

## **Military Resistance 13E10**



[Thanks to SSG N (ret'd) who sent this in. She writes: "The day after."]

## **ACTION REPORTS**

### **Fleet Week Outreach, New York City**

From: Claude C.  
To: Military Resistance Newsletter  
Sent: May 30, 2015  
Subject: Fleet Week Outreach, New York City

Good day all.

So, A and C went out on Friday the 22nd of May to Times Square and after, the Port Authority. A majority of our outreach was in Times Square.

We spoke with 10 individuals at Times Square. One Navy personnel and the rest were Marines.

We were able to give out 9 newsletters and 6 videos.

Out of these ten interactions, only one person immediately turned us down after learning about what our organization is working towards and one young man's response to our

addressing the US disengage in any further wars prompted him to tell us that if we didn't fight "psychopaths" then who would, etc.

So, at the Port Authority, we spoke to two soldiers before being notified we can leave our info in the USO office and they can freely take and keep our info.

We'll have to see how successful this new tactic can be, and maybe figure if it's something to continue going forward. And please A, add or correct if there's anything I missed stating here.

Have a great weekend everyone. God bless.

Total:  
12 Personnel Interactions  
9 Newsletters  
6 Videos

**MORE:**

## **ACTION REPORTS WANTED: FROM YOU!**

**An effective way to encourage others to support members of the armed forces organizing to resist the Imperial war is to report what you do.**

**If you've carried out organized contact with troops on active duty, at base gates, airports, or anywhere else, send a report in to Military Resistance for the Action Reports section.**

**Same for contact with National Guard and/or Reserve components.**

**They don't have to be long. Just clear, and direct action reports about what work was done and how.**

**If there were favorable responses, say so.**

**If there were unfavorable responses or problems, don't leave them out. Reporting what went wrong and/or got screwed up is especially important, so that others may learn from you what to expect, and how to avoid similar problems if possible.**

**If you are not planning or engaging in outreach to the troops, you have nothing to report.**

**NOTE WELL:**

**Do not make public any information that could compromise the work.**

**Identifying information – locations, personnel – will be omitted from the reports.**

Whether you are serving in the armed forces or not, do not identify members of the armed forces organizing to stop the wars.

If accidentally included, that information will not be published.

The sole exception: occasions when a member of the armed services explicitly directs identifying information be published in reporting on the action.

MORE:

## Military Initiative

### Organizing Committee Mission Statement:

*July 4, 1776*

*Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.*

*But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.*

1. Members of the armed forces have the right and duty to defend civilians from dictatorships and to aid civilian movements against dictatorships.

This applies whether dictatorship is imposed by force of arms or is imposed when those in command of the resources of society use their wealth for buying politicians to control the government.

The armed forces are not for use by politicians or corporations to attack movements fighting for improvement in the lives of working class citizens, or to attack the rights and liberties of Americans written in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution

2. The armed forces are not for use in wars of Empire.

Military Initiative is for immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Afghanistan and Iraq.

Members of the armed forces organizing to defeat wars of empire will receive encouragement and support.

The long term objective is to assist in eliminating wars of empire by eliminating all empires.

**Nations attacked by Empires have the right to independence and to resist invasion.**

**3. Efforts to increase democratic rights in every society, organization, movement, and within the armed forces itself will be encouraged and supported.**

**This applies to the armed forces of every nation. There is no national government at this time organized by, for, and under the control of its citizens.**

**4. Military Initiative does not advocate individual disobedience to orders or desertion from the armed forces because members of the armed forces working together is most effective.**

**That said, Military Initiative will assist in the defense of troops who see individual desertion or refusal of orders as the only course of action open to them for reasons of conscience.**

**5. Military Initiative practices organizational democracy.**

**This means control of the organization by the membership, through elected delegates to any coordinating bodies that may be formed, whether at local, regional, or national levels. Anyone elected is subject to recall, by majority vote of the membership.**

**Any coordinating bodies will report their decisions and votes to the membership, and may be overruled by a majority of the membership.**

**6. It is unnecessary for Military Initiative to be in complete political agreement with other organizations to work together toward a common objective.**

**Organizations working together on common objectives need to discuss differences about the best way forward.**

**7. The mission of Military Initiative is to bring together in one organization members of the armed forces and civilians who are dedicated to these objectives.**

**In order to be prepared to defend and extend human rights and economic justice, we will meet together to organize wherever we may be, engaging in such activities as may be necessary, reasonable and effective.**

## **Membership Requirements:**

8. Civilian member participate in organized action to reach out to and work with active duty armed forces.

9. Military Initiative or individual members may choose to support candidates for elective office who are for immediate withdrawal from Afghanistan and Iraq, but do not support candidates opposed to immediate, unconditional withdrawal.

