

## **Military Resistance 10C6**



“UK mission in Afghanistan to continue despite the loss of six soldiers who were caught in a huge explosion” -- Steve Bell

**The Syrian Conflict’s  
Biggest Wave Of Military  
Defections To Date:  
“Everyone, Including Top  
Generals, Now Fear For Their  
Lives”**

# **“The Defections Appeared To Boost Syria’s Armed Opposition, And Exposed Corrosive Sectarian Splits In Syria’s Army”**

**“At Least 50 Officers Have Defected From The Army Over The Past Week”**

**“The Latest Wave, These People Said, Included Six Brigadier-Generals, Four Colonels And A Female First Lieutenant”**

Mar 8, 2012 By Erika Solomon and John Irish, Reuters & March 9, 2012 By NOUR MALAS and SIOBHAN GORMAN, Wall Street Journal [Excerpts]

Several high-ranking Syrian military officials joined the opposition to President Bashar al-Assad on Thursday and Friday, in the Syrian conflict’s biggest wave of military defections to date.

The men fled over the past three days to a camp for Syrian army deserters in southern Turkey, according to Lieutenant Khaled al-Hamoud, a spokesman for the Free Syrian Army (FSA).

**“We have six brigadier generals who are now in Turkey and another, who has stayed to lead some battalions inside Syria,” Hamoud said.**

**The senior rebel officer remaining in Syria is Brigadier General Adnan Farzat, who announced his defection in a YouTube video on Tuesday, saying he objected to the intensified shelling in his home town.**

**He will operate in the battered Homs province, parts of which have been severely damaged during the Syrian forces’ crackdown on centers of rebellion against four decades of Assad family rule.**

The defections appeared to boost Syria’s armed opposition, and exposed corrosive sectarian splits in Syria’s army, between a largely Sunni core of soldiers and the highest officials, many of whom are from the same minority Alawite sect as President Assad.

The defections also appeared to lay the ground for new struggles within Syria’s already-fractured opposition. The rebel Free Syrian Army, led by a former Syrian army colonel since its founding last year, has since been joined by higher-ranking officers. A

brigadier-general who defected in January is preparing to split into his own armed group, rebels familiar with his plans said Friday.

At least 50 officers have defected from the army over the past week, including 15 who crossed into Turkey on Thursday and Friday, senior rebel leaders said. The latest wave, these people said, included six brigadier-generals, four colonels and a female first lieutenant.

Turkey's state-run Anadolu news agency said 234 Syrian refugees crossed into Turkey since Thursday, including four defected generals, two colonels and a field officer. The agency hasn't typically catalogued defections.

The Free Syrian Army, a patchwork group of defectors and local militias fighting the regime's forces, has become the focus of international attention, despite a joint United Nations-Arab League effort to pursue a diplomatic track on Syria.

The high-ranking defections announced Friday are significant, analysts say, because they could give credence to a rebel group so far dominated by young conscripts and led by colonels who appear to have little command over a growing ground insurgency.

The FSA is led by Col. Riad al-As'ad, who held on to the top spot even after the January defection of Brigadier General Moustafa al-Shaikh, who now heads a military council meant to absorb higher-ranking defectors.

Rebels say the council works within the rebel army. The two officers appear to maintain contact, separately, with different groups on the ground in different regions of Syria.

Brig. Gen. Shaikh now plans to split off and form his own group in coming days amid disagreements over the rebel army's relationship to the Syrian National Council, if rebel and opposition leaders can't come to a power-sharing compromise, rebels familiar with his plans said Friday. The move could make it vastly more difficult for the opposition council to coordinate, fund and equip the rebels.

Senior rebels said Friday that recent defections were partly due to Sunni officers coming under increasing threat from higher-ranking Alawites.

**"The situation has changed very quickly in Syria," said Col. Aref Hammoud, who was among dissident soldiers who greeted the incoming defectors in the southern Turkey camp that houses the Free Syrian Army.**

**"Everyone, including top generals, now fear for their lives."**

Mr. Hammoud described recent high-ranking defectors relaying stories of Sunni officers in Syria being detained, and their families being pursued.

"Just being Sunni is suspect," he said. A higher-ranking defector said some 2,000 Sunni officers have been detained since the start of the uprising last year.

Senior defectors confirmed that Turkish authorities last week thwarted a planned kidnapping of Col. As'ad, the FSA's founder.

The rebels are also concerned for the safety of the men's families, who have not left Syria, the two spokesmen said. They said Syrian forces had arrested the family of Brigadier General Faez Amro, who fled to Turkey last month.

There have been several reports of defecting officers' relatives being killed.

And on Wednesday, Syrian security forces detained the family of Brig. Gen. Fayeze Amro, the deputy of the rebels' Higher Revolutionary Military Council.

Mr. Amro's wife and six children were kidnapped by members of Syria's powerful air-force intelligence, said Fahd Almasri, a Paris-based spokesperson for the council.

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## **AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS**

### **California Soldier Dies Of December 3 Afghan Wounds**

Mar 8, 2012 The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A 21-year-old Fort Bliss soldier is dead after an improvised bomb blew up the military vehicle in which he was riding in Afghanistan.

A Defense Department statement Thursday says Spc. Edward J. Acosta of Hesperia, Calif., died Monday in La Jolla, Calif., of wounds suffered Dec. 3 in the explosion in Wardak province of central Afghanistan.

He was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division from Fort Bliss, Texas.

