

Military Resistance 14B8



**Black Panther Party Prisoner
Free At Last:
For 45 Years In Prison, Louisiana
Man Kept Calm And Held Fast To
Hope;
“The Longest Time In Solitary
Confinement Of Any Prisoner In
United States History”
“No Matter How Much Concrete They
Use To Hold Me In A Particular Place
They Couldn’t Stop My Mind”**



Albert Woodfox, 69, spent 45 years in state custody, nearly all of it in solitary at Louisiana State Penitentiary, called Angola. Credit: Bryan Tarnowski for The New York Times

FEB. 20, 2016 By CAMPBELL ROBERTSON, New York Times

NEW ORLEANS — A hotel door, a short elevator ride, a stroll through the lobby and the urge to take a walk were all that separated Albert Woodfox from the great wide world.

This had been the case only for less than 24 hours.

On Friday morning, Mr. Woodfox, who had just turned 69, was released from prison as part of a plea deal with Louisiana prosecutors. He pleaded no contest before a state judge to charges of manslaughter and aggravated burglary in the 1972 death of a corrections officer.

In return, he turned his back on the 45 years he had spent in Louisiana’s custody, nearly all that time in a 50-square-foot cell, perhaps the longest time in solitary confinement of any prisoner in United States history.

Now on Saturday morning, he was sitting in a hotel suite alongside one of his brothers and members of the legal team that had worked for years for his release. He was calm, composed, steady as a surgeon, but one imagines that survival would have been impossible without this sort of disposition.

“I don’t think I ever felt that I would die in prison,” Mr. Woodfox, who is black, said. But he acknowledged: “As the years passed, it became more difficult to feel that way.”

The Louisiana State Penitentiary, the 18,000-acre prison in an elbow of the Mississippi River, is known familiarly as Angola. This was the name for the cotton plantation that once occupied the same grounds, itself named for the part of Africa where the plantation’s slaves had come from.

It is the largest maximum-security prison in the country, and in the early 1970s it was possibly the bloodiest.

“Almost every day, somewhere in the prison, somebody was getting stabbed or killed or beat with an iron pipe,” Mr. Woodfox recalled.

When Mr. Woodfox arrived at Angola in 1971, it was his second time there. Raised by a barmaid in New Orleans, he had taken to the street life and had the lengthy criminal résumé to show for it.

Two years earlier, already facing a 50-year sentence for armed robbery, Mr. Woodfox escaped from the Orleans Parish courthouse using a smuggled pistol and made his way to New York City.

Before long, he was in jail there, too, awaiting extradition but also becoming a part of the Black Panther Party, which was growing in the nation’s jails.

When he returned to Angola, he was a different sort; his fellow inmates at first laughed at his new talk of politics and revolution.

But prison officials referred to him as a militant, he said, and kept him on what was known as “the Panther Tier,” where he organized protests of prison conditions.

The morning of April 17, 1972, Mr. Woodfox said, he was on his way back from picking up some papers from an inmate paralegal when rumors began spreading that a white corrections officer had been murdered. Guards pulled Mr. Woodfox and other inmates into a room where they were strip-searched.

After a night in a solitary cell called “the dungeon,” Mr. Woodfox and a fellow Black Panther, Herman Wallace, were charged with murder and sent to the one-man cells where they would spend the next four decades.

The officer who had been killed was Brent Miller, a former standout high school wide receiver who had just turned 23. At the time, his father also worked at Angola, overseeing the crops and livestock and his brother was a corrections officer at the prison. Brent Miller knew the prison was overcrowded, understaffed and dangerous — another officer had been set on fire the day before.

When Brent Miller was found on the morning of the 17th, he had been stabbed 32 times.

“Do I believe he did it?” Stan A. Miller, another of Brent Miller’s brothers who at one time worked at the prison, too, said when asked about Mr. Woodfox. “Hell yeah, I believe he did it.”

Mr. Miller said an eyewitness told him as much in 1995.

Still, that witness, Leonard Turner, testified in 1998 that he had not seen the murder and then in 2002 signed a statement for Mr. Woodfox’s lawyers saying that he did see the murder but that he knew “for an absolute fact” that Mr. Woodfox had not been involved.

Mr. Turner's is only one of the problematic witness accounts on which the case rested; no forensic evidence was found that tied Mr. Woodfox or Mr. Wallace to the murder.

Mr. Woodfox's lawyers highlighted not only the inconsistency of the accounts but also incentives that in some cases were undisclosed by prosecutors before trial: an unusual furlough for one witness, a governor's pardon for another and for one, a transfer to a custody situation with such minimal security that he was able to rob three banks while still under state supervision.

Mr. Miller's widow eventually came to doubt the guilt of Mr. Woodfox and Mr. Wallace, creating something of a break with her former in-laws, who remain convinced that he did it.

At a 1973 trial, Mr. Woodfox was convicted. Mr. Wallace was convicted the next year. And so they sat, alone.

State prosecutors have pushed back at the description of Mr. Woodfox's confinement as "solitary." For most of his time at Angola he was kept alone in a cell, 6 feet by 8 or 9 feet with bars on one end, allowing limited conversation with other inmates when the industrial fans did not drown out all talk.

He was allowed out for one hour a day.

Former inmates said it would be impossible to describe this as anything other than solitary.

"I've seen grown men turn into babies — you know, they just lay in their bed in a fetal position and don't talk," Mr. Woodfox said. "I've seen guys who can't stop talking. I've seen guys that scream all day."

"You play this game: 'I'm Superman, there's nothing you can do to hurt me.' Then at night time when the lights are out and everybody's sleeping, you sit down and cry or whatever and you realize, 'I'll survive another day.' "

In a 2008 filing about bail, the state laid out its case for labeling Mr. Woodfox a "dangerous inmate."

Six incidents over the preceding two decades were listed, including hollering and shaking the bars of his cell in 2002 and threatening to start a hunger strike in 1999. In none of the cases was anyone hurt, though officials said in 1992 that he had been found with the makings of a homemade spear.