10. Members may not be active duty or drilling reserve commissioned officers, or employed in any capacity by any police or intelligence agency, local, state, or national.

11. I understand and am in agreement with this mission.

I oppose bigotry against people because of their race, religion, national origin, gender, or sexual orientation.

I pledge to defend my brothers and sisters, and the democratic rights of the citizens of the United States, against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

----- (Signed)

(Date)

----- (Application taken by)

Military Initiative: [Contact@militaryproject.org](mailto:Contact@militaryproject.org)  
Box 126, 2576 Broadway,  
New York, N.Y. 10025-5657

MORE

# You Can Take Action That Makes A Difference: Join The Military Initiative: MILITARY INITIATIVE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Armed Forces? (Branch) \_\_\_\_\_

Veteran? Years: \_\_\_\_\_

Union: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (Landline): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (Cell): \_\_\_\_\_

\$ dues paid \_\_\_\_\_  
(See next: Calendar year basis.)

Armed Forces Members	@	Dues waived
Civilians	@	\$25
Students/Unemployed	@	\$10
Civilian/Military Prisoners	@	Dues Waived

Comments:

NOTE: Civilian applicants will be interviewed, in person if possible, or by phone.

**Military Initiative: [Contact@militaryproject.org](mailto:Contact@militaryproject.org)  
Box 126, 2576 Broadway,  
New York, N.Y. 10025-5657**

**MORE**

## **“People Need Not Be Helpless Before The Power Of Illegitimate Authority”**

*[Based on a statement by David Cortright, Vietnam Veteran and armed forces resistance organizer.]*

**In the final analysis the stationing of American forces abroad serves not the national interest but the class interest of the corporate and political elite.**

The maintenance of a massive, interventionist-oriented military establishment is based on the need to protect multinational investment and preserve regimes friendly to American capital.

Imperialism is at the heart of the national-security system and is the force fundamentally responsible for the counterrevolutionary, repressive aims of U.S. policy.

Only if we confront this reality and challenge it throughout society and within the ranks can we restore democratic control of the military.

Of course nothing can be accomplished without citizen involvement and active political struggle.

During the Vietnam era enlisted servicemen created massive pressures for change, despite severe repression, and significantly altered the course of the war and subsequent military policy.

To sustain and strengthen this challenge we must continue to build political opposition to interventionism and support those within the armed services, including national guard and reserves, who defy the goals and program of Empire.

The central lesson of the GI movement is that people need not be helpless before the power of illegitimate authority, that by getting together and acting upon their convictions people can change society and, in effect, make their own history.

Military Initiative

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## **AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS**

**37 Afghan Security Force Members  
Switch Sides, Join Taliban In  
Uruzgan:  
“Taliban Are In About A Kilometer  
Distance From The Capital City Of This  
District”**

28 May 2015 by Farid Hussainkhail, TOLONews& Khaama Press

At least 37 Afghan security force members, including soldiers and police, have switched sides to join the local Taliban in Uruzgan – taking their weapons with them, said officials Thursday.

District governor of Khas Urozgan, Abdul Karim Karimi confirmed the reports but said that a number of these defectors have since been killed by the Taliban after crossing over.

According to Karimi, security force members have been engaged in ongoing clashes with Taliban insurgents over the past 15 days. In addition, the Taliban have overrun a number of military posts in the area.

Last week officials said that heavy clashes have been the order of the day for over a week in the Khas Urozgan district. At that stage at least 10 posts had been reportedly seized by insurgents.

Local residents in Khas Urozgan say there are serious clashes between security forces and Taliban since about two weeks in this district.

**According to these residents Taliban are in about a kilometer distance from the capital city of this district.**

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## **Insurgents Attack Guest House For Foreigners In Kabul: Fighting Lasts Six Hours**



Afghan security officers patrol near a guesthouse targeted in an attack by the Taliban, in Kabul, Afghanistan, May 27, 2015. (AP Photo/Allauddin Khan) (Allauddin Khan/AP)

May 27 By Tim Craig, Washington Post & AP [Excerpts]

KABUL — Afghan President Ashraf Ghani praised security forces on Wednesday for repelling a Taliban assault on a Kabul guesthouse, which sparked a six-hour gun battle that kept nearby residents cowering until dawn.

**But the ability of the attackers to penetrate into central Kabul, armed with a cache of weapons and ammunition, is likely to raise even more questions about whether Afghan security forces can keep the capital secure.**

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack in tweets on a recognized Twitter account.

