

Not Only Is The War A Disaster, Greedy U.S. Incompetents Ruined The Iraqi Oil Fields

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They said that rather than tapping Iraqi state oil company officials, the U.S. program was overseen by American officials with little experience in the oil industry. In an interview, one senior U.S. official managing part of the restoration effort jokingly described his knowledge level as "Oil for Dummies."

Iraqi officials also said KBR relied too heavily on foreign contractors, conducted lengthy, unnecessary studies and failed to deliver promised equipment.

September 26, 2005 By T. Christian Miller, Times Staff Writer

QARMAT ALI, Iraq — The failure to rebuild key components of Iraq's petroleum industry has impeded oil production and may have permanently damaged the largest of the country's vast oil fields, American and Iraqi experts say.

The deficiencies have deprived Iraq of hundreds of millions of dollars in potential revenue needed for national rebuilding efforts and kept millions of barrels of oil off the world market at a time of growing demand.

Engineering mistakes, poor leadership and shifting priorities have delayed or led to the cancellation of several projects critical to restoring Iraq's oil industry, according to interviews with more than two dozen current and former U.S. and Iraqi officials and industry experts.

The troubles have been compounded in some cases by security issues, poor maintenance and disputes between the U.S. and its main contractor, Houston-based KBR, a subsidiary of Halliburton Corp., according to the interviews and documents.

Despite the United States' spending more than \$1.3 billion, oil production remains below the estimated prewar level of 2.5 million barrels per day and well below a December 2004 goal of up to 3 million barrels per day.

Interviews and documents from whistle-blowers show problems with at least three projects deemed crucial to Iraq's oil production:

Qarmat Ali water treatment plant. This massive pumping complex is needed to inject water into Iraq's southern oil fields to aid in oil extraction.

Under a no-bid contract, KBR was instructed to repair the complex at a cost of up to \$225 million, but not the leaky pipelines carrying water to the fields. As a

result, the water cannot be delivered reliably, raising concerns that some of Iraq's oil may not be recoverable.

Al Fathah pipelines. As part of the same no-bid contract, the U.S. gave KBR a job worth up to \$70 million to rebuild a pipeline network in northern Iraq despite concerns that the project was unsound.

In the end, KBR built fewer than half the pipelines, and the project was given to another contractor. The delay has aggravated oil transport problems, which have forced Iraq to inject millions of barrels of oil back into the ground, a harmful practice for the oil fields and the environment. A government audit is being conducted based on a complaint by a whistle-blower.

Southern oil well repairs. A \$37-million project to boost production at dozens of Iraqi oil wells was canceled after KBR refused to proceed without a U.S. guarantee to protect it from possible lawsuits.

After the 2003 invasion, U.S. officials and KBR moved swiftly, resuming oil production only a month after the war began and slowly increasing output.

But after matching the prewar peak of 2.5 million barrels a day in September 2004, production declined to about 2.2 million barrels daily last month.

If the U.S. had successfully completed the planned repairs, Iraq could be producing up to 500,000 additional barrels a day, according to some estimates.

The difference would add up to more than \$8 billion a year.

Current and former Iraqi oil officials expressed disappointment, frustration and anger at the U.S. performance.

They said that rather than tapping Iraqi state oil company officials, the U.S. program was overseen by American officials with little experience in the oil industry. In an interview, one senior U.S. official managing part of the restoration effort jokingly described his knowledge level as "Oil for Dummies."

Iraqi officials also said KBR relied too heavily on foreign contractors, conducted lengthy, unnecessary studies and failed to deliver promised equipment. They acknowledged that Iraq needed to spend more on its oil industry but wondered why the U.S. investment had not had more of an effect.

Other Iraqis said that the U.S. and KBR simply failed to deliver. "I think we had the worst quality of U.S. service, staff and companies," said Jaafar Altaie, who was a senior planner at the Oil Ministry and now works with Amman-based Tabouk Energy Group, a consulting firm. "We had maximum rhetoric and minimum results on the ground."

Only weeks after the U.S.-led invasion in March 2003, the U.S. hired KBR under a no-bid contract to repair the Qarmat Ali water treatment plant, a complex of twisting pipes

and rusting metal that sits in the middle of drab, flat desert a few miles north of Basra in southern Iraq.

Both the United States and Iraq considered the water treatment plant a high priority. Oil rises from the ground in southern Iraq because of natural pressure in the sands. As the oil surges out, the pressure declines, making extraction more difficult.

To counter the problem, the Iraqis inject water into the earth to maintain the pressure in the oil field. That water, however, must be first cleaned at Qarmat Ali so that particles or bacteria don't plug up the holes in the soil that allow the oil to rise.

By August 2004, KBR had completed most repairs at the plant, which had badly deteriorated during 12 years of sanctions and because of the looting that followed the U.S.-led invasion. KBR rebuilt motors, refurbished pumps and installed electrical generators and chlorination and anti-corrosion systems.

But when KBR opened the taps to send the treated water to Iraq's legendary Rumaila oil field, the deteriorated pipes were unable to handle the increased pressure. The pipeline burst repeatedly, delaying work for weeks on end, KBR and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officials said. In the five months ending December 2004, KBR managed to send water through the pipes for only 29 days. Even today, the plant delivers only about a third of its capacity.

To make matters worse, farmers tapped into the pipeline, using it to irrigate their fields. KBR found one local who was watering his entire tomato crop courtesy of the Qarmat Ali pipeline.

Despite the problems, the U.S. never assigned KBR the task of repairing the aging lines. Todor, the U.S. oil advisor, said that by the time the problem became apparent, most of the money available in the south had already been committed to other projects.

On a recent tour of the sprawling, decades-old complex, its decrepit state was obvious. The walls were cracked; motors, valves and pipes were rusted. Dirt and mud covered the floors.

Only two of the five pumps that KBR fixed were operating. An Iraqi engineer said a machine to add cleaning chemicals to the water was unusable. Another system to protect the interior of the pipelines from rust was not being used for fear that the anti-corrosion additive would damage the oil fields.

Neither the U.S. nor KBR have provided additional maintenance or operating funds to the plant since turning it over to the Iraqis. For their part, the Iraqis said KBR had installed substandard equipment and had not provided sufficient training.

"It's useless. We have material from KBR, but we don't have documents on how to use it," said the Iraqi engineer, who requested anonymity because of security concerns.

