

Military Resistance 14L2



[Thanks to SSG N (ret'd) who sent this in. She writes: "Veterans are coming home to NoDak"]

MILITARY NEWS

Veterans Deploy To Standing Rock:

“Any Sort Of Social Injustice Out There Is A Cause For A Lot Of Veterans”

“They Put Skin In The Game To Make This Country Better In The Face Of The Obvious Violations Of The Values In Our Constitution And The Bill Of Rights”



Veterans are in the fight against the Dakota Access Pipeline

December 2, 2016 Garrett Reppenhagen interviewed by Eric Ruder; Socialist Worker.
Transcription by Rebecca Anshell Song

Garrett Reppenhagen served in the U.S. Army as a Cavalry/Scout Sniper in the 1st Infantry Division in Iraq, receiving an Honorable Discharge in May 2005. He has worked as a veteran's advocate and activist, as a member of About Face: Veterans Against War (formerly Iraq Veterans Against the War).

Eric Ruder: Can you talk about how you and other veterans in About Face got involved in organizing solidarity with the protests at Standing Rock?

Garrett Reppenhagen:

It started as a personal drive to go there with my family and friends to try to make a difference. It just so happens a lot of my friends are military veterans since I served in the U.S. Army as a sniper in Iraq. I've been organizing with veterans since I've been out. I was honorably discharged in 2005. It kind of drove other groups to kind of try to get there and do something as well.

Any sort of social injustice out there is a cause for a lot of veterans who feel that they put skin in the game to make this country better in the face of the obvious violations of the values in our Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

We know that these ideals were never a reality for a lot of demographics of people--but we should be there to defend these principles and make a stand for justice.

How does your firsthand experience of the reality of U.S. imperialism inform your thinking about what's happening with the Dakota Access Pipeline?

I enlisted as a Cavalry Scout, and the U.S. Cavalry certainly has a history of genocide against Native Americans.

So the brutality of colonization of this country is built on the backs of U.S. Cavalry soldiers, and we were the blunt edge, the Cavalry saber tip if you will, to dominate Indigenous people in the U.S.

When I was in Iraq, we went there under the pretense that we were going there to “take revenge” for 9/11 and stop “weapons of mass destruction.”

But it quickly became obvious that was a huge betrayal and the causes that drove us there were fraudulent.

What were the causes? There was obviously a huge drive for corporate profits in the military-industrial complex and control of Iraqi oil fields. That was a war that had a lot to do with fossil-fuel protection and consumption. A new frontline in the battle against environmental colonialism is now at Standing Rock.

And just like the Iraqis have every right to repel U.S. soldiers occupying their land, Natives have every right to defend their clean water and make sure that treaties that have been signed with the U.S. government are enforced.

There was a lot of feeling that that was the moral high ground and the right thing to do and I think veterans took to it.

Can you talk about your experience at the protest camp?

I was there for a little less than a week and it was amazing. It was a weird time because an activist named Sophia Wilansky had just been injured very severely by police violence. Her injury could result in her losing her arm.

We were in the Oceti Sakowin camp, which is kind of the frontline camp Army Corps of Engineers land--occupied land, I guess you would say--and people were reeling from the immense police violence during the altercation the night before.

The camps swelled as it got closer to Thanksgiving. And almost everybody there perceived that as the bullshit holiday that it is, so there was a lot of excitement over the massive amounts of people that came. I think the camp we were at swelled to almost 7,000 people during the time we were there, so it was really intense.

There were a lot of folks that were new. There was a great orientation--it was one of the first things that we did after we got our camp set up, and it was just amazing how much we learned.

We had to be divided into three groups because there were just so many new people arriving at the camp that we were packed into an army general purpose median tent, standing room only, to receive amazing lessons. I've never been in an activist situation where there was so much emphasis on non-violence and on maintaining the values and the principles that the Lakota have brought to this fight. It's really empowering, and it really gives you a foundation. It just felt like I was a part of something not only larger in a physical sense, but larger in a spiritual sense.

There were well-delivered trainings on civil disobedience. It's just amazing to see generations of protesters and activists in this country bringing that information to the front. Generally, the prayer circles, the attitude around camp, the sacredness of that site and the intentions of everybody there were really amazing to be part of.

“I've Never Seen The Sort Of Police Brutality That I Witnessed There”

At the same time, despite being involved in the antiwar movement during the Bush administration and the Occupy movement, I've never seen the sort of police brutality that I witnessed there. Arriving at the casino before we went into the camps, it seemed like we were behind the lines of a real war.

People were resting and recuperating. The place looked like a refugee zone, with people leaning against the walls, trying to keep warm.

It's something I haven't seen since I've been twice to Iraq.

To see these folks just huddled in the casino, trying to get warm food and nurse their injuries--everything from cold weather injury to hypothermia, to actual bullet wounds from rubber bullets--it was pretty intense and kind of centered my mind about what we were going into.

That anxiety left a little bit once we got to the camp and realized we were on this sacred ground, and a lot of people were there taking care of each other, but the medical tents in the camps were full of people too.

And there were so few medical personnel that a lot of people weren't being looked after. So, yes, that was a bit different from a lot of other actions and protests I've been to.

Almost anybody who recognized us as military veterans gave a great deal of respect to us, but it's not surprising.

Native Americans serve in the military at a higher rate than any ethnic demographic, and I asked a Blackfoot friend of mine who's in the Marines why that is. He said, “We've been fighting for this country long before white people got here. Why would we stop now?”

There's something revered about the warrior ethos and the warrior culture, and I think that still exists today.

So we did get a lot of respect and we're obviously one element up there protesting alongside the other protectors, but in one sense there's less risk for military veterans because we have the credibility of being a veteran, which gets us a little more leniency from judges and law enforcement officers.

We have to give a lot of respect to the folks who don't have that protection, but are still out there taking risks every day to do what's right.

What do you think was behind the deadline that was set and then rescinded by the Army Corps of Engineers to clear the camp on Monday, December 5?

