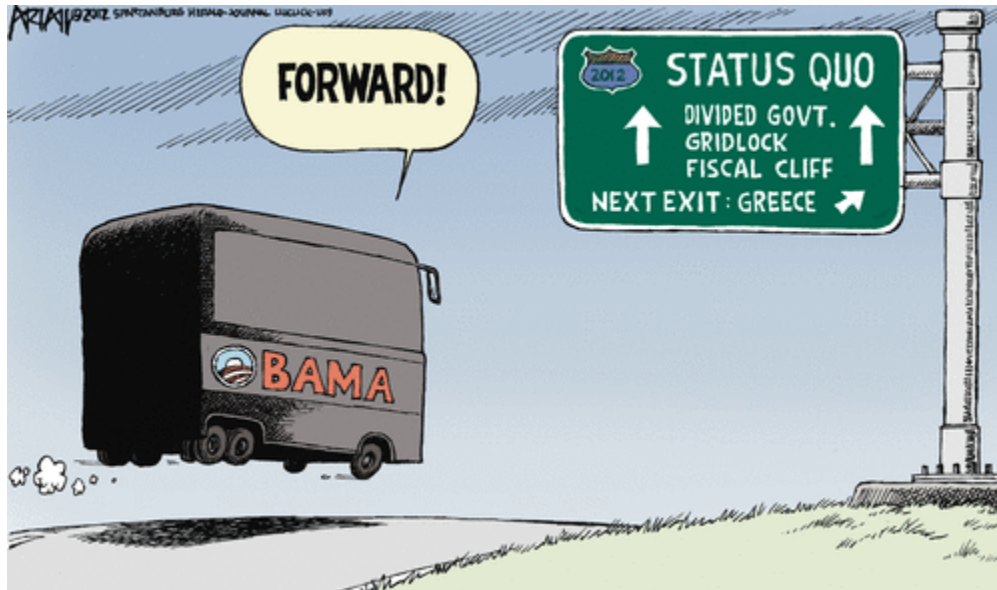


Military Resistance 10K17



Courage And Malfeasance In Afghanistan:

**“Sir, This Is A Really Bad Idea,”
Said Whittaker. “A. Really. Bad.
Idea. Anyone We Drop Off There Is
Going To Die”**

**“Officers Ordered An Afghanistan
Outpost Built Knowing It Was
Vulnerable. Then The Taliban Arrived
And Soldiers Died”**

“It Was Madness”

[Thanks to Phil G, who sent this in.]

His mind played a cinematic loop of the fate of the camp, one that always ended in disaster. In scenario after scenario, posing one defensive strategy after another, every single time he completed an exercise, everyone at the outpost died.

Nov 18, 2012 By Jake Tapper, Salon Media Group, Inc.

Excerpted from “The Outpost: An Untold Story of American Valor” by Jake Tapper. Published by Little, Brown and Co.

It was madness.

At Jalalabad Airfield, in eastern Afghanistan in the summer of 2006, a young intelligence analyst named Jacob Whittaker tried with great difficulty to understand exactly what he was hearing.

The 10th Mountain Division of the United States Army wanted to do what?

Whittaker had to choose his words carefully.

He was just a low-ranking specialist with the Idaho National Guard, a very low man on a very tall totem pole. A round-faced twenty-six-year-old, Whittaker had simple tastes — Boise State football, comic books — and a reputation for mulishness belied by his innocent appearance.

Whittaker stared at his superior officer, Second Lieutenant Ryan Lockner, who was running this briefing for him and Sergeant Aaron Ives.

Lockner headed intelligence for Task Force Talon, the Army’s aviation component at Jalalabad Airfield, in Nangarhar Province, adjacent to the Pakistan border. Military leaders considered this area, officially designated Regional Command East, the most dangerous part of an increasingly dangerous country.

Lockner had an assignment. Soldiers from the 10th Mountain — a light infantry division designed for quick deployment and fighting in harsh conditions — had recently come to this hot corner of Afghanistan and would soon be spreading throughout the region, setting up outposts and bases.

More specifically, they would be establishing a camp in Nuristan Province.

The members of the intelligence team led by Lockner didn’t know much about Nuristan, as U.S. forces had generally been focusing their efforts on Kunar Province, which had become a haven for Taliban insurgents and foreign fighters sneaking in from Pakistan to oppose the American “infidels.”

During one operation in Kunar the previous summer, in 2005, nineteen U.S. troops — Special Forces — had been killed by such insurgents, and since then, the United States had increased its presence there. Helicopters flying in and out of Kunar Province were fired upon at least twice a week, every week, with small arms and/or rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs).

Nuristan was farther north, a province so mythically untamed that one of the greatest writers of the English language, Rudyard Kipling, had chosen it as the setting for his 1888 novella “The Man Who Would Be King.”

One of Kipling’s British adventurers, Daniel Dravot, describes Nuristan as a place where “no one has gone ... and they fight, and in any place where they fight a man who knows how to drill men can always be a King.” “You’ll be cut to pieces before you’re fifty miles across the Border,” warns Kipling’s narrator. “The people are utter brutes, and even if you reached them you couldn’t do anything.”

The region’s previous brigade commander, Colonel Pat Donahue, hadn’t thought Nuristan had much strategic value, so conventional forces hadn’t been posted there, and no one had troubled to find out much about the native people, the Nuristanis, a distinct and outlying ethnic group within Afghanistan.

In a departure from his predecessor’s policy, Donahue’s replacement — Colonel John “Mick” Nicholson, the commander of the 10th Mountain Division’s 3rd Brigade, known as the Spartan Brigade — ordered the establishment of small outposts throughout the area in the summer of 2006, in an attempt not only to stop the Taliban fighters who were streaming in from Pakistan, often with bushels of weapons, but also to win over the locals, who were predisposed to a suspicion of outsiders.

“But Sir ... That Is A Really Awful Place For A Base”

Lockner had just returned from Forward Operating Base Naray, in Kunar Province, where he’d met with officers of the 10th Mountain Division’s 3rd Squadron, 71st Cavalry Regiment, or “3-71 Cav.” They’d told him of their plan to set up an outpost in the Kamdesh District of Nuristan Province, for which he would be in charge of identifying suitable helicopter landing zones.

