

Military Resistance 10K2



**U.S. Troops Die, U.S. Traitors
Help Kill Them:
Afghan Leader Kept In Power
By U.S. Military Command
Takes Money To Free Taliban
Prisoners Who Manufacture
And Place IEDs:
“Gov. Shirzai Was Intervening In
These Cases For Monetary Gain,**

Not Out Of Any Sympathy For The Taliban”

**Gov. Shirzai’s Administration
“Recently Involved In Facilitating The
Insurgency By Refusing To Detain
And Prosecute Insurgents Caught
Preparing Attacks”**

**The Governor Also “Running An Open
Extortion Scheme” “Traveling With
Suitcases Of Undeclared Cash Earned
From Criminal Activity, Illegal ‘Land
Grabbing’ And Narcotics Trafficking”**



Nangarhar province Gov. Shirzai, center, during a September amnesty ceremony for militants. European Pressphoto Agency



Internal U.S. reports allege Nangarhar province Gov. Shirzai is collecting illegal taxes at the Torkham crossing. Agence France-Presse/Getty Images

In another case, it says, Gov. Shirzai applied pressure to local officials to release a dozen men who had been detained by Afghan forces for allegedly manufacturing and placing roadside bombs in the province's restless Khogyani district. They were released before they could be tried.

November 2, 2012 By NATHAN HODGE, Wall Street Journal [Excerpts]

JALALABAD, Afghanistan—One of Afghanistan's top power brokers has been freeing suspected insurgents, running an open extortion scheme and traveling with suitcases of undeclared cash earned from criminal activity, according to internal U.S. documents.

A few years ago, the U.S. military described Gov. Gul Agha Shirzai as the best hope for securing Nangarhar province, a critical gateway to Pakistan.

Now, under Gov. Shirzai, U.S. officials say, Nangarhar has turned into a center of corruption, allowing the Taliban and criminal groups to stage a comeback.

An assessment of Gov. Shirzai prepared by a top U.S. civilian official in eastern Afghanistan—marked "secret" and viewed by The Wall Street Journal—details "systemic corruption" by the governor and members of his administration, including extortion, illegal "land grabbing" and narcotics trafficking.

A second document, a shorter U.S. diplomatic cable marked "sensitive" and prepared by civilian U.S. customs experts, sounds a similar theme. U.S. officials said the documents were authentic and didn't dispute their contents.

Gov. Shirzai, contacted through his spokesman and intermediaries with details on the allegations, didn't respond to repeated requests for comment.

U.S. officials acknowledge that corruption is a problem in Nangarhar province.

They have long described Gov. Shirzai as someone who could deliver on security and reconstruction, even while acknowledging he was an autocrat with a fortune from insider dealings.

Cmdr. William Speaks, a Defense Department spokesman, said the Pentagon takes corruption allegations "very seriously," but added: "It's also important to remember that we are not in a position to select the country's leaders—that is a matter for the Afghan people." **[As for that stupid lying bullshit, this is from more of the report below: "It was the U.S. that installed the former warlord as governor of Kandahar..... T]**

The deterioration in Nangarhar— home to around 1.4 million people and eastern Afghanistan's biggest city, Jalalabad — underscores the pitfalls of America's long-standing strategy of relying on Afghan warlords to bring security. After a decade of nation-building attempts, U.S. and Afghan officials worry that, as the U.S.-led coalition withdraws, the country will be dominated once again by what they describe as "criminal patronage networks," fueling the insurgency.

The Taliban began their march to power in the 1990s in the southern city of Kandahar because of popular outrage with local warlords' abuses. Gov. Shirzai was one of these warlords, serving as Kandahar governor at the time, and once again following the 2001 U.S. invasion.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai, a fellow Kandahari, appointed Gov. Shirzai to oversee Nangarhar in 2005. Mr. Karzai's term expires in 2014. Gov. Shirzai has publicly indicated his interest in running for the presidency.

The draft U.S. assessment of Gov. Shirzai, which is based on intelligence reports and other sources, alleges that he has amassed a vast personal fortune from the so-called Shirzai Fund, an unauthorized tax collected at the Torkham Gate border crossing with neighboring Pakistan.

The operation nets the governor \$1.5 million to \$4 million per month, according to the report.

During a trip to Germany in early July, Gov. Shirzai was detained for two hours by the German Customs Police as he tried to enter carrying three briefcases full of undeclared cash, the report says.

"Because of his diplomatic passport, he was released and allowed to enter the country with his ill-gotten gains," it says.

The German Foreign Ministry wasn't informed about the governor's visit to the country, said a person familiar with the matter.

The U.S. document also says officials in Gov. Shirzai's administration "have recently been involved in facilitating the insurgency by refusing to detain and prosecute insurgents caught preparing attacks" on U.S. and Afghan troops.

