

Military Resistance 14E7



AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

**Taliban Offensive In North
Stresses Afghan Military:
“The Taliban Has Surrounded A
Number Of Afghan Troops In Baghlan
Near The Provincial Capital”
“The Government Doesn’t Listen To Us
... Forces Can Go There, But They Don’t
Go”**

May 16, 2016 by Bill Roggio, The Long War Journal. Bill Roggio is a Senior Fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and the Editor of The Long War Journal.

The Taliban has surrounded a number of Afghan troops in Baghlan near the provincial capital, putting pressure on Afghan troops which were already stretched thin fighting on four different fronts.

Taliban fighters have encircled Afghan forces in the district of Pul-i-Khumri, which hosts the capital city of the same name, families of the troops claimed. The Afghan soldiers have been under siege for one week, according to TOLONews, and the military has yet to move to relieve the forces.

“The government doesn’t listen to us ... forces can go there, but they don’t go. The government has aircraft, but don’t use them,” a relative of one of the soldiers trapped in Pul-i-Khumri district told the Afghan news agency.

The Taliban claimed to have taken over large areas of Pul-i-Khumri and the neighboring district of Baghlan-i-Jadid (also known as Baghlan-i-Markazi). On May 14, the Taliban released a statement on Voice of Jihad claiming its fighters “(dismantled) two more bases as well as ([purged) two villages from the enemy after hours of fighting” in Baghlan-i-Jadid and “took over a major military base and a number of checkpoints” in Pul-i-Khumri.

The next day, the Taliban released a detailed report claiming major gains in Pul-i-Khumri. According to the statement, the Taliban overran nine villages and four “posts,” while its fighters “laid a siege around a fortified base and blocked off the main road extending to Mazar-i-Sharif,” the capital of Balkh province. The Taliban claimed it repelled Afghan forces attempting to break the siege of the base.

While it is difficult to independently confirm the Taliban’s claims about the fighting in Baghlan, press reports indicate that the jihadist organization has made gains in the north and are disrupting transportation on the Ring Road, or Highway 1, in Baghlan. The Ring Road connects Afghanistan’s largest cities and is the major highway in the country.

Last week, The New York Times confirmed that the Taliban shut down the vital artery after ambushing policemen guarding it. **[See next. T]**

“The northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif was cut off, as were road connections to eight northern provinces,” the Times reported on May 14.

The Taliban offensive in Baghlan is straining Afghan security forces, which have primarily focused on securing the capital of Kabul while holding off the jihadist group from taking over the provincial capitals of Helmand in the south and Kunduz, which borders Baghlan in the north. The Taliban overran Kunduz City in September 2015 and held it for two weeks before US special operations forces led the fight to retake the provincial capital. In Helmand, the Taliban control or contest most of the districts, and have laid siege to the capital of Laskar Gah for several months.

Afghan forces have been stretched thin attempting to fight the Taliban on multiple fronts. Forces are often shifted from one theater to another to take back ground from the Taliban, but once the military pulls back, the areas fall back under Taliban control.

The Taliban has not confined its fighting to Kunduz, Baghlan, and Helmand. The group has made gains in Kandahar and is also pressing Afghan forces in eastern

provinces such as Kunar, Khost, and Paktika, and western provinces such as Badghis and Farah.

Taliban Cut Off Afghan Highway Linking Kabul With Northern Afghanistan And Neighboring Countries:

“This Is The Third Day Of Fighting”

**“We Didn’t Get Any Support, Not
Even Water And Food”**

**“That Road Was Completed About Five
Months Ago, But The Ceremony
Inaugurating It Was Held In Kabul
Because Of Security Concerns”**

MAY 14, 2016 By ROD NORDLAND, New York Times

KABUL, Afghanistan — Taliban insurgents have cut the main highway that links the capital with northern Afghanistan and neighboring countries for the past three days, according to Afghan officials in the area.

After the Taliban ambushed police forces guarding a stretch of the national Ring Road in Baghlan Province on Thursday, fighting continued through Saturday and appeared likely to last longer, according to officials in the area.

The northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif was cut off, as were road connections to eight northern provinces.

It was only the latest setback for the country’s battered Ring Road, a highway network over 2,000 miles long built by international donors at a cost of \$3 billion, and still not complete after more than a decade of work.

Parts of it remain unfinished, other sections have repeatedly fallen under insurgent control, and on much of its length, only heavily armed military convoys can travel safely because of the risk of insurgent roadblocks and bombings.

President Ashraf Ghani hailed the Ring Road network as vital to his vision of making landlocked Afghanistan the “hub” of Central Asia. It would provide the only reliable road connections between India and Pakistan, as well as nations like Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, which in turn would link the region with Russia and Turkey.

Now traffic is mostly stalled on one of the country’s busiest stretches of highway, the section of the Ring Road between Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif, an important economic center and gateway for travel to Uzbekistan.

Mubarez Hazara, an Afghan Local Police commander in the Surkh Kotal area of Baghlan Province, said by telephone that he and his 40 fighters were surrounded by Taliban insurgents. The insurgents had overrun a check post on the highway and remained entrenched and blocking traffic.

“This is the third day of fighting,” Mr. Hazara said. “They attacked us from four directions and stopped after they lost some of their men, so they surrounded us for two or three days, and we didn’t get any support, not even water and food.”

Mr. Hazara said the road was currently under Taliban control, and while the insurgents were letting some traffic through, they were systematically searching for government officials or sympathizers. “They search cars and drag out people who work for the government,” he said.

The Ring Road connects most of the country’s major population centers. According to the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction, the road network is the second-biggest recipient of foreign development aid in Afghanistan.

