

## Military Resistance 10G10



**“A Perfect Test Case For The Key Question At This Stage Of The War: Can The Afghans Go It Alone?”**

**“The Afghan Commander Did Not Appear To Have The Support And Loyalty Of His Own Brigade”**

**“In The End, It Took American Air Power To Win The Fight”**

# **“Even After Jets Had Taken Out The Militants' Positions, The Afghan Commander Refused To Push Further Into The Valley For Fear It Could Put More Troops At Risk”**

July 5, 2012 By MUHAMMAD LILA, ABC News

The mission was Afghan-led and run with 10 or so American soldiers bringing up the rear.

The goal was to sweep through a series of remote mountain villages and reclaim the valley where Taliban insurgents were believed to be heavily entrenched.

It was exactly the kind of mission the Afghan National Army would need to carry out as U.S. forces begin their drawdown across the country.

It was also a perfect test case for the key question at this stage of the war: Can the Afghans go it alone?

They set out early this morning from the small base at Kalagush, the only base for U.S. forces in Nuristan Province. It's a tiny base protecting a long, winding river valley that heads north into the further reaches of the province.

Nuristan has long been a transit point between the Afghan border with Pakistan, and the city of Kabul, which militants seek to penetrate to launch attacks.

With the Afghans in the lead, the troops moved through the first village without incident -- the Americans in their support role, watching and waiting.

"OK, let's go up there," said Capt. Marcus Morgan. "That's a Taliban flag right there."

The Afghan forces were just leaving that first village, marching along a mountain ridge about five miles from Kala Gush, when the first bursts of incoming fire came.

"Where's that coming from?" someone said over the radio.

Taliban fighters, perhaps lying in waiting, had ambushed the Afghan troops along the ridge. The Afghan troops fired back, beginning a sustained firefight that lasted about 10 minutes.

Because of a new mandate allowing U.S. forces to only give advice, American soldiers stayed back, forcing the Afghan troops to make decisions on their own.

But with mortars and heavy machine-gun fire surrounding the troops, and tempers flaring among the Afghans, one Afghan commander asked the Americans for air support.

Within minutes the Afghan forces had power from the air, and the airstrikes ended the battle.

Back at Kalagush, this much was clear: The Afghan forces had performed well in some areas, but were terribly lacking in others. When the Afghans were called upon to fight, they did and they fought bravely.

But no matter how well these Afghans can learn to fight, their limited education created extremely difficult obstacles.

Some of these soldiers couldn't read, let alone understand maps. The American soldiers showed them pictures, but in the heat of the moment, the Afghans ditched them to draw diagrams in the dirt.

They also suffered from serious command issues.

The Afghan commander did not appear to have the support and loyalty of his own brigade. At times, his second in command openly criticized him, shouting at him for not sending enough fighters up to a plateau that was the scene of some of the heaviest fighting.

In the end, it took American air power to win the fight.

And even after jets had taken out the militants' positions, the Afghan commander refused to push further into the valley for fear it could put more troops at risk.

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## **AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS**

# **Single IED Kills 6 American Soldiers In Wardak: “A Seventh American Soldier Was Killed In A Separate Insurgent Attack Sunday In The South”**

07/09/2012 By Deb Riechmann, Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan - An insurgent bomb killed six American soldiers in eastern Afghanistan, part of a surge of violence that has dealt a stark reminder that war is still raging.

German Brig. Gen. Gunter Katz, a spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition, said the six Americans were killed Sunday when their armored vehicle struck a bomb in eastern Afghanistan.

He said a seventh American soldier was killed in a separate insurgent attack Sunday in the south.

Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid claimed responsibility for that attack in Wardak province, just south of Kabul.

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## **West Side Soldier Killed In Combat**

June 27, 2012 Mattos Newspapers, Inc.,

NEWMAN – A West Side soldier killed in action in Afghanistan last week was remembered by loved ones Monday as a dedicated family man who extended his military service in order to better provide for his wife and 13-month-old son.

Army Sgt. Jose Rodriguez, a 2008 graduate of Gustine High School who grew up in Newman and Gustine, was killed in a June 19 firefight while serving with a Stryker brigade combat team in Kandahar Province, family and military sources said.

Earlier this week, family members filled the Newman home of his mother, Margarita Rodriguez, where photos and candles adorned a mantle and living room wall.....snapshots of childhood years, his family and his military service.

Among the loved ones gathered were Sgt. Rodriguez's wife of less than two years, Lupita Rodriguez, and the couple's 13-month-old son Octavian.

"He was a great dad," Lupita Rodriguez reflected. "Everything that he would do was to benefit Octavian and I. He would do anything to keep us happy. He was very loving and caring."

Jose Rodriguez, 22, was serving a second tour of duty in Afghanistan when he was killed.

He was supposed to be finished in the military last December, Lupita Rodriguez related, but he extended his duty to serve one more tour in Afghanistan before returning home with plans to pursue a career as a firefighter.

Sgt. Rodriguez stayed on for the additional deployment because he wanted to provide a better start for his family when he returned to civilian life, his wife explained.

"He wanted to deploy one more time," she said. "He was thinking about us. He wanted us to have longer health benefits, and for us to be better off (when he returned home)."

In preparation for that time, Jose Rodriguez moved his family from housing near Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Tacoma, Wash., where he was stationed, to Modesto a few days before he deployed in late April.

He had been home briefly for Easter earlier that month, and several family members had made the trek to Washington this spring to spend time with him before he deployed.

Those visits provided some special moments and memories of precious time together the family will cherish, his loved ones said.

“When they went up there, Jose said his mom should stay the whole week. She didn’t, and now she regrets that,” Lupita Rodriguez shared.

Jose Rodriguez was born in San Jose, the middle of seven children, according to family members.

The family moved between Gustine and Newman when he was growing up, they recalled. His childhood activities included playing youth baseball. Much of his childhood was spent in Newman, relatives said, and he attended Orestimba for the first two years of high school. He finished his studies at Gustine High after the family moved back to Gustine. He played football at both schools, according to family members.

Ruben Rodriguez recalled his brother as having an infectious smile and sharp sense of humor.

