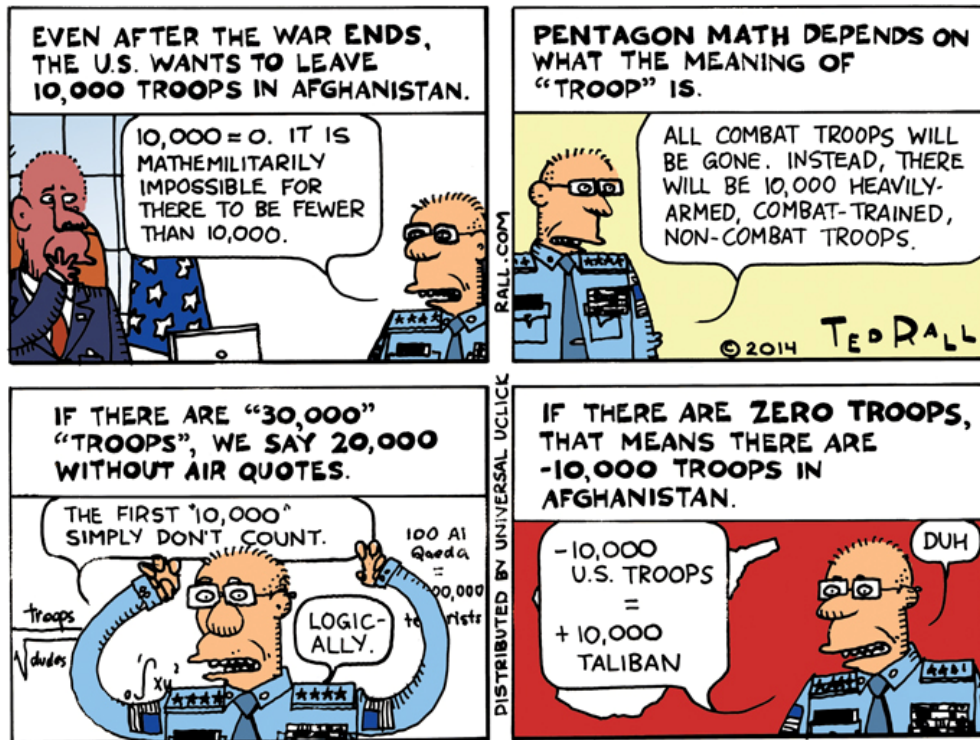


Military Resistance 12B2



Public Opinion Poll Says War In Afghanistan A Failure:

“The Public Is More Attentive To Costly Wars Than We Might Expect, Even When Politicians Try To Ignore The Conflicts”

“The Public Has Continued To Update Its Views On Iraq And Afghanistan Despite The Fact That These Wars Have

Received Virtually No Attention At All From Our Politicians”

Comment: T

One more demonstration that the disgusting elitists incessantly whining about how stupid people are, calling them sheep, are themselves the truly stupid ones, merely repeating each others’ arrogant smug lying ignorance.

January 31, 2014 Susan Page, USA TODAY [Excerpts]

[G]rim assessments in a USA TODAY/Pew Research Center poll underscore the erosion in support for the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan and the loss of faith in the outcome of the wars, both launched in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks.

The public's soured attitudes may make it harder the next time a president tries to persuade Americans of the value of military action when it involves putting thousands of U.S. troops in harm's way.

In the survey:

On Iraq, Americans by 52%-37% say the United States mostly failed to achieve its goals. That is a decidedly more negative view than in November 2011, when U.S. combat troops withdrew. Then, by 56%-33%, those surveyed said the U.S. had mostly succeeded.

On Afghanistan, Americans by a nearly identical 52%-38% say the U.S. has mostly failed to achieve its goals. In 2011, a month after Osama bin Laden was killed, a majority predicted the war would succeed.

“What is especially interesting about these responses is that the public has continued to update its views on Iraq and Afghanistan despite the fact that these wars have received virtually no attention at all from our politicians over the past couple of years,” said Christopher Gelpi, a political scientist at Ohio State University who has studied attitudes toward the conflicts.

“This shows that the public is more attentive to costly wars than we might expect, even when politicians try to ignore the conflicts.”

In a study of the impact of Afghanistan on the 2012 election, Ohio State's Gelpi found that the war's casualties didn't affect voter choices because Obama and Republican nominee Mitt Romney had similar stances.

However, casualties in Afghanistan were linked to lower voter turnout in communities that suffered them.

“We think that the failure of politicians to respond to an issue that voters cared about — the casualties of war — discouraged involvement in the election,” he said.

DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE MILITARY?



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

Forward Military Resistance along, or send us the email address if you wish and we'll send it regularly with your best wishes. Whether in Afghanistan or at a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to injustices, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: Military Resistance, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

**AFGHANISTAN THEATER:
“US Foreign Fighters Suffered 49
Combat Casualties During The Week**

Days Ending Jan. 30 As The Total Rose To 40,401”

Jan 29, 2014 www.michaelmunk.com [Excerpts]

AFGHANISTAN THEATER: US foreign fighters suffered 49 combat casualties during the week days ending Jan. 30 as the total rose to 40,401.

