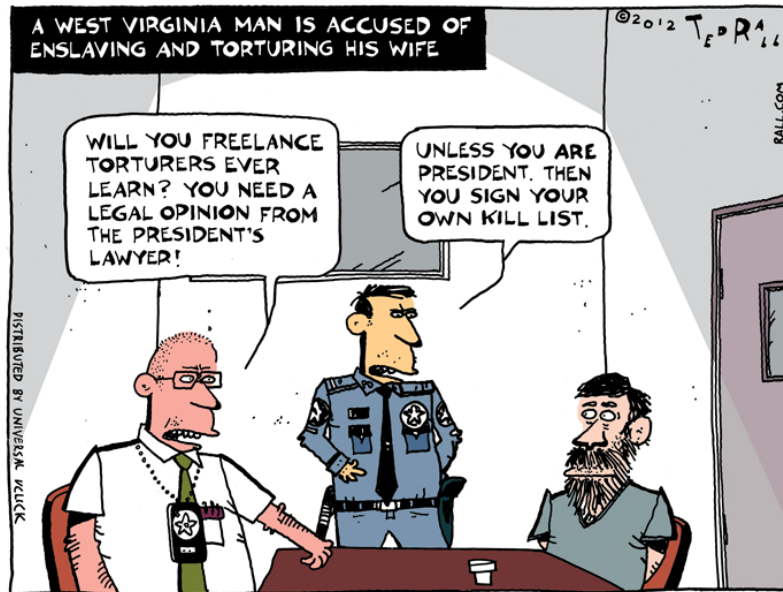


Military Resistance 10G20



On The Ground With The Syrian Opposition:

**“Most Appeared To Be Deserters
Who Had Joined The Opposition
Because Of The Repressive
Actions They Were Being Ordered
To Carry Out”**

**“Strong Nationalist (And Quite
Sophisticated) Politics Of The
Grassroots Movement Even In Rural
Areas Like This”**

“Your Father Sold The Golan, You Suffocate Our Souls” (Meaning Bashar Al-Assad’s Father Afez)



FSA fighter holds up his Syrian military I.D. card

To clarify the background for these comments I’ve done a bit of research into the Syrian opposition, and I must admit to being embarrassed at my own ignorance – I was really not aware of the extent and depth of the popular grassroots organization, only a hint of which is provided by this film.

July 22, 2012 By Brian Slocums, The North Star [Excerpts]

I posted a link

[\[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHQhAxtKOTA&feature=player_embedded\]](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHQhAxtKOTA&feature=player_embedded) to this French-language documentary [*On the Ground With the Syrian Opposition*] a week ago in the Libya and Syria: When Anti-Imperialism Goes Wrong comment thread, but it probably got lost in the flow of discussion there, so I am reposting it here along with a brief review of some of the contents of the film.

The documentary was made by a two-person team from the French TV station Canal Plus who entered Syria from Turkey with the cooperation of Syrian oppositionists last December.

They spent 10 days with a group of Syrian Free Army (FSA) fighters in a small village in the northwest of the country, near the key opposition center of Idlib. Apart from following this group, they managed to briefly enter Idlib, and also to be present at a major gathering of opposition forces (military and civilian) somewhere in a “liberated zone” in the Jebel Az-Zawiya mountains nearby.

Like most good documentaries, this is most valuable in providing a sense of the human dimension of the conflict and those involved in it. But it also provides some factual

details about the struggle that are relevant to the issues that we have been discussing here.

Obviously the program provides only a microcosmic picture of what is going on in one small locality and over one short space of time. Remarks by the people encountered suggest that the events and views recorded were fairly typical of a large swathe of the Syrian opposition, but there will be places where things are very different (especially in the large cities).

Those who can't follow the French commentary may not find it worthwhile to watch the whole film but I think that the final 10 minutes, which shows the large gathering in the mountains, is worth watching just for the visual images, which give a sense of the popular enthusiasm that the revolt has mobilized (at least in some places) and of the relationship between the fighters and the civilian population.

The FSA, at least in this part of the country, operates in small groups of fighters based in local villages.

The group that the filmmakers were attached to were described as a mixture of Syrian army deserters and local peasants, but most appeared to be deserters who had joined the opposition because of the repressive actions they were being ordered to carry out.

Their command structure is located across the border in Turkey, and their weaponry fairly basic: small arms and one or two machine guns.

Their operations center around providing protection to civilian opposition forces in the villages, particularly for demonstrations, but they clearly undertake some offensive actions against the Syrian army.

Their basic structures are the small groups, but they regroup into larger units as necessary. One fighter expressed the view that in the village where they were based, political opinions were divided, with 60% being anti-Assad and 40% pro-government, the divide largely on generational lines (the younger generation being more solidly pro-opposition).

There is interesting footage of a demonstration in a small local village where such gatherings apparently take place every evening. (@15:52)

One of the slogans of the demonstration offers some insight into the strong nationalist (and quite sophisticated) politics of the grassroots movement even in rural areas like this: "Your father sold the Golan, you suffocate our souls" (meaning Bashar al-Assad's father Afez).

The filmmakers entered the city of Idlib in agreement with the local opposition. Interestingly, the opposition leader who they deal with tells them that the FSA is only allowed to operate in the villages – they are forbidden from entering Idlib itself, because the local opposition believes that their presence increases the risk of armed exchanges with Assad's military. In their view the most important thing is the continued mobilization of the mass movement. This indicates that there are tactical differences within the opposition, but suggests that the deciding voice is that of the civilian movement not the armed wing.

Discussions with fighters about external assistance again show divergences: some plead for international support (but are unclear about what form it should take), but one FSA officer when asked about this simply says that Western government should at least expel Syrian ambassadors.

I've suggested that those interested might watch the last 10 minutes on the gathering in the mountain "liberated zone" so I won't say much about that, except to note that the civilian demonstration seems large for such a remote area, and that there is heavier weaponry on display here (but only rocket-propelled grenades).

This may be a result of different units being present or of recent changes in supply sources or both.

To clarify the background for these comments I've done a bit of research into the Syrian opposition, and I must admit to being embarrassed at my own ignorance – I was really not aware of the extent and depth of the popular grassroots organization, only a hint of which is provided by this film.