“That Road Was Completed About Five Months Ago, But The Ceremony Inaugurating It Was Held In Kabul Because Of Security Concerns”

Soon after Mr. Ghani took office in 2014, he ordered that work be rushed to complete the last section of road, a 135-mile stretch in western Badghis Province, but disputes between the government and contractors have stalled that work.

The special inspector general has raised questions about the financial capacity of the Afghan government to maintain the road. Many parts of the highway have already degraded — even returning to little more than dirt roads in places — because of poor maintenance, use by overweight trucks and military vehicles, and damage from roadside bombs.

The road was originally built at an average cost of \$3.5 million per mile, more than 12 times the normal cost of road-building in Afghanistan, mostly because of the heavy security costs of protecting foreign contractors. Security on one 64-mile stretch from Gardez to Khost cost more than \$45 million.

(That road was completed about five months ago, but the ceremony inaugurating it was held in Kabul because of security concerns).

Many of the newly built roads already need repairs, said Ahmad Shah Wahid, the country's former minister of public works, who oversaw the project during his time in office.

"The government has not provided adequate maintenance and protection," he said. "If it goes on like this and the roads don't get maintenance, we won't have any roads 10 years from now."

The condition of the Ring Road has taken a back seat to concerns about security on them, with the attack in Baghlan one of the boldest of efforts by the Taliban to sever traffic, but hardly the only one.

Earlier this month, insurgents launched heavy attacks on security check posts along the Ring Road between Greshk and Lashkar Gah, in Helmand Province, overrunning three police positions and killing 15 police officers, and taking six officers prisoner.

That again cut the strategic stretch linking Kandahar, the biggest southern city, with Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand Province.

For months, the stretch of Ring Road linking Kandahar and Kabul has been subject to regular Taliban ambushes and so-called flying check posts, making travel dangerous except under heavy guard, for most of the distance. Only the short stretch between Kabul and Wardak Province is passable regularly.

The highway has also been shut down by insurgent ambushes in northern Jowzjan and Faryab Provinces, in western Farah Province and along stretches in Kunduz and Oruzgan Provinces, according to local officials and the police in those areas.

Recently, even the main highway from Kabul to the Torkhum border crossing with Pakistan has been occasionally shut down by Taliban ambushes.

When the United States and its allies invaded Afghanistan and ousted the Taliban, there were little more than 30 miles of paved highways, largely the result of protracted warfare, despite decades of road building projects by both the Americans and the Soviets dating back to the 1950s.

Paving the Ring Road section between Kabul and Kandahar, a stretch also known as Highway 1, reduced the travel time between those cities to 10 to 12 hours from two or three days. Warfare and ambushes, as well as degradation of the road, have more than reversed that.

Haji Mahbob Agha, a truck driver, says a round trip on that stretch now takes 10 days. "It's not just one or two problems but many problems," he said. "I'm either robbed, or stopped by armed people, or blocked by fighting. There's no benefit to this work any more."

Lately, he said, he has been leaving his truck in a parking lot instead, and looking for safer work.

Eight Afghan Policemen Killed By Colleague In Zabul: “Taliban Spokesman Said The Shooter ‘Is Now With Us’”

5.19.16 AP

KABUL: Eight Afghan policemen were killed by a colleague who turned his gun on them at a checkpoint in the volatile southern Zabul province, an official said on Thursday.

The perpetrator escaped the scene in Qalat, the provincial capital, taking weapons and vehicles, said Ghulam Jalani Farahi, Zabul's deputy police chief. The incident happened at 3 am Thursday, he said.

A Taliban spokesman, Qari Yousaf, said the insurgent group was behind the attack. He told The Associated Press the shooter “is now with us.”

Elsewhere, in the Dihrawud district of Uruzgan province, two policemen were killed by a colleague in an apparent personal dispute, said district police chief Shah Muhammad.

Insider attacks are commonplace among Afghanistan's security forces, often carried out by insurgent infiltrators

Six Afghan Policemen Killed By Colleagues In Uruzgan: “Car Bombing Hit A Foreign Forces’ Military Convey In Bagram District”

May 21 2016 By Khaama Press & Ayaz Gul VOA News & Bakhtar News

At least six policemen were reportedly killed in an insider attack in southern Uruzgan province of Afghanistan,

A local security official said the attack was apparently carried out by 3 policemen as a total of 9 policemen were available in the check post where the incident took place.

The police chief for the Chargino district, the site of the violence, told reporters that three officers involved in the shooting have escaped taking weapons and vehicles with them.

There have been a considerable rise in the number of insider attacks during the recent months which comes amid deteriorating security situation as a result of the Taliban-led insurgency.

Car bombing hit a foreign forces' military convey in Bagram district, central Parwan province today.

Abdul Shakoor Qadousi district governor of Bagram said BNA reporter, the incident occurred, while an attacker rammed a car type of corolla packed explosive materials into foreign forces' convey in Qala Naw region of Bagram district.

There were no any report regarding the killing and wounding of foreign forces, but it has been said a vehicle belong to foreign forces was completely destroyed, Qadousi added.

It is mentionable that there were no any damages to civilians following the incident.

Insurgent Attack On Police Academy

05/14/16 BNA

Lashkargah City: Insurgent attack was took place in front of a military academy gate in Nad Ali district, southern Helmand province this morning.

Omar Zhawak spokesman of Helmand governor said BNA correspondent, the explosion occurred in front of police military academy in Nad Ali district, in which 4 public order policemen were martyred and six others were injured.

An attacker wanted to enter a car packed with explosive materials in military academy, but before reaching to his goal identified by Afghan security forces and detonated the car in front of the academy gate, Zhawak added.