“When you met him he would be the most serious person, but once he got to know you he loved to make people laugh,” he reflected.

“He always had to be doing something,” Ruben Rodriguez added. “He hated just sitting around.”

Jesus Zuno, also a 2008 Gustine High graduate, was a close friend since early childhood.

“He was my brother, since we were little kids. If you were having the worst day ever, Jose could make you smile,” he related.

Zuno, who is Octavian’s godparent, said they stayed in close touch.

“When he deployed, he would call me,” he related. “We would talk about life, about what plans we had when he got back.”

Learning of his friend’s death was “unreal,” Zuno said. “I just didn’t want to believe it. I kept thinking, ‘it’s not him.’ I didn’t want to process it.”

He also praised his friend’s heroism and dedication.

“He loved what he did. He enjoyed every second of it,” Zuno reflected. “He was a true hero.”

Jose Rodriguez had enlisted in the military shortly after high school graduation and shipped out to basic training that fall at Fort Benning, Ga., his brother said. His first deployment was in January 2009, according to published reports.

During that time, he and Lupita Rodriguez were carrying on a long-distance relationship.

The couple had met at a wedding when both were in high school. Lupita Rodriguez, who lived in Modesto, said that despite the challenges of a relationship from afar “I wanted to be the one he was writing letters to.”

Her mom would set those letters apart from the mail for her to find when she returned home from school. Jose Rodriguez also arranged from Afghanistan to have Valentine’s Day flowers and a glass memento depicting soul mates sent during his first deployment, Lupita Rodriguez said.

The couple exchanged wedding vows in September 2010, and she moved to Washington a few months later after finishing her studies. Their son was born 13 months ago.

“He loved to play with Octavian,” Lupita Rodriguez said. “He loved his son.”

She said she was initially surprised when he enlisted in the Army, but said “I liked it because he liked it.”

When she asked before his second deployment whether he was fearful, Lupita Rodriguez recalled, her husband assured her that he wasn’t.....and that he was very good at his job.

She said she last heard from him on June 13.

Six days later, he was killed in action during what an officer described to the family as a fierce firefight. Even after her husband was mortally wounded, Lupita Rodriguez said, he continued to return fire.

“I know they tried everything to keep him alive, but it wasn’t possible,” she said.

Through their grief, his family expressed their pride in the fallen soldier.

“We are all very proud of Jose,” Lupita Rodriguez reflected. “We are all going to remember him. He left us with some great memories.”

Jose Rodriguez is the first soldier from the Newman-Gustine area to be killed in action since Cpl. T.J. Gonzales of Newman lost his life in Iraq in December 2008.

Family members said funeral arrangements are still pending.

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## **Fifth Marine Electrocuted In Afghanistan**

Jul 3, 2012 By Dan Lamothe - Staff writer; Army Times [Excerpts]

A corporal was electrocuted in Afghanistan’s Helmand province on June 8, marking at least the fifth case of electrocution killing a Marine there since November.

The cause of death was listed on the Naval Safety Center's website without identifying the Marine. Cpl. Anthony Servin, of 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines, out of Camp Pendleton, Calif., was killed the same day, the Pentagon announced last month. His death is currently under investigation, officials said.

The latest electrocution occurred after the Marine's radio antenna touched a low-hanging power line, the Naval Safety Center reported.

A seemingly similar incident occurred Nov. 26, when Cpl. Adam Buyes' radio antenna touched a low-hanging wire in Sangin district as his patrol was leaving an outpost, according to documents obtained by Marine Corps Times through the Freedom of Information Act.

"Initially Cpl. Buyes was groaning, taking approximately one breath every five seconds, and had a weak pulse," the documents say.

"Shortly thereafter, Cpl. Buyes stopped groaning and his breathing and pulse diminished quickly, until the corpsman could not detect any pulse or breathing."

The incidents highlight the hazard low-hanging wires present to U.S. forces in Afghanistan. It's a particular cause for concern in northern Helmand, where power lines on creaky utility poles lead from the Kajaki Dam, a landmark facility that produces electricity for Helmand and Kandahar provinces.

Other Marines killed by electrocution since November include Cpls. Connor Lowry and Jon-Luke Bateman and Lance Cpl. Kenneth Cochran. Lowry was killed March 1, while Bateman and Cochran died Jan 15.

Lowry was an ammunition technician with Golf Battery, 2nd Battalion, 11th Marines, out of Pendleton.

He died in a vehicle's gun turret in an incident involving a low-hanging wire in Kajaki district, Marines in his unit told Marine Corps Times during an April embed with their unit. A Marine official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the wire touched Lowry directly before his death.

Bateman and Cochran died in Musa Qala district in an accident involving an electric generator, according to a report in the Pahrump Valley Times, a newspaper in Bateman's hometown area in Nevada.

The Marines were electrocuted by a live wire near the generator, rather than the machine itself, a Marine official said.

Bateman was an infantryman with Pendleton's 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines, and Cochran was a water support technician with 9th Engineer Support Battalion, out of Okinawa, Japan.

**POLITICIANS REFUSE TO HALT THE  
BLOODSHED**

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

## **Resistance Action: Coordinated Militant Attacks Sweep Across Afghanistan**

07/09/2012 Associated Press

Insurgents assassinated a chief prosecutor in eastern Ghazni province as he drove to work. Mohammad Ali Ahmadi, the deputy provincial governor, said Sahar Gul was shot twice.

Then nearly a dozen other attackers tried to storm the police headquarters in Kandahar, but they failed to enter the compound.

The incident was still being investigated, but Faisal said authorities suspect that the three attackers in the vehicle, a form of miniature pickup known as a Zaranj, were headed toward police headquarters when their explosives detonated.

Three policemen were killed in the attack. Another 18 police and 12 civilians were wounded.

A total of 14 attackers, who fired at police for about two hours from several directions, blew themselves up or were shot and killed by police, Kandahar officials said.

Militants also attacked a police headquarters building in Shibirghan, the capital of Jawzjan province in the relatively peaceful north.

