

## GI SPECIAL 7B9:



# Blinding Flash Of The Obvious:

**“There Is A Good Chance That Obama’s War In Iraq Will Last Longer Than Bush’s War”**

**Obama’s Campaign Promise To Get American Combat Troops Out Of Iraq Within 16 Months Is “False Phraseology”**

# **“Newsflash For Obama. There Is No Such Thing As Non-Combat Troops” “Obama’s Promise To Get Troops Out Of Iraq So That He Can Use Them In Afghanistan Is Not A Departure From Bush, It Is A Continuation Of Bush”**

2.13.09 By Michelle Levi, CBS News. [Excerpts]

On CBS News.com’s “Washington Unplugged” today, author and Washington Post pentagon reporter Thomas Ricks suggested that the United States was nowhere near the finish line of its effort in Iraq.

“I think there are a lot of reasons Iraq ‘09 is going to be very tough and in fact harder than the last year of Bush’s war,” he told guest moderator John Dickerson.

“And I think there is a good chance that Obama’s war in Iraq will last longer than Bush’s war.”

The author of “Fiasco” is out with a new book about the U.S. experience in Iraq during last two years of the Bush administration titled, “The Gamble: General Petraeus And The American Military Adventure In Iraq 2006-2008.”

**“There is no pacifistic branch of the U.S. military,” Ricks said, calling President Obama’s campaign promise to get American combat troops out of Iraq within 16 months “false phraseology.”**

**“Newsflash for Obama,” he said. “There is no such thing as non-combat troops...I think we are there for a long time.”**

“Where are we now in Iraq?” Dickerson asked.

Ricks said there are two fundamental misunderstandings that Americans have about the war.

The first involves the surge, which, he said, was much more difficult than most people thing.

The second is the perception that the war is over.

“The war has changed several times,” he said. “It was an invasion that morphed into an occupation into an insurgency then to a civil war, then into an American counter offensive. Just because it’s changing doesn’t mean it’s ended.”

Dickerson then turned to Afghanistan, asking what effect ground conditions in Iraq have on its neighboring battleground.

“The odd thing about Barack Obama’s promise to get troops out of Iraq so that he can use them in Afghanistan is that it is not a departure from Bush, it is a continuation of Bush,” Ricks said.

“It’s the same unwarranted optimism.”

Ricks said there is also “some friction” over where to send U.S. troops in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, which he says is partially because there are “some pretty big egos” making these decisions.

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## **IRAQ WAR REPORTS**

### **NEW GENERAL ORDER NO. 1: PACK UP GO HOME THIS IS STUPID BULLSHIT**



U.S. Marines of 1st Battalion escort a team from U.S. State Department election observers after visiting a polling station in Sinjar, 390 km (240 miles) northwest of Baghdad January 31, 2009. REUTERS/Erik de Castro

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# **AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS**

## **U.S. Soldier Killed In Uruzgan**

Feb 13 (KUNA)

A soldier of the US-led coalition troops was killed in a clash with Taliban in southern Afghanistan, it was reported Friday.

A statement issued by the coalition forces Bagram base, located north of here, said the soldier died of wounds sustained from “enemy fire” during a combat reconnaissance patrol in Uruzgan province early this morning.

An Afghan soldier was also wounded during the incident.

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## **Ranch Kid Who Died In Afghanistan Was Resolute, Driven, Parents Say**



Trevor Johnson

January 30, 2009 By ED KEMMICK Of The Gazette Staff

Trevor Johnson liked to do things his own way.

At 17, when he signed a pledge to join the Marines, he arranged it so that he didn't have to start boot camp until the end of summer after high school graduation, so he could play one more full season of Legion baseball in Colstrip.

And when he re-enlisted in 2007, he didn't want a formal, full-dress swearing-in. Instead, he and his lieutenant, both clad in cutoffs and Hawaiian shirts, conducted the ceremony on the roof of a barracks at Camp Lejeune, N.C.

“It was his way of saying, ‘This is how you’re going to get me,’” said his father, Tom Johnson. “He was a prankster. He was a little bit of a renegade.”

He was also a bright, athletic, handsome young man nicknamed “Hollywood” by his fellow Marines. He was a ranch kid through and through, at home on a horse and at ease with a gun, and he wanted to serve his country from an early age.

He served for a year in Southeast Asia, based in Japan, and later fought in Afghanistan and Iraq. He began his second deployment to Afghanistan in November.

Tuesday, at the age of 23, he was killed by a roadside bomb.

“They had to do an identification on dental records. There was nothing left of him,” said his mother, Colleen Johnson.

The Johnsons spoke of their son’s life and death Thursday afternoon at their ranch house, 25 miles southeast of Forsyth on Rosebud Creek Road. Out front, at half-staff and snapping in a stiff breeze on the gray, snow-flecked prairie, were an American flag, a Montana flag and a Marine Corps flag, each on its own pole.

Colleen was home alone Tuesday morning when two staff sergeants from the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve in Billings came out to the ranch to deliver the news. She heard knocking on the door and went to answer it, but at first she couldn’t.