(George Kendall, a lawyer for Mr. Woodfox, said it had been made of paper.)

Mr. Woodfox did calisthenics in the morning, and in the afternoon he wrote letters and read newspapers, law books and political literature — Nelson Mandela, Malcolm X, James Baldwin. Little about his day changed, even in recent years when the outside world learned of him, Mr. Wallace and Robert King, a third inmate who spent a long stint

in solitary. The men collectively became known as the “Angola Three.” Mr King was ordered released in 2001.

In 1992, Mr. Woodfox’s conviction was thrown out on the ground that he had not had effective assistance of counsel. He was convicted at a second trial in 1998, though that conviction was overturned in 2013 because of discrimination in the selection of the grand jury foreman.

Mr. Wallace’s conviction was overturned the same year on similar grounds. Dying of lung cancer, Mr. Wallace was ordered released by a federal judge.

“He died three days later,” Mr. Woodfox said, his voice breaking. “But he died a free man.”

Mr. Woodfox was indicted last February for a third time. So the preparation for a trial — one in which all the key witnesses were dead — began again. But the election of a new state attorney general in November restarted negotiations, leading to Friday’s plea agreement. It counts as a conviction, but is not an admission of guilt, something that angers the Miller family.

“They lied to us,” Stan Miller said of the state attorney general’s office.

When someone is in a cell for four decades he measures things differently: time, certainly, but also freedom.

Asked to recall his last trip as a free man, as a 22-year-old on the run to New York, Mr. Woodfox said he did not remember it as a feeling of freedom. True freedom he discovered much later, he said, after years of reading of brave men.

“When I began to understand who I was, I considered myself free,” he said.

“No matter how much concrete they use to hold me in a particular place they couldn’t stop my mind.”

The interview ended, and Mr. Woodfox asked about his little brother, who had stepped out for a moment. Together they were planning to visit their mother’s grave.

A flash underneath the sleeve of Mr. Woodfox’s jacket revealed a gift that his brother had given him a few hours earlier to celebrate his first morning as a free man in 45 years: a watch.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Two Badakhshan Districts Captured By Insurgents: “Some Other Districts Like Ragh Are Under Threat”

18 February 2016 Written by Abdul Wali Arian, TOLONews

Badakhshan provincial governor Ahmad Faisal Bigzad raised concerns over insurgents' activities on Thursday and said that Jurm and Yamgan districts of Badakhshan are completely under the control of insurgents.

But he said government forces are currently engaged in heavy fighting with the militants - many of whom are foreign.

“Two districts are completely under enemy control and some other districts like Ragh are under threat,” said Faisal Bigzad, the provincial governor.

There are concerns that with the weather warming up battles will increase in the province.

“We have full preparations both for summer and spring, if the warm weather has a positive effect for the enemy then there are positive effects for us as well,” said Mohiuddin Ghori Pamir, ANA's 20 division commander.

3,000 Insurgents Active In Kunduz: “Militants Have Expanded Their Activities To The Outskirts Of Kunduz City”

20 February 2016 by Abdul Wali Arian, TOLONews

Officials said Sunday that a large-scale military operation has been launched in Kunduz and that up to 3,000 militants, including about 200 foreigners, are currently active in the province.

They said that militants have expanded their activities to the outskirts of Kunduz city, the center of the province.

“As per my information, 200 foreign insurgents are active in Kunduz city and its outskirts and there are 154 militant groups and around 2,500 to 3,000 militants in the entire province,” said Mohaiuddin Ghori, commander for 20th Pamir Battalion.

But the Afghan National Army's Chief of Staff Gen. Qadam Shah Shahim downplayed the reports.

“Wherever we know there is a threat, our special units are there and they are being advised by foreign troops,” said Shahim.

But residents are wary and these days shops in Kunduz are being closed early and the city is empty.

Residents say they are worried the Taliban will return, especially as the Taliban frequently establish checkpoints on routes close to Kunduz city.

“The Taliban are establishing checkpoints even during the day for two to three hours and then go to their villages,” said Farhad, a resident of Kunduz city.

Telecommunication services are also being suspended at night, they say.

“Those who come from villages say that the Taliban are establishing checkpoints,” said Amanullah, a shopkeeper in the city.

Kunduz city collapsed to the Taliban for three days last year but it took security forces weeks to oust the insurgents and stabilize the city.

Afghan Troops Abandon Strategic Helmand District After Months Of Heavy Fighting With Taliban:

“We Will See Kajaki, Gereshk And Sangin Collapsing Very Soon”

“Taliban Said It Had Captured Armored Personnel Carriers, Bulldozers And Other Equipment Abandoned In Roshan Tower And Nine Other Checkpoints”

Stupid Afghan Commander Says “Their Presence In The Area Did Not Mean Anything”

Feb 20, 2016 BY MOHAMMAD STANEKZAI, Reuters

Afghan forces have pulled out of bases in Musa Qala, a strategic district of the southern province of Helmand, after months of heavy fighting with Taliban insurgents, officials said on Saturday.

Helmand, a traditional heartland of the Taliban and one of the world's biggest centers of opium production, has been threatened for months and the United States recently sent hundreds of soldiers to the province to bolster its defense.

The commander of the Afghan army's 215th corps, Mohammad Moeen Faqir, said troops had been ordered to pull back from Roshan Tower, their main base in Musa Qala, as well as other checkpoints to reinforce Gereshk, straddling the main Highway One which links Kabul with the south and west.

“Their presence in the area did not mean anything,” he said. “We will use them in battle with enemies in other parts of Helmand province.”

Fierce fighting has raged in Musa Qala and other parts of Helmand for months and the Taliban overran the district in August last year before they were driven back by Afghan forces backed by U.S. airstrikes.

Musa Qala itself is a dry and sparsely inhabited district that British and American troops fought hard to control between 2006 and 2008 but its loss could bring further losses elsewhere, including Sangin where government forces have been clinging on.

“Now that the government has withdrawn its forces from this district, we will see Kajaki, Gereshk and Sangin collapsing very soon,” said deputy provincial council member Abdul Majid Akhundzada.

