

## **Military Resistance 10A9**



## **The Last Man To Die For A Mistake: “I’m Just Sad, And Pray That My Best Friend Didn’t Lay Down His Life For Nothing”**

08 January 12 By Don Babwin and Tom Breen, Associated Press

As the last U.S. troops withdrew from Iraq on Sunday, friends and family of the first and last American fighters killed in combat were cherishing their memories rather than dwelling on whether the war and their sacrifice was worth it.

Nearly 4,500 American fighters died before the last U.S. troops crossed the border into Kuwait.

David Hickman, 23, of Greensboro was the last of those war casualties, killed in November by the kind of improvised bomb that was a signature weapon of this war.

“David Emanuel Hickman. Doesn’t that name just bring out a smile to your face?” said Logan Trainum, one of Hickman’s closest friends, at the funeral where the soldier was laid to rest after a ceremony in a Greensboro church packed with friends and family.

Trainum says he’s not spending time asking why Hickman died: “There aren’t enough facts available for me to have a defined opinion about things. I’m just sad, and pray that my best friend didn’t lay down his life for nothing.”

He’d rather remember who Hickman was: A cutup who liked to joke around with friends. A physical fitness fanatic who half-kiddingly called himself “Zeus” because he had a body that would make the gods jealous. A ferocious outside linebacker at Northeast Guilford High School who was the linchpin of a defense so complicated they had to scrap it after he graduated because no other teenager could figure it out.

Hickman was these things and more, a whole life scarcely glimpsed in the terse language of a Defense Department news release last month. Three paragraphs said Hickman died in Baghdad on Nov. 14, “of injuries suffered after encountering an improvised explosive device.”

He was more, too, than the man who bears the symbolic freight of being the last member of the U.S. military to die in a war launched in the political shadow of 9/11, which brought thousands of his fellow citizens out into the streets to oppose and support it. Eventually, the war largely faded from the public’s thoughts.

“There’s a lot of people, in my family included, they don’t know what’s going on in this world,” said Wes Needham, who coached linebackers at Northeast when David was a student. “They’re oblivious to it. I just sit and think about it, the courage that it takes to do what they do, especially when they’re all David’s age.”

And they were mostly young.

According to an Associated Press analysis of casualty data, the average age of Americans who died in Iraq was 26. Nearly 1,300 were 22 or younger, but middle-aged people fought and died as well: some 511 were older than 35.

“I’ve trained a lot of kids. They go to college and you kind of lose track of them and forget them,” said Mike King of Greensboro Black Belt Academy, where Hickman trained in taekwondo for about eight years. “He was never like that. That smile and that laugh immediately come to mind.”

The pain is fresh for people who knew Hickman. But the years have not eased the anguish of those who lost loved ones in the war’s earliest days, when funerals were broadcast live on local television, before the country became numb to the casualty count.

Vicky Langley’s son, Marine Pvt. Jonathan Lee Gifford, was killed just two days into the war. More than eight years later she sits in her Decatur, Ill. home, surrounded by photographs of him and even a couple of paintings of him in his dress uniform that total strangers created and sent her.

She said she doesn't concern herself with thoughts about the cost of the war and whether it was worth the life of her son and all the others who died.

"Only the Iraqi people can answer that," she said.

She thinks of her son constantly. She recalls the first day of kindergarten and how she came home and "turned on every appliance I could (because) it was just so quiet without him."

She remembers how as a young man he would call her, without fail, when the first snow of the year started to fall. She still hears the knock at her door at 11 at night, and the chaplain telling her that her 30-year-old son had been killed in Iraq.

And she sees him in the 4-year-old daughter he left behind, who is now 12.

Lexie Gifford's thin frame and face are miniature versions of her father's, her smile a replica of his. She has the same slow, I'll-get-there-when-I-get-there walk. For a reason nobody understands, a while back started popping frozen French fries in her mouth just like her dad used to do.

As the last troops prepared to leave Iraq, Langley was getting ready.

"I'll probably sit and cry," said Langley, 58. "I'll be happy for the ones you can be happy for and sad for the ones you are sad for."

Langley's life has been one catastrophe after another since her son died. The next year her husband died. Then months later, doctors told her the reason she was feeling poorly was that her kidneys had shut down. That was followed by a fall and a broken back. Today, as she waits for her name to come up on a list for a kidney transplant, she gets around the house she shares with her mother in a motorized scooter.

The one thing she doesn't have, she said, is guilt. Though she talked her son out of enlisting in the military a couple times over the years, the reasons began and ended with concerns about the safety for her only child.

But after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, she knew there would be no talking him out of enlisting. Besides, she said, "If I was young enough I would have gone in, too."

Even though the country's mood was much different in 2009 when Hickman joined the Army, he had no doubts about his decision, Trainum said.

"When I talked with him on the phone a week before, he wasn't unhappy about where he was or regretting being there at all," Trainum said. "It was just going to work for him, and he was looking forward to getting his work done and getting home."

Hickman, Gifford and the others left behind parents and spouses and children like Lexie, whose memories of her Marine father are what one might expect of a girl who was four when she last saw him.

“He popped out of a Christmas box,” she said, of the Christmas just before Gifford was deployed, when he hid inside a large box to surprise his daughter. “He was tall. He had brown hair. He was nice.”

The losses linger for people who saw the flag-draped coffins come home.

