

Military Resistance 10L11



Les Miserables

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Round Rock Soldier Dies In Afghanistan

Dec. 15, 2012 By Ben Wear, American-Statesman Staff

Staff Sgt. Nelson D. Trent, a Round Rock resident serving in Afghanistan, was killed Thursday in Afghanistan.

A native of the East Texas town of Whitehouse, Trent, 37, died in Kandahar after an improvised explosive device ignited, according to a news release from the U.S. Department of Defense.

The release said that Trent was assigned to the 56th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 36th Infantry Division out of Fort Worth.

Trent had been affiliated with the Texas Army National Guard, according to Trent's Facebook page, where he listed himself as the communications noncommissioned officer in charge for Joint Task Force 71, an emergency response unit made up of several guard units.

It was unclear Saturday when and how Trent moved to the 36th Infantry, and was deployed to Afghanistan.

As news spread Saturday of Trent's death, his friends on Facebook remembered him as upbeat and a patriot.

"I can't ever remember a time being around Nelson and not laughing," friend David Bell wrote. "He was funny, loved people and loved his country."

POLITICIANS REFUSE TO HALT THE BLOODSHED

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

Explosion Destroys U.S. Mercenaries' Compound In Kabul: Many Injured And Dead; "An American Official Of The Company Was Seriously Wounded"





PHOTOS: The blast in Kabul December 17, 2012 targeting a U.S. military contracting company. Credit: REUTERS/Mohammad Ismail

December 17, 2012 CBS/AP & Agence France-Presse & By Hamid Shalizi, Reuters

KABUL, Afghanistan

A car bomb exploded outside a compound housing a U.S. military contractor in the Afghan capital Monday, blowing apart an exterior wall, company representatives and police and government representatives said.

The blast occurred near Camp Phoenix, a U.S. military base where Afghan soldiers are trained.

After the blast, Western men clutching weapons walked outside the company compound as ambulances sped by.

A foreign soldier walked by parts of a building that was torn apart by the blast, which left a large crater.

A brick wall collapsed.

“A small truck packed with explosives detonated between Contrack and Najeeb Zarab factories -- one person is dead and 15 others are wounded,” Kabul police chief Mohammad Ayoub Salangi told AFP.

Police said it was not immediately clear whether anyone had been in the truck when the huge explosion occurred.

“We don’t yet know whether there was someone in the truck or it was detonated remotely. They were very powerful explosives.”

The blast on the outskirts of Kabul sent a plume of smoke into the air and shook windows more than a mile away in the city center.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack, saying it was a car bombing carried out by a "hero mujahid" on "an important American company which provided security services to the invading forces".

"This company was under the surveillance of the mujahedin for a while and thanks God today the opportunity was provided to attack it," Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in a statement.

The security officer for Contrack, a McLean, Va.-based company that builds facilities for military bases, said an attacker drove a vehicle packed with explosives up to the exterior wall of the compound and detonated the bomb.

Contrack security officer Baryalai who, like many Afghans only goes by one name, said he could only confirm wounded.

He said the injured employees included Americans, Afghans and South Africans. An American official of the company was seriously wounded, he said. The injured may also have included Filipinos.

An Associated Press reporter at the site saw large sections of exterior wall blown apart and a collapsed roof on a building inside.

Twisted metal from shipping containers that had been ripped open by the explosion littered the ground. A light snow was falling all morning and was already starting to cover the debris as reporters and investigators surveyed the site.

It appeared that the wall at the site of the explosion was made of mud brick -- surprising in a city where most foreign contractors live in compounds reinforced by concrete blast walls.

Baryalai said the arm of the company that was attacked Monday is building barracks and other facilities for the Afghan army. Contrack's projects in Afghanistan also include fuel storage, air field construction and tanker facilities for U.S. military bases, according to its website.

A worker coming out of the building said that he saw at least 30 people wounded.

"There was massive destruction inside ... I was sitting behind my computer when it happened. I was not hurt, but I saw many of my colleagues were injured," Bashir Farhang said.

An AFP reporter at the scene said there were signs of a huge explosion beyond an area blocked off by police, and some bystanders had also suffered minor injuries.