They referred to the target as "belonging to the occupiers," reiterating the insurgents' message that foreign installations are specific targets in the Afghan capital.

**The siege began late Tuesday, with heavy explosions accompanying sporadic automatic rifle fire, and was focused on the Rabbani Guesthouse, which is favored by foreigners as the area is in the heart of the diplomatic district and close to the airport.**

The hotel is owned by the Rabbani family, which includes the late Burhanuddin Rabbani, who served as president of Afghanistan from 1992 until 1996 and was assassinated in Kabul in 2011, and current Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani.

The militants were armed with assault rifles, rocket launchers and hand grenades.

But when the attackers approached the guesthouse in Kabul's upscale Wazir Akbar Khan neighborhood, several security guards began firing on them. One of the militants then blew himself up on the street in front of the Heetal Plaza Hotel.

The other three hid in a concrete bunker near the front gate of the guesthouse. As Afghan police and soldiers rushed to the scene, the surrounding neighborhood became an urban battlefield.

The attackers repeatedly lobbed grenades, resulting in more than two dozen explosions. More than 100 bullets were also fired by militants or police, neighbors said.

Around dawn, however, Afghan forces riding in armored vehicles blasted through the concrete outpost, killing all three attackers. Sediq Sediqqi, spokesman for the Afghan Interior Ministry, said there were no police or civilian casualties.

Wazir Akbar Khan houses several foreign embassies, headquarters for international aid organizations and the estates of wealthy Afghans.

"All night, we haven't slept," Gul Nabi, 29, who lives across the street from the guesthouse, said Wednesday morning. "This is the first time we have seen such a big battle" in Kabul.

Khaesta Gul, the night watchman at a mosque on the same street, was sleeping on the floor of the mosque when the force of an initial explosion shattered the windows and showered him with glass.

“I escaped, but my hands are still shaking,” Gul said Wednesday morning.

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

## MILITARY NEWS



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## **Croatian Police Attack Veterans Marching For Increased Benefits “They Can Only Take Us Dead”**

29 May 15 by Sven Milekic, BIRN; Zagreb

After police tried to remove protesting Croatian war veterans from St Marks's square in the heart of Zagreb, where the government headquarters is located, protesters hid inside a nearby church, where they spent the night.

The veterans of the independence war have been protesting for more than 200 days in front of the veterans' ministry, demanding the removal of the minister, Predrag Matic, and the passage of a law granting additional benefits for war veterans.

Since Thursday's protest was unannounced, police said it could only start after 10pm, before which, by law, unannounced protests in front of the government are not allowed.

Police clashed briefly with the protesters who then retreated to the church, which they prevented the police from entering.

Some of the clergy intervened to prevent physical conflict.

They reminded the police that under Croatian agreements with the Holy See, police may not enter religious sites unless it is "for the urgent protection of life or health or to preserve goods of particular historical and cultural value".

Police stayed for the whole night in front of the church, keeping it surrounded, preventing food and water from being given to the protesters.

At the same time, protesters who had remained at their camp in front of the veterans' ministry blocked the nearby Savska street with a couple of gas cylinders.

One of the protest leaders, Josip Klemm, told Croatian Radio on Friday that "the defenders (a term for war veterans) are worried for their safety and are under stress and exhausted".

Another leader of the protest, the president of the Association of 100 Per Cent Handicapped Croatian Defenders, Djuro Glogoski, described the events at a short press conference at the church's entrance.

"Police tried on three occasions to enter the church but retreated because they were not allowed in. Some of the most severely disabled war veterans, who have their physiological needs, are in there," Glogoski said.

He said a government official should talk to them, which is what protesters asked for on Thursday when they first came to the square.

"We estimate that the situation is serious. Because of what happened last night, we think our lives are in danger. The gentlemen from the police yesterday wanted to kidnap Josip Klemm, but they failed," he said. "They can only take us dead," he concluded.

Minister Matic on Friday said the whole protest had been organised by the opposition Croatian Democratic Union, HDZ.

"When its mentors (from the HDZ) say the protest is over, it will end... I am afraid it will not end well. The defenders are in an emotional state and you can do anything when you are emotional," he said.

After returning from a visit to the Vatican, President Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic called for "all those responsible to step forward for dialogue and the joint resolution of outstanding issues.

"I am trying to get in touch with Prime Minister Zoran Milanovic," she briefly stated.

**The protesters arrived around noon on Thursday at the square, showing support for workers from public companies already protesting on the square.**

The protesters then tried to set up a new camp, demanding that Milanovic receive them, so they could have a talk.