“I used to watch all the war stories on TV, you know,” said Needham, Hickman’s old coach.

“But since this happened to David, I can’t watch that stuff anymore. I just think: That’s how he died.”

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## **AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS**

### **Man In Afghan Army Uniform Kills U.S. Soldier And Wounds Another In Zabul**

09 January 2012 AAP

A man in an Afghan army uniform has opened fire on a group of Americans at a base in the south of the country, killing a US soldier and wounding another, an Afghan military spokesman says.

Spokesman General Mohammad Zahir Azimi said on Monday that the attacker was also killed in the shootout on Sunday.

“Right now, an investigation is going on to determine whether he really was a soldier or someone using an army uniform. And if he was a soldier, what caused the shooting,” Azimi said.

Azimi said the shooting occurred inside one of the Afghan National Army’s bases in Zabul province, about 400km south of Kabul.

The shooting brought to 11 the number of foreign soldiers killed this month.

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### **Wyoming Airman Killed By Explosion In Afghanistan**

[Thanks to SSG N (ret’d) who sent this in. She writes “End without war/war without end.”]

January 7, 2012 Associated Press

CHEYENNE, Wyo.— An airman killed in a roadside attack in Afghanistan knew the dangers involved but accepted them as “just part of the job,” his brother-in-law said.

Tech. Sgt. Matthew Schwartz, 34, of Cheyenne, was among three servicemen killed Thursday when their vehicle was struck by an improvised explosive device in Helmand Province’s Shir Ghazi, the Defense Department said Saturday in a news release.

Schwartz was an explosive ordnance disposal specialist assigned to the 90th Civil Engineer Squadron at F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming. He grew up in Michigan, graduated from Traverse City Central High School in 1996 and served 12 years in the Air Force, according to the Traverse City Record-Eagle.

He left for his sixth overseas deployment in October and would have been due home in March. He had served previous tours in Afghanistan and Iraq.

“He knew the dangers; he talked about it,” Schwartz’ brother-in-law Jeff O’Brien told the newspaper. “He said it was just part of the job.”

Schwartz moved to Cheyenne in 2006, when he was transferred to F.E. Warren after a stint at Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico, the Wyoming Tribune Eagle reported.

He and his wife, Jennifer, had three daughters, ages 11, 8 and 6.

“I can’t remember a time without him,” Jennifer Schwartz told the Michigan newspaper. “We had an understanding ... we needed each other. He loved life, and he loved his kids. He was just wonderful.”

The explosion also killed Senior Airman Bryan Bell, 23, of Pennsylvania, who was assigned to the 2nd Civil Engineer Squadron at Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana, and Airman 1st Class Matthew Seidler, 24, of Maryland, who was assigned to the 21st Civil Engineer Squadron at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado.

Seidler was the first airman in the 21st Space Wing to die in Iraq or Afghanistan, The (Colorado Springs) Gazette reported Saturday. He was on his first overseas deployment.

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## **Westminster Airman Killed By Explosive Device In Afghanistan**

January 7, 2012 By Kevin Dayhoff, Baltimore Sun

A Westminster airman was one of three service members who died from injuries suffered from an improvised explosive device attack on Jan. 5 in Shir ghazi, Helmand province, southern Afghanistan.

Airman 1st Class Matthew Seidler, 24, of Westminster, had been assigned to the 21st Civil Engineer Squadron, Peterson Air Force Base, Colo.

Seidler, an explosive ordnance disposal technician, was one of eight soldiers who have died in a series of recent attacks in southern and eastern Afghanistan, according to military officials.

Also killed in the attack were Senior Airman Bryan Bell, 23, of Erie, Pa., who had been assigned to the 2nd Civil Engineer Squadron, Barksdale Air Force Base, La., and Tech. Sgt. Matthew Schwartz, 34, of Traverse City, Mich., from the 90th Civil Engineer Squadron, FE Warren Air Force Base, Wyo.

“This is a tragic day for (Seidler’s unit), and especially for Matt’s family,” said Col. Chris Crawford, 21st Space Wing commander, in a statement. “We will come together to help Matt’s family and friends through their grief.”

Lt. Col. Mark Donnithorne, 21st CES commander, said in the statement that servicemen such as Seidler were “vital to Operation Enduring Freedom, and unfortunately, the pride we’ll feel when we see Matt’s name on the EOD Memorial Wall at Eglin Air Force Base will not extinguish the sorrow we feel from his loss.”

Seidler had entered active duty in November 2009, according to a release issued from Peterson Air Force Base.

According to iCasualties.org, some 566 NATO troops were killed in Afghanistan in 2011; including 418 from the United States and 46 from the United Kingdom.

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## Harborcreek Man Killed In Afghanistan Was Dedicated To Serving Others



This is a 2005 file photo of Bryan Bell. The Harborcreek Township native, an explosive ordnance disposal technician with the U.S. Air Force, was reported killed on Jan. 5 in Afghanistan. FILE PHOTO BY JACK HANRAHAN/ERIE TIMES-NEWS

January 7, 2012 By CATHERINE CLOUTIER, Erie Times-News

At an early age, Bryan Bell felt a strong sense of community obligation.

His father, Rick Bell, has served as a volunteer firefighter at the Fairfield Hose Co. in Harborcreek Township for 37 years. As a child, Bryan Bell would spend his spare time at the fire station.

