

GI SPECIAL 7D11:



Abdul Hassan carries a rocket-propelled grenade near a small boat with some of his crew. This group, called the Central Regional Coast Guard, was formed three years ago, has 350 men in its ranks and about 100 speedboats -Photograph: Veronique de Viguerie/Getty Images [Thanks to JM, who sent this in.]

Pirates?

**“We Don’t Consider Ourselves
Sea Bandits. We Consider Sea
Bandits Those Who Illegally Fish
And Dump In Our Seas”**

**“Did We Expect Starving Somalians To
Stand Passively On Their Beaches,
Paddling In Our Toxic Waste, And Watch
Us Snatch Their Fish”**

5 January 2009 Johann Hari, Independent.co.uk

Who imagined that in 2009, the world's governments would be declaring a new War on Pirates?

As you read this, the British Royal Navy – backed by the ships of more than two dozen nations, from the US to China – is sailing into Somalian waters to take on men we still picture as parrot-on-the-shoulder pantomime villains. They will soon be fighting Somalian ships and even chasing the pirates onto land, into one of the most broken countries on earth.

But behind the arrr-me-hearties oddness of this tale, there is an untold scandal.

The people our governments are labelling as “one of the great menaces of our times” have an extraordinary story to tell – and some justice on their side.

Pirates have never been quite who we think they are.

In the “golden age of piracy” – from 1650 to 1730 – the idea of the pirate as the senseless, savage Bluebeard that lingers today was created by the British government in a great propaganda heave.

Many ordinary people believed it was false: pirates were often saved from the gallows by supportive crowds.

Why? What did they see that we can't?

In his book *Villains Of All Nations*, the historian Marcus Rediker pores through the evidence.

If you became a merchant or navy sailor then – plucked from the docks of London's East End, young and hungry – you ended up in a floating wooden Hell. You worked all hours on a cramped, half-starved ship, and if you slacked off, the all-powerful captain would whip you with the Cat O' Nine Tails. If you slacked often, you could be thrown overboard. And at the end of months or years of this, you were often cheated of your wages.

Pirates were the first people to rebel against this world.

They mutinied – and created a different way of working on the seas. Once they had a ship, the pirates elected their captains, and made all their decisions collectively, without torture. They shared their bounty out in what Rediker calls “one of the most egalitarian plans for the disposition of resources to be found anywhere in the eighteenth century”.

They even took in escaped African slaves and lived with them as equals. The pirates showed “quite clearly – and subversively – that ships did not have to be run in the brutal and oppressive ways of the merchant service and the Royal Navy.” This is why they were romantic heroes, despite being unproductive thieves.

The words of one pirate from that lost age, a young British man called William Scott, should echo into this new age of piracy. Just before he was hanged in Charleston, South Carolina, he said: "What I did was to keep me from perishing. I was forced to go a-pirateing to live."

In 1991, the government of Somalia collapsed.

Its nine million people have been teetering on starvation ever since – and the ugliest forces in the Western world have seen this as a great opportunity to steal the country's food supply and dump our nuclear waste in their seas.

Yes: nuclear waste.

As soon as the government was gone, mysterious European ships started appearing off the coast of Somalia, dumping vast barrels into the ocean. The coastal population began to sicken. At first they suffered strange rashes, nausea and malformed babies. Then, after the 2005 tsunami, hundreds of the dumped and leaking barrels washed up on shore. People began to suffer from radiation sickness, and more than 300 died.

Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, the UN envoy to Somalia, tells me: "Somebody is dumping nuclear material here. There is also lead, and heavy metals such as cadmium and mercury – you name it."

Much of it can be traced back to European hospitals and factories, who seem to be passing it on to the Italian mafia to "dispose" of cheaply.

When I asked Mr Ould-Abdallah what European governments were doing about it, he said with a sigh: "Nothing. There has been no clean-up, no compensation, and no prevention."

At the same time, other European ships have been looting Somalia's seas of their greatest resource: seafood.

We have destroyed our own fish stocks by overexploitation – and now we have moved on to theirs.

More than \$300m-worth of tuna, shrimp, and lobster are being stolen every year by illegal trawlers. The local fishermen are now starving.