Continuing his policy of ignoring protesters who want the removal of Minister Matic, Milanovic ignored their latest demand, which resulted in the protesters saying they would not leave the square until he received them.

Some HDZ officials, as well as Grabar Kitarovic herself, a former HDZ member, have supported the protesters on occasions in the past.

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## **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

Therefore, in order for the proletariat's political strike, once transformed into demonstration by the entire people, to become the starting point for a victorious revolution, a sympathetic attitude must be widespread throughout the army.  
-- Leon Trotsky, "Up To The Ninth Of January," 1905

## WAR--The Sacred Cow



Photograph by Mike Hastie

From: Mike Hastie  
To: Military Resistance Newsletter  
Sent: May 20, 2015  
Subject: WAR--The Sacred Cow

**The Iraq War wasn't a "Mistake,"  
this Wall Street Sacred Cow made  
a Killing. The "stake" went into the  
hearts of all the veterans who were  
betrayed by the Fatherland for wealth.**

**Mike Hastie  
Army Medic Vietnam  
May 20, 2015**

Photo and caption from the portfolio of Mike Hastie, US Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71. (For more of his outstanding work, contact at: [hastiemike@earthlink.net](mailto:hastiemike@earthlink.net)) T)

One day while I was in a bunker in Vietnam, a sniper round went over my head. The person who fired that weapon was not a terrorist, a rebel, an extremist, or a so-called insurgent. The Vietnamese individual who tried to kill me was a citizen of Vietnam, who did not want me in his country. This truth escapes millions.

Mike Hastie  
U.S. Army Medic  
Vietnam 1970-71  
December 13, 2004

**“Especially After The 1968 Tet Offensive, Antiwar Sentiment Spread Widely Among The Combat Troops In Vietnam”**

**“The Main Activities Of Antiwar U.S. Servicepeople In Vietnam Were Not Peaceful Demonstrations”**

**“A 1975 Survey Revealed That 75% Of Vietnam Veterans Were Opposed To The War”**

**“There Is No Contemporaneous Evidence Of Any Antiwar Activists Spitting On Veterans”**

Excerpts from *Vietnam And Other American Fantasies*; H. Bruce Franklin; University Of Massachusetts Press; Amherst, 2000

**The most serious occurred on April 14 at the base of Dau Tieng (east of Tay Ninh, north of Cu Chi), when a unit of the Third Brigade of the Fourth Infantry Division defied orders to proceed on a search-and-destroy mission near where another unit had been badly cut up.**

**The commanding officer ordered other soldiers to fire on the rebels, who returned the fire. One report indicated dozens of men killed or wounded and three helicopters destroyed.**

As the Vietnam veteran and sociologist Jerry Lembcke has demonstrated in his invaluable 1998 book *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam*, the vast majority of returning veterans characterized their reception as friendly.

**There is no contemporaneous evidence of any antiwar activists spitting on veterans.**

The first allegations of such behavior did not appear until the late 1970s. The spat-upon veteran then became a mythic figure used to build support for military fervor and, later on, the Gulf War, but the myth has become so powerful that many veterans have now come to believe, despite all evidence to the contrary, that it actually happened to them personally.

Of course it is possible that isolated instances may have occurred. But if antiwar activists were frequently spitting on veterans or otherwise abusing them, why has nobody ever produced even the tiniest scrap of contemporaneous evidence? According to the myth, spitting on veterans was a regular custom as they arrived from Vietnam at the San Francisco and Los Angeles airports.

**We are supposed to believe that these men just back from combat then meekly walked away without attacking or even reporting their persecutors, and that nobody else, including airport security officers, ever noticed what was going on.**

For there is not one press report, airport security report, police report, court record, diary entry, video shot, or photograph of a single incident at these airports or anywhere else.

How then to explain the belief now held by many veterans that they were indeed spat upon as they arrived from Vietnam at the San Francisco and Los Angeles airports?

The answer lies in the transformative power of collective national myth over individual memory.

**The myth is so strong that it has even determined their memory of where they arrived, for they were flown back not to these civilian airports but to military bases closed to outsiders.**

And a 1975 survey revealed that 75 percent of Vietnam veterans were opposed to the war.

Especially after the 1968 Tet offensive, antiwar sentiment spread widely among the combat troops in Vietnam, where peace symbols and antiwar salutes became commonplace.

**Some units even organized their own antiwar demonstrations to link up with the movement at home.**

For example, to join the November 1969 antiwar Mobilization, a unit stationed at Pleiku fasted against the war and boycotted the Thanksgiving Day dinner.

