

Military Resistance 10B15



AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

U.S. Troops To Remain In Afghanistan Beyond 2014:

“Where Tough Clearing
Operations Are Required, The
U.S. Military Would Continue To
Lead For Some Time”

“Forces Will Still Be Fighting On The Ground, Before, During And After 2014”

“We Will Engage In Combat Alongside The Afghans As Necessary”

“The Pentagon Needs To Retain For Some Time Most, If Not All, Of The 68,000 U.S. Troops In Afghanistan”

February 19 By Ronald E. Neumann, The Washington Post [Excerpts]

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta provoked a widespread misunderstanding this month when he spoke of the U.S. military's changing mission in Afghanistan, to that of an advisory role. Media reports of Panetta's comments indicated that this meant U.S. forces would speed up their withdrawal from that country, when the White House has yet to make any such decision and the basic strategy of transition is unchanged.

Compounding the confusion is the public's misunderstanding of the current policy in Afghanistan — of transferring the “security lead” to the Afghans at the end of 2014 — the basic strategy of which remains unchanged.

This transfer is not a timetable for the withdrawal of all foreign troops.

Rather, the policy is that, after 2014, the Afghans will do the bulk of the fighting but will still have advisers from abroad in combat with them.

The U.S. role will shift, but it is critically important to understand that, in the shift to a mission mainly devoted to advising and supporting — whatever the terms used — our forces will still be fighting on the ground, before, during and after 2014.

Panetta made this explicit Feb. 4, saying at the Munich Security Conference that, after 2014, “we will engage in combat alongside the Afghans as necessary.”

In some areas, the Afghans would lead, with U.S. advisers and with larger U.S. combat formations available to support as needed.

In other areas, where tough clearing operations are required, the U.S. military would continue to lead for some time.

Afghan soldiers need to develop confidence that, when the chips are down, help will arrive.

While Afghans need to be pushed to take more responsibility, failure is likely if the process is artificially rushed, with green troops required to take too much responsibility too soon.

These difficult judgments will require a flexible reserve force. This is why the Pentagon needs to retain for some time most, if not all, of the 68,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan after the withdrawals scheduled for this year.

Resistance Action



US soldiers in Kandahar, south of Kabul, Afghanistan, Feb. 20, 2012, where a car bomber attacked the police station. (AP Photo/Allauddin Khan)

February 20, 2012 AFP

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan -- A car bomber rammed the gate of a police station in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar, unleashing a powerful blast that killed at least one policeman, officials said. The attacker detonated a bomb-laden sedan at the gate of Kandahar city's fourth district police station on Monday, killing at least one officer. Another policeman and three civilians were injured.

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

While U.S. Troops Die:

U.S. & Afghan Regimes Hook Up With Taliban For A Three-Way

Feb 16, 2012 By Anne Gearan and Robert Burns - The Associated Press [Excerpts]

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Leon Panetta on Thursday applauded Afghan President Hamid Karzai for telling an interviewer that the U.S., the Afghan government and the Taliban recently held three-way talks aimed at moving toward a political settlement of the war.

When asked about Karzai's statement, other U.S. officials were more circumspect than Panetta.

White House press secretary Jay Carney would not confirm Karzai's assertion that a three-way session took place.

Fighting Breaks Out Inside Afghan Embassy In D.C.

“This Is Our Most Important Embassy In All Of The World, But We Are Living With Thugs”

February 16, 2012 By MATTHEW ROSENBERG, New York Times

WASHINGTON — If war is what happens when diplomacy fails, what results when diplomats themselves fail to be, well, diplomatic with one another?

At the Afghan Embassy in Washington, the answer was a punch in the face.

Last week, after an argument over who was going to put together a filing cabinet and where it would be placed, an Afghan Embassy staff member who handles relations with Congress decked a colleague who handles the mission's administrative affairs, current and former diplomats said.

No lasting damage was done, except maybe to the career of the aggressor. Yet even that is not a certainty — the puncher, Haroon Aloko, is the son of Afghanistan's attorney general.

The Foreign Ministry said he was called back to Kabul for “discussions,” but an embassy staff member said he was still in the United States, waiting for the incident to blow over

before resuming his duties. The staff member did not want to be named for fear of damaging his career.

“This man, he assaults people. But he is not fired,” the staff member said. “This is our most important embassy in all of the world, but we are living with thugs. You see why I would want not to have my name involved?”

On its own, a single office scuffle is unlikely to change Afghanistan’s trajectory as it grapples with the United States’ slow disengagement.

But the punch and the Foreign Ministry’s cautious reaction offer a reminder of a rampant problem for Afghanistan: nepotism that runs up and down the government, from teaching appointments in rural schools to posts at the country’s well-appointed embassies in Western capitals, like the Afghan mission in the Kalorama neighborhood of Washington.

The perception that the best jobs — as well as the most lucrative business deals — go to those with the best connections has sharply undermined popular support for the Afghan government.

As for the matter at the Afghan Embassy in Washington, the Foreign Ministry said it was under control.

Mr. Aloko did not respond to calls or text messages to his American cellphone seeking comment.

SOMALIA WAR REPORTS

Insurgents Inflict Many Casualties On Government And Occupation Force: Panicked Troops’ Artillery Misses Insurgents But Kills Civilians

Feb 20, 2012 Garowe Online

MOGADISHU, Somalia -- At least 10 people were killed and 20 injured when clashes sparked late Sunday night and continued on till the next morning, Radio Garowe reports.