Meanwhile, Taliban group claimed responsibility behind the incident.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Iraqi Dictatorship Opens Fire On Anti-Corruption Demonstrators:

At Least One Dead, Many Wounded; “The Crowd Rushed The Prime Minister’s Office And The Parliament Building”

“Their Numbers In The Thousands”

(Photo: Karim Kadim/AP)

May 20, 2016 by Susannah George and Qassim Abdul-Zahra, The Associated Press. [Excerpts] Associated Press writers Murtada Faraj and Karim Kadim in Baghdad contributed to this report.

BAGHDAD — Iraqi security forces fired tear gas and gunshots as hundreds of anti-government protesters stormed Baghdad’s heavily secured Green Zone on Friday. Several demonstrators, mostly supporters of powerful Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, were wounded as the crowd rushed the prime minister’s office and the parliament building.

The violence prompted Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi to impose a curfew in the country’s capital but it was lifted just a few hours later. By evening, the protesters were cleared from the Green Zone compound.

Earlier in the day, crowds of mostly young men gathered outside the Green Zone walls, with their numbers swelling into the thousands. This led security forces to push through the crowd on foot, firing volleys of tear gas in an effort to push the people back from the gates.

The violence quickly escalated. The protesters who made it into the Green Zone rushed toward the prime minister’s office and the parliament building.

Some posted jubilant photographs from inside the premier’s office on social media sites.

An Associated Press reporter at the scene saw several protesters badly wounded and one was shot in the head. Ambulances weaved through the crowd to ferry away those hurt. Hospital and police officials said five protesters were seriously wounded.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to release the information.

Al-Sadr released a statement condemning the government's use of force against unarmed protesters Friday, saying he supports the "people's revolution."

Friday's violence came more than two weeks after the highly fortified compound was first breached by al-Sadr's supporters in April.

Iraqi security forces at the time largely stood down, allowing protesters to scale walls and pull down concrete barriers. Al-Abadi later replaced the head of the compound security.

The initial breach followed repeated delays to proposed government reform legislation. Since then, Iraq's government has been gridlocked and the parliament unable to convene.

Meanwhile, a string of deadly bombings has killed more than 200 over the past couple of weeks in and around Baghdad. The attacks, many claimed by the Islamic State group, follow territorial losses the Sunni militants have suffered at the hands of Iraqi forces backed by U.S.-led coalition aircraft.

MILITARY NEWS

**Despite \$10 Billion 'Fix,'
Veterans Waiting Even Longer
To See Doctors:
"Compared To This Time Last
Year, There Are 70,000 More
Appointments Where It Took Vets
At Least A Month To Be Seen"
"It Can Take Three To Four Months
Just To Line Up An Office Visit"**

“If I Knew Half Of What I Knew Now Back Then When I Was Just A Kid, I Would’ve Never Went In The Military”

16 May 16 By Quil Lawrence, NPR [Excerpts]

Many veterans are still waiting to see a doctor.

Two years ago, vets were waiting a long time for care at Veterans Affairs clinics across the country. At one facility in Phoenix, for example, veterans waited an average of 115 days for an appointment. Adding insult to injury, some VA schedulers were told to falsify data to make it look like the waits weren’t that bad.

The whole scandal ended up forcing the resignation of Eric Shinseki, secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs at the time.

Congress and the VA came up with a fix: Veterans Choice, a \$10 billion program that was supposed to give veterans a card that would let them see a non-VA doctor if they were more than 40 miles away from a VA facility or they were going to have to wait longer than 30 days for a VA provider to see them.

There was a problem, though. Congress gave the VA only 90 days to set up the system. Facing that extremely tight time frame, the VA turned to two private companies to administer the program and help veterans get an appointment with a doctor and then work with the VA to pay that doctor.

Although the idea sounds simple enough, the fix hasn’t worked out as planned.

Wait times have gotten worse — not better. Compared to this time last year, there are 70,000 more appointments where it took vets at least a month to be seen.

The VA claims there has been a massive increase in demand for care, but it’s apparent the problem has more to do with the way Veterans Choice was set up.

The program is confusing and complicated. Vets don’t understand it, doctors don’t understand it, and even VA administrators admit they can’t always figure it out.

The problems are evident in Montana, which has more veterans per capita than any state except Alaska.

This winter, when Montana Sen. Jon Tester sent his staff to meet with veterans across the state, Bobby Wilson showed up at a session in Superior. Wilson, a Navy vet who served in Vietnam, is trying to get his hearing aids fixed.

But he says he’s mired in bureaucracy. “The VA can’t do it in seven months, eight months? Something’s wrong,” he says. “Three hours on the phone,” trying to make an appointment. “Not waiting,” he says, “talking for three hours trying to get this thing set up for my new hearing aids.”

Tony Lapinski, a former aircraft mechanic with the Air Force, has waited for answers on the phone with Health Net, one of the two contractors the VA selected to help Veterans Choice patients.

“You guys all know the Health Net piano?” he says. “They haven’t changed the damn elevator music in over a year!”

That elicits knowing chuckles from the audience. In an interview later, he says, “They are the nicest boiler-room telemarketers you have ever spoken to. But that doesn’t get your medical procedure taken care of.”

Lapinski has an undiagnosed spinal growth, and he’s worried. “Some days I wake up and go, ‘Am I wasting time, when I could be on chemotherapy or getting a surgery?’” he says. “Or six months from now when I still haven’t gotten it looked at and I start having weird symptoms and they say, ‘Boy, that’s cancer! If you had come in here six months ago, we probably could have done something for ya, but it’s too late now!’”

Lapinski finally got to a neurosurgeon, but he didn’t exactly feel like his Choice card was carte blanche. Doctors, it turns out, are waiting, too — for payment, he says.