Provincial governor Mohammad Aleem Saaie said a bomber on a bicycle blew himself up near the headquarters. No one died, but he said wounded included two policemen, a doctor and a prosecutor.

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



## MILITARY NEWS

# Another Rat Abandons The Stinking Ship: The Tyrant Assad's Top General Runs Away

July 5 By Liz Sly, The Washington Post [Excerpts]

ANTAKYA, Turkey — A powerful military officer and longtime close associate of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has defected and was on his way to Paris, where foreign ministers from Friends of Syria countries are meeting, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius confirmed Friday.

In what could be the first sign of a crack in the Assad regime's inner circle, Maj. Gen. Manaf Tlas fled to Turkey this week before heading for France to join his father, a once-powerful former defense minister, a close family friend told Reuters.

Word of the purported defection quickly buzzed through social media sites run by the Syrian opposition, which gleefully posted pictures of Assad and Tlas posing together in a reminder of how close the two had been.

**The pro-Assad Web site Syria Steps reported that Tlas, who heads the elite Republican Guard, had joined the opposition--although other Web sites and opposition leaders said it was unclear whether Tlas would ally himself with the rebels battling Assad's forces.**

**Either way, it appeared to be the most senior defection since the uprising against Assad began more than 15 months ago.**

The Web site of the Tartous Today newspaper, which also supports the Assad government, carried a report from the Shaam News Network saying that Tlas had disappeared in the Syrian capital, Damascus, two days earlier but that the network had not published the information because of the "sensitivity of the situation."

Col. Aref Hammoud, a spokesman for the opposition Free Syrian Army in southern Turkey, and two rebel officers inside Syria said the Free Syrian Army had helped Tlas cross into Turkey earlier in the day.

Hammoud declined to say where Tlas was but said he was not at the camp for military defectors outside the southern Turkish town of Antakya, making it unclear whether he would join the opposition.

Both the pro-Assad Web sites sought to play down the significance of the reputed defection, saying it would have no effect on the situation in Syria as the security forces continue their battle to crush the uprising.

Tartous Today accused Tlas of collaborating with the now-departed U.S. ambassador to Syria, Robert Ford, and said the country was better off without him.

“Syrian intelligence would have captured him if they wanted to,” the Web site said. “His decision to defect will not affect us at all, but he will instead become a new burden on the hands of the garbage and traitors nesting in Turkey.”

Syria Steps quoted security officials as saying that “the situation on the ground is under control. There is nothing that will stop us from eliminating the terrorists in the country.”

However, the Web site also seemed to acknowledge the significance of the purported flight, adding that “this news comes as a shock to the Syrian people, who have long been familiar with the Tlas family and its loyalty to the nation.”

Tlas’s father, Mustafa Tlas, had been a confidant of Assad’s father, Hafez al-Assad, serving as his defense minister for many years and then paving the way for a smooth succession for Bashar after his father died.

The senior Tlas, however, is reported to have been living in Paris throughout most of the uprising; another of his sons is reputedly living in Dubai; and a member of the family commands one of the best-known Free Syrian Army battalions fighting near Homs, suggesting that the reported defection would not be a complete surprise.

If confirmed, however, it would be the first clear sign of disaffection within the ranks of the many senior Sunni officers who have remained loyal to the government, alongside those drawn from Assad’s Shiite-affiliated Alawite minority. Several brigadier generals have defected in the past, but Tlas was a higher-ranked major general.

Syria expert Joshua Landis wrote on his blog that Tlas had recently been pushed aside by the Alawite officers because he “supported a policy of negotiation, flexibility and compromise.

“He was overruled by the military leadership and has since looked for a way out,” Landis wrote. “If he has indeed fled the country, the regime will be thrown back on its heels.”

### **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**

**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**

# **One Stryker Battalion Lost More Men In Afghanistan Than Any Other:**

**“The 1-17 Seemed To Be Making Tactical Mistakes”**

**“Stryker After Stryker Hit Roadside Bombs”**

**“Barreling Through The District In A Vehicle That Afforded The Driver Only A Narrow Slit Of A Window Meant The Soldiers Couldn't Scan The Ground For Bombs”**



Hostile Afghan Forces use IED to Attack Stryker. Veterans Today Network

**The second-ranking U.S. commander in Afghanistan, Lt. Gen. David Rodriguez, raised the question of whether Tunnell should be relieved of his position. But the top U.S. general in Kandahar, Mick Nicholson, told Rodriguez he thought Tunnell could change.**

**A few months later, Nicholson confided to colleagues that he regretted not having pushed for Tunnell's removal.**

[Thanks to Clancy Sigal who sent this in.]

June 27, 2012 By Rajiv Chandrasekaran, Slate [Excerpts]

Following is an excerpt from *Little America: The War Within the War for Afghanistan*, by Rajiv Candrasekaran, out this week from Knopf.

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As top Army commanders cast about for spare troops to go to Kandahar in 2009, they settled upon a brigade that had never deployed to a war zone and had spent the previous year preparing for a tour in Iraq.

The unit's commander, Col. Harry Tunnell, got the message about his new mission while he and his troops were conducting their last major exercise before shipping off to Iraq.

Tunnell had been gravely wounded in Iraq, where he led a battalion of paratroopers with the 173rd Airborne Brigade. In October 2003, his convoy was ambushed by insurgents near the city of Kirkuk. He was shot through the leg when he stepped out of his Humvee.

In 2007, he was given command of a newly formed unit—the 5th Brigade of the 2nd Infantry Division.

The 3,800-strong contingent was equipped with what was then the Army's newest combat vehicle, the Stryker, an eight-wheeled armored transport that can carry 11 soldiers and travel up to 60 miles per hour. But they had one massive design flaw: Their hulls, which were flat, could not deflect the force of bombs buried in the road.

As Tunnell was forming his brigade, the Army replaced Humvees in other units heading to Iraq and Afghanistan with MRAPs, heavy trucks that had V-shaped hulls that could diffuse roadside bomb explosions.

But Tunnell's brigade got only a few. The Army had invested billions of dollars in designing and building the Stryker, and the Pentagon brass wanted to see it in action.

