

GI SPECIAL 6J8:



**“Who Is Going To Hear
Our Pain?”**

Fort Bragg:

**“I Have Been Deployed Four
Times And I Have Been In The
Army Nine Years, She Said”**

**“She Is Looking For A President Who
Is Going To Help Us, Not Hurt Us”**

“I Want My Boys To Know Something Other Than Chaos”

October 6, 2008 By Bryan Bender, Boston Globe Staff [Excerpts]

CAMERON, N.C. - For Private First Class Michael Anderson, the perils he could face on his first deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan next year are the least of his worries.

Anderson, 22, says he is more concerned about how his wife, Tunisia, 30, and the four children they are bringing up - from six months to 9 years old - will cope with his long absence; whether they will be able to make ends meet; the long-term effects on their relationship; indeed, even whether the family can hold together.

In the new military housing development where they live outside Fort Bragg, just one of the military communities that ring the Army's largest base on the East Coast, the neatly manicured lawns, American flags, and bright new playgrounds mask a messier reality about military life this election season.

“The family situation for soldiers stinks,” Anderson said in the living room of his simple two-story house in Lyndon Oaks, home to enlisted soldiers and their families, as his wife put away groceries from Wal-Mart.

“This is an area that needs a lot of improvement as far as things that help soldiers,” he added, including more pay and benefits and family-support programs. “The wives don't have much to do,” he said. “They get bored. They need to have more types of recreational things.”

In large part because of such anxieties, soldiers and their spouses are more engaged in this presidential election than ever before, according to longtime observers of the Fort Bragg area. They are keenly interested to see what the candidates' policies will mean for the future of their communities.

But many of them are caught between their frustration with their predicament and a desire to make sure the mission in Iraq is respected and their service is honored.

Anderson, for example, said he believes that “the soldiers aren't being respected when they come home.” He complained of local stores in the Fort Bragg area “taking advantage of us” by jacking up prices.

For a growing number of them, their deep sense of duty is threatened by the daily struggle for the semblance of a normal life, forcing them to question how much longer they can hold out, according to nearly two-dozen interviews a Globe reporter conducted last month with soldiers, their spouses, counselors, and community leaders.

Wives with husbands deployed overseas whispered of countless Army marriages falling apart, often as a result of infidelity. Mothers complained about the hardships of living on the salary of an enlisted soldier such as Anderson - who receives less than \$1,400 a month in base pay - including wartime bonuses.

Others spoke in serious tones of soldiers struggling to rejoin their families after returning from war with scars, both mental and physical, and young children who barely recognize them.

“They are breaking up families,” said Chandra Vargas, 27, whose husband is deployed a second time to the Middle East and who stopped by the Andersons, her two children in tow, to plan a late summer trip to the beach.

“The same guys are going over and over again. You get a little bit of extra money, but it ain’t worth it. They are leaving the moms to be single parents. People are getting ‘Dear John’ letters.”

She implored: “Who is going to hear our pain?”

The soldiers and their spouses have conflicting views on how the candidates might help or aggravate the situation.

Soldiers such as Latoya Jackson, 26, who has been deployed to Iraq four times and is set to go to Afghanistan next year, want to know when the deployments will ease.

“I have been deployed four times and I have been in the Army nine years,” she said, adding that she is looking for a president “who is going to help us, not hurt us.”

They turned to Shannon Shurko, 32, a former elementary school teacher and mother of two whose husband is on his second combat tour. She holds up a copy of a magazine called “Military Spouse” she recently discovered, which offers a military psychologists’ perspective on the impact of multiple deployments. “We have taken a big hit,” Shurko said of military families like her own. “It was a rough deployment,” she said of her husband’s first combat tour. “Fifteen months is a long time.”

Shurko, like many others interviewed, spoke not only of the difficulty of the multiple separations but the less-appreciated struggle to make the family whole again after reuniting with spouses and parents that have been at war.

“He missed so much,” she said of her husband.

And just when her husband was getting to know his sons again, he received orders to deploy again. She doesn’t want her husband to go overseas again, Shurko said.

“I want my boys to know something other than chaos.”

Vargas, after making an emotional appeal for help, scolded another Army wife whose husband is deployed, Sabrina Rivera, 24 - a mother of three with another on the way - when she said she isn’t planning to vote.

“We have to make a difference!” Vargas told her.

But asked if she had decided whom she will turn to, Vargas paused before adding, “I don’t know who I am voting for. It’s kind of tricky.”

Troops Invited:

Comments, arguments, articles, and letters from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or send email contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Replies confidential. Same address to unsubscribe. Phone: 917.677.8057

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Family, Friends Remember S.C. Soldier Killed In Iraq

Sep. 30, 2008 By Jenn Parker, McClatchy Company

Just as their Conway dining room's wood-paneled walls are full of family photos, Ronald and Wanda Phillips are full of stories about their oldest son, Staff Sgt. Ronald Phillips Jr. The 33-year-old 3rd Infantry Division member died Thursday while leading a four-vehicle patrol during his second tour in the U.S. Army in Iraq - four days before he was scheduled to return to his Fort Stewart, Ga., home on a two-week leave.

Army Capt. Justin DeVantier said the soldier, who his family simply called "Ron," died after an improvised explosive device was detonated in Bahbahani, about 27 miles south of Baghdad. The family learned of his death in a phone call around 7:15 a.m. Friday.

"It was like someone hit me upside the head with a 2 by 4, one of those that just sticks and stings," said Ronald Phillips. He and his wife last saw Ron just over a year ago.

Wanda Phillips says a moment with a pastor during her son's high school days was his first nudge toward service. "God said, 'If you serve me, I'm going to take you places,'" she said, reading from the family's written account of what Ron was told that day. "You're going to be able to run with young people and go with teams. You're going to countries in the world ... and you'll be part of an exciting move."

"All Ron heard out of that was he was going to lead teams," said Ronald Phillips, laughing. "Well, he was a basketball player and said, 'Oh, Daddy, I'm going overseas to play basketball.' I said, 'Boy, that ain't what that means.'"

Wanda Phillips remembers being shocked when her son enlisted in the Army in 1996, after graduating from Conway High School in 1994. "He didn't even like to wear his McDonald's uniform," she said, chuckling.

