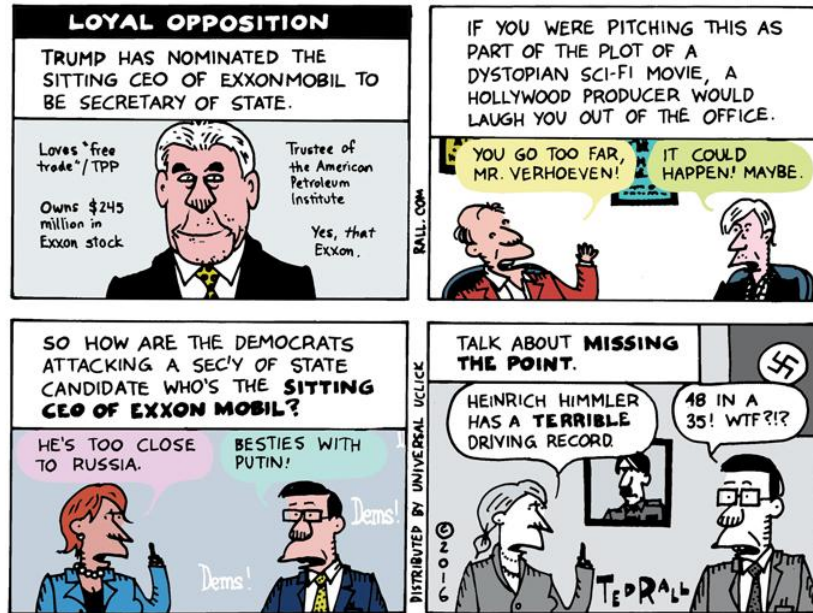


Military Resistance 14L13



**Venezuela Military
Stealing And Trafficking
Food As Millions In The
Country Going Hungry:
“Maduro Put Generals In
Charge Of Everything From
Butter To Rice”**

**“Instead Of Fighting Hunger, The
Military Is Making Money From It”
“Food Is A Better Business Than
Drugs”**

**“The Military Would Be Watching
Over Whole Bags Of Money,”
Campos Said. “They Always Had
What I Needed”**

**“The Military Is Getting Fat While My
Grandchildren Get Skinny”**

Comment: T

Difficult as it may be believe, there are still some who occasionally refer to the Maduro cesspool as “socialist,” when in fact, as this report demonstrates, capitalism, in a most naked and barbaric form, is alive and well in Venezuela. There is no socialism in Venezuela, and never has been; merely cruel, stupid, thieving regimes whose corrupt personnel stole that label to apply to themselves, along with whatever else they could and can steal to maintain their own capitalist class power and privileges.

December 27, 2016 by Hannah Dreier and Joshua Goodman, Associated Press. Associated Press writers Stan Lehman in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and Gisela Salomon in Miami contributed to this report. [Excerpts]

PUERTO CABELLO, Venezuela –

When hunger drew tens of thousands of Venezuelans to the streets in protest last summer, President Nicolas Maduro turned to the military to manage the country's diminished food supply, putting generals in charge of everything from butter to rice.

But instead of fighting hunger, the military is making money from it, an Associated Press investigation shows.

That's what grocer Jose Campos found when he ran out of pantry staples this year. In the middle of the night, he would travel to an illegal market run by the military to buy pallets of corn flour — at 100 times the government-set price.

“The military would be watching over whole bags of money,” Campos said. “They always had what I needed.”

With much of the country on the verge of starvation and billions of dollars at stake, food trafficking has become one of the biggest businesses in Venezuela, the AP found. And from generals to foot soldiers, the military is at the heart of the graft, according to documents and interviews with more than 60 officials, business owners and workers, including five former generals.

As a result, food is not reaching those who most need it.

The U.S. government has taken notice. Prosecutors have opened investigations against senior Venezuelan officials, including members of the military, for laundering riches from food contracts through the U.S. financial system, according to four people with direct knowledge of the probes. No charges have been brought.

“Lately, food is a better business than drugs,” said retired Gen. Cliver Alcala, who helped oversee Venezuela's border security. “The military is in charge of food management now, and they're not going to just take that on without getting their cut.”

Oil-exporting Venezuela became dependent on food imports, but when the price of oil collapsed in 2014, the government no longer could afford all the country needed.

Food rationing grew so severe that Venezuelans spent all day waiting in lines. Pediatric wards filled up with underweight children, and formerly middle class adults began picking through trash bins for scraps.

When people responded with violent street protests, Maduro handed the generals control over the rest of food distribution, and the country's ports.

The government now imports nearly all of Venezuela's food, according to Werner Gutierrez, the former dean of the agronomy school at the University of Zulia, and corruption is rampant, jacking up prices and leading to shortages.

One South American businessman said he paid millions in kickbacks to Venezuelan officials as the hunger crisis worsened, including \$8 million to people who work for the current food minister, Gen. Rodolfo Marco Torres.

The businessman insisted on speaking anonymously because he did not want to acknowledge participating in corruption.

Last July, he struggled to get Marco Torres's attention as a ship full of yellow corn waited to dock.

“This boat has been waiting for 20 days,” he wrote in text messages seen by AP.

“What's the problem?” responded Marco Torres.

Although money was not mentioned, the businessman understood that he needed to give more in kickbacks. In the end, he told the general, the boat had to pull out because costs caused by the delay were mounting.

Bank documents from the businessman's country show that he was a big supplier, receiving at least \$131 million in contracts from Venezuelan food ministers between 2012 and 2015. He explained that vendors like him can afford to pay off military officials because they build huge profit margins into what they bill the state.