“We grew up together at the station,” said Jim Hawryliw, the fire chief of the Fairfield Hose Co., who was eight years older than Bell. “He was so goofy and funny. He could make anyone laugh.”

At 14 years old, Bell joined the fire company as a junior fireman. By the time he had graduated from Harbor Creek High School in 2006, he had traveled through the ranks to become a senior fireman.

Hawryliw said Bryan Bell was an active member of the volunteer fire company, often responding to calls.

And in 2006, Bryan Bell responded to a different kind of call: He joined the U.S. Air Force.

Bryan Bell, a 23-year-old senior airman, died for his country in Afghanistan on Thursday. His mother, Donna Aldrich, received notice of his death by a letter.

Rick Bell knew something terrible had happened to his son when three Air Force officers showed up at his Harborcreek home Thursday evening.

“I opened the door, and as soon as I saw those three lieutenant colonels, I knew he was gone,” Rick Bell said.

Rick Bell said he didn’t know many details about his son’s death, which occurred in south-central Afghanistan. Bell’s main job was to clear routes with two other servicemen in an armored vehicle, Rick Bell said.

Bryan Bell last visited his dad over the summer, before his deployment to Afghanistan. He previously served a tour in Iraq.

He was still excited to be an explosive-ordnance disposal technician, and eager to defuse and dismantle bombs and other weapons.

“He always made it a point to say, ‘Dad, it’s what I want to do,’” Rick Bell said.

“He didn’t want to go over there and shoot people.”

Hawryliw, the fire chief, said that Bryan Bell originally wanted to pursue a career as a firefighter in the Air Force, but he had come to love his position in the EOD division.

“It was one of the jobs I wanted,” Bryan Bell said, when interviewed by the Erie Times-News in March 2010. “It’s exciting. I’m glad I got it over the other jobs I picked.”

The position of EOD technician came into the spotlight after “The Hurt Locker” won the Academy Award for Best Picture in 2009. Bryan Bell described the movie as “probably the best war movie ever made.”

While on tour in Iraq in March 2010, Bryan Bell was photographed for an Associated Press story describing EOD technicians' reactions to the movie.

"We try to do everything remotely with robots," Bryan Bell said in 2010. "If that doesn't work, the team leader is the one to go in and finish the mission. My job is to watch his back."

Those close to Bell said what they will miss most about him is his sense of humor.

"He was the most lovable, humorous person," said Kim Bell, Bryan Bell's stepmother. "He will be sadly, sadly missed."

Hawryliw said he will always remember Bryan Bell as a boy sitting with his father around a campfire and talking for hours.

"Bryan was a great friend to all," Hawryliw said. "Anybody who knew him loved him."

Bryan Bell's wife, Alaina Hart Bell, lives in Louisiana, where he was stationed before going overseas. His sister, Candice Bell, is also in the Air Force.

Support for the Bell family has streamed in, expressed both through phone calls and over social networks.

"We've gotten tremendous support from the community. It's just been an overwhelming time," Kim Bell said.

Rick Bell spent part of Friday morning visiting the mother of U.S. Army Sgt. Donald Oaks Jr., who was killed April 3, 2003, while serving in Iraq.

The families live less than a block from each other in Harborcreek. From his house, Rick Bell can see the U.S. flag Oaks' mother has flown every day since her son's death.

"People need to know that these deaths half a world away really hit home," Rick Bell said. "It's not all kids from Tulsa, Oklahoma, or L.A. Two of their families live less than 150 yards from each other."

Rick Bell planned to leave Erie late Friday to travel to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, where his son's body will be delivered. Funeral plans have not been made, but Rick Bell said his son will be buried in Erie.

**POLITICIANS CAN'T BE COUNTED ON TO HALT  
THE BLOODSHED**

**THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE  
WARS**



# **Military Convoy For Foreign Troops Ambushed Near Farah**

09 January 2012 AAP

Taliban fighters ambushed a convoy carrying supplies for foreign troops in western Afghanistan, killing two private security guards and wounding three. The convoy was heading toward the city of Farah, about 700km west of Kabul, when it was hit.

**IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE  
END THE OCCUPATION**

## **MILITARY NEWS**

**THIS IS HOW OBAMA BRINGS THEM HOME:  
ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE**



The casket of U.S. Marine Corps Staff Sergeant Vincent J. Bell December 27, 2011 at Arlington National Cemetery. Bell, an artilleryman for the 2nd Battalion of the 11th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force based in Camp Pendleton, California, was killed by an improvised explosive device explosion while he was on foot patrol in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, during his fifth deployment in ten years with the Marine Corps. (Photo by Alex Wong/Getty Images)

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## **FORWARD OBSERVATIONS**



**“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.**

**“For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.**

**“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”**

**“The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppose.”**

**Frederick Douglass, 1852**

**The Social-Democrats ideal should not be the trade union secretary, but the tribune of the people who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression no matter where it appears no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalize all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth before all his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for all and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat.”**

**-- V. I. Lenin; What Is To Be Done**

# Historical Perspective



Vietnam Veterans Memorial Washington, D.C. 2009: Photo by Mike Hastie

From: Mike Hastie  
To: Military Resistance Newsletter  
Sent: January 07, 2012  
Subject: Historical Perspective

## Historical Perspective

**There are two American perspectives on the Vietnam War:**

- 1. The view the American public is forced to see.**
- 2. The view the soldier saw, otherwise known as what really happened in the field.**