Mohammed Hussein, a fisherman in the town of Marka 100km south of Mogadishu, told Reuters: "If nothing is done, there soon won't be much fish left in our coastal waters."

This is the context in which the "pirates" have emerged.

Somalian fishermen took speedboats to try to dissuade the dumpers and trawlers, or at least levy a "tax" on them. They call themselves the Volunteer Coastguard of Somalia – and ordinary Somalis agree.

The independent Somalian news site WardheerNews found 70 per cent "strongly supported the piracy as a form of national defence".

No, this doesn't make hostage-taking justifiable, and yes, some are clearly just gangsters – especially those who have held up World Food Programme supplies.

But in a telephone interview, one of the pirate leaders, Sugule Ali: “We don't consider ourselves sea bandits. We consider sea bandits those who illegally fish and dump in our seas.”

William Scott would understand.

Did we expect starving Somalians to stand passively on their beaches, paddling in our toxic waste, and watch us snatch their fish to eat in restaurants in London and Paris and Rome?

We won't act on those crimes – the only sane solution to this problem – but when some of the fishermen responded by disrupting the transit-corridor for 20 per cent of the world's oil supply, we swiftly send in the gunboats.



Galkayo is in the centre of Somalia, near the states of Hobyo and Puntland, and also near Ethiopia. Despite its strategic location, the city remains very poor, unemployment is very high and violence is part of everyday life. Pirates have a relatively high standing and are starting to build themselves big houses and businesses with their money. Now they represent the dream of success for many of the men living in Galkayo - Photograph: Veronique de Viguerie/Getty Images. [Thanks to JM, who sent this in.]

MORE:

**“Since I Do This With A Little Ship I
Am Called A Pirate”**

**“You Do It With A Great Fleet And Are
Called An Emperor”**

Kingdoms without justice are similar to robber barons. And so if justice is left out, what are kingdoms except great robber bands?

For what are robber bands except little kingdoms?

The band also is a group of men governed by the orders of a leader, bound by a social compact, and its booty is divided according to a law agreed upon.

If by repeatedly adding desperate men this plague grows to the point where it holds territory and establishes a fixed seat, seizes cities and subdues peoples, then it more conspicuously assumes the name of kingdom, and this name is now openly granted to it, not for any subtraction of cupidity, but by addition of impunity.

For it was an elegant and true reply that was made to Alexander the Great by a certain pirate whom he had captured.

When the king asked him what he was thinking of, that he should molest the sea, he said with defiant independence: “The same as you when you molest the world! Since I do this with a little ship I am called a pirate. You do it with a great fleet and are called an emperor.”

St. Augustine

MORE:

**“Fishing Fleets From Around The
World Took Advantage Of The
Lack Of A Somali Coast Guard To
Steal Every Fish They Could Find”
“That’s ‘Robbery On The High Seas,’
The Definition Of Piracy”**

“Somalis Were Then Forced To Endure Piracy Of The Ethiopians And The United States, Who Collaborated In Late 2006 To Invade The Country”

04/15/2009 Glen Ford, Black Agenda [Excerpts]

Some dreaded seagoing Somalis began taking up piracy in 1991, when the Somali government disintegrated and there was no one to patrol the country's coasts.

About the same time, and not coincidentally, commercial fishing fleets from around the world took advantage of the lack of a Somali coast guard, to steal every fish they could find in Somali waters.

That's "robbery on the high seas," the definition of piracy.

An estimated \$300 million worth of Somali sea life is pirated by foreigners every year.

Other kinds of pirates nowadays often leave something behind – the piratical poisonous waste dumpers. They seem to be mafia-connected outfits that dump the radioactive waste from European hospitals into Somali waters, along with heavy metals and dangerous chemicals of all kinds.

A survey by the Somali news agency Wardheer News shows that 70 percent of Somalis "strongly supported piracy as a form of national defense of the country's territorial waters."

Having seen their coastal waters pirated by foreigners since 1991, Somalis were then forced to endure the land and air piracy of the Ethiopians and the United States, who collaborated in late 2006 to invade the country and oust the only relatively effective government Somalia had had in 15 years.

Occupied by Ethiopia with the backing of the American superpower, Somalis were stripped of the last thing they had on land or sea – their national sovereignty. The foreign super-pirates had taken everything.