The new base would sit adjacent to the Nuristan hamlet of Urmul. A small settlement missing from most maps, Urmul was home to fewer than forty families of Nuristanis, or roughly two hundred people, who lived in houses made of wood and rock and mud sealant.

The residents were primarily subsistence farmers trying to eke out a living through both crops and livestock, but the U.S. Army knew little more than that about them. Coalition forces likewise had next to no intelligence about the enemy in Nuristan — its numbers, its location, its intentions, or, most important, its capabilities — which was one of the reasons the brass was pushing to build a base there.

This was the essential difficulty of the task at hand: the higher-ups in the U.S. Army needed to know about the enemy in this unexplored province, so in order to learn as much as they could, they were going to stick a small group of troops in its midst.

For all Lockner knew when he flew over Urmul to reconnoiter, the hamlet might have been Osama bin Laden's secret compound.

"They're going to build another outpost," Lockner told Whittaker and Ives back at Jalalabad Airfield. "So I need you to take this terrain analysis I started, finish it, and make it pretty so I can brief it in the morning."

Many troops were far more proficient in PowerPoint than they were with firearms, so Whittaker understood just what Lockner meant by "make it pretty": the slides for the presentation needed to look crisp and to make a compelling case.

"Where are they going?" Whittaker asked.

Lockner gestured at the topographical map. "Right over here, northwest of Naray," he said. "Where the Darreh ye Kushtaz and Landay-Sin Rivers meet."

Whittaker looked at the spot, stunned. "Right there?" he asked.

"Right there," confirmed Lockner. "Can you do it?"

"I can do it; I have all night," Whittaker said. "But sir ... that is a really awful place for a base."

This new camp in the Kamdesh District would, like the dangerous Korangal outpost that their pilots knew too well, be surrounded by higher ground.

But whereas the base in the Korangal was situated about halfway up a mountainside, in a former lumberyard, the one in Kamdesh would sit in a cup within the valley's deepest cleft, ringed by three steep mountains that formed part of the five-hundred-mile-long Hindu Kush mountain range.

Blocked off on its northern, western, and southern sides by rivers and mountains, it would moreover be a mere fourteen miles distant from the official Pakistan border — a porous boundary that meant little to the insurgents who regularly crossed it to kill Americans and Afghan government officials before taking refuge in caves or in the mountains or returning to their haven across the border.

The camp would be one of the most remote outposts in this most remote part of a country that was itself cut off from much of the rest of the world, and the area all around it would be filled with people who wanted to kill those stationed there.

"Anyone We Drop Off There Is Going To Die"

"So it's located at the base of a mountain peak?" Whittaker asked.

It didn't take a Powell or a Schwarzkopf to know that as a matter of basic military strategy, it was better to be at the top of a hill than at the bottom of a valley.

"Yes."

“And it’s flanked by a river on the west and another river to the north?”

Whittaker continued.

“And there’s no good road to get to it — they’re still building that,” Lockner volunteered.

The Army had been coordinating efforts to build up the vulnerable and narrow path from Naray to Kamdesh, but rain, steep cliffs, insurgent threats, and high turnover rates among local construction workers had led to frequent delays.

The road, often running along the edge of a cliff that spilled into the Landay-Sin River, was a mere thirteen feet wide at its widest, and in some spots only half that — narrower than many military vehicles.

A soldier could be killed just driving on that road, without ever coming into contact with a single enemy fighter.

“And it’s an eternity away by helicopter if something goes wrong,” Whittaker said.

“Yup,” agreed Lockner.

“Sir, this is a really bad idea,” said Whittaker. “A. Really. Bad. Idea. Anyone we drop off there is going to die.” As he said it, he thought he saw Lockner’s eyes glaze over.

Whittaker was known for being inquisitive and sometimes downright melodramatic, but even for him, this was an outsized response to a mission briefing. Those who worked with him understood that he always believed he was the smartest person in the room. He knew it put people off and made them less likely to listen to him when he had something especially important to say, but he was still young and had not yet learned how to check his behavior.

“What’s the point of this base?” Whittaker asked. “It’s on the low ground. It can’t be supported in any meaningful way. The troops there will be horribly outnumbered by potential bad guys in the town next door. They can’t even really go out and do anything because the rivers, the town, and the mountains will block any patrol routes.”

He couldn’t stop himself.

“All they can do is die,” he added.

Lockner, too, had been surprised to learn where the 3-71 Cav officers wanted to put the camp. He understood their logic, at least in theory: with so few air assets, they’d have to rely on the road as the main way to resupply the outpost. And anyway, the troops couldn’t just sit on the mountaintops; they had to go to the towns and make friends with the locals.

But Lockner himself wouldn’t want even to visit there.

Still: it wasn't their job to question where the 3-71 Cav officers had decided to put their camp and their men.

"Noted, bitch," Lockner told Whittaker with a smile.

"But do it anyway. We just need to find a place to land the helicopters."

"But sir—"

The lieutenant stopped smiling.

"Whittaker," he said, now angered. He mocked the other man's staccato: "Fucking. Focus. I. Need you. To make me. Some. Slides. We need. A place. To land. The helicopters."

Lockner had already spotted one location atop the mountain that seemed perfect for landing helicopters, a rarity in the jagged topography of Nuristan. The second landing zone would need to be down nearer to where the outpost itself would be constructed, close to the local headquarters of the Afghan National Police.

The specialist from Idaho spent that hot night carrying out Lockner's order.

The task per se wasn't particularly difficult; it was just a PowerPoint presentation.

But Whittaker kept staring at the map, hoping that the logic behind it would suddenly be revealed to him, as if it were one of those Magic Eye posters containing a hidden image. He thought about what he would do if he were a commander of one of the local insurgent groups. The hours passed as Whittaker war-gamed attacks on the new outpost.

His mind played a cinematic loop of the fate of the camp, one that always ended in disaster. In scenario after scenario, positing one defensive strategy after another, every single time he completed an exercise, everyone at the outpost died.