“We were always told it was going to be two guys in uniform,” she said. “And there they were. I didn’t let them in for 20 minutes. I said to myself, ‘No, it couldn’t have happened to him.’ “

Tom was out in the fields, feeding the cows, when the two sergeants found him. When they told him of Trevor’s death, the first thing he thought of was a 15-year-old cow that Trevor, as a boy, had bottle-fed and raised as his own. Tom turned around, and the old cow was right there.

“I told her, ‘You’ll never see him again,’ “ he said.

Tom Johnson is a native of Laramie, Wyo., who went to Rocky Mountain College in Billings on football scholarship. It was there he met Colleen, whose ancestors settled in the Rosebud Valley in 1882. Trevor’s great-great-uncle was Gen. O.O. Howard, who fought in the Civil War and who in 1877 pursued Chief Joseph and his Nez Perce band across Montana.

Tom and Colleen were married in 1977 and lived for a time in Billings, where he was a carpenter and she was a teacher. They moved to the family ranch in 1984 with their 1-year-old daughter, Erin.

“We knew I was pregnant with Trevor, and we wanted to raise our kids here,” Colleen said.

Trevor was always smart, and he was a quick learner. Colleen said her mother taught Trevor how to play cribbage when he was just 4, and he was soon beating her.

"I taught him chess, and I never did beat him," she said.

During his senior year at Colstrip High School, Trevor was in three advanced-placement classes - trigonometry, calculus and physics. He had a laid-back demeanor, his parents said, but once he set to work on something, he went at it with a single-minded intensity.

"Yeah," his father said with a laugh, "you didn't want to interrupt whatever he was focused on."

Trevor loved playing G.I. Joe when he was a little boy, and as a teenager he got involved in some pretty serious paintball war games with his friends and many cousins. Colleen thinks he may have settled on the military when he was no older than 8.

After the terrorism attacks of 9/11, his determination hardened. By the end of that day, he told his parents he felt called to duty.

"I said, 'Why you?'" his father said. "And he said, 'There's people who can't defend themselves, and I can help them.'"

After training in Okinawa and elsewhere in the Far East, Trevor was deployed to Afghanistan from June 2005 to January 2006. He served in the mountainous region bordering Pakistan, often sent out to find and dispose of weaponry cached in caves.

He was sent to Iraq from October 2006 to May 2007. His parents said his main job was working as a combat engineer, but he also served in the infantry and intelligence and as a rifle instructor. A ranch kid, he was a good shot from the start. His father doesn't remember exactly what level of marksmanship Trevor attained, "but it was top of the heap, anyway."

Toward the end of his tour in Iraq, he considered re-enlisting. His parents asked him to come home first so they could see him again and talk over his options before he made his mind up.

They spent four days in Denver when he came home, talking about his options, and in the end he decided he wasn't through with the military. He told his mother he didn't feel his job was finished.

A few months after re-enlisting, he fell in love with a woman named Nicole. "Their eyes met across the room," his mother said. "It really was love at first sight."

They were married on Oct. 29, 2007, and last May they had a daughter, Aspyr. Trevor also had a stepson, Landan, who is 3.

Trevor shipped out for Afghanistan again in November, this time serving in the Helmand province. His mother said he had never been happier, describing his unit as the best he had ever been with. None of his fellow Marines had ever been to Montana, and they could hardly imagine the life he described to them, growing up on a ranch, riding horses, branding calves.

Colleen sent her son some pictures of the ranch, some sage and a handful of dirt.

“Just so he could remember it and smell it. And so they could understand it. They said they were all going to come out here this summer,” Colleen said. “Hopefully, they still will.”

He was a sergeant in the 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, and by his second tour in Afghanistan, he was a heavily decorated Marine.

**From what his parents understand, he was on a foot patrol Tuesday, clearing land mines and improvised explosive devices in advance of other troops. He apparently was killed when an IED was triggered remotely. Another Marine, Sgt. David Wallace of Sharpsville, Pa., was also killed, although it wasn't clear whether it was a result of the same blast.**

**The troops were patrolling a road through steep hills, and the explosion was the signal for an ambush. Several other Marines were injured in the ensuing firefight, and it was a while before any of Trevor's remains could be recovered.**

Trevor Johnson had earlier asked to be buried in Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia, mainly so his children in North Carolina can more easily visit his grave. It may take two weeks before his interment, so his parents may have a memorial service on the ranch before then.

His only sibling, Erin, a horse trainer in Texas, was on her way to Montana on Thursday. Tom and Colleen Johnson said they wanted to bury Trevor on the ranch, but they understand why he chose Arlington.

“We can visit Arlington, too,” his mother said, “but he's here in spirit. I can look out everywhere, and I have a memory of him.”

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## **Liberation The Old Fashioned Way: Australian Special Forces Kill Five Children In Afghanistan**

13 Feb 2009 3 News

In a statement issued today, Australia's Defence Department has released details of a conflict engagement involving Australian special forces soldiers in which five Afghan children were killed in the early hours of Thursday morning.

“No Australians were injured in the engagement, but a number of people have been killed and wounded during this incident,” the statement reads.

