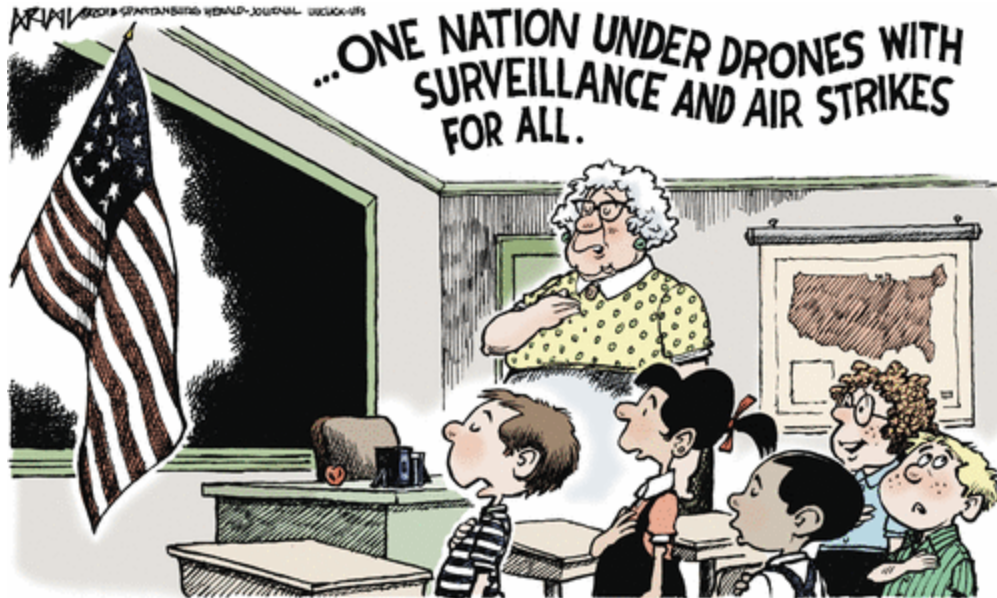


Military Resistance 11C10



**“What On Earth Are They Doing
With All That Money?”**

**“If Troops Are Not Getting Trained
And Their Benefits Are Being Cut
Back, Then Where Are These
Hundreds Of Billions Of Dollars In
Our Budget Going?”**

**“Only In The Cesspool Of Fraud, Waste
And Abuse That Is The Defense
Department Can Budgets Like These Be
Called ‘Austere’”**

Army Times
March 18, 2012

I nearly spit out my dinner when I read your headline "Fighting through austerity" (March 4).

Even with these "evil" and "scary" cuts factored in, the defense budget will still rise every year in the foreseeable future. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the projected defense budget will still go from \$593 billion in fiscal year 2014 to \$702 billion in 2023, even if this sequester is allowed to stand.

When I hear politicians and the top brass say that training will have to be cut back and units will go without supplies, and all these other dire consequences, it begs a very simple question:

What on earth are they doing with all that money?

If troops are not getting trained and their benefits are being cut back, then where are these hundreds of billions of dollars in our budget going?

Only in the cesspool of fraud, waste and abuse that is the Defense Department can budgets like these be called "austere."

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Zlotow
Fort Riley, Kan.

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

500 Protesters Marching To The Afghan Parliament Building In Kabul, Protesting Presence Of U.S. Special Operations Forces In Wardak Province.

03/16/13 The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Several hundred demonstrators are marching to the Afghan parliament building in Kabul, protesting the continued presence of U.S. special operations forces in Afghanistan's troubled Wardak province.

Kabul's deputy police chief Gen. Mohammad Daud Amin says Saturday's demonstration of roughly 500 protesters has been peaceful.

The demonstrators are demanding the release of nine local citizens they believe were detained by the U.S. forces.

**The Empire Of The Feared,
Favoured And Undisputed
Warlord Of Oruzgan:
“Summary Executions And
Torture, Arbitrary Detentions And
Extortion, All Of It Funded By Drug
Running And The Extraction Of
Massive Highway Security Tolls”
“Matiullah Gets Away With It All
Because Of His Ties To The
Australian And American Military
Machines In Southern Afghanistan”
“The Day The Foreigners Leave His Own
Men Will Kill Him” “They’ll Be Lining Up
To Take Matiullah Down”**



Matiullah Khan. Photo: Kate Geraghty

March 17, 2013 by Paul McGeough, Chief foreign correspondent, The Brisbane Times

As Australian and American forces pack up to quit Afghanistan, the uncrowned king of Oruzgan watches closely, narrowing his focus to the question of how to survive in a snake pit of tribal politics.

A law unto himself, 40-ish warlord Matiullah Khan is cagey, oozing bonhomie and danger in equal measure.

If he were in New York, Wall Street and the Mafia would compete for his services.

He is the Jekyll and Hyde of the Afghan south who, by all accounts, might drown you in kindness or in a well.

The widows of Tarin Kowt shower him in blessings for his weekly distribution of money and meat, oil and flour.

A foreign official who needed to talk human rights comes away intimidated - the way Matiullah twirls a Glock pistol throughout their meeting has something to do with it.

In private they curse MK, as he is known locally and by the Afghanistan cognoscenti. But he's celebrated in pop music. The man who corruptly acquires nearly all his dollars goes on national TV as the crusading star in a public awareness campaign preaching against the sin of corruption.

Matiullah's evolution stuns those who are in the business of watching him. "Seriously, in 2003 this guy had the mind of a child," a human rights professional says. "He was a typical greedy warlord, fighting for resources."

