

GI SPECIAL 7A9:



NOTICE:

Early January was used in travel to do with planning more effective ways to support members of the armed forces organizing to resist the Imperial wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the new regime's plans to continue both.

This means that many useful articles sent in to GI Special have not appeared, because publication was suspended during travel. There is considerable backlog.

It's also not been possible to reply with thanks to all the useful news and letters sent in by troops, military family members, veterans, and those civilians who understand why nothing is more likely to shorten the wars than reaching out to the troops person to person, face to face, including the National Guards and Reserves who live right next to you.

It's very hard to fight wars without an armed force willing to do it.

So, please accept this way of expressing respect for and hand in hand solidarity with everybody who sends in all the good stuff. If the U.S. Federal Reserve will provide a billion or two, this work will be full time instead of doing it after the day job. T.

Words Change, The War Goes On:

“Raids Are Not To Be Called Raids. ‘We Call Them Cordon And Knocks Now,’ Armer Said”

“U.S. Special Forces Soldiers Were Conducting An Operation In Northern Sadr City, Which, In Theory, Is Off-Limits To American Troops”

“‘That’s An EFP!’ He Exclaimed, Referring To A Type Of Armor-Piercing Roadside Bomb”

“Fighters Are ‘Hiding’ North Of The Wall”

January 12, 2009 By Ernesto Londoño, Washington Post Foreign Service [Excerpts]

BAGHDAD -- First Lt. Ilya Ivanov's initial mission of 2009 began with a crucial, if irksome, task: rousing an Iraqi army sergeant out of bed.

After trekking through dark, trash-filled streets in Sadr City, as the crackle of gunfire and the wails of stray dogs echoed in the distance, the 24-year-old infantry platoon leader arrived at the Iraqi army station one hour before midnight on New Year's Eve. The Iraqi soldier was sleeping placidly on an uneven, thin mattress, a layer of freshly applied moisturizing lotion on his face.

"Tell him we would be honored if he joined us in this mission," Ivanov asked his interpreter to relay.

Tens of thousands of U.S. troops in Iraq started the year calibrating their missions to conform with a new security agreement that demands that American combat troops depend more heavily than ever on their often-bungling Iraqi counterparts.

Sometimes that means dragging one or two along on patrol.

Soldiering without the robust protections of the U.N. Security Council resolution that expired Dec. 31, in a country where animosity toward U.S. service members runs high, has left some troops feeling uneasy and vulnerable.

"We've got to walk on eggshells," said Spec. Cory Armer, 23, of Lake Charles, La. "I understand you can't go out and shoot everyone and play Rambo. But war is war.

"We shouldn't be falling under the jurisdiction of a country we're at war with." **[Spc. Armer understands perfectly what the reality is, despite all the stupid, lying propaganda. The U.S. Empire has been, is, and will be at war with Iraq until the last foreign occupation soldier leaves. The Iraqis are right to resist.]**

U.S. commanders lately have sought to dispel the notion that American troops remain at war in Iraq. [U.S. commanders are full of shit right up to their eyes. The troops know better.]

Since 2003, U.S. service members have had the power of life and death in Iraq; many Iraqis to this day cower at the sight of a convoy of U.S. military armored vehicles.

Rules of engagement -- the guidelines that spell out defensive measures U.S. troops can take -- have been scaled down in recent years.

For example, troops are no longer supposed to drive on the wrong side of the road, which they habitually did to avoid setting patterns that make them more prone to roadside bomb attacks.

What commanders once called their "area of operation" is now an "operating environment."

And raids are not to be called raids. "We call them cordon and knocks now," Armer said.

The Iraqi sergeant was jovial and didn't appear upset at being dragged out of bed. He washed his face and sat smoking a cigarette.

He leaned toward Ivanov and let him in on a secret: He had a bottle of whiskey and he was willing to share it.

Ivanov declined politely and let him in on a secret of his own: U.S. Special Forces soldiers were conducting an operation in northern Sadr City, which, in theory, is off-limits to American troops.

"Tonight is an important mission," Ivanov said, using an interpreter to communicate with the sergeant. "I'm not supposed to tell him, but I will because we're friends."

The sergeant stripped out of a fitted green sweat suit, slipped on his uniform, grabbed his rifle, and wrapped a brown-and-white kaffiyeh, a type of head scarf, around his face.

"He doesn't want people seeing him with the Americans," said Rad, Ivanov's interpreter. For that reason, the 26-year-old sergeant, a Kurd, and Ivanov asked that the man's name not be published.

Minutes before midnight, Ivanov and his men, on a joint mission with the lone sergeant, headed out to a street market to meet an informant.

Iraqi government officials last year demanded, as part of the security agreement negotiations, that U.S. troops withdraw from populated areas by July.

American military officials have taken some steps toward that end, closing down large bases and outposts occupied only by U.S. troops. But they have no imminent plans to shut down dozens of inner-city bases like the one in Sadr City, which they call a joint security station.

