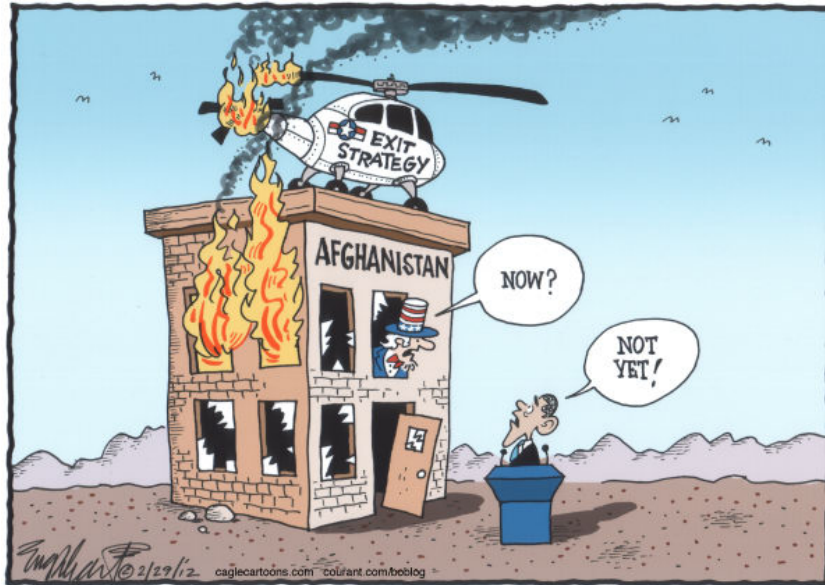


## Military Resistance 10C2



**“I Think He Just Feels  
Betrayed”**

**3,000 Sailors Will Lose Their  
Jobs In The Coming Months:  
“Efforts Have Sprung Up To Fight  
The Dismissals”**

**“As A Family, We Kept Our  
Commitment To The Navy. I Guess  
We Just Thought They’d Keep Their  
Commitment To Us, Too”**

# **“Even Among Sailors Who Haven’t Been Affected, The Enlisted Retention Board Has Become A Source Of Consternation And Anger”**



Eric Clevinger, shown on Feb. 17, 2012, in his Virginia Beach home, was recently “laid off” from the Navy after 14 years because of a measure to thin the ranks in overmanned job classifications. He hasn’t been told why he was chosen, and is scared of what he faces in this economy. His main concern is his 7-year-old daughter’s well-being and education, and being able to provide for that. Her picture is on the corner of the table in front of him. (Vicki Cronis-Nohe | The Virginian-Pilot)

**It marks the first time the service will lay off thousands of sailors who are in the middle of enlistment contracts, including hundreds in Hampton Roads.**

**In the months since the move was announced, it has become widely unpopular and controversial.**

March 2, 2012 By Corinne Reilly, The Virginian-Pilot [Excerpts]

**The day that Amanda Humburg’s husband found out he would be involuntarily discharged from the Navy, his command sent him home early to give him time to absorb the shock.**

**He walked through the door of their house in Chesapeake with a blank expression on his face and a pile of papers in his arms that explained what came next -**

**severance pay, six months of health coverage, free advice on how to write the first resume of his life.**

**“He was almost emotionless,” Humburg recently recalled. “He looked at me and he said, ‘I have bad news.’ And then he just dropped all the papers on the floor and went to the bedroom. He wouldn’t come out for the next two hours.”**

**Humburg’s husband had been in the Navy all of his adult life.**

He joined right after high school, and over the course of the next 14 years, he made every sacrifice the job required: half a dozen deployments, four missed wedding anniversaries, countless nights spent away from his two little girls.

It wasn’t easy on their family, but the Humburgs thought it would be worth it, said Amanda, a stay-at-home mom; they figured he’d put in six more years, and then he’d be eligible for retirement.

Now, though, they are facing an entirely different reality, and his Navy career will be over by September, even before the end of his current enlistment contract.

Humburg’s husband, who chose not to be interviewed for this story, is one of about 3,000 sailors who will lose their jobs in the coming months as part of an unprecedented and drastic effort to thin the Navy’s ranks in overcrowded job fields.

**It marks the first time the service will lay off thousands of sailors who are in the middle of enlistment contracts, including hundreds in Hampton Roads.**

**In the months since the move was announced, it has become widely unpopular and controversial.**

**Many of those being forced out have been in the Navy for well over a decade, and many have good service records.**

**In most cases, they were chosen for discharge based simply on their rank and job classification in order to meet set quotas.**

Many sailors chosen for discharge, including Humburg’s husband, say their commands were equally stunned by the board’s choices, and in some cases their superiors had told them they had nothing to worry about.

Months after affected sailors were given the news, many are still struggling with one question they say the Navy has not answered: Why me?

“More than anything, I think he just feels betrayed, and honestly so do I,” Humburg said. “He did everything they asked him to and he never screwed up. As a family, we kept our commitment to the Navy. I guess we just thought they’d keep their commitment to us, too.”

The Navy explains it this way: Because of the economy, far fewer sailors are leaving the service than in years past. As a result, 31 of the Navy’s 85 enlisted fields have become badly overcrowded. For sailors in those job categories, such as aircraft maintenance,

that has meant fewer opportunities for promotion, which has swelled the midcareer ranks.

While the Navy can compensate to a degree by enlisting fewer new sailors into overmanned fields, it cannot stop altogether; for budgetary reasons and for longer-term force effectiveness, it needs to keep a particular number of sailors in each field and in each pay grade.

