

## **GI SPECIAL 5G11:**

**THIS IS HOW BUSH BRINGS THE TROOPS HOME:  
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE**



The casket of Army Sgt 1st Class Greg Sutton at Arlington National Cemetery June 20, 2007. Sutton, 38, died on June 6 after his vehicle struck an improvised explosive device in Baghdad. REUTERS/Jason Reed

# **Profits Outrank Troops Lives**

**“The Lives Of Our Soldiers  
Took A Back Seat To Who Got  
The Contracts”**

**Pentagon Traitors “Put U.S.  
Troops In Iraq At Risk”**

# **War Profiteers Who Couldn't Deliver On Time & Produced Worthless Shit Got No-Bid Contracts; Soldier-Killing Brass Lied: There Were Others Who Could Have Produced Better & Quicker**

[Thanks to Pham Binh, Traveling Soldier, who sent this in.]

**In describing the scope of the problem, the report said that some of the Simula kits delivered to the troops had two left doors, were missing side plates and contained brackets that needed re-welding. Overall, the problems “resulted in increased risk to the lives of soldiers,” the report states.**

July 11, 2007 By RICHARD LARDNER and ANNE FLAHERTY, AP

**WASHINGTON - The Defense Department put U.S. troops in Iraq at risk by awarding contracts for badly needed armored vehicles to companies that failed to deliver them on time, according to a review by the Pentagon's inspector general.**

The June 27 report, obtained Wednesday by The Associated Press, examined 15 contracts worth \$2.2 billion awarded since 2000 to Force Protection Inc. and Armor Holdings Inc.

**The contracts were issued without the normal competition for government work because the military determined these companies were the only ones capable of supplying the vehicles fast enough to meet the demands of deployed troops.**

**Yet the inspector general's report concluded otherwise.**

Overall, Force Protection of Ladson, S.C., received 11 contracts from the Army and Marine Corps worth \$417 million for a variety of vehicles, including its Buffalo and Cougar mine-resistant trucks.

**Force Protection failed to meet all delivery schedules, according to the report, and acquisition officials knew there were other manufacturers that might have supplied some of the vehicles in a more timely fashion.**

The report does not provide the names of those possible alternative sources.

The report, not yet publicly released, also criticizes the Army's award of a \$266 million contract for crew protection kits to Simula Aerospace and Defense Group, a subsidiary of Armor Holdings of Jacksonville, Fla.

Simula lacked the internal controls necessary to ensure delivery of the kits, which were needed to make military vehicles less vulnerable to roadside bombs and small-arms fire, according to the report.

**The Army received kits “with missing and unusable components, which increased installation time and required additional reinspection of kits,” according to the report.**

**In describing the scope of the problem, the report said that some of the Simula kits delivered to the troops had two left doors, were missing side plates and contained brackets that needed re-welding.**

**Overall, the problems “resulted in increased risk to the lives of soldiers,” the report states.**

Armor Holdings received three other contracts worth \$1.5 billion for armored Humvees and armor kits to strengthen older-model vehicles.

The review was requested by Rep. Louise Slaughter, D-N.Y., in April 2006, after she learned the Pentagon was relying on just a few small companies to supply bomb-resistant vehicles to troops in Iraq.

**“It’s been business as usual,” Slaughter said Wednesday after reviewing the report. “The lives of our soldiers took a back seat to who got the contracts.”**

**Slaughter said the report raises more questions than answers and that she wants to know if the awards were the result of “influence peddling or insider connections.”**

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## **IRAQ WAR REPORTS**

# **“The Only Results Of Bush’s Surge That We See Are The Number Of Caskets Coming Home” Chicopee Bids Farewell To Another Hometown Soldier**

July 6, 2007 By Claire L. Cummings, Boston Globe Correspondent

CHICOPEE -- The fallen soldier’s little boy smiled as Governor Deval L. Patrick gave him a comforting rub on the back. The 1-year-old, dressed in a gray Army exercise shirt

and miniature camouflage pants, is already the spitting image of his father, relatives said.

As family and friends gathered yesterday to remember Army Staff Sergeant Daniel A. Newsome, they recalled that his life's mission was to raise his son to be a great man. For those who love and miss Newsome, who died June 27 in Baghdad from injuries he sustained in an explosion, it is a mission they will now make their own.

"All of us are the mold that made Dan the man he was, and though we cannot make a new Dan . . . a new Staff Sergeant Daniel Allan Newsome, we can do our best to mold and shape a man very much like him," said Eric Ritter, the soldier's stepfather. "He already looks like his Daddy. His little hands and feet are Dan's. He has Dan's eyes. And when he frowns, his forehead wrinkles just like his Dad's did."

Others said the 27-year-old Newsome was a responsible leader who took his job seriously, but thrived on making people laugh.

"I always felt a little safer when we patrolled, because I knew he wouldn't hesitate to do what he'd have to do to save my life," Staff Sergeant Jack Schnackenberg told those in attendance.