Ives arrived in the morning to relieve him. Even without the all-nighter, Whittaker hadn't slept well in months; he was the only day-sleeper in a tent that would hit 120 degrees before noon. He looked a mess: razor blades were scarce, and he didn't entirely trust the on-base Pakistani barber and his jerky technique. With all of that, on top of the stress and the dust that coated everyone and everything in Jalalabad, he figured he must resemble a mentally ill homeless person.

Whittaker's fears about the new base were intensified by the memory of a previous scouting mission, Operation Tall Mountain, which he hadn't protested against as aggressively as he now thought he should have.

Tipped off by an intelligence report suggesting that a high-value target was using a small trail east of a combat outpost named Ranch House, a team of scouts had gone to a nearby mountain peak to survey the area and try to spot insurgents.

At fourteen thousand feet above sea level, the temperature on the peak was just above freezing. Because the helicopters were already overloaded with men, equipment, and supplies, the cold-weather gear and water were scheduled to follow on a second flight — which in fact never left Jalalabad, having been grounded by thunderstorms. The scouts were now trapped on a remote mountain peak without critical supplies. Everyone survived the three-day ordeal, but it was a mess.

In the end, even though the scouts saw nothing of note, the mission was believed to have accomplished something — for some officer somewhere, at least. Whittaker — who had offered up a halfhearted argument that the plan didn't make sense — suspected that the operation had turned into a positive bullet on someone's officer evaluation report.

Now the whole idea of the Kamdesh outpost seemed to be propelled by the same shallow Army logic: Push forward! Move 'em on! Head 'em out! Achievement was what mattered, even if the achievement itself was worthless, whereas delays or a cancellation could be seen as a failure of leadership, which would look bad on an officer's record during the next round of promotions.

Whittaker told Ives that he felt he should have fought harder against Operation Tall Mountain; he would never be able to live with himself, he said, if they couldn't find a way to stop the construction of this new base.

But by that point he'd learned that in the military mindset, it was usually preferable just to carry out orders and then investigate later, if necessary, rather than to raise questions beforehand about whether a plan might be flawed.

The aviation group named the helicopter pad at the future location of Camp Kamdesh Landing Zone Copenhagen, after the crew members' favorite brand of chewing tobacco. The one atop the southern mountain was christened Landing Zone Warheit, for Staff Sergeant Dana Warheit, an Air Force staff weather officer who happened to be sitting in the briefing room at that moment and whose surname sounded kind of cool.

“Whittaker Would Come To Call Camp Kamdesh The Custer Combat Outpost”

Over the next few days, Whittaker would come to call Camp Kamdesh the Custer Combat Outpost. He figured people would ask him what the nickname meant, giving him an opportunity to carefully explain the problems to anyone who would listen; he intended to keep doing that until someone in command finally came around and canceled the mission. Eventually, Lockner had to tell him to knock it off.

Whittaker's fears would be realized more than three years later. Before dawn on October 3, 2009, hundreds of insurgents scattered throughout the village of Urmul and the mountains surrounding the American outpost.

The U.S. base had been there since 2006, and insurgents had attacked it from day one. The newest company of U.S. troops had arrived less than five months before, and during that period, the enemy had increased his attacks threefold over the number launched against previous units. But this would be the big one.

The enemy fighters faced Mecca and conducted their morning prayers. Then they grabbed their guns and got into position to attack the Kamdesh outpost.

At 5:58 a.m., as the sun started to rise over the valley, the assault began.

Five U.S. soldiers manned five guard stations, near the entrance of the camp and on four Humvees. Those spots were obvious targets for the enemy, as were the command center and the various barracks. Strategically, the Taliban fighters focused on the mortar pit, the location of the only guns at the outpost that could return fire with any effectiveness against their positions on the mountainside: one 60-millimeter and two 120-millimeter mortars, the big guns.

“Allahu Akbar!” the insurgents cried, seemingly with the blast of every rocket and the crash of each mortar fired into the air: “God is great.”

After a short and intense assault, Taliban fighters began spilling down from the southern mountain, through the wire, past the mortar pit, and into the camp.

“Mujahideen have entered the base!” rejoiced one such “holy warrior.”

“The Christianity center is under attack!” another of the Taliban cried.

“Long live the mujahideen!” yelled a third. “No helicopters are here yet! Let’s just hit them!”

He was right about the aircraft.

The Americans at the outpost had called for air support — they had little hope of surviving otherwise — but the Apache attack helicopters had not yet arrived, and they wouldn’t get there for more than another hour. The Americans fought.

Over the past three years, U.S. troops had died on their way to construct the outpost; they had died clearing the path to establish the outpost; they had died patrolling the area that surrounded the outpost; they had died driving from the outpost; they had died commanding the outpost; and they had died pursuing the mission of the outpost.

Now, as the enemy burst through into their camp, a small group of just over fifty American soldiers had no alternative but to do whatever they could to stay off that grim list.

There was no more time for them to wonder why they were there. It was time to fight — and for some, it would be time to die

Military Resistance In PDF Format?

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

MILITARY NEWS

Got One



Free Syrian Army fighters pose on a tank, which they say was captured from the Syrian army loyal to President Bashar al-Assad, after clashes in Qasseer, near Homs November 19, 2012. REUTERS/Shaaam News Network/Handout

**For-Profit Universities “Turn
The Returning Veterans From
Honorees To Prey”
“Ambulance-Chasing Recruiters
Saw Returning Veterans As Low-
Hanging Fruit, Or, As The Report**

Says They Are Known In The Industry, ‘Dollar Signs In Uniform’”

“They Can Corner Bedridden GIs And Entice Them With Promises Of Free Education And More”

“Overwhelming Documentation Of Exorbitant Tuition, Aggressive Recruiting Practices, Abysmal Student Outcome, Taxpayer Dollars Spent On Marketing And Pocketed As Profit, And Regulatory Evasion And Manipulation”

November 12, 2012 By Jack Shakely, Los Angeles Times [Excerpts] Jack Shakely is president emeritus of the California Community Foundation.