The Phillips pepper tales of their son with equal parts tenderness and strength, describing him as a man as likely to lavish his wife and two young children with love as he was to chase after rambunctious soldiers. “I told him it was God that put him there,” said Wanda Phillips, describing conversations via a Web camera with her son. “I’d tell him, ‘Son, don’t forget why you’re there. You’ve got young soldiers and they’re just scared.’”

As family, friends and neighbors gathered Monday at the Phillips’ house on Jordan Lane, Trish Hughes described Phillips Jr. as part of a loving, sweet family. “You can’t help but love them,” she said. “I know (they) would be there for me.”

Ronald Phillips says he knows it’s important for the family to savor memories and move forward together. “We have three things going for us: great friends, a super family and an awesome God,” he said. “In the end, we’ll make it.”

And Now For A Blinding Flash Of The Obvious

If the surge worked, then the troops can leave.

If the troops can’t leave, then the surge didn’t work.

Duh.

T

Embrace The Goatfuck;



A herd of goats passes U.S. Army soldiers from 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment as they patrol with their replacements from 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division in Baqouba, Iraq, Oct. 6, 2008. (AP Photo/Maya Alleruzzo)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Canadian Soldier Shot, Seriously Wounded In Panjwayi

October 8, 2008 CBC News

A Canadian soldier was shot and seriously wounded by insurgents in southern Afghanistan on Tuesday.

The soldier was struck by small arms fire at about 5:20 p.m. in the Panjwayi district, about 30 kilometres west of Kandahar City, the military said.

The soldier, whose identity has not been released, was evacuated by helicopter to the hospital at Kandahar Airfield.

The military said the soldier is in serious but stable condition. The soldier's family has been notified.

Notes From A Lost War:

**“It’s A Big Catastrophe”
“Roadside Bombs Frequently
Target Afghan Police And Military
Patrols, Along With NATO
Convoys”
“No One In An Official Capacity Can
Even Quantify The Violence”**

“Afghan Security Forces Are Widely Thought To Accept Bribes And Collaborate With Insurgents And Robbers”

After the ribbon-cutting ceremony in December 2003, the U.S. State Department touted the \$190 million project as “the most visible sign of America’s postwar reconstruction” in Afghanistan.

Today, the road is a symbol of instability across the country. It reflects the inability of the Afghan government and international security forces to maintain law and order, and the increasing presence of the Taliban.

October 6, 2008 James Palmer, The Washington Times [Excerpts]

KABUL-KANDAHAR ROAD, Afghanistan: The mood inside the bus is grave and doubtful. The passengers have come with suitcases, cardboard boxes, cloth bundles and flasks of green tea.

The time of day - it is still before 3 a.m. - and what the travelers all know about the journey ahead creates a mood you might expect of prisoners of war being transported to an uncertain fate.

“When you’re on the bus, you don’t talk with the people you don’t know in case they’re with the Taliban,” said 19-year-old Asadullah, an electronic spare-parts dealer who, like many Afghans, uses only one name.

Mr. Asadullah and the 55 other passengers are taking a ride like no other.

In fact, many people think the 300-mile highway that links Kandahar and Kabul – Afghanistan’s two largest and most economically vital cities - is the most dangerous stretch of road on the planet.

Completed 56 months ago, the road was meant to open a gateway to economic development and improve the quality of life for Afghans.

After the ribbon-cutting ceremony in December 2003, the U.S. State Department touted the \$190 million project as “the most visible sign of America’s postwar reconstruction” in Afghanistan.

Today, the road is a symbol of instability across the country. It reflects the inability of the Afghan government and international security forces to maintain law and order, and the increasing presence of the Taliban.

Government and military officials say insurgents and bandits commonly pull travelers from their vehicles, then kill them or kidnap them for ransom.

Afghan security forces are widely thought to accept bribes and collaborate with insurgents and robbers.

Roadside bombs frequently target Afghan police and military patrols, along with NATO convoys.

No one in an official capacity can even quantify the violence.

“I have to take these risks,” said Mr. Asadullah, who makes the treacherous journey between Kabul and Kandahar once a month. “I have to make money to buy food for my family.”

Ramazan Shafaq, Afghanistan's transportation ministry's planning director, sums up the current state of the road in a simple sentence:

“It's a big catastrophe.”

Responsibility for security along the highway initially was handed to Afghanistan's national police, but shortages of men and weaponry, and the recent increase in violence along the road, have forced the government to deploy military units as reinforcements.

Gen. Abdul Alim Kohistani, the regional police commander who oversees the territory, said he has just 180 men to man the 14 checkpoints along the 300-mile route. The commander said he needs at least 320 more officers and heavier firepower to provide adequate security.

“The Taliban has (rocket-propelled grenades) and mortars. How can we fight them when we only have PKs, AK-47s, and fewer men?” Gen. Kohistani asked, referring to the machine guns and rifles his men carry.

“We want to take control of this highway and show the world and the Afghan people that we are capable of doing this.”

Evidence of the apparent mismatch can be found along the road in the form of burned-out green police pickup trucks, four-wheel-drive vehicles, NATO supply trucks and demolished bridges.

The army built a base last month near the midpoint between Kabul and Kandahar and has established 15 checkpoints with at least 40 to 50 soldiers at each one.

Defense Ministry spokesman Gen. Zaher Azimi argued that manning checkpoints on the highway is a policing job and the army is already hard-pressed with other duties.

Still, he said, the military has no alternative because “instability is increasing day by day.”

While careful not to criticize the police force, Gen. Azimi said that if he were in charge of security along the highway he would “pursue the insurgents into the surrounding areas off the road to capture or push them as far back as possible.”

Afghans unable to afford the \$100 one-way airfare between Kabul and Kandahar pay an average of \$6 for the bus ride, which tends to be safer than traveling in private vehicles that are favored targets of the Taliban and highwaymen.

Still, the bus ride has its own dangers.

Faizullah, the president of the Abduli International Transport who uses only one name, said Taliban operatives regularly call his office and ask who has bought tickets.

“They’re looking for foreigners and people working with the government,” Mr. Faizullah said. “We tell them we only sell tickets to normal Afghan civilians.”

That doesn’t prevent the Taliban from frequently stopping and boarding buses along the highway, drivers and passengers said.

“They search and question everyone,” said driver Agha Mohammed, 35. “Sometimes they take two or three people off.” Understandably, drivers tend to hurtle their buses down the narrow two-lane road, rarely voluntarily stopping for passengers.

