

Military Resistance 10G4



July 4 Special #1

BETWEEN THE OOH'S AND AHH'S

**From: Dennis Serdel
To: GI Special
Sent: July 10, 2006**

BETWEEN THE OOH'S AND AHH'S

By Dennis Serdel: VFP #50, VVAW, Vietnam 1967-68 (one tour) Purple Heart Americal Div. 11th Brigade, UAW GM retiree, Perry, Michigan

**The night was as black as charlie's pajamas.
But flares were being sent up
into the Southern Cross
and tracer bullets were crossing the sky
and twirling around like a child's sparkler
on the 4th of July.
It was the 4th of July in Vietnam 1968
and almost everybody was celebrating,**

smoking pot, drinking beer and whiskey.
Every so often, there would be a “mad minute”
where everybody flipped her on automatic
and unloaded clips for a minute or a little longer.
One bunker was going ape with machine gun tracers,
“Who the hell is that?”
asked one of our guys to his buddies.
“It’s Sarge,” one answered, “he’s all messed up
on pot and whiskey.”
Another answered in the dark,
“he’s been just hooking tracer rounds together
and just shooting tracer rounds.”
On the LZ that night, the celebrating went on
until everybody was calling it good,
except for Sarge with the machinegun’s
noise and tracer rounds.
Finally, someone said,
“Look, a couple of us better go down there
and tell Sarge to quit.
Two walked down there
and after a while, Sarge stopped.
A little girl was hugging her daddy’s leg
and looking up to the Starry black sky.
Then a firework burst like a star
and wiggly red travelled down
like an umbrella, then a blue star burst
and a wiggly blue umbrella fell
and a white star boomed
with a big thumping boom
that shook the air
and all the children would go
“Ooh” and “Aah.”
Sarge stood in the crowd and watched
as all the parents became little children too
and began to “Ooh” and “Aah”
and point with their fingers
while holding their little ones.
Old Sarge wondered what day
charlie picked as their Independence Day.
Then he realized he had been shooting
at God that 4th in Vietnam
under the Southern Cross
and feelings rose from the heart of his chest
flowing up into the emotions in his head,
his eye’s watering up.
After all these years,
the war still bothered him
and he didn’t know why.

MORE:

July 4 Special

#2

“If I Were An American, As I Am An Englishman, While A Foreign Troop Was Landed In My Country, I Never Would Lay Down My Arms — Never — Never — Never”

November 18, 1777: William Pitt, Earl of Chatham; Spoken in the House of Lords, London, England

My lords, this ruinous and ignominious situation, where we can not act with success, nor suffer with honor, calls upon us to remonstrate in the strongest and loudest language of truth, to rescue the ear of majesty from the delusions which surround it.

The desperate state of our arms abroad is in part known.

No man thinks more highly of them than I do. I love and honor the English troops. I know their virtues and their valor.

I know they can achieve any thing except impossibilities; and I know that the conquest of English America is an impossibility.

You can not, I venture to say it, you can not conquer America.

Your armies in the last war effected every thing that could be effected; and what was it? It cost a numerous army, under the command of a most able general (Lord Amherst), now a noble lord in this House, a long and laborious campaign, to expel five thousand Frenchmen from French America.

My lords, you can not conquer America.

What is your present situation there?

We do not know the worst; but we know that in three campaigns we have done nothing and suffered much.

Besides the sufferings, perhaps total loss of the Northern force, the best appointed army that ever took the field, commanded by Sir William Howe, has retired from the American lines.

As to conquest, therefore, my lords, I repeat, it is impossible.

You may swell every expense and every effort still more extravagantly; pile and accumulate every assistance you can buy or borrow; traffic and barter with every little pitiful German prince that sells and sends his subjects to the shambles of a foreign prince; your efforts are for ever vain and impotent—doubly so from this mercenary aid on which you rely; for it irritates, to an incurable resentment, the minds of your enemies, to overrun them with the mercenary sons of rapine and plunder, devoting them and their possessions to the rapacity of hireling cruelty!

If I were an American, as I am an Englishman, while a foreign troop was landed in my country, I never would lay down my arms — never — never — never.

Declared Bill Ehrhart, a marine in Vietnam:

“In grade school we learned about the redcoats, the nasty British soldiers that tried to stifle our freedom.... Subconsciously, but not very subconsciously, I began increasingly to have the feeling that I was a redcoat. I think it was one of the most staggering realizations of my life.”