**This is an image of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., otherwise known as, "The Wall." In the background is the actual monument, with the names of over 58,000 American soldiers killed in Vietnam.**

**This is what I call the public's perspective, or viewpoint, based on information given by cultural mythology. As the years go by, this point of view is drastically distorted to cover up the war crimes committed by the United States Empire during the Vietnam War. The historical world view is that the entire Vietnam War, or as the Vietnamese call it, "The American War," was a**

**non-stop war crime committed by the U.S. Government.**

**The truth of the war in Vietnam is the perspective seen by those who were the victims of the war, which is represented by the statue of the three American soldiers in the foreground. Tens of thousands of Vietnam veterans who have committed suicide represent this perspective, my personal perspective.**

**I have met few Vietnam vets who did not know of someone who committed suicide as a result of being in Vietnam. What happens in the field stays in the field. When a Vietnam veteran commits suicide, the American public never wants to know why. That is the perspective that is never revealed. In the suicide, is the truth behind the Vietnam War. Three of my close friends from Vietnam did not die in Vietnam, but as a result of being there. The last one hung himself in a motel room four years ago. So, while the American public is viewing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. at ground level, the statue of the three soldiers are seeing the truth from another world.**

**I did not serve in Vietnam for the cause of freedom. I served Big Business in America for the cause of profit. That is the truth that is buried in the casket, The American Casket.**

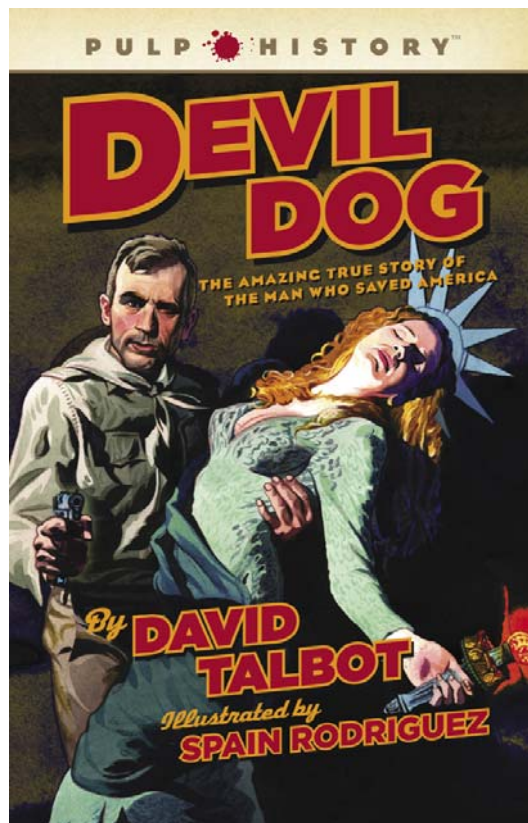
**Mike Hastie  
Army Medic Vietnam  
Jan. 7, 2012**

**Photo and caption from the portfolio of Mike Hastie, US Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71. (For more of his outstanding work, contact at: [hastiemike@earthlink.net](mailto:hastiemike@earthlink.net)) T)**

**One day while I was in a bunker in Vietnam, a sniper round went over my head. The person who fired that weapon was not a terrorist, a rebel, an extremist, or a so-called insurgent. The Vietnamese individual who tried to kill me was a citizen of Vietnam, who did not want me in his country. This truth escapes millions.**

**Mike Hastie  
U.S. Army Medic  
Vietnam 1970-71  
December 13, 2004**

**Book Review – “Devil Dog”**  
**“Unbelievable And All True! Devil Dog Will Knock You Out!”**  
**The Story Of Major General Smedley D. Butler, U.S.M.C.**  
**“Devil Dog, Written In An Anti-War Flair Much Similar To Butler’s Own Later Inclinations, Finishes Up With Detailed Coverage Of Butler Stopping A Coup By Bankers And The American Legion Against President Franklin Roosevelt”**





Butler Reviewing Troops: Berkeley Daily Planet

From: Don Bacon  
To: Military Resistance Newsletter  
Subject: Devil Dog  
Date: Jan 8, 2012

*Devil Dog*; by David Talbot and Spain Rodriguez; New York; Simon & Schuster, 2010; 151pp.

Reviewed by Don Bacon, LTC, US Army (Ret), Vietnam & Smedley Butler Society:  
<http://www.warisarocket.org/>

The story of Major General Smedley D. Butler, USMC.

Unbelievable and all true!

Devil Dog will knock you out!

Devil Dog is part of the "Pulp History" series which uses the style of razzle-dazzle fiction and comic books to interest youngsters (and oldsters) in history. "The Pulp History series brings to life extraordinary feats of bravery, violence, and redemption that history has forgotten. These stories are so dramatic and thrilling they have to be true."

"Devil Dog" has a flair not unlike what General Butler displayed.

It's a little short on military facts, but it makes up for a lack of clarity on military strategies with exciting personal stories about how the brave Butler dealt with the many challenges in his life, culminating in a plot against the President that General Butler cracked wide open.

Devil Dog: "By the time Smedley Butler was 23, he was a veteran of three wars and a decorated marine captain. He had traveled the world and seen more than most men had in a lifetime."