A handful of Iraqi officials work alongside Eifler's unit. Like other security stations in Baghdad, it is overwhelmingly populated, and unmistakably controlled, by Americans.

"Three months ago, we took this area from the bad guys," said 2nd Lt. Thar Mahdi, one of the Iraqi army officers based at the joint security station.

But fighters are "hiding" north of the wall the Americans aren't supposed to cross, he added.

The progress of recent months could collapse overnight, he said, if the Americans were to leave the outpost. "We have a lot of corruption in my army," Mahdi said. "We have bad guys in my army that support the bad guys."

U.S. troops this year are being forced to rely on their Iraqi partners more than ever, particularly in detention operations. The American military is in the process of emptying its detention facilities to comply with the new requirement that bars the U.S. government from holding suspected criminals who have not been charged by Iraqi authorities.

"We used to detain people for their intelligence value only," in some cases, said intelligence officer Capt. Dominic Heil, 25, of California's Napa Valley. "We can't do that anymore."

The system requiring warrants is forcing U.S. troops to do shoe-leather detective work. Across Iraq, U.S. military battalions have created prosecution task forces that compile evidence in order to secure warrants.

The judges in Sadr City have refused to consider warrant petitions from the Americans, U.S. military officials said, because they were spooked by a recent assassination attempt targeting one of them.

The judges in the Green Zone sign off on warrant requests, but many demand that the Americans transport witnesses to the court so they can meet the witnesses face to face, U.S. officials said.

Many witnesses have been reluctant to sign sworn statements or accompany the Americans to court. Because there is no mechanism to compel witnesses to testify, U.S. troops can do little other than plead.

"People say they are afraid (the Mahdi Army) will come and get them when we leave," said 1st Lt. Nathaniel Woodrum, 28, of St. Louis, the officer in charge of the joint operations center at the station in Sadr City.

At 1:55 a.m., as the infantrymen were crossing a street where U.S. troops have been targeted with roadside bombs in recent weeks, Rad, the interpreter, saw a red blinking light on a billboard.

"That's an EFP!" he exclaimed, referring to a type of armor-piercing roadside bomb.

The soldiers scurried inside a nearby building. They searched the occupants of a dwelling and took fingerprint and iris scans.

Ivanov radioed the station and gave troops there a description of the suspected roadside bomb and his unit's location.

The device appeared to have been placed to target the turret of an armored vehicle, a tactic extremists have used in recent months to kill soldiers inside the new, mine-resistant trucks the Pentagon purchased.

Ivanov's men stood behind a wall, using laser beams on their rifles to wave off vehicles headed toward the suspected bomb.

Two hours later, a U.S. bomb squad determined that the device was a dud.

Ivanov's men, cold and sleep-deprived, walked in silence back to the outpost, where a brand-new Iraqi flag now flies.

U.S. Soldier Killed By Baghdad IED

Jan. 18, 2009 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE
No. 20090118-04

BAGHDAD – A Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldier died of wounds suffered following an improvised explosive device in eastern Baghdad Jan. 18 at approximately 11 a.m.

NEW GENERAL ORDER NO. 1: PACK UP

GO HOME



U.S. soldiers wait at the airfield in Kandahar province south of Kabul, Afghanistan, Dec. 29, 2008. (AP Photo/Rahmat Gul)

TROOP NEWS

“At Least 48 Oregon Guardsmen May Have Been Poisoned By An Airborne Carcinogen”

KBR Officials Knew Of Toxins Months Before Soldiers In Iraq

[Thanks to SSG N (ret'd) who sent this in. she writes: “anything for a buck.”]

January 10, 2009 Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — At least 48 Oregon guardsmen may have been poisoned by an airborne carcinogen while working in southern Iraq, and hundreds more may have been exposed when those troops returned to camp with the chemical on their boots, according to a report in The Oregonian on Friday.

The news comes just weeks after a CBS News report that KBR officials waited up to four months before warning the Army that troops were exposed to an airborne carcinogen.

Depositions from KBR employees obtained by the TV network detailed concerns about hexavalent chromium at a southern Iraq water plant as early as May 2003.

Army officials did not know about the problem until August 2003, and responded by pulling Indiana guardsmen from their posts at the site.

At least one Indiana guardsman has died from lung cancer that may be related to the chemical exposure and several others now have tumors and rashes consistent with chromium poisoning, the network reported.

The Oregonian report said at least 233 state guardsmen stationed in the area at the time may have also suffered some level of exposure. The Guard intends to contact all 420 members of the battalion — 1st Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment — to inform them of the potential risk.

Scientific Study: The MRE Taste Test “If The Fucking Rats Won’t Eat It, What Does That Tell You?”