I don't want to overburden this post, so I'll close it here, but might feed some of my further findings either into the discussion or in another post looking more at the civilian opposition.

MORE:

Syrian Rebels Say Fight For Country's Largest City Has Begun: "Aleppo Is Witnessing Serious Street Battles"

"Damascus And Aleppo Are Both Home To Elites Who Have Benefited From Close Ties To Assad's Regime"

July 22, 2012 Associated Press & Luke Harding and Martin Chulov in Beirut and agencies, Guardian News and Media Limited [Excerpts]

Syrian rebels have launched an offensive to "liberate" the country's largest city of Aleppo, an opposition commander said Sunday.

Opposition sources said fighters from rural areas around Aleppo had been converging on the city of 3 million people near the border with Turkey.

In a further sign of rapid regime erosion, four more army brigadiers were said to have crossed into Turkey, bringing the number of senior military defectors there to about 100.

Another brigadier, Adelnasser Ferzat, defected to FSA fighters in Aleppo, it was claimed.

The FSA had previously reached within nine miles of Aleppo.

On Saturday, activist Mohammad Saeed said dozens of FSA rebels had penetrated deep inside the city.

There were reports that they had set up checkpoints in some areas. Video showed thick black smoke billowing over buildings. Some residents had painted walls with the pre-Ba'athist flag, the symbol of the revolution.

Free Syrian Army fighters battled government troops near the main intelligence base on Sunday.

Fighting raged in other parts of Aleppo, Syria's second largest city, and demonstrators defaced a stone statue of President Bashar al-Assad's father, the late president Hafez al-Assad, in the central Shahba area overnight, breaking off parts of it, according to a video taken by activists.

"Sounds of explosions from different areas are shaking the whole city. A heavy exchange of gunfire has been going on near the state security headquarters in al-Mouhafaza since the morning," a resident told Reuters by telephone.

The opposition attack on Aleppo, Syria's commercial hub and traditionally a bedrock of support for President Bashar Assad, was a sign of the rebels' growing confidence and capabilities.

Damascus and Aleppo are both home to elites who have benefited from close ties to Assad's regime, as well as merchant classes and minority groups who worry their status will suffer if Assad falls.

Col. Abdul-Jabbar Mohammed Aqidi, the commander of rebel forces in Aleppo province, said in the video posted on Youtube, "we gave the orders for the march into Aleppo with the aim of liberating it."

He called on government troops to defect and join the opposition, and said rebels will protect members of President Bashar Assad's Alawite minority sect, an off-shoot of Shiite Islam, saying "our war is not with you but with the Assad family."

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and Aleppo-based activist Mohammed Saeed said the fighting is concentrated in several neighborhoods.

Saeed said rebels are in full control of the central Salaheddine district and the nearby Sakhour area.

“Aleppo is witnessing serious street battles,” Saeed said, with fierce clashes on the road leading to the city’s international airport, known as Nairab, as rebels tried to surround the airfield to prevent the regime from sending reinforcements.

In the capital of Damascus, the Observatory also reported attacks by government forces in the neighborhoods of Mazzeh and Barzeh that had once been held by rebels. It said that troops used helicopters gunships in the attack, causing heavy casualties.

Maj. Gen. Nabil Zughuib, described as a missile expert, was also shot dead along with his wife and a son in the Damascus neighborhood of Bab Touma, according to the Observatory.

Assad, meanwhile, appeared on state TV receiving Gen. Ali Ayyoub, the new army chief of staff, whose predecessor replaced the defense minister slain in the bombing.

It was only Assad’s second appearance since the attack.

Despite the regime’s efforts to present an image of calm in the capital, Malaysia’s government said it was shuttering its embassy in Damascus and evacuating more than 130 students and diplomats, while Italy ordered of its citizens to leave the country because of the “progressive deterioration” of the situation.

The escalating bloodshed and increasing chaos also has put Syria’s neighbors on edge, particularly Israel.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday that Israel was closely monitoring the violence in Syria for signs the regime’s chemical weapons or missiles might make their way into the hands of anti-Israeli militants.

MORE:

Head Of Zionist Military Intelligence Fears Fall Of Assad Will Threaten Israel:

**“The Conflict There Has Allowed What
He Called ‘Radical Islam’ To Gain
Ground On Israel’s Northern Border”**

07.17.12 By Sheera Frenkel and David Enders, McClatchy Newspapers

JERUSALEM -- The head of Israeli military intelligence told his country’s parliament on Tuesday that Syrian President Bashar Assad won’t be able to defeat the armed uprising that’s spread throughout Syria and that the conflict there has allowed what he called “radical Islam” to gain ground on Israel’s northern border.

Maj. Gen. Aviv Kochavi told a closed session of the Knesset that he didn't know how long Assad could remain in power, but that his fall was a certainty. "It may take more time – I can't give you an exact number – but it will happen," Kochavi said, according to notes taken during his testimony and shared later at an official briefing that was overseen by an Israeli military censor.

He warned of a growing presence of Islamist fighters.

"We can see an ongoing flow of al Qaida and global jihad activists into Syria," Kochavi said, according to the version shared with reporters.

MORE:

**Via State Department Funding,
The U.S. Empire Fantasizes
About A Government That Will
Keep The Assad Dictatorship
Minus Assad:**

**Dreams Of A Transition That "Is
Not Sweeping Away Of The Entire
Political And Judicial Framework
Of Syria"**

**"The Project Has Also Tried To
Identify Regime Personnel Who Might
Be Able To Play An Effective Role
After Assad Falls"**

**"None Of The Groups That Fall Beyond
The Mainstream Of The Opposition Have
Any Connection To The Project"**

Comment: T

See the article following this one that rather neatly describes in a few words how stupid and pointless this talking shop really is.

The future governing structure inside Syria will be decided by forces on the ground inside Syria, local revolutionary armed forces in particular. Absent an Imperial military intervention, the kind of government described in this article represents a utopian scheme disconnected from reality, but no doubt providing funds and employment for those individuals and organizations participating, including the assorted Syrian exile political hacks sucking up to the U.S. State Department.

[Thanks to Frank Scott who sent this in.]