Butler was a Philadelphia Quaker who conversely enlisted in the Marine Corps when he was sixteen, took a Chinese bullet in the chest at age eighteen, ran down rebels in Nicaragua and Haiti, saved the lives of his men in France and along the way received two Congressional Medals of Honor.

It was in France that the Marines took the name Devil Dogs.

While the French were retreating in the hell-like place called Belleau Wood, Captain Lloyd Williams of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, uttered the now-famous retort, "Retreat, hell. We just got here." The Marines stopped the German offensive back there in the Spring of 1918 which earned them the nickname Teufelshunde--Devil Dogs--from their enemies.

"Devil Dog" doesn't have any of this action, but it does describe small unit military action in Nicaragua and Haiti, including how Butler earned his second Medal of Honor in Haiti. In France. Butler was a camp commander at the time, which earned him not the title Devil Dog but rather he became known as 'General Duckboard' for reasons you'll have to get the book to learn.

Butler had a varied career, most of it in what he called the war racket -- making Central American countries, Haiti (which he governed) and China hospitable for US banks and corporations.

He also served some time as a police commissioner in rough prohibition-era Philadelphia, and supported the bonus army, both of which are well-covered, as is his planned court-martial (dropped) for insulting Benito Mussolini.

**Devil Dog, written in an anti-war flair much similar to Butler's own later inclinations, finishes up with detailed coverage of Butler stopping a coup by bankers and the American Legion against President Franklin Roosevelt. The plotters knew that there was one man in the land who could raise a private army on their behest, but they underestimated that man.**

**He turned the tables on them! After spending a career defending their interests he knocked 'em out!**

If you want an excellent, detailed biography of General Butler, the world he lived in and the wars he campaigned in, get a copy of "Maverick Marine" by Hans Schmidt.

**If you want to get General Butler's full attack on war, and what to do about it, get the pamphlet "War Is A Racket."**

If you would enjoy some "pulp fiction," in seven "acts," from "The Year of the Dragon" to "The Plot Against America," with a comic-book flair, excellent illustrations and a good feeling for the man himself and his interaction with his beloved Marines -- get "Devil Dog."

Or if you want a complete picture of one of the most interesting and influential military men in US history, a true legend, get all three.

## **DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN MILITARY SERVICE?**

Forward Military Resistance along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly.

Whether in Afghanistan or at a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the wars and economic injustice, inside the armed services and at home.

Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Resistance, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657. Phone: 888.711.2550

## **ANNIVERSARIES**

### **January 10, 1776: Magnificent Anniversary: “We Have It In Our Power To Begin The World Over Again”**



Thomas Paine

Carl Bunin Peace History January 7-13

January 10 1776: Thomas Paine anonymously published his influential pamphlet, “Common Sense.”



In it Paine questioned the fundamental legitimacy of the rule of kings, and advocated the doctrine of independence for Americans, and the rights of mankind.

Quotations:

“He who is the author of a war lets loose the whole contagion of hell and opens a vein that bleeds a nation to death.”

“We have it in our power to begin the world over again.”

## Troops Invited:

Comments, arguments, articles, and letters from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or email [contact@militaryproject.org](mailto:contact@militaryproject.org): Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe.

## DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



## CLASS WAR REPORTS



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**Our Day Has Come!**  
**“Today, We The Nigerian People  
Arise To Take Our Destiny In Our  
Hands, As The Most Massive  
General Strike & Labour-Led Mass  
Protests In Our History  
Commences”**  
**“We Are At Crossroads, Where The  
Death Of Fear, Resurrects The**

# **Boldness Of Life, In Moments Of Struggle”**

## **“We Now Fully Know That It Is The Elite That Play Up Our Ethnic And Religious Identities As ‘Differences’ To Be Manipulated To Keep Us Divided And Thus Weak”**

**A revolutionary situation has sprouted in the country, what would come out of it is still in contention, but it is certain this time around that the masses, and no less the state, have dug into what could turn out to be Nigeria’s moment of decision.**

January 9, 2012 By Baba Aye, Deputy National Secretary of the Labour Party; National Chairperson of the Socialist Workers League [Nigeria] [Excerpts]

### **Introduction**

Today, we the Nigerian people arise to take our destiny in our hands, as the most massive General Strike & labour-led mass protests in our history commences, in a face-off with the state/government of the 1% that have held us in bondage and led the country to ruin, for the reversal of the increment in fuel price, and indeed for more: for our self-emancipation!

The revolutionary situation that marked this year as one that will birth change for us and children yet unborn started with the year itself.

2012 commenced with a big bang, ignited by the Federal Government when it raised the price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) better known as petrol, from N65.00 to N141.00, as its New Year “gift” to the Nigerian people.

**Within days, well over a hundred thousand citizens had participated in some form of demonstration or the other in cities across half of the states of the Federation, in virtually all of its six geo-political zones.**

New organisations and coalitions have been formed, & old organisations and alliances revitalised in a massive wave of mass anger on the streets, by working people and youths.

The two trade union federations, Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC), reached an historic joint resolution in defence of the Nigerian people against the fuel price increase, at their separate National Executive Councils’ meetings, attended by radical elements of the civil society on Wednesday January 4, to prosecute

what has been described as “the mother of all general strikes & mass protests” ever in Nigeria, commencing today, to subsist indefinitely, till the will of the people prevails.

The Federal Government’s response has been one of recalcitrance filled with arrogance.

