

GI SPECIAL 7G13:



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

Three Steps From Disaster: Resistance Cuts Off Land Sustainment To Marines In Helmand Valley:

**Troops “Short Of Basic Equipment
And Supplies Ranging From
Radios And Vehicles To Uniforms”
“Critical Supplies Of Food, Water
And Ammunition Are Being Dropped
To Troops By Helicopters”
“The Lack Of Basic Gear Is
Unprecedented In His Experience,
Which Includes Seven Other
Deployments. ‘This Is A First,’ He
Said”**



Taliban mounted forces preparing to repel U.S. offensive in an undisclosed location in Afghanistan July 14, 2009. REUTERS/Stringer

July 16, 2009 By Ann Scott Tyson, Washington Post [Excerpts]

U.S. Marines pushing deeper into Taliban territory in Afghanistan's Helmand River Valley are short of basic equipment and supplies ranging from radios and vehicles to uniforms.

Here in Garmsir District, critical supplies of food, water and ammunition are being dropped to troops by helicopters ferrying sling-loads to bypass roads implanted with bombs, leaving little room to carry other gear.

Several Marines from one company, for example, ripped their pants during an arduous foot march and are still waiting for replacements — some in boxer shorts, officers said.

"We're short vehicles, we're short frog-suits (uniforms) ... radios are trickling in," said Gunnery Sgt. Robert Larosa of 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment.

Larosa said that the lack of basic gear is unprecedented in his experience, which includes seven other deployments. "This is a first," he said.

Another logistical challenge is that Marine camps and outposts here are mainly being built from scratch because the Marines are the first coalition forces to move into southern Helmand in significant numbers, and the area lacks existing facilities to house them.

Many supplies did not begin to arrive until the Marines themselves deployed, Larosa said, and with intensive operations underway, their delivery is still lagging behind.

With such urgent demand for critical items, non-essentials such as mail, toiletries and tobacco have become rare luxuries at Marine outposts. "They either send chow and water or mail — I'd much rather have the water" in the 100-plus degree heat, said Larosa.

Still, the deprivation is taking a toll. "No mail, no PX. People are starting to get ornery," said one officer. Mail has arrived about three times in the past month and a half.

Marines in the battalion are exploiting every possible opportunity to get supplies needed for the troops.

For example, when Brig. Gen. Larry Nicholson flew in for a commanders' meeting at Camp Delhi today, he was asked to bring with him a fresh supply of plastic "wag" bags that Marines use to dispose of human waste.

"Hey, did we get the wag bags?" Nicholson asked his staff before departing.

Earlier this week, Larosa decided to launch a one-man supply chain.

Armed with orders from his men and a large plastic crate, he jumped on a helicopter to the nearest large base, Camp Leatherneck near the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah. Once there, armed with \$1,200 of his own money, he literally stripped the PX shelves of cigarettes and chewing tobacco.

Larosa's shopping spree irritated customers at Leatherneck, but, arriving back at the camp in Garmsir, he was greeted as a conquering hero.

“This is my craziest deployment yet,” he said. He is keeping the stash of tobacco at the foot of his cot until he can distribute it all to those who placed orders.



Taliban fighters organizing to resist U.S. offensive in an undisclosed location in Afghanistan July 14, 2009 as 4,000 U.S. Marines push up the isolated Helmand River Valley. REUTERS/Stringer

MORE:

“An Estimated 18-Hour Trip Morphed Into A Week With No End In Sight, Forcing Commanders To Contemplate The Quickest Evacuation Route”

“In Six Days, The Unit Crawled Just A Handful Of Kilometres, Bugged Down By Blasts And Delayed By An Ambush, Advancing Inch By Inch Across Terrain Mined Intensively”

“The Bomb Killed Two US Marines Instantly, Shredded Their Armour And Flung Body Parts Into A Canal”

Jul 15 by Ben Sheppard Ben Sheppard, AFP [Excerpts]

GARMSIR, Afghanistan

The bomb killed two US Marines instantly, shredded their armour and flung body parts into a canal. A mission to open a supply line in Taliban country faced a hidden enemy at every turn.