A big part of the problem, some U.S. officials said, was the Army Corps of Engineers, which oversaw initial repairs under the Restore Iraqi Oil project. The Corps, which had little experience in the oil industry before the war, was forced to rely on advice from KBR and other experts in making rebuilding decisions.

Bunnatine Greenhouse, who was the top contracting official in the Corps, sharply criticized its involvement at a congressional hearing in June. "The Corps had absolutely no competencies related to oil production," said Greenhouse, who also criticized the no-bid contracts awarded to KBR. She was demoted in August. The end result of the U.S. investment here is that Qarmat Ali still does not produce enough water to be used for injection into the oil fields, nor can the water reliably be delivered to the injection stations, which also remain in need of repair.

The lack of reliable water injection has led to a debate about whether Iraq's southern oil fields have been permanently damaged. Although nobody is sure, some oil experts fear that America's failure to fix the problems has worsened damage that may have occurred during Saddam Hussein's rule.

United Nations oil experts have told the U.S. government that some oil reservoirs in southern Iraq have been so badly managed that the Iraqis will be able to recover only between 15% to 25% of the oil, well below the industry standard of 35% to 60%, a recent Department of Energy report states.

Some said the U.S. and Iraq needed to work harder, especially on fixing Qarmat Ali.

"It's frustrating. You've got one of the biggest fields in the world that's sitting there and needs some help," said one contractor familiar with the project who asked not to be named. "It's like your favorite pet dog got hurt and you want to help it."

The status of reservoirs elsewhere in Iraq is also a concern. Once an oil well begins production, it is difficult to shut it down. But attacks on pipelines in the north are so frequent that the Iraqis can't export the oil, nor do they have enough capacity to store it.

As a result, when oil production backs up, the Iraqis are forced to pump the oil back into the ground — a practice widely condemned in the industry because the re-injected oil, which is thicker, can plug fissures through which the petroleum flows. Iraq puts almost 200,000 barrels of oil per day back into the ground — meaning that Iraq's net production is even lower than the official figure of 2.2 million barrels.

"Once you have damaged the fields, there is almost nothing you can do about it. I have a great worry that we are not too far from it," said Farouk Kasim, an Iraqi oil expert, at a conference in London this summer. "The last two years have been a nightmare."

The pipelines at Al Fathah bridge became one of the nightmares of the reconstruction effort.

A squat concrete and steel structure over the Tigris River in northern Iraq, the bridge was bombed by U.S. jets during the 2003 invasion. The attack knocked out a stretch and destroyed a network of oil and gas pipelines that ran underneath.

The 16 pipelines were a crucial part of Iraq's deteriorating oil infrastructure, moving crude and other petroleum products from northern wells around Kirkuk to Baiji, a dusty refinery town south of the bridge.

The Army Corps of Engineers decided it would be quicker to run the pipelines under the riverbed instead of repairing the bridge. The agency ordered KBR to drill under the river despite warnings against such a route, said a Corps contracting official involved in the project. The official asked to remain anonymous, fearing retaliation from commanders.

Trouble began soon after the project started in January 2004. The soil was unstable, and a borehole drilled to hold the pipes collapsed. In an e-mail obtained by The Times, the contracting official described the project as "placing a pipe in a large box of marbles."

The project, originally envisioned to take 10 weeks, turned into a nearly yearlong job.

As the months went by, the cost soared. In the end, KBR managed to install six of the sixteen pipelines originally planned. Although the Corps said it still had not determined the final cost of the project, one source said it might approach \$88 million.

KBR defended the project, saying that "unforeseen" subsurface conditions had resulted in "technical challenges." They also noted that the horizontal drilling needed to install the pipelines below the riverbed had never been done in Iraq, requiring the importation of new equipment.

"KBR ultimately completed six of the drill lines and installed six of the pipelines when (the Army Corps) decided to stop work on the project due to funding limitations at the time," Price, the KBR spokeswoman, wrote.

Todor, the advisor to the Oil Ministry, said neither the Army Corps nor KBR anticipated the poor soil conditions. KBR and Army Corps officials said they were unaware of any study warning against the pipeline plan.

Two years after the project was first proposed, a senior U.S. official said the fully restored pipeline network would be completed this fall.

Another crucial aspect to restoring Iraq's oil production have been "well work-overs" — cleanup jobs that can improve the productivity of oil wells.

The Project and Contracting Office, a government reconstruction agency, wanted KBR to perform 30 work-overs on wells in southern Iraq for \$37 million.

Negotiations got bogged down over KBR's demand that the U.S. indemnify it in case of lawsuits arising from the work, a senior U.S. official said.

KBR insisted on the guarantee, saying that indemnity was provided by governments worldwide. The U.S. said that only the Iraqi government, as a sovereign nation, could give such protection. In July, the two sides reached an impasse and the U.S. terminated the project, according to a statement. Other companies approached by U.S. officials also refused to take on the project without indemnification.

The U.S. has now decided to use the \$37 million to train Iraqis to do the work-overs. At stake: an estimated increase of 300,000 barrels of oil per day.

"Indemnification was a big problem. For a lot of companies, it was a stumbling block," said a senior U.S. official overseeing the work-over project. "Our schedule, though behind, should get a lot better now."

Such promises ring hollow to Iraqis, who are frustrated with the U.S. and KBR. Abdul Raof Ibraheem is a manager at one of Iraq's largest refineries. His massive complex of rusting metal spheres is nearly silent these days. KBR is supposed to be supplying parts to fix the plant. But the firm recently told Ibraheem that the worldwide spending boom in oil infrastructure had made it hard to purchase the required equipment. The parts will arrive perhaps by next summer, KBR officials told him.

Ibraheem said he had expected more.

"Frankly speaking, I am not satisfied with KBR's work. What I saw from KBR, their performance is not what we had expected. We heard a lot about KBR, but we're not satisfied.

"The results have meant nothing for us."

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces. Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces. If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers.

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/> And join with Iraq War vets in the call to end the occupation and bring our troops home now! (www.ivaw.net)

TROOP NEWS

BIG SURPRISE!