But the Somalis kept fighting back, anyway, driving out the Ethiopians and making the Americans fume with rage. The Somalis refused to roll over and die, or beg.

Barack Obama's Ambassador to the United Nations, a young Black woman named Susan Rice, is positively rapid when it comes to beating Somalia into submission.

She was more gung-ho for the U.S.-Ethiopian invasion than George Bush.

Susan Rice is no doubt searching for a military solution to Somali piracy – which would amount to more piracy by the same foreigners that have driven Somalis to such desperate measures.

MORE:

“They Fought With The Fishermen And Coastal Communities, Pouring Boiling Water On Them And Even Shooting At Them, Running Over Their Canoes And Fishing Boats”

April 14, 2009 Amy Goodman, Democracy Now! [Excerpts]

Mohamed Abshir Waldo, a consultant and analyst. He joins us on the line from Mombasa. He is Kenyan of Somali origin. He wrote a piece in January titled “The Two Piracies in Somalia: Why the World Ignores the Other?”

MOHAMED ABSHIR WALDO: Fishing piracy means fishing without license, fishing by force, even though the community complains, even though whatever authorities are there complain, even though they ask these foreign fishing fleets and trawlers and vessels that have no license, that have no permit whatsoever, when they tell them, “Stop fishing and get out of the area,” they refuse, and instead, in fact, they fight.

They fought with the fishermen and coastal communities, pouring boiling water on them and even shooting at them, running over their canoes and fishing boats.

These were the problems that had been going on for so long, until the community organized themselves and empowered, actually, what they call the National Volunteer Coast Guard, what you would call and what others call today as “pirates.”

AMY GOODMAN: So you're saying illegal fishing is happening off the coast of Somalia. What countries are engaged in it?

MOHAMED ABSHIR WALDO: The countries engaged include practically all of southern Europe, France, Spain, Greece, UK. Nowadays I hear even Norway. There were not many Scandinavians before, but Norwegian fishing now is involved in this, you know, very profitable fishing business.

So, there are others, of course. There are Russian. There are Taiwanese. There are Philippines. There are Koreans. There are Chinese.

You know, it's a free-for-all coast.

And to make things worse, we learned that now that the navies and the warships are there; every country is protecting their own illegal fishing piracies—vessels. They have come back.

They ran away from the Somali volunteer guards, coast guards, but now they are back. And they are being protected by their navies.

In fact, they are coming close to the territorial waters to harass again the fishermen, who no longer have opportunity or possibility to fish on the coast because of the fear of being called pirates and apprehended by the navy, who are at the same time protecting the other side.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Resistance Action



A wrecked bus hit by a bomber in Kirkuk. Ten Iraqi policemen were killed and at least 22 wounded in a massive car bomb in the northern city of Kirkuk on Wednesday. (AFP/Marwan Ibrahim)

4.11.09 AP & April 12 (Reuters) & 04/15/09 AFP

Iraqi police say a bomber detonated his explosive belt killing seven U.S.-allied paramilitaries and wounding 22 others waiting in line for their salaries outside a military headquarters south of Baghdad. Police spokesman Maj. Muthana Khalid said the bomber mingled into a crowd of about 250 Awakening Council members outside the headquarters and blew himself up. The explosion took place around 11 a.m. on Saturday in Jbala, about 35 miles, or 50 kilometers, south of Baghdad.

MOSUL - Two policemen were killed in separate attacks on police checkpoints on Saturday in Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

MOSUL - An off-duty policemen was wounded by insurgents on Saturday, police said.

Ten Iraqi policemen were killed and 22 others wounded in Kirkuk when they were targeted by a car bomber as they headed home from protecting an oil installation on Wednesday, said a police commander. "The policemen were travelling home on a bus in the south of the city" around 5pm (1400 GMT), said Lieutenant Colonel Ghazi Mohammad Rashid. "All that was left of the bus were its seats, the officers' Kalashnikovs, and human body parts." All the casualties were members of the Oil Protection Force, a department of Iraq's police, and had been working for the state-owned North Oil Company, added Rashid.

Bomber Attacks Habbaniyah Army Training Camp

April 16, 2009 By Leila Fadel and Jamal Naji, McClatchy Newspapers

A bomber attacked troops at an Iraqi Army training camp in western Iraq Thursday, but Iraqi authorities were in disagreement about the casualty count.

