

Military Resistance 12A18



**“I Was A U.S. Marine On The
Ground In Afghanistan From
2004 To 2005, So I Know
Firsthand What It’s Like”**

**“Down To The Lowest Soldier,
There Is A Very Palpable Sense
That Everything We’ve Done Is
Too Little, Too Late”**

**“Just Because They Gave Their Lives
For Something Pointless And
Political, Does Not Mean We Honor
Them Less By Saying So”
“Here’s The Truth: The U.S. Military Is No
Longer In Afghanistan To Win Anything.
It’s Just There”**

Jan. 11, 2014 Paul Szoldra, Business Insider, Inc.

Jake Tapper, the host of CNN’s “The Lead,” is getting blasted after interviewing former Navy SEAL Marcus Luttrell Friday night.

The interview was about the new movie, “Lone Survivor,” which portrays a failed SEAL mission in Afghanistan.

Reflecting on his thoughts while watching the film and the sense of “hopelessness” he felt it portrayed, Tapper said, “I was torn about the message of the film in the same way that I think I am about the war in Afghanistan itself.

“I don’t want any more senseless American death. And at the same time I know that there were bad people there and good people that need help.”

The overall interview didn’t go so well.

If you look at Tapper’s Twitter stream or look at comments on articles about this right now, you will see that they’re filled with venom:

“Jake Tapper was about 3 seconds from getting his throat caved in.”

“They didn’t die for nothing .. they died fighting the A-HOLES who killed 3000+ on 9-11 !!”

I watched “Lone Survivor” last night.

I won’t spoil it for you if you haven’t seen it (you should), but it tells the story of four Navy SEALs being attacked by a bigger force, being shot multiple times, and falling down a mountain.

This did seem like a hopeless ordeal to me when I saw it on screen.

These SEALs were all heroes, there's no question about that. But reflecting on the larger picture surrounding this particular mission, Operation: Red Wings, and the broader war in Afghanistan, shouldn't be taboo.

As Ed Darack, the author of the book "Victory Point," wrote for the Marine Corps Gazette:

"RED WINGS was an incredible tragedy for the families, friends, and associates of those lost.

"From a tactical / operational standpoint, and from an analysis of its influence on furthering security in the region (the operation's purpose), the opening phase of RED WINGS was an unmitigated monumental disaster—one of the greatest, if not the greatest, in recent military history.

"Because so many resources were pushed to aid the recovery effort (the search and recovery was called RED WINGS II), other planned operations (not just in that part of the AO, but throughout Afghanistan), had to be delayed and many cancelled altogether.

"Ahmad Shah, a once unknown local Taliban aspirant, gained instant global fame and saw his ranks, finances, and armaments (including those taken from the SEALs' burgeon, enabling him to renew his attacks with greater intensity and frequency."

But here's what's really senseless: Attacking Jake Tapper for asking a question that I ask myself every time I receive an email notification from the Department of Defense that another service member has died in Afghanistan.

Namely: Why are Americans still fighting (and dying) there?

"The Department of Defense announced today the death of a soldier who was supporting Operation Enduring Freedom," the emails all begin, followed by the name, rank, age, hometown, and terse statement of how they died.

My first thoughts when I get these are of sadness for the family.

My second thought is always, what are we still doing there?

I was a U.S. Marine on the ground in Afghanistan from 2004 to 2005, so I know firsthand what it's like.

I know Americans who have been killed. So, do I get a pass in asking these questions? Is it alright for me to ask this question, because I was there and Jake Tapper wasn't?

"You don't have to be a veteran to judge whether or not the war is or was worth it," tweets former Army officer Andrew Exum.

It's time we have an adult non-screaming-at-each-other conversation about what we want to accomplish in Afghanistan, as well as an objective assessment of whether we are succeeding.

If you look at Iraq right now — Fallujah specifically — there are plenty of veterans wondering if their losses there were all for nothing.

“Just because they gave their lives for something pointless and political, does not mean we honor them less by saying so,” tweets “Gary Owen,” a former Army infantry and civil affairs officer, now a civilian contractor in Afghanistan since 2009.

The Blaze’s takedown of Jake Tapper, writes Army veteran Alex Horton on Twitter, “reveals the unhealthy bits of hero worship standing in for policy.”

It’s 2014 and this year is supposed to be the last of what will very likely be looked back on as a complete disaster in Afghanistan.

“Down to the lowest soldier, there is a very palpable sense that everything we’ve done is too little, too late,” one Army officer told me in 2012 after the pullout date was announced.

Here’s the truth: The U.S. military is no longer in Afghanistan to win anything. It’s just there.

We should always remember and cherish the lives lost, but we do a disservice to their memory — and today’s troops — by not asking the tough questions.

“No matter where you come down on the war in Afghanistan, if you’ve never questioned whether it’s worth it,” Exum wrote on Twitter. “You’re not thinking critically.”

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

U.S. Soldier Killed By Insurgents Raid In Afghanistan

January 20, 2014 by: MATTHEW ROSENBERG and TAIMOOR SHAH, New York Times [Excerpts]

KABUL, Afghanistan – Backed by a truck bomb, Taliban in military fatigues staged a raid Monday against a sprawling base shared by U.S. and Afghan forces in southern Afghanistan.