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

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

**“An Afghan Policeman On Late-Night  
Guard Duty At A Checkpoint Allowed  
Taliban Insurgents To Enter And Kill  
Nine Other Policemen” “While They  
Were In Dreamland”**

March 8, 2012 By ROD NORDLAND, The New York Times Company [Excerpts]

KABUL, Afghanistan — An Afghan policeman on late-night guard duty at a checkpoint allowed Taliban insurgents to enter and kill nine other policemen as they slept in their beds, an official in the Ministry of Interior said on Thursday.

The guard, who escaped, was a member of the Afghan Local Police, a unit trained and vetted by American Special Operations troops, according to Brig. Gen. Ali Shah Ahmadzai, who is in charge of the local police program at the Ministry of Interior.

The episode occurred in Oruzgan Province, in southern Afghanistan, around 2 a.m. Wednesday, he said.

General Ahmadzai said he had information indicating the guard was a Taliban infiltrator, though he declined to elaborate, and added that the police were seeking the man.

“He helped coordinate the attack and let the Taliban in, and they killed them while they were in dreamland,” General Ahmadzai said.

**Elsewhere, the police were targeted by a bomb in the eastern city of Jalalabad, the fourth bomb attack there in a week.**

The bomb was planted in the median strip of a city street and went off around 7:30 a.m. Thursday, wounding 11 people. Seven of the victims were policemen.

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# **“We Are Tired Of The Americans Here”**

## **“There Is No Trust Between Us”**

03.08.12 By JON STEPHENSON AND ALI SAFI, McClatchy Newspapers & By Rowan Scarborough, The Washington Times

KABUL, Afghanistan -- Afghan soldiers and police say the recent burning of Qurans by U.S. personnel has seriously undermined their trust in their American counterparts, suggesting that the decade-long campaign to win hearts and minds has not only failed but also threatens the Obama administration's exit strategy.

“We are tired of the Americans here,” said Mohammad Aziz, 20, a Kabul police officer. “We don't want them to stay because they keep insulting our religion.”

“It has created a gap between us and the Americans,” said Col. Rozi Khan of the Afghan army's commando brigade. “There is no trust between us.”

Interviews with more than two dozen Afghan security personnel in recent weeks suggest that mistrust and hostility between the supposed allies has been simmering for years - but boiled over after Feb. 20, when American personnel burned Qurans and other religious materials at the U.S.-run Bagram Air Base north of Kabul.

Several Afghans interviewed voiced frustration at previous incidents of Americans desecrating the Quran. And while they didn't mention specific cases, the burning last year of a copy of the Muslim holy book by Florida pastor Terry Jones received wide attention in Afghanistan and sparked days of deadly protests nationwide.

“The Quran has been burned by the Americans on several occasions in the past,” said Jamaluddin, a sergeant major interviewed in Kabul who, like many Afghans, uses only one name.

Some Afghan soldiers and police said they couldn't understand how U.S. personnel could make such a mistake after more than a decade in Afghanistan.

“If an American burns the Quran in front of my eyes, I will kill him. I don't care whether I live afterwards or not,” said Jandad, a soldier based at Afghanistan's Ministry of Defense in Kabul. “My life would be worthless if I saw such a thing and didn't take action.”

Even some Afghans who said they preferred non-U.S. ISAF forces to Americans said they were not happy with the presence of any Western soldiers in Afghanistan.

Police officer Ghulam Hazrat, who is based in the northern province of Kunduz and was trained by Dutch and German forces, said they behaved with greater cultural and religious sensitivity than U.S. soldiers, but he added that “these foreigners are all the same.”

“They are all infidels,” Hazrat said.

Last year, Jeffrey Bordin, a political and behavioral scientist, published a field study in Afghanistan for the U.S. Army.

**He conducted 68 focus groups made up of 613 Afghans to determine the reasons for the repeated occurrences of “personal clashes.”**

**The list of grievances: U.S. convoys running traffic signs, indiscriminate fire that killed civilians, use of flawed intelligence sources, violations of female privacy during searches, public urination and the unnecessary shooting of animals.**

**“They found many U.S. soldiers to be extremely arrogant, bullying, unwilling to listen to their advice and were often seen as lacking concern for civilian and ANSF safety during combat,” Mr. Bordin found.**

**U.S. soldiers had their own list of complaints about their Afghan comrades.**

**The study said: “They reported pervasive illicit drug use, massive thievery, personal instability, dishonesty, no integrity, incompetence, unsafe weapons handling, corrupt officers ... covert alliances/informal treaties with insurgents, high AWOL rates, bad morale, laziness, repulsive hygiene and the torture of dogs.”**

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## **REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE: ALL HOME NOW**



U.S. soldiers keep watch after a car bomb blast in Kandahar province February 20, 2012. REUTERS/Ahmad Nadeem

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## **SOMALIA WAR REPORTS**

# **Somalia Islamists Al-Shabab Ambush Ethiopian Occupation Troops; 73 Killed**

10 March 2012 BBC

Islamist militant group al-Shabab has ambushed an Ethiopian base in Somalia, with dozens of casualties, reports say.

They attacked the base, near Yurkut village in the central region of Geddo, from two directions at dawn.

Al-Shabab claimed to have killed 73 Ethiopians, while the Somali government said it in turn killed 48 members of the militant group.

BBC correspondents say it is the most intense fighting since Ethiopian troops entered Somalia last November.

The fighting lasted for more than three hours, but correspondents say it will be difficult to verify the exact number of dead.

The attack took place between the border with Ethiopia and Baidoa, a town Ethiopian forces took last month from al-Shabab rebels.