July 20, 2012 Posted By Josh Rogin, Foreign Policy

For the last six months, 40 senior representatives of various Syrian opposition groups have been meeting quietly in Germany under the tutelage of the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) to plan for how to set up a post-Assad Syrian government.

The project, which has not directly involved U.S. government officials but was partially funded by the State Department, is gaining increased relevance this month as the violence in Syria spirals out of control and hopes for a peaceful transition of power fade away.

The leader of the project, USIP's Steven Heydemann, an academic expert on Syria, has briefed administration officials on the plan, as well as foreign officials, including on the sidelines of the Friends of Syria meeting in Istanbul last month.

The project is called "The day after: Supporting a democratic transition in Syria." Heydemann spoke about the project in depth for the first time in an interview with The Cable.

He described USIP's efforts as "working in a support role with a large group of opposition groups to define a transition process for a post-Assad Syria."

The opposition leaders involved in the USIP project have been meeting since January and providing updates on their work to the Arab League, the Friends of Syria group, the team of U.N. Special Envoy Kofi Annan, and the opposition Syrian National Council.

The focus of the group's effort is to develop concrete plans for the immediate aftermath of a regime collapse, to mitigate the risks of bureaucratic, security, and economic chaos. The project has also identified a few things can be done in advance to prepare for a post-Assad Syria.

"We organized this project along systematic lines, including security-sector reform," Heydemann said.

“We have provided technical support for Syrian opposition participants in our project, and the Syrians have identified priorities for things that need to be implemented now.”

He emphasized that USIP’s involvement is primarily in a facilitation and coordination role. “The Syrians are very much in the lead on this,” he said. **[Those worn-out exile hacks picked by USIP, to be more precise. T]**

USIP intends to release a report on the project in the coming weeks that will serve as a transition strategy document to be used by the next government. [Blind, stupid Imperial arrogance is certainly alive and well. T]

The next phase is to stand up a transition support network “to begin to implement these recommendations about stuff that needs to happen now,” Heydemann said.

In addition to security-sector reform, the group has come up with plans to reform the justice sector and a framework for the role of the armed opposition in a post-Assad Syria.

The idea is to preserve those parts of the Syrian state that can be carried over while preparing to reform the parts that can’t.

For example, large parts of the Syrian legal system could be preserved. [Yes yes, it’s certainly been reasonably effective in sending those critical of the Syrian government to torture chimera in regime prisons, those that weren’t simply executed that is. By all means, keep that wonderful legal system. T]

The group has come up with a few innovative proposals to make the post-Assad transition less chaotic.

One example Heydemann cited was the idea of mobile judicial review squads, which could be deployed to do rapid review and release of detainees held by the regime after it falls.

The project has also tried to identify regime personnel who might be able to play an effective role in the immediate phase after Assad falls.

“There’s a very clear understanding of the Syrians in this project that a transition is not sweeping away of the entire political and judicial framework of Syria,” Heydemann said.

“We have learned an enormous amount about the participants so that we can actually begin a very crude vetting process.”

The USIP-led project has been careful to avoid working to push the Assad regime from power.

“We have very purposely stayed away from contributing to the direct overthrow of the Assad regime,” Heydemann said. “Our project is called ‘the day after.’ There are other groups working on the day before.”

The project has been funded by the State Department, but also has received funding from the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as Dutch and Norwegian NGOs. USIP partnered with the German Institute of International and Security Affairs, which is why all of the meetings have been held in Berlin.

The absence of Obama administration officials at these meetings, even as observers, was deliberate.

“This is a situation where too visible a U.S. role would have been deeply counterproductive. It would have given the Assad regime and elements of the opposition an excuse to delegitimize the process,” Heydemann said.

He also said that none of the groups that fall beyond the mainstream of the opposition have any connection to the project, although the participants assume that Islamist politics will be a significant part of any future Syrian political order.

The idea is not to predict if, how, or when the Assad regime might fall, but rather to do as much as possible, as quietly as possible, to get ready for any contingency.

“Regime collapse offers one set of challenges; a negotiated transition offers another. Even if we are not certain a transition will occur, it would be profoundly irresponsible not to prepare for a transition,” Heydemann said. “We are providing the opposition with an opportunity for the opposition itself to demonstrate its ability to undertake this work, which is actually quite significant.”

MORE:

**“The Main Opposition Groups
Washington Supports Lack
Cohesion, Credibility And, Most
Importantly, Command Over
The Armed Rebels”**

**“Syrian Academics And
Technocrats – Almost All Of Them
Exiles – Who Were Tasked With
Creating A Shadow Government**

Don't Appear To Have Real Support On The Ground In Syria” “Local, Grassroots Councils That Sprang From The Revolution Would Form The Backbone Of An Interim Authority If The Government Falls Soon”

“I Think The Revolutionary Councils Are Organized And They Now Know How To Work To Some Extent”

July 20, 2012 By Hannah Allam; McClatchy Newspapers [Excerpts]

WASHINGTON — As rebels rack up important victories that could hasten the fall of Syrian President Bashar Assad, U.S. officials are still struggling to identify a credible opposition authority to keep fragile Syria from civil war once the leader is gone.

The main opposition groups Washington supports lack cohesion, credibility and, most importantly, command over the armed rebels who on Friday said they were sending reinforcements to Damascus for battles that could determine whether the four-decade Assad family dynasty survives.

Syrian academics and technocrats – almost all of them exiles – who were tasked with creating a shadow government don't appear to have real support on the ground in Syria, in Washington or at the United Nations, according to analysts and published remarks by officials.

Samer al Hussein, an opposition activist from Hama who's been in stuck in Damascus since the latest violence, predicted that the local, grassroots councils that sprang from the revolution would form the backbone of an interim authority if the government falls soon.

The Syrian National Council, he added, could be a part of the transition, but he said, “I don't think the SNC is very qualified to work on the political side.”

“I think there will be chaos, but I think the revolutionary councils are organized and they now know how to work to some extent,” Hussein said by telephone from Damascus, the booms of shelling audible in the background.

"We have some authority."

MORE:

Syria: Summarizing The Obvious

Comment: T

1. The government of Syria is an especially violent, cruel and bloodthirsty dictatorship constructed to use mass murder to defend the interests of the rich and powerful who own Syria, otherwise known as the ruling class of Syrian capitalists. Think the Syrian 1%.