This is just my opinion, but I think announcing the deadline was a bluff by the Army Corps of Engineers in hopes of stopping the inflow of people.

Thousands and thousands of people showed up last week, and frankly I think it scared the hell out of the authorities.

I think passing on misinformation and using different scare tactics are all moves to try to keep the numbers down of folks who are going up that direction, maybe change some people's minds who are planning on making the trip.

But there are now thousands of people there, and this camp now has permanent structures built on it. People have invested a lot of blood, sweat and tears into building this camp. It takes half a day just to walk across all of the camps.

There are tents and physical structures as far as you can see, and frankly, they don't have the manpower to come and clear everybody out.

Even if they used tear gas, I don't think the entire state has enough tear gas canisters to do the job.

There are a lot of people in the camp, so probably the best they could do is arrest people in ones and twos here and there, and if they can prove that they're on that land when they're out of camp, maybe that's an additional charge they can give.

But looking at that camp, as somebody who served in Iraq and has been involved in riot control and some other situations--with my 30-man scout platoon, armed with real-live ammunition and heavy caliber weapons, I would not have even thought of attempting to try to clear out that camp.

So unless they bring a hell of a lot more manpower out to bear, that camp's going to stay there.

They might be able to impose additional arrests and fines on people who aren't in the camp if they can prove that they were. They've got constant surveillance of that camp, so that might be a way they try to target leaders. But they'd have to build up a massive force that they don't have currently, so it's going to take time if they're going to raid that camp.

The police forces that I saw out there were better armed and equipped than my scout platoon was in Iraq.

They have anti-mine vehicles and grenade launchers and crazy riot control weapons.

They're using water cannons in freezing temperature conditions on these folks--that certainly makes a non-lethal weapon very lethal, so maybe they could come to bear with some of the equipment that they have and try to take out sections of the camp, but I think it would be foolish and dangerous if they tried a full-scale raid on that camp.

It seems like the Obama administration is trying to save face by backing down, and perhaps figuring that the harsh winter will clear the camp without exposing Obama.

The weather is severe, but we brought a heavy weather tent with us that we left behind to donate that can fit easily 12 people in there. We also brought up a wood-burning stove, and there's other heaters and generators. So people are going to be able to live there.

The Indigenous people have lived outdoors in conditions like that before, and honestly, in some of the reservations, the housing that they have is not that great. It's not weatherized.

That camp's going to stay there throughout the wintertime--the weather's not going to do it.

Obama basically asked that the Army Corps of Engineers halt temporarily and said that he was going to see how things went in the next couple of weeks--that was all before the election. I have no doubt that he was afraid to give any real severe orders that might damper the views of Democrats in the coming election--and little help did that do for them.

But it did stall a lot of things, and I'm pretty certain from what I heard up on that drill path, that they are drilling unpermitted underneath the lake, and that means they realize that whatever fine they would receive for drilling unpermitted won't exceed the money they'll lose every day oil doesn't pump through those pipes.

So, what Obama did before the election was absolutely toothless, and now with this current order from the Army Corps of Engineers, the White House is completely silent on the entire matter.

It's just not surprising that they're not willing to do anything but try to appear at a minimum somewhat sympathetic to the folks at Standing Rock.

Do you think they might try to break up the camp by restricting access and supplies such as food?

There's a direct way into the camp from the south, and that still exists, so if you go from the Prairie Knights Casino, which is south of the camps, north, you get straight into the Oceti camp from that direction. From the north, that same road is barricaded at the bridge, and that's where most of the conflicts and direct actions are targeting right now. That's where the cars were overturned and burned and that's kind of the main access by foot to the drill pad and to the pipeline construction.

If they closed the road down further south and blocked off access into the reservation, I'm sure that would cause a lot more issues but there are still ways to get supplies there without driving, so I don't think that will stop things permanently.

What should people do who are looking for ways they can express their support?

You can do direct actions in your local communities. A lot of businesses and banks that are supporting the pipeline are in your cities, so you don't have to go that far to organize

and build a solidarity movement and do direct action in your towns. Donations are always needed.

Legal funds are an absolute must right now.

There are money needs for transportation and bail. Folks are getting carted up as far as Fargo and then processed and let out of the jail in the middle of the night and early morning in freezing weather without money for a bus or for a hotel. So people need transportation dollars to get back to camp and get warm.

And a lot of gear, a lot of winterization gear. Heavy canvas tents, not summer tents, heavy winter clothes, like snowboarding jackets, gloves, hats, wood-burning stoves, propane, other heaters--those sorts of things are all badly needed.

Especially if folks are going to start moving and joining the camps on the reservation, they're going to need to rebuild structures and have the supplies to do that.

And call your decision maker. Call decision makers in North Dakota--the governor, county commissioners, senators, members of Congress. Make sure that you pummel the White House with phone calls and e-mails and let them know that folks out there are watching and they're waiting for a response. Something has to come soon, if we're going to win this fight.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Donald Trump Is Assembling The Richest Administration In Modern American History:

“Nominees For Top Positions Include Several Multimillionaires, An Heir To A Family Mega-Fortune And Two Forbes-Certified Billionaires”

“It Is A Group That Has Long Spent Big To Influence Politics”

When George W. Bush assembled his first Cabinet in 2001, news reports dubbed them a team of millionaires, and government watchdogs questioned whether they were out of touch with most Americans' problems.

Combined, that group had an inflation-adjusted net worth of about \$250 million — which is roughly one-tenth the wealth of Donald Trump's nominee for commerce secretary alone.

Trump is putting together what will be the wealthiest administration in modern American history.

His announced nominees for top positions include several multimillionaires, an heir to a family mega-fortune and two Forbes-certified billionaires, one of whose family is worth as much as industrial tycoon Andrew Mellon was when he served as treasury secretary nearly a century ago.

Rumored candidates for other positions suggest Trump could add more ultra-rich appointees soon.