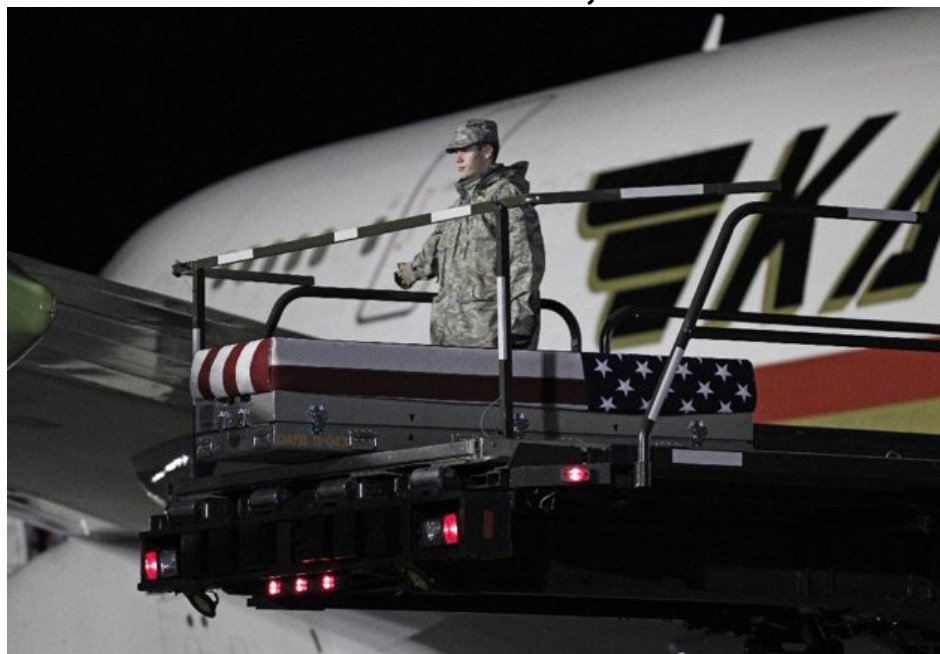
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## MILITARY NEWS

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



The remains of Marine Lance Cpl. Edward J. Dycus of Greenville, Miss., at Dover Air Force Base, Del. Feb. 2, 2012. L-Cpl. Dycus was killed by an Afghan Army soldier who was guarding a joint operating base with him. (AP Photo/Jose Luis Magana)

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**Transportation Security  
Administration Fucking Over  
Returning Veterans:  
“TSA Is Still Not Required To Hold  
Positions And Promotions For  
Employees Who Are Called Away To  
Serve”**

# “If The Federal Government Cannot Be A Model Employer For Our Veterans, Who Can Be?”

Mar 8, 2012 By Rick Maze, Army Times [Excerpts]

A House subcommittee is considering two bills that would expand job protections for veterans — and advocacy groups say both changes are long overdue.

HR 3524, would prevent employers from discriminating against disabled veterans who miss work because they are receiving medical treatment for service-connected disabilities. They could receive up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave a year without fear of losing their job, under the bill pending before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee's economic opportunity panel.

HR 3670 would extend employment and re-employment rights to workers for the Transportation Security Administration. TSA notes on its website that it follows “many of the provisions” of the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act, but under current law it is the only federal employer exempt from USERRA.

TSA, which has more than 50,000 employees, was created after the 2001 terrorist attacks on the U.S. with an exemption from many employment protections.

“More than a decade later, TSA is still not required to hold positions and promotions for employees who are called away to serve,” said Ryan Gallucci of Veterans of Foreign Wars.

“If the federal government cannot be a model employer for our veterans, who can be?” asked Rep. Tim Walz, D-Minn., a subcommittee member who supports the legislation.

**Ronald Young, the Defense Department's director for family and employment policy, said he is aware of 20 employment and re-employment rights disputes over the last three years involving TSA, most resolved by administrative discussions.**

**But Walz said TSA does not believe all USERRA rules apply to the agency, which is one reason to pass the bill.**

## **Troops Invited:**

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

## 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**

**Rise like Lions after slumber  
In unvanquishable number,  
Shake your chains to earth like dew  
Which in sleep had fallen on you-  
Ye are many — they are few  
-- Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1819, on the occasion of a mass murder of British  
workers by the Imperial government at Peterloo.**

**“The Regime In Damascus  
Thought That Adopting A More  
Hawkish Foreign Policy  
Towards The West In General  
And The US In Particular Would  
Make It Immune To Revolution”  
“That Was A Fatal Mistake”  
“The Average Syrian Does Not Really  
Care About The Confessional  
Background Of His Oppressors”  
“A Sizeable Part Of The Sunni Rich Class  
Remains Loyal To The Regime”**

March 9, 2012 By Marwan Kabalan, Special to Gulf News [Excerpts]

As the Syrian revolution enters its second year, analysts remain busy trying to explain and understand how a country with very strong authoritarian credentials and strict central rule could suddenly slip into chaos and civil conflict.

In trying to do that, analysts have made several mistakes.

In the first place they failed to spot signs of a brewing storm. For most of them, the Syrian revolution was something completely unexpected. The Syrian regime contributed to making such a perception, but has eventually fallen victim to it.

The regime in Damascus thought that adopting a more hawkish foreign policy towards the West in general and the US in particular would make it immune to revolution.

That was a fatal mistake.

**In January 2011, merely six weeks before the uprising, Syrian President Bashar Al Assad told the Wall Street Journal that his country is very unlikely to go through the turmoil that hit Tunisia and Egypt because the foreign policy of his country had tremendous support among Syrians.**

“If you want to talk about Tunisia and Egypt, we are outside of this ... We have more difficult circumstances than most of the Arab countries but in spite of that Syria is stable. Why? Because you have to be very closely linked to the beliefs of the people. This is the core issue. When there is divergence between your policy and the people’s beliefs and interests, you will have this vacuum that creates disturbance. So people do not only live on interests; they also live on beliefs, especially in very ideological areas,” Al Assad told the US newspaper.