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## **Cut Off At The Khyber Pass:**

# **“This Is Land That Throughout History Has Been A Graveyard For Empires”**

## **“The Attacks On Trucks Inside Pakistan To Disrupt The NATO Supply Line May Prove To Be The Latest Example Of That History”**



Bridge after it was blown up by militants in a tribal area near Khyber Pass on the outskirts of Peshawar Feb. 3, 2009, cutting the main route for supplies bound for occupation forces in Afghanistan. (Adil Khan/Reuters)

February 6, 2009 By Shahan Mufti – GlobalPost [Excerpts]

PESHAWAR, Pakistan — Shakir Afridi’s business is a mess these days — and that spells very bad news for America’s war in Afghanistan.

Afridi is a Pakistani “transporter” and also the spokesperson for the Pakistani union of transporters — a loosely affiliated, tribal and often-undocumented group of truck owners who move trade goods inside Pakistan and across its land borders into Afghanistan.

Many of these trucks supply the U.S. military inside Afghanistan.



Afridi was woken up with the news that 12 of his trucks coming in from Afghanistan were torched in the early hours of the morning on Wednesday.

They stood stranded after a bridge was blown up Tuesday along the key transport route leading to the Khyber Pass, the major border crossing between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Afridi, who belongs to one of Pakistan's two major Pashtun trucking families, said he commands a fleet of 3,500 trucks and employs nearly 15,000 men who operate and maintain the vehicles.

These days, 90 percent of his resources are dedicated to one contract: transporting NATO supplies from the Arabian Sea port city of Karachi 700 miles across Pakistan's western border into Afghanistan.

The supply route through the Khyber Pass is critical for U.S. forces — three-quarters of total NATO supplies to Afghanistan come through it — and the disruptions could severely undercut the U.S. military's plan for a build-up of troops in Afghanistan.

**(At a briefing in Washington, retired Australian Lt. Col. David Kilcullen, a counter-terrorism adviser to Gen. David Petraeus, said, "The supply route is critical. It has been shut down about six times in the last year. That is a major disruption.")**

Even as U.S. forces suffer from the Taliban's ability to shut down supply lines, Afridi said his business had been going well since the U.S. moved troops into Afghanistan in 2001.

But more recently it has been falling apart.

**"When we first started transporting NATO's stuff the major worry was sometimes getting attacked inside Afghanistan," Afridi told me in a bare-walled, sparsely furnished office on the outskirts of the city of Peshawar near the border with the tribal areas.**

**"But now we're sweating just to make it to the border."**

Transporters like Afridi have made a business from supplying along a route that has seen more armies pass through — and suffer defeat — than any other place on earth.

**Alexander the Great suffered an arrow to his leg here and retreated with his shrinking army.**

**After an attempt at control, the Moguls wrote the region off as unmanageable.**

**In the 19th century, British invaders had to back their way out and negotiate a buffer zone after decades of war.**

**The Soviets invaded in 1979 and for years were plagued by cut off supply routes.**

**Eventually their empire fell apart after its campaign here — albeit with a little of help from covert funding from the U.S. to the Afghan resistance fighters known as Mujahideen.**

**This is land that throughout history has been a graveyard for empires.**

**And the attacks on trucks inside Pakistan to disrupt the NATO supply line may prove to be the latest example of that history.**

The attacks have increased in the past six months as U.S. drones have started regularly attacking Pakistan's west.

In September, the Pakistani government suspended the supply route to NATO after American ground troops crossed into Pakistani tribal areas for the first time and killed 20 villagers. In December, two weeks after an American drone struck inside Pakistani settled territory for the first time, nearly 250 NATO trucks were burned by militants in a rampage spread over two nights.

And security appears to be worsening along the supply line just as the U.S. prepares to send up to an additional 32,000 troops to Afghanistan this month.

Since the bridge explosion on Wednesday, the terminals used by private international cargo companies such as APL and Maersk that have contracts to transport most of NATO's supplies through Pakistan are spilling over with these large 22-wheelers, loaded with NATO military equipment destined for the troops in Afghanistan.

An estimated 300 trucks pass through Pakistan to Afghanistan every day. The U.S. Embassy said there are no weapons or ammunition that move through Pakistan, but everything from technical equipment, food, clothing and blankets comes through Pakistan and keeps NATO soldiers warm and fed.

**For anti-NATO forces, stopping these supplies "is the most effective way of weakening the NATO army in Afghanistan," said Talat Masood, a retired general in Pakistan's army.**

Almost two decades after the U.S. expelled the Soviet army from Afghanistan, it's the Americans who are approaching Russia for help getting in. Petraeus announced last month that the U.S. had reached agreements to open "additional logistical routes into Afghanistan" through Russia and Afghanistan's central Asian neighbors to the north.

**Rahimullah Yusufzai, an expert on Afghanistan and the tribal region in Peshawar says this claim means little. "They (NATO) can cut that down to maybe 60 percent?," he said of the supplies moving through Pakistan.**

**"That still doesn't solve anything."**

**"They think central Asia is safe?" Shakir Afridi scoffed at Petraeus' suggestion. "My great grandfather has been in the business, and I know," he raised a finger, "there is no other way to supply Afghanistan without Pakistan."**

**By some estimates the cost of shipping will triple for NATO for supplies moved through central Asia.**

Things are not looking up for the United States in central Asia, regardless. The president of Kyrgyzstan announced in a televised address that the country had decided on “ending the term for the American base on the territory of Kyrgyzstan.” According to press reports ISAF is now turning to Afghanistan’s northern neighbor Uzbekistan, which expelled Americans from military bases in 2005.