“They never stop - even when people ask or get angry,” said 22-year-old university student Mohammed Latif.

Despite their efforts to keep moving, the drivers said, they have no choice when the Taliban appear.

“I must stop or they’ll start shooting,” said 34-year-old Toryalai, who drives between Kabul and Kandahar four times a week for the Abduli bus line and earns the equivalent of about \$140 a month with an occasional \$20 bonus.

In another show of force, the Taliban have coerced cell phone companies to shut down their signals along the highway at night after fulfilling threats to start destroying communication towers in the region, said an employee of one of the firms, Roshan. The man requested anonymity because he is not authorized to speak publicly about the matter.

“The cell phones are a problem,” said Mr. Faizullah, the Abduli bus president. “Our drivers can’t communicate with us if they have any kind of trouble when the signals are down.” Back on the bus, the six-hour journey is nearing completion and the mood of the passengers gradually picks up. Their chatter seems to rise uniformly with the sun outside.

In a sandy, pockmarked terminal in Kabul later that morning, the relieved group disembarks before retrieving their baggage from the cargo compartments below. They rapidly depart in hatchback taxis and compact cars of relatives and friends.

“It was a good trip,” said Abdul Nabi, 36, a trader who was visiting family. Whisking away his wife and four children, he added, “We weren’t stopped once on the way, and we arrived in one piece.”

“Majority Of Canadian Oppose The Afghanistan Mission” Canadian Prime Minister Wants Deadline For Getting Out

Oct 7 (AFP)

NATO-led forces alone cannot bring peace and stability to Afghanistan, Prime Minister Stephen Harper said Tuesday, a week before Canada votes in a general election.

To reach this goal, the Conservative leader said, a timeline for a transition of security responsibilities should be set.

Opinion polls suggest that a majority of Canadian oppose the Afghanistan mission, while Harper has expressed frustration at the failure of NATO allies to commit more troops and resources to ISAF.

Harper said Tuesday: “My judgment is if we have an open-ended commitment, we are never going to make the transition to Afghan security. So I think setting the timeline is part and parcel of accomplishing the mission.”

**“The U.S. And NATO Forces In
Afghanistan Are Essentially
Pipeline Protection Troops
Fighting Off The Hostile Natives”
War In Afghanistan Is “About
Opening A Secure Corridor Through
Pashtun Tribal Territory To Export
The Oil And Gas Riches Of The
Caspian Basin”**

“The Pashtun Afghans Who Live There Are Ready To Fight For Another 100 Years”

October 06, 2008 By Eric Margolis; EricMargolis.com [Excerpts]

For those who savor historical irony, the Soviet Empire collapsed in the years 1989-1991 because of an implosion of its economy brought on by a ruinous arms race with the United States and the heavy costs of occupying Afghanistan.

Seventeen years later came the turn of the world's other great imperial power, the United States.

Lethally bloated by runaway debt, and burdened by 50% of the world's military spending, the house of cards known as the US economy finally collapsed.

The US economy is in grave peril and its big three automakers may soon face bankruptcy.

In a crazy sidebar, as Wall Street and the US banking system faced meltdown, the insouciant Pentagon just announced it would spend \$300 million with American 'contractors' to spread pro-US propaganda in Iraq.

This remarkable idiocy notwithstanding, Washington could soon run out of money necessary to keep paying for operations in Iraq, and bribing Pakistan with \$250-300 million a month to wage war against its own rebellious Pashtun tribes people along the Afghanistan border.

Attacks on US and NATO convoys are even beginning at the port of Karachi.

There is no real Afghan national army, just a bunch of unenthusiastic mercenaries who pretend to fight.

The current war in Afghanistan is not really about al-Qaida and 'terrorism,' but about opening a secure corridor through Pashtun tribal territory to export the oil and gas riches of the Caspian Basin of Central Asia to the West.

The US and NATO forces in Afghanistan are essentially pipeline protection troops fighting off the hostile natives.

Both Barack Obama and John McCain are wrong about Afghanistan.

It is not a 'good' fight against 'terrorism,' but a classic, 19th century colonial war to advance western geopolitical power into resource-rich Central Asia.

The Pashtun Afghans who live there are ready to fight for another 100 years.

The western powers certainly are not.

TROOP NEWS

**NOT ANOTHER DAY
NOT ANOTHER DOLLAR
NOT ANOTHER LIFE**



The casket of Army Chief Warrant Officer 4 Michael Slobodnik, who was killed in Afghanistan, at Arlington National Cemetery, Oct. 8, 2008. Slobodnik also served in Operation Desert Storm, and five tours in the current war in Iraq. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

Military Family Sues VA After Soldier Suicide: Iraq Combat Veteran Sought Treatment At VA Hospital After Three Suicide Attempts “But Wasn’t Seen By A Psychiatrist For More Than Two Months”

Oct 7 By MARYCLAIRE DALE, Associated Press Writer [Excerpts]

PHILADELPHIA - The widow of an Iraq war veteran who committed suicide while in outpatient care for depression at a Veterans Administration hospital has sued the federal government for negligence.

Tiera Woodward, 26, claims in her lawsuit that her late husband, Donald, sought treatment at a VA hospital in Lebanon after three failed suicide attempts but wasn't seen by a psychiatrist for more than two months.

She says doctors were slow to diagnose her husband with major depression, and that once the diagnosis was made, a psychiatrist failed to schedule a follow-up meeting with her husband after he informed the doctor he had gone off his medication.

Donald Woodward killed himself in March 2003 at age 23.

"I intend to make them make changes," said Donald Woodward's mother, Lori Woodward. "I have too many friends whose kids are in Iraq. I have a nephew now in Iraq, in the same unit, and I can't have my family go through this again."

The lawsuit, filed in the Middle District of Pennsylvania, seeks an unspecified amount for funeral expenses, lost income and pain and suffering.

It echoes other lawsuits nationwide over VA mental-health services, despite legislation President Bush signed in November ordering improvements.