**Indeed, this line of argument would help later to explain the protest movement in terms of foreign conspiracy, but that proved to be another fatal mistake.**

Even when some resorted to socio-economic tools to analyse the situation in Syria following the Tunisian and Egyptian revolution they came up with exactly the same conclusion: Syria was immune to revolution.

Michael Broning, Director of the prestigious Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, a German political foundation, wrote an article in Foreign Affairs magazine.

The key theme of his article was that Syria was different from other countries in the Arab Middle East. “Syrian youth certainly share the economic grievances of young people in Tunisia and Egypt, but widespread poverty and unemployment are unlikely to catalyse sudden popular uprising.”

He justifies his argument on the grounds that in Syria “political isolation and domestic authoritarianism have severely restricted the development of a politically conscious and economically empowered middle class”.

As such, the situation in Damascus differs significantly from pre-revolutionary Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya.

In all three countries, public fury was fuelled by a highly visible and ever-increasing status gap between a large elite class and a marginalised majority.

Unlike Syrians, protesters in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya perceived their poverty to be relative rather than absolute — and thus as an injustice caused by the regime, Broning concluded.

**Indeed, like many other theories about the Middle East and Arab world, this pathetic argument fell like a house of sand just a week after it was published in Foreign Affairs.**

Another big mistake was made after the breakout of the uprising and focused on the roots of the Syrian crisis.

Most analysts, especially after the transformation of the largely peaceful protest movement into an armed struggle, tended to focus on the sectarian element of the conflict. This was also very misleading theory.

**The key point that the average Syrian does not really care about the confessional background of his oppressors was completely overlooked.**

**Analysts have also ignored the fact that a sizeable part of the Sunni rich class remains loyal to the regime as is still apparent in Syria's two biggest cities, Damascus and Aleppo.**

When the uprising began, most western and Arab governments expected the regime to crush it in a matter of days or weeks.

These are just few examples of the poor understanding of Syria in the West and in the region too.

**MORE:**

**Syria And The Palestinians:  
“No Other Arab State Except Jordan  
Has As Much Palestinian Blood On  
Its Hands As Has The Syrian Regime  
Under The 42-Year Assad Dynasty”  
“A Regime That Not Only Kills Its People,  
But Whose Entire History Has Meant The  
Shedding Of Massive Quantities Of  
Palestinian Blood”**

March 7, 2012 By Michael Karadjis, Links.org.au [Excerpts]

The declaration by Ismail Haniyeh, prime minister of Hamas, that his movement was backing the popular uprising in Syria against the brutal regime of Bashar al-Assad was widely reported, as was the significance of his statement to worshipers at Cairo's Al Azhar mosque.

Hamas, while ruling the Gaza Strip, had its exile leadership based in Syria; now Haniyeh was perhaps betting on a new strategic relationship with post-Mubarak Egypt. Haniyeh saluted “the heroic Syrian people, who are striving for freedom, democracy and reform”.

In fact, Haniyeh's very strong statements in support of the Syrian people were not the only statements from Hamas.

Another senior Hamas official in Gaza, Mahmud Zahar, said Hamas was not taking sides in the Syrian conflict. “We cannot take one side, with half a million Palestinians living in complete freedom in Syria having to (face the consequences) of this position ... We do not seek to get involved in internal or regional Arab conflicts. Our fundamental struggle is directed against the Israeli occupation of Palestine.” He did “advise” the Syrian regime

“to give more freedom to the Syrian people, in order to strengthen Syria so that it would be able to free the occupied Golan territory and support the resistance (against Israel)”.

Given the presence of so many Palestinians in Syria, he has a point. Palestinians have their own problems, to say the least; the last thing they need is to be on the “wrong” side in Syria when one or the other side wins, and have to face the consequences.

And while Hamas’ obvious sympathies are, as Haniyeh made clear, with the Syrian people who are fighting for freedom, the consequences of being on the “wrong” side in the event of Assad retaining power could well be dire, given the simple fact that no other Arab state except Jordan has as much Palestinian blood on its hands as has the Syrian regime under the 42-year Assad dynasty.

Being on the “wrong” side in the event of the victory of the Syrian uprising could also be nasty, depending on who exactly wins; there are certainly those among the externally based Syrian National Congress (SNC), especially those closest to the reactionary Saudi Arabian and Qatar monarchies, who could be equally vicious.

That should be the starting point for any supporter of the Palestinian people: recognition that their first priority is to their struggle and the defence of their people, not to gaining nods of approval from Western leftists and some of their more peculiar views.

Least of all would Palestinian freedom fighters be concerned about a most peculiar sect writing that Hamas’s decision to finally denounce the 12 months of daily slaughter of the Syrian people in the streets by the reactionary Assad clique “points ultimately toward a complete break with Iran and Syria and rapprochement the US imperialism”.

This assertion by the “World Socialist Web Site” (WSWS) was essentially a rehash of what had been thrown about in the bourgeois media, indeed, from the more no-nothing sections of it.

While this web-based sect would be of little consequence to the Palestinians, it is worthwhile to look at their argument as part of a discussion of how leftists relate to national liberation movements such as Hamas – whatever its errors and limitations – compared to how we ought to relate to a consolidated capitalist state, even one with some “anti-imperialist” heritage (in the case of Assad, as will be shown below, an entirely fictitious one).