Pakistan, says Yusufzai in Peshawar “is still the lifeline for NATO.”

The U.S., he says, “simply can’t afford to have things go much more wrong here.”

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

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

**Afghans Celebrate Defeat Of  
Russian Occupation:  
“I Don't Remember Russians  
Entering The Homes Of People  
Without Permission, Breaking Their  
Doors”**

**“What The Americans Are Doing Today,  
Like Searching People's Homes And  
Their Bombardment Of Afghan Villages,  
Would Not Have Been Accepted By The  
Mujahideen”**

Feb 14 Kabul: AFP

Afghans Saturday marked the 1989 withdrawal of the Soviet Union proud they were able to overcome the mighty Red Army but concerned about the fighting still wracking their country 20 years later.

When the last Soviet tanks rolled out across the border on February 15, 1989 -- which corresponds to a Saturday in the Afghan calendar -- the thousands of men who had fought the 10-year occupation were triumphant.

"We fired jubilant gunfire into the air," recalls Mohammad Soliman, one of the mujahideen (holy fighters) who took on the Red Army in a battle that drew behind-the-scenes support from Pakistan and the United States.

Afghans are increasingly unhappy with civilian casualties in mainly US bombing raids against the insurgents and intrusive midnight house searches by the foreign soldiers.

"There is not much difference between the Russians and Americans," says Del, the former anti-Soviet guerrilla.

But, "I don't remember Russians entering the homes of people without permission, breaking their doors," he says.

Soliman, the other former mujahid, is also disappointed by the war, poverty and actions of the foreign troops.

"After we defeated the Russians, we expected an Islamic and prosperous Afghanistan. But what we have today is not what we expected," he says.

"What the Americans are doing today, like searching people's homes and their bombardment of Afghan villages, would not have been accepted by the mujahideen."

## **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 Veterans Against the War to end the occupations and bring all troops home now! ([www.ivaw.org/](http://www.ivaw.org/))**

## **TROOP NEWS**

## Fresh Fuel For Obama's Death Machine



U.S. servicemen sit inside a C-17 Globemaster waiting to take off for Afghanistan at Manas Air Base near Kyrgyzstan's capital Bishkek, February 13, 2009.  
REUTERS/Shamil Zhumatov

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## FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



**“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.**

**“For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.**

**“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”**

**Frederick Douglas, 1852**

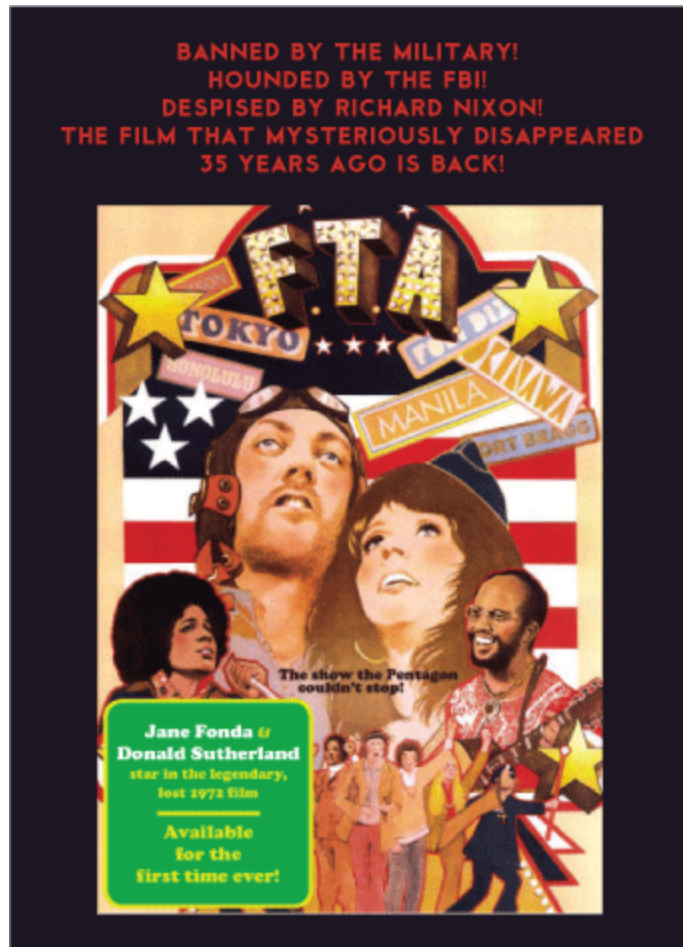
**One day while I was in a bunker in Vietnam, a sniper round went over my head. The person who fired that weapon was not a terrorist, a rebel, an extremist, or a so-called insurgent. The Vietnamese individual who tried to kill me was a citizen of Vietnam, who did not want me in his country. This truth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

**Mike Hastie  
U.S. Army Medic  
Vietnam 1970-71  
December 13, 2004**

## **FTA Is Back!**

**“The Extraordinary Air Of Dissent That Rises Out Of ‘FTA’ Provides A Rare Glimpse Into An Unhappy And Demoralized Fighting Force Stuck In A War Which They Did Not Believe In”**