“If New England was occupied by Canadians, I’d still want ‘em to leave.”

On how Iraqis feel about 130,000 American troops in their midst: From 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, based in northwest Baghdad: Quoted by Mike Tharp, July 03, 2009, Baghdad Observer

MORE:

July 4 Special #3 Poem For The 4th Of July: America, America

July 04, 2007 Via Phil G

Saadi Youssef is a well-known Iraqi poet, an expatriate living in London. The translator is Khaled Mattawa, poet, president of RAWI, and professor at University of Michigan. The poem was sent to me by D. H. Melhem.

Poem For The 4th Of July: America, America

by Saadi Youssef

I too love jeans and jazz and Treasure Island

and John Silver's parrot and the balconies of New Orleans.
I love Mark Twain and the Mississippi steamboats and Abraham Lincoln's dogs.
I love the fields of wheat and corn and the smell of Virginia tobacco.
But I am not American.

Is that enough for the Phantom pilot to turn me back to the stone age?

America:

let's exchange gifts. Take your smuggled cigarettes
and give us potatoes.
Take James Bond's golden pistol
and give us Marilyn Monroe's giggle.
Take the heroin syringe under the tree
and give us vaccines.
Take your blueprints for model penitentiaries
and give us village homes.
Take the books of your missionaries
and give us paper for poems to defame you.
Take what you do not have
and give us what we have.
Take the stripes of your flag
and give us the stars.
Take the Afghani Mujahideen beard
and give us Walt Whitman's beard filled with butterflies.
Take Saddam Hussein
and give us Abraham Lincoln
or give us no one.

We are not hostages, America
and your soldiers are not God's soldiers ...
We are the poor ones, ours is the earth of the drowned gods,

the gods of bulls
the gods of fires
the gods of sorrows that intertwine clay and
blood in a song...
We are the poor, ours is the god of the poor
who emerges out of farmers' ribs
hungry
and bright,
and raises heads up high...

America, we are the dead.
Let your soldiers come.
Whoever kills a man, let him resurrect him.
We are the drowned ones, dear lady.
We are the drowned.
Let the water come.

(translated from the Arabic by Khaled Mattawa)

MORE:

July 4 Special #4 1776 And Right Here, Right Now

July 4, 1776 [Excerpt]

Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.

But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.

DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN MILITARY SERVICE?

Forward Military Resistance along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly.

Whether in Afghanistan or at a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the wars and economic injustice, inside the armed services and at home.

Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Resistance, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657. Phone: 888.711.2550

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Three British Soldiers Killed At Checkpoint Kamparack Pul By A Man Wearing An Afghan Police Uniform

2 Jul 12 Ministry of Defence

It is with the deepest sadness that the Ministry of Defence must announce that three soldiers were killed in Afghanistan yesterday, Sunday 1 July 2012.

Two soldiers serving with the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards and one serving with the Royal Corps of Signals were killed in an incident at Checkpoint Kamparack Pul in the Nahr-e Saraj district of Helmand province.

The soldiers were part of a Police Advisory Team which had been to the checkpoint to conduct a shura.

On leaving, they were engaged by small arms fire from a man wearing an Afghan Police uniform. During this exchange of fire the three soldiers were wounded and, despite receiving first aid at the scene, they died of their injuries.

Two Hood-Based Soldiers Killed In Afghanistan

Jul 2, 2012 Army Times

Two soldiers based at Fort Hood, Texas, died June 24 in Kandahar, Afghanistan, the Pentagon announced Monday.

Killed were Staff Sgt. Robert A. Massarelli, 32, of Hamilton, Ohio, and Sgt. Michael J. Strachota, 28, of White Hall, Ark.

They were assigned to the 96th Transportation Company, 180th Transportation Battalion, 4th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary).

**POLITICIANS REFUSE TO HALT THE
BLOODSHED**

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

Attack Kills Workers For U.S. Special Forces Base

2 July 2012 BBC

At least seven people have been killed and many more wounded in a car bomb attack in the Afghan city of Kandahar, police have said.

The bomber rammed a car packed with explosives into a vehicle carrying workers from a nearby US base, a local official said.

The base near the attack on Monday is now used by US special forces, provincial police chief General Abdul Razaq told AFP news agency.

It is close to the former compound of Taliban leader Mullah Omar, officials say.

