

## **Military Resistance 14B5**



# Obama Regime Sending Hundreds Of Troops To Afghanistan Combat

## Area:

By Month's End, A Force  
Described As Battalion-  
Strength, Consisting Of Mostly

**Army Soldiers, Will Arrive In  
Helmand Province;  
“The Pentagon Initially Resisted  
Categorizing The Battle As  
‘Combat’; Press Secretary Peter  
Cook Called It A ‘Combat  
Situation’”  
“The Difference Between Combat  
And Advisory Missions Can Blur In  
Practice”  
“The US Military Has Sounded Warnings  
Of A Deteriorating Situation In  
Afghanistan, In Helmand And Beyond”**

The Taliban have come close to overrunning a district center in Helmand, Sangin, where more than 100 UK troops died during a war that has entered its 15th year, despite US airstrikes in late December. Kabul is said to control only three of Helmand's 14 districts, including the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah.

8 February 2016 Spencer Ackerman in New York and Sune Engel Rasmussen in Kabul, Afghanistan; The Guardian

Hundreds of additional US troops are slated to deploy to a volatile province in Afghanistan to bolster the local military against a resurgent Taliban, the Guardian has learned.

By month's end, a force described as battalion-strength, consisting of mostly army soldiers, will arrive in Helmand province where US and UK forces have struggled in battles for over a decade to drive out the Taliban. The infantry battalion will relive a smaller one currently in Helmand.

In keeping with Barack Obama's formal declaration that the US is not engaged in combat, despite elite forces recently participating in an hours-long battle in Helmand, defense officials said the additional troops would not take part in combat.

But they will help the existing Helmand force defend itself against Taliban attacks, officials said.

US military officials declined to offer many specifics about an upcoming reinforcement, but they described the mission as primarily aimed at bolstering the performance of the embattled 215th Corps of the Afghan military, through training as well as protecting other troops training Afghans in Helmand.

The 215th Corps has recently had its commander replaced amid performance and corruption concerns, and has endured “unusually high operating tempo for long periods of time”, outgoing US commander General John Campbell testified to Congress last week. It is among four Afghan corps that still have US military advisers embedded within it, despite a recent pullback to advise at higher levels.

“Our mission remains the same,” said Colonel Michael Lawhorn, a spokesman for the US command in Kabul, “to train, advise, and assist our Afghan counterparts, and not to participate in combat operations.”

The Guardian understands the additional forces in Helmand will not increase the current total troop numbers in Afghanistan, which currently stand at 9,800, but will instead be deployed from troops already in the country.

Battalion strengths vary, but can constitute a force of up to 800 troops. The incoming battalion, officials said, is comprised of around 200 more soldiers than the one it relieves.

**While new advisers make up a significant component of the additional forces, Lawhorn said that another mission of the reinforcement will be to “bolster force protection for the current staff of advisers”, suggesting a concern for the safety of the existing Helmand force amid major recent Taliban gains.**

The US military has sounded warnings of a deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, in Helmand and beyond, that have prompted significant revisions in Obama’s war plans.

Already Obama has agreed to leave 5,500 troops in Afghanistan past the end of his presidency, but his newly confirmed commander, General John “Mick” Nicholson, told a Senate panel recently that increased insurgent violence will prompt him to re-evaluate troop requests, and left the door open to bolstering a force Obama has sought to draw down.

In January, a US special forces soldier died and two others were wounded as they assisted the Afghan military in repelling a Taliban assault in the province that lasted hours.

**While the Pentagon initially resisted categorizing the battle as “combat”, press secretary Peter Cook called it a “combat situation, but (US troops) are not in the lead intentionally”, illustrating how the difference between combat and advisory missions can blur in practice.**

Opium-rich Helmand has emerged as a Taliban priority, as most of its 2015 attacks focused on the province. Unlike earlier eras of the war, the Taliban have declined to take a winter break and have fought in the province all year.

**The Taliban have come close to overrunning a district center in Helmand, Sangin, where more than 100 UK troops died during a war that has entered its 15th year, despite US airstrikes in late December.**

**Kabul is said to control only three of Helmand's 14 districts, including the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah.**

Outgoing commander Campbell, testifying to Congress last week, said that while current rules of engagement prevented US troops who are not engaged in counter-terrorism raids from initiating fights with the Taliban, "I have no restrictions on providing force protection" for troops that train Afghans.

Lawhorn described the reinforcement as a "planned deployment of additional personnel", but at least one congressional official contacted by the Guardian was unaware of the plan.

Two days after this story was published, a US defense official who would not speak for attribution clarified that the increased troop level represented an "enhancement of the existing force protection mission" for US troops training their Afghan counterparts.

