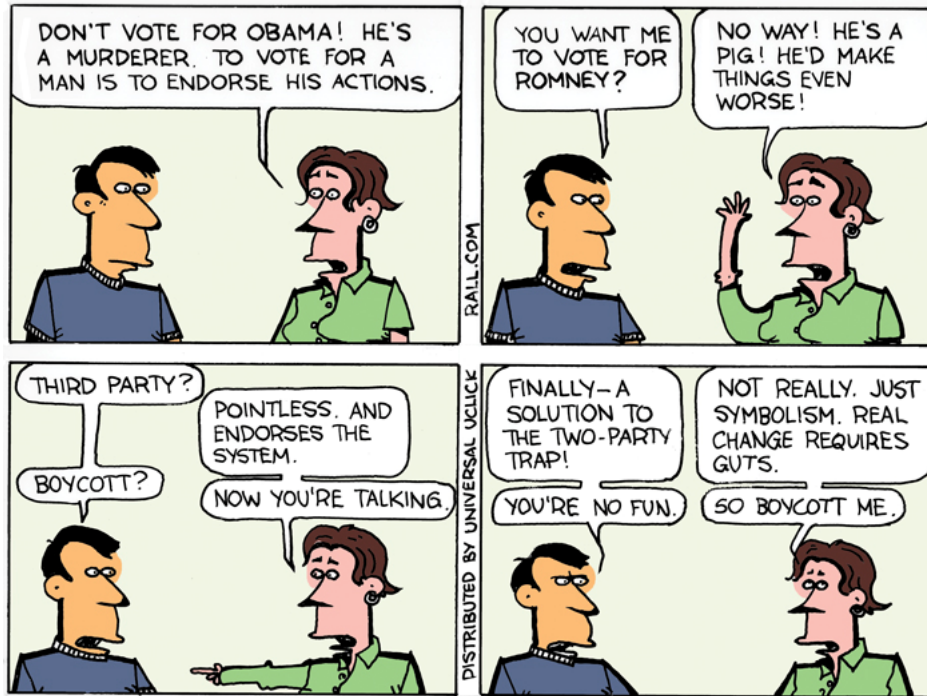


Military Resistance 10H15



1 In 10 U.S. Troop Deaths In Afghanistan Are Green On Blue: “Insider Attacks By Afghan Troops Who Turn Their Weapons On U.S. And NATO Forces Have More Than Doubled Compared To Last Year”
“Insider Attacks Have Killed 39 NATO Troops This Year, Including 24 Americans”

Insider attacks by Afghan troops who turn their weapons on U.S. and NATO forces have more than doubled compared to last year, prompting the top U.S. commander in Kabul to step up efforts to identify potential inside-the-wire threats.

A spate of attacks in August has brought the total of so-called “green-on-blue” attacks to 31 this year, military officials said. Last year, officials reported 12 similar attacks, according to data compiled by the New America Foundation.

The attacks have caused 13 U.S. Army casualties, according to a spokesman for the International Security Assistance Force. Insider attacks have killed 39 NATO troops this year, including 24 Americans. That accounts for about 10 percent of the 233 U.S. troops killed in action this year.

On Aug. 7, two Afghan soldiers reportedly killed an American soldier in eastern Afghanistan before defecting to the Taliban.

MORE:

“My Son Trained Somebody To Murder Him”

“If My Son Died On The Battlefield, I Would’ve Been -- Maybe Been -- Able To Accept That, But Instead They Killed Him Inside The Gym”

“Numerous Recent Polls Have Shown That A Majority Believe The War In Afghanistan Is Not Worth Fighting”

Aug 20, 2012 by Richard Sisk, Military.com [Excerpts]

The grief-stricken father of a slain Marine lashed out at the U.S. training policies with the Afghan National Security Forces.

His son’s death became one of many recent insider attacks leading to high-level meetings between U.S. and Afghan leader to re-evaluate their training methods.

“At the end of the day, what happened is my son trained somebody to murder him,” Greg Buckley Sr. said at the funeral Saturday for Lance Cpl. Gregory T. Buckley, 21, of Oceanside, N.Y., according to a CBS report.

The Afghan recruits “come in, they say, ‘We want to be police officers,’ and we hand them a blue uniform and hand them an AK-47? That’s insane,” the father told CBS as he stood surrounded by family and friends wearing buttons with a picture of his fallen son in uniform.

“If my son died on the battlefield, I would’ve been -- maybe been -- able to accept that, but instead they killed him inside the gym,” said Buckley Sr., according to CBS.

Buckley; Staff Sgt. Scott E. Dickinson, 29, of San Diego, Calif.; and Cpl. Richard A. Rivera Jr., 20 of Ventura, Calif., were shot to death on Aug. 10 while they worked out at a base gym in the southwestern Helmand province.