A foot patrol was advancing painstakingly with metal detectors and bare hands to defuse bombs planted on a rough track when an explosion shot a cloud of dust and rocks into the sky in southern Afghanistan's Helmand province at dusk.

"I turned away and felt rocks in the air as they came over my back," said Sergeant Anthony Zabala, 31. "That was it," he added.

The unit has been in Afghanistan for only months, part of a surge of 21,000 extra US troops sent to quell a Taliban insurgency that is testing Western military endurance and shows signs of expanding beyond southern and eastern heartlands.

The two dead men had expressed frustration earlier in the day to an AFP reporter about the difficulties posed by so-called improvised explosive devices (IEDs), but seemed confident they could neutralise the threat.

"They have been placing IEDs all along this route. We were on alert that it was a dangerous place to work," said Zabala after Monday's bombing.

Years of Marine training and adrenaline kicked in. Helicopters landed, rotor blades roaring in the darkness to evacuate two wounded as Marines scoured the undergrowth, shouting out the names of two comrades who vanished.

Suddenly, someone found the plate of a flak jacket, flung 50 metres (55 yards) away on the far bank of the canal.

Marines, who quickly stripped off and waded waist-deep through thick reeds, shouted that they had found body parts in the water.

Body bags were brought up. The search continued through the night with divers flown in to dredge the canal, in some of the most dangerous terrain in Afghanistan and the heart of opium-growing territory.

The unit had left base camp at dawn last Wednesday to clear a 30-kilometre (19 mile) supply line to compatriots airlifted behind Taliban lines on July 2 at the start of one of the biggest offensives of the nearly eight-year war.

But an estimated 18-hour trip morphed into a week with no end in sight, forcing commanders to contemplate the quickest evacuation route.

In six days, the unit crawled just a handful of kilometres, bogged down by blasts and delayed by an ambush, advancing inch by inch across terrain mined intensively with the deadliest weapon known to insurgents -- the IED.

General Moheedin Ghori, the top Afghan general in Helmand said the main reason for the surge in casualties was IEDs, which cost little to make and require few personnel to plant.

"There have been more mines buried deeper, which explode after several vehicles have passed. We call them pressure mines," he said.

The troops are weighed down by heavy equipment, wilting in scorching summer temperatures of up to 46 degrees Celsius (115 degrees Fahrenheit).

MORE:

**“After Observing The Marines,
The Taliban Fighters Have
Attacked With IEDs”**

**“Bomb Attacks Have Slowed Or
Obstructed The Marines’ Use Of
The Network Of Narrow, Unpaved
Dirt Roads That Link Farming
Villages In The River Valley”**

**“Bombs Have Already Disabled
Several Vehicles Which Are Further
Hampered By Their Bulk In
Navigating The Primitive Roads”**

“Commanders Requiring Slow-Going Travel Through Adjacent Deserts, Or Foot Marches Through Fields And Canals”

July 16, 2009 By Ann Scott Tyson, Washington Post [Excerpts]

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan -- Taliban fighters who evaded a major Marine Corps thrust into insurgent-held towns along the Helmand River valley this month are now probing Marine positions and using roadside bombs to impede U.S. troop movements, according to senior Marine officers.

Several hundred Taliban had been occupying the populated agricultural lands, known as the “green zone,” where the Marines are now setting up positions. Many of the Taliban fighters laid low during the offensive, the officers said.

In recent days, however, insurgents throughout the area have reemerged to mount fresh attacks, said Col. George S. Amland, deputy commander of the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade, which has some 4,000 troops operating in central and southern Helmand.

The Taliban, Amland said, is looking “for weak points or points that he thinks he can exploit and come back and reclaim the territory that he has left.” While usually unwilling to attack the Marine units head on, the Taliban is instead relying on “hit and run” tactics, said another officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he had not been authorized to speak on the record.

After observing the Marines, the Taliban fighters have attacked with makeshift bombs known as improvised explosive devices, or IEDs.

“The use of IEDs has proliferated,” Amland said. The bombs are relatively unsophisticated and made of readily available agricultural materials, but are nevertheless lethal.

Two Marines on a road-clearing crew were killed Monday in Helmand’s Garmsir District, after they traced the wire of a suspected bomb into a house that was rigged to explode, according to an officer with their unit.