The family of Marine Jeffrey Lucey, also 23, has a federal suit pending in Massachusetts over his June 2004 suicide. And two veterans groups sued the VA in San Francisco seeking an overhaul of its health system, citing special concerns about mental health, but a judge dismissed the suit in June over venue issues.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupations 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 to Imperial wars 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.org/)

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Resistance Action



A damaged armoured vehicle after a mortar attack in Baghdad October 7, 2008. Two mortar blasts struck outside Iraq's Foreign Ministry on Tuesday as visiting U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte prepared to hold a press conference in the Green Zone compound nearby . REUTERS/Omar Obeidi

October 2, 2008 By Sahar Issa, McClatchy Newspapers & By Sahar Issa, McClatchy Newspapers & Oct 4 (Reuters) & Oct 5 (Reuters) & Oct 8 By Sinan Salaheddin, The Associated Press &

A bomb targeted a convoy carrying Western contractors in the southern city of Basra, officials said. There were three civilian cars with workers from a Western construction company. An Iraqi police official in Basra said one Iraqi civilian was wounded. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

A car bomb targeted a Shiite mosque in Zafaraniyah, southeastern Baghdad at 7.45 a.m. Thursday. A bomber slammed his explosives-filled car into an Iraqi military armoured vehicle at a checkpoint near a mosque in the nearby district of Zafaraniyah, the officials said, killing four Iraqi Army members, injuring one soldier.

A roadside bomb killed two policemen and wounded another on Friday in central Mosul, police said.

Guerrillas attacked a police station, killing two policemen on Saturday just east of Ramadi, police said. Ramadi is 100 km (60 miles) west of Baghdad.

A roadside bomb killed one policeman and wounded one other in Iskandariya south of Baghdad on Tuesday, police said.

A sticky bomb attached to a car carrying employees of Kerbala governing council, killed one and wounded two in the village of al-Shamaliya, west of Kerbala, 80 km (50 miles) southwest of Baghdad, police said on Thursday.

Two traffic policemen were wounded when a roadside bomb exploded near their patrol in Sadr City district of northeastern Baghdad, police said.

Three Iraqi soldiers were wounded on Wednesday when a roadside bomb exploded near their patrol in Mosul, police said. A roadside bomb exploded near a police patrol, wounding one policeman in Mosul on Wednesday, police said.

Guerrillas killed an off-duty policeman in a drive-by shooting in eastern Mosul, police said.

A female bomber blew herself up near government offices in Baquba, northeast of the capital. Those killed included five Iraqi soldiers and three policemen. The explosion in Baquba occurred just before noon across the street from the city's courthouse, shattering nearby storefronts and leaving pools of blood on the pavement.

"We were inside the court building when we heard a thunderous explosion followed by people's cries," said Abu Mohammed, a 55-year-old lawyer. "We rushed outside the building. We couldn't see anything because smoke was everywhere."

Abu Mohammed, who would give only his nickname for security reasons, said the target appeared to be Iraqi army Humvees parked nearby.



A damaged military vehicle after a bomb attack in Baquba, 65km (40 miles) northeast of Baghdad October 8, 2008. REUTERS/Stringer

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

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

**Vincent Emanuele (IVAW) Testifies
At Winter Soldier**



From: Mike Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: September 30, 2008
Subject: Vincent Emanuele Testifies at Winter Soldier

Vincent Emanuele (IVAW) testifies at Winter Soldier

This image is so piercing for me. He looked directly into my camera when I hit the shutter button. When I got home after photographing the Winter Soldier event in Silver Spring, Maryland, this image sort of haunted me. I finally realized why. This image forced me to look at the truth. As a Vietnam veteran, I knew this truth very well. It is a veteran who has seen the Lie, and he is forcing the public to see it also, as painful as that may be. For me, this is a direct eye to eye contact with the absolute truth.

Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
Sept. 30, 2008

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

**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 wars, 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. Phone: 917.677.8057

**“In The Late 1960s, During The
Vietnam War, This Elegant Georgian
Building Housed, Among Other
Tenants, The Royal Asiatic Society,
As Well As My Own London ‘Station’**

On The Underground Railway For Escaping GI Deserters”

Simply put, my new job was to smuggle American deserters in and out of the United Kingdom, help arrange false papers, find safe houses in the UK, ‘babysit’ our less stable ‘packages’ (AWOLs in transit), personally accompany those too shaky to travel alone, and liaise with my opposite numbers in Paris, Copenhagen and Stockholm, as well as in North America, Australia and Japan, where the anti-war youth movement was particularly strong.

9 October 2008 By Clancy Sigal, London Review Of Books

Civilians who ‘entice’ or ‘procure’ or in any substantial way assist US military deserters are liable to severe punishment, including prison terms and fines.

Title 18, Section 1381, Uniform Code of Military Justice (1951)

Number 56 Queen Anne Street, just off Oxford Circus, is today a set of Grade II listed, high-end business offices for rent.

But in the late 1960s, during the Vietnam War, this elegant Georgian building housed, among other tenants, the Royal Asiatic Society, as well as my own London ‘station’ on the underground railway for escaping GI deserters.

We were breaking the law, under the US Uniform Code of Military Justice and NATO’s Visiting Forces Act; theoretically, in a time of war, we could be shot.

I had first met Harry Pincus, the charismatic founder of our station, when we were both volunteer ‘barefoot doctors’ at R.D. Laing’s Kingsley Hall, a halfway house for psychotics in the East End. One night, when Harry was ambushed by a crazed resident (we never called them ‘patients’), I smacked his assailant upside the head with the broken chair leg I always carried with me on duty rota.

Two years later, Harry returned the favour when, one foggy evening, he found me wandering, homeless, in Swiss Cottage, and took me home with him to Queen Anne Street, where he had a spare room at the back.

At first, badly needing refuge, I swallowed Harry’s fiction that the youngsters of military age and their occasional girlfriends, lying around, making love or sleeping in the spacious front rooms, were just hippies, nothing to get upset about. He was a gifted spin artist.

I settled, or rather burrowed, into the flat’s wonderfully large back room, and went into total denial. That is, until one afternoon, on the corner of Queen Anne and Welbeck Streets, I was approached by a grubby, unshaven little man – yes, in a dirty mac – with

an Oswald Mosley moustache, who, in a stage-Yorkshire accent, introduced himself as 'Sergeant Brent' of Special Branch.

Politely, he showed me his warrant card, and hinted that I was involved in something that could lead to my deportation as an undesirable person. 'So, squire, it's all up to you.' Then the non sequitur: 'Desertion, aye nasty business that. You'd be talking to Mister Hitler if our boys had behaved like that in the war.'

