

## **Military Resistance 14B6**



### **A Revolutionary Anthem For Revolutionary Times [Soldiers For The Cause]**

**The First Of Arkansas Volunteer Infantry  
Regiment (African Descent) Marching  
Song 1864:**

**All Honor To Their Memory**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwSZgLLqPy8>

## **Tasked With Combating Opium, Afghan Officials Profit From It:**

**“A Local Narco-State  
Administered Directly By  
Government Officials”.**

**“Revenue Is Kicked Up The Chain, All  
The Way To Officials In Kabul, The  
Capital”**

**“More Than Ever, Afghan  
Government Officials Have  
Become Directly Involved In The  
Opium Trade”**



Opium poppies in Garmsir, a district of Helmand Province. Credit Bryan Denton for The New York Times

**“Over the years, I have seen the central government, the local government and the foreigners all talk very seriously about poppy,” said Hakim Angar, a former two-time police chief of Helmand Province.**

**“In practice, they do nothing, and behind the scenes, the government makes secret deals to enrich themselves.”**

FEB. 15, 2016 By AZAM AHMED. Fazl Muzhary contributed reporting from Marja, Afghanistan; Nad Ali, Afghanistan; and Garmsir; and Taimoor Shah from Garmsir. [Excerpts]

GARMSIR, Afghanistan —

The United States spent more than \$7 billion in the past 14 years to fight the runaway poppy production that has made Afghan opium the world's biggest brand.

Tens of billions more went to governance programs to stem corruption and train a credible police force.

Countless more dollars and thousands of lives were lost on the main thrust of the war: to put the Afghan government in charge of district centers and to instill rule of law.

But here in one of the few corners of Helmand Province that is peaceful and in firm government control, the green stalks and swollen bulbs of opium were growing thick and high within eyeshot of official buildings during the past poppy season — signs of a local narco-state administered directly by government officials.

In the district of Garmsir, poppy cultivation not only is tolerated, but is a source of money that the local government depends on. Officials have imposed a tax on farmers practically identical to the one the Taliban use in places they control.

**Some of the revenue is kicked up the chain, all the way to officials in Kabul, the capital, ensuring that the local authorities maintain support from higher-ups and keeping the opium growing.**

**And Garmsir is just one example of official involvement in the drug trade.**

Multiple visits to Afghan opium country over the past year, and extensive interviews with opium farmers, local elders, and Afghan and Western officials, laid bare the reality that even if the Western-backed government succeeds, the opium seems here to stay.

More than ever, Afghan government officials have become directly involved in the opium trade, expanding their competition with the Taliban beyond politics and into a struggle for control of the drug traffic and revenue.

**“There are phases of government complicity, starting with accommodation of the farmers and then on to cooperation with them,” said David Mansfield, a researcher who conducted more than 15 years of fieldwork on Afghan opium.**

**“The last is predation, where the government essentially takes over the business entirely.”**

The huge boom in poppy production that began a dozen years ago was strongly identified with the new Taliban insurgency, as the means through which the militants bought their bullets, bombs and vehicles. In recent years, the insurgents have committed more and more working hours to every facet of the opium business.

That fact was built into a mantra of Western officials in Afghanistan: When security improves, opium will be easier to take down.

That the Afghan government is now also competing in the opium business, in the absence of other reliable economic successes, has ramifications beyond the nation's borders.

Governments across the region are struggling with the health and security problems brought by the increased opium flow. And as the trade becomes more institutionalized in Afghanistan, it has undercut years of anticorruption efforts, perpetuating its status as a source of regional instability, crime and intrigue.

The administration of President Ashraf Ghani has made fighting corruption a central promise. A spokesman for his government, asked about official involvement in opium trafficking, including in Garmsir, insisted that there was "zero tolerance" for such behavior.

**"The president has been decisive in acting on information that indicates involvement of government officials in illegal acts, including taxation of opium," said the spokesman, Sayed Zafar Hashemi.**

**But in Garmsir and other places in the Helmand opium belt, the system is firmly in place and remarkably consistent.**

### **"Some Of The Most Important Regional Police And Security Commanders Are Closely Identified With The Opium Trade"**

It relies on a network of village leaders and people employed by farmers to manage the water supply, men known as mirabs. These men survey the land under cultivation and collect money on behalf of officials, both in district-level government and in Kabul.

The connections run deeply into the national government, officials acknowledge privately. In some cases, the money is passed up to senators or assembly members with regional connections.

In others, employees in the Independent Directorate of Local Governance, the agency that oversees provincial and district governments, pocket the payoffs, officials said. Some of the most important regional police and security commanders, including allies of American military and intelligence officials, are closely identified with the opium trade.

But the real money often stays local, with provincial and district officials. In the case of Garmsir, the district governor and police chief reaped the largest share of the rewards, according to local officials and farmers.

The local police were also included in the profits.

Farmers said they paid about \$40 for each acre of poppies under cultivation. In 2015, that meant nearly \$3 million in payments from the district of Garmsir alone, according to officials familiar with the process.

Garmsir is just one of several districts in Helmand Province, the heart of poppy country and the center of the 2010 American troop “surge,” where the government has built local opium alliances with farmers. The district of Marja has a system similar to the one in Garmsir, in which locals pay a flat rate based on how much poppy they grow, according to interviews with more than a dozen farmers and officials. In the district of Nad Ali, the same conditions exist to a lesser extent.

**That the Taliban have closed in on some of those districts in recent weeks will mean little to the local growers. They paid their tax to the insurgents before the American troop surge and to the government after it. They will adjust again.**

And the money to be made is only increasing. Already, experts say, satellite imagery from the past growing season across southern Helmand showed that opium cultivation was occurring openly within sight of military and police bases.