The total includes 21,443 dead and wounded from what the Pentagon classifies as “hostile” causes and 18,958 dead or medically evacuated (as of Dec. 3, 2012) from what it calls “non-hostile” causes.

US media divert attention from the actual cost in American life and limb by reporting regularly only the total killed (6,795: 4,489 in Iraq, 2,306 in Afghanistan) but rarely mentioning those wounded in action (51,877: 32,238 in Iraq; 19,639 in Afghanistan).

They ignore the 59,908 (44,607 in Iraq, 18,463 in AfPak (as of Dec 3, 2012) military casualties injured and ill seriously enough to be medevac'd out of theater, even though the 6,795 total dead include 1,456 (961 in Iraq, 495 in Afghanistan) who died from those same “non hostile” causes of whom almost 25% (332) were suicides (as of Jan 9, 2013).

WIAs are usually updated on Wednesday at www.defenselink.mil/news/casualty.pdf

**POLITICIANS REFUSE TO HALT THE
BLOODSHED**

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

MILITARY NEWS

**Sharp Decline In Army Suicides:
“Military People Now, They Just
Don’t Seem As Burnt Out As They
Used To Be”**

“The Decline May Be The Inevitable Result Of Ending Involvement In One War In Iraq And Winding Down Its Role In Another”

“The 150 Suicides Among Active-Duty Soldiers In 2013 Is The Lowest Number For That Service Branch Since 2008”

Jan. 31, 2014 By Gregg Zoroya, USA TODAY [Excerpts]

FORT CARSON, COLO. —

Suicides in the Army fell by 19 percent in 2013, dramatically reversing a rising trend plaguing the Army for nearly 10 years.

There were 150 suicides among soldiers on active-duty status last year, down from a record 185 in 2012, according to Army data. The numbers include both confirmed and suspected suicides.

Suicide researchers say the decline may be the inevitable result of the nation ending involvement in one war in Iraq and winding down its role in another in Afghanistan.

“I get the sense when I work with military people now, they just don’t seem as burnt out as they used to be,” says Craig Bryan, associate director of the National Center for Veterans Studies. “I mean there was a while there, they were just driven into the ground, even if they’d not been deployed, it was just keep going more, more, more, more.”

Many agree it was fueled by the cumulative strain of fighting two wars at once, an unprecedented demand on an all-volunteer force in which family separations, multiple deployments and combat exposure became a way of life for years.

During periods of weeks or months, more troops were dying by their own hand than were killed in combat, according to military data.

The Army’s many suicides drove up totals for the entire military, leading to a record 351 such deaths among active-duty troops in 2012 -- the deadliest suicide year on record for U.S. forces. The subsequent decline in suicides for the Army last year appeared to have the same effect, pushing down total Defense Department suicide numbers for 2013.

Though the Pentagon has not released its 2013 final figures, internal documents show 284 actual and presumed suicides among active-duty troops for the year through Dec. 15, a pace that would leave it significantly lower than 2012 suicides.

The 150 suicides among active-duty soldiers in 2013 is the lowest number for that service branch since 2008.

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

Wars throughout history have been waged for conquest and plunder and it is the working class who fights all the battles, the working class who makes the supreme sacrifices, the working class who freely sheds their blood and furnishes their corpses, and it is they who have never yet had a voice - in either declaring war or making peace. It is the ruling class that invariably does both. They alone declare war.

They are continually talking about patriotic duty. It is not their patriotic duty but your patriotic duty that they are concerned about. Their patriotic duty never takes them to the firing line or chucks them into the trenches.

-- Eugene V. Debs

The January 31, 2014 Snowden Interview: You Are Promised That Whatever Your View Of Snowden, This Video Will Present Someone You Have Never Met

<http://benswann.com/media-blacks-out-new-snowden-interview-the-government-doesnt-want-you-to-see/>

January 25 former NSA contractor Edward Snowden was interviewed by German television network ARD.

The Snowden you will meet here will show much about how his work frightens the powers that be.

Whatever impression you have formed of Snowden will very likely be changed, for the better.

T

Ukraine: Comment And Reader Reply

Comment by T:

[From Military Resistance 12B1, 2.1.14]

Ignore the apologists for Russian imperialism who try to portray the uprising in the Ukraine as some sort of U.S.-fascist conspiracy.

Those apologists writing in favor of the Yanukovich dictatorship who haven't sold themselves outright to the Putin regime don't have a clue that mass movements against a dictatorship are filled with all kinds of political and civic organizations, right and left, as well as millions of people who are not with any organization, but hate the tyranny, oppression, and exploitation which this Ukrainian government practices.

There are certainly extreme reactionaries protesting the government, but they don't control a genuinely popular mass uprising against a dictatorship that tried to crush all criticisms of its corruption and ruling class greed by passing a law criminalizing opposition, including revolutionary socialists, anarchists and workers' unions.

This is a mass movement from below that, hopefully, will destroy the Ukrainian government and the Ukrainian capitalists that own and operate that government.