If ever there was a poster child for the law of unintended consequences, it is the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Down through the years, few government programs have enjoyed the almost universal approval of the GI Bill, enacted in 1944 and expanded in 1966. I’m one of its fans: It helped me buy my first home (a bungalow in Hermosa Beach) and sent me to law school.

As the U.S. military became all volunteer in the 1970s and America enjoyed more than a quarter-century of peace, the GI Bill seemed less necessary and its benefits dwindled.

The perceived parsimony of the diluted GI Bill ended with a bang in 2008 with the passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

This bill, which was augmented in 2011, chose to focus on education and retraining, and reflected the nation’s grateful thanks to troops returning from years of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. The legislation provides generous payments for public or private college tuition, a housing allowance for full-time students that amounts to about \$1,200 a month and up to \$1,000 a year for books.

The latest bill also contains two provisions — one a bureaucratic head-scratcher, the other well intended but often counterproductive — that turn the returning veterans from honorees to prey.

The predators are for-profit universities, which provide by far the lion's share of education to our returning GIs.

In August, Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, issued a scathing report on for-profit universities. Harkin issued a statement saying there was “overwhelming documentation of exorbitant tuition, aggressive recruiting practices, abysmal student outcome, taxpayer dollars spent on marketing and pocketed as profit, and regulatory evasion and manipulation.”

The report held out special opprobrium for the ambulance-chasing recruiters who saw returning veterans as low-hanging fruit, or, as the report says they are known in the industry, “dollar signs in uniform.”

These recruiters — and there are 35,000 of them nationwide, 10 times the number of job and career counselors employed by the for-profit universities — have been known to actively recruit at Wounded Warriors centers and at veterans hospitals, where they can corner bedridden GIs and entice them with promises of free education and more.

The “and more” is made up of the problematic provisions of the Post-9/11 GI Bill I referred to earlier.

The bill provides a \$684 “housing” allowance even if a veteran attends college online and the school has no real campus, let alone room-and-board fees. This allowance is sent directly to the veteran. The for-profit recruiters can sell returning troops on the premise that not only will their tuition and fees be covered but that \$684 a month goes into his or her pocket. The allowance may be meant to help defray living expenses, even for online students, but it's essentially free money that would be hard for anybody to resist. It may partially explain why vets with little interest in education would enroll in online programs. (About two-thirds of these schools' online students leave without getting a degree, but then so do most of their regular students.)

It's another part of the bill, however, that really makes our returning veterans “dollar signs in uniform.”

In order to receive government grants and loans, a university must demonstrate that at least 10% of its income comes from sources other than federal financial aid.

This is a no-brainer for schools like UCLA and Loyola Marymount. But for-profit schools, such as Kaplan University and the University of Phoenix, have a hard time hitting the mark — or would, except for the Post-9/11 GI Bill. That's because all Post-9/11 GI Bill payments, taxpayer money pure and simple, are deemed not to count as federal aid because they don't come from the Department of Education. Go figure.

The University of Phoenix figured it out. It got \$1.2 billion in federal Pell grants in the academic year 2010-11, and \$210 million in Post-9/11 GI Bill payments, thereby making its 10% mandate. It's small wonder that its recruiters would pay special attention to our men and women coming off active duty.

For-profit universities have every right to sell their educational wares, regardless of their relative merit and expense, in the marketplace.

But the unintended consequences of these provisions of the Post-9/11 GI Bill breed academic failure, waste taxpayer dollars and do not accomplish the things our grateful nation intended. The GI Bill is broken and needs to be fixed.

Pentagon's Chief Weapons Buyer Has Cheery News For War Profiteers: "Says 'A Lot Of Money Still To Be Made' In Arms Business" "He Insisted The Department Was Not Out To Cut Industry's Profits"

Nov 28, 2012 By Andrea Shalal-Esa, Reuters [Excerpts]

The Pentagon's chief weapons buyer on Wednesday reassured industry executives and investors that there was still "a lot of money" to be made in the defense business, despite mounting budget pressures that will limit spending on new arms programs.

Frank Kendall, defense undersecretary for acquisition, technology and logistics, said the budget outlook had clearly changed after a decade of continuous increases in U.S. military spending.

But he said the Pentagon's annual budget remained quite large -- and even a worst case scenario that would cut defense spending by an additional \$50 billion or around 10 percent in fiscal year 2013 -- was "not the end of the world."

"We're going to work our way through this," Kendall told an investor conference hosted by Credit Suisse.

"There's a lot of money still to be made."

"We're in this together. The health of the industrial base is very important," he said.

He insisted the department was not out to cut industry's profits, saying that the Pentagon viewed weapons makers as part of its overall "force structure" and was looking for more "win-win" deals that save money while rewarding good performance.

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.

“Hearing Called To Focus On The \$86.5 Million VA Spent Last Year On Conferences And Workshops” “Members Hammered VA Witnesses About Why Hundreds Of Questions About Conference Spending Asked In The Last Six Months Have Not Been Answered”

Nov 28, 2012 By Rick Maze - Staff writer, Army Times [Excerpts]

“The truce is off,” the House Veterans Affairs’ Committee chairman declared Wednesday in an abrupt and explosive end to a hearing on questionable spending on conferences and travel within the Veterans Affairs Department.

“Expect more oversight and investigation,” said Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Va., as he gaveled to a close a hearing called to focus on the \$86.5 million VA spent last year on conferences and workshops — a hearing that unexpectedly expanded to questions about foreign travel by VA workers.

Tension had been building between VA and Congress because the department has been slow to respond to questions about spending on conferences, including exactly how much has been spent. Miller and his staff came up with the \$86.5 million total for 2011, a figure that Todd Grams, VA’s chief financial officer, did not dispute.

Miller and other committee members hammered VA witnesses about why hundreds of questions about conference spending asked in the last six months have not been answered.

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 Social-Democrats ideal should not be the trade union secretary, but the tribune of the people who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression no matter where it appears no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalize all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth before all his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for all and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat.”