In one case, the document says, Gov. Shirzai lobbied to obtain the release of six Afghans who had been arrested in Nangarhar's Goshta district for driving trucks carrying about a half-ton of ammonium nitrate — a chemical precursor for homemade explosives widely used by insurgents — hidden in bags of sugar.

In another case, it says, Gov. Shirzai applied pressure to local officials to release a dozen men who had been detained by Afghan forces for allegedly manufacturing and placing roadside bombs in the province's restless Khogyani district. They were released before they could be tried.

A senior coalition official, queried about the allegations, said he believed Gov. Shirzai was intervening in these cases for monetary gain, not out of any sympathy for the Taliban.

The U.S. document also details Mr. Shirzai's association with alleged local criminals.

One passage describes the governor attending wedding parties in the company of an alleged crime boss who had been recently been released on bail. According to the document, Mr. Shirzai helped broker the man's release. Footage of the events was carried on local television, the report said.

In interviews with the Journal in 2009, senior U.S. officials said he was able to get things done through "force of personality"—including cutting opium production, boosting security and pushing through reconstruction projects.

It was the U.S. that installed the former warlord as governor of Kandahar after ousting the Taliban in 2001, and he amassed a considerable fortune providing contracting services to the giant U.S. military base there.

"He is the biggest detriment to good governance in Nangarhar," said Lt. Col. Martin Willmarth, an Army civil affairs officer in the province. "I wish we could get rid of him."

While Gov. Shirzai isn't a Nangarhar native, his revenue-collection scheme gives him a powerful tool for winning local loyalties. At a provincial development committee meeting at the governor's palace in September — chaired by Gov. Shirzai and observed by a Wall Street Journal reporter — local officials hashed out the details of local development projects: school textbooks to be ordered, bridges and canals to be repaired, power outages to be discussed.

The meeting stalled because U.S. advisers working with Gov. Shirzai had put an uncomfortable topic at the top of the agenda: The province's massive budget shortfall.

The local directors, who report to ministries in Kabul, struggled to understand the detailed budget numbers that had been prepared for them by U.S. advisers. With just a few months left in Afghanistan's current fiscal year, the central government in Kabul had transferred less than 5% of the \$48 million earmarked for development projects in Nangarhar to the provincial level.

That left a gaping shortfall in funding for social programs. The directors were reluctant to admit that to the governor.

Gov. Shirzai intervened by spreading around the cash.

"I'll give you \$50,000 from the Shirzai Fund to solve your problem," he told the man representing the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled. The governor then doubled his offer to \$100,000, to applause. His fund would also foot the \$30,000 bill for an X-ray machine at a local hospital, he added.

"He's making it rain again," an astonished U.S. official said after the meeting.

"This is how the sausage gets made," said Air Force Lt. Col. Grant Hargrove, the commander of the U.S.-led Nangarhar Provincial Reconstruction Team, a military unit focusing on development issues in the province, after observing the meeting. **[This "sausage" is being made from the body parts of U.S. troops. T]**

Gov. Shirzai's quick-fix largess presents a big dilemma for Nangarhar. According to the previously undisclosed report by U.S. government customs experts, the Shirzai Fund collects tolls at an unmarked customs building across from the main complex at the Torkham Gate crossing.

At the crossing, Afghan customs officials levy a lawful fee for vehicles entering the country. But provincial officials reporting to Gov. Shirzai collect separate fees — from 200 to 2,500 Afghanis (\$4 to \$50) per vehicle, with the tariffs set on a sliding scale, depending on the size of the vehicle and the type of cargo.

The secret report describes the tax as an "ongoing illegal extortion scheme" at the border.

"The collection operation is well organized and run in an efficient, businesslike manner," the customs report states. The illegal tax represents a fraction of what Gov. Shirzai is believed to earn from other alleged criminal activity, the U.S. reports and officials say.

Afghan officials acknowledge the fund's existence.

Truck drivers who travel through the Torkham Gate say they have been forced to pay the fee as they move cargo to the provincial capital of Jalalabad from Peshawar, Pakistan.

Trucker Jafar Utmanzai said his contribution to the Shirzai Fund was usually around 500 Afghanis, or about \$10. "They say it's a reconstruction fund, but God knows where this money goes," Mr. Utmanzai said.

Mirwais Yasini, an influential Afghan parliamentarian from Nangarhar, said Gov. Shirzai's provincial reconstruction scheme was akin to someone stealing \$500 from your pocket and then saying: "Don't worry, I'll buy you lunch today."

Meanwhile, lawlessness and violence has risen in Nangarhar, once considered relatively peaceful.

In recent months, several judges have been assassinated, including Behsud District Judge Sharifullah, whose nearly decapitated body was discovered after he was abducted from a downtown vegetable market in Jalalabad in March.

An atmosphere of intimidation has made it all the more difficult to oust corrupt officials.

Mr. Karzai recently sacked several provincial governors for poor performance and lack of progress in combating corruption. Gov. Shirzai survived the purge. So did a northern power broker, Tajik former warlord Gen. Mohammed Atta Noor, the governor of Balkh province — home to the main border crossing with Uzbekistan.

