

Military Resistance 11C11



Where Are My Pain Pills

From: Dennis Serdel
To: Military Resistance Newsletter
Sent: March 16, 2013
Subject: Where Are My Pain Pills

Written by Dennis Serdel, Vietnam 1967-68 (one tour) Light Infantry, Americal Div. 11th Brigade; United Auto Workers GM Retiree

Where Are My Pain Pills

The TV makes John sick
like pouring poison down his eyes
a water-boarding all the time
barely mentioning the Soldiers
dying & the torture

of being wounded
& the DOD cutting back
on Veterans benefits
a new aircraft boat & a jet
& how the Soldiers & Workers
would be better off dead
than starving in the streets
John doesn't see a new greatest
generation, just two black eyes
with puss pouring down his face
like tears, a sucker punch
& it makes it hard to see
the TV as it lies
everything was not OK before
a mine blew off his leg
& they called the dead
that were with him
American Martyrs like the other side
that fight for God and Country
& the flag in a 911 response that
is old & the memory has faded
like dead Soldiers long ago
& now in a longest war
that should be over & a Memorial
built before the last dead Soldier
ends the war because others
can be added like the Vietnam Wall
as John feels his old leg
sometimes
but it isn't flesh anymore
it's a 911 Memorial made out
of steel to hold his body up
as the TV stand in his room
holds the TV up as a monster
that brews hatred & turns his room
to red
as the world is revolutionizing
the rich are being turned into
an early 911 X memory
like in the beginning
before the war switch,
What about us Iraq Soldiers,
are you going to give us
our GI Bill, our benefits because
all these hundreds of "Help The Vets"
Charities haven't given me

a single dime, they keep
most of the money, maybe build
a wheel chair ramp to an old trailer
in a run down trailer park, take
pictures of it to show to the suckers
these con-artists should be jailed
They will not make a Memorial
for us even though
Iraq did not attack us
reducing the twin towers
to two blue lights shining up
into the night
the people who died in the towers
would not want our Soldiers
fighting a wrong war
an Empire Building war
as the Pentagon has its eyes
& is already invading Africa
with boots on the ground
and drones
& in Baghdad, they're still
killing each other every day
& Afghanistan is a joke
unless you're there.
Maybe we will have to build
a Memorial by ourselves...

Rock Poetry written by Dennis Serdel for Military Resistance

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.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Edmond Soldier Is Killed In Afghanistan Attack

March 13, 2013 BY ROBERT MEDLEY and BRYAN DEAN, NewsOK

EDMOND — A week after Rex Schad graduated high school in Edmond, his mother paid the application fees to enroll him at the University of Central Oklahoma.

A few hours later he “confessed” that what he really wanted to do was join the Army, said his mother, Colleen Whipple. Schad unenrolled from UCO and joined the military.

The 25-year-old staff sergeant died Monday in Afghanistan, the victim of an insider attack by an Afghan police officer, family members said.

Schad had been in Afghanistan since November on his second tour, said his grandfather, Harold Whipple, of Edmond.

Two chaplains and an Army sergeant visited the family Monday afternoon and told them Schad had been killed earlier in the day.

Colleen Whipple said she knew her son had been killed when she saw men sitting in a van outside her house.

“It’s a shame,” Colleen Whipple said. “But it’s what he wanted to do.”

Family members said Schad never wavered from the commitment he made to the Army just after he graduated high school.

“He was a soldier,” Harold Whipple said. “He was where he wanted to be. Not only did he enlist in the Army, but he had asked to be put in the infantry.”

U.S. Army officials reported two soldiers and two Afghan police officers were killed Monday in eastern Afghanistan when another Afghan police officer opened fire on them. The attacker also was killed in the shoot-out in the eastern Wardak province.

Abdul Razaq Koraishi, the province's deputy police chief, said an Afghan police officer stood up in the back of a police pickup, grabbed a machine gun and started firing at a team led by U.S. special operations and a group of Afghan policemen in the police compound in Jalrez district. In addition to those killed, four police officers were wounded.

The U.S. Defense Department has not released the names of the soldiers killed, but family members said one of them was Schad.

Schad was a 2005 Edmond Memorial High School graduate, Colleen Whipple said.

"It's a tragic loss, but I cannot be more proud of him," Colleen Whipple said. "He was an extraordinary young man taken too soon."

Friends and fellow soldiers, many of whom referred to Schad as a brother, posted notes of condolence on his Facebook page.

"I will miss you," Guillermo Rivas said. "It was great honor to serve with you, but it was a greater honor to be your friend. You left this land in body but your memory will live forever."

Harold Whipple said Schad was sent to Afghanistan from Fort Stewart, Ga. He had lived in Edmond from age 2 until he left to join the Army.

Schad's body is en route to Dover, Del., family members said. Services are pending with Baggerly Funeral Home in Edmond.

US Helicopter Crashes In Afghanistan One Dead, One Injured

2013-03-16 AP

Kabul - A U.S. helicopter has crashed in southern Afghanistan, killing one service member and injuring another.

Captain Luca Carniel says there was no enemy activity in the area when the helicopter crashed on Saturday, and the cause is being investigated.

Kandahar governor spokesperson Javeed Faisal says the helicopter crashed in Daman district, a few kilometres west of Kandahar City.

Officials did not release the type of helicopter or nationalities of the casualties.

It's the second deadly helicopter crash in the south in a week. A Black Hawk crashed outside Kandahar City on Monday, killing five US troops.