"He doesn't go after every penny now. He consults the elders instead of dismissing them. He shows respect for the ones that he needs to respect, and he has developed this incredible understanding of how to play politics."

Matiullah's formal title is provincial chief of police in Oruzgan.

But that's a veil of official gossamer over a painstakingly crafted web of power and patronage that has catapulted a former taxi driver and field labourer to the top table in the nation.

And it comes at a time when Afghanistan's President, Hamid Karzai, is positioning his cronies to hold on to their massive, ill-gotten gains as he nears the mandated end of his term of office.

Matiullah is a Karzai crony but also his own man - relying, as one international observer says, on a weak central government to do his own thing.

It is late in the evening when we hear an explosion - then panic. Men with guns pour out of the compound, scattering every which way. They know Matiullah is about to return from one of his regular meetings with the Australians or Americans in a sprawling military base that sits cheek-by-jowl with his compound.

It transpires that a small device detonated as Matiullah's Humvee left, but it seems to be directed at the nearby home of a tribal elder, not at MK.

This is no big deal in the Oruzgan scheme of things, but there is room to cast Matiullah as the hero of the moment. He has his own radio station, and in a case like this his guards become a Greek chorus. "He didn't do what other commanders would do - speed off in the opposite direction," one of them reports breathlessly, once they have established he is safe.

"No, MK jumped out and investigated the bombing himself."

"His Reputation Is That He Will Kill At Will"

Outside the high walls of his compound, men sell caged partridges; inside, haughty peacocks strut freely. The compound is a sprawl of mud-walled buildings, a small mosque and an elaborate swimming pool. It has a gym, a media centre and stylish guest accommodation.

A network of closed-circuit cameras feeds images of everything to a large, segmented flat-screen TV tucked under the desk in Matiullah's first-floor office suite. A new boys' school is being built at the back, he says, to specialise in English, computer studies and university preparation.

His desk clutter includes heavy pieces of carved green marble, one shaped as a map of Afghanistan; plaques of appreciation from the Australian Federal Police and a US Navy SEAL team; a medal awarded by the Kabul government; and in pride of place at the front edge of the desk, a boxed boomerang - a gift from air chief marshal Angus Houston, former head of the Australian Defence Force. As we sit to talk, Matiullah removes a spittoon from the desktop.

His reputation is that he will kill at will and people are afraid of him.

An Afghan analyst who has observed him at close quarters compartmentalises his critique, on one hand damning MK's human rights record but also admiring what he describes as a rare capacity, for an Afghan, to take the fight to the Taliban.

"He is a very brave man and he fights the Taliban with honour - in the south-Afghanistan meaning of this word," he says. "There are only a couple of people in all of the south who can stand up to the insurgents and who the Taliban actually fear. Abdul Raziq, the Kandahar police chief, is one; MK is the other. Matiullah faces his enemy with real courage and psychology. He is prepared like few others when he goes in to battle."

These days he leaves the compound only in a heavily armoured Humvee. Matiullah knows, the Taliban know, and his tribal rivals know that such is the power concentrated in him that his elimination would create an extraordinary and dangerous vacuum as Afghanistan transitions to the next uncertain phase of its history.

Matiullah is consolidating and the ledger splits between what he calls his "good works" and allegations from his legion of critics of sins ranging from petty theft to acts of sheer bastardry.

Having, in effect, established his own shadow government, he unilaterally embarks on the jobs he feels need to be done, mocking the more cumbersome planning approach of the provincial and national bureaucracy, and even of his Australian backers.

He complains that the Australians sat in their bunkers "doing nothing, while I was clearing the Baluchi Valley".

And he snipes at the Australian-led Provincial Reconstruction Team: "I do things; they talk about doing them."

At Chora, Achekzai tribal elder Daru Khan Khaksar interrupts his note-taking on our meeting to cast Matiullah as their saviour. "His role is more important than that of the Afghan National Army or of anyone else," he says. "We travel freely because he imposed security where others couldn't."

There is a spectral quality to the man - especially if chanced upon in the evening light as he steps out in the all-white robes of a Muslim who has made the Haj pilgrimage to Mecca. He speaks quietly.

“If He Understands That I’ve Told You This, He’ll Kill Me,’ A Source Tells Fairfax Media, Without Exaggeration”

Born in Tarin Kowt in the early 1970s, Matiullah attributes his lack of education to “house-to-house” disruption during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

Until he was 19, he was displaced by war to his family’s village north of the town, where he worked the fields. Did the family grow opium poppies? “Mostly wheat,” he responds, massaging the sole of his right foot.

But something is not right. A staple in accounts of Matiullah’s life has been tutelage by his warlord uncle, the brutal and vengeful Jan Mohammad Khan, aka JMK. At the remote Shahidi Hassas, a tribal elder recalls: “Even when Matiullah Khan was a child, before he had a beard, he fought with JMK.”

But ask about the garrulous uncle and the nephew becomes monosyllabic, casting their relationship in remote terms - JMK was too busy being a leader for all to be looking out for his nephew, and then the Taliban threw him in jail.

To hear Matiullah now, the critical formative influence in his life was President Karzai.

Don’t believe any of that talk about him being JMK’s henchman, Matiullah says. The first armed combat he volunteers is an encounter with the Taliban in the mountains between Tarin Kowt and Dihrawud after the September 11, 2001, attacks on the US. He and a small group led by Karzai had collected an air drop of American weapons - AK-47 and PK machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades.

But as they hauled the booty back towards Tarin Kowt, where they planned to launch an attack on the provincial government centre, they came under attack - and the Taliban got away with all the US-supplied arms.