The grief and anger of Buckley’s father reflected the opinions of most Americans.

Numerous recent polls have shown that a majority believe the war in Afghanistan is not worth fighting.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Lynch Station Marine Killed In Afghanistan

August 26, 2012 By: Steve Hardy, WSLS

A Marine from Lynch Station was killed in Afghanistan when a police officer he helped train turned his gun on American service members, his family said.

Staff Sgt. Greg Copes, 36, served as a military instructor around the world, including missions in Mauritania, Malaysia and Indonesia, the U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command said in a news release.

Recently, Copes helped to train local police in the Farah Province of Afghanistan.

His brother Earl Copes said he was told by Marines that Greg Copes attended an initiation ceremony for local officers Friday. When one of the Afghan officers was handed his service weapon, he fired on American service members. The attack killed Copes and Hospital Corpsman Petty Officer 1st Class Darrel Enos, 36, of Colorado Springs, MARSOC said.

Copes was scheduled to return home Sept. 3, his brother said.

On Saturday, the Associated Press reported on a shooting in the province involving a new Afghan police officer. They identified the shooter as “Mohammad Ismail, a man in his 30s who had joined the Afghan Local Police just five days ago.” After the man

opened fire, he was shot and killed by Afghan and coalition forces, according to the report.

Maj. Jeff Landis of MARSOC said that authorities are withholding the name of the shooter and particulars of the case while they investigate.

Copes joined the Marines nearly a decade ago after September 11, his brother said.

“He wanted to be part of something more noble,” Earl Copes, a Lynchburg firefighter, said.

After a tour in Iraq as a machine gunner for small watercrafts, Copes got more involved with training other Marines and joined a special operations unit.

“He never wanted to be average. He always wanted to be surrounded by the best, and he always strived to be the best,” Earl Copes said.

The Marine is survived by his father, Marion; his stepmother, Barbara; his wife; and four children, ages 6 years to 6 months.

His family is making funeral arrangements. Copes will be buried next to his mother.

Earl Copes said that, while he is grieving his brother’s death, he has a deep appreciation for his service. “We all take for granted the cost of freedom and the cost he’s paid and that others have paid ... He was proud of what he was doing, and we’re extremely proud of him.”

**POLITICIANS REFUSE TO HALT THE
BLOODSHED**

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

Resistance Action: Payback Come Quick



[Graphic:flickr.com/photos]

Aug 26 OLOnews & By Sajad, Khaama Press

Insurgents shot dead eastern Logar province's head of Hajj and Pilgrimage on Saturday night while he was shopping at the market, a local official said.

The shooting happened around 7:00 PM local time in the Wagh Jan market bazaar of the Mohammad Agha district when attackers on a motorbike drove by the market and shot at the provincial Head of Hajj Mawlawi Ghulaam Rasoul, Logar governor spokesman Din Mohammad Darwish said.

"There is no exact information as to why they shot dead Mawlawi Ghulaam Rasoul and the police have started investigating about the incident," he said.

On August 20, Afghan and foreign troops launched a military operation in the district in which a Taliban leader and several other insurgents were captured. The operation was launched in the district to capture an Haqqani arms supplier.

The Haqqani arms supplier provided weapons, explosives, and improvised explosive device components to Haqqani fighters throughout the province, according to Isaf.

Afghan defense ministry officials following a statement on Sunday announced, at least 9 Afghan national army soldiers were killed or injured following militants attack and improvised explosive device blasts across the country.

The source further added one Afghan soldier killed and five others were injured after an improvised explosive device went off in eastern Ghazni province.

In a separate incident in Shegal district of eastern Kunar province an Afghan national army soldier was killed in militants attack.

Meanwhile another Afghan soldier was killed and another was injured in eastern Logar province of Afghanistan.

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

MILITARY NEWS

“I Have A Concern That The Army Is Ignoring Thousands Of Soldiers Who Are

Living And Working With Undiagnosed Depression”

“We Want You To Get Help, But We Will Consider You To Be A Threat To National Security If You Do”

Army Times
Letters To The Editor
August 27, 2012

I have a concern that the Army is ignoring thousands of soldiers who are living and working with undiagnosed depression.

PTSD appears to be the diagnosis of the moment. It's almost considered a rite of passage to have it. In fact, if you get counseling for combat-related PTSD, you don't even have to report it on your security clearance.

But PTSD has a certain set of diagnostic criteria, to include flashbacks and nightmares.

There has been absolutely no support, no "Real Warriors" campaign, for soldiers suffering depression, which may or may not be related to combat trauma. The estimates that over half of soldiers who take their own lives have never deployed before demonstrate that it's not just combat exposure that is killing these people.

And yet, Army leadership wants to throw all of its time and resources at PTSD.

I am not saying that PTSD is not an issue.