GIs Still Driving Poorly Armored Vehicles In Iraq

10.6.05 Salt Lake Tribune

Two years into the war against insurgents in Iraq---who use roadside bombs as a favored tactic---and U.S. Army troops still are being ordered to roll off forward operating bases with inferior truck armor.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

All In The Name Of Greed Disguised As Patriotism

From: Mike Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: October 06, 2005
Subject: All In The Name Of Greed Disguised As Patriotism

To G.I. Special:

Well, here it is October 6, 2005, and the war in Iraq is still in overtime.

"Mission Accomplished," by George Bush almost 30 months ago, and it is still a lie.

Before Thanksgiving, there will be over 2,000 dead Americans from this war in Iraq. The wounded will be kept a secret by the Pentagon.

Iraqi deaths, and wounded, will be a well guarded secret by the Pentagon.

Suicides by Iraq veterans will be kept a secret by the Pentagon.

Unexplained one car accidents resulting in the death of an Iraq veteran will be kept a secret by the Pentagon.

PTSD involving Iraq veterans will be kept a secret by the Pentagon.

Alcoholism and drug addiction involving Iraq veterans will be kept a secret by the Pentagon.

Divorce rates among Iraq Veterans will be kept a secret by the Pentagon.

Frequent loss of jobs by Iraq veterans will be kept a secret by the Pentagon.

Iraq veterans " Going Off," at V.A. hospitals will be kept a secret by the Pentagon.

Profound grief and anger by Iraq veterans will be kept a secret by the Pentagon.

Rage in public places by an Iraq veteran will be kept a secret by the Pentagon.

Absolute hopelessness involving Iraq veterans will be kept a secret by the Pentagon.

Symptoms of Gulf War Syndrome involving Iraq veterans will be kept a secret by the Pentagon.

Iraq veterans dying from premature cancers will be kept a secret by the Pentagon.

Family members worrying about their relatives who served in Iraq, will be kept a secret by the Pentagon.

Iraq veterans gone from their families for days and weeks at a time, will be kept a secret by the Pentagon.

The feelings of profound betrayal by Iraq veterans against their government, will be kept a secret by the Pentagon.

The reason I know this, is because the same thing happened during and after the Vietnam War. And, the final conclusion I came to as far as the U.S. Government was concerned, was that our government did not give a damn. THEY DID NOT GIVE A FLYING SHIT.

I was treated at a V.A. hospital in the Pacific Northwest, where two Vietnam veterans committed suicide in the same bathroom of that hospital. And, the reason, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT DID NOT GIVE A DAMN.

With V.A. cutbacks, it goes on and on.

When American soldiers get back from Iraq, a lot of them will need treatment for acute PTSD.

A V.A. counselor does not see a vet, and then tell him or her, that they will have another appointment in 3-4 weeks. These veterans are in an acute state of anxiety, and need to be seen on a weekly basis for as long as it takes for them to stabilize.

The V.A. system is short handed in treating these veterans, because they don't have enough money. (Too many limousines in Washington, D.C.)

Plus the fact, Vietnam veterans are hitting the Wall, because their PTSD is exacerbated from this war in Iraq.

And the mantra goes on and on and on. WELCOME HOME, and remember, "FREEDOM IS NOT FREE!"

That statement makes me want to vomit.

I have to repeat something: The corporate rich and the politicians in this country do not care. I saw it all when I came back from Vietnam. I was considered a loser by many, and a sucker by others. I had enough anger to stop a freight train.

Only one person voted against the Iraq War, and that was Barbara Lee. The rest of the pimps went along with a president who didn't know which end a war bullet came out of a gun.

Our Government went to war, not because of faulty information from the CIA. Our Government went to war because the Elite wanted to steal the land from the American Indian--excuse me, steal the oil from the Iraqi people.

Any academic who has PhD's for hash marks, who wants to argue this point, needs to talk to an Iraq Veteran in about ten years. For many, that will be when their PTSD peaks, if they don't get treated.

Oil, and a great staging area in the Middle East, is the Mission.

When it came to stealing the land from the American Indians, rule of law, the Bible, Geneva Convention rules, went out the window. It was irrelevant. Possession is nine-tenths of the law, according to the Bully.

Let's have a brief history lesson about the major points about the Vietnam War: "The Domino Theory," was a BIG LIE. Ho Chi Minh turned to Communism, because the French would not get out of HIS country. What the French were doing in Vietnam, was exactly what the British were doing in India. They were controlling another country by Occupation. And, that is immoral!!

So, Ho Chi Minh turned to the Russians and the Chinese, because he could not get weapons from Sears, or G.I. Joe's. So, when the French got their ass kicked by Ho Chi Minh in 1954, the U.S. Government took over. THAT WAS IMMORAL!! Ho liked the United States, he wrote letters to Truman, asking him for assistance in getting the French out. No deal, the Vietnamese were brown people, and that did not look good on a resume. So, we took over where the French left off, and the rest is history.

This was called, Neocolonialism. We put a puppet government in power, and we put their flag on the flag pole. Neat, very neat. By the end of the War in Indochina, the U.S. Government killed between 2 and 3 million people. That includes the countries of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. The U.S. Government wounded ten times that amount. There were millions of refugees going every direction, mostly to over crowded cities. We made 200,000 prostitutes. We dropped 8 million tons of bombs on Southeast Asia. (The U.S. dropped 2 million tons of bombs during WWII.)

Southeast Asia is the most bombed area in the world, and the U.S. Government did it. We dropped 400,000 tons of Napalm. The targets did not matter. If the American people knew how many civilians we killed on purpose during the war in Indochina, they would have panic attacks. The U.S. Government sprayed 19 million gallons of the deadly defoliant, "Agent Orange." Deaths, and birth defects were in the tens of thousands.

50,000 American soldiers who served in Vietnam, died as a result of being sprayed with Agent Orange. 300,000 American soldiers were wounded in Vietnam. 58,000 American soldiers died in Vietnam.

I know several on the Wall in Washington, D.C. Over 50,000 Vietnam Veterans have committed suicide since they returned from Vietnam. I know a couple.

I saw American soldiers commit suicide in Vietnam. Tens of thousands of American soldiers got addicted to heroin in Vietnam. We had many in my unit in Vietnam. And, the carnage, and suffering, goes on and on.

And, the reason that is true, IS BECAUSE FREEDOM IS NOT FREE!!!! So, you can imagine what is going to happen with the Iraq Veterans.