-- V. I. Lenin; What Is To Be Done

Army Delays Robotic First Sergeant PRC-E8 Program



The current prototype model of the PRC-E8



An earlier and more primitive model dubbed the "Sarge-a-Phone"

27 November 2012 by G-Had. Investigative reporter Dark Laughter also contributed to this report.

ABERDEEN, MD – The commander of the U.S. Army Aberdeen Test Center has officially notified the Pentagon of further delays to an experimental program to deploy robotic First Sergeants to remote outposts in Afghanistan.

Colonel Gordon Graham, who only assumed command of Aberdeen in mid-August, announced on Monday that the Portable Rocker-Chevron Eight, or PRC-E8 program, is still at least six months away from a workable prototype and \$20 million over budget.

“At the rate we’re going, I think we’re going to have trouble just getting the PRC-E8 into service before the planned end of combat operations in 2014,” Colonel Graham wrote in an e-mail to Army Chief of Staff General Raymond Odierno.

The PRC-E program is part of an Army initiative to both increase its expeditionary readiness and reduce its deployment footprint. Because a human First Sergeant consumes valuable chow, water, and bandwidth, the Army has been toying with the idea of creating a solar-powered automated staff non-commissioned officer ever since 2001.

The first models, the PRC-E5 and PRC-E6, were extremely primitive, consisting of an automated loudspeaker that just repeated the phrases ‘Shut up!’ and ‘Hurry up!’ every five minutes.

The first real breakthrough for the program was the PRC-E7, developed in Iraq aboard Camp Victory in 2008. That particular model was advanced enough to detect enemy incoming mortars in time to immediately call troops into an outdoor formation to chew them out for walking around their outpost in flip-flops.

Unfortunately the model proved to be unreliable. After several months, most PRC-E7s would hole up in their conex box for days at a time while remotely downloading terabytes of pornography.

According to Colonel Graham, the PRC-E8 was designed to address the flaws in the PRC-E7 program. The original model was a Jetsons-style robot equipped with a mechanical chest-poker, but was scrapped after several malfunctions resulted in the poker shattering soldiers’ sternums or puncturing lungs.

The current design is a loud klaxon that goes off periodically, with no one sure why it goes off or how to turn it off. It contains no interface or controls, aside from a sign that opening it and tampering with it is a court-martial offense.

The PRC-E program traces its roots back to World War II, when staff non-commissioned officers used to record hours of verbal abuse on 78 rpm records and ship them to far-flung U.S. military units around the globe.

The program was briefly resurrected in 1965 by the American Forces Vietnam Network for its popular radio program, “Get Your Fucking Hands Out of Your Fucking Pockets, Vietnam”.

Because of pending budget cuts, the Army is attempting to make the PRC-E8 a Joint Services project. However, this has exponentially increased costs and led to further delays, as the Air Force PRC E-8 is unable to operate outside of a climate-controlled facility and the Navy PRC E-8 keeps ordering Army platoons to swab sand dunes.

The Marine Corps has refused to join the program, arguing that it would be more cost effective just to pay local nationals to scream random undecipherable words at Marines standing post.

Colonel Graham also announced the widely-anticipated cancellation of the PRC-E9: a planned \$100 million airship that would be able to simultaneously monitor hundreds of outposts, scan 3,000 computers for inappropriate browsing and observe countless patrols for the unauthorized removal of personal protective equipment.

The PRC-E9 had come in for heavy criticism, with some questioning its value in a combat zone and observing that it could only be deployed on the largest Forward Operating Bases.

Until the PRC-E8 becomes operational, commanders in the field have been issued GBOSS and Aerostat surveillance systems as a temporary stopgap measure to help monitor remote outposts and report disciplinary infractions.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



Huge Victory For Our Side: Supreme Court Upholds Citizens Right To Film Police

28 November 12 By Martha Neil, ABA Journal [Excerpts]

The U.S. Supreme Court has refused to review a federal appeals court decision finding it unconstitutional to enforce an Illinois state law that makes it a felony to videotape police officers working in public if a microphone is turned on.

The law had been challenged by the American Civil Liberties Union, and a divided panel of the Chicago-based 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals agreed earlier this year that it “restricts far more speech than necessary to protect legitimate privacy interests” and, “as applied to the facts alleged here, it likely violates the First Amendment’s free speech and free-press guarantees,” as Judge Diane Sykes explained in the majority opinion (PDF).

On Monday, the nation’s top court declined to hear the state’s appeal, leaving the 7th Circuit ruling in force, the Chicago Tribune reports.

Meanwhile, a number of citizens throughout the country say they have been charged with a crime (often obstruction) while recording police on the job.

A Massachusetts man is facing a wiretapping case after allegedly posting a video on YouTube that shows him instructing a female passenger how to use an electronic device to record a traffic stop by Shrewsbury police. Irving Espinosa-Rodrigue, 26, is scheduled for a pretrial hearing in January, reports the Shrewsbury Daily Voice.

Among other accounts of such incidents recently posted on the Photography Is Not a Crime site, Daniel J. Saulmon tells PINAC that he spent several days in jail earlier this month after being arrested in Hawthorne, Calif., while filming police on a public street.

He faced an obstruction case, but says the charges against him have been dropped.

For those who want to know more about the legal issues involved in such cases, the American Bar Association Government and Public Sector Lawyers Division is hosting a Dec. 4 teleconference called *Videotaping Police, Wiretapping Laws and the First Amendment*.

Family And Neighbors Of Yemeni Killed By U.S. Drone Ask Why He Wasn't Taken Alive: “A Flurry Of Speculation About Why Qadhi, A Well-Known Figure

In This Town, Was Targeted In Such A Violent And Anonymous Way”

**“The Strike Has Sown Resentment In
Beit Al Ahmar, Whose Landscape Is
Dominated By Mammoth Compounds
Belonging To The Former President
And Other Powerful Elites”
They Swear Revenge For Unnecessary
Murder**



Himyar al Qadhi stands next to a building pockmarked by damage from the drone strike that killed his brother Adnan, who was targeted for his alleged ties to Al Qaida. | Adam Baron/MCT

In the center of the village, a farmer named Abduljaber Saber held forth on the strike with his neighbors, calling the attack a violation of the rule of law, casting it as an example of “American hypocrisy.”