“You get your procedure done, and you find out that two months later the people haven’t been paid. They have got \$10 billion that they have to spend, and they are stiffing doctors for 90 days, 180 days, maybe a year!” says Lapinski. “No wonder I can’t get anyone to take me seriously on this program.”

“If I Knew Half Of What I Knew Now Back Then When I Was Just A Kid, I Would’ve Never Went In The Military”

He says he gets it. He used to do part-time work fixing cars, and he would still take jobs from people who had taken more than 90 days to pay him or bounced a check. But he did so reluctantly.

“I had a list of slow-pay customers,” he says. “I might work for them again, but everybody else came before them. So why would it be any different with these health care professionals?”

Hospitals, clinics and doctors across the country have complained about not getting paid, or getting paid very slowly. Some have just stopped taking Veterans Choice patients altogether, and Montana’s largest health care network, Billings Clinic, doesn’t accept any VA Choice patients.

Not cool, Sen. Tester says of Health Net and other contractors.

“The payment to the providers is just laziness,” he says. “I’m telling you, it’s just flat laziness. These folks turn in their bills, and if they’re not paid in a timely manner, that’s a business model that’ll cause you to go broke pretty quick.”

The VA now admits the rushed time frame led to decisions that resulted in a nightmare for some patients.

Health Net declined to be interviewed for this story. But in a statement, the company says the VA has recently made some beneficial changes that are helping to streamline Veterans Choice. For example, the VA no longer demands that a patient's medical records be returned to VA before it pays the bill.

Meanwhile, though, veterans continue to wait. "If I knew half of what I knew now back then when I was just a kid, I would've never went in the military," says Bobby Wilson. "I see how they treat their veterans when they come home."

On the other side of the coin, doctors are frustrated in dealing with another government health care bureaucracy.

In Gastonia, N.C., Kelly Coward, a surgery scheduler at Carolina Orthopaedic & Sports Medicine, dials yet another veteran with bad news.

"I'm just calling to let you know that I still have not received your authorization for Health Net federal. As soon as I get it, I will give you a call and let you know that we have it and we can go over some surgery dates," she tells a veteran.

The practice sees about 200 veterans. Dealing with Health Net has become a time-consuming part of her job.

"I have to fax and re-fax, and call and re-call. And they tell us that they don't receive the notes. And that's just every day. And I'm not the only one here that deals with it," she says.

Carolina Orthopaedic's business operations manager, Toscha Willis, is used to administrative headaches. They're part of the deal with health care, she says, but she's never seen something like this.

It takes "multiple phone calls, multiple re-faxing of documentation, being on hold one to two hours at a time to be told, 'We don't have anything on file,' " she says. "But the last time we called about it, they had it, but it was in review. You know, that's the frustration."

It can take three to four months just to line up an office visit.

The delays have become a frustration within the VA, too. Tymalyn James is a nurse care manager at the VA clinic in Wilmington, N.C. She says Choice has made the original problem worse. When she and her colleagues are swamped and refer someone outside the VA, it's supposed to help the veteran get care more quickly. But James says the opposite is happening.

"The fact is that people are waiting months and months, and it's like a — we call it the black hole," she says. "As long as the Choice program has gone on, we've had progressively longer and longer wait times for Choice to provide the service, and we've had progressively less and less follow-through on the Choice end with what was supposed to be their managing of the steps."

The follow-through is lacking in two ways. The first is the lengthy delay in approving care. And after that's finally resolved, there's a long delay in getting paid for the care.

At least 30 doctors offices across North Carolina are dealing with payment problems, some that have lasted more than a year.

Carolina Orthopaedic's CEO Chad Ghorley says his practice is getting paid after it provides the care. It's the lengthy delay on the front end that puts a burden on the staff and, he worries, puts veterans at risk. He's a veteran himself.

"The federal government has put the Band-Aid on it, when there's such a public outcry to how the veterans are taken care of, all right?" he says. "Well, they've got the Band-Aid on it to get the national media off their backs. But the wound is still open, the wound is still there."

Those experiences for both veterans and providers are typical.

VA Docs To Be Able To Recommend Marijuana In Some States: "This Could Finally Be The Year The Federal Government Stops Making Veterans Jump Through Costly Time- Consuming Hoops Just To Get Legal Access"

May 19, 2016 by Patricia Kime, Military Times [Excerpts]

Congress on Thursday gave veterans the right to discuss medical marijuana as a treatment option with their Veterans Affairs doctors in states where it is legal.

The House and Senate approved bills that include amendments forcing VA to lift restrictions that prohibit doctors from talking about medical marijuana or recommending it to their veteran patients.

The legislation, tacked onto bills funding military construction and VA, prohibit the department from using funds to enforce the VA's policy that limits doctors from recommending medical marijuana.

The House voted 233-189 on the amendment offered by Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore., on Thursday morning; the House later approved the full legislation in a 295-129 vote. The Senate voted 89-8 to approve its own version of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill.

“The death rate from opioids among VA health care is nearly double the national average,” Blumenauer said in debate over his amendment.

“From what I hear from veterans is that medical marijuana has helped them deal with pain and PTSD, particularly as an alternative to opioids.”

While the measure allows VA doctors to discuss marijuana and complete the needed paperwork for state-sponsored medical marijuana programs, it does not allow VA to provide medical marijuana for patients or cover prescription cost.

Twenty-three states and the District of Columbia have legalized medical marijuana, and 17 states have laws allowing physicians to prescribe oils derived from marijuana plants.

In 14 states, post-traumatic stress disorder is an approved condition for medical marijuana.

The two bills will need to be reconciled and signed into law for the provision to go into effect. Shortly after the vote, however, medical marijuana advocacy groups praised the moves and said they look forward to full passage.

