

GI SPECIAL 7C9:



“We Are With The People”
Troops In Madagascar Defy Dictator:
“We Were Trained To Protect Property And Citizens, Not To Fire At People”

“We No Longer Take Orders From Our Hierarchy” “We Are Following Our Hearts”

March 9, 2009 By Reuters & 3.10 Aljazeera & 3.11.09 Wall St. Journal

Soldiers in a large military camp in Madagascar have staged a mutiny, claiming they would no longer take orders from the government, reports say.

Access roads to a military camp in the Soanierana district outside of the capital Antananarivo were reportedly blocked by mutinous soldiers on Sunday.

“We no longer take orders from our hierarchy, we are following our hearts. We were trained to protect property and citizens, not to fire at people. We are with the people,” one of them told the AFP news agency.

The island's opposition leader spent a second day in hiding after a crackdown on his antigovernment movement.

Dissenting soldiers patrolled a main arterial road heading out of the city toward the presidential palace after rumors the presidential guard would attack Camp Capsat circulated.

A power struggle between the capital's sacked mayor Andry Rajoelina and President Marc Ravalomanana has ignited weeks of civil unrest, killing around 135 people and crippling the island's \$390 million tourism sector.

“That is enough killing people like that. We will defend our camp from all attack,” said a soldier beside a roadblock, on condition of anonymity.

About 30 armed military personnel manned the road. Some 600 soldiers are based at Capsat - it is not known how many soldiers have mutinied.

Andry Rajoelina, the opposition leader, has called a series of anti-government demonstrations since January 26 and demanded that Marc Ravalomanana, the president, steps down.

Rajoelina has accused Ravalomanana of being a dictator.

Rajoelina is in hiding after security forces attempted to arrest him and authorities intensified a crackdown on his movement.

“I am now hiding in a safe location where I cannot be attacked... Until the dust settles, I can no longer physically appear in front of my supporters,” he told AFP without specifying whether he was still in the capital Antananarivo or even in the country.

The former mayor of Antananarivo has vowed to oust Ravalomanana, who he describes as a dictator starving his people.

Fearful of spreading unrest among the soldiers, the nation's military leadership gave the country's feuding leaders 72 hours to resolve the political crisis, or face military intervention.

DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE MILITARY?

Forward GI Special along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the wars, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Project, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657. Phone: 917.677.8057

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Chesterfield Soldier Dies Near End Of Tour In Iraq

March 7, 2009 MELODIE N. MARTIN TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

Army Sgt. Jeffrey Alexander Reed of Chesterfield County still hadn't made up his mind about re-enlisting. But he enjoyed his work with the military police so much that his parents figured he would make it a career.

"He shared how rewarding it was to be spreading democracy and freedom and helping people who so desperately needed it," Mark Reed said of his youngest child. "He was very proud of his job, of his country and what we stand for."

His 23-year-old son was killed Monday when his vehicle was struck by a grenade in Balad, Iraq, just north of Baghdad, the Department of Defense said yesterday.

When he died, Reed was 15 days away from completing his second 15-month tour in Iraq, his father said yesterday.

Reed was assigned to the 411th Military Police Company, 720th Military Police Battalion, 89th Military Police Brigade, in Fort Hood, Texas. Reed joined the Army after graduating from L.C. Bird High School in 2004. He was followed that year by his brother, Sgt. Christopher Reed, 25, now a chemical weapons specialist serving in Afghanistan.

"I think a lot of it had to do with 9/11 and service to country and what we were going through in defending the nation," said their father, a U.S. Postal Service mail carrier.

Reed's father said he is comforted by conversations he has had in the past several days with soldiers who worked with his son.

"He was just beloved. Three of his soldiers called me yesterday on speakerphone to express their sadness and to let us know how much he meant to them. They told me they were devastated. That meant a lot to us as parents," he said.

The soldier also leaves behind a wife, Ashley Robbins Reed; his mother, Mary Reed; and a sister, Cynthia Reed, all of Chesterfield.

A funeral will be held Tuesday at 1 p.m. at the Chesterfield Chapel of J.T. Morriss & Son Funeral Home, 3050 W. Hundred Road. Burial will follow in Sunset Memorial Park in Chester. Contributions to the Jeffrey Reed Memorial Scholarship Fund may be sent to P.O. Box 55, Chesterfield, VA 23832.

Tribal Leaders, Police, Soldiers And Journalists Blown Up At Abu Ghraib; “Local Army Chief” Killed

ITN & By Alissa J. Rubin and Marc Santora, IHT

A bomber took aim Tuesday at a group of Iraqi Army officers

At least 33 people, including a local army chief, have died and 52 have been injured in the attack on the western edge of Baghdad, officials say.

At least 7 were Iraqi Army officers.

The attack took place in the Abu Ghraib municipality, and appeared to target a group of dignitaries as they left a national reconciliation conference.

This is the third major attack in the last few days.

The bomb exploded as delegates came out of the conference, attended by a large number of VIPs.