Jalalabad road, where the explosion occurred, is one of the main arteries into the city. It is flanked by a number of foreign companies and organization, along with foreign military bases.

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While U.S. Troops Die:

**“Kabul Bank Became
Afghanistan’s Largest Financial
Institution By Offering The
Promise Of Modern Banking”**

**“What It Really Dealt In Was
Modern Theft”**

**“Kabul Bank Had Little Reason To
Exist Other Than To Allow A Narrow
Clique Tied To President Hamid
Karzai’s Government To Siphon
Riches From Depositors”**

**“The Bank Was Institutionalizing Fraud
That Reached Into The Hundreds Of
Millions Of Dollars”**



The chief judge in the Kabul Bank case, Shams Rahman Shams, at center behind desk, listened to a defense lawyer during a hearing this month. The United States has pressed for prosecutions. Bryan Denton for The New York Times

November 26, 2012 By MATTHEW ROSENBERG, The New York Times [Excerpts]

KABUL, Afghanistan —

Kabul Bank became Afghanistan’s largest financial institution by offering the promise of modern banking to people who had never had a saving or checking account.

What it really dealt in was modern theft: “From its very beginning,” according to a confidential forensic audit of Kabul Bank, “the bank was a well-concealed Ponzi scheme.”

Afghan and American officials had for years promoted Kabul Bank as a prime example of how Western-style banking was transforming a war-ravaged economy.

But the audit, prepared this year for Afghanistan’s central bank by the Kroll investigative firm, gives new details of how the bank instead was institutionalizing fraud that reached into the hundreds of millions of dollars and obliterated Afghans’ trust after regulators finally seized the bank in August 2010 and the theft was revealed.

Going further than previous reports, the audit asserts that Kabul Bank had little reason to exist other than to allow a narrow clique tied to President Hamid Karzai’s government to siphon riches from depositors, who were the bank’s only substantial source of revenue.

At one point, Kroll’s investigators found 114 rubber stamps for fake companies used to give forged documents a more legitimate look.

And the auditing firms used by the bank never took issue with loan books that were “almost entirely fraudulent,” Kroll found, recommending that the Afghan government explore suing the last such auditor, A.F. Ferguson & Co., a private Pakistani firm with a franchise under PricewaterhouseCoopers.

When Afghan regulators, aided by American officials, first discovered the extent of the fraud at the bank in the summer of 2010, “we never imagined that the criminality was as deep as it was, that it was so widespread and that it included high-ranking officials and their relatives,” said Abdul Qadeer Fitrat, at the time the governor of the Bank of Afghanistan, the country’s central bank.

“At the beginning, I received information from the U.S. Embassy that maybe \$150 million or \$200 million is gone in bad loans to powerful people,” he said.

The number soon climbed close to \$900 million, though “we did not know who took the loans and that they were all tied to a few individuals.”

What Kroll’s audit found is that on Aug. 31, 2010, the day the Bank of Afghanistan seized Kabul Bank, more than 92 percent of the lender’s loan portfolio — \$861 million, or roughly 5 percent of Afghanistan’s annual economic output at the time — had gone to 19 related people and companies, according to the audit.

Among the largest beneficiaries were a brother of Mr. Karzai and a brother of First Vice President Muhammad Qasim Fahim who each owned stakes in the bank that had been bought with loans from the bank, according to the audit and regulatory officials.

Reached for comment, Mr. Karzai’s spokesman, Aimal Faizi, stressed that the president considered the audit incomplete: Mr. Karzai still believes Kroll has to find out where all the missing money has gone, to which countries it was sent and to which accounts if the firm wants the report to be seen as credible, Mr. Faizi said.

The two men that Afghan prosecutors, Western officials and the Kroll audit accuse of profiting most from the fraud were the bank’s principal owners: Sherkhan Farnood, its chairman and a former World Series of Poker Europe winner, and his former bodyguard, Khalil Fruzi, who served as the bank’s chief executive.

Working with the bank’s executives, they devised simple, yet effective, schemes to fool weak and reluctant regulators, and the Americans who were advising them, the audit says.