“So we had to liberate Tarin Kowt with the few AK-47s we had,” he says. “It wasn’t bloody. We attacked in the morning, it was over by afternoon. Two Talibs died in a traffic accident as they tried to escape.”

Here, MK would have us believe that already he was evolving as the human-rights-conscious, Jeffersonian democrat he hasn’t quite become. “We were in the mountains, but it wasn’t about being a mujahideen fighter,” he insists. “We were thinking about liberating Afghanistan; about helping it to develop as a nation, with a national police service and military.”

For many Afghans, the appeal of a police chief with deep pockets is his can-do approach to everything, circumventing funding crises and planning delays. If a village needs a mosque for prayers, he builds one; a bridge to cross a river, he’ll get moving right away. A culvert gets washed away and Matiullah moves in men, machines and money.

He has built more than 70 mosques in the province, some simple mud-walled constructions, others more elaborate. Discussing what he calls his “good works”, Matiullah becomes almost sentimental. “I have to listen to the people and to fulfil their

expectations,” he says. “I have to close the gap between the people and their government and help them to understand that the police serve them. I feel great responsibility.

“I want to win the hearts and minds of the people because it makes them happier.

“So I build a mosque for people who need one. I’ve lost count of the number of wells I drill for people with no water. I spend \$80,000 to send 600 students for study in Kabul. I take care of 280 girls in the school at the back of my compound.”

He closes with an impressive figure: 15,000 - the number of locals he claims live off the salaries he pays. Sceptical Afghans say it’s all a calculated personal investment in consolidating the power of his Popalzai tribe and at the same time eclipsing fellow tribesmen who might claim the mantle of leadership. Perhaps ...

If Matiullah’s good works are his Jekyll persona, then a measure of his Hyde side is the fear induced in people who speak about him.

“If he understands that I’ve told you this, he’ll kill me,” a source tells Fairfax Media, without exaggeration.

“Matiullah Gets Away With It All Because Of The Real Or Implied Blessings His Highway-Security Racket Derives From His Ties To The Australian And American Military Machines”

A United Nations official observed him to be “a ruthless individual who’ll use whatever is at his disposal”.

Among “whatever” is a catalogue of charges by human rights and other analysts: summary executions and torture, arbitrary detentions and extortion, all of it funded by drug running and the extraction of massive highway security tolls.

More spectacularly, Matiullah gets away with it all because of the real or implied blessings his highway-security racket derives from his ties to the Australian and American military machines in southern Afghanistan.

The fear element in the Matiullah narrative emanates in particular from events after the fall of the Taliban in the Baluchi Valley, a stronghold of the pro-Taliban Ghilzai tribe north of Tarin Kowt.

As explained by an analyst who has conducted interviews in the area: “JMK and MK went house to house, killing people.

These days MK is so strong that people are afraid to tell their stories openly, but I spoke with the victims. About a year after the fall of the Taliban, a few shots were fired from one of the villages, so JMK and MK started rounding up people.

“One man told me how his son was made to lie on the ground - and then they drove a truck over his head.”

The source then turns to the town of Mirabad: “It was the same there - maybe 700 people have been killed in multiple, brutal killings.

That’s why Mirabad became a home to the Taliban again; it was more about revenge on the tribal establishment than it was about loving the Taliban.

“Half of them arguably were Taliban - the rest were sympathisers, or maybe just relatives of sympathisers. But a good 200 were innocent - wrong place, wrong time kind of thing.”

But for many ordinary Oruzganis, MK is the last line of defence between them and a return to the brutal warlord madness of the early 1990s, or to the straitjacketed Taliban years that followed.

Even Matiullah’s long-term rival Nabi Khan Tokhi speaks up. “People’s appreciation of MK is genuine because he opened the roads,” he says. “I had to abandon the Chora road after 40 of my men were killed trying to secure it. MK did what I couldn’t do ... six governors and police chiefs before him couldn’t do it, either. So people say, however much money he has, may God give him 10 times more.”

At Dihrawud, district police chief Haji Namatullah explains how he is under orders from Matiullah not to rob the people: “He said, ‘Come to me for money if you have a problem - do not extort it from the people.’ And I know too well that he’ll punish me if I commit a crime.”

So more than a decade later, how does Matiullah Khan judge progress? Is the provincial chief of police in Oruzgan a part of the problem or the solution?

He talks about an encounter with an 85-year-old man who has never left his village near Sawar, in Oruzgan’s remote Charchino district. “What can we expect from such people in supporting or playing a role in governing this country?” he asks. “That old man has never seen Tarin Kowt. He doesn’t know what his rights are; how do you introduce democracy to him?”

“It’s very difficult. The people are ignorant and they don’t understand this democracy. We need time, lots of time, but gradually we’re working for better governance.”

“When The Foreigners Leave He Will Be Nothing”

A question that exercises many in Tarin Kowt is the fate of Matiullah in 2014, after the foreigners clear out and Karzai can no longer be called on to send reinforcements.

This is the context in which Matiullah’s appointment as police chief is seen as part of the new Karzai crony network that is intended to survive beyond the end of his presidency. Because if they cannot hold the south, what’s to come of the Karzai cabal?

Juma Gul Heimat, the former police chief, uses cashews, sugared almonds and other nibbles to map tribal conflict in Oruzgan. “There are big areas that MK does not control, and because his Popalzai people have fought with everyone else, it will be difficult for

him to assert himself as a powerbroker,” he says. “Even if Kabul backs him, people will want to test him.