**“The Film’s True Power Comes In The Frank, Often Rude Comments From The Servicemen And Women Who Openly Question The Purpose And Planning Of The American Involvement In Vietnam”**



**Broadcast Premiere February 23  
On the Sundance Channel**

**FTA Trailer**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4HlkgPCgU7g&eurl=http://imgineaworldof.blogspot.com/&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4HlkgPCgU7g&eurl=http://imgineaworldof.blogspot.com/&feature=player_embedded)

**FINALLY, AFTER 35-YEARS IN EXILE  
FTA IS BACK! AVAILABLE FEBRUARY 24  
EXCLUSIVELY ON DVD  
FROM DISPLACED FILMS AND  
NEW VIDEO/ DOCURAMA**

**FTA:**

**Ultra-Rare! F.T.A. (aka FREE THE ARMY aka FUN, TRAVEL, ADVENTURE), 1972,  
Displaced Films, 97 min. Dir. Francine Parker.**

**F.T.A. was originally released by American-International but pulled from distribution after only one week, with rumors of pressure from the Pentagon.**

– Phil Hall, Film Threat

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## About The Film:

11.13.2001 Movie Review By Phil Hall, Filmthreat.com [Excerpts]

Directed by Francine Parker, produced by Francine Parker, Jane Fonda and Donald Sutherland, written by Robin Merken, Michael Alimo, Rita Martinson, Holly Near, Len Chandler, Pamela Donegan and Dalton Trumbo

Starring Jane Fonda, Donald Sutherland and Holly Near

1972. Rated R. Running time: 1 hour 37 minutes. An American International Release

During the Vietnam War, Hollywood maintained a curiously stony silence about the conflict in Indochina and the violently split reactions at home.

Except for the John Wayne insanity “The Green Berets” and the cinema verite depiction of the 1968 protests outside the Democratic National Convention in “Medium Cool,” the war was nowhere to be seen on the screen.

“FTA,” a documentary produced by and starring Jane Fonda, was the rare film which bluntly addressed the Vietnam War and the policies behind the U.S. involvement.

But unfortunately, it was a little too rare: the film was abruptly withdrawn after only one week in release.

During 1971 and 1972, Jane Fonda and Donald Sutherland led a quasi-USO tour that played in towns outside of U.S. military bases along the West Coast and throughout the Pacific.

Fonda referred to the tour as “political vaudeville” and the show itself was called “FTA” (the acronym standing for “Free the Army” and “Fuck the Army”).

The audiences were primarily the men and women of the U.S. armed services, and during the tour Fonda and her company interviewed the various soldiers, sailors and marines regarding their thoughts on the Indochina slaughterhouse.

Viewing “FTA” today is like opening a long-forgotten time capsule.

**The film’s true power comes in the frank, often rude comments from the servicemen and women who openly question the purpose and planning of the American involvement in Vietnam.**



Most memorable here are the members of the U.S.S. Coral Sea, who presented a petition to their superiors demanding a halt to the bombing in Vietnam; African-American soldiers and marines who angrily decried racist attitudes among the white commanding officers at the U.S. military installations, usually with an upraised fist of the Black Power movement; women serving in the U.S. Air Force who talk unhappily about sexual harassment from their male counterparts; and soldiers who pointedly refer to the dictatorial government in South Vietnam which was being presented as the democracy which they were supposedly defending.

**The extraordinary air of dissent that rises out of “FTA” provides a rare glimpse into an unhappy and demoralized fighting force stuck in a war which they did not believe in.**

A truly harrowing and heartbreaking vision: a very brief chat with a discharged American soldier who lost an arm in Vietnam and left the service to wander aimlessly through Japan, without a home or a sense of purpose in life. This unfortunate young man appears literally out of nowhere and disappears almost as quickly; his story should have been given a film unto itself.

One sketch offered a nasty sting with Donald Sutherland taking the role of a TV sports commentator providing a play-by-play call on a battle between U.S. forces and the Vietcong (the battle ends prematurely when American fighter planes bomb their own ground troops).

**The military audiences at the “FTA” seemed to enjoy the performances, although the film includes a hairy moment when a few hecklers disrupt the show and are ejected by other soldiers.**

Fonda speaks about supporting the U.S. service members in Vietnam while criticizing the U.S. government policies which put them into harm's way.

Having a filmed record of the discontent of that era makes this an important documentary, and one can easily forgive its shortcomings and stumbles when considering this was the rare production to question the Vietnam War at a time when Hollywood preferred to look the other way.

## **To Get Your Copy Of FTA:**

[http://militarylies.typepad.com/military\\_lies/2009/01/preorder-fta-from-displaced-films.html](http://militarylies.typepad.com/military_lies/2009/01/preorder-fta-from-displaced-films.html)

**“Governments Are Trembling”  
“Revolt Is In The Air”**

# **“The Economic Disaster Is Sparking Mass Protest And Revolt On A Scale Not Seen In Two Decades”**

## **“70% Of The French Public Backed The General Strike”**

February 13, 2009 By Eric Ruder, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

THE FINANCIAL turmoil that began in the summer of 2007 in the U.S. is spreading around the globe with frightening speed and devastating consequences for working people.