A U.S. soldier was killed in the attack.

The assault on the base, which is in the Zhare district of Kandahar province, began when a truck packed with explosives drove up to the main gate. The driver set off a powerful blast, killing himself and the U.S. soldier, said Jamal Agha, the district governor.

Within seconds of the explosion, a minivan sped to the gate, and eight insurgents clad in military fatigues and wearing explosive vests jumped out to storm the base.

The Taliban took responsibility for the attack, claiming to have inflicted heavy casualties at what Qari Yousuf Ahmadi, an insurgent spokesman, described as a “huge American base.”

Niceville High Alum Killed In Afghanistan



January 5, 2014 By LAUREN SAGE REINLIE, Daily News

LAUREL HILL — John and Karla Lacey were at home when they saw the uniformed service members approaching their door. The news would not be good.

Shortly before, they had received word that John’s youngest son, Army Sgt. 1st Class William “Kelly” Lacey, 38, had been killed in Afghanistan.

He was on his fifth deployment and scheduled to come home in less than two weeks.

“The worst thing you can possibly see when you have a child in a war zone is gentlemen walking up in uniform,” said his stepmother Karla Lacey, from their home in Laurel Hill on Sunday. “It’s devastating.”

Lacey, a Niceville High School alum, was born at Eglin Air Force Base and raised in Niceville.

He was killed Saturday morning when his unit was attacked by a rocket propelled grenade at a base in Nangarhar Province. He was serving with the 201st Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team of the 1st Infantry Division out of Fort Knox, Ky.

After joining the Army in January 2003 at 27 years old, Lacey was deployed quickly and then often. He served three tours in Iraq and was on his second to Afghanistan when he was killed.

“He was brave beyond brave,” his father John, 71, said. “He was out there in the middle of nowhere, in hell, and he kept doing it over and over and over ... I’m just so proud of him.”

Karla Lacey, 56, said her stepson was really proud of his service, including the time he spent as a paratrooper with the Army’s 82nd Airborne Division.

“I read on his unit’s Facebook page that a commander wrote ‘He always ran towards the gun,’ “ she said. “That pretty much sums him up.”

Lacey came from a long line of family military history, including an older brother who served in the Army and his father, who retired from the Air Force.

Karla said Lacey was proud of his father’s service and that was in large part why he decided to join the Army. He always said his aim was to make it to the same rank as his father, which he had done within the past several months, she said.

In addition to his dad and stepmother, he leaves behind his mother, Pam Joiner, in Live Oak, Fla.; two older brothers; three younger stepbrothers; and his wife Ashley Lacey, their 4-year-old daughter Lily, and three older stepdaughters, Caiden, Trinity and Brandy-Lynn Fahl in Fort Knox, Ky.

“He loved his family — all of them,” Karla said. “He was a wonderful son, a wonderful father, a wonderful husband and a wonderful brother.”

She said Lacey was playful and fun, devoted to his wife and daughter. He met Ashley while serving in the Army. She was in the service, too.

Lacey loved to go shooting with his dad and brothers when they could get together, Karla said. The last time he had been home was last Christmas.

Family friend Gerald Roberson, 49, remembers when he first met Lacey. He and Lacey’s older brother Patrick had become friends.

“He was the little kid running around with those big, brown eyes,” Roberson said.

He described Lacey as laid back and easy going, traits likely received from his mother. Roberson and Patrick often would be charged with looking after Lacey, but he rarely got into trouble, unlike themselves, he said.

He said he remembers coming back to visit Lacey as a teenager, he had grown his hair long and was going through a “hippie phase,” just like they had when they were that age.

Then, he joined the military.

“I think that was good for him,” Roberson said. “He was a very dedicated soldier.”

He said Lacey was one of the nicest, kindest people he ever had met, and his loss is a blow for anyone who knew him.

“I’ve had tears in my eyes every minute since I heard the news,” he said. “He will be deeply missed.”

Services will be held in the area in the coming days, but details had not been finalized by Sunday, Karla Lacey said.

She said he will be buried in the Magnolia Cemetery near their home in Laurel Hill.

U.S. Forces Kill Little Kid: “It’s Very Likely To Have Happened Because Visibility Was Not Good, It Was Raining And Cloudy”

1.10.14 By Jamieson Lesko, Alexander Smith and Fazul Rahim, NBC News [Excerpt]

KABUL, Afghanistan –

U.S. troops fighting in bad weather accidentally shot dead a young Afghan boy, local police said Friday, straining already tense ties between the two countries.

Marines gunned down the child, who was between 4 and 5 years old, after they were shot at and returned fire in the Nadali District of Helmand Province, Assistant Police Chief Abdullah Chopan told NBC News.

“It’s very likely to have happened because visibility was not good, it was raining and cloudy,” Chopan said.

He said the child was a girl, but he and the Helmand governor’s spokesman later confirmed it was a boy. The incident happened on Wednesday, hours after another firefight involving U.S. forces in the area.