<p>POLITICIANS REFUSE TO HALT THE BLOODSHED</p> <p>THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE WAR</p>
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Spain To Pull Troops Back In Afghanistan “Several Units Have Already Been Deactivated”

March 16 (UPI)

Spain has announced plans to begin pulling its troops from Qala-i-Naw province in northwestern Afghanistan to a main base in the neighboring province of Herat.

The pullback, which comes several months earlier than planned, leaves Spanish troops only in western Herat province, Khaama Press reported Saturday.

The withdrawal from Qala-i-Naw had been scheduled for autumn. All Spanish troops are scheduled to out of Afghanistan in 2014.

Several units have already been deactivated and 45 soldiers are scheduled to return to Spain Tuesday, Spanish defense ministry officials said.

Spain had deployed about 1,400 troops as part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. About 100 Spanish military personnel have died in the conflict, most of them in air accidents.

Afghan Suicide Attacks - A Stunning Success: “To U.S. Diplomats Hiding Behind Fortress Walls In Kabul And Elsewhere, The Suicide Attacker Remains A Mystery” “These Officials, Who Have No Desire To Die For Afghanistan And Have No Cause Worth Fighting For, Seem Unable To Comprehend The Motivation Of Those

Who Are Willing To Sacrifice Their Lives For A Cause”

The motivations for these attacks run the gamut, but a surprisingly large source of anti-Americanism is a response to secret arrests in the night, black U.S. prisons, torture, air strikes that hit the wrong targets, drone killings of innocent civilians and the continued U.S. support for brutal dictators, warlords and violent militias.

17 March 2013 by Matthew J. Nasuti, Kabul Press [Excerpts]

Victory usually goes to the side with the highest dedication.

If one dispenses with all the propaganda, the use of suicide attackers, whether they be bombers or insider turncoats, has objectively been a stunning success.

The reality is that an opponent who is willing to die for his or her cause has a significant tactical advantage over a foreign army consisting of troops whose main priority is to survive their war zone tours.

NATO seems befuddled not only by its inability to counter the suicide attacker, but by its failure or refusal to even comprehend its foe.

As a result NATO spokespersons revert back to a tired and discredited theme that suicide attackers are uneducated religious fanatics brainwashed in Madrassa schools in Pakistan by unscrupulous mullahs.

The truth is that most suicide attackers are educated and apparently consider themselves dedicated patriots combating a foreign invader with the only weapon they have, which is themselves.

Two weeks ago it was announced that Tahir Ashrafi, the leader of the Pakistan Ulema (religious) Council, had formally endorsed the use of suicide bombers against American and NATO forces.

He adopted the Taliban saying that, “suicide bombers are the atomic weapons of Muslims.” This ruling emphasizes that the suicide attackers represent mainstream Islam.

It is the same with Christianity. In the Book of Judges 16:30, Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines” and he proceeded to pull down a Philistine temple on himself and on the Philistine rulers. Samson is a hero of the Bible.

One of the difficulties that these attackers present to the West is that the most dedicated and courageous fighters seem to be on the other side. Just as with the Vietnam War, the enemy is dedicated to victory at all cost, while Afghan security forces seem less so.

An exception to this trend occurred on March 9, 2012 in a village in Khost Province. In a remarkable demonstration of courage, Afghan policeman Murad Khan reportedly ran up to and embraced a suicide bomber, absorbing much of the blast with his body.

This dramatic act of heroism resulted in no public statement by the hapless U.S. Ambassador James B. Cunningham or by NATO's bewildered new commander General Joseph Dunford.

Both officials should have immediately boarded a helicopter and flown to Khost to meet with Murad Khan's family in order to herald his bravery and ensure that his family was being provided for.

Every day the U.S. Embassy and NATO churn out reams of meaningless press releases and manufactured statistics. The tide of garbage produced is so great that the officials fail to grasp when an event occurs that truly merits a press release.

Murad Khan represented everything that the West is attempting to build in Afghanistan, yet both Cunningham and Dunford seem oblivious to the situation on the ground. U.S. officials seem to never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity.

The U.S. Embassy's website is currently gushing over the visit of Michael H. Posner, one of a gaggle of Assistant Secretaries of State who come and go into Afghanistan each year. He arrived for a meaningless conference on "promoting shared democratic values." Secretary Posner, speaking inside a heavily protected conference center, spoke about the "considerable progress" being achieved in Afghanistan.

Secretary Posner's refusal to tour the countryside belies his propaganda speech.

To U.S. and NATO diplomats hiding behind fortress walls in Kabul and elsewhere, the suicide attacker remains a mystery.

These officials, who have no desire to die for Afghanistan and have no cause worth fighting for, seem unable to comprehend the motivation of those who are willing to sacrifice their lives for a cause.

The history of those willing to die for a cause is a long one.

It dates back to the Spartan defense of Thermopylae in 480 B.C.; the siege of Masada in 73-74 A.D.; the defense of the Alamo in 1836; Pickett's charge at Gettysburg on July 3, 1863, the Viet Minh "death volunteers" who threw themselves at French defenses at Dien Bien Phu, and the Japanese Kamikaze attacks of 1944-45.

In Japanese, "Kami: means "God." God's Wind was able to recruit more than 4,000 pilots who were successful in sinking up to 47 Allied ships, while damaging another 368, including battleships and aircraft carriers. It must have taken great skill and amazing courage to carry out those attacks.

Just like today, the attacks were dismissed as the work of fanatics, rather than patriots.