The fact the governing regime has now put those interests in the toilet merely illustrates the regimes' incompetence in defending the position of the Syrian ruling class. Assad's government has ceased to serve a useful purpose for the Syrian ruling class, and become a curse threatening to bring their house down on their heads.

2. It would be desirable to see the whole class of Syrian capitalists and the Assad regime wiped off the face of the earth by a revolutionary movement from below organized and led by Syrians.

Shattering the Syrian government machinery would, at minimum, open the door for revolutionary socialist tendencies to organize for significant changes benefiting the Syrian working class, the lower ranks of the army, and the rural poor: the majority of Syrians.

The local revolutionary councils already in place and governing inside Syria can become the backbone for a new organization of power and a decisive arena for accomplishing this work.

3. It would not be desirable under any circumstances to see Russia, England, France, China, the United States or any other Imperial power or combination of them send their own or proxy military forces to invade Syria, using the revolutionary movement as an pretense to do so in the name of "averting chaos," "helping" the Syrian people, "providing humanitarian assistance," etc. etc.

Decent people will organize to do everything possible to cripple, and if possible, destroy efforts of that kind undertaken by their own or other governments.

4. As for cheerleaders who praise and support the Assad dictatorship:

Some are professional propagandists for the Russian or Iranian dictatorships, acting on behalf of those 1% regimes to advance their interests in Syria. One example is PressTV, the mouthpiece of the Iranian dictatorship.

Some are oblivious to the reality that Syria's best hope for defense against the U.S. or any other Imperial regime is the overthrow of the Assad government and its replacement by a revolutionary council government of elected representative of the Syrian working class, the lower ranks of the army, and the rural poor: the majority of Syrians, who have no wish to become the subjects of some foreign power.

Others admirers of Assad are merely the most recent incarnation of those who identify with and serve the interests of assorted tyrants, dictators, exploiters and oppressors.

There have always been armchair intellectuals fascinated by and sucking up to assorted forms of dictatorships, vicariously living out through them their own fantasies of holding dictatorial power to force the rest of us to do what they decide is best for us.

Fuck 'em.

5. The most effective way for those living in the United States of America to aid the Syrian revolution is to do whatever lies within our power to weaken and eventually bring down the U.S. Imperial government and the ruling class it serves, the chief author and sustainer of oppression, tyranny and exploitation that is the curse of six continents.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Five Foreign Occupation “Service Members” Killed Somewhere Or Other In Afghanistan: Nationality Not Announced

Jul. 22, 2012 The Associated Press

Five foreign service members were killed in roadside bombings over the past two days.

All five were killed in roadside bomb attacks -- one Saturday in the east, and on Sunday, two in the east and two in the south. NATO provided no further details on the incidents or the nationalities of the troops.

The deaths bring the number of foreign forces killed in July to 32, and a total of 247 so far this year.

Afghan Soldier Opens Fire On U.S. Troops: Two Wounded

23 July 2012 Emma Graham-Harrison in Heart, Guardian News and Media Limited
[Excerpt]

Monday, an Afghan National Army (ANA) soldier turned his weapon on U.S. forces in northern Afghanistan.

The deputy governor of Faryab province, Abdul Satar Baraz, said: "An ANA soldier opened fire this morning around 8am, wounding two US soldiers. The shooter was an ethnic Arab Afghan from Jowzjan."

**POLITICIANS REFUSE TO HALT THE
BLOODSHED**

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

1 British, 2 US Mercenaries Killed By Afghan Policeman Near Herat

Jul. 22, 2012 The Associated Press & By MATTHEW ROSENBERG and HABIB ZAHORI, The New York Times & AGI & July 23, 2012 By Rahim Faiez, The Associated Press & Emma Graham-Harrison in Heart, Guardian News and Media Limited

A person wearing an Afghan police uniform turned his weapon Sunday against civilian contractors with the U.S.-led military coalition in western Afghanistan, killing three.

The three civilian police training contractors killed by an Afghan policeman over the weekend have been identified as two Americans and a British citizen.

Two other people were wounded — an Afghan translator and a fourth civilian adviser whose nationality was not released.

The contractors worked as trainers of Afghan police officers at the West Zone Police Center near the Herat airport, in the province of the same name under Italian control.

The officials said that the gunman graduated from the police training centre 1 1/2 years ago and was assigned to the centre's protection unit. He was killed by soldiers after he opened fire on the civilian trainers inside a hall at the training centre, they said.

The policeman was from neighbouring Badghis province. Dotted with steep valleys and pistachio forests, it lies north of Herat and has a stronger insurgent presence.

An Afghan official said the policeman had opened fire on international forces around 7:30 p.m., after the Afghan police had broken their daily fasts for the Islamic holy month of Ramadan.

Col. Noor Khan Nekzad, a spokesman for the police in Herat, said the shooting took place at a coalition police training center near the city. The center is mainly staffed by Italian forces, although some Americans also work there.

Sunday's attack was a rare jolt of violence for foreign troops stationed in Herat, a bustling commercial centre near the border with Iran, and the hub of one of Afghanistan's more peaceful regions.

Most government buildings in the city are guarded by razor wire and sandbags rather than the layers of blast walls that mark out official compounds in the capital, Kabul, and other more restive areas.

At Camp Arena, soldiers said they had not heard alarm sirens at the base for several months.

Resistance Action

21 July 2012 TOLONews & Jul. 22, 2012 The Associated Press & AAP

In western Herat province, a car of policemen came under attack from insurgents in the Gozara district on Friday night, a local official said on condition of anonymity. The deputy police chief and another policeman were killed in the attack, while district police chief Abdul Wahid and another officer were wounded in the attack, he said. Wahid was taken to a nearby hospital in the city, he added.

In Jalrez, the rebels captured six Afghans returning home from work at a foreign military base close to the capital Kabul..

The bodies of five of them were found on Sunday, all booby-trapped with explosives, a statement from the provincial governor's office said. Their hands were tied behind their backs, a witness told AFP.

The sixth man fled his captors,

Spokesman Shahidullah Shahid said their bodies were discovered early Sunday.