The hall which hosted the conference is about 25km (15 miles) from the centre of Baghdad, and close to the Abu Ghraib prison facility, which came under scrutiny because of the abuse of prisoners by US troops.

One witness, the owner of a car repair shop, described how the bomb went off as the delegates began a walking tour of Abu Ghraib's market.

Police sources said tribal leaders, police, soldiers and journalists were among the dead in the latest attack.

There is an investigation into whether the shooting after the bombing was an ambush by insurgents or undisciplined gunfire by Iraqi security forces, said Major General Qassim Atta, spokesman for the Baghdad security plan.

In the explosion Tuesday, witnesses described a scene of confusion and carnage, with the bombing followed by shooting that may have wounded or killed others not hit in the initial attack.

“I saw some of the corpses were riddled with bullets,” said Abu Jamal al-Zubaie, who lives nearby. “And many other wounded people who they took to the hospital also had bullet holes in them.”

He said most of the firing was from guards protecting visiting dignitaries.

MORE:

Big Surprise: The Resistance Is Back “The Iraqi Security Forces Have Refused To Do Anything In Our Area”

Those policy makers who think that the Iraq “problem” has somehow been “solved” might be starting to worry that they had, once again, been over-optimistic and guilty of simplifying a very complicated place.

3.10.09 By Alissa J. Rubin and Marc Santora, IHT [Excerpts]

U.S. forces, in the first stages of withdrawal, have begun to move back to large bases and hand over combat outposts and joint security stations to the Iraqi military.

Their reduced presence on the streets appears to have emboldened insurgents.

The hard-line Baathist [translation: secular nationalist] movement announced on its official Web site on Tuesday that it would spurn any reconciliation with the new Iraqi government, which it described as “collaborators, spies and traitors.”

“The Iraqi security forces have refused to do anything in our area,” [Awad al-Harbousi, a leader of the U.S. allied Awakening movement near Taji] said.

“We have many arrest warrants against people, but because the Americans withdrew from our area, the Iraqis are afraid to go after them without air support.”

The attack, the second since Sunday to kill more than two dozen people, suggested a renewed ability by insurgents to mount effective bombings after a

long period in which such attacks were relatively few and less lethal because of heavy security precautions.

At the weekend Maj Gen David Perkins, the coalition spokesman, said that Iraq had moved “from a very unstable to a stable position”.

Those policy makers who think that the Iraq “problem” has somehow been “solved” might be starting to worry that they had, once again, been over-optimistic and guilty of simplifying a very complicated place.

MORE:

War

March 10, 2009 The Columbus Dispatch

Grenades lie unattended next to a bazaar in the western part of the city. Garbage bags are searched daily for bombs. At a sprawling sheep market, Iraqi soldiers are careful not to kick over rocks for fear of setting off hidden explosives.

War has ebbed in most parts of Iraq, but not in Mosul ...

“If you don't have the Americans, this is not going to be good,” said an Iraqi army captain who gave his name only as Ahmed to protect his family. “I cannot take care of it.”

Even so, “some people don't like coalition forces here,” Ahmed added as his soldiers joined U.S. troops at the sheep market last week. “Iraqi people will come together, and it will be better.”

Yesterday, gunmen opened fire on a checkpoint in the western New Mosul neighborhood, killing two police officers and wounding a civilian.

Explosives are part of the daily cacophony in Mosul; the U.S. Army reported six bombs either found or detonated in the city on Thursday and Friday; one wounded an Iraqi soldier.

Iraqi security forces also pose a threat: three U.S. soldiers have been killed in Mosul since November by gunmen wearing Iraqi army or police uniforms.

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

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

Photograph Of No Photography



U.S. soldiers from the 4th Infantry Division at Camp Rustimiyah in Baghdad March 10, 2009. REUTERS/Mohammed Ameen

**BAD IDEA:
NO MISSION;
POINTLESS WAR:
ALL HOME NOW**



U.S. soldiers get into an armoured vehicle after a mission in Baghdad's Green Zone February 28, 2009. REUTERS/Mohammed Ameen

OOPS: Remember That Lying Propaganda Two Months Ago About How The Green Zone Checkpoints Had Been Turned Over To Iraqis?

03/11/09 AFP

Amid the plethora of security checks needed to enter the Green Zone, a heavily armed US soldier slowly walks up to a car only to ask the occupants to pick up their cigarette butts, discarded from the windows.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Special Forces Death Squads Stand Down For Two Weeks; Back In Action Now: U.S. General McKiernan Caught In Stupid Lie About It

[Thanks to SSG N (ret'd) who sent this in.]

March 9, 2009 By MARK MAZZETTI and ERIC SCHMITT, The New York Times Company [Excerpts]

WASHINGTON — The commander of a secretive branch of America's Special Operations forces last month ordered a halt to most commando missions in Afghanistan, reflecting a growing concern that civilian deaths caused by American firepower are jeopardizing broader goals there.

The halt, which lasted about two weeks, came after a series of nighttime raids by Special Operations troops in recent months killed women and children, and after months of mounting outrage in Afghanistan about civilians killed in air and ground strikes.