We now know that the 9/11 hijackers were not religious fanatics, but were largely secular and were motivated by more complex factors.

The problem for the American people is that they continue to be fed a diet of distortions.

All overseas attacks are brushed off by U.S. officials as the work of one organization, al-Qaeda and its affiliates.

The reality is that there is a growing and diverse list of groups opposed to the United States and this information is being concealed from the American public.

The motivations for these attacks run the gamut, but a surprisingly large source of anti-Americanism is a response to secret arrests in the night, black U.S. prisons, torture, air strikes that hit the wrong targets, drone killings of innocent civilians and the continued U.S. support for brutal dictators, warlords and violent militias.

The suicide attackers, both bombers and those who infiltrate the security forces in order to attack within, are undermining the NATO war effort and are succeeding to a degree that NATO refuses to admit.

The tactic has been by all accounts an amazing success. The reality is that one determined man or woman cannot easily be stopped by Western technology.

The answer to this crisis is to address the root causes of the suicide bomber.

In order to do that, the West needs to cease smearing the bombers with a “fanatic” label and publicly recognize that the attackers consider themselves to be patriots fighting for (what in some instances are) just causes.

One depressing Western example is The New York Times. On March 14, 2013 it ran an Editorial that endorsed the idea that the United States should engage and work with Kenya's new President Uhuru Kenyatta, despite clear evidence that he funded vicious death squads in Kenya.

The Times essentially argued that U.S. strategic interests were separate from issues of morality and decency, and outweighed them.

By adopting such abhorrent positions, The Times has increased the risks for American journalists working overseas. If Kenyans who lost family members and relatives to the death squads should decide to retaliate against American journalists or even The Times itself with suicide attacks, it is certain that The Times' management would react with outrage and shock.

However to some, such attacks would be justified.

Suicides can be an indicator of desperation against an adversary, but they are also an indicator of internal decay. In 2012 the U.S. military officially recorded 349 suicides among military members, a number that was up 15% from 2011. That means that one suicide occurs every 25 hours.

In Afghanistan, there is a rising tide of suicides by women and girls who have been promised freedom by the West, but find that such freedom is nothing more than a press release by the U.S. Secretary of State. As the reality sinks in, suicide rates have skyrocketed. While U.S. officials hold photo sessions with wealthy Afghan women and proclaim that women are advancing in Afghanistan, the reality in the countryside is different.

The response by Western Governments to all these suicides is denial and paralysis.

The suicides signal fundamental problems and a growing cancer within the West, but Western officials refuse to publicly acknowledge the problems, therefore the suicides continue.

There is such a gulf between Western governments and the developing world, and between Western officials and their own troops that solutions seem impossible. Without a solution, victory may well fall to the side most determined to win.

Remember that in 1983 a single suicide truck bomber attacked the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut resulting in the eventual withdrawal of the U.S. and French expeditionary force in Lebanon.

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

“The US-Backed Warlord Hakim Shujoyi, Runs Amok – Killing, Raping, Looting”

“There Is No Law But If You Have A Network And You Can Be Useful To The Foreign Forces And If You Have Patrons In Kabul, Then Nobody Can Touch You”

“Weighing The Threats, Juma Gul Opts For The Taliban As The Lesser Of The Evils”

“The Taliban Are More Dangerous Than Dangerous, But The Past Excesses Of The Elders Are Worse Than Anything The Taliban Has Done”

March 15, 2013 by Paul McGeough, The Sydney Morning Herald [Excerpts]

Haji Mohammad Qasim moves, and his pistol follows him around the room.

He lounges on a floor cushion and it's there on a window sill – in easy reach. He shifts to a sofa when tea is served with dried mulberries and walnuts and, when a servant boy glides by, he stuffs the pistol into a gap in the upholstery.

As Qasim excuses himself, wandering off to check a thermostat by the door, he slips the weapon into the ample folds of his dun-coloured robes. At 31 he is young to be carrying the weighty turban of a tribal elder, but Qasim is acutely aware of the risks.

His father, Jan Mohammed Khan – dubbed JMK by the Americans and feared as much as he was revered – was one floor above where we are having tea in the family's Kabul home when his guards were conned by two gunmen.

They posed as students on hard times who were after a handout. When they got up close they opened fire, ending the old man's long, brutal existence – but not before JMK had given them \$70 each.

It was summer 2011 and Jan Mohammed Khan's demise, amid a wave of attacks dubbed the “messages of death”, rocked the Kabul government and triggered a power struggle that still plays out in a remote corner of Afghanistan called Oruzgan.

These days it is the provincial police chief Matiullah Khan, JMK's protege and a distant cousin of the risk-averse young Qasim, who rules the roost in Tarin Kowt, Oruzgan's provincial capital and home to just 10,000, mostly illiterate people.

He is known as MK – his key rivals have been eliminated and he has become bigger than the government.

Matiullah is disdainful of the elaborate plans by which the international community has struggled to set up a system of strong provincial administrations to be cogs in the wheels of a central machine in Kabul.

He has been locking in his own parallel structures at the same time as he rakes in millions from his Australian-backed highway-security scam.

Similarly, off in a far corner of the province, a district called Khas Oruzgan, the US-backed warlord Hakim Shujoyi, runs amok – killing, raping, looting.

Seemingly getting away with it, Shujoyi is just as contemptuous as the more sure-footed, forty-ish Matiullah of the grand designs of the foreigners.