For example, his \$52 million contract for the yellow corn was drawn up to be charged at more than double the market rate at the time, suggesting a potential overpayment of more than \$20 million for that deal alone.

The Food Ministry's annual report shows significant overpayments across the board, compared to market prices. And the prices the government pays for imported foods have been increasing in recent years, while global food prices remain stable.

“It's Like Drug Trafficking You Can Carry Out In Broad Daylight”

This spring, the opposition-controlled congress voted to censure Marco Torres for graft. Maduro vetoed it as an attempt to hurt the Food Ministry, and Marco Torres stayed on as minister.

Internal budgets from the ministry obtained by AP show the overpayment continues. For example, the government budgeted for \$118 million of yellow corn in July at \$357 a ton, which would amount to an overpayment of more than \$50 million relative to prices that month.

“What's amazing about this is it's like a clean form of corruption,” said Carabobo state lawmaker Neidy Rosal, who has denounced food-related government theft worth hundreds of millions of dollars. “It's like drug trafficking you can carry out in broad daylight.”

Marco Torres did not respond to several requests for comment by phone, email and hand-delivered letter.

By putting the military in charge of food, Maduro is trying to prevent soldiers from going hungry and being tempted to participate in an uprising against an increasingly unpopular government, said retired Gen. Antonio Rivero.

“They gave absolute control to the military,” Rivero said from exile in Miami. “That drained the feeling of rebellion from the armed forces, and allowed them to feed their families.”

However, it also opened the door to widespread graft and further squeezed the food supply.

One major scam involves the strict currency controls that have been a hallmark of the administration.

The government gives out a limited amount of coveted U.S. currency at a rate of 10 bolivars to the dollar. Almost everyone else has to buy dollars on the ever more expensive black market, currently at 3,000 bolivars to the dollar.

The holders of licenses to import food are among the select few who get to buy dollars at the vastly cheaper rate. Alcala, the retired general, said some officials distribute these much-desired licenses to friends. The friends then use only a fraction of the dollars to import food, and share the rest with the officials.

“We call it 'scraping the pot,' and it's the biggest scam going in Venezuela,” Alcala said.

In 2014, one general presented Maduro with a list of 300 companies suspected of simply pocketing the cheap dollars they obtained with their licenses and not importing anything.

No action was ever taken and the general was forced into exile, accused of corruption himself.

Some contracts go to companies that have no experience dealing in food or seem to exist only on paper.

Financial documents obtained by AP show that Marco Torres gave Panama-registered company Atlas Systems International a \$4.6 million contract to import pasta. Atlas has all the hallmarks of a shell company, including no known assets and the use of secretive shares to hide the identity of the company's true owners.

Another government food supplier, J.A. Comercio de Generos Alimenticios, lists on its website a non-existent address on a narrow, partially paved street in an industrial city near Sao Paulo, Brazil.

The two companies transferred more than \$5.5 million in U.S. dollars in 2012 and 2013 to a Geneva account controlled by two young Venezuelans, according to bank and internal company documents seen by AP.

The Venezuelans were Jesus Marquina Parra and Nestor Marquina Parra, brothers-in-law of the then-food minister, Gen. Carlos Osorio.

Efforts to reach the brothers were unsuccessful.

Osorio is no longer food minister, but has an even more important role in overseeing food. He was promoted in September to inspector general of the armed forces, with the mission of ensuring transparency in the military's management of the nation's food supply.

Arturo Sanchez, a former supply chain manager at a multinational dairy company, recounted unpleasant encounters with Osorio. In one case, officers forced the company to buy fructose it didn't need because they wanted to unload merchandise he suspected was ill-gotten. Another time, he said, national guardsmen took four trucks of goods without paying. Sanchez fled to Florida in 2014.

Osorio did not respond to requests for comment. But in the past he threatened to sue opposition lawmakers for staining his honor with false accusations of corruption. He blamed an economic war for the food shortages.

The Defense Ministry and presidential press office refused to answer repeated calls, emails and hand-delivered letters requesting comment. In the past, officials have accused the opposition of exaggerating the problem of corruption for political gain.

From time to time, the government carries out raids of warehouses holding smuggled goods and arrests lower-ranking military officers accused of graft. For example, the night market in Carabobo state where Campos bought his corn flour was eventually shut down and 57 tons of smuggled food seized. Now Campos buys staples from intermediaries he suspects are working with the same military officials.

In January, the government quietly arrested 40 state employees for stealing large quantities of food from open-air markets. One of those still in jail is a colonel who had been named by Osorio to serve as president of a state agency that imported food.

“We have the moral fortitude and the discipline to take on this task of protecting what belongs to the people,” the defense minister, Gen. Vladimir Padrino Lopez, said in September. “The state has an obligation to root out corruption in all levels of public administration.”

“It's An Unbroken Chain Of Bribery From When Your Ship Comes In Until The Food Is Driven Out In Trucks”

And yet the corruption persists from the port to the markets, according to dozens of people working in Puerto Cabello, the town that handles the majority of Venezuela's food imports.

Sometimes the officials who control access to the docks keep ships waiting until they are paid off, said a stevedore at the port, who spoke anonymously because he feared losing his job.

The stevedore said clients give him envelopes of dollars to pass on to officials. He described visiting the sergeant in charge and making small talk while placing an envelope in the wastebasket. Then he slides the basket under the table and leaves. That night, his client's ships are allowed in, he said.

After ships unload their cargo, customs officials take their share, according to four customs workers. They said that without a payment equivalent to a month's minimum wage, officials will not start the process of nationalizing goods.