IF so, the question then becomes whose class will organize and take the power after mass revolution brings down a hated regime; the same question that follows every successful revolution from below.

Reader Reply:

From: FS

To: Military Resistance Newsletter

Subject: Re: Military Resistance 12B1: "Soldiers Will Be On The People's Side"

Date: Feb 1, 2014

hey buddy...are you serious re the ukraine?if it's a dictatorship, what the fuck is the usa? ...the guy was elected...duh?

of course there's opposition and it isn't only the pig-mass-murdering west, just as there are very good people in syria who hate their government...so? the pig-mass-,murdering west is in syria as it was in libya and is in the ukraine , and the idea for us "progressives" (?) should be to get its/our butt the fuck out of other people's business, especially given that we are helpless - absofuckinglylutely helpless! - to stop our own country from terrorizing the entire fucking globe...

but instead we're supposed to stand shoulder to shoulder with our brothers and sisters in other lands who rise up against elected tyranny, even if some of them are scum sucking toadies for global capital?

sorry, but every time one of these orchestrated-from DC "revolutions" happen, whether color coded for dimwits or not, previously thoughtful people in america, including some leftist-republicans, seem to wind up sounding like hillary clinton...

what the fuck is up?

if someone puts a bullet through obama's head, or the tea party "takes over" a government building, should we all cheer that "the masses" have won?

repeat: what the fuck is going on? is this shit you're sending around about the ukraine a joke that i'm not getting?

**[One More Time]
[Further Comment Unnecessary]**

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Building Links To The Troops

1907:

**“The Work Of The Socialist Youth
Is Not In Vain”**

**“During The Strikes At Dunkirchen,
Creusot, Loguivi, Monso-Le-Min The
Soldiers Ordered Against The
Strikers Declared Their Solidarity
With The Workers”**

**“The Young Socialist Workers Are
Working With All The Enthusiasm And
Energy Of The Young To Have The Army
Side With The People”**

Anti-militarist literature is delivered to soldiers in the barracks and handed out to them in the streets; soldiers find it in coffee-houses and pubs, and everywhere else they go.

October 8, 1907: Vperyod [Forward], Issue #16. By V.I. Ulyanov. [The writer used the pen name "Lenin" to keep the government from terrorizing his family.]

It will be recalled that the International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart discussed the question of militarism and in connection with it the question of anti-militarist propaganda. The resolution adopted on the point says, in part, that the Congress regards it as a duty of the working classes to "help to have working class youth brought up in a spirit of international brotherhood and socialism and imbued with class consciousness".

The Congress regards this as an earnest of the army ceasing to be a blind instrument in the hands of the ruling classes, which they use as they see fit and which they can direct against the people at any time.

It is very hard, sometimes almost impossible, to conduct propaganda among soldiers on active service. Life in the barracks, strict supervision and rare leave make contact with the outer world extremely difficult; military discipline and the absurd spit and polish cow the soldier.

Army commanders do everything they can to knock the "nonsense" out of the "brutes", to purge them of every unconventional thought and every human emotion and to instill in them a sense of blind obedience and an unthinking wild hatred for "internal" and "external" enemies.... It is much harder to make an approach to the lone, ignorant and cowed soldier who is isolated from his fellow-men and whose head has been stuffed with the wildest views on every possible subject, than to draft-age young men living with their families and friends and closely bound up with them by common interest.

Everywhere anti-militarist propaganda among young workers has yielded excellent results. That is of tremendous importance. The worker who goes into the army a class-conscious Social-Democrat is a poor support for the powers that be.

There are young socialist workers' leagues in all European countries. In some, for instance, Belgium, Austria and Sweden, these leagues are large-scale organisations carrying on responsible party work. Of course, the main aim of the youth leagues is self-education and the working out of distinct and integrated socialist outlook. But the youth leagues also carry on practical work. They struggle for an improvement in the condition of apprentices and try to protect them from unlimited exploitation by their employers.

The young socialist workers' leagues devote even more time and attention to anti-militarist propaganda.

For that purpose, they try to establish close ties with young soldiers.

This is done in the following way. Before the young worker has joined the army, he is a member of a league and pays membership dues. When he becomes a soldier, the league continues to maintain constant contacts with him, regularly sending him small cash aids ("soldier's sous" as they call them in France), which, however small, are of substantial importance to the soldier.

For his part, he undertakes to provide the league with regular information about everything that goes on in his barracks and to write about his impressions. Thus, even after he joins the army, the soldier does not break off his ties with the organisation of which he was a member.

An effort is always made to drive the soldier as far away from home as possible for his service. This is done with the intention of preventing the soldier from being tied with the local population by any interest, and to make him feel alien to it.

It is then easier to make him carry out orders: to shoot at a crowd. Young workers' leagues try to bridge this alienation between the soldier and the local population.

Youth leagues are connected with each other. When he arrives in a new town, the soldier, a former member of a youth league at home, - is met by the local league as a welcome visitor, and he is at once brought into the circle of local interests and helped in every possible way.

He ceases to be a newcomer and a stranger. He is also aware that if any misfortune befalls him he will receive help and support. This awareness adds to his courage, he gains assurance in his behaviour in the barracks, and is bolder in standing up for his rights and his human dignity.