But I think that if the leadership really wants to address the reasons why people are killing themselves, they need to broaden their perspective.

Telling soldiers that it's OK to seek help but then forcing them to report counseling on their security clearance questionnaires for something as common as depression sends a mixed message:

We want you to get help, but we will consider you to be a threat to national security if you do.

Staff Sgt. Katrina Espinoza
Tacoma, Wash.

Military Resistance Available In PDF Format

If you prefer PDF to Word format, email: contact@militaryproject.org

**Marine Corps' Bulldog Mascot To
Receive Promotion And Threat-
Identification Training After Angry
Outburst Menacing SecDef
Panetta's 75-Pound Golden
Retriever:**

**“At The Conclusion Of A Pomp-Filled
Military Parade Held In Honor Of The
Pentagon Chief, Chesty Growled,
Barked And Ignored His Choke-Chain
Of Command As He Went Nose-To-
Nose With Bravo”**

**“Some Senior Officers Thought
Promoting Chesty Might Appear
Insubordinate”**



Chesty XIII Now Sgt. Chesty

Other senior Marines worried about the message promoting Chesty might send. In military chain of command, Bravo is second only to Bo Obama, the president's hypoallergenic Portuguese water dog.

The Constitution puts the military under civilian control, and some senior officers thought promoting Chesty might appear insubordinate.

"The standards in the barracks had lowered," said one senior Marine officer. "The dog didn't really deserve it."

August 24, 2012 By JULIAN E. BARNES, Wall Street Journal

WASHINGTON—

The Marines won't say it out loud, but everyone knows that Cpl. Chesty got promoted to sergeant this summer not for being a good Marine, but for his in-your-muzzle confrontation with the top dog in the Pentagon.

Just two weeks before his promotion, the Marine Corps mascot, an English bulldog formally known as Chesty XIII, had a run-in with Bravo, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta's golden retriever.

Chesty, usually known for happily mugging for photos with kids, revealed his inner grunt when he spotted the larger dog at the conclusion of a pomp-filled military parade held in honor of the Pentagon chief.

Chesty growled, barked and ignored his choke-chain of command as he went nose-to-nose with Bravo.

As Chesty's growl erupted into an angry bark, an officer urgently whispered in the ear of his handler, Sgt. Chris Harris: "Keep the leash tight."

That kind of breach of decorum at the headquarters barracks, where the top generals and their wives reside, could have been career-ending for most Marines.

Chesty weathered the controversy and came out of it with a new stripe on his uniform.

Privately, some wives of senior Marine officers, more focused on politeness than doggedness, let it be known they didn't approve of the promotion.

A whispering campaign against Chesty reached the ears of Col. Paul Montanus, barracks commander.

Some said Chesty was getting too fat.

Some senior wives wanted Chesty relieved of duty in favor of a more pliable bulldog private serving in another unit.

Other senior Marines worried about the message promoting Chesty might send.

In military chain of command, Bravo is second only to Bo Obama, the president's hypoallergenic Portuguese water dog.

The Constitution puts the military under civilian control, and some senior officers thought promoting Chesty might appear insubordinate.

"The standards in the barracks had lowered," said one senior Marine officer. "The dog didn't really deserve it."

Col. Montanus, who had the dog's fate in his hands, acknowledges that Chesty was wrong to shove his short snout in Bravo's face. "There absolutely was a protocol break," he said. "We don't bark at guests, whether they are human or the canine variety."

But, the colonel said, much of the opposition was baseless.

A barracks spokesman says senior Marine wives love and support the current Chesty.

And at 54 pounds, Chesty fits nicely in the dress blues he was issued as a younger dog, thanks to being served half the daily kibble ration of his chunky predecessors.

Nevertheless, in a speech at Chesty's June promotion ceremony, Col. Montanus acknowledged the decision was "touch and go."

"There are some Marines that are destined to be sergeant," he said. "Then there are some whose conduct is...questionable. Chesty is one of those Marines."

Col. Montanus said he had considered formally punishing Chesty for "disrespect to a superior commissioned dog."

It is true that "Chesty made threatening gestures," he said.

"But we decided the body of work for Chesty was enough he rated becoming a sergeant."

Left unspoken: The very act that made Chesty's promotion controversial also made it more likely.

Immediately after the parade in honor of Mr. Panetta it became clear that going muzzle-to-muzzle with the 75-pound golden retriever was going to enhance Chesty's reputation in the ranks.

While Mr. Panetta was present, the top Marines displayed embarrassed grins and laughed nervously.

But after the boss left, the high-fives and atta-boys broke out.

Far from being denied his traditional post-parade Milk-Bone, the bulldog found himself the object of warrior admiration. Even Gen. James Amos, the Marine commandant, approached Chesty and said, "Good job."

