

Military Resistance 10K15

I spent 33 years and four months in active military service and during that period I spent most of my time as a high class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street and the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism...



General Smedley Butler
United States Marine Corps, 1898-1931

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, ANTIRACIST ORGANIZATION ★ SOLIDARITY-US.ORG

**“Afghan Aid Is Being Quietly Funneled To The University Of Massachusetts In The Home State Of Senator John Kerry”
“Corruption Flourishes Best In The Darkness”**

“USAID Knows That Awards Such As Those Described In This Article Are Suspect, Which Is Why There Is No Transparency Within The Agency”

“The Institute Professes To Support Human Rights, But It Only Advocates For Human Rights Against Regimes Unfriendly To The United States”

“Afghan Government Officials Have Studied The U.S. Government And Have Adopted Far Too Many Of Its Dishonest Practices”

27 November 2012, by Matthew J. Nasuti, Kabul Press

Afghan aid is being quietly funneled to the University of Massachusetts in the home state of Senator John Kerry.

Kerry is the Chairman of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee which oversees the U.S. Department of State.

More than \$21 million in Afghan aid has or is being diverted to the “Center for International Education” to fund its programs in the wealthy town of Amherst, Massachusetts.

The awards, by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), were uncovered by this reporter just last week.

A review of the USAID’s public databases reveals no information on these awards, except for some vague references to the University being a “HEP” contractor. HEP stands for “Higher Education Project.”

The University of Massachusetts reports that it is being paid to focus on “capacity building, curriculum review, peer facility reviews” and in “helping to design a model for a network of Afghan educational institutions.”

This vague and nebulous scope of work is virtually un-auditable. There are no metrics to measure or assess, and therefore no method for determining whether the funds are being wasted.

USAID sends money into Massachusetts and Senator Kerry responds by being supportive of all USAID’s efforts.

The University of Massachusetts then subcontracts part of the work to Indiana University, conveniently the home state of Senator Richard Lugar, the ranking Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In Afghanistan this would be called bribery, but in Washington, D.C., Massachusetts and Indiana, it is standard politics.

In the United States some public officials consider public jobs and public funds to be theirs to dispense; and dispense them they do: to family members, friends and supporters, even though such would be a crime if anyone paid attention to the law.

None of this is a recent phenomenon.

The University of Massachusetts is a regular beneficiary of USAID contracts for “studies” in Gaza, the Sudan and Malawi where it works on “international capacity building.” The University is associated with the Open Society Institute, a dubious organization partnered with the U.S. Department of State.

The Institute professes to support human rights, but it only advocates for human rights against regimes unfriendly to the United States.

For example, its Central Asia project avoids any criticism of Uzbekistan or Kazakhstan, which are longstanding allies of Secretary Hillary Clinton and Bill Clinton. On November 4, 2012, the Institute published a laudatory article by Cornelius Graubner entitled, “The New Silk Road.” The new NATO rail and trucking route through Uzbekistan is praised as historic, with no mention of the Uzbek police state run by dictator Islam Karimov.

USAID knows that awards such as those described in this article are suspect, which is why there is no transparency within the agency.

Notices of awards and dollar numbers do not appear on USAID’s Internet site for Afghanistan, and scopes of work are never published.

Corruption flourishes best in the darkness.

The diversion of Afghan aid should have attracted the attention of the U.S. Department of Justice, but the Department only pays lip service to anti-corruption efforts.

On paper it has an Office of Public Integrity which is nominally headed by an attorney named Jack Smith. The problem is that this Office has been drifting for years as it has no authority to prosecute Federal corruption.

Instead it prosecutes State officials, but only when those officials have fallen out of favor and have no important interest groups supporting them.

In essence, if internal polling finds no opposition to the prosecution, then criminal charges are filed. Anti-corruption prosecutions in Afghanistan commence using the exact same criteria. Afghan Government officials have studied the U.S. Government and have adopted far too many of its dishonest practices.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Foreign Occupation “Servicemember” Killed Somewhere Or Other In Afghanistan: Nationality Not Announced

November 26, 2012 Reuters

A foreign servicemember died following an improvised explosive device attack in southern Afghanistan today.

Port Henry Man Killed In Combat



Dain Venne of Port Henry pictured in his combat uniform while on patrol. Venne was killed in Afghanistan on Saturday while serving with the U.S. Army Reserve.

November 5, 2012 By LOHR McKINSTRY, Press-Republican

PORT HENRY — Port Henry resident Dain Venne was killed in Afghanistan Saturday while serving with the U.S. Army Reserve.

Venne, 29, was on patrol when a roadside bomb exploded, according to preliminary reports.

Two other soldiers died with Venne when the bomb went off.