A senior Afghan official in Kabul said the two governors have been spared because firing them would have destabilized the region.

U.S. officials openly acknowledge corruption by Mr. Shirzai. But the consensus at the coalition's headquarters in Kabul hasn't tipped in favor of calling for his ouster—especially considering how important the Torkham Gate crossing will be for removing U.S. equipment as military forces go home.

“He’s been on our side,” a senior coalition official said. “We know he’s corrupt. But we have to ask ourselves: Has he crossed a sufficient number of red lines that we’ve got to deal with? So far, it doesn’t appear to be.”

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.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

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

November 3, 2012 Reuters

Three foreign servicemember died following an improvised explosive device attack in eastern Afghanistan today.

U.S. “Service Member” Killed Somewhere Or Other In Afghanistan:

November 3, 2012 Reuters

A U.S. Forces-Afghanistan service member died following an insurgent attack in southern Afghanistan today.

Four Norwegian Soldiers Wounded By IED

11.2.12 Aftenposten

Four Norwegian soldiers were injured and brought to hospital after their armoured vehicle hit a road bomb in Northern Afghanistan late Thursday.

They were part of a column of 7 vehicles with 25 troops which was on its way from Mazar-e-Sharif to Kabul when their SISU was destroyed by the bomb.

The injured were brought to the nearest ISAF camp in the area, where they are now being treated for their injuries.

**POLITICIANS REFUSE TO HALT THE
BLOODSHED**

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

Four Afghan Police Killed By Afghan Police:

“The Latest In A Series Of Afghan Security Personnel Targeting Their Local And Foreign Colleagues”

November 02, 2012 AFP

KANDAHAR: Four Afghan policemen were shot dead by their colleagues at a police checkpoint in southern Afghanistan, officials said Friday.

The shooting, which is the latest in a series of Afghan security personnel targeting their local and foreign colleagues, occurred in Greshk district of volatile Helmand province late Thursday evening.

“Four policemen were killed by gunshots by their five colleagues in a police checkpoint last night around 10:00 PM,” Tooryalai, police chief of Greshk district in Helmand province, told AFP.

The five attackers managed to flee after the killing, Tooryalai said.

The five gunmen had been sent to the checkpoint as reinforcements to prevent a possible Taliban attack before opening fire on their colleagues, he said.

Both the attackers and the dead were new recruits to the police force, Tooryalai added.

Taliban Kills Tribal Influential In Kandahar: “His Death Body Has Found From A House In Perwan Area”

November 03, 2012 By T. Suraya-Yarzada, Bakhtar News

Kandahar --- The local officials of Kandahar said that armed Taliban killed a tribal influential in Panjwai district of Kandahar province.

Fazel Ahmad Ishqzai governor of Panjwai district was abducted from Perwan area of that district two days back and later on, his death body has founded from a house in Perwan area.

Jaweed Faisal in charge of press office of Kandahar confirmed killing of this tribal influential, said police started investigation in this regard.

Faisal said, no one has been arrested in the connection of this case yet.

More Resistance Action

November 03, 2012 Breaking News.ie

A roadside bombing in southern Afghanistan has killed a district police chief, officials said.

Ahmadulah Nazik, who is the administrator of the Dand district in Kandahar province, said Rahmatullah Khan died while trying to reach a police outpost under Taliban attack.

MILITARY NEWS

New York National Guard Iraq War Veteran Sues Military For Denying Her Injury Benefits: “The Army Medical Board Concluded That Towne’s Injury Was ‘Combat Related’”

“But At The Same Time, The Board Concluded That The Injury Wasn’t Incurred ‘During Performance Of Duty In Combat-Related Operations.’ This Cut Her Disability Payments”

“In My Opinion, (The Defense Department) Did What They Did Strictly From A Financial Perspective”

Nov. 02, 2012 By Michael Doyle, McClatchy Newspapers

WASHINGTON -- Tanya L. Towne was wearing her full "battle rattle" when she got injured preparing for war. Now the Pentagon must explain why that should be treated differently from a combat-related injury.

What happens next will put the Defense Department on the spot.

It also could mean a lot to veterans other than Towne, who served 17 years in the New York Army National Guard before her 2009 medical discharge.

"She represents a lot of folks who were called up for Iraq and Afghanistan and who got hurt," Towne's attorney, Scott MacKay, said in a telephone interview Thursday.

In a provocative recent ruling, the U.S. Court of Federal Claims wants the Defense Department to justify a Bush administration-era decision that an injury during combat training doesn't qualify a veteran for the enhanced benefits that are provided to those who are injured during combat.

While the Pentagon's distinction between training and combat sounds clear-cut, it seemingly conflicts with another part of federal law.

But the distinction saves the government money.

"In my opinion, (the Defense Department) did what they did strictly from a financial perspective," MacKay said.

MacKay knows about such things. A West Point graduate, he's the vice president and general counsel for Lockheed Martin Information Systems.