Since the U.S. launched its Helmand operation, Western troops in Afghanistan have been dying at a rate of three a day, far higher than the normal rate.

The bomb attacks have slowed or obstructed the Marines’ use of the network of narrow, unpaved dirt roads that link farming villages in the river valley.

The bombs have already disabled several vehicles which are further hampered by their bulk in navigating the primitive roads.

The Marines' mine-resistant armored protection vehicles "are just too big for those roads," said Col. Eric Mellinger, operations officer for the Marine brigade.

Commanders have made some roads off limits, instead requiring slow-going travel through adjacent deserts, or foot marches through fields and canals.

Many of the supplies for the troops are being flown in by helicopter.

Still, the Taliban are able to hide in plain view by blending in with the population.

At the same time, large swaths of the river valley remain without coalition forces, including Marja, which is near the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah.

Insurgents are known to be taking refuge there, Amland said.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Oklahoma Sailor Killed In Afghanistan



Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Tony Michael Randolph of Henryetta, Oklahoma. Randolph was killed, July 6, 2009 when a vehicle in which he was riding struck a roadside bomb in Afghanistan. (AP Photo/ Randolph family via Rogers Funeral Home)

Commander Of Turkish Forces Killed In “Accident”

Jul 15 ANKARA (AFP) & CRI

The commander of Turkey's contingent in the NATO force in Afghanistan and another soldier have been killed in a road accident in northern Afghanistan, the foreign ministry said Wednesday.

The crash that killed Colonel Faruk Sungur and his driver happened Tuesday when his armored car was struck by a truck as they were on their way from the northern city of Mazar-i Sharif to Kabul, ministry spokesman Burak Ozugergin told reporters.

Two other Turkish soldiers travelling in the vehicle were injured, he said.

Canadian Soldier Killed In Afghanistan

07/16/09 Globe and Mail Update

A Canadian soldier has died in Afghanistan.

Private Sébastien Courcy, 26, died around 6 a.m. Thursday morning, Kandahar time, while taking part in military operations in the Panjwayi District, about 17 kilometres south-west of Kandahar City. According to the Canadian Forces, Pte. Courcy was standing on high ground during the operation, and fell to his death. Nobody else was injured. The military did not immediately release any further information on what caused the fall.

**“American Convoys Often Must Wait
For Bomb-Detection Teams That
Move At Three Miles Per Hour”
“In Some Cases, I.E.D.’S Are Used As
Lures To Draw Soldiers Into Booby
Traps”**

July 14, 2009 By JAMES DAO, New York Times

FORWARD OPERATING BASE ALTIMUR, Afghanistan — The call came just after dinner: a pickup truck carrying Afghan national police officers had hit a buried bomb, and all five officers inside were dead.

When First Lt. James Brown and his team of bomb investigators arrived at the shredded remains of the truck, the grim significance of the attack became clear. One of the dead was a hard-charging commander who, more than any officer in this restive district of Logar Province, had helped fight a shadowy network of local bomb makers.

This year, bomb attacks on coalition troops in Afghanistan have spiked to an all-time high, with 465 in May alone, more than double the number in the same month two years before.

I.E.D.'s have been even more deadly for Afghan police officers and soldiers. At the current rate, I.E.D. attacks on Afghan forces could reach 6,000 this year, up from 81 in 2003, an American military official said.

With few paved roads, Afghanistan is even more fertile territory for I.E.D.'s. than Iraq, where hard pavement often forced insurgents to leave bombs in the open. Not so in Afghanistan, where it is relatively easy to bury a device in a dirt road and cover the tracks.

Even when I.E.D.'s do not wound or kill troops, the threat restricts and complicates the movements of coalition forces.

American convoys often must wait for bomb-detection teams that move at three miles per hour.

Helicopters are limited, and most troops travel in mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles known as MRAPs, which are lumbering and hard to maneuver.

Though heavily armored MRAPs are effective in shielding soldiers from explosions, two turret gunners died recently when one flipped over after hitting I.E.D.'s.

The bombs are often made with fertilizer and diesel fuel, but some use mortar shells or old mines that litter the countryside. Some bombs are set off when vehicles pass over pressure plates. Others require remote control, like a cellphone. Still others detonate with a button or a wire touched to a battery.