Many of the Trump appointees were born wealthy, attended elite schools and went on to amass even larger fortunes as adults.

As a group, they have much more experience funding political candidates than they do running government agencies.

Their collective wealth in many ways defies Trump's populist campaign promises.

Their business ties, particularly to Wall Street, have drawn rebukes from Democrats. But the group also amplifies Trump's own campaign pitch: that Washington outsiders who know how to navigate and exploit a "rigged" system are best able to fix that system for the working class.

"It fits into Trump's message that he's trying to do business in an unusual way, by bringing in these outsiders," said Nicole Hemmer, an assistant professor in presidential studies at the University of Virginia's Miller Center.

But Trump and his team, she added, won't be able to draw on the same sort of life struggles that President Obama did, in crafting policy to lift poor and middle-class Americans.

"They're just not going to have any access to that" life experience, she said. "I guess it will be a test — does empathy actually matter? If you're able to echo back what people are telling you, is that enough?"

Trump's nominee for commerce secretary is industrialist Wilbur Ross, who has amassed a fortune of \$2.5 billion through decades at the helm of Rothschild's bankruptcy practice and his own investment firm, according to Forbes.

Ross' would-be deputy at the Commerce Department, Todd Ricketts, is the son of a billionaire and the co-owner of the Chicago Cubs.

Steven Mnuchin, who Trump named to head the Treasury Department, is a former Goldman Sachs executive, hedge fund executive and Hollywood financier.

Betsy DeVos, a Michigan billionaire who was named as Trump's education secretary, is the daughter-in-law of Richard DeVos, the co-founder of Amway. Her family has a net worth of \$5.1 billion, according to Forbes. Elaine Chao, the choice for transportation secretary, is the daughter of a shipping magnate.

It is a group that has long spent big to influence politics.

Mnuchin, Ross and DeVos each made hundreds of thousands of dollars of political contributions within the last two years, according to OpenSecrets.org. In Ross' Manhattan office, next to a window overlooking Central Park, there is a table filled with pictures of Ross with candidates to whom he has contributed, including John A. Boehner, Michael Bloomberg and Bill Clinton.

On Wednesday, Democrats seized on Ross's and Mnuchin's Wall Street ties to accuse Trump of undermining his populist pitch.

"I'm not shocked by this. It's a billionaire president being surrounded by a billionaire and millionaire cabinet, with a billionaire agenda . . . to hurt the middle class," said Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio).

"The appointments suggest that he's going to break his campaign promises."

In their first interviews Wednesday after being unveiled as cabinet nominees, Mnuchin and Ross pitched their business experience as beneficial to the goals of boosting workers.

"I think one of the good things about both Wilbur and I, we have actually been bankers," Mnuchin told CNBC, adding, "We've been in the business of regional banking, and we understand what it means to make loans."

On the campaign trail, Trump pledged lift up Americans who have seen their economic prospects dim with the loss of well-paying blue-collar jobs. And indeed, voters by and large ignored Trump's own opulence, which never became the baggage that it did for the 2012 Republican nominee, Mitt Romney.

Still, the question now is whether public officials who come from such privileged backgrounds will favor policies that benefit the rich.

"This isn't a criticism or a conspiracy . . . but it's important to recognize that everyone's perspective and policy and government is shaped by the kind of life you've lived," said Nicholas Carnes, a political scientist at Duke University.

"The research really says that when you put a bunch of millionaires in charge, you can expect public policy that helps millionaires at the expense of everybody else."

Future appointments could further increase the wealth of Trump's cabinet. Harold Hamm — a self-made oil industry executive who ranks 30th on the Forbes 400, a list of the

wealthiest Americans, with a net worth of \$16.7 billion, — is on Trump’s shortlist for secretary of energy. Andrew Puzder, a restaurant industry executive, has been floated for labor secretary.

Trump is hardly the first president to dole out cabinet positions to wealthy Americans. The Commerce and Treasury departments in particular tend to be headed by politically connected donors or Wall Street executives, said Matt Grossman, a political scientist at Michigan State University.

“Of course, it’s not uncommon for the wealthy to be overrepresented in political positions of all kinds, and in appointment processes you tend to get people who are already well-connected to the incoming president,” he said.

Penny Pritzker, the current commerce secretary, comes from one of America’s wealthiest families, and her net worth is estimated at \$2.5 billion.

Former treasury secretaries Henry M. Paulson Jr. and Paul H. O’Neill both had personal wealth in the tens or hundreds of millions of dollars.

The tradition goes back in history. Andrew Mellon, one of the wealthiest Americans in the early 20th century, served as treasury secretary under three administrations. Eisenhower’s cabinet garnered the nickname “nine millionaires and a plumber.”

Mellon was first appointed by President Warren G. Harding, and he helped steer the U.S. economy through the “Roaring Twenties” — and into the Great Depression.

He is widely credited with pioneering an early version of the tax policies that form part of Trump’s economic agenda, which proved successful in the 1920s. It was the notion that the government could speed up the economy — and increase federal revenue — by cutting taxes on the rich.

MORE:

**“After A Decade In The Wilderness,
Wall Street’s Most Powerful Firm,
Goldman Sachs, Is Dominating The
Early Days Of The Incoming Trump
Administration”**

**Goldman “Stands To Return To A Level
Of Influence Unmatched By Any Other
Company In America”**



11/30/16 By Ben White, POLITICO LLC

NEW YORK — Government Sachs is returning to Washington.

After a decade in the wilderness, Wall Street's most powerful firm, Goldman Sachs, is dominating the early days of the incoming Trump administration.

The newly picked Treasury Secretary, Steven Mnuchin, spent 17 years at Goldman.

Trump's top incoming White House adviser, Steve Bannon, spent his early career at the bank. So did Anthony Scaramucci, one of Trump's top transition advisers.