The implication in the WSWS statement that it is the Syrian regime, rather than the national liberation movement Hamas, that has a more fundamental conflict with US imperialism flies in the face of decades of reality, as anyone with the slightest knowledge of recent Middle East politics is aware, so without other evidence, there is simply no reason for Hamas’s shift to “point to” anything of the sort.

Perhaps Hamas actually prefers the at least slightly open Egyptian border since the fall of Mubarak to the tightly-closed-as-ever-for-40-years Syrian-Israeli border.

Hamas had been based in Damascus not out of love for Assad, but due to having few alternatives.

As long as Mubarak ruled Egypt, that country was an active collaborator with the Zionist occupation of Palestine, especially the criminal siege of Gaza.

Hamas had been based in Jordan until King Hussein kicked it out in the late 1990s.

The deal was, “we (Syria) give you offices, but you make sure to never use Syrian territory for any operations against Israel, even symbolic”.

The Syrian border with Israel on the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights was the second quietest border for 40 years, after that of Egypt, enforced by the “anti-imperialist” Assad.

If the regime was never going to move even symbolically on its own occupied territory, it sure as hell was not going to allow Palestinians to.

**“One Of The Statements Continually Heard Both In The Capitalist Mass Media And Among Leftists With Some Level Of Illusions In Assad Was That The West May Want A “More Pliant” Regime In Damascus”**

But with the fall of Mubarak things have changed.

Certainly, the Egyptian generals are not exactly enthusiastic supporters of the Palestinian struggle, but under the influence of the revolution, their public posturing has shifted since Mubarak; certainly over the last year a number of events on the Egypt-Israel borders have shifted the number one most sealed border from Egypt to Syria.

Why Hamas would not want to take advantage of that – especially given the proximity of Egypt to Gaza – would be a mystery.

Clearly, by making his announcement at Friday prayers in Egypt, Haniyeh manoeuvred to push forward the positive momentum in Egypt. The fact that the Muslim Brotherhood is now the strongest party in Egypt, and that Hamas was originally the Palestinian wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, is hardly insignificant either; and the brotherhood is, of course, for better or worse, a prominent part of the Syrian opposition based among the Sunni majority there.

The WSWS thought that Hamas’ shift away from Assad’s dictatorship indicated a move away from Hamas’s more militant stand on Palestinian issues to a more compromising stand, again reflecting bad bourgeois media.

Yet one has to think: why would a national liberation movement moving away from support for a reactionary capitalist dictatorship indicate a softer, more compromising line towards imperialism and Zionism?

Unless one had massive illusions in the nature of that regime.

How would it be that a capitalist regime would be more “militant” than the national liberation movement of the very people being oppressed by Israel?



Indeed, one of the statements continually heard both in the capitalist mass media and among leftists with some level of illusions in Assad was that the West may want a “more pliant” regime in Damascus; while often acknowledging the real limitations and vacillations of Assad, many leftists suggested that giving sanctuary to the exile leadership of Hamas was an example of how the Assad regime was not completely pliant, still had a little bit of anti-imperialist backbone.

Thus Assad was measured based on partial support to Hamas (and Hezbollah in Lebanon).

Logically, then, if Assad had kicked out Hamas, one could say this may indicate Assad moving towards accommodation with imperialism. But how does it follow that when Hamas quits Syria of its own accord that this indicates Hamas has gone pliant? There is a lack of logic in such statements.

In any case, let’s look at some facts regarding what WSWS says.

The article asserted:

*This aptly called ‘seismic’ shift has already expressed itself in the most recent position of the group’s leadership toward reconciliation with Fatah in the West Bank and its willingness to abandon armed struggle against Israel and ultimately endorse a two-state solution.*

The mind boggles.

The movement of Hamas towards reconciliation with Fatah is already several years old, starting a very long time before Hamas’s recent break with Damascus.

And from the point of view of the Palestinian people, this move towards reconciliation is long overdue on both sides and very much in their interests.

Second, Hamas has been engaged almost entirely in political struggle for at least seven-eight years. Nearly all suicide attacks ended in 2003, then definitely in 2005 after a final spate. There have been occasional armed operations with other Palestinian groups against Israeli armed forces since then, but overwhelmingly it has not been an armed but political struggle.

For just as long, Hamas has pushed the hudna, or ceasefire, concept, whereby if Israel ends its occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem and allows a fully independent Palestinian state there, Hamas will definitively end all armed struggle, while refusing to give up the ultimate goal of liberating all of Palestine; achieved after that via political struggle. Hamas is completely right on this, and this has been decade-long policy.

### **“Assad – Like King Hussein Of Jordan – Was Willing To Put Words Into Action By Actively Slaughtering Palestinians”**

For an allegedly Trotskyist grouplet, WSWS displays remarkable illusions in a capitalist dictatorship:

*Hamas's presence in Syria dates back to 1999, when the Jordanian monarchy expelled it in a bid to strengthen the position of its rival, the Fatah leadership in the PLO in the so-called peace process. Syria, which had historically opposed any settlement between Palestinian groups and Israel on the basis of a two-state solution, provided the group with logistical and financial support.*

Let us be very clear: Syria under the Assad dynasty has never opposed a two-state solution and never claimed to.

When Assad senior seized power in 1970 from the left-wing Baath Party that had ruled in the 1960s, the new regime immediately recognised UN Resolution 242, as did Egypt and Jordan.

This called for Israel's withdrawal from the recently occupied territories but only regarded Palestinians to be a refugee problem.

There was nothing about Palestinian self-determination. Resolution 242 was rejected by more "rejectionist" Arab states (e.g., the Iraqi Baathists, Libya, Algeria, South Yemen) and by the PLO, including by Yassir Arafat's Al Fatah faction.