**POLITICIANS REFUSE TO HALT THE
BLOODSHED**

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

**“Afghanistan’s Police Officers
Have Not Been Paid Since
November, And Some Have Not
Seen A Paycheck Since
October”**

**“Despite The Billions Of Dollars
Their Countries Spend To Pay The
Police, Many American And
European Officials Were Not
Aware That The Police Had Not
Been Paid”**

**“150,000 Armed Men Unpaid In A
Country With A History Of Police
Corruption”**

**“A Policeman Guarding A Street In Kabul
Lined With Western Embassies Angrily
Told Colleagues That The Americans
Were Withholding The Money To Weaken
Islam And That They Should Be Driven
Out”**

And, in at least two districts, unpaid police officers appear to have begun demanding money from shop owners and villagers, Afghan and Western officials said. It is hard to say whether the police were extorting money from people because they had not been paid, the officials said.

The Afghan police have a track record of such behavior even when they are paid on time.

JAN. 12, 2014 By MATTHEW ROSENBERG and JAWAD SUKHANYARJAN, New York Times [Excerpts]

Hares Kakar contributed reporting from Kabul, and Taimoor Shah from Kandahar, Afghanistan.

KABUL, Afghanistan — Outgunned by the Taliban and often derided by some as little more than uniformed thieves, police officers in Afghanistan do not have an easy job. But in recent months, their lives have gotten even tougher: Afghanistan's police officers have not been paid since November, and some have not seen a paycheck since October.

The government has the money, which comes from the United States and its NATO allies, but the Interior Ministry, which oversees the police, missed a deadline for filing the necessary forms with the Finance Ministry, said Afghan officials interviewed Sunday.

The back salaries will be paid in the next few days, the officials said, playing down the issue as a minor administrative mix-up.

But the case of the unpaid police officers exemplifies another glaring and often overlooked failure in the American-led nation-building effort here: weak government institutions staffed by officials who are often unqualified or, in some cases, incompetent.

Western officials, in this case, were caught off guard. Despite the billions of dollars their countries spend to pay the police, many American and European officials were not aware that the police had not been paid for nearly two months. They first heard about it when contacted by a reporter on Sunday.

Keeping track of billions in aid money was a problem when Western officials basically ran the Afghan government, and the challenge appears to be getting only worse as the American and European roles diminish.

The few foreign officials who did know about the pay problem said that they had found out about it only in recent days, a month after the last salaries were supposed to be paid, and that they were still trying to figure out what had happened.

Some Afghan and Western officials noted that missing or late paychecks had been a problem across the Afghan government for years.

But the problem tended to affect one department at a time, not leave roughly 150,000 armed men unpaid in a country with a history of police corruption and factional violence.

In interviews across Afghanistan, nearly two dozen police officers, including rank-and-file constables and senior commanders, said the delay had cut across all the various forces, including the regular uniformed police and the village militias, known as Afghan Local Police, which have well-documented problems with brutality and theft.

A member of a front-line paramilitary unit fighting the Taliban in southern Afghanistan had to ask his family for money to buy necessities, like soap.

A police commander gave one of his men \$20 — a princely sum for most Afghans — to pay a doctor's bill for the man's ailing wife.

And, in at least two districts, unpaid police officers appear to have begun demanding money from shop owners and villagers, Afghan and Western officials said.

It is hard to say whether the police were extorting money from people because they had not been paid, the officials said.

The Afghan police have a track record of such behavior even when they are paid on time.

Many police officers, including commanders, blamed the United States for their late paychecks, adding to the litany of Afghan complaints against their American allies.

And on Sunday night, a policeman guarding a street in Kabul lined with Western embassies angrily told colleagues that the Americans were withholding the money to weaken Islam and that they should be driven out.

Other officers, though, looked no further than their own government to assign blame.

"I stand here every day in this cold weather from morning to evening without being paid," said one, who gave his name as Assadullah, while directing traffic in Kabul. "I see high-ranking officials passing by in their cars. They do not care."

Afghan officials, meanwhile, blamed one another for the problem.

Omar Zakhilwal, the finance minister, said the Interior Ministry's paperwork arrived three days before the end of the Afghan fiscal year on Dec. 20. By then, the ministry's processing system was already closed so the accounting books could be reconciled.

Mr. Zakhilwal has been scrutinized for years over allegations of corruption, and he emphasized that the rules were followed without exception at his ministry.

The Interior Ministry "might as well have complained about us because we didn't process their late requests," he wrote in an email. "But we at the Ministry of Finance follow standard budgetary procedures — and that we stick to."

Sediq Sediqqi, a spokesman for the Interior Ministry, said his ministry had missed the deadline because of a shift in the dates for the fiscal year, although that change was announced more than a year ago.

The late paychecks affected only a few areas and were “not a big problem,” Mr. Sediqqi added.

He laughed when asked if he had been paid. “Of course,” he said.

A few hours later, his boss, Umar Daudzai, the interior minister, said in an interview that the entire police force had not been paid in December and that officers in six provinces had also not been paid in November.

Punctured Tires In Kabul Are The Work Of Police: “Police Say The Policy Is Meant To Prevent Militants From Stealing Cars For Use In Bomb Attacks”



NPR producer Sultan Faizy’s car — parked right outside the NPR office in Kabul — was recently targeted by the police. Police say the policy is meant to prevent militants from stealing cars for use in bomb attacks. Sean Carberry/NPR

January 20, 2014 by Sean Carberry and Sultan Faizy, NPR

In Kabul, car theft isn’t a big problem, but it is a big concern. Security officials fear that militants could use stolen vehicles as car bombs.