There is a reason the Corps has a bulldog for a mascot and that he is named after the famously gutsy Marine Lt. Gen. Lewis "Chesty" Puller.

Even within a service that values discipline, there is a certain mystique about a Marine who's willing to poke a paw in the eye of power—particularly in defense of the homeland, or kennel.

Col. Montanus's successor as barracks commander, Col. Christian Cabaniss, made plain the current Chesty had only grown in his estimation.

"Chesty embodies Gen. Mattis's saying about the Marines: 'No better friend, no worse enemy,'" Col. Cabaniss said.

"Chesty's great. He is great with kids. But if you are impolite to him, if you are wrong, that is when he will defend himself."

Like Chesty, Gen. Mattis has risen through the ranks despite the occasional public display of machismo — comments such as "Be polite, be professional, but have a plan to kill everybody you meet" — that has raised eyebrows with civilians.

Gen. Mattis, who oversees operations in the Middle East and Afghanistan, said he considers Chesty a "kindred soul."

"He's a fine Marine dog," the general said. "Loyal, hardworking and full of fun—while looking mean as all get-out."

Col. Montanus strenuously denies that the confrontation with Bravo helped Chesty's promotion. A well-trained Marine, he said, should be able to recognize a superior.

"I would say Chesty needs some threat-identification classes," he said. "I understand 'No better friend, no worse enemy.' But generally we are talking about our enemies, not our superior officers."

Col. Montanus calls the clash with Bravo a minor infraction. Chesty, the colonel says, excels at his main responsibility: Accepting hugs from children with enthusiasm and without biting. As for Bravo's master, there seem to be no hard feelings. "Chesty may bark a lot," Mr. Panetta said. "But he understands the chain of command."

In an interview on a hot evening, Chesty was friendly and panted constantly.

Although he didn't answer questions about Bravo, he did jump on a reporter's leg.

GOT AN OPINION?

Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or send to contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request identification published.

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

The Nixon administration claimed and received great credit for withdrawing the Army from Vietnam, but it was the rebellion of low-ranking GIs that forced the government to abandon a hopeless suicidal policy.

-- David Cortright; Soldiers In Revolt

Man In Afghan President's Uniform Shoots Secretary Of Defense In Latest 'Green-on-Blue' Attack



August 22, 2012 by Dark Laughter, The Duffle Blog.

Kabul, Afghanistan – Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta is in stable condition this morning after being shot by Afghan President Hamid Karzai during a joint press conference on plans to reduce “green-on-blue” incidents.

Though an initial press release from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) described Panetta’s assailant as a “man in an Afghan President’s uniform,” those who witnessed the shooting live on CNN harbor few doubts that the shooter was actually Karzai.

The attack is the latest in a series of green-on-blue incidents, in which coalition forces are shot by their Afghan allies, making a total of 32 incidents in 2012 alone, with the year far from over. They have produced a total of 39 fatalities and numerous other injuries, in what the Pentagon has referred to as “a baffling pattern of freak accidents and misunderstandings.”

According to reporters on the scene, Panetta was giving a speech on his continuing faith in the Karzai government’s ability to end green-on-blue incidents, and the ability of the coalition to overcome the Taliban together and bring peace to Afghanistan.

He had just turned over the microphone to his “great friend, President Hamid Karzai.”

Karzai stepped up to the podium and stared blankly for a few seconds at Panetta, who stood smiling broadly several feet away.

Then, without warning, Karzai suddenly produced a small revolver and opened fire on the Secretary, missing him three times, but hitting him once in his left arm and once in his left leg with subsequent shots.

A sixth shot knocked Panetta's glasses off his face.

The revolver then clicked as Karzai pulled the trigger several more times before angrily throwing the empty pistol at Panetta, breaking his nose as he lay bleeding on the floor.

In the chaos that followed, Central Command head General James Mattis rapidly confiscated the pistol, while ISAF commander General John Allen checked to make sure the Afghan president hadn't hurt his fingers while firing the weapon.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Martin Dempsey checked Panetta's pulse and attempted to revive him.

"Is President Karzai alright?" groaned Panetta before passing out.

Panetta was promptly rushed to a hospital facility at Bagram Airfield in a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter, which had to change course to avoid small arms fire from a friendly Afghan base.

At Bagram, Panetta was transferred to an ambulance which took him directly to the base's trauma center, though it came under fire from Afghan National Security Forces no less than three times during the five minute drive, in one case from a group that was walking out of a base dining facility and had to stop to load their rifles.

Both groups of Afghans (one group was responsible for two of the incidents) later offered grudging apologies.

Regarding the motivation for the shooting, Karzai initially claimed it was due to "American insolence, ignorance of Afghan culture, Quran burning, violating Afghan traditions, or something else like that." He then called for the immediate withdrawal of coalition forces so Afghans could begin maintaining the country on their own "without western interference."