Goldman's president, Gary Cohn, spent an hour schmoozing with President-elect Donald Trump on Tuesday and could be up for an administration job, possibly as director of the Office of Management and Budget, people close to Cohn and the transition said. Cohn, a long-time commodities trader, is friendly with Trump's powerful son-in-law, Jared Kushner.

It's a stunning reversal of fortune for Goldman, a long-time Washington power that fell out of favor following the financial crisis.

CEO Lloyd Blankfein got hauled before Congress along with other Wall Street executives to account for their behavior.

And Trump, who ran as a populist and bashed Wall Street on the campaign trail, featured Blankfein as a shady and dangerous character in his final campaign ad.

Rolling Stone's Matt Taibbi famously labeled Goldman the "great Vampire Squid" on the face of America.

Had Hillary Clinton won the White House, Goldman faced a virtual lock-out from Washington with Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders poised to block any major picks from the bank or any other firm on Wall Street.

Now Goldman, whose proximity to the levers of power dates to the early 20th Century and the creation of the Federal Reserve, stands to return to a level of

influence unmatched by any other company in America. And Warren and her allies are left throwing darts from the sidelines.

“We are talking about a massive change in tone in literally just three weeks,” said William Cohan a former banker and author of “Money and Power: How Goldman Sachs Came to Run the World. “If this had gone as the cognoscenti thought it was going to go we would be hearing Elizabeth Warren with her megaphone saying no one with a Wall Street background is getting anywhere near a Washington job.”

The rise of Goldman is also filled with ironies for Trump, even beyond his recent bashing of Blankfein.

Like many Wall Street banks, Goldman stopped doing business with the real estate mogul years ago, scared off by his bankruptcy filings. Many of the firm’s top executives made it clear they preferred Clinton for president.

Now Mnuchin, whose father was also a powerful Goldman banker, will be Trump’s top economic adviser, and he is already promising an agenda that thrills Wall Street and terrifies many Democrats.

“Our number one priority will be tax reform. This will be the largest tax change since Reagan,” Mnuchin said on CNBC’s “Squawk Box” on Wednesday, flanked by Wilbur Ross, the billionaire investor tapped by Trump to serve as Commerce secretary. “We’re going to cut corporate taxes ... we’re going to get to 15 percent,” said Mnuchin, who also argued for changing parts of the Dodd-Frank financial reform law that curtailed many of Wall Street’s swashbuckling ways.

“Trump’s Top Economic Adviser Is Already Promising An Agenda That Thrills Wall Street”

“The number one problem with Dodd-Frank is it’s way too complicated and it cuts back on lending,” Mnuchin said. “So we want to strip back parts of Dodd-Frank that prevent banks from lending. And that will be the number one priority on the regulatory side.”

Those kinds of comments and the rise of Goldman and Wall Street influence in Trump’s Washington is sending progressive Democrats into a panic. Liberals fear an agenda that will slash tax rates for the wealthy and corporations and gut regulations while allowing Wall Street to go back to the kind of trading practices that helped fuel the financial crisis.

Even many reform-minded conservatives wanted Trump to pick a different Treasury Secretary, someone like House Financial Services Chairman Jeb Hensarling or former BB&T CEO John Allison for the job. Both have strong views on increasing bank capital requirements and fighting so-called “Too Big to Fail” institutions. It’s much less clear that Mnuchin will do anything to make life difficult for large banks.

Warren came out firing against Mnuchin on Tuesday night. And Democrats plan to hammer the Treasury nominee’s record as head of OneWest, a California bank derided as a “foreclosure machine” during the depths of the crisis.

“Steve Mnuchin is the Forrest Gump of the financial crisis — he managed to participate in all the worst practices on Wall Street,” Warren said in a statement on Tuesday night.

“He spent two decades at Goldman Sachs helping the bank peddle the same kind of mortgage products that blew up the economy and sucked down billions in taxpayer bailout money before he moved on to run a bank that was infamous for aggressively foreclosing on families.”

Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), ranking Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee, which will consider Mnuchin’s nomination, promised thorough hearings including a focus on Mnuchin’s time at OneWest. The attacks may not be enough to derail Mnuchin, but they will add to a developing Democratic strategy of undercutting Trump’s blue-collar credentials by portraying him as a billionaire plutocrat governing with the interests of his rich friends in mind.

“There are a number of serious problems raised by populating the most senior positions in government from a single bank and from a single industry,” said Dennis Kelleher, CEO of financial reform group Better Markets.

“Whether it’s true or not, Goldman Sachs will be perceived as having privileged access and influence throughout the government. What we need most, and Candidate Trump seemed to understand this, is a view that prioritizes what’s good for Main Street and the real economy.”

Goldman defenders say a negative focus on Mnuchin’s time at the bank is unfair and that he has the economic and markets expertise to help create faster economic growth that lifts wages across the board.

“I commend President-elect Trump on his outstanding selection of Steven Mnuchin to be Secretary of the Treasury,” former Goldman CEO and George W. Bush Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson said in a statement on Wednesday. “Steven embodies the characteristics necessary to be a very good Treasury secretary. He is a doer with the analytic and political skills to get things done in a complex environment.”

Goldman supporters also note that had Clinton won, the left would have pushed for Gary Gensler, former head of the CFTC and himself a long-time Goldman banker, to be Treasury secretary or take some other high-profile post.

“Throughout its 147-year history, Goldman Sachs has encouraged its employees to give back to the community while they are working here and after they leave,” said Jake Siewert, communications director at Goldman. “We are proud that many have gone on to serve their country and their communities after they have left.”

The return of Goldman to prominence in Washington restores a tradition that waned in recent years. The relationship dates to back at least to 1913 when one of the firm’s founding partners, Henry Goldman, helped create the Federal Reserve.

The influence declined during the Depression only to rise again with Goldman head Sidney Weinberg’s close relationship with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. More recently, Goldman held sway in President Bill Clinton’s White House with the elevation of

former co-chairman Robert Rubin to Treasury secretary during a period that saw significant deregulation of the banking industry and the repeal of the Depression-era Glass-Steagall law separating the activities of retail and investment banking.