Jawed Faisal, a spokesman for the provincial governor, told AFP that most of the victims of Monday's attack were Afghans working at the base.

The attack happened in front of Kandahar University.

Correspondents say it is well known that high-ranking officials study at Kandahar University in the evenings.

“The Americans Have A Big Base There, And They Never Go Out”

“And, Only Four Kilometres From The Front Gate, The Taliban Control Everything”

“You Can See Them Carrying Their Weapons”

“In The Three Days I Spent There, I Saw Only One American Patrol”

July 9, 2012 by Dexter Filkins, The New Yorker [Excerpts]

A few weeks ago, Nasir returned to Deh Afghanistan. The Taliban were back, practically ignored by U.S. forces in the area.

“The Americans have a big base there, and they never go out,” he said.

“And, only four kilometres from the front gate, the Taliban control everything. You can see them carrying their weapons.”

On a drive to Jalrez, a town a little farther west, Nasir was stopped at ten Taliban checkpoints.

Much of the violence and disorder in Kunduz, as elsewhere in Afghanistan, takes place beyond the vision of American soldiers and diplomats.

German, Norwegian, and American soldiers are stationed in Kunduz, but, in the three days I spent there, I saw only one American patrol.

The American diplomats responsible for Kunduz are stationed seventy-five miles away, in a heavily fortified base in Mazar-e-Sharif.

When I met a U.S. official and mentioned the reconstituted militias once commanded by Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, the official did not know the name. “Keep in mind,” he said, “I’m not a Central Asian expert.”

Largely prohibited from venturing outside their compounds, many American officials exhibit little knowledge of events beyond the barricades.

They often appear to occupy themselves with irrelevant activities such as filling out paperwork and writing cables to their superiors in the United States.

Some of them send tweets—in English, in a largely illiterate country, with limited Internet usage. “Captain America ran the half marathon,” a recent Embassy tweet said, referring to a sporting event that took place within the Embassy’s protected area.

In the early years of the war, diplomats were encouraged to leave their compounds and meet ordinary Afghans.

In recent years, personal safety has come to overshadow all other concerns. On April 15th, when a group of Taliban guerrillas seized buildings in Kabul and started firing on embassies, the U.S. Embassy sent out an e-mail saying that the compound was “in lockdown.”

“The State Department has marginalized itself,” an American civilian working for the military said.

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

Pissing In The Wind:

“The United States Is Spending \$92 Million To Build Afghanistan A New ‘Pentagon’”

June 30 By Joshua Partlow, The Washington Post [Excerpts]

KABUL — The United States is spending \$92 million to build Afghanistan a new “Pentagon,” a massive five-story military headquarters with domed roofs and a high-tech basement command center that will link Afghan generals with their troops fighting the Taliban across the country.

The military headquarters building is one of the most prominent public symbols of the United States’ financial commitment to Afghanistan.

In addition to the Defense Ministry headquarters, the United States is building a \$54 million Kabul headquarters for the Interior Ministry, which oversees the Afghan police, as well as a \$102 million base for the Afghan military’s 201st Corps in the east.

Of the 1,150 buildings planned, more than 600 have been completed, at a cost of \$4 billion.

Rising amid Kabul’s dusty streets, the 516,000-square-foot edifice, still cloaked in scaffolds and cranes, dwarfs other buildings in town.

“Once it’s finished, it will be a permanent and a very significant illustration of the U.S. support for Afghanistan,” Wardak, the defense minister, said in an interview. “And we needed it.”

MILITARY NEWS

Estate Sues VA For \$2M For Soldier’s Death: “Waggoner Had Been Prescribed 19 Different Drugs”

May 10, 2012 The Associated Press

EUGENE, Ore. — A Puyallup, Wash., soldier's estate is suing the federal government and contending the 32-year-old Afghan war veteran should not have been cleared for a three-day pass by the Roseburg, Ore., Veterans Administration Medical Center.

Jeffrey Jared Waggoner died in Roseburg in 2008. The estate seeks \$2 million.

The lawsuit filed Tuesday in federal court contends that Waggoner's score on an assessment of psychological, social and occupational fitness indicated he needed inpatient care.

The Oregonian reports that the suit contends Waggoner had been prescribed 19 different drugs and suffered from ailments including post-traumatic stress disorder and opioid addiction.

The suit alleges the soldier checked into a motel, went out to get food, then returned and slumped unconscious in the doorway of his room. His death was blamed on an overdose of methadone and Oxycodone and asphyxiation, the latter apparently the result of the way he had fallen.