From: Ward Reilly, [Veterans For Peace]
To: GI Special

Sent: January 15, 2009

Subject: Scientific study: Even Rats Wont Even Eat MRE's

Dear GI Special,

I was the infantry for 3 years from 71 to 74, and I ate many, many C-rations. So, in solidarity with the troops in the field today, I conducted an experiment on today's "MRE's", or "Meals, Ready To Eat", to see what the troops were being fed.

I had a box MRE's in my shed, in case of a disaster, and hurricane Gustav destroyed the shed...some rats got to the MRE's after the hurricane, and they went crazy when they discovered the MRE's.

They tore through EVERY MRE packet...and guess what?

Out of the 4 different types of meals I had, the rats wouldn't eat even a single meal after ripping through the packets!! Not One!

I had: "Pork Chop, Boneless, In Jamaica Style Sauce, With Noodles", "Chunked And Formed Turkey Breast In Gravy With Potatoes", "Spaghetti With Meat Sauce", and "Frankfurters, Beef"...the rats easily opened each package, as can be clearly seen in the photos, and they REJECTED the contents of EVERY MRE meal.

If the fucking rats won't eat it, what does that tell you?

See photos for the proof of my scientific experiment.

Peace from Ward Reilly,
First Infantry Division veteran

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.**

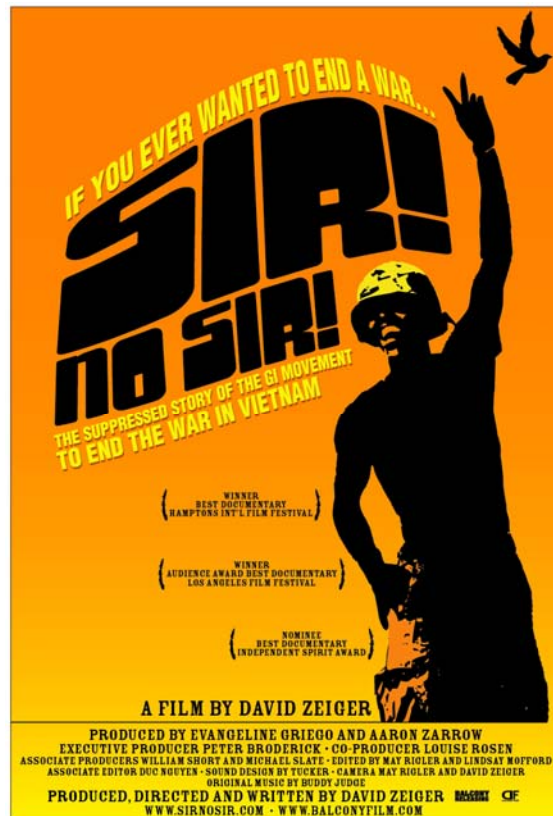
**"The mighty are only mighty because we are on our knees. Let us rise!"
-- Camille Desmoulins**

**"When someone says my son died fighting for his country, I say, "No, the suicide bomber who killed my son died fighting for his country."
-- Father of American Soldier Chase Beattie, KIA in Iraq**

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

“If You Ever Wanted To End A War”



Sir! No Sir!:

The Sir! No Sir! DVD is on sale now, exclusively at
http://www.sirnosir.com/home_dvd_storefront.html

Also available is a Soundtrack CD (which includes the entire song from the FTA Show, "Soldier We Love You"), theatrical posters, tee shirts, and the DVD of "A Night of Ferocious Joy," a film about the first hip-hop antiwar concert against the "War on Terror."

To Whom it May Concern:

I just wanted to say thank you for this film, for raising my awareness, I never even knew some of these things happened.

I think this probably is one of the most important documentaries made about war resistance.

Thank you again,
SGT Spencer Batchelder

**BUY SIR! NO SIR! FOR ACTIVE DUTY SOLDIERS
NOW**

**HELP GET SIR! NO SIR!
INTO THE HANDS THAT NEED IT MOST**

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

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

**“Even Before The Economic Crisis
Hit, The United States Was
Overextended Abroad”**

**“Most Waning Empires-For Example,
Britain, France, And The Soviet Union-
Don't Realize That They Are Declining
Until It Is Too Late”**

January 13, 2009 by Ivan Eland, CommonDreams [Excerpts]

Even though the looming economic meltdown will likely be serious-and maybe even cataclysmic-the foreign policy chattering classes of both parties are on autopilot and have not yet abandoned their interventionist consensus.

A rude awakening awaits.

Even before the economic crisis hit, the United States was overextended abroad. One measure of that imperial overstretch was that the U.S. accounted for roughly 43 percent of the world's military spending but only 20 percent of the world's GDP.

Obama will likely withdraw some forces from Iraq but will send them to the second nation-building quagmire in Afghanistan. During the election campaign, Obama said that he saw Afghanistan as the central front in the war on terror and pledged to augment U.S. forces there.

Doubling down in Afghanistan by sending as many as 30,000 additional forces will make the war Obama's.

The bad news is that most waning empires-for example, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union-don't realize that they are declining until it is too late.