Iraqi security and medical officials originally said the blast in camp in Habbaniyah about 70 miles west of Baghdad killed 16 and wounded 50. And Interior Ministry officials Thursday evening confirmed the same casualty count.

But the commander of the Anbar Operations Command, Maj. Gen. Murdhi Mishhen Al Mahalawi said no one was killed, and at least 17 soldiers were injured in the bombing. And a nurse at Ramadi hospital, where the men were being treated, said the original death toll he'd given reporters was wrong.

Iraqi security officials said a young man in his teens walked into the training grounds at lunch time just east of Ramadi, in the mostly Sunni Anbar province. The explosion ripped through the lunch crowd at about 1 p.m. on Thursday.

Just after the explosion U.S. and Iraqi forces shut down all roads leading to the base and throughout the area. Iraqi police in the area said that the Iraqi commander at the base ordered the arrest of all the soldiers at the gate of the base.

"We Must Continue To Treat All Iraqi Citizens With The Utmost Dignity And Honor"

Gen. Ray Odierno, U.S. Commanding General, Multi-National Force—Iraq

[Quoted By Robert H. Reid, The Associated Press, Dec 5, 2008]



A foreign occupation soldier from the US soldier stops an Iraqi citizen and puts his hands on his body to search him north of Baghdad on April 12, 2009. (AFP/File/Ali Yussef)

[Fair is fair. Let's bring 150,000 Iraqi troops over here to the USA. They can kill people at checkpoints, bust into their houses with force and violence, butcher their families, overthrow the government, put a new one in office they like better and call it "sovereign," and "detain" anybody who doesn't like it in some prison without any charges being filed against them, or any trial.]

[Those Iraqis are sure a bunch of backward primitives. They actually resent this help, have the absurd notion that it's bad their country is occupied by a foreign military dictatorship, and consider it their patriotic duty to fight and kill the soldiers sent to grab their country.]

[What a bunch of silly people. How fortunate they are to live under a military dictatorship run by George Bush. Why, how could anybody not love that? You'd want that in your home town, right?]

OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION

ALL TROOPS HOME NOW!

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

**And If The Iraqi Army Held 20,000
U.S. Citizens In Military Prisons
Inside The USA Six Years After
Invading The Country And
Overthrowing The Government?
What Would Be Your Weapon Of
Choice?
Spitballs?**



An Iraqi man is greeted by his mother after his release from U.S. military occupation prison in the Dora neighborhood of Baghdad, Iraq, April 13, 2009. Twelve prisoners were released from Camp Bucca on Monday. (AP Photo/Hadi Mizban)



A woman finding out her detained husband was not among released prisoners, in the municipal council in Tarmiya, north of Baghdad April 12, 2009. Thirty-two detainees were released from the U.S. detention facility at Camp Bucca. REUTERS/Saad Shalash

Get The Message?



Iraqi citizens against the occupation gather in Firdous Square in central Baghdad, Iraq, April 9, 2009. Tens of thousands thronged Baghdad to mark the sixth anniversary of the city's fall to U.S. troops, and to demand they leave immediately. REUTERS/Stringer

**ENOUGH OF THIS SHIT;
ALL HOME NOW**



A U.S. soldier from 46th Engineer Battalion stands on a frame, above cement which was just poured in for a vehicle maintenance ramp, at Al-Muthana Airfield in Baghdad March 8, 2009. REUTERS/U.S. Army/Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell/Handout

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

**Foreign Occupation Soldier Killed
Somewhere Or Other In Afghanistan;
Nationality Not Announced**

April 16 (Reuters)

A soldier from the NATO-led force in Afghanistan was killed by an explosion in an eastern part of the country on Wednesday, the alliance said. It did not specify the soldier's nationality.