As far as the Corporate Elite, and Our Government is concerned, these soldiers are nothing but oil barrels to hold our precious oil in.

Support The Truth. This is the kind of "Truth Madness," that put me in a padded cell of a psychiatric hospital. Anyone who does not believe this, has a lot of research to do, and a lot of military cemeteries to visit.

Trust me, the corporate rich in this country, would not even put flowers on these graves.

When I came back from Vietnam, I was a piece of shit, and the U.S. Government will be glad when my radical ass is gone.

As Bob Dylan once wrote, "The truth was obscure, too profound and too pure; To live it, you have to explode."

**Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
1st Squadron 10th Cavalry
4th Infantry Division
Vietnam 1970-71
October 6, 2005**

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

**Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic**

Vietnam 1970-71
December 13, 2004

Opportunists Undercut The Movement

September 30, 2005 Socialist Worker Editorial [Excerpt]

If the Democrats aren't willing to back the antiwar movement's demands to bring the troops home, it's because top party officials accept the idea that control of Iraq's oil is simply too important to the U.S. empire to give up.

Nevertheless, many prominent leaders in the antiwar movement are willing to ignore the Democratic Party's embrace of the imperial consensus.

For example, Judith Le Blanc, a national co-chair of United for Peace and Justice and leading member of the Communist Party U.S.A., wrote in the Peoples Weekly World, "To end the war, we must build a bipartisan peace bloc in Congress that can set the date for troop withdrawal and force Bush and the Pentagon to end the occupation."

But such a strategy of orienting on both Democratic and Republican politicians to fix a date for U.S. pullout months--or years--down the road will only undercut the movement's demand for immediate troop withdrawal.

It also gives ground on the crucial argument that the U.S., which went to war based on lies, has no legitimate reason for an occupation that will only add to death and destruction each and every day it continues.

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Send to contact@militaryproject.org. Name, I.D., withheld on request. Replies confidential.

Why The US Must Leave Iraq Now

Basically, if all the US military in Iraq is capable of is operations like Fallujah and Tal Afar, then they really need to get out of the country quick before they drive the whole country, and the region, into chaos.

September 25, 2005 Juan Cole, juancole.com. [Excerpt]

In the past few months, some Fallujans have been allowed to return, and a few neighborhoods are functioning (shown, like the facade in the Jim Carrey vehicle, The Truman Show, to gullible Western journalists as evidence that everything is hunky dory).

Other Fallujans are living in tents atop the rubble of their former homes.

There are still bombings and daily mortar fire in the area. I noted an Aljazeera report of a mortar shell falling near a US position not so long ago, and asked here why the US press did not report it.

Someone with a relative serving in the US military in that area wrote to say that they take mortar fire all the time and it was unremarkable. The propaganda line was that "Fallujah is the safest city in Iraq." But US troops have been killed there not so long ago, and the slogan is clearly not true.

The US has now attacked another Sunni city, this time the Turkmen stronghold of Tal Afar.

In the continued "scorched earth" policy of the US military in the Sunni areas, a joint US/ Iraqi (mostly Kurdish) force appears to have levelled entire neighborhoods in Tal Afar, a northern Turkmen city, making most of its 200,000 inhabitants refugees living in squalid tent camps or with friends and relatives elsewhere.

The operation yielded relatively few arrested terrorists.

There is a news blackout on Tal Afar imposed by the US and the Iraqi authorities.

Members of a Red Crescent delegation reached Tal Afar, but had their cell phones confiscated, were told to distribute aid in a remote and little known part of the city, and ended up mainly giving help to the displaced persons in their tent settlements.

Hasan Bal, a member of the Red Crescent team that went to Tal Afar, stressed that theirs was a very difficult mission. "The people and especially the children in Tal Afar are living in miserable conditions. Their conditions are indescribable. It is practically impossible not to cry for them," noted Bal.

Basically, if all the US military in Iraq is capable of its operations like Fallujah and Tal Afar, then they really need to get out of the country quick before they drive the whole country, and the region, into chaos.

Even as they are chasing after shadows in dusty border towns, the US military is allowing much of Baghdad to fall into the hands of the guerrillas.

The US military has had no political successes in the Sunni Arab areas. Mosul and some parts of Baghdad could have been pointed to in summer of 2004. In summer of 2005, these earlier successes have evaporated like a desert mirage toward which thirsty soldiers race.

The situation in the Sunni Arab areas was worse in summer of 2004 than it had been in summer of 2003. It is worse in the summer of 2005 than it had been in 2004. Even the Iraqi political groupings that had earlier been willing to cooperate with the US boycotted the Jan. 30 elections and are now assiduously working to defeat the new constitution.

Things in the Sunni Arab areas are getting worse, not better.

I conclude that the presence of the US ground troops is making things worse, not better.

Let's get them out, now, before they destroy any more cities, create any more hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons, provoke any more ethnic hatreds by installing Shiite police in Fallujah or Kurdish troops in Turkmen Tal Afar.

They are sowing a vast whirlwind, a desert sandstorm of Martian proportions, which future generations of Americans and Iraqis will reap.

The ground troops must come out. Now. For the good of Iraq. For the good of America.

Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward this E-MAIL along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, at home and inside the armed services. Send requests to address up top.

A Bit Of History: **“You’ll Never Find Any Entity Called Kuwait”**

September 2005 Malcom Lagache interview with Salah Al-Mukhtar. [Excerpt]

Salah Al-Mukhtar: Iraqi Ambassador of Iraq to India (1999-2003); Ambassador of Iraq to Vietnam (2003)

SM: The Kuwait issue dates back to the British colonial occupation of Iraq and the region surrounding it at the end of the 19th century. In that time, the British military commander had separated Kuwait from Iraq to use it as a jumping zone to Iraq and other countries in the Arab homeland.

At that time, oil was discovered in Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. British colonialism tried to impose its full control over the region's oil and that is why, from a strategic point of view, it was very important to separate Kuwait from Iraq.

This was accomplished by giving the ruling family of the locality of Kuwait great financial privileges for the purpose of creating a motive for that family to stay away from Iraq and to establish an independent entity.

This fact is supported by historical facts and the social fabric of both Kuwait and the Iraqis. You cannot differentiate Kuwait and Iraq from Basrah city because both speak the same dialect and both have the same traditions.