For example, the French futilely tried to reassert control in Indochina after World War II and failed in bitterly opposing Algeria's independence using armed force; the British, along with the French and Israelis, conducted an ill-fated invasion of Egypt in 1956; and the Soviets became mired in a losing counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan during the 1980s.

Mr. Zion Clarifies A Few Things



A Palestinian girl wounded during an Israeli attack is carried in Jabalya in the northern Gaza Strip January 13, 2009. (Ismail Zaydah/Reuters)

From: Z
To: GI Special
Sent: January 17, 2009
Subject: RE: Mr Zion clarifies a few things

Kindly listen to my story and my exasperating situation will become crystal-clear to you.

You need to understand that I live with an absolutely impossible woman. All I ever wanted was to live in peace and harmony with her. I was willing to share and share alike.

So I let her build us a beautiful house, under my direction. I gave her a nice big basement and I modestly took the upstairs. You'd think she'd be happy and even a little grateful, right? She's got a pretty little window just above ground level, with a lovely view of a gray fence.

Once in a while I let her come upstairs and do a few chores for me. The rest of the time she's free to sit around her comfortable little basement and watch TV whenever it works. It's a dream existence, don't you think?

All I ever wanted in exchange for my generosity was a little quickie now and then. Not much to ask for, is it? Forget it: nothing doing! The woman is filled with violence and hatred.

She does nasty things out of sheer spite. Sneaking upstairs to put marbles on my floor and thumbtacks on my toilet seat! Is that any way to treat her benefactor in his very own house?

The woman threatens my very existence. I am compelled to take stern measures to defend myself. So, every now and then I go to the basement and beat the living daylights out of her. Don't think it's easy! She's a strapping wench, and she fights back like a wildcat!

Luckily, I have a very kind and understanding Uncle who has always sympathized with me and assisted me. Every year, Sam gives me a brand new pair of shining brass knuckles to help me control the vicious shrew. Did I say brass knuckles? They're diamond knuckles, 3 billion dollars a pair!

Yes he does spoil me a bit but, oh how I love my Uncle! This time I'm really making Uncle proud of me. Listen: I went down to the basement to teach the damned bitch a lesson she will never forget (and perhaps to get a little in-and-out while I was at it). Well, she just about scratched my eyes out!

So, what did I do? What would you do? I beat her within an inch of her life, that's what I did. I hit her with everything I got. Broke maybe half of her bones, and left her a bloody mess. The terrorist bitch richly deserved it. I have to defend myself, don't I?

What did you expect me to do? Scratch her in return? If she's stupid enough to take on my 200 pounds of solid muscle – and my little pair of diamond knuckles (thanks, Uncle!) – she'll damn well get what's coming to her. Not only did I pound the stuffing out of her,

but I also smashed her kids against the wall. (Forgot to tell you about them – the slut had a whole bunch of brats, she's got fewer now).

OK, I hope you understand the situation better now, and realize more fully just what kind of terror I'm defending myself against on a daily basis.

What's the solution? I don't know but I sure hope that if I kick her butt properly a few more times, and smack a few more of her snotty kids against the wall, she'll finally decide to run for it next time I open the front door.

That may well be the only way for me to live in my own house in peace. Wish me luck!

Meantime, thank you for your continued sympathy and support!

Don't forget to give my best regards to Uncle!

“Let's Assume That The United Nations, Instead Of Decreeing Part Of The Middle East For The Creation Of The State Of Israel, Had Decreed That Western Pennsylvania Would Be The New Haven For The Victims Of The Holocaust”

From: Sandy Kelson [Veterans For Peace & Military Project]
To: GI Special
Sent: January 02, 2009
Subject: Letter to Editor

Dear Editor:

Let's assume that the United Nations, instead of decreeing part of the Middle East for the creation of the state of Israel, had decreed that western Pennsylvania would be the new haven for the victims of the Holocaust.

Further, assume that the Nazi victims started arriving in mass with weapons and through terror caused the heretofore longtime residents of western Pennsylvania to run for their lives.

These escaping refugees set up camps across the border in Ohio, West Virginia and New York. They wear the keys to their abandoned homes on necklaces hoping someday to return.

From their new hovels they look across the border and see their homes being occupied by people from Europe who are also planting their old fields.

They start shooting across the border at the transplanted Europeans. The Europeans, claiming the right to self defense, retaliate with superior firepower and kill hundreds of former western Pennsylvanian residents and their descendants.

The entire western community gives absolute support to the “Settlers” and condemn the western Pennsylvanians for their attacks.

Some may say the difference is that Israel is the ancient home of the Jewish people given to them by God and it is only right that after 3000 years or so that justice be done and that they get their ancient homeland back.

Well, if this is correct, I am sure that the descendants of the indigenous survivors of the 1492 European invasion of the Americas, those whom we call Indians, who are housed in camps we call Reservations, would probably accept this idea of justice and invite the descendants of the 1492 invasion to forthwith leave their homeland that was bequeathed to them thousands of years ago by the Great White Spirit.