The bursting of the bubble in the U.S. housing market in the summer of 2007 was the catalyst for full-blown economic crisis in country after country in Europe.

Now, the economic disaster is sparking mass protest and revolt on a scale not seen in two decades.

Britain's Guardian newspaper described the new political reality in a January 31 article titled "Governments across Europe tremble as angry people take to the streets." It begins:

"France paralyzed by a wave of strike action, the boulevards of Paris resembling a debris-strewn battlefield. The Hungarian currency sinks to its lowest level ever against the euro, as the unemployment figure rises. Greek farmers block the road into Bulgaria in protest at low prices for their produce. New figures from the biggest bank in the Baltic show that the three post-Soviet states there face the biggest recessions in Europe.

"Exactly 20 years ago, in serial revolutionary rejoicing, they ditched communism to put their faith in a capitalism now in crisis and by which they feel betrayed. The result has been the biggest protests across the former communist bloc since the days of people power.

"Europe's time of troubles is gathering depth and scale. Governments are trembling. Revolt is in the air."

**ON JANUARY 29, a quarter of France's 5 million public-sector workers honored a general strike call, and up to 2.5 million people joined protests in 200 French cities to express their disgust with austerity measures proposed by French president Nicolas Sarkozy.**

Last summer, Sarkozy was basking in what he considered solid public support for his "reforms" aimed at undercutting the power of France's labor unions. "These days, when there's a strike, no one notices," he quipped.

Now Sarkozy is noticing--along with the rest of the world.

“The mammoth demonstrations were designed to send a warning of discontentment to the conservative government of President Nicolas Sarkozy,” Time magazine reported.

**“Workers in France are angry about what they see as insufficient government efforts to protect both public- and private-sector jobs. People are also upset that union and employee concerns over stagnating salaries and slumping purchasing power were ignored when the government drew up its \$34 billion economic stimulus package.”**

In fact, most French workers feel that the “stimulus package” bails out the bankers without doing anything to address the attacks on public services, pensions and the skyrocketing unemployment rate.

**Despite the inconvenience of the strike’s impact on public transportation and government attempts to isolate the strikers by calling for unity in the face of the crisis, 70 percent of the French public backed the general strike, and a significant number of private-sector workers stayed away from work or joined the street protests in solidarity.**

The protests were largely peaceful, including a march of 300,000 in Paris, where a group of marchers tried to head toward Sarkozy’s residence.

Police repeatedly charged the group, swinging their batons and firing tear gas. The crowd responded by setting garbage cans on fire, turning over a car and trying to set up a barricade.

Meanwhile, in Iceland, once thought to be one of Europe’s most prosperous and stable societies, it took scarcely more than a week for the country’s banking system to crash and its currency to implode, making Iceland the first (and unlikely the last) national bankruptcy.

**Within weeks of Iceland’s crash, what many observers had considered an island of content consumers was transformed into a nation of angry demonstrators who banged pots and pans in the streets, braved tear gas and riot police, besieged the world’s oldest parliament building, drove the neoliberals from government and installed a coalition of Left Greens and Social Democrats.**

They dubbed their movement the Saucepan Revolution.

“In economics, they talk about the invisible hand that regulates the market,” Icelandic author Andri Snaer Magnason told Solnit.

“In Iceland, the free market became so wild that it was not fixed by an invisible hand, but an invisible guillotine. So, in one weekend, the whole class of our newly rich masters of the universe lost their heads (reputation, power and money), and all the power and debt of the newly privatized companies fell into the hands of the people again.”

After decades of demanding that government get out of their way so they could reap maximum profits, some captains of industry and finance are looking forward to the return

of “big government”--but only as a way to get their hands on taxpayer money to socialize the losses.

What’s more, the economic collapse is superheating the response of anxious and angry populations to other political events as well.

In Greece, for example, the police murder of 15-year-old student activist Alexandros Grigoropoulos sparked a wave of school occupations and massive street battles with police.

But the outrage at police repression quickly fused with anger at the economic crisis, culminating in a general strike by Greek unions on December 10.

These protests in turn inspired actions by Greek farmers, who have set up roadblocks to press the country’s conservative government to address the dismally low prices they receive for their produce. Already, the government has agreed to allocate \$650 million in subsidies for farmers.

In France, Olivier Besancenot, the presidential candidate of the Revolutionary Communist League (Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, or LCR) who received 4 percent of the vote in the 2007 elections, has been thrust into the ranks of the country’s leading political figures.

“Besancenot, a postman in his day job, is a star,” according to an early February edition of Newsweek. “And as storm clouds gather, he has become the country’s most influential opposition figure.

Besancenot has achieved a 60 percent popularity rating, with 45 percent of those polled saying they want to see him have more influence in the future, ahead of mainstream leaders like the centrist François Bayrou (44 percent) and new Socialist leader Martine Aubry (42 percent).”

In late January, the LCR met to formally dissolve its organization of 3,000 and launch a broader New Anticapitalist Party (NAP), which now has 10,000 members. With Besancenot’s high profile lending more excitement to the founding of the NAP, the French political spectrum could move sharply left--which is especially encouraging given the 10 percent vote that fascist National Front candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen got in 2007.