And when the financial crisis hit in 2008, then-president Bush turned to Paulson to help design a Wall Street bailout package that pumped hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars into the financial industry.

Defenders of the bailout say it saved the economy from potential ruin and most banks including Goldman quickly paid back all federal funds. But Wall Street critics worry that the return of Goldman to such levels of power will ensure friendly treatment of the industry that could spark more crises in the future.

“My real issue with Mnuchin is that it really is a start the countdown clock moment to the next crash,” said Kelleher. “That is the inevitability if the Wall Street view of the world once again becomes policy.”



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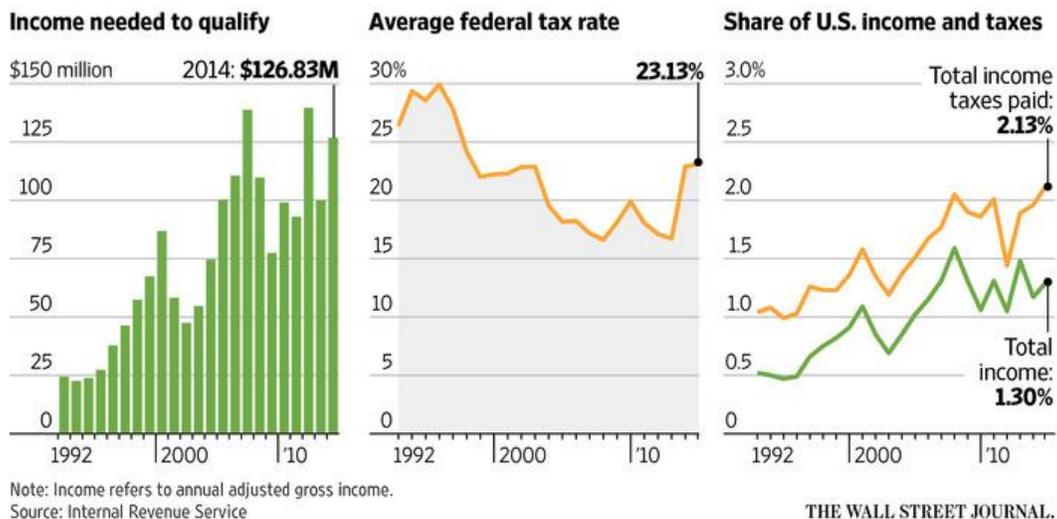
**The Really Rich Got Richer,
According To IRS's Top 400:
Total Income Reported On The Top
400 Individual Tax Returns Rose 20%
In 2014**

“The IRS Also Said On Thursday That It Would No Longer Release Data On The Top 400”

Taxes at the Top

The top 400 U.S. households reported 20% more income in 2014 than in 2013. That group has an outsized share of income and deductions, according to IRS data.

Select characteristics of the top 400 U.S. taxpayers:



Dec. 1, 2016 By RICHARD RUBIN, Wall Street Journal

The total income reported on the top 400 individual tax returns rose 20% in 2014, according to Internal Revenue Service data released Thursday.

The figures reveal the concentration of earnings at the pinnacle of the income distribution, in a club that required \$126.8 million of adjusted gross income to enter.

That group, out of nearly 150 million tax returns in 2014, received 1.3% of income and 10% of capital gains that get preferential rates. The same 400 households also made 6.9% of all charitable contributions.

The top 400 households paid 2.13% of all individual income taxes, their highest share in the data series that goes back to 1992. Their average tax rate was 23.13%, the highest since 1997, when Congress cut capital-gains taxes.

The increases in incomes for the top 400 in 2014 may be somewhat skewed by the tax increases that took effect in 2013. Those changes encouraged taxpayers to realize capital gains in 2012 instead of 2013, causing a spike in reported income in 2012 and a dip in 2013.

The top 400 are measured by income, not wealth, and the individuals change from year to year.

Many wealthy people can avoid annual income taxes by not selling assets and wouldn't be part of the list, which doesn't include taxpayers' names.

The IRS also said on Thursday that it would no longer release data on the top 400, which it compiled going back to 1992. Instead, future reports will focus on the top 0.001%, which included 1,396 households for 2014.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Taliban Seizes Cache Of Weapons After Overrunning District In Kandahar: “Additionally, The Taliban Walked Away With Crates Filled With RPG Rounds And Ammunition For The Rifles And Machine Guns”



Image from the “The Conquest of Ghorak” [Excerpt from images]

December 1st, 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.

When the Taliban assaulted the district of Ghorak in Kandahar last month, it seized a number of US-made weapons that were supplied to the Afghan security forces from a base that was overrun.

Additionally, a number of Afghan soldiers were killed during a nighttime assault that was captured on video.

The Taliban released a video, entitled “The Conquest of Ghorak” on its propaganda website, Voice of Jihad, on Nov. 29. The jihadist group claimed it overran Ghorak’s district center on Nov. 19 however this has not been confirmed in the Afghan press.

The video gives credence to the Taliban’s claim.

The Taliban assaulted a base outside of the town of Ghorak that appears to have been manned by a company of Afghan troops during the night of Nov. 18. After heavy fighting, which was captured on a video at a distance through a night vision camera, Taliban fighters entered the base.

The bodies of dozens of Afghan troops are seen laying on the ground throughout the base.

After the battle, the Taliban displayed M-16 rifles, some with grenade launchers mounted, M-249 light machine guns, and rocket-propelled grenade launchers.

Additionally, the Taliban walked away with crates filled with RPG rounds and ammunition for the rifles and machine guns.

Several Taliban fighters were also spotted wearing night vision goggles; it is unclear if the devices were taken from Afghan troops during the assault, or if the fighters used them during the attack.