And the service cannot simply allow the higher enlisted ranks to swell while continuing to fill the lower ranks, because the Navy is mandated by Congress to keep its force below a certain number of sailors, and it has only so much money to pay them.

The problem of high retention is not one the Navy didn't see coming.

**For several years the service has offered early-out programs for sailors wanting to leave before the end of their contracts, and since 2003, the Navy has used a program called "Perform to Serve" to keep in check the number of sailors in overmanned job classifications. It requires midranked sailors in popular fields to essentially compete for their jobs against one another each time they're up for re-enlistment.**

Sometimes those not selected for re-enlistment in their current fields are able to switch to undermanned jobs and stay in. Others are forced out.

**In 2011, nearly 7,000 sailors who wanted to stay in the Navy were dismissed through Perform to Serve.**

To achieve the number of discharges the Navy needed to stay on track, it would have to look at a slice of its force wider than just those up for re-enlistment.

Board members reviewed the official records of roughly 15,000 sailors in the 31 overmanned fields, ranging in years of service from seven to 14, and in rank from petty officer third class to senior chief petty officer, according to the Navy.

Just over 300 were selected for discharge during a preliminary round that picked out sailors with obvious shortcomings, such as major disciplinary actions or run-ins with the law.

The rest were chosen based on quotas that targeted the most overcrowded fields and ranks. The majority who will be let go are first- and second-class petty officers responsible for maintaining aircraft, operating radar, navigation and communications equipment, and running various shipboard machinery, such as engines and generators.

About 125 sailors who were initially selected for discharge were subsequently spared and chosen to switch jobs into one of the Navy's 16 undermanned fields.

For the rest, there is no process by which the dismissals can be appealed.

**The Navy has undertaken similar boards to reduce the ranks among senior enlisted personnel and officers, though in lesser numbers.**

**So far those efforts have targeted only officers eligible for retirement, and senior enlisted sailors chosen for discharge were picked based on job performance, not quotas.**

Petty Officer 2nd Class Eric Clevinger is one of those still struggling with why he was chosen.

**A 33-year-old aviation electronics technician who joined the Navy more than 14 years ago, he was deployed aboard the aircraft carrier Enterprise with Strike Fighter Squadron 211, based in Virginia Beach, when the enlisted retention board was announced.**

**At first, he said, his command told him he wasn't among those who would be considered for discharge. Later, after he learned he would be considered, his superiors told him he shouldn't worry because of his strong job performance, he said.**

"There was just a lot of confusion about how the decisions were being made. I thought I was safe."

**His commanding officer at the time, Cmdr. James McCall, recently described Clevinger as a proficient, motivated technician who had a positive influence on the people working around him.**

McCall said that delivering the news to Clevinger and the four other sailors in his squadron who were selected for dismissal was "probably one of the most unpleasant things I've had to do as a commanding officer."

**He said it was only made harder by the fact that he couldn't give his sailors concrete explanations as to why they were chosen.**

The Navy has said that no records from the board deliberations were kept except for the members' votes, and even those are confidential, as is the case with other Navy boards, such as those that decide promotions.

The Navy couldn't say exactly how many Hampton Roads-based sailors are being discharged through the enlisted retention board layoffs, but if 1 percent of the service's total force is affected, that amounts to roughly 700 personnel here.

**It's a number large enough that efforts have sprung up to fight the dismissals, including Facebook pages and a White House petition.**

**At least one sailor is suing over his discharge, according to the publication Navy Times, and even among sailors who haven't been affected, the enlisted retention board has become a source of consternation and anger.**

Ward Carroll, the editor of Military.com and a retired naval aviator, said the service's decision to break the enlistment contracts of so many sailors could have wider consequences for recruitment and morale.

“You show up with some idea that if you want to - short of being punished with a court-martial or something - you can stay for 20 years. That’s the general conception of what the military is all about,” Carroll said. When things play out otherwise, “it does feel like a breach.”

And last month, the Navy announced plans to allow sailors who reach 15 years of service by the time they are laid off on Sept. 1 to apply for early retirement. Roughly 300 of the 3,000 sailors who will be discharged are eligible for reduced monthly payments, including Amanda Humburg’s husband.

Humburg said learning that her family might collect the payments has gone a long way in restoring her opinion of the Navy. “It did change a lot for me,” she said. “If we get it, we’ll still be getting much less than we would have if he’d been allowed to stay in for 20 years, but at least it’s something. At least they’re recognizing that he’s owed something for his service.”

But the Humburgs must apply for the payments, and they won’t know for some time whether they’ll get them.

So for now, they are preparing for the worst.

They are planning to sell their house and move back to the Midwest, where they’ll be closer to extended family and where they think job opportunities may be more plentiful.

**They’re not sure whether their girls, ages 2 and 6, will continue to have medical insurance.**

Humburg said her husband, a petty officer first class, is still struggling to come to terms with his new reality.

**He had an especially difficult time explaining his impending discharge to his father, who is a Navy veteran.**

“His dad’s first question was, ‘What did you do wrong? You don’t get kicked out of the Navy unless you did something wrong.’ “

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## **AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS**

# **Two West Michigan Soldiers Among Five Injured By Explosive Device In Afghanistan**

March 01, 2012 Michigan Live

WEST MICHIGAN — Two area soldiers were among five from Michigan injured Sunday by an explosive device in Afghanistan.

Private 1st Class Jon Brancheau, of Wyoming, and Spec. Justin Skaggs, of Grand Rapids, were posted at an entry control point in the Kunduz Province when the device was thrown nearby and detonated.