“It’s looking like this could finally be the year the federal government stops making veterans jump through costly time-consuming hoops just to get legal access to medical marijuana,” said Tom Angell, chairman of Marijuana Majority. “There is absolutely no reason the VA should be preventing its doctors from helping veterans who served our country find relief with medical marijuana.”

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

Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! When the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand.

And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage.

-- Micah 2: King James Version

Agent Orange Children Vietnam 2016



Photograph by Mike Hastie

From: Mike Hastie
To: Military Resistance Newsletter
Sent: May 12, 2016
Subject: Agent Orange Children Vietnam 2016

Full Disclosure

Children die from cancer, they are born without arms and legs, they are born with twisted bodies, mental illness, or no eyes, to name a few birth defects. Their parents and society have an enormous burden to try and make their lives as meaningful as possible. The U.S. Government and the American people share no responsibility in humanitarian justice. Whenever national shame is at stake, the truth is against the law.

**Mike Hastie
Army Medic Vietnam**

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

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

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

Nation Dreading Next 6 Months Of Watching Candidates Trying To Relate To It



May 20, 2016 The Onion

WASHINGTON—Shuddering at the thought of the barrage of daily spectacles they would soon be subjected to, citizens across the nation reported Friday they were dreading having to spend the next half year watching presidential candidates attempt to relate to them.

“Oh God, I don’t think I can handle six straight months of seeing the nominees trying as hard as they can to draw parallels between their experiences and our daily lives,” said Salt Lake City resident Linda Rodie, just one of millions of Americans to voice their dismay upon realizing that, until polls close on November 8, they would be inundated with images of politicians donning plaid shirts, wearing hard hats, eating at local mom-and-pop restaurants, and overeagerly going through various other motions in an attempt to find common ground with voters.

“We’re going to have to hear them talk about their childhoods and their favorite foods, not to mention the part where they participate in some kind of pop culture fad to show that they, like us, know how to have fun and don’t take themselves too seriously. And the whole time they’ll be going on about shared values and small-town America and whatever else they think will resonate with us. Christ, I don’t know how I’m going to make it through this.”

At press time, the nation had resolved to just get this over with by watching a video of a recent Hillary Clinton appearance on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*

Heart Attack A Real Wake-Up Call For Man's Insurance Provider

May 19, 2016 The Onion

HARTFORD, CT—Saying the incident had forced them to completely rethink their past decisions about the man's coverage and how they would approach his policy from here on out, Aetna executives reported Thursday that the recent heart attack of longtime plan member Michael Burns was a real wake-up call for the 163-year-old insurance company.

"This came as a terrible shock, but to be honest, it was probably just what we needed to shake us out of our old habits and realize we have to make some big changes around here," said CEO Mark Bertolini, adding that the health care provider had known for years that Burns' monthly premium could be easily two or three times its current level, and that it was unfortunate that it had taken a major emergency and hospitalization for the company to finally do something about it.

"You want to believe you can keep charging someone the same co-pays forever, but after this, we're really going to have to keep a closer watch to make sure his yearly deductible keeps pace with his increased health risk—that's just common sense.

I honestly didn't realize things had gotten this bad." Bertolini added that he was just glad they had caught the problem while Burns still had plenty of profitably healthy years left.

RECEIVED FROM READERS

**Amy Austin Holmes:
Why Does The United States Still
Have Military Bases Abroad?
"They Are Initially Created For A
Specific Reason, And It May Sound
Perfectly Reasonable And Legitimate
At The Time"**

“Then That Reason Ceases To Exist And The U.S. Still Finds Other Justifications For Keeping These Military Bases”

From: Marcus A
To: Military Resistance Newsletter
Subject: US Bases Abroad
Date: May 18, 2016

This article was in the daily AUC newsletter asking why there are so many bases overseas http://www.aucegypt.edu/news/stories/amy-holmes-why-does-united-states-still-have-military-bases-abroad?utm_source=newsatauc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=news

May 17, 2016 News, The American University in Cairo

While Amy Austin Holmes, associate professor and head of the Sociology Unit, was doing her master’s degree at the Free University of Berlin, the student dormitory where she lived was different from the rest of the campus in one unique way — it used to be the home to hundreds of U.S. soldiers.

During the Cold War, 250,000 soldiers were stationed in Germany, plus their families, which meant nearly half a million Americans living in Germany.

“When Germany was reunited, some of the American troops withdrew from Berlin, which is why you have all these empty military buildings, which you then have to convert into something else for civilian use,” explained Holmes.

However, even after the threat of the Cold War subsided, the United States didn’t leave completely. “While the Russians left East Germany after the Cold War, the American troops did not,” said Holmes. “There was a decrease in the number of troops, but still there were something like 70,000 American soldiers living in Germany 20 years after the end of the Cold War.”

Holmes began to question whether this was necessary.

Why has the United States maintained military bases overseas when the nature of the security threat has changed? Why has the significance of U.S. military bases, which have been such a large part of the political and cultural conversation in their host countries, been overlooked by the U.S. public?

“In the U.S. there is an utter lack of awareness that there are these bases all over the world; that’s a huge problem,” said Holmes. “The mainstream media doesn’t report about U.S. military bases. The issue usually only comes up when journalists are reporting from a conflict zone. So they go there to cover whatever war is going on, and

then the issue of the U.S. bases may come up by accident or as an afterthought,” said Holmes.

In 2014, Holmes published *Social Unrest and American Military Bases in Turkey and Germany Since 1945* (Cambridge University Press). She also wrote and directed the documentary film, *Occupy Turkey: Resistance in Baseworld*, as a companion piece to the book. She has also conducted research on the U.S. Navy base in Bahrain that has resulted in several publications, including *The Base that Replaced the British Empire: De-Democratization and the American Navy in Bahrain*.