The Taliban said in a statement it had captured armored personnel carriers, bulldozers and other equipment abandoned in Roshan Tower and nine other checkpoints.

The withdrawal prompted speculation among local officials that the government had reached an arrangement with the Taliban but Abdul Jabar Qahraman, presidential envoy for security affairs in Helmand, denied any such pact.

“There wasn't any deal,” he said. “We learnt that there was no need to continue the fight in that area.”

No comment was immediately available from the ministry of defense in Kabul.

The outgoing commander of international forces, Gen. John Campbell, recently sent hundreds of American troops to Helmand, where they assist and train Afghan forces but do not fight.

A spokesman in Kabul said its aim remained to train, advise and assist and referred questions on Afghan troop movements to the defense ministry.

U.S. officials estimate the Taliban dominates or threatens almost a third of the country and has full control over at least four districts.

Although it briefly took the northern city of Kunduz last year, it does not control any provincial capitals.

Taliban Deny Their Commander Captured Dressed Like A Woman: “Government Propaganda” “Its Dispirited Troops Are Facing A Trashing At The Hands Of Mujahideen Everywhere”



February 18, 2016 by BY BILL ROGGIO. Bill Roggio is a Senior Fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and the Editor of The Long War Journal.

The Taliban has rejected Afghan press reports that one of its commanders was captured in the eastern province of Paktika while wearing a woman's dress.

Additionally, the jihadist group denied reports that its forces clashed with a rival faction in southwestern Afghanistan. The reports and Taliban denials are part of an ongoing information war being waged by both sides as security in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate.

Today, the National Directorate of Security – Afghanistan’s intelligence service – claimed it captured a Taliban commander, known as Khizar Ali, in Paktika’s Bermal district as he was “dressed like a woman.”

The claim was published on the NDS’ Facebook page; included were photographs and a video showing Ali in a colorful woman’s dress (see photo above).

Oddly enough, Ali is handling an AK-47, with a magazine inserted.

The NDS report of Ali’s capture was picked up by Afghan news outlets, including Khaama Press.

Also, yesterday, 1TV Afghanistan reported that more than 30 Taliban fighters were killed as forces loyal to Mullah Mansour, the emir of the established Taliban, clashed with followers from Mullah Rasul’s breakaway faction in the Nawa district in Ghazni province.

The Taliban issued a statement yesterday on Voice of Jihad, its official propaganda outlet, rejecting the capture of Ali as well as the report of infighting with Rasul’s forces.

“The provincial officials of the stooge Kabul regime alongside their notorious intelligence agency have been claiming since yesterday of infighting between Mujahideen in Nawa or Maqur districts of Ghazni province as well as arresting a commander in Bermal district of Paktika province today,” a statement attributed to Zabihullah Mujahid read, one of the group’s official spokesmen.

“We strongly reject this propaganda and state that no such incident has taken place in any of the areas and neither has a Mujahideen commander been detained anywhere,” Mujahid continued.

Mujahid described the reports as “rumors,” “fabrications,” and “propaganda” designed to “boost the morale of its dispirited troops who are facing a trashing at the hands of Mujahideen everywhere.”

The back and forth between the Afghan government and the Taliban is nothing new, as both sides are attempting to gain the upper hand and convince the Afghan people and international community that they are winning the war.

It is often difficult assessing each side’s claims.

For instance, the Taliban is often more credible when it comes to reports on its operations, including the seizing of districts in Afghan provinces.

The Taliban claimed at the beginning of the year that it controlled more than 30 districts and strongly contests scores more.

Afghan officials have only admitted that four districts are under Taliban control.

A study by The Long War Journal shows that the Taliban control at least 38 districts and strongly contest another 40.

However, the Taliban often exaggerates the effects of its operations, for instance by overstating Coalition and Afghan casualties.

The Afghan military and Ministry of Interior also inflate the number of Taliban killed in its operations.

With the Western media losing interest in Afghanistan and the Afghan media under assault by the Taliban and even at times by the government, it becomes more difficult to assess the validity of reports such as the captured Taliban commander wearing a dress and jihadist infighting.

MILITARY NEWS

Thousands Of US Veterans Are Sick And Dying Because Of The US Military's Burn Pits In Iraq

And Afghanistan:

“The DoD Staying Solidly Aligned With KBR While Soldiers Are Suffering Is Criminal”

“The Obama Administration Haven’t Defended Whistle-Blowers At All”

“They’ve Attacked Them”

[Thanks to Sandy Kelson, Veteran & Military Initiative Organizing Committee, who sent this in. Excerpt from Sandy Kelson.]

[I assumed when I was in the military that loyalty was a two way street. The below article shows again what I have come to learn over and over again since I joined the army in 1963. Loyalty in the military goes only one way. The troops take an oath to be loyal to the gvmt and consent to take orders but there is no oath requiring the gvmt, elected representatives and high ranking officers, to be loyal to the troops. From the veteran Bonus Marchers peacefully petitioning the gvmt for their promised WWI veterans bonus being routed by force from the Mall by Generals Patton, MacArthur and Eisenhower acting under orders of President Hoover to the denial of Atomic Veterans' diseases, Agent Orange Disease, the Gulf War Disease to the Burn Barrel illnesses, the gvmt has been disloyal to the troops.

[Heroes When We Charge. Bums When We Return]

FEB 16, 2016 LIAM O'DONOGHUE, Salon Media Group, Inc. [Excerpts]

The first 10 pages of "The Burn Pits: The Poisoning of America's Soldiers" will rip your heart out. In the opening chapter of this new book, Joseph Hickman, a former U.S. Marine and Army sergeant, shares the brief and tragic life story of one Iraq War veteran.

In a nutshell, a healthy young man shipped off to Iraq, was stationed at a U.S. military base where he was exposed to a constant stream of toxic smoke, returned home with horrible respiratory problems, was denied care by the VA, developed brain cancer and died.