He's representing Towne pro bono, and he said many injured veterans could be in similar circumstances.

Though precise numbers are elusive, the Disabled American Veterans organization estimated in 2008 that "countless thousands" would lose out on potential benefits because their training injuries weren't considered combat-related.

Towne figures she knows some of them.

"I am sure that there are many more cases (like mine) behind the scenes," Towne said Thursday in a telephone interview.

Justice Department officials, defending the Pentagon, counter that the military has acted reasonably.

"The . . . determination that Ms. Towne is not eligible for enhanced disability severance pay because she incurred her training-exercise injury outside the performance of duty in combat-related operations is supported by substantial evidence and applicable statutes and regulations, and is neither arbitrary nor capricious," Justice Department attorney Ryan Majerus wrote in a legal brief.

Now 37, Towne recently opened a sporting goods store in the upstate New York town of Fort Plain. It's about 110 miles from Fort Drum, where in June 2004 she was preparing with the Army National Guard's 42nd Infantry Division.

Trained as a radio repair specialist, Towne was running through a house-clearing drill. She and her fellow soldiers, clad in body armor and bearing equipment that weighed about 50 pounds, had to climb on each other to enter through a window.

"It was a real-world scenario," Towne said.

She fell, landing awkwardly. Army doctors diagnosed a muscle injury, and the following January she deployed to Forward Operating Base Danger in Tikrit, Iraq. She said she was in constant back pain during her 10 months overseas.

Once Towne had returned to the United States, further medical evaluations determined that she was physically unfit for active duty. In June 2009, she was honorably discharged with a 10 percent disability rating.

She also was caught in an apparent contradiction.

The Army medical board concluded that Towne's injury was "combat related" for the purposes of receiving a tax benefit. But at the same time, the board concluded that the injury wasn't incurred "during performance of duty in combat-related operations." This cut her disability payments.

The medical board based its ruling on a Bush administration policy issued in 2008, which said combat-related injuries meant those incurred "as a direct result of armed conflict." Officials determined that this ruled out training injuries, including those sustained during simulated combat preparations before deployment to a war zone.

The Bush administration policy narrowly interpreted a 2008 "wounded warriors" bill, intended to improve military and veterans care.

This interpretation, or at least the rationale behind it, came under question in the decision Oct. 25 in Towne's case by U.S. Court of Federal Claims Judge George W. Miller.

Miller concluded that the Pentagon "articulated no reason" for the narrow interpretation, and said it "lacks any explanation."

He directed the Army Board for Correction of Military Records to reconsider Towne's case and to ask the Defense Department for a better explanation of the combat-related benefits policy.

This is far from a final victory for the training-injured veteran, because courts often defer to the rationales given by government agencies. At the least, though, Towne and others like her could get one more shot at help.

"I really haven't had high hopes," Towne said.

"After 17 years in the Army, I have learned to take things the way they dish them out."

War Profiteer Will Pay Iraq Veterans \$85 Million For Poisoning Them:

“This Was About Showing That They Cannot Get Away With Treating Soldiers Like That”

“It Should Show Them What They Did Was Wrong, Prove What They Did Was Wrong And Punish Them For What They Did”



Veterans Larry Roberta (left) and Scott Ashby (center) testify alongside state Rep. Chip Shields on Wednesday about being exposed to cancer-causing hexavalent chromium while serving in Iraq in 2003. Both men have suffered health problems from the exposure, which Shields called “a crime.” Photo; Fredrick Joe, The Oregonian

[Thanks to michaelmunk.com]

“For a corporation to come in and have this much disregard for the health and well-being of men that are shedding blood, sweat and tears for this country,” Arnold said, “for them to come in and to say that we mean less than their profit, is wrong.”

November 2, 2012 AP [Excerpts]

PORTLAND, Ore. A jury on Friday ordered an American military contractor to pay \$85 million after finding it guilty of negligence for illnesses suffered by a dozen Oregon soldiers who guarded an oilfield water plant during the Iraq war.

After a three-week trial, the jury deliberated for just two days before reaching a decision against the contractor, Kellogg Brown and Root.

The suit was the first concerning soldiers' exposure to a toxin at a water plant in southern Iraq. The soldiers said they suffer from respiratory ailments after their exposure to sodium dichromate, and they fear that a carcinogen the toxin contains, hexavalent chromium, could cause cancer later in life.

Rocky Bixby, the soldier whose name appeared on the suit, said the verdict should reflect a punishment for the company's neglect of U.S. soldiers.

"This was about showing that they cannot get away with treating soldiers like that," Bixby said. "It should show them what they did was wrong, prove what they did was wrong and punish them for what they did."

Each soldier received \$850,000 in noneconomic damages and \$6.25 million in punitive damages.

Another suit from Oregon Guardsmen is on hold while the Portland trial plays out. There are also suits pending in Texas involving soldiers from Texas, Indiana and West Virginia.