I do not have a solution to the violence in the Middle East. I know, however, that there will be no solution until the world acknowledges the wrong done to those who were victims of the creation of the state of Israel and address that wrong.

Sanford Kelson

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. Same address to unsubscribe. Phone: 917.677.8057

“The Palestinians Are A Troublesome Species, Given To Violence And Irrational Rebellion”

“They Cannot Succeed, And They Should Not Continue, So They Must Be Eliminated, Eradicated”

January 13, 2009 by Morgan Strong, Consortium News

They have buried many children in Gaza the past two weeks.

One, a little girl, was buried a week ago last Tuesday. She was only four. She was a beautiful child, long dark hair and a sweetly innocent face, far too early for such promise as she to die.

She died in a most horrific way. She was huddled in terror when a bomb landed near her, throwing her from her bed. Shrapnel tore viciously into her tiny body.

I know what that feels like.

As a Marine rifleman in the Vietnam War, I suffered the same sudden terror, the blinding pain, as white hot metal rips into you.

She would have felt, and smelled, the burning of her flesh. She would have seen all the blood and perhaps the bleeding gouges where the flesh was ripped from her body.

She would have been beyond terror, beyond reason, beyond understanding, of what had happened to her. Mercifully, she might have lived for only a few seconds in agony, fear and hopeless despair.

She would have cried for her mother. Everyone calls for their mother then.

Now she is just one of hundreds of innocent children who are dead because of grand design and petty interest.

She didn't matter really; nobody matters very much in Gaza. There are things to be done, scores to be settled, arrogance to belittle.

Don't think that the trivial life of a child is to be considered when it is a matter of necessity to rid oneself of irritants, in the cause of tranquility.

Israel killed the little girl. A pilot dropped a bomb into her home. The pilot who dropped the bomb thought little about it, or what he might have done. He flew back to his base, to his sterile life, not abused by any sense of remorse.

If he had known he killed a little girl, he might not have cared very much. Surely, his superiors don't shed many tears for these little girls who die horribly. They are interested only in their own.

The "others," the Palestinians, are a troublesome species, given to violence and irrational rebellion. They cannot succeed, and they should not continue, so they must be eliminated, eradicated. A simple solution.

The Israelis are to decimate Hamas, and any and all who support them, and they will spread terror among the people of Gaza so that these irritants can never again lay claim to human dignity.

They will be punished terribly until they are entirely submissive.

Then they will be punished more because it is possible to do so.

The President of the United States says that they deserve what they get because Hamas started it - a callow schoolboy's understanding of such horror, justifying the act of standing by and watching while little girls and little boys die so horribly.

There is no justification for what Israel is doing to these innocents, only excuses and lies.

There is no shame, no pity, no contrition, no apology, no moment of despair from those who do this.

They may well win, but they will be understood as so violent and unmerciful to be forever shamed.



Carlos Latuff

Vietnam GI: Reprints Available

Not available from anybody else, anywhere

Edited by Vietnam Veteran Jeff Sharlet from 1968 until his death, this newspaper rocked the world, attracting attention even from Time Magazine, and extremely hostile attention from the chain of command. The pages and pages of letters in the paper from troops in Vietnam condemning the war are lost to history, but you can find them here.

The Military Project has copied complete sets of Vietnam GI. The originals were a bit rough, but every page is there. Over 100 pages, full 11x17 size.

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Cost for others: \$15 if picked up in New York City. For mailing inside USA add \$5 for bubble bag and postage. For outside USA, include extra for mailing 2.5 pounds to wherever you are.

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OCCUPATION PALESTINE

**“There Has Been A Deliberate,
Systematic Destruction Of All
Places Of Refuge”**

**“It Is A Devastating Awareness
For Parents - That There Is No Way
To Keep Their Children Safe”**

**“Paramedics Face The Deliberate Targeting Of Their Colleagues - 13 Killed, 14 Ambulances Destroyed”
“Gaza, Palestine And Its People Continue To Live, Breathe, Resist And Remain Intact And This Refusal To Be Broken Is A Call And Challenge To Us All”**



A convoy of Israeli tanks moves towards the border of the northern Gaza Strip January 15, 2009. (Yannis Behrakis/Reuters)

By CAOIMHE BUTTERLY, CounterPunch, January 16-18, 2009

Caoimhe Butterly is an Irish human rights activist working in Jabaliya and Gaza City as a volunteer with ambulance services and as co-coordinator for the Free Gaza Movement, She can be contacted at sahara78@hotmail.co.uk

A Report From Gaza

The morgues of Gaza's hospitals are over-flowing.

The bodies in their blood-soaked white shrouds cover the entire floor space of the Shifa hospital morgue.

Some are intact, most horribly deformed, limbs twisted into unnatural positions, chest cavities exposed, heads blown off, skulls crushed in.