The owners kept two sets of books, and hid loans to themselves and their shareholders by taking them in the names of friends, relatives and even domestic servants, according to the audit and Afghan officials.

They grouped related loans together to better keep track of who owed what. Hundreds of millions of dollars in illicit loans were routed to Dubai through a money exchange controlled by Mr. Farnood, who founded the bank.

Kabul Bank employed people to forge documents for fictitious companies, which were then audited by accounting firms that appear to have been complicit, according to Kroll.

That is where the rubber stamps came in: they bore the names of those false companies, like Abdul Mahmood Trading and Ali Jan Abdul Hadi Ltd., to lend an air of respectability to fake documents.

Toward the end, Mr. Fruzi even expensed foreign shopping sprees at stores like Louis Vuitton and Versace in Dubai and New Delhi. Mr. Farnood was snapping up villas in Dubai with bank money, though he has maintained they were investments gone bad, nothing more.

Bailing out depositors cost the cash-strapped Afghan government more than \$825 million, and Afghan and Western officials say that only between \$200 million and \$400 million, depending on how assets are valued, has so far been recovered from shareholders.

For many Afghans, the scandal surrounding Kabul Bank, a linchpin of the economic order established here by Americans and their allies, has cemented the opinion that the United States brought crony capitalism, not free markets, to Afghanistan.

The audit is likely to reinforce that view while raising potentially troubling questions about who is being prosecuted here in connection with the scandal, and who is not.

The United States and its allies have pressed hard for prosecutions, threatening to cut aid if no action was taken. The completion of the forensic audit, which was financed by international donors and delivered in March, was another demand by the international community, as was a separate report, due later this week, by an Afghan government-funded but largely independent corruption watchdog commission composed of Afghan and foreign experts.

Mr. Farnood and Mr. Fruzi top the list of 22 defendants charged so far, and both are on trial in Kabul. Many others on the list are Kabul Bank executives who are accused of helping to carry out fraud, though it is unclear whether they personally profited.

Few officials have any problem with those prosecutions.

But there are questions about the charges brought by Afghan prosecutors against a few officials at Afghanistan's central bank.

Western officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, expressed worries that those cases appeared to be intended to end further investigation into Kabul Bank.

In the most prominent such case, the former chairman of the Bank of Afghanistan, Abdul Qadeer Fitrat, has been indicted primarily for failing to warn the Afghan government about Kabul Bank and concealing the fraud there — an accusation that one Western official called “laughable.”

Several Western and Afghan officials insist that Mr. Fitrat had actively pressed inquiries of Kabul Bank, and believed he had been indicted in order to scare him off. He fled the country last year.

Even Mr. Farnood said Mr. Fitrat had done nothing wrong: “Fitrat was the one person who was not involved in any bribing,” he said in a telephone interview.

The situation was particularly galling, the officials said, because apart from Mr. Farnood and Mr. Fruzi, the other “high-value beneficiaries” — each of whom still owes at least \$5 million to the bank, Kroll estimates — have yet to face any legal action.

That group includes Mahmood Karzai, the president’s brother, and Haseen Fahim, the vice president’s brother.

Kabul Bank did serve some legitimate functions — for instance, the United States paid the salaries of hundreds of thousands of soldiers, police and teachers through it.

But many of the bank’s practices seemed tailor-made to lure depositors by any means available.

One popular gimmick detailed by the audit was known as a Bakht account, which offered those who opened them a chance to win houses, cars and jewelry at glitzy prize drawings.

The only real winners, however, were the bank’s senior managers and their friends, the audit found.

The new depositors’ money was used principally “to provide free financing to the other business interests of senior management and a group of connected persons.”

MORE:

While U.S. Troops Die:

**“Millions Of Dollars Paid By
International Forces To Rent A
Piece Of Land In Logar Province
For Use As An Airstrip Went To
Six Well-Connected Individuals”
“They Gave The Taliban \$500,000”**

“Corruption Is Rife From The Highest To Lowest Levels Of Government”

Dec. 11, 2012 By ABDUL MAQSUD AZIZI, The Institute for War & Peace Reporting.

Abdul Maqsd Azizi is a reporter in Afghanistan who writes for The Institute for War & Peace Reporting, a nonprofit organization that trains journalists in areas of conflict.