At least 6 other TFG [government] and AMISOM [occupation] troops were killed in the clashes and 15 others were injured. The injured were rushed to nearby hospitals where they are being treated.

The fighting began in the district of Karaan near the street which links Mogadishu and Afgoye.

The fighting took the lives of 4 civilians and injured more than 20, after artillery had missed the target and hit civilian homes.

Unconfirmed reports say that AMISOM and TFG troops fired artillery that had killed some civilians in Sunday night's clashes.

People in the area of the Karaan were paralyzed with fear after heavy artillery was being fired back and forth one resident of the district Mohamed Ismail told Garowe Online, "Last night our neighborhood was shelled many times, two people in my family were killed."

MILITARY NEWS

**Secretary Of Defense Smears
Syrian Revolutionaries And
Gives A Helping Hand To
Syria's Bloody Dictator:
"Assad's Fall Would Be A Boon To
Extremists"**

**SecDef And U.S. Director Of National
Intelligence Back Assad Claims Of
Terrorist Attacks On His Regime:**

They Claim “Indications That Al-Qaida Has Infiltrated The Government’s Opposition”



A man sprays graffiti on a wall, where graffiti (written in blue) translates as “Down with Bashar”, is seen in the Bab Sharqi district of Damascus February 18, 2012.
REUTERS/Stringer

The Assad regime’s “acts in torturing and killing its opponents are very similar to those used by al-Qaida members in annihilating anybody who disapprove with their dark beliefs and ideologies,” the Local Coordination Committees, one of the main Syrian activist groups, said in a statement this week.

Feb 16, 2012 By Kimberly Dozier & By Lara Jakes and Mazin Yahya - The Associated Press [Excerpts]

WASHINGTON — Top U.S. intelligence officials pointed to al-Qaida in Iraq on Thursday as the likely culprit behind recent bombings in Syria, the deadliest attacks against the Syrian government in the 11-month uprising.

Although the U.S. has called for Syrian President Bashar Assad to step down, his fall could lead to a power vacuum that al-Qaida’s largest regional affiliate or other extremist groups could fill, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper told Congress.

And that could allow such groups to help themselves to Syria’s vast stockpiles of chemical weapons, he said.

At the Pentagon, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said the crisis in Syria has become “that much more serious” and worrisome to the United States as a result of indications that al-Qaida has infiltrated the government’s opposition.

Assad has long blamed terrorists for starting the uprising, which has pitted his military against a rag-tag group of angry Syrians.

Al-Qaida's leader called for Assad's ouster last week.

Clapper said bombings against Syrian security and intelligence targets in Damascus in December, and two more recent bombings in the nation's largest city, Aleppo, bear "all the earmarks of an al-Qaida-like attack," leading the U.S. intelligence to believe the Iraqi militant branch is extending its reach into Syria.

He added the mixture of Syrian opposition groups may have been infiltrated by such militants, probably without their knowledge.

"We've seen evidence of Sunni extremists," he said. "Can't label them specifically as al-Qaida, but similar ilk who are infiltrating the oppositionist groups."

But he warned Assad's fall would be a boon to extremists.

Syrian rebels have for the last 11 months demanded a more democratic system for the country, and even liken the Assad regime to al-Qaida.

The Assad regime's "acts in torturing and killing its opponents are very similar to those used by al-Qaida members in annihilating anybody who disapprove with their dark beliefs and ideologies," the Local Coordination Committees, one of the main Syrian activist groups, said in a statement this week.

"This also comes clear in the teeming history of the Syrian regime support to the extremists and death militias in Lebanon and Iraq."

4,000 Soldiers From Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. Off To Obama's Imperial Slaughterhouse

Feb 16, 2012 Army Times [Excerpt]

About 4,000 soldiers from 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, will deploy to Afghanistan in late spring, the Defense Department announced Thursday.

The brigade, based at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., will deploy as part of the regular rotation of forces in Afghanistan.

This will be the first Afghanistan tour for the 2nd Stryker Brigade, which deployed twice to Iraq while stationed in Korea and at Fort Carson, Colo., according to information released by Joint Base Lewis-McChord.

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

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

**Commanding Officer At
California's Camp Pendleton
Publicly Condemns Civilian
Authorities After Unarmed Marine
Killed By Orange County Cop
While His Children Were With Him:
"I Am Less Than Satisfied With The
Official Response From The City Of
San Clemente And Orange County"
"Many Of The Statements Made
Concerning Manny Loggins' Character
Over The Past Few Days Are Incorrect
And Deeply Hurtful To An Already
Grieving Family"**

February 19, 2012 By JULIE WATSON Associated Press [Excerpts]

For the Marines who served with Sgt. Manuel Loggins Jr., it would have been an injustice to stay quiet.

So in a move that broke with the military's tradition, Loggins' commanding officer at California's Camp Pendleton publicly rebuked civilian authorities in neighboring Orange County for their handling of the investigation into the fatal Feb. 7 shooting by a deputy of the highly esteemed Marine.

While Marines have each other's backs on the battlefield, when they get into trouble back home off base, the military tends to step aside while police investigate. But Marines say this time was different.

The death of Loggins has rocked the tight-knit Marine Corps community.

Fellow troops describe him as a devout Christian man who was dedicated to his pregnant wife and three children — and was nothing like the picture painted by law enforcement.