"We'll miss you," replied Mattis tersely, as he and Dempsey immediately started calling the Commander in Chief to plan a general withdrawal from the country. Karzai then rapidly backtracked, saying the attack was caused by "perhaps some confusion on my part, but that confusion was caused by an intelligence failure on the part of NATO."

As Mattis continued to dial without so much as an upward glance, Karzai threw a screaming, crying tantrum in which he swore he'd join the Taliban if he was not properly supported by his NATO backers. Following the threat to join the Taliban, Karzai's tirade trailed off, as he had noticed Mattis was glancing back and forth between him, a metal urn of scalding hot coffee on a nearby refreshment table, and Gen Allen, who was looking Mattis directly in the eyes while emphatically shaking his head no.

At that point, Karzai changed his story yet again, and claimed that he had actually been handing the pistol to Panetta when he suffered a negligent discharge.

Following the incident, ISAF issued an apology, saying, "We are deeply sorry for any emotional trauma experienced by President Karzai, especially with regards to the loss of his personal sidearm, which has been in his family for generations."

Though most have interpreted the attack as confirmation of the ongoing degradation of NATO-Afghan relations and the deteriorating legitimacy of the Afghan government, some officials in the region, such as Pakistani General Ashfaq Kayani, see Karzai's actions in a more positive light.

"Right now we're hearing unprecedented levels of support for Karzai from Taliban officials and many low-level fighters who have previously refused to come to the table and deal with the Karzai government," Kayani said. "This could be the key to formal reconciliation efforts which could end the war."

He also expressed hopes that Karzai might pursue the gutsy strategy further with a larger gesture, such as formally putting the whole NATO effort under the command of Taliban leader Mullah Omar.

An ISAF spokesman rejected Kayani's proposal as "utter nonsense", and was joined in a rare agreement by a Taliban spokesman who noted that "while a broken clock might be right twice a day, there is still no place for Hamid Karzai in an Afghan government that hopes to have any legitimacy with people at home or abroad."

Surface Photo Via Mars Rover "Curiosity"



08/20/2012 Mars surface photo via Mars Rover Curiosity. The Huffington Post

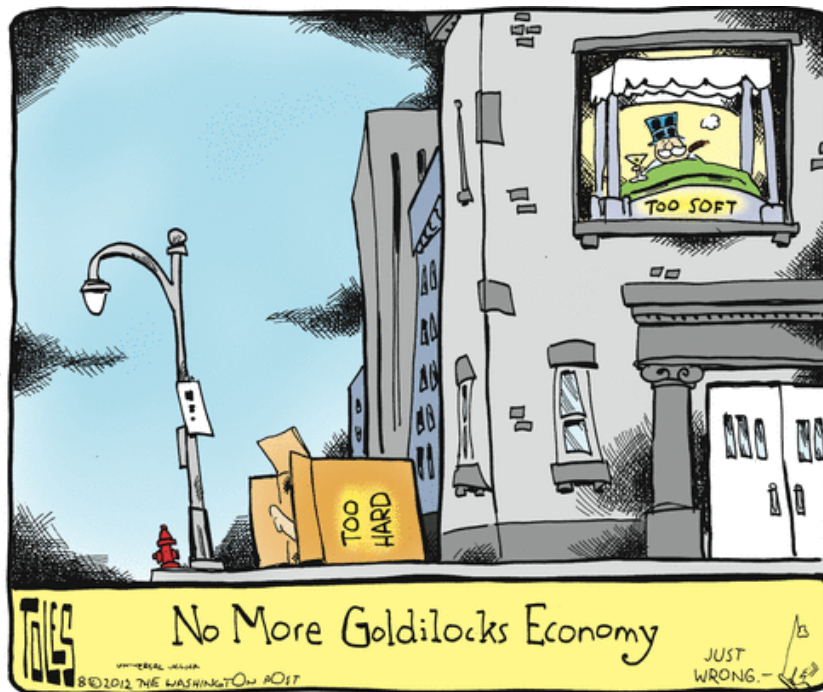
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DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



CLASS WAR REPORTS



**Protesters In Rural Spain Seizing
And Farming Vacant Lands:
“Increasingly, The Demonstrations
Are Spreading To Private Estates”
“Just Like The Big Aristocratic
Landowners, Our Politicians Have No
Interest In Generating More Farm Jobs,’
Said Lola Álvarez Márquez, 44, Who Has
Held Seasonal Harvesting Jobs Since
She Was 16”**



Pepper picking on the occupied Somonte farm. Laura Leon for the International Herald Tribune

The march's itinerary this week passed close to Somonte, a government-owned farm that has been occupied by about 20 people since March.

With the help of a donated tractor, the demonstrators there have been growing red peppers, tomatoes and eggplant.