"The battalion will bring a small number of trainers to assist with the efforts to re-man, re-equip and re-train the 215th Corps, but its primary mission will remain force protection," the official said.

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## **AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS**

**60% Of Regime Capital  
Electricity Cut Off By Taliban:  
Can't Be Fixed;  
Insurgents Holding Area Of Cut;  
"Millions Of Residents In The Bitterly  
Cold Afghan Capital Kabul Have Been**

# Living Mostly Without Power For The Last Two Weeks”



Night in Kabul, Afghanistan

February 11, 2016 by Noor Zahid, VOANews.com

Millions of residents in the bitterly cold Afghan capital Kabul have been living mostly without power for the last two weeks as critical grid line from neighboring Uzbekistan has been cut off. The Afghan government blames Taliban attacks for the disruption in the power supply.

Taliban insurgents blew up two power pylons in the Dand-e-Shahabuddin area in the strategic northeastern province of Baghlan after security forces launched a massive operation against the Taliban, Afghan officials say.

**The state-owned utility company Da Afghanistan Breshna Shirkat (DABS) has not been able to repair the pylons as the military offensive is still going on, DABS officials say.**

“We cannot give this assurance (time frame for towers' repair). Security forces should give this assurance as to when they may clear the area,” a spokesperson for DABS told VOA. “Once allowed, we could repair the pylons within eight hours.”

**About 60 percent of the electrical supply to the city has been cut. The power shortage has not only plunged large swathes of Kabul into darkness, but it has also curtailed the operations of most government departments.**

Kabul's passport department, which receives thousands of applications every day, has seen the number of passports issued decrease by 500 daily.

“Customers have to wait for hours,” Sayed Omar Sabour, the head of the passport department told VOA.

"I have been waiting for two weeks to get a passport," a customer told VOA.

"What kind of a country is this? This is the capital of the country which is supposed to have power around the clock."

**Electricity is the most affordable source of heat and power for cooking for Kabul's estimated five million residents.**

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## **Afghan Insurgents Gaining Control Of Territory In Tarin Kowt: "A Bleak Assessment Of The Security Situation In The Country" "Insurgents In Uruzgan Are Pushing Afghan Forces Back"**

10 February 2016 By defence reporter Andrew Greene, ABC Radio Australia

The chief of Defence says Afghan insurgents are getting the upper hand in many districts around the former Australian military base in Tarin Kowt.

Australian forces completed their withdrawal from Uruzgan province at the end of 2013, after a 12-year mission which saw 41 Defence Force personnel killed and 261 seriously wounded.

**Last week, the top US commander in Afghanistan, General John Campbell, gave a bleak assessment of the security situation in the country, warning 2016 could be "no better and possibly worse than 2015" if adjustments were not made.**

"Afghanistan has not achieved an enduring level of security and stability that justifies a reduction of our support in 2016," General Campbell said.

Defence Force head Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin has told a Senate estimates hearing the Australian Defence Force agrees with the concerns, and insurgents in Uruzgan are pushing Afghan forces back.

"Our assessment is in the rural areas of outlying districts such as southern Dihrawud, Charchina, Shahidi Hassas, Chora and Khas Uruzgan," he said

"Insurgents have increased their freedom of movement and generally contain ANDSF (Afghan National Defence and Security Forces) units to their bases and their checkpoints."

Air Chief Marshall Binskin said 2015 was the first year the ANDSF took on the task of defending their country themselves, but the withdrawal of coalition support had made the job difficult.

Specifically, the Defence chief said the withdrawal of logistics support, air support, intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance had weakened the Afghan forces.

"(In) 2013-2014 they had some of the most sophisticated intelligence and surveillance systems in the world providing information and that was tailored down quite quickly, and the Afghan forces weren't able for a number of reasons ... to build up their air support capability as quickly as had been hoped," he said.

"That with the lack of ISR, and the air combat side of it meant towards the end of 2015 the Taliban started to realise they could start to move around with a little bit of impunity."

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## Resistance Action

08 February 2016 TOLONews

**At least three Afghan National Army (ANA) personnel members were killed after a bomber detonated his explosives near an ANA vehicle in Mazar-e-Sharif in northern Balkh province early Monday, local officials said.**

**In addition, 18 other ANA members, including three women, were injured.**

The incident took place in Mazar at about 8:00am local time after a car bomber detonated his explosives near the ANA staff vehicle close to 209 Shaheen Military Corps, a spokesman for acting provincial governor, Munir Ahmad said.

All the victims are ANA personnel and they were taken to the local military hospital, he said.