The newspaper says two previous attempts by the estate to sue were rejected by the government.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



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

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

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

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

Frederick Douglass, 1852

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

Prayer

6/28/2012 Via Leonard Carrier; Justice Freedom

Dear Lord,

I know that I don’t talk to you that much, but this year you have taken away:

my favorite visionary Steve Jobs,

my favorite author Ray Bradbury,

my favorite children’s’ author Maurice Sendak,

my favorite American Bandstand host Dick Clark,

my favorite hairdresser Vidal Sassoon,

my favorite musicians Doc Watson and Earl Scruggs,

my favorite Monkee Davy Jones,

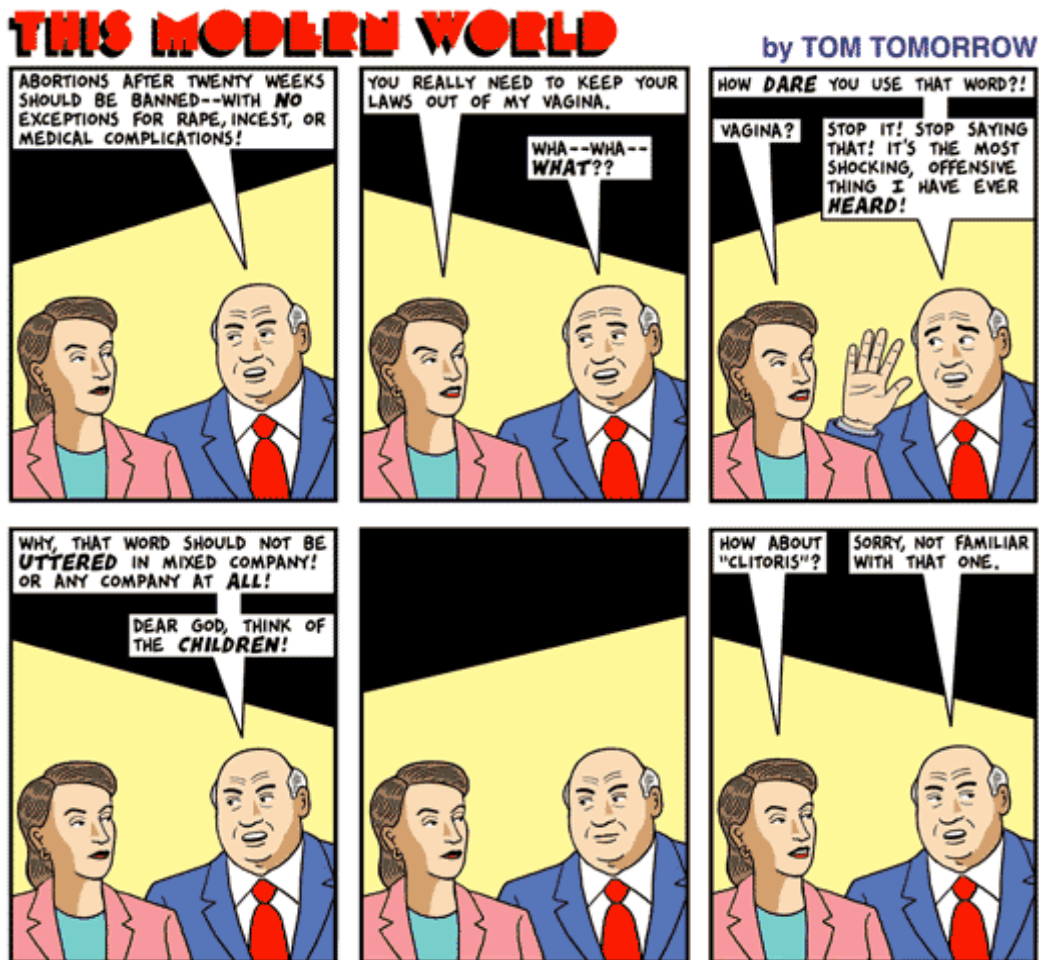
my favorite 60 Minutes guy Mike Wallace,

and my favorite singer Whitney Houston.

I just wanted to let you know that my favorite news commentator is Rush Limbaugh.