Fatah was sometimes called the "right wing of the PLO", but as a national liberation movement was always fundamentally to the left of the treacherous Assad clique (the current Fatah leadership is, of course, a different issue, in a different context).

Moreover, Assad did more than just support a compromising resolution; unlike most reactionary Arab regimes far from the conflict, Assad – like King Hussein of Jordan – was willing to put words into action by actively slaughtering Palestinians.

**In 1976, the Syrian army invaded Lebanon, where the Palestinians had been allied to a Muslim and leftist coalition fighting for equal rights against the reactionary Phalange Party, which aimed to maintain the sectarian dominance of the Christian minority, which had been foisted onto Lebanon by retreating French colonialism in 1943.**

**The Syrian army took the side of the Phalange and participated in their siege of the Palestinian-Muslim-leftist coalition in Tel-al-Zaatar Palestinian refugee camp, a monstrous siege leaving 2000-3000 Palestinians dead or wounded.**

Assad's aim in all this was to do what Egypt's Sadat had just done.

Sadat had betrayed the Palestinians by signing the Camp David "peace" accords with Israel in order to get back the Israeli-occupied Sinai.

Assad aimed to show the US and Israel how useful his regime could be to try to get Israel to likewise return the occupied Golan Heights. But having returned the Sinai and pacified its southern border, Israel felt no need to return any more land.

What's more, for Assad's efforts, Israel formally annexed the Golan Heights in 1981, an act of outright international piracy. With this slap in the face, Assad was unwillingly forced into the "rejectionist" camp.

Ever enthusiastic about Assad's imaginary "rejectionism", the WSWS continues: "It had done the same (as it did with Hamas in 1999) with other tendencies in the PLO's 'rejectionist' camp in 1988, the year Yasser Arafat recognized the state of Israel."

The mind explodes.

In 1983, Syria and Libya encouraged a rebellion within Fatah among its cadres in Lebanon when Arafat was exploring various diplomatic manoeuvres. Yes, these were "rejectionist" cadres of Fatah, who felt Arafat's diplomacy was too compromising, unlike the pro-242 Assad regime hypocritically sponsoring them. Assad's real objectives were to weaken and take over the independent PLO, in order to better try to do a deal with Israel over the occupied Syrian Golan Heights; he only used the rejectionist rebellion for his own opposite purposes.

And whatever compromises Arafat was making, they did not include recognising Resolution 242.

**Israel was well aware of this, and despite the "rejectionist" position of the Fatah rebels, openly expressed its support for Syria taking control of the PLO.**

The more rejectionist parties in the PLO – e.g., the Popular front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) – had many of the same criticisms of Arafat that the Fatah rebels had, but rejected this Syrian bid to take over the PLO and attempted to mend the feud.

In any case, Assad soon abandoned the initial principled Fatah rejectionists (who had been discredited due to Syrian interference on their side) and took hold of a grotesque Palestinian splinter group which had originally been a split from the PFLP, called the PFLP-General Command (PFLP-GC), led by Ahmed Jibril who was willing to be a puppet.

### **Syria And Israel Attack Refugees**

In late 1983, Syrian troops in Lebanon and their PFLP-GC stooges launched a monstrous attack on Palestinian refugee camps in Tripoli in northern Lebanon, while the Israeli navy joined in the same siege and bombardment from the sea. While the alleged "compromiser" Arafat was there with his people defending them against this murderous double siege, the "rejectionist" PFLP-GC and Syria were bombing Palestinian refugees in direct coordination with Israel.

Libya split with the "rejectionists" and reoriented towards an alliance with Fatah.

In 1985, Assad launched the Lebanese Shiite sectarian militia Amal against the Palestinian refugee camps throughout Lebanon, in the famous year-long "war of the camps" in which thousands of Palestinians were killed by Assad's goon squads. Anyone visiting these camps decades later can see thousands of bullet holes from Amal's criminal siege. Libya sent military aid to Fatah to defend the camps. Hezbollah, the pro-Iranian splinter from Amal, vigorously condemned its Amal co-religionists over these attacks.

In 1988, the entire PLO, including Fatah, the PFLP and the DFLP, and all the smaller principled “rejectionist parties” reunited in Algiers.

Only groups entirely under Assad’s control, like the PFLP-GC, stayed out. Later that year, Arafat declared the state of Palestine, and declared that the PLO was ready to negotiate on the basis of the original UN partition in 1947 (which only gave Palestine 45% of the land, but at least that was a lot more than the 22% being offered as a Palestinian state in the occupied territories in the most generous of offers, and even this is actively rejected by Israel and the US). Perhaps this is what the WSWS means by Arafat “recognised Israel”, but that year has no relation to what the WSWS says also happened, which apparently refers to the events of the previous five years described above.

In 1990, Assad’s Syria and Saudi Arabia jointly sponsored a new religiously sectarian – but less-so – constitution in Lebanon; the two countries effectively controlled the new state apparatus. This brought together many of the sectarian players from both sides, including Amal and the Phalange. Those standing outside were sidelined.

For its opposition and continued resistance to Israeli occupation, Hezbollah was singled out for punishment – Assad’s troops massacred 21 Hezbollah cadres. The Lebanon deal was followed by Syria sending its army to fight on the US side during its attack on Iraq in 1991.

### **Assad And Israel**

For its efforts, Assad still got nothing from Israel on the Golan Heights. As a result, today Syria is still “anti-Israel” because Israel still occupies its land. But no other government in Syria, no matter who comes to power, would agree to give up the Golan.