His parents are Brian and Laura (Harris) Venne of Port Henry. His father is a longtime Moriah town justice. Laura is a teacher at Moriah Central School.

Dain Venne was with the U.S. Army 10th Mountain Division headquartered at Fort Drum, but reported to the Canton-Oswego U.S. Army Reserve Training Center. He had served one tour in Iraq and the current one in Afghanistan.

The family was notified Saturday afternoon, according to friends.

Venne was a graduate of Moriah Central School and was a student at St. Lawrence University in Canton when the 9/11 terrorist attacks occurred. He enlisted in the U.S. Army soon after, friends said, in an effort to serve his country in a time of need.

This year, Venne received the Firefighter Commendation Medal from the Port Henry Fire Department for his life-saving actions in rescuing several stranded victims during August 2011 floods. His father accepted the award for him in May since he was serving in Afghanistan at the time.

Port Henry Fire Chief James Hughes said firefighters were at the fire station Sunday preparing for services that will likely be held later this week.

“Our thoughts and prayers are with the Venne and Harris families. We are devastated, like everyone else, over these events.”

He said Venne was a credit to the fire service.

“He was an outstanding firefighter, a perfect gentleman. It’s a reflection on his family how he carried himself, very respectful to his fellow firefighters. You couldn’t ask for a better person, better son; he was an overall good and decent human being.”

Hughes said Venne had worked with the youth of the area.

“He took an interest in youth, sports and education. He worked with kids, and I was very impressed that he could reach out to a young mind and make an impression. He had an ability to teach and educate.”

Essex County Emergency Services Director Donald Jaquish said Venne was a great member of the community.

“He got a medal for helping rescue people trapped at Port Henry Campground during the flood last year. It’s very sad. He was athletic and a very good boy.”

Venne has also been praised as one of the best football players Moriah ever had. A 2001 Moriah Central School graduate, Venne was named to the 2000 All-State Football Team as a running back and linebacker by the New York State Sports Writers Association.

Moriah Central School Superintendent William Larrow said school staff will meet to discuss a tribute to Venne.

“We want to honor Dain and his family. We’re all very close to the Venne family.

“He was a true leader, a model student and someone the entire community looked up to,” Larrow continued. “He was one of the very best. He believed in the military; he believed in his mission.”

Moriah Town Supervisor Thomas Scozzafava said it’s a time of mourning for the town.

“Our hearts go out to the families. Dain was a true hero; one of the nicest guys you’ll ever meet. He was respected by the entire community.”

Scozzafava said all flags in the Town of Moriah and Village of Port Henry will now fly at half mast in honor of Venne.

“It’s a horrible, horrible tragedy. When tragedy strikes, Moriah comes together, and we will now.”

**POLITICIANS REFUSE TO HALT THE
BLOODSHED**

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

Resistance Action

27 November, 2012 PakTribune

KABUL/JALALABAD: Defence ministry on Monday said six Afghan National Army (ANA) troops were killed and 10 more wounded during separate hostile incidents over the past 24 hours.

The ANA troops were killed and wounded in explosions and direct attacks while discharging security responsibilities in Ghazni, Helmand, Uruzgan, Wardak and Faryab province, the defence ministry said in a statement.

Meanwhile, two police among six persons were wounded in two back-to-back bomb explosions in Haska Maina district of eastern Ningarhar province this morning, sources said Monday.

A roadside bomb exploded near a police vehicle in Baghiband Kandao area of Haska Maina at about 7:30 a.m. (local time), injuring two police, security forces told Afghan Islamic Press (AIP).

According to security forces the police vehicle was also severely damaged in the blast.

Taliban claimed responsibility for the bomb explosions.

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

Most French Troops Leaving Afghanistan Now: 1500 Stay To Pack Up Equipment; 500 Will Stay To “Train And Support Afghan Forces, And Help Run Kabul’s Airport”

11/20/12 By JAMEY KEATEN, The Huffington Post

PARIS -- France on Tuesday ended its combat operations in Afghanistan, pulling hundreds of troops from a base in a volatile region northeast of Kabul and fulfilling promises to end its combat role on a faster track than other NATO allies.

After a handover ceremony with Afghan troops, 500 French combat soldiers in trucks and armored vehicles left the Nijrab base in the Kapisa region – where anti-government insurgents have been active – and traveled southwest to Kabul, the capital, said Col. Thierry Burkhard, a French military spokesman.

“This is the end of combat operations,” Burkhard told The Associated Press, adding that the withdrawal went smoothly.

“It’s the end of support operations for the Afghan National Army because we have no more troops who can deploy in such a role.”