Their close ties with young soldiers enable the youth leagues to carry on extensive anti-militarist propaganda among the soldiers.

This is done mainly with the aid of anti-militarist literature, which the youth leagues publish and circulate in great quantities, especially in France, Belgium and also in Switzerland, Sweden, etc.

This literature is highly diverse: postcards with anti-militarist pictures, anti-militarist army songs (many of these songs are very popular among the soldiers), "soldier's catechism" (in France it was circulated in more than 100,000 copies), all sorts of pamphlets, leaflets, appeals; weekly, fortnightly and monthly newspapers and magazines for soldiers, some of them illustrated.

Barracks, Recruit, Young Soldier, Pju pju (a pet name for the young recruit), and *Forward* are very widely circulated. For example, in Belgium the newspapers *Recruit* and *Barracks* have a printing of 60,000 copies each. Especially many magazines are published at the time of the draft.

Special issues of soldiers' newspapers are mailed to the homes of all recruits.

Anti-militarist literature is delivered to soldiers in the barracks and handed out to them in the streets; soldiers find it in coffee-houses and pubs, and everywhere else they go.

Recruits receive special attention. They are given a ceremonial send-off.

During the recruitment, processions are staged in the towns. In Austria, for instance, recruits walk through the town dressed in mourning and to the strains of funeral marches. In front of them rolls a decorated red carriage.

All the walls are plastered with red posters which say in large letters: "You will not shoot at the people!"

Evening parties with ardent anti-militarist speeches are held in honour of the recruits. In short, everything is done to awaken the recruit's consciousness, to ensure him against the evil influence of the ideas and emotions which will be instilled into him in the barracks by fair means and foul.

The work of the socialist youth is not in vain. In Belgium, there are almost 15 soldiers' unions in the army, which are mostly affiliated with the Social-Democratic Labour Party and are closely allied with each other. In some regiments, two-thirds of the soldiers are organised.

In France, the anti-militarist mood has become massive. During the strikes at Dunkirchen, Creusot, Loguivi, Monso-le-Min the soldiers ordered against the strikers declared their solidarity with the workers....

As time goes on, there are more and more Social-Democrats in the army and the troops become increasingly less reliable.

When the bourgeoisie has to confront the organised working class, whom will the army back?

The young socialist workers are working with all the enthusiasm and energy of the young to have the army side with the people.

DHS Purchases 1.2 Billion 'Domestic Anti-Personnel' Rounds



Photo Credit: Youtube

January 29, 2014 By Mike, Duffel Blog. Duffel Blog reporters Dark Laughter, Drew, and Jay contributed to this report.

ARLINGTON, VA — The Department of Homeland Security has purchased more than one billion rounds of a newly designed 9mm handgun round designated “domestic anti-personnel,” developed in part by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, and manufactured in China by NORINCO, a Duffel Blog investigation has uncovered.

Nicknamed “Patriot Poppers,” the ammunition was originally conceptualized as the round to “guard against those guarding against tyranny.” According to government documents, the design is extremely effective at creating permanent tissue damage to unarmored doughy middle-aged targets.

“It won’t really penetrate any significant body armor, but that stuff is illegal to purchase anyway,” said Regina Dugan, a DARPA spokesperson speaking to reporters only on background. “These are for pacification of the law-abiding, protest prone people: Truthers, Birthers, you know the type. Don’t quote me on that.”

The new DAP round represents a great leap forward in ammunition design,” said David Lo Pan, spokesman for NORINCO North America. “While the new round is not armor-piercing, it can easily penetrate the Old Testament, The Book of Mormon, iPhones, fanny packs, pocket-sized constitutions, Members Only jackets, frock coats, powdered wigs, and picket signs.”

The flashy new design is also attracting attention from private firearm enthusiasts interested in exercising their 2nd amendment rights. Following the State of the Union address however, President Obama preemptively signed an executive order designating the round for Law Enforcement and Military use only.

The National Rifle Association and the National Association for Gun Rights have vowed to fight the state and federal restrictions, as well as challenge the fiscal and legal grounds of the bulk purchase itself. The NRA called the executive order “an unconstitutional executive fiat,” while the NAGR decried the government’s alleged moral and fiscal impropriety.

DHS Director Jeh Johnson attempted to justify the purchase, quickly releasing a statement to address some misconceptions taking hold on blogs and talk radio.

We’ve provided his full statement below:

“Look, I don’t know what people are getting so worked up about. Your local neighborhood cop isn’t carrying these bullets to kill your common criminals or illegal immigrants; even though he might have to do those things in very unusual situations.

“He’s carrying these bullets because we foresee a need to shoot and kill anti-government extremists and PTSD-addled veterans. Does anyone really not get that? The Domestic Anti-Personnel round is nothing more than a tool that was explicitly designed for that legitimate purpose.

This new round is a windfall for the American people. These rounds cost a fraction of the military grade ammunition. They are smaller and lower powered, which saves taxpayers money.

Because to be honest, it just doesn't take much lead and powder to put one of those taxpayers down."