“When the foreigners leave he will be nothing.”

A warning by the former police chief that “MK will lose his power, lose his men” resonates with a throwaway line by one of Matiullah’s militiamen during the convoy run from Tarin Kowt to Kandahar.

“We do this for the money,” he says as the armoured Toyota barrels down the highway. “It’s not about loyalty to MK.”

And though Matiullah and his rival Nabi Khan Tokhi have recently come to some sort of accommodation, the latter seems to think all bets might be off come next year’s elections. “Then we’ll see who is president and who is police chief,” he says.

“MK has brought good benefits for his tribe but he has done nothing for the rest of us.

“The balance between the tribes is not maintained - and without that balance there can be no security.”

Walking Fairfax Media through continuing sectarian violence in Khas Uruzgan, a community leader ponders the fate of Matiullah in the absence of the foreign forces.

“What is he if there are no Americans, no Australians? The people will stand against him - he’ll be nothing,” the leader says. “Nobody in the other tribes - Achekzai, Noorzai or Barakzai - likes him and people work for him only to earn a living.

“The day the foreigners leave his own men will kill him ... They’ll be lining up to take Matiullah down.”

MORE:

**How The Frightened Australian
Army Command Desperately
Tried And Failed To Kill The
News Report Above You Have
Just Read:**

**“It Became Apparent That Unseen Hands Were Working To Thwart Us”
Army Told Afghans “The Fairfax Team Was In Oruzgan To ‘Write Wrong Stories’”
“You Have No Permission To Be Here”**



Australian soldiers searching for IED's near the Puza Bridge. Photo: Kate Geraghty

March 16, 2013 by Paul McGeough, Chief foreign correspondent, The Sydney Morning Herald

Tarin Kowt:

When Australian Defence Force media flacks met spokesmen from a number of Afghan government agencies in the southern wilds of Afghanistan late in January, critical ADF business was on the agenda – how to block independent reporting from the province by Fairfax Media.

Farid Ayil, a spokesman for the provincial chief of police, said he was pressured during the meeting to recommend to his boss Matiullah Khan that he should refuse to host a Fairfax news team of myself and photographer Kate Geraghty – an outcome that would have made our reporting assignment virtually impossible.

Despite a flat denial, issued by an ADF spokesman last week, that there had been any attempt to derail the Fairfax assignment, Mr Ayil said in an interview: “The (ADF) guy went around the table getting everyone to say they had refused, and then he demanded to know why we were taking you.”

The unnamed ADF representative had then presented a litany of reasons to back his argument – the Fairfax team was in Oruzgan to “write wrong stories”; it had travelled to Tarin Kowt “without permission”; and it had entered Afghanistan “without a letter from the Australian government”.

The ADF media doctrine is based on maintaining tight military control on the movement of journalists and their access to military and civilian interview subjects.

And as Geraghty and I worked our Kabul and Tarin Kowt contacts to find an Afghan agency that might host us in the provincial centre, it became apparent that unseen hands were working to thwart us.

A series of invitations that had been issued warmly were curtly withdrawn – in most cases, within hours.

Mr Ayil said that after canvassing a decision by the provincial governor to withdraw his initial approval for us to lodge in his guest house, and an offer by an Afghan National Army general to arrange an ANA billet which also had fallen through, he was put under pressure.

What followed, as he recalled, was a reversal of what might have been expected – instead of the more worldly Australians encouraging their skittish Afghan counterparts to be open and cooperative with the news media, it was the reverse.

"I told them you were free journalists – that you didn't need to ask for permission to be here, and that we didn't need to ask for permission to host you," Ayil said a few days after the meeting in Tarin Kowt.

"I couldn't figure out why it was such a problem for them. I asked why they were making such a big deal out of it. I told the guy not to worry, because your security was our responsibility – we're good at security and you'd write the real story of Oruzgan."

“You Have No Permission To Be Here”

On arriving at Tarin Kowt on a commercial flight in mid-January, Geraghty and I were approached on the tarmac by several Australian military officers. Geraghty was asked to identify herself and then told: "you have no permission to be here."

We were not formally detained. But it was made clear that we would not be allowed to leave the makeshift terminal, while the Australians checked whether or not the ANA would host us.

While they made their inquiries, our resourceful Afghan translator, who had accompanied us from Kabul, called his contacts and was able to confirm that we were to be guests of the police chief.

Even before the Australians had completed their inquiries with their Afghan counterparts, Matiullah Khan had dispatched a police pick-up to move us to an elaborate and very safe guesthouse at his sprawling compound, which is adjacent to the foreign forces base on the outskirts of Tarin Kowt.

Ayil said that in the subsequent days there had been so many phone calls, by Afghan translators on behalf of the ADF, inquiring about our whereabouts, that his colleagues took to refusing to divulge information on our movements.

Later, a bemused Matiullah Khan chuckled, seeming to enjoy what had the appearance of a power play with the Australians – if only for a bit of political sport, it made good sense for him to allow us to remain on the ground, when the Australians were so determined to block us.

“You Have A Right To Come Here To Talk To The Afghan People – Why Are They Trying So Hard To Stop You?”

More often the butt of criticism for displaying a low regard for the niceties of democracy and human rights, the police chief seemed genuinely puzzled that such an effort was being made to block a news team.

"You're journalists - right?" he said on our first meeting. "As far as I'm concerned, you have a right to come here to talk to the Afghan people – why are they trying so hard to stop you?"