The Association of Orange County Deputy Sheriffs has said Loggins plowed a car through a gate at San Clemente High School at 4:30 a.m., and then got out as his 9- and 14-year-old daughters could be heard screaming in the SUV. The association said the girls told sheriff's personnel their father had been acting oddly, while Loggins could be heard in a nearby field yelling irrational statements.

When Loggins returned, he allegedly ignored warnings by deputies not to start the SUV.

A deputy shot him, fearing for the children's safety, the statement said.

Loggins' commanding officer, Col. Nicholas Marano, countered back with a bruising statement issued to the media: "While I am confident they will do the right thing in the end, I am less than satisfied with the official response from the City of San Clemente and Orange County. Many of the statements made concerning Manny Loggins' character over the past few days are incorrect and deeply hurtful to an already grieving family."

The words were especially searing given the military's close relationship with law enforcement agencies — many of whom are made up of former service members — and the fact that the investigation was in its initial stages.

Loggins' supervisor, Maj. Christopher Cox, said Marano's bold statement won applause in the Corps.

"We're glad he stepped up and made a statement over the way this has been handled," he said.

"Everybody reads the report presented by the Orange County officials. Obviously it contradicts what we know to be the case about him. He was involved with his family. His relationship with his daughters was fantastic. They were a close family. To paint it any other way is not right."

Tom Dominguez, president of the Association of Orange County Deputy Sheriffs, also declined to speak to The Associated Press but his office issued this: "Our statement was about the events of the morning of Feb. 7, 2012 and nothing more. We issued the facts not a commentary on the character of any individual in this case. We await the results of the independent investigation."

The deputy, Darren Sandberg, served in the Corps. Sandberg, a 15-year Sheriff's Department veteran, is on leave.

The Corps has kept in contact with Loggins' family and Cox said they have not been given adequate information.

Cox declined to say whether the Corps believes Orange County officials are trying to cover up a mistake.

It would be irresponsible to speculate about what happened, he said, but it was not unusual for Loggins to be at the school at that hour.

Loggins went there regularly with his daughters so they could run together before he had to be on base by 7:30 a.m.

Cox said Loggins' oldest daughter asked to train with her father so she could join the high school track team one day, and his 9-year-old often tagged along.

The death has been difficult for the Marine community to accept because there are so many unanswered questions, Cox said.

Loggins was unarmed and had three Bibles in the vehicle — one for himself and the others for his daughters, Cox said.

“There are rules of engagement that have to be followed by anyone carrying a weapon whether that be a law enforcement officer or the military,” Cox said.

“I know the rules we have are quite stringent. I don't know what they are for Orange County officials, but I imagine they would be about the same.”

The media often points out when someone in trouble is a service member, and Cox said the public may be quick to assume this was another case of military personnel losing control.

But Cox said those assumptions can cloud the truth.

Loggins, of Joliet, Ill., enlisted in 1998 but was never deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan.

Cox said he was a humble, kind hardworking Marine who had received multiple medals. The office where Loggins worked handled cargo shipments for the base.

He was studying to be a nurse and volunteered at local nursing homes.

There were no signs of trouble, said Cox, who worked with him almost daily.

“Everybody wants closure but that's difficult to do without information. It's made it even more difficult over the fact that it was a shooting by a law enforcement officer,” Cox said. “It doesn't add up for a lot of people here.”

Marines deal with death as part of the job, Cox said, but “we've been left in a state of limbo and in my opinion that's made it more difficult to accept this than if it had been in a combat scenario.”

Sheriff's Department spokesman, Jim Amormino, said deputies are justified in using deadly force if they feel their lives or the lives of others are in danger.

Loggins' family could not be reached for comment.

**“Troops Coming Back From
Iraq, Afghanistan Or Other
Military Duties Complain Of
Being Denied Jobs Or
Otherwise Being Penalized By
Employers Because Of Their
Military Obligations”
Despite Federal Law Forbidding
Such Punishment Of Troops, “The
Biggest Offender: The Federal
Government”
“Major Offenders Include The
Department Of Homeland Security”
“Service Members Have Been Fired After
Absences”**

[Here it is again. Same old story. Used up, thrown away, and the politicians couldn't care less. To repeat for the 3,565th time, the enemy is not in Afghanistan. Afghan citizens and U.S. troops have a common enemy. That common enemy owns and operates the Imperial government in Washington DC for their own profit. That common enemy started these wars of conquest on a platform of lies, because they couldn't tell the truth: U.S. Imperial wars are about making money for them, and nothing else. Payback is overdue. T]

Matthai informed his civilian supervisors in April 2010 that he would be sent to Afghanistan in the fall for a year.

A few days later, he was fired for “poor performance” and for being absent without leave. “I was shocked,” Matthai recalled. “I told them, ‘At least let me resign so I can walk out of here with a clear name.’”

Instead, he was escorted out by a guard.

February 19 By Steve Vogel, The Washington Post [Excerpts]

Every year, more than a thousand National Guard, reserve and active-duty troops coming back from Iraq, Afghanistan or other military duties complain of being denied jobs or otherwise being penalized by employers because of their military obligations.

The biggest offender: the federal government.

It is against federal law for employers to penalize service members because of their military service.

And yet, in some cases, the U.S. government has withdrawn job offers to service members unable to get released from active duty fast enough; in others, service members have been fired after absences.