The United States has had a significant military presence in Germany since World War II, but the mission of soldiers there has been fluid. Originally, the U.S. military presence was to prevent the resurgence of German militarism in 1945. Then with the beginning of the Cold War around 1948, the enemy shifted — it was no longer the Nazis; it was the Soviet Union. “When the Berlin Wall was built, the purpose of the military presence changed from defeating the Nazis to then protecting Germany, our former enemy, against the Soviet Union,” said Holmes.

“That’s what you find in any country where there is a long history of an American military presence,” she explained. “They are initially created for a specific reason, and it may sound perfectly reasonable and legitimate at the time, but then that reason ceases to exist and the U.S. still finds other justifications for keeping these military bases.”

Holmes cites lack of oversight in the U.S. Congress and minimal transparency from the Department of Defense as primary reasons for inefficient operations. “This whole system of American military bases doesn’t operate very efficiently; it’s not very streamlined,” said Holmes.

For Holmes, finding an answer to why the United States has maintained overseas military bases is crucial.

“That’s another reason why I wanted to do this project - because it is so unknown to the average American. There is utter silence about the issue, which has been ignored. But if you look at the history of this, you become aware of the fact that maintaining this system of overseas military bases is not just a means to an end. I think it’s an end in itself,” asserted Holmes.

“This is when I started to become aware of how huge this whole system of overseas military bases is and was in the past.”

When Holmes turned the focus of her research to the U.S. overseas military presence, she found there was virtually no comprehensive history on the topic. The limited literature that did exist focused on single issues. “It was a very understudied topic,” she recalled.

“No one had written about the whole history of the American overseas military presence from the beginning until now, including the history of opposition against the bases, so that’s what I wanted to do,” said Holmes.

While Holmes was living directly in the shadow of an American military base, she wanted to take a broader perspective. So, in addition to Germany, she incorporated the history

of the military presence in Turkey in her research. “German and Turkey have enough in common that you can compare them,” said Holmes. “They’re both part of NATO, hosted an American military presence from 1945 to now, they both have a multiparty political system and were frontline states during the Cold War,” she explained. “But they are also different enough that they are interesting to study.”

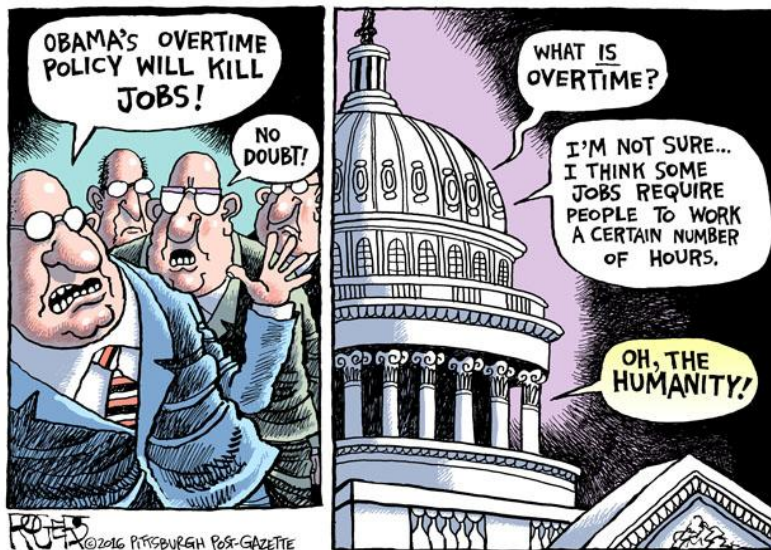
To tell the history of U.S. bases in the two countries, Holmes detailed the history of opposition movements against the American bases.

“To my surprise, I found that, despite the fact that Turkey and Germany are historically and culturally quite different, they had strikingly similar types of protests against the military presence,” explained Holmes.

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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.

DANGER: CAPITALISTS AT WORK



“The Reputation Of The Political Class In Brazil Really Can’t Go Any Lower”

“Most Of The Parties Embrace No Ideology Or Agenda And Are Simply Vehicles For Graft”

“Ms. Rousseff Chose Michel Temer Of The P.M.D.B. To Be Her Vice President”

“This Year, He Turned Against Her. Temer, Convicted Of Violating Campaign Finance Limits, Is Now The Nation’s President”



Brazil's Senate voted Thursday to suspend President Dilma Rousseff and begin an impeachment trial against her. Credit Cadu Gomes/European Pressphoto Agency

MAY 14, 2016 By ANDREW JACOBS, New York Times

BRASÍLIA — One of Brazil's longest-running spectacles features a dizzying array of characters whose theatrics appear on millions of television sets most nights.

The ever-changing cast of 594 includes suspects accused of murder and drug trafficking, aging former soccer players, a judo champion, a country music star and a collection of bearded men who have adopted roles as leaders of a women's movement.

The cast even includes a clown who goes by the name Grumpy.

But these are not actors. They are the men and women who serve in the national legislature.

Democracy can be a mystifying, rough-and-tumble affair anywhere, but Brazil's Congress has few equals.

As the nation endures its worst political upheaval in a generation, the lawmakers orchestrating the ouster of President Dilma Rousseff — who was suspended on Thursday and faces an impeachment trial on charges of manipulating the budget — are coming under renewed scrutiny.

More than half of the members of Congress face legal challenges, from cases in auditing court involving public contracts to serious counts like kidnapping or murder, according to Transparency Brazil, a corruption monitoring group.

The figures under investigation include the president of the Senate and the new speaker of the lower house.

Just this month, the previous speaker, an evangelical Christian radio commentator fond of posting biblical verse on Twitter, was ejected to face trial on charges that he secreted as much as \$40 million in bribes into Swiss bank accounts.