KBR was found guilty of negligence but not a secondary claim of fraud. U.S. District Court Judge Paul Papak acknowledged before the trial began that, whatever the verdict, the losing side was likely to appeal it.

Any appeal must first wait for Papak to formally enter the judgment.

The company will appeal the verdict, said KBR attorney Geoffrey Harrison in a statement issued late Friday afternoon.

Harrison said the verdict "bears no rational relationship to the evidence."

KBR witnesses testified that the soldiers' maladies were a result of the desert air and pre-existing conditions.

Even if they were exposed to sodium dichromate, KBR witnesses argued, the soldiers weren't around enough of it, for long enough, to cause serious health problems.

The contractor's defense ultimately rested on the fact that they informed the U.S. Army of the risks of exposure to sodium dichromate.

KBR was tasked with reconstructing the decrepit, scavenged plant just after the March 2003 invasion while National Guardsmen defended the area.

Bags of unguarded sodium dichromate — a corrosive substance used to keep pipes at the water plant free of rust — were ripped open, allowing the substance to spread across the plant and into the air.

Attorneys for the 12 Oregon National Guardsmen focused on the months of April, May and June 2003, alleging KBR knew about the presence of sodium dichromate and took no action.

One of the soldiers' key witnesses, a doctor, testified that hexavalent chromium caused a change to soldiers' genes, leaving them more susceptible to cancer.

Plaintiff Jason Arnold said he understands that contractors are a necessity for often-specialized tasks, but he hopes the verdict forces the U.S. military to reexamine its relationship with the private defense industry.

“For a corporation to come in and have this much disregard for the health and well-being of men that are shedding blood, sweat and tears for this country,” Arnold said, “for them to come in and to say that we mean less than their profit, is wrong.”

During the Iraq war, KBR was the engineering and construction arm of Halliburton, the biggest U.S. contractor during the conflict. KBR split from Halliburton in April 2007.

KBR has faced lawsuits before related to its work in Iraq. One of the more prominent cases, involving a soldier who was electrocuted in his barracks shower at an Army base, was dismissed.

A second case is still in Maryland federal court, in which former KBR employees and others who worked on Army bases in Iraq and Afghanistan allege KBR allowed them to be exposed to toxic smoke from garbage disposal “burn pits.”

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.

“Two-Thirds Of The Texas Iraq And Afghanistan Veterans The American-Statesman Identified As Dying Of Overdoses Had Powerful Prescription Painkillers In Their Systems”

“‘It Blind-Sided Us,’ His Mother, Lynda Golden, Said”

Sept. 29, 2012 By American-Statesman Investigative Team, Austin American-Statesman [Excerpts]

Two-thirds of the Texas Iraq and Afghanistan veterans the American-Statesman identified as dying of overdoses had powerful prescription painkillers in their systems, according to autopsies and medical examiner reports.

It wasn't clear if the pills directly responsible for the overdoses were prescribed by U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs physicians.

But in many instances, family members said, the veterans first used the narcotics as active-duty service members.

“More frequently than we'd like, veterans get prescribed opioids while they're in the service,” said Catherine Coppolillo, a staff psychologist at the Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center in Milwaukee.

With their often interlocking conditions — post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, chronic pain — veterans are an especially complicated and vulnerable population to treat with the powerful drugs.

With their high rate of mental health diagnoses, returning veterans also are particularly susceptible to the deadly interaction of narcotic painkillers with drugs used to treat depression and anxiety. Mixing opioids with benzodiazepines — sedatives often used to treat mood disorders — is particularly risky.

Seventeen of the Texas veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts the Statesman identified as dying of overdoses — about one-third — died with both opioids and benzodiazepines in their systems, medical examiner records showed.

Army veteran Christopher Golden was found unresponsive at his Huntsville home the morning of Feb. 5, 2006.

An autopsy found that he had hydrocodone and temazepam — commonly prescribed as Restoril to treat insomnia — in his system. His death at the age of 25 was ruled an accidental mixed drug overdose.

“It blind-sided us,” his mother, Lynda Golden, said.

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

**A revolution is always distinguished by impoliteness, probably because the ruling classes did not take the trouble in good season to teach the people fine manners.
-- Leon Trotsky, History Of The Russian Revolution**

“Every Four Years Liberals (And A Few Radicals) Invent Ever-More Morally, Politically, And Strategically Bankrupt Reasons To Vote For The Democratic Candidate”

“The Two Evils Presented Become Progressively More Evil Every Four Years”

“Liberals’ Perverse Ritual Of Convincing Themselves That Seppuku Is A Lesser Evil To Beheading Every Four Years Has Weakened Left-Of-Center Forces”



usnews.com

November 2, 2012 by Pham Binh of Occupy Wall Street, Class War Camp; The North Star [Excerpts]

The 2012 presidential race bears no trace of Occupy or the militancy it spawned among Chicago teachers and Wal Mart workers. This is no accident — the U.S. political system is a machine, and this machine smothers militancy.