**As they have in the past, Europe’s far-right parties will seek to pin blame for the economic crisis on immigrants, trade unions and the left, but so far, the first response has gone in a leftward direction in most places.**

Even in Switzerland, where the far-right Swiss People’s Party (SVP) launched a 2007 campaign to ban the construction of minarets, the distinctive feature of Muslim mosques--this in a country where only two such religious buildings exist--Swiss voters overwhelmingly rejected the SVP’s latest anti-immigrant effort, with 60 percent voting to extend the right of workers from any country of the European Union (EU) to move freely to the EU’s newest members, Romania and Bulgaria.

No one knows how long it will take for the riots, strikes and student struggles in Europe to reach this side of the Atlantic on a greater scale.

But sooner or later, they will.

Our side should start getting ready now.

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## DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



**“Far From ‘Deconstructing The War On Terror’, Obama Is Clearly Pursuing It With The Same Vigor, Ideological**

# **Backing And Deception As The Previous Administration”**

**“Bush’s First War, In Afghanistan,  
And Last War, In Pakistan, Are  
Now Obama’s Wars”**

**“He Has Retained Bush’s ‘Right’ To  
Imprison Anyone, Without Trial Or  
Charge”**

**“His Nominee For Attorney General, Eric  
Holder, Has Endorsed An Extension Of  
Bush’s Totalitarian USA Patriot Act”**

**Far from “shutting down the CIA’s secret prison network”, Obama’s executive orders actually give the CIA authority to carry out renditions, abductions and transfers of prisoners in secret**

05 February 2009 By John Pilger, New Statesman [Excerpts]

On 23 January, the Guardian’s front page declared, “Obama shuts network of CIA ‘ghost prisons’“. The “wholesale deconstruction of George Bush’s war on terror”, said the report, had been ordered by the new president, who would be “shutting down the CIA’s secret prison network, banning torture and rendition . . .”

The bollocks quotient on this was so high that it read like the press release it was, citing “officials briefing reporters at the White House yesterday”.

Obama’s orders, according to a group of 16 retired generals and admirals who attended a presidential signing ceremony, “would restore America’s moral standing in the world”.

What moral standing?

It never ceases to astonish that experienced reporters can transmit PR stunts like this, bearing in mind the moving belt of lies from the same source under only nominally different management.

Far from “deconstructing the war on terror”, Obama is clearly pursuing it with the same vigor, ideological backing and deception as the previous administration.

George W Bush's first war, in Afghanistan, and last war, in Pakistan, are now Obama's wars - with thousands more US troops to be deployed, more bombing and more slaughter of civilians.

Last month, on the day he described Afghanistan and Pakistan as "the central front in our enduring struggle against terrorism and extremism", 22 Afghan civilians died beneath Obama's bombs in a hamlet populated mainly by shepherds and which, by all accounts, had not laid eyes on the Taliban.

Women and children were among the dead, which is normal.

**Far from "shutting down the CIA's secret prison network", Obama's executive orders actually give the CIA authority to carry out renditions, abductions and transfers of prisoners in secret without threat of legal obstruction.**

**As the Los Angeles Times disclosed, "current and former US intelligence officials said that the rendition programme might be poised to play an expanded role".**

**A semantic sleight of hand is that "long-term prisons" are changed to "short-term prisons"; and while Americans are now banned from directly torturing people, foreigners working for the US are not.**

**This means that America's numerous "covert actions" will operate as they did under previous presidents, with proxy regimes, such as Augusto Pinochet's in Chile, doing the dirtiest work.**

Bush's open support for torture, and Donald Rumsfeld's extraordinary personal overseeing of certain torture techniques, upset many in America's "secret army" of subversive military and intelligence operators because it exposed how the system worked.

Obama's newly confirmed director of national intelligence, Admiral Dennis Blair, has said the Army Field Manual may include new forms of "harsh interrogation" which will be kept secret.

**Obama has chosen not to stop any of this.**

**Neither do his ballyhooed executive orders put an end to Bush's assault on constitutional and international law.**

**He has retained Bush's "right" to imprison anyone, without trial or charge.**

**No "ghost prisoners" are being released or are due to be tried before a civilian court.**

**His nominee for attorney general, Eric Holder, has endorsed an extension of Bush's totalitarian USA Patriot Act, which allows federal agents to demand Americans' library and bookshop records.**

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The man of “change” is changing little. That ought to be front-page news from Washington.

The president’s first phone call was to that Palestinian quisling, the unelected and deeply unpopular Mahmoud Abbas.

Under Obama, the “sense of a new era abroad”, declared the Observer, “was reinforced by the confirmation of Hillary Clinton as secretary of state”. Clinton has threatened to “entirely obliterate Iran” on behalf of Israel.

Not a single member of the president’s team demurred from his support for Israel’s barbaric actions in Gaza.

Obama himself likened the safety of his two young daughters with that of Israeli children but made not a single reference to the thousands of Palestinian children killed with American weapons - a violation of both international and US law.

He did, however, demand that the people of Gaza be denied “smuggled” small arms with which to defend themselves against the world’s fourth-largest military power.

And he paid tribute to the Arab dictatorships, such as Egypt, which are bribed by the US treasury to help the United States and Israel enforce policies described by the UN special rapporteur Richard Falk, a Jew, as “genocidal”.