### **“Behind The Scenes, The Government Makes Secret Deals To Enrich Themselves”**

**“Over the years, I have seen the central government, the local government and the foreigners all talk very seriously about poppy,” said Hakim Angar, a former two-time police chief of Helmand Province.**

**“In practice, they do nothing, and behind the scenes, the government makes secret deals to enrich themselves.”**

By the most basic metric, the international effort to curb poppy production in Afghanistan has failed. More opium was cultivated in 2014, the last year of the NATO combat mission, than in any other year since the United Nations began keeping records in 2002.

If there was a bright spot in 2015, it was that a poppy fungus or weevil reduced the harvest by as much as half in some places. But the lower production is likely to mean even more desperate attempts to increase cultivation next year, if the past is any guide.

Highlighting the efficiency of the government poppy tax, officials in Marja decided this year to halve it from the year before — precisely the proportion of the harvest that the fungus blighted.

“In the case of the opium trade, they try harder,” said one counternarcotics law enforcement official in southern Afghanistan. “There’s just too much money to ignore it.”

Government complicity in the opium trade is not new. Power brokers, often working for the government, have long operated behind the scenes, producing, refining and smuggling opium or heroin across one of the many porous borders of Afghanistan. That kind of corruption has been seen nationwide.

Taxation on a districtwide level in the main opium-growing centers, however, has been less common. Most who spoke about it did so on the condition of anonymity, fearing reprisals. Those who spoke openly tended to have enough resources to deter official blowback.

“Of course it happens here,” said a local police commander in Marja, Baz Gul, who oversees a few dozen men and was one of the residents who first took up arms against the Taliban. “But the police chief, the local police commander, they don’t take the money directly. They do it through influential figures.”

As it happens, Marja — one of the most violent districts during the 2010 troop surge, and the site of pitched battles recently between the Taliban and Afghan forces backed by American Special Operations troops — is a case study in opium economics.

One elder in Marja, who collects money from villagers who cultivate poppy in his block of 44 acres, said poppy was simply too alluring to ignore. Even with the tax, even with the blight, opium outstripped the next most lucrative crop by a ratio of more than three to one.

In 2015, the elder said, the group’s earnings came close to \$62,000, less than half as much as the year before. With a tax of \$60 per acre, the final profit for all 44 acres was roughly \$59,000. By comparison, the average income for an Afghan, according to the World Bank, is \$681 a year.

“Most other crops would have earned about \$20,000 for 44 acres,” said the elder, seated in the home of another tribal elder in Marja. A dozen men arrayed in the room nodded quietly at his accounting.

The district of Nad Ali, a short drive from the provincial capital, Lashkar Gah, appears less organized than Garmsir or Marja. In April, on a drive through open farmland in government-controlled areas, much of the poppy crop had been plowed through because of an early harvest or because the plants were so disease-ridden that the farmers saw no point in keeping them standing.

Farmers in Nad Ali said tax collection depended on a number of factors, including one’s relationship with the local police commander, proximity to the district center and how badly crops were hurt by disease. In some cases, the teams sent by the government to eradicate crops collected the funds. In others, it was the local or national police.

Payments ranged from about \$90 to \$100 for every acre, according to six farmers.

“All of our poppies were disease-affected,” said one farmer in the Loy Bagh area of Nad Ali. “What people paid depended on how much they cultivated and how much was destroyed by the disease.”

The system in Garmsir, however, appears to leave little to chance. The district, farther from the provincial capital than Marja or Nad Ali, enjoys more autonomy than most under government control.

Interviews conducted in mid-March, before the blight appeared, showed a system of accommodation that was settling in comfortably. While farmers were not happy about paying the government, most saw it as inevitable and noted that the profit margin for opium was still considerably better than for wheat or cotton.

“We understand that the officials will charge us money,” said Juma Khan, a 35-year-old farmer in Garmsir, shrugging.

The system ran into turbulence in the spring, when two members of Parliament caught wind of the arrangement. After their demand for a cut of the profits was rebuffed, they went public, according to Afghan officials familiar with the case.

Officials in Kabul quickly fired the district governor, police chief and intelligence director, who were accused of dividing the profits. In a small ceremony, the Helmand deputy governor returned wads of cash to cheering farmers outside the provincial governor's offices and promised to crack down on such exploitation.

Officials said that all of the money had been returned to farmers and that the responsible parties had been removed from power. But neither promise was entirely true.

The governor of Garmsir — who, in an interview, denied that he had created or collected any tax — was quietly moved to Washir, a neighboring district. Months later, he was moved back to Garmsir, where he has returned to his old job. Government officials in Kabul said he had been cleared of wrongdoing after a thorough investigation.

A later visit to Garmsir unearthed a second inconsistency: Farmers said they had received only half of their money back. Still, that was something of a rebate. After all, they had lost nearly half of their crop to blight.

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## **MORE AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS**

**Reality Behind The  
Kunduz Smokescreen:  
“The Government Has Been  
Unable To Bring Security And  
Stability To The Province”  
The City Of 260,000 Captured By  
The Taliban In September Never  
Cleared Of Insurgents;**

# **“The Situation Was Deteriorating Day By Day, With No Hope Of Improvement In Sight” “Activists Said They Had Lost Belief In The Oft-Touted Commitments Of Local Security Officials”**

Feb 14, 2016 By Pajhwok reporter, Pajhwok

KUNDUZ CITY:

Fragile security and increasing Taliban activities near Kunduz City, have forced some civil society organisations (CSOs), especially those working to promote women's rights, into leaving the province or limiting their campaign.

Before the fall of Kunduz City to the Taliban last year, there were more than 70 civil society organisations in the province, but the number has now slumped to 30 because of growing chaos in the strategic northern province.

Indubitably, civil society could play an important role in resolving problems of people and pushing the government into delivering better services, but insecurity has badly affected operations of such groups.

Taliban captured Kunduz City on Sept. 28, 2015 but after three days security forces launched an operation and recaptured the city in about two weeks. More than 180 civilians were killed, 330 others wounded and over 20,000 others displaced.