The ADF charge that we were in Afghanistan ‘without a letter from the Australian government’ suggested an Australian operation that went beyond the ADF to include the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

All foreign journalists arriving in Kabul are expected to register for accreditation with the Afghan Foreign Ministry – which has hit upon requesting a pro-forma letter from a journalist’s embassy stating that Reporter or Photographer X indeed works for Publication Y in their home country. The Australian embassy in Kabul has issued such a letter for me in the past.

However, in a phone message which I was told came from the acting ambassador in Kabul, but was relayed through the emergency consular hotline staff in Canberra, I was told that because we had entered the country ‘under (our) own steam’ and not by invitation of the ADF or DFAT and because we were not accompanying a minister or officials of the Australian government, we would not be issued a letter.

Given that its Australian component is perhaps just one per cent of the Afghanistan story, the embassy was effectively denying our right as journalists to cover any of the story – because most arms of the Afghan security establishment require that visiting reporters have the Foreign Ministry accreditation.

To move without restriction, we had decided not to subject ourselves to ADF control by formally requesting an ADF embed at Tarin Kowt – but we did request an interview with the Australian commanding officer.

Despite our presence on the ground for 10 days in accommodation about 100m from the gate to his base, his media staff informed us that he was not available.

In response to written questions issued on March 4, the ADF said that “your request for an interview ... was approved; however, we understand that you had already departed Tarin Kowt”.

The statement finished cheerfully – “We look forward to working with you for future visits and hope that you are able to provide us with sufficient notice to allow appropriate planning to occur.”

DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE MILITARY?



U.S. soldier in Beijia 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 injustices, 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.

MILITARY NEWS

“The Ongoing Problem Of Vets Who Suffer Through Long Waits For Appointments At VA Hospitals And Clinics”

“At Least Two Veterans Died Last Year Waiting To See A Doctor”

“Others Couldn’t Get Primary Care Appointments For Up To Eight Months”

Mar 15, 2013 By Patricia Kime - Staff writer, Navy Times [Excerpts]

Internal Veterans Affairs Department documents show that at least two veterans died last year waiting to see a doctor while others couldn’t get primary care appointments for up to eight months, members of a House oversight and investigations panel said Thursday.

Addressing the ongoing problem of vets who suffer through long waits for appointments at VA hospitals and clinics, House lawmakers joined federal investigators and veterans service organizations in castigating VA on an issue that has endured for more than a decade.

“Evidence shows that many VA facilities, when faced with a backlog of thousands of outstanding or unresolved consultations, decided to administratively close out these requests. Some reasons given included that the request was years old, too much time had elapsed, or the veteran had died,” said Rep. Mike Coffman, R-Colo., chairman of the House Veterans Oversight and Investigations panel.

According to VA, about 49 percent of new patients and 90 percent of established patients are able to see a primary care doctor or specialist within VA’s goal of 14 days, a metric established in 2011.

But the first-time patients who weren’t seen within 14 days waited an average 50 days to schedule initial appointments.

VA actually has no idea how long most patients wait, said Debra Draper, health care director at the government’s watchdog agency, the Government Accountability Office, which looked into the matter in December.

“The bottom line is it is unclear how long veterans are waiting to receive care in VA’s medical facilities because the reported data are unreliable,” Draper told the panel.

She said GAO analysts found that more than half of VA's 50,000 schedulers did not know how to accurately report the information needed to determine wait times, which includes logging the date a veteran wants to be seen as well as the actual date of the appointment.

Others admitted to changing the desired date so the time aligned with VA's established goal of 14 days.

"We weren't specifically told that they were directed by management, however, the current situation provides ample opportunity to change dates to further reflect the results they want to achieve," Draper said.

She said other issues contribute to the problem, including a scheduling system that is "antiquated, cumbersome and error-prone."

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

**Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number,
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you-
Ye are many — they are few
-- Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1819, on the occasion of a mass murder of British
workers by the Imperial government at Peterloo.**

Sartre Brigade Will Deploy To Afghanistan: U.S. Commander Says “Ange And His Boys Are The Best We Have Left. It’s In The Bag”

[Thanks to R Capron, who sent this in.]

March 14, 2013 By the Activist Newsletter, Issue #189 [activistnewsletter.blogspot.com/]

Kabul, March 11 — Plans to intensify the struggle against the Taliban were advanced yesterday when the U.S. led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) revealed plans to airdrop a platoon of crack French existentialist philosophers into the country to destroy the morale of the remaining terrorist zealots by proving the non-existence of God.

Elements from the feared Jean-Paul Sartre Brigade, or ‘Black Berets’, will be parachuted into the combat zones to spread doubt, despondency and existential anomie among the enemy.

Hardened by numerous intellectual battles fought during their long occupation of Paris’s Left Bank, their first action will be to establish a number of sidewalk cafes at strategic points near the front lines.

There they will drink coffee and talk animatedly about the absurd nature of life and man’s lonely isolation in the universe. They will be accompanied by a number of heartbreakingly beautiful women who will propagate fear, uncertainty and doubt by looking remote and unattainable.

Their leader, Colonel Marc-Ange Belmondo, spoke yesterday of his confidence in the success of their mission. Sorbonne graduate Belmondo, an intense and unshaven young man in a black pullover, gesticulated as he argued, "The Taliban are caught in a logical fallacy of the most ridiculous proportions. There is no God and I can prove it."

Marc-Ange plans to deliver an impassioned thesis on man's inescapable lack of freedom of action, with special reference to the work of Foucault and the films of Alfred Hitchcock — thus finally overwhelming the terrorist forces with logic, provoking confusion and surrender.