Thousands of soldiers have suffered similar fates since serving in the vicinity of the more than 250 military burn pits that operated at bases throughout Iraq and Afghanistan. Many who haven't succumbed to their illnesses yet have passed along the legacy of their poisoning to their children. "The rate of having a child with birth defects is three times higher for service members who served in those countries," according to the book.

The impact on local civilian populations is even more widespread.

Although collecting data in these war-ravaged areas is extremely difficult, the studies that have been conducted reveal sharp increases in cancer and leukemia rates and skyrocketing numbers of birth defects. The toxic legacies of these burn pits will likely continue to devastate these regions for decades.

So what are the "burn pits"?

When the U.S. military set up a base in Iraq or Afghanistan, instead of building incinerators to dispose of the thousands of pounds of waste produced each day, they burned the garbage in big holes in the ground. The garbage they constantly burned included "every type of waste imaginable" including "tires, lithium batteries, asbestos insulation, pesticide containers, Styrofoam, metals, paints, plastic, medical waste and even human corpses."

Here's where the story gets even more infuriating.

As a result of the privatization of many aspects of military operations, the burn pits were operated by Kellogg, Brown, and Root (KBR), a former subsidiary of Halliburton, the company where Dick Cheney was CEO before ascending to the White House. During the Bush administration, Halliburton made nearly \$40 billion from lucrative government contracts (despite many corruption scandals), Dick Cheney and his corporate allies got incredibly rich, and the soldiers whose lives have likely been destroyed by this reckless operation... are pretty much screwed.

Top officials, including then-Gen. David Petraeus, initially denied that the burn pits were a health hazards, but mounting medical evidence contradicting the Defense Department's position have brought this scandal into the spotlight.

However, in a pattern that follows how Vietnam vets suffering from Agent Orange were treated, the Department of Veterans Affairs continues to deny medical coverage to most Iraq and Afghanistan veterans seeking treatment for burn pit-related illnesses.

Joseph Hickman is hoping that his new book will help change that.

This interview has been lightly edited for clarity.

O'DONOGHUE: This is one of the most devastating scandals to come out of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, so why hasn't it gotten more attention?

Hickman: I think the Department of Defense does its best to squash this story and so does Veterans Affairs.

They really don't want this out at all. When the registry (for victims of burn pit pollution) came out, they even squashed the registry. It took them a year and a half past their due date to get it up, to actually have it running.

I think the case that you lay out in the book is pretty convincing. Although these wars started during the Bush years, Obama is now in his eighth year in office and still has not made this issue a priority. How much fault should we place on the Obama administration for the failure to address this problem?

I think he holds a lot of responsibility for it, but I think the biggest problem is Congress and the Senate. Because when a soldier gets sick the first thing he (or she) does is write his congressman or senator if he's not getting results from the VA or DoD. They still follow the chain of command, so that's their last complaint, and the senators and congressmen have just really dropped the ball on this completely. And I think that is totally politically motivated, because a lot of these senators and congressmen they're reaching out to are in bed with defense contractors.

Have you heard any of the presidential candidates address the topic of burn pits or the VA in a meaningful way, other than to use the VA as an attack line against Obama?

No, none of them has mentioned the burn pits or soldiers suffering from the burn pits at all.

Bernie Sanders has done a lot for veterans, probably more so than any other candidate, and he still hasn't addressed this issue, either.

You mention in the book that there were a few members of the military and KBR contractors that voiced concerns about the health hazards posed by the burn pits.

One KBR employee was really harassed badly by KBR for coming forward. He felt he was threatened and he had a really hard time talking about it with me. He was really worried about repercussions.

That's really a reflection of the Obama administration. They haven't defended whistle-blowers at all. They've attacked them. Obama's presidency has been extremely disappointing in that area.

I was surprised to learn in the book that Chelsea Manning was actually responsible for leaking some of the information about how the military was aware of the burn pit health hazards earlier than they let on.

Several soldiers were absolutely shocked and surprised that Chelsea Manning released that document. It changed many of their minds about her. The military, for the most part, is a lot of Republicans or very conservative people.

But when I shared this with several soldiers, it absolutely changed a lot of their views on Chelsea Manning. I said, "Look, she didn't always give up things that were damaging to our country. These are really things that the administration doesn't want you to see." She showed that we got sick from the burn pits.

You describe in the book how independent researchers have found a huge increase in birth defects, leukemia, cancer and other carcinogenic diseases among Iraqi and Afghan civilians living near the burn pits, which you contrast with the controversial World Health Organization report that contradicted those findings. There has been speculation that the U.S. used political pressure to influence the WHO report, which was quickly contradicted by several reputable medical journals.

There's a large group of epidemiologists that absolutely believe that that report was influenced by the U.S. government. Dr. Mozghan Savabieasfahani, a widely respected environmental toxicologist, has been there and seen the birth defects and how we literally destroyed that country with pollution. There are birth defects there that don't even have medical names yet.

"They Still Fight Tooth And Nail Not To Give These Veterans Benefits"

One of the frustrating things you describe is that the Pentagon violated their own regulations but they still can't be held legally responsible. As you say in the book, "under federal law the military can't be held accountable, so nobody is to blame." If no one can be held to account, what kind of positive outcomes can we hope for?

They started the burn pit registry, which is modeled off of the Agent Orange and Gulf War Syndrome registries, which are failures. So we modeled it off a failed program. It took 27 years for the Agent Orange Vietnam veterans to actually receive any type of

care, and they still don't get the care they should. These numbers we're talking about with the burn pits and Agent Orange and Gulf War Syndrome ... they're so large that the government knows that if they treated all these soldiers the cost would be unbelievable. It's something that they can't afford, and I think that's why it takes decades for them to treat them.

The best way to help the soldiers involved in this is to actually believe what they're saying. They believed in the soldiers when they sent them off to war. They believed they would go over there and get the job done, but when they come home and they complain of illnesses, they suddenly question their integrity. And that just has to stop.

So there's this dynamic where it's in the VA's interest to deny that soldiers really have these health problems in order to protect itself from being liable for covering those treatments. There are accounts in your book of hostile VA doctors telling patients that they're healthy, but then independent doctors contradicting the VA's diagnosis.