Also with Brancheau and Skaggs were Spec. Jeremiah Eberly, of Charlotte, Mich., Spec. Michael McNichol, of Mount Pleasant, and Ed Fuentesbueno, of Phoenix.

The injured soldiers were transported from the site to a military medical facility at Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan for treatment, the Army National Guard said.

An Army National Guard Spokesperson in Wyoming today was not able to comment on the severity of the injuries or the conditions of those involved.

The 1st Battalion, 125th Infantry Regiment deployed in early 2012 for a one-year mobilization in Afghanistan.

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

**THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE  
WAR**

**“We Are Tired Of The  
Americans And What They Do  
With The Korans And Other  
Incidents”**

**“The Anger Will Never, Ever Go  
Away”**

# **“When We Watch These Dogs It’s A Way Of Expressing Our Anger Against The Americans” “We Call The Dogs Who Lose Americans”**

March 2, 2012 By Alex Sundby, Reuters [Excerpts]

American officials’ apologies for the burnings of Muslim holy books on a U.S. base in Afghanistan failed to calm the anger felt by some Afghans at a Kabul dogfighting ring, expressing outrage against the United States Friday to the Reuters news agency.

“We call the dogs who lose Americans. We are furious about the Korans,” Mirwais Haji, 28, told the wire service as the loser of one dogfight limped out of the dirt ring.

“We want the Afghan government to bring the people who did this to us,” he added. “We will kill them ourselves.”

At the dogfighting ring, one man cast the bloody fights as a way of channeling his rage against the United States.

Thousands of people gather in a circle each Friday to watch large Afghan fighting dogs, known as Kuchis, attack each other in 30-second contests below mountains on the edge of Kabul.

Some do it for entertainment, betting up to \$4,000 on a single fight, as vendors sell peanuts, tangerines and potatoes.

For others, it’s an escape from frustrations over everything from unemployment, to the war to rampant government corruption.

This Friday, several people were still riveted by the Koran burnings, which NATO called a tragic blunder. Gripped by anti-American sentiment, they cheered on dogs who growled, stood on their hind legs and tore at each other’s throats.

“We are tired of the Americans and what they do with the Korans and other incidents,” said Akmal Bahadoor, 18, an airport employee, as some of the dogs were held down by two men because they are so powerful and edgy.

**“When we watch these dogs it’s a way of expressing our anger against the Americans. We think the Americans are being attacked.”**

**Western officials are hoping the outcry will soon pass so they can focus on other huge challenges before 2014. But there are no signs of that happening any time soon.**



As young boys ran to get out of the way of a crazed dog that ran through the crowd, a few Afghan soldiers watched other canines charge each other.

“Even if the people who did this are prosecuted, the anger will never, ever go away. It will always be stuck in my heart,” said one of them, 30-year-old Khalil Bazar.

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## **Resistance Action**

29 February 2012 TOLONews.com

In southern Helmand province today, six people were wounded in a car bomb attack. The incident took place at 10:00 am local time in Lashkargah, the capital of Helmand province, when a bomber detonated his explosives near the provincial police headquarters, deputy police chief of the province, Kamal-u Din Shirzai, said. A policeman was injured.

A bomb exploded outside the private Kabul Bank in Taluqan city, the provincial capital of northern Takhar Province.

<p><b>IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATION</b></p>
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### **MILITARY NEWS**

**German Pay Phone Profiteers  
Enrage Troops Calling Home:  
\$51 For 2 Minutes;  
“Calling Rates Are Not Printed On  
The Phones In The Segregated  
Lounge, Where American Troops  
Must Stay During Layovers”**

# “‘I Want Them To Stop Ripping Off Soldiers,’ Sergeant Corder Said In An Interview”



Sgt. Richard Corder was billed \$41 for a three-second call to his family’s answering machine. Ben Sklar for The New York Times

March 1, 2012 By JAMES DAO, The New York Times [Excerpts]

When Specialist Reynald Matias was heading to Afghanistan with his Army unit late last year, their chartered flight stopped to refuel at Leipzig-Halle Airport in Germany.

**During a brief layover, he called his wife in Tacoma, Wash., using his debit card on a pay phone in the terminal’s troops-only transit lounge.**

**“What are they charging you?” his wife, Crystal, asked when he reached her.**

**He did not know, so she told him to hang up. A few days later she got the answer: \$51 for what she estimated was a two-minute call.**

“Military pay isn’t up there,” she said. “It really hurt us.”

**For many American troops passing through Leipzig to the war zones, the steep cost of a quick call home from pay phones has been a source of growing indignation.**

The Pentagon estimates that about two dozen commercial charters carrying American forces stop at the Leipzig airport each week.

**In interviews, service members said calling rates are not printed on the phones in the segregated lounge, where American troops must stay during layovers.**

**The phones do not accept prepaid phone cards bought in the United States, and troops say their complaints to a customer service line are ignored or not answered.**

**Those complaints have gained new attention in recent weeks with a class-action lawsuit filed by a soldier from Fort Hood, Tex., against a telecommunications company that handles calls from Leipzig, BBG Global.**

The soldier, Sgt. Richard Corder, said he was billed \$41 last year for a three-second call in which he left a message on the family's answering machine.

**"I want them to stop ripping off soldiers," Sergeant Corder said in an interview.**

His suit demands that BBG and other companies that provide service from Leipzig pay refunds to every service member who used the military-only phones. The United States military estimates that tens of thousands of its troops pass through Leipzig each year during refueling stops, but it could not say how many use the phones.

In a statement, BBG Global said a German-based company that operates the phones actually sets the rates; Sergeant Corder's lawyers disputed that assertion.