Many of the legislature's problems stem from the generous rewards to be found in Brazil's hydra-headed party system, an unwieldy collection of dozens of political organizations whose names and agendas often leave Brazilians scratching their heads.

There is the Party of the Brazilian Woman, for instance — a group whose elected members in Congress are all men.

"The electoral process allows many distortions," said Suêd Haidar, the party's founder and president. She sighed, acknowledging that many of the men who join have little interest in promoting women's rights.

One of those who joined the party, Senator Hélio José da Silva Lima, was accused of sexually abusing a young niece last year, though charges were later dropped.

“What would become of us men if there were no women by our side, to bring us joy and pleasure?” he was quoted as saying in the Brazilian news media when asked about his decision to join the women’s party.

The same public fury over endemic corruption and governmental mismanagement that helped drive Ms. Rousseff from power has long been directed at the cabal of politicians, most of them white men, whose penchant for back-room deals and self-enrichment has become part of Brazilian lore.

“The reputation of the political class in Brazil really can’t go any lower,” said Timothy J. Power, a professor of Brazilian studies at Oxford University.

“People compare the legislature to the ‘House of Cards,’” he said, referring to the Netflix political drama, “but I disagree. ‘House of Cards’ is actually more believable.”

With 28 parties holding seats, the Brazilian Congress is the world’s most fractured, according to Mr. Power. The runner-up, Indonesia’s legislature, has a third fewer parties.

“Brazil is not an outlier, it’s a freak,” said Gregory Michener, the director of the public transparency program at Fundação Getúlio Vargas, a university in Rio de Janeiro.

The parties tend to use words like “Democratic,” “Christian” and “Republican” in their names, though “Labor” has them all beat.

Among them are the Labor Party of Brazil, the Christian Labor Party, the Brazilian Labor Renewal Party and the National Labor Party. For the sake of variety, there are also the Workers’ Cause Party and Ms. Rousseff’s once-dominant Workers’ Party.

“The entire system is a monster,” said Juremir Machado da Silva, a columnist at Correio do Povo, a newspaper in the southern city of Pôrto Alegre.

Polling has shown that more than 70 percent of Brazilians cannot recall what parties the candidates they elect belong to, and that two-thirds of the electorate has no preference for any party.

“Most Of The Parties Embrace No Ideology Or Agenda And Are Simply Vehicles For Patronage And Graft”

More important, experts say, is that most of the parties embrace no ideology or agenda and are simply vehicles for patronage and graft.

In a typical four-year term, one in three federal legislators will switch parties, some more than once, according to a tally by Marcus André Melo, a political scientist at the Federal University of Pernambuco.

Brazilian lawmakers are among the world’s highest paid, scholars say, with generous stipends that go well beyond their monthly salaries.

They also receive free housing, health care and large staffs and enjoy special immunity from prosecution.

Only the overworked Supreme Court can try them on criminal charges, a process that can take years.

“The only thing that’s better than being a political party in Brazil is to be a church,” said Heni Ozi Cukier, a political scientist at the university E.S.P.M. in São Paulo. “They’re opportunists who are looking for something that gives them power, influence, protection.”

Forming a party requires collecting 500,000 signatures. Mr. Cukier said 62 parties were seeking official recognition, including one named after a soccer team.

Although Brazil’s president leads one of the world’s largest countries, he or she must forge coalitions with up to a dozen parties to get legislation passed in Congress.

The price of loyalty is often a ministerial post, or three, depending on how many votes the party can deliver. In some instances, cooperation involves the illicit exchange of cash.

In 2005, a scandal known as mensalão, or big monthly payment, revealed the pervasiveness of such arrangements. To win votes in Congress, the party of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Ms. Rousseff’s mentor and the standard-bearer of the Workers’ Party, had been paying compliant lawmakers a monthly stipend of \$12,000.

The most recent graft scandal — known as Operação Lava Jato, or Operation Car Wash — has proved even bigger, with billions of dollars in bribes directed to political parties from the national oil company, Petrobras. More than 200 people, from business tycoons to party leaders, have been implicated in the scandal, and their numbers are expected to grow.

Public fury over the scheme played a pivotal role in the ouster of Ms. Rousseff, who was chairwoman of Petrobras when the kickback arrangement was hatched, though she has not been accused of any wrongdoing.

In her impeachment trial, she is accused of a budgetary sleight of hand in an effort to conceal Brazil’s economic troubles and win re-election in 2014 — not of stealing to enrich herself.

Rousseff’s Rotten Deal

The need to form alliances of convenience in Congress can lead to legislative chaos, especially when disgruntled partners bolt from the president’s coalition.

Ms. Rousseff, who once enjoyed a wide majority in the lower house, was ultimately knocked aside by the house’s now deposed speaker, Eduardo Cunha, a onetime ally who faces a graft trial.

Mr. Cunha's party, the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party, called the P.M.D.B., has become a particular source of outrage in Brazil.

Critics say the party, founded five decades ago as an opposition party but tolerated by the nation's military dictatorship, has become a vast patronage trough for its members, who embrace a wide spectrum of ideologies. The party's ace is its size, which means that presidents have to enter into a partnership that involves doling out coveted cabinet posts.

Ms. Rousseff chose Michel Temer of the P.M.D.B. to be her vice president.

[Stupid pretend radicals whining endlessly about Rousseff's impeachment prefer not to mention the above mentioned rotten deal she made with the completely corrupt P.M.D.B. sewer. For reality, see the next article below. T]

This year, he turned against her and withdrew his party from her coalition, paving the way for Ms. Rousseff's impeachment trial.

Mr. Temer, who has been convicted of violating campaign finance limits, is now the nation's president.