Until now, you can still find mixed families in Kuwait and Basrah city in Iraq. From a linguistic point of view, Kuwait is the diminutive name of Kut, which is an Iraqi city in the southern part of Iraq.

If you read the history of the region, you'll never find any entity called Kuwait.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Baghdad In The Dark As Resistance Attack Cuts Power Supply

"We saw massive destruction, greater than anything we had experienced before," he said. "We lost six power lines which were the backbone of the super-grid." The sabotage was expertly done. Usually explosives were attached to one leg of a pylon or tower so it collapsed when they were detonated. The saboteurs must have consulted an electrical engineer who pointed out how to cause maximum damage.

27 September 2005 By Patrick Cockburn, in Baghdad, The Independent (UK)

Surveying an abandoned, night-time street in Baghdad, Nadum Ali Jawad is one of the many Iraqis who are fed up with being left in the dark.

"I don't believe sabotage is the main reason for the electricity blackout, I think officials just steal the money meant for new power stations," was the student's verdict on yet another power cut.

Few failures in Iraq 30 months after the fall of Saddam Hussein infuriate Iraqis more than the continuing shortage of electricity.

Baghdad's power now works in maddening shifts - two hours on, four hours off, then two hours on again. The throb of small generators, enough for a television and a few feeble lights, provides a background buzz in every house.

As the Minister of Electricity, Mohsin Shalash, a thick-set mournful-looking man, has the most unpopular job in Iraq.

Sitting in his heavily defended office, he told The Independent that the supply was getting better until 13 July when saboteurs blew up the pylons bringing power to Baghdad from the north.

"We saw massive destruction, greater than anything we had experienced before," he said. "We lost six power lines which were the backbone of the super-grid." The sabotage was expertly done. Usually explosives were attached to one leg of a pylon or tower so it collapsed when they were detonated. The saboteurs must have consulted an electrical engineer who pointed out how to cause maximum damage.

Lack of electric power dominates life in the capital. It means that fridges and deep-freezers do not work so food cannot be stored. It insures that cooking has to be done by gas or kerosene, which have risen sharply in price.

Machinery is destroyed by variations in the power supply. Every so often I forget to take the stairs in my hotel and get into the lift. It starts encouragingly when I press the button and then comes to a shuddering halt between floors. Soon afterwards sturdy maintenance men raise or lower the lift to the nearest floor so I can squirm out while they hold the door open.

Mr Shalash said the sabotage was just one of the problems he faces. Demand for power in Iraq is about 8,500MW and it is only getting 5,000MW.

In the confident days after the fall of Saddam Hussein the Electricity Ministry, influenced by American advisers, ignored contracts agreed under the old regime. New and more expensive contracts for power stations were signed. So far they have produced very little power. "It was a very big mistake," says Mr Shalash.

He skirted delicately around questions about contracts signed over the past two years. Ali Allawi, the Finance Minister, had previously told The Independent that, aside from more than \$1bn (£600m) missing at the Defence Ministry, some \$600m to \$800m had disappeared in the second half of 2004 and early 2005 from other government ministries.

He said the biggest losses were at the electricity and transport ministries.

Mr Shalash said that, unlike in arms procurement, where money was spent and few weapons received, newly purchased electrical equipment did turn up. The questions being asked revolved around the exaggerated cost of some contracts. "Our guys picked six or seven major ones where there are major errors, something improper," he said.

Mr Shalash confirmed that on several occasions an in-house ministerial committee overseeing contracts refused to sign the papers put in front of them. As a result, new and more compliant committee members were appointed who were willing to sign. He said that ministry officials had been particularly dubious about a contract for Musayib power station that increased in cost from \$280m to \$350m.

A further difficulty is that Iraqi consumers do not pay for electricity, and are therefore lavish in using it when it is available. They are invariably dismissive of official excuses, refusing to believe that the US could not restore electricity to its pre-war levels.

They repeatedly point out that after the 1991 Gulf War, Saddam Hussein took only six months to patch up the power stations and the national grid, though both had been severely damaged by missiles and bombs.

Stuffing Iraq's Ballot Boxes: U.S. Major Reports January Election Outcome Was Faked By Collaborators

Cruz remembers joking about the "500% voter-participation rate" in Sinjar. Nevertheless, the Stryker Brigade Combat Team complied with the request for the ballots.

Sep 30, 2005 By Gareth Porter, Asia Times Online Ltd. [Excerpt]

WASHINGTON - If the referendum on Iraq's draft constitution next month is conducted fairly, it now appears very likely that the document will be defeated by a two-thirds majority in the three Sunni-dominated provinces of Anbar, Salahadeen and Nineveh, plunging Iraq into a new political crisis.

However, one way such a defeat could be averted is by massive vote fraud in the key province of Nineveh.

According to an account provided by the US liaison with the local election commission, supported by physical evidence collected by the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI), Kurdish officials in Nineveh province tried to carry out just such a ballot-stuffing scheme in last January's election.

The Sunni Arab majority of about 1.7 million in Nineveh – including Sunni insurgent organizations - appears to be united behind a "no" vote on the constitution. Kurds number only about 200,000 and non-Kurdish, non-Arab minorities another 500,000 to 600,000.

The non-Arab, non-Kurdish minorities - Assyrian Christians, Shabaks, Yezidis and Turkmen - which hold the balance in the province, are overwhelmingly opposed to the constitution.

Heavy-handed control by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) of non-Kurdish towns, exercised through Kurdish militia and intelligence presence in non-Kurdish areas, has

alienated all four groups. They fear the draft constitution would legitimize Kurdish plans to absorb into Kurdistan the areas of Nineveh where they are the majority, eliminating the limited recognition of status and rights as minorities they now have.

In the January election, the Kurds dealt with the problem of being a relatively small minority in the province by stuffing the ballot boxes, as recounted by Major Anthony Cruz, an US Army reserve civil affairs officer assigned to work with the province's electoral commission.

Cruz, now back in Los Angeles, provided a detailed account of the election in Nineveh to IPS in interviews.

The 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division ("Stryker Brigade") was responsible for getting ballot boxes and ballots to polling places on the Nineveh Plain in January's election. But it relied on battle-hardened Kurdish Peshmerga militiamen to maintain security in the towns and villages, and did not know its way around the area well enough to deliver ballot boxes there without Kurdish help, according to Cruz.