Family members wait outside to identify and claim a brother, husband, father, mother, wife, child. Many of those who wait their turn have lost numerous family members and loved ones.

Blood is everywhere. Hospital orderlies hose down the floors of operating rooms, bloodied bandages lie discarded in corners, and the injured continue to pour in: bodies lacerated by shrapnel, burns, bullet wounds. Medical workers, exhausted and under siege, work day and night and each life saved is seen as a victory over the predominance of death.

The streets of Gaza are eerily silent- the pulsing life and rhythm of markets, children, fishermen walking down to the sea at dawn brutally stilled and replaced by an atmosphere of uncertainty, isolation and fear.

The ever-present sounds of surveillance drones, F16s, tanks and Apaches are listened to acutely as residents try to guess where the next deadly strike will be- which house, school, clinic, mosque, governmental building or community centre will be hit next and how to move before it does.

That there are no safe places - no refuge for vulnerable human bodies - is felt acutely.

It is a devastating awareness for parents - that there is no way to keep their children safe.

As we continue to accompany the ambulances, joining Palestinian paramedics as they risk their lives, daily, to respond to calls from those with no other life-line, our existence becomes temporarily narrowed down and focused on the few precious minutes that make the difference between life and death.

With each new call received as we ride in ambulances that careen down broken, silent roads, sirens and lights blaring, there exists a battle of life over death.

We have learned the language of the war that the Israelis are waging on the collective captive population of Gaza - to distinguish between the sounds of the weaponry used, the timing between the first missile strikes and the inevitable second - targeting those that rush to tend to and evacuate the wounded, to recognize the signs of the different chemical weapons being used in this onslaught, to overcome the initial vulnerability of recognizing our own mortality.

Though many of the calls received are to pick up bodies, not the wounded, the necessity of affording the dead a dignified burial drives the paramedics to face the deliberate targeting of their colleagues and comrades - thirteen killed while evacuating the

wounded, fourteen ambulances destroyed - and to continue to search for the shattered bodies of the dead to bring home to their families.

Last night, while sitting with paramedics in Jabaliya refugee camp, drinking tea and listening to their stories, we received a call to respond to the aftermath of a missile strike.

When we arrived at the outskirts of the camp where the attack had taken place the area was filled with clouds of dust, torn electricity lines, slabs of concrete and open water pipes gushing water into the street.

Amongst the carnage of severed limbs and blood we pulled out the body of a young man, his chest and face lacerated by shrapnel wounds, but alive- conscious and moaning.

As the ambulance sped him through the cold night we applied pressure to his wounds, the warmth of his blood seeping through the bandages reminder of the life still in him.

He opened his eyes in answer to my questions and closed them again as Muhammad, a volunteer paramedic, murmured "ayeesh, nufuss"- live, breathe- over and over to him. He lost consciousness as we arrived at the hospital, received into the arms of friends who carried him into the emergency room. He, Majid, lived and is recovering.

A few minutes later there was another missile strike, this time on a residential house.

As we arrived a crowd had rushed to the ruins of the four story home in an attempt to drag survivors out from under the rubble. The family the house belonged to had evacuated the area the day before and the only person in it at the time of the strike was 17 year old Muhammad who had gone back to collect clothes for his family.

He was dragged out from under the rubble still breathing - his legs twisted in unnatural directions and with a head wound, but alive. There was no choice but to move him, with the imminence of a possible second strike, and he lay in the ambulance moaning with pain and calling for his mother.

We thought he would live, he was conscious though in intense pain and with the rest of the night consumed with call after call to pick up the wounded and the dead, I forgot to check on him.

This morning we were called to pick up a body from Shifa hospital to take back to Jabaliya. We carried a body wrapped in a blood-soaked white shroud into the ambulance, and it wasn't until we were on the road that we realized that it was Muhammad's body. His brother rode with us, opening the shroud to tenderly kiss Muhammad's forehead.

This morning we received news that Al-Quds hospital in Gaza City was under siege.

We tried unsuccessfully for hours to gain access to the hospital, trying to organize co-ordination to get the ambulances past Israeli tanks and snipers to evacuate the wounded and dead.

Hours of unsuccessful attempts later we received a call from the Shujahiya neighborhood, describing a house where there were both dead and wounded patients to pick up. The area was deserted, many families having fled as Israeli tanks and snipers took up position amongst their homes, other silent in the dark, cold confines of their homes, crawling from room to room to avoid sniper fire through their windows.

As we drove slowly around the area, we heard women's cries for help.

We approached their house on foot, followed by the ambulances and as we came to the threshold of their home, they rushed towards us with their children, shaking and crying with shock.

At the door of the house the ambulance lights exposed the bodies of four men, lacerated by shrapnel wounds - the skull and brains of one exposed, others whose limbs had been severed off.

The four were the husbands and brothers of the women, who had ventured out to search for bread and food for their families. Their bodies were still warm as we struggled to carry them on stretchers over the uneven ground, their blood staining the earth and our clothes.