France was once one of the largest contributors to the NATO mission in Afghanistan, with a peak deployment of 4,000 troops – though far smaller than the tens of thousands of U.S. troops there. Since mid-2008, French forces were deployed in Kapisa, a crescent-shaped and strategic region along mountains between Kabul and the Pakistani border.

France already pulled out its forces from the neighboring Surobi district of Kabul province – a less violent area than Kapisa – earlier this year after then-President Nicolas Sarkozy said his country would pull combat troops out ahead of NATO's 2014 timetable for the U.S.-led combat operation to end.

French public opinion has gradually soured on the ongoing Afghanistan mission, and a string of insurgent attacks that raised the French death toll preceded a decision by both Sarkozy and his successor to speed up the French withdrawal.

Tuesday's move put President Francois Hollande, who beat Sarkozy in a springtime presidential election, on track to make good on his campaign-trail promise to withdraw all French combat troops from Afghanistan by the end of this year.

Hundreds of French troops were expected to fly out of Kabul in the coming weeks.

France plans to maintain 1,500 troops in Afghanistan next year, mainly to repatriate equipment deployed during the 11-year French military role as part of the allied intervention in Afghanistan.

About 500 will help train and support Afghan forces, and help run Kabul's airport.

SOMALIA WAR REPORTS

Insurgents “Stormed Bases Manned By Somali Forces Outside Shalanbod Town” “Huge Blast” Blows Up Occupation Troops Military Personnel Carrier

November 27, 2012 & November 28, 2012 Sh.M.Network

Marko — Witnesses say a huge blast tore through a military personnel carrier with soldiers serving for the African Union mission in Somalia in Marko town, just 110 Km south of Mogadishu.

Local residents in Marko said they heard a loud explosion at about 2pm on Tuesday that was targeted on AMISOM forces as they were passing on one of the streets in the city.

Details on the casualties are yet sketchy as the AU forces sealed off the area and carried out searches following the attack. The city has once again been under Al shabab control before the coalition forces moved in almost one month ago.

At least three people confirmed dead and seven others injured when a fierce gun battle erupted between government forces and Al shabab fighters in Somalia's Lower Shabelle region, reports said.

The skirmish broke out last night at around 7 pm local time after heavily armed fighters belonging to Al shabab stormed bases manned by Somali forces outside Shalanbod town, 110 Km south of Mogadishu.

"Three combatants from both warring sides were killed and 7 wounded during the attack that lasted for several hours at the entrance of Shalanbod, where Somali forces have military positions," a resident told Shabelle Media via phone.

Locals said the battle was the deadliest they have ever witnessed since Somali national army (SNA) and AMISOM took the control of the port city of Marko and its surrounding areas from Al shabab militants last month.

Militias Storm Bases Manned By Kenyan Occupation Troops "Causing Unconfirmed Human Losses"

November 24, 2012 Sh.M.Network

KISMAYO — Armed clashes reportedly broke out Saturday in Somalia's southern port city of Kismayo, a town formerly held by Islamists about 500 Km (310 Miles) south of Mogadishu.

Witnesses said heavily armed unknown militias have stormed bases manned by Kenyan forces in the heart of the city late on Friday night, causing unconfirmed human losses.

Local residents reported that the attack raged on for several hours and the Kenyan army managed to fend off the assault from their positions.

Since the city fell to Somali forces together with Kenyan army serving under the African Union peacekeeping mission in Somalia (AMISOM), such attacks against the coalition troops have been on the rise.

Somali Gov't Soldiers Kill Each Other In Mogadishu, As Usual

November 23, 2012 Sh.M.Network

MOGADISHU — Somali government soldiers have exchanged a heavy gunfire in Mogadishu, killing at least two combatants while others injured, reports said on Friday.

Friday gunfire happened at Suq-Bo'le village in Mogadishu's Dharkenley district, when soldiers tried to remove an illegal checkpoint placed by another soldiers under the Somali government, according to witnesses who spoke with Shabelle Media Network.

The latest reports in the areas say that the situation returned normal after more another government troops had intervened to the warring sides.

It is not the first time that government soldiers disagreed and exchange deadly gunfire in Mogadishu, Somalia capital since Al shabab fighters pulled out of the city last year.

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

**What country can preserve its liberties if its rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms.
-- Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, 1787**

Veterans Affairs Makes Life Easier For Vets; Modifies, Loses Records



VA Secretary Eric Shinseki

28 November 2012 by drew, The Duffle Blog

OAKLAND, CA – A local Veterans Affairs office is leading the nation with an innovative approach to veterans issues, by helping military members transition to civilian life by modifying their records without their knowledge, a VA spokesperson said today.