Commented the U.S. commander in Afghanistan: "Ange and his boys are the best we have left. It's in the bag."

Barack, A Few Travel Tips For Your Trip To Israel: "To Avoid Any Dangers Of Getting Deported To Nairobi, I Would Just Keep Mentioning That You Are The President Of The United States" "It Might Help"

March 15, 2013 By Amer Zahr, Information Clearing House

Amer is an Arab-American stand-up comedian. Drawing on his experiences growing up as a child of Palestinian refugees, he finds the humor in culture, politics, history, and everyday life.

Amer has also produced and headlined in 2 of his own comedy tours, "1001 Laughs Comedy Tour" & "We're Not White!"

Amer writes and speaks widely on political and social affairs, and has appeared on radio and television, including ABC's "Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher."

Mr. President, I hear you are traveling to Israel.

As a concerned patriotic American citizen of Palestinian descent, I have some pointers for you.

Now, I assume you'll be flying into Tel Aviv. Usually, when non-Jews arrive there, especially if they are a little darker-skinned, they are asked to wait in a... let's call it a "VIP Room."

Incidentally, the room is quite nice. There's a water cooler, comfortable chairs, and a soda machine. It's probably the only place in the world where you can be racially profiled and get an ice-cold Coca-Cola all at once.

To avoid the room, I would mention that you are the President of the United States. It might help.

You may get strip-searched.

Saying you are an American doesn't help much here. I've tried. I even sang the national anthem last time an Israeli soldier was looking down my pants. Right after I said, "Oh say can you see," he said, "Not much."

To escape this embarrassment, I would mention that you are the President of the United States. It might help.

In case they don't already know, you might not want to tell Israeli security you are half-Muslim.

As a fellow half-Muslim, I can tell you they don't really care about the percentage. Any bit of Muslim freaks them out.

And I'm not sure if you heard, but the fans of one of Israel's soccer teams, Beitar Jerusalem, actually protested when the club signed two Muslim players. When one of them scored in a game last week, hundreds of fans actually walked out of the stadium. One of the fans later stated about the Muslim players, "It's not racism. They just shouldn't be here."

Hopefully, they don't know your middle name is "Hussein." Maybe they didn't watch the inauguration.

In any case, I would mention that you are the President of the United States. It might help.

This next one might be a little tough.

Maybe you didn't hear, but lately there has been a little "African problem" in Israel. Over the past several years, tens of thousands immigrants from Africa, mostly from Eritrea and Sudan, have entered the "only democracy in the Middle East." Most of them are looking for work, and some are political refugees. Israel has recently rounded up many of them for deportation.

Oh, and by the way, they don't call them "refugees" or "migrants," they call them "infiltrators." Israelis have held numerous demonstrations in Tel Aviv, where most of the migrants live, to demand an African exodus from Israel.

And the refugees aren't the only Africans Israel seems to have a problem with. About 150,000 Israeli Jews are of Ethiopian descent.

A number of news organizations reported early this year that Israeli government doctors had been giving Ethiopian Jewish women contraceptives either against their will or without their knowledge. The Israeli government admitted the practice and decided to stop it once it was reported on.

See, Mr. Obama, many rabbis in Israel have questioned the "Jewishness" of Ethiopian Jews. And if you're not Jewish in Israel, well... I'd be glad to give you the full story on that someday.

So they're not too crazy about their own Ethiopian citizens, and last year, Benjamin Netanyahu warned that illegal immigrants from Africa "threaten our existence as a Jewish and democratic state."

I know, "Jewish" and "democratic"? It's confusing. I'll try to explain that one to you one day too, but I can't guarantee I'll be able to. But I think one thing is clear. Israel does not seem to like Africans too much.

Now I know you're not from Eritrea, Ethiopia, or Sudan, but I probably wouldn't advertise too strongly that your dad was from Kenya. This might be really hard, given your skin tone and everything, especially if you're bringing Michelle with you.

To avoid any dangers of getting deported to Nairobi, I would just keep mentioning that you are the President of the United States. It might help.

OK, finally, when you leave, Israeli security officers are going to search your bags.

And they don't do it casually with a smile like our airport security here. They go through your stuff like a wife looking for evidence of an affair.

You might remind them that you, as the President of the United States, sign their checks.

And they're going to strip search you again.

Yes, on the way out too. Strip searches in Israel are "buy one, get one free."

They perform the strip search in a section of the airport aside from where the normal operations are conducted. You'll run into a few of your Palestinian-American constituents when you're there. I know it's a weird place for someone to ask to take a picture with you, but to us, it's just part of visiting home.

You don't have to mention to us that you are the President of the United States.

We already know.

We supported you, twice. Maybe you can return the favor.

New XO Attempting To Stamp Out Misuse of Word 'Literally'

16 March 2013 by da kine, The Duffel Blog

FORT BLISS, TEXAS – Major Sean O'Sullivan, the new executive officer of 1-42 Air Defense Artillery Battalion, has made it his primary mission in life to stamp out the misuse of the word "literally" among his staff officers and subordinate leaders within the battalion.

O'Sullivan's first salvo in this campaign came last Tuesday in the form of a signed and scanned memorandum sent to all 1-42 ADA staff officers and company commanders, with both the battalion and brigade commanders carbon copied.

The memorandum went into some detail on how the XO saw an increase in the misuse of the word "literally" throughout the formation and encouraged all battalion personnel to avoid using it "in e-mails, military memos, or even off-duty hours if (they) do not know how to use it properly."