It added that callers could learn rates by dialing "3" and that BBG "meets or exceeds" disclosure rules in Germany.

**Several service members said they were never told how they could learn about rates.**

**Sergeant Corder said that he asked the operator, but did not receive a clear answer.**

His lawyer, John Mattes of San Diego, said BBG purposely keeps rates vague and instructs its operators in its training manual "to never rate a call unless the customer has specifically asked for the data."

**"If they told you it cost \$41 for a minute, you wouldn't make the call," Mr. Mattes said.**

The high pay phone costs in Germany are particularly galling for many troops because they can call home from combat areas for much less. International calls from Afghanistan on Skype, Afghan cellphones or public phones at forward operating bases can cost 25 cents a minute or less, service members say.

"I could call home two or three times a week" and not spend \$20 a month, said Staff Sgt. Chris Bridson, a soldier at Fort Hood.

Sergeant Bridson is one of several service members who said they were charged high rates on pay phones at a secure transit area at Frankfurt Airport, another way station for military charters. Those charters carry American forces from bases in the United States to Kuwait or Kyrgyzstan, where military aircraft take them to combat zones.

The sergeant said he paid \$39 for a three-minute call from Frankfurt to his wife in November. BBG Global said it provides some service at Frankfurt Airport, though the sergeant said he was not sure who had billed him.

Sgt. Kyle Herman of the Montana National Guard said he used the Leipzig phones twice when heading to Kuwait last year, and was charged \$83.92 for about four minutes.

**“My wife and I were completely shocked that they could charge rates like that, especially for troops that are a captive audience,” he said by e-mail from Kuwait.**

“I expected the international calls to cost a little, but not \$40 a call.”

Mr. Mattes has also represented nonmilitary clients who have sued BBG Global and a related San Diego-based firm, BBG Communications, for complaints of exorbitant phone charges.

Two of those suits were dismissed, partly for jurisdictional reasons, since BBG Global has its headquarters in Switzerland. BBG has asked a federal court in Waco, Tex., to dismiss Sergeant Corder’s claim for similar reasons.

**The Better Business Bureau of San Diego has given BBG a failing grade in its online business review, saying it received more than 450 complaints about BBG over the last three years, most of them unresolved.**

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## FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



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

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

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

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

Frederick Douglass, 1852

A revolution is always distinguished by impoliteness, probably because the ruling classes did not take the trouble in good season to teach the people fine manners.  
-- Leon Trotsky, History Of The Russian Revolution

**Military Resistance Available In PDF Format**

If you prefer PDF to Word format, email: [contact@militaryproject.org](mailto:contact@militaryproject.org)

**“No Regional Or International  
Power Wanted A Revolt In  
Syria”**

**“The Truth Is That The Bashar Al-  
Assad Regime Is Convenient For  
Everyone, The West And Israel  
Included”**

**“A Truly Independent Syria Is A  
Certain Loss For Someone And The  
Terrible Unknown For The Others”**

**“A Revolution Against The Entire World”**



**The Syrian regime perhaps is not a friend of the West, but it is an oppressive regime that has in recent years started a process of free market policies and policies of centralisation of economic power that resemble unrestrained capitalism, limited only to the need to ensure that the distribution of wealth is compatible with the interests of the authorities.**

February 29, 2012, WRITTEN BY ENRICO DE ANGELIS – translated by Mary Rizzo; Uruknet

**The Syrian revolution is a conspiracy devised by the United States: thus goes the discourse of many leftists activists and their newspapers.**

**But behind this vision is a distorted reading of reality and an increasing difficulty in interpreting the complexity of the contemporary world.**

**Which risks making them lose credibility even in the future struggles.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Since the revolt in Syria started, many have been convinced that it has been an American-Zionist conspiracy that has been behind the scenes, directing the uprising.

They say that the majority of Syrians still support Bashar al-Assad. They say that the living is still good in Syria and that the life conditions were better than in the other Arab states where the revolts broke out.

They say that the activists of the opposition and the mainstream media that support them exaggerate the number of victims.

They say that right from the start it was an insurrection armed by the United States and Gulf countries.

They say that Syria is the last secular State and especially that it is the last bastion, together with Iran, against the policies of the United States and their allies in the region.

Expressing this vision of what is happening in Syria since last March are persons who see themselves as belonging to the so-called Anti-imperialist camp.

It is difficult to identify with precision those who belong to it: more than anything else, it is with a way of thinking, which emerges when one finds himself in discussion with human rights activists, those who sympathise with the Palestinian cause, anarchists, exponents of social centres (translator's note, leftist student groups) and many others.

In general, those who are against the world order that has the stamp of the United States. But it is a reading that at times also finds its expression in more official ways. In Italy, an example is Il manifesto, which since the start had an attitude regarding Syria that can be called ambiguous at best.

**Any argument seems valid as long as it deviates the attention from the repression of the regime regarding the protests: the geo-political interests at play, the lack of precision in the count of the victims, the armed character of the revolt, the infiltration by al Qaeda and Iraqi Jihadists.**

And, on the other hand, Il Manifesto is in good company – in a recent article entitled “The United States should stay out of Syria”, the American magazine The Nation begins immediately with a geo-political analysis of the question, stressing who is against whom in the international panorama.

Then it follows saying that “the Syrian opposition is, at least in its most external form, obscure” and concludes that the revolt could end in a massacre of the Alawites.

Joseph Massad, the champion of the conspiracy theory writes in al-Jazeera English that the Syrian revolt has been “taken hostage” by the imperialist forces within (???) and outside Syria, and that certainly the outcome cannot be a true democracy.