Of the 141 soldiers classified below the rank of specialist fifth class, only eight showed up for the traditional meal; this “John Turkey Movement” spread to units all over Vietnam.

When Bob Hope introduced General Creighton Abrams, commander of all U.S. forces in Vietnam, to the 30,000 troops assembled for a Christmas show at the sprawling Long Binh base, the entire throng leaped to their feet and held their hands high in the “V” salute of the peace movement.

### **“The Main Activities Of Antiwar U.S. Servicepeople In Vietnam Were Not Peaceful Demonstrations”.**

But the main activities of antiwar U.S. servicepeople in Vietnam were not peaceful demonstrations.

**An ongoing dilemma for the antiwar movement back home was the difficulty of finding ways to move beyond verbal protest and symbolic acts to deeds that would actually interfere with the conduct of the war.**

**The soldiers in Vietnam had no such problem.**

**Individual acts of rebellion, ranging from desertion and sabotage to injuring and even killing officers who ordered hazardous search-and-destroy missions, merged into mutinies and large-scale resistance.**

As early as the spring of 1967, sporadic small-scale mutinies were being reported in the French press but not in the U.S. media — except for the movement’s own press.

**The most serious occurred on April 14 at the base of Dau Tieng (east of Tay Ninh, north of Cu Chi), when a unit of the Third Brigade of the Fourth Infantry Division defied orders to proceed on a search-and-destroy mission near where another unit had been badly cut up.**

**The commanding officer ordered other soldiers to fire on the rebels, who returned the fire.**

**One report indicated dozens of men killed or wounded and three helicopters destroyed.**

**The base was sealed off and no outside personnel were admitted for three days.**

**Combat refusal and outright mutinies spread rapidly after the Tet offensive in 1968.**

But news about this form of growing GI resistance was kept rather efficiently from most of the American public until August 1969, when correspondents reported firsthand on the unanimous battlefield refusal of a badly mauled infantry company to go back into combat.

During the next two years, the press published numerous reports of entire units refusing direct combat orders, and the public actually got to see two incidents of rebellion on network television.

**“A Common And Less Conspicuous Method Of Killing Unpopular Officers: Rifle Fire Often In The Midst Of Combat”**

Resistance took another form so widespread that it brought a new word into the English language: “fragging.”

Originally taking its name from fragmentation grenades but soon applied to any means of killing commissioned or noncommissioned officers, fragging developed its own generally understood customs, usages, and ethos.

Officers who aggressively risked or otherwise offended their men were customarily warned once or twice by a nonlethal grenade before being attacked with a booby-trapped or hurled grenade.

By mid-1972, the Pentagon was officially acknowledging 551 incidents of fragging with explosive devices, which had left 86 dead and more than 700 wounded. These figures were no doubt understated, and they did not include a common and less conspicuous method of killing unpopular officers: rifle fire often in the midst of combat.

**YOUR INVITATION:**

**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](mailto:contact@militaryproject.org):**

**Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication.**

**Same address to unsubscribe.**

## ANNIVERSARIES

### May 1963: One For Our Side “Masters Of War Released”



The record album, “The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan,” with the song “Masters Of War,” was released.

Masters of War  
By Bob Dylan

Come you masters of war  
You that build all the guns  
You that build the death planes  
You that build the big bombs  
You that hide behind walls  
You that hide behind desks  
I just want you to know  
I can see through your masks

You that never done nothin'  
But build to destroy  
You play with my world  
Like it's your little toy  
You put a gun in my hand  
And you hide from my eyes  
And you turn and run farther  
When the fast bullets fly

Like Judas of old  
You lie and deceive  
A world war can be won  
You want me to believe  
But I see through your eyes  
And I see through your brain  
Like I see through the water  
That runs down my drain

You fasten the triggers  
For the others to fire  
Then you set back and watch  
When the death count gets higher  
You hide in your mansion  
As young people's blood  
Flows out of their bodies  
And is buried in the mud

You've thrown the worst fear  
That can ever be hurled  
Fear to bring children  
Into the world  
For threatening my baby  
Unborn and unnamed  
You ain't worth the blood  
That runs in your veins

How much do I know  
To talk out of turn  
You might say that I'm young  
You might say I'm unlearned  
But there's one thing I know  
Though I'm younger than you  
Even Jesus would never  
Forgive what you do

Let me ask you one question  
Is your money that good  
Will it buy you forgiveness  
Do you think that it could  
I think you will find  
When your death takes its toll

All the money you made  
Will never buy back your soul

And I hope that you die  
And your death'll come soon  
I will follow your casket  
In the pale afternoon  
And I'll watch while you're lowered  
Down to your deathbed  
And I'll stand o'er your grave  
'Til I'm sure that you're dead

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## May 29, 1932: Betrayed Veterans March On Washington DC



The St. Louis contingent of the Bonus Expeditionary Force is pictured here as it starts for Washington, D.C., in May 1932.