Though many bombs remain crude, American officers say the insurgents are cunning and relentlessly adaptive. In some cases, I.E.D.'s are used as lures to draw soldiers into booby traps.

Mr. Alam was the commander of a checkpoint near the border of the Charkh and Baraki Barak districts, a stronghold of Taliban supporters. When more than 1,200 soldiers with the Third Combat Brigade, 10th Mountain Division flowed into the province early this year, there were scattered firefights, but the insurgents mostly melted into the landscape.

And then the I.E.D. attacks multiplied. After seeing two bombs in the area in May, American forces found or exploded 17 I.E.D.'s in June, most along an important connector they call Route New York.

Mr. Alam helped, and so became a target. Following a weekly routine, he spent a recent Saturday with his family at home north of Kabul and was returning to his checkpoint that afternoon when the bomb exploded under his truck, dead center.

“It’s Proper War Out There” “One Time It Took Us From First Light Until Last Light Just To Move 800 Metres”

Jul 15 2009 by Tom Mullen, Evening Chronicle

BLOOD and dirt spattered across his comrades' faces, Trooper Anthony Matthews tried to ignore their screams.

Deafened by the boom of a Taliban rocket exploding just feet away, the soldier knew he had to act quickly.

He glanced at his friend, who had been badly injured by the blast, before returning a hail of gunfire at the unseen enemy.

Bullets then pinged around his ears as Trooper Matthews, of the Light Dragoons, realised he too had been hit, wincing with pain as he saw his blood-soaked trouser leg.

Treating himself first, he then wrapped a tourniquet around his fellow soldier's wounded leg, as screams of agony rang out in the confusion.

Deep in the horror of Helmand Province, this was Operation Panther's Claw, the bloodiest battle ever for British troops in Afghanistan.

And the cricket ball-sized wound that Trooper 'Anth' Matthews has returned to Tyneside with tells only part of the story.

The 20-year-old, of Dunston, Gateshead, witnessed terrible fighting during a month that has already claimed the lives of 15 British soldiers.

His close friend Christopher Whiteside, also of the Light Dragoons, was one of those victims, along with eight servicemen killed in one dark day of combat.

Today, as he recovers from surgery to the blast wound on his left leg, Trooper Matthews told of the times he feared for his own life.

He said: "Not many people can tell the tale of getting hit by a grenade. I've just been lucky."

"We came out of the compound we had taken over, and there was a tree-line that we used as cover."

"My mates were beside me at either side, and then all I remember is hearing a massive bang. There was dirt all over their faces and they were screaming."

"It was like a scene out of Saving Private Ryan. My ears had gone. I looked at my friend and I could see he had been hit badly."

"I turned and looked down at my leg and my pants were all broken. I put a tourniquet on while I was still shooting."

The Light Dragoons were near the city of Lashkar Gah, in Helmand Province, an area swarming with insurgents and littered with Taliban booby traps.

It was during the early hours of July 7 when Trooper Matthews' platoon stepped into the ambush.

A rocket-propelled grenade left the former Gateshead cadet and his friend, Trooper Aaron Bradley, seriously wounded.

He added: "When the bullets are whizzing past it's terrifying. They sound like bees flying past your ears, and then you hear them land and it sounds like someone clapping their hands."

"It was just adrenaline. I didn't feel anything. I stabbed myself with morphine and held on until the helicopters came. They got us back to Camp Bastion in four minutes."

Treated first in Afghanistan, the Geordie soldier was then flown to Birmingham's Selly Oak hospital, where he had an operation to seal the deep wound across the back of his left leg.

And it wasn't the first time the squaddie – who earned the nickname 'Bulletproof Tony' – was hit.

Just days before, he was on a foot patrol behind a Scimitar tank which was blown into the air by a roadside bomb, peppering his arms with shrapnel.

He said: "No-one was killed or even injured badly that time, amazingly. The tank flipped on to its side and got smashed to bits."

"A team came out to clear the area and make sure it wasn't a 'daisy chain', where one bomb sets off others."

"It's proper war out there. One time it took us from first light until last light just to move 800 metres. We were in constant contact with the enemy."