I ran back to the house, sweating with anxiety. What, I demanded of Harry, have you got me into? Fifteen years younger than me and half a head taller, with the bulge-eyed good looks of the actor Jeff Goldblum, Harry wrapped a fatherly arm around my shoulders. 'Relax,' he soothed, 'we're the best thing that's ever happened to you.'

And so it was.

Now that Sgt Brent had rumbled us, Harry felt free to take me on a full tour of the flat, a labyrinth of high-ceilinged, almost ballroom-sized rooms off a spacious main hallway. Bodies, asleep or stoned, lay sprawled on couches or on the living-room carpet, while a multicoloured Wurlitzer bubble jukebox in the corner wailed the Lovin' Spoonful's 'Did You Ever Have to Make Up Your Mind?'

A strong scent of weed mixed with odours from the Cordon Bleu cooking school down Marylebone Lane.

From the moment he'd rescued me on that misty night in Swiss Cottage, Harry had planned for me, as a presumably responsible adult, to take over his duties at Number 56.

Simply put, my new job was to smuggle American deserters in and out of the United Kingdom, help arrange false papers, find safe houses in the UK, 'babysit' our less stable 'packages' (AWOLs in transit), personally accompany those too shaky to travel alone, and liaise with my opposite numbers in Paris, Copenhagen and Stockholm, as well as in North America, Australia and Japan, where the anti-war youth movement was particularly strong.

We were most wary of NATO's Visiting Forces Act, which mandated police forces to 'detain and arrest' absentees.

Although Harold Wilson's government winked at the law, the British police, who generally disliked the Labour Party, enjoyed the easy sport of plucking a deserter – recognisable by his buzzcut – off the street and turning him over to the US military police.

In the blink of an eye he would find himself in a North Carolina military prison.

If, as Harry was fond of quoting Mao, 'the guerrilla moves among the people as a fish swims in the sea,' our sea of helpers extended from the windswept Hebrides (God help the boy we sent there) to Devon, Cardiff to Norfolk.

I still have my 'emergency list' of on-call helpers: Quakers, pacifist vicars, street people, students, the vegetarians and sandal-wearers detested by George Orwell, even retired military officers.

I favoured getting AWOLs out to the provinces, where they seemed more comfortable than in metropolitan London. Deserters saw themselves as, and were, the 'niggers' of the antiwar movement, which by and large favoured nice, articulate, clean-living middle-class draft dodgers over working-class anti-heroes. At the time, few of the boys would have viewed their outcast experience, as I came to see it, as a rite of passage.

My problem was that almost as soon as I began working with the AWOLs, I lost patience with them and their girlfriends, who kept referring to me, in my hearing, as 'the crazy old guy in the back room'. I must have seemed slightly mad to them as I dashed about the flat at all hours hoovering, picking up rubbish, scrubbing dishes, plunging the toilets and performing the many other Sisyphian tasks needed to keep teenage things – and my disordered mind – in order. They just laughed and called me a 'sanitation Nazi' when I hectored them.

'Who's writing your speeches, Dick Nixon?' jeered Charlene, a tall, leggy, mussed-blonde deserter groupie and self-described Missouri trailer trash. Charlene, fed up with 'American fascist bullshit', had landed on us one day along with a tubercular deserter from Stockholm's snowdrifts, Stanislau ('Stash'), the son of Polish immigrants who ran a bakery in Detroit. Over time and shared emergencies – AWOLs always had emergencies – Charlene and 19-year-old Stash became my guides, and mentors, in the deserter trade.

Stash, a large and imposing man-boy, was a cheerfully self-confessed law-breaker and Munchausian liar. 'I love you like a brother, old man, but please don't leave your wallet lying around where's I can see it.' A juvenile jail veteran, he was used to being on the run, sleeping rough, rolling drunks, stealing cars and living by his wits.

Pirates of the underclass, we were drawn to each other like long-lost brothers: like me, he was given to panics, depression and impulsive acts of escape. He was also extremely smart. Whether or not he'd been in Vietnam was iffy; he'd spin one colourful tale in the morning and a different one in the afternoon. 'Stash is the worst advertisement for a man I've ever met,' Charlene said. 'But down there, in the street, where it counts, he's a rocket scientist.'

'Down there, in the street' is where it was all happening.

Some days, when business was slow in Queen Anne Street, I'd troll nearby Hyde Park and Bayswater Road for kids who looked lost and had short haircuts.

Even though the Street Offences Act had just been amended, it was still risking arrest to approach a young American boy asking: 'What unit you from? Need a bed?'

Harry and I wrangled constantly over my neurotic concern for 'security': i.e. maintaining a decent level of tidiness at the house, if for no other reason than to keep the cops away.

I balked at inviting in reputed Weathermen, gone underground after violent 'actions' in the States; but Harry, who firmly believed in 'letting it all hang loose', was an adamant

civil libertarian, so I grudgingly accepted these runaway felons, though only on condition that we turn away British army deserters from Northern Ireland, whose presence was sure to close us down.

By this time, we had evolved a classically English accommodation with the various secret services who kept tabs on us: at one time or another these included MI5, Special Branch, the CIA, the FBI, US navy and army counterintelligence as well as US Seventh Army counterintelligence, not to mention the local Marylebone police who came pounding up the stairs in response to neighbours' complaints about the noise, or when the marijuana clouds wafting out of the front windows became too noxious.

Deserters are by nature paranoids who tend to suspect one another of being in the CIA. This curious mixture of brotherhood and mistrust was a permanent part of the atmosphere at the house, which inevitably also attracted its fair share of fantasists, liars, charlatans and, on rare occasions, real live government spies, easily spotted by their 'tell', usually a provocateur-style rant designed to pull us into conspiratorial violence.

Now and then a teenage fabulist came through, insisting he'd been a side-gunner on a helicopter gunship but now suffered pangs of guilt at massacring Vietnamese peasants from the air. Most of these kids turned out to be runaways from Middle America who had flipped on too many Sgt Rock and Fantastic Four comic books.

My favourite was a 16-year-old from Tennessee who called himself 'Kid Blue'. When I last heard from him he was phoning (he said) from the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square, where the CIA had kidnapped and were torturing him. 'Help! They're murdering me! Help me . . . help – arrrggghh!' I never heard from Kid Blue again.