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.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



Texas Students Hijack A U.S. Government Drone In Midair

June 29, 2012 By Kris Sims, Parliamentary Bureau, Toronto Sun

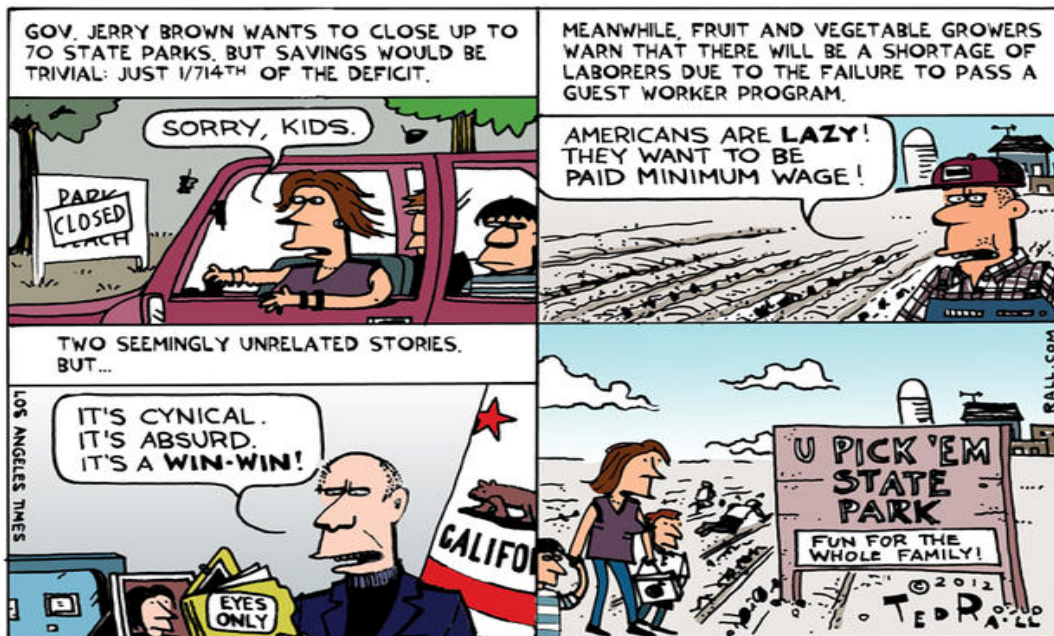
College students in Texas stunned officials when they hijacked a domestic drone with under \$1,000 of gear that could be bought at Radio Shack.

With Department of Homeland Security officials watching, the small group of techies from the University of Texas at Austin's Radionavigation Laboratory showed the security experts how to mimic a dummy GPS controller, aim it at the drone and start controlling it. It worked within minutes, and the students had control of the unmanned aircraft.

For a nation that has an exponentially increasing number of the Unmanned Aerial Vehicles cruising its skies, the demonstration was sobering.

For privacy watchdogs, the fact that a domestic drone could so easily become a remote controlled missile is only one of myriad concerns over the use of the flying robots.

CLASS WAR REPORTS



GET MILITARY RESISTANCE NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

If you wish to receive Military Resistance immediately and directly, send request to contact@militaryproject.org. There is no subscription charge.

Louisiana Is The World's Prison Capital

**“Locking Up As Many People As
Possible For As Long As Possible
Has Enriched A Few While Making
Everyone Else Poorer”**

**“Public Safety Comes Second To
Profits”**



“Inmates spend months or years in 80-man dormitories with nothing to do and few educational opportunities before being released into society with \$10 and a bus ticket.” Corrections officer Dee Hutson yanks down towels put up in front of beds to

obstruct the guards' view, as he and the warden walk through the empty dormitory at Richland Parish Detention Center searching for any items that look suspicious. Photo: SCOTT THRELKELD / THE TIMES-PICAYUNE

May 13, 2012 By Cindy Chang, The Times-Picayune

Louisiana is the world's prison capital.

The state imprisons more of its people, per head, than any of its U.S. counterparts.

First among Americans means first in the world. Louisiana's incarceration rate is nearly five times Iran's, 13 times China's and 20 times Germany's.

The hidden engine behind the state's well-oiled prison machine is cold, hard cash.

A majority of Louisiana inmates are housed in for-profit facilities, which must be supplied with a constant influx of human beings or a \$182 million industry will go bankrupt.