And in that vein still others.

In these months I often found myself encountering persons who have these opinions. An example is an Italian activist I met in Tahrir Square in Cairo, on the occasion of 25 January, anniversary of the Egyptian revolt. He also came to celebrate with the victory against the Mubarak regime with the Egyptians. But when it comes to Syria, the position is striking, “the situation is completely different. The Egyptian regime was supported by the United States, the Syrian one is on the other hand against them.”

**“What Happens On A Local Level Counts For Nothing, The Struggle Of A People For Their Freedom: The Only Thing That Counts Is Geo-Political Equilibrium”**

This is the first point that I'd like to discuss: the cold realpolitik that comprises this way of thinking.

Suddenly the discourse of human rights, the defence of freedom at all costs, the opposition to State violence against citizens slip into the background.

What counts now are only geo-political types of concerns.

**Though hidden behind other arguments, the discourse is essentially: the enemy of my enemy is my friend, no matter what he does.**

**Syria and its regime is the enemy of the United States, thus it has to be protected.**

**The Syrian people can be sacrificed on the altar of the global struggle of anti-imperialism, because, too bad for them, they happen to be fighting from the wrong side.**

What is important is to be against the United States, and anything that goes against them is fine with me.

This passage from a discourse based on ethics to a discourse based exclusively on political concerns seems to be experienced by those who use it without contradictions.

Che Guevara all of a sudden starts to talk like Kissinger or Metternich, yet, everything seems normal.

What happens on a local level counts for nothing, the struggle of a people for their freedom: the only thing that counts is geo-political equilibrium.

### **“No Regional Or International Power Wanted A Revolt In Syria”**

The second consideration goes under the name of ignorance.

Because the contradiction referred to above is often overcome by claiming that it's not truly a spontaneous revolt, but it is an armed insurrection orchestrated by the United States with the intention to intervene militarily.

This is the same script that is used regarding the Iraq war of 2003 or, more recently, that in Libya.

If the revolt is authentic, then the humanitarian case does not exist.

There is no place here for challenging in detail all the pieces that make up this invented mosaic. And I don't want to deny that there are foreign interests at play: there always are some. In fact, the longer the revolt lasts and the more that the clampdown of it is bloody, the more that an external intervention becomes pressing and influential, conditioning the future of the country.

As a Syrian activist has said: when you don't know who to turn to, you would even deal with the Devil.



But to think that the insurrection in Syria is fruit of a pre-ordained plan from outside is simply false.

And for those who know the situation well, for those who have followed every single development since the beginning, there is no shadow of a doubt.

**No regional or international power wanted a revolt in Syria.**

**It is sufficient to analyse the declarations of the American administration since last March.**

After less than a month Hillary Clinton declares that “Assad is a reformer”, dismissing the repression as “disproportionate use of force” and reassures Assad, excluding armed intervention in Syria.

On 20 May Obama states that “Assad should lead the transition towards democracy”.

On 20 May, Obama repeats that “Assad has to step down in the interest of the Syrian people”.

And lastly, 6 February he excludes once more any military intervention.

Clearly, it is not what one can call a defamation campaign as the one against Saddam Hussein prior to the invasion of 2003.

**On the contrary, the doors have always remained open for Bashar al-Assad, even when the brutality of the repression had become clear to all.**

The Syrian National Council, the main opposition organ abroad, has been recognised only one month ago and by very few countries.

And the Free Syria Army, despite all the widespread rumours this year, judging by the rudimentary arms it possesses, has not yet received any help from foreign countries.

### **“A Revolution Against The Entire World”**

The Syrian revolution, as some activists have written, seems to be a revolution against the entire world.

Not in the sense that there is any kind of conspiracy against it, but in the sense that the struggle for independence is evidently a solitary struggle. No external actor has the force to intervene, or the intention to place their bets on this revolution.

Yet everyone follows it closely, anxious to understand how it will end and to know which horse to bet on so that they can cash in when all is over and done. There are many interests that must be safeguarded, except for the Syrian ones.

**The truth is that the Bashar al-Assad regime is convenient for everyone, the West and Israel included.**

**Syria and the Assads have always barked tremendously and bitten very little, and they offered stability to the entire area. Fundamentally, Israel needs to have a threat to exhibit in order to continue reciting the role of victim under siege.**

**And the Assad regime constitutes a threat only on paper.**

**On the contrary, a truly independent Syria is a certain loss for someone and the terrible unknown for the others.**

**It is precisely for this reason that the lack of solidarity in those movements and those persons who instead are always ready to participate in protests for Palestine or against the wars of NATO stands out even more as incomprehensible behaviour.**

It is a world, that of the “anti-imperialists”, which shows that it not only has remained behind in its own incapacity to understand contemporary reality and its transformations, but also to be imprisoned within ideological prisons that impede them from reading the nature of local phenomena in their specificity.

They say: one always must read events in a global key.

But even if that were true, one first of all needs to read them well, and second, they need to do so without forgetting the persons who live in places where the events take place and who are undergoing more often than not local forces.

As the Syrians know well, at times local powers can be more violent and ferocious than global ones. What does it matter to a Syrian if in the end the United States should make gains in geopolitical interests, if this of course is true, if the day before a follower of Assad has killed his brother?