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Two Unarmed Palestinian Fishermen Taken Prisoner By Zionist Forces Off Gaza, As Usual



Photo by Charlie Andreasson

January 27, 2014 International Solidarity Movement, Rosa Schiano| Gaza, Occupied Palestine

On Monday, 20th January, at about 6:00 am, Yousef Amin Abo Warda (age 18) and his cousin Ahmad Kamal Abo Warda (age 16) left their house to go fishing in a small boat without an engine.

Around 7:30 am they were fishing in front of the al-Waha area, in the northern Gaza Strip, and sank their fishing nets about three kilometers, or 1.6 nautical miles, offshore.

Yousef said two large Israeli gunboats approached the fishing boats.

While other fishermen were able to escape, for Yousef and Ahmad it was impossible, as their boat had no engine and was made heavy seawater seeping through a hole.

“Soldiers from one of the gunboats began shooting into the water, while the second gunboat quickly turned around us to create waves,” Yousef said.

The soldiers, as they usually do when they want to arrest fishermen, asked the two young Palestinians to undress, dive into the water and swim to the Israeli ship.

“I tried to get closer to their ship by swimming, but the ship moved away, so it became hard for me,” Yousef said. “I cried that I was tired moving my arms. I could no longer swim. The ship stopped. I went directly to the ladder that they put down and I climbed on board the ship.”

“They made me kneel down and handcuffed my hands behind my back,” Yousef added.

“They gave me some clothes and helped me put them on. They yelled to my cousin Ahmad to swim toward the ship. After about half hour Ahmad was sitting behind me. Our hands and feet were tied.” Moreover, the soldiers kicked the two fishermen on their back.

After about half an hour the ship reached the Israeli port of Ashdod.

The soldiers removed the bandages from the fishermen’s eyes, as well as their cuffs, to allow them to get off the ship. On shore, the fishermen were again handcuffed and blindfolded.

They were asked personal information: their names, place of residence, dates of birth, phone numbers. Some soldiers wrote this information in Hebrew on a paper.

They asked Yousef to hold the paper in his hands and took a picture of him. Yousef and Ahmad were held in two separate rooms for about three hours. Then some soldiers took Yousef into the room where Ahmad was detained. They left them handcuffed in a room for another three hours. Then some soldiers made the fishermen get in a Jeep and brought them to Erez.

At Erez, the two fishermen were brought into a room and interrogated separately.

The investigator asked Yousef about his name, his family, his brothers, the age of his relatives, his work and other personal information. “The detective showed me on a computer a map of the city of Jabalia, he told me the name of the streets with specific details,” he said.

“He asked me to select my house. He showed me a house in which some people working for Hamas and the al-Qassam brigades are living, and he asked me if I know them. I said no.

“Then he showed me other houses belonging to people connected with Hamas. He indicated more than two houses.

“He was trying to get information from me. I said I don’t know anything. He told me ‘Are you afraid? You are in a safe place and you can tell us everything. These people are

trying to destroy your life, they are terrorists.’ He indicated about six families that live in my neighborhood”.

The investigator showed him also the beach and asked him on which part of the beach he usually works and where he keeps his boat.

The investigator also asked him also about a police site in the area and how many people work there.

Yousef replied that he knows only two policemen, to whom the fishermen show their permits on the beach, and that he doesn’t go to the governmental site.

The investigator asked Yousef about a training site of the al-Qassam brigades. Yousef replied that he doesn’t know anything about it.

“The investigator then showed me photos of some hasakat (small fishing boats) and asked me to whom they belong, and he asked me about some cafes on the beach and about the harbor. I told him that I don’t know anything about the harbor and I don’t go there. The investigator asked me ‘In Jabalia refugee camp there is a site that belongs to Hamas?’ I told him that I don’t know.”

“The investigator asked me what I thought of al-Sisi (commander of the Egyptian armed forces) and how the relation are between Hamas and al-Sisi. I told him that I do not follow the news or politics.

“I said, ‘I go to fish and I go home’.

“The detective told me ‘If you are near the border and you get shot by the army, who will you blame and would you consider responsible?’ ‘You are responsible,’ I said. He replied ‘Hamas should be blamed, not us.’”

“The investigator then asked me, ‘What do you think of the Hamas government and what is your opinion of it in comparison with Fatah? Do you feel comfortable? Why did you elected them?

“You were happy under the Israeli government.

“Many Palestinians came here to work and had money. Can you compare your current life to the life in which Israel controlled Gaza?’ I told him that I’m only 18 years old. I can’t know and I have never gone to Israel.”

The investigator then asked Yousef about the tunnels , Yousef replied that he’s just a fisherman and has never seen one. Finally, the investigator asked him if he was feeling hungry. Yousef said yes. The soldiers brought him a shawarma sandwich and a Coke.

Yousef was then taken to another room and remained there for an hour. Meanwhile, investigators had questioned his cousin Ahmad. The soldiers then accompanied the two young fishermen to the Erez gate and told them to return to the Gaza Strip.

“They closed the door behind us,” he said.