Newsome lay in an open casket, his face lighted by a chandelier. Poster boards lined one side of the room, which displayed photographs from several phases of the soldier's life, from his own baby picture to a group shot with friends in front of a limousine before a high school dance.

A slide show projected dozens of images to the tune of Eric Clapton's "Tears in Heaven." Whether he's holding his newborn child or lounging in uniform in Iraq, Newsome is smiling in nearly every photo.

In addition to Patrick, several law enforcement officers and firefighters also attended the service.

Yesterday also marked the first day that flags on state buildings were lowered to half-staff for the burial of a Massachusetts soldier killed in war, following Patrick's order this week. Newsome's uncle, Concord Fire Chief Kenneth Willette, lobbied the state to revisit its policy on the practice, long reserved for political leaders.

Newsome is the third soldier from Chicopee to die in the Iraq and Afghan conflicts. The city's mayor said his death has overwhelmed the area.

**"Each one's bad, but the multiple impact on the community has just been terrible," Mayor Michael D. Bissonette said after the service.**

**"The only results of Bush's surge that we see are the number of caskets coming home. It's not sitting well with people."**

Outside the hall, some shoppers at a nearby supermarket paused from packing away groceries to silently watch the procession leave for Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Agawam. Others stood in the Castle of Knights parking lot as several soldiers escorted Newsome's casket to the hearse.

"It's overwhelming for what they're doing for this gentleman," said Tammy Boucher, 48, of Chicopee. ". . . It's a nice thing to see that everybody pulls together."

Don and Shirley Dunham had seen the giant American flag suspended from two fire engines outside the hall and walked over to pay their respects. Their grandson was expected home soon for a two-week leave from Iraq.

**"In World War II, you knew who your enemy was; you knew who you were fighting," said Don Dunham, 79, who also served in the Korean war. "Over there, you don't even know who the enemy is. Everybody's your enemy. That's why this kid got killed; he didn't know who shot him."**

Newsome had just visited home a couple of weeks ago. During his break, Bissonnette said, the soldier and his wife, Karen, began planning for civilian life; his enlistment was up in February.

"It's unfathomable to see people with so much promise have their lives snuffed out like this," he said.

**Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward GI Special 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, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Project, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657**

## **Puerto Rican Soldier Killed In Green Zone**



US Army Capt. Maria Ines Ortiz, 40, left, a Puerto Rican soldier, was killed on July 10, 2007 in a mortar attack in Baghdad's Green Zone. She was the first Army nurse to die from combat-related injuries in the Iraq war. (AP Photo/Casiano Family Photo)

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## Mortar Attack On Green Zone Kills At Least Two

Jul 13 By LEE KEATH, Associated Press Writer

On Friday, a volley of at least four mortars were fired from the city's dangerous southern districts at the Green Zone, the heavily fortified district where al-Maliki's offices and the U.S. Embassy are located.

The mortars hit near the home of a senior Iraqi military official, killing two Iraqi soldiers, an Iraqi army official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to release the information to the press.

**There was no immediate word from American authorities on casualties.**

It would be the second time in a week that mortar fire into the Green Zone — nearly a daily occurrence — has caused deaths.

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## Soldier From Klamath Falls Oregon Casualty In Iraq



Dominic Rodriguez: Photo: Rodriguez family

Jun-26-2007 Salem-News

(SALEM, Ore.) - Army Specialist Dominic N. Rodriguez, 23, of Klamath Falls, Ore., died June 22nd from injuries sustained in a non-combat related incident in Baghdad, Iraq.

He was assigned to the 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas. Officials with the Department of Defense say the incident is under investigation.

Dominic Rodriguez had been in Iraq since October of 2006. He enlisted in the U.S. Army believing that is was where he belonged and he wanted to defend his country.

He was born Nov. 17th, 1983 in Klamath Falls, Ore, and graduated from Klamath Union High School.

Dominic Rodriguez was extremely interested in sports. He was the Captain of the High School football team and then went on to play college ball at the College of the Siskiyous in Weed, Calif. He also enjoyed wrestling, swimming and fishing.

He is survived by his wife, Jeanette, Stepchildren Allison and Austin, and parents Filomeno and Patricia Rodriguez Sr.

It is unknown at this time when the services will be held, They are requesting in lieu of flowers, donations be made In Honor of Spec. Dominic Rodriguez Jr. to the Special Olympics, P.O. Box 221, Klamath Falls, OR 97601, 541-850-5257.

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## **Attack On British Compound Sets Building On Fire**

July 13, 2007 AP

BAGHDAD: An insurgent mortar or rocket attack Friday on a compound where the British and U.S. consulates are located in southern Iraq set an unused building on fire but caused no casualties, a British military spokesman said.

"The Basra Palace compound was exposed to IDF (indirect fire) attack this morning. One of the buildings inside the camp caught fire as a result, though the building was a disused kitchen with no personnel inside," said Maj. Matthew Bird. He added that multinational forces returned fire on guerrillas involved in the attack, one of whom was killed.