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

MILITARY NEWS

**“‘I Essentially Did Six Years
Based On A Lie,’ Says Hickam,
26, Who Served Four Tours In
Iraq”**

**The Army Has Acknowledged
“That Enlistment Agreements
Involving The Fund Were
‘Blatantly Misleading’ For More
Than A Decade”**

**“Even So, It Denied Appeals From
Veterans”**

**“Hickam Is One In A New Wave Of
Veterans Who Are Discovering That
Their Army College Fund Is Worth Far
Less Than They Were Promised By
Recruiters When They Enlisted”**

At the time, the deal seemed irresistible to Eric Hickam: Give six years to the Army, a recruiter told him in 2003, and you can get a \$50,000 “kicker” — the Army College Fund.

But when his payments started coming last fall, his first year at Columbia University, the amount fell far short of what Hickam had anticipated.

He thought the college fund was a bonus on top of his GI Bill, worth about \$35,000 at the time.

The Army says the \$50,000 figure was a total of all benefits. Last month, it denied Hickam’s appeal seeking \$50,000 more than what he’s receiving for his GI Bill.

“I essentially did six years based on a lie,” says Hickam, 26, who served four tours in Iraq.

Hickam is one in a new wave of veterans who are discovering that their Army College Fund is worth far less than they thought when they enlisted.

The Army has acknowledged, in at least 91 cases, that enlistment agreements involving the fund were “blatantly misleading” for more than a decade, a review of publicly available military records show.

Even so, it denied appeals from veterans who felt misled.

With help from Congress, which in 2009 created a one-year opportunity for veterans to seek relief, the Army paid out \$2.18 million to 86 applicants, or about \$25,000 each. But the Army has since denied additional appeals.

And no one knows how many of nearly 140,000 young men and women who signed up for the Army College Fund between April 1, 1993, and Sept. 30, 2004, either have given up or have yet to discover the discrepancy.

“It’s sad that it takes an act of Congress to provide Army student veterans with their rightfully earned benefits,” says Michael Dakduk, executive director of Student Veterans of America, a coalition of student veteran groups on more than 500 campuses.

“The Army needs to recognize that this is still a problem.”

The discrepancy has to do with how the Army College Fund, established in 1982 to attract college-bound youth into the military, is calculated. According to claims available online that were filed by soldiers as far back as 2000, some servicemembers believed the Army College Fund was an extra benefit, on top of the standard education benefit provided by the GI Bill.

But in multiple cases, an Army review board told them the Army College Fund instead reflects the combined total amount the veteran will get.

The Army “paid some” claims before May 2006 but “does not have reliable data” on how many or the amounts paid, Army spokeswoman Diana Dawa says.

David Choi, 30, who enlisted in 2002 and alternates between working full time and going to school, says his recruiter made the \$50,000 Army College Fund his main selling point.

“He continued to dangle it in front of my face like a carrot on a stick,” says Choi, who separated from the Army in 2006 and enrolled in Santa Monica Community College in 2009. UCLA graduate student Dani Molina, 29, recalls that when he questioned the language about the Army College Fund in 1999, “my recruiter said not to worry about it.”

Like Hickam, Choi and Molina say they were surprised that they got less than what they expected, but never sought a claim under the 2009 law because no one told them about it.

Dawa says the Army notified veterans whose claims had previously been denied, and posted a notice on its website. Last week, Rep. Doris Matsui, D-Calif., who proposed the 2009 legislation, introduced a new bill that would again allow the Army to correct “erroneous” amounts, this time from 2013 to 2015.

Rick Jahnkow, of the non-profit Project on Youth and Non-Military Opportunities, which conducts efforts to prevent military recruiters from enlisting young people, says Congress could do even more good by requiring military recruiters to provide “very clear statements” of what servicemembers can expect when they enlist.

Nicholas Olson, 29, a senior at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls, says he has given up expecting the Army to compensate him and has focused instead on fighting for rights for veterans who are disabled or homeless.

“I’m able to get by on what I have and am thankful for that,” he says. “While I do feel cheated, I feel almost selfish asking for more money when there are others who get nothing and are on the streets.”

Troops Invited:

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

Obama Regime Denies Relief To Suffering Troops And Veterans:

““For Many, Cannabis Not Only Treats PTSD, It’s A Lifesaver,’ Krawitz Told Military Times In October”

Legalizing Marijuana For Sufferers Of Post-Traumatic Stress “Has Met With A Sound Rejection From The White House”

Jul 17, 2012 By Patricia Kime - Staff writer; Army Times [Excerpts]

An effort to persuade the Obama administration to legalize marijuana for sufferers of post-traumatic stress has met with a sound rejection from the White House.

Responding to a petition signed by 8,258 people on the White House website, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy Gil Kerlikowske wrote last month that marijuana is not a “benign drug” and does not meet standards of safe or effective medicine.

The “Allow United States Disabled Military Veterans Access To Medical Marijuana To Treat Their PTSD” petition was launched last year by former Air Force Sgt. Mike Krawitz, executive director of Veterans for Medical Cannabis Access.

Krawitz said he launched the drive partially out of concern that veterans sometimes risk losing their Veterans Affairs Department medical coverage if they are found to smoke pot.

“For many, cannabis not only treats PTSD, it’s a lifesaver,” Krawitz told Military Times in October.

Seventeen states and the District of Columbia allow doctors to prescribe marijuana for medicinal purposes, but it remains illegal under federal law.

The Obama administration has held steadfast in enforcing federal laws applicable to medical marijuana production, sales and distribution.

“Military Prosecutors And Manning’s Attorneys Sparred Over Questions

Defense Lawyers Want To Ask To Screen Potential Military Jury Members”



www.bradleymanning

Jul 17, 2012 By Jessica Gresko - The Associated Press

FORT MEADE, Md. — A defense lawyer for an Army private charged in the biggest leak of classified information in U.S. history acknowledged Tuesday in court that it will be hard to find military jurors who aren't aware of the case.

David Coombs, an attorney for Bradley Manning, made the statement during a hearing at Maryland's Fort Meade, the second day of a planned five-day hearing in preparation for Manning's trial, currently scheduled for September.