The ugly inner workings of the Democratic part of that machine were briefly exposed when a televised floor vote was held at the Democratic National Convention (DNC) to add God and Jerusalem as apartheid Israel's capital to the party platform at the behest of President Obama.

What followed was a charade, the kind of party-line "democracy" practiced at Communist Party congresses in China, North Korea, and the U.S.S.R.:

One DNC delegate stormed out and joined Occupy. Nothing teaches that the Democratic Party does not belong to Democrats better than painful, bitter experiences like this.

But Occupy's absence from the presidential conversation is neither simply nor exclusively the result of the rigged political system.

It is also partially the result of Occupy's anarchist ethos, a double-edged sword that has proven very effective for preventing Wisconsin-style derailment by union leaders loyal to the Democratic Party but very ineffective in terms of power politics, that is, using the levers of power — elections and elected office — to get things done.

The challenge for Occupy is to become effective at both, something the 1960s left did not achieve. For example, all the mayors that evicted us should be evicted and replaced by occupiers like New York City's Sergeant Shamar Thomas, Oakland's Scott Olsen, or Seattle's Dorli Rainey.

Like clockwork, every four years liberals (and a few radicals) invent ever-more morally, politically, and strategically bankrupt reasons to vote for the Democratic candidate while most radicals attack one other and their liberal neighbors for capitulating to the two-party state.

Neither side of this contentious divide has an exit strategy from the two-party plantation and so American politics remains stuck on repeat, except that the two evils presented become progressively more evil every four years.

Liberals' perverse ritual of convincing themselves that seppuku is a lesser evil to beheading every four years has weakened left-of-center forces over the past nine presidential election cycles (since the Democratic Party nominated McGovern in 1972) to such an extent that today's Democratic Party is to the right of the Nixon administration in policy terms on the environment, health care, and workplace safety.

The radicals who correctly reject seppuku as a survival strategy have generally not put much practical effort into building a meaningful third party that could begin to split the Democratic Party's voting base (workers, people of color, LGBTs, women) from its funding base (big business), citing the American electoral terrain's tremendous obstacles.

Why bother starting to climb when the cliff face is so steep?

Abstaining from electoral work independent of the Democratic Party's machinery seems like the smart strategic choice, given the far left's meager resources and the certainty of unfavorable outcomes for an unknown number of election cycles.

The problem is that unless and until we start this difficult and treacherous climb, the high ground (meaning control of the state) *will forever remain in enemy hands*. The radical left's "smart" strategic choice in the short run has led to the defeat and destruction of left-of-center forces in the long run.

Think that's an exaggeration?

Look at the unions — or what's left of them.

The failure to create an alternative political instrument or institution, a party more Democratic than the Democratic Party, is the material foundation underpinning the recurring seppuku-or-beheading suicide ritual we subject ourselves to every four years.

Fear trumps correct arguments as a mobilizing force and hope trumps fear, as anyone who lived through the 2008 election knows.

Telling people to “break with the Democratic Party” *does nothing* to break the Democratic Party any more than abstinence education stops anyone from having pre-marital sex or sensitivity training changes how police manhandle people of color.

If anyone has the guts left to arrest the cyclical seppuku of the left, it is occupiers. Most of them were enthusiastic Obama voters in 2008 and were forced to be the change they wanted to see starting in fall of 2011.

After the eviction of the Zuccotti Park encampment, George Martinez challenged Wall Street Democrat Nydia M. Velázquez for the newly redrawn 7th Congressional District's Democratic primary, calling his campaign “Bum Rush the Vote.” He polled 2.7% in a four-way race, reflecting the stiff competition and Occupy Wall Street's weak mobilizing power in the district. In Washington state's 43rd Legislative District, Occupy Seattle activist and Socialist Alternative member Kshama Sawant won close to 10% of the vote in primary races against two entrenched Democrats in the state legislature, allowing Sawant to run against one of them in November in the general election, a *real* red-versus-blue race!

On the national level, four socialist parties are following the time-honored socialist tradition of fielding four competing candidates against one another. Self-proclaimed socialist Roseanne Barr is running on the Peace and Freedom Party ticket that has ballot lines in only two states, Iowa and California. Former Democrat Rocky Anderson's Justice Party has ballot access in 11 states.

The Green Party's Jill Stein is on the ballot in 38 states and hopes to reach 44 by November, a first for the Green Party since it had 44 in 2000 and a comeback from its low point of 24 in 2004.

In a historic first, the Green Party qualified for federal matching funds in the 2012 election cycle.

The plethora of presidential candidates to the left of the two parties in 2012 is an indicator of the left's *recovery*, not simply the depressingly familiar tale of a squabbling,

frustrating, self-defeating, American left. This becomes easier to see when we step back and look at the results of the past few presidential cycles.