Their relatives, frightened by the lack of news, had tried to contact the International Committee of the Red Cross and other organizations.

They also asked some fishermen to look for them in the sea. But only around 11:00 pm did the ICRC inform them that the two had been arrested.

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

YOU'RE INVITED:

Comments, arguments, articles, and letters from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or email contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe.

CLASS WAR REPORTS



Eyewitness Report:

**Mexican Armed Self-Defense
Guards Up Close And Personal;
“The Authorities Have Been Accused
Of Being Complicit With The
Organized Crime Cartel”
“The Military Official Is Received With A
Barrage Of Insults, Boos, And Whistles”
[Crossing Borders In Templar Territory]**



Photo: Juan José Estrada Serafín

As we drive through this liberated territory we realize that now, despite public opinion about the entire state of Michoacan, we are in one of the safest places in the country, and maybe the world, comunitario territory.

Jan 31, 2014 By Simón Sedillo, El Enemigo Común

We left a municipality in Michoacan, which is often confused in the mainstream media as part of the Tierra Caliente region, but is actually Sierra.

We hear that there is going to be a negotiation with the state and federal government and autonomous self-defense groups in order to accord the legalization of the self-defense groups.

We head to Tepacaltepec where the meeting is to be held. The scene is surreal to say the least, but so is everything else in Michoacan these days, so it is no surprise to us any longer. In what looks like an old farmhouse, seats and tables with white tablecloths are arranged in a large rectangle.

The mainstream media begin to trickle in.

Outside the tin roofed, open-air farmhouse you can see unarmed self-defense group members or comunitarios from throughout the state gathered under a mesquite tree. Despite the mainstream media and the official line claiming the self-defense patrols are composed of marauding militias, comunitarios is what the people in this part of the state call the self-defense groups in order to clarify their relationship to the community.

They are from the community and are therefore comunitarios (communitarians).

They hang two hammocks as they know these meetings never start when they are supposed to.

There is a strong federal police presence as well, but there really does not seem to be much tension between the federales and the comunitarios.

Several federal police officers have lost their lives in battles against the Knights Templar Cartel and there seems to be a certain camaraderie between individual comunitarios and federales, far beyond any official strategy to co-opt the comunitarios based upon the deaths that they share.

Both know they are using one another to accomplish different goals. The comunitarios want to free their communities from organized crime and the federales want to prove themselves as on the right side of an all too confusing war against the Knights Templar, a cartel that acts a lot more like a religious cult than an organized crime mafia.

Some comunitarios are hopeful that this will protect them from further government persecution, however the sense of most comunitarios I talk to this day is that when the Templars are vanquished, the federal government will criminalize, persecute, and incarcerate the comunitarios.

When we arrived we noticed the table where a variety of government officials are expected to be seated had several official government logos behind them on a placard.

In some small way there is a sense of hope among the comunitarios, yet there is still a very evident disdain for the authorities who have been accused of at best turning a blind eye to the reality in these war-torn communities, and at worst of being complicit with the organized crime cartel. Before much longer we notice a government official removes the logos from the table.

One comunitario tells us "Good, this isn't their meeting, it is ours. We have forced them to the negotiation table with actions and results."

Several white suburbans along with heavily militarized federal police and army vehicles drive into the grounds of the old farmhouse; they are of course escorting the governor, an emissary from the federal police in the region, and the federal commissioner of development and security in Michoacan.

Their security detail illustrates the fear they must have to travel through this war zone. As the governor steps out of his vehicle, the mainstream media swarm to get the best shot of the beginning of this historic meeting, which is expected to end in a truce between the officials and the comunitarios.

Slowly we hear boos and hooting and hollering from the comunitarios at the governor. One young woman holds up a sign questioning the governments intentions, and shares very strong opinions about this meeting. She is backed up by several comunitarios.

The government officials are forced to recognize the inefficiency of a drug war strategy in the region, in which their inability to identify cartel members woven into the social fabric of the entire state.

In addition they must admit that it is the comunitarios who know exactly who is involved, where they are hiding, and what the cartel has done to their families over the last several years.

The government officials admit that without the help of the comunitarios, it would be impossible to get rid of the Knights Templar Cartel.

It is clear that the comunitarios have the upper hand in this situation.

The proposal is to legalize and formalize the comunitarios under the law.

We hear whispers and mumbling amongst the crowd arguing against legalization from an authority that is, in their experience clearly corrupt and complicit with the organized crime cartel.

Every time the governor begins to speak, individuals are heard shouting out insults, and booing.

At a given point a moderator announces the presence of an army general responsible for the military zone in Apatzingan, a city still under Templar control today.

“The Military Official Is Received With A Barrage Of Insults, Boos, And Whistles”

The military official is received with a barrage of insults, boos, and whistles. There may be a love-hate relationship with the federal police in the region, but the relationship with the army is hate-hate.

Every single person we speak to clarifies that the military has time and time again proven itself to be corrupt and complicit with the cartel, not to mention that a week earlier in an attempt to disarm comunitarios in the recently liberated community of Antunez, just outside Apatzingan, the military fired upon unarmed civilians from that community who came out en masse to defend comunitarios against this official aggression.