The stand-down began in mid-February, and the raids have since resumed.

Col. Gregory S. Julian, a spokesman for Gen. David D. McKiernan, who commands all American and NATO troops in Afghanistan, last week denied that there had been any halt to Special Operations missions.

On Monday, however, Colonel Julian seemed to acknowledge that the stand-down had occurred, but he said his boss was not behind the order.

MORE:

Journalist Imprisoned For 11 Months By U.S. Occupation For Interviewing Resistance Leaders Assassinated In Kandahar; “It Was Not Clear Who Was Behind The Killing”

Mar 11 By AMIR SHAH and FISNIK ABRASHI, Associated Press Writers

Gunmen in southern Afghanistan killed an Afghan journalist once held by the U.S. military in Afghanistan as an enemy combatant, officials said Wednesday.

Attackers killed Jawed Ahmad, 23, also known as Jojo, in the southern city of Kandahar on Tuesday, said Zalmay Ayubi, the spokesman for Kandahar's provincial governor.

Ahmad worked for a number of Canadian media outlets in Kandahar, covering a war that pits the Taliban-led insurgents against Canadian and U.S. troops in the province.

It was not clear who was behind the killing, and authorities were investigating, Ayubi said.

In late 2007, Ahmad was detained and held for 11 months by the U.S. military, which accused him of having contact with Taliban leaders and possessing their phone numbers and video of them, according to a complaint filed by Ahmad's lawyers last year in U.S. District Court in the District of Columbia.

He acknowledged in that interview that he had contacts with Taliban fighters but said that was part of his job.

“As a journalist you have the right to talk to any organization,” he said. “Yes, I talked to the Taliban like any other reporter.”

Attacks On Collaborator Cops Up 300%

10 March 2009 By VOA News

A U.S. government report says attacks on security forces in Afghanistan nearly tripled over the past year.

The report says attacks on Afghan police increased from 97 to 289, and that about 56 police officers are killed in action each month. The study published Monday in Washington by the Government Accountability Office, or GAO, also noted some progress, as a result of U.S. and Afghan officials' successful efforts to restructure the country's police force.

[Here's Your Mission] Welcome To Liberated Afghanistan: Journalism Student Gets 20 Years In Prison "For Asking Questions In A University Class About Women's Rights Under Islam"

The rights groups say the Supreme Court ruled in secret about a month ago to uphold the jail term for Kambakhsh, but did not inform his lawyer of its decision. The lawyer says he was not allowed to present a defense to the court.

Mar 11 By AMIR SHAH and FISNIK ABRASHI, Associated Press Writers

Afghanistan's Supreme Court upheld the decision of lower courts to sentence a young Afghan journalist to 20 years in prison, though the court did not release the sentence publicly, Human Rights Watch said in a statement late Tuesday.

Parwez Kambakhsh was convicted of blasphemy for asking questions in a university class about women's rights under Islam.

Prosecutors also said he illegally distributed an article he printed off the Internet that asks why Islam does not modernize to give women equal rights. He also allegedly wrote his own comments on the paper.

The case against the 24-year-old Kambakhsh, whose brother has angered Afghan warlords with his own writings, has come to symbolize Afghanistan's slide toward an ultraconservative view on religious and individual freedoms.

Human Rights Watch said Kambakhsh had not committed a crime and called on President Hamid Karzai to pardon him.

“The Supreme Court represented the last hope that Parwez Kambakhsh would receive a fair hearing, but once again justice was denied,” said Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch.

The rights groups say the Supreme Court ruled in secret about a month ago to uphold the jail term for Kambakhsh, but did not inform his lawyer of its decision. The lawyer says he was not allowed to present a defense to the court.

Kambakhsh was a journalism student at Balkh University in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif and writing for local newspapers when he was arrested in October 2007.

In January 2008, a lower court sentenced him to death in a trial critics have called flawed in part because Kambakhsh had no lawyer representing him. Muslim clerics welcomed that court's decision and public demonstrations were held against the journalism student because of perceptions he had violated the tenets of Islam.

TROOP NEWS

**Lt. Col. Jay Thornton Proud Of
Tormenting Hurt Soldiers At
Bragg;
“Soldiers Are Being Punished For
Injuries That They Sustained While
They Were Defending The Nation”
“Officers Are Indifferent To Their
Medical Needs And Punish Them For
The Very Injuries That Landed Them
There”**

“An Effort To Get Rid Of Soldiers Considered Unlikely To Return To Regular Duty”



Enemy combatant Thornton meets with his staff to devise new ways to humiliate and punish disabled troops. [Wolfstad.com]

[Thanks to Sandy Kelson, Military Project & Veterans For Peace; SSG N (ret'd); James Starowicz, Veterans For Peace.]

“In my 10 years of service I have often seen soldiers mistreated, abused or left hanging, but never have I seen an entire unit collectively mentally and physically break down its members,” said Sgt. Jonas from Tempe, Ariz.