Trooper Matthews has been praised for his efforts, receiving the Commander's Award For Excellence medal.

His house was decked out in Union Jacks to welcome him home, and he is now recuperating alongside his mother, Karine, brother Kallum, 13, and girlfriend Sam, 20.

***Good News For The Afghan
Resistance!!***
**U.S. Occupation's Terrorist
Tactics Recruit Even More
Fighters To Kill U.S. Troops:
Despite Bullshit From U.S.
Commanding General, More Kids,
Women And Farmers Murdered By
U.S. Air Attacks**

[Fair is fair. Let's bring 50,000 Afghan 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 Afghans 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 Barrack Obama.

[Why, how could anybody not love that?

[You'd want that in your home town, killing kids, women and farmers, right?

[You wouldn't organize with your neighborhoods to take up arms and fight back, would you? Would you?]

July 16, 2009 By TAIMOOR SHAH and CARLOTTA GALL, The New York Times & Ismail Sameem, Reuters [Excerpts]

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — At least six Afghan civilians were killed and 16 wounded when a United States patrol came under attack on Wednesday night and called in air support, villagers and local officials said Thursday.

Nine wounded villagers, including two women and four children, reached a Kandahar hospital on Thursday. Several were unconscious, but others described helicopters firing into their compound at 11 p.m. as they fled the house and tried to hide in an orchard.

General McChrystal has called for all forces to make a “cultural shift” in their approach to the insurgency in Afghanistan and focus on respecting and protecting the local population. His tactical directive, issued on July 2, limits operations against residential compounds that are likely to produce civilian casualties.

Forces under fire and in danger have the right to defend themselves, Colonel Julian said, but “in general, if we are not certain there are no civilians in a compound we would not target the compound.”

The wounded in the Kandahar hospital were from a farming family in the village of Tawalla, in the remote district of Shah Wali Kot, which has long been a stronghold for Taliban forces.

One of the injured, Muhibullah, 24, said he woke to the sound of shooting and helicopters and ran from the house with the rest of the family toward an adjoining orchard owned by his uncle.

“When we reached the garden, the helicopter shot at us and injured three of my brothers, one sister, my mother, father and sister-in-law and killed Rahmania, a 4-year-old girl,” he said.

“I do not know the reason; we did not hear any fighting that night, and there are not any Taliban in our village,” he said. “It was a very frightening night for us — we could all have been killed.”

His father, Niamatullah, 46, said when he woke he tried to stop the family, but they were already running.

Helicopters were hovering near the house, he said, and when he rushed after the family they reappeared and started firing.. He said he hid behind a wall, and the helicopters fired on it.

The wall collapsed, injuring him in the head.

He found seven members of his family lying wounded on the ground in the orchard, including four of his sons, his wife, his sister-in-law and her daughter.

He listed four neighbors, all farmers in their 20s and 30s, who he said were killed in the attack, besides Rahmania, his cousin's daughter. Hay ricks and wood piles caught fire from the gunfire, which continued until 3 a.m., he said.

Niamatullah said there were no Taliban fighters in the village, but the village lies close to the main road connecting Kandahar province to Oruzgan province to the north.

The American forces were on patrol away from civilian areas when they came under fire at 10:30 p.m. from small-arms fire and rocket-propelled grenades from a group of militants, according to an American spokeswoman, Capt. Elizabeth Mathias of the Air Force.

Helicopters were involved at the beginning and other aircraft later, she said.

She did not identify the United States forces involved, but American Special Forces based in Kandahar often patrol the region.

Stupidity Awards For July 2009: #1: U.S. Command Pressures Taliban To Execute A U.S. Soldier They Hold Prisoner: "If You Do Not Release The U.S. Soldier Then You Will Be Hunted"

16 July 2009 By VOA News & By AMIR SHAH, Associated Press Writer

A Taliban commander in southeastern Afghanistan said he will kill a captured U.S. soldier unless the U.S. military stops operations in two provinces.

Mawlavi Sangin said Thursday that the soldier is healthy but threatened to kill him unless the U.S. stops airstrikes in Ghazni province's Giro district and Paktika province's Khoshamand district. Giro has been heavily bombed. The final decision about the soldier's fate will be made by Taliban leader Mullah Omar.