Prosecutors say that the now 24-year-old Manning gave hundreds of thousands of classified diplomatic cables and war logs to the secret-sharing website WikiLeaks while working as an intelligence analyst in Baghdad in 2009 and 2010. He's facing 22 charges including aiding al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. If convicted, he could be sentenced to life in prison.

At Tuesday's hearing, military prosecutors and Manning's attorneys sparred over questions defense lawyers want to ask to screen potential military jury members.

Potential jury members are asked a series of written and then oral questions before being put on the jury. Coombs, Manning's lead defense attorney, said he is using the questions to learn about jurors' open-mindedness and familiarity with issues in the case, but also what makes the potential jurors "tick."

To that end, both sides drafted a written set of more than 100 questions ranging from what newspapers potential jurors read to how much television they watch and where they volunteer. But the defense also wanted to ask more specific questions relevant to the case.

For example, on Monday, Coombs noted that his client is gay. As a result, a total of nine questions about homosexuality are being included in the written jury questionnaire, a prosecutor said. That includes a question about whether potential jurors agree with the repeal last year of the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy, which prohibited gays from serving openly in the military.

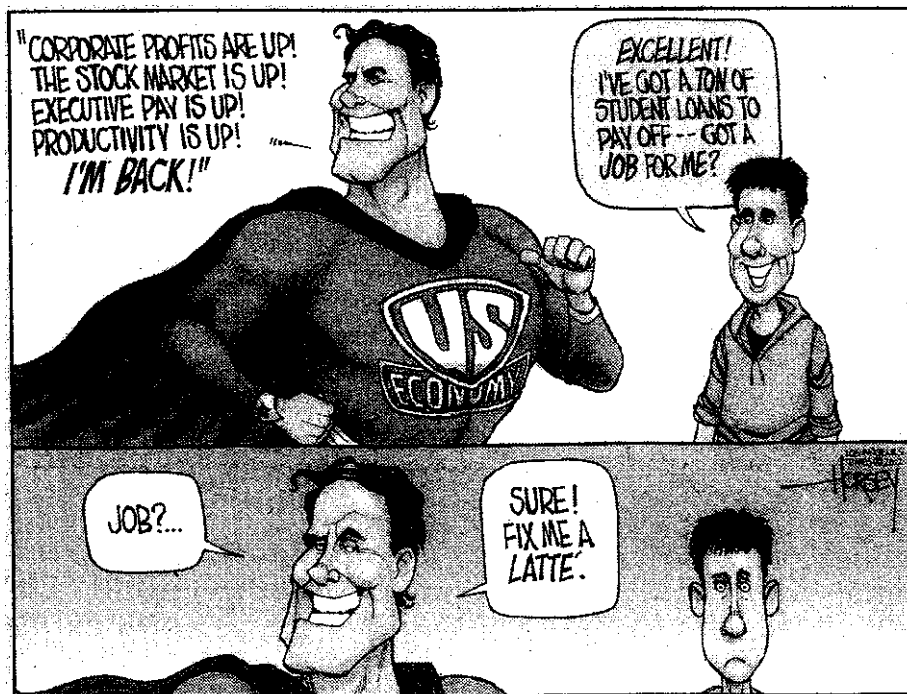
But the judge in the case, Col. Denise Lind, refused to allow a question about whether potential jurors oppose gay marriage. She said potential jurors' answers to the "don't ask, don't tell" question get at essentially the same information about bias.

The defense will also get to ask potential jurors whether they've ever read a book about the release of classified information, whether they've ever signed a petition or marched in a protest and whether they're familiar with gender identity disorder.

Unlike a civilian jury, military jurors get chosen by a senior officer to be part of a pool of potential jurors. They can then be questioned and selected to participate in a trial.

Manning has not yet specifically elected to have a jury hear his case and could decide to have a judge hear the case. However, the default in a case like his is to have a jury that would be drawn from a pool of military members stationed in the Washington area.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



Oops

July 22, 2012 By Jay Janson, Information Clearing House [Excerpt]

While reading the Text of Obama Statement on Shootings in Colorado - Associated Press 7/20/2012, one line struck this writer as quite astounding:

“We may never understand what leads anybody to terrorize their fellow human beings like this. Such violence, such evil is senseless. It’s beyond reason.”

The President may have realized afterward that since he has been ordering the shooting of thousands in a half-dozen countries, the words “evil, senseless, beyond reason” could easily reflect back on himself.

A later Obama statement on the massacre in a Colorado movie house did not contain the words ‘evil, senseless, violence beyond reason.’

**Stupid Reactionary Iranian Dictatorship Unleashes “Morality Police” To Harass Women:
“Concerts Have Been Abruptly Canceled Because Of Inappropriate Dress And Too Much Contact Between Male And Female Fans”
“I Felt Disrespected And Insulted”
“I’m A Grown Woman. I Can Decide What I Can Wear. I Can Make These Decisions Myself”**

Chicken-Brained Government Woman-Haters “Made The Case This Year That Un-Islamic Dress Is A Matter Of National Security And A Symptom Of Longtime Western Meddling In Iranian Affairs”

In Iran and other Islamic countries, hijab, which means “cover” in Arabic, has come to define a type of dress code for women, the main priority of which is to obscure signs of femininity.

July 21 By Jason Rezaian, The Washington Post

TEHRAN — An annual test of wills between Iran’s morality police and women who dress in ways that are deemed unacceptable has begun in cities across the Islamic republic.

But this year, the stakes are unusually high.

As Iranian leaders attempt to deflect the public’s attention from economic woes spurred by crushing foreign sanctions, they risk alienating large segments of a society that is already deeply divided.

Mandatory female covering known as hijab has been a defining element of Iran since the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

Although the laws regarding proper cover haven’t changed, some women have grown bolder in interpreting the limits of what they can wear, creating a conflict that inevitably flares each summer as temperatures climb.

The government’s offensive this year has been marked by the stationing of mixed-gender teams of morality police in Tehran’s main squares.

In recent weeks, 53 coffee shops and 87 restaurants have been closed in Tehran for serving customers with improper hijab or for other gender-related offenses, such as permitting women to smoke hookah pipes.

Concerts have been abruptly canceled because of inappropriate dress and too much contact between male and female fans.

Approximately 80 stands at an international food fair were closed last month because, officials said, the women working at them were either breaking hijab rules or wearing too much makeup.