The federal government is the largest employer of citizen-soldiers. About 123,000 of the 855,000 men and women currently serving as Guard members and reservists, or about 14 percent, have civilian jobs with the federal government. Over a fourth of federal employees are veterans.

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), enacted in 1994 to ensure that members of the military do not face a disadvantage in their civilian careers because of their service, calls on the federal government be “a model employer” for service members.

But critics contend that the federal government has been far from perfect, and they fear that with troops back home from Iraq and more on the way from Afghanistan, violations of the law could increase.

Advocates for veterans say the system set up for service members to challenge alleged USERRA violations is onerous, with no single agency having oversight.

And they note that the federal government doesn’t have much incentive to improve. The federal government can be ordered to pay back wages for being in willful violation of the law, but it incurs no other penalties. A private company, by contrast, could be liable for double an employee’s lost wages.

“There seems to be a feeling that the federal government can get away with what they’re doing,” said Matthew Estes, a USERRA lawyer with the law firm Tully Rinckey.

The Defense Department, including the Army, Navy, Air Force and various defense agencies, had 75 USERRA cases filed with the Labor Department last year, while Veterans Affairs had the second most, with 46 complaints.

Other major offenders include the Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Postal Service.

Some employees penalized for their military service describe being forced to wend their way through a frustrating bureaucracy before they get recourse.

Sometimes, veterans and advocates say, they never get it.

In fiscal 2010, the Labor Department recommended that Justice officials pursue 43 alleged violations of USERRA. The Justice Department agreed to represent only three, but helped settle nine other cases. The department declined to represent 18 service members, despite Labor's conclusion that their cases had merit. Another dozen cases were still being considered by Justice at the end of the fiscal year.

Service members who have been refused reemployment or denied new jobs say the consequences often extend to their personal lives.

First Lt. Christopher Matthai, 31, enlisted in the Army at 18 after graduating from high school in Baltimore, and in 2006 he joined the Army Reserve. In May 2009, shortly before he married, Matthai was hired for a two-year internship by the Social Security Administration as an information technology specialist.

Soon after he started, however, the Army Reserve selected Matthai for a commission. After missing much of his first year at work for officer training, Matthai informed his civilian supervisors in April 2010 that he would be sent to Afghanistan in the fall for a year.

A few days later, he was fired for "poor performance" and for being absent without leave.

"I was shocked," Matthai recalled. "I told them, 'At least let me resign so I can walk out of here with a clear name.'"

Instead, he was escorted out by a guard.

Matthai filed a complaint with the Labor Department.

An investigation stretched on for months, and Matthai deployed to Afghanistan with the situation unresolved and his wife, Lindsay, pregnant with their first child.

Stress from the case "was destroying my marriage," he said. "I'm sitting overseas, banging my head against the wall."

The Labor Department's investigation, completed in March 2011, found that Matthai had been "wrongfully terminated" because of his military obligations and falsely accused of being absent without leave.

There was no evidence of poor performance.

Matthai was entitled to get his job back with lost wages and benefits and have his record cleared of any wrongdoing, according to the Labor Department.

Matthai, then midway through his tour in Afghanistan, only wanted the SSA to clear his record and pay his attorney fees.

But the Labor Department's findings carry no enforcement power. The SSA offered to pay only a small portion of his attorney fees and insisted that Matthai not seek reemployment with the SSA — a stipulation that would have been a red flag for any other federal agency considering hiring him, according to Estes, his attorney.

“The whole complaint process is totally broken,” Matthai said. “I’m a federal employee and a reservist, and I felt completely unprotected and abandoned by the federal government.”

It was only after Matthai returned from Afghanistan, when his attorney began scheduling depositions to bring the case before the Merit Systems Protection Board and his congressman, Rep. C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-Md.), called the agency, that the SSA settled the case in November.

The agency dropped its demand that Matthai not seek employment with it again, paid him his full \$13,500 in attorney fees and cleared his record, but it made no admission that it had violated USERRA. The agency declined to comment.

“I still feel cheated,” Matthai said. “The law needs some muscle behind it to have it mean something.”

In January, Matthai left Maryland for a one-year assignment with the Army in Texas. His wife and their now 1-year-old son, Christopher Jr., will soon follow.

“I’ve got to find some kind of employment,” he said, “and it seems the only option is the military.”

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“Advocates Say Soldiers Are Being Abused In The Warrior Transition Battalion At Fort Bragg And Others Like It Across The Country”

“Some Are Wrongly Being Kicked Out Of The Army With Other-Than-Honorable Discharges”

“Thursday, More Soldiers And Veterans Called The Fayetteville Observer To Voice Complaints About Their Treatment In The Battalion”

“Dogs And Cats Get Better Care By Veterinarians Than Soldiers Do, Said Retired Navy Cmdr. Bill Manofsky”

02/17/2012 Greg Barnes, Staff writer, Fayetteville Observer

Independent inspections of Fort Bragg's Warrior Transition Battalion during the past 20 months show that best-practice standards are being met in many areas, Brig. Gen. Michael Garrett said Thursday.

Garrett held a news conference a day after Gen. Frank Helmick, commander of the 18th Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg, announced that he was ordering an investigation into the practices and procedures of the Warrior Transition Battalion.

Kevin Arata, spokesman for the 18th Airborne Corps, said Helmick signed the order to start the investigation Thursday afternoon.