For all the differences between them, these two are strongmen who have risen on new money and might, not by the old measures of numbers of tribesmen and acres. Together they encapsulate the triumph of misguided coalition strategies and warlord greed over what was to be the West's fragile gift to Afghanistan – democracy.

There is no sense of Jeffersonian or Westminster governance in Oruzgan. The turnout for the 2010 elections was the lowest in Afghanistan, 6.4 per cent. Such was voter apathy among the majority Pashtuns that an enthusiastic turnout by the minority Hazaras meant Khas Oruzgan was poised to be represented in parliament only by members of its oppressed Hazara minority.

So an Afghan solution was found and the world blinked indifferently – the Hazara votes were shredded.

“They Expect That Blood Will Be Spilt As The Contest For A Slice Of A Smaller Economic Pie Will Be Even More Bitterly Fought”

Amid such expediency it doesn't do to get caught between the likes of Matiullah Khan and Hakim Shujoyi.

And after the bulk of foreign forces are withdrawn next year, ordinary Afghans harbour great fears for the future. They expect that blood will be spilt as the contest for a slice of a smaller economic pie will be even more bitterly fought. Those who can, pin their hopes on a visa to Australia – or anywhere that is not Afghanistan.

One of those hopefuls is Hammedullah Hammedie, who finds himself at a crossroads in the new Afghanistan. Moving between the power struggles among local tribes and the more enlightened world of the heavily fortified Australian bunker that serves as the nerve centre for the international commitment to Oruzgan, Hammedie is a construction contractor who confesses to weeping for his nation.

He should be laughing. His company has gained Australian reconstruction contracts worth millions. For all that, he writes off the whole Western adventure in his homeland as great expectations dashed.

“People are so disappointed. The promises have not been fulfilled,” he says, sitting in an office adorned with a framed Australian certificate of appreciation for his work. “This is not a democracy,” he says.

Hammedie invokes the name of his grandfather as the resolver of the most vexing local disputes, of kings and presidents who have come to his family home – but not any more

because contact with today's ruling class would bring dishonour and disgrace on his noble family.

“The Contractor Sees ‘Prostitutes And Hotel Servants’ In What Serves As A National Parliament”

This is a man who embodies the Afghan sense of self – what his family means to those around him, what he can contribute and, ahem, what he might take for himself on the way through.

He worries about security at an intimate, personal level. “I have a nice house and 13 fine cars,” he says, holding court at a lunch of 50 dishes that he lays on for this correspondent. “But I can't go outside my family compound because everywhere is too dangerous. I was safer as a child, riding a bicycle in the village.”

Then tracing an arc from Tarin Kowt to Kabul, the contractor sees “prostitutes and hotel servants” in what serves as a national parliament; a bunch of incompetents hijacking a bureaucracy in which merit counts for naught; and a pointy elbowed band of business thieves who have been licensed as a new tribal elite.

“They've given our country to those whose hands are still red with the blood of the people,” he says.

He laments the failure at the heart of the Western presence in Afghanistan, the foreigners' empowerment of a ruthless warlord class that Afghans had dared to hope had been banished – first, by the Taliban when they ran the country; and, second, by the foreign invasion of 2001 that sent the fundamentalists' Islamist regime packing.

This is the context in which Hammedie's endorsement of Matiullah Khan, as a modern warlord whose time and tone are right, serves as a brutal punctuation mark in the Afghanistan debate.

There is no doubt that in Tarin Kowt MK runs the show. Nominally the provincial governorship sits above him in the pecking order but it has become an inconsequential revolving door – corruption and jealousy in, and complaints, out.

The incumbent, Amir Muhammad Akundzada, was appointed not quite a year ago and already there are rumours his days are numbered as the police chief Matiullah eclipses him too.

Observations by the locals are reminders of a reality of life in the new Afghanistan – that the parliament in Kabul and all its symbolism are little more than window dressing for the West's failed experiment in exporting democracy.

“Matiullah Khan is so powerful,” cautions young female MP Reihana Azad. “There will be power struggles but MK will not go easily; he won't go quietly.”

Despite celebration around the world of fingers dipped in ink as proof that Afghans had voted, real power in Oruzgan is in the hands of people with a reputation for using violence.

“There Is No Law But If You Have A Network And You Can Be Useful To The Foreign Forces And If You Have Patrons In Kabul, Then Nobody Can Touch You”

“This is the way it works,” says an officer from a non-governmental organisation versed in local affairs. “There is no law but if you have a network and you can be useful to the foreign forces and if you have patrons in Kabul, then nobody can touch you.”

A meaty drumstick in construction contractor Hammedullah's grasp pauses short of his mouth as he anoints Matiullah Khan: “I look around, and he is the only person here who serves his people well.” Hammedullah rattles off the names of half-a-dozen local strongmen, dismissing all as lowlifes who “stole the people's mattresses and cushions” before he comes back to the police chief.

“He's the warlord we need. I was here through the mujahideen wars – Matiullah is better than all the others put together.”

On the bald slopes of the Hindu Kush in Char Chino district, a day's rough driving from Tarin Kowt, Nader, a Kuchi nomad, has no comprehension of how his image is captured in a camera. Two valleys to the north, herder Shahib Jan cannot get his head around the concept of a newspaper, much less the internet.

But among the elders sipping tea on a Saturday morning in the district centre at Shahidi Hassas, the summation of Afghanistan's predicament is as erudite as any paper published on the issue by the think tanks in Washington.