As we prepared to leave the area our torches illuminated the slumped figure of another man, his abdomen and chest shredded by shrapnel. With no space in the other ambulances, and the imminent possibility of sniper fire, we were forced to take his body in the back of the ambulance carrying the women and children.

One of the little girls stared at me before coming into my arms and telling me her name - Fidaa', which means to sacrifice. She stared at the body bag, asking when he would wake up.

Once back at the hospital we received word that the Israeli army had shelled Al Quds hospital, that the ensuing fire risked spreading and that there had been a 20-minute time-frame negotiated to evacuate patients, doctors and residents in the surrounding houses.

By the time we got up there in a convoy of ambulances, hundreds of people had gathered.

With the shelling of the UNRWA compound and the hospital there was a deep awareness that nowhere in Gaza is safe, or sacred.

We helped evacuate those assembled to near-by hospitals and schools that have been opened to receive the displaced. The scenes were deeply saddening- families, desperate and carrying their children, blankets and bags of their possessions venturing out in the cold night to try to find a corner of a school or hospital to shelter in.

The paramedic we were with referred to the displacement of the over 46,000 Gazan Palestinians now on the move as a continuation of the ongoing Nakba of dispossession and exile seen through generation after generation enduring massacre after massacre.

Today's death toll was over 75, one of the bloodiest days since the start of this carnage.

Over 1,110 Palestinians have been killed in the past 21 days. 367 of those have been children.

The humanitarian infrastructure of Gaza is on its knees - already devastated by years of comprehensive siege.

There has been a deliberate, systematic destruction of all places of refuge. There are no safe places here, for anyone.

And yet, in the face of so much desecration, this community has remained intact. The social solidarity and support between people is inspiring, and the steadfastness of Gaza continues to humble and inspire all those who witness it.

Their level of sacrifice demands our collective response- and recognition that demonstrations are not enough.

Gaza, Palestine and its people continue to live, breathe, resist and remain intact and this refusal to be broken is a call and challenge to us all.



[Thanks to Mark Shapiro, Military Project, who sent this in.]

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

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CLASS WAR REPORTS

Class War In Greece:

“The Demonstrations That Rocked Greece At The End Of Last Year Resumed On January 9; “Despite The Repression, The Movement Has Continued To Develop”



Protests have picked up where they left off for the holidays in December

January 16, 2009 By George Yorgos, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

THE DEMONSTRATIONS that rocked Greece at the end of last year resumed on January 9, picking up where they left off before the holidays with a militant march of 20,000 teachers and students in Athens.

The protests erupted last month after Athens police killed a young activist, Alexandros Grigoropoulos. After a wave of student occupations and huge street battles with police, Greek unions called a general strike December 10. A new wave of even bigger protests followed.

Despite the repression, the movement has continued to develop.

Students were again the driving force in the January 9 demonstration, called in memory of Nikos Temponeras, a teacher who was murdered on that date in 1991 by right-wing thugs of the ruling New Democracy party. Temponeras was killed while defending his school's occupation in the protests that took down that government.

Today, students are once again out to topple another right-wing New Democracy government, this one run by Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis.

After marching January 9, students and the teachers took over the center of Athens for more than four hours, demanding justice for Alexis, money for education, the disarming of police and the resignation of Karamanlis.

As has been the case in previous protests, police violently attacked the peaceful demonstration without any pretext. They arrested 80 protesters and 15 lawyers who appeared at the police headquarters to defend them.

The police reserved their most rabid attacks for members of the media who were trying to document the police brutality.

This attack has outraged journalists and students--and breathed new life into the student movement right before general assemblies scheduled to decide their next actions.

The Karamanlis government has already tried to charge many arrested students with ridiculous crimes under the antiterrorist laws passed in 2001 and again before the Athens Olympics of 2004.

The authorities are using this latest crackdown in the latest attempt to terrorize the student movement before it revives--and to send a message that the protests will not be tolerated.

BUT ALL this repression has been in vain, because the protests never really stopped.

The antiwar movement demonstrated against the murderous Israeli war on Gaza on numerous occasions during the holidays. The largest demonstration was January 3. Organized by the Coalition of the Radical Left and other left-wing organizations (with the exception of the Communist Party, which always has its own sectarian gatherings), some 20,000 protesters marched for nine miles in the rain, from the Greek parliament to the U.S. Embassy, and from there to the Israeli Embassy.

Outside the Israeli Embassy, protesters were met again with another vicious attack by riot police--this time with liberal use of tear gas newly purchased from Israel.

(In the December protests, police had used up all of their arsenal, gassing us daily with more than 4,000 canisters of tear gas.)

The protesters were back on the streets January 10, this time protesting Israeli atrocities in the land operations in Gaza.