Some government and private offices were set afire and precious equipment looted during the Taliban's control of the city. Integrated Network of Kunduz Civil Foundation head Abdullah Rasuli said: "SCO role has been shrinking after the plunder of equipment and goods during the Taliban's capture of Kunduz City."

Some of the SCOs reorganised their staff after borrowing huge sums of money but the rest could not reactivate their offices, he said, assailing the government to keep its promises of strengthening security. As a consequence, several SCOs have either stopped or scaled back their operations.

"The protection of the civil society activists can ensure the resumption of SCO activities, but the government has been unable to bring security and stability to the province," he reiterated.

**The presence of militants is a big challenge for SCOs in Kunduz, where journalists are also being threatened increasingly by the resurgent militants.**



Women and Youth Organisation for Peace and Development (WYPADO) Chairperson Marzai Rustami recalled prior to the collapse of the city, civil society had been very active. But after the incident, its activities had run out of steam.

“The collapse of Kunduz City came as a rude shock to us, causing some civil society offices to stop operations,” she said. There is still fear of Taliban among the people and civil society activists.

**If the security personnel did not address these concerns, failed to curb Taliban-linked violence or further delayed a decisive clearing offensive, operations of civil society would eventually come to a halt, she warned.**

“If the debacle recurs, civil society activists will be insecure, because all documents of activists had been seized by the militants,” she argued.

**Mohammad Yousuf Ayubi, head of provincial council, agreed the worsening law and order situation had been taking a toll on women’s social activities. “Most of women have announced their disassociation with civil society and fled to other areas.”**

According to Ayubi, before the fall of Kunduz city, civil society activities were on the rise. “But now they are declining, just like the public interest in their operations.”

Syed Yasin Raheel, a resident of Kunduz City, said earlier civil society activists served the people very efficiently. But some elements, having connections in different organisation, got huge funds from donors, he remarked.

He opined civil society did a good job in organising training courses, workshops, public awareness programmes and keeping a watch on government performance.

But some security officials blamed civil society groups for their inactive role in preventing the collapse of Kunduz City. Deputy police chief Col. Masum Safi claimed activities of civil society had been ineffective.

If the activists had helped security forces honestly, he said, the province would have been more peaceful. He stressed the need for coordination between civil society activists and security agencies. If civil society had shared their concerns with police in time, the provincial capital might not have fallen to the Taliban, he believed.

Safi acknowledged security was not good in Kunduz, but still better than Kabul.

He said police had devised effective strategies for better security and things would start improving in the near future.

**Civil society activists, in response, said they had lost belief in the oft-touted commitments of local security officials and were unsure about the protection of their lives in the province.**

**They complained no strategy had been adopted by the government for the safety of civil society activists.**

The situation was deteriorating day by day, with no hope of improvement in sight, they concluded.

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## **Many Provincial Officials Arranging Truce Deals With Taliban; Insurgents Cutting Off More And More Electric Power To Regime Held Areas**

February 14, 2016 By Bruce Pannier, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty [Excerpts]

The situation in northern Afghanistan, in areas along the border with Central Asia, has been deteriorating for more than two years now.

Local officials, military officials, and residents of the northern provinces admit there are districts near or at the border of Central Asia that are currently under the control of the Taliban and their foreign militant friends.

Moving further west, there has been fighting in Baghlan Province since late January.

**During that fighting the power line from Uzbekistan to Kabul, which provides more than 30 percent of Afghanistan's electricity, was cut, leaving the Afghan capital and other areas with limited or no electricity.**

**And moving a bit more to the west, the power line from Turkmenistan to Faryab Province was also knocked out.**

**On February 11, the day after the panel discussion, the power line from Tajikistan to Kunduz was also cut.**

These acts of sabotage in themselves would be bad enough but there is more to the story here.

**Members of the Baghlan provincial council said Minister of Borders and Tribal Affairs Golab Mangal made a deal with the Taliban that handed over the Dand-e Ghowri area, where the fighting has been going on, to Taliban control in exchange for promises to leave the provincial capital Puli Khumri alone.**

**There are accusations that similar deals between officials and the Taliban have also been made in Kunduz, Badakhshan, and Faryab provinces, again, all provinces that border Central Asia.**

Tahir mentioned that Afghan Vice President Abdul Rashid Dostum has not followed up on his pledge to drive the Taliban and their foreign allies from northern Afghanistan. Dostum led successful counteroffensives against militants last summer in northwestern

Afghanistan, Dostum's native region. But there has been little evidence of a new push in recent weeks.

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## **“Heavy Fighting Underway Between Afghan Security Forces And The Taliban”**

### **“The Taliban In The District Are Using Vehicles And Weapons They Seized From Afghan Forces”**

14 February 2016 by Abdullah Achakzai, TOLONews

Members of the Helmand provincial council said on Sunday that ongoing fighting in Sangin district has made life extremely difficult for local residents.

They said that over the past several days heavy fighting is underway between Afghan security forces and the Taliban and a number of security troops have been killed and injured.

The provincial council members said that due to a lack of telecommunication services in the district, they don't have exact figures regarding casualties.

They went on to say the Taliban in the district are using vehicles and weapons they seized from Afghan forces.

**Helmand governor, Mirza Khan Rahimi, however, said that Afghan security forces are progressing.**

**He added that the Taliban in their attack on several checkpoints of security forces killed a number of Afghan troops and wounded at least eight others.**

The fighting started around four months ago when hundreds of Taliban militants stormed Marja, Musa Qala and Sangin districts of the province as well as Lashkargah, the center of Helmand. The fighting is still going on.

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## **Afghanistan -- Kajaki Dam: U.S. Spent More Than \$300 Million And Still Useless;**

# **“Project Planners Were Overly Ambitious, Oblivious To Conditions On The Ground And Unable To Meet Key Deadlines Or Keep Costs From Ballooning”**

## **“At Least \$17 Billion In Questionable Spending Since 2009”**



New parts sit unopened outside the Kajaki Dam in 2011. (David Goldman/AP)

Jan. 19, 2016 by Megan McCloskey, ProPublica [Excerpts]

The five-day mission was dangerous and grueling.