So the police have turned to a rather controversial tactic to deter thieves.

On a recent evening, a guest left our office only to discover two of his car tires had been punctured. Moments later, my producer discovered two of his tires had been punctured. Both cars were parked on the side of the street in front of our office.

As we quickly found out, there was no point in reporting the vandalism to the police — turns out they were responsible for it.

Nesar Ahmad Abdulrahimzai is the police chief for Kabul's 10th district. He was initially reluctant to discuss the matter, but eventually he agreed to a brief phone conversation.

“The police puncture tires as precautionary measures,” he says.

“The police are poorly equipped and we simply have no other option to prevent car theft,” says Abdulrahimzai. So, he has instructed his officers to puncture tires of cars parked on the street after dark.

It seems rather extreme considering he says only two cars have been stolen in the district in the last six months.

To our surprise, we've heard that many city residents support the policy, though they probably have off-street parking. But there are plenty of complaints as well.

Zoheb Stanikzai, a 19-year old student, says he has nowhere to park his car except on the street.

“I've complained and given the police a letter saying I'm responsible for my car,” he says.

But to no avail. He's already spent more than \$500 on new tires, and the police won't reimburse him.

One morning as we drove down one of the main streets near our office, we passed three cars with flat tires and a fourth where a group of men was busy changing the tires.

That's welcome news to mechanics like Musafir Nabizadah. He's quite happy with the policy.

“When tires are punctured more than once, which the police do,” he says, “the owner has to change the tire, which costs a lot for him.”

The policy gave him a rush of business when it went into effect a few weeks ago. Nabizadah also says it's a good policy because it keeps the city safer.

Hamidullah Ataei disagrees.

“Actually, this is very stupid,” says Ataei, a former prosecutor who had four tires punctured when he parked his car in front of his house.

The practice is illegal under Afghan law, Atae says, and the victims are legally parked when their cars are effectively vandalized. Police officers counter that by saying they have gone door to door warning people their tires would be punctured.

“They don’t do their job, but instead they puncture the tires and misuse their authority,” Atae says.

He complained to the police and asked for reimbursement, but was told it was his fault for parking on the street.

There is supposed to be a phone line for people to call the police to file complaints, Atae says, but it’s not connected.

And, he says, many Afghans are afraid to complain to the police out of fear officers will retaliate.

The attorney general’s office in Kabul says it has not received any complaints against the police for puncturing tires.

Zaher Zaher, Kabul City police chief, says he opposes the policy. He says it’s part of a pattern of officers abusing their power.

“I apologize to those who have suffered from this problem,” he says.

He says he will stop it, though his spokesman later said puncturing tires is reasonable.

In the meantime, some police officers appear to be moderating their tactics. The other night while driving home, I saw an officer next to a parked car letting the air out of the tire’s valve.

MILITARY NEWS

John McCain Gets It Right: Send Petraeus Back To Iraq

January 12th, 2014 by Ashley Killough, CNN [Excerpt]

CNN) - President Barack Obama should send David Petraeus, a retired four-star general who ran the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, back to Iraq to help deal with the growing unrest in the country, Sen. John McCain said Sunday on CNN’s “State of the Union.”

[Take up a collection for a one-way ticket? T]

“The U.S. Navy’s New Aircraft Carrier, The Most Expensive Warship Ever Built, Is “Unlikely” To Meet Its Goal For Handling Aircraft”

“The Ford, Already The Most Expensive Warship Ever Built, Is Projected By The Navy To Cost \$12.8 Billion”

Jan 10, 2014 By Tony Capaccio, Bloomberg L.P. [Excerpts]

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel was warned last month that the U.S. Navy’s new aircraft carrier, the most expensive warship ever built, is “unlikely” to meet its goal for handling aircraft.

The USS Gerald R. Ford’s “sortie generation” rate -- the ability to launch and recover aircraft -- is based on “unrealistic assumptions,” and key launching systems “are currently suffering from development problems and have poor or unknown reliability,” Pentagon Director of Operational Testing Michael Gilmore told Hagel in a Dec. 9 memo.

“I am transmitting this report to you because it deals with a high-visibility program, and it is likely Congress will request copies,” Gilmore wrote.

He attached a 30-page report outlining his early “operational assessment” of the CVN-78 program, which calls for spending at least \$40 billion to develop and build three carriers.

Huntington Ingalls Industries Inc. (HII), based in Newport News, Virginia, is the prime contractor on the carrier program, with Raytheon Co. (RTN) providing radar systems and General Atomics handling the launch and recovery gear.

The Navy has said the new carrier promises about a 25 percent increase in sortie generation over the current Nimitz class.

The Ford, already the most expensive warship ever built, is projected by the Navy to cost \$12.8 billion in current dollars, 22 percent more than estimated five years ago. Adjusted for inflation, the cost is closer to \$13.9 billion, said the Congressional Budget Office.

Navy program documents indicate that the service intends to request about \$2.6 billion for the program next year, up about \$1 billion from the current year’s request.