August 23, 2012 By RAPHAEL MINDER, New York Times [Excerpts]

HORNACHUELOS, Spain — Outmaneuvering the police, hundreds of jobless farmworkers charged through a hole in a fence and turned the manicured gardens of a vacant estate here in Spain's agricultural heartland into a lively fairground of protest this week.

Men more accustomed to working in the fields lounged in the shade beside a pink palace, picnicked on paella and spent a night relaxing. Some even took a dip in the pool.

"We're here to denounce a social class who leaves such places to waste," said Diego Cañamero, the leader of the Andalusian Union of Workers, addressing the demonstrators who had occupied the property, the Palacio de Moratalla.

For all of the estate's grandeur, the owner, the Duke of Segorbe, lives in Andalusia's capital, Seville, about 60 miles away.

Such protests have gathered pace in this farm region in Spain's south in recent weeks, adding a volatile dimension to the country's economic downturn. They have also pointed to a deeper anger about the shape of Spain's economy and democracy.

The resentment here over land that has been left uncultivated at a time of deepening recession and record joblessness reaches beyond local politicians and landowners to European Union bureaucrats.

Agricultural subsidies are criticized by many here as favoring landed interests, paying them not to grow crops when nearly a third of the work force in Andalusia is unemployed.

Mr. Cañamero said that European subsidies reinforced landed interests because the payments' value was based on the size of the landholding rather than on its productivity. "There is zero incentive for these already wealthy owners to grow anything," he said.

Three years into the crisis, the government of Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy has faced protests by miners, students, teachers, legions of jobless workers and any range of others unhappy with his austerity policies.

But the protests here in rural Spain, which have tipped increasingly toward lawlessness and civil disobedience, contain the echoes of conflicts that have a special place in Spain's history.

As Spain's biggest region and farming heartland, Andalusia was the site of many of the confrontations over land ownership leading up to the Spanish Civil War, when a landed elite resisted an agrarian reform meant to give farm hands better work conditions and job security.

"We're not anarchists looking for conflict, but our claims are similar to those of the 1930s," Mr. Cañamero said, referring to the war years, "because the land is, unfortunately, under the control now of even fewer people than at that time."

The occupation of Palacio de Moratalla from Tuesday morning to early Wednesday was part of a march that Mr. Cañamero has led since Aug. 16, walking about 15 miles a day across the parched countryside with around 500 demonstrators. In recent months, the protests by unemployed farmworkers have mostly singled out unused state land, either in the hands of Andalusia's regional government or Spain's Defense Ministry, which previously required it for military purposes.

Increasingly, the demonstrations are spreading to vacant private estates as well.

Another leader of the march, Juan Manuel Sánchez Gordillo, has taken increasingly strident actions to draw attention to his complaints. This month, Mr. Sánchez Gordillo, the mayor of the farming town of Marinaleda and a member of one of Spain's opposition parties, the United Left, created a national controversy by helping coordinate food raids on two supermarkets. Seven people were charged with robbery with violence.

He and others say that the pain of Spain's downturn is being felt not by the bankers and property developers who set off the financial crisis, but by the most vulnerable, particularly as the country struggles to meet the mounting demands for austerity by European Union policy makers and investors.

"I will do whatever it takes to show that this crisis is not about the bond market and Spain's risk premium but about hundreds of thousands of families struggling to survive," Mr. Sánchez Gordillo said, wiping off perspiration with his necktie.

A strong dose of communalism infuses the thinking of many of the demonstrators. T

he march's itinerary this week passed close to Somonte, a government-owned farm that has been occupied by about 20 people since March.

With the help of a donated tractor, the demonstrators there have been growing red peppers, tomatoes and eggplant.

"Just like the big aristocratic landowners, our politicians have no interest in generating more farm jobs," said Lola Álvarez Márquez, 44, who has held seasonal harvesting jobs since she was 16. "In only a few months, we've already shown that if people are given the right to work the land, they will be able to forget poverty and joblessness and take pride instead in forming a self-sufficient community."

So far, the Andalusian authorities have hesitated to clamp down on the farm occupations. Somonte was evacuated by the police in late April, but the occupiers returned a day later.

Earlier this month, the police cleared another farm, Las Turquillas, owned by the Defense Ministry, after it was occupied for 18 days.

Meanwhile, unemployment in the farm towns has been worsened by the fall of the property sector along Andalusia's coast, which has sent construction workers back to the countryside.