“A lot of our employees were getting bored with staring at their desks for 20 straight years,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Erik Shinseki, “so to raise morale I told them to

start helping veterans in any way they can. Military life is tough, so we want to make civilian life easier for them.”

VA Claims Processor Roger Carder says he’s eager to help veterans by working on their specific issues.

“Yeah I’m doing this guy a big favor,” said Carder as he rifled through the file of a former Army Specialist.

“He got out with an honorable discharge so he deserves a break. I changed his records to indicate he was fully disabled so he wouldn’t have to get any kind of strenuous job. He called up a week later saying he got fired because his boss thought he was cheating the system. I told him I didn’t have the authority to change his records and couldn’t help him.” “He’s much better off now. He shouldn’t have had to work so hard.”

“I’m helping someone right now,” Rachel Smith said after placing a caller on hold briefly for three hours.

“He’s saying he has PTSD and needs immediate psychiatric counseling. We’re supposed to get them an appointment within twenty four hours but I told him there aren’t any openings for three months.

“PTSD is one of those things that you’re better off dealing with on your own.”

The VA also launched its new “Tough Love” campaign, where they help veterans by giving them new challenges to overcome as part of a learning experience.

“I’m helping a girl named Sally right now,” said VA Case Manager Jason Marquez.

“She joined the Army at 18 and got out at 22. She wants to go to college on the GI Bill. The Army gave her a steady paycheck so she’s never had a chance to deal with serious financial stress. I hid all her forms in my desk so she had to take out a bunch of student loans. Her savings ran out so she got evicted from her apartment, dropped out, and moved back in with her parents.”

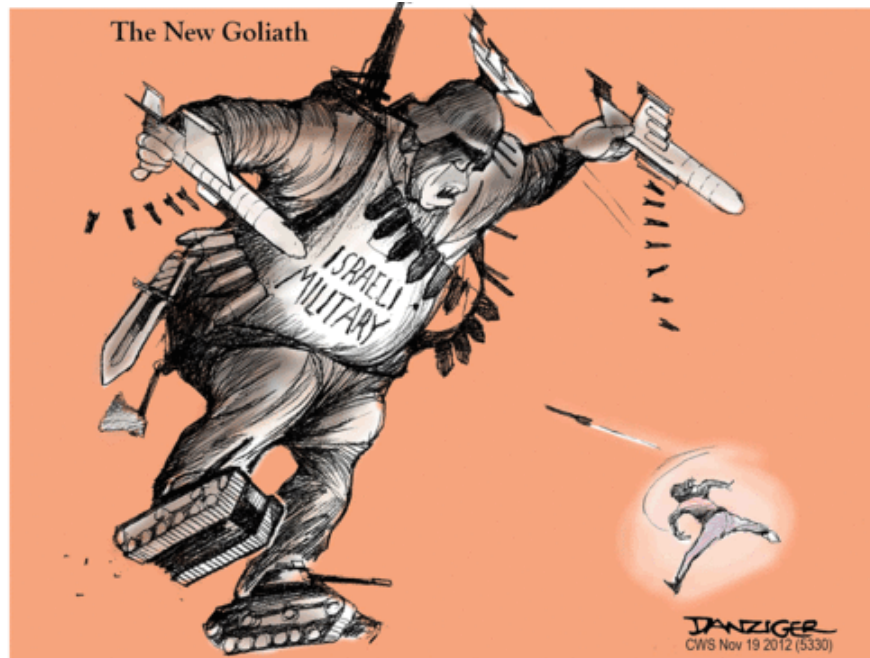
Marquez added, “Luckily the Tough Love campaign helped her gain a crushing amount of debt and she doesn’t qualify for GI Bill payments because she’s not in college anymore.

“It’s a good lesson we all have to learn sometime.”

MILITARY RESISTANCE BY EMAIL

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

OCCUPATION PALESTINE



[To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation commanded by foreign terrorists, go to: www.rafahtoday.org The occupied nation is Palestine. The foreign terrorists call themselves "Israeli."]

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.