It's because it's a delayed casualty. It isn't a limb missing or a bullet hole in a person or something where there's actually proof that their injury is service-connected, meaning they got their injury from the time they were in combat. So when they come in with these respiratory issues or cancers, it's very hard for the soldier to prove that, "Hey, I got this on the battlefield," because it's not an injury that they received from their enemy.

But the numbers show that there is a real pattern. You found the proof, so the denial is hard to grasp in the face of such mountains of evidence.

“The DoD Staying Solidly Aligned With KBR While Soldiers Are Suffering Is Criminal”

Yeah, it's to the point now where they can't deny it, but they still fight tooth and nail not to give these veterans benefits. It's just a budget issue now, and the soldiers are suffering from it.

VA reform has been a big issue for some time now, so why haven't we seen much progress or improvement?

The VA has always been under-budgeted. The budget is just not there for them. Up until two years ago they were using a computer system that was – they didn't have Windows, they didn't have iOS, they were using stuff from 1985, 1986. This was just two years ago. That's a fact. They needed a complete upgrade. It's always been under budget, since I've been going there.

There's a lawsuit against KBR out there right now, and the biggest hurdle for the KBR lawsuit is DoD will not speak against KBR for their misuse of the burn pits. And you can't sue the government under the Feres Doctrine. A soldier can't sue the government for his injuries, but he can sue a private contractor. But as long as the U.S. government stays solid on the issue and won't speak out against KBR, it kind of creates a legal limbo where it's their word against this massive corporation. The best testimony they could have is DoD saying, "Yes, you mistreated these burn pits."

But really, can the DoD even do that? Because they didn't have any regulation in place for seven years on what they could burn or where they should be located or anything else. The DoD staying solidly aligned with KBR while soldiers are suffering is criminal.

Did the military's use of private contractors like KBR in some ways help to facilitate this crisis?

KBR operated many of the burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan. There are some regulations for contractors, but they're not nearly as stringent, and the penalties are not nearly as harsh for contractors as they are for soldiers. So these contractors were super-careless with these burn pits. There were burning anything and everything in them, and they didn't care and they didn't think they could be held accountable.

They've grown to the point where they feel that the government can't operate without them. These companies have that arrogance. Contractors that were operating the burn pits in Iraq were actually told by their headquarters, "If they're going to investigate us over these burn pits, don't worry about it. If we pull out, they can't run this base."

End note: A portion of the proceeds from sales of "The Burn Pits" will be donated to the nonprofit organization www.burnpitspits360.org

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

“We have it in our power to begin the world over again.” -- Thomas Paine

**“Syrians Will Not Prioritise An
Anti-IS Struggle So Long As
Assad Survives”**

**“They See Assad As The Greater,
Not The Lesser Evil”**

“Their Perception Is Logical”

**“Assad And His Supporters Are
Responsible For By Far The Largest
Proportion Of Civilian Casualties And
Displacement”**

11 February, 2016 by Robin Yassin-Kassab, The New Arab

Syria is entering its darkest stage yet. Intense Russian bombardment and Iranian-backed militias have almost encircled rebel-held Aleppo.

The city's last hospital has now been hit by a Russian airstrike.

In the liberated south, too - where provincial elections were recently held - the revolution is being driven back.

Hundreds of thousands of new refugees are fleeing, seeking shelter in caves or under trees. Several refugee camps have also been bombed, as Russia wins the country back for Assad, supposedly for the sake of domestic and international stability.

But the notion that the revolutionary areas of the Arab world can return to stability under the old security states is every bit as historically nostalgic and supernatural as the Islamist idea that the Muslims can return to peace and justice under a medieval-style caliphate.

The Arab revolutions erupted for a reason - because, over decades, the regimes had failed their people economically, politically, socially and culturally.

The regimes inevitably collapsed - are still collapsing - under the weight of this historical failure.

Faced with a democratic uprising and incapable of genuine reform, Syria's Assad regime provoked a civil war.

Five years on, it has lost four-fifths of the country, a reality which massive imperialist intervention - the Iranian-organised trans-national Shia jihadists on the frontlines and the Russian bombers overhead - is only now changing.

Even within regime-held territory, the old "national" regime has already fallen, replaced by a consortium of foreign states and local warlords.

The army, bled by casualties, desertions and defections, is a shell of its former self.

But none of these facts hinder President Putin, nor the increasingly vocal Western "realist" argument that the regime - "the lesser evil" - must be collaborated with, even shored up, in order to contain jihadism.

In reality, Assad, who once warned of "tens of Afghanistans", is the first cause behind jihadism in Syria.

While assassinating peaceful protest leaders in 2011, he released jihadists from jail.

His regime perpetrated a series of sectarian massacres in 2012, deliberately provoking a backlash from the Sunni majority.

Since then, its scorched earth policy - in fulfilment of the slogan "Either Assad or We'll Burn the Country" - has provided the chaos which jihadists best exploit.

Assad's Western appeasers ignore another key fact - that very many Syrians, however much they may hate the IS police state, will not prioritise an anti-IS struggle so long as Assad survives.

This is because they see Assad as the greater, not the lesser evil. And their perception is logical. Assad and his supporters are responsible for by far the largest proportion of civilian casualties and displacement.

Nevertheless, the "realist" - or, better put, "surrealist" - position prevails.

Russia has the initiative; the Obama administration falls into line. Assad will be supported against “terrorism”; once terrorism is defeated, perhaps Assad will go.

The problem is, making the jihadists the reason for Assad's survival gives Assad (and Putin) a good reason to keep them in business. That's why Russia's bombing patterns repeat those of the regime's air force.

More than 80 percent of Russian bombs have hit areas in opposition to both IS and Assad, communities which had in fact driven IS out.

As well as killing hundreds of civilians - another quarter of a million have been displaced around Aleppo since the intervention, and 150,000 more in the south - Russia has hit aid convoys, schools and court houses.

It has attacked a range of opposition militias, including Free Army groups tepidly and occasionally backed by the United States.