March. 10, 2009 & March 11, 2009 By KEVIN MAURER, Associated Press

Staff Sgt. Jason Jonas says when he goes to bed at night, he is terrified his medication will cause him to oversleep and miss morning roll call again.

His commanders are fully aware the paratrooper wounded in Afghanistan has been diagnosed with a sleep disorder, because he is one of about 10,000 soldiers assigned to the Army's Warrior Transition units, created for troops recovering from injuries.

Commanders at Fort Bragg's transition unit readily acknowledge holding them to the same standards as able-bodied soldiers in combat units, often assigning chores as punishment for minor infractions.

Soldiers assigned to the units have combat injuries such as amputations and mental health problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as minor ailments that didn't come from combat.

The unit has a discipline rate three times as high as Fort Bragg's main tenant, the 82nd Airborne Division, and transition units at two other bases punish their soldiers even more frequently than the one at Fort Bragg, according to an Associated Press review of records obtained through the Freedom of Information Act.

“In my 10 years of service I have often seen soldiers mistreated, abused or left hanging, but never have I seen an entire unit collectively mentally and physically break down its members,” said Sgt. Jonas from Tempe, Ariz.

Sgt. Jonas, 28, is one of 11 current or former soldiers who have spent time in Fort Bragg's transition unit and say that its officers are either indifferent to their medical needs or trying to drive injured men and women from the military.

Some complain they are being punished for the very injuries that landed them in the unit.

“It is the military's way of dealing with it: 'You're a fake. You need to go back to work,' “ said Pfc. Roman Serpik, 25, who enlisted in Duluth, Ga. He said he injured his head and back in a practice parachute jump last April.

Sgt. Jonas suffered a concussion on a jump in 1999 at Fort Bragg, and military doctors determined that that led him to develop narcolepsy, a disorder that causes people to fall asleep abruptly, he said.

He said medication for his condition made him miss formation five times, resulting in a demotion that cost him \$400 a month.

“Do we hold our capable warriors in transition accountable to these standards, to include the Uniform Code of Military Justice and the various Army regulations?

“Unapologetically, yes, we do,” said Lt. Col. Jay Thornton, the unit's commander.

He said soldiers are “helped, not harmed, by maintaining an appropriate level of structure and military discipline.”

Advocates for wounded soldiers question whether the tough-love approach is an effort to get rid of soldiers considered unlikely to return to regular duty.

The transition unit at Fort Bragg issued what is known as an Article 15, used for minor misconduct that doesn't rise to the level of a court-martial, roughly once a month for every 135 soldiers through the first nine months of 2008.

At Fort Knox, Ky., the rate was one Article 15 per month for every 96 soldiers. The highest rate was at Fort Drum, N.Y., home to the 10th Mountain Division, where the injured warriors' commanders issued one Article 15 per month for every 76 soldiers.

On the more lenient end, the Article 15 rate for the transition unit at Hawaii's Schofield Barracks, the base of the 25th Infantry Division, was one for every 371 soldiers.

The general in charge of the Army's more than 9,000 wounded soldiers said Wednesday he is ordering a review of how the ones at Fort Bragg are being punished for minor violations.

Brig. Gen. Gary Cheek said he is asking the Army Surgeon General to look at all discipline that has been taken against soldiers in the base's Warrior Transition unit to make sure each case was fair.

More than a dozen current or former soldiers who have been assigned to the transition unit at Fort Bragg told the AP that its officers are indifferent to their medical needs and punish them for the very injuries that landed them there.

Rep. Steve Israel, D-N.Y., said he heard about the problems at Fort Bragg's Warrior Transition Battalion last month when a group of soldiers came to Long Island to share their experiences. He said what he heard "sent chills up his spine," and he vowed to seek legislation to resolve the issue if the problems don't clear up soon.

Sgt. Sheree Snow, 30, of Indianapolis, said she was evacuated from Iraq to Germany with fibroid tumors in February 2008, had a hysterectomy that May and was prescribed pain and sleeping medication for months afterward while at Fort Bragg.

She said the medication led her to miss nine morning formations, and when she was trying to wean herself off the painkillers, an entire day.

Thornton, her commander, punished her with 14 days of extra duty and docked her two months' pay, she said.

"The leadership isn't trained to work with wounded soldiers," said Snow, who returned to her primary assignment at Fort Eustis, Virginia, this year.

Jason Thomasson, a 34-year-old Iraq veteran from Winston-Salem, North Carolina, said he was sent to the unit after developing post-traumatic stress disorder, which he said led to extreme paranoia.

He missed formations and left Fort Bragg without permission. For that he was demoted and eventually kicked out of the Army.

"Soldiers are being punished for injuries that they sustained while they were defending the nation," Thomasson said. "I was a model soldier before I had PTSD."

