

Military Resistance 10B18



AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

**U.S. Colonel And Major Killed
Inside Afghan Interior Ministry
Command And Control Centre:
“Any Afghan Who Carried Out The
Attack Would Have Had The Highest
Clearance”**

Removal Of All Foreign Military Advisers From Afghan Ministries “Suddenly Called Into Question The Entire Strategy Of Joint Operations With Afghan Forces Across The Country”

[Thanks to Alan Stolzer, Military Resistance Organization, who sent this in.]

25 February 2012 BBC & By GRAHAM BOWLEY and ALISSA J. RUBIN, The New York Times & Usman Sharifi, Agence France-Presse [Excerpts]

Two U.S. officers have been killed in the interior ministry in the Afghan capital Kabul, coalition officials say.

Afghan security officials said those killed were an American colonel and major.

The two were shot in the back of the head,

In a statement, Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said the gunman was an insurgent named Abdul Rahman. He said an accomplice inside the ministry helped him get inside the compound.

He said the killings were a planned response to the Quran burnings. “After the attack, Rahman informed us by telephone that he was able to kill four high-ranking American advisers,” Mujahid said.

A UK embassy spokesperson had earlier said all British civilians were being withdrawn from the ministries in what was hoped would be a temporary measure.

The interior ministry was put in lock-down after the shootings, officials said.

The BBC's Orla Guerin in Kabul says eight shots were reported inside the building, which should be one of the safest in the capital, and that any Afghan who carried out the attack would have had the highest clearance.

Local media reports said the attack was by an Afghan policeman but this has not been confirmed.

Early reports suggest the two officers were shot in the ministry's command and control centre.

The BBC's Bilal Sarwary in Kabul says this is where representatives of 34 provinces meet to plan security.

He quotes sources as saying that Interior Minister Bismullah Khan was having a meeting with senior Western officials elsewhere in the building when the shooting took place.

NATO responded by immediately pulling all advisers out of Afghan ministries, in a deepening of the crisis over the American military's burning of Korans at a NATO army base.

The order by the NATO commander, Gen. John R. Allen, came on the fifth day of virulent anti-American demonstrations across the country, and it was a clear sign of concern that the fury had reached deeply into even the Afghan security forces and ministries working most closely with the coalition.

General Allen's order to withdraw military advisers includes both those service members operating under the NATO flag, Americans and members of the coalition of 49 countries here, as well as specialized military advisers from Special Operations forces who are separate from the NATO chain of command.

There are at least several hundred advisers embedded in almost every department of the security ministries, but a NATO spokesman would not give a number. They work on everything from logistics and weapons training to strategic planning for top level officials.

Most military advisors are in the Ministries of Defense, Interior, National Directorate of Security (Intelligence), and a few are scattered in other ministries.

The pullout from the Afghan ministries suddenly called into question the coalition's entire strategy of joint operations with Afghan forces across the country, although General Allen said NATO was still committed to fighting the war in Afghanistan.

MORE:

**Afghan National Uprising
Against Foreign Military Forces
Continued On Saturday:
“What You See Is That We're In A
Weaker Position Than We Were
Maybe Two Or Three Or Four
Weeks Ago”
“I'm Not Sure Anyone Knows The
Clear Way Forward”**

“It’s Gotten More And More Complicated. It’s Fraught”



An Afghan policeman comforts a protestor as others appeal to police during an anti-U.S. demonstration in Kunduz, north of Kabul, Afghanistan, Feb. 25, 2012. (AP Photo/Ezatullah Pamir)...

By GRAHAM BOWLEY and ALISSA J. RUBIN, The New York Times & BBC [Excerpts]

Angry protests over the burning of the Korans continued on Saturday.

Violent anti-U.S. protests have seen furious Afghans attack French, Norwegian and U.S. bases, shouting “death to America” after the Taliban exhorted their countrymen to kill foreign troops to avenge the incident.

There seemed to be a tension across the country.

“You look at this as clearly and objectively as you can, what you see is that we’re in a weaker position than we were maybe two or three or four weeks ago,” said a foreign official, who asked not to be identified because he was discussing internal deliberations.

“I’m not sure anyone knows the clear way forward. It’s gotten more and more complicated. It’s fraught.”

An American defense official who served in Afghanistan said NATO forces around the country had been told in recent days to keep their distance from their Afghan

counterparts on shared bases out of concern that there could be more attacks on them by Afghan soldiers.

Chanting anti-American slogans calling for an end to foreign military presence, the protesters also vented broader fury, storming offices of the Afghan government and the United Nations, leading to violent standoffs.

Officials said that five protesters were killed on Saturday, including four who were shot by Afghan police after a large crowd of about 5,000 attacked the United Nations headquarters in Kunduz Province in the north, wrecking government buildings and stores.

Those shootings left another 51 wounded, hospital officials said.

In the east, 2,000 protesters, mainly young students from one of the main high schools, marched on the governor's residence in Laghman Province, and 21 Afghans were wounded when the police opened fire, at least two critically.