Arata said 576 soldiers are now in the battalion for physically wounded and mentally impaired soldiers. The goal is to get the soldiers back to work or to help them in their return to civilian life.

But advocates say soldiers are being abused in the Warrior Transition Battalion at Fort Bragg and others like it across the country.

They say that some soldiers in the programs have developed suicidal tendencies because medications are routinely overprescribed.

They also say that many soldiers aren't getting the rehabilitative treatment they need.

Instead, they say, some are wrongly being kicked out of the Army with other-than-honorable discharges.

The advocates' allegations about the Warrior Transition Battalion led Helmick to call for the investigation.

Wednesday night, a loosely knit group of advocates organized a meeting of about a dozen soldiers, spouses and others who complained about care and treatment in the battalion.

As part of the investigation, Helmick assigned his inspector general, Col. Maggie Dunn, to attend the meeting to gather information that will be used to shape the investigation.

Thursday, more soldiers and veterans called The Fayetteville Observer to voice complaints about their treatment in the battalion.

Garrett reiterated Helmick's statement that wounded warriors are "a vital concern" to Fort Bragg, one that is taken "very, very seriously."

But advocates for wounded soldiers aren't buying it.

Dogs and cats get better care by veterinarians than soldiers do, said retired Navy Cmdr. Bill Manofsky of California.

Manofsky said he has been fighting for better military medical care since 2003. He said he helped expose abuse and mistreatment of wounded soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in 2004.

That abuse led to the formation of the Warrior Transition Battalion at Fort Bragg and 34 others around the country.

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Family Seeks Answers About Lone U.S. Servicemember Unaccounted For In Iraq: “They Feel He’s Not Worth Looking For. They’re Not Doing Anything”

**“The Family Hasn’t Been Able To Get
Answers From The Government
Since The Abduction”**

**“At Least They Could Find Out If He’s
Alive Or Not”**



Appearing haggard, Altaie appeared in a video released by his captors on the internet four months after his abduction. There was no sound, but he was reading a statement. It was the last time he has ever been seen by his family. Photo Courtesy of Free Ahmed Alt

February 16, 2012 By Matthew M. Burke, Stars and Stripes [Excerpts]

In almost nine years of war, more than 1.5 million U.S. troops served in Iraq, with 4,408 losing their lives. The last 40,000 crossed into Kuwait by Dec. 18.

Except for U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Ahmed Altaie.

Altaie is the lone U.S. servicemember unaccounted for from operations in Iraq.

The Iraqi-born reservist from Michigan was abducted more than five years ago in Baghdad after breaking the rules and sneaking outside the wire to meet his Iraqi wife.

In the days after he went missing, 3,000 coalition soldiers conducted more than 50 raids to find their comrade. At least one soldier was killed; others were wounded.

As the trail turned cold, Altaie's family and friends grew frustrated by what they say is the U.S. government's lack of effort to find him.

"They won't talk about it," Altaie's ex-wife and self-described best friend, Linda Racey, said from Michigan recently. "They feel he's not worth looking for. They're not doing anything."

Ahmed's brother, Hathal Taie Altaie, said the family hasn't been able to get answers from the government since the abduction.

"We need to know the truth," he said. "Some say he's in Iran. Some say he's dead. At least they could find out if he's alive or not."

Now, after almost no movement in the case in about a year, the family has latched onto a glimmer of hope.

On Dec. 26, Altaie's family was watching Al Arabiya News Channel when a man they say might have information about the missing soldier appeared before the cameras.

Qais al-Khazali is the leader of Asaib Ahel al-Haq, an Iranian-backed militia responsible for abductions and the deaths of U.S. troops. In 2010, the group claimed to be holding Altaie and offered to exchange him for detained members of its group. On TV, Khazali pledged to put down his weapons so his group could join the Iraqi government. He said their "duty" to fight the Americans was over.

If Khazali was sincere about joining the Iraqi government, might he be willing to return Altaie, the family wondered?

"They claim they have Ahmed," said Hathal Altaie. "They are probably liars, but we don't know. This guy must know something. The U.S. government needs to pressure the Iraqis."

U.S. and Iraqi officials remain quiet.

Raifet Ahmad, a spokesman for the Iraqi Embassy in Washington, said he had asked Baghdad officials what was being done to find Altaie and whether the government had questioned Khazali. He didn't receive an answer.

Asked the same questions, the White House declined to comment, as did the U.S. Embassy in Iraq and the FBI. The Army, the office of the Secretary of Defense, Pentagon officials and the CIA directed inquiries to the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office, which is responsible for investigating missing servicemembers from "past" conflicts.

The Missing Personnel Office took over the case from U.S. Central Command on Dec. 1, 2011, but spokeswoman Maj. Carie Parker said her office has yet to receive all of Altaie's case files.

She "couldn't say" when the office would be up to speed on the case.

"In fact, we are still combing archives on old cases from as far back as World War II," Parker wrote in an email to Stars and Stripes.

Parker said efforts would be coordinated through the embassy in Iraq and directed Stars and Stripes to an embassy public affairs officer who never responded to calls or emails.

The perceived lack of cooperation between agencies doesn't sit well with Altaie's family. Hathal Altaie met with representatives of all of the major agencies about a month ago and learned nothing, he said.

"No one gave us any clear answers," he said. "All we hear is, 'We're working on it. We'll let you know.' To be honest, they're not doing enough."