Thousands of troops hauled a 220-ton turbine piecemeal on trucks the entire length of a Taliban-infested province in southern Afghanistan. The feat was hailed by the British military as on par with the logistics of World War II and cost about \$1 million.

The herculean effort was for USAID’s marquee reconstruction project, the Kajaki Dam, the lynchpin of an ambitious and expensive plan to bring electricity to southern Afghanistan.

**That was 2008.**

**The turbine has sat, unassembled, in rusting containers at Kajaki ever since.**

For the past year, ProPublica has been scrutinizing the tens of billions spent on reconstruction in Afghanistan by the military, the State Department and the U. S. Agency for International Development.

**Project after project has foundered because the U.S. ignored history, warnings, local culture and common sense.**

Last month, ProPublica analyzed and, for the first time, added up the cost of these failures and found at least \$17 billion in questionable spending since 2009.

Trumpeted as a symbol of America's visionary support for Afghanistan, the dam has become instead a monument for all that has gone wrong: Project planners were overly ambitious, oblivious to conditions on the ground and unable to meet key deadlines or keep costs from ballooning.

For the Afghans, it meant that promises were broken.

For American taxpayers, upwards of \$300 million could end up wasted.

The Kajaki Dam was built in the rugged, rural north of Helmand Province in the 1950s during America's first push to make Afghanistan a modern country and an ally. The U.S. turned it into hydroelectric power station in the 1970s, but abandoned the project before completion when the Russians invaded in 1979.

In 2004, three years after the U.S. led its own invasion, USAID restarted the project with great fanfare.

**“The Dam Sits In Taliban Country”**

The agency successfully refurbished two turbines that were nearly inoperable after decades of neglect and the dam eventually began producing some power.

**But its true success hinged on installing a third, modern turbine that could vastly increase that power throughout the area, including to the city of Kandahar, a strategic and populated urban center one province to the east.**

**That addition was supposed to be complete a decade ago.**

**The Internet is littered with stories over the years about how the Kajaki Dam would now be finished in 2007! In 2009! In 2013! In 2015!**

Each time the deadline was missed, USAID remained optimistic about the dam's prospects, even when others acknowledged failure, such as Gen. David Petraeus telling BBC News in 2011 that Kajaki was a classic case of “over-promising but under-deliver(ing).” Former Afghan President Amid Karzai too criticized the project, saying “it is 10 years now that Kajaki Dam has been as it is...all of that money wasted.”



Despite 12 years and upwards of \$300 million expended by USAID, the Kajaki Dam in southern Afghanistan is still not finished. Parts have been left to rust. (America Tonight, Al Jazeera America)

**Critics say the project's failure wasn't hard to foresee. The dam sits in Taliban country, a well-known fact that adds a permanently and dangerously unpredictable layer to what was already a monumental logistical challenge.**

Former Ambassador William Taylor, who worked on reconstruction in both Afghanistan and Iraq, said such "large, national projects, particularly in conflict zones, tend to be targets. It can be counter productive."

By 2006, intensive fighting had picked up in in the provinces of Helmand and Kandahar, the spiritual homeland of the Taliban and where they have the most support among the population.

By then it was clear Kajaki Dam was smack in the middle of the Taliban resurgence.

**Even as more and more troops poured into the province, the Kajaki district has remained one the more insurgent-infested areas, and for the most part "in Helmand, we never controlled much more than what the Marines stood on," said retired Lt. Gen. Daniel P. Bolger, who was in charge of training the Afghan security forces in 2011 and 2012.**

The northern part of Helmand is also an extremely remote area still littered with Russian mines and with almost no infrastructure or connection to the newly established government.

There are limited options to get to the dam. The road that runs there, Route 611, is by Sampler's own admission, "quite easy to close." Not unexpectedly, the Taliban often prevented workers and supplies from getting to the dam.

Instead, USAID had to airlift supplies, increasing the cost by nearly \$7 million, according to a USAID Inspector General report.

**The project also required significant work across wide swaths of Taliban territory to connect the dam to Kandahar city with transmissions lines.**

With hundreds of millions invested, USAID continued to work on the mammoth project even as Helmand became one of the key areas of President Barack Obama's troop surge in 2010, and the deadliest province for U.S. service members.

Unsurprisingly, during this period, the Kajaki Dam languished, and a top USAID official told The Associated Press that the agency had discussions in 2012 about scrapping the project.

Instead, it forked over an additional \$75 million and handed control of getting the third turbine online to the struggling national Afghan utility in 2013, with USAID playing an advisory role.

For the Afghans to install it, however, 700 tons of concrete still needs to get to the site through the same Taliban territory the turbine traveled seven years earlier — but without British or American military forces to deliver it.

Inexplicably, USAID missed its window to deliver the concrete when the U.S. Marines had cleared the area for a time in a major operation in late 2011.

Yet another goal date has been set for completion of the project – fall of 2016. (It was originally March 2016, then May 2016, then July 2016 as security problems persisted.)

The security situation of late doesn't bode well for meeting that goal. .

Last summer, the Taliban seized many cities in northern Afghanistan near the dam, and in the fall, the U.S. conducted airstrikes to fend off Taliban attacks in the area. In December, the Taliban overran the bordering district of Sangin.

**“Even If The Utility Does Manage To Install The Third Turbine, The Energy From It Won't Have Anywhere To Go.**

**The Taliban's dominance of the area is such that it controls at least a third of the output from Kajaki Dam, collecting taxes from the people for its use, according to the Afghan national utility.**

**Even if the utility does manage to install the third turbine, the energy from it won't have anywhere to go.**

The Kajaki Dam is but one part of USAID's larger electricity plan that includes rehabilitating transmission lines between it and Kandahar City, and that hasn't been completed either. Putting in transmission lines that would connect the Northeast power grid with the one in the Southeast is also on the list.