These road trips early last month, hundreds of kilometres over 10 days, reveal the stunning beauty of craggy mountains where the light and mood change by the minute, as the sun swings high through the cobalt blue heavens.

Unseen, but seeping through villages tucked into the folds of each valley, are all the elements of a cultural and political force-field little altered after more than a decade in the embrace of what the Afghan people were assured would be the civilising arms of the West.

Afghanistan's first language is still violence. Bombings and beheadings, raping and looting, kidnappings and land grabs are frequent enough to communicate to the country's fearful millions that their destiny remains in the disfiguring, uncaring hands of others.

That an incident of brutality happened last year, or two years earlier, does not diminish the threat for all in today's retelling of villagers rounded up and murdered, some by the weight of great boulders dropped on them; others by a vehicle driven over their head.

Or of rape as a weapon – with an added signature punishment of the attackers using their teeth to tear at the flesh of their victims' breasts.

High-tech or crude, violence is violence. Perpetrated by foreigners, Taliban or tribesmen, it's a language understood too well by all.

Most recently last week, by the family of seven-year-old Toor Jan and his six-year-old brother, Odood, who were killed as they collected firewood near Shahidi Hassas, the village where we had tea with the elders.

Australian forces in the area had “become aware of an imminent threat” and called for US air cover.

The Americans mistakenly bombed the brothers and their donkeys, mistaking them for insurgents.

So this is not a report on what Australian military and civilian officers believe they'll be leaving behind, what Julia Gillard has referred to as a better, more secure place.

Nor does it find Oruzgan to be a viable element of the “secure and capable Afghanistan that can govern itself and ensure that al-Qaeda never (returns),” as described by US General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, when he was challenged in February to define the mission in Afghanistan.

These are remote, politically convenient assessments that do not sit easily with the tribal elders and businessmen of Oruzgan.

What we have here are the unvarnished observations of the people who live in the province, based on dozens of interviews without them having a foreign gun pointed at them.

They sit in their villages, not in what, for them, are the claustrophobic surrounds of a foreign military base.

These are the voices of a people who were promised so much, implicitly and explicitly, by the “soldiers who came out of the sky”, whose presence has amounted to a chimeric decade, at the end of which the new Afghanistan is pretty much like the old Afghanistan.

Neither Canberra nor Washington will admit it publicly but, deliberately or by default, their Afghan venture, now winding down after 12 bruising years, has delivered 30 million people into the arms of the same warlords whose violence in the early 1990s convinced the Afghan people, if only for a time, that the Taliban were a better bet.

Australian officials are guardedly optimistic in speaking about the operation. Adrian Lochrin, who recently finished an 18-month stint as leader of the Tarin Kowt provincial reconstruction team, acknowledges that the political culture will be slow in modernising. “Long-running tribal disputes are part of the landscape”, he says.

Dust hangs in the Tarin Kowt air. The bazaar is livelier than during any previous visit by this correspondent. There are more shops. They sell a wider range of goods to a wider range of shoppers.

Posters on the town's walls make clear who is the boss. There's the President, Hamid Karzai, who pulls strings from Kabul; and there's the fabled Jan Mohammed Khan, the former governor, now dead; and then there's police chief Matiullah Khan.

Oruzgan is about the same size as greater Sydney and is home to about 400,000 people. These days, it is a province on the road to nowhere. But it counts as part of the southern belt that has been the historic home to Afghanistan's Pashtun kings.

Now it's more the hole in the Afghanistan doughnut – a backwoods that is home to very conservative people. Muslim hospitality guarantees they are warm and welcoming – one on one. More deeply, however, these people are suspicious of the outside world and perhaps even more so of one another.

“Afghans Who Believe In Democracy Feel Cheated By The Foreign Support For These Worst Elements Of Afghan Politics”

Starved of institutional resources, Oruzgan has played a central role in Afghanistan's modern history. Taliban leader Mullah Omar married into a family from Dihrawud and many of his fighters are Oruzganis.

But Oruzgan also served as the stomping ground on which Karzai raised his revolt against Taliban rule in 2001.

It is this fact that leaves Afghanistan analysts scratching their heads. Why, they ask, if there is such loyalty to Karzai in Oruzgan and if the province's isolation makes it more manageable than some others, is Oruzgan so unmanageable?

Former provincial police chief Juma Gul Heimat tries to peel away the onion layers, asking, if Karzai and his cronies were such hotshots why did it take eight years to break the Taliban siege on Chinartu, on the province's southern flank. The implication is that some of the loyalists were not as loyal as they might have been presumed to be; that they were happily cutting side deals with the insurgents.

But Juma Gul gives up. “The problems in Oruzgan are extreme. If I tell you all, you'll get a headache”.

Equally perplexing in a society in which, as it was put to this correspondent, “every man stands for his tribe and dies for his tribe”, the Australian and US invaders put all their money on the fourth or fifth strongest of the tribes – Karzai's Popalzai. “And they're being left to run the joint,” says an incredulous analyst.

In Oruzgan, that meant the three biggest tribal groups were disenfranchised – the Achekzai, the Noorzai and various groups in a confederation known as Ghilzai. It is hardly surprising, then, that the Noorzai and Ghilzai, in particular, are strongly represented in the fighting ranks of the Taliban.

One of the traditional responses to the abuse of power is for elders and families that are out of favour simply to leave their district. A foreign military analyst warns that usually it's steady hands that go, leaving the hotheads behind.

"If MK's inordinate power means a power struggle, then many in the Ghilzai will leave the area," he says. "It will seem like stability but don't read it like that – it's not."