A Most Honorable U.S. Air Force Reservist Wins Campaign To Free

Guantanamo Victim Of “CIA Fantasy”

**“Any Evidence Against Him Was Only Obtained Through Torture”
“He Had A Scalpel Used On His Chest And On His Genitals. He Was Severely Beaten. There Are Also Periods Of Times Where He Was Hung Up By His Wrists”**

“If I detained Mr Mohamed in a garage for seven years and deprived him of all rights and called him a car, that makes him no more a car because he's detained in a garage, no more than my government can detain someone, put them in jail and label them as a terrorist, makes them a terrorist.”

24 February 2009 BBC

Lt Col Yvonne Bradley, a US Air Force reservist and a military lawyer with 20 years experience, had kept a low profile until handling the Binyam Mohamed case.

But with the British resident back from Guantanamo Bay after seven years in captivity during which he claims he was “tortured in medieval ways”, it is she who has emerged as an unlikely hero of his long struggle for freedom.

Lt Col Bradley's fight to bring Mr Mohamed back home was largely unknown to the wider world until 9 February, when she flew to Britain to urge the Foreign Office to press harder for his release.

She proceeded to launch headlong into a series of meetings with Whitehall officials, and gave a number of lengthy media interviews.

By revealing that her 30-year-old Ethiopian-born client had become “very ill” as a result of a hunger strike, Lt Col Bradley appeared to spark Foreign Secretary David Miliband into action.

Two days later, the minister said he and his colleagues were working “as fast and hard as we can” with the US to secure Mr Mohamed's return.

Speaking to the BBC at the end of her week in Britain, Lt Col Bradley revealed details about her first meeting with Mr Mohamed and her immediate assumption that he was a terrorist.

“You have to realise, I'm a soldier, I was a true believer. I thought 'This guy's a terrorist'.

“I had done some heavy hitting criminal work, but was concerned, walking into a cell with someone that someone had told me was a terrorist, the worst of the worst, and I truly believed that.”

The misgivings appeared to be mutual. According to an April 2006 item in the US Department of Defense (DoD) news archive, Lt Col Bradley “declared herself unqualified” to represent Mr Mohamed at the start of military commissions proceedings against him “because of a conflict of interest”.

The DoD website says Mr Mohamed “asserted he did not want Bradley, or any American, to represent him in this case”, and told the presiding judge: “I don't believe her being an American and a soldier - a sworn enemy of mine - will defend me. I have a problem with trusting Americans, because I've been in custody of Americans for four years.”

But Lt Col Bradley had already begun to see some of the light at the end of the tunnel.

“After that first meeting with Mr Mohamed I walked out of that cell - and I was thinking: 'What are we doing?' - because if Binyam Mohamed is the worst of the worst that we are trying, we have the wrong people.

“He came over quiet and credible. I've represented many individuals before and they always say they're innocent, but Binyam wasn't like that.

“Everything he said, the way he said it, his body language. I could tell he was concerned and distanced from me because he didn't know if this was part of a disturbing game of interrogators.”

She said the case against Mr Mohamed was “CIA fantasy” and that any evidence against him was only obtained through torture.

She went on: “Mr Mohammed was a new convert to Islam and didn't speak the language. There was no way anyone in Mr Mohamed's position or status was going to make his way to the top of the chain of al-Qaeda in nine months and be having dinner with some of these leaders.”

Just two weeks after she first arrived in Britain to campaign for Mr Mohamed's release, Lt Col Bradley has had her wish, with her former client walking free in the country he first came to as a teenage refugee.

She maintains that for him to be labelled a terrorist was absurd.

“I look at it this way. If I detained Mr Mohamed in a garage for seven years and deprived him of all rights and called him a car, that makes him no more a car

because he's detained in a garage, no more than my government can detain someone, put them in jail and label them as a terrorist, makes them a terrorist.”

She is no longer the “believer” she was when she first met Mr Mohamed, quite the opposite.

“Guantanamo Bay did not contain the worst of the worst, that was part of the rhetoric.

“There have been prosecutors over the years who have quit, at least six publicly, there's a lot more that have gone under the radar, disappointed and demoralised.”

While Mr Mohamed's own statement did not detail the alleged torture he endured, Lt Col Bradley did not skimp on any of the detail on Monday: “He had a scalpel used on his chest and on his genitals. He was severely beaten. There are also periods of times where he was hung up by his wrists - all Spanish Inquisition technique - and left there for weeks upon end.”

After six years as a regular officer in the judge-advocate general's branch of the US Air Force, Lt Col Bradley worked for a further seven years for an organisation providing legal representation to death row inmates.

She now has a law practice near Philadelphia, which she put on hold while pursuing Mr Mohamed's case. She volunteered following an appeal for military lawyers to take up the cases of Guantanamo detainees in 2005.

Her job done, she can return to the US - perhaps to aid further Guantanamo inmates - “thrilled beyond what words can say”.

Lt Col Bradley added: “I was able to keep a promise. There's not many promises I can keep but the last time I saw him at Guantanamo Bay I told him 'next time I see you Binyam, you'll be a free man'.

“So I'm overwhelmed, I'm thrilled that in these three years of representing him, (I can) keep at least one promise.”