Political reform can be challenging, given that legislators must approve undoing the system that protects them. There have been some changes, including a recent law that bars candidates with criminal records from running for office for eight years, and a campaign finance law, scheduled to take effect this year, that limits the influence of corporate money.

The crush of Brazilian parties tends to favor celebrity candidates, whose name recognition helps vault them to the top of the ballot heap during elections. The most curious example is Tiririca the Clown, whose stage name translates as Grumpy.

In 2010, he ran for the lower house on a lark with the slogan "It can't get any worse," and his campaign literature included this tagline: "What does a congressman do? The truth is I don't know, but vote for me and I'll tell you."

He prevailed with more than 1.3 million votes — nearly twice as many as the next candidate.

In an interview, Tiririca — whose real name is Francisco Everardo Oliveira Silva, though Deputy Tiririca is the name on the house website — said he was often disappointed by the disarray in Congress.

"At first it was a joke," he said of his candidacy. "So I decided that if so many people believe in me, I would have to give it my best, and that's what I'm doing."

MORE:

**“The Rousseff Government
Repressed Protests And Allied
Itself With Capital”**

**“It Applied Multiple Rounds Of
Austerity That Disproportionately
Affected The Country’s Popular
Classes”**

**“Workers And The Poor Continue To
Reject The PT Government’s
Austerity Packages”**

**“This Situation Would Not Have Been
Possible Without The PT’s Internal
Debacles And Its Abandonment Of
Working-Class Emancipation”**

5.11.16 by Jeffery R. Webber, Jacobin [Excerpt]

To recap, the explosive situation in Brazil grew out of a confluence of intermingling crisis tendencies.

The global economic crisis was delayed but no less fierce. Rousseff campaigned in 2014 on a lie and won with the narrowest margin in recent Brazilian history.

She hasn't been unable to win back the confidence of the markets or the support of the popular classes. In December 2015, fiscal hawk Levy resigned; Nelson Barbosa, a dove in fiscal matters, replaced him.

But this feigned tack to the moderate left fueled the right's impeachment campaign without returning support from the left.

Corruption charges have now entangled virtually the entire leadership of the PT dating back to 2002. Important figures like José Dirceu and João Vaccari Neto are in prison.

Rousseff has lost all semblance of political authority, as the alliances holding her government aloft unravel quickly.

Workers and the poor continue to reject the PT government's austerity packages; the new right is gaining confidence and capacities, even if it still lacks an alternative project for power.

There is no independent socialist left with sufficient influence to produce an alternative.

This situation would not have been possible without the PT's internal debacles and its abandonment of working-class emancipation.

The Rousseff government repressed protests and allied itself with capital, made labor legislation more flexible, and covered for a corporation responsible for the environmental crime of Mariana.

It applied multiple rounds of austerity that disproportionately affected the country's popular classes.

The ruling party now mourns the absence of its own moral capacity to mobilize the poor against the right.

But this was foreseeable: their maintenance of neoliberal rule combined with routine corruption more typically associated with the right diminished their support base.

The PT, as is its instinct, will continue to try to forge a negotiated, elite-driven pact with the centrist parties in the Senate in order to hold on to power. But as historian and PSOL activist, Sean Purdy, notes, "The anti-government left must organize opposition to the deal between the PT and the centrist parties, which will only bring more austerity."

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Zionist Occupation Forces Shoot Unarmed Palestinian Inside Free Gaza. As Usual

14-5-2016 PIC

GAZA, -- A Palestinian young man was shot and injured as Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) opened fire at a group of youths who gather every Friday near Gaza borders to show solidarity with Jerusalem Intifada.

The young man was taken to al-Aqsa Hospital for treatment as he was hit with a live bullet in his foot.

Dozens of Gazans were killed and injured since the outbreak of Jerusalem Intifada on October 1, 2015.

This week's demonstration came as millions of Palestinians and rights activists commemorate the Palestinian Nakba (catastrophe), when some 700,000 Palestinians were expelled from their lands in 1948 at gunpoint by Zionist gangs and remain scattered across refugee camps in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq.

Nearly 531 Palestinian towns and cities were destroyed during the Nakba while 15,000 Palestinians were killed at the hands of Zionist gangs to pave the way for the establishment of Israel.

Occupation Soldiers Storm Fawwar Camp, Burn “Vast Tracts” Of Cultivated Palestinian Fields

14-5-2016 PIC

AL-KHALIL -- Vast tracts of cultivated land went on fire and burned near al-Fawwar refugee camp, south of al-Khalil city, after Israeli troops at dawn Saturday fired flares during a campaign in the camp.

The invading troops also clashed with local young men in the neighborhoods of the camp and intensively fired tear gas and stun grenades at them.

Another group of soldiers also stormed at dawn different neighborhoods of Bethlehem. In a separate incident, several military patrols at an early morning hour raided Iraq Burin town, south of Nablus, and stayed there for several hours before withdrawing, without making arrests.

Zionist Settlers Protected By Occupation Troops Invade Palestinian Villages: “Towns And Villages Located Near Illegal Israeli Settlements Are Subjected To Regular Settlers’ Attacks”

13-5-2016 PIC

JENIN -- Dozens of Israeli settlers stormed Friday Kafrit village southwest of Jenin and Beit Furik town in Nablus under military protection. Local sources affirmed that dozens of settlers stormed Kafrit area in Jenin and performed Talmudic rituals while chanting anti-Arab slogans in total provocation to the local residents.

Along the same line, hundreds of settlers stormed Beit Furik town in Nablus and carried out a series of provocative acts.

The settlers stormed the town in military jeeps and motorcycles, eyewitnesses said.

Despite living under a brutal military occupation, Palestinian towns and villages located near illegal Israeli settlements are subjected to regular settlers' attacks and violations under the protection of Israeli forces.

**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."**



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