Several homegrown private prison companies command a slice of the market. But in a uniquely Louisiana twist, most prison entrepreneurs are rural sheriffs, who hold tremendous sway in remote parishes like Madison, Avoyelles, East Carroll and Concordia. A good portion of Louisiana law enforcement is financed with dollars legally skimmed off the top of prison operations.

If the inmate count dips, sheriffs bleed money. Their constituents lose jobs.

The prison lobby ensures this does not happen by thwarting nearly every reform that could result in fewer people behind bars.

Meanwhile, inmates subsist in bare-bones conditions with few programs to give them a better shot at becoming productive citizens.

Each inmate is worth \$24.39 a day in state money, and sheriffs trade them like horses, unloading a few extras on a colleague who has openings.

A prison system that leased its convicts as plantation labor in the 1800s has come full circle and is again a nexus for profit.

In the past two decades, Louisiana's prison population has doubled, costing taxpayers billions while New Orleans continues to lead the nation in homicides.

One in 86 adult Louisianians is doing time, nearly double the national average.

Among black men from New Orleans, one in 14 is behind bars; one in seven is either in prison, on parole or on probation.

Crime rates in Louisiana are relatively high, but that does not begin to explain the state's No. 1 ranking, year after year, in the percentage of residents it locks up.

In Louisiana, a two-time car burglar can get 24 years without parole.

A trio of drug convictions can be enough to land you at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola for the rest of your life.

Almost every state lets judges decide when to mete out the severest punishment and when a sympathetic defendant should have a chance at freedom down the road. In Louisiana, murderers automatically receive life without parole on the guilty votes of as few as 10 of 12 jurors.

The lobbying muscle of the sheriffs, buttressed by a tough-on-crime electorate, keeps these harsh sentencing schemes firmly in place.

"Something has to be done -- it just has to be done -- about the long sentences," said Angola Warden Burl Cain. "Some people you can let out of here that won't hurt you and can be productive citizens, and we know the ones who can't."

Every dollar spent on prisons is a dollar not spent on schools, hospitals and highways.

Other states are strategically reducing their prison populations -- using tactics known in policy circles as "smart on crime."

Compared with the national average, Louisiana has a much lower percentage of people incarcerated for violent offenses and a much higher percentage behind bars for drug offenses -- perhaps a signal that some nonviolent criminals could be dealt with differently.

Do all of Louisiana's 40,000 inmates need to be incarcerated for the interests of punishment and public safety to be served? Gov. Bobby Jindal, a conservative Republican with presidential ambitions, says the answer is no.

Despite locking up more people for longer periods than any other state, Louisiana has one of the highest rates of both violent and property crimes. Yet the state shows no signs of weaning itself off its prison dependence.

"You have people who are so invested in maintaining the present system -- not just the sheriffs, but judges, prosecutors, other people who have links to it," said Burk Foster, a former professor at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette and an expert on Louisiana prisons.

"They don't want to see the prison system get smaller or the number of people in custody reduced, even though the crime rate is down, because the good old boys are all linked together in the punishment network, which is good for them financially and politically."

In the early 1990s, when the incarceration rate was half what it is now, Louisiana was at a crossroads. Under a federal court order to reduce overcrowding, the state had two choices: Lock up fewer people or build more prisons.

It achieved the latter, not with new state prisons -- there was no money for that -- but by encouraging sheriffs to foot the construction bills in return for future profits. The financial

incentives were so sweet, and the corrections jobs so sought after, that new prisons sprouted up all over rural Louisiana.

The national prison population was expanding at a rapid clip. Louisiana's grew even faster.

There was no need to rein in the growth by keeping sentencing laws in line with those of other states or by putting minor offenders in alternative programs. The new sheriffs' beds were ready and waiting. Overcrowding became a thing of the past, even as the inmate population multiplied rapidly.

"If the sheriffs hadn't built those extra spaces, we'd either have to go to the Legislature and say, 'Give us more money,' or we'd have to reduce the sentences, make it easier to get parole and commutation -- and get rid of people who shouldn't be here," said Richard Crane, former general counsel for the Louisiana Department of Corrections.

Today, wardens make daily rounds of calls to other sheriffs' prisons in search of convicts to fill their beds. Urban areas such as New Orleans and Baton Rouge have an excess of sentenced criminals, while prisons in remote parishes must import inmates to survive.

The more empty beds, the more an operation sinks into the red.

With maximum occupancy and a thrifty touch with expenses, a sheriff can divert the profits to his law enforcement arm, outfitting his deputies with new squad cars, guns and laptops.