Other parts of the letter indicated how seriously O'Sullivan takes the situation: "1-42 ADA is a professional organization that is represented to both internal and external organizations and agencies by our words, both in text and orally.

"When one of our team says they 'literally shit themselves laughing,' it reflects negatively on this command. Has anyone ever actually shit himself or herself from laughing then had to change their filthy pants? That is what 'literally shitting oneself' means."

In the memo's next paragraph, O'Sullivan writes: "I recently heard a battery commander during a safety brief say, 'You guys need to stay safe. Like, literally, this is very important to me and the first sergeant.' This sort of usage makes no sense. Could something ever be 'figuratively' important? The use of 'literally' in this context adds no value and serves only to waste our Soldiers' (sic) time."

Other members of 1-42 ADA do not share the XO's opinion. Command Sergeant Major Edwin Merrill, who holds a master's degree in applied linguistics from the University of Massachusetts Boston, believes that O'Sullivan's obsession with the word "literally" shows an inability to accept the changing nature of language.

"The misuse of 'literally' can get annoying I guess," Merrill told The Duffel Blog, "but language is always evolving. The good Major needs to understand that. If I wanted to sharp-shoot, I could point out he used 'their' as a gender-neutral, singular pronoun in his memo. He also says 'less' when he means 'fewer,' but I don't get up in his shit.

"Don't get me started on how often he misuses the word 'ironic.' Maybe he should worry about the (Unit Status Report) and 026 (deadline report)."

Captain Jose Barraza, the commander of Bravo Battery, was more frank in his criticism of the XO. "Major Sully sent off that memo to all of us and cc:ed our rater and senior rater.

“Maybe I should have ‘replied all’ and pointed out that he used the word ‘whom’ when he should have used ‘who.’ And he’s a jackass about ellipses. Fucking toolbag.”

When he responded to an email from TDB, O’Sullivan stuck to his guns.

“The way these staff officers and commanders use ‘literally,’ you would think it was like the word ‘smurf’ in that they use it to mean anything they want. It has a very specific meaning and they make themselves look unprofessional by using it incorrectly since grammar and usage are crucial to the profession of arms. Between you and I, I only cc:ed the BC and BDE CDR to make sure they knew I was serious about this.”

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Zionists Stage Home Invasions, Beat And Arrest Palestinians To Prepare For Obama Visit:

**“When Obama Asks For A Good-Will
Gesture By The Israeli Side, They Are
Going To Release These Prisoners Who
Do Not Pose A Security Threat”**

14 March 2013 Middle East Monitor

On Thursday morning at dawn Israeli occupation forces detained scores of Palestinian citizens from several cities across the West Bank.

Palestinian sources said that those detained had been taken from their homes in the dark. The occupation forces carried out extensive searches of the homes, damaging the properties and confiscating computers and mobile phones.

Four of the detainees from Jerusalem were seized by Israeli special forces.

Witnesses said that the Israeli forces broke into 18 year old Yazan Syam’s house in Silwan.

After detaining Yazan, the forces reportedly harshly beat his family members.

According to the director of Wadi al-Helwa Information Centre, Jawad Syam, the Israeli special forces also broke into the Muheisin family house in Al-Bustan neighbourhood and subjected the residents to beatings.

Activists said that the mass detention campaign was a continuation of the detentions that Israeli forces had carried out in the wake of the protests that erupted after the Israeli storming of the Al-Aqsa mosque last Friday.

Meanwhile, Israeli forces in the Talfeet neighbourhood near Nablus fired tear gas at school students. Local sources said that 30 students required first aid treatment for breathing problems.

Sources in the West Bank told MEMO that this was the fourth time Israeli forces had targeted Palestinian schools in the West Bank this month.

"They break into schools, fire tear gas and sometimes arrest students under the pretext of throwing stones" the sources told MEMO.

In addition, a Palestinian worker was detained whilst at work at the Al-Anbatawi Company in Nablus.

In the wake of the latest turmoil in the West Bank and Jerusalem Palestinians have increased their protests against recent Israeli violations. Journalist and activist, Ahmed al-Betawi, from Nablus said that there were two reasons behind the increasing Israeli detentions.

The first reason, Al-Betwai told MEMO, was the Israeli occupations attempt to prevent the outbreak of a new Intifada in the West Bank. "The Israeli occupation is not ready to face a new Intifada. It is preparing itself to (face) potential threats from the Syrian and Egyptian sides."

The other reason, according to Al-Betawi, is the upcoming President Obama visit.

"Obama might oblige the Israeli government to release a number of Palestinian prisoners as a good-will gesture before the resumption of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. Therefore, they (are) trying to detain a large number of prisoners.

"Then, when Obama asks for a good-will gesture by the Israeli side, they (the Israelis) are going to release these prisoners who do not pose a security threat."