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“Members Of Ahrar And Other Armed Opposition Groups Are Angry At The U.S. For Not Giving Them Enough Backing”
“At The Same Time, Ahrar And Other Opposition Groups Strongly Oppose U.S. Policy In The Region”
“They Want The Return Of Syria’s Golan Heights, Seized By Israel In The 1967 War”
“They Support Palestinian Rights And Oppose U.S. Aggression In Iraq And Afghanistan”

Aug 22, 2012 By Reese Erlich, Truthdig [Excerpts]

ANTAKYA, Turkey—Free Syrian Army leader Abdul Salaam types on his Dell laptop while a comrade sitting nearby taps a text message on his iPhone. Eight of his fighters

lounge around an apartment living room late one night. Their 150-man brigade, Ahrar Syria (Free People of Syria), even has its own Facebook page.

While the brigade sports modern techno gadgets, it lacks sophisticated arms and ammunition. So instead of fighting in the battle of Aleppo, the militants help smuggle refugees and injured fighters from war-torn Syria into Turkey.

Members of Ahrar and other armed opposition groups are angry at the U.S. for not giving them enough backing.

“We haven’t gotten any arms from the U.S.,” Salaam said. “If we had arms, Assad would have fallen by now.” He also favors establishing a no-fly zone over parts of Syria as the U.S. and NATO did in Libya.

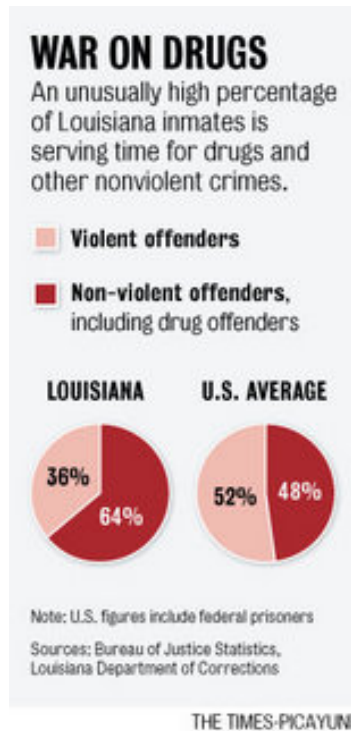
At the same time, Ahrar and other opposition groups strongly oppose U.S. policy in the region. They want the return of Syria’s Golan Heights, seized by Israel in the 1967 War. They support Palestinian rights and oppose U.S. aggression in Iraq and Afghanistan.

None of those political views make Washington very happy. Opposition leaders assume that the U.S. is searching for pro-American leaders to take over once Assad falls.

**Tough Sentencing Laws Keep
Louisiana’s Prisons Full:
“Sentences Of Several Decades,
Or Even Life, For Nonviolent
Crimes Are Not Unusual In
Louisiana”**

**“More Than 300 People Serving Life
Without Parole In Louisiana Have
Never Been Convicted Of A Violent
Crime”**

“Jackson, 50, Is Serving Life Without Parole For Stealing A Jacket From A Department Store”



May 16, 2012 Cindy Chang, The Times-Picayune [Excerpts]

Brian Martin is serving 24 years behind bars -- without the possibility of parole -- for a car burglary.

The 22-year-old had two other burglaries on his record when he was arrested near Abita Springs on June 8, 2011, after stripping a BMW of its stereo and steering wheel. If charged as a three-time offender, he could have received life without parole. His attorney, Doyle "Buddy" Spell, persuaded prosecutors to consider only the two most recent car break-ins, taking a life sentence off the table, but doubling the 12-year maximum for a first-timer.

Martin, a drug addict with a mop of unruly blond hair, will be 46 when he is released from prison in 2036. "I would suggest that we just threw away a life and that the punishment did not fit the crime," Spell said.

Sentences of several decades, or even life, for nonviolent crimes are not unusual in Louisiana.

The state's prisons are filled with Brian Martins -- petty criminals who in another state would have received a much shorter sentence or no jail time at all. Unusually tough

sentencing laws are one major reason Louisiana has the highest incarceration rate in the world.

"We see the only goal that is being reflected accurately might be retribution," said Katherine Mattes, a professor at Tulane Law School and interim director of the university's Criminal Litigation Clinic.

In Texas, no bastion of liberalism, a two-time car burglar would be guilty of a misdemeanor and sentenced to a maximum of six months.

California's famous three-strikes law does not kick in unless at least one of the crimes was a rape, murder, carjacking, residential burglary or other major felony. There, Martin would have received no more than a year behind bars.

In Louisiana, about 160 habitual offenders whose most recent crime involved nothing more harmful than marijuana are serving 20 years or more.

More than 300 people serving life without parole in Louisiana have never been convicted of a violent crime.

It's not just low-level criminals who fare worse here. Louisiana is the only state that automatically sentences murderers to life without parole.

St. Tammany Parish, where Martin was convicted, is known as "St. Slammany" because prosecutors so often seek the maximum penalty.

But the same sentencing laws apply throughout the state, hemming in judges with mandatory minimums.

Louisiana is also one of only two states where a defendant can be convicted on the votes of 10 of 12 jurors.