“The poor reliability” of “critical subsystems” -- such as the new electromagnetic catapult system, advanced arresting gear, dual-band radar and weapons elevators for moving

munitions to the flight deck -- "will be the most significant risk" to the carrier's success in combat testing and deployment, Gilmore said.

Both the assessment sent to Hagel and an upcoming annual report on weapons testing "highlight poor or uncertain reliability currently demonstrated by critical new technologies," Gilmore spokeswoman Jennifer Elzea said in an e-mail statement.

A section of Gilmore's report obtained by Bloomberg News said the Navy to date has "conducted limited reliability testing of these systems."

"If the reliability problems" are not solved and "drive CVN-78's sortie generation rate well below" that of the current Nimitz class carriers, "the result could be significant to strategic planners" assessing wartime needs, Gilmore wrote.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



"At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation's ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.

"For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.

"We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake."

“The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppose.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852

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

**“The Government Wants To Drown
The Country In Blood, Forgetting
That The Troops Consist Of Sons
Of The Oppressed People”
“We Demand An End To The War”
[Proclamation Of The Revolutionary
Council Of Sailors: The Battleship
Potemkin]**



The Potemkin (Russian: Князь Потёмкин Таврический, Knyaz' Potyomkin Tavrisheski, 'Prince Potyomkin of Tauris') was a pre-dreadnought battleship (Bronenosets) of the Imperial Russian Navy's Black Sea Fleet. The ship was made famous by the Battleship Potemkin uprising, a rebellion of the crew against their oppressive officers in June 1905 (during the Russian Revolution of 1905) -- Wikipedia

June 27, 1905, Proletary Newspaper No. 7

Proclamation Of The Revolutionary Sailors In Command Of The Battleship Potemkin

To all civilized citizens and to the working people!

The crimes of the autocratic government have exhausted all patience. The whole of Russia, burning with indignation, exclaims: Down with the chains of bondage!

The government wants to drown the country in blood, forgetting that the troops consist of sons of the oppressed people.

The crew of the Potemkin has taken the first decisive step. We refuse to go on acting as the people's hangman.

Our slogan is: freedom for the whole Russian people or death!

We demand an end to the war and the immediate convocation of a constituent assembly on the basis of universal suffrage.

That is the aim for which we shall fight to the end: victory or death!

All free men, all workers will be on our side in the struggle for liberty and peace.

Down with the autocracy! Long live the constituent assembly!"

Syria: “A War By The Criminal And Corrupt Assad Regime Against The Vast Majority Of Its Own People” “Being ‘Neutral’ In Cases Of Injustice Means Effectively Supporting The Oppressor, Regardless Of Claims To Not Like Him”

Jan 14, 2014 by Les Evenchick, New Orleans; NOLA_C3_Discussion

Syria:

First of all, it's neither a civil war nor a proxy war.

It's a war by the criminal and corrupt Assad regime against the vast majority of its own people.

Other countries and interests try to intervene for their own interests but that is secondary. It's a myth that if the Assad regime is ousted Al Qaeda or extreme fundamentalists will take power.


The vast majority of Syrians would not tolerate that any more than they tolerate the Assad regime.

It's an excuse not to support the real revolution against the Assad regime.

Being "neutral" in cases of injustice means effectively supporting the oppressor, regardless of claims to not like him.

The primary effort has to be to remove the Assad regime. Other problems will be dealt with afterwards.

DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE MILITARY?



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.

STUCK ON STUPID

Your Stupid Shopping Guide

[Thanks to David McReynolds for posting.]

11.22.13 by Dave Barry, The Miami Herald [Excerpts]

FACE SLIMMER MOUTHPIECE

\$62 plus shipping and handling from japantrendshop.com

This is the perfect holiday gift to give when you want to send the message: "Your face is fat."

This Face Slimmer Exercise Mouthpiece is made in Japan, a nation famous for being totally non-weird.

According to the import-company website, all you do is insert this mouthpiece, then for three minutes make "mouth movements" and "say vowel sounds out loud over and over again," and voilà, like magic you will look like a lunatic with some kind of hideous lip disease.

But when you take the mouthpiece out, you will look youthful and vibrant, at least according to the import company, and we see no reason why it would lie.

HOODIE PILLOW CASE

\$19.99-29.99 plus shipping and handling from thinkgeek.com

How many times have you exclaimed: "Why do I have to purchase a hoodie and a pillowcase as two separate items? Why is there no product that combines these two things into one convenient package?"

If your answer is "numerous times," then you will want to own this hoodie pillowcase and give one to everybody on your holiday list.

As its name suggests, the hoodie pillowcase is a pillowcase with a hood attached to it.

Just think of the advantages! There are so many that we cannot even begin to list them all here. But we can say that we think this concept could be expanded to include other combinations, such as a hoodie bathing suit, hoodie saxophone, hoodie aquarium, hoodie barbecue grill, hoodie WeedWacker, etc. We honestly can't think of any object that would not be improved by having a hood attached to it, and we include the Shroud of Turin in that statement.

PERFECT POLLY

\$14.99 (price may vary) plus shipping and handling from perfectpollypet.com

You've probably seen the TV commercials for Perfect Polly, the battery-operated pretend parakeet manufactured in China from genuine plastic.