Readers may write to the author at the Institute for War & Peace Reporting, 48 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8LT, U.K.; Web site: www.iwpr.net.

KABUL, Afghanistan -- It appears that millions of dollars paid by international forces to rent a piece of land in Logar province for use as an airstrip went to six well-connected individuals, and possibly the Taliban, rather than the land's rightful owner, the Afghan government.

That so much money could easily go astray should come as no surprise, given that corruption is rife from the highest to lowest levels of government.

According to the province's former governor, the payments were made in 2009 when a Provincial Reconstruction Team - a joint military and civilian force deployed to pacify restive provinces such as Logar - decided to build an airstrip, along with several buildings and associated roads, in a desert area just south of the provincial capital of Poll-e Alam.

Atiqullah Ludin, who served as provincial governor at the time, said six local individuals, he refused to identify, laid claim to the 53-square kilometer tract of land, despite the fact that they were unable to produce credible documents showing ownership of the land.

The six reportedly received \$2.6 million in rent for the first year, with a portion of that going to the local Taliban.

“In 2009, the intelligence agency in Logar reported to me that after the six men received \$2.6 million in rent for the first year from the Americans, they gave the Taliban \$500, 000,” Ludin said.

A NATO spokesman in Logar, who spoke on condition that he not be identified, said the agency is still unable to determine who actually owned the land - the individuals or the state.

Questions about the land transfer first arose as far back as 2010, when Abdul Hakim Sulaimankhel, chairman of the provincial council, wrote to Ludin, saying, “The governor's office should immediately arrest those who have seized the land, and the money the six individuals have received from the Americans should be retrieved and deposited in the government treasury.”

In fact, Ludin did act when initially told about the \$2.6 million deal, ordering four of the six recipients of the rent to be arrested. A few days later, however, he ordered the four released.

Ludin initially claimed that he had the four arrested because the deed they possessed was invalid and had been improperly authorized by a previous governor, Abdullah Wardak. "Anything that went on happened in Abdullah Wardak's time, and I am completely unaware of it," he said.

Wardak was killed by a roadside bomb in 2008.

Ludin was less forthcoming when asked to explain why he had the four suspects released.

At first, he insisted that it was the local prosecutor who had freed the men. But when confronted with documents showing his signature on the release forms, the former governor would only say, "I was only doing my duty."

At least one individual was willing to step forward and acknowledge receiving payment for the land.

Awal Khan, a tribal elder from the area, confirmed that he received payment. "It's rent for our property," he said, before telling a reporter to "go away." And it appears that some of the 200 families that live in the area where the airstrip is to be built also received a share of the payments.

One farmer, Lotfullah, 36, said he received \$18,000 four years ago "because that was my share." Others got less - between \$5,000 and \$7,000 - he said.

He'd never seen so much money in his life, he said.

And he's never seen such an amount again. The \$18,000 was the first, and last, payment.

Provincial officials say the matter is still under investigation.

MILITARY NEWS

Free Syrian Soldiers Capture Regime's Infantry College:

“At Least 100 Soldiers Have Been Taken Prisoner And 150 Decided To Join Us”

“The Soldiers Were All Hungry Because Of The Siege”

16/12/2012 FRANCE 24 [Excerpts]

In the latest of a string of military installations to fall to the Syrian rebels, the army's infantry college in northern Aleppo, a facility that has an army base, a recruitment center and a military school, was captured on Saturday after five days of fighting, a rebel commander with the powerful Islamist Tawheed Brigade said.

Yarmouk, on the southern fringes of Damascus, falls within a swathe of territory running from the east to southwest of the Syrian capital from where rebels hope to storm into the main redoubt of 42 years of Assad family rule over Syria. The commander whose Tawheed brigade took part in the assault said the rebels had surrounded the college, located 16 km (10 miles) north of Aleppo, Syria's largest city, three weeks ago.

“At least 100 soldiers have been taken prisoner and 150 decided to join us. The soldiers were all hungry because of the siege,” the commander, who spoke on condition he was not further identified, told Reuters by telephone.