**The Syrian regime perhaps is not a friend of the West, but it is an oppressive regime that has in recent years started a process of free market policies and policies of centralisation of economic power that resemble unrestrained capitalism, limited only to the need to ensure that the distribution of wealth is compatible with the interests of the authorities.**

The loss of credibility of international solidarity movements

**It is a paradox and disquieting that the insurrection brought forward in the first place in the name of freedom, democracy and social justice, and which is brought ahead by the less advantaged social classes of the country, is perceived as a revolt in favour of global imperialism.**

**Why can't one simply be on the side of the people and against the forces that limit their freedoms, wherever they may be?**

But this would already be an operation that is far too complex within the rigid framework of imperialism vs. the free world.

One is either against Iran or against the United States.

**These persons in general exhibit a presumptuous scepticism that often translates into a hasty conclusion: the mainstream media lies, therefore, reality is the opposite of what they affirm.**

**In other words, if CNN affirms that there is a massacre in Syria, it means that the revolt has been organised by the Americans.**

**They know how the world works, the others are poor lobotomised idiots who drink down anything that the mass media decides to force their way.**

But unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, the world (and also that of the media) is much more complex than that.

If it is true that the mainstream media are often subordinated by the agendas of governments, it is also true that one cannot so easily dismiss them and thing that there is a permanent international conspiracy woven by the United States.

**But all of this, for those pseudo-intellectuals who are sitting comfortably in their own armchairs while people die, is if no importance at all.**

**They should however remember one thing, and that is when they take to the streets again to march for a just cause, against the occupation of Palestine or against another NATO intervention, they will have very much less credibility from now on.**

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

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# **“Staggeringly Corrupt And Repressed, Saudi Arabia Is Ripe For Revolution”**

**“Let Us Strangle The Last King  
With The Guts Of The Last Priest”  
“Two Weeks Ago, A Tribe In Taif,  
Near Mecca, Prevented The Security  
Forces Enforcing A Royal Order  
Confiscating Their Land”  
“They Forced The Authorities To Cancel  
The Confiscation Order By Physical  
Protest”**

27 February 2012 By Saad al-Faqih, Guardian News and Media

**‘Let us strangle the last king with the guts of the last priest,’ the French 18th century philosopher Denis Diderot said.**

**The same phrase is now widely repeated across Arabia – or Saudi Arabia, as it is currently named under the dynastic autocracy.**

**It is only a matter of time before the revolutions that have swept the Arab world in the past year reach the Saudi kingdom.**

Most of the factors that led to the Arab uprisings are present in Arabia.

The Saudi regime holds tens of thousands of political prisoners, most without charge – just one example of the oppression people suffer.

The scale of corruption is staggering. In the most recent budget alone, \$100bn is unaccounted for. In this country with its huge oil revenue, unemployment rates are soaring (currently more than 30%), the average salary is less than \$1,300 (£820) a month, with a huge discrepancy between classes, and 22% of the population live in poverty.

As a result of corruption, the oil wealth has had little impact on the quality of life of the average citizen, as is the case in neighbouring Gulf countries.

What is worse is that the royal family continues to treat the country and its people as its private property. Instead of attempting to provide the citizens with the strong identity people long for, they have reinforced the subjugation to the royal family of Al-Saud.

Furthermore, as elsewhere in the Arab world, the expansion in communication tools has broken down barriers and deprived the Saudi regime of the secrecy and deception on which its legitimacy relied. Opposition-run satellite stations now voice an alternative message, while the internet and mobiles allow easy interaction, making virtual debates more effective than real ones.

**In the past couple of months, one anonymous twitter account, @mujtahidd, has attracted more than 220,000 followers thanks to its ability to expose corruption in a detailed, accurate manner.**

**@mujtahidd has already published thousands of remarkably well informed tweets about several royal family members, including the king.**

The popularity of @mujtahidd has gone beyond Twitter; it has become the talk of the nation. So much so that blocking his account inside the kingdom did nothing to stop the number of followers escalating. This readiness to embrace the campaign of leaks by an anonymous individual is a demonstration of how little people trust the country's official media.

Reformists from many different backgrounds are increasingly audible in society. Most are from the religious ranks – as has been the case in other Arab countries where upheavals occurred.

It is these religious reformers themselves, not the liberals, who repeat Diderot's call for a settling of accounts with both princes and their tame religious hierarchy.

It is this kind of apparent contradiction – along with the complexity of Arabia's geopolitical map – which makes many observers incapable of forecasting the kingdom's political future.

The western media, where they notice the ferment in Arabia at all, focus on the Shia revolt and the position of women.

It is true that the Shia are very active in protest – their demonstrations are massive. However, they are a minority and the regime links them with Iran, so their protests remain isolated and self-contained. The regime has so far successfully used these protests in its favour, by persuading the Sunni majority of a threat of a Shia "takeover" of the Eastern province.

And within Arabia, where both sexes are deprived of their basic rights, the west's focus on women's rights has backfired, as it has become twinned with unpopular "western" values.

Paying attention exclusively to these two questions suits the Saudi regime because it gives the impression that it is not facing other distracts from more far-reaching challenges that threaten its very existence. The regime is more concerned with its portrayal in the west as a stable and resilient regime than being seen as serving minority rights or encouraging western values.

Any major internal challenge to its stability would result in western powers losing confidence in its ability to serve their interest.

So why hasn't revolution yet reached Arabia?

The traditional inhibitions are still there. Despite the widespread conviction that a comprehensive change of regime is necessary, reformers remain hesitant about declaring their views, let alone taking action.

The official religious establishment, whose members are directly appointed by the king, continue to appease the regime in a country where religion is the main player in politics.

People are bombarded with scaremongering in the media which associates change with chaos and bloodshed as in Yemen, Syria and Libya.