Bribes are also required for any missing paperwork, and can exceed \$10,000 for a single shipping container, customs worker Aldemar Diaz said.

“Sometimes you actually want to do it legally, but the officials will say, 'Don't bother,'” he said.

Luis Pena, operations director at the Caracas-based import business Premier Foods, said he pays off a long roster of military officials for each shipment of food he brings in from small-scale companies in the U.S.

“You have to pay for them to even look at your cargo now,” he said. “It’s an unbroken chain of bribery from when your ship comes in until the food is driven out in trucks.”

Worst of all, he added, is that he is forced to pay to skip a health inspection. Officials make him buy a health certificate and don’t even open the containers to test a sample, he said.

A version of this process also takes place on the border, said Alcala, the retired general who was once in charge of border control. He said officers allowed smugglers to pay bribes to bring in food without proper health and safety checks. This year, Venezuelans began posting photos and videos showing magnets pulling tiny iron shavings out of freshly opened bags of sugar smuggled in from Brazil.

Pena said his contacts at the port have offered to illegally sell him government-imported staples like sugar and rice, complete with falsified papers and a military escort.

“The military was supposed to step in and make sure the food got to the people, but it’s been the exact opposite,” said Pena, sitting in his warehouse.

“They’ve made it into a business, and there’s no one to appeal to. In the end, it’s the customer who pays.”

If he tries to get through the process without bribes, he said, the food sits and spoils.

Rotting food is a problem even as 90 percent of Venezuelans say they can’t afford enough to eat.

In some cases, partners buy food that is about to expire at a steep discount, then bill the government for the full price. The government has sometimes acknowledged that food it imported arrived already expired.

The problem of rotting food got so bad at Puerto Cabello that it drew rebuke in the most recent state comptroller’s report, which expressed particular dismay that thousands of tons of state-imported beans had been allowed to spoil.

When the food is no longer usable, the military tries to get rid of it quietly. Puerto Cabello crane operator Daniel Arteaga watched one night last winter as workers at a state-run warehouse buried hundreds of containers of spoiled chicken and meat imported by the government.

“All these refrigerated containers, and meanwhile people are waiting in food lines each week just to buy a single chicken,” he said.

Photos taken at the Puerto Cabello dump last year show men in green military fatigues helping bury beef and chicken.

Residents at a slum down the hill said after the military visits the dump, they dig up animal feed, potatoes, even ham to give their children.

The docks are hidden behind high concrete walls, and guards watch every entrance. AP gained rare access in November. The low-ranking military members assigned to guard the port can be seen collaborating with thieves to steal what little food comes in, according to eight people who work behind the walls.

“You see people making off with whole sacks of flour or corn on their shoulders, and paying the guards on their way out,” logistics coordinator Nicole Mendoza said. “You see the money changing hands, and you just lower your eyes and don't say anything.”

Lt. Miletsy Rodriguez, who is in charge of a group of national guardsmen running security at the port, said people are just looking to scapegoat the military. If her unit wasn't around, looting would be even more widespread, she said.

“The majority of us are doing our best. And sooner or later we'll catch people who are not doing the job right,” she said.

“In Puerto Cabello, Hungry Residents Said It Feels Like Corrupt Soldiers Are Taking Food Off Their Children's Plates”

Just as bribes are needed to get food into the port, they are also required to move food out, truckers said.

The roads near the port are lined with trucks waiting to be let in. Drivers sling hammocks in their wheel wells and sometimes wait several days in the thick tropical heat. Trucking bosses recently banded together to stop paying bribes to port officials, and the officials are now punishing them by delaying the movement of cargo onto vehicles, said Jose Petit, president of the Puerto Cabello trucking association.

When the food is finally loaded onto the trucks, soldiers come by to take a cut. Photos and videos taken by truckers show officials taking sacks of sugar and coffee.

As the trucks rattle off down the highway, hungry women in clothes that no longer fit chase after them to pick up anything that falls out.

Billboards lining the highway feature a drawing of an enormous ant beside a nonworking phone number to denounce corruption, and the warning, “No to bachaqueros.” That's what Venezuelans call people who make a living illegally reselling food, after the leafcutter ants that haul many times their weight through the jungles.

On the roads, truck drivers face an obstacle course of military checkpoints, ostensibly set up to stop bachaqueros. Truckers say soldiers at about half the checkpoints demand bribes. Some invent infractions such as an insufficiently filled tire, and take cash along with sacks of pantry items, produce and even live chickens, the drivers said.

“It used to be you'd go your whole route and not have to pay any anything. Now at every checkpoint, they ask for 10,000 bolivars,” said trucker Henderson Rodriguez, who was waiting for a third day to get into the port to pick up a load of sugar.

The surest way to move food through the network of checkpoints is to transport it under military guard. For a percentage of the product's value, military officers on the take will assign a moonlighting soldier to ride along in the truck, according to five store and restaurant owners.

Sugar and flour are among the items most in demand because they have become virtually impossible to find legally, and some businesses, like bakeries, cannot function without them. A half dozen bakery owners across the country said in interviews that military officials regularly approach them with offers to sell supplies in exchange for a bribe.

In the city of Valencia, bakery owner Jose Ferreira cuts two checks for each purchase of sugar: one for the official price of 2 cents a pound and one for the kickback of 60 cents of pound. He keeps copies of both checks in his books, seen by AP, in case the authorities ever come asking.

"You make the legal payment, and then you pay the kickback," he said. "We have no other option; there's no substitute for sugar."