**Indeed, the fact that Assad has kept the border quiet for so long means that Israel has largely remained nervously quiet about the Syrian uprising, and in some cases leaders have clearly expressed their preference for Assad remaining in power.**

**Israel has good reason to believe that any replacement of Assad may be less accommodating and be likely to have less control over the border.**

The WSWS hopefully notes that today “Syria is throwing its support behind the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), which has some following within the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and Syria, to offset the loss of Hamas”.

Is the Assad dynasty throwing its support behind PFLP-GC now? Not 30 years ago? Throwing support behind its own stooge? Note, WSWS claims that the PFLP-GC has “some following” in the camps.

Even that much? Maybe among some camp guards in the camps inside Syria, from which no struggle has ever been allowed to be waged. One wonders how much support

the PFLP-GC has in the Tripoli camps they were bombing in tandem with Israel back in the 1980s?

In any case, solidarity with the Palestinian people does not require them to fall in with whatever grotesque schema sections of the Western left may have thought up.

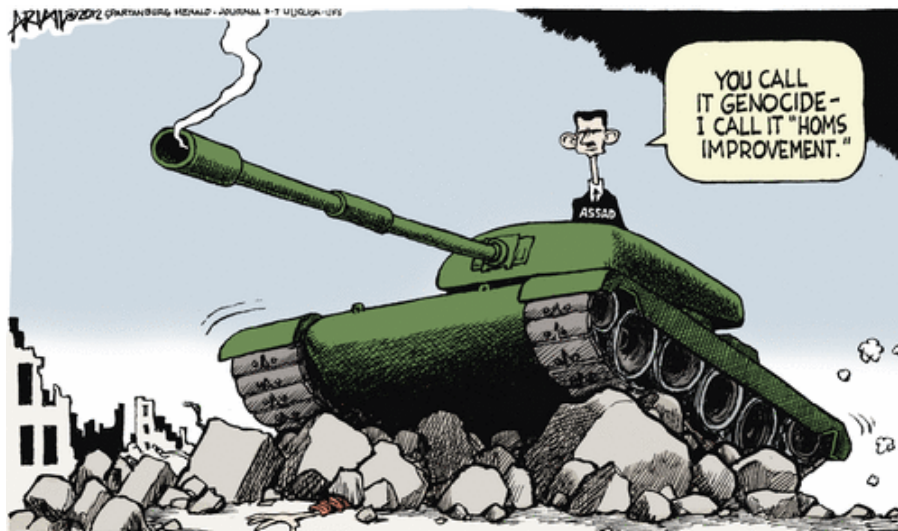
The unfolding Syrian drama is extremely complex, and while the people are right to revolt against a tyrant, the outcome is utterly unclear, with rising armed struggle raising the possibility of the largely non-sectarian movement degenerating into a sectarian blood-letting, alongside the intervention of the Saudi Arabian and Qatar tyrants in support of imposing a particular type of regime as Assad falls.

The Palestinians are well within their rights to keep out of it, but whatever the outcome, including possible imperialist intervention, there is little point in denying the tyrannical nature of the Assad regime, and the fact that its actions – slaughtering peaceful protesters in huge numbers – is what has led to the situation as is.

It is only natural that, seeing the opportunities in post-Mubarak Egypt, the Palestinians would want to identify with the Syrian people engaged in a struggle with many parallels to their own, and to break with a regime that not only kills its people, but whose entire history has meant the shedding of massive quantities of Palestinian blood.

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## **DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK**



# **“In 2010, California Considered Prop 19, A Measure To Legalize Marijuana And Tax It As Alcohol”**

## **“The Beer Industry, Alcohol Corporations, And Prison Guard Unions Contributed Money To Help Stop Prop 19”**

## **“Drug Company Lobbyists Also Fight To Keep Marijuana Illegal’**

March 7, 2012 By Lee Fang, Alternet [Excerpts]

John Lovell is a lobbyist who makes a lot of money from making sure you can't smoke a joint. That's his job.

He's a lobbyist for the police unions in Sacramento, and he is a driving force behind grabbing Federal dollars to shut down the California marijuana industry.

At some point in the distant past, the war on drugs might have been popular. But not anymore — the polling is clear, but beyond that, the last three Presidents have used illegal drugs.

So why do we still put hundreds of thousands of people in steel cages for pot-related offenses?

Well, there are many reasons, but one of them is, of course, money in politics. Corruption. Whatever you want to call it, it's why you can't smoke a joint without committing a crime, though of course you can ingest any number of pills or drinks completely within the law.

One of the primary sources for cash for more policing activities are Federal grants for penalizing illegal drug use, which help pay for overtime, additional police officers, and equipment for the force. That's what Lovell does, he gets those grants. He also fights against democratic mechanisms to legalize drugs.

In 2010, California considered Prop 19, a measure to legalize marijuana and tax it as alcohol.

Lovell managed the opposition campaign against Prop 19. He told Time Magazine that he was pushing against the initiative because, “the last thing we need is yet another mind-altering substance to be legalized.”

But Republic Report reviewed lobbying contracts during the Prop 19 fight, and found that Lovell’s firm was paid over \$386,350 from a wide array of police unions, including the California Police Chiefs Association.

While Lovell may contend that he sincerely opposes the idea of marijuana legalization, he has constructed an entire business model predicated on pot prohibition.

There is big money in marijuana prohibition.

Lovell represented a police union in a bid to steer some \$2.2 million dollars into a “Marijuana Suppression Program.”

In 2009 and 2010, California police unions sought a \$7,537,389 chunk of Federal money for police to conduct a “Campaign Against Marijuana Planting” program.