Ghorak is situated along a belt of Taliban-controlled or contested districts in southern Afghanistan that spans the provinces of Farah, Helmand, Uruzgan and Kandahar. The Taliban has used this southern safe haven to directly threaten the capitals of Farah, Helmand, and Uruzgan. Afghan forces, backed by US advisers and airstrikes, have struggled to stave off Taliban offensives against the capitals of these three provinces.

Resistance Action

01 December 2016 IHS Jane’s Terrorism Watch Report

ONE soldier was killed and three others were wounded - including Afghan National Army (ANA) Commander Brig. Gen. Niamatullah - when a roadside improvised explosive device (IED), emplaced by unidentified militants, detonated, in Lashkargah in Afghanistan’s Helmand province on 14 November, Pajhwok reported.

Nov 30 2016 By Khaama Press

At least two explosions were heard in Kabul city earlier tonight amid reports two rockets landed in Shash Darak diplomatic area of the city.

Security sources confirmed that the rockets landed between Pul-e-Mahmood Khan area and Shash Darak but no casualties have been reported so far.

A security official in the Ministry of Interior confirmed that the rockets landed in the vicinity of Maslakh area in Shashdarak and the area has been cordoned off by the security forces.

POLICE WAR REPORTS

Feds Trying To Deport Muslim Imam Who Pimped For Christie And “Law Enforcement” Silly Man Says “I Believe In The Judicial System In This Country” Gov. Chris Christie “Said That ‘He’s Always Had A Very Good Relationship With Us’”

Dec 3, 2016 By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PATERSON, N.J.

The leader of one of New Jersey’s largest mosques is heading to court to fight from being deported after federal authorities say he lied on his green card application.

Imam Mohammad Qatanani told his congregation at the Islamic Center of Passaic County that he will return to court on Monday, after the Department of Homeland Security appealed an immigration judge’s decision not to deport him eight years ago after finding no credible links to terrorism, The Record reported.

Qatanani came to the U.S. from Jordan. He was born in the West Bank and said that he was detained by Israeli officials while visiting there in 1993.

Federal officials say that he didn't disclose being convicted in Israel for being a member of Hamas, but Qatanani denies that he was ever part of the group classified as a terrorist organization by the U.S. government. He says that he was only detained like many others at the time and was never told that he was convicted of anything.

His brother-in-law was a senior Hamas military leader killed by the Israelis, but Qatanani said in his 2008 trial that he did not participate with him in political activities.

"I know that justice will prevail and that everything will be in the right way. I believe in the judicial system in this country," Qatanani, 52, said Friday.

An attorney for homeland security wasn't available for comment.

An FBI agent testified previously that Qatanani admitted that he was arrested and tried, but he claimed during the trial that he was not aware of the conviction and that he was subjected to physical and mental abuse while in detention.

Qatanani came to the U.S. in 1996 on a religious worker visa to lead the Paterson mosque and has been credited with working with leaders of different faiths and law enforcement. He has worked on the New Jersey Attorney General's Office's Muslim outreach task force.

A number of character witnesses have testified on his behalf at his first trial, including a rabbi and several high-ranking New Jersey law enforcement officials.

While serving as the U.S. federal prosecutor in New Jersey, Republican Gov. Chris Christie called him a "man of great goodwill" and said that "he's always had a very good relationship with us."

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

One way to stop the next war is to continue to tell the truth about this one. -- Kathy Kelly

How To Stop A War:

“On April 27 [1968] A Group Of Forty Active-Duty People Marched At The Head Of An Anti-War Demonstration In San Francisco, The First Time GIs Led A Civilian Peace Rally”

“On February 16, 1969, The Alliance Sponsored A Peace Rally In Downtown Seattle, With Two Hundred Active- Duty People Leading A Crowd Of Several Thousand”

[No, they didn’t go to DC begging the Imperial Congress to stop the war. They knew that when the army rebelled, the war would end. They did, and it did. T]

Excerpts from: SOLDIERS IN REVOLT: DAVID CORTRIGHT, Anchor Press/Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1975.

The young people forced into the ranks by the Vietnam build-up expressed a sometimes articulate, sometimes desperate, opposition to an unwanted mission.

The GI movement imbued the military with the voice of a troubled citizenry, providing a measure of democratic restraint on though otherwise unresponsive and imperious institutions of war.

The appearance of coffeehouses and a burgeoning GI press, in an atmosphere of mounting disillusionment over stalemate in Vietnam, set the stage for the first significant GI action.

The Army's huge armored training center at Fort Hood experienced a particularly rapid deterioration of troop morale, especially among combat returnees, and throughout the Vietnam period witnessed extensive unrest and drug use (the base's copious marijuana supplies earned it the sobriquet "Fort Head").

The civilians who opened the Oleo Strut in the summer of 1968 thus met with an enthusiastic response; with the founding of Fatigue Press, a long history of successful GI activism began.

The first political gathering of Fort Hood soldiers occurred in Killeen on July 5, 1968.

A "Love-In" and countercultural festival was held in Condor Park, featuring rock music and anti-war speeches; approximately two hundred soldiers attended, most of them white.

The atmosphere at the base grew considerably tenser in the following weeks, however, as thousands of troops were prepared for possible use against civilian demonstrators at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago — culminating in a dramatic and important act of political defiance among black troops.

On the evening of August 23, over one hundred black soldiers from the 1st Armored Cavalry Division gathered on base to discuss their opposition to Army racism and the use of troops against civilians.

After a lengthy, all-night assembly, which included a visit from commanding general Powell, forty-three of the blacks were arrested for refusal to follow orders.

The action of the blacks was spontaneous and unrelated to the work of the white soldiers (reflecting a common pattern of parallel but separate development of dissent among blacks and whites), but the Oleo Strut GIs supported the brothers and helped with their legal defense.

Because of widespread support for the resisters, especially among blacks, the Army's treatment of the Fort Hood 43 was not as harsh as it might have been; most received only light jail sentences.

The San Francisco Bay Area has been in the vanguard of most of the radical movements in the United States during the past decade, and the GI movement was no exception.