These are the tribal flaws that Canberra has buttressed in a conflict in which the Taliban are just part of the problem.

Beneath the surface, between tribes and within tribes, are hard-fought power struggles in which the combatants perceive central government as a threat to their local power, and so the tribal elders and warlords set out to undermine the state – to which all are obliged to pay lip service, particularly when tribal elders feel disenfranchised by a lack of government support.

"It's Very Easy To Kill People In Oruzgan"

By contrast, the warlords always have done their own thing, taking what they could, even as the state and the coalition have tried to co-opt them. These contests will have as significant a bearing on the shape and character of the new Afghanistan as the outcome of this Western war with the Taliban which many here fear will be the charnel house of 1992-94 Afghanistan revisited.

Afghans who believe in democracy feel cheated by the foreign support for these worst elements of Afghan politics.

"These guys were dead when the foreigners came but you've brought them back to life," says Reihana Azad, the young female MP, bitterly. "They will never surrender power, especially if the international community abandons us next year. They accept no opposition."

"It's very easy to kill people in Oruzgan," Azad says. "It's kind of usual to eliminate your opponents. And it all works perfectly because the Taliban get the blame and the Taliban don't mind, do they?"

"And for the first few years they also were tricking coalition forces to do their killing for them. Him? Oh yes, so-and-so is definitely Taliban!"

A senior man in the marginalised but substantial Ghilzai tribe is the softly spoken Nabi Khan Tokhi. "We have nothing, no positions in government," he complains. "All power is with the Popalzai and as long as we have this imbalance, there will be no security in Oruzgan.

"We all fought the Taliban. I had 4000 fighters out there so it's not fair that we're all sidelined by one tribe that uses its power for its own ends."

Some elders see double jeopardy in the likelihood that in becoming embroiled in tribal wars, local powerbrokers will call on their followers who serve in the national army and police to return to their home turf to fight – and to bring what weapons they can.

"That's what happened when the Russians left," says Haji Abdul Rahman, a fretful Babozai elder, at Dihrawud. "Everyone had their own turf and this time, if the warlords see any weakness in the Kabul government they'll do it again."

After 12 gruelling years and despite all this talk of “next year”, the international military withdrawal already is under way. The Australians have retreated from their forward bases to Tarin Kowt and on the rutted tracks and rocky riverbeds that serve as roads, this correspondent encountered several big convoys hauling US gear southwards, towards Kandahar.

With the departure of the foreigners, comes rising local anger. “They did nothing against the warlords who wrecked this country. They supported them, kept them in power,” an otherwise mild-mannered local says in an explosion of rage at the Australians and the Americans.

As we tumble down the Chambark Valley, driving back to Tarin Kowt, the light in the late afternoon is like liquid gold. Along the way, we meet Haji Abdul Manan, who commands six of Matiullah Khan's security checkpoints – Haji Abdul's head is full of figures.

“In the past four years nine of my men were killed by the Taliban – four of them beheaded; 17 were injured, and we defused 52 roadside bombs.

The Americans came through a few days ago to take back their stuff – 22 bulletproof vests, 23 AK-47s and two sets of night-vision goggles. “What do we do now?”

The elders turn out to meet us – dauntingly, as many as 300 at a time. On meeting foreigners, it is their way to crowd in, but mostly to listen as one or two appointed spokesmen make their case.

“Weighing The Threats, Juma Gul Opts For The Taliban As The Lesser Of The Evils”

In Chora, 30-odd older men listen as Sadiq Khan explains: “They are cheating us by taking their weapons home. That's what the Russians did, so if you want a repeat of what happened on their departure, then sure – leave as you seem to be leaving.”

At Dihrawud, local police chief Haji Namatullah is succinct in acknowledging the ambivalence of the clans. “The people close in are happy; they see the culverts, schools and clinics. People further out are not happy; all they got was night raids,” he says. “But the foreigners are going now. We see the convoys every day.”

Such is the fear of looming chaos that delegations of elders from some smaller tribes in Oruzgan are finding their way to Kabul, with pleas for Karzai to act to keep Australian forces in the province.

“It'll be just like the mujahideen wars,” says former police chief and former communist Juma Gul Heimat, warning of bad behaviour by the tribal powerbrokers. “If this opportunity is lost, Afghanistan will be lost to history.”

Separately, Juma Gul warns of an inability by the locals to withstand a resurgent Taliban. “Khas Oruzgan and Char Chino will not last more than five minutes. The Taliban will want the people's food and money.”

Weighing the threats, Juma Gul opts for the Taliban as the lesser of the evils.

“The Taliban are more dangerous than dangerous, but the past excesses of the elders are worse than anything the Taliban has done.”

Given the Taliban's record on women's rights, it's no surprise that female MPs hedge their bets.

“You can't say that the bad behaviour of the powerbrokers is a bigger problem than the Taliban. Both are bad,” says Azad. Her colleague, Hilla Achekzai, is not quite as dark: “Maybe we don't go back entirely to what life was like before the foreigners came. But, yep, we'll be going backwards.”

The idea that the country could be abandoned to violence troubles another security expert who has spent time in the south – on the United Nations payroll.

“These gangsters rely on the Aussies for support,” he says. “What'll happen when that crutch is pulled from under them? For all the Australian and American efforts to talk up the Afghan security forces, they do not have the capacity to work in the south. They'll be there but you won't see them leaving their bases to confront these guys.”

Much of the expert critique on Afghanistan hinges on the failure of international forces to curb corruption.