Laghman Province, a normally peaceful region, had seen earlier protests since the Koran burning and was the scene of U.S. air attacks on insurgents on Thursday, when foreign forces seized heavy machine-guns and other firearms.

Further north in Sar-e-Pol, a crowd of about 4,000 congregated at a main mosque to hear mullahs preaching, according to Asadullah Khuram, deputy head of the provincial council, but the demonstration concluded peacefully.

There were demonstrations in Paktia, Nangarhar and Sari Pul provinces.



Afghan demonstrators condemn U.S. as they carry a wounded man during a protest in Herat on February 24. (AFP Photo/Aref Karimi)



Afghan demonstrators carry a wounded man during a protest in Kunduz. (AFP Photo/Gulrahim)...

MILITARY NEWS

“The Commander Of Madigan, Col. William Homas, And The Head Of The PTSD Screening Team, Dr. William Keppler, Have Been Relieved Of Their Duties”

“The PTSD Evaluation Process By This Unit At Madigan Has Been Deeply Flawed”

““What They Are Saying Is That I'm A Liar, And That Really Angers Me,’ Said Tony Stephens, A Washington National Guard Veteran”

“They Have Stripped My Honor From Me”

[Thanks to Mark Shapiro, Military Resistance Organization, & Clancy Sigal, who sent this in.]

“We have people coming in here, they have the symptoms of PTSD, every symptom you can think of, and then they get ‘anxiety disorder’ instead. And it’s definitely to save money,” said Gonzalez of the group G.I. Voice.

“My (Madigan) report clearly states that I have a personality disorder. I’m a malinger and I overexaggerated my symptoms,” the soldier said. “I find myself thinking I would rather be in a combat zone than dealing with all this.”

February 21 2012 By Kim Murphy, Los Angeles Times & AP & February 22, 2012 By Hal Bernton, Seattle Times staff reporter & 02/23/12 ADAM ASHTON; Staff writer; Tacoma News, Inc.

The Army has removed the head of the Madigan Army Medical Center in Washington state during an investigation into whether soldiers had diagnoses of post-traumatic stress disorder reversed to reduce medical costs.

Doctors should not be taking financial consideration into account in a mental health diagnosis, said Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., chair-woman of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs.

When an Army forensic psychiatric team at Madigan Army Medical Center examined Sgt. 1st Class Stephen Davis, it concluded the soldier who served in Iraq and Afghanistan had exaggerated his symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and had wrongly been diagnosed with the condition.

But a psychiatric team at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center recently reversed the Madigan diagnosis.

It concluded the 45-year-old Davis had PTSD, which is expected to make him eligible for a retirement pension and health insurance for his wife and dependents.

“This isn't just about money and benefits to myself and my wife,” Davis said Wednesday in a meeting with reporters at Sen. Patty Murray's office in Seattle. “It's doing what's right. Taking care of soldiers that are coming home.”

Davis is one of 14 soldiers whose Madigan diagnoses were reviewed at Walter Reed as part of a wider investigation into the PTSD screening and treatment at the Western Washington medical center.

The Army Medical Command said Wednesday that six of those soldiers had PTSD diagnoses reinstated.

The remaining eight soldiers, according to Walter Reed doctors, had behavioral-health conditions other than PTSD, including two who were never initially diagnosed with the condition.

The reinstatement entitles them to a disability pension of at least 50 percent of their Army salaries – more than what they would have received under the team's changes.

“The Commander Of Madigan, Col. William Homas, And The Head Of The PTSD Screening Team, Dr. William Keppler, Have Been Relieved Of Their Duties”

The Army plans to contact every former soldier whose post-traumatic stress diagnosis was changed by a Madigan Army Medical Center psychiatry team over the past four years and likely will reevaluate many of those cases.

“These results clearly show that the PTSD evaluation process by this unit at Madigan has been deeply flawed,” Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., said Wednesday.

“How many other service members have been wrongly diagnosed, how much cost played a role in these decisions, and how widespread this problem is, are still big, unanswered questions.”

Meanwhile, the commander of Madigan, Col. William Homas, and the head of the PTSD screening team, Dr. William Keppler, have been relieved of their duties during the investigation, and also has suspended the forensic psychiatry unit until the Army can standardize its PTSD treatment programs.

In 2011, an ombudsman investigated complaints from soldiers who said the forensic psychiatric team had reversed earlier diagnoses of PTSD and tagged some of them as possible malingerers.

The ombudsman also wrote a memo about a lecture in which a member of the forensic psychiatric team talked about the need to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars and not rubber stamp PTSD diagnoses that could result in a soldier earning \$1.5 million in benefits over a lifetime.

“He stated at the rate we are going that the Army and the (Veterans Administration) will be broke,” the ombudsman wrote.

“He stated we have to be good stewards of taxpayers' dollars and we have to ensure we are not just 'rubber stamping' a soldier with the diagnosis of PTSD.”

The room was “exceptionally quiet,” the ombudsman wrote, adding that he was unsure whether it was because listeners were surprised at the \$1.5 million estimate “or why we were talking about dollars in relation to our soldiers.”