A Delighted Afghan Civilian Can Barely Restrain His Enthusiasm For The U.S. Troops Who Have Come To Liberate Him



An Afghan man looks at a U.S. soldier of 3rd Platoon Cherokee Troop from the 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division on patrol in Logar province April 13, 2009. REUTERS/Ahmad Masood

Resistance Action

April 12 (Xinhua) & April 13 (KUNA) & 14 April 2009 Quqnoos & April 16 (Reuters)

Three Afghan policemen were wounded as Taliban insurgents raided the checkpoint in northern Afghan Kunduz province on Saturday night, provincial police chief said on Sunday. "The incident occurred in Puli Alchin, 5 km north of provincial capital Kunduz city, and three policemen sustained injuries during the clash," Abdul Rahman Haqtash told Xinhua. Taliban purported spokesman Qari Yusuf Ahmadi claimed that their men have killed five policemen and destroyed two police vehicles during the fighting.

Two private security guards of a road construction company were killed in a bomb blast in the country's southeastern province of Khost on Monday morning. The guards were on way to their duty station in their car when the vehicle hit a roadside bomb in Bak

district of the province. Two guards died on the spot while a third sustained injuries, said police officials in the district.

Taliban militants attacked a police checkpoint Tuesday Morning, leaving a police officer dead and two others wounded in Herat

A roadside bomb killed two police officers in Kandahar on Wednesday, the interior ministry said, adding two more officers and two women were wounded in the explosion.

“The Local Insurgents In Kunar Had Been Hardened By Years Of Guerrilla War Against Top American Divisions”

“The Bombs Were Large Enough To Blow Apart An Armored Humvee In One Case, And In General They Have Become Even Larger Recently, Officers Said”

April 12, 2009 By C. J. CHIVERS, The New York Times Company [Excerpts]

DANGALEEK, Afghanistan — First Lt. C. Carter Cheek stood in the Afghan rain. His patrol had climbed a switchback road leading to the Taliban-dominated village of Wanat, the location of the bloodiest battle for American forces in Afghanistan since 2005.

Enemy spotters looked down from higher ridges, using hand-held radios to relay word of the American advance.

“Basically from here north, it’s game on,” Lieutenant Cheek said. If the platoon moved farther toward Wanat, it would probably be ambushed, he said.

Lieutenant Cheek, 25, is a platoon leader for Company C of the First Battalion, 26th Infantry.

The company arrived after a ferocious battle and in a climate of political uncertainty about the degree of commitment to the war.

But it has since been issued heavier fighting vehicles, seen another battalion reinforce its efforts in the region and fought what is essentially a holding mission to prepare for a large influx of American troops that President Obama has ordered to Afghanistan later this year.

This spring, as the pace of fighting has increased with warming weather, there have not been enough American soldiers here to clear Wanat of the insurgents openly living there.

Company C, with its roughly 120 infantrymen, arrived in Afghanistan last July and was assigned to patrol a series of steep-sided valleys and cascading streams that feed the Pech River in Kunar Province, just west of the border with Pakistan.

The local insurgents in Kunar had been hardened by years of guerrilla war against top American divisions.

They were skilled at ambushing patrols from ridges over the roads, and they had built a sprawling network of spotters, caves and intelligence sources that made them difficult to surprise or to fight on American terms.

They had also studied their foe.

Over time they had shifted to using heavy bombs — 20 to 25 pounds of homemade explosives packed into large pots or plastic ice chests buried in the dirt roads.

The bombs were large enough to blow apart an armored Humvee in one case, and in general they have become even larger recently, officers said.

The Taliban's local strength was made clear on July 13, as Lieutenant Cheek's platoon was flying from Fort Hood, Tex., to Afghanistan, prepared to move into Wanat. A large Taliban force attacked an American and Afghan patrol base in the village. Nine Americans were killed and 27 were wounded. Afghan police officers were implicated in the attack.

The Army left the village. It has yet to return.

Capt. James C. Stultz, 28, the company commander, recalled the sense of seriousness as the soldiers grasped the work ahead. "It was an eye-opener to hear what kind of fighting was going on," he said.

"Especially because, you know, this was the welfare war. You never heard about the fighting in Afghanistan."

Company C is now responsible for two-thirds of the area it patrolled last year.

The area is still too large for the company to cover fully. Three valleys — the upper Waygul, the Watapor and the lower Chapa Dara — remain almost untouched by American presence, as do many side canyons off the Pech River.