"The condition of three of the injured is not good," he added.

However, he did not provide further details about the attack.

The Taliban has claimed responsibility for the attack.

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Feb 08 2016 Khaama Press

Six people have lost lives and nine others sustained injuries in a suicide bomb blast in Paktika province.

The blast took place in front of a baker in the capital city of Yahyakhil District around 11:30 am this morning.

The apparent target of the bomber was Musa Khan Kharotai, the district governor, who just drove through the area before the blast took place.

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## **SOMALIA WAR REPORTS**

# **Somali Insurgents Bombed Plane: “The Explosion Targeted Western And Turkish Intelligence Agents Aboard The Daallo Airlines Flight To Djibouti”**

Feb 13, 2016 by Abdi Guled, Associated Press & By Thomas Joscelyn, The Long War Journal [Excerpts]

Somalia's Islamic extremist rebels, al-Shabab, said Saturday they carried out the bombing of a commercial passenger jet earlier this month that blew a hole in the fuselage, sucking out the suspected bomber and forcing the plane to make an emergency landing.

“The operation is part of a series of operations specifically targeting the Western and apostate intelligence infrastructure,” Shabaab claims.

“Acting on accurate intelligence and extensive surveillance by (Shabaab) intelligence teams,” the statement reads, Shabaab “carried out the airborne operation as a retribution for the crimes committed by the coalition of Western crusaders and their intelligence agencies against the Muslims of Somalia and so as to staunch the flow of Western crusaders into this Muslim land.”

The explosion targeted Western and Turkish intelligence agents aboard the Daallo Airlines flight to Djibouti on Feb. 2, al-Shabab said in a statement. It said the bombing had been planned to destroy the Airbus 321 plane but it failed. Al-Shabab said they will continue such attacks.

The bomb exploded shortly after takeoff from Mogadishu airport, when the plane was at 11,000 feet and ascending. Experts say if the plane had been at its intended cruising altitude of 30,000 feet, the explosion could have brought down the aircraft.

Security video footage taken at Mogadishu airport shows two men handing what looks like a laptop computer to the suspected bomber after he passed through the security checkpoint. Somali authorities say at least one of the men delivering the laptop was an airport employee. Authorities believe the laptop-like device was the bomb that caused the explosion. At least 20 people including the airport employee have been arrested in connection to the attack.



Abdullahi Abdisalam Borleh, the suspected bomber, was a passenger and was blown out of the plane.

Al-Shabab is waging an insurgency against Somalia's U.S.-backed government and has been targeting Turkish interests and personnel in the country.

Al-Shabab has carried out attacks on neighboring countries who have contributed troops to an African Union peacekeeping [translation: occupation] force bolstering the Somali government against the extremists.

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## **POLICE WAR REPORTS**

# **How Many In Prison Because Of Fake Bite Mark “Evidence”? “For Far Too Long, This Grossly Unreliable Technique Has Been Admitted By Courts With No Scrutiny Of The Claims Made By Forensic Dentists” “No Validated And Reliable Science Remotely Supports Bite-Mark Evidence”**

Feb 12, 2016 By Joe Palazzolo, Wall Street Journal

**A Texas commission recommended on Friday that the state suspend the use of bite-mark evidence in criminal cases pending additional research, becoming the first agency in the nation to discredit a forensic technique that has come under intense scrutiny in recent years.**

**The Texas Forensic Science Commission, made up of scientists, practitioners and law-enforcement authorities, voted in favor of a ban that would remain in effect until research could show, among other things, that forensic dentists know a bite mark when they see one.**

The commission can only make recommendations, but its findings are likely to influence judges considering the admissibility of bite-mark evidence throughout the country, legal experts said.

“Texas took a giant leap forward in bringing scientific integrity to the criminal justice system,” said M. Chris Fabricant, a lawyer for the Innocence Project who was at the commission hearing.

“For far too long, this grossly unreliable technique has been admitted by courts with no scrutiny of the claims made by forensic dentists.”

Research over the past decade has questioned basic assumptions at the center of bite-mark analysis: that teeth, like fingerprints, are unique to a person, and that bite marks can be reliably recorded on skin.

**A study presented last year by the American Board of Forensic Odontology, which accredits forensic dentists and sets guidelines for the field, showed striking disagreement among practitioners on a fundamental question in bite-mark comparison: whether an injury is, in fact, the result of a bite.**

Adam Freeman, a Westport, Conn., dentist and president-elect of the ABFO, and Iain Pretty, a professor at the University of Manchester School of Dentistry, asked accredited dentists with an average of 20 years of experience to look at photos of injuries from 100 real cases.