The Seattle Times looked at the medical records of a mix of six soldiers and veterans who were screened for possible medical retirements at Madigan. (Only one of those cases was reviewed by Walter Reed doctors.)

They all had been deployed to combat zones, some repeatedly.

All were initially diagnosed with PTSD by Army or VA medical providers and often underwent extensive treatment, only to have the Madigan team overturn their diagnoses.

After interviews and administering tests, the Madigan team concluded five of them were exaggerating their symptoms and some had other conditions such as personality disorders.

“What they are saying is that I'm a liar, and that really angers me,” said Tony Stephens, a Washington National Guard veteran from Poulsbo who had initially been diagnosed by the VA with PTSD after returning from Iraq.

“They have stripped my honor from me.” At this point, his case is not under review.

The five other soldiers who offered their medical records to The Seattle Times requested anonymity.

Those include a soldier who, on his third tour of duty to a war zone, was evacuated because of a suicide attempt. After his return home, he said he slept so fitfully that he once attacked a beloved service dog that had awakened him from a nightmare.

“My (Madigan) report clearly states that I have a personality disorder. I'm a malinger and I overexaggerated my symptoms,” the soldier said. “I find myself thinking I would rather be in a combat zone than dealing with all this.”

Another soldier who had his diagnosis reversed was a combat medic who served in Afghanistan. Shortly after his arrival there, he responded to a suicide bomber who struck a bazaar, injuring 13 U.S. soldiers and more than 20 civilians. The following months were punctuated by other bloody bomb attacks.

He was evacuated before the end of his tour because of his nightmares, jumpiness and other symptoms of acute stress, including voicing thoughts of homicide, according to medical records.

The Madigan team found this soldier had an adjustment disorder but still met “psychiatric standards for retention” in the Army.

Sen. Murray said Wednesday that, “If there were people in charge who felt their mission was not to make a correct diagnosis but to save money for the taxpayer ... that to me was absolutely wrong.”

A medical-command ombudsman reported that Keppler referred to Madigan's forensic psychiatry team as the “gold standard” for testing for PTSD.

Yet as early as 2006, documents obtained by The Times indicate, the team was coming under scrutiny.

That year, Larry Larue, a Gulf War veteran, disputed the findings of a psychiatrist on the team that reversed the PTSD diagnosis given by another psychiatrist.

Larue protested up the Army chain of command and to his congressman. He eventually was able to get a second review at Walter Reed, which concluded that Larue did have PTSD.

Some soldiers interviewed by The Times said they had substantial interviews by Madigan's team.

But Davis says his lasted only 10 minutes.

“We are fighting the system now to change it,” Davis said. “The soldiers want the respect they deserve, and the help they deserve for PTSD.”

“It’s Definitely To Bring Down The Numbers Of PTSD, Especially At This Base, Which Has Such A High Number”

Matt McAlvanah, who has investigated the issue for U.S. Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.), who chairs the Senate's veterans affairs committee, said the senator has received reports of “derogatory language” used by Madigan physicians about PTSD complaints.

“They were making comments about them not having PTSD, or sort of faking it. They used the word malingerers,” McAlvanah said in an interview.

“The Army has a long history here about being more concerned about money, frankly, than the soldiers,” U.S. Rep. Norm Dicks (D-Wash.) complained at a Feb. 8 subcommittee hearing in Washington, D.C.

At the time, he raised pointed questions about Madigan's handling of PTSD complaints to the Army’s surgeon general, Lt. Gen. Patricia Horoho, a former Madigan commander.

“We’re not very interested in ... characterizing the people who had been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder as malingerers, which I find offensive,” the congressman said.

Horoho said the Army is investigating a practice, apparently unique to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, in which doctors who were unsure about a PTSD diagnosis referred their case files to the forensic psychiatry team, which decided on a diagnosis, without seeing the patient personally.

She said the Army is also investigating the decision to close a high-intensity stress treatment program at Madigan and fold it into another mental health program.

“You know, we can’t be getting rid of an Intensive Operations Program because it came up with too many diagnoses,” Dicks complained.

Jorge Gonzalez, head of a service members’ advocacy group near Lewis-McChord, said the investigation reflects a longstanding problem with combat veterans gaining access to mental health services.

“We have people coming in here, they have the symptoms of PTSD, every symptom you can think of, and then they get ‘anxiety disorder’ instead. And it’s definitely to save money,” said Gonzalez of the group G.I. Voice.

“It’s definitely to bring down the numbers of PTSD, especially at this base, which has such a high number.”

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: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe.

“Military Commanders Pressure Clinicians To Issue Unwarranted Psychiatric Diagnoses To Get Rid Of Troops”

“Her Command Specifically Asks For A Diagnosis Of A Personality Disorder”

“For Years, Veterans’ Advocates Have Said That The Pentagon Uses The Diagnosis To Discharge Troops Because It Considers Them Troublesome Or Wants To Avoid Giving Them Benefits For Service-Connected Injuries”

[Thanks to Clancy Sigal, who sent this in.]