The theft extends to the very end of the food supply chain, vendors said. At one market in Valencia, the military members who were appointed in August to stop contraband confiscated vendors' produce. They said the vendors did not have the right permits. The food was piled in an olive green cargo truck.

In Puerto Cabello, hungry residents said it feels like corrupt soldiers are taking food off their children's plates.

Pedro Contreras, 74, watched more than 100 trucks carrying corn rattle onto the highway, and walked stiffly into traffic to sweep up the kernels that had sifted out. He planned to pound them into corn flour that night to feed his family.

"The military is getting fat while my grandchildren get skinny," he said. "All of Venezuela's food comes through here, but so little of it goes to us."

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Afghan Army Helicopter Down In Herat Province

Dec 27 2016 By Khaama Press

The security sources in Herat have confirmed that the helicopter crashed in Shindand airfield.

This comes as reports emerged earlier suggesting that the helicopter made a crash landing after a magnetic bomb was found inside.

In the meantime, the Taliban militants claimed that the helicopter was shot down by the group's fighters in Shindand airfield.

Afghan MP Wounded By Kabul Explosion



The site of the roadside blast. (AP: Rahmat Gul)

Dec 28 2016 By Khaama Press & ABC News

A relatively heavy explosion was heard in Kabul city earlier today, leaving several people dead or wounded.

The incident took place in the vicinity of 6th police district of the city close to a mosque in Dasht-e-Barchi area in West of Kabul.

Eyewitnesses in the area are saying that a bomber targeted a vehicle of an Afghan lawmaker in the vicinity of Dasht-e-Barchi area.

However, a security official said a magnetic bomb was planted in the vehicle of MP Fakuri Biheshti's vehicle and his bodyguard was killed.

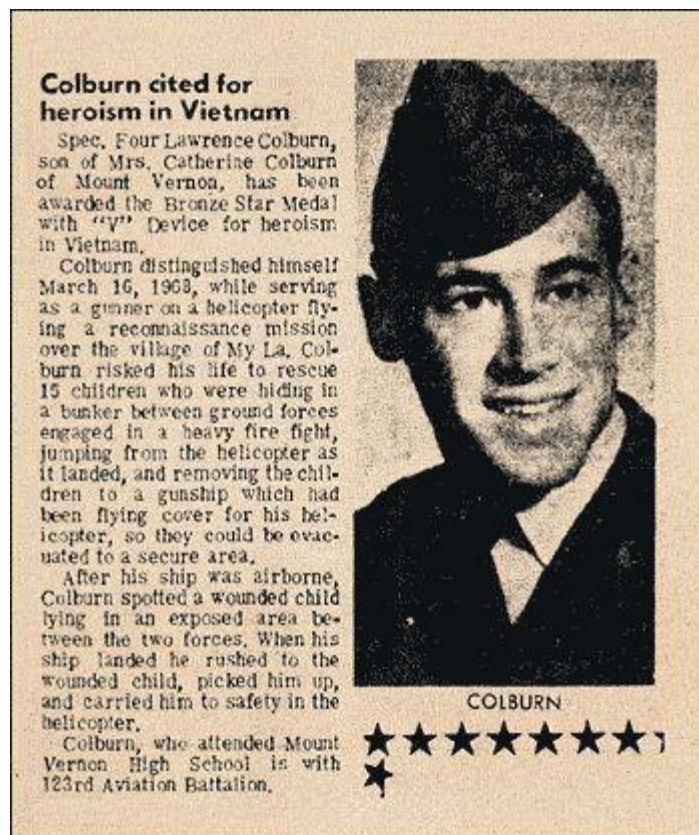
Behishti, a member of Parliament from Bamyan province, and his son were wounded in the blast, an official with the Parliament's security department said.

The source further added that several other people have also been killed or wounded in the attack, citing preliminary information.

MP Biheshti is representing the central Bamyan province in the Lower House of the Parliament, Wolesi Jirga, and he was reportedly on his way towards the parliament building when his vehicle was targeted.

MILITARY NEWS

Larry Colburn, Who Helped Stop Vietnam My Lai Massacre, Dies at 67: “Mr. Thompson Ordered Mr. Colburn To Fire His M-60 Machine Gun At Any Soldiers Who Tried To Inflict Further Harm”



www.pinterest.com

Dec. 16 ,2016 By SAM ROBERTS, New York Times

Larry Colburn, who became an 18-year-old American hero when he intervened with two comrades to halt the massacre of unarmed Vietnamese civilians by United States soldiers in 1968, elevating an innocuous hamlet named My Lai into a watchword for the horrors of war, died on Tuesday at his home in Canton, Ga. He was 67.

The cause was liver cancer, his wife, Lisa, said.

Mr. Colburn was the last surviving member of a three-man helicopter crew that was assigned to hover over My Lai on Saturday morning, March 16, 1968, to identify enemy positions by drawing Vietcong fire.

Instead, the men encountered an eerie quiet and a macabre landscape of dead, wounded and weaponless women and children as a platoon of American soldiers, ostensibly hunting elusive Vietcong guerrillas, marauded among defenseless noncombatants.

The crew dropped smoke flares to mark the wounded, "thinking the men on the ground would come assist them," Mr. Colburn told Vietnam Magazine in 2011.

"When we would come back to those we marked," he said, "we'd find they were now dead."

Audaciously and on his own initiative, the pilot, Chief Warrant Officer Hugh Thompson Jr., swooped down and landed the copter.

"Mr. Thompson was just beside himself," Mr. Colburn recalled in an interview in 2010 for the PBS program "The American Experience." "He got on the radio and just said, 'This isn't right, these are civilians, there's people killing civilians down here.'"