The family even pleaded its case to the office of Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich.

Racey, who has spearheaded efforts to keep the case active, said she believes Levin's office has "blown off" the family, as have the other agencies.

Racey and Altaie have known each other for more than 20 years and remained close after amicably divorcing in 2001, she said.

Once the point person for the family, Racey said the agencies won't talk to her anymore because she kept pushing for answers.

"I've been on the case for five years and three months," she said. "I'll never give up on this."

Altaie and his parents left Iraq when he was 12, his mother, Nawal, said.

An aviation enthusiast, Altaie found work in Michigan as a mechanic on airplanes, but was laid off in 2001. The couple divorced that year.

The Ann Arbor Muslim was operating on auto-pilot, a man without a plan, until a visit to Iraq in 2003 with his family. Nawal said that her son fell in love again with the country of his birth, especially Baghdad. During his trip, which lasted for several months, he met the woman who would become his wife, Israa Sultan, according to Racey.

The family left Iraq once again as the security situation worsened, Nawal said.

Family members said Altaie was committed to going back to Iraq, and the fluent Arabic speaker could have taken lucrative contractor jobs there as a translator.

Instead, he joined the Army Reserve in December 2004, according to Hathal. Family members said he wanted to support the mission in Iraq — as a proud American citizen and soldier. In 2005 he returned, as part of a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Baghdad, and acted as a translator in the embassy for VIPs.

Altaie and Sultan were married in 2006, his wife told the Detroit News in June, her only interview since the abduction.

The marriage would have been against military regulations, since troops are not allowed to marry citizens of a country that the U.S. military is involved with in a conflict. However, Army spokesman Maj. Gen. William Caldwell would later say that Altaie had not broken the rules because of the timing of his marriage.

On Oct. 22, 2006, Altaie called Racey to make sure she was taking her insulin for her diabetes, she said. It was Ramadan, and Altaie told her he had given his new wife's family \$100 to buy a leg of lamb for the feast. He told them he would return the next day at 4 p.m., Racey recalled.

Racey could hear ordnance exploding in the background. What he said next now haunts her.

"He said, 'It's getting real dangerous here,'" she said. "If I die, Linda, I want to be buried next to you," he told her. "That's the last thing he said."

The next day, Altaie stole off from Baghdad's Green Zone in civilian clothes on a new scooter for an unauthorized visit to Sultan, Racey said, according to her early conversations with the FBI and other agencies.

There are discrepancies regarding the circumstances, but Army officials acknowledged that Altaie was married to Sultan.

Altaie wasn't a bad person, Racey said, but he was known to sometimes break the rules. When he worked at the airport, for example, he would leave work early, asking someone to punch out for him later. He had snuck out of the fortified zone to visit Sultan on several occasions without consequence. This time would be different.

When the 41-year-old linguist, then a specialist, arrived in the Karradah neighborhood of Baghdad, his phone rang. It was the man who had sold him the scooter. The caller heard cars approaching and then listened to Altaie's cries as he was confronted by several armed masked men before he reached the front door of Sultan's family home.

Racey said that the FBI interrogated the scooter salesman later, and he told them he heard Altaie's wife screaming the name of a neighborhood thug. Altaie broke free from the kidnapers and took shelter in Sultan's family home, hiding in a closet. But the kidnapers came in and took him, cuffing and stuffing him into a Mercedes before driving off.

"This last mistake cost him his life, possibly," Racey said.

Racey believes the kidnapping was an inside job. "The (kidnapers) knew he would be there at 4 o'clock," she said.

Sultan now lives in Michigan, where she was taken “for her own protection” as a “spouse of a U.S. Army soldier,” according to Mark Edwards, a spokesman for U.S. Army Human Resources Command.

Hathal Altaie said the family hadn’t spoken to her in more than a year.

Initially, the U.S. government offered a \$50,000 reward for information that led to Altaie’s recovery. Caldwell said that in the days after the abduction, U.S. forces conducted dozens of raids, including some in the Shiite militant stronghold of Sadr City.

They detained men who confessed to the kidnapping, but said they sold Altaie to another group.

The Ahl Albait Group issued a statement claiming responsibility for the kidnapping. Altaie’s family was confident that he would be returned unharmed, because they believed a U.S. soldier would have value in negotiations.

Four months after Altaie was abducted, a video with no sound surfaced on a militant website showing the soldier standing, reading from a piece of paper. His mother said she barely recognized her handsome son.

“He looked very different from when I saw him [last],” Nawal said, adding that he appeared to have been beaten and looked as if his teeth had been broken.

“I never saw him again,” Nawal said.

In 2009, according to media accounts, an insurgent group tried to coordinate an exchange for Altaie’s body, but the body they handed over belonged to another missing American servicemember.

Then in 2010, a Reuters reporter said he had spoken with the leader of the kidnapers, a man claiming to be from Asaib Ahel al-Haq. He claimed that Altaie had been killed in 2006 by another group and that they had received the body.

Around the same time, relatives saw a statement from Asaib Ahel al-Haq on a website saying they wanted to exchange Altaie for detainees.

That never happened.

The family is tired of the roller-coaster ride.

They say the U.S. government has kept them in the dark, and they have lost faith in their efforts.

Racey now believes she knows why the case has gone cold.

Three months ago, she got an anonymous call from someone who claimed to be on the Army search team.