February 24, 2012 By JAMES DAO, The New York Times Company [Excerpts

Capt. Susan Carlson was not a typical recruit when she volunteered for the Army in 2006 at the age of 50. But the Army desperately needed behavioral health professionals like her, so it signed her up.

Though she was, by her own account, “not a strong soldier,” she received excellent job reviews at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., where she counseled prisoners. But last year, Captain Carlson, a social worker, was deployed to Afghanistan with the Colorado National Guard and everything fell apart.

After a soldier complained that she had made sexually suggestive remarks, she was suspended from her counseling duties and sent to an Army psychiatrist for evaluation.

His findings were shattering: She had, he said in a report, a personality disorder, a diagnosis that the military has used to discharge thousands of troops. She was sent home.

She disputed the diagnosis, but it was not until months later that she found what seemed powerful ammunition buried in her medical file, portions of which she provided to The New York Times.

“Her command specifically asks for a diagnosis of a personality disorder,” a document signed by the psychiatrist said.

Veterans’ advocates say Captain Carlson stumbled upon evidence of something they had long suspected but had struggled to prove: that military commanders pressure clinicians to issue unwarranted psychiatric diagnoses to get rid of troops.

Since 2001, the military has discharged at least 31,000 service members because of personality disorder, a family of disorders broadly characterized by inflexible “maladaptive” behavior that can impair performance and relationships.

For years, veterans’ advocates have said that the Pentagon uses the diagnosis to discharge troops because it considers them troublesome or wants to avoid giving them benefits for service-connected injuries.

The military considers personality disorder a pre-existing problem that emerges in youth, and as a result, troops given the diagnosis are often administratively discharged without military retirement pay.

Some have even been required to repay enlistment bonuses.

On Captain Carlson’s case, the Colorado National Guard declined to comment. Officials at Womack Army Medical Center at Fort Bragg, N.C., said the psychiatrist who evaluated Captain Carlson in Afghanistan, Maj. Aniceto Navarro, was not available for an interview.

But in a statement, the hospital said: “No commander may order a credentialed clinician to make a particular diagnosis. Dr. Navarro did not feel he was being ordered by the service member’s command to make a particular diagnosis.

“The sentence referenced was written in terms of the commander asking to evaluate for a personality disorder, i.e. asking if one existed, not ordering to diagnose a personality disorder.” **[This gets the lame stupid bullshit of the year so far award. Here’s the words again: “Her command specifically asks for a diagnosis of a personality disorder,”]**

Though it is impossible to know how many veterans are disputing their personality disorder discharges, Vietnam Veterans of America, an advocacy group, with help from the Yale veterans legal clinic, has sued the Defense Department seeking records they say will show that thousands of troops have been unfairly discharged for personality or adjustment disorder since 2001.

“We believe that many of the people who received personality disorder discharges were wrongly diagnosed and that in fact they were suffering from PTSD or traumatic brain injury,” said Thomas Berger, executive director of Vietnam Veterans of America’s health council.

Although the number of personality disorder discharges is small relative to the total number of troops who have served since 2001, Congress was concerned enough about the issue to hold hearings in 2007 after reading reports that troops with post-traumatic stress and other combat-related injuries were being discharged for personality disorder.

But the Government Accountability Office said in 2010 that the Defense Department had not proved that it was in full compliance with its rules.

And Captain Carlson's case shows that the military continues to issue personality disorder diagnoses in questionable ways, according to veterans' advocates and her lawyers, Stephen H. Carpenter Jr. and Daniel C. Russ.

Unlike the soldiers at Madigan, Captain Carlson has not been given a diagnosis of PTSD. But the personality disorder diagnosis could complicate her ability get a medical discharge for a back injury and other problems.

Perhaps more significant, the diagnosis will be listed on her discharge papers, which employers typically review when they are considering veterans for a job.

"It may have a significant impact on her ability to find employment," Mr. Carpenter said.

Captain Carlson, now 55, signed up with the Army after a co-worker at a Milwaukee trauma hospital, a surgeon in the National Guard, told her that the Army badly needed therapists and social workers. Intrigued, she got an age waiver and joined through a program that commissions officers based on their specialized training.

At Fort Leavenworth, where she served for three years, supervisors called her "highly talented," "outstanding" and "a dedicated officer," according to a 2008 evaluation.

After leaving active duty, Captain Carlson moved to Colorado Springs in 2010 to take a civilian job as a substance abuse counselor at Fort Carson. But she soon learned that the Colorado National Guard, which she had just joined, would deploy to Afghanistan in early 2011. She told her commander she wanted to go.

"I wanted to experience what soldiers experience," she said in an interview.

But her problems began soon after she arrived in Afghanistan last February. She got lost outside a combat outpost and wore shorts when she should have been in combat uniform. Then a junior enlisted soldier accused her of sexual harassment, citing an off-color remark she made during a game of Scrabble with several soldiers at a combat outpost.

Captain Carlson contends the remark was innocent, but the Army sent her back to Bagram Air Base near Kabul and opened an investigation. A major general eventually gave her a memorandum of reprimand, a potentially career-ending action. But she says it was the psychological evaluation she received at Bagram that upset her the most.