Mortar and rocket attacks on the Basra Palace compound as well as other British military bases in the southern city of Basra, occur almost daily, usually from Shiite militants. More than an hour after Friday's attack, thick black smoke could be seen billowing from inside the compound.

It "was some kind of indirect fire attack, could have been rocket or mortars," Bird said.

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## **Silly Bullshit Story Of The Week**

Jul 13 Reuters

U.S. soldiers killed at least six Iraqi policemen and seven suspected militants during a dawn raid in east Baghdad on Friday to arrest an Iraqi police lieutenant accused of militant links, the U.S. military said.

A U.S. war plane made an air strike during the fighting after U.S. soldiers were attacked with "heavy and accurate" gunfire from an Iraqi police checkpoint, rooftops and a nearby church, the military said in a statement.

The police lieutenant was detained in the raid. The U.S. said he was suspected of planning roadside bomb and mortar attacks on U.S. forces, and of close ties with Iranians accused by Washington of fomenting violence in Iraq.

**[Last week everybody fighting the occupation was supposed to be Al Qaida. Looks like the propaganda department has changed the lies again. Now it's Iranians. What next, space monsters from the dark side of the moon?]**

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## **UNREMITTING HELL ON EARTH; BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW**



Thanks to Kevin Ramirez, CCCO. He writes: Pics showing what happens when US bases get mortared/rocketed. Obviously taken by a GI. I found them online, and don't know who took them.

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## SOMALIA WAR REPORTS

### **A World Record For U.S. Imperial Propaganda In Four Paragraphs**

7.14.07 AP

Islamists in Somalia threatened Saturday to disrupt a peace [occupation] conference this weekend, saying anyone who takes part 'is sentenced to death.'

The threat came from the Shabab, the militant wing of an Islamic [translation: nationalist: *Political groups in Somalia are "Islamic" because the people who live there are "Islamic." Duh.*] group that ruled much of southern Somalia for six months last year.

The group was driven from its strongholds in December [by a U.S. government backed invasion and occupation. How could AP forget that?] but has vowed to launch [they've been fighting for seven months now, but why mention facts?] an Iraq-style insurgency [the reporter sucked this one out of his thumb; nobody in Somalia talks about an "Iraq-style" insurgency] until Somalia is ruled by an Islamic theocracy [translation: is ruled by Somalia citizens, not a U.S. government created military dictatorship].

The Shabab termed Sunday's meeting in Mogadishu a 'conspiracy conference against the Somali people.' [Wow, how did an accurate statement get past the ass-kissing Bush propagandist who wrote this? T]

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## TROOP NEWS

### **Republicans Kill Webb's Troop-Protection Amendment**

July 11, 2007 Bob Geiger, Huffington Post [Excerpts]

We didn't need any further proof that Congressional Republicans really don't give a damn about the troops or their families but we just got it in the United States Senate anyway.

Just moments ago, Senate Republicans succeeded in a filibuster in which they refused to end debate on Virginia Democrat Jim Webb's S. 2012, which would have placed strict limits on National Guard and reserve deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan as well as mandating more downtime at home before active-duty combat troops are returned to battle.

The vote was 56-41 to end debate, with 60 votes needed to move to a full, up-or-down vote on the Webb measure.

"Sadly, our forces are being burned out. Many of our troops are on their third or even their fourth tour in Iraq and Afghanistan," said Patty Murray (D-WA) on the Senate floor Tuesday.

"Months ago, the Department of Defense announced that their tours would be extended from 12 months to 15 months. And on top of all that, they are not receiving the necessary time at home before they are sent back to battle."

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## **IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP**

### **GET THE MESSAGE?**



Iraqi boys throw stones at the burning wreckage of a U.S. military Humvee destroyed by a roadside bomb in eastern Baghdad July 11, 2007. (AP Photo/Khalid Mohammed)

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## **Assorted Resistance Action**

July 13 (Xinhua) & Reuters

**Guerrillas attacked the western checkpoint of Interior Ministry building at about 2:30 a.m. on Friday on a highway near the Interior Ministry building in eastern,**

**killing five policemen and wounding nine others, some in critical condition, a well-informed police source said.**

The policemen trades fire with the attackers who took shelter in cars and opened fire at the checkpoint, the source said. The attack took place during the nighttime curfew in the capital, which starts from 10:00 p.m. on Thursday (1800 GMT) to 5:00 a.m. (0100 GMT) on Friday.

Four Iraqi policemen and two soldiers were killed when guerrillas attacked their checkpoint in Dour, a small town near the northern city of Tikrit, police said.

An Iraqi soldier was killed and two others wounded by a roadside bomb targeting their patrol in the east Baghdad neighbourhood of Dora, police said.

One policeman was killed and eight other officers plus a civilian were wounded by a roadside bomb in the restive northern city of Mosul, police said.

An Iraqi soldier was killed in a drive by shooting in the centre of Sawayra, a town 60 km (40 miles) south of Baghdad, police said.

**IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE  
END THE OCCUPATION**

## **FORWARD OBSERVATIONS**

**“What country can preserve its liberties if its rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms.”  
Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, 1787.**

**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**

***July 14, 1789:  
Magnificent Anniversary:***

# “Revolutionaries And Mutinous Troops Stormed And Dismantled The Bastille”



Carl Bunin Peace History

**Bastille Day in France: Parisian revolutionaries and mutinous troops stormed and dismantled the Bastille, a royal fortress converted to a state prison, that had come to symbolize the tyranny of the Bourbon monarchs.**

This dramatic action was proof that power no longer resided in the King as God's representative, but in the people, and signaled the beginning of the French Revolution and the First Republic.

## **Troops Invited:**

**What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or send email [contact@militaryproject.org](mailto:contact@militaryproject.org):. Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Replies confidential. Same address to unsubscribe.**

## **OCCUPATION REPORT**

***Good News For The Iraqi  
Resistance!!***

# **U.S. Occupation Commands' Stupid Terror Tactics Recruit Even More Fighters To Kill U.S. Troops**



Iraqi citizens look at the wreckage of their home after a night home invasion in the Azamiyah neighborhood by foreign occupation troops from the U.S. July 12, 2007, in Baghdad. Residents say U.S. soldiers used explosives to gain entry to a building containing several shops, destroying the building and a nearby home. (AP Photo/Khalid Mohammed )

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

**OCCUPATION PALESTINE**

**“Why Should Any Palestinian  
‘Recognize’ The Monstrous Crime  
Carried Out By Israel’s Founders”**

**I look forward to the day when Israel can say to me, and millions of other Palestinians: "Here, here is your family's house by the sea, here are your lemon trees, the olive grove your father tended: Come home and be whole again." Then we can speak of a future together.**

July 10, 2007 By Mousa Abu Marzook. L.A. Times. MOUSA ABU MARZOOK is the deputy of the political bureau of Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement.

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Damascus, Syria — HAMAS' RESCUE of a BBC journalist from his captors in Gaza last week was surely cause for rejoicing. But I want to be clear about one thing: We did not deliver up Alan Johnston as some obsequious boon to Western powers.

It was done as part of our effort to secure Gaza from the lawlessness of militias and violence, no matter what the source. Gaza will be calm and under the rule of law — a place where all journalists, foreigners and guests of the Palestinian people will be treated with dignity.

**Hamas has never supported attacks on Westerners, as even our harshest critics will concede; our struggle has always been focused on the occupier and our legal resistance to it — a right of occupied people that is explicitly supported by the Fourth Geneva Convention.**

**Yet our movement is continually linked by President Bush and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to ideologies that they know full well we do not follow, such as the agenda of Al Qaeda and its adherents.**

**But we are not part of a broader war.**

**Our resistance struggle is no one's proxy, although we welcome the support of people everywhere for justice in Palestine.**

**The American efforts to negate the will of the Palestinian electorate by destroying our fledgling government have not succeeded — rather, the U.S.-assisted Fatah coup has only multiplied the problems of Washington's "two-state solution."**

Mr. Bush has for the moment found a pliant friend in Abu Mazen, a "moderate" in the American view but one who cannot seriously expect to command confidence in the streets of Gaza or the West Bank after having taken American arms and Israeli support to depose the elected government by force. We deplore the current prognosticating over "Fatah-land" versus "Hamastan." In the end, there can be only one Palestinian state.

But what of the characterization by the West of our movement as beyond the pale of civilized discourse? Our "militant" stance cannot by itself be the disqualifying factor, as many armed struggles have historically resulted in a place at the table of nations.

Nor can any deny the reasonableness of our fight against the occupation and the right of Palestinians to have dignity, justice and self-rule.

Yet in my many years of keeping an open mind to all sides of the Palestine question — including those I spent in an American prison, awaiting Israeli "justice" — I am forever asked to concede the recognition of Israel's putative "right to exist" as a necessary precondition to discussing grievances, and to renounce positions found in the Islamic Resistance Movement's charter of 1988, an essentially revolutionary document born of the intolerable conditions under occupation more than 20 years ago.

The sticking point of "recognition" has been used as a litmus test to judge Palestinians. Yet as I have said before, a state may have a right to exist, but not absolutely at the expense of other states, or more important, at the expense of millions of human individuals and their rights to justice.

**Why should anyone concede Israel's "right" to exist, when it has never even acknowledged the foundational crimes of murder and ethnic cleansing by means of which Israel took our towns and villages, our farms and orchards, and made us a nation of refugees?**

**Why should any Palestinian "recognize" the monstrous crime carried out by Israel's founders and continued by its deformed modern apartheid state, while he or she lives 10 to a room in a cinderblock, tin-roof United Nations hut?**

These are not abstract questions, and it is not rejectionist simply because we have refused to abandon the victims of 1948 and their descendants.