And that's when he decided to intervene. He said, 'We've got to do something about this, are you with me?' And we said, 'Yes.' "

Mr. Thompson confronted the officer in command of the rampaging platoon, Lt. William L. Calley, but was rebuffed. He then positioned the helicopter between the troops and the surviving villagers and faced off against another lieutenant. Mr. Thompson ordered Mr. Colburn to fire his M-60 machine gun at any soldiers who tried to inflict further harm.

"Y'all cover me!" Mr. Thompson was quoted as saying. "If these bastards open up on me or these people, you open up on them. Promise me!"

"You got it boss," Mr. Colburn replied. "Consider it done."

Mr. Thompson, Mr. Colburn and Glenn Andreotta, the copter's crew chief, found about 10 villagers cowering in a makeshift bomb shelter and coaxed them out, then had them flown to safety by two Huey gunships.

They found an 8-year-old boy clinging to his mother's corpse in an irrigation ditch and plucked him by the back of his shirt and delivered him to a nun in a nearby hospital.

Crucially, they reported what they had witnessed to headquarters, which ordered a cease-fire. By then, as many as 500 villagers had been killed.

Would Mr. Colburn have fired at his fellow Americans?

“How could I ever be prepared for something like that?” he replied years later. “Would I have? I guess that’s the \$64,000 question, isn’t it?”

Lawrence Manley Colburn was born on July 6, 1949, in Coulee Dam, Wash. His father, Harry, a World War II veteran, was a civil engineer who had helped build the Grand Coulee Dam. His mother, the former Catherine Manley, was a homemaker. His father died when Larry was 15.

An altar boy, he attended Roman Catholic elementary and junior high schools and a public high school, where, after an altercation with an assistant principal, he was suspended for two weeks. Rather than return to school, he joined the Army. Because he was 17, he needed his mother’s permission.

He earned his high school equivalency diploma in the Army before being shipped to Vietnam in December 1967.

The full extent of the gang rapes, massacre and mutilations by Charlie Company in My Lai and another hamlet, on the South Central Coast, was not exposed until two months after Mr. Colburn was discharged.

A Pulitzer Prize-winning report by Mr. Hersh for The Dispatch News Service in November 1969 provoked international outrage and eventually resulted in charges against more than a dozen officers.

Only one, however, was convicted: Lieutenant Calley, for the murder of 22 civilians. He was sentenced to life imprisonment but ended up serving only three and a half years under house arrest at Fort Benning, Ga.

Mr. Colburn entered Green River College in Auburn, Wash., on the G.I. Bill but struggled academically and financially and quit before graduating to become a commercial fisherman in Alaska.

He later moved to Oregon, where he met Lisa Cale, a student at Eastern Oregon State College. They married in 1985 and moved to Atlanta, where he sold orthopedic rehabilitation equipment.

She survives him, along with their son, Connor, and his sisters, Sheila Beal, Mary Jones and Colleen Capestany.

My Lai became a paradigm for unbridled brutality and an object lesson in battlefield ethics, but the crewmen whose audacious intervention prevented even more bloodshed were largely forgotten.

Their heroism was acknowledged with Bronze Stars, which they considered inappropriate recognition: The Bronze Star is awarded for bravery under enemy assault, they reasoned, and they had demonstrated courage in the face of friendly fire.

After the investigations and trial, Mr. Thompson and Mr. Colburn received something else, too: hate mail.

“One of the most infuriating things is being called a whistle-blower, as if we went and ratted someone out,” Mr. Colburn told Vietnam Magazine. “That is completely false; there was no back-stabbing going on. We were right in their face at My Lai. We were ready to confront those people then and there. And we did, the best we could.”

In the late 1980s, after seeing Mr. Thompson interviewed on a television documentary, David Egan, a professor at Clemson University in South Carolina, began a crusade to recognize, belatedly, the crew’s actions.

Trent Angers, the author of “The Forgotten Hero of My Lai: The Hugh Thompson Story” (1999), told The Associated Press that Mr. Colburn had “stood up, shoulder to shoulder with Hugh and Glenn, to oppose and stand down against those who were committing crimes against humanity.”

“Without his assistance,” he added, “Hugh might not have done what he did.”

In 1998, 30 years after the massacre, Mr. Thompson and Mr. Colburn were awarded the Soldier’s Medal, which is granted for lifesaving bravery not involving direct contact with an enemy.

“It is my solemn wish that we all never forget the tragedy and brutality of war,” Mr. Colburn said at the ceremony, held at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington. “I would like to quote Gen. Douglas MacArthur: ‘The soldier, be he friend or foe, is charged with the protection of the weak and the unarmed.’ “

Mr. Thompson and Mr. Colburn walked the short distance to the memorial, where they made a rubbing of the inscribed name of Mr. Andreotta, who was killed in Vietnam three weeks after the massacre. He was awarded the Soldier’s Medal posthumously.

The two men returned to My Lai that year, meeting some of the villagers they had rescued and dedicating an elementary school. On the flight home, Mr. Colburn recalled, he turned to Mr. Thompson and said, “It was so good to see all those little kids smiling again, not having to worry about being blown up, not having to be looking over their shoulders all the time, just being able to be kids.”

Mr. Thompson died of cancer in 2006 at 62.

Two years later, on the 40th anniversary of the massacre, Mr. Colburn returned to Vietnam and was reunited with Do Ba, who as a boy had been rescued by Mr. Colburn from an irrigation ditch.

Military Resistance In PDF Format?