Harry was by this point pretty much out of it, his big eyes spooked by acid, exaltation, anger, joy, sadness alternating with spasms of common sense. He declared that he was on a 'journey' – indeed the same one I was on when he rescued me – and would not be denied what he believed I had seen, the third eye of God. Stubborn, gentle, raging, compassionate: he was trying, like all of us, to unknot his contradictions.

At a recent Labour Party Conference in Brighton, he'd grown so frustrated with the delegates' lack of sympathy for the deserters' cause that he'd broken up the ballroom furniture in a rage and had been flung out on his ear.

'DESERTER ASYLUM NOW NOW NOW!' screamed the lurid leaflets produced by Harry's group, the Union of American Exiles in Britain.

I winced at the inelegance, but there was a more pressing matter: we were rapidly running out of money. I hatched a brilliant plan. At a free Rolling Stones concert in Hyde Park in July 1969, we'd infiltrate and panhandle the anticipated mob of hippies, street freaks and war-averse American students on vacation. With all those kindred spirits gathered on the grass (in both senses), we were on to a sure thing.

I dreamed of plucking a fortune in donations. To help us rattle the cans a number of young American 'Rhodies' – the Oxbridge-based Rhodes and Fulbright scholars – came to cover the park entrances from Marble Arch to the Albert Hall. One of them was Frank Aller, an extraordinarily nice boy who was the roommate and best friend of Bill Clinton, then scraggle-bearded, fattish and vaguely on our side.

Frank, in his neatly pressed Brooks Brothers suit, looked (and was) so incorruptibly straight that on demos we often put him instead of volatile Harry in front of the TV cameras. Frank dragged Clinton along that day. Bill flirted with the girls – this is not hindsight – and was always somewhere else when it came to hawking leaflets on street corners.

On that lovely sunny Sunday, about twenty of us gathered to sweep through the 250,000 fans in the park. Every hippie, freak and dooper in the United Kingdom, Europe and the Americas seemed to be there. We collected endless saintly smiles, hugs and V-peace signs, while up on the jerrybuilt stage Mick and Keith set loose clouds of yellow butterflies. By dusk, we had gathered six petition signatures, \$30 in US currency and £12 sterling and some coins.

The Hyde Park fiasco broke Harry's spirit; it didn't do much for mine, either.

A miasma of 'Movement fatigue' fell on us, not much helped by the revelations of the My Lai massacre and Nixon's 'secret' Cambodia bombing. Charlene eventually evaporated to Sweden with yet another consumptive boy (he'd fled after his parents betrayed him to the local sheriff in Oklahoma), and Stash disappeared altogether.

Even the amiable David, a Californian draft dodger and pacifist who lounged about the flat in an Easy Rider fringed jacket and cowboy boots, came back some nights with bleeding knuckles from pub fights he swore he hadn't started.

A commune has a natural life, and ours was coming to an end. But at least we had had one last hurrah when President Nixon came to town.

In suits and ties, hoping to look like Young Republicans Abroad, we gathered on the north side of Brook Street outside Claridge's, where Nixon was staying. Our scheme was to lure him onto the hotel balcony in front of the TV cameras with our chants of 'Nix-on, Nix-on!', then suddenly raise high our antiwar placards. And there he was! Upstairs, hemmed in by aides and Secret Service, on the balcony, waving to nobody in particular with his death-rictus smile, all teeth and hatred. The police held us back and we politely obeyed, according to plan.

Just then Harry, in jeans and flapping Pendleton shirt, ducked past the police cordon – he'd played varsity football for Amherst College – and made straight for the gilt metal doors leading to the marble lobby, bellowing: 'NIXON MURDERER! NIXON BABY KILLER!'

He was like a blind Samson, bobbies and Special Branch and Secret Service all over him, fists flying. Blood streamed down his face; his large eyes burned with the joy of battle. The cops pushed us back while they concentrated their fury on him with kicks and punches. I'd never seen Harry so light of heart.

In the midst of it all, I looked up and was transfixed by the curious, detached stares of Nixon and his henchmen.

Instantly, I recognised two of his aides as my UCLA classmates: ramrod-stiff, crew-cut Bob Haldeman and jowly John Ehrlichman, Nixon's 'gatekeeper' and dirty-tricks adviser

respectively. Bob, wintry-eyed and controlled, whispered urgently to a Secret Service guy. But it was Ehrlichman's gaze that held me. Hot, angry, personal.

From a sidewalk angle looking up, his jutting, pugnacious jaw looked like Mussolini's. 'Hi John! Hi Bob!' I yelled at my former drinking buddies and screamed out UCLA's 'fight song': 'By the Pacific's rolling waters/Here we stand its son and daughter.'

I can't remember if we spent any time in the cells at the nearest police station on Savile Row – my second home on demo days – but we straggled back to the house to watch ourselves on the Six O'clock News.

There we were, posters and all. The world had noticed. And then it was over.

A few days later I found a dead body in the porcelain claw-foot tub in the main bathroom off Harry's red-draped seraglio. The gold-plated taps were full on and the tub was overflowing. 'Omigod, Harry's done it!' I cried.

Charlene dashed in with Emma, a Rhodie who was Harry's best (non-lover) friend, slushing over hundred-year-old William Morris tiles, ankle-deep in bath water. While Emma tugged the taps shut, Charlene grabbed the corpse's hand to check for vitals, then slapped its face. 'The bastard's OD'd,' she said.

Ever so slowly, in a lazy, graceful, Neptune-like stirring, Harry raised himself up in the bath to stretch his athletic body, splashing us like a playful puppy.

Peering at us with a hazy, crazy smile, he stepped out of the tub to give me his best royal hug. 'That's always been your problem, Clancy,' he said. 'You let the little things get to you.'

Charlene returned from downstairs to report that Harry had flooded one whole wall of priceless books and hangings in the Royal Asiatic Society's library directly below. A few minutes later, fully clothed and seemingly composed, Harry led our remorseful little delegation down a flight of stairs with carved mahogany banisters, past portraits of long dead maharajahs, for a penitential chat with Miss Evans, the RAS librarian.

Even now, as moisture from upstairs darkened the flock wallpaper of her beloved library, Miss Evans, once she saw our stricken faces, managed a heroic degree of forgiveness. If – she got the words out with some difficulty – we agreed to put a stop to the past-midnight parties, and got rid of the jukebox, and contributed 'however modestly' to the cost of repairs, a 'rapprochement' (her word) was possible. My heart swelled with relief and gratitude. But something about Miss Evans's manner – her sheer niceness? – rattled Harry.