**The dentists were asked to decide whether the injuries were bite marks or not, or suggestive of bite marks.**

**In most cases, the 38 dentists who completed the study couldn’t agree on whether they were looking at bite marks, Dr. Freeman said. They unanimously agreed on a mere four cases.**

Some forensic dentists say the study exaggerated the disagreement and believe they can make accurate comparisons based on their experience and expertise.

“A competent forensic dentist can profile bites. He can look at a bite and create a profile about what kind of teeth could’ve made it if there’s sufficient information in the bite mark,” David Senn, a dental-school professor at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, told the Texas commission at a November hearing.

Dr. Senn told the panel that about 85% to 90% of the injuries he reviews lack detail enough to be compared with a suspect’s teeth. Mistakes happen, he said, when forensic dentists try to make comparisons without enough information.

**Research by Mary Bush and Peter Bush and their team at State University of New York at Buffalo over the past decade found that no two bite marks made by the same set of teeth were same.**

They used a clamp-like device with teeth attached to simulate bites on cadavers.

“Even under these ideal circumstances, we cannot duplicate bites,” said Ms. Bush. “It can only get worse when you have the real event.”

The Texas Forensic Science Commission, which will undertake a review of all cases in Texas involving bite mark evidence, began its investigation after receiving a complaint from the Innocence Project on behalf of its client, Steven Mark Chaney, who was convicted in the 1987 slayings of John and Sally Sweek after forensic dentists linked him to a bite mark on Mr. Sweek’s arm.

A Texas judge set Mr. Chaney free in October, more than 28 years into a life sentence, after an expert who had matched him to the bite mark filed an affidavit disavowing the testimony in light of “today’s scientific standards.”

The Innocence Project complaint said “no validated and reliable science remotely supports bite-mark evidence” and asked the commission to recommend a moratorium on its use in criminal cases.

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## **MILITARY NEWS**

**Polluted Okinawa Drinking  
Water Supply Comes From  
Massive Us Military Base:  
“The Result Of Years Of Repeated  
Mishaps And ‘Lax Safety  
Standards’ By U.S. Military  
Forces”**

**“Chemicals Known To Cause Cancer,  
And Neurological And Reproductive  
Disorders Made Its Way To Local  
Waterways”**

# “The Base Did Not Notify Japanese Authorities”



A P-3 Orion lands on the airstrip at Kadena Air Force Base in Okinawa, Japan. (Photo: US Navy via flickr/cc)

[Thanks to Vietnam Veterans Against the War Anti-Imperialist, who sent this in.]

February 10, 2016 by Andrea Germanos, staff writer; Common Dreams [Excerpts]

Internal documents obtained by the Japan Times offer evidence that the contamination of local drinking water sources near a massive U.S. airbase in Japan is the result of years of repeated mishaps and "lax safety standards" by U.S. military forces.

The reports, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, "expose a spate of accidents at the (Kadena Air Base in Okinawa) during the past 15 years that have involved at least 21,000 liters of fire extinguishing agents—some of them toxic."

The reporting cites several such instances, including a three-day period in 2001 when 17,000 liters of fire extinguishing agents were released and "attributed by base officials to mechanical and electronic malfunctions."

It also cites an incident in 2015 when "a drunk U.S. Marine activated a firefighting system. It filled a hangar with more than 1,500 liters of JET-X 2.75 percent—a foam classified by the U.S. government as hazardous.

**It contains chemicals known to cause cancer, and neurological and reproductive disorders." That foam made its way to local waterways, but the base did not notify Japanese authorities.**

The U.S. Pacific Air Forces issued a statement in January that—despite the detection of toxic substance in the drinking water sources— the water was safe because it is adequately treated before consumer use.

"The base continues to comply with current Japanese Environmental Governing Standards (JEGS), which are equivalent to the U.S. Safe Drinking Water Act that is

enforced by the (Environmental Protection Agency). Be assured that your drinking water is safe," Stars and Stripes reports the statement as saying.

The newly obtained documents, the Japan Times reports, highlight the flaws in the JEGS:

"While JEGS requires the U.S. military to notify the Japanese government immediately when 'a significant spill . . . threatens the local Japanese drinking water resource,' the decision on whether to categorize a spill as 'significant' is often left to the discretion of the U.S. military"

Controversy surrounding the city-sized "Little America" of a base is not new, nor limited to water pollution, as Jon Letman wrote for Al Jazeera America:

"the Kadena Air Base occupies over 80 percent of Kadena town and includes a 6,000-acre ammunition storage area.