**The Minister of Information, Labaran Maku, who used to be a fire-brand activist and a founding member of the United Action for Democracy castigated the labour movement’s opposition to the so-called “removal of fuel subsidy”, while the Minister of Labour, Emeka Wogu asserted that government would not submit to “threats” from those it “rules”.**

The final word of the Federal Executive Council was by President Goodluck Jonathan on January 7.

He claimed to understand how the people feel and promised palliatives. Such palliatives, which are part of the Subsidy Removal Reinvestment and Empowerment (SURE) scheme, headed by the former Cadbury Nigeria boss, Dr. Christopher Kolade include the establishment of a “robust” mass transit scheme. At the heart of this scheme is the distribution of 1,600 buses to various cities in a country with an estimated population of 167 million people, to alleviate the pangs of transportation, considering the sharp increases in transport costs.

Quite robust indeed, it could be said, if one were to think with his much loved shoes.

The president’s Rehoboam-like speech did not draw much applause from Nigerians.

Yesterday, January 8, the House of Representatives stepped into the fray, with its special session to discuss the state of the nation.

It passed a resolution moved by Comrade Paul “TeeJay” Yusuf, a former students’ union leader, demanding that the fuel price increase be reversed.

It is also to hold discussions with labour by Tuesday after an attempt to include calling on organised labour to call off its strike in its resolution was thrown out.

It was clear when the sun went down yesterday, that, the die was cast for a major battle between the 1% of the country’s population comprising its wealthy ruling class and the 99% dispossessed, suffering people that have chosen to stop smiling, who have borne the brunt of the fuel price hike this last one week and have equally fought against it with all our might.

**A revolutionary situation has sprouted in the country, what would come out of it is still in contention, but it is certain this time around that the masses, and no less the state, have dug into what could turn out to be Nigeria’s moment of decision.**

**“The Nation Stands As One Against The Bulwark Of The Might Of The State And Its Few Shameless Paid Tools”**

**We are at crossroads, where the death of fear, resurrects the boldness of life, in moments of struggle.**

**Here, for once, like never before, the nation stands as one against the bulwark of the might of the state and its few shameless paid tools who for the love of filthy lucre can not hear the bells ringing across the land, bells of the stiffest resistance in words and in deed.**

The National Medical Association, the Nigerian Bar Association, the Federation of Informal Workers Organisation of Nigeria and the Joint Action Forum of pro-labour civil society organisations have, along with hundreds of other national, regional and local organisations placed themselves at the standpoint of the working class, demanding reversal of the fuel pump price and subscribing with no reservations to the leadership of the working class in the nation's waging of this struggle against the state of the 1%.

Indeed, the binding demand has been **NO TO FUEL PRICE HIKE.**

**But with this, virtually every section of society, except for the big employers have clearly said ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.**

The country has been bedeviled by astounding poverty, rising insecurity and utter disillusionment.

The general elections last year, had been for many, a first step towards re-making this country despite its condemnable flaws. But the elite, comprising the ruling class, have not only failed to provide moral and intellectual leadership, it has wittingly or unwittingly made the state of the nation worse.

Most of those who voted for the current government now regret it. This of course is not to say there were alternatives that could have turned our lives around, for without us as the people fighting to emancipate ourselves, as we now shall do, all hope is lost.

### **“On Sunday At Funtua, Katsina State, Muslims Surrounded Churches As Christians Worshipped, To Provide Security”**

**While grinding want and despair reign with no regards for creed, ethnic identity or region Nigerians live in, sectarian violence has been the dominant news focussed on globally when you talk of Nigeria.**

**This has been defined more, in recent times, by the terror antics of the Boko Haram group, which reports, including from wikileaks show, have had the tacit support of key figure in the state machinery, at different times.**

**Where we are now however has demonstrated even within the miasma of continued perpetuation of such dastardly acts, gallant demonstrations of solidarity across faiths.**

**Last week, non-Muslims stood guard in Kano as Muslims said their prayers in the City Centre now called Liberation Square, where they were all brutally evicted from at about 1.30am by anti-riot police, while on Sunday at Funtua, Katsina state, Muslims surrounded churches as Christians worshipped, to provide security.**

**This was in response to threats of Boko Haram attacks that had spread across the state.**

Similarly, Muslim youths who had been Occupying the sidewalk of the Eagle Square since Thursday, as well as civil society activists, organised around the Alliance for Credible Elections and the Joint Action Forum went to churches with leaflets, forging solidarity across creed.

**We now fully know that it is the elite that play up our ethnic and religious identities as “differences” to be manipulated to keep us divided and thus weak.**

**Hunger and disillusionment know no creed or “tribe”.**

**And the elite when they meet to decide our fate and fleece our social wealth do not consider themselves then as Muslims, Christians, animists or atheists!**

**But they have pitted us against ourselves, time and again.**

**But now, the hour has come for our self-redemption through collective struggle for a better society.**

### **“Why Must Nigerians Pay For The Government’s Subsidizing Of Corruption And Its Grandiose Inefficiency?”**

It would not be out of place, in considering how we got to this juncture to point at the contentious issue of “subsidy” removal.

While barely 17,000 executives and their coteries across the country pocket N1.125t annually and the National Assembly alone gulps a quarter of total recurrent expenditure, the state claims that N1.3t fuel “subsidy” for the Nigerian people is not sustainable.

It further goes tongue-in-cheek to admit that this amount arises not from subsidising petrol for Nigerians but largely as corrupt enrichment of a “cabal” in the oil sector.