Party/Candidate	2000	2004	2008
Democratic	50,999,897 (48.38%)	59,028,109 (48.27%)	69,456,897 (52.92%)
Republican	50,456,002 (47.87%)	62,028,285 (50.73%)	59,934,815 (45.66%)
Nader	2,882,955 (2.74%)	463,647 (0.38%)	738,475 (0.56%)
Green	Nader	119,862 (0.10%)	161,603 (0.12%)
Peace and Freedom	—	Nader	27,607 (0.02%)
Socialist	5,602 (0.00%)	10,822 (0.01%)	6,528 (0.00%)
Socialist Workers	7,378 (0.01%)	11,119 (0.01%)	7,571 (0.00%)
Workers World	4,795 (0.00%)	1,656 (0.00%)	—
Party for Socialism and Liberation	—	—	6,808 (0.01%)
Socialist Equality	—	1,857 (0.00%)	—

The above table shows that the only significant or meaningful electoral political expression of left opposition to the two parties in the past three presidential election cycles is the candidacy of liberal consumer advocate Ralph Nader.

Nader's vote peaked in 2000, collapsed in 2004, and recovered in 2008 in terms of absolute numbers by winning almost twice the number of as in 2004, but his sliver of electoral support barely increased with the tremendous turn out of new, young Obama voters that year.

Over the past three presidential cycles, the socialist parties to Nader's left have gained no traction with any segment of the population and continue to waste their time, money, and extremely limited resources running national campaigns not only against the two enemy parties but against each other.

They have gained nothing for themselves nor contributed to the recreation of a broader socialist movement through these ill-advised efforts despite the fact that socialism is more popular than capitalism among young people.

The 2012 race will be a crucial test for the Green Party and a smaller test for the new Justice Party since Nader is not in the race.

This test will be especially difficult since the close race between Obama and Romney strengthens the appeal of the lesser evil "strategy." Stein will be lucky to match Nader's vote in 2000 when the alter-globalization movement was in full swing and icons like Michael Moore and Rage Against the Machine campaigned for him. This is her first national run and she does not yet enjoy a fraction of the name recognition Nader did in

2000 after three decades of activism and lobbying. However, part of building an effective opposition to 1% rule is ensuring that our efforts do not depend so heavily individuals or celebrities like Nader. Stein's campaign should be seen as a (small) part of that longer-haul process.

As the Republican Party dismantles the New Deal and the Democratic Party produce excuses instead of action to stop them, the task of creating a viable left organization that can use elected office against the 1% is more pressing than ever.

As the liberal Matt Stoler put it:

“if a political revolution came tomorrow, could those who believe in social justice and climate change actually govern? Do we have the people to do it? Do we have the ideas, the legislative proposals, the understanding of how to reorganize our society into a sustainable and socially just one?”

“I suspect, no. When the next crisis comes, and it will come, space will again open up for real policy change. The most important thing we can use [the 2012] election for is to prepare for that moment. That means finding ways of seeing who is on our side and building a group with the will to power and the expertise to make the right demands. We need to generate the inner confidence to blow up the political consensus, against the railings of the men in suits. ...

“[T]he task starting after the election is to build this network of organized people with intellectual and political integrity into a group who understand how to move the levers of power across industry, government, media and politics. We need to put ourselves into the position to be able to run the government.”

At the same time, the constituent elements that could and should constitute such a formation are scattered, divided, and isolated from one other.

The rent strikers in Sunset Park have no organic link with the occupiers of Oakland's Biblioteca; the Working Families Party of New York and the state's Green Party work at cross-purposes with each other; the Vermont Progressive Party occupies the space where the Green Party should be.

Building bridges between initiatives that, in the big scheme of things, are up against the same enemies is no easy task, as the examples of the Greek left and, in very different circumstances, the Free Syrian Army show, but it is unavoidable and indispensable if we are going to start winning instead of continually losing.

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Study: Random, Pointless Formations Tied To Increase In Combat Performance, Morale



November 2, 2012 by SGT B, The Duffle Blog. About The Author: SGT B is an Army MP who's never written a ticket but still enjoys doughnuts and coffee. Send him love or hate at SGT31B@gmail.com.

FORT CAMPBELL, KY - First Sergeants throughout the Army and Marine Corps are celebrating the release of a study today that shows a direct and positive impact on combat performance that correlates with random, pointless formations.

Thomas Burns, lead researcher for military think-tank Xegis Solutions, conducted a study with the 43rd Engineering Battalion at Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

"We studied three companies in the battalion. One company had twenty formations a day, the other had ten, and the last one had zero. These weren't necessary formations — the First Sergeant would simply say to the Platoon Sergeants, 'Get everybody together, I've got information to put out'."

He continued, "the inevitable calls of "Foouooooorrrrrmmmmaaaation!!!! Out front in the parking lot!" would soon echo throughout the unit. Once the troops were assembled, the First Sergeant would usually let them stand there for fifteen to thirty minutes before finally dismissing the company to return to scheduled work."