Those arrested face up to two months in prison or even lashing, penalties that have been on the books for years but have rarely been imposed.

The aggressive enforcement and stiff penalties have spawned resentment.

“I felt disrespected and insulted,” said 30-year-old Sahar, who was arrested for wearing sleeves that went only to her forearms. “I’m a grown woman. I can decide what I can wear. I can make these decisions myself.”

But authorities have made the case this year that un-Islamic dress is a matter of national security and a symptom of longtime Western meddling in Iranian affairs.

Officials routinely cite the improper wearing of hijab as the cause of a variety of social maladies, from women who marry later in life to those who go into prostitution. The root problem is often blamed on “foreign agents.”

Tehran’s police chief, Ahmad-Reza Radan, this month called support for improper hijab “part of the enemy’s soft war against us.”

In Iran and other Islamic countries, hijab, which means “cover” in Arabic, has come to define a type of dress code for women, the main priority of which is to obscure signs of femininity.

In Iran, that has always meant covering women’s hair and much of the body. Traditionally, covering of the head, arms and legs has been strictly enforced. A long jacket, called a manteau, accompanied by a scarf, has been the accepted minimum.

Over the years, however, what passes as hijab has changed, and now a wide range of styles can be seen in any Iranian city — from the black, all-encompassing chador to brightly colored head scarves that barely stay in place.

Manteau and head scarf shops are some of the most successful retailers in Tehran, where women strive to incorporate fashion trends. Skinny jeans with flat shoes are in this year, and on the streets of Tehran, they are hidden in part by the long, loose-fitting manteaus that are all the rage.

“Harking back to radical roots is a great comforter and proven survival strategy when positions on other, more substantial, issues are less clear cut,” said Rouzbeh Parsi, a research fellow at the European Union Institute for Security Studies who specializes in Iran.

But the practice also risks spurring a backlash.

Those arrested say they feel a growing sense of alienation in their own country.

Mahnaz and Mahin, sisters who are 28 and 29 years old, respectively, were recently arrested because Mahin was wearing a jacket that female morality police officers deemed too short.

“They were so rude to us,” said Mahnaz, who, like others, spoke on the condition that her last name not be used.

“They told us, ‘If being arrested for having bad hijab bothers you, you should leave. This is an Islamic country, and we don’t want Western-looking people here.’”

Finding urban Iranians who support the program to enforce hijab is increasingly difficult. Many women who dress conservatively also find the patrols distasteful.

“Forcing people to dress a certain way is useless and won’t get the results that they want,” said Nafiseh, a 50-year-old mother of three who wears the tent-like chador.

“I’m really against it, because these people aren’t really breaking Islamic rules.”

She said she often intervenes in arrests, knowing that, because of her strict adherence to the dress code, she is unlikely to be punished.

Mostafa, a 46-year-old marketing consultant, described how his 16-year-old daughter was arrested in a crowded shopping mall.

“They coaxed her into the police van and told her they just wanted to talk to her,” he explained. “Once she was in the van, the whole atmosphere changed, and they said things that made her cry.”

After a brief time in custody, his daughter, Banafshe, was released. “Do you know what her response was to the whole episode?” he asked.

“She said, ‘Dad, as soon as I finish high school, I’m leaving this country forever.’”

**Stupid Reactionary Russian Dictatorship Extends For Six Months The Detention Of Three Punk Rockers Who Had Staged A Protest Performance In A Cathedral:
The Trio, Who Face Up To Seven Years In Jail, Have Been Held In Prison Since March Without Trial;**

Chicken-Brain Government Charging Them With “Blasphemy And Offending Orthodox Believers” And “Hooliganism”

“They Called On Divine Intervention To Drive Then-Prime Minister Vladimir Putin From Office”



Members of the all-girl punk band “Pussy Riot” Nadezhda Tolokonnikova (center), Maria Alyokhina (right) and Yekaterina Samutsevich (left), sit behind bars during a court hearing in Moscow on July 20, 2012. The trio, who face up to seven years in jail, have been held in pre-trial detention since March. Natalia Kolesnikova/AFP/Getty Images

July 20 By Kathy Lally, The Washington Post

MOSCOW — In a sign of Russian authorities’ determination to clamp down on dissent, a court extended for six months on Friday the detention of three punk rockers who had staged a protest performance in a cathedral.

The three young women were among a group of five mask-wearing singers known as Pussy Riot who took to the altar of Moscow’s Christ the Savior Cathedral in February and chanted what they described as a punk prayer.

In it, they called on divine intervention to drive then-Prime Minister Vladimir Putin from office two weeks before his election as president.

The women — Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, 23, Maria Alekhina, 24, and Yekaterina Samutsevich, 29 — were arrested shortly afterward. In a preliminary hearing Friday, prosecutors said they needed more time to investigate and asked for an extension until January.

By then the women will have been behind bars for a total of 10 months, accused of blasphemy and offending Orthodox believers. They are being held on hooliganism charges, which can bring up to seven years in jail.

The court action came just after the Russian parliament passed a series of quickly written laws this month aimed at curbing protest by imposing hefty fines for slander, allowing government limits on the Internet and forcing human rights and election-monitoring organizations, among other groups that receive foreign funds, to register as foreign agents.

News of the prolonged detention quickly dominated Twitter and other social media and was met by disbelief and outrage. Although the Russian Orthodox Church has supported the rockers' prosecution, the charges have angered many here, believers and non-believers alike, who say the women may be guilty of disorderly conduct but should not be in jail.

Influential cultural figures have signed petitions in their defense, and fund-raising concerts for them have been held around the world. Amnesty International has described them as prisoners of conscience and, after the latest court ruling, called for their immediate release.

In one tweet Friday, a young woman vowed she would never enter an Orthodox church again. In another, a young man said it was time for anyone with brains to leave the country.