So the brigade agreed to send a US convoy with the voting materials to meet a Kurdish delegation in the Kurdish town of Faida on the border of Kurdistan 50 miles north of Mosul, so that the convoy could be guided to the largely Christian and Shabak towns on the Plain of Nineveh.

When the convoy arrived in Faida the day before the election, however, the promised Kurdish guides never came. Instead, said Cruz, the Kurdish mayor of the town came demanding the ballots for what he called Kurdish towns on the list. The convoy commander wanted to take all the ballots back because the mission had been aborted.

A tense standoff followed, and the convoy commander called Cruz for a decision on what to do with the ballots. He advised the commander to give the mayor enough ballots for four towns, and the convoy returned to Mosul.

On election day, Cruz recalled, the US military tried to find helicopters to carry the ballot materials out to the six remaining district towns on the list, but was able to get ballots before the 5pm close of voting to only one town, Bashiqa, which is almost entirely Christian, Shabak and Yezidi.

But according to Cruz, Kurdish militiamen stole the ballot boxes from the polling place, returning them later after obviously tampering with them and offering bribes to the election workers to accept them.

Meanwhile, a much more ambitious vote-fraud scheme was unfolding in Sinjar, a relatively small district town in the west known to be a predominantly Sunni Arab area.

About 12,000 ballots had been sent to Sinjar, but on election day KDP officials in Sinjar requested a number of ballots far in excess of the estimated electorate in the town and surrounding villages, according to Cruz. He recalled that the request was supported by the office of the interim president of Iraq, Sunni Arab Ghazi al-Yawer.

Cruz remembers joking about the "500% voter-participation rate" in Sinjar. Nevertheless, the Stryker Brigade Combat Team complied with the request for the ballots.

Later, the province's Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) forwarded 38 ballot boxes, 174 plastic sacks and 14 cardboard cartons of ballots that had obviously been tampered with to the national IECI. In some boxes, reams of ballot papers that had not even been folded were visible. In others, boxes had been resealed with red and green duct tape.

When Cruz asked the local IECI director how many of the fraudulent ballots had come from Sinjar, he was told, "all of them".

The average number of ballots per ballot box nationwide was 500, and if each of the 236 boxes and bags of votes from Sinjar had that many ballots, those bags would have contained about 115,000 ballots. The total number of legitimate votes in Nineveh was only 190,000.

The Kurds apparently wanted to bolster their claims on Sinjar and much of the Plain of Nineveh. They also were apparently trying to ensure that non-Kurdish minorities would not have enough votes to gain representation in the interim National Assembly or in the province council.

It did succeed in reducing the vote for the national Assyrian Christian list to exactly 3,346, despite an electorate approaching 100,000. The Iraqi Turkmen Front list garnered only 1,342 votes, despite an electorate that was many times larger.

Judging from the large disparity between the 77,000 legitimate votes for the Kurdish list for the national assembly and the 110,000 legitimate votes for the Kurdish list for province council, the Kurds deliberately shifted a substantial number of votes to Yawer in return for his role in getting the additional ballots need for the vote-stuffing exercise. Yawer was threatened with a minimal vote in the province because of the Sunni boycott.

Although it displayed the boxes and bags of fraudulent ballots, the national IECI downplayed the seriousness of the ballot-stuffing in Nineveh and covered up the Kurdish role in it.

In his media briefing on February 8, IECI spokesman Farid Ayar blamed the ballot fraud on unidentified "militiamen or armed men". According to Cruz, however, the only such incident in the province was in Bashiqa.

Ayar refused to divulge which party would have profited from the fraudulent ballots, telling journalists, "I can't accuse any party, because we don't know."

The KDP obviously miscalculated in thinking that electoral officials in Nineveh could be bribed to turn a blind eye to such crude ballot stuffing. But no damage was done by the failed attempt. The IECI helped by diverting media attention from the Kurds, and US news media never dug into the story behind the mountain of fraudulent ballots exhibited by the commission.

In the constitutional referendum, the Shi'ite government will share the Kurdish interest in doing whatever is necessary to avert the defeat of the constitution in Nineveh. Meanwhile, the US military remains heavily dependent on Kurds in Nineveh. The KDP may well believe that a more sophisticated Kurdish ballot-stuffing scheme will work on October 15.

WINNING MORE HEARTS AND MINDS, FOR THE ARMED RESISTANCE THAT IS



U.S. troops prepare to enter a house in Sa'da on Saturday as part of Operation Iron Fist.

[Nothing quite like invading somebody else's country for a President who pretends he's liberating it, hanging around for another couple years when the people who live there want you gone, kicking in their doors, busting into their houses without their consent, rummaging through their personal belongings, and arresting them if they object. Guaranteed to make any self-respecting, patriotic citizens who think it's supposed to be their country arm themselves and do their best to kill you. It's what you'd do if there were 140,000 Iraqi troops occupying the USA and pulling that shit in your home town, isn't it?

[But the officers who order you to do this know that, don't they?

[Don't they?]

**OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION
BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME NOW!**

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Workers Of Gaza Unite!

"We do not have anything except for our children. And we have the right to ensure that they will also attend university, just like the children of officials and senior government people do. We are not asking for seats and salaried positions, we are asking to be treated with dignity."

But the protest was also directed against the incompetence of the official labor unions, the leaders of which - who receive regular salaries from the Palestinian Authority treasury - no one can remember if, when or how were elected.

Calls by senior Palestinian Authority officials for "national unity" and the victory celebrations marking the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, say the workers, will not divert their attention and will not keep them quiet.

14/09/2005 By Amira Hass, Haaretz Daily

Another demand was added last week to the list of demands of the Independent Workers Committees in Gaza, which they have been presenting in the past few months to institutions of the Palestinian Authority and its leadership.

The new demand is the indictment of whoever ordered that live ammunition be fired over the heads of workers and their children - schoolchildren - who demonstrated in Khan Yunis last Monday.

The original list included the following major demands: an exemption from school registration fees for the children of workers and the unemployed; establishment of a social solidarity fund for the systematic payment of unemployment compensation; the cancellation of debts of workers and unemployed persons who failed to pay their electricity and water bills in the past five years; tight supervision of distribution of temporary jobs by the Palestinian Authority; free health insurance to workers and the unemployed; free elections to the General Union of Palestinian Workers.