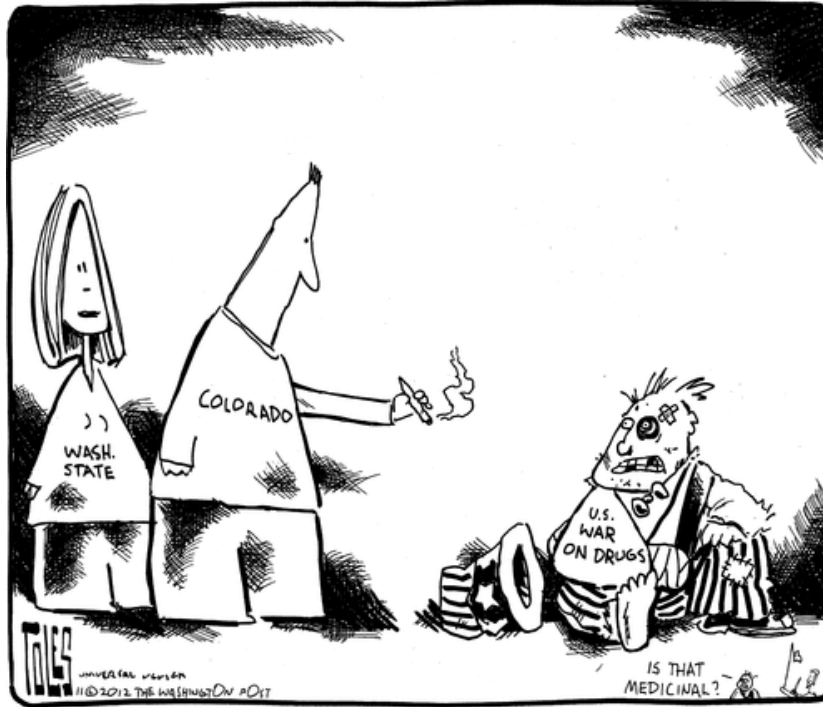
Whether in Afghanistan or at a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war and economic injustice, inside the armed services and at home.

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

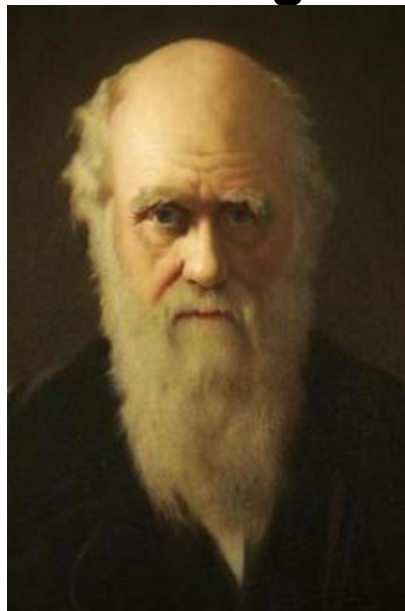
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DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



Charles Darwin Gets 4,000 Write-In Votes In Georgia



Charles Darwin

Nov 9, 2012 By David Beasley, Reuters [Excerpt]

A Georgia congressman who attacked the theory of evolution found himself with an unlikely opponent in Tuesday's U.S. election, when 4,000 voters in one county cast write-in ballots for the 19th century father of evolution, British naturalist Charles Darwin.

In a September 27 speech, Paul Broun, a physician and member of the U.S. House of Representatives Science, Space and Technology Committee, called evolution and the Big Bang Theory, "lies straight from the pit of hell."

Since Broun, a Republican, had no opposition in the general election, a University of Georgia plant biology professor, Jim Leebens-Mack, and others started a write-in campaign for Darwin, the father of the theory of evolution.

"We don't feel our interests are being best served by an anti-science fundamentalist representing us on the Science, Space and Technology Committee," Leebens-Mack told Reuters on Friday.

The write-in votes in Athens-Clarke County will not count officially since Darwin was never certified as a write-in candidate, but Leebens-Mack hopes the campaign will encourage a strong candidate, Democrat or Republican, to challenge Broun in 2014.

Broun received 16,980 votes in Athens-Clarke County, home of the University of Georgia, Broun's undergraduate alma mater.