The latest estimated completion date for the transmission lines is late 2018.

Today the Kajaki project is pointed to by many — nongovernmental organizations, military officers, Afghans, former USAID and diplomats — as a prime example of an array of reconstruction problems. For retired British Gen. Sir Nick Parker, who served in Afghanistan, it exemplifies a common U.S. and British faux pas: failing to take into account the Afghan point of view.

Charles Tiefer, who was on the Commission for Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, said Kajaki is the symbol for how naively ambitious the reconstruction effort was.

On a trip to Afghanistan in 2010, he said, the commission was astounded to learn of the scale of what USAID was trying to accomplish in the energy sector.

Tiefer said he leapt out of his chair to take a closer look at what was being presented.

“It’s nice to dream, but the resources just aren’t there in face of a potent and terrible insurgency to build, maintain and protect a national electric grid,” Tiefer said.

“The idea of completing this elaborate project in any interval short of the very distant future was a fantasy.”

**In interviews, USAID and State Department officials would not acknowledge that even minor mistakes had been made with the Kajaki project.**

According to USAID’s Sampler, at the start of the war less than 6% of Afghans had access to electricity and now 30% of the population is hooked up to an electrical grid. After years of reliance on foreign subsidies, DABS, which is in charge of the Kajaki Dam, is now solvent, he said.

Despite the optimism, USAID is still providing advice and expertise, including a nearly \$30-million, four-year program to help DABS manage its transition from dependency on donors.

And the utility continues to struggle mightily in southern Afghanistan.

**With the Kajaki Dam incomplete, the electrical grid project incomplete, and no money for fuel at the two generator plants the U.S. built as a temporary, stop-gap measure, most of the lights remain out in Kandahar.**

The military spent \$143.5 million to build those generator plants in 2011 and nearly \$140 million more to buy fuel for them, deciding that having electricity in Kandahar was key to countering the insurgency.

But after the troops left, the U.S. stopped paying for fuel in September. DABS hasn’t been able to take over. That means that even the U.S.’s transition plan to make up for its failure to get the Kajaki Dam fully running is a failure, SIGAR said.

Bolger, the Army general, argues that among the Afghans, the long-term inability to finish the dam and other energy projects has a “more demoralizing effect than



corruption. What the Afghans don't understand is how a country can land people on the moon but can't get the power running."

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## **MILITARY NEWS**

# **VA Suicide Hotline In Oscar-Winning Documentary Lets Calls Go To Voicemail: "Callers Did Not Always Receive Immediate Assistance"**

[Thanks to Richard Capron, who sent this in.]

February 15, 2016 by Gregg Zoroya, USA TODAY

A VA suicide hotline movingly portrayed in an Oscar-winning documentary has allowed crisis calls to go into voicemail and has struggled with adequate staff training, according to an inspector general investigation.

Inspectors found problems occurred when calls were routed to backup crisis centers after staff at the Department of Veterans Affairs suicide hotline center in Canandaigua, N.Y., (800-273-8255) were taking all the calls they could handle.

"We substantiated allegations that some calls routed to backup crisis centers were answered by voicemail, and callers did not always receive immediate assistance," said the VA Inspector General report made public late last week.

The VA, which has highlighted veteran suicides as a crucial area of concern, said that since the hotline was created in 2007, about 2 million calls have been answered and emergency efforts made to intervene and save lives in more than 53,000 cases.

An HBO documentary highlighting the life-and-death drama of the VA suicide hotline efforts won an Oscar last year.

The Inspector General report did not document how many calls are going to voicemail.

But it said the number of calls going to backup crisis centers increased dramatically in recent years, from 36,261 in 2013 to 76,887 in 2014. About every sixth call goes to a backup center, the report said.

Investigators found 20 calls going to voicemail at one backup crisis center in 2014 where staff were apparently unaware there was a voicemail system, the report said.

In response to the findings, the VA concurred with all recommendations for taking steps to ensure calls no longer go to voicemail and that staff training be improved. Steps to increase staffing at the Canandaigua center were announced by the VA almost a year ago, said Victoria Dillon, department spokesperson.

A comprehensive training initiative is underway, and a quality assurance surveillance plan to monitor backup centers is being developed, she said.

“Systems are being reviewed and action plans have been developed to resolve the issues and address the OIG (Officer of Inspector General) recommendations,” she said, adding that all improvements will be in place by September.

When the Canandaigua staff are busy taking calls, new phone calls are routed to one of six call-receiving crisis centers that are part of the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association. The Inspector General found that staffers at these centers may not have the same level of training as the VA workers in Canandaigua.

Calls routed to the backup centers can be placed in a queue where they hear music for several minutes while they wait, the report said.

The VA had no process for learning how long these people wait or how many of them finally hang up, the report said.

The 2014 documentary on the VA crisis hotline, “Crisis Hotline: Veterans Press 1” won the Oscar for best documentary, short subject.

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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

Marxists know that democracy does *not* abolish class oppression. It only makes the class struggle more direct, wider, more open and pronounced, and that is what we need.

The fuller the freedom of divorce, the clearer will women see that the source of their “domestic slavery” is capitalism, not lack of rights.

The more democratic the system of government, the clearer will the workers see that the root evil is capitalism, not lack of rights.

The fuller national equality (and it is *not* complete without freedom of secession), the clearer will the workers of the oppressed nations see that the cause of their oppression is capitalism, not lack of rights, etc.

-- V. I. Lenin, Collected Works, 4th English Edition; Vol. 23

## **FYI: Military Resistance Website Visits:**

**Top Ten Sources Of Visits Ranked 1-10**

**January 2016**

- 1 United States
- 2 Germany
- 3 China
- 4 Ukraine
- 5 France
- 6 Russian Federation
- 7 South Korea
- 8 Romania
- 9 Vietnam
- 10 Canada

Readers from an additional 65 have also accessed, including Palestinian Territories, Fiji, Japan, Great Britain, Thailand, Somalia, Malaysia & Australia.