In notes from that evaluation, Dr. Navarro wrote that "it is very difficult to draw absolute conclusions for a personality disorder."

But he noted that her command had asked for the diagnosis and, in his final report dated three days later, Dr. Navarro did just that.

Captain Carlson has "a very dramatic style" and "chronic difficulty in adjusting," Dr. Navarro wrote in that report, concluding that she had "personality disorder NOS" — not otherwise specified — "with histrionic traits." He recommended that the Army move swiftly to discharge her if she did not comply with counseling from her commander.

Experts say personality disorder is generally evident in a person's youth, leaving a telltale pattern across failed jobs and broken relationships. For that reason, they generally recommend that diagnoses include reviews of patients' medical records and interviews with people who have known them for years.

Dr. Navarro says in his notes that he did not have access to her records.

Dr. Andrew E. Skodol, research professor of psychiatry at the University of Arizona and an expert on personality disorder who was not familiar with Captain Carlson's case, said it would not be surprising for a person who entered the Army in middle age to have trouble adapting to the stresses of military life and deployment.

But that would not necessarily qualify as a personality disorder, Dr. Skodol said.

After leaving Afghanistan last year, Captain Carlson went to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, where a psychiatrist gave her a diagnosis of adjustment disorder, her lawyers said.

That psychiatrist has since been suspended as part of the Army's investigation into Madigan.

It will be up to the Colorado National Guard to decide how Captain Carlson will be discharged, a process that could take months.

At the least, Captain Carlson wants the personality disorder diagnosis removed from her record.

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

<p>Hope for change doesn't cut it when you're still losing buddies. -- J.D. Englehart, Iraq Veterans Against The War</p>

U.S. Intelligence Agencies Do Not Believe Iran Is Trying To Build Nuclear Bomb

February 23, 2012 By Ken Dilanian, Los Angeles Times [Excerpts]

As U.S. and Israeli officials talk publicly about the prospect of a military strike against Iran's nuclear program, one fact is often overlooked: U.S. intelligence agencies don't believe Iran is actively trying to build an atomic bomb.

A highly classified U.S. intelligence assessment circulated to policymakers early last year largely affirms that view, originally made in 2007.

Both reports, known as national intelligence estimates, conclude that Tehran halted efforts to develop and build a nuclear warhead in 2003.

The most recent report, which represents the consensus of 16 U.S. intelligence agencies, indicates that Iran is pursuing research that could put it in a position to build a weapon, but that it has not sought to do so.

Although Iran continues to enrich uranium at low levels, U.S. officials say they have not seen evidence that has caused them to significantly revise that judgment.

Senior U.S. officials say Israel does not dispute the basic intelligence or analysis.

It's unclear how much access U.S. intelligence has in Iran, a problem that bedeviled efforts to determine whether Iraq had weapons of mass destruction before the U.S.-led invasion in 2003.

The assessment that Saddam Hussein had secretly amassed stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons and was seeking to build a nuclear weapon, cited by the George W. Bush administration to justify the invasion, turned out to be wrong.

For now, U.S. military and intelligence officials say they don't believe Iran's leadership has made the decision to build a bomb.

"I think they are keeping themselves in a position to make that decision," James R. Clapper Jr., director of National Intelligence, told the Senate Armed Services Committee on Feb. 16.

"But there are certain things they have not yet done and have not done for some time."

Clapper and CIA Director David H. Petraeus told a separate Senate hearing that Iran was enriching uranium below 20% purity. Uranium is considered weapons grade when it is enriched to about 90% purity, although it is still potentially usable at lower enrichment levels.

U.S. spy agencies also have not seen evidence of a decision-making structure on nuclear weapons around Khamenei, said David Albright, who heads the nonprofit Institute for Science and International Security and is an expert on Iran's nuclear program.

Albright said a push by Iran to build a nuclear weapon probably would be detected.

**“For The Last Eleven Months,
The Regime Has Proved
Everyday That They Are Far
From Being A Symbol Of
Revolution”**

**“Or A Symbol Of Unity, Or
Arabism, Or Anti-Imperialism, Or
Even Resistance”**

“They Have Been An Emblem Of Nothing But Tyranny And Oppression”

“The Regime Would Rather Erase Every
Citizen’s Existence Than Admit They Are
The Universal Conspiracy That Plagues
Syria”



To conceal the reality of what they really are, the Assad regime fabricates every kind of conspiracy possible: political conspiracy, media conspiracy, military conspiracy, an Arab conspiracy, a Western conspiracy, an imperialist conspiracy, an economic conspiracy, a sectarian conspiracy.

Feb 21 2012 by Amal Hanano, Jadaliyya.com/ [Excerpts]

The Syrian revolution undeniably belongs to the street. It’s rooted in the public realm where masses of physical bodies occupy the squares and real voices fill the air with defiance against the brutality of a relentless regime.

Supporters of the regime like to demeaningly describe the Syrian revolution as iftiraadiyyeh, hypothetical, “a virtual revolution,” fueled by outside forces far from Syrian streets (thus, Syrian interests).

They mark the protesters as traitors falling prey to a “universal conspiracy” against Syria’s sovereignty.