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

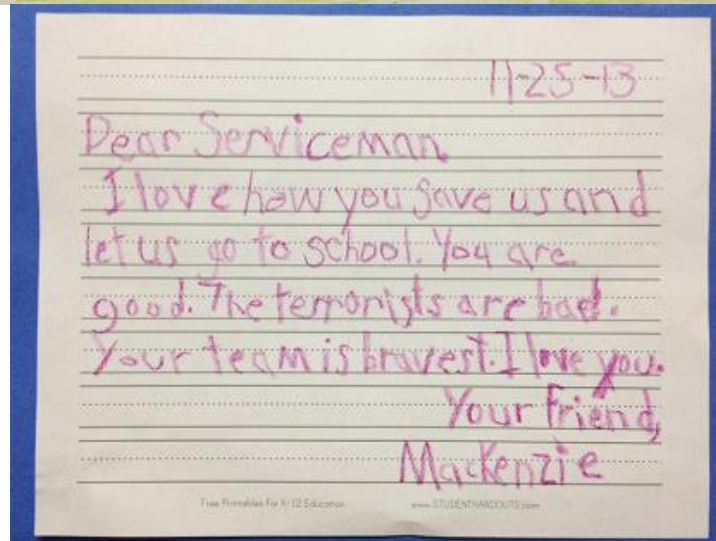
Frederick Douglass, 1852

If our colleges and universities do not breed men who riot, who rebel, who attack life with all the youthful vision and vigor, then there is something wrong with our colleges. The more riots that come out of our college campuses, the better the world for tomorrow.

-- William Allen White

Soldier Responds To Christmas Letter From A First Grader:

“It’s This Very Sort Of Half-Baked, Yellow-Ribbon-Car-Magnet, Support-The-Troops Bullshit That Has Made The Perpetuation Of America’s Commitment In Afghanistan As Palatable As It’s Been”



Dec 16, 2013 By Juice Box, The Duffle Blog

Dear Mackenzie,

Thanks for your kind words. The support of young Americans like you makes everything we do feel at least marginally worthwhile.

But let's get a few things straight. First of all, I'm not your friend. In fact, I specifically tried to avoid receiving this letter to save myself the burden of writing you back.

Second, your black-and-white characterization of this conflict grossly misunderstands the complexity of modern warfare and, indeed, the folly of declared war against any group as broadly unspecific as "the terrorists."

This isn't World War II, and the extent to which I am "good" and the enemy is "bad" is subject to debate — just ask anyone who's ever woken up to a Hellfire landing in the backyard.

It's inaccurate, in any case, to suggest that we're here fighting any sort of unified adversary.

On a given day, I couldn't tell you if I'm being shot at by Taliban, Haqqani, Hezb-e Isalmi, Taj Mir Jawad, or the Afghan National Army.

At a certain point, when you're surrounded by people who hate you, there comes a time for looking inward. The truth is I'm not a "hero," and what I do has no bearing at all on your daily life.

Seriously, what am I "saving" you from?

Al-Qaeda abandoned its goal of a global caliphate years ago and has since retooled to source a collection of loosely affiliated regional insurgencies that, while dangerous, won't disrupt your flow of touch screens and high fructose corn syrup anytime soon.

Frankly, it's this very sort of half-baked, yellow-ribbon-car-magnet, support-the-troops bullshit that has made the perpetuation of America's commitment in Afghanistan as palatable as it's been to a country of binge consumers unanimously ignorant to what's actually going on out here.

Despite my distaste for limp platitudes, I am, by all rights, a patriot. For this reason, I find your depiction of our nation's flag with six stars and five stripes particularly offensive. The United States flag has fifty stars, one for each state, and thirteen stripes to symbolize each of the original colonies.

Perhaps if even a fraction of the \$680 billion blown on this war had been reapportioned to public education you would know this.

If you really wanted to do something nice for me this Christmas, you might instead have written your congressman.

You might have said to him or her that you were fed up with the waste and disgusted by the endemic mismanagement of this so-called war.

Or you might have simply told that cloying, self-satisfied teacher of yours to shove it.

But don't let me harp. It's simply my hope that, somewhere in between Saturday morning cartoons and learning to add and subtract, you'll stop and apply a dose of critical thinking to your assessment of our military's role abroad.

Thanks again for the letter and happy holidays. Punk.

Very Respectfully,
Sergeant First Class Patrick Fenway
Logar Province, Afghanistan

P.S. The butterfly in your picture is wildly out of proportion.

ANNIVERSARIES

***Great Moments In U.S. Military
History:
December 29, 1890:
Massacre At Wounded Knee;
“Many Women And Children Standing By
Their Tipis Under A White Flag Of Truce
Were Cut Down By Deadly Shrapnel
From The Hotchkiss Guns”***



A mounted soldier rides among the dead Indians at Wounded Knee

[Via Peace History December 25-31 By Carl Bunin]

English.uiuc.edu

From Momaday, "The American West and the Burden of Belief" in Geoffrey C. Ward, *The West: An Illustrated History*. Copyright © 1996 by The West Book Project, Inc. (Little Brown, 1996).

On December 15, 1890, the great Hunkpapa leader Sitting Bull, who had opposed Custer at the Little Bighorn and who had toured for a time with Buffalo Bill and the Wild West show, was killed on the Standing Rock reservation.

In a dream he had foreseen his death at the hands of his own people.

Just two weeks later, on the morning of December 29, 1890, on Wounded Knee Creek near the Pine Ridge agency, the Seventh Cavalry of the U.S. Army opened fire on an encampment of Big Foot's band of Miniconjou Sioux.

When the shooting ended, Big Foot and most of his people were dead or dying.