The Palestinian security authorities were all out in full (and aggressive) force against several hundred workers and unemployed people who staged a protest on the streets of Khan Yunis last week.

The workers, members of the committees, decided to demonstrate after learning that the promises of senior Palestinian Authority officials, including Mohammed Dahlan, to comply with their main demand and exempt their children from school registration fees were given only to the media and were not passed on to the schools as official directives.

The parents had happily sent their children to school, where the principals informed them they would be permitted to study on condition that their parents pay the registration fees.

As a result, the workers committees declared a first demonstration on Sunday, at the Education Ministry. They reached a temporary agreement on the formation of a joint committee that would determine entitlements to an exemption from school fees.

The following day, when the children were sent "to bring a paper from the Welfare Ministry" to show their parents were in a poor financial state, the workers set up a protest tent outside the offices of the governor of Khan Yunis, whose government position makes him the public representative of the rais, Mahmoud Abbas.

On Monday, representatives of the workers asked to begin negotiations on their demands with the governor, Hosni Zourab. Zourab complained that the workers in the tent were interrupting him and speaking rudely. Abd-as-Samih an-Najjar, who was elected in free elections as the head of the Independent Workers Committees in the Gaza Strip, said Zourab was referring to two or three enraged workers who accused the governor not only of not fulfilling promises, but that he, an-Najjar, had silenced the men.

He claimed that everyone there wanted a civilized discussion and negotiations, and to that end he had gone to the governor's office. There, to his amazement, he found representatives of the security agencies, and a few mukhtars - dignitary representatives of family clans "who are good when it comes to handling interfamily disputes, but have nothing to do with our demands, which concern the rule of law."

"We are not asking for favors or gestures from any of the higher-ups, and not for a temporary solution, but rather for the fixing in legislation of the rights of workers and the unemployed," says an-Najjar.

"We do not have anything except for our children. And we have the right to ensure that they will also attend university, just like the children of officials and senior government people do. We are not asking for seats and salaried positions, we are asking to be treated with dignity." However, it seems a foul atmosphere began to fill the room, which culminated in the order to dismantle the protest tent.

Security sources in the PA claimed it was the workers who began to throw stones at the policemen, who were therefore compelled to disperse the demonstration by shooting in the air and throwing tear-gas grenades.

The workers reject the allegation, and say the police acted violently against their right to demonstrate in a peaceful manner, and intended to attack them as they were squeezed tight in the protest tent, which explains why they were compelled to leave the tent and demonstrate in the streets.

The workers explained the throwing of stones at the policemen as a "need to defend ourselves," after the Palestinian Authority policemen began firing their weapons in the air, with live ammunition.

The workers also rescued an-Najjar from the policemen.

He had been arrested even though he claims he tried to ensure the entire protest would take place peacefully. "They fired tear gas at us," he says, "and we shouted at them, `In Neveh Dekalim, the Israeli army stood in front of the settlers for days on end and did not harm them, while you, our national police force, throws tear gas at us within five minutes.'" One grenade hit the foot of one of the demonstrators.

The clashes between the police and the workers and schoolchildren who joined in the protest of their parents went on for several hours.

Attempts to prevent the pupils from joining the demonstrators, lest they be hurt, proved unsuccessful.

"Everything went out of control," says an-Najjar. The insulting way that "their" police treat them is hurtful. In the meantime, representatives of the Independent Workers' Committees in the northern Gaza Strip, who heard of the clashes launched their own protests in Beit Lahia and Jabalya.

Representatives of the committees throughout the Gaza Strip are scheduled to meet on Wednesday and plan their next moves.

The Independent Workers' Committees evolved from the protest tent camps that were set up by workers throughout the Strip, especially those who lost their jobs in Israel due to the prolonged closure, which began some three years ago.

It all started with a protest of what they saw as an unfair division of the funds contributed to the Palestinian Authority, funds they did not receive, leaving them as an increasingly larger group of "welfare cases."

They also protested the fact that the criteria for handing out various jobs to the unemployed were unclear. The protest developed into an increasingly more structured and principled criticism - first of all against the Palestinian Authority's policy of "distribution of charity" and "distribution of favors" - in place of a valuing of social welfare and social solidarity to be anchored in the legislation.

But the protest was also directed against the incompetence of the official labor unions, the leaders of which - who receive regular salaries from the Palestinian Authority treasury - no one can remember if, when or how were elected.

The official, veteran unions are connected at the hip to the various political organizations, and the distribution of portfolios between them is done according to allegiance to the various PLO groups. They are headed by well-connected PLO members.

The workers and the unemployed who began protesting three years ago emphasize their organizational independence.

Last year, prior to the January 2005 election for the Palestinian Authority presidency, the workers began preparations for the establishment of an independent workers' organization. They held their founding conference on December 18, 2004, at which an-Najjar was elected chairman and a general secretariat was elected, which includes 21 representatives, including five women. Heads of the organization say that approximately 8,000 workers have registered as members; they pay annual membership dues of NIS 10.

Prior to the presidential elections, members of the new workers' organization discovered that the only contender who expressed full support for their demands was Dr. Mustafa Barghouti, who set up the Palestinian National Initiative.

They therefore expressed their support for him as a candidate, but as an-Najjar now stresses, it was temporary support.

The Hamas movement, which recently established a workers' association of its own, offered them to take part in a demonstration it organized. At a meeting held last month at the main office in Khan Yunis, they turned down the offer; they realized their most important asset is organizational independence.

Therefore, they have also asked that the human rights groups, which have a strongly leftist background, ease up on the professional "embrace" they initially granted the workers' organization, to avoid being stained by any labels. Now they are themselves arranging for various courses to be offered to workers.

The traditional Union of Workers' Associations viewed the independent organization as a threat. Charges were voiced at several demonstrations that the union had sent provocateurs to tangle with the police and turn the clash into a model of "chaos" and "treacherousness" against the national government.

Although the establishment Palestinian media generally refrains from reporting on their demands and organizing efforts, in spite of misleading reports that the demonstration in Khan Yunis included protesters from Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the independent committees did notch a few achievements: They were assured (on a signed document), that the electric company would not cut off electricity to individuals who have not paid their bills on time ("A NIS 15,000 debt is the minimum," says an-Najjar).