Carl Bunin Peace History May 28-June 3

**In the depths of the Great Depression, the “Bonus Expeditionary Force,” a group of 1,000 World War I veterans seeking cash payments for their veterans’ bonus certificates, arrived in Washington, D.C.**

By mid-June, they had set up a massive “Hooverville,” a contemporary term for an encampment of the homeless.

One month later, other veteran groups made their way to the nation's capital, swelling the Bonus Marchers to nearly 20,000 strong, most of them unemployed veterans in difficult financial straits.

**In direct violation of the Posse Comitatus Act, they were violently disbanded by the Army in July.**

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**May 30, 1937:  
The Memorial Day Massacre:  
Chicago Police Cowards Murder  
Striking Steel Workers:  
“All But Four Of The Fifty-Four Gunshot  
Wounds Were To The Side Or Back And  
One Victim Was Shot Four Times”**



Carl Bunin Peace History May 28-June 3

1000 striking steel workers (and members of their families), on their way to picket at the Republic Steel plant in south Chicago where they were organizing a union, were stopped by the Chicago Police.

In what became known as the “Memorial Day Massacre,” police shot and killed 10 fleeing workers, wounded 30 more, and beat 55 so badly they required hospitalization.

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## The Memorial Day Massacre of 1937

uhigh.ilstu.edu [Excerpts]

The 1930s was a period of economic unrest for the United States. Following the prosperous “roaring twenties”, the Great Depression hit the general population hard. Many employees were fired and those who were not lost much of their former salary.

Then, in 1933, as part of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal, the National Recovery Act was passed. One of its most important concessions to laborers was the right to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing.

The number of strikes nationwide grew to the highest amount in American history.

When the National Recovery Act was declared unconstitutional in 1935, Congress was still sympathetic to the young labor unions that had been formed under it. They soon passed the Wagner Act, or National Labor Relations Act, to reassert the rights of the laborers.

By the 1930s the steel industry had survived much adversity, yet there were still changes to come.

The Committee for Industrial Organization, (CIO), was founded in November 1935.

Encouraged by the CIO, the steel industry became one of the first to begin organizing under the Wagner Act. Accordingly, on June 17, 1936 The Steel Workers Organizing Committee, (SWOC), was created. The industry itself did not accept this movement.

**Many companies began to stock up on tear-gas, firearms, and ammunition as well as, refining their espionage and police systems.**

After a long struggle for further organization and acceptance within the steel industry, the United States Steel Corporation, (the leading producer of steel, dubbed “Big Steel”), signed an agreement recognizing SWOC. This contract allowed for five dollar a day wages in addition to a 40-hour week with time-and-a-half for overtime. By May 1937, there were 110 firms under contract.

Still, some companies refused to sign. In response, SWOC called its first strike involving 25,000 workmen against Jones and Laughlin Steel Corporation. Thirty-six hours later, the corporation agreed to a Labor Board election. The union won 17,028 to 7,207.

Despite this enormous victory, a combination of “Little Steel” companies including Bethlehem Steel, Republic Steel, Inland Steel, and Youngstown Sheet & Tube, refused to sign.

Their leaders had strong anti-union attitudes and felt that the U.S. steel decision to “surrender” to SWOC was a betrayal. Tom Girdler, chairman of the Board of Republic Steel, was one particularly influential anti-union spokesperson.

**The company anticipated a strike so they placed a stockpile of industrial munitions at various plants of Republic Steel.**

Then, on May 26, 1937, SWOC decided to strike three of the "Little Steel" companies: Republic, Youngstown Sheet & Tube, and Inland. Most of the plants ceased production during the strike; they were willing to wait it out because the steelworkers' union strike benefits were meager.

Picket lines were set up at these plants to prevent any attempt to reopen them.

However, Republic Steel remained defiant and refused to close all of its plants. They even housed non-union workers in the plant, so they could continue working without the hassle of picket lines outside.

One of these plants was the Republic Steel South Chicago Plant.

One half of this plant's 2,200 employees had joined the strike. When the walkout began on May 26, the police interfered in an attempt to prevent other non-committed workers from joining the cause. The SWOC organizers attempted to form a picket line in front of the gate.