Source: AWStats

# **Portugal 1975 -- A Revolution Destroyed: “The Far Left Had A Major Fault” “The Revolutionary Left Had Neither The Will Nor The Influence To Move Rank-And-File Soldiers” “This Is A Tragedy From Which We Must All Learn”**

December 1985 By Chris Harman, Socialist Worker [UK] reprinted in February 11, 2011  
Socialist Worker

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Portugal was ruled by a full-fledged fascist regime for half a century, longer than anywhere else in Europe.

Opposition parties were banned. The only unions permitted were small, state-run craft associations.

Armed police were used to break any strike. Working-class leaders were consigned to the jails of the PIDE secret police for 10 or 20 years.

The fascist state ruled not only over Portugal, but also over an immense empire in Africa. The colonies of Angola, Guinea Bissau and Mozambique provided abundant profits for Portugal's giant monopolies and jobs for its middle class.

On the morning of April 25, 1974, the citizens of Lisbon arose from their beds to find tanks patrolling the streets and normal radio broadcasts replaced by military music. Was the coup from the left or the right? The answer came when the radio broadcast a popular anti-fascist song.

**People rushed out into the streets to fraternize with the soldiers, handing them red carnations.**

Together, they tore down the emblems of the fascist regime, opened the prisons to free political prisoners and arrested known police informers.

The new government was headed by Gen. António de Spínola, an old reactionary who had fought as a volunteer in Hitler's armies during the Second World War. But his

government members were made up from all the underground anti-fascist parties, including the Communists.

And it soon became clear that power in the armed forces lay not with him, but with 400 junior officers who had actually organized the coup--known as the Armed Forces Movement, or MFA.

**The army had turned against fascism for one simple reason--it was losing the colonial war in Africa. But there were big differences on how to react to this.**

Spinola put forward the line of the big Portuguese monopolies. Their aim was to replace direct Portuguese rule by indirect rule based upon "moderate," CIA-financed movements in the colonies, even if this meant continuing the war for the time being.

The junior officers wanted to end the war at all costs, and knew only one way to do so--to hand over power to the real liberation movements, like the MPLA (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola) in Angola and Frelimo in Mozambique.

The divisions were soon increased by something else. Portugal had undergone considerable industrialization in the last decade of fascism. It was because big business wanted to prevent action by workers that Spinola took the Communists, by far the largest underground party, into his government.

They told workers to trust Spinola, and the Communist minister of labor framed a new anti-strike law.

But the workers were not to be held back in this way.

**"There Was A Growing Tendency For Rank-And-File Soldiers To Organize Politically For Themselves, Joining Left-Wing Demonstrations And Siding With Workers To Industrial Disputes"**

THE GIANT Lisnave shipyard began a wave of strikes that swept the country in the early summer of 1974. These workers faced opposition from all the government parties. Yet the workers succeeded in forcing massive improvements in pay and conditions and a general "cleaning out" of reactionary managers in industry and the media.

All this was too much for Spinola, big business and the Portuguese right. He tried to stop the revolution in its tracks in September with a fascist-style rally. But a mass mobilization of workers stopped it from taking place, and he was forced to resign.

**In March 1975, he tried again, this time with a military coup.**

**But workers argued with soldiers who had been sent to seize the approaches to Lisbon and persuaded them to turn against their reactionary officers.**

Instead of stopping the revolution, the actions of the right spurred it forward.

The banking unions closed down the banks until the government agreed to nationalize them--and with them some 60 percent of Portuguese industry. Workers occupied more than 300 factories.

The old generals lost their control over the armed forces to the junior officers of the MFA.

**And there was a growing tendency for rank-and-file soldiers to organize politically for themselves, joining left-wing demonstrations and siding with workers to industrial disputes.**

Foreign socialists who visited Lisbon in the summer of 1975 underwent an experience that they would not forget. Here was a city where the majority of the working class wanted socialism and where the old obstacles, in terms of the police, the army and even a well-organized capitalist class, seemed in complete disarray.

Yet other obstacles, just as dangerous, continued to exist.

Within the working-class movement, the two main parties were the recently reformed Socialist Party of Mário Soares and the Communist Party.

**“Within The Armed Forces, They Began To Plot With The Old Right-Wing General To Oust The Junior Officers Who Had Overthrown Fascism”**

**The Socialist Party had gone along with the first popular mobilizations against the right. But its leaders took fright at the further development of the revolution. They were soon trying to whip up a lynch-mob atmosphere against the left.**

In northern Portugal, they encouraged right-wing rioters who burned down the offices of unions and left-wing parties.

**Within the armed forces, they began to plot with the old right-wing general to oust the junior officers who had overthrown fascism.**

But the Socialist Party alone could not have saved Portuguese capitalism. It only had support from a minority of workers in the key Lisbon industrial belt, and in the unions.

**The majority party of the workers at the time of the overthrow of fascism was the Communist Party.**

If it had fought for socialist revolution by leading the wave of strikes and occupations that began in the early summer of 1974, it would have been unstoppable.

But it followed a different tack.

**It denounced the strike wave, while attempting to get control of the existing state by secret plots with opportunist politicians and army officers. Its leaders believed this would enable them to establish an Eastern European-type society.**

The high point of their success was the summer of 1975, when an officer thought too sympathetic to the party, Vasco Goncalves, formed a government. But this soon proved

incapable of effectively ruling the country. It refused to unleash the revolutionary energy of the workers and it could not deal with a wave of sabotage and unrest in the rural areas of the north. Goncalves soon quietly abandoned power to those to the right of him.

A quite considerable minority of workers turned to genuinely revolutionary ideas. The small revolutionary parties mushroomed in size until they exercised considerable influence.

### **“The Army Officers Became More And More Impotent”**

**Yet the far left had a major fault.**

Although they talked about the working class, they all acted as if some other social force could substitute itself for the class.