But new construction is visible on a string of small American bases between Kabul and the Pakistani border. **[Great idea! Why didn't the French try that in Vietnam? Oh, you say the French did try that in Vietnam? Oops.]**

The officers said the infrastructure will house many of the 21,000 additional American soldiers due to arrive later this year and will serve as an on-ramp for fresh combat forces

to flow into the field and fill many current gaps. **[Just love the way the reporter has swallowed all that briefing talk full of ramps and flowing and gaps and all. Maybe the French should have tried more inspiring briefings in Vietnam too. And the U.S. Army. Everybody knows that elegant briefings full of exciting flowing images win wars. Right?]**

The additional soldiers will bring the total American troop deployment in Afghanistan to about 60,000.

For now, as signs of buildup accumulate, Company C has concentrated its patrols on the Pech and lower Waygul Valleys.

The Pech Valley is exceptionally narrow — a jagged slot through the mountains that in places is only 700 or 800 yards wide. With snowmelt and spring rainfall leading to an early crop of wheat, the river's terraced banks make a stripe of vivid green against the mountain slopes.

The villages vary from tolerant of the Americans to quietly hostile. On six recent patrols along the ridges and roads, many children waved. A few raised their middle fingers as soldiers passed by. A few others threw stones.

Last week, as the company's Second Platoon returned from a patrol, a rock slammed into the ballistic glass beside the head of the platoon's forward observer, Pfc. Matthew C. Boyd.

"Man, he pegged my window," he said, chuckling at first, then swearing. **[Perhaps it occurred to Pfc. Boyd after the chuckle that somebody or other was checking out range, lead, declination, and security of the firing position. Oops.]**

Stones are a small part of it. In one village, the soldiers found an old woman carrying an assault rifle under her shawl; in another, they found a 12-year-old boy with a rocket-propelled grenade.

Company C has a history of engaging in intense fighting. It suffered 13 combat deaths in its last 15-month tour in Iraq, in 2006 and 2007.

Nine months into its first rotation in Afghanistan, the company has been in 97 firefights and three roadside bomb attacks; roughly one in six of the company's soldiers have been wounded by bullets or shrapnel, six seriously enough to be sent home.

Charlie Troop At The Little Bighorn

Apr 14 by Charlotte McDonald-Gibson (AFP) [Excerpts]

Lugging heavy equipment and breathless in the midday sun, US soldiers clumsily ascend a steep mountain in northeast Afghanistan, hunting for weapons hidden in a cave.

Fresh bloodstains on a rocky path suggest injured militants were recently here, but the insurgents seem to have disappeared into the mountains they know so well, melting into an isolated community often sympathetic to their cause.

Intelligence reports and five AK-47 shots that ring out through the Alaugal Valley indicate Taliban-linked fighters are watching the soldiers. But they are nowhere to be seen.

“They can see us, but we can’t see them,” says US Staff Sergeant Eric Winn as his men draw their weapons and scan for caves they think are the source of rocket and small-arms fire that recently hit coalition army posts.

Suddenly, Winn spots a suspected militant talking on a radio, and the troops open fire on a nearby peak. But the man swiftly ducks over a ridge and the mountain once again appears deserted.

As far as anyone on the patrol with Charlie Troop, 3rd Platoon 1st Infantry Division, can remember, this is the first time since the 2001 US-led invasion that foreign troops have climbed this mountain.

The mission comes as the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) struggles to quell a resurgent Taliban, which has been waging a hearts and minds campaign in this cut-off area of Kunar province.

Gazing out over scenic valley slopes tiled with winter wheat and snow-capped peaks that soldiers liken to North America’s Rocky Mountains, troops point out villages where they have never set foot.

All those people know of ISAF are the sounds of bombs being dropped.

Charlie Troop commander Captain Jay Bessey says there was no permanent ISAF presence in Ghaziabad until three months ago, partly because of manpower issues and more pressing priorities elsewhere in the war-torn country.

Right now they lack local intelligence and know-how of the mountainous terrain, while strong ties between militants and the local population also hamper efforts to quell the fighting.

Atop the 1,500 metre (4,950-foot) mountain Charlie Troop have struggled up, Winn stops two young men in dusty long shirts and trousers, wrapped in shawls and wearing tennis shoes. They evade his questions.

With no evidence to hold them, Winn eventually lets the men go, and the US soldiers and their counterparts from the Afghan National Army stumble down a slope littered with loose rocks and bracken, and return to base as night falls.