Inmates spend months or years in 80-man dormitories with nothing to do and few educational opportunities before being released into society with \$10 and a bus ticket.

Fred Schoonover, deputy warden of the 522-bed Tensas Parish Detention Center in northeast Louisiana, says he does not view inmates as a "commodity." But he acknowledges that the prison's business model is built on head counts. Like other wardens in this part of the state, he wheels and deals to maintain his tally of human beings. His boss, Tensas Parish Sheriff Rickey Jones, relies on him to keep the numbers up.

"We struggle. I stay on the phone a lot, calling all over the state, trying to hustle a few," Schoonover said.

Some sheriffs, and even a few small towns, lease their prison rights to private companies.

LaSalle Corrections, based in Ruston, plays a role in housing one of seven Louisiana prisoners. LCS Corrections Services, another homegrown company, runs three Louisiana prisons and is a major donor to political campaigns, including those of urban sheriffs who supply rural prisons with inmates.

Ask anyone who has done time in Louisiana whether he or she would rather be in a state-run prison or a local sheriff-run prison. The answer is invariably state prison.

Inmates in local prisons are typically serving sentences of 10 years or less on nonviolent charges such as drug possession, burglary or writing bad checks.

State prisons are reserved for the worst of the worst.

Yet it is the murderers, rapists and other long-termers who learn trades like welding, auto mechanics, air-conditioning repair and plumbing. Angola's Bible college offers the only chance for Louisiana inmates to earn an undergraduate degree.

Such opportunities are not available to the 53 percent serving their time in local prisons.

In a cruel irony, those who could benefit most are unable to better themselves, while men who will die in prison proudly show off fistfuls of educational certificates.

Louisiana specializes in incarceration on the cheap, allocating by far the least money per inmate of any state.

The \$24.39 per diem is several times lower than what Angola and other state-run prisons spend -- even before the sheriff takes his share. All local wardens can offer is GED classes and perhaps an inmate-led support group such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

Their facilities are cramped and airless compared with the spacious grounds of state prisons, where inmates walk along outdoor breezeways and stay busy with jobs or classes.

With a criminal record, finding work is tough. In five years, about half of the state's ex-convicts end up behind bars again.

Gregory Barber has seen the contrast between state and local prisons firsthand. He began a four-year sentence for burglary at the state-run Phelps Correctional Center -- a stroke of luck for someone with a relatively short sentence on a nonviolent charge who might easily have ended up in a sheriff's custody.

With only six months to go, the New Orleans native was transferred to Richwood Correctional Center, a LaSalle-run prison near Monroe. He had hoped to end his time in a work-release program to up his chances of getting a good job. But the 11th-hour transfer rendered him ineligible.

At Phelps, he took a welding class. Now, he whiles away the hours lying in his bunk for lack of anything better to do. The only relief from the monotony is an occasional substance-abuse rehab meeting.

"In DOC camps, you'd go to the yard every day, go to work," said Barber, 50, of state-run prisons. "Here, you just lay down, or go to meetings. It makes time pass a little slower."

While Louisiana tops the prison rankings, it consistently vies with Mississippi -- the state with the second-highest incarceration rate -- for the worst schools, the most poverty, the highest infant mortality.

One in three Louisiana prisoners reads below a fifth-grade level. The vast majority did not complete high school. The easy fix of selling drugs or stealing is all too tempting when the alternative is a low-wage, dead-end job.

More money spent on locking up an ever-growing number of prisoners means less money for the very institutions that could help young people stay out of trouble, giving rise to a vicious cycle.

Louisiana spends about \$663 million a year to feed, house, secure and provide medical care to 40,000 inmates. Nearly a third of that money -- \$182 million -- goes to for-profit prisons, whether run by sheriffs or private companies.

"Clearly, the more that Louisiana invests in large-scale incarceration, the less money is available for everything from preschools to community policing that could help to reduce the prison population," said Marc Mauer, executive director of The Sentencing Project, a national criminal justice reform group. "You almost institutionalize the high rate of incarceration, and it's even harder to get out of that situation."

Louisiana's prison epidemic disproportionately affects neighborhoods already devastated by crime and poverty. In some parts of New Orleans, a stint behind bars is a rite of passage for young men.

About 5,000 black men from New Orleans are doing state prison time, compared with 400 white men from the city.