The following day, a couple thousand immigrants and their supporters responded to the call by the organization Deport Racism to protest the recent death of a 24-year-old Bangladeshi immigrant outside the Immigration Center in Athens. The young man was found beaten to his death in a nearby ditch. The murder was probably committed by

cops or neo-Nazi thugs, who target immigrants waiting outside all night in long lines to register for asylum. It was the third such murder so far this year.

In this climate of continual protests, general assembly meetings have been called in universities across the country to decide the next steps for the movement.

But the next round of occupations have already begun--this time carried out by workers in the mass media.

On January 10, a group of unionized media workers, along with opposition members in the leadership of the union, took over the offices of their union. They were protesting against both the working conditions they face and the treacherous role of the media in the recent youth demonstrations.

The leadership of the journalists' union, the Union of Athens Daily Press Editors (ESIEA, according to its initials in Greek), is one of the most corrupt and bankrupt in the eyes of its members. ESIEA officials are able to maintain control of the union leadership, thanks to collaboration between New Democracy and trade unionists in the center-left PASOK party, who act as partners with the big bosses in the media.

ESIEA has done nothing to oppose the medieval working conditions imposed by media employers and has gladly collaborated with the establishment in manipulating the truth about the recent protests, the attacks on immigrants and workers, and the campaign of intimidation against every person who dares to fight back.

The initiative of the media workers found an immediate response in the city of Volos, where workers took over the building of the historic labor council of that city (the first of its kind established in Greece). The Volos workers made similar demands of their bureaucratic union leadership.

In both occupations, workers hold open meetings every night to decide their daily actions.

This mass participation is becoming a symbol for workers and students at a time many people radicalized by recent events are looking for ways to move the struggle forward.

As in the struggles of the 1960s, an escalation of the struggles can put profound change on the agenda--change that is badly needed by working people. At the same time, the struggle will underscore the need for a new, more radical left.

MORE:

Class War In Greece: "Down With The Government Of Murderers"

“The Karamanlis Government Is Falling Apart, And It Must Be Overthrown From Below By The Actions Of The Movement”

Now is the time for strike actions--and coordination between sections of workers already in struggle--to generalize our demands and fight for victories.

January 5, 2009 Editorial, Workers' Left [Greece] Editorial [Excerpts] via Socialist Worker

The resilience of this movement can only be understood as a result of the solidarity that the demonstrators have enjoyed among the majority of people in Greece.

The explosion of anger that followed Alexis' murder brought together all sorts of pressures that people have been subjected to for years: Rising prices and continuous austerity that have slashed workers' income.

The spread of flexible labor relations that have filled up workplaces with "part-timers" and "temps." Systematic cuts in social spending that have driven hospitals, schools and retirement funds to the threshold of collapse.

To this already severe reality has been added the nightmare of financial crisis.

At the same time as the capitalists and their government are spending 28 billion euros (\$35 billion) to "save" the banks, they are asking us willingly to accept even harsher sacrifices to save the system from the crisis they created.

At the same time, the explosion that followed Alexis' murder brought together all of the major and minor struggles of the previous period: The great movement of the last year against privatization of education and proposed changes to Article 16 of the constitution, which protects the rights of youth to free education. The teachers' strike in autumn 2006. The flood of protest against plans to change the pension system. The hundreds of strikes that didn't quite win and even those that went down in defeat.

These popular struggles have kept resistance alive with the demand for an end to neoliberalism--and that "bill" is today being presented to Karamanlis.

The slogan "Down with the government of murderers" is absolutely central. The Karamanlis government is falling apart, and it must be overthrown from below by the actions of the movement.

This means not only removing from power the discredited personnel of Karamanlis' New Democracy, but also overturning the policies dictated for years by the industrialists and

the bankers--policies that the experience of the preceding Simitis government shows could be continued by a social neoliberal government of PASOK.

It is because of this experience that we have no reason to wait for the certain electoral defeat of New Democracy.

We should not allow Karamanlis any more time to go on with his anti-labor, anti-social policies.

We are opening up the prospect of victories and real gains for workers and youth. With respect to that perspective, actions in the streets are not sufficient by themselves anymore. While not abandoning demonstrations, we need to turn our efforts to actions inside the schools, with student strikes, occupations and mass general assembly meetings.

At the same time, the movement needs to broaden further in society.

The right cannot withstand the pressure of a fighting front of students and workers.

At the present time, the labor movement is facing the challenge of the newly passed budget. It is clear that the trade unions aren't doing even the most basic things to mobilize opposition.

During the December 10 general strike, the unions retreated in terror, initially canceling a strike rally in the center of Athens. Eventually, the demonstration did take place, and the large turnout and its fighting spirit gave union leaders the most proper answer. But in the few days before the budget vote in parliament, the unions avoided any calls for serious actions to escalate the struggle.

That duty now falls on the shoulders of activists inside the unions at the grassroots level.

Now is the time for strike actions--and coordination between sections of workers already in struggle--to generalize our demands and fight for victories.

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