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

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 Douglass, 1852

**“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**

**Happy Anniversary:
March 12, 1912**

Women Warriors Win Bread And Roses



IWW organizer Elizabeth Gurley Flynn addresses a strike rally

Carl Bunin Peace History March 12-18

The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) won the Lawrence, Massachusetts, "Bread & Roses" textile strike after 32,000 workers (mostly young female immigrants who spoke twenty-five different languages) stayed out for nine weeks.

They were striking for better pay, a 54-hour workweek and safer working conditions: the equipment was dangerous and the air quality caused lung disease in nearly one-third of the workers before the age of twenty-five.



Bread & Roses victory parade

“Bread and Roses,” by James Oppenheimer

**As we go marching, marching, in the beauty of the day,
A million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill lots gray
Are touched with all the radiance that a sudden sun discloses
For the people hear us singing: bread and roses, bread and roses.**

**As we go marching, marching, we battle, too, for men,
For they are women’s children and we march with them again.
Our lives shall not be sweated from birth until life closes;
Hearts starve as well bodies; give us bread but give us roses.**

**As we go marching, marching, unnumbered women dead
Go crying through our singing their ancient call for bread.
Small art and love and beauty their drudging spirits knew;
Yes, it is bread we fight for, but we fight for roses, too.**

**As we go marching, marching, we bring the greater days;
The rising of the women means the rising of the race.
No more the drudge and idler, 10 that toil where one reposes,
But a sharing of life’s glories: bread and roses, bread and roses.**

January 18, 2002 By ELIZABETH SCHULTE, Socialist Worker

JAMES OPPENHEIMER wrote the song “Bread and Roses” for striking textile workers in Lawrence, Mass.

He took the title from the banners of strikers, who demanded not just decent treatment at work, but the right to dignity and a better quality of life.

The textile bosses in Lawrence had hired women and children because they thought they could pay poverty wages and never face resistance. And they employed immigrants--who spoke more than 25 different languages--with the aim of keeping workers from uniting and fighting back.

But the bosses were wrong on both counts. More than 20,000 Lawrence workers struck against a 30-cent pay cut in January 1912.

Many workers were lured to Lawrence by advertisements in their home cities--throughout the Balkans and the Mediterranean--showing happy textile workers carrying bags of money home from their jobs. Instead, the new immigrants were greeted with miserable labor at poverty wages.

The strike came as a surprise to bosses, considering that the workers were largely unorganized. Because of its craft orientation and its policy of ignoring immigrant and women workers, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) had few locals in the textile industry.

AFL leaders actually opposed the Lawrence strike and by the end of the struggle had sided with the bosses -- denouncing strikers as anarchists and saboteurs. In contrast, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), or Wobblies, saw the Lawrence battle as a key struggle in their strategy of organizing all workers into "One Big Union."

ALTHOUGH THE IWW had been organizing in Lawrence since 1905, at times working with the more conservative AFL unions, they accelerated their campaign when one of the largest mills, Atlantic Cotton, struck against speedups in 1911. The Wobblies sent in some of their best organizers--J.P. Thompson, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Big Bill Haywood, Arturo Giovannitti and Joe Ettor, whose ability to speak six languages was a tremendous asset.

But the backbone of the struggle was the workers of Lawrence themselves. In January 1912, Massachusetts passed labor reform legislation that limited women and children from working more than 54 hours a week. In Lawrence, the typical workweek was 56 hours. But because the law didn't have a provision preserving the two hours' pay, bosses instead decided to use the measure to cut wages.

Local 20, the Italian branch of the IWW, called a meeting on January 10 to discuss what action to take on payday. Some 1,000 workers showed up and voted to call workers on strike as soon as they received the checks.

On January 12, strikers poured out of the mills, some of them forming flying squads to go into factories to bring out other workers. Mill owners ordered their goons to attack workers, hosing them down with freezing water in the subzero January weather. But workers resisted, going into the factories and smashing machinery and windows.

The governor used this as an excuse to call out the National Guard, which joined police on the streets in intimidating workers.

In the course of the struggle, Lawrence workers devised several new and effective strike tactics. One was the mass picket. Instead of small picket lines, Lawrence strikers organized all their forces to block workplaces.

In the face of thousands of workers surrounding a factory, neither the bosses' scabs nor the police could do a thing.

And as they marched, sang and chanted in the thousands, workers built solidarity and a sense of their own power.

Building solidarity among the different immigrant groups--the largest were Italians, Poles, Russians, Syrians and Lithuanians--was critical to the strike's victory.

Questions in the struggle were debated and decisions made in weekly mass meetings attended by thousands of strikers. After each meeting, workers sang the workers' anthem from the Paris Commune, "The Internationale."

Day-to-day decisions were made by a strike committee, which was made up of elected representatives from each of the different language groups.

THE ROLE of women -- wives of strikers and strikers themselves -- was key to the strike's success, and the IWW did everything it could to foster their participation. The Wobblies organized special meetings for women and encouraged them to take on leadership positions.