These commercials feature people smiling radiantly and laughing with delight as the amazingly fake-looking Perfect Polly performs her repertoire: making a vaguely birdlike electronic sound; moving her head; moving her tail; moving her head again; moving her tail again; moving her head again; and just generally providing hours of fascinating entertainment to anybody — young or old — who has the IQ of kelp.

If you have somebody on your holiday list who fits that description, then Perfect Polly is the ideal gift for that person.

We think the Perfect Polly concept should be expanded to encompass other pretend critters — hamsters, cats, dogs, children, etc.

Maybe some day we could replace the entire U.S. Congress with battery-operated plastic senators and representatives.

Come to think of it, we could replace Congress right now with 535 Perfect Pollys.

They'd be cheaper and far less likely to text pictures of their private parts. They don't even HAVE private parts, as far as we know.

NECK AIR CUSHION

\$19.98 plus shipping and handling from harrietcarter.com

We don't know about you, but when we have a medical problem, we do not "take chances" with our treatment. We go straight to one of the nation's best-known authorities on healthcare: the Harriet Carter mail-order gift catalog ("Distinctive Gifts Since 1958").

That is why we are so excited about this neck air cushion, which is a rubber thing that you wrap around your neck, and then pump up with air to receive medical benefits.

This is important because your neck is one of your most vital bodily organs. Think about it: Without your neck, your head (this happens more often than you would think) would fall right off. That's why you should purchase a neck air cushion for yourself and everybody on your gift list.

Not only does it provide important unspecified benefits, but it makes you look as though you are being strangled by some kind of mutant blue squid. You cannot put a price tag on that.

NECKTIE FLASK

\$24.95 (free shipping available) from flasktie.co

Drinking on the job was not always frowned upon.

As you know if you watch *Mad Men*, back in the 1960s American office workers routinely pounded down tumblers of booze at 10:30 in the morning. Yet during that same era, America was able to (1) land men on the moon, and (2) produce groundbreaking TV commercials such as the one where a rabbit tries to steal Trix cereal from kids because it has, quote, “real fruit colors.”

Coincidence? We think not.

So let's say that, for whatever perfectly legitimate reason, you or somebody on your holiday gift list would like to conceal eight ounces of liquid on your person in an office environment. This is the item for you.

It's a necktie with a hidden plastic container connected to a tube so you can suck the liquid without removing the tie. It's perfect for work, but it's also great for funerals, ballet recitals, jury duty, congressional hearings — any situation where you find yourself thinking: “I could sure go for eight ounces of liquid.” And the beauty of it is, nobody will suspect a thing until you pass out facedown in a pool of your own fluids.

This is the official necktie of the Federal Reserve Board.

CHICKEN DIAPERS

\$12.50 plus shipping and handling from pamperyourpoultry.com

Why does your chicken need a diaper? Here's a helpful quote from the folks at Pampered Poultry:

“Our diapers fit comfortably and allow you to enjoy your birds in the house or car without worry!”

So if you know people who wish to enjoy birds in their houses or cars — and far be it from us, in the 21st century, to judge these people — then this is the gift you are looking for. The diapers come in a variety of fashionable colors that will go with any décor as long as you keep the lights fairly dim.

CHICKEN BRASSIERE

\$19.99 plus shipping and handling from hensaver.com

A question that we have all asked ourselves is: “Does my chicken need a brassiere?” To answer that question, let’s refer to the website of the company that sells the Birdy Bra:

“The Birdy Bra not only supports a slow or pendulous crop but can protect a bird’s chest, which is a common location of pecking of hens by other hens. Once blood is drawn the pecking can escalate, resulting in infection and even death. Our Birdy Bra can also be used on parrots that self mutilate.”

That’s right, people: If you are not putting a brassiere on your hen (or self-mutilating parrot) (which would be a good name for a rock band) you could very well be contributing to its DEATH.

So if you, or some person on your holiday list, would prefer not to be thought of as a heartless murderer of fowl, this brassiere is the perfect gift item. It comes in a variety of sizes and colors, as well as instructions that probably make a ton of sense if you are in possession of an actual chicken.

GLÄCE LUXURY ICE

\$75 plus next-day shipping and handling from deandeluca.com

Of all the products we have ever featured in the Holiday Gift Guide, this is the one that, more than any other, makes us say, quote: “Huh?”

Here’s the product description from the Dean and DeLuca catalog, which we are not making up:

“Glâce Luxury Ice is a meticulously designed and differentiated ice brand specifically designed for use in premium drinks and cocktails. The Glâce Mariko Sphere is a perfectly spherical 2.5-inch piece with a melting rate of 20-30 minutes.

“The Glâce G-Cubed, a symmetrical 2.5-inch cube, has a dilution rate of 20-40 minutes. Glâce Ice pieces are individually carved from a 300-lb. block to ensure flawless quality and a zero-taste profile, never contaminating the essence of premium liquors and drinks.”

In other words, Glâce Luxury Ice is: Ice. It is frozen water.

Granted, it is an “ice brand” that has a special name with two little dots over the “a” to suggest classiness, and it has been “individually carved,” and it has a “melting rate” and a “zero taste profile.” But it’s still ice.

Guess how much it costs, for a box of 10 cubes.

Seventy-five dollars.