As for the 1988 charter, if every state or movement were to be judged solely by its foundational, revolutionary documents or the ideas of its progenitors, there would be a good deal to answer for on all sides. The American Declaration of Independence, with its self-evident truth of equality, simply did not countenance (at least, not in the minds of most of its illustrious signatories) any such status for the 700,000 African slaves at that time; nor did the Constitution avoid codifying slavery as an institution, counting "other persons" as three-fifths of a man.

**Israel, which has never formally adopted a constitution of its own but rather operates through the slow accretion of Basic Laws, declares itself explicitly to be a state for the Jews, conferring privileged status based on faith in a land where millions of occupants are Arabs, Muslims and Christians.**

The writings of Israel's "founders" — from Herzl to Jabotinsky to Ben Gurion — make repeated calls for the destruction of Palestine's non-Jewish inhabitants: "We must expel the Arabs and take their places." A number of political parties today control blocs in the Israeli Knesset, while advocating for the expulsion of Arab citizens from Israel and the rest of Palestine, envisioning a single Jewish state from the Jordan to the sea. Yet I hear no clamor in the international community for Israel to repudiate these words as a necessary precondition for any discourse whatsoever.

The double standard, as always, is in effect for Palestinians.

**I, for one, do not trouble myself over "recognizing" Israel's right to exist — this is not, after all, an epistemological problem; Israel does exist, as any Rafah boy in a hospital bed, with IDF shrapnel in his torso, can tell you.**

This dance of mutual rejection is a mere distraction when so many are dying or have lived as prisoners for two generations in refugee camps.

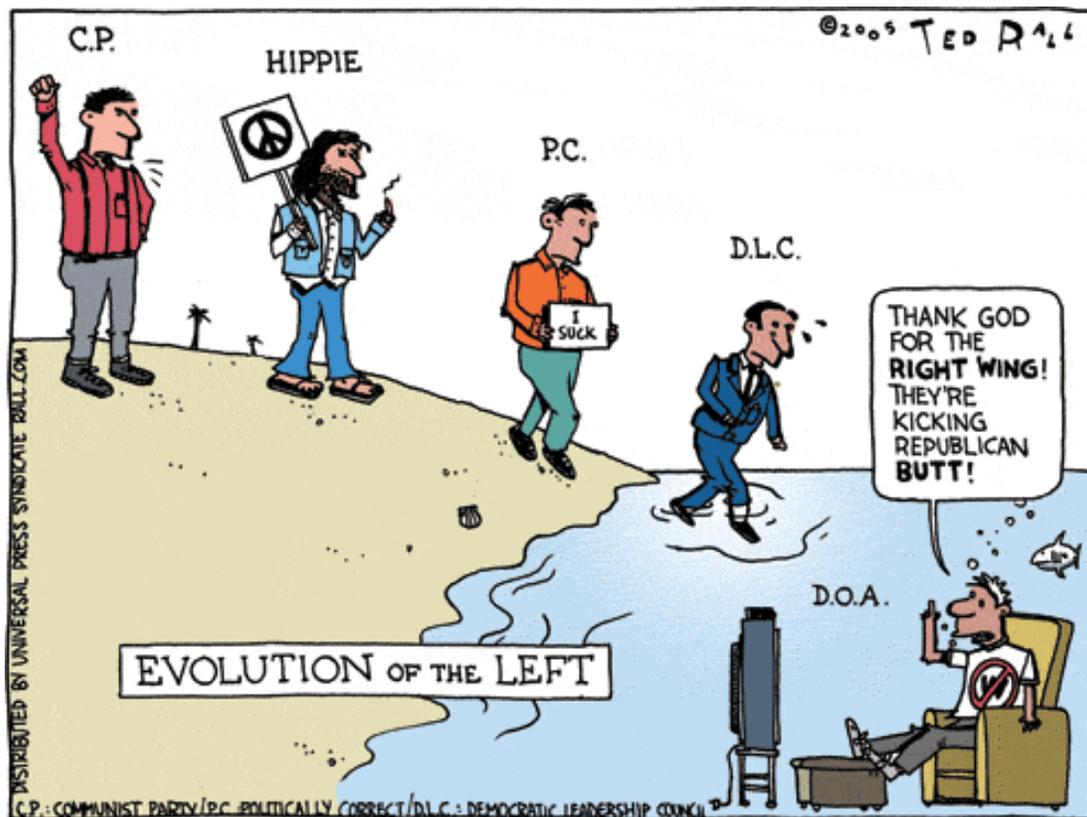
As I write these words, Israeli forays into Gaza have killed another 15 people, including a child. Who but a Jacobin dares to discuss the "rights" of nations in the face of such relentless state violence against an occupied population?

I look forward to the day when Israel can say to me, and millions of other Palestinians: "Here, here is your family's house by the sea, here are your lemon trees, the olive grove your father tended: Come home and be whole again."

Then we can speak of a future together.

[To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation by foreign terrorists, go to: [www.rafahtoday.org](http://www.rafahtoday.org) The occupied nation is Palestine. The foreign terrorists call themselves "Israeli."]

## DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



# Give Bush Credit: His Stupid Lies About Iraq Are Consistent

July 12, 2007 By NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF, NY Times [Excerpt]

It's nice that Mr. Bush is still confident about Iraq, telling us on Tuesday: "I strongly believe that we will prevail."

Apparently, we're doing almost as well today as we were in October 2003 when he blamed journalists for filtering out the good news and declared: "We're making really good progress."

Then in September 2004, Mr. Bush assured us that Iraq was "making steady progress."

In April 2005: "We're making good progress in Iraq."

In October 2005: "Iraq has made incredible political progress."

In November 2005: "Iraqis are making inspiring progress."

Do we really want to continue making this kind of inspiring progress for the next 10 years?

## TRAITOR



(AFP/Jim Watson)

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or send to [contact@militaryproject.org](mailto:contact@militaryproject.org):. Name, I.D., withheld on request. Replies confidential. Same to unsubscribe.

## CLASS WAR REPORTS

### ***Venezuela:***

**“International Consortia From  
China, Russia, And Iran Are  
Exploiting Our Workers More Than  
Ever”**

**“The President Represents  
Investment By The Multinationals As  
A Step Forward”**

**“I See It As Mortgaging The  
Revolution”**

July–August 2007, International Socialist Review Issue 54: INTERVIEW: Orlando Chirino

*The following interview was conducted with ORLANDO CHIRINO, national organizer of Venezuela’s National Workers’ Union (UNT) federation and leader of C-CURA (the United Autonomous Revolutionary Class Current) within the UNT. The interview was conducted after President Hugo Chávez proposed the formation of a new unified Venezuelan Socialist Party (PSUV). Originally posted on the left-wing Venezuelan Web site Aporrea.org in late April, it was translated and posted in English on the British International Socialism journal Web site in early May 2007.*

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*WHAT IS your assessment of the issues posed by President Chávez when he launched the proposal for forming the PSUV on March 24?*

THE GREAT virtue of the discussion that President Chávez has set in motion is that it gives us an opportunity to discuss the nature of the Venezuelan revolution, the project for creating the PSUV, the role played in the revolution by different social sectors, and in particular the working class. It's a debate about how you build an organization and it raises a whole series of questions that we should discuss openly, publicly, and with complete honesty.

**What is most worrying is that the president ended up by doing exactly what he criticized.**

**He criticized the political cannibalism that characterizes the organizations of the Left, but then he went on to say that anyone who does not share his views is a counterrevolutionary.**

I think this is a serious mistake, because far from encouraging debate it closes it down and encourages the sectarianism that the president has said he is anxious to fight.

*WHAT DO you think are the most important issues?*

THERE ARE lots of issues to discuss, but let me address two in particular.

**The president says, for example, that the reformists are a danger — and I agree. And yet it is my view that the program the president is putting forward rests on a reformist conception, and that there is no perspective for a break with the logic of capital.**

Let me explain.

**After the great neoliberal offensive of the 1990s, we are seeing again multimillion-dollar investments by international capital in strategic sectors of the economy such as oil, mining, coal, construction, and infrastructural projects.**

**International consortia from China, Russia, and Iran are exploiting our workers more than ever.**

**I don't believe that some multinationals are better than others.**

They are all essentially concerned with monopolizing production and trade, exploiting workers, pillaging the natural resources of nations and intervening politically in the economic decision-making processes of those countries. This strikes at the heart of the kind of economic model we are building.

**The president represents investment by the multinationals as a step forward.**

**I see it as mortgaging the revolution.**

For me, the first step toward socialism is to break with multinational companies and corporations.

What this government is doing, on the contrary, is promoting concentration into larger and larger economic groups; the purchase of CANTV and the Electricity Company of Caracas are examples.

**There's no question that the recuperation of these enterprises by the state is a step forward, but the business sector was so pleased with these developments that they made a public announcement of their support for the move.**

***Equally worrying is the president's announcement that Sidor (a major steel company) will not be nationalized because it is being run by "good capitalists."***

***In fact, this company was privatized under the Fourth Republic and is owned by a multinational consortium headed by Techint of Argentina.***

Our understanding is that the president took this view because the company is based in a country governed by a "friendly" president, namely Kirchner.

But we wonder when we began to speak of "good" and "bad" capitalists?

**The president is currently making a lot of public references to China.**

**We would ask him not to do that, because capitalism was restored in China a number of years ago, and today it is the country where the working class is most exploited.**

**They are modern-day slaves, led by a rotten party that calls itself communist, but is in fact completely subject to the multinationals.**

To cap it all, the Chinese have just introduced into the constitution the right to private property. China is hardly a good example.

Another important issue is the role of social classes in this revolution.

You don't have to refer to Marx, Engels, Lenin, or Trotsky to know that the only way to overturn capitalism, a system in which a minority imposes its will on the majority, is that the working class and the people—we who are the majority and the producers—take the lead in expropriating the enterprises and place them under our control.