These accusations start with the head of the regime himself, Bashar al-Assad, as he declared in his last speech: “At the beginning of the crisis, it was not easy to explain what happened. Emotional reactions and the absence of rationality were surpassing the facts. But now, the fog has lifted, and it is no longer possible for the regional and international parties which wanted to destabilize Syria to forge the facts and the events.

“Now the masks have fallen off the faces of those parties, and we have become more capable of deconstructing the virtual environment which they have created to push Syrians towards illusion and then make them fall. That virtual environment was created to lead to a psychological and moral defeat which would eventually lead to the actual defeat.”

During the early months of the uprising, the president called dissidents “conspiracies” and protesters “armed gangs.” In his last speech he claimed if real protesters really existed, he would have joined them, “This is not a revolution. Can a revolutionary work for the enemy – a revolutionary and a traitor at the same time? This is impossible. Can revolutionaries be without honor, moral values or religious principles? Had we had real revolutionaries, in the sense we know, you and I and the whole people would have moved with them. This is a fact.”

These sentiments have been repeated by people inside Syria and out, Syrians and not, who consider the thousands of “unable to verify” videos documenting Assad’s atrocities as mfabrakeh, fabricated.

They say the clips exaggerate the number of people actually protesting, while the pro-regime demonstrations are deceptively reduced or not declared as massive as they really were, or not covered at all by the biased Arab and international media.

The YouTube clips are described as “pictures” by some journalists like Robert Fisk and Patrick Cockburn. “Pictures,” a carefully chosen, archaic term that alludes slyly to the reel not the real; directed, acted, cinematic.

Were they not real even when these videos were made in front of the Arab League monitors? Were they not real even when filmed by independent journalists who have finally entered Syria (albeit on extremely short visas and even shorter government-controlled leashes)?

Recently, debates have been occupied trying to understand the nature of the Free Syrian Army (FSA).

Does this army exist or is the FSA “a fax machine in Turkey”?

Maybe the pundits have not seen the wide-spread protests on the Fridays christened, “We support the Free Syrian Army”, and “The Free Syrian Army Protects Us.”

Rania Abuzaid's excellent report explains the nuanced composition of the FSA.

While it is true the FSA is separated into various groups defending different parts of the country and lacks a traditional central command, the thousands of men who fight and die every day in its name make it very real.

The president, joined by his small but growing public relations army of Arab and Western journalists/supporters and backed by “most Syrians” according to Jonathan Steele, would like you to believe the following scenario: In Syria, a minuscule number of mythical (yet sectarian/extremist/Salafi/violent) protesters repeat make-believe chants supporting (and protected by) a fictional army, while being filmed by faux cameras, made into fabricated films, to be tweeted by virtual activists, and watched by millions of fake people on their conspiratorial Arabic satellite channels and consumed by a biased Western media engaged in the “propaganda” war, in order to cover the “real” Syrian crisis in, as Cockburn says, “a fog of disinformation pumped through the internet.”

And why should the world believe Assad’s scenario over the people’s reality?

Because, according to the Syrian regime, the country faces a universal conspiracy designed to validate foreign intervention which will destabilize the region, strengthen Israel, weaken Iran, declare Qatar a regional superpower, and push Syria into a civil war fueled by “inherent” sectarianism that the Assad regime has protected its citizens from for the past forty-two years.

For some, the “conspiracy” also threatens to kill what is called the last vestige of Arab “resistance.”

Resistance against what?

Most Syrians would say the Assad regime has never resisted anything but the Syrian people’s aspirations.

(But most Syrians never understood or appreciated their country’s all-important “regional” political role. They were too busy enduring Assad & son’s domestic policies.)

The Syrians on the street (the ones who matter) even chant: “Ya Bashar, you coward, go send your troops to the Golan.”

No one in Syria or the Golan is holding their breath.

Some people will disagree with blindly disregarding the Assad regime’s regional and international accomplishments, as a result of its historic stances of resistance.

Those people should ask the families of the over 7,000 murdered Syrians if their loved ones’ deaths were worth this so-called resistance.

They should ask Palestinians as well (also the ones who matter): What has the Syrian regime done for you lately? (“Lately,” is loosely defined here, but let us just say in the last fifty years.)

They would probably answer: a lot; of damage.

Critic Subhi Hadidi lists some of the damage, “As for the Palestinians, well, the regime did quite the opposite: It sided against the Palestinians, as well as the ‘national movement’ led by Kamal Jumblatt in the Lebanese civil war; it was involved in the 1976 Tal al-Zaater siege and massacre . . . it participated in the 1983 siege and shelling of Palestinian camps in Tripoli, Lebanon.”

Poet and former political prisoner Faraj Bayraqdar says those who still defend the regime’s self-declared role of resistance, “are inflicted with ideological blindness.”

He adds, “Those people don’t know the difference between resistance and desisting, between rhetoric and reality.”

The regime uses this mix of recycled ideological propaganda and media manipulations to confront the mass accumulation of evidence of their atrocities that have spread across the world.