With little time to instill cohesion in a team of soldiers who had never worked together, Tunnell had drilled them repeatedly and aggressively. But he also encouraged his officers to seek guidance outside the military bubble. A young captain spent a few months studying small-business economics at the University of Washington. Another officer took a weeklong executive program on negotiation at Harvard. Tunnell himself went to an MIT seminar on innovation.

Despite his emphasis on education, Tunnell had a dim view of the intellectual underpinnings of counterinsurgency theory.

He didn't think insurgencies were defeated by protecting villages and winning over residents through reconstruction and development projects.

He believed that the top priority was to kill the bad guys. As he had convalesced in 2005 at the Army War College, he had written a short book about his experiences in Iraq that included a spirited rebuttal to the COIN (counterinsurgency) fever that would sweep the military a few years later:

*“Military leaders must stay focused on the destruction of the enemy. It is virtually impossible to convince any committed terrorist who hates America to change his or her point of view—they simply must be attacked relentlessly. ...*

*It is appropriate for military units to develop goals that include appreciating local culture, improving quality of life for the populace, and promoting good governance whenever these concepts improve access to the enemy. However, if the pursuit of them does not advance one's knowledge of threats and a unit's capability to maintain the offensive, then they are of little practical value as tactical or operational objectives. Destruction of the enemy force must remain the most important step to defeating terrorists and insurgents.”*

By the time Tunnell took over the brigade, every other infantry commander preparing to go to Iraq or Afghanistan was using Gen. Petraeus' COIN manual as his lodestar.

But not Tunnell.

He told his soldiers that their approach to security operations would be drawn from an Army manual that outlined counterinsurgency operations, which had long been superseded by Petraeus' playbook.

Instead of emphasizing the protection of civilians, it instructed commanders to “give priority to destroying the guerrilla forces.” He called his unit the “Destroyer Brigade” and ordered that its vehicles be painted with the motto SEARCH AND DESTROY.

When the brigade was at the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, Calif., officers there grew concerned about Tunnell's aggressive approach, but more senior Army commanders did not force him to abandon it.

And selecting another brigade for the Kandahar mission was out of the question—the Army's force generation command was emphatic: No other units were available for an Afghanistan rotation.

The counterinsurgency orientation influenced preparations. Tunnell boasted that his soldiers expended more ammunition during training than any other brigade headed to Afghanistan. In order to get higher scores than their peers at combat exercises, he left more experienced officers in command of platoons instead of using the opportunity to train newly arrived second lieutenants, who would have to take charge once they got to Afghanistan.

One lieutenant in the brigade told me that the first time he spoke to his entire platoon over the radio was when they were in combat.

“Almost all of our training focused on combat,” he said. “All of the other stuff—learning about the culture, the language, the plan for reconstruction—that was an afterthought.”

Tunnell’s brigade set up its headquarters at the recreation-packed Kandahar Airfield in August 2009.

Instead of concentrating near the city, which was a priority for Gen. Stanley McChrystal, then-commander of U.S. troops in Afghanistan, the brigade’s four battalions were sent in different directions by Mart de Kruif, the Dutch general who ran the NATO headquarters in Kandahar at the time. He said he had Taliban problems everywhere and did not possess enough force to deal with all of them. With the Marines augmenting the British, neighboring Helmand province had almost 20,000 foreign troops. Kandahar province, which was larger and more important, had fewer than 10,000.

“The prize was Kandahar city, but we didn’t act like it,” said Tunnell’s deputy, Lt. Col. Karl Slaughenhaupt.

**Top Canadian officers told Tunnell’s staff that no more than 30 to 40 insurgents were in the district.**

The Stryker battalion in Shah Wali Kot, the 1-17 Infantry, soon learned how wrong the Canadians were.

**On their first patrol into Arghandab, they were pummeled with gunfire and lost a Stryker to a roadside bomb.**

**A week later, during a mission to guard polling sites for the presidential election, Sgt. Troy Tom stepped on a mine while crossing a footbridge. The bomb was so massive that Tom, a strapping 21-year-old Navajo from New Mexico, disappeared entirely.**

His platoon mates heard the loud explosion, but they had spread themselves so far apart that they had not seen what occurred. Some thought Tom might have been kidnapped, prompting the battalion commander to declare him missing and push more men into the area to conduct a search.

**Soon thereafter, a soldier looking for Tom stepped on another large bomb, and he too disappeared.**

With two soldiers gone, Tunnell dispatched his fourth battalion, which had been designated as a rapid reaction force for all of southern Afghanistan, into Arghandab to help with the search.

It devolved into a 40-hour firefight with insurgents, many of whom operated in dozen-man squads as the Americans did.

Although the soldiers eventually recovered some remains of both missing men, five more comrades were wounded. Among them was 25-year-old Lt. Dan Berschinski, a 2007 West Point graduate who lost both of his legs to a mine.

Tunnell decided to rewrite his battle plan. Based on Canadian reports, he had assumed Shah Wali Kot was the principal Taliban sanctuary north of Kandahar. But the fighting in Arghandab indicated otherwise. His intelligence officers soon estimated that there were between 300 and 400 enemy fighters in the area.

In late August, Tunnell devoted half his forces to a two-battalion operation intended to clear insurgents from the northern part of the district. The 1-17 was to focus on a trio of villages not far from where Tom had been killed. Another battalion was to flush insurgents out of the south.

### **“Tunnell Was Fighting The War He Wanted To Fight, And Nobody Stood In His Way”**

On the second week of the operation, I met with Lt. Col. Patrick Gaydon, an artillery officer who had been put in charge of the Stryker brigade’s special troops battalion, which was responsible for governance, reconstruction, and development. After he spent an hour telling me about the universities at which his fellow officers had taken classes before deploying and the sophisticated computer network that allowed soldiers to send and receive vast quantities of data while in the field, I mentioned that I would be heading to Arghandab in two days to attend a shura, a meeting of local elders.