The man told her the Army considered him absent without leave for venturing outside the Green Zone and wouldn't spend any more money or risk any more lives trying to find him.

Altaie's family said they are speaking out now because they want to put those rumors to bed.

True, he broke the rules, Racey said, but he had left before and always returned. It shouldn't mean that the U.S. stops looking, she said. People who think he went over to the other side are dead wrong, Racey said. Altaie loved his job in the military and wanted to make a career out of it.

Racey is in constant touch with Altaie's parents, and said Nawal believes her son is alive and prays for his safe return.

Racey doesn't share her optimism.

"I don't think he's still alive," she said. "I'm a realist." Still, she said she has dreams in which Nawal calls her to report a miracle, that Altaie has been found alive.

Today, Altaie would be 46. He has been promoted twice while in captivity. Friends and family remember him for his passions: music, flying airplanes and dressing well. Nawal said she will never forget her son's smile.

"I'm always thinking of him, wishing he would come back," Nawal said.

"We want to know if he's dead or alive. Please."

Air Force Lt. Gen. Hawkins, New Head Of The Defense Information Systems Agency, Helps Recruit Combatants To Kill U.S. Troops: "People In Arab Nations For Example, Might See Hawkins' Comments As A Show Of Support Toward One Religion By The U.S. Government"

Feb 17, 2012 By Markeshia Ricks - Staff writer, Army Times [Excerpts]

Air Force Lt. Gen. Ronnie Hawkins, the new head of the Defense Information Systems Agency, is under fire for a commander's call Wednesday that included references to God.

As part of an all-hands meeting with DISA employees, Hawkins apparently showed a power point presentation that contained two slides titled "Ronnie's Rules" that outline 18 priorities, the first and last of which are "Always put God first, and stay within His will" and "Always remember God is good — all the time!"

Hawkins said in a response to a query from Air Force Times that he stated at the all-hands meeting that "Ronnie's Rules" were his personal road map for living and he has used it since he was a captain. He said he tries to live by these rules every day.

All DISA employees apparently didn't see the presentation the same way.

A DISA employee who witnessed the presentation spoke with Air Force Times under condition of anonymity.

He said he was shocked that a senior leader would include such direct references to God in a commander's call that in his opinion was held to say "I'm your new commander and this is what I expect of you."

The employee said what might seem like an ordinary presentation to Air Force employees can be easily obtained and used as propaganda in other countries — something he said a commander should know.

People in Arab nations for example, might see Hawkins' comments as a show of support toward one religion by the U.S. government, he said.

"If you're a commander, you will be seen as speaking for the U.S. government whether you like it or not," he said. "What you do goes out into world."

The employee said that he provided the presentation to the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, a nonprofit advocacy group, "in hopes of saving lives."

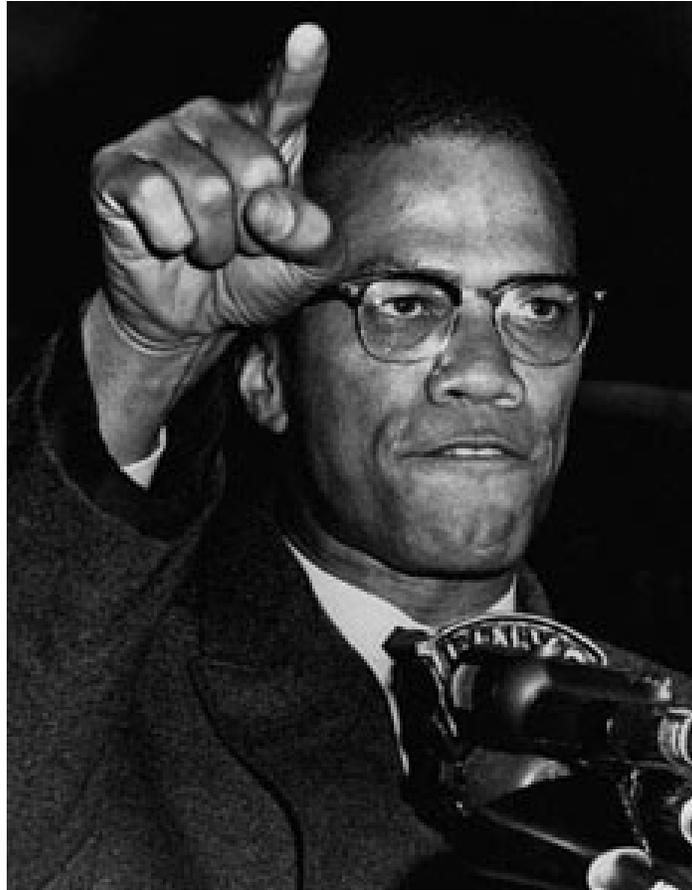
MRFF's founder and president, Mikey Weinstein, is calling for Hawkins to be court-martialed for violating his oath to the Constitution. He said he is representing 21 employees at DISA.