The regime continues to insist it’s fighting armed gangs while using real weapons pouring in from Russia on real ships to kill unarmed civilians and defected soldiers.

After months of skeptics asking, “Just who are these ‘armed gangs’?”, Foreign Minister Walid Muallem ended a press conference in November with clips of the “armed gangs” in action.

It was later discovered that those clips were filmed in Lebanon in 2010.

In other words, mfabrakeh.

When he was confronted in December, Muallem defended himself (beginning at minute 57:00) saying the clips were “correct in all their content, but they weren’t directed in a good way, only.”

Directed? Like “pictures”? How real of him.

He added, “If we wanted to expose the truth, the ugly images of what the terrorist groups are doing, I believe many of you will faint.” (Thank you, Walid Muallem for sparing us the truth.)

When the mysterious yet conveniently-timed explosion rocked the Midan area in Damascus last month, state television channel, SANA, was on location ready to broadcast live coverage of the “surprise” bombing.

They were so efficient that they captured on film, a man holding a Syrian TV mic planting white plastic bags near the pools of blood.

Even the presenter was shocked into silence as she narrated the scene. Another case of bad direction. They should have called Jaafari Jr. to handle it.

Syrian supporters of the regime know very well what it feels like to play pretend. It’s apparent in the new, popular chant, “We will be your shabbiha forever, ya Assad.” For

decades, Syrians chanted “We sacrifice our souls and our blood for you, ya Assad.” I never thought I would feel nostalgic for that chant, but I am. As insincere as it was, it meant that we were willing to sacrifice what we were, as we were, our souls and blood, for the leader. This new chant viciously takes subserviency to another level. It expresses the willingness of the people to become something criminal—the despised, ruthless thugs for the regime. To become something they are not.

Between treacherous chants and pseudonymous identities, Syria has become a web of deception, woven by necessity by both sides for protection against the entrenched regime. But Syrians have been unaccounted for as individuals for decades.

Long ago, our features were erased in a sea of empty faces that mirrored only one face. We became a pixelated canvas that created a collage of the leader’s image.

Our voices formed one unified mouth only capable of expressing (fake) declarations of love and devotion. We never really mattered to the regime, and so, we forgot to matter to ourselves. Today, the Syrian people not only fight every day for their survival, but to prove that they matter. They resist to prove they exist.

In a recent article by Robert Fisk, he referred to Syria as a symbol.

For decades, Syria indeed was reduced to a symbol, sometimes of Arab unity, other times of confrontational and heroic resistance. Hafez al-Assad represented revolution, as we used to chant during mandatory demonstrations, “Hafez. Assad. Symbol of the Arab revolution.”

For the last eleven months, the regime has proved everyday that they are far from being a symbol of revolution.

Or a symbol of unity, or Arabism, or anti-imperialism, or even resistance.

They have been an emblem of nothing but tyranny and oppression.

To conceal the reality of what they really are, the Assad regime fabricates every kind of conspiracy possible: political conspiracy, media conspiracy, military conspiracy, an Arab conspiracy, a Western conspiracy, an imperialist conspiracy, an economic conspiracy, a sectarian conspiracy.

And according to Jaafari Sr., Syria now faces a Google conspiracy.

Every conspiracy is legitimate except the one conspiracy the Syrian people have endured for four decades: the illegitimate rule of the Assad dynasty.

The regime would rather erase every citizen’s existence than admit they are the universal conspiracy that plagues Syria.

For such a virtual, hypothetical, fictitious, mythical, conspiracy-based revolution, its heavy weight is tangible with real blood, real corpses, real tears, real intimidation, real scars of real torture dug into real flesh.

The Syrian people, like their revolution, are not hypothetical, mythical, or fictitious, they are real.

They are not a symbol of revolution, they are revolution. But as Elias Khoury says, "In their struggle and in their resistance, waging their orphan revolution, the Syrian people are alone." And it is wearing them out.

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ANNIVERSARIES

February 25, 1968: Anniversary Of Memorable Bullshit: A General Cuts His Throat With His Tongue



Vietnam commander Gen. William Westmoreland meeting with Pres. Lyndon Johnson

Discussing the war capacity of North Vietnam, a country that had been fighting for its independence for 23 years and had just staged the massive, successful Tet Offensive, U.S. General William C. Westmoreland stated, "I do not believe Hanoi can hold up under a long war."

He was replaced as commander in Vietnam less than four months later.

February 26, 1984: Reagan Withdraws U.S. Troops After Saying To Do So "Means The End Of Lebanon"

**"There Was No Way That We Could
Really Contribute To The Original
Mission By Staying There As A Target"**



[Thanks to Carl Bunin Peace History Feb 25-March 2]

The last of the 1400 peacekeeping troops Pres. Ronald Reagan had sent to the Lebanese capital of Beirut were evacuated. The troops were part of an international force sent to deal with the Lebanese civil war.

The president withdrew almost all American troops following the deaths of 241 Marines and 58 French paratroopers in a suicide truck bombing carried out four months earlier by combined forces of Islamic Jihad and Hizbollah.

France withdrew its troops as well.