“The women worked in the mills for lower pay and in addition had all the housework and the care of the children,” wrote Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. “The old-world attitude of man as the ‘lord and master’ was strong. We resolutely set out to combat these notions. The women wanted to picket. We knew that to leave them at home alone, isolated from the strike activity, prey to worry...was dangerous for the strike.”

Women proved to be some of the fiercest fighters.

On one occasion, a group of Italian women found a police officer alone on a bridge. They had taken his gun, club and badge and were in the process of removing his pants before throwing him into the water when he was rescued by the cavalry.

“The IWW has been accused of putting the women in the front,” wrote Flynn.

“The truth is, the IWW does not keep them in the back, and they go to the front.”

So it is no surprise that several women were elected strike committee delegates.

Concrete provisions were made to provide for workers' families. Strikers ran six commissaries and 11 soup kitchens.

And when the Lawrence schools taught strikers' children that their parents were “un-American” for striking, the IWW's Haywood organized meetings for the kids.

When the growing threat of violence from police and company goons made strikers fear for their children's safety, the workers devised a brilliant plan. Strike supporters in other parts of the country--mostly from New York City--were called on to house and care for the children for the strike's duration. When supporters gathered to meet the Lawrence children at Grand Central Station, it became a huge labor rally.

The strikers forced the mill bosses to settle in March--and won most of their demands. They got pay increases on a sliding scale, with the lowest-paid workers getting 25 percent raises; time and a quarter for overtime; and a guarantee that no striker would be discriminated against.

The victory encouraged a wave of strikes in several New England cities. For example, as soon as Wobblies arrived in Lowell, Mass., mill owners offered workers a 5 percent raise.

The history of this amazing struggle--especially its spirit of solidarity among men and women and between different immigrant groups--remains an inspiration today.

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

“A Woman Carrying A Baby And White Flag Was Shot In Broad Daylight By An Israeli Soldier”



Rawhiyya was trying to lead women and children to safety

On the day of his death he wrote “I, John Brown, am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away but with blood.”

“Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments, I submit; so let it be done!”

[Thanks to Aaron H who sent this in.]

February 20 Al Jazeera

Focus On Gaza, correspondent Ayman Mohyeldin visited the village of Khuza'a where residents and human rights experts believe a possible war crime took place during Israel's offensive on the Gaza Strip.

A photograph of her recent pilgrimage to Mecca is now all that remains of Rawhiyya al Najar.

The mother was a Gaza native who had lived her entire life through conflict before it was to end on January 13, aged 37, by what was estimated to be a single shot to the head.

Testimony from eyewitnesses, friends, neighbours and human rights experts about the incident tell the story of how a woman carrying a baby and white flag was shot in broad daylight by an Israeli soldier.

Nasser al Najar, Rawhiyya's husband, still has the bloodstained white flag his wife was carrying when she was killed.

In 1949, the newly formed state of Israel, many of whose citizens had been victims of Nazi war crimes, signed the Geneva Convention on the protection of civilians in time of war.

Among the conditions of the convention Article three states: "Persons taking no active part in the hostilities ... shall in all circumstances be treated humanely."

Article 32 states: "Civilian hospitals organised to give care to the wounded and sick ... may in no circumstances be the object of attack."

But during Israel's recent war on Gaza there is evidence to suggest that these conditions were frequently ignored and that the Israeli military disregarded the laws of war.

Villagers in Khuza'a are accustomed to living under the guns that man the nearby Israeli watchtowers, but Nasser says there are normally no Palestinian resistance fighters in the area and consequently he felt the village would be spared an Israeli raid.

However, on January 12, the Israelis began an intense shelling of the area and deployed white phosphorous, a move that was considered a precursor to a ground-based attack.

Bombs were falling and a number of houses in the area were on fire.

Nasser, along with many others, decided to leave the area, fearing the men in the village would be taken prisoner by the Israelis. He could not persuade his wife to join him.

"She said ... If they were going to kill her, then she would rather die in her own house," he says.

"She thought that maybe if we lifted white flags they might have some mercy on us and not kill us.

“She said the white flag represents peace so they won't harm us ... But they didn't respect the white flag.”

Rawhiyya's daughter, Hiba, stayed with her mother but the white phosphorous caused them to have coughing fits and hampered their efforts to put out the fires.

By 11pm that night, Khuza'a was shut off from the outside world by Israeli tanks, with bulldozers to the east and special forces to the west.

The villagers, now mostly old men, women and children, sheltered together in the larger houses but neither the size of the buildings nor the white flags were to offer any protection.

By 0730am, tanks and bulldozers were busy demolishing houses. Increasingly hemmed in, the women and children decided they had no choice but to try and leave.

“Rawhiya was leading them. She said if all the women and children start moving out then everyone else could follow afterward. So she distributed white flags and led them out,” Iman says.

“She walked at the front carrying a white flag, followed by other women carrying white flags or holding out their children.”

Yasmine al Najar, another of the women, was at the front of the group with Rawhiyya when they spotted Israeli special forces positioned in a house opposite them.

Despite the presence of children and white flags on display the soldiers began to open fire.