More significant still is the level of distrust between activists, making any collective act of protest difficult. Political activism in Arabia has been almost nonexistent, while terms such as freedom of expression, power sharing, transparency and accountability are seen as alien.

This does not mean change is impossible.

Even the heir to the throne, Prince Nayef, (Crown Prince, deputy PM and Interior Minister) is regarded with so little reverence that there are calls from within the country to bring him to trial.

One activist wrote an open letter to Nayef saying protests would erupt after his departure of the current king (the king is 90). Meanwhile official religious scholars are being rejected in favour of independent ones because the religious establishment is increasingly being seen as a partner in corruption.

Scaremongering in the Saudi media – about a Shi'a takeover, for example – will continue to be effective until people reach the threshold where fear becomes irrelevant – as has proved to be the case in Syria and elsewhere in the region.

**As for the international support for the regime, from America and Europe, this is already backfiring as the people see Al-Saud selling the country to western "masters".**

The balance of factors in Arabia is clearly tipping in the direction of profound change. Change of such a scale is usually triggered either by an expected event – such as the death of the king – or an unexpected incident – as was the case with Bouazizi, whose self-immolation sparked Tunisia's revolt.

**Two weeks ago, a tribe in Taif, near Mecca, prevented the security forces enforcing a royal order confiscating their land.**

**They forced the authorities to cancel the confiscation order by physical protest.**

**Across the country, people are asking: if one small tribe can regain its land through peaceful protest, why shouldn't the entire nation reclaim its rights in a similar way?**

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## DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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**“The Government Was Keeping  
Tabs On OWS”**

**The “Process Included DHS  
Scouring OWS-Related Twitter  
Feeds”**

**“The Report Emphasizes The Need  
To ‘Control Protesters’”**

**The DHS Document Appears To Be  
“Concerned With Protecting The  
Mechanisms Of The Financial Sector”**

Feb 29, 2012 By Allison Kilkenny, In These Times [Excerpts]

Rolling Stone's Michael Hastings last night posted a story on an internal DHS report entitled "SPECIAL COVERAGE: Occupy Wall Street," dated October of last year. The five-page report, part of five million newly leaked documents obtained by Wikileaks, sums up the history of the movement and assesses its "impact" on the financial services and government facilities.

In an interview on Citizen Radio, Hastings talked about the monitoring by DHS and also the leaked emails from Stratfor, a leading private intelligence firm Hastings describes as the "shadow CIA."

The process of combing through the huge amount of leaked documents has only just begun, but Hastings considers the revelation that the government was keeping tabs on OWS to be the biggest news so far to come out of the latest dump.

The monitoring, or spying (depending on how generous one is feeling), process included DHS scouring OWS-related Twitter feeds.

"(DHS) was following all of the social networking activity that was going on among Occupy Wall Street," says Hastings.

**"Now, I'm sure this is going to be spun tomorrow as this continues to grow that, oh, it's just benign, DHS just used open source material to do this, and that's true, but the question is: why is a large government bureaucracy who's mandated to protect the homeland...monitoring very closely a peaceful political protest movement?"**

**"They're not monitoring the Democratic National Committee, they're not monitoring Young Republican meetings. They're monitoring Occupy Wall Street."**

The report emphasizes the need to "control protesters," terminology Hastings finds troubling, along with DHS's assertion that OWS will likely become more violent.

**"(The report) names all the sort of groups (DHS is) worried about, one being Anonymous, this hacktivist group, but it also names the other people in Occupy Wall Street: labor unions, student groups," Hastings says.**

One might expect to read some hand-wringing over public safety concerns in a government document, and yet the DHS document appears to be more concerned with protecting the mechanisms of the financial sector than in ensuring the safety of citizens who are exercising their First Amendment rights.

"They talk about threats to 'critical infrastructure' and this fear that these protests are going to...make commerce difficult and people are going to start losing money. There is a kind of bottom line in analysis to what they're talking about. There isn't an emphasis on public safety in a way one would expect from a department that's supposed to protect the homeland. It's this sort of sense that they're protecting somebody's homeland, and they're the folks who generally make all the money."



This same business-over-people bias is present in the second major leak involving the Stratfor emails. “When you go look at the back-and-forth, it’s all about, well, we have to protect lower Manhattan so the bankers can get to work on time.”

Hastings talks about two troubling tracks: In the DHS case, the U.S. government monitoring activist groups, and in the Stratfor case, large corporations paying a private intelligence firm to monitor other activist groups.

**On Jan. 26, 2011, Fred Burton, the vice president of Stratfor, fired off an excited email to his colleagues: “Text Not for Pub. We have a sealed indictment on Assange. Pls protect.”**

The question was: who did Burton mean by “we”?

“It’s like the Big Lebowski, right? The royal We,” says Hastings.

**What Burton meant by “we” was the U.S. government.**

**“We know that the Department of Justice had been investigating Assange, and playing this game of oftentimes not explicitly saying what they were doing, but sort of threatening they would be doing this espionage investigation.**

**“We know that they’ve interviewed people in a grand jury, and then a few weeks ago with the Bradley Manning pre-trial that they were actually trying to make this espionage case against Assange,” says Hastings.**

**“Burton claims that there in fact a secret U.S. indictment against Assange related, essentially, to espionage. That’s pretty big news.”**

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# Win One For Our Side: Protests Lead To End Of Stupid, Cruel, Racist Arrests And Tickets For Being Late To School



Students rally against truancy policies on the steps of City Hall in Los Angeles on Feb. 22. The city is relaxing its punitive truancy policies to focus on the reasons students skip class. Nick Ut/AP

March 1, 2012 by Krissy Clark, NPR. This story was co-reported with Susan Ferriss of the Center for Public Integrity.