CLASS WAR REPORTS

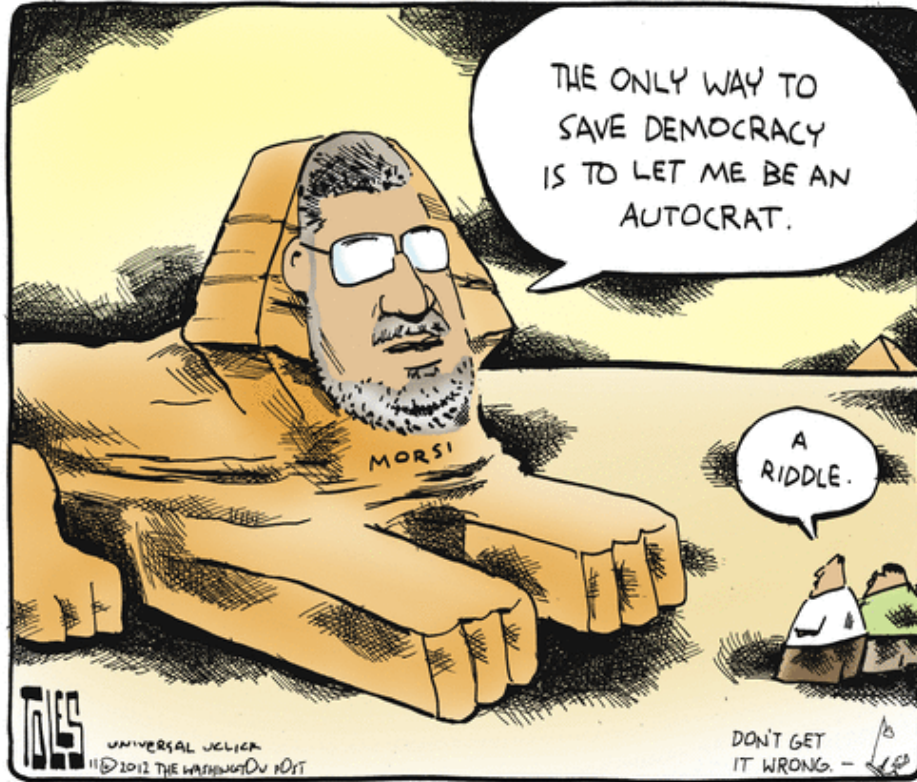


“The People Want The Regime To Fall”

**200,000 Egyptians Rally In
Tahrir Square Demanding The
President Withdraw Decrees
Vastly Expanding His Power:
“The Crowds Chanted ‘Bread,
Freedom, Down With Constituent
Assembly””**

**“Protesters Stormed The
Headquarters Of The Muslim
Brotherhood In The Country’s
Second Largest City Of Alexandria,
Hurling Papers And Furniture From A
Balcony”**

**“More Than 1,000 Strikes Have Taken
Place In The Past Two Months, Which
Signals The Largest Wave Of Industrial
Action Since The Fall Of Hosni Mubarak”**



27 November 12 by Aljazeera & TV-Novosti & Egypt Independent & By MATT BRADLEY and SAM DAGHER, Wall Street Journal [Excerpts]

Police in Cairo used teargas against protesters after clashes erupted on Tahrir Square, leaving one dead.

The violence came before a 200,000-strong rally demanding the country's Islamist president withdraw decrees vastly expanding his power.

"The people want the regime to fall," the crowds chanted.

A military officer participating in the demonstrations, Brigadier General Helmy Farag, commented, "The president succeeded in one thing — he unified the divided civilian powers for the first time."

Rallies are also being held in the Nile Delta cities of Mansura, Tanta and Mahla and in the central provinces of Assiut, Sohag and Minya.

Thousands of protesters in Mahla, who gathered on the central square claim to have come under fire during their rally.

"People started chanting against Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood while in the square which is near the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) headquarters," and "suddenly bullets started flying everywhere from the FJP direction." Mohamed Fathi told Daily News Egypt.

Meanwhile, more than 1,000 strikes have taken place in the past two months, which signals the largest wave of industrial action since the fall of Hosni Mubarak.

This has included action by the nation's 100,000 doctors, who have threatened to resign en masse.

One of Morsi's main aims through the acquisition of further powers was to deal with this emerging social movement.

Lawyers left their syndicate chanting, "The people want the downfall of the regime," - the signature chant of the protests that toppled Mubarak in February, 2011.

"Hold your head high, you're in Tahrir, brother Badie won't rule us," chanted an activist on the stage, referring to the Brotherhood's leader Mohammed Badie.

Other protesters recycled chants from the anti-Mubarak protests, such as "The people want the downfall of the regime" and "Leave! Leave!"

"The Brothers have stolen the nation," read one banner.

Several other marches were preparing to set off from around the capital to join thousands of protesters already in the square to denounce Morsi's decree.

In the city of Alexandria, several hundred gathered in Qaitbay Square, with two large marches expected to join them later.

"Down with the rule of the Supreme Guide," they chanted, in reference to the head of the powerful Muslim Brotherhood, on whose ticket Morsi ran for office.

"The Muslim Brotherhood stole the revolution" read one banner in Tahrir.

"The Muslim Brotherhood are liars," read another.

The demonstrations come a day after Morsi met with the country's senior judges in a bid to defuse the crisis over the decree, that has sparked deadly clashes and prompted judges and journalists to call for strike.

According to a presidential statement late Monday, Morsi told the judges that his decree meant that any decisions he makes on "issues of sovereignty" are immune from judicial review.

Presidential spokesperson Yasser Ali, said Morsi told the judges that he acted within his rights as the nation's sole source of legislation, assuring them that the decrees were temporary and did not in any way infringe on the judiciary.

Morsi's original edict, however, explicitly gives immunity to all his decisions and there was no sign it had been changed.