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

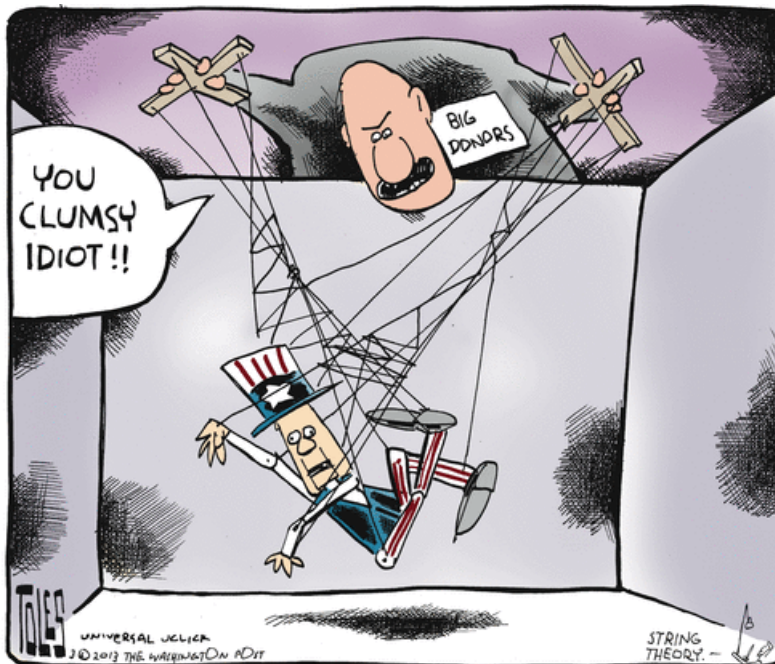
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DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



CLASS WAR REPORTS



**The Noose Tightens:
“War And Its Consequences Are
Inching Closer Even To Maleki,
Home To Many Government
Officials, Including The Private
Residence Of President Bashar Al-
Assad”**

**“Checkpoints Are Often Targets Of
Rebel Attacks”**

**“This Week, Many Families Rushed To
Get Their Military-Age Male Members Out
Of The Country After The State’s Pro-
Regime Mufti Called For Jihad”**

The market, which is next to the Jobar neighborhood, is worse off. Rebels established a foothold in Jobar in early February. From that base they have stepped up attacks inside the city.

March 15, 2013 By SAM DAGHER, The Wall Street Journal [Excerpts]

DAMASCUS—For most residents here in the Syrian capital, war governs every detail of life.

As the uprising-turned civil war enters its third year this month, the Assad regime has turned the center of Damascus into a maze of checkpoints and fortifications and says it is making progress routing rebels amassed in the suburbs.

The rebels, stepping up urban guerrilla warfare tactics, say they are closing in on the capital.

Stuck between them are nearly 2.5 million people, residents of the capital and those who came here to escape the violence in the suburbs and other parts of the country.

The city is on edge.

Mind games, conspiracy theories and rumors often overwhelm reason.

The Syrian capital has been spared the devastation of the country's other major cities. Children attend school and people go to work, shop in well-stocked markets, eat in restaurants and lounge in coffee shops.

But life here is getting more precarious.

Most city streets become deserted at night and on Fridays, the Syrian weekend, when people anticipate an uptick in violence.

This week, many families rushed to get their military-age male members out of the country after the state's pro-regime mufti called for jihad to repulse foreign invaders. Many saw the call as a prelude to mass conscription.

"Is it fair for me to keep my family here?" said a resident in his mid-40s living with his wife and daughter in the upscale neighborhood of Maleki. His family's life, he said, is now confined to Maleki, his nearby office and his daughter's school. "I have this guilty feeling and I stay up until 2 or 3 a.m. thinking about it."

War and its consequences are inching closer even to Maleki, home to many government officials, including the private residence of President Bashar al-Assad. There is the daily sound of nearby artillery pounding rebel positions on the city's southwestern fringes. And the neighborhood itself was hit last month by several mortar rounds.

Firing in the direction of checkpoints, security outposts and officials' homes has become a common insurgent tactic, despite the risk to civilians. This week, six people were killed and 80 wounded in such mortar attacks in Damascus.

Every week, the Maleki resident said, family, friends and acquaintances join a steady stream of those who have sought shelter in places such as Egypt, Lebanon and the semiautonomous Kurdistan region of Iraq. One couple keeps a suitcase packed and a car ready with a full tank of gasoline in case they have to flee with their children to Lebanon, he said.

Abu Mouaz now bikes from home in Salehiya on the northern side of the city to his shop in the city's main food market in the southeast side.

Pedaling allows him to navigate through checkpoints, which are often targets of rebel attacks.

Near his home, sandbag positions and concrete barriers are set up outside several regime security and military installations. There is a large armored police truck.

The market, which is next to the Jobar neighborhood, is worse off.

Rebels established a foothold in Jobar in early February. From that base they have stepped up attacks inside the city. A food-packaging warehouse in the market went up in flames last week after it was hit during clashes there.

"It is as if we have one foot in life and the other foot in the afterlife," says Abu Mouaz, in an effort to describe the precarious existence of most Syrians.

Damascus residents, whether they are opponents and supporters of the regime, have honed their survival skills.

Most keep off the airport road and several sections of the Southern Flyover, the main highway snaking around the capital. Sniper fire and frequent clashes are common on these roads.

In Abaseen Square, a main square next to Jobar, residents call neighborhood watchers to find out if it is safe to return home from work.

A regime loyalist who owns a bookshop in Abaseen has assumed such a role. On a recent afternoon, as regime tanks off the square pounded rebels in Jobar, he fielded calls from neighbors—telling them the neighborhood was safe, despite reports to the contrary on pro-opposition Arab news channels. "Come home!" he yelled into the phone.

Regime opponents also team up to keep each other informed. One activist helps compile a list of restaurants and cafes to be avoided because they are known haunts for members of the security and intelligence services. They also avoid neighborhoods where the regime has stood up loyalist militias, known as Popular Committees.

On a recent day, about a dozen men in military fatigues and civilian clothes raided a row of popular teahouses in central Damascus, and arrested two men and forced them into the back of an SUV.

"Arrest is my biggest fear," said the activist, shortly afterward. "I am trying to manage stress and avoid having a nervous breakdown like so many people I know."

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