One describes the international aid billions as “a tsunami of illicit cash sloshing” through the Afghan economy.

Another offers this blunt assessment: “There were four things the coalition had to do: counter corruption, contain abuse and reconcile the people to living with each other. There's not been much progress on any of those three. But on the fourth, counterinsurgency, we've been great – we've destroyed the insurgency three times over and every time it's come back because we haven't done the first three.”

It's no surprise that we hear little sympathy for the 39 Australians who have died here – too many Afghans have died with them.

MILITARY NEWS

Syrian General Defects To Revolutionary Forces: Says “Morale In The Army Had Collapsed”

“One Of The Most Senior Defections Since The Start Of The Conflict”

16 March 2013 BBC

A Syrian army general has reportedly defected to the opposition, saying that morale in the army had collapsed.

A man identified by opposition activists as General Mohammed Ezz al-Din Khalouf announced his defection in a video shown on al-Arabiya TV.

He is said to have reached safety in neighbouring Jordan. There was no comment from the Syrian government.

Gen Khalouf, identified variously as a brigadier-general and a major-general, was shown sitting beside his son, said to be an army captain.

“It is not possible for anyone to accept any of the ideas of this regime unless they have achieved special interests,” he said.

Seif al-Hourani, an activist from a rebel group which reportedly helped the man and his family out of the country, told AP news agency via Skype that the escape had been planned for months.

Six days ago, rebels smuggled the general, his wife, and three of their children out of Damascus and they crossed into Jordan on Friday, he said.

Correspondents say that, if confirmed, it would be one of the most senior defections since the start of the conflict.

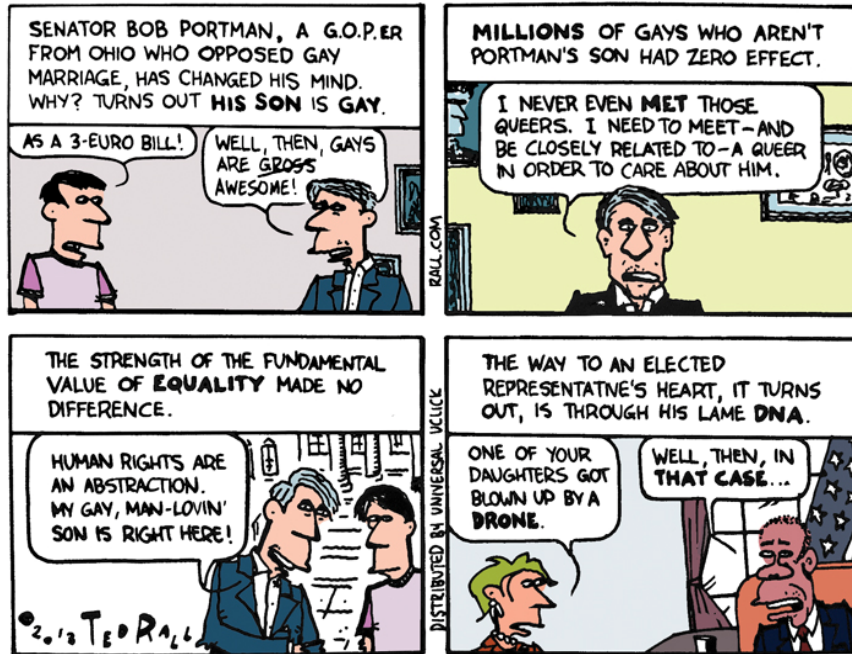
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DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



CLASS WAR REPORTS



**“Two Police Officers Who Shot
And Killed A 16-Year-Old Boy On
A Street In East Flatbush,
Brooklyn Have A History Of Being
Successfully Sued For Civil Rights
Violations”**

**“In Each Case, Mourad And Cordova
Attempted To Cover Up Their
Misconduct By Falsifying And
Fabricating Evidence”**

**“On Friday Afternoon, A Woman
Addressed Riders Of The No. 1 Line
Subway In Uptown Manhattan, Saying
East Flatbush Was Under ‘Martial Law,’
And Accusing Police Of ‘Murdering’
Gray”**

March 16, 2013 CBSNewYork/AP & March 15, 2013 By John Marzulli, NEW YORK
DAILY NEWS [Excerpts]

NEW YORK — Two police officers who shot and killed a 16-year-old boy on a street in East Flatbush, Brooklyn have a history of being sued for civil rights violations, according to a published report.

The city has paid \$215,000 to settle three lawsuits against Sgt. Mourad Mourad and two against officer Jovaniel Cordova, according to the New York Daily News.

Sgt. Mourad Mourad racked up three suits while he was a plainclothes cop on Staten Island, and Officer Jovaniel Cordova racked up two at Brooklyn’s 70th Precinct — all alleging various civil rights violations including illegal stop and search and false arrest.

Prosecutors later dismissed all but one of the arrests against the six plaintiffs, and the criminal cases were sealed.

“Our clients’ interactions with Sgt. Mourad and Officer Cordova expose a disturbing pattern of unconstitutional and aggressive stop-and-frisk practices,” said lawyer Brett Klein, who filed four of the five suits.

“In each case, Mourad and Cordova attempted to cover up their misconduct by falsifying and fabricating evidence.”

Read more: <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/brooklyn/cops-killed-kimani-gray-named-federal-lawsuits-article-1.1290342#ixzz2NI9H1IQi>

The officers were in East Flatbush March 9 when they tried to stop and question Kimani Gray, 16, on the street.