Three weeks earlier, Reagan had told the Wall Street Journal, "As long as there is a chance for peace, the mission remains the same. If we get out, that means the end of Lebanon."

In a barb directed at House Speaker Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill Jr. (D-Massachusetts), Reagan had said, "He may be ready to surrender, but I'm not."

BBC News: On This Day

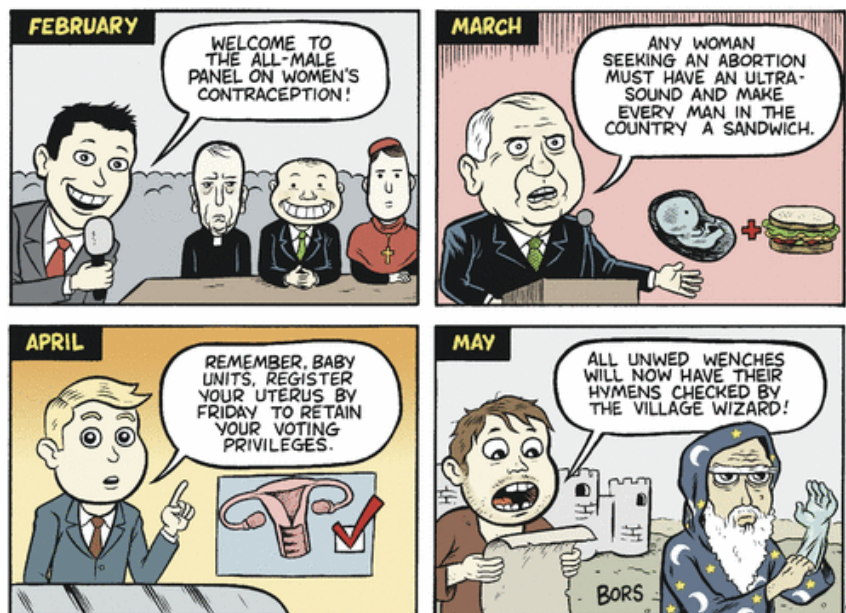
American forces have withdrawn almost all of their troops from the Lebanese capital, Beirut. About 1,000 US Marines left the coast beside the international airport as Shi'ite militiamen arrived in jeeps and armoured vehicles to take over.

US President Ronald Reagan ordered military personnel to begin pulling out of the area over a week ago following a recent upsurge in terrorist attacks.

"Once the terrorist attacks started there was no way that we could really contribute to the original mission by staying there as a target just bunkering down and waiting for further attacks," he said.

The US Marines were sent in 18 months ago to help the Lebanese administration but as the last troops pulled out there was no official government delegation present to see them off. Instead, Insurgents riding motorcycles watched without emotion as US military helicopters airlifted the last front line troops to warships off the Lebanese coast.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



Obama Regime Traitors Refuse To Say By What Authority They Kill U.S. Citizens Without Trial: Senator Says “It Is Indefensible To Claim Intelligence Agencies Have The Authority To Knowingly Kill American Citizens — Subject To Limitations That Have Never Been Described Publicly — While At The Same Time Refusing To Provide Congress Its Legal Opinions On This Authority”

Feb 8, 2012 By PETE YOST, Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A Democratic member of the Senate Intelligence Committee said Wednesday that he, like the public, is being kept in the dark about Justice Department legal advice on when the U.S. may kill American citizens abroad who are suspected terrorists.

Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon says he's been trying for more than a year to get the legal analysis from the intelligence community without success.

He is renewing his request four months after American-born cleric Anwar al-Awlaki and a second American, Samir Khan, were killed by a CIA air strike in Yemen.

Newsweek magazine said two weeks ago that the Obama administration was planning to reveal publicly the legal reasoning behind its decision to kill al-Awlaki. To date, the administration has not done so.

In a letter to Attorney General Eric Holder, Wyden said that in February 2011, James Clapper, the director of national intelligence, “indicated that he would have liked to be responsive to my request, but he told me that he did not have the authority to provide formal written opinions of the Department of Justice's Office of Legal Counsel to Congress.”

Dennis Blair, then director of national intelligence, told Congress in February 2010 that in carrying out counterterrorism operations, “If we think that direct action will involve killing an American, we get specific permission to do that.”

Wyden wrote Holder that it is indefensible for the executive branch to claim that intelligence agencies have the authority to knowingly kill American citizens — subject to limitations that have never been described publicly — while at the same time refusing to provide Congress its legal opinions on this authority.

Last summer, Wyden and Sen. Mark Udall, D-Colo., sought to force the Obama administration to reveal how many people in the U.S. have had their telephone calls and emails monitored by government agents under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act Amendments of 2008.

The administration said it was not reasonably possible to identify the number. Wyden and Udall said they were concerned that the government may be monitoring communications of law-abiding citizens with inadequate justification.

Wyden and Udall also unsuccessfully sought to require the administration to disclose what Wyden said were secret interpretations of domestic surveillance law.

The proposal was aimed at provisions in the USA Patriot Act that allow government agents to conduct broad searches for records in national security investigations without court warrants.

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