This is despite the fact that if the country’s four refineries with a combined refining capacity of 445,000bpd were producing at optimal capacity, domestic need could be secured.

Why must Nigerians pay for the government’s subsidizing of corruption and its grandiose inefficiency?

To limit the cause of the extent of anger and simmering revolt in the land to the fuel subsidy question would however be to fail to see the wood for the trees.

**The clouds of revolution had been gathering for years in the horizons of Nigeria, as even members of the ruling class could see.**

**In 2008, 2009 & 2010, different leading members of the elite class of capitalists in the country, from diverse ethnic and regional backgrounds had pointed at the possibility of such in the near future.**

**They had noted: abysmal poverty; severe rates of unemployment; mass discontent and; the bland ostentatious lifestyles of the elite in the face of these.**

**They could point at the symptoms but dare not identify the crux of the matter; the inhumanness and non-sustainability of capitalism for lasting social development.**

In the wake of the Arab Spring, Dimeji Bankole, the then Speaker of the House of Representatives whom an anti-corruption agency has clearly identified now as a mega-thief declared that revolution could never occur in Nigeria.

Months later, the former President, Chief Olusegun Obsasanjo, who sold off our collective patrimony for pittance, to himself and his cronies, as part of the neoliberal agenda of the Nigerian state warned in faraway Geneva that revolution might be imminent in Nigeria.

He reiterated this position in December, when in a seeming uncharacteristic manner, he took a stand against the then looming “removal of fuel subsidy”.

The people of Nigeria now rise, to reverse the increase in the price of petrol and for more.

“We have been naught, we shall be all”; that is the cry that rings through the land today as we face our destiny. That is the crossroad at which we now are; to win, or to fight to the last drop of our blood!

It is not accidental that the present situation is unfolding in Nigeria at this moment in history.

We are living through historic times in which the “automatic legitimacy” of the capitalist system has been critically cracked, but the ascendancy of an alternative is itself not assured.

While we are surer now that another world indeed is possible, we must contend for what such possibility could mean. But without the generalisation of that “death of fear” and commonsensical “acceptance” of this anti-people order which while obsolete still remains real, no revolution from below could occur.

It is important to stress the crucial role the working class, nationally and internationally, has to play in finding and entrenching the emergent new.

This has practical significance for us in the moment we now are in, as not a few of the youths who have tirelessly and ceaselessly been on the battle field of an unfolding revolution this past one week have many a time in discussions asserted that “let labour do its thing, we will (or can) do ours and still win”.

**As our day starts today, with a national General Strike and mass protests in every major city in the country, the might of the working class and the possibilities it holds for generalising and giving leadership to our collective struggle, definitely stamp itself on the course of the unfolding situation in Nigeria.**

It is all well and good to interpret the situation we have entered and which is now deepening. The greater challenge might be that of adequately responding to the question; “what is to be done?”

In challenging the will of the state we are fighting against power. To win more i.e. to emancipate ourselves entails yet another logic being laid on this; our fighting for power.

In this light, we would have to organise organs of people and street power, as the situation deepens.

**In our neighbourhoods, schools and yes; workplaces, we would have to entrench direct democracies, by constituting General Assemblies with action committees to address diverse needs of keeping the revolution alive.**

I mention workplaces despite the General Strike for a simple reason. In the course of the week, or even beyond it, it is not impossible that despite its bravado, the state would back down, although as they say; “those whom the gods would kill, they first run mad”.

But even if with a reversal and consequent suspension of the strike (and this is not given at this moment, but we must consider all possibilities), the wind is stolen from our sails, it cannot but be for a while. The genie is out of the bottle. We might be entering into a long drawn period of people and street power (PSP) of the 99% against the 1% that have brought Nigeria to its knees and made our lives a misery.

International solidarity would be crucial as the 1% is tied by a thousand strings across all lands. But no less so are we!

The spread of revolutionary upsurge across the world, berthing now in Nigeria as the sub-Saharan Harmattan further attests to this. Nigerians in the diaspora have taken up this gauntlet, starting in London and marching again today in Washington.

We must as well call on the police ranks to sheath their weapons if directed to shoot at protesters. The killers of 23-year old Mustafa Muyideen Mofoluwasho Opobiyi during demonstrations at Ilorin must be brought to book.

The fact that some 300 police officers marched in Lagos and other junior ranks rebuffed a Deputy Commissioner’s order to use live ammunition on protesters also goes to show many junior police men (and women) would rather tear off their uniforms of servitude than become tools that will bring death to their brothers and sisters in our collective struggle.