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ANNIVERSARIES

February 21, 1965: A Brilliant And Courageous Soldier For The Cause Killed In Action



Carl Bunin Peace History Peace History February 18-24

Malcolm X was shot and killed by rival Black Muslims in New York City, as he was about to address his Organization of Afro-American Unity at the Audubon Ballroom in New York City's Washington Heights. He was 39. **[He was killed not long after announcing his new politics: that working class whites and African-Americans can join together to fight those who own and control the society for their own wealth and privilege. T]**

MORE:

The House Negro And The Field Negro:

“The Slavemaster Took Tom And Dressed Him Well, And Fed Him Well -- Gave Him A Long Coat And A Top Hat And Made All The Other Slaves Look Up To Him”

“Then He Used Tom To Control Them”

“The Same Strategy That Was Used In Those Days Is Used Today, By The Same White Man”

Malcolm X, Message To The Grassroots, 10 Nov, 1963 in Detroit, MI:
<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/malcolmxgrassroots.htm>

[Excerpts]

First, what is a revolution?

Sometimes I'm inclined to believe that many of our people are using this word "revolution" loosely, without taking careful consideration what this word actually means, and what its historic characteristics are.

When you study the historic nature of revolutions, the motive of a revolution, the objective of a revolution, and the result of a revolution, and the methods used in a revolution, you may change words. You may devise another program. You may change your goal and you may change your mind.

A revolution is bloody. Revolution is hostile. Revolution knows no compromise. Revolution overturns and destroys everything that gets in its way. And you, sitting around here like a knot on the wall, saying, "I'm going to love these folks no matter how much they hate me."

No, you need a revolution.

Whoever heard of a revolution where they lock arms, as Reverend Cleage was pointing out beautifully, singing "We Shall Overcome"?

Just tell me.

You don't do that in a revolution.

You don't do any singing; you're too busy swinging.

To understand this, you have to go back to what young brother here referred to as the house Negro and the field Negro -- back during slavery.

There was two kinds of slaves.

There was the house Negro and the field Negro.

The house Negroes - they lived in the house with master, they dressed pretty good, they ate good 'cause they ate his food -- what he left.

They lived in the attic or the basement, but still they lived near the master; and they loved their master more than the master loved himself.

They would give their life to save the master's house quicker than the master would.

The house Negro, if the master said, "We got a good house here," the house Negro would say, "Yeah, we got a good house here."

Whenever the master said "we," he said "we."

That's how you can tell a house Negro.

If the master's house caught on fire, the house Negro would fight harder to put the blaze out than the master would.

If the master got sick, the house Negro would say, "What's the matter, boss, we sick?" We sick! He identified himself with his master more than his master identified with himself.

And if you came to the house Negro and said, "Let's run away, let's escape, let's separate," the house Negro would look at you and say, "Man, you crazy. What you mean, separate? Where is there a better house than this? Where can I wear better clothes than this? Where can I eat better food than this?"

That was that house Negro. In those days he was called a "house nigger."

And that's what we call him today, because we've still got some house niggers running around here.

This modern house Negro loves his master.

On that same plantation, there was the field Negro.

The field Negro -- those were the masses. There were always more Negroes in the field than there was Negroes in the house. The Negro in the field caught hell.

He ate leftovers.

In the house they ate high up on the hog. The Negro in the field didn't get nothing but what was left of the insides of the hog. They call 'em "chitt'lin'" nowadays. In those days they called them what they were: guts. That's what you were -- a gut-eater. And some of you all still gut-eaters.

The field Negro was beaten from morning to night. He lived in a shack, in a hut; He wore old, castoff clothes.

He hated his master. I say he hated his master. He was intelligent.

That house Negro loved his master. But that field Negro -- remember, they were in the majority, and they hated the master.

When the house caught on fire, he didn't try and put it out; that field Negro prayed for a wind, for a breeze.

When the master got sick, the field Negro prayed that he'd die. If someone come to the field Negro and said, "Let's separate, let's run," he didn't say "Where we going?" He'd say, "Any place is better than here."

You've got field Negroes in America today. I'm a field Negro. The masses are the field Negroes.

When they see this man's house on fire, you don't hear these little Negroes talking about "our government is in trouble."

They say, "The government is in trouble." Imagine a Negro: "Our government"!

Just as the slavemaster of that day used Tom, the house Negro, to keep the field Negroes in check, the same old slavemaster today has Negroes who are nothing but modern Uncle Toms, 20th century Uncle Toms, to keep you and me in check, keep us under control, keep us passive and peaceful and nonviolent.

That's Tom making you nonviolent.

It's like when you go to the dentist, and the man's going to take your tooth. You're going to fight him when he starts pulling.

So he squirts some stuff in your jaw called novocaine, to make you think they're not doing anything to you. So you sit there and 'cause you've got all of that novocaine in your jaw, you suffer peacefully. Blood running all down your jaw, and you don't know what's happening.

'Cause someone has taught you to suffer -- peacefully.

There's nothing in our book, the Quran -- you call it "Ko-ran" -- that teaches us to suffer peacefully.

Our religion teaches us to be intelligent.

Be peaceful, be courteous, obey the law, respect everyone; but if someone puts his hand on you, send him to the cemetery.

That's a good religion. In fact, that's that old-time religion.

That's the one that Ma and Pa used to talk about: an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, and a head for a head, and a life for a life: That's a good religion.

And doesn't nobody resent that kind of religion being taught but a wolf, who intends to make you his meal.

The slavemaster took Tom and dressed him well, and fed him well, and even gave him a little education -- a little education; gave him a long coat and a top hat and made all the other slaves look up to him.

Then he used Tom to control them.

The same strategy that was used in those days is used today, by the same white man.

He takes a Negro, a so-called Negro, and make him prominent, build him up, publicize him, make him a celebrity.



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