The soldiers killed four unarmed people, including an 11-year-old girl.

The accord between government officials with representatives from several, but not all, of the comunitarios includes the legalization the comunitarios under official authority through registering their weapons and their names with the Secretary of Defense.

This is a stark contradiction to the military strategy employed in Antunez a week earlier, and certainly makes several of the comunitarios uneasy. On the other hand the government is forced to publicly commit to go after the members of the organized crime cartel and lock them up.

The fear is that this list of comunitarios names will later be used to criminalize and incarcerate the comunitarios after they have accomplished the task at hand, ridding their state of the Knights Templar.

Another common fear is that the whole agreement is pure theater, an act by the federal government to buy time and gain control of the situation.

Again the crowd is heard booing on several occasions. Two elderly women from Apatzingan under condition of anonymity tell me, “Why are they signing now? Why work with the government when we have proven that we don’t need them to organize and defend ourselves? Why sign with the white-collar criminals?”

I speak to a comunitario who has seen decent coordination with the federal police and very bad coordination with the military time and time again.

He tells me, “We are trying to exhaust every possible legitimate means of defending ourselves and our communities.

“There is very little trust in the government officials, and we expect them to break their commitment.

“Whether they do or not, we will continue exactly as we have, taking control of our own security.

During the meeting we hear that comunitarios have advanced towards the community of Periban. We decide to head that way and see what is going on.

“The Cockroach Effect”

Ten kilometers before Periban we come across a small comunitario checkpoint.

The comunitarios there are on high alert due to what they call, “the cockroach effect”. As comunitarios advance into any community, Templarios scatter like cockroaches into adjacent communities.

We talk to one of the comunitarios and ask him about the accord with the government for legalization of the comunitarios, and he repeats the sentiment of others at the meeting, “They (government officials) are using us to look good, but what they really want out of this is a list of names so that when the time comes they can disarm and detain us, after we do their job for them.”

We head to Periban, by the time we get there the town plaza is full of community members, and there is a (relatively) small military and federal police presence there as well. We see very few comunitarios, mostly with handguns meandering about the plaza. The feeling was almost festive. The town seemed as if it had taken its first breath of

relief in a very long time. The rumor is that comunitarios will now advance to the next community 10 kilometers away, which is Los Reyes.

Towards the edge of town we see three pickup trucks full of men with hunting rifles, shotguns, and assault rifles. We decide to follow them, and they meet up with several other men with a variety of vehicles and weaponry at the very edge or Periban.

Here we meet a comunitario who has attained some fame in the mainstream media, known as Simón el Americano. He tells us that the advance had been postponed until the following day. Reportbacks from that advance into Los Reyes verify that the takeover was peaceful and festive as well. The comunitarios plan on slowly continuing to make their way to Uruapan, an urban metropolis and stronghold of the Templarios.

We decide to drive to Uruapan in order to drop off colleagues who are headed home after a simultaneously difficult and inspiring week. On the way back from Uruapan to the community we are staying at, we decide to take a more public route, which we had traveled in the past, rather than travel back through the zone of the advances, again fearing the “cockroach effect” ourselves.

We head towards Apatzingan, which again is still technically under Templar control, though it has basically been surrounded by the comunitarios, who are just waiting for the most opportune moment to liberate the community in what will be a primarily symbolic gesture.

About an hour from Uruapan, just past the kilometer 110 marker seen from the roadside we come upon a scene all too common in Templar territory. There is a tractor trailer stopped in our lane, and another one parked coming from the opposite direction in the other lane.

There is enough space between them so that one could pass up the first trailer in our lane, but I stop the car about 50 meters away and we watch. The trailers are in front of a PEMEX gas station, and we see several pick up trucks in the gas station parking lot, not pumping gas but lined up in order to exit quickly and together. There were no fire cans or orange cones on the road, a classic sign of an official military, police, or comunitario checkpoint.

After adding up the details we decide that this must be a narco-bloqueo, or narco-blockade, a road block strategy utilized by the Templars to kidnap, extort and rob places of business and individuals.

I put the car in reverse, and make a backwards u-turn and head back a couple of kilometers to a 24-hour truck stop. As we pull in to the truck stop, two tractor trailers pull into the truck stop as well, back to back. We assume they were warned about the narco-blockade up the road and stopped before it was too late. We didn't say a word to one another.

Nobody knows who might be a member of the Templars. We ordered coffee and so did the truck drivers. My colleagues and I had already agreed to wait a half hour and try again, if the road were still blocked, we would head back to Uruapan and stay in a hotel. As I pay the bill the young woman at the truck stop says “May god bless your travels.” I am pretty sure that all of us knew that just down the road, there was a tremendous

security risk to all of us. Again without a word spoken the truck drivers and us leave at the same time. We drive

behind them very slowly, and as we come up on the gas station, the roadway is clear. However the 24-hour service station is closed, all of the lights are turned off, and there isn't a soul in sight.