His neighbor, Mohamed Abdulwali, took a break from repairing a water canister to chime in: “Any action has a reaction. Any violence will breed violence.”

November 28, 2012 By Adam Baron, McClatchy Newspapers

BEIT AL AHMAR, Yemen — The Nov. 7 drone strike that killed alleged al Qaida-linked operative Adnan al Qadhi outside Beit al Ahmar was just one of more than 50 American airstrikes believed to have taken place in Yemen so far this year.

Unlike the usual post-strike conjecture, however, this one has unleashed a flurry of speculation about why Qadhi, a well-known figure in this town, was targeted in such a violent and anonymous way.

American counterterrorism officials have painted drone strikes as a tool of last resort, utilized only when targets represent an imminent threat and are nearly impossible to take out by other means.

But people in Beit al Ahmar say it's hard to argue that Qadhi's capture would have been out of the question. He'd already been arrested, and released, before, in 2008 after an attack on the American Embassy. And Beit al Ahmar, nine miles outside Yemen's capital, Sanaa, is no isolated enclave – it's the birthplace of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh and home to much of the military's leadership.

Sitting less than an hour's drive from the capital, residents here say Qadhi could have been captured easily. The Central Intelligence Agency in the United States, whose drone launched the missile that killed Qadhi, declined to comment.

“It is nearly inconceivable to imagine that he could not have been taken into custody alive,” said Abdulghani al Iryani, a Yemeni political analyst. “Beit al Ahmar, of course, is the hometown of much of the top leadership of the Yemeni armed forces.”

Instead, the strike has sown resentment in Beit al Ahmar, whose landscape is dominated by mammoth compounds belonging to the former president and other powerful elites.

Even after many of the area's most powerful sons broke ranks in the revolt against Saleh last year – a time marked by bloody clashes in the capital – the village had remained calm until the American drone strike, locals said.

When the dust settled, Qadhi and a companion were dead.

The timing of the strike, less than 24 hours after President Barack Obama's re-election, seemed to silence any forecasts that the U.S. administration would back off of its reliance on drone strikes in a second term.

The location of the strike, the closest to the capital so far, led many to conclude that no area was off limits in the U.S. air campaign against Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, or AQAP, which American officials characterize as one of the most active branches of the terrorist network.

Few here dispute Qadhi's open sympathy toward AQAP. After all, the target's house, modest compared to nearby fortress-like compounds, sticks out because of a mural on one side that shows al Qaida's signature black flag.

But his relatives and associates say there's more nuance to Qadhi's story.

While he was labeled as a local leader of AQAP after his death, as recently as last winter he'd participated on a team that mediated between the government and AQAP-linked militants who'd seized control of the central town of Rada.

The scion of a prominent local family who still held a position as an officer in the Yemeni military, Qadhi had refused to take part in the fighting, relatives said.

They said he stayed home even as other AQAP militants carved out a base in the southern province of Abyan.

"He may have supported al Qaida, but he wasn't taking part in activities," said Abdulrazzaq Jamal, a Yemeni journalist and analyst who met with Qadhi shortly before his death.

"There were connections, but there wasn't perceptible tangible support."

While Qadhi appeared to make little secret of his extremist ideology, his relatives said the strike against him came as a total shock. There had been no indication that he was a potential drone target, they said.

Had they known he was considered such a high-value target, they claimed, they would've assured his cooperation with the authorities.

"We could have made sure he turned himself in," said Himyar al Qadhi, Adnan's brother. "If Adnan was guilty of any crime, then arrest him, put him on trial."

Still reeling from the loss, Himyar, standing at his brother's gravesite, was open about seeking revenge.

The impact crater from the missile that killed Qadhi is little more than a dip in the road now, but local outrage still burns.

"What way is this to kill a person, in such a place?" said Qalil Lahib, owner of the land where the strike took place, pointing out civilian homes and a nearby school as he stood over the missile site.

"It's shameful, it's a crime."

In the center of the village, a farmer named Abduljaber Saber held forth on the strike with his neighbors, calling the attack a violation of the rule of law, casting it as an example of "American hypocrisy."

His neighbor, Mohamed Abdulwali, took a break from repairing a water canister to chime in: "Any action has a reaction. Any violence will breed violence."

DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE MILITARY?



U.S. soldier in Bejjia village Iraq, Feb. 4, 2008. (AP Photo/Maya Alleruzzo)

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CLASS WAR REPORTS

**In Meridian, When Schools Want
To Discipline Children “They Call
The Police, Who Arrest Children
As Young As 10 Years Old”**

“They Are Handcuffed And Incarcerated For Days Without Any Hearing”

Any Of Green’s School-Based Infractions, From Being A Few Minutes Late For Class To Wearing The Wrong Color Socks “Led To His Incarceration In The Local Juvenile Detention Center”

This practice has also appeared to target black students.

Meridian, a city of 40,000 people, is 61 percent African-American. But over a five-year period, Owens said, “There was never once a white kid that was expelled or suspended for the same offense that kids of color were suspended for.”

November 26 2012 by Julianne Hing, Colorlines.com

Cedrico Green can’t exactly remember how many times he went back and forth to juvenile.

When asked to venture a guess he says, “Maybe 30.”

He was put on probation by a youth court judge for getting into a fight when he was in eighth grade.

Thereafter, any of Green’s school-based infractions, from being a few minutes late for class to breaking the school dress code by wearing the wrong color socks, counted as violations of his probation and led to his immediate suspension and incarceration in the local juvenile detention center.

But Green wasn’t alone.

A bracing Department of Justice lawsuit filed last month against Meridian, Miss., where Green lives and is set to graduate from high school this coming year, argues that the city’s juvenile justice system has operated a school to prison pipeline that shoves students out of school and into the criminal justice system, and violates young people’s due process rights along the way.

In Meridian, when schools want to discipline children, they do much more than just send them to the principal’s office.