**It is still morning yet on creation day for the Nigerian revolution.**

**But yes, we the people dare say; OUR DAY HAS COME!**

**FORWARD TO VICTORY!**

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**“We Are Imploring All Able  
Working Class People Willing  
To Take Time Out Of His Or Her  
Own Lives, To Come To  
Longview, Washington For A  
Historic Protest”**

**“The Class Struggle Never Really  
Goes Away”**

**“This Council Call Out To Friends Of  
Labor And The ‘99%’ Everywhere To  
Come To The Aid Of ILWU Local 21,  
And To Support Them In Any Way  
Possible In Their Fight Against Multi  
National Conglomerate EGT”**

**“This Council Request That Anyone Willing  
To Participate In A Community And Labor  
Protest In Longview, Washington Of The  
First EGT Grain Ship, Do So When Called  
Upon By This Body”**

**(A Call To Action: Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Counties  
Central Labor Council -- Longview Area,  
Washington)**

## **A Call to Action:**

**It is estimated, sometime in late January or early February the (scab) EGT facility at the port of Longview will receive its first grain ship to be loaded at its berth.**

**The name and timing of this ship will undoubtedly be kept secret until the last possible moment. It is likely there will be a few days to as little as 24 hours notice of when the ship will dock. Notification will be given via the Internet and any other relevant means of networking throughout the country.**

**We are imploring all able working class people willing to take time out of his or her own lives, to come to Longview, Washington for a historic protest.**

**This is the time for workers everywhere to take a stand.**

Unions and the working class standard of living that have benefited from collective bargaining for so long are in danger of being extracted completely.

You can see this systematically taking place over the last 30 years or longer, and especially in recent times. Unions have lost ground over this period of time due to unjust anti-labor laws, corporate influence on the government, and complacency on the part of organized labor among other reasons.

We recognize the danger of, and view the government attack on collective bargaining of public employees as a warning shot to labor as a whole.

Wisconsin was ground zero and the spark that awoke the sleeping giant that is labor. Workers are beginning to remember there is indeed strength in numbers, regardless of how many unjust laws are made to divide us.

We have not been pacified long enough, as to give up our constitutional rights or to give up all the gains our forefathers fought and died to achieve over the last hundred years.

People inherently ask WHY?

Why should I, or others come to the aid of the ILWU? Why should I care, and what does it matter if this ship gets loaded and they lose this struggle?

The ILWU has a proud history of being arguably the strongest labor union in the world for almost 80 years. The secret of this success lies in the bottom up, rank and file democratic structure. This empowers and involves every member. And the intelligence and foresight of the leaders who knew without unity on the entire west coast and unity with the working class, there was no strength.

EGT is attempting to break the ILWU.

EGT is operating on public port property where the ILWU have worked for decades. They are in violation of their lease agreement, which states that the ILWU is to be the

workforce on port property. Longshoremen have done work in port grain elevators before the ILWU was formed (in the 1930s).

If EGT succeeds, they will have essentially broken the ILWU.

First, they will set a precedent that work on public port docks is no longer automatically Longshore Jurisdiction. Then within less than a year, when the northwest grain handlers agreement is set to be negotiated, all the other grain elevators will seek to either go non-ILWU or will seek to match the eroded standard EGT creates. Shortly thereafter in 2014, the ILWU will negotiate its master contract with the Pacific Maritime Association. If they lose, you can bet the PMA will take notice and hit hard.

Most importantly to note is that grain accounts for 30% of the ILWU health and welfare package. If you lose a third of your bargaining power and your traditional jurisdiction on port property, what are you left with?

Either no ILWU, or a union that would resemble nothing like what it once was. There would be little or no collective power up and down the west coast, and no way to fight for social justice or defend the working class, just as the ILWU has done for so long, in its entrenched and strategic position at the gates of international commerce.

Longshoremen have traditionally been a rough and tough bunch, but they always make sure to educate their members on the importance of history, unity and the power of collective bargaining.

People nowadays forget or have not been taught their own history, they forget what it means to cross a picket line, and become a scab the rest of their life. For 30 years or more we have been sliding downhill, while some would argue unions have outlived their time.

The reality is unions are the last defense when the imperfect system of checks and balances within our government fails to serve the interests of the workers.

**The class struggle never really goes away.**

**Right now the rich and the ruling class are attempting to deal a blow that labor might never recover from.**

**The ILWU has always been the vanguard of labor everywhere. Today, the ILWU's value of "An Injury to One, Is an Injury to All" couldn't be any more pertinent for all organizations.**

**So please, if you believe in a better future for the 99% of us that work for a living, do what you can to support ILWU Local 21.**

**"The most important word in the language of the working class is solidarity."—  
Harry Bridges**

**In Solidarity,**

Kyle Mackey, Secretary/Treasurer Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Counties Central Labor Council  
ILWU Local 21 Member

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**Resolution of the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Counties  
(Washington) Central Labor Council –  
Adopted January 2, 2012**

Whereas: the ILWU has always been at the forefront in the struggle for social justice and better working conditions. And,

Whereas: ILWU Local 21 has inspired working people worldwide. And,

Whereas: ILWU jurisdiction is under an unprecedented attack. And,

Whereas: It is clear to all working people that EGT is seeking to race to the bottom and destroy a long history of good family wage jobs throughout the area. And,

Whereas: The Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Counties Central Labor Council, hereinafter called the council, recognize the blatant union busting tactics of EGT, as well, the danger of losing the ILWU as a powerful ally for the working class. And,

**Be it Resolved: that this Council call out to friends of labor and the “99%” everywhere to come to the aid of ILWU Local 21, and to support them in any way possible in their fight against multi national conglomerate EGT. And,**

**Be it further Resolved: that this Council request that anyone willing to participate in a community and labor protest in Longview, Washington of the first EGT grain ship, do so when called upon by this body. And,**

Finally be it Resolved: that the Council forward this resolution to all local unions, the Washington State Labor Council, Oregon Federation of Labor, California Labor Federation, the AFL-CIO, and all other relevant organizations.

Respectfully submitted,

Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Counties Central Labor Council Executive Board

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