Police said Gray was with a group of young men that night, standing in front of a home on East 52nd Street when the officers, from the Brooklyn South Anti-Crime Patrol, approached.

When the officers started to talk to the group, Gray began acting suspiciously, police said.

Police said at one point, Gray grabbed for something in his waistband. Gray then pulled out a gun and pointed it at the officers, according to police.

When the plainclothes officers saw the gun, they both fired, police said. Gray was pronounced dead at Kings County Hospital a short time later, police said.

A gun was recovered at the scene, but Gray’s family maintains the teen wasn’t armed. A lawyer for the Gray family has questioned the NYPD’s account of what happened and said the family wants to know how the gun was recovered.

Kimani Gray’s mother, Carol Gray, said her son was killed in front of his best friend’s house after a birthday party.

Autopsy results showed he was shot seven times in his shoulders, arms and legs, with wounds to the front and back of his body.

Protests against police actions in the case were held every night from Monday through Thursday. Some of the protests led to violence and dozens of arrests.

Protesters have also appeared beyond East Flatbush. On Friday afternoon, a woman addressed riders of the No. 1 line subway in uptown Manhattan, saying East Flatbush was under “martial law,” and accusing police of “murdering” Gray.

The officers involved in the shooting have been placed on administrative duty pending an investigation, which is standard practice.

The civil rights lawsuits against the two officers were all by people who were illegally stopped and then roughed up.

The suits are:

- Derek Franks received a \$92,500 settlement for a suit against Mourad and other unidentified cops, alleging he was illegally stopped and frisked on May 7, 2007. He spent four months in Rikers Island until charges were dropped.
- Andre Maraj and Dary Harville each received \$22,500 settlements, which alleged they were falsely arrested by Mourad and others. Harville claimed he was “slammed” into a car.
- Jontel Sebborn received \$20,000 stemming from his arrest after a car stop. He was ordered out of the car by Mourad and others, who frisked him and pulled his pants and underwear.

You can take me to the precinct but you’re not going in my underwear here,” Sebborn told the cops, says the complaint.

- Peter Owusu pocketed \$22,500 for the “emotional distress” he suffered as a result of a car stop and arrest by Cordova. Owusu claims he was placed facedown in a puddle and handcuffed. He later pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct.
- Steve Morency got \$35,000 after accusing Cordova of an illegal stop inside an E. 17th St. building. Morency claimed he was punched in the face and needed three stitches to close a cut above his eye.

Klein said Mourad racked up the suits when he was assigned to an aggressive anti-crime unit.

Both Mourad and Cordova had each been involved in a previous shooting, which were deemed to be within department guidelines.

GOT A COMMENT?

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Bahrain Youths Stage Anti-Gulf Force Demo:

“Protesters Blocked Main Roads To Their Villages Using Large Tree Trunks, Garbage Containers And Burning Tyres, And Hurling Petrol Bombs And Stones At Police, “No, No Saudi Occupier Down (King) Hamad”

March 14, 2013 AFP via AhranOnline

Bahraini police clashed with youths protesting Thursday against the deployment into a third year of a Gulf military force that backed Manama's bid to crush a Shiite-led uprising, witnesses said.

Police fired tear gas and sound bombs to disperse hundreds who took to the streets across several Shiite villages chanting: “No, no Saudi occupier” and “Down (King) Hamad,” the witnesses said.

On 14 March, 2011, a joint Peninsula Shield Force — led by Sunni Saudi Arabia—rolled into Bahrain to help restore order in the strategic Gulf kingdom where protesters had camped for a month in the capital's financial centre.

The Gulf troops continue to protect the kingdom's vital installations but do not intervene to disperse protests.

“Bahrain free, free, Peninsula Shield out, out,” chanted the demonstrators, who took to the streets in response to calls for rallies by the clandestine cyber radical group The 14 February Revolution Youth Coalition.

The protesters blocked main roads to their villages using large tree trunks, garbage containers and burning tyres, and hurled petrol bombs and stones at police, witnesses said.

No casualties were reported.

In a statement on Twitter, Bahrain's interior ministry said Thursday that an act of “sabotage” took place on the main Budaiya road which links several Shiite villages.

“The road was blocked and a vehicle was set alight,” said the ministry.

Home to the US Fifth Fleet, Bahrain has continued to witness sporadic demonstrations since the Gulf force arrived, now mostly outside the capital.

No breakthrough has yet emerged from talks between the opposition and the government that began last month continues.

The International Federation for Human Rights says around 80 people have been killed in Bahrain since the violence first broke out on 14 February, 2011.

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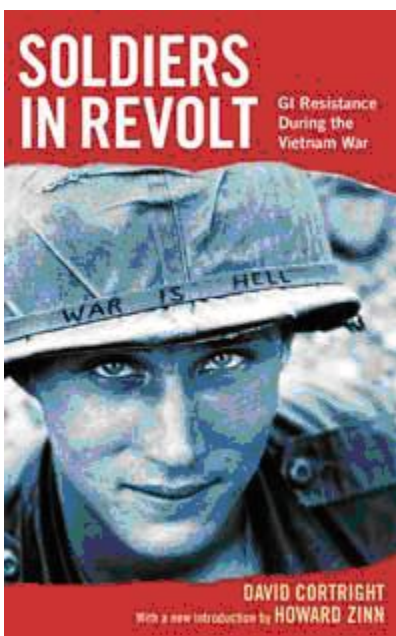
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