North of Aleppo, Russia bombs the rebels even while they are battling IS. Sometimes, that is, Russia bombs on behalf of IS. And Russia is helping Assad eliminate the opposition leaders who will be essential to any political solution, such as Jaysh al-Islam's Zahran Alloush.

From the Syrian ground, the West appears absolutely complicit. Current policies offer jihadists their ideal narrative opportunity.

It sounds like this: “Everything and everybody in Syria is being bombed by everyone. The only things which aren't being bombed are Assad's loyal communities and the air bases he uses to kill you.

“Russia's Orthodox Christians are bombing you alongside the Western Crusaders, and the Alawi regime is fighting you with the help of Iran's Shia militias.

“Some years ago you were stupid enough to revolt for words like 'freedom' and 'democracy', but now you see the truth. You were oppressed before, because you were Sunni Muslims, and you are slaughtered today because you are Sunnis. Only the Sunni Caliphate will save you.”

While the realists are in denial, Putin knows his war will boost jihadists.

And this because he isn't aiming for a peace process but to destroy the opposition so entirely that only Assad and the jihadists are left standing.

Then he assumes the world will have no choice but to back him in backing Assad.

In this light, the Obama administration's support for Putin's Vienna - now Geneva - process looks more like appeasement than engagement.

The opposition negotiating team was badgered into attendance, hoping at least there might be some movement towards a prisoner release, a cessation of bombing, or a lifting of the starvation sieges.

They had hoped such basic measures, in line with UN resolutions, would be implemented before talks began - but they were wrong.

They were not so naive as to harbour any hopes for movement towards a settlement.

Russia, after all, invited its own “opposition” along too, and Iran insisted that discussion of its Shia foreign fighters was off the agenda.

The US accepted these terms, and now talks of a “national government” as an endgame, not a transition away from the dictatorship which has burnt the country.

Unsurprisingly, the talks faltered as soon as they started. The real progress is on the battlefield, to the cost of the Syrian people.

The State Department recently listed “bringing peace, security to Syria” as one of 2015's achievements. Given the size of Syria's challenge, given the war's continuing escalation and its increasingly visible ramifications on international security, such myopia is plainly disastrous.

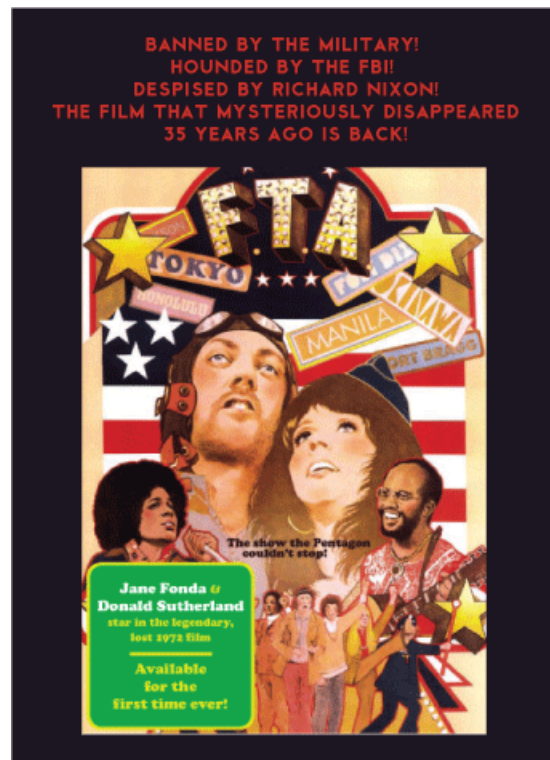
FTA!
**The Film Provides A Rare Glimpse
Into The Revolt From Below That
Ultimately Forced The Pentagon To
Withdraw In Defeat From Vietnam:
“Behind-The-Scenes Footage Of Soldiers
Talking Candidly To The Troupe
Members About Their Frustration And
Anger At The Ongoing War”**

FTA Trailer

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4HlkqPCgU7g&eurl=http://imageaworldof.blogspot.com/&feature=player_embedded

**FINALLY, AFTER 35-YEARS IN EXILE
FTA IS BACK! AVAILABLE FEBRUARY 24
EXCLUSIVELY ON DVD**

FROM DISPLACED FILMS AND NEW VIDEO/ DOCURAMA



FTA:

Ultra-Rare! F.T.A. (aka FREE THE ARMY aka FUN, TRAVEL, ADVENTURE), 1972, Displaced Films, 97 min. Dir. Francine Parker.

F.T.A. was originally released by American-International but pulled from distribution after only one week, with rumors of pressure from the Pentagon.

– Phil Hall, Film Threat

About The Film:

[Thanks to Michael Letwin, New York City Labor Against The War & Military Project, who sent this in.]

February 22, 2009 By Dennis Lim, Los Angeles Times [Excerpts]

A time capsule of the anti-Vietnam War movement, “FTA” is also a vivid flashback to a world-famous movie star’s stint as a political radical. At the peak of her celebrity, which coincided with the dawning of her political consciousness, Jane Fonda abdicated her Hollywood throne and remade herself as the face of the anti-establishment.

With government agents and the news media watching her every move, she led a vaudeville troupe on a tour of U.S. military bases in 1971 -- a trip chronicled in this fascinating documentary, largely unseen since its brief, abortive release and finally available on DVD this week.

In the disc's only extra, a 20-minute interview, Fonda recounts how the project came about.



Vietnam Days

She and Donald Sutherland, her costar in 1971's "Klute" (which won her an Oscar), were approached by Howard Levy, a doctor who had become an antiwar cause célèbre for refusing to train Green Beret medics.

He proposed that they put on a corrective to Bob Hope's gung-ho USO shows, giving voice not just to the growing peace movement but to antiwar sentiment within the ranks of the military.

The FTA troupe staged its first shows in the U.S., with Fonda and Sutherland (who had just played the irreverent Hawkeye in Robert Altman's "MASH") headlining a company that included Peter Boyle and Howard Hesseman. (The all-purpose acronym is short for "Free the Army" and a more profane variation.)