A U.S. military spokeswoman, Captain Elizabeth Mathias, said the military has distributed leaflets in the two provinces calling for the soldier's safe return.

One leaflet shows an American soldier sitting on the ground and shaking hands with Afghan children. It asks for the missing "American guest" to be returned home.

But another leaflet shows U.S. soldiers kicking in the door of a house and says: "If you do not release the U.S. soldier then you will be hunted."

Comment: T

When you're being hunted, you can't afford the luxury of being impeded by taking care of a prisoner. So, U.S. command has just issued instructions to the Taliban to kill the U.S. soldier.

Hardly a surprise; they need a dead martyr for propaganda purposes more than a live POW.

American commanding officers have a culture different from our own.

They are a strange, primitive people, many of them beardless fanatic religious fundamentalists, who place no value on human life, and who believe that if they die fighting for their prophet "Jesus," they will be taken up to paradise by beautiful naked boys with wings called "angels."

Their effort to kill those who do not wish to submit to their occupation is called "the clash of civilizations."



Example of Christian angel; Caravaggio, 1600

MORE:

Stupidity Awards For July 2009:

#2:

Shortage Of Copters Killing British Troops; Their Commander Doesn't Even Have One; But Murderous Idiot Prime Minister Says There's No Shortage

16 July 2009 By VOA News & Richard Norton-Taylor, Guardian News and Media
[Excerpts]

British military operations in Afghanistan are being seriously undermined by the shortage of helicopters, with commanders having to rely on ground transport at greater risk to soldiers, a hard-hitting report by the Commons defence committee concluded today.

The cross-party report is likely to cause ministers severe embarrassment because they have persistently denied that a lack of helicopters is having any adverse impact on operations.

Britain's 9,000 troops in Afghanistan's southern Helmand province have fewer than 25 helicopters – 10 Chinooks, five Sea Kings and eight Apache attack aircraft – at their disposal.

The report said a larger fleet would allow soldiers to travel by air, instead of on the ground, where they are exposed to roadside bombs.

Fifteen British soldiers have been killed this month, many by roadside bombs planted by Taliban insurgents.

Media outlets reported Thursday that Britain's top army commander was forced to fly in an American helicopter when he visited the front lines in Helmand because British forces could not spare one.

British Prime Minister Gordon has repeatedly said that British forces have the resources and equipment they need.

MORE:

Stupidity Awards For July 2009:

#3: Dead Men Walking: Obama Fools Send 81 U.S. DEA Agents To Shut Down World's Largest Opium Production

July 15, 2009 By Josh Meyer, McClatchy Newspapers [Excerpts]

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. government is dramatically expanding a long-neglected second front in the war in Afghanistan, dispatching Drug Enforcement Administration agents in an effort to decapitate the Taliban-linked drug-trafficking networks that are fueling the insurgency and corrupting the Afghan government, current and former counternarcotics officials say.

In response, the number of DEA agents and analysts in Afghanistan will jump from 13 to 68 by September, and ultimately to 81 in 2010, and more will be deployed to Pakistan, too.

Birmingham Doctors Inundated With Battle-Injured Soldiers From Afghanistan

Jul 16 2009 by Alison Dayani, Birmingham Post

Birmingham doctors treating British military casualties have revealed they have been inundated with four times as many battle-injured soldiers from Afghanistan in the past month compared to a year ago.

The news comes as the country mourns the death of eight soldiers, three from the Midlands, whose bodies were flown back to the UK on Monday.

Selly Oak's Royal Centre for Defence Medicine has had a surge of Army admissions from the war-torn country since Operation Panther's Claw began in Helmand province in early June.

New Military of Defence (MoD) figures show 66 soldiers were flown back for treatment from Afghanistan in June this year, with doctors fighting to save the lives of 32 injured in battle.

Some 24 soldiers, 12 with battle injuries, already arrived at the hospital this month.

UNREMITTING HELL ON EARTH; ALL HOME NOW



A U.S. Marine takes a deep breath before attempting to dismantle an explosive device in Golestan district of Farah province, Afghanistan, May 8, 2009. REUTERS/Goran Tomasevic

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

“Hope for change doesn't cut it when you're still losing buddies.”
-- J.D. Englehart, Iraq Veterans Against The War

THE NEW ISSUE OF TRAVELING SOLDIER IS OUT!