It also did not affect the edict that the president can take any measures he sees as necessary to stop threats to the revolution, stability or public institutions.

Many see that edict as granting Morsi unlimited emergency powers.

A march organized by the Tagammu Party arrived in Tahrir from Talaat Harb Street. Party members as well as members of the Socialist Youth Union and other revolutionary forces raised party flags and photos of martyrs.

A march that began in the Shubra neighborhood north of Cairo, led by former presidential candidate Khaled Ali, arrived in the square late Tuesday afternoon.

Earlier news reports had said that Constitution Party leader Mohamed ElBaradei would lead the march.

The classic chants of the revolution came in loud roars, with protesters shouting, “The people want to bring down the regime,” as well as newer slogans such as, “Bread, freedom, down with Constituent Assembly.”

Several political parties also participated in the Shubra march, including the Free Egyptians party, the Social Democratic Party, the Adl Party, the Socialist Popular Alliance Party, and the Revolutionary Socialists Movement.

Dozens of engineers belonging to the independent engineers union also marched from the union’s headquarters to Tahrir, demanding the cancellation of Morsy’s decree and the withdrawal of engineering sector representatives from the Constituent Assembly.

The engineers chanted against the Muslim Brotherhood and its Supreme Guide Mohamed Badie, while raising banners supporting the judiciary and rejecting the declaration.

Former Engineers Syndicate head candidate Tareq al-Nabarawy told Al-Masry Al-Youm that Egyptian engineers reject the declaration.

He added that the Brotherhood-majority Engineers Syndicate council statement supporting the declaration was “a lie and forgery of the engineers’ will.”

Another march against the declaration composed of hundreds of Tourism Support Coalition members headed to Tahrir from the Hilton Ramses Hotel, with protesters chanting, “Bread, freedom, bringing down the Constituent Assembly.”

Coalition coordinator Ehab Moussa said, “Morsy’s latest decisions harm the tourism sector and investments in Egypt. Investors will run away after their trust in the Egyptian judiciary is shaken.”

Hundreds of political forces including the April 6 Youth Movement, the Constitution Party and the Tagammu Party gathered Tuesday evening outside the Fatah Mosque to begin marching to Tahrir. Protesters raised flags for their political parties and banners rejecting the constitutional declaration.

MORE:

“Office Of The Muslim Brotherhood’s Party Burn In Alexandria”



A protester cheers as items ransacked from an office of the Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party burn in Alexandria November 23, 2012. REUTERS/Stringer

Anti-Government Protesters Flood Cairo’s Tahrir Square



A general view of anti-government protesters in Tahrir Square in Cairo November 27, 2012. REUTERS/Asmaa Waguih



A general view of anti-government protesters in Tahrir Square in Cairo November 27, 2012. REUTERS/Mohamed Abd El Ghany



An anti-Mursi protester holds empty tear gas canisters that were shot by the riot police during a protest at Tahrir Square in Cairo November 27, 2012. REUTERS/Mohamed Abd El Ghany

Syrian Rebels Capture Another Government Airbase:

“A Key Military Base That Was Considered The Last Bastion For Regime Forces In The Area”

“We Are Coming For You Bashar”

“The Marj Al-Sultan Base, 10 Miles From The Capital, Is The Second Military Facility On The Outskirts Of The City Reported To Have Fallen To Assad’s Opponents This Month”



Syrian rebels celebrating the takeover of Mayadeen military base near Deir el-Zour, Nov. 22, 2012. Syrian rebels strengthened their hold in an oil-rich strategic province bordering Iraq, capturing a key military base that was considered the last bastion for regime forces in the area. (AP Photo/Shaaam News Network via AP video)

26 November 12 By Khaled Yacoub Oweis, Reuters [Excerpts]

Syrian rebels said on Sunday they had captured a helicopter base east of Damascus after an overnight assault, their latest gain in a costly battle to unseat President Bashar al-Assad that is drawing nearer to his seat of power.

The Marj al-Sultan base, 15 km (10 miles) from the capital, is the second military facility on the outskirts of the city reported to have fallen to Assad's opponents this month.

Activists said rebels had destroyed two helicopters and taken 15 prisoners.

"We are coming for you Bashar," a rebel shouted in an internet video of what activists said was Marj al-Sultan. Restrictions on non-state media meant it could not be verified.

The rebels have been tightening their hold on farmland and urban centers to the east and northeast of Damascus while a major battle has been underway for a week in the suburb of Daraya near the main highway south.

"We are seeing the starting signs of a rebel siege of Damascus," veteran opposition campaigner Fawaz Tello said from Berlin.