'NO MORE "SHOULD"!' he yelled, banging his fist on the inlaid teak conference table and going around it to tower over her. "'Shoulds" are breaking the heart of the world!' he thundered.

And then he delivered a summary indictment of British imperial sins in Cyprus, Kenya, India and anywhere else that came to mind. For good measure, as he stomped out of the library, he flung over his shoulder a promise that under no circumstances would we,

her upstairs tenants, subscribe to British collusion in the Vietnam War by muffling the jukebox.

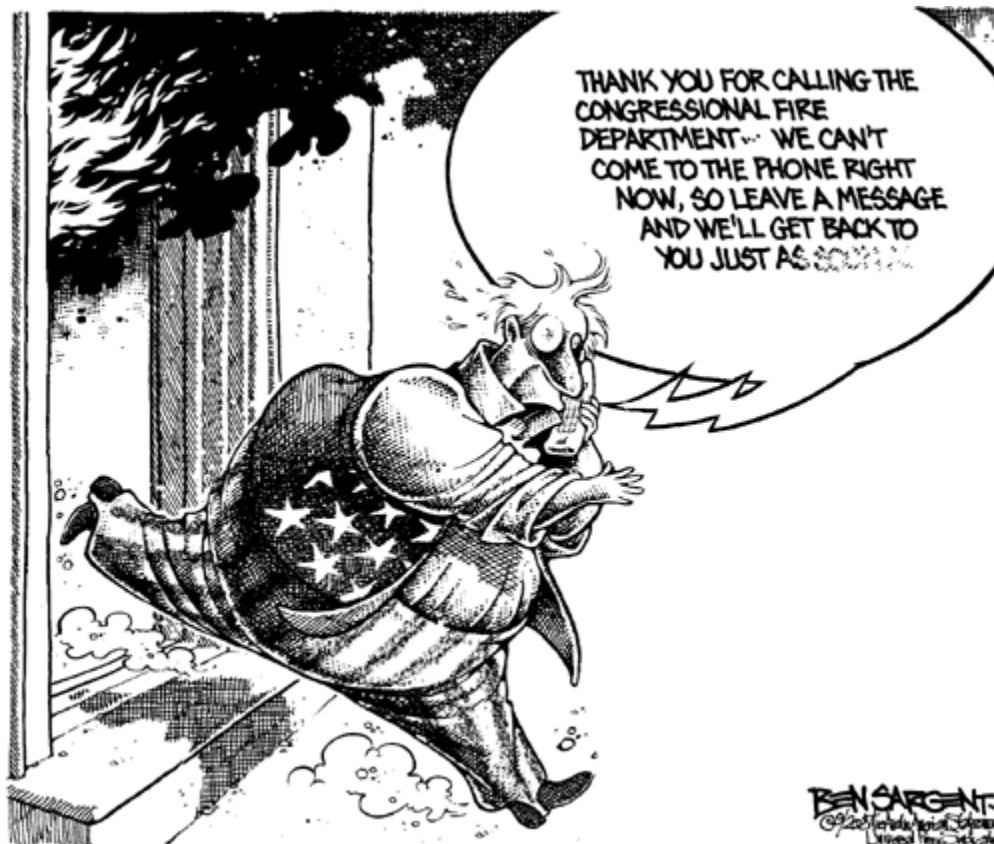
At the door, he turned back to Miss Evans, who was trembling with shock and anger, and gave her his saintliest grin. We got our eviction notice the next day.

Whenever I have Big Thoughts about our little operation at 56 Queen Anne Street, a final image brings me back to reality.

The last time Harry and I saw each other, in Marylebone Lane, just after our foco broke up, I was outraged to see that he had 'borrowed', and was wearing, my best pair of cavalry twill trousers. So we stood on the narrow sidewalk, shouting at each other like fishwives, arguing the merits of bourgeois property rights versus oh I forget what.

I demanded my pants back and, without hesitation, Harry slipped them off in the middle of the passing lunchtime throng and handed them over. Then, mustering his dignity, he strolled away in his jockey shorts.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



“Obama And McCain Propose Dusty Death Without End In Afghanistan”

“US/NATO Cannot Send 400,000 Combat Troops To Garrison Afghanistan’s Towns, Hamlets And Countryside”

October 7, 2008 By Marc W. Herold, Department of Economics, Whittemore School of Business & Economics, University of New Hampshire; Uruknet. [Excerpt].

Candidate Obama, his Clinton era advisers, and sadly all too many others fail to recognize a web of inter-connected, persistent constraints, or given realities.

One might label them as the “five cannots”:

US/NATO cannot send 400,000 combat troops to garrison Afghanistan’s towns, hamlets and countryside (which is a pre-condition for reconstruction to win hearts and minds);

the US/NATO cannot impose a powerful central government upon Afghanistan; the US/NATO cannot neutralize the very effective least-cost weapons of choice of the Afghan resistance (IED’s and suicide bombers);

the US/NATO cannot seal the Afghan-Pakistan border and hence will not eliminate the vital sanctuary so necessary to a guerrilla movement);

and lastly, the Pakistan government has never been able to dominate its vast tribal borderlands and there is no reason to believe such will change.

Those who choose not to understand these “five cannots” advocate change in a vacuum.

The perceived poison of a foreign occupation, the rampant corruption, the all-too-frequent desecration of Islam by the occupiers, the sheer folly of the US/NATO seeking to extend the writ of a central government into the Pashtun tribal regions, the spiraling count of civilian deaths has shifted the Afghan struggle towards being a war of national liberation.

The presence of foreign forces is furthermore according to the United Nations’ senior expert on Al Qaeda, providing the glue with which Osama bin Laden’s Al Qaeda network is bonding support in the region.

Anatol Lieven of King’s College (London) puts things aptly: Afghanistan is “Becoming a sort of surreal hunting estate, in which the U.S. and NATO breed the very terrorists they

then track down.” No matter that in Kabul even foreigners speak about being “inside a living hell.”

No matter that veteran reporter Kathy Gannon notes that Afghans are fed up with the U.S. and Karzai. No matter that Karzai and U.S. bombs have transformed what was once a backward looking Taliban primarily espousing sharia into a thriving modern movement of resistance and national liberation.