No weapons were found. No caves destroyed, and no militants captured or killed, but Sergeant Jimmy L. Carswell believes their first expedition across the Kunar River and into enemy territory sent a message.

“We surprised them.

“We’re really not afraid to go across the river...

“We’re not afraid to come across and come get you.”

[And those exact words could have been said June 25, 1875 by Brevet Major-General George Armstrong Custer, Seventh Cavalry, as he saw the Sioux village on the other side of the Little Bighorn River. T]

TROOP NEWS

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



The remains of Army Specialist Michael J. Anaya, of Crestview, Fla., at Dover Air Force Base Del., April 14, 2009. Anaya, of Crestview, Fla., was killed when a makeshift bomb exploded near his vehicle in Bayji, Iraq. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, based at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. (AP Photo/Pat Crowe II)

**“An Oklahoma Man Who Lost An Eye
And A Leg In Iraq Says The Giant**

Insurance Company AIG Refused To Provide Him A New Plastic Leg And Fought To Keep From Paying For A Wheelchair Or Glasses For The Eye In Which He Has 30 % Vision”

[Thanks to James Starowicz, Veterans For Peace, for posting this one.]

April 16, 2009 By AVNI PATEL and BRIAN ROSS, ABC News

An Oklahoma man who lost an eye and a leg in Iraq says the giant insurance company AIG refused to provide him a new plastic leg and fought to keep from paying for a wheelchair or glasses for the eye in which he has 30 percent vision.

“They bought the cheapest thing that they could get away with,” said 51-year old John Woodson, a truck driver for the KBR contracting firm who lost his leg when his truck hit a roadside bomb in Iraq.

“Everything’s been a struggle, a constant fight,” said Woodson, injured in Oct. 2004. “It’s been hell since.”

Woodson is covered by AIG under a government-mandated program that provides medical and disability benefits for employees working for U.S. contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan. AIG covers about 90 percent of the claims for overseas workers.

Still in constant pain, Woodson says he was infuriated to see AIG executives receive huge bonuses, travel on private jets and be pampered at a California spa.

“They’re getting their bonuses but they fight you, they’ll constantly fight in order to try to get you to give up,” said Woodson, of Poteau, Oklahoma.

Woodson is one of a number of injured contractors whose alleged difficulties with AIG were examined in the joint investigation.

In Woodson’s case, when his fuel truck hit the hidden bomb outside Baghdad, he was blown through the roof of his cab and thrown about a hundred feet away, also damaging his back and breaking his pelvis.

Woodson says he was told by an AIG representative in the hospital that he would be fully covered by AIG, but that when he returned home, he quickly discovered AIG was prepared to challenge almost all of his medical needs.

“I’ve had to argue for everything, you constantly stay on the phone, writing letters, e-mailing, trying to get things to happen,” Woodson said.

To cushion the impact on his injured back and pelvis, Woodsen asked AIG for a new plastic leg with a spring in the foot.

“It was just so painful just to walk,” Woodson said.

He says AIG refused to buy him a new leg, which he says would have cost about \$8,000.

AIG also refused, he said, to provide him a water-proof leg so he could remain standing and take a shower.

U.S. military amputees are normally provided three different legs, to cover a full range of walking, showering and exercising.

In the end, Woodson says he thinks it was pressure from his lawyer and Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK) that forced AIG to finally provide an improved leg, with replacement parts, but not a new one as his doctor had ordered.

Woodson’s lawyer, Toby Cole, says he sees a pattern of AIG “delaying and denying” claims from contractors injured in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“It’s difficult for me to think it’s anything but a concentrated effort just to ignore these guys,” said Cole.

More than 30,000 contractors have filed claims for injuries suffered in Iraq and Afghanistan. More than 1,400 have died.