When it came time to embark on the two-week Pacific Rim tour, Fonda assembled a more politically correct lineup that stressed racial and gender parity -- equal numbers of black and white, and male and female, performers, including singer Holly Near and comedian Paul Mooney.

Fonda, Sutherland and company stopped off in Hawaii, the Philippines, Okinawa and Japan (where they were initially refused entry).

Denied permission to perform on U.S. bases, they set up shop in nearby coffeehouses and other venues, although military officials apparently tried to minimize attendance by publicizing incorrect show times.

All told, the troupe played 21 shows, which were attended by some 64,000 servicemen and women.

Many of the male GIs, as Fonda ruefully concedes in the interview, must have been anticipating the Space Age sex kitten from “Barbarella” and not the righteous radical who took the stage in jeans, no makeup and a raised fist.

The show mixes protest songs with broad and bawdy skits, taking potshots at military chauvinism and top-brass privilege. But what it lacks in finesse, it makes up for with a raucous energy.

Directed by Francine Parker (who died in 2007), the documentary alternates between the song-and-dance routines and behind-the-scenes footage of soldiers talking candidly to the troupe members about their frustration and anger at the ongoing war and the American presence in the region.

As fate would have it, “FTA” opened the same week in July 1972 that news broke of Fonda’s trip to Hanoi, where she made radio broadcasts for the North Vietnamese regime and was photographed sitting on an anti-aircraft gun.

Within a week, the distributor (youth-flick specialist American-International Pictures) had pulled the movie from theaters.

Fonda’s career went into partial eclipse, and she remains to this day a favorite target of the right, but she recovered to win a second Oscar for the 1978 war-veteran drama “Coming Home.”

For years she quietly has distanced herself from her radical past, which might explain why “FTA,” which she co-produced, has been out of circulation for more than three decades.

Its recent reemergence points to a change of heart and owes much to the efforts of filmmaker David Zeiger, who used footage from “FTA” in “Sir! No Sir!,” a 2005 documentary about antiwar resistance within the military.

To Get Your Copy Of FTA:
<http://www.sirnosir.com/FTA.html>

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: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe.

ANNIVERSARIES

February 25, 2011: The Uprising Spreads



Day of Rage in Taiz, Yemen

Carl Bunin Peace history Feb 24-March 2

A Day of Rage saw demonstrations across the Middle East. Protesters in Iraq, Yemen, Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, and Bahrain showed their support variously for an end to corruption and income inequality, political reform and better public services, and the replacement of long-running dictatorships with democratic regimes.

February 25, 1968: Anniversary Of Memorable Bullshit: A General Cuts His Throat With His Tongue



Vietnam commander Gen. William Westmoreland meeting with Pres. Lyndon Johnson

Carl Bunin Peace History Feb 25-March 2

Discussing the war capacity of North Vietnam, a country that had been fighting for its independence for 23 years and had just staged the massive, successful Tet Offensive, U.S. General William C. Westmoreland stated, "I do not believe Hanoi can hold up under a long war."

He was replaced as commander in Vietnam less than four months later.

February 26, 1984: Reagan Withdraws U.S. Troops After Saying To Do So "Means The End Of Lebanon"

**"There Was No Way That We Could
Really Contribute To The Original
Mission By Staying There As A Target"**



[Thanks to Carl Bunin Peace History Feb 25-March 2]

The last of the 1400 peacekeeping troops Pres. Ronald Reagan had sent to the Lebanese capital of Beirut were evacuated. The troops were part of an international force sent to deal with the Lebanese civil war.

The president withdrew almost all American troops following the deaths of 241 Marines and 58 French paratroopers in a suicide truck bombing carried out four months earlier by combined forces of Islamic Jihad and Hizbollah.

France withdrew its troops as well.

Three weeks earlier, Reagan had told the Wall Street Journal, “As long as there is a chance for peace, the mission remains the same. If we get out, that means the end of Lebanon.” In a barb directed at House Speaker Thomas P. “Tip” O’Neill Jr. (D-Massachusetts), Reagan had said, “He may be ready to surrender, but I’m not.”

BBC News: On This Day

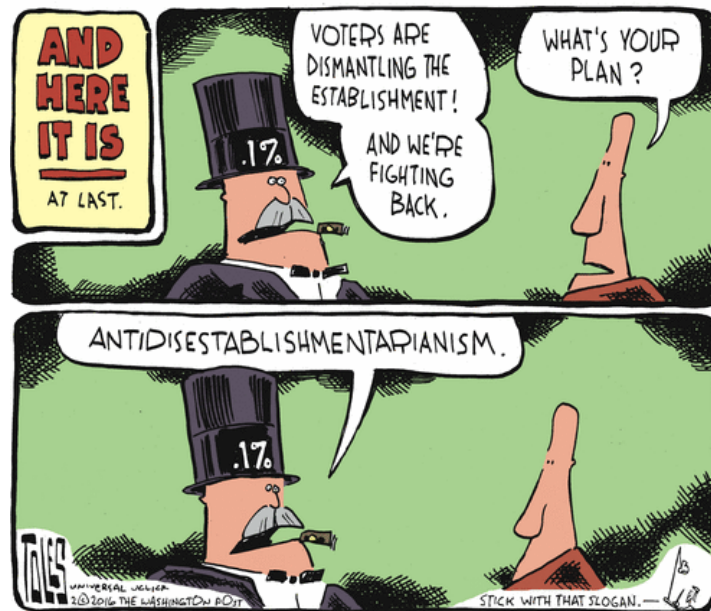
American forces have withdrawn almost all of their troops from the Lebanese capital, Beirut. About 1,000 US Marines left the coast beside the international airport as Shi’ite militiamen arrived in jeeps and armoured vehicles to take over.

US President Ronald Reagan ordered military personnel to begin pulling out of the area over a week ago following a recent upsurge in terrorist attacks.

“Once the terrorist attacks started there was no way that we could really contribute to the original mission by staying there as a target just bunkering down and waiting for further attacks,” he said.