The commander whose Tawheed brigade took part in the assault said the rebels had surrounded the college, located 16 km (10 miles) north of Aleppo, Syria's largest city, three weeks ago.

“At least 100 soldiers have been taken prisoner and 150 decided to join us. The soldiers were all hungry because of the siege,” the commander, who spoke on condition he was not further identified, told Reuters by telephone.

MORE:

“The Loss Of Bases Near Damascus, Like The Helicopter Base That Rebels Seized On Sunday, Is More Significant Than

Losses In The Rebel-Dominated North”

“The Regime Is Pulling Out Its Forces From The Provinces To The Capital”

“They Just Control The Areas The Tanks Stand On”

November 26, 2012 By ANNE BARNARD, The New York Times Company [Excerpts]

BEIRUT, Lebanon —

At a hydroelectric dam on the Euphrates River on Monday, Syrian rebels relaxed in the operations room, checking a computer screen, sipping tea and projecting confidence after driving off government forces and seizing crates of rocket-propelled grenades.

All of this was proudly recorded and quickly uploaded for the world to see.

Swarming the heavily guarded dam was the latest in a monthlong string of tactical successes in which rebels have raided government installations, including numerous air bases, from northern Syria to the suburbs of Damascus.

The raids allowed the rebels to boast of their growing effectiveness, undercut the morale of government forces and reinforce their arsenals.

But what they are not necessarily seeking is to hold the bases they hit.

Instead, rebels have shifted tactics, fighters and analysts say, seizing outposts, then often abandoning them, to deny government air power a target for retaliation.

Rebels say they have learned from recent mistakes, after seizing neighborhoods only to draw devastating airstrikes that killed civilians and alienated supporters.

Now, they focus less on conquering territory than on turning a war of attrition to their advantage, forcing the state to bleed.

In the past month, fighters have overrun a half-dozen bases around Damascus, Syria's capital; two in the country's eastern oil-producing area; and the largest military installation near the country's largest city, Aleppo.

They have focused on challenging air power, their deadliest foe, by harassing some air bases, ransacking others and seizing antiaircraft weapons.

“Rebels are learning,” said Ahmad Kadour, an activist in Idlib, reached through Skype. When they capture a base, he said, “they take the machinery and the weapons and leave right away, because the regime is always shelling the places it used to control.”

Yezid Sayigh, an analyst of Arab military affairs at the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut, said that the loss of bases near Damascus, like the helicopter base that rebels seized on Sunday, is more significant than losses in the rebel-dominated north and isolated northeast, where the army has partly melted away, leaving the reduced forces vulnerable.

Still, rebel actions are imperfectly coordinated, and it was unclear whether they planned to hold the Tishreen Dam near Aleppo. It is an important source of electric power and one of two major crossings between Aleppo and the eastern provinces.

Last summer, the government withdrew to strong points, increasingly relying on air power and artillery to smash areas that rebels had seized.

The rebels have changed their tactics, too. Col. Qassem Saadeddine, the head of the military council of the loose-knit Free Syrian Army rebel umbrella group in Homs, said there was a concerted strategy to attack key bases and withdraw with weaponry.

But, he said, where possible, rebels leave guards to prevent troops from using the bases again.

“They just control the areas the tanks stand on,” he said in an interview from Turkey. “The regime is pulling out its forces from the provinces to the capital.”

The rebel victories create opportunities, and dangers, as well.

After they took Base 46, a large base outside Aleppo, rebels won a political victory by restoring power that had been cut in pro-rebel areas.

MORE:

**“The War Is Turning Against
The Regime, And It’s Turning At
A Faster Rate Than We Had
Seen Before”**

**“The Government’s Ability To Resupply And Reinforce Its Far-Flung Bases Is Diminishing”
“It Has Not Launched A Significant Offensive To Retake Ground Since August”
“Videos After The Capture Last Week Of Base 46 Showed Fighters Acquiring Tanks, Armored Personnel Carriers, Artillery And Surface-To-Air Missiles As Well As Large Quantities Of Ammunition”**

November 25 By Liz Sly, Washington Post [Excerpts]

In the past week, the rebels have seized five important military facilities in the north, the east and near the capital, Damascus, capturing sizable quantities of weaponry, further isolating remaining government positions and freeing opposition fighters to focus on attacking Assad’s forces.