Gaydon asked how I was getting there. I told him the general who was Tunnell’s boss had arranged a flight. Gaydon was delighted; it meant he’d have a chance to get there as well. Gaydon’s unit had been in Afghanistan for a month, but it had not yet received any vehicles suitable for travel beyond the Kandahar Airfield. Because his team’s mission was not to kill bad guys, it was at the end of the list for supplies.

I was astounded.

Given his focus on government and reconstruction, Gaydon seemed like the officer who really needed to attend the shura. Over in the Marine areas, then-Brig. Gen. Larry Nicholson had insisted that his battalion commanders hold districtwide shuras within 48 hours of their arrival in Nawa and other parts of the central Helmand River Valley.

But Tunnell did not regard community meetings as a priority for his operation. The brigade’s State Department political adviser, Todd Greentree, had to meet with Tunnell three times to persuade him to authorize the shura. His ability to flout COIN, despite McChrystal’s unambiguous embrace of it, revealed the lack of control the supposedly disciplined U.S. military had over officers who were spread across a vast country and sometimes reported to non-American generals.

Tunnell was fighting the war he wanted to fight, and nobody stood in his way.

Gaydon spent the day after our meeting drafting a speech he would deliver to the crowd of turbaned elders.



“I want you to know that we are undertaking this military operation so that we can create an environment where we can work shoulder-to-shoulder with district leaders, elders, and the people of Arghandab over the long term,” he wrote.

But the morning we were supposed to leave, we learned our flight had been canceled. A delegation of visiting members of Congress wanted to fly around the south, and our helicopter had been reassigned as an airborne tour bus. We settled for an early breakfast in the chow hall with Greentree, who fumed over an omelet and hash browns that the brigade was missing an opportunity to win over residents and steel them against Taliban intimidation. “This is really, really bad,” he said.

He couldn’t understand why a few vehicles could not have been diverted to transport them to the meeting. “Is this the most important thing we could have done in the operation today? Absolutely.”

Gaydon tried to put the best spin on it. The shura would go on, he said. He planned to have an officer in Arghandab read the speech he had written. At least Tunnell will be there, I said consolingly. He’s the one who matters. The Afghans always want to talk to the man in charge.

“Tunnell won’t be attending,” Greentree said. “He said he’ll be too busy directing the combat operations.”

The next day, I asked Greentree how it had gone. Fine, he said, for the first 30 minutes. Then two AH-64 Apache attack helicopters strafed a nearby building, and the attendees fled.

The following months would yield more missteps.

Tunnell’s soldiers once drove a Stryker with loudspeakers through a village during an insurgent’s funeral, announcing “This is what happens when you fight us.”

At a meeting with State Department officials, one Stryker officer dismissed a request that the brigade focus more on development, saying, “Come on, buddy, we’re just here to rack ’em and stack ’em.” The word around the Kandahar Airfield was that Tunnell had told his men that by the time they were done with their tour, the Afghans “will be praying to Mecca 10 times a day.”

The brigade spent almost nothing from a multimillion-dollar military account for reconstruction projects during its first three months.

**And when a company commander posted on the wall of his base a quote from McChrystal’s COIN guidance—“sporadically moving into an area for a few hours or even a few days solely to search for the enemy and then leave does little good, and may do much harm”—a senior officer ordered him to take it down.**

**Not long after, Tunnell reassigned that company commander to a desk job.**

**“The 1-17 Seemed To Be Making Tactical Mistakes. Stryker After Stryker Hit Roadside Bombs”**

Senior military officials at the Kandahar Airfield and at NATO headquarters in Kabul grew alarmed. Their concern extended well beyond Tunnell's rejection of COIN strategy.

**The 1-17 seemed to be making tactical mistakes.**

**It quickly pulled out of areas it assaulted, which allowed insurgents to return.**

**But its most egregious sin, the officials said, was using Strykers in places where its soldiers should have been walking.**

**Barreling through the district in a vehicle that afforded the driver only a narrow slit of a window meant the soldiers couldn't scan the ground for bombs as effectively as if they had been on foot.**

**Stryker after Stryker hit roadside bombs.**

**Sometimes there would be a fatality. If the vehicle's occupants were lucky, there would be just a bunch of broken bones and concussions.**

**But the insurgents began to adapt by building bigger and bigger bombs.**

In late October, when a Stryker rolled over one buried in the banks of the Arghandab River, seven soldiers and their interpreter died.

### **“A Few Months Later, Nicholson Confided To Colleagues That He Regretted Not Having Pushed For Tunnell's Removal”**

The second-ranking U.S. commander in Afghanistan, Lt. Gen. David Rodriguez, raised the question of whether Tunnell should be relieved of his position. But the top U.S. general in Kandahar, Mick Nicholson, told Rodriguez he thought Tunnell could change.

A few months later, Nicholson confided to colleagues that he regretted not having pushed for Tunnell's removal.

Some officers who worked for Tunnell told me the brigade had been thrust into an untenable position.

Its four battalions were spread across a huge swath of southern Afghanistan, often forcing them to remain in their vehicles for drive-by patrols instead of bedding down in villages and walking the beat.

Their area was crawling with far more insurgents than they had expected.

And every time they thought they were gaining traction, senior commanders upended their mission.

In mid-September, de Kruif ordered the second battalion that had participated in the Arghandab operation to move to the far western part of Kandahar province to replace a departing U.S. Army unit that had been working for the Canadians.

That left the 1-17 responsible for all of Arghandab.

With so many insurgents holed up in Arghandab, Tunnell's men needed to take forceful action. But they failed to offer enough carrots with their sticks, and they failed to grasp the political winds within the NATO headquarters.

Had Tunnell been just as tough but described his methods as COIN—instead of counterinsurgency operations—he would have run into less trouble with his superiors.

In November, British Maj. Gen. Nick Carter took charge of southern Afghanistan from de Kruif. He immediately concluded that the Stryker battalion was the wrong unit for Arghandab.

He pushed it back to Shah Wali Kot and brought in a battalion of the 82nd Airborne Division, which had originally been sent to Afghanistan to help train the country's army.