With the support of two local GI newspapers, *The Ally* and *Task Force*, area servicepeople were among the first to speak out in 1968.

On April 27 a group of forty active-duty people marched at the head of an anti-war demonstration in San Francisco, the first time GIs led a civilian peace rally.

Two months later, also in San Francisco, nine AWOL enlisted men (five soldiers, two sailors, one airman, and one Marine) publicly took sanctuary at Howard Presbyterian Church in moral opposition to the war. After a forty-eight-hour “service of celebration and communion,” they were arrested by MPs on July 17.

In the fall, the growing network of GI activists in the area laid plans for the largest servicemen’s peace action to date — an active-duty contingent for the scheduled October is anti-war rally in downtown San Francisco.

Among the efforts to mobilize area soldiers and distribute literature about the march was Navy nurse Susan Schnall’s daring feat of dropping leaflets from an airplane onto five area military bases (for which she was later court-martialed).

As the demonstration date approached, military authorities became nervous that a large number of GIs might become involved, and, in a manner that became standard whenever protests were planned, sought to prevent servicemen from attending.

A communication from the Military Airlift Command in Washington, later anonymously released to *The Ally*, depicted the military’s attitude toward even lawful dissent: it urged that “this demonstration be quashed if possible because of possible severe impact on military discipline throughout the services.”

On the Saturday of the actual march, soldiers at the nearby Presidio were detained for mandatory company formations, while special maneuvers and other diversions were held at several West Coast bases.

Despite such obstruction, two hundred active-duty GIs and some one hundred reservists marched at the head of the demonstration, in what was the largest gathering yet of the expanding GI movement.

Two days later, in an incident partly inspired by the show of antiwar strength on October 12, twenty-seven inmates of the Presidio stockade held a sit-down strike to protest the shooting death a few days earlier of fellow prisoner Richard Bunch and to call attention to unbearable living conditions—what became known later as the Presidio mutiny. (For a sensitive and penetrating account of the Presidio incident see Fred Gardner’s *Unlawful Concert*.)

As the GI movement emerged, civilian radical organizations played an important role in helping to sustain rank-and-file dissent. One of the first agencies to recognize the changes taking place within the Army was the Student Mobilization Committee (SMC) and its closely allied counterpart, the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA).

One of the first examples of this co-operation was the GI-Civilian Alliance for Peace (GI-CAP) and the newspaper Counterpoint at Fort Lewis.

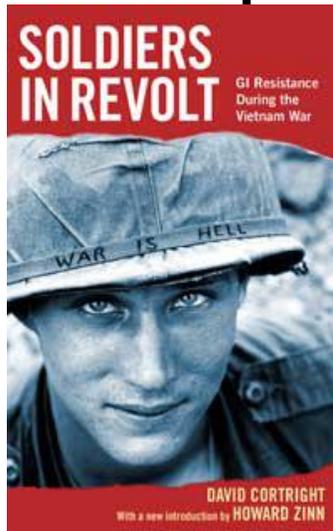
Aided by SMC activists, GI-CAP developed into one of the most successful early GI-movement groups, with as many as fifty servicemen at regular weekly meetings.

On February 16, 1969, the Alliance sponsored a peace rally in downtown Seattle, with two hundred active- duty people leading a crowd of several thousand.

A few months later, the servicemen formed their own organization apart from the civilians and continued their work as an all GI group.

MORE:

**FREE TO ACTIVE DUTY:
A Vietnam Soldier Wrote The Book All
About How An Armed Forces Rebellion
Stopped An Imperial War**



SOLDIERS IN REVOLT: DAVID CORTRIGHT, Anchor Press/Doubleday, Garden City, New York

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[FILM TRAILER]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCbev3PW4Ug>

“TAKES AIM AT THE FAILED MENTAL HEALTH POLICIES WITHIN THE U.S.
MILITARY”

[Thanks to Susan Rosenthal for sending.]

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

**Israel Burning -- The Great Fire
Of 2016:
Netanyahu Lied That The Arabs
Did It;
The Zionist Settlers Did It 80 Years
Ago, When They Spread Beautiful
Forests Over A Desert;
And The Great Drought Came And
Brought The Great Fire Along With It**

And Behold, The Forests Burned The Foolish Occupiers

12.3.2106 by Uri Avnery, Gush Shalom. Uri Avnery is an Israeli writer and founder of the Gush Shalom peace movement. Avnery was a Knesset member from 1965–74 and from 1979–81.

When my parents married in Germany, just before World War I, among the gifts was a document attesting that a tree had been planted in their name in Palestine.

My father was an early Zionist.

Popular Jewish humor in Germany at that time had it that “a Zionist is a Jew who wants to take money from another Jew in order to settle a third Jew in Palestine.” My father certainly was not planning to go to Palestine himself.

Palestine was then a country bereft of ornamental trees.

The Arab inhabitants cultivated olive trees, from which they made their scant living, and at that time the citrus trees were introduced.

The olive tree is native – already in the Biblical story of Noah’s ark, the dove fetches an olive leaf as a sign of life.

According to popular legend, during that war the Turkish administration cut down the trees in order to build a railway across the Sinai peninsula and dislodge the British from the Suez Canal. However, the British crossed the Sinai in the other direction and conquered Palestine.

After that war the Zionists started to come to the country en masse.

Among many other things, they started to plant trees in large quantities. Real forests sprang up, though compared with Russian or European forests they were pitiful.

The Zionists did not ask themselves why the country was bereft of so many kinds of trees. The obvious answer was that the Arabs didn’t care, that’s just the kind of people they are. No love for the country. No love for trees.

The Zionist movement was full of self-confidence. They could do anything they set their mind to. They hated the Palestinian landscape as it was.

They were going to create a different country. When David Ben-Gurion, a 20-year old youngster, landed at Jaffa in 1906, he was utterly disgusted. “Is this the land of our fathers?” he cried out.