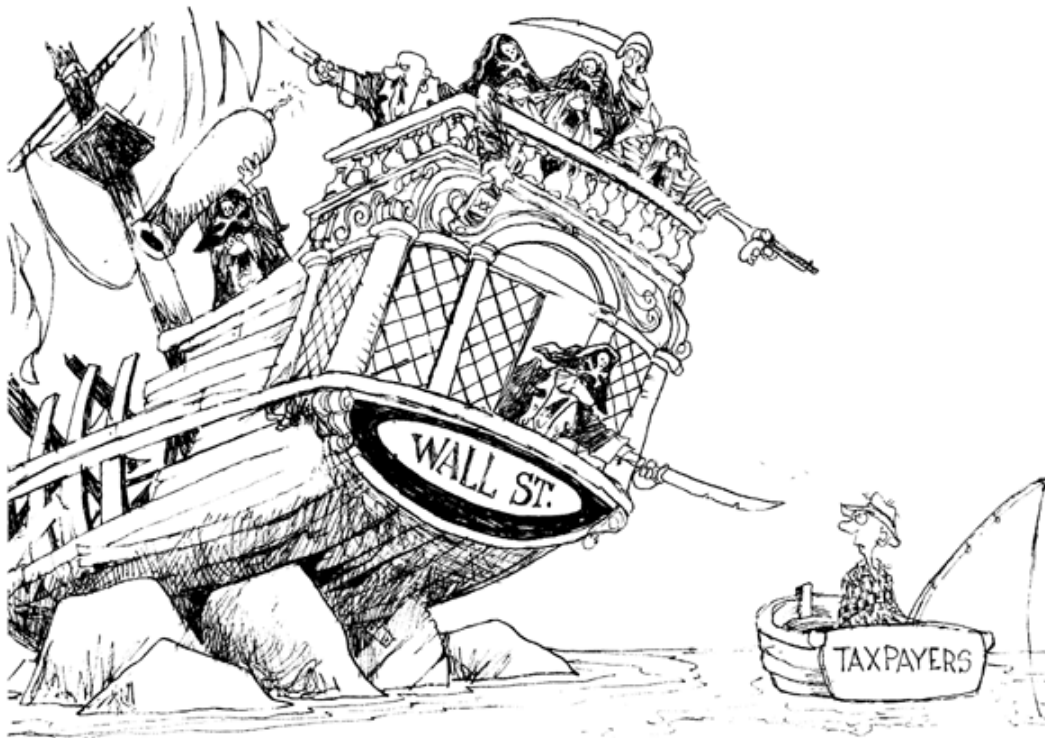
No matter that anti-Americanism is spiraling in Pakistan as U.S. raids take place.

Obama and McCain propose dusty death without end in Afghanistan.

**POLITICIANS CAN'T BE COUNTED ON TO HALT
THE BLOODSHED**

**THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE
WARS**

CLASS WAR REPORTS



“ QUICK ! EVERYBODY INTO THAT LIFEBOAT...”

Maryland State Police Rats Put Social Activists' Names On Government Terror Lists; Piece-Of-Shit Who Gave The Orders, Thomas E. Hutchins, Says "I Don't Believe The First Amendment Is Any Guarantee To Those Who Wish To Disrupt The Government"

08 October 2008 By Lisa Rein, Washington Post Staff Writer [Excerpts]

The Maryland State Police classified 53 nonviolent activists as terrorists and entered their names and personal information into state and federal databases that track terrorism suspects, the state police chief acknowledged yesterday.

Police Superintendent Terrence B. Sheridan revealed at a legislative hearing that the surveillance operation, which targeted opponents of the death penalty and the Iraq war, was far more extensive than was known when its existence was disclosed in July.

The department started sending letters of notification Saturday to the activists, inviting them to review their files before they are purged from the databases, Sheridan said.

The surveillance took place over 14 months in 2005 and 2006, under the administration of former governor Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. (R).

The former state police superintendent who authorized the operation, Thomas E. Hutchins, defended the program in testimony yesterday. Hutchins said the program was a bulwark against potential violence and called the activists "fringe people."

Sheridan said protest groups were also entered as terrorist organizations in the databases, but his staff has not identified which ones.

Stunned senators pressed Sheridan to apologize to the activists for the spying, assailed in an independent review last week as "overreaching" by law enforcement officials who were oblivious to their violation of the activists' rights of free expression and association.

The letter, obtained by The Washington Post, does not apologize but admits that the state police have "no evidence whatsoever of any involvement in violent crime" by those classified as terrorists.

Hutchins told the committee it was not accurate to describe the program as spying. "I doubt anyone who has used that term has ever met a spy," he told the committee.

His officers sought a "situational awareness" of the potential for disruption as death penalty opponents prepared to protest the executions of two men on death row, Hutchins said.

"I don't believe the First Amendment is any guarantee to those who wish to disrupt the government," he said.

But Sen. James Brochin (D-Baltimore County) noted that undercover troopers used aliases to infiltrate organizational meetings, rallies and group e-mail lists.

He called the spying a "deliberate infiltration to find out every piece of information necessary" on groups such as the Maryland Campaign to End the Death Penalty and the Baltimore Pledge of Resistance.

The police also entered the activists' names into the federal Washington-Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area database, which tracks suspected terrorists.

One well-known antiwar activist from Baltimore, Max Obuszewski, was singled out in the intelligence logs released by the ACLU, which described a "primary crime" of "terrorism-anti-government" and a "secondary crime" of "terrorism-anti-war protesters."

Hutchins said some names might have been shared with the National Security Agency.

Although the independent report on the surveillance released last week said that it was part of a broad effort by the state police to gather information on protest groups across the state, Sheridan said the department is not aware of any surveillance as "intrusive" as the spying on death penalty and war opponents.

The police notified the protesters at the recommendation of former U.S. attorney and state attorney general Stephen H. Sachs, who was appointed by Gov. Martin O'Malley (D) to review the covert monitoring. In a report last week, Sachs also recommended regulations that forbid such spying on protest groups unless the state police chief believes it is justified.

"I can't imagine getting a letter that says, 'You've been classified as a terrorist; come in and we'll tell about it,'" said Sen. Bryan W. Simonaire (R-Anne Arundel).

Two senators noted that they had been arrested years ago for civil disobedience. Sen. Jennie Forehand (D-Montgomery) asked Sheridan, "Do you have any legislators on your list?"

The answer was no.

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