Traveling Soldier Front Page Cartoon [Thanks to Mark Shapiro, Military Project.]

FEATURING:

1. "They helped kill my daughter" says a military mom.

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/7.09.letter.php>

2. Soldier-Killing Toxic Burn Pits Unnecessary But Profitable

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/7.09.burnpits.php>

3. "I Lost Three Buddies In My Platoon In Iraq And For What?" says an Iraq vet.

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/7.09.forwhat.php>

4. Download the new Traveling Soldier to pass it out at your school, workplace, or at nearby base.

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/TS23.pdf>

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

July 17, 1927: Dishonorable Anniversary: A Bloody Day In A 24 Year U.S. Occupation [No, There's Nothing "Neo" About The U.S. Empire]

After taking office on January 1, 1925, Solórzano requested that the United States delay the withdrawal of its troops from Nicaragua. Nicaragua and the United States agreed that United States troops would remain while United States military instructors helped build a national military force.

Carl Bunin Peace History July 16-22

In a significant early use of close air support, a U.S. Marine squadron of seven airplanes dive-bombed rebels and peasants surrounding Marines and Nicaraguan military (then under direct U.S. control) in Ocotal, Nicaragua, killing more than 100.

The rebels were opposed the presence of U.S. forces, essentially continuous since 1909.

United States Occupation 1909-33:

Countrystudies.us/nicaragua/15

United States interest in Nicaragua, which had waned during the last half of the 1800s because of isolationist sentiment following the United States Civil War (1861-65), grew again during the final years of the Zelaya administration.

Angered by the United States choice of Panama for the site of a transisthmian canal, President Zelaya made concessions to Germany and Japan for a competing canal across Nicaragua.

Relations with the United States deteriorated, and civil war erupted in October 1909, when anti-Zelaya liberals joined with a group of conservatives under Juan Estrada to overthrow the government.

The United States broke diplomatic relations with the Zelaya administration after two United States mercenaries serving with the rebels were captured and executed by government forces.

Soon thereafter, 400 United States marines landed on the Caribbean coast.

Weakened and pressured by both domestic and external forces, Zelaya resigned on December 17, 1909. His minister of foreign affairs, José Madriz, was appointed president by the Nicaraguan Congress. A liberal from León, Madriz was unable to restore order under continuing pressure from conservatives and the United States forces, and he resigned on August 20, 1910.

Conservative Estrada, governor of Nicaragua's easternmost department, assumed power after Madriz's resignation. The United States agreed to support Estrada, provided that a Constituent Assembly was elected to write a constitution. After agreeing with this stipulation, a coalition conservative-liberal regime, headed by Estrada, was recognized by the United States on January 1, 1911.

Political differences between the two parties soon surfaced, however, and minister of war General Luis Mena forced Estrada to resign. Estrada's vice president, the conservative Adolfo Díaz, then became president. In mid-1912 Mena persuaded a Constituent Assembly to name him successor to Díaz when Díaz's term expired in 1913.

When the United States refused to recognize the Constituent Assembly's decision, Mena rebelled against the Díaz government. A force led by liberal Benjamín Zelaydón quickly came to the aid of Mena.

Díaz, relying on what was becoming a time-honored tradition, requested assistance from the United States.

In August 1912, a force of 2,700 United States marines once landed again at the ports of Corinto and Bluefields. Mena fled the country, and Zelaydón was killed.

The United States kept a contingent force in Nicaragua almost continually from 1912 until 1933.

Although reduced to 100 in 1913, the contingent served as a reminder of the willingness of the United States to use force and its desire to keep conservative governments in power.

Under United States supervision, national elections were held in 1913, but the liberals refused to participate in the electoral process, and Adolfo Díaz was reelected to a full term. Foreign investment decreased during this period because of the high levels of violence and political instability.

Nicaragua and the United States signed but never ratified the Castell-Knox Treaty in 1914, giving the United States the right to intervene in Nicaragua to protect United States interest.