"The enormous base, built on land seized after World War II, contains the Air Force's largest combat air wing, with two squadrons of F-15 fighters and an array of military aircraft that includes fighter jets, transport planes, refueling aircraft, helicopters, Ospreys, reconnaissance aircraft and anti-submarine patrol planes. According to the U.S. military, it is the "hub of airpower in the Pacific," home to more than 9,000 U.S. service members and their families and contributes an estimated \$700 million annually to the local economy.

"The military lauds Kadena for promoting 'regional peace and stability,' but many Okinawans see the base as a source of constant noise, pollution and tension."

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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**

**Democracy, true democracy, is never superseded. It is the first thing that a revolution establishes..**

**..--C.L.R. James; Notes On Dialectics**

## **ANNIVERSARIES**

### **February 13, 1968: The Anniversary Of Five Honorable Soldiers Who Stood Up**

Carl Bunin Peace History February 11-17

Five soldiers were arrested at a pray-in for peace in Vietnam at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Two were court-martialed for refusing to stop praying. The pray-in was repeated a year later.

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## **CLASS WAR REPORTS**

### **Three Pakistan Airlines Strikers Killed:**

**Prime Minister Says He Won't  
Tolerate Dissent;  
“Nawaz Said The Protesting PIA  
Employees Will Be Fired From  
Service And Can Be Sent To Jail For  
A Year If They Don't End Their Strike”  
“Those Who Continue The Strike Will Be  
Treated As Enemies Of PIA And Pakistan  
And They Will End Up Losing Their  
Jobs”**



February 2 Pakistan Today

At least three Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) employees were killed on Tuesday as Rangers and police personnel launched a baton and tear gas attack on anti-privatisation strikers near Karachi's Jinnah Terminal, resulting in suspension of the national flag carrier's flight operations across the country.

While flight operations remained on schedule Tuesday morning despite the PIA union's call for a complete strike against privatisation of the airline, the situation changed drastically after employees protesting outside the Karachi Airport clashed with law enforcement personnel, resulting in the deaths of at least three PIA employees.

PIA flight operations were suspended around 4pm at Lahore's Allama Iqbal International Airport, Islamabad's Benazir Bhutto International Airport, Peshawar's Bacha Khan International Airport and the Quetta Airport, officials confirmed. The status of PIA flights at Karachi was already uncertain due to the violent protests.

PIA Lahore spokesman Athar Awan said flight operations had been halted after three PIA employees were killed in clashes with forces.

PIA's employees later gathered outside the Lahore Airport to register their protest.

Employees also gathered outside the Islamabad Airport Tuesday afternoon, vowing to continue their protest till their demands are accepted by the government.

Earlier in the day, in a bid to disperse protesting Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) employees at Jinnah Terminal, security personnel resorted to baton-charging and using rubber bullets, water cannons and tear gas shells, as Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif called for implementation of the Essential Services Act.

Two protesters died after sustaining bullet wounds while a third man succumbed to his injuries later in the hospital.

A heavy contingent of Rangers and police personnel were deployed at the site to prevent protesters from entering the cargo gate and moving onto Jinnah Avenue. Security personnel fired tear gas shells and water cannons at protesters as they attempted to force their way into the cargo gate.

An injured protester Inayat Raza, who sustained a bullet wound in his chest during the protest, succumbed to his injuries at a private hospital. Raza was a member of PIA's engineering department.

Another injured person, Saleem, who also sustained bullet wounds died at the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Complex (JPMC), spokesman Dr Seemi Jamali confirmed.

A PIA human resource department member Zubair also succumbed to his injuries later in the night.

At least three other people, including a television cameraman Shafiq Dilshad, were injured during the protest as security officials also dispersed journalists and media personnel covering the incident. Dilshad's condition is said to be stable.

Another TV channel's cameraman Agha Rafiq was also injured in the clash, while a business reporter of a local daily was beaten up by the police.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif during a high-level meeting on Tuesday instructed implementation of the Essential Services Act.

National institutions will not be used for political motives, he said, adding that steps are being taken to turn the national flag carrier into a profitable organisation. He directed the interior Ministry to deal with major strikes regarding the issue and said PIA operations must not come to a halt.



Federal Information Minister Pervez Rashid, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Aviation Shujaat Azim attended the meeting.

Later addressing reporters on a visit to a coal power plant in Sahiwal, PM Nawaz said the protesting PIA employees will be fired from service and can be sent to jail for a year if they don't end their strike.