Indian Bodies on the ground at Wounded Knee

It has been estimated that nearly 300 of the original 350 men, women, and children in the camp were slain. Twenty-five soldiers were killed and thirty-nine wounded,

Sitting Bull is reported to have said, "I am the last Indian."

In some sense he was right. During his lifetime the world of the Plains Indians had changed forever.

The old roving life of the buffalo hunters was over. A terrible disintegration and demoralization had set in. If the death of Sitting Bull marked the end of an age, Wounded Knee marked the end of a culture.

“I did not know then how much was ended.

“When I look back now from the high hill of my old age, I can still see the butchered women and children lying heaped and scattered all along the crooked gulch as plain as when I saw them with eyes still young.

“And I can see that something else died there in the bloody mud, and was buried in the blizzard. A people’s dream died there. It was a beautiful dream....” -Black Elk-

Paula M. Robertson: From Encyclopedia of North American Indians. Frederick E. Hoxie, Ed. Copyright © 1996 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

Many women and children standing by their tipis under a white flag of truce were cut down by deadly shrapnel from the Hotchkiss guns. The rest fled under withering fire from all sides.

Pursuing soldiers shot most of them down in flight, some with babes on their backs.

One survivor recalled that she was wounded but was so scared she did not feel it. She lost her husband, her little girl, and a baby boy.

One shot passed through the baby’s body before it broke her elbow, causing her to drop his body. Two more shots ripped through the muscles of her back before she fell.

The warrior Iron Hail, shot four times himself but still able to move, saw the soldiers shooting women and children.

One young woman, crying out for her mother, had been wounded close to her throat, and the bullet had taken some of her braid into the wound. A gaping hole six inches across opened the belly of a man near him, shot through by an unexploded shell from the guns.

Others told of women, heavy with child, shot down by the soldiers. Bodies of women and children were found scattered for three miles from the camp.

On New Year’s Day, a pit was dug on the hill that the Hotchkiss guns had been on, and the frozen bodies of 146 men, women, and children were thrown into the pit like cordwood until it was full.

The whites stripped many of the bodies, keeping as souvenirs the Ghost Shirts and other clothing and equipment the people had owned in life, or selling them later in the thriving trade over Ghost Dance relics that ensued.

One member of the burial party remarked that it was “a thing to melt the heart of a man, if it was of stone, to see those little children, with their bodies shot to pieces, thrown naked into the pit.”

Besides the 146 buried that day, others who had been wounded died soon afterward, and relatives removed many of the bodies before the government burial party arrived. Estimates of the number of Lakotas slain vary, but many authorities believe that the figure is around three hundred men, women, and children.

Not many escaped.



The mass grave at Wounded Knee

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December 30, 1936: Class War At GM



Workers sit down at GM



Supporters pass in food to sitdown strikers

Peace History Dec 26 - Jan 1 By Carl Bunin

Members of the United Automobile Workers sat down at a General Motors plant in Flint, Michigan. GM, the world's largest corporation at the time, had refused to recognize or negotiate with the union, despite passage of the National Labor Relations Act (Wagner Act) in 1935 which promised unions the right to organize.

The local's membership adopted a tactic developed by French workers. Instead of picketing outside a factory only to be ignored or forcibly cleared away, the sit-down strike enabled workers to halt production and seize the plant "from the inside."

The strike began just days after the end of a successful sit-down at Ford supplier Kelsey-Hayes.

DANGER: CAPITALISTS AT WORK



OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Zionist Military Opens Fire At Unarmed Palestinian Farmers Working On Their Land And Fishermen In Gaza, As Usual

December 21, 2016 IMEMC News & Agencies

Israeli forces, on Tuesday morning, opened fire at Palestinian farmers and fishermen during separate incidents, in the north and south of the Gaza Strip, local sources said.

Israeli forces deployed at borderline military outposts east of Maghazi refugee camp, in the central Gaza Strip, and east of Khan Younis, south of the Strip, opened fire at farmers who were working on their land, said the sources.

There were no reports of casualties, according to WAFA correspondence, but the farmers left the area in fear for their lives.

Israeli navy forces also opened fire at fishermen sailing off the northern coast of the Strip. No injuries were reported, however.

Residents say that they come under daily attack from Israeli army and naval forces, who interfere in their daily quest for livelihood.

TV Regulators Ban Ad By Association For Civil Rights In Israel Criticizing Racism, Homophobia

December 25, 2016 IMEMC News & Agencies

The Second Authority for Television and Radio (SATR), a public body that supervises Israeli commercial television and radio stations, banned a public service announcement by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) called “Human rights: Because without (them) I’m not Equal,” Haartez reports.

In the advertisement, well-known Israelis speak to the camera about what human rights mean to them.

Two statements in the clip were ruled objectionable by SATR.

The first is when Palestinian-Israeli singer and actress Mira Awad tells the camera “it is permitted to speak Arabic without fear.”

The second occurs when Titi Aynow, the first black Miss Israel, and Daphni Leef, an Israeli artist and activist, say together that they want, “the right to choose and marry whoever I want... Even if I’m gay.”

SATR called the clip’s support for speaking Arabic “problematic.”

Gay marriage, it ruled, is a “political, social, public or economic matter” in “public dispute.” The authority banned the ad from being aired for these reasons.

ACRI has sent a letter to SATR saying the decision curtails freedom of expression. ACRI will go to court if the decision is not overturned.

SATR is led by a 15-member council that is chosen by the Israeli communications ministry. The board is responsible for ensuring “the public interest... and a diverse and high-quality broadcasting environment.”

It is one of the largest regulatory bodies in Israel.