The Templar's are known for storming businesses, robbing employees and individuals, and kidnapping civilians. We assume that this is exactly what has happened here tonight. We continue on to the community of Lombardia and at kilometer 115 there is a checkpoint, except that this one looks like an official one. Fire cans are visible, as well as orange cones. I advance, however as we get closer we notice that the speed bumps on the road leading up to the actual checkpoint are made out of dirt and are fresh, normally they are made out of old tire strips. Very few vehicles had been through here. We begin to evaluate the scene, there are no federal police, or military present. We see no official decals. The checkpoint has all the idiosyncrasies of a comunitario checkpoint, except that we know for a fact that the comunitarios have not made it this far yet. This was a Knights Templar's checkpoint, and it was too late to turn around.

We see several men hiding behind sandbag barricades, and one individual flashes us with a light and orders us to stop. We roll down the passenger side window, and I flash my international press pass and the guard waves us through, no questions asked.

We drive through and about one kilometer down the road, and we see several Army trucks with several soldiers parked by the side of the road. They do not stop us or anybody, they are just there.

Their presence does not make us feel any safer. We continue on our way, and into Apatzingan. In Apatzingan only taxis, known for being Templar lookouts, patrol the area. We keep our distance by running several stop lights, and stopping very slowly and keeping our distance from the taxis when absolutely necessary. Our goal for the moment is to make it to the comunitario checkpoint in Buena Vista, which opens up the way to several liberated municipalities and back to our starting point just under 3 hours away.

Soon we see the fire cans and orange cones again at the entrance to Buena Vista. This time we know that this is comunitarios.

Crossing that border was the most relieving sensation I have ever experienced in my life.

We tell the comunitarios about the situation and they radio in the information to others in the area to avoid Lombardia. They confirm our instincts that in fact that was a narco-blockade outside Lombardia, and that we were very fortunate to have been alert and avoided it.

The comunitarios radio ahead to the subsequent comunitario checkpoints on our route back to our starting point earlier that day.

As we drive through this liberated territory we realize that now, despite public opinion about the entire state of Michoacan, we are in one of the safest places in the country, and maybe the world, comunitario territory.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



When Schools Stopped Bullying Kids With Oppressive “Rules,” The Schools Saw “A Drop In Bullying, Serious Injuries And Vandalism” “Concentration Levels In Class Are Increasing”

February 1, 2014 by MARIKA HILL, Fairfax NZ News [Excerpts]

Ripping up the playground rulebook is having incredible effects on children at an Auckland school.

Chaos may reign at Swanson Primary School with children climbing trees, riding skateboards and playing bullrush [known in the USA as Red Rover] during playtime, but surprisingly the students don't cause bedlam, the principal says.

The school is actually seeing a drop in bullying, serious injuries and vandalism, while concentration levels in class are increasing.

Principal Bruce McLachlan rid the school of playtime rules as part of a successful university experiment.

“We want kids to be safe and to look after them, but we end up wrapping them in cotton wool when in fact they should be able to fall over.”

Letting children test themselves on a scooter during playtime could make them more aware of the dangers when getting behind the wheel of a car in high school, he said.

“When you look at our playground it looks chaotic. From an adult's perspective, it looks like kids might get hurt, but they don't.”

Swanson School signed up to the study by AUT and Otago University just over two years ago, with the aim of encouraging active play.

However, the school took the experiment a step further by abandoning the rules completely, much to the horror of some teachers at the time, he said.

When the university study wrapped up at the end of last year the school and researchers were amazed by the results.

Mudslides, skateboarding, bullrush and tree climbing kept the children so occupied the school no longer needed a timeout area or as many teachers on patrol.

Instead of a playground, children used their imagination to play in a “loose parts pit” which contained junk such as wood, tyres and an old fire hose.

“The kids were motivated, busy and engaged. In my experience, the time children get into trouble is when they are not busy, motivated and engaged. It's during that time they bully other kids, graffiti or wreck things around the school.”

Parents were happy too because their children were happy, he said.

But this wasn't a playtime revolution, it was just a return to the days before health and safety policies came to rule.

AUT professor of public health Grant Schofield, who worked on the research project, said there are too many rules in modern playgrounds.

“The great paradox of cotton-woolling children is it's more dangerous in the long-run.”

Society's obsession with protecting children ignores the benefits of risk-taking, he said.

Children develop the frontal lobe of their brain when taking risks, meaning they work out consequences. “You can't teach them that. They have to learn risk on their own terms. It doesn't develop by watching TV, they have to get out there.”

The research project morphed into something bigger when plans to upgrade playgrounds were stopped due to over-zealous safety regulations and costly play equipment.

“There was so many ridiculous health and safety regulations and the kids thought the static structures of playgrounds were boring.”

When researchers - inspired by their own risk-taking childhoods - decided to give children the freedom to create their own play, principals shook their heads but eventually four Dunedin schools and four West Auckland schools agreed to take on the challenge, including Swanson Primary School.

It was expected the children would be more active, but researchers were amazed by all the behavioural pay-offs. The final results of the study will be collated this year.

Schofield urged other schools to embrace risk-taking. “It’s a no brainer. As far as implementation, it’s a zero-cost game in most cases. All you are doing is abandoning rules,” he said.



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