The threat of habitual-offender prosecution is a powerful tool to get defendants to plead to long sentences, as Martin did.

Meanwhile, the costs mount. Human lives tick away.

The state's finances suffer as prisoners' sentences stretch into old age. The Department of Corrections spends about \$24 million a year caring for 300 or so infirm inmates who are no longer physically capable of committing a crime.

If Louisiana is out of line with the rest of the country in the harshness of its punishments, the United States is out of line with the rest of the Western world.

Until the 1980s, U.S. incarceration rates were comparable to Europe's. Then came the war on drugs and a new tough-on-crime ethos.

State after state enacted longer sentences, particularly for drug offenses and other nonviolent crimes.

Today, the United States keeps a higher percentage of its citizens behind bars than any other nation -- outpacing France, Germany and Great Britain by 10 times or more.

As criminal punishments increased throughout the United States, Louisiana went to unheard-of extremes.

Money is a driving force in Louisiana, where sheriffs profit from the incarceration of more than half the state's prisoners.

Louisiana's sentencing laws are significantly tougher than those of neighboring Texas, which has the nation's fourth-highest incarceration rate and has executed more condemned criminals than any other state.

Like many states, Texas has a tiered system of punishment. Felonies fall into one of five broad categories: capital, first-degree, second-degree, third-degree and state jail felonies. The sentencing range is the same for most crimes in a category.

Most murders are classified as first-degree felonies. A murderer can get as little as five years, with an upper limit of 99 years, compared with Louisiana's automatic life without parole.

In Texas, passing worthless checks is the lowest type of misdemeanor, a class C, carrying no prison time and a maximum fine of \$500.

In Louisiana, writing a worthless check can lead to 10 years behind bars.

In Louisiana, each offense carries its own tailor-made punishment, so justice can seem arbitrary.

For example, the Legislature passed a law in 2005 to punish people who were stealing sackfuls of crawfish from farmers' ponds. The crime of crawfish theft carries a maximum prison sentence of 10 years, depending on the value of the crustaceans.

"Each statute has its own penalty that you don't have in other states. You've got a lot of statutes where you've got no parole, no probation, mandatory minimums and such," said Richard Jerome, a project manager for the Pew Center's Public Safety and Performance Project. "You've got provisions where the third-time offense means no parole at all. Those things certainly do have an impact."

About two dozen states have habitual-offender laws, but Louisiana stands out for its unyielding treatment of nonviolent criminals.

Generally, Texas bumps a repeat offender up to the next category of crime. The lower limits on such prosecutions remain fairly generous to the defendant. Someone convicted of a first-degree felony who already has another felony conviction can get less than 15 years.

In Louisiana, a trio of drug convictions can trigger life without parole.

Three nonviolent crimes with sentences of 12 years or more, such as the car burglaries Martin committed, also subject the defendant to automatic life without parole.

Many defendants plead guilty to lesser charges rather than risk losing a trial where so much is at stake. When judges only have one choice, sentencing hearings become a mere formality.

In 2001, the Legislature modified the habitual-offender statute to take some petty crimes off the list, a rare instance where lawmakers softened a punishment. Still, anyone sentenced under the old law has little recourse except for a pardon from the governor, which is hard to come by. In nearly five years in office, Jindal has only freed one person from prison.

"We have to really start taking a deep, deep look at how we are treating human beings," said Rep. Terry Landry, D-New Iberia, former head of the Louisiana State Police. "Somewhere in a book it says, 'By the grace of God go I.' Some of us, the difference between us and the people who got incarcerated is that they got caught and we didn't."

Timothy Jackson has picked up woodworking during his 15 years at Angola state penitentiary and can make everything from rocking chairs to dining-room sets. He looks forward to the semiannual inmate rodeo and crafts fair, where he catches up with relatives and hawks his wares.

Jackson, 50, is serving life without parole for stealing a jacket from a department store.

In 1996, using two car-burglary convictions and a two-decades-old robbery conviction, Orleans Parish prosecutors put him behind bars for the rest of his life.

The 4th Circuit Court of Appeal initially downgraded Jackson's sentence, calling it "excessive, and a prime example of an unjust result." Then the Louisiana Supreme Court ruled that judges may not second-guess the habitual-offender law except in rare instances. The 4th Circuit reluctantly reversed itself.

Under current law, the jacket theft would no longer count as a fourth offense, but the change is not retroactive. Jackson, a Mid-City native who worked as a cook at Brennan's and other local restaurants, is out of luck.

"I'm going to be honest. I'm locked up like I killed someone. They've got people who killed people got less time than I did," Jackson said.

"A \$159 jacket. If somebody had told me I could get life for that, I wouldn't believe them."

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Tim Goodrich, Iraq Veterans Against The War**

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