In that sense, what we mean by socialism is very simply stated.

Yet that is becoming more and more difficult in Venezuela.

**We workers are not in that position, even in the key sectors of the economy, to contemplate even joint management, let alone workers control.**

**The government will not consider the possibility of co-management in strategic sectors.**

Our comrades at the Constructora Nacional de Válvulas (today called Inveval) had to undergo real physical hardships and hunger, and fight like hell before the government finally listened to them and agreed to expropriate the company.

The workers of Venepal (now Invepal) had to fight for ten months before they beat the capitalists—while the government looked the other way.

And now we have the case of Sanitarios Maracay where the workers are in the fourth month of an occupation for nationalization — but the government still seems less than interested in nationalizations like this.

This suggests that the government's program does not include expropriation, and nor will the PSUV's.

But if this doesn't happen, we will not be moving toward socialism, but only toward some kind of state capitalism with a developmentalist perspective.

**This leaves private property untouched, and means that capitalist exploitation and the accumulation of profit by a very few will continue.**

*WHAT ABOUT Chávez's view on the independence of the trade unions?*

THIS IS a really important issue. The president can't change history and argue that those of us who are fighting for the independence of the trade-union movement have somehow been "poisoned" by the experience of the Fourth Republic.

On the contrary, trade union autonomy is the key antidote to bureaucratization; that's why the revolution was saved in 2002 and 2003, and as long as it continues it will be the key safeguard of the revolution.

The CTV (the old national trade union, the Venezuelan Confederation of Labor) sold its soul to the old two-party system and the governments it produced. For forty years the Venezuelan trade-union movement lived through its worst period, because workers were puppets in the games played by the old parties (Copei and AD) and the bosses' organizations.

Venezuelans still remember how AD (Democratic Action) decided the fate of workers, bought and sold contracts, and worked with the government to control the unions and the CTV.

We should remember that the bosses' strike of 2002–03 was led by CTV and Fedecámaras (the bosses' organization) working hand in hand. The *raison d'être* of the new UNT union is exactly the opposite: to fight for trade union autonomy, and organize the workers to fight against any attempt to submit them to political control or give in to compromises.

The president needs to remember that during the trade-union elections of 2001, when as we all know the CTV orchestrated an enormous electoral fraud, many workers did not support the alternative slate led by Aristóbulo Istúriz precisely because he was seen as the government's candidate.

The president has to understand that because of what we call the class instinct, and the levels of class and revolutionary consciousness, as well as because of their relationship with the bosses, the behavior of workers is different from that of peasants, communities, or students.

The worst thing about the president's comments, however, is the suggestion that by fighting for the independence of the working-class movement we are playing a counterrevolutionary role.

That is not true.

With other comrades we have built a national trade-union current that as well as fighting against bureaucracy and for socialism, is most committed to a fierce defense of trade-union autonomy.

The second congress of the UNT was proof of what I am arguing. What happened there was not just about five different factions or currents fighting or some leaders squabbling with others because we have personal disagreements, and President Chávez is wrong to describe it that way.

**In fact, for the last two years “the mother of all battles” has been under way between two conceptions—on the one hand those who want to tie the trade unions to the government, and on the other, those of us who are fighting for the sovereignty and independence of the trade-union movement.**

**We have thirty years of trade-union work behind us and we have never compromised with the bosses or the government, let alone with imperialism.**

**And we have no intention of giving up now because the president has described us as “the poisonous residue of the Fourth Republic”!**

**We have fought tirelessly within the trade-union movement for class principles, democratic methods, and an integrity born of proletarian morality. As PST-La Chispa (Workers' Socialist Party) we are proud to have been the first political organization to support Hugo Chávez's presidential candidacy. He will remember the first meetings we organized in the La Quizanda district of Valencia and with the textile workers of Aragua. So our history is unimpeachable.**

We are at the forefront of the struggle against the CTV, we supported the creation of the FBT (Bolivarian Workers' Front), and we are enthusiastically behind the UNT.

**We joined the best activists in resisting the coup of April 11, 2002, and we were centrally involved in the recovery of the oil industry during the bosses' lockout of 2002–03. Our record is an extremely honorable one.**

*YET CHÁVEZ quoted the great revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg in support of his case. How do you see that?*

THE PRESIDENT has tried to use Rosa Luxemburg's writings to support his arguments against trade-union independence — but we have to see her positions in the particular political and historical context in which she put them forward.

When she discussed the question of trade-union autonomy she was referring to the German Social Democratic Party and arguing against syndicalist and bureaucratic tendencies within the unions. As a Trotskyist I have to recognize that Trotsky was wrong when he argued that the trade unions in Russia should not be autonomous shortly after the Bolshevik victory. Luckily, Lenin participated in the debate and he argued for autonomy. Trotsky's arguments had real force, given that this was the time of the war economy, when there was hunger, civil war, physical assaults against working-class and trade-union leaders, and a confrontation with the holy alliance of the imperialist counterrevolution. Yet even so he was wrong while Lenin was right.