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

Empire Presidents On Easter Sunday



Two Vietnam veterans stand before the statue at the My Lai Massacre site in 1994. No U.S. political leader would ever do this, because they could never face their shame. These Vietnam veterans did, because they faced

**their shame. When the intellect can no longer
censor the soul, the truth is born.
-- Mike Hastie**

From: Mike Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: April 12, 2009
Subject: Empire Presidents On Easter Sunday

Empire Presidents On Easter Sunday

**An Empire President going to church on Easter Sunday.
What is wrong with this picture?
Asking God to guide them,
as they themselves create more prayers.
America,
you will get away with nothing.**

**Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
April 12, 2009**

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

April 16, 1971:



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

Carl Bunin Peace History April 14-20

Members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) threw medals they had earned in Vietnam on the U.S. Capitol steps in protest of the Vietnam

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Unconquered. Unconquerable.



Jun 8, 2007 Photo by Al Rowwad. Thanks to Mazin Qumsiyeh for posting

[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."]

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DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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

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

CLASS WAR REPORTS



Comment Unnecessary

13 April 2009 By Mike Lillis, The Colorado Independent

According to the Federal Reserve, the net worth of the typical African-American family in 2007 was just 10 percent of the net worth of the typical white family - down from 12 percent in 2004.

Put another way: For every \$1 held by whites five years ago, blacks had 12 cents.

Three years later, they had a dime.

**“The U.S. Government Has
Lavished Hundreds Of Billions Of
Dollars On Bailing Out The**

Banking Sector With Almost No Strings Attached”

“But Somehow, Autoworker Contracts Aren’t So Sacrosanct”

[Reporting On “The Drive To Get Workers To Pay For The Deepest Economic Crisis Since The Great Depression Of The 1930s”]

April 6, 2009 Eric Ruder, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

WITH THE threat of bankruptcy hanging over General Motors and Chrysler like a sword, the federal government is giving the United Auto Workers (UAW) a choice: Do you want to cut off your own legs, or would you like us to do it for you?

The White House forced GM Chair and CEO Rick Wagoner to resign and essentially instructed Chrysler to reach a merger deal with the Italian automaker Fiat. But beyond these requirements, both GM and Chrysler are under orders to get company “stakeholders” to make further financial concessions before the government makes more bailout funds available.

The talk about “stakeholder obligations” is code for the government’s real message--after decades of retreats already, members of the UAW need to accept even deeper cuts and concessions.

Of course, the U.S. government has lavished hundreds of billions of dollars on bailing out the banking sector with almost no strings attached.

Under the Wall Street bailout, nationalized insurance giant AIG was allowed to pay out \$165 million in bonuses to executives who wrecked the company, because they were “contractually obligated.”

But somehow, autoworker contracts aren’t so sacrosanct.

So while the financial sector gets the carrot, the auto industry gets the stick.

As a matter of government policy, this seems irrational. The same government demanding buyouts and layoffs to “rescue” the auto industry is carrying out a stimulus plan to create jobs throughout the economy.

The rational kernel in all this, however, is the drive to get workers to pay for the deepest economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

In his speech announcing the administration's orders to the auto companies, Obama had this to say to autoworkers:

"I will fight for you. You're the reason I'm here today. I got my start fighting for working families in the shadows of a shuttered steel plant. I wake up every single day asking myself what can I do to give you and working people all across this country a fair shot at the American Dream."

But no one was under any illusion about what's being demanded of autoworkers.

Concessions agreed to by the UAW at Ford in early March will serve as a template for GM's demands.

The Ford contract includes givebacks on overtime pay, bonuses, supplemental unemployment benefits, a slew of work rules governing shop-floor conditions, and new and drastic cuts in funding for retiree health care.

GM expects to lower its hourly employee costs from \$7.6 billion in 2008 to \$6.5 billion in 2009 and \$5.4 billion in 2010.

But hidden in these numbers is the slashing of benefits paid to retirees in the form of pension and health care payments--known as "legacy costs."

In 2003, GM had \$18.4 billion in hourly employee costs, including \$5.7 billion in legacy costs. By 2010, GM expects that its legacy costs will be less than \$1 billion, and by 2014 as little as \$100 million.

So in scarcely more than a decade, GM hopes to eliminate 98 percent of the benefits it pays to 1 million UAW retirees and their families, who expected that for 30 or more years of back-breaking labor, they would receive a livable pension and health care coverage after retiring.

UAW leaders, however, have done little to stand up to the GM plan.

Even before the current stage of the crisis, they had already accepted the general framework of what the government is demanding today, including a two-tier wage scale that pays new hires half the wage of the workers they replace.

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