**By then, 21 soldiers from the 1-17 had been killed in Arghandab. It was the highest death toll of any U.S. Army battalion in Afghanistan.**

Two months after the Stryker brigade returned home to Washington state, five soldiers from the battalion Tunnell had sent to far western Kandahar province were charged with murdering unarmed Afghans for sport and keeping their fingers as trophies.

**A subsequent Army investigation by a one-star general absolved Tunnell of any direct blame for the killings. By then Tunnell had relinquished command of the brigade.**

**Had he still been on the job, he should have been relieved of command, the general determined, in part because of “his failure to follow instructions and intent.”**

Tunnell's stubbornness cost the United States a critical chance to pacify key areas around the most important city in southern Afghanistan during the first year of Obama's presidency.

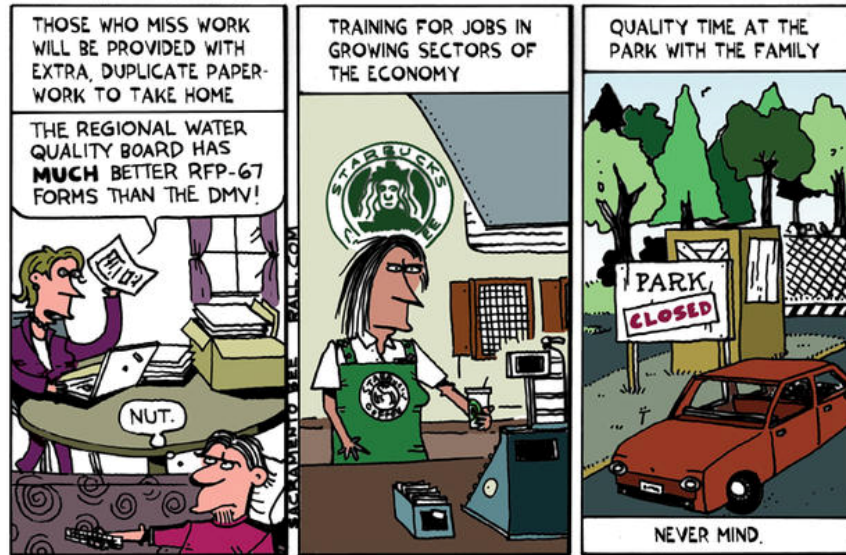
“We had a great opportunity,” Mick Nicholson told a fellow general. “Sadly, we lost a year.”

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## DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

GOV. BROWN IS PROPOSING THAT STATE WORKERS BE CUT TO 4-DAY WORKWEEK—A FURLOUGH. HOW WILL THEY SPEND THEIR EXTRA FREE DAY?



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**Iran Government TV Poll Reveals  
Iranians Want Nuclear Programme  
Stopped:  
“63% Of Respondents In Favour Of  
Suspending Uranium Enrichment In  
Exchange For The Gradual Easing Of  
Sanctions”  
Stupid Iranian Dictatorship Shuts Down  
The Polling**

The survey, launched by the state broadcaster, IRIB, appeared designed to demonstrate a united front in the face of a new EU boycott of Iranian oil that came into effect last Sunday.

It asked viewers to express their preferred response online to the embargo, which Iran has greeted by staging a new series of war games and missile tests.

But the gambit turned into a spectacular own goal after two days of voting when IRIB's news channel screened results showing 63% of respondents in favour of suspending uranium enrichment in exchange for the gradual easing of sanctions.

**TV bosses quickly stopped the poll and replaced it with one seeking viewers' opinions on an Iranian parliament proposal to close the Strait of Hormuz, a strategically vital waterway in the Persian Gulf that is the passageway for about one-fifth of the world's oil supplies.**

**But that too appeared to backfire when 89% of respondents opposed closing the strait.**

**It was subsequently replaced by another survey about the popular Iranian football club, Persepolis.**

However, that the fiasco had touched a raw nerve become clear when IRIB claimed in a report that the results had been hacked by the BBC, an accusation the corporation denies.

The Iranian broadcaster insisted the true figure supporting uranium enrichment suspension was only 24% while the rest backed retaliatory measures.

The original results showed only 20% supporting retaliation and 17% wanting a continuation of the current policy of "resistance" to sanctions.

"This survey shows that, while the Iranian people might want nuclear energy, they don't want it at the price the government is forcing them to pay through its negotiating strategy," said Meir Javedanfar, an Iranian-born commentator with the Middle East Economic and Political Analysis Company.

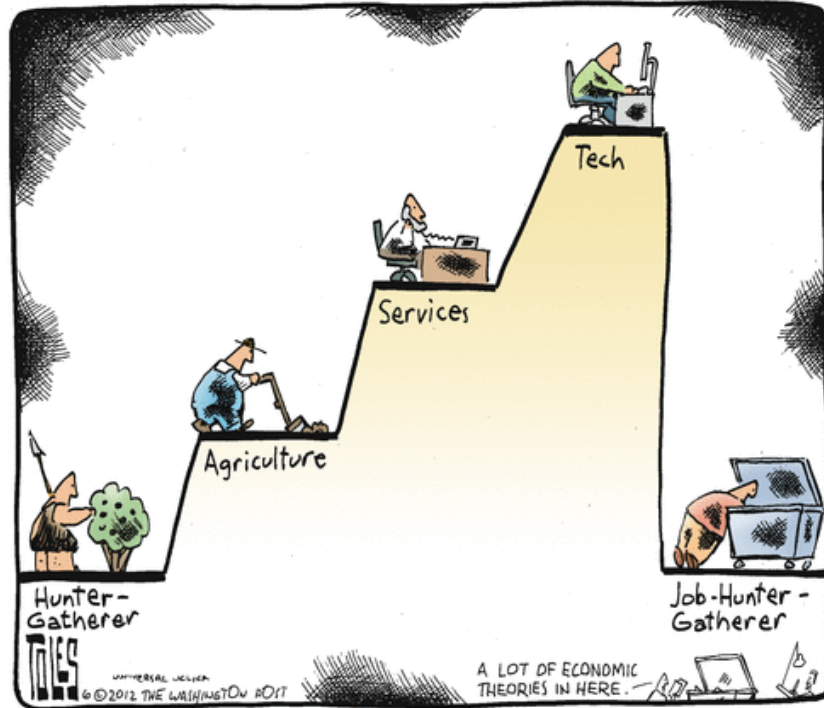
"Their opinion is not factored into the government's negotiating strategy and this poll shows they are not happy with it."