The US Marines were sent in 18 months ago to help the Lebanese administration but as the last troops pulled out there was no official government delegation present to see them off. Instead, Insurgents riding motorcycles watched without emotion as US military helicopters airlifted the last front line troops to warships off the Lebanese coast.

DANGER: CAPITALISTS AT WORK



OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Over 40 Palestinian Homes, Structures Demolished In Jordan Valley By Occupation Regime

Feb 11 2016 Palestine Chronicle

Israeli forces on Thursday destroyed over 40 Palestinian homes and structures in the Tubas district of the occupied West Bank as ongoing Israeli policies in the Jordan Valley continue to drive Palestinians out of their homes.

A Palestinian official from the governor's office in Tubas, Mutaz Bsharat, told Ma'an that Israeli forces and bulldozers stormed the Palestinian communities of al-Farisiya and Khamat al-Khader and demolished seven homes, displacing seven families.

Forces also demolished 35 structures in the Bardala and Ein al-Baida communities, Bsharat added.

Tubas Mayor Rabih Khandaqji told Ma'an that local and international organizations were carrying out efforts to aid Palestinians displaced during the demolitions and to rebuild destroyed structures.

Israel has carried out near-daily demolitions in the occupied Palestinian territory since the start of this month and destroyed 42 Palestinian-owned structures in the last week of January alone, displacing 168 people, including 94 children.

The communities targeted in Thursday's demolitions are all located in Area C, the over 60 percent of the West Bank under full Israeli military control where building permits are near-impossible for Palestinians to obtain from Israel.

As a result, Palestinian communities are forced to build illegally and face the constant threat of demolition and displacement.

In addition to demolition, Israeli rights group B'Tselem earlier this month pointed to the use of Israeli military training exercises as a means of forcible displacement of Palestinians from the Jordan Valley.

Anger Mounts Over Video Showing Zionist Troops Abuse Of Disabled Palestinian

Feb 15 2016 Palestine Chronicle

An online video of a disabled Palestinian man being tipped out of his wheelchair by an Israeli police officer in the occupied West Bank city of Hebron (Al-Khalil) has provoked outrage on social media.

The footage, posted online Sunday by the Palestinian Shehab News Agency, shows the soldier overturning the man's wheelchair as other soldiers warded away onlookers who had gathered in the area after a Palestinian girl was shot dead by Israeli troops.

After several people try to come to the disabled man's aid, one of the soldiers sets off a stun grenade to disperse the crowd.

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBi_tUoQjI8

As of Monday afternoon, the video had been watched more than 370,000 times.

Genocide

Wikipedia [Excerpt]

Raphael Lemkin, in his work *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (1944), coined the term "genocide" by combining Greek *genos* (γένος; race, people) and Latin *cidere* (to kill).

Lemkin defined genocide as follows:

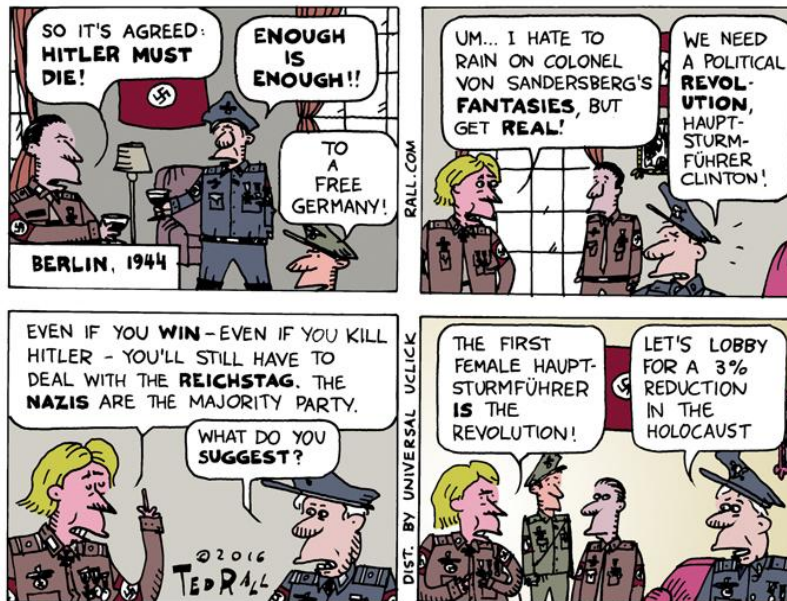
"Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation.

It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.

"The objectives of such a plan would be the disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups."

To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation commanded by foreign terrorists, go to:
<http://www.maannnews.net/eng/Default.aspx> and
<http://www.palestinemonitor.org/list.php?id=ej898ra7yff0ukmf16>
The occupied nation is Palestine. The foreign terrorists call themselves "Israeli."

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN MILITARY SERVICE?

Forward Military Resistance along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly.

Whether at a base in the USA or stationed outside the Continental United States, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war and economic injustice, inside the armed services and at home.

Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Resistance, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657.

Military Resistance In PDF Format?

If you prefer PDF to Word format, email: contact@militaryproject.org

MILITARY RESISTANCE BY EMAIL

If you wish to receive Military Resistance immediately and directly, send request to contact@militaryproject.org. There is no subscription charge. Same address to unsubscribe.



Military Resistance Looks Even Better Printed Out

Military Resistance/GI Special are archived at website

<http://www.militaryproject.org> .

Military Resistance distributes and posts to our website copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available in an effort to advance understanding of the invasion and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. We believe this constitutes a "fair use" of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law since it is being distributed **without charge or profit** for educational purposes to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for educational purposes, in accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107. **Military Resistance has no affiliation whatsoever with the originator of these articles nor is Military Resistance endorsed or sponsored by the originators. This attributed work is provided a non-profit basis to facilitate understanding, research, education, and the advancement of human rights and social justice.** Go to: law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml for more information. If you wish to use copyrighted material from this site for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use', you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

If printed out, a copy of this newsletter is your personal property and cannot legally be confiscated from you. "Possession of unauthorized material may not be prohibited." DoD Directive 1325.6 Section 3.5.1.2.