That’s right: SEVENTY-FIVE DOLLARS. For ICE.

So obviously this is a product aimed at real connoisseurs, with “connoisseur” defined as “a person with even less intelligence than the morons who buy Perfect Polly.”

We purchased an order of Gläce Luxury Ice using money generously provided by the Miami Herald.

Our plan was to put it in a premium drink and then drink it, but by the time our photographer finished taking pictures of it, it had melted. So now what we have is a bag of water. But it’s luxury water. It’s Wäter. And we’re willing to let it go, to the right connoisseur, for just \$50.

BRAIN GAMES FOR DOGS

\$9.99 plus shipping and handling from harrietcarter.com

Do you have a dog? Is it stupid?

Of course it is! That’s why we call it a “dog.” We’re talking about a species whose highest biological priority — higher than eating, finding shelter or protecting its young — is sniffing other dogs in the butt.

If that sounds like your dog, then you need Brain Games for Dogs. This book is a tremendous training tool. You give your dog a command — any command — and if it fails to obey immediately, you simply strike it with this book.

No! That was a joke!

Please do not write angry letters containing misspelled words to the editor.

In fact this is an excellent book, filled with helpful information on how to teach your dog many tricks and games, such as Fetch, Push the Door Closed and Balance a Treat.

Notice we say “your dog.” Our personal dog is not interested in learning any of these things. Our dog’s unspoken but clear position is, “I am an old dog, and these are new tricks.” Our dog would no more push the door closed than do our income taxes.

CAT LADY ACTION FIGURE

\$11.09 (price may vary) plus shipping and handling from amazon.com

Here’s a fun gift for that special child on your holiday list (we are using “special” in the sense of “strange”).

This is an action figure depicting a cat lady who is wearing a bathrobe and pajamas and is ready for action with her six included cat figurines.

Imagine the hours of enjoyment some lucky youngster will have, making the cat lady feed the cats, change the cat litter, feed the cats again, change the litter again, collapse on the ground and lie motionless for days while the cats pay no attention to her, etc.

This is a WAY better present for a modern youngster than the Xbox, which to the best of our knowledge does not come with ANY cat figurines.

TURKEY LEG AIR FRESHENER

\$5.95 plus shipping and handling from disneystore.com

If you've ever been to Walt Disney World, you've probably seen large people lumbering around gnawing on turkey legs the size of Yule logs and getting turkey grease all over themselves.

No doubt your reaction, like that of most people, was: "I wish there was a way to make my car smell like those people!"

Well guess what happens "when you wish upon a star?" Your dreams come true, in the form of this turkey-leg air freshener! It's not an actual turkey leg: It's a car air freshener made from a piece of cardboard that looks strikingly like a piece of cardboard that vaguely resembles a turkey leg.

And it smells as good as it looks! That is why this is the Official Turkey Leg Air Freshener of both Dale Earnhardt Jr. and the Popemobile.

DOORBELL FOR DOGS

\$29.95 (with free U.S. shipping) from pebblesmart.com

Dogs keep a busy schedule.

They have to go out, then they have to come back in, then they have to go back out, then they have to come back in, then they have to go back out, then they have to come back in, then they have to go back out, and then they have to come back in again. And that's just from 7 to 7:15 a.m.

Unfortunately, for most dogs, the only way to communicate to you that they need you to open the door is to scratch manually on the door, which is annoying and technologically primitive, not to mention causing low self-esteem in the dog.

But now, thanks to the miracle of space-age electronics, we have the dog doorbell, which eliminates that annoying scratching and replaces it with an annoying doorbell sound that the dog makes by pressing the big yellow button with its snout.

Your dog will love this amazing product, unless your dog is anything like my dog, which was terrified of it.

The dog doorbell is mounted low enough for dogs to use it, which means it would also be a great gift for anybody who sometimes parties a little too hard and arrives home unable to walk erect.

CLASS WAR REPORTS

“The 85 Richest People On Earth Have The Same Amount Of Wealth As The Bottom Half Of The Population”

“The United States Has Led A Worldwide Growth In Wealth Concentration”

The Richest 1% In The U.S. “Has Received 95% Of Wealth Created Since 2009, After The Financial Crisis, While The Bottom 90% Of Americans Have Become Poorer”

“Falling Taxes For The Rich And Increased Use Of Tax Havens Have Helped Widen Income Inequality, Oxfam Said”

[Thanks to Mark Shapiro, Military Resistance Organization, who sent this in.]

January 20, 2014 By Jim Puzzanghera, Los Angeles Times [Excerpts]

The 85 richest people on Earth have the same amount of wealth as the bottom half of the population, according to a new report that highlights growing income inequality as political and business leaders gather for the annual World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Those wealthy individuals are a small part of the richest 1% of the population, which combined owns about 46% of global wealth, according to the report from British humanitarian group Oxfam International.

The study found the richest 1% had \$110 trillion in wealth -- 65 times the total wealth of the bottom half of the population.

That bottom half of the population owned about \$1.7 trillion, or about 0.7% of the world's wealth. That's the same amount as owned by the 85 richest people, the report said.

The findings undermine democracy and make it more difficult to fight poverty, the report said.

"It is staggering that in the 21st century, half of the world's population own no more than a tiny elite whose numbers could all sit comfortably in a single train carriage," said Winnie Byanyima, the group's executive director.