**In a move to stall the strike, Nawaz had already enforced the Essential Services (Maintenance) Act 1952 for six months, barring protesting members of the PIA from participating in any union activity.**

**“Any person found guilty of an offence under this Act shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year and shall also be liable to a fine,” the legislation reads.**

**On Monday, Federal Information Minister Pervaiz Rashid had also made clear that strict action will be taken against protesting employees.**

**“Let me make clear that those who continue the strike will be treated as enemies of PIA and Pakistan and they will end up losing their jobs,” he stressed.**

The National Assembly on January 21 witnessed the passage of six bills, including one to convert the national flag carrier into a public limited company.

Under the bill, Pakistan International Airlines Corporation (PIAC) is to be converted into a public limited company as Pakistan International Airlines Company Limited (PIACL).

The government plans to split the ailing national flag carrier PIA into two companies and sell the control of its core business to a global airline, but the opposition to the sell-off has been intense.

## **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.**

## Greek Farmers Attack Police



AP: Riot police try to avoid a metal item thrown by farmers during a protest outside Agriculture ministry in Athens, Feb. 12, 2016. (AP Photo/Thanassis Stavrakis)

Farmers from across Greece protest against government and its plans to impose new taxes and pension charges for farmers.

### MORE OF SAME EVENT:

## Greek Farmers Attack Police With Large Staffs



(EPA/PANTELIS SAITAS)

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## Bahrainis Attack King's Police



AP: A Bahraini anti-government protester, his face covered to protect against tear gas, watches for riot police from in front of a wall with posters of a Shiite cleric executed in Saudi Arabia and other opposition posters that have been torn by authorities in Sitra, Bahrain, on, Feb. 12, 2016.

Bahraini youths pelted armored vehicles and police jeeps with paint bombs, stones and petrol bombs after police moved in quickly with tear gas to quash the anti-government protest, one of several demonstrations held in the run-up to Sunday's fifth anniversary of Bahrain's Arab Spring uprising. (AP Photo/Hasan Jamali)

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## Romanians Yearn For Rule By Vlad The Impaler: “He Was A Cruel Prince And Did Many Bad Things, But Mostly To The Rich And The Merchants”

# **“He Used Harsh Methods To Reclaim The Country From The Corrupt And Rich Boyars”**

**"Even If They Accept He Was A Cruel  
Prince, They Say At Least He Was A  
Honest One”**



Vlad at work on “the rich and the merchants.” touchpractice.com

12 Feb 16 by Marian Chiriac, BIRN

Bucharest

Democracy may have had its day in Romania, considering the results of a recent poll, which showed that many Romanians would like to hand the country over to the cruel medieval prince called Vlad the Impaler - if he was still alive.

The prince of Wallachia, nowadays southern Romania, is widely seen as a hero and a great leader by many Romanians.

"Vlad was a true king. Of course, he was a cruel prince and did many bad things, but mostly to the rich and the merchants," 63-year-old Steliana Notaru said. "We need a tough leader now more than ever, as Romania is still plagued by corruption and insecurity," Notaru added.

A recent survey, conducted by CSCI pollster and interviewing more than 1,000 Romanian adults, showed that 35 per cent of them would vote for Vlad as Romanian President if an election took place in which only historic figures could compete,

Tepes, called “the Impaler” for his brutality, led Romanian resistance to the Ottomans after they invaded Transylvania in the mid-15th century. He later burned the suburbs of the town of Brasov and killed hundreds of ethnic German "Saxons" living there. It marked him down as a sadist who enjoyed killing and torturing people.

Legends of his cruelty were passed down the generations through pamphlets published in Germany. But Vlad Tepes remains popular mainly among people who yearn for a tough non-nonsense leader.

"To most of Romanians, Vlad Tepes remains a symbol of the fight against corruption. They only cite the fact he used harsh methods to reclaim the country from the corrupt and rich boyars, and that he was ruthless with thieves and bums," says historian Alexandru Voicu.

"Even if they accept he was a cruel prince, they say at least he was a honest one," he added.

The bloody legends about Vlad the Impaler inspired Irish writer Bram Stoker to create the famous book about the blood-sucking Count Dracula. Nowadays, the Romania authorities play on this legend to draw tourists to Transylvania, mainly to the gothic turrets of Bran Castle, which was built in the 14th century to serve as a customs and a fortress defending the eastern border of Transylvania.

Vlad is not the only infamous historical character who has had a makeover in many people’s minds during recent years. Romanians have now mixed feelings about once hated communist regime. Preoccupied with their financial woes, many people say they don’t feel strongly about the regime that took power in 1947 and collapsed in December 1989. Surveys show that nearly half the population believe life was better in the communist era, with a higher standard of living and job security being given as the main arguments.