“We continued this study for three months before the battalion deployed to Afghanistan and followed them through their tour in-country,” said Burns. “They were tasked with route clearance — a particularly dangerous job.”

Burns said that the results were astonishing.

“A direct correlation between the number of random, pointless formations the units had been conducting per day and how many IED strikes, casualties, and enemies killed was found. Basically, the more the better. Formations saved lives and helped these troops to kill more Taliban.”

The company that held the most pointless formations, Burns says, was also the one credited with the most finds of weapons caches, disruption of insurgent activity, and highest performance in combat engagements.

“And the company with no formations whatsoever,” said Burns tearfully, “they were pretty much combat ineffective. I believe that if they had also not worn their reflective belts on patrol, they might have all been done for.”

Morale also appeared to skyrocket any time troops were told to be fifteen minutes early to every formation.

Private Ethan Trest told the Duffel Blog how this personally saved his life.

“I just got to the unit prior to deployment. I was considering suicide, mostly because my Drill Sergeants had been really scary and mean to me at Fort Leonard Wood. Right when I was about to swallow a fistful of 800mg Ibuprofen, I got a phone call from my team leader.”

Obviously shaken, Private Trest trembled through the next sentence. “He saved my life. Something about hearing that the morning formation is at 0700, but the Platoon Sergeant expects us there at 0645, and he expected me there at 0630, just made me realize that it wasn’t worth it.”

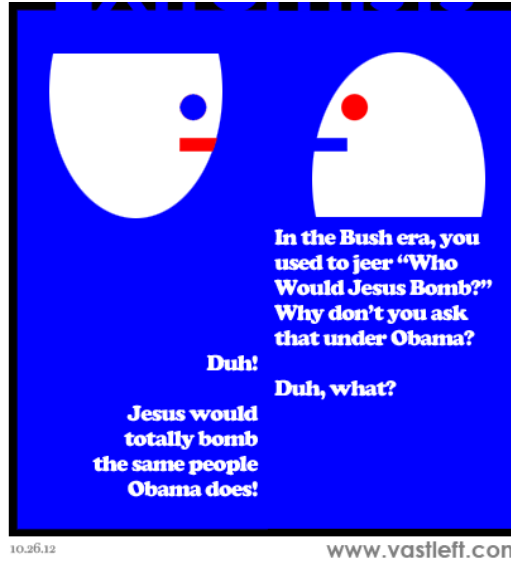
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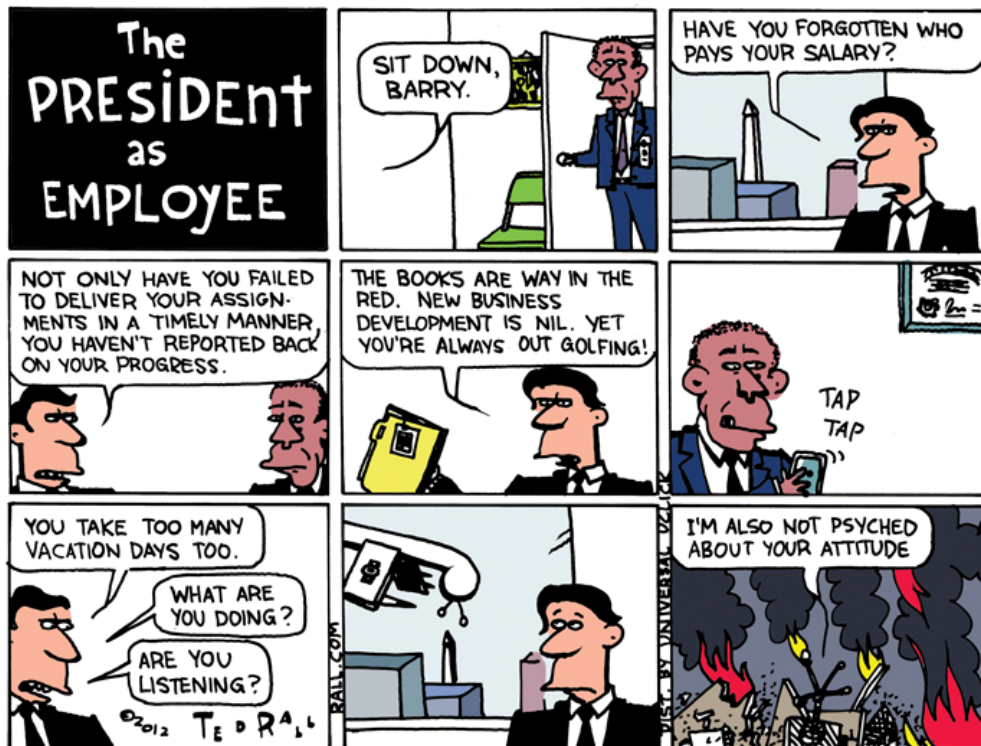
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“The single largest failure of the anti-war movement at this point is the lack of outreach to the troops.”
Tim Goodrich, Iraq Veterans Against The War

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