The EU sanctions, coupled with a new US embargo punishing nations that continue to buy Iranian crude, threaten to drastically slash Tehran's oil revenues, on which Iran's economy depends. It is the latest in a series of punitive measures aimed at curbing a nuclear programme which the west suspect is a front for building an atom bomb. Iran says its goals are peaceful.

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## CLASS WAR REPORTS



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**“Growing Numbers Of Poor People, Like Ms. Ray, Are Ending Up Jailed And In Debt For Minor Infractions”  
For-Profit Companies Add Huge Fees For Probation:  
“These Companies Are Bill Collectors, But They Are Given The**

# Authority To Say To Someone That If He Doesn't Pay, He Is Going To Jail” “The Supreme Court Has Made Clear That It Is Unconstitutional To Jail People Just Because They Can't Pay A Fine' Mr. Dawson Said In An Interview”



Richard Earl Garrett is the lead plaintiff in a class action suit against the town of Harpersville, Ala. Mr. Garrett has spent a total of 24 months in jail and owes \$10,000, all for traffic and license violations that began a decade ago. Cary Norton for The New York Times

**Hills McGee, with a monthly income of \$243 in veterans benefits, was charged with public drunkenness, assessed \$270 by a court and put on probation through a private company. The company added a \$15 enrollment fee and \$39 in monthly fees. That put his total for a year above \$700, which Mr. McGee, 53, struggled to meet before being jailed for failing to pay it all.**

July 2, 2012 By ETHAN BRONNER, The New York Times [Excerpts]

**CHILDERSBURG, Ala. — Three years ago, Gina Ray, who is now 31 and unemployed, was fined \$179 for speeding. She failed to show up at court (she says the ticket bore the wrong date), so her license was revoked.**

**When she was next pulled over, she was, of course, driving without a license. By then her fees added up to more than \$1,500.**

**Unable to pay, she was handed over to a private probation company and jailed — charged an additional fee for each day behind bars.**

**For that driving offense, Ms. Ray has been locked up three times for a total of 40 days and owes \$3,170, much of it to the probation company.**

Her story, in hardscrabble, rural Alabama, where Krispy Kreme promises that “two can dine for \$5.99,” is not about innocence.

It is, rather, about the mushrooming of fines and fees levied by money-starved towns across the country and the for-profit businesses that administer the system.

The result is that growing numbers of poor people, like Ms. Ray, are ending up jailed and in debt for minor infractions.

“With so many towns economically strapped, there is growing pressure on the courts to bring in money rather than mete out justice,” said Lisa W. Borden, a partner in Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, a large law firm in Birmingham, Ala., who has spent a great deal of time on the issue.

**“The companies they hire are aggressive. Those arrested are not told about the right to counsel or asked whether they are indigent or offered an alternative to fines and jail. There are real constitutional issues at stake.”**

Half a century ago in a landmark case, the Supreme Court ruled that those accused of crimes had to be provided a lawyer if they could not afford one.

But in misdemeanors, the right to counsel is rarely brought up, even though defendants can run the risk of jail. The probation companies promise revenue to the towns, while saying they also help offenders, and the defendants often end up lost in a legal Twilight Zone.

Here in Childersburg, where there is no public transportation, Ms. Ray has plenty of company in her plight.

Richard Garrett has spent a total of 24 months in jail and owes \$10,000, all for traffic and license violations that began a decade ago. A onetime employee of United States Steel, Mr. Garrett is suffering from health difficulties and is without work. William M. Dawson, a Birmingham lawyer and Democratic Party activist, has filed a lawsuit for Mr. Garrett and others against the local authorities and the probation company, Judicial Correction Services, which is based in Georgia.

**“The Supreme Court has made clear that it is unconstitutional to jail people just because they can’t pay a fine,” Mr. Dawson said in an interview.**

**In Georgia, three dozen for-profit probation companies operate in hundreds of courts, and there have been similar lawsuits.**

In one, Randy Miller, 39, an Iraq war veteran who had lost his job, was jailed after failing to make child support payments of \$860 a month.

In another, Hills McGee, with a monthly income of \$243 in veterans benefits, was charged with public drunkenness, assessed \$270 by a court and put on probation



through a private company. The company added a \$15 enrollment fee and \$39 in monthly fees. That put his total for a year above \$700, which Mr. McGee, 53, struggled to meet before being jailed for failing to pay it all.

**“These companies are bill collectors, but they are given the authority to say to someone that if he doesn’t pay, he is going to jail,” said John B. Long, a lawyer in Augusta, Ga., who is taking the issue to a federal appeals court this fall.**

“There are things like garbage collection where private companies are O.K. No one’s liberty is affected. The closer you get to locking someone up, the closer you get to a constitutional issue.”

The issue of using the courts to produce income has caught the attention of the country’s legal establishment. A recent study by the nonpartisan Conference of State Court Administrators, “Courts Are Not Revenue Centers,” said that in traffic violations, “court leaders face the greatest challenge in ensuring that fines, fees and surcharges are not simply an alternate form of taxation.”

J. Scott Vowell, the presiding judge of Alabama’s 10th Judicial Circuit, said in an interview that his state’s Legislature, like many across the country, was pressuring courts to produce revenue, and that some legislators even believed courts should be financially self-sufficient.

In a 2010 study, the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law examined the fee structure in the 15 states — including California, Florida and Texas — with the largest prison populations.

It asserted: “Many states are imposing new and often onerous ‘user fees’ on individuals with criminal convictions. Yet far from being easy money, these fees impose severe — and often hidden — costs on communities, taxpayers and indigent people convicted of crimes. They create new paths to prison for those unable to pay their debts and make it harder to find employment and housing as well as to meet child support obligations.”

Most of those fees are for felonies and do not involve private probation companies, which have so far been limited to chasing those guilty of misdemeanors. A decade or two ago, many states abandoned pursuing misdemeanor fees because it was time-consuming and costly.