**They devoted as much attention to courting left-wing army officers as to trying to win factory workers away from the Communist Party.**

**Time was running out for the left-wing officers.**

**They could dominate Portuguese politics while the old ruling class was demoralized and divided.**

**But once it began to get its act together--with a lot of help from Western governments and from the Socialist Party--the army officers became more and more impotent.**

By November 1975, there were only two choices: either the working class took things into its own hands, or the old ruling class would stage a comeback.

The right struck on November 25.

The pretext was the occupation of TV stations by a group of left-wing soldiers.

Right-wing officers moved their troops quickly to disarm all the left-wing soldiers in the Lisbon area and to restore the power of the old generals.

They met very little resistance. It required only a couple thousand troops to disarm the much larger left-influenced forces in Lisbon.

The reason lay in the way the left had put its faith in maneuvering by army officers, rather than in mass workers' action.

The Communist Party, which only the day before had organized a successful two-hour general strike, refused to take action against the advance of the right. It seemed to think it would be able to plot its way to power regardless.

The left-wing officers were not ready to wage what might well be an armed confrontation against their fellow officers, and made no move.

**The revolutionary left had neither the will nor the influence to move rank-and-file workers in the face of the Communist Party's opposition, or rank-and-file soldiers in the face of opposition from the left-wing officers.**

The right wing was careful not to use its newfound control of the army and police to attack workers' conditions immediately. It knew that to do so might rekindle the fire of the revolution.

But the more the revolutionary years of 1974 and 1975 receded into the past, the more such gains were taken back by the employing classes. The fact that most of the time the Socialist Party was in the government did not make any difference,

A decade later, average wages were 10 percent lower than they were in 1973, the last year of fascism. Hundreds of thousands of workers have to wait six months or more for wages owing to them. Lisbon is once again a city noted for the large number of people begging in the streets.

Portugal showed the promise of a very different sort of future in 1974 and 1975. That did not materialize because there was not a powerful revolutionary socialist party to challenge the hold of the Communist and Socialist Parties.

This is a tragedy from which we must all learn.

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## **DANGER: CAPITALISTS AT WORK**





## **OCCUPATION PALESTINE**

# **Protesters Demand Return Of Palestinian Bodies In Occupied East Jerusalem: “Withholding The Bodies A Form Of ‘Collective Punishment’”**

Feb. 5, 2016 Ma'an

JERUSALEM -- Palestinian youths in the occupied East Jerusalem neighborhood of Jabal al-Mukabbir on Thursday took to the streets in protest of Israel's continued policy of withholding the bodies of Palestinians killed after attempted, alleged and actual attacks against Israelis, locals said.

Locals said the protest quickly erupted into clashes, as Israeli forces attempted to suppress the youths. Israeli forces reportedly used rubber-coated steel bullets and stun grenades against protesters, who responded by hurling rocks and shooting off fireworks at Israeli forces.

Three of the 10 bodies being held by Israeli authorities are Palestinians from the Jabal al-Mukabbir neighborhood.

Late last month, PLO Secretary-General Saeb Erekat called on the Middle East Quartet to pressure Israel to return the bodies of alleged Palestinian attackers still being held by the Israeli authorities.

The call was made in an open letter sent to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon, EU Foreign Policy Chief Federica Mogherini, United States Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

“I call upon you to instantly take action and exert diplomatic and political pressures on Israel to immediately release bodies of Palestinian martyrs killed by Israeli forces and settlers,” Erekat wrote.

He said that withholding the bodies of Palestinians was a form of “collective punishment” by Israel against the Palestinian people, which he described as illegal under international law.

It is unknown if any of the parties responded to the request.

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# **Palestinian Families Homeless As Israeli Military Demolishes Their West Bank Houses:**

## **“Among The 110 People Made Homeless Were Dozens Of Children From 12 Different Families”**

### **“Villages Like Jenbah Are Some Of The Poorest In The West Bank”**



A distraught Palestinian family amid the remains of their home after it was demolished by Israelis in Musafir Jenbah. Photograph: Hazem Bader/AFP/Getty Images

2 February Peter Beaumont in Khirbet Jenbah, Occupied Palestine; Guardian News and Media Limited

**Israeli military bulldozers have demolished 23 houses in two impoverished southern West Bank villages, including structures that were home to more than 100 people.**

**The demolitions, one of the most significant in recent memory, occurred in a controversial Israeli-designated military area known as Firing Zone 918, which comprises approximately 115 square miles (300 sq km) and was declared restricted by the Israelis in the 1970s.**



Villagers in Khirbet Jenbah rescue furniture following house demolitions. More than 80 villagers lost their homes in a single morning. Photograph: Peter Beaumont for the Guardian

The action came despite a long-running and internationally high-profile campaign to protect the eight villages in the zone, including a petition signed by some of the world's most famous authors.

Human rights groups have repeatedly challenged Israel's claim to the land, arguing it is illegal to establish a military zone in occupied territory. Tuesday's demolitions were described by the Israeli veterans group Breaking the Silence – which has long supported the villages – as one of the biggest demolitions in the past decade.

**Israeli bulldozers moved into Khirbet Jenbah and the nearby hamlet of Khirbat el-Halawa just after dawn on Tuesday morning, destroying a dozen homes in Jenbah itself as well as other structures, some of which are funded by European countries including the UK.**

According to Israeli NGO Peace Now, among the 110 people made homeless during the demolitions were dozens of children from 12 different families.

The 12 buildings destroyed were among 40 properties that had been earlier earmarked for destruction, in three locations in a remote area of rolling hills accessible only by dirt roads. The destruction of the remaining buildings was temporarily halted after lawyers for the villagers obtained a court injunction, which provided a stay of execution until next week.

The families, many of whose homes are attached to caves that are also used as houses, argue that their families have lived on the land since long before Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967.