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## **DANGER: CAPITALISTS AT WORK**

# **Venezuelan Capitalism Brings Dying Infants, Chronic Power Outages, Hunger And “Savage**

**Suffering” To The World’s  
Worst-Performing Economy:  
“In The Past Week, Six Infants  
Died Because There Wasn’t  
Enough Medicine Or Functioning  
Respirators”**

**Stupid, Vicious President Of Corrupt  
Regime Tells Poor And Hungry To Go  
Raise Chickens:**

**Money From Oil Sales “Put Into An Off-  
Budget Fund Outside Congressional  
Oversight. Large Sums Are Believed To  
Have Been Stolen, According To Former  
Venezuelan Government Officials”**

Inflation in this oil-rich country is expected to hit a world’s-worst 700% this year, according to the International Monetary Fund. The economy shrank by 10% last year and is expected to decline another 8% this year, according to the IMF, the worst performance in the world.

Feb. 12, 2016 By Anatoly Kurmanaev and Maolis Castro, Wall Street Journal [Excerpts] Lorena Evelyn Arraiz in San Cristóbal, Sheyla Urdaneta in Toas, Mayela Armas and Kejal Vyas in Caracas and Sara Schaefer Muñoz in Bogotá, Colombia contributed to this article.

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CARACAS, Venezuela—

**In a hospital in the far west of this beleaguered country, the economic crisis took a grim toll in the past week: Six infants died because there wasn’t enough medicine or functioning respirators.**

Here in the capital, the crisis has turned ordinary life into an ordeal for nearly everyone. Chronic power outages have prompted the government to begin rationing electricity, darkening shopping malls.

Homes and apartments regularly suffer water shortages.

Rosalba Castellano, 74 years old, spent hours this week in what has become a desperate routine for millions: waiting in long lines to buy whatever food is available. She walked away with just two liters of cooking oil.

“I hoped to buy toilet paper, rice, pasta,” she said. “But you can’t find them.”

**Her only choice will be to hunt for the goods at marked-up prices on the black market.**

**The government, she said, “is putting us through savage suffering.”**

The National Assembly, now controlled by the opposition, declared a food emergency on Thursday—an attempt to spur the government of President Nicolás Maduro to, among other things, ease price controls that have created shortages of everything from medicine to meat.

The National Assembly, now controlled by the opposition, declared a food emergency on Thursday—an attempt to spur the government of President Nicolás Maduro to, among other things, ease price controls that have created shortages of everything from medicine to meat.

“The people are being left without the ability to feed themselves,” said lawmaker Omar Barboza.

**Inflation in this oil-rich country is expected to hit a world’s-worst 700% this year, according to the International Monetary Fund.**

**The economy shrank by 10% last year and is expected to decline another 8% this year, according to the IMF, the worst performance in the world.**

**And there is no end in sight.**

**“He Noted That He Has 50 Chickens In His Own Home And That His Countrymen Also Can Be Taught To Farm At Home”**

In response to growing food shortages, Mr. Maduro last month created a Ministry for Urban Farming. He noted that he has 50 chickens in his own home and that his countrymen also can be taught to farm at home. The move echoes a policy Cuba implemented after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, which cut off aid to Cuba.

**Mr. Maduro has hinted at various policy initiatives.**

**This past week, he opened a Facebook account. “I want to expand my direct presence on social media,” he posted, adding two pictures.**

**It didn’t take long for ordinary Venezuelans to respond. Some welcomed the president to Facebook.**

**Others asked him to resign. Many asked him to investigate corruption in their cities and states. Some asked for help buying a car, or getting fertilizer, or finding food.**

José Guerra, an economist and opposition lawmaker, called it “a big absurdity for a country that’s in crisis. It shows Maduro doesn’t have his feet planted firmly on the ground.”

### **“One In 10 People Are Looking For A Way To Leave The Country”**

With daily hardships mounting, one in 10 people are looking for a way to leave the country, according to polling company Datanalisis.

More than a million Venezuelans already have emigrated over the past decade, according to many estimates.

Leonardo Briceno said three of the four managers of his Caracas public-relations company quit to leave the country. Next week, he will become the latest departure when he moves to the U.S. with his wife and 2-year-old daughter.

**“It goes beyond the crime and economic deterioration,” he said. “It’s imagining a scenario where my daughter needs a medication and we can’t find it. That scares me the most.”**

The crisis is felt not just in Venezuela’s teeming cities but in places like Toas, a tiny island of palm trees and crystalline waters in far western Venezuela, home to just 8,000 people.

Last December, thieves stole 15 miles of underwater power cable connecting the island to the mainland. The theft severed the island’s telephone connections and idled its water pumps.