They call the police, who show up to arrest children who are as young as 10 years old. Arrests, the Department of Justice says, happen automatically, regardless of whether the police officer knows exactly what kind of offense the child has committed or whether that offense is even worthy of an arrest.

The police department's policy is to arrest all children referred to the agency.

Once those children are in the juvenile justice system, they are denied basic constitutional rights. They are handcuffed and incarcerated for days without any hearing and subsequently warehoused without understanding their alleged probation violations.

“(D)efendants engage in a pattern or practice of unlawful conduct through which they routinely and systematically arrest and incarcerate children, including for minor school rule infractions, without even the most basic procedural safeguards, and in violation of these children’s constitutional rights,” the DOJ’s 37-page complaint reads.

Meridian’s years of systemic abuse punish youth “so arbitrarily and severely as to shock the conscience,” the complaint reads.

The federal lawsuit casts a wide net in indicting the systems that worked to deny Meridian children their constitutional rights. It names as defendants the state of Mississippi; the city of Meridian; Lauderdale County, which runs the Lauderdale County Youth Court; and the local Defendant Youth Court Judges Frank Coleman and Veldore Young for violating Meridian students’ rights up and down the chain.

The DOJ’s complaint also charges that in the course of its eight-month investigation the city blocked the inquiry by refusing to hand over youth court records.

Attorneys for city officials deny that claim, and say they are bound by law to protect the confidentiality of youth who’ve been through the system and so cannot share their records with the federal government.

The DOJ’s lawsuit, despite its bombshell revelations for the rest of the country, has been a long time coming. Groups like the Southern Poverty Law Center and the NAACP have been concerned about Meridian for years.

The SPLC’s inquiry into Meridian began in 2008, when attorneys started hearing reports of “horrific abuse” of youth housed in juvenile detention centers, said Jody Owens, managing attorney of the SPLC’s juvenile justice initiative in Mississippi.

Advocates learned that 67 percent of youth in detention centers arrived there from the Meridian school system, Owens said.

In between school and detention, students were denied access to counsel and due process, and many were never made aware of what they were even being arrested for. “The administrators were the judge, jury and executioner,” Owens said.

This practice has also appeared to target black students.

Meridian, a city of 40,000 people, is 61 percent African-American. But over a five-year period, Owens said, “There was never once a white kid that was expelled or suspended for the same offense that kids of color were suspended for.”

Among the infractions that landed Green, who is black, in juvenile detention were talking back to a teacher, wearing long socks and coming to school without wearing a belt.

He was behind bars for stretches of time as long as two weeks, and the real rub, his mother Gloria said, is that weekends didn’t count as days served.

A 10-day suspension stretched to 14 actual days; time for Meridian juvenile justice officials apparently stopped on weekends. All that back and forth out of school and in juvenile took a real toll on Green’s education, and he was held back from the eighth grade.

“It was mind-boggling,” Gloria Green said. “My son loved school and to be kicked out as much as he was, one year he just couldn’t catch up.”

“We did everything we know to do. I went over to the school and got make-up work, and he still failed two subjects and at that point I didn’t know which way what my child was going to go.”

“We talk about the school to prison pipeline and it’s often an abstract thing,” said Shakti Belway, an attorney who worked closely with families on the Meridian case for the Southern Poverty Law Center.

“But here it is literally happening over ridiculous, minor charges.”

Indeed, children as young as elementary school students have been taken directly from school and forced to serve school suspensions inside a jail cell.

In its complaint, the DOJ charged the city’s police department with operating a de facto “taxi service” shuttling students away from school and into youth jails.

But Meridian doesn’t have a monopoly on this kind of injustice. Every which way a person can look — from elementary to high school, at a national level and on down to the most local — black students are far more likely to be punished and to be punished more harshly than all other students.

A 2010 study by Russell Skiba, a professor of education policy at Indiana University, looked at four decades of data from 9,000 of the nation’s 16,000 middle schools.

It found that black boys were three times as likely to be suspended as white boys and that black girls were four times as likely to be suspended as white girls. It is a serious, endemic issue.

The federal government’s case raises troubling questions about the racial disproportionality that school discipline policies produce broadly. Zero tolerance policies,

which crack down on school-based infractions with automatic, harsh punishments, are the mandatory-minimums of the school discipline world.

But whatever their merits and drawbacks, said Skiba, they shouldn't generate racially disparate outcomes.

"I think what this suit says is: Whatever you do in a school district, why would it be that there would be racial and ethnic disparities? If we're going to choose suspensions and expulsions and police presence, why are students of color overrepresented in that?"

Research shows that if the intent behind zero-tolerance policies is to discourage misbehavior and foster good learning environments, they don't do the job.

A sweeping 2006 study (PDF) conducted by the American Psychological Association found that zero-tolerance policies don't actually make schools safer, and in fact can work to push students away from school.

If, however, the intent is to push students of color out of school, away from their educational futures and into the criminal justice system, there is also a body of evidence that suggests that zero-tolerance policies are rather effective instruments.

For Gloria Green, the lawsuit is the answer to prayers she repeated over and over when her son was going back and forth to jail.

"It was degrading to me because I was like, 'My son is not a criminal. Why is he behind bars?'"

"I would always say, 'Dang, I wish there was somebody that could help me,' because I didn't know what I could do and I was afraid that if I went to his school and stood my ground it'd make things hard for my child."

She's fully supportive of legal action now, but not just because she wants belated justice for Cedrico.

"I'm excited because I have a 13-year-old coming up in the Meridian Public Schools as well."

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Vietnam GI: Reprints Available

Vietnam GI

January, 1969

Free to Servicemen

“... he threw his rifle at his Commanding Officer...”



WHEN HAWKS RETIRE

All of us who've had our "free" trips to Sunny Nam and Seonac Korea shouldn't feel guilty about accepting such "gifts" from the Government. Lots of hawk politicians are taking Government trips too. Of course, their trips are a little bit different.

Take Senator Edward V. Long (D-Mo.), the Senate Judiciary Committee bigshot whose retirement in January was speeded up by graft scandals. The good Senator decided that as a last sacrifice to his country he would give himself "TDY" to Europe. The reason was to "get firsthand information on foreign aid and military assistance programs." Doubtless, that's why he took his wife along.