Police Captain James Mooney, despite the fact that the picketers were peaceful, broke up the line and arrested 23 people who refused to move. The rest were forced to 117th Street, 2 blocks from the plant.

Because of this action, the police no longer played an impartial role in the strike. Instead, they were clearly supportive of Republic.

Strike headquarters were established in Sam's Place, at 113th and Green Bay Avenue.

Chicago mayor, Edward J. Kelley, announced in the Chicago Tribune that peaceful picketing would be permitted. In response to this article, the strikers attempted to establish pickets, but were turned away.

On the next day, at around 5:00 PM, another attempt was made to picket. The marchers marched from Sam's Place to 117th Street. There were a few policemen present, but the marchers continued west towards Burley Avenue.

Once the marchers reached Buffalo the police line had strengthened a great deal. The workers continued and fighting broke out. The police used clubs to fight the workers back. A few had drawn revolvers without orders and discharged them in the air. No one was killed, but there were several bloody heads.

May 28 was a quiet day, but the marchers were upset with police actions.

Nick Fontecchio, a Union leader, called for a mass meeting at Sam's Place the next day, Memorial Day Sunday. Captain Mooney received an anonymous report that on Sunday an attempt would be made to invade the plant to drive out the remaining non-union workers. He did not check the rumor, but proceeded to station 264 policemen on duty at the Republic Steel Mill.

**By 3:00 p.m. on May 30, 1937, a crowd of around 1500 strikers had gathered. It was a sunny, warm day with the temperature at around 88 degrees.**

**Many of the union members and supporters had brought along their wives and children to join in this almost festive gathering organized by SWOC leader Joe Hunt. Several speakers addressed various labor issues most importantly, the right to organize and picket.**

Some resolutions were approved to send to government officials concerning police conduct at the Republic plant. It was then moved to march to the plant and establish a mass picket.

When this was approved about 1000 people went into formation behind two American flags. Instead of marching south down Green Bay Avenue, they turned onto a dirt road across an open prairie chanting, "CIO, CIO!"

When the police, saw this they moved their position from 117th street between Green Bay and Burley Avenue to across the dirt road, just north of 117th on Burley.

The 200 police were in double file and watched the approaching marchers with their clubs drawn. The Republic mill had armed some of the officers with non-regulation clubs and tear gas.

The marchers met the police line and demanded that their rights to picket be recognized by the police letting them through.

They were "commanded in the name of the law to disperse", but the picketers persisted. This continued for several minutes. While marchers armed themselves with rocks and branches, foul language was passed between the two parties. Tension was mounting.

Recording all of this was cameraman Orland Lippert. Unfortunately, he was changing lenses at the start of the actual violence. This has caused some dispute as to which side initiated the fighting. The following account, determined at the hearings under Senator Robert LaFollette, is generally accepted.

Police were trying to prevent marchers from outflanking their line.

As some strikers began to retreat a stick flew from the back of the line towards the police. Instantaneously, tear gas bombs were thrown at the marchers. The next few moments were total chaos.

More objects were thrown at the police by the marchers.

**Acting without orders, several policemen in the front drew their revolvers and fired point blank at the marcher's ranks, many of whom were beginning to retreat.**

**The actual shooting only continued for fifteen seconds, but the violence did not end there. Using their clubs, the police beat anyone in their paths, including women and children.**

**During this time, arrests were also made. Patrol wagons were filled to twice the mandated capacity of 8 prisoners. The injured were not even taken directly to local hospitals.**

**As a result of this atrocity, four marchers were fatally shot and six were mortally wounded. Thirty others suffered gunshot wounds.**

Thirty-eight were hospitalized due to injuries from the beatings and still thirty more required other medical treatment.

**It is noteworthy that all but four of the fifty-four gunshot wounds were to the side or back and one victim was shot four times.**

There were minor police casualties with thirty-five reported injuries, (no gunshot wounds), but only three needed overnight hospital care.

After the riot, sympathetic strikers fervently protested the police brutality. On the other hand, the press, especially the Chicago Tribune, portrayed the marchers as communist conspirators who had essentially attacked the police and attempted to throw out non-union workers.

The LaFollette Committee investigated this tragedy and came to four conclusions.

First, the police had no right to limit the number of peaceful pickets and that the march was not aimed at freeing remaining plant workers.

Second, the police should have halted the march with limited violence, if this action is even justifiable.

Third, the force used by the police was excessive and the marcher's only methods of provocation were abusive language and throwing of isolated missiles.

Fourth, the police could have avoided the bloodshed.