Fisherman Genebraldo Chacin said his children haven’t bathed or gone to school since then, and they have been eating only one meal a day. His neighbors say the island is close to starvation.

“Our food rots without electricity, and it’s sad because it’s so difficult to find food here,” said Mr. Chacin’s neighbor, Sasha Almarza.

“When we are able to find any in the store, we eat it all the same day.”

**Venezuela’s murder rate has climbed to 90 per 100,000 residents, according to the Venezuelan Violence Observatory, a nongovernment group that focuses on crime.**



That would be the world's second-highest rate after El Salvador, and far exceeds the U.S. rate of about four per 100,000.

The plunge in the price of oil has hurt Venezuela more than just about any other oil-producing nation. Oil accounts for 96% of its export earnings and funds about half its federal budget.

**For years, the federal budget accounted for oil at \$40 a barrel, even in years when the actual price was about \$100. The excess money was put into an off-budget fund outside congressional oversight. It was spent, and large sums are believed to have been stolen, according to former Venezuelan government officials and investigators in the U.S. who are probing corruption.**

The country's rainy-day oil-savings fund stands at \$3 million, compared with funds in some other oil-rich nations that total hundreds of billions of dollars.

Not only did the country fail to save, it borrowed heavily. It now has a foreign-debt load of about \$110 billion.

Alejandro Arreaza, Latin American economist at Barclays, says market data indicates Venezuela has about an 85% chance of defaulting in the next 12 months.

He said he thinks the government will pay the \$1.5 billion that is due Feb. 26, and will do all it can to honor the \$5 billion in principal and interest payments due in October and November. To avoid a messy default and a seizure of oil assets by creditors, he said, Venezuela may have to cut imports further and possibly move to restructure its debt.

"They already have political problems on the domestic front," Mr. Arreaza said, "and they want to avoid opening an international front."

### **"Medical Associations And Health-Care Specialists Say Preventable Deaths Have Been On The Rise Because Of Lack Of Medication, Equipment And Doctors"**

A shortage of dollars because of currency controls and declining oil revenues has hit the economy hard.

Venezuela used to export rice, coffee and meat. It now imports all three. It even imports its own bank notes, ordered from European firms and flown in on 747 jets.

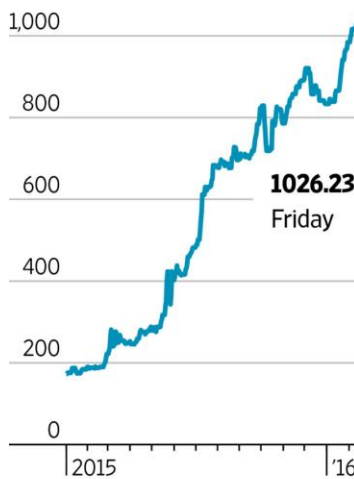
A complicated system of exchange rates makes the country either one of the world's cheapest or most expensive—depending on the rate used.

At the official rate of 6.3 bolivars per dollar, a McDonald's Happy Meal costs \$146.

At the widely used black-market rate, where a dollar fetches more than 1,000 bolivars, it costs just 89 cents. That makes the country dirt cheap for savvy travelers and those who earn dollars, but unaffordable for the poor who can't access greenbacks.

## Money Trouble

Venezuelan bolivars per U.S. dollar on the black market



Source: DolarToday.com

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Medical associations and health-care specialists say preventable deaths have been on the rise because of lack of medication, equipment and doctors. The country's leading trade group for drugstores says 90% of medicines are scarce.

**On a recent day at the University Hospital of Maracaibo, in Venezuela's second-largest city, patients lay on bare beds in rooms with dirty floors.**

**There was no running water, medicine, cleaning supplies or food.**

**Feces floated in the toilets. Medical staffers there said gang members roam the halls, forcing underpaid and harassed doctors to lock themselves in the offices to avoid assaults.**

"It feels like this hospital is under siege," said Dora Colmenares, a liver surgeon. "We urgently need humanitarian aid."

**During the past week, six infants died at the Central Hospital in the western city of San Cristóbal, according to officials with the city's child-protection services office and the union that represents hospital workers.**

**The babies died because of a shortages of medicine and functioning respirators for underdeveloped lungs, the officials said.**

**"Until the problem of a lack of supplies and imports is resolved, the neonatal situation here is only going to get worse," said Karelis Abunassar, the child-protections chief.**

She said an inspection of a packed maternity ward found just 11 working incubators and seven respiratory machines, insufficient for the number of premature babies born there.

Calls to the Health Ministry weren't returned.

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