“I was right next to her, a centimetre away,” Hiba recalls. “Our neighbour was also walking next to her ... she was holding up her child as though a flag ... Then he shot her.”

Yasmine tried to help her neighbour.

“A bullet hit Rawhiya in the head... it entered through one side and went out through the other... I took a bullet in the foot,” she says.

In the nearby town of Khan Yunis, Marwan Abu Raida, a paramedic at the Nasser hospital, was finishing his first call out of the day when he received the call sending him to Khuza'a. It was 0745am

“I drove straight there... I was still 60 to 70 metres away from the body when what I think were Israeli special forces started shooting at me,” he says.

“I felt powerless... there was nothing I could do for her. My understanding was that medical teams were protected under international ethics and law and that medical teams should be protected and they should have freedom of movement.”

With the emergency services unable to help them and the bulldozers closing in, the women made frantic appeals for help, some of which aired live on the midday news.

“No one answered our calls for help,” Iman, another of the stranded residents, says.

“At the end we decided to go out together and face the bombardment. The way we saw it was: it's better to walk in to the fire than stay and die under the rubble.”

Crawling on their hands and knees and still under fire, the villagers tried to reach the relative safety beyond the cordon of special forces but were shot at once more.

“Everyone went into one of the houses on the street and they were stuck there,” Yasmine says. “But I kept running for about 300 metres until I reached the ambulance and paramedics waiting for us.

It was six hours later that the Israeli army began to withdraw, leaving Iman's 16-year-old brother who had been captured tied up in a house and Rawhiyya's body in the street.

Calm and everyday life as much as it can exist, has now returned to what is left of Khuza'a but the scars of the war remain.

It is not easy for investigators to build a picture of exactly what happened. The recollections of people under artillery and sniper fire are often contradictory but in the case of Rawhiyya's killing there is a remarkable consistency.

Nasser has obtained a death certificate from the examining doctor, confirming the paramedic's earlier diagnosis that his wife's death was caused by a single shot to the head.

A GPS calculation of the distance confirms that she was shot at 120 metres.

This, together with Abrahams' findings in other parts of Gaza, have led him to a conclusion which, if correct, would point to a war crime implicating not only the soldier responsible but the entire Israeli military chain of command.

But there is little Human Rights Watch can do other than publish the findings of the report and Abrahams says the Israeli army, like many militaries, does not outline official rules of engagement.

For Rawhiyya's friends and relatives there is also little comfort.

Nasser is doing what he can to look after his daughter but he says there is still so much that reminds them of Rawhiyya and their house overlooks the spot where she was killed.

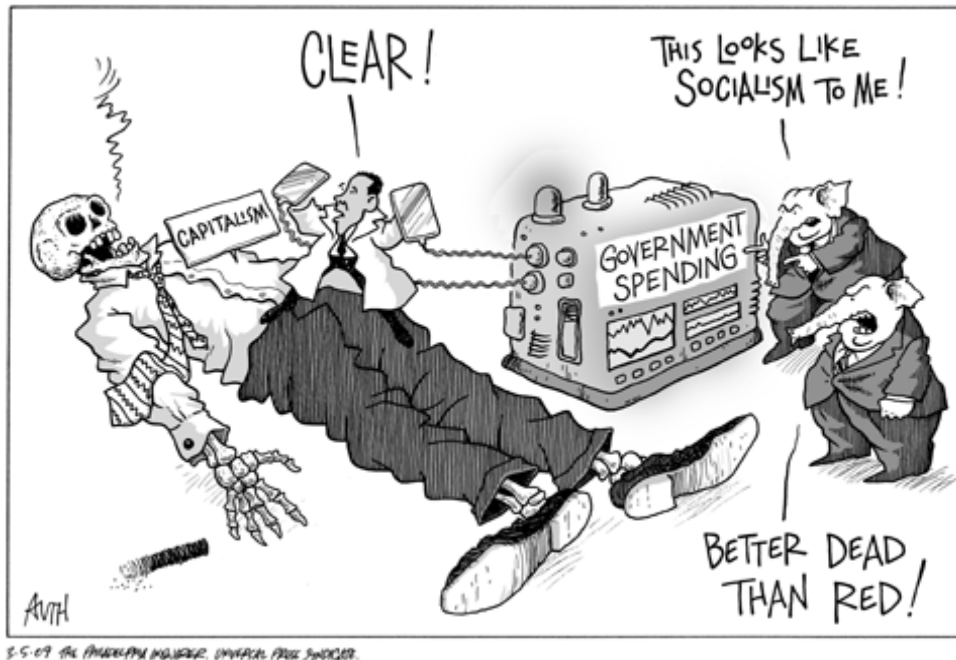
Hiba has built a small memorial where her mother died.

“I thought about what she used to say about staying strong and steadfast,” she says.

“When people called us and told us to leave we used to tell them that we will stay here, and we will stay strong.”

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

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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/)

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

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

CLASS WAR REPORTS



[Thanks to Phil Gasper, who sent this in.]

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