Villages like Jenbah are some of the poorest in the West Bank, unconnected to the grid and reliant on donated solar panels, some of which were destroyed by the Israeli military.

On Tuesday villagers dug through the remains of their homes, set up temporary tents and transported furniture they had managed to save from houses to the places they planned to sleep.

Among them was Khalid Hussein Jabari, who lost his house in Khirbet Jenbah along with other family members.

Standing over the ruins of his brother's house he said: "They came the day before and marked the houses for demolition. We knew it was serious because some of the villagers who can understand Hebrew heard the soldiers talking about how the buildings were going to be destroyed."

"I was in (a nearby town) when I heard the news at 3.30 on Tuesday morning. I just got back here when the bulldozers arrived, just after 5am."

A few metres away Mahmoud Ahmad Isa, 30, watched as members of his family moved furniture down a flight of stone stairs into a cave entrance next to the wreckage of his home.

"It is wet (in the cave) but we'll see how we get on. The first thing we need to do is clear the rubble and rebuild," he added. "We don't have any other alternative."

While Israel has long wanted to move the villages, located in part of the occupied territories known as Area C, which is under full Israeli administrative and security control, the villagers have enjoyed high-profile international support.

Two years ago 51 acclaimed international authors, among them Mario Vargas Llosa, Seamus Heaney and Orhan Pamuk, signed a petition asking the Israeli government to allow the villages to remain.

It is also not the first time the Israeli military has destroyed Khirbet Jenbah. The village was demolished in its entirety in 1999. The villagers, however, returned later and won a court ruling allowing them to stay on the land if they agreed to arbitration with the military.

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## **Palestinian Villagers Fear Further Home Demolitions By Israeli Army: "The Demolitions Are Part Of Plans To Remove 1,000 Palestinians From A 11.5**

# Square Miles Of Land In The South Hebron Hills”

7 February 2016 Kate Shuttleworth in Jerusalem, Guardian News and Media Limited

Palestinian villagers in remote parts of the southern West Bank are bracing themselves for more home demolitions, a week after Israeli bulldozers destroyed 23 homes leaving more than 100 people homeless.

Villagers fear a temporary court injunction to stop the demolition of another 10 properties – to be heard on Tuesday – will fail.

The injunction will be heard at the high court of justice in Jerusalem and will decide if the Israeli army has a legal grounding to destroy the additional residences in the villages of Al Fahit, Majaz, Sfay, Umm Tuba and Al Mercaz, to make way for a military facility.

Israeli bulldozers moved into Khirbet Jenbah and Halawa last Tuesday morning destroying the homes and other structures.

The demolitions came after the latest round of mediation talks between lawyers representing Palestinian villagers and the Israeli government collapsed.

In the days after Tuesday’s demolitions, aid agencies delivered tents to protect them from the elements.

The demolitions are part of plans to remove 1,000 Palestinians from a 11.5 square miles of land in the south Hebron Hills, which was designated a military zone, known as Firing Zone 918, in the 1970s.

The army first began demolishing structures and forcibly evicting Palestinian residents in 1999. Residents returned to their land they mounted a legal challenge in court. The matter was never resolved as the court kept referring it to arbitration.

While Israel has long wanted to move the villages, located in part of the occupied territories known as Area C, which is under full Israeli administrative and security control, the villagers have enjoyed high-profile international support.

Last week, however, Israel declared that mediation had failed because of the villagers’ unwillingness to relocate. A statement from Cogat, the Israeli defence ministry unit that administers civilian affairs in the West Bank, said that “enforcement measures were taken against illegal structures and solar panels built within a military zone”.

On Saturday the European Union called on Israel to stop the demolition of Palestinian housing, some of which had been donated by the EU.

“In the past weeks there have been a number of developments in Area C of the West Bank, which risk undermining the viability of a future Palestinian state and driving the parties yet further apart,” an EU statement said.

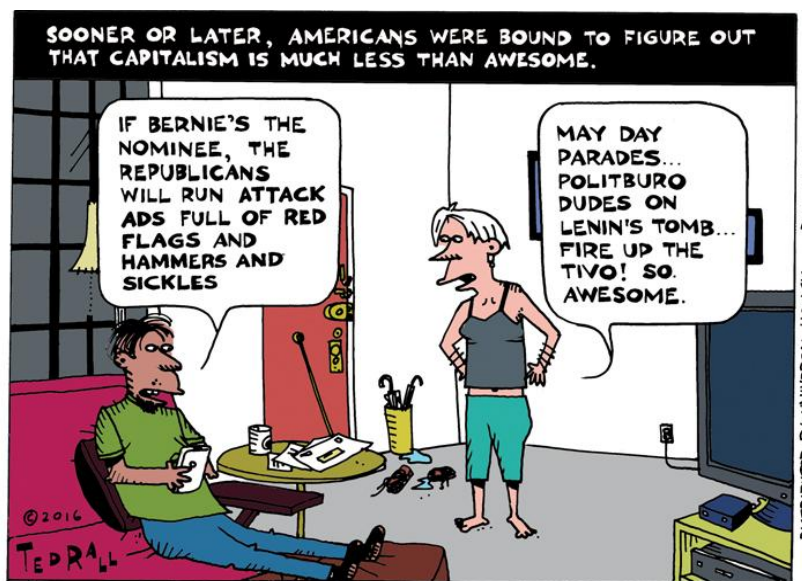
The statement also referred to a decision made on 25 January, by Israel, to declare 380 acres of land near Jericho in the West Bank state land, with reported plans to build 150 new residences for settlers.

This was followed by the demolitions in Khirbet Jenbah and Halawa last week.

“This is particularly concerning both because of the extent of the demolitions and also the number of vulnerable individuals affected, including children who need support,” the EU said, adding that “demolitions included EU-funded structures”.

To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation commanded by foreign terrorists, go to:  
<http://www.palestinechronicle.com/>  
The occupied nation is Palestine. The foreign terrorists call themselves “Israeli.”

## DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



### **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.

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