In its 2016 report on the status of human rights in Israeli society, ACRI warns of the ways the Israeli political majority brazenly erodes the free speech of social, political, and national minorities.

Zionists Order Grandchildren To Get Out Of Palestinians Family's Home In Occupied Jerusalem:

**“The Israeli High Court Ordered
The Younger Generations Out Of
The House, Allowing Only The
Two Elders To Remain”**

**“Descendants Of Mustafa Sub Laban
And Nora Ghaith, Whose Mother First
Moved Into Their House In 1953, Must
Leave Their Home”**

**“The High Court Accepted Settlers’
Claim That The House Was Abandoned”**

21 December 2016 by Charlotte Silver, The Electronic Intifada

The Ghaith-Sub Laban family's six-year legal battle to remain in their home of six decades has come to an end, as the Israeli high court made a final ruling in the family's eviction case on Wednesday.

After Jewish settlers rejected the court's proposed compromise on Tuesday, the Israeli judges returned a more favorable verdict to the settlers: allowing the Ghaith-Sub Laban family to remain in their home for only 10 more years, and at that point terminating their protected tenancy.

Without protected tenancy, the settler organization that owns the building can evict the family.

But the court has ordered the descendants of Mustafa Sub Laban and Nora Ghaith, whose mother first moved into their house in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City in East Jerusalem in 1953, to leave their home.



Kinan Sub Laban, 4, stands in the bedroom of the occupied East Jerusalem home where he lives with his parents and grandparents, Nora Ghaith and Mustafa Sub Laban. Acting on a request from Jewish settlers, the Israeli high court on Wednesday ordered the younger generations out of the house, allowing only the two elders to remain for 10 more years. (Mehdi Chebil / Polaris)

Nora and Mustafa currently live in the house with a daughter, two sons, a daughter-in-law and two grandchildren aged 4 and 9.

Their son Ahmad Sub Laban, a journalist and field researcher with the human rights group Ir Amim, noted that the court's ruling evicts part of the family.

If Ahmad and his brother and sister violate this stipulation, the whole family may be evicted.

The high court ruling also excludes the small storage room below their house from the decision, allowing settlers to proceed to take that over.

The Ghaith-Sub Labans are the last Palestinian family remaining in the building. The others have already been evicted and replaced with Jewish settlers.

In a statement on Facebook, the family said, "Nora and her family appealed to the Israeli high court asking for a 'remedy of justice.' Apparently their notion of 'justice' is unheard of!"

Nora Ghaith-Sub Laban said the high court accepted the settlers' claim that the house was abandoned, a claim the family has vehemently denied.

"The court process and final decision starkly expose how settlers, over the course of decades, have taken advantage of land trusts to abuse Palestinian families in East Jerusalem," Israeli human rights group Ir Amim said in a statement.

Though the Ghaith-Sub Laban family have been at risk of eviction since the 1970s, they have been fighting the Kolliel Galicia Trust's determination to evict them from their home since 2010, when the Israeli government gave the group the property.

Nora's mother first rented the house in 1953 from the Jordanian Custodian of Enemy Property. The custodian assumed control of properties in East Jerusalem that Jews had abandoned in the early 20th century during the Palestinian revolts against Zionist and British colonization.

Palestinian refugees from western Jerusalem often moved into these properties in the Jerusalem after they fled or were ethnically cleansed by Zionist militias in 1948.

When she moved in, Nora's mother was granted protected tenancy status, which should last for three generations.

After Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967, the family began to pay rent to the Israeli General Custodian.

In 2010, the Israeli General Custodian transferred the property to Atara L'yoshna, which eventually became the Kolliel Galicia Trust.

The organization immediately appealed to evict the family on the basis that the family had left the apartment and therefore forfeited their protected tenancy status. In 2014, a Jerusalem court upheld the settlers' claim.

“(The) Israeli judiciary once again sustains the discrimination that Palestinians face, where Israeli settlers are allowed to reclaim property they allegedly owned pre-1948 whereas Palestinians are prohibited from the same,” the family said in a statement.

Israel has never allowed Palestinians to recover any of the vast tracts of property seized from them in 1948.

“The Israeli high court, as with all similar eviction or house demolition cases, has proved itself to be a partner to Israel's settlement expansion policy and to the settler's ambition to take over as many houses (as possible) in occupied East Jerusalem.”

According to Ir Amim, the Ghaith-Sub Labans are one of nine families in the Old City currently under threat of eviction. Seven of these families live on the same street as the Ghaith-Sub Labans.

Ir Amim and anti-settlement group Peace Now have released data showing the settler population in the so-called historic basin of the Old City has increased 70 percent since Benjamin Netanyahu was elected prime minister in 2009.

Sixty Palestinian families have been evicted in the same time period.

While private settler groups like Kolliel Galicia Trust and Ateret Cohanim have been primarily responsible for evicting Palestinians in the Old City over the last year, they have received tolid support from the government. Ir Amim says the ministry of housing

and construction's security budget for East Jerusalem settlers grew 119 percent since 2009.

Earlier this year, when the high court first granted the family the right to appeal the Jerusalem court's ruling to evict them, the family credited international support and attention as partially responsible for the favorable ruling.

"All the efforts to pressure the Israeli government and involve foreign diplomats are paying off," Nora Sub Laban said hopefully last February.

Representatives from the US and European consulates had attended hearings for the family, and last year, the US consulate expressed "concern" over the family's pending eviction.

But Wednesday's high court ruling laid bare the paucity of such rhetoric from states that have demonstrated their unconditional support for Israel while it continues to force Palestinians off their land and out of their homes.

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