Because police concentrate resources on high-crime areas, minor lawbreakers there are more likely to be stopped and frisked or caught up in a drug sweep than, say, an Uptown college student with a sideline marijuana business.

With so many people lost to either prison or violence, fraying neighborhoods enter a downward spiral. As the incarceration rate climbs, more children grow up with fathers, brothers, grandfathers and uncles in prison, putting them at increased risk of repeating the cycle themselves.

Angola is home to scores of old men who cannot get out of bed, let alone commit a crime.

Someone who made a terrible mistake in his youth and has transformed himself after decades in prison has little to no chance at freedom.

Louisiana has a higher percentage of inmates serving life without parole than any other state.

Its justice system is unstintingly tough on petty offenders as well as violent criminals. In more than four years in office, Jindal has only pardoned one inmate.

"Louisiana don't feel no pity. I feel like everybody deserves a second chance," said Preston Russell, a Lower 9th Ward native who received life without parole for a string of burglaries and a crack charge.

"I feel like dudes get all this education ... under their belt and been here 20, 30 years. You don't think that's enough time to let a man back out and give him another chance at life?"

An inmate at Angola costs the state an average of \$23,000 a year. A young lifer will rack up more than \$1 million in taxpayer-funded expenses if he reaches the Louisiana male life expectancy of 72.

Russell, 49, is in good health. But as he gets older, treating his age-related ailments will be expensive. The state spends about \$24 million a year caring for between 300 and 400 infirm inmates.

Now in his 13th year at Angola, Russell breaks into tears recounting how he rebelled against the grandmother who raised him, leaving home as soon as he could. First he smoked weed, weed became crack, then he was selling drugs and burglarizing stores in between jobs in construction or shipping.

The last time he stole, Orleans Parish prosecutors tagged him as a multiple offender and sought the maximum -- the same sentence given to murderers. In the final crime that put him away for life, he broke into Fat Harry's and stole \$4,000 from the Uptown bar's video poker machines.

Tough fiscal times have spurred many states to reduce their prison populations. In lock-'em-up Texas, new legislation is steering low-level criminals into drug treatment and other alternatives to prison.

In Louisiana, even baby steps are met with resistance. Jindal, who rose to the governor's office with the backing of the sheriffs' lobby, says too many people are behind bars. Yet earlier this year, he watered down a reform package hammered out by the Sentencing Commission he himself had convened.

The commission includes sheriffs and district attorneys, so its proposals were modest to begin with.

Measures like those in Texas, which target a subset of nonviolent offenders, are frequently lauded but may not be enough. To make a significant dent in the prisoner numbers, sentences for violent crimes must be reduced and more money must be invested in inner-city communities, according to David Cole, a professor at Georgetown Law School. Such large-scale change -- which has not been attempted in any state, let alone Louisiana -- can only happen through political will.

In Louisiana, that will appears to be practically nonexistent. Locking up as many people as possible for as long as possible has enriched a few while making everyone else poorer. Public safety comes second to profits.

"You cannot build your way out of it. Very simply, you cannot build your way out of crime," said Secretary of Corrections Jimmy LeBlanc, who supports reducing the incarceration rate and putting more resources into inmate rehabilitation.

"It just doesn't work that way. You can't afford it. Nobody can afford that."

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IMPRISONS MORE
PEOPLE THAN
ANY NATION
IN THE WORLD...**

LOUISIANA
1,619
people per
100,000 residents

UNITED STATES
730

RUSSIA
525

RWANDA
450

IRAN
333

CHINA
122

AFGHANISTAN
62

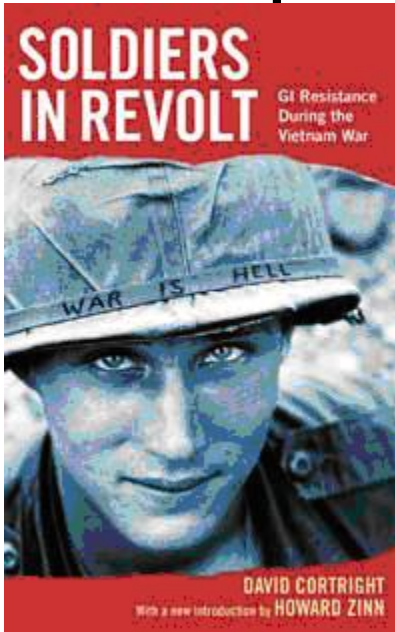
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