**Companies like Judicial Correction Services saw an opportunity. They charge public authorities nothing and make their money by adding fees onto the bills of the defendants.**

Stephen B. Bright, president of the Southern Center for Human Rights, who teaches at Yale Law School, said courts were increasingly using fees “for such things as the retirement funds for various court officials, law enforcement functions such as police training and crime laboratories, victim assistance programs and even the court’s computer system.”

**He added, “In one county in Pennsylvania, 26 different fees totaling \$2,500 are assessed in addition to the fine.”**

Mr. Dawson's Alabama lawsuit alleges that Judicial Correction Services does not discuss alternatives to fines or jail and that its training manual "is devoid of any discussion of indigency or waiver of fees."

Mr. Bright, of the Southern Center for Human Rights, said that with the private companies seeking a profit, with courts in need of income and with the most vulnerable caught up in the system, "we end up balancing the budget on the backs of the poorest people in society."

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## **“The March, Which According To Its Student Organizers Summoned Around 150,000 People, Was Held To Demand An End To Profiteering In Education And To Call For Free And Quality Education To All Chilean Students”**



“Education and health is the best investment that a society can make.” Credit: Brittany Peterson

June 29, 2012 By Brittany Peterson, The Nation

The first raindrops began to leak from the menacing gray sky over Plaza Italia, in the heart of Santiago, by 9:00 am.

Aside from hurried professionals and a few special force police officers patrolling in pairs and politely conversing with small groups of students who should have been in classes, everything appeared calm.

Two hours later, the scene was unrecognizable as a massive crowd swelled.

High school and college students had marked this national strike, Thursday, June 28, in their calendars weeks ago. The strike came in the heated aftermath of four consecutive marches last week, which included a march by high school students, private university students, opponents to lithium extraction, and supporters of sexual diversity.

In addition to high school and college students, the College of Professors and the United Confederation of Workers (CUT), among many other groups, colored the streets with their flags and songs. The march, which according to its student organizers summoned around 150,000 people, was held to demand an end to profiteering in education and to call for free and quality education to all Chilean students--the mantra of the education movement that has reverberated over the last year.

Last year's movement regularly drew marches the size of Thursday's demonstration and involved nationwide university occupations that lasted up to seven months at some schools. Teams of students intensely researched financing methods and student leaders dialoged directly with President Sebastián Piñera on several occasions in an attempt to find a solution to reform the education system.

It came as a shock to students that these months of mobilization failed to bring significant policy change.

The proposal in April by Education Minister Harald Beyer for a new university funding plan that would remove private banks from the loan process and decrease interest rates from six percent to two percent was something, but too little, too late, according to the President of the University of Chile Student Federation (FECH) Gabriel Boric, who dismissed the reform: "We don't want to trade debt for debt, which is what the government is offering us."

Pedro Ciudad, a member of the College of Professors and a teacher at a public school in the humble Santiago neighborhood Conchalí, joined Thursday's march. Ciudad said he has seen the quality of education worsen since he first began his career in public education 14 years ago. "Fewer people register in the schools and the State does not concern itself with public education," he said. "We have to buy our own pens that we use in the classroom."

"I never miss class, but this is the moment to miss it and to be conscious of what is going on in our country and make the youth conscious. That is the job I have as a professor," said Ciudad.

María Fernanda Quilaleo, a third year industrial design student of the Metropolitan Technical University, stood dressed in costume with her entire family beside her. "Just like last year, we all come together," said Quilaleo, who described the march as a cultural carnival. "I hope some solution will be reached," she said. "(The government) should invest more resources, because they are there. They are just mis-distributed."

While a peaceful, colorful march took place on one side of Alameda, the main road that passes in front of the presidential palace, a few police vehicles began to speed threateningly down the other side of the street. FECH Vice President Camila Vallejo tweeted during the march, "Police provocations have already begun on Mc Iver (street name)...we have to keep advancing and not fall into their game."

Soon after, "encapuchados," or delinquents, began to destroy public property and police responded with water canons, tear gas, and mass arrests. The march continued and eventually arrived at a final destination where student leaders addressed the crowd and Chilean folk singer Manuel García performed. However, delinquents caused disruptions there as well increasing tensions between their ranks and the organized student movement.

After the march, student leaders drenched from the relentless rain arrived at the presidential palace, La Moneda, where they presented a letter to President Piñera that highlighted a five-point list of demands.

"Before a government that appears to cede to the will of businesses that are robbing thousands of Chilean families and stealing their dreams, the united student movement has come today to deliver the horizons of the movement as well as a series of concrete measures which we believe can be advanced," said Boric to the press.

One of the movement's main problems is that not all universities support the CONFECH, the confederation of all public universities in Chile, which began and propels the education movement. Particularly, private universities have felt left out, since many demands focus on improving public education.

Rodrigo Vergara, President of the Student Federation of the Silva Henríquez Catholic University, is among the dissenters. Students at his university, among many others, occupied their campuses for months and participated in numerous inter-university discussions and marches. But, since the few proposed government reforms largely addressed concerns relevant to the public universities, Vergara and his peers were left feeling deeply deceived.

This year, they are focusing their energy on internal issues rather than continuing collaboration with other universities. We want to make structural changes inside," said Vergara. "If we are not able to change anything inside the university, what can we achieve outside of it?"

Regardless of his university's new introspective strategy, some of their students attended Thursday's march. Vergara acknowledged that despite this past semester's latent period for the nationwide education movement, "this semester there is chance for something larger, but that depends on how the (police) forces respond."

Vergara explained that one visual clue of a revitalized movement is police repression.

When this occurs, he said people feel like there is a crisis in the education system, but when everything is calm, then the urgency for change is not felt. "If the government is frightened by this march, it is evidence that the students are really committed. If they let them march on and everything is nice, it is because they are not worried, they are not

uncomfortable, and it is because the kids aren't committed to the cause--they see it as just a game."

Time will tell how uncomfortable the current generation of student activists will make Chile's elite. But, judging by the sentiment in the streets yesterday, these students do not intend to go away quietly.

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