[T]he gains underscore the steadily growing effectiveness of the rebel force and the accelerating erosion of what had once been one of the region’s most powerful armies, now severely depleted and on the defensive along almost all of the country’s many battle fronts.

The fighting is piecemeal, intense and likely to persist for many more months as regime troops and rebel fighters battle it out town by town and base by base across the vast swaths of the country that are being contested.

But there seems to be little doubt that the momentum is shifting to the rebels’ advantage, said Joseph Holliday of the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War, and that in itself is having a cumulative effect on the battlefield.

Each new base that falls yields new stashes of weaponry, and as larger bases are overrun, the quality of those weapons also is increasing.

Videos released after the capture last week of Base 46, a major facility to the west of Aleppo, showed fighters acquiring tanks, armored personnel carriers, artillery and surface-to-air missiles as well as large quantities of ammunition.

But no longer is it possible to describe the war in Syria as a stalemate, said Jeffrey White, a defense fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, and the pace of rebel gains in recent weeks raises the prospect that a collapse of government forces could come sooner than has been expected.

“The war is turning against the regime, and it’s turning at a faster rate than we had seen before,” White said.

In a video released overnight Saturday of the assault on the Marj al-Sultan air base outside Damascus, fighters are seen using a tank to storm the perimeter.

They claim to have destroyed eight aircraft, including three helicopters and two MiG fighter jets, contributing to the slow depletion of the air force on which the regime has increasingly relied to remain in the fight in areas from which its ground forces have been ejected.

Meanwhile, the government’s ability to resupply and reinforce its far-flung bases is diminishing, as evidenced by the recent captures, and it has not launched a significant offensive to retake ground since August.

Even in the suburbs of Damascus, where a government push in the summer appeared to have forced the rebels into retreat, the tide is turning again, and the fighting is inching back toward the edges of the city.

“Troops Are Petitioning The White House To Lift The Services’ Bans On Hands In Pockets”

“You’ve Actually Got Sergeants Major Running Around Bases Looking For Stuff Like That”

“The Petition States Pockets Would Allow For Troops To Be Able To Properly Sheathe Their Deadly ‘Knife Hands’”

Nov 25, 2012 By Gina Harkins - Staff writer; Army Times [Excerpts]

Troops are petitioning the White House to lift the services' bans on hands in pockets — and if enough people sign it, your commander in chief could respond.

The matter isn't just about comfort, but also safety, the petition states.

Pockets would allow for troops to be able to properly sheathe their deadly “knife hands.”

“Knife hands is the way of pointing at someone where your hand looks like a blade,” explained “Josh B.,” a sergeant in the Army National Guard who posted the petition on the White House website.

“They are especially popular with Marines and can be used as defensive weapons.”

The petition was put up on the White House website's “We the people” section, which invites Americans to start petitions on issues important to them.

If you're able to get enough online signatures — 25,000 within 30 days — the White House staff has to review it.

Occasionally, President Obama issues a response, which is emailed to everyone who signs it. But more likely, it will be a member of his staff, the site states.

Josh B. is maintaining some level of anonymity because he doesn't want to get into trouble with his command for partaking in a political activity.

As a regular contributor to the satirical military news website “The Duffel Blog,” the military policeman and his colleagues say they're too-often yelled at for having their hands in their pockets.

“It's just silly to us that putting our hands in our pockets is such a big thing that they harp on it in the military,” Josh B. said.

“You've actually got sergeants major running around bases looking for stuff like that. I think there are better things we can do with our time, like training to react to fire or” improvised explosive devices.

The sergeant said he's never taken the issue up with his sergeant first class directly — because the staff noncommissioned officer is usually too busy yelling at him to get his hands out of his pockets.

The Air Force prohibits airmen from standing or walking with their hands in their pockets, except to “insert or remove an item,” according to AFI 36-2903, which governs dress and appearance.

The sergeant and his comrades got the idea to start the petition after the recent string of petitions for states to secede from the U.S. In November, the signature threshold on a petition for Texas secession was reached, requiring the White House to consider it.

**DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE
MILITARY?**



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

Forward Military Resistance along, or send us the email address if you wish and we'll send it regularly with your best wishes. 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, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: Military Resistance, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657.

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

**The Butcher Assad's Forces Attack A
Palestinian Mosque In Damascus,
Killing At Least 25 People:
"This Regime Knows No Limits In Its
Approach To Criminal Murder And**

‘Destruction,’ Senior PLO Official Yasser Abed Rabbo Told Reuters”



FRANCE 24

16/12/2012 FRANCE 24 & 17/12/2012 Reuters. Ma'an staff contributed to this report

RAMALLAH -- The Palestinian Authority leadership condemned the Syrian regime on Sunday after Bashar Assad's forces attacked a Palestinian refugee camp in Damascus, killing at least 25 people.

“We hold Bashar Assad and his regime responsible for this crime in Yarmouk camp, which clearly reveals that this regime knows no limits in its approach to criminal murder and destruction,” Senior PLO official Yasser Abed Rabbo told Reuters.

“In the Yarmouk refugee camp massacre and everywhere in Syria, the international community must put an end to a system of murder and terrorism in Syria before they burn the whole region.”

Syrian fighter jets rocketed the Palestinian Yarmouk camp in Damascus on Sunday, killing at least 25 people sheltering in a mosque in an area where Syrian rebels have been trying to advance on the capital, opposition activists said.

They said the deaths resulted from a rocket hitting a mosque in the camp, to which refugees have fled from other fighting in nearby suburbs of Damascus.

It was the first reported aerial attack on the camp since the revolt against President Bashar Assad erupted last year.

A video posted on Youtube shows bodies and body parts scattered on the stairs of what appears to be the mosque.

President Abbas told official news agency Wafa that he was very concerned that Palestinians in Syria were begin affected by Syria's internal conflict and called for an end to violence against refugee camps in the country.

He urged the international community to intervene to protect Palestinian refugees in Syria.

Syria is the home of more than 500,000 Palestinian refugees, most of them living in Yarmouk. Assad's government and Syrian rebels have enlisted and armed Palestinian refugees during the 21-month uprising, which has escalated into a civil war

Heavy fighting broke out 12 days ago between Palestinians loyal to Assad and Syrian rebels, together with a brigade of Palestinian fighters known as Liwaa al-Asifah (Storm Brigade).

The fighting intensified on Saturday with rebels gaining ground inside the camp, forcing Ahmed Jibril, a veteran leader of a Damascus-based Palestinian faction that backs Assad to leave the capital with his son.

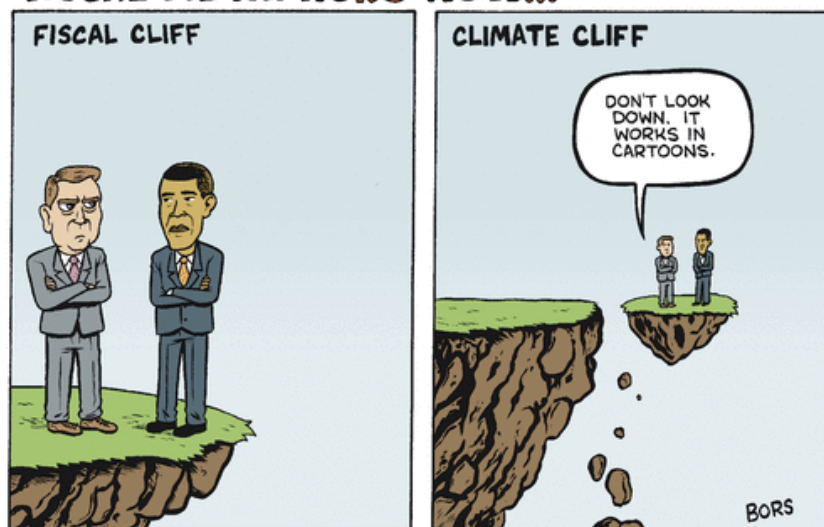
Jibril's PFLP-GC has maintained strong ties to Assad throughout the uprising, unlike Hamas whose Damascus-based officials - including leader-in-exile Khaled Mashaal - quietly pulled out of Syria as the mainly Sunni Muslim revolt against Assad gained momentum.