"Marj al-Sultan is very near to the Damascus Airport road and to the airport itself. The rebels appear to be heading toward cutting this as well as the main northern artery to Aleppo."

Assad's core forces are entrenched in the capital.

They also have devastating air superiority although they have failed to prevent rebels increasing their presence on the edge of the capital and in neighborhoods on the periphery.

A Syrian government air strike on the rebel-held village of Deir al-Asafir, 12 km (8 miles) east of Damascus, killed 10 children on Sunday, opposition activists said.

Internet video footage also showed residents collecting young bodies hit by shrapnel. A sobbing woman picked up the lifeless body of a girl, while the bodies of two boys were shown in the back seat of a car.

"None of those killed were older than 15 years old. There are two women among 15 people wounded," said Abu Kassem, an activist in the village told Reuters.

The video said by activists to have been filmed at the Marj al-Sultan base showed rebel fighters carrying AK-47 rifles.

An anti-aircraft gun was positioned on top of an empty bunker and a rebel commander from the Ansar al-Islam, a major Muslim rebel unit, was shown next to a helicopter.

"With God's help, the Marj al-Sultan airbase in eastern Ghouta has been liberated," the commander said in the video. Eastern Ghouta, a mix of agricultural land and built-up urban areas, has been a rebel stronghold for months.

Damaged mobile radar stations could be seen on hilltops, with rebels waving as they walked around the compound.

Footage from Saturday evening showed rebels firing rocket-propelled grenades at the base, and what appeared to be a helicopter engulfed in flames.

Last week rebels briefly captured an air defence base near the southern Damascus district of Hajar al-Aswad, seizing weapons and equipment before pulling out to avoid retaliation from Assad's air force.

Pissed-Off Dominicans Take The Streets Against Raise In Taxes And Fuel Costs: “Social Inequality Is More Violent Than Any Protest” “We Pay All These Taxes, And We See Nothing In Return” “Government Corruption And Overspending Have Led To The Country’s Bloated Deficit”



Dominicans attend a demonstration against the fiscal reform in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, Sunday, Nov. 11, 2012. The measure will increase the general sales tax to 18 percent from 16 percent, will raise the price of gasoline and impose taxes on basic food products. The sign reads in Spanish: "Social inequality is more violent than any protest." (Manuel Diaz/AP Photo)

Nov. 13, 2012 By MANUEL RUEDA, ABC News [Excerpts]

Imagine thousands of protesters in a hot tropical country, meeting in a park, carrying signs that say, "there's not a lack of money here, there are just too many thieves." Or "tell me who's in jail and then we can talk about raising taxes."

Add some lively percussion to the mix, and that's essentially what's been going on in the Dominican Republic since last Wednesday, when the government said that it would raise taxes on citizens so that it could cut its massive deficit.

The pictures from the protests against the government's fiscal reform package, also known as the paquetazo, have been widely circulated on social media sites.

A bystander at one of the protests was even shot by police on Thursday. There's also a popular Facebook meme that compares the latest protest in Santo Domingo, which took place on Sunday, to a historic protest that unleashed a rebellion against military dictatorship back in 1965.

The Dominican government is expected to end 2012 with a deficit of \$4.6 billion, an amount that represents roughly 6.8 percent of the country's GDP. This budget gap is two times larger than last year's deficit.

And if the government continues to sustain such a bloated deficit, it may not be able to secure a \$2 billion IMF loan that is currently in the works, because the IMF has explicitly said it will not loan to any country that doesn't have its finances together.

So, in order to reduce the deficit for 2013, the Dominican government approved a fiscal reform package on Saturday that raises the national sales tax from 16 to 18 percent. New taxes will also be imposed on liquor, cigarettes and fuel.

Protesters who have taken to the streets of Santo Domingo and other Dominican cities say they understand that there is a debt problem.

But they believe the government should cut down its own expenditures, instead of hitting citizens with new taxes.

"We pay all these taxes, and we see nothing in return," said Lillian Castillo, who attended a protest in Santo Domingo's Independence Park on Sunday, with her husband and a friend.

Like many at the protest, Castillo believes that government corruption and overspending have led to the country's bloated deficit.

She mentioned Education Minister Josefina Pimentel, whose salary was raised from \$4,660 to \$7,500 per month, as tax increases were being discussed by the country's Congress.

"I consider myself to be apolitical," Castillo said via Facebook. "But this fiscal reform package was the drop that made the glass spill."

Szterenfeld attributes the spike in the Dominican Republic's deficit to outgoing president Lionel Fernandez who spent millions in infrastructure projects, partially aimed at "securing" his legacy.

Big spending programs also helped his hand-picked successor, Danilo Medina to win the presidential election in May.

Troops Invited:

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