It was also agreed that the unemployed and workers would receive free health care, although this would not include treatment abroad. This promise was given by the former health minister, Jawad al-Tibi, but leaders of the independent workers' organization discovered that not only are people required to pay NIS 50 for this "free" health insurance, but that it is defined as "insurance of the Al-Aqsa Intifada." In other words, as soon as the official end of the intifada is declared, no more insurance.

Will the upcoming meeting with the Palestinian labor minister break from the pattern of the past three years: disregard by the establishment, lobbying on behalf of a sympathetic Palestinian Authority official, noisy demonstrations that lead to a meeting with one official or another and then assurances that turn into a temporary "favor"?

In any event, an-Najjar, who anticipates a presidential order by Abbas to regulate the free registration of pupils, workers and the unemployed, promises that if 10 days before Ramadan, which falls in October, their main demands are not met, the workers will continue their protest actions.

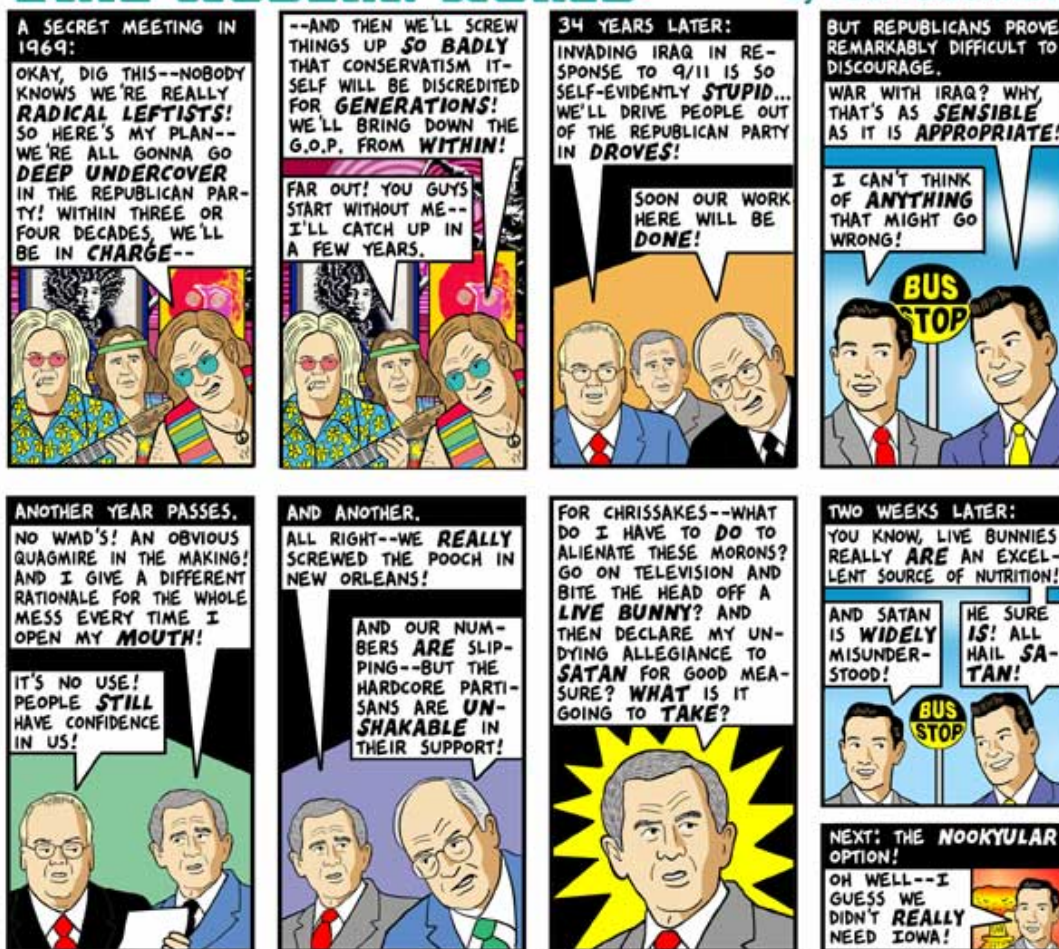
Calls by senior Palestinian Authority officials for "national unity" and the victory celebrations marking the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, say the workers, will not divert their attention and will not keep them quiet.

[To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation by a foreign power, go to: www.rafahtoday.org The foreign army is Israeli; the occupied nation is Palestine.]

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



CLASS WAR REPORTS

Ranks Of The U.S. Poor Increasing Year By Year; Poverty “More Widespread Than In Any Other Industrialized Country”

[Thanks to PB, who sent this in.]

The world's 500 richest people, according to U.N. statistics, have as much income as the world's poorest 416 million.

October 05, 2005 By Bernd Debusmann, (Reuters)

Four decades after a U.S. president declared war on poverty, more than 37 million people in the world's richest country are officially classified as poor and their number has been on the rise for years.

Last year, according to government statistics, 1.1 million Americans fell below the poverty line. That equals the entire population of a major city like Dallas or Prague.

Since 2000, the ranks of the poor have increased year by year by almost 5.5 million in total. Even optimists see little prospect that the number will shrink soon despite a renewed debate on poverty prompted by searing television images which laid bare a fact of American life rarely exposed to global view.

The percentage of black Americans living in poverty is 24.7, almost twice as high as the overall rate for all races.

There are three times as many poor whites as blacks in the United States and the poverty rate for whites has risen faster than that for blacks and Hispanics.

Academic experts also say the government's figures minimize the true scale of poverty because they are outdated. The formula for the poverty level was set in 1963 on the assumption that one third of the average family's budget was spent on food.

This is no longer true. Housing has become the largest single expense and tens of thousands of the "working poor," the label for those who work at or near the minimum wage, are forced to sleep in cars, trailers, long-term motels or shelters.

"Every August, we Americans tell ourselves a lie," said David Brady, a Duke University professor who studies poverty.

"The poverty rate was designed to undercount because the government wanted to show progress in the war on poverty.

"Taking everything into account, the real rate is around 18 percent, or 48 million people. Poverty in the United States is more widespread, by far, than in any other industrialized country."

Poverty is a universal problem, as is inequality.

The world's 500 richest people, according to U.N. statistics, have as much income as the world's poorest 416 million.

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