In November, the PLO said that around 600 Palestinians had been killed in the Syrian conflict.

Yarmouk, on the southern fringes of Damascus, falls within a swathe of territory running from the east to southwest of the Syrian capital from where rebels hope to storm into the main redoubt of 42 years of Assad family rule over Syria.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

SINCE WE'RE ALL ABOUT VISUAL METAPHORS NOW...



**Obama Asserts Right To Kill Any
American Citizen He Pleases,
Anytime He Pleases, Without A Trial,
In Secret:
“If The Court Accepts The Government’s
Position, It Is Not Only The Current
President But Every Future President
Who Will Wield The Power To Kill Any
American”**

December 16, 2012 Jon Queally, staff writer; Common Dreams [Excerpts]

In a little noticed filing at week’s end, the US government made its first legal response to a challenge made by civil liberties groups about the Obama administration’s secretive “Kill List” program by urging a federal court to dismiss the case, arguing that the courts should not interfere with Obama’s declared authority that he can kill US citizens without congressional, judicial, or public oversight.

The case surrounds the targeted killing of three US citizens in Yemen last year, including Anwar Al-Awlaki, his 16-year-old son Abdulrahman and Samir Khan.

The ACLU and the Center for Constitutional Rights, who helped bring the suit on behalf of family members of those killed, said in a joint statement that the essence of the government’s argument was “that it has the authority to kill Americans not only in secret, but also without ever having to justify its actions under the Constitution in any courtroom.”

“To claim, as the administration, that the courts have no role at all to play in assessing whether the government’s targeted killings of Americans are lawful – even after the fact – simply cannot be squared with the due process clause,” they said.

The specifics of the case heighten the urgency once again by the fact that in the lawsuit before the court — one brought by family members of US citizens killed by their own government in Yemen — questions the legality of killing Americans without due process or oversight.

“The president himself has acknowledged that the targeted killing program must be subject to more meaningful checks,” said the ACLU and CRR. “But there is little evidence of that recognition in the brief filed by the government on Friday.

“If the court accepts the government’s position, it is not only the current president but every future president who will wield the power to kill any American he or she deems to present a threat to national security, without ever having to explain that action to a judge. The Constitution requires more.”

In the motion to dismiss, Justice Department lawyers made the case that any demands for judicial review are superseded by what the government said are necessary actions in protecting national security.

It further argued that the court’s desire to explore alternatives to assassination (versus possible capture) was not in its “proper purview”.

Not only did the Obama administration push to have the case dismissed, as Politico’s Josh Gerstein reports, the government lawyers “also threatened to invoke the State Secrets Privilege if the suit is not dismissed on other grounds.”

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.

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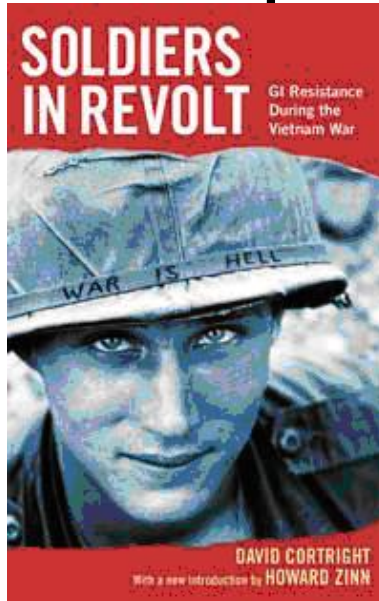
Pictures of Syria's Tyrant Bashar al-Assad and Syrian flags burn after being set on fire by Free Syrian Army fighters in Ouwayjah village in Aleppo December 17, 2012. REUTERS/Zain Karam

Win Another One For Our Side



Juana Madrid (C) celebrates with supporters after her eviction by the IVIMA (Madrid Housing Institute) was suspended in Madrid December 14, 2012. Madrid, who lives in her rental home with two of her daughters, camped outside the IVIMA office for two days to try to avoid her eviction order. REUTERS/Andrea Comas

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