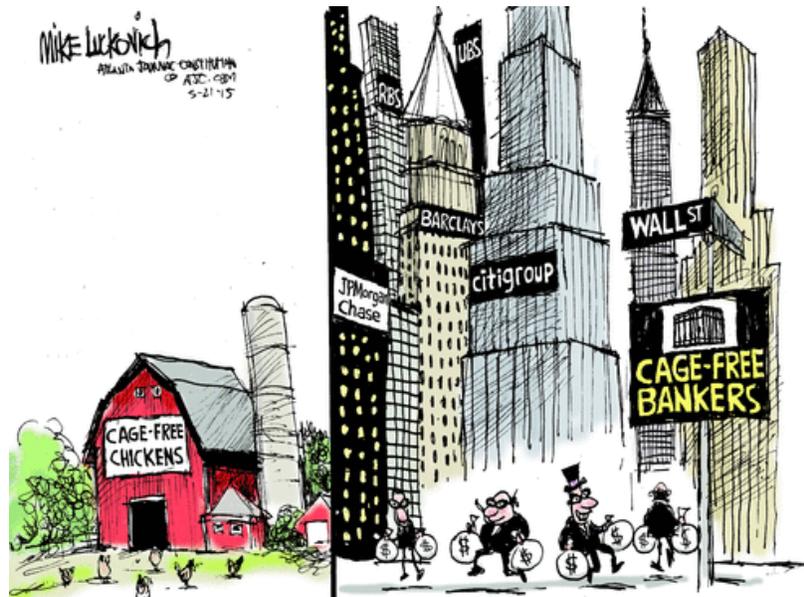
**In addition to those killed in the Memorial Day Massacre, 6 other union members lost their lives in pickets of the "Little Steel" strike of 1937. In fact, the "Little Steel" strike is surpassed by few in the areas of viciousness, press distortion, suppression of rights, and police brutality.**

The strike was called off when the many hardships suffered began to demoralize union workers. However, in August of 1941, under legal pressure, the Little Steel companies agreed to cease the committing of unfair labor practices. A year later, they signed their first contract recognizing the new union, United Steelworkers of America.

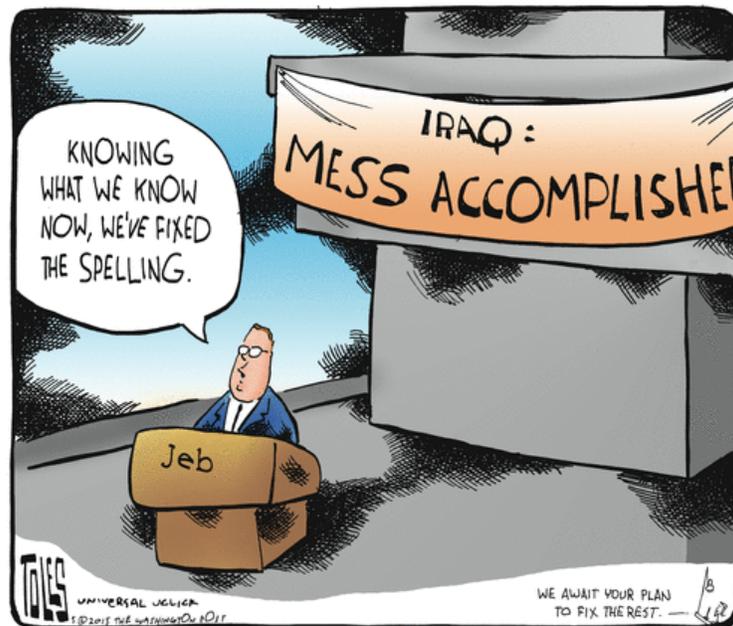
**The massacre has been referred to as the "blackest day of modern labor history", but the sacrifices of these workers were not in vain. Little Steel had only delayed the inevitable march of unionism in America.**

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## DANGER: CAPITALISTS AT WORK



## DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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

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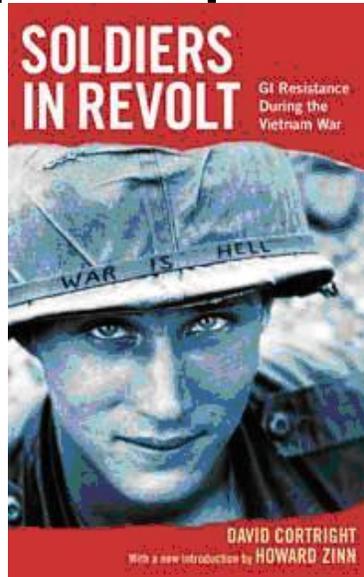
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