Los Angeles is easing its stance on truancy.

For the past decade, a tough city ordinance slapped huge fines on students for even one instance of skipping school or being late, but the Los Angeles City Council is changing that law to focus on helping students get to class because it turns out those harsh fines were backfiring.

Two years ago, Nabil Romero, a young Angeleno with a thin black mustache, was running late to his first period at a public high school on L.A.'s Westside.

"I live two bus rides away from my school," he says. "The first bus ride took 45 minutes; the second one did as well. By the time I arrived school, I was approached by police officers and I was told to stop. I was handcuffed, searched."

Romero had to pay a \$350 truancy fine — a lot in a single-parent home like his.

**“When my mom heard the fine, she was like, ‘Oh, we’re going to have to cut back on a lot of stuff,’ and we started cutting back on food expenses, clothes expenses, shoes,” he recalls. “And this was all my fault.”**

Well, maybe not all his fault. The ticket Romero got was for breaking the city of L.A.’s daytime curfew law — a law that, critics say, often punishes low-income kids making an honest effort to get to school.

Manuel Criollo, an organizer with L.A.’s Community Rights Campaign, says he first started hearing stories like Romero’s a few years ago, stories about police ticketing kids on their way to campus, or rounding them up at bus stops.

“To be honest, all of us were like, ‘OK, are you guys literally saying they’re at the bus stop?’ And we went out there, and yeah — literally, you had school police basically waiting for young people to give them tickets!”

**Criollo’s group got ahold of police data showing that in five years, officers issued 47,000 truancy tickets — most right next to schools in lower-income neighborhoods. Blacks and Latinos received a disproportionate number of the tickets, compared with the makeup of the student population.**

The daytime curfew only applies to unaccompanied minors.

Criollo points out that in richer neighborhoods, tardy kids often escape tickets because their parents drive them to school. Kids in poor neighborhoods usually rely on public buses.

**At a recent rally to protest the law, teacher Andrew Terranova explains that tickets meant to scare kids into going to school have had the opposite effect.**

**“I had students who I’d say, ‘Where were you yesterday? You were absent from my class.’ ‘Oh, Mister, I was late. I missed my connecting bus so I went home.’ ‘Why’d you go home?’ ‘ Oh, I was afraid of getting another truancy ticket.’ “**

Michael Nash, the presiding judge for L.A.’s Juvenile Court, where most of the tickets and fines are handled, called the fines crazy.

“We weren’t really accomplishing anything,” he says. “The court is not going to solve that problem if the kids are late to school. That’s something for the schools to work out with the kids and the families.”

So now, under the new daytime curfew law, police must avoid targeting students clearly headed to campus in the first 90 minutes of school.

“We have to take a look at what can we do to try and help us resolve the root problem of this rather than the Band-Aid approach of just writing the citation,” says L.A. school police chief Steve Zipperman.

When tickets are issued, fines will be waived for the first two offenses, and students will have to work with counselors to come up with an attendance plan — looking into transportation issues or family stuff that might be getting in the way.

City Councilman Tony Cardenas recently summed up the city's new approach to a crowd of students inside city hall.

"Young people, this is not a permission slip to be late. There are still consequences," he said. "However, instead of purely punishing like the current system, we will be there for you; we will be there with you."

Believe it or not, Cardenas told them, an adult is actually going to talk to you, and help figure out how to get you to school on time.

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**“Hundreds Of Supporters Of  
Former Maldives President  
Mohamed Nasheed Clashed With  
Police On Thursday”  
“The New President Was Blocked  
From Addressing Parliament”  
“Nasheed, Who Became The Maldives’  
First Democratically Elected President In  
2008 After 30 Years Of Authoritarian  
Rule, Said He Was Removed From Power  
In An Armed Coup On Feb. 7”**

March 1, 2012 By TOM WRIGHT, Wall Street Journal [Excerpts]

Hundreds of supporters of former Maldives President Mohamed Nasheed clashed with police on Thursday as the new President was blocked from addressing Parliament, in signs that the Indian Ocean nation's political crisis is far from over.

Officials from President Waheed Hassan Manik's government said protesters threw steel bars at police, injuring 16 officers and leading to the detention of 44 supporters of Mr. Nasheed. A spokesman for the Maldivian Democratic Party, Mr. Nasheed's political organization, said four of the party's members were in the hospital but denied there had been serious violence.

Mr. Nasheed, who became the Maldives' first democratically elected president in 2008 after 30 years of authoritarian rule, said he was removed from power in an armed coup

on Feb. 7. Mr. Manik denies taking power unconstitutionally. He was Mr. Nasheed's vice president, and says Mr. Nasheed resigned of his own volition.

Since that change in leadership, MDP supporters have held regular rallies in Male, the capital, calling for immediate elections, confident that voters would restore Mr. Nasheed to power.

In February, after mediation by India, Mr. Manik's government committed to "early" elections in a road map aimed at ending the political crisis.

But the document gave no date for elections, and MDP lawmakers on Thursday stopped Mr. Manik from making his inaugural address to Parliament by occupying the speaker's chair.

Thousands of Nasheed supporters took to the streets.

The violence appeared to be the worst in Male since Feb. 8, the day after Mr. Nasheed's ouster, when scores of MDP supporters ended up in the hospital after clashes with police.

The U.S. and human-rights groups condemned the police for that earlier crackdown.

The lingering crisis risks tarnishing the image of a country whose luxury-tourism industry caters to 900,000 foreigners a year.



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