Of special interest was his visit to

As we go to press we learn that the government has finally agreed on the shape of the table and seating arrangements for the Paris talks. Now that everyone is seated and comfortable, maybe we can expect further "breakthroughs."

The grim fact is that while the government honchos are jiving in Paris, thousands of our buddies are still dying in Nam. In fact, since they began talking last May 7,000 GIs have been killed in action.

Talks or no talks, the only solution is to get the hell out of Nam, immediately. Stop talking and start shipping us home.

The next issue of VGI will discuss the Paris talks in greater detail. By that time we'll have had our "breakthroughs" and our "breakthroughs" about it.

Switzerland, which neither gets US aid nor wants any. It doesn't really make any difference, since as soon as Senator Long returned from his "fact-finding mission" he retired from the Senate, thus depriving our Congress of all his "facts" (mostly on nightclubs and ritz hotels).

Going to and from Europe Long travelled on Senate funds, but while on "TDY" there, he economized by using US military aircraft, cars and chauffeurs to get around. The Pentagon ordered the red carpet rolled out around the world. Nothing too good for a retiring hawk politician. As the saying goes, in America we're all equal — only some are more equal than others!

Below is an interview with a Marine who didn't like the war and figured out why. This guy is a Platoon SGT with five years in the Green Machine, and over a year in Nam, mostly in long range recon with Charlie Company, 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion. VGI spoke to him while he was on leave awaiting his second Nam tour. Since he doesn't ETS until 1973 we've left out his name.

VGI: How did you feel about the war when you went over there. Did your feelings change?

A: When I first went over there, I thought it would be a great thing in pay, and a great new experience of being in war. I really thought it was going to be something different. But then I got put on some of these patrols and I got to see the people and got to talk to the people. This was the big thing that finally changed me. I finally saw that it wasn't worth while, and that they actually don't want our help because it actually isn't help.

VGI: Did you have any contacts with the Vietnamese, with the people?

A: There was a place called Ben Son and for a while I was stationed down at the bridge there. This is where I lived, ate, slept, drank, everything. There were houses right next to my bunker, we had an address for ours and we gave everybody else addresses. We explained to the people what the addresses were and they got all shook up about the whole thing, wow, they got addresses now.

VGI: What was it like, living there?

A: We lived with them, we shared our food with them. They used to really go for the little treats in the cration packs, the gum and the cration cigarettes and everything, and in turn they'd bring back bananas. There was this one girl, her name was—I can't think of her name now—I had her picture but I lost it. This one girl, she really stands out in my mind because she used to come over and bring us beer every day and in turn, all she expected from us was the empty boxes of crations, that's all she wanted, the empty boxes. But then we started putting little things in the empty boxes and told her we wanted her to have them.

VGI: What would she want with the empty boxes?

A: I don't know, the Vietnamese people, they could take an empty can of nothing and make something out of it. She made me a soaplet which she had made out of a cration tin. She had pounded it out with a nail and a hammer. It had a little Buddha on it and I wore it all the time. I actually got to feel naked after I lost it.

But yes, later on, during the Tet holidays, the Viet Cong came in and burned out half of the village, and the mannes naturally went in pursuit. In order to stop them, the VC took this girl and they cut off her breasts. She was brought up to the hospital and later she died.

VGI: Did the brass give you any static about living with the Vietnamese?

A: The incident when I almost got into trouble was, there was a convoy of about 12 to 14 trucks. I think it was. We had a whole bunch of plywood on it and we took this plywood over to a village chief in Ben Son, he was one of

the elders. We dropped off something like 14 sheets of plywood. Naturally, when we got back, there was one truckload of plywood missing, and they asked where it was. They later found out that I had given it to the village chief, not for my own good relations with him, but because there was times when we didn't get rations. At our observation point, and they brought us food. So we gave them something else in return.

interview

VGI: What are some of the things you saw and did that led you into deciding in the middle of Nam not to fight anymore?

A: Well, I saw times when COL Bull Fisher, when he would tell his men to dismantle their personnel-carrying flame-throwers, take them out on a company sleep and put them back together once they got out. He went into a village and told them, "Are there any Viet Cong here?" The village chief naturally said "No" because he knew that if he said yes, he didn't know what'd happen to him. Then COL Fisher said, "Well, if there is any Viet Cong in this village, we'll show you what's going to happen." He sent one of his flame men up to the house, he didn't check to see if there was anybody in it or not. Later we found out there was a woman in there who was real sick, she couldn't move or anything. She was burned to death. It was terrible. And seeing guys being carried in in ponchos. A full-grown man weighed about two pounds after he was brought in as a sack of raw flesh or something like that.

VGI: Did you see any other incidents like this?

A: There was this little village just out of Ben Son where we bought our rice and got our ice. It's not poetry, it's really true; it was just this small village, maybe 16 or 17 houses. It was a "gray to white" village, off and on there'd be Viet Cong visiting the area. No helmet at all, they'd pass go in there to be resupplied. Yet one day, they found out that VC were coming into that village and they called "Puff." "Puff" came over and leveled the whole village down. I think maybe three people lived out of the whole thing. One was a little baby about two years old whose mother and father was gone.

One of the guys sort of adopted this kid, this little two year old. He took this kid real close. When we went on R and R we brought him back toys and crations and things like that. It was really something, because they don't get too many trucks over there. We'd round up a few dump trucks and stuff like that from Hong Kong. They were really surprised to see the new toys, I mean, the toys they play with, old cration cans and stuff like that are their toys. They're a fascinating people. If you just have an opportunity to see them, to get to know them, they're really great.

VGI: How do you think they feel about us?

A: This one incident—I know of the letter one north Vietnamese who was down south wrote to his brother up north who was intent on coming down

Continued on page 8

Edited by Vietnam Veteran Jeff Sharlet from 1968 until his death, this newspaper rocked the world, attracting attention even from Time Magazine, and extremely hostile attention from the chain of command.

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