This should tell you that we are not dogmatists, that we study reality and engage critically with our own history.

It was not a coincidence that years ago the Stalinists described us as counterrevolutionaries because we were fighting for a new revolution that would sweep away the bureaucracy that had seized power in Russia.

*WHAT EFFECT has this discussion had on trade-union independence?*

IT HAS had major effects.

We haven't yet been able to hold the UNT internal elections, for example. The argument last year was that we had to give priority to the presidential elections. We were not against calling for a vote for Chávez, but we argued that the best way to campaign for that call was that it should come from a legitimately elected leadership. Unfortunately, it did not happen.

The other reality is the tragedy that public-sector workers and oil workers are living through at the moment.

If the trade-union movement were not autonomous and we had to accept what the government was saying, we would have to accept the contract negotiated by Fedepetrol and the other federations. The contract was not just illegitimate, but in fact was part of the leadership of the bosses' campaign of sabotage supported by imperialism. It is our independent struggle that has prevented that.

**The same is true of public-sector workers. The current minister is busy making deals with the trade-union leaders who have no authority and are in a minority. Their power stems only from the leadership's control of the apparatus and the support it gets from the government.**

And there is another issue related to autonomy. The FBT and the Labor Ministry allege that the UNT is not fulfilling its historic role and should therefore disappear. At the same time they are talking about setting up parallel structures and putting forward a series of proposals that will decimate the trade-union movement. It is crucial that these proposals are seriously and carefully discussed by the working class.

**It is because we are independent that day in and day out we are able to fearlessly express our views on the errors — sometimes the appalling errors — that the government is committing.**

**Public-sector workers cannot be left waiting for twenty-seven months for their contract to be negotiated. And it seems that the oil workers will face a similar fate. The key question is whether it is right to struggle for the independence of the trade union, and whether our exposure of these issues makes us counterrevolutionaries.**

Of course this is not just about trade-union autonomy. It is also about the relationship between the PSUV and the government. Will all PSUV members be obliged to support the decisions of the government and its bureaucrats? Will the new party be more than just an appendage of the government?

**Imagine an oil worker who risked his life challenging the bosses' sabotage participating in a meeting where the minister will order him to accept a collective contract negotiated with the people who organized the coup! These are important issues that need to be discussed.**

*DO YOU feel you were properly represented by Osvaldo Vera, who spoke at the launch meeting of the PSUV as a representative of the workers?*

NOT AT all; he did not raise a single issue of concern to the working class. He just spoke in generalities.

**And I have to ask myself who decided, when and where, that he should speak in the name of the Venezuelan working class?**

For me this is the key question.

How is the PSUV being built?

**I want to express my solidarity with thousands of my compatriots who went to Caracas to take part in the event and who were not only excluded, but mistreated and beaten in the bargain.**

**On television we saw governors, mayors, and deputies who do not have mass support occupying the first rows.**

**There were bosses and bureaucrats present who have defended the bosses, and a number of people who have been accused of corruption and the defense of policies that did not reflect the interests of the people.**

**That is why there is so much discontent—because people know that this process has begun in a very questionable way.**

We in C-CURA believe that we have to be clear in our class allegiance.

We cannot give space to bosses, landowners, bureaucrats, or those guilty of corruption. But it would be completely wrong to exclude the grass roots or those who disagree with the president.

Everyone knows that Vera does not represent the working class. The FBT is a minority within the UNT, yet he stood and spoke in the name of all workers. That is why we are fighting for the PSUV to accept internal currents without conditions or qualifications.

Nobody should be forced to dissolve — that would be completely arbitrary and designed to stop discussion before it begins. And we need to know what the position of the president and the organizing committee is on these matters.

*HOW DO you see the future of the PSUV project?*

WE HAVE to recognize that the people have placed great hopes in it; indeed, it is seen by many as a real political victory over the leaderships of the old parties like the MVR, PPT, Podemos, and all those other organizations that for years have fed a tiny group of fat bureaucrats while the majority grew thinner by the day.

However, I must say to you that the way it has been presented by President Chávez will not succeed in bringing in the real class fighters, the honest revolutionaries working within the trade-union movement.

And that is why we insist on taking part in this debate.

We have a view of how to build a revolutionary party in Venezuela, which is imperative if the struggle for a revolutionary process is to continue and develop to the point where it can seize from the capitalists their economic, political, and military power.

Until now, we have seen nothing of that in the discussion about the PSUV.

**What is important is that the debate is open and that everyone says clearly what they think and what kind of party they want, what its program should be, and how it should be built.**

**We are part of that debate and we will not allow anyone to discredit our contribution or accuse us of anything.**

**We will speak honestly, openly, and listen to others in the debate.**

**Our views are different from those put forward by the president and the organizing committee.**

**We will make sure that they hear our views and visions for the Venezuelan revolution.**

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