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CLASS WAR REPORTS

\$21 Trillion Hoard Hidden From Taxman By Global Elite:

**“Assets Owned By Only 92,000
People, Or 0.001% Of The World’s
Population – A Tiny Class Of The
Mega-Rich”**

**“The Assets Are Held By A Small
Number Of Wealthy Individuals While
The Debts Are Shouldered By The
Ordinary People Of These Countries
Through Their Governments”**

**“People On The Street Have No Illusions
About How Unfair The Situation Has
Become”**

21 Jul 2012 By Heather Stewart, business editor, The Observer

A global super-rich elite has exploited gaps in cross-border tax rules to hide an extraordinary £13 trillion (\$21 trillion U.S.) of wealth offshore – as much as the American and Japanese GDPs put together – according to research commissioned by the campaign group Tax Justice Network.

James Henry, former chief economist at consultancy McKinsey and an expert on tax havens, has compiled the most detailed estimates yet of the size of the offshore economy in a new report, *The Price of Offshore Revisited*, released exclusively to the Observer.

He shows that at least £13tn – perhaps up to £20tn – has leaked out of scores of countries into secretive jurisdictions such as Switzerland and the Cayman Islands with the help of private banks, which vie to attract the assets of so-called high net-worth individuals.

Their wealth is, as Henry puts it, “protected by a highly paid, industrious bevy of professional enablers in the private banking, legal, accounting and investment industries taking advantage of the increasingly borderless, frictionless global economy”.

The detailed analysis in the report, compiled using data from a range of sources, including the Bank of International Settlements and the International Monetary Fund, suggests that for many developing countries the cumulative value of the capital that has flowed out of their economies since the 1970s would be more than enough to pay off their debts to the rest of the world.

Oil-rich states with an internationally mobile elite have been especially prone to watching their wealth disappear into offshore bank accounts instead of being invested at home, the research suggests.

Once the returns on investing the hidden assets is included, almost £500bn has left Russia since the early 1990s when its economy was opened up.

Saudi Arabia has seen £197bn flood out since the mid-1970s, and Nigeria £196bn.

“The problem here is that the assets of these countries are held by a small number of wealthy individuals while the debts are shouldered by the ordinary people of these countries through their governments,” the report says.

The sheer size of the cash pile sitting out of reach of tax authorities is so great that it suggests standard measures of inequality radically underestimate the true gap between rich and poor.

According to Henry’s calculations, £6.3tn of assets is owned by only 92,000 people, or 0.001% of the world’s population – a tiny class of the mega-rich who have more in common with each other than those at the bottom of the income scale in their own societies.

“These estimates reveal a staggering failure: inequality is much, much worse than official statistics show, but politicians are still relying on trickle-down to transfer wealth to poorer people,” said John Christensen of the Tax Justice Network.

“People on the street have no illusions about how unfair the situation has become.”

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: “Countries around the world are under intense pressure to reduce their deficits and governments cannot afford to let so much wealth slip past into tax havens.

“Closing down the tax loopholes exploited by multinationals and the super-rich to avoid paying their fair share will reduce the deficit.

This way the government can focus on stimulating the economy, rather than squeezing the life out of it with cuts and tax rises for the 99% of people who aren't rich enough to avoid paying their taxes."

Assuming the £13tn mountain of assets earned an average 3% a year for its owners, and governments were able to tax that income at 30%, it would generate a bumper £121bn in revenues – more than rich countries spend on aid to the developing world each year.

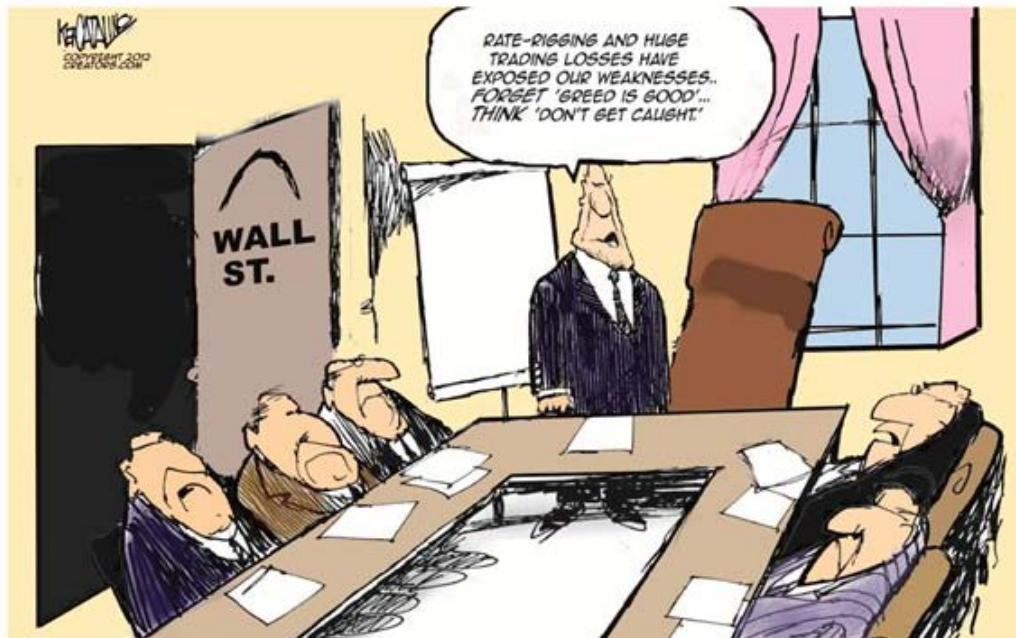
Groups such as UK Uncut have focused attention on the paltry tax bills of some highly wealthy individuals, such as Topshop owner Sir Philip Green, with campaigners at one recent protest shouting: "Where did all the money go? He took it off to Monaco!" Much of Green's retail empire is owned by his wife, Tina, who lives in the low-tax principality.

A spokeswoman for UK Uncut said: "People like Philip Green use public services – they need the streets to be cleaned, people need public transport to get to their shops – but they don't want to pay for it."

Leaders of G20 countries have repeatedly pledged to close down tax havens since the financial crisis of 2008, when the secrecy shrouding parts of the banking system was widely seen as exacerbating instability.

But many countries still refuse to make details of individuals' financial worth available to the tax authorities in their home countries as a matter of course. Tax Justice Network would like to see this kind of exchange of information become standard practice, to prevent rich individuals playing off one jurisdiction against another.

"The very existence of the global offshore industry, and the tax-free status of the enormous sums invested by their wealthy clients, is predicated on secrecy," said Henry.



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