The anti-marijuana money went directly into the paychecks of many officers. For example, police departments in Shasta, Siskiyou, and Tehama Counties formed a “North California Eradication Team” to receive \$550,000 in grants that helped pay for overtime, a new officer, and flight operations:

The total amount awarded was \$550,000, to be split between Shasta, Siskiyou and Tehama counties, which make up the Northern California Marijuana Eradication Team (NorCal-MET). Broken down in the agenda worksheet, the sheriff’s office is expecting to spend \$20,000 on flight operations, \$94,895 for the full-time deputy’s salary and benefits, \$16,788 for the administration assistant salary and benefits and \$29,983 to cover up to 666.29 hours of overtime.

The Federal anti-marijuana honeypot might have dried up if Prop 19 had passed.

Legalizing marijuana would have generated billions in tax revenue for the state of California, while also reducing victimless crime prosecutions.

But for lobbyists like Lovell, legalization was a direct assault on hundreds of thousands of dollars in potential fees for helping to solicit taxpayer money for his clients.

Of course, police unions aren’t the only interest group with a stake in maintaining broken drug laws.

The beer industry, alcohol corporations, and prison guard unions also contributed money to help Lovell stop Prop 19.

Howard Wooldridge, a retired police officer who now helps push for legalization as a citizen advocate, told Republic Report that drug company lobbyists also fight to keep marijuana illegal because they view pot as a low-cost form of competition.

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## CLASS WAR REPORTS

### **Bahrain: “Demonstrators Returned To The Streets In One Of The Nation’s Largest Marches In Months” “They Chanted ‘Down, Down Hamad’, Referring To King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa”**

March 9, 2012 By ALEX DELMAR-MORGAN, Wall Street Journal & BBC [Excerpts]

DOHA, Qatar—The head of an official inquiry into Bahrain’s unrest last year called for the investigation of any senior officials involved in the deaths or torture of protesters, as thousands of demonstrators returned to the streets in one of the nation’s largest marches in months.

Protesters carried banners denouncing the government and calling for the release of political detainees. They chanted “Down, down Hamad”, referring to King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

**Video posted online showed protesters with Bahraini flags in a line stretching back for more than 1.5km (a mile). Opposition leaders estimated the crowd at nearly 100,000, which would make it one of the largest protest gatherings since the street rallies erupted in February 2011.**

Police used tear gas to drive back a small group of demonstrators who attempted to approach Pearl Square, which was the heart of the 2011 protests before it was stormed by security forces in March 2011.

Cherif Bassiouni, whose report in November found authorities used excessive force and widespread torture to shut down a popular uprising, told The Wall Street Journal that Bahrain’s Sunni regime hadn’t acted on his recommendation that any members of the government guilty of abuses should face justice.

“If you follow the system of accountability and justice, you follow the evidence wherever it goes and whoever is responsible has to be held accountable,” said Mr. Bassiouni, an Egyptian former United Nations human-rights lawyer.

Bahrain’s King Hamad ordered the independent report into the crackdown in June. Headed by Mr. Bassiouni, the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry concluded



that detainees had been subjected to systematic mistreatment included being beaten with rubber hoses, metal rods, electrocuted and threatened with rape.

The report outlined proposed reforms to the police and security services.

Tensions in Bahrain have simmered since the Sunni-led government forcefully put down a mainly Shiite protest movement early last year, with the help of Saudi troops, leaving 35 people dead and nearly 3,000 arrested, according to the report.

Friday's march was called by protest leaders as a show of opposition resolve after Bahrain's leaders portrayed the uprising as losing steam ahead of a Formula One Grand Prix car race in April, the Associated Press reported. Protests forced the cancellation of last year's race.

The government promised to implement the majority of these in three months. The government has implemented most of the recommendations, Mr. Bassiouni said in the interview. But he said he was unaware of any prosecutions of those responsible for the deaths of protesters, including five who his commission said were tortured to death and 64 other cases of torture detailed in the report.

Bahrain's majority Shiites have long complained about discrimination and call for more rights, better housing and jobs. Yet rulers maintain an iron grip on power and are reluctant to see reforms that would empower the Shiite majority—something they say would embolden Iran, which it accuses of stoking antigovernment unrest.

Mr. Bassiouni's report was limited to human-rights abuses and didn't make political recommendations.

But in the interview, he cast doubt on whether Bahrain could change politically because of opposition to reforms by some members of the al Khalifa ruling family, particularly Prime Minister Khalifa bin Salman al Khalifa, who has been in office for 42 years.

**Bahrain's majority Shia community has long complained of deep discrimination. They make up about 70% of the country's 525,000 citizens.**

**Protesters, most of them Shia, are seeking the end of the rule of the Al Khalifas, a Sunni dynasty that controls politics and all the main posts in Bahrain.**

The government has offered some political concessions, but insists on controlling all the main appointments and ministries.

**Bahrain is home to the US Navy's Fifth Fleet and it is a significant oil and gas producer.**

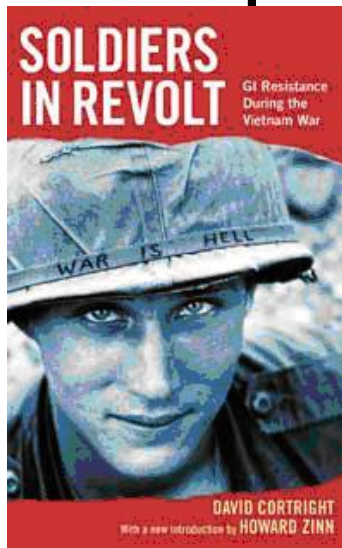
**“The single largest failure of the anti-war movement at this point is the lack of outreach to the troops.”**

**Tim Goodrich, Iraq Veterans Against The War**

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