So the Zionists set out to change the landscape. They imported beautiful trees from all over the world and planted forests wherever they could: along the road

from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem, on Mount Carmel and many other places. They were beautiful.

The new immigrants did not ask themselves why the country, which had been populated since the beginning of time and remained so continuously to this day, had been so empty of these kinds of trees.

Obviously, it was the fault of the Arabs.

Actually, the reason was quite different.

Palestine suffers from an extreme shortage of rainfall. Every few years or so there is a drought, the country dries up, and fires break out all over the place.

The trees which are not suited to this country just burn up.

Six years ago there was a warning. A large fire broke out on Mount Carmel. It consumed large portions of the forest and killed 47 policemen, who were caught by the fire while on their way to evacuate a prison.

“Suddenly The Land Was On Fire”

Two weeks ago it happened in earnest. For eight months there was hardly a drop of rain. A strong, hot, east wind blew in from the desert. The land dried up. Any little spark could have started a major fire.

Suddenly the land was on fire.

About 150 separate fires broke out, many of them near Haifa, Israel's third largest town.

Haifa is beautiful, rather like Naples, and several of its suburbs are surrounded by trees. No one had thought about safe distances or such.

Several neighborhoods caught fire.

Almost eighty thousand inhabitants had to be evacuated, leaving their life-long belongings behind. Many apartments were destroyed by fire. It was heart-breaking.

The fire-fighters did their best. They worked around the clock. No lives were lost. With hoses on the ground and light fire-fighting airplanes in the air, they gradually brought the calamity under control.

How did the fires break out?

Under the prevailing climatic conditions, any little spark could have caused a major disaster. A campfire not properly extinguished, a burning cigarette thrown from a passing car, an overturned hookah.

But that is not dramatic enough for news media, and even less for politicians.

Soon enough the country was full of accusations: The Arabs Did It. Of course. Who else? TV was full of people who had actually seen Arabs setting forests alight.

Then Binyamin Netanyahu appeared on screen.

Clad in a fashionable battle-dress, surrounded by his minions, he declared that it was all the work of Arab terrorists. It was an “Intifada of Fire”.

Fortunately, Israel has a savior: he himself. He had taken control, summoned an American supertanker and several other foreign fire-fighting planes. Israelis could go back to sleep.

In reality, all this was nonsense. The brave fire-fighters and policemen had already done their job. Netanyahu’s intervention was superfluous, indeed harmful.

During the last great fire, six years ago, on the Carmel, Netanyahu had played the same role and summoned a giant American fire-fighting plane. It had done a good job over the forest.

This time, near human neighborhoods, it could do nothing. In settled neighborhoods, the super-tanker was useless. Netanyahu summoned it, had himself photographed with it, and that was that.

The accusation of the Arab citizens as responsible for the catastrophe was much more serious. When Netanyahu raised it, he was widely believed.

The semi-fascist minister of education, Naftali Bennett, argued that the fire proved that the country belongs to the Jews, since the Arabs had set it on fire.

Many Arab citizens were rounded up and interrogated. Most were released. In the end it appeared that perhaps about 2 (two) percent of the fires were started by Arab youngsters as acts of revenge.

Haifa is a mixed city, with a large Arab population.

Generally, relations between Arabs and Jews there are good, sometimes even cordial. The two communities faced the new danger together,

Arab villages opened their homes to Jewish refugees from the fire. Mahmoud Abbas, the chief of the Palestinian Authority in the occupied territories, also sent his firefighters into Israel to help out.

Netanyahu’s incendiary speeches, making wild (and quite unproven) accusations against the Arab citizens and against Arab workers from the occupied territories, did not catch on.

So this political fire, too, was suppressed before it could do too much damage. As the days pass, the accusations recede, but the damage they caused remains.

(When I served in the army, long ago, my company was awarded the honorary title “Samson’s Foxes”. Samson, the biblical hero, attached firebrands to the tails of foxes and sent them into the fields of the Philistines.)

The fire should provide food for thought.

If Netanyahu and his minions are right and “the Arabs” are intent on throwing us out of the country by any means, including fire, what is the answer?

The easy answer is: Throw them out, instead.

Logical, but impracticable. There are now more than six and a half million Arab Palestinians in Greater Israel – Israel proper, the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), and the Gaza Strip. The number of Jews is about the same. In today’s world, you just cannot expel such numbers.

So we are condemned to live close together – either in two states, a proposal rejected by Netanyahu, or in one state, which would be either an apartheid state or a bi-national state.

If one believes, as Netanyahu and his followers do, that every Arab is a potential “fire terrorist” – how will anyone in the joint state be able to sleep at night?

Only some Arabs have guns. Only some have cars, with which to run over Jews. Only some can make explosives. But everyone has matches. Given a dry season, the sky is the limit.

By the way, just by chance, this week I saw a German TV program about a Swiss village, high up in the Alps. From time to time, a very dry hot wind, called Foehn, blows over it from the south. Twice in living memory the village has burnt down. All without an Arab in sight.

In Israel, the fire brigades belong to the local authorities, providing patronage and salaries to local party hacks.

In June 1968, as a young member of the Knesset, I came up with a revolutionary proposal: to abolish all the local fire-fighting departments and set up a united, national fire-fighting service, like the police. Such a force, I argued, could plan for all eventualities, prepare adequate equipment and allocate the necessary resources.

Contrary to their habit of heaping abuse on my proposals, my adversaries took this one seriously. The minister in charge acknowledged that it was a good idea, but added that “its time has not yet come”.

Now, 48 years later, the time has evidently still not arrived.

Instead, the Great Fire has.

[For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. Isaiah 66:15-17 King James Version]

[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]

To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation commanded by foreign terrorists, go to:

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/Default.aspx> and
<http://www.palestinemonitor.org/list.php?id=ej898ra7yff0ukmf16>

The occupied nation is Palestine. The foreign terrorists call themselves "Israeli."



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