"Widening inequality is creating a vicious circle where wealth and power are increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few, leaving the rest of us to fight over crumbs from the top table," she said.

The United States has led a worldwide growth in wealth concentration, according to the Oxfam report, titled "Working for the Few."

The percentage of income held by the richest 1% in the U.S. has grown by nearly 150% since 1980.

That small elite has received 95% of wealth created since 2009, after the financial crisis, while the bottom 90% of Americans have become poorer, Oxfam said.

The share of wealth owned by the richest 1% also expanded in all but two of the 26 nations tracked by researchers in the World Top Incomes Database.

Falling taxes for the rich and increased use of tax havens have helped widen income inequality, Oxfam said.

“Maliki, Backed By Iran And The US, Escalated The Violence Against Iraqis By Shelling

**Cities, All Over Iraq, With Tanks,
Artillery, And Aircraft”**

**The Iraqi Tribes Are Defending The
Iraqi People, Not What Maliki
Pretends To Be “Terrorist Groups
Like Qaeda And ISIS”**

**“It Is A Patriotic Revolt, Not As The
Enemies Of The Arab Nation, Such
As The US, Britain, And Russia Tried
To Portray It To Be Run By Islamic
Terrorists”**

**“This Revolt Is Not Only That Of The
Anbar Arab Tribes. It Involves All Iraqi
Arab Tribes From The North To The
South And As Such It Is Against
Sectarianism”**

The terrorism that exists in Iraq today is made possible and orchestrated by the US and Iran. Sure proof to this has been the backing of Maliki at the US controlled UN and the Arab league that both miss-portray what is taking place in Iraq as Maliki fighting terrorism!

January 19, 2014 Communique of the Central Media Committee for Support of Iraq, via Uruknet. Translated by Falastini Moghtareb, Iraq Committee info USA, baharyafa@gmail.com

The Iraqi patriotic revolt represents all Iraqis from the north to the south and as such it is against sectarianism and categorically refuses all calls for a Bremer like plan to divide the unity of Iraq into provinces.

The peaceful nature of Iraqi protests that have been going on for one year has been shattered by Maliki's violence. It started with the Hweyjah massacre that killed 60 and wounded 300 protesters.

Now, Maliki, backed by Iran and the US, escalated the violence against Iraqis by shelling cities, all over Iraq, with tanks, artillery, and aircraft.

This vicious attack has prompted the valiant Arab tribes to step in, in order to protect the Iraqi people.

It is the members of the Iraqi tribes, and ex-officers of the old patriotic army of Iraq who are defending the Iraqi people, not what Maliki pretends to be "terrorist groups like Qaeda and ISIS".

When members of Maliki militias were captured by the resistance forces they were not harmed. Instead the Arab tribes gave them safe haven, food, and returned them to their homes and families. This is because this revolt is for the Iraqis themselves, it is against Iran and its puppet ruler in Iraq, Maliki.

Hence, it should be clear to see that this revolt represents all Iraqis. It is a patriotic revolt, not as the enemies of the Arab nation, such as the US, Britain, and Russia tried to portray it to be run by Islamic terrorists.

The terrorism that exists in Iraq today is made possible and orchestrated by the US and Iran. Sure proof to this has been the backing of Maliki at the US controlled UN and the Arab league that both miss-portray what is taking place in Iraq as Maliki fighting terrorism!

This revolt is not only that of the Anbar Arab tribes. It involves all Iraqi Arab tribes from the North to the South. It is a patriotic revolt to rid Iraq of the Iranian occupation to restore it to its people with security and justice for all.

This Iraqi revolt also represents the whole Arab nation struggle, not only Iraq.

As such it stands in support of the Syrian Arab popular revolt against Safawi rule, supports the Unity of Yemen, the Arab identity of Bahrain, the stability of Egypt, Tunisia, Lebanon, the Arab Maghreb, especially against Iranian influence, sectarian interference, and sabotage. In this regard it is an Arab revolt, not a tribal revolt.

Lastly, we assert that the General Military Council is the leader and brain of the armed revolt and supporting it is an Iraqi and Arab national duty.

“Deliver The Prisoners Of Al-Maliki's Forces And Security Services To Red Cross Representatives”

Urgent Appeal From General Military Council Of The Iraq Rebels

January 20, 2014 General Military Council of the Iraq rebels, via Uruknet

The General Military Council of the Iraq rebels invites all clan's rebels in all uprising provinces to deliver the prisoners of al-Maliki's forces and security services to Red Cross representatives, for the following reasons:

1. Protection of prisoners from being harmed or killed by al-Maliki's army and his security apparatus, where they will be under guarantee of (Red Cross) till arriving at a safe place.
2. Miss an opportunity of releasing them to exploit by al-Maliki to kill them, and falsely claim they were killed or injured by the clan's rebels.
3. To prevent the possibility of prisoners being forced to lie to the media about ill-treatment by the clan's rebels .
4. To document the humanitarian and legal action by clan's rebels through their dealings with Global humanitarian organizations such as the (Red Cross), which helps to give the true picture of this blessed revolution.

General Military Council of the Iraq rebels 19 January 2014

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE.*



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