It is time those paid to keep the record straight gave us the opportunity to debate informatively.

**In the 21st century, people power remains a huge and exciting and largely untapped force for change, but it is nothing without truth.**

**“In the time of universal deceit,” wrote George Orwell, “telling the truth is a revolutionary act.”**

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

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

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## CLASS WAR REPORTS



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**“Since The Old Order Led The  
Country Into This Mess, Enlarging  
Its Rescue Package Is Certain To  
Stoke Further The Ferocious  
Public Outrage”  
How To Get A Banker’s Attention?**

# “Public Executions Of Wall Street Miscreants” Proposed



Alternate Form Of Salary Caps For Bankers?

February 11, 2009 The Editors, The Nation & February 13, 2009 By Eugene Robinson, Washington Post [Excerpts]

Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner will get much better at making his case to Congress and the American people.

I'm confident in that prediction because after watching his debut this week, I don't see how he could get much worse.

**Geithner should pay more attention to the unrequited, Old Testament wrath that seems to be brewing over the financial crisis.**

**I know it's dangerous to generalize from anecdotal evidence, but I have to pay attention when, as happened this week, an obviously intelligent, otherwise reasonable-sounding gentleman leaves me a voice-mail message calling for "public executions" of Wall Street miscreants.**

If Geithner had spoken with any clarity, he would have revealed that his "new" plan is basically a continuation of the one that failed spectacularly in the closing months of the Bush administration: Washington intends to deliver vast additional sums of public money to the very largest banks while demanding little in return for the public interest.

**The Obama administration is adding new wrinkles to a doomed effort, attempting to put Humpty Dumpty back together again.**

Since the old order led the country into this mess, enlarging its rescue package is certain to stoke further the ferocious public outrage.

So Geithner cannot say plainly what he is up to.

Neither he nor Larry Summers, Obama's chief economic adviser, can think his way out of the problem or propose a more aggressive approach, as both men are wedded to the old way of doing things.

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**“Oil And Gas Industry Is Permitted To  
Make Billions And Billions And  
Billions Each Year And Not Be  
Accountable For These Men Killed  
On The Rigs”**

**“They (Oil And Gas Companies) Do Not  
Care If The Families Are Left Destitute,  
Go Hungry, Or Left Out In The Street.  
They Need To Be Accountable”**

February 2, 2009 By DUSTIN BLEIZEFFER, Star-Tribune energy reporter [Excerpts]

[Thanks to SSG N (ret'd) who sent this in. She writes: The first few paragraphs are pure class war. After that its politics. And this is in a good “Red” state.

Three men have died in Wyoming oil fields during the past 30 days.

Their deaths cap a year in which the oil and gas industry here grossed \$34 billion in revenues and still ranked among the worst in the nation for worker fatalities, according to information from state and local officials and the Center for Disease Control.

During the past year, state legislators heard testimony from dozens of injured workers and family members of killed workers about how the state workers' compensation system fails to deliver benefits in regard to serious, long-term cases.

Benefits are too low, they say.

Administrators allegedly resort to baseless and continual denial of claims that are ultimately found compensable, in addition to doctor-shopping and outright intimidation, according to the testimony.

“They (oil and gas companies) do not care if the families are left destitute, go hungry, or left out in the street. They need to be accountable,” said Cheryl Fried, widow of LeRoy Fried who was killed on a rig in August 2004.

“I think it’s a matter of people having an accident,” said Bruce Hinchey, president of the Petroleum Association of Wyoming. “You can legislate drunk-driving laws and you’ll still have drunk drivers. We’re going to have accidents.”

Worker advocates say there is indeed a problem in Wyoming.

Too many workers are getting injured and killed, and too many of those families are not finding enough help from the state’s workers’ compensation program.

**When a company pays into the state’s workers’ compensation fund, it is immune to lawsuits from its employees no matter how grossly negligent it is in a death or injury.**

In return for giving up their right to sue, employees are supposed to enjoy compensation and medical benefits from workers’ compensation no matter how grossly negligent they are for their own death or injury.

But not finding adequate compensation from workers’ comp, a handful of injured workers have been successful at suing their supervisors -- who currently do not enjoy legal immunity for their portion of negligence.

That’s the push behind the business and industry lobby’s “Co-employee immunity,” bill to extend legal immunity to co-employees and supervisors.

In a press conference Wednesday at Vincent’s law office in Riverton, several injured workers and family members of roughnecks killed on the job gathered to make their case for holding oil and gas operators liable.

Mike Butch suffered a broken neck and back among other injuries.

“I’m still working in the oil field. I had to. I had to go back to work,” said Butch. “I’ll die, but hopefully it won’t be on the rig.”

Cheryl Fried’s husband LeRoy Fried was killed on a rig in 2004. She received a death benefit from Wyoming Workers’ Compensation of about \$120,000.

Now that it’s paid out, she’s working part time cleaning hotel rooms to help support her family.

“I look out my window and see his (LeRoy Fried) grandchildren play,” said Vincent. “He was killed for no fault of his own. Finally, I could take it no longer.

“Oil and gas industry is permitted to make billions and billions and billions each year and not be accountable for these men killed on the rigs.”

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BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE.*



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