A modified version, the Chamorro-Bryan Treaty omitting the intervention clause, was finally ratified by the United States Senate in 1916.

This treaty gave the United States exclusive rights to build an interoceanic canal across Nicaragua. Because the United States had already built the Panama Canal, however, the terms of the Chamorro-Bryan Treaty served the primary purpose of securing United States interests against potential foreign countries--mainly Germany or Japan--building another canal in Central America.

The treaty also transformed Nicaragua into a near United States protectorate.

Collaboration with the United States allowed the conservatives to remain in power until 1925.

The liberals boycotted the 1916 election, and conservative Emiliano Chamorro was elected with no opposition.

The liberals did participate in the 1920 elections, but the backing of the United States and a fraudulent election assured the election of Emiliano Chamorro's uncle, Diego Manuel Chamorro.

A moderate conservative, Carlos Solórzano, was elected president in open elections in 1924, with liberal Juan Bautista Sacasa as his vice president.

After taking office on January 1, 1925, Solórzano requested that the United States delay the withdrawal of its troops from Nicaragua.

Nicaragua and the United States agreed that United States troops would remain while United States military instructors helped build a national military force.

In June, Solórzano's government contracted with retired United States Army Major Calvin B. Carter to establish and train the National Guard. The United States marines left

Nicaragua in August 1925. However, President Solórzano, who had already purged the liberals from his coalition government, was subsequently forced out of power in November 1925 by a conservative group who proclaimed General Emiliano Chamorro (who had also served as president from 1917 to 1921), as president in January 1926.

Fearing a new round of conservative-liberal violence and worried that a revolution in Nicaragua might result in a leftist victory as happened a few years earlier in Mexico, the United States sent marines, who landed on the Caribbean coast in May 1926, ostensibly to protect United States citizens and property.

United States authorities in Nicaragua mediated a peace agreement between the liberals and the conservatives in October 1926. Chamorro resigned, and the Nicaraguan Congress elected Adolfo Díaz as president (Díaz had previously served as president, 1911-16). Violence resumed, however, when former vice president Sacasa returned from exile to claim his rights to the presidency.

In April 1927, the United States sent Henry L. Stimson to mediate the civil war. Once in Nicaragua, Stimson began conversations with President Díaz as well as with leaders from both political parties. Stimson's meetings with General José María Moncada, the leader of the liberal rebels, led to a peaceful solution of the crisis. On May 20, 1927, Moncada agreed to a plan in which both sides--the government and Moncada's liberal forces--would disarm. In addition, a nonpartisan military force would be established under United States supervision. This accord was known as the Pact of Espino Negro.

As part of the agreement, President Díaz would finish his term and United States forces would remain in Nicaragua to maintain order and supervise the 1928 elections.

A truce between the government and the rebels remained in effect and included the disarmament of both liberal rebels and government troops. Sacasa, who refused to sign the agreement, left the country.

United States forces took over the country's military functions, and strengthened the Nicaraguan National Guard.

Sandino Begins Nationalist Guerrilla War Against The U.S. Occupation

A rebel liberal group under the leadership of Augusto César Sandino also refused to sign the Pact of Espino Negro.

An illegitimate son of a wealthy landowner and a mestizo servant, Sandino had left his father's home early in his youth and traveled to Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico.

During his three-year stay in Tampico, Mexico, Sandino had acquired a strong sense of Nicaraguan nationalism and pride in his mestizo heritage.

At the urging of his father, Sandino had returned to Nicaragua in 1926 and settled in the department of Nueva Segovia, where he worked at a gold mine owned by a United States company.

Sandino, who lectured the mine workers about social inequalities and the need to change the political system, soon organized his own army, consisting mostly of peasants and workers, and joined the liberals fighting against the conservative regime of Chamorro.

Highly distrusted by Moncada, Sandino set up hit-and-run operations against conservative forces independently of Moncada's liberal army.

After the United States mediated the agreement between liberal forces and the conservative regime, Sandino, calling Moncada a traitor and denouncing United States intervention, reorganized his forces as the Army for the Defense of Nicaraguan Sovereignty (Ejército Defensor de la Soberanía de Nicaragua-EDSN).

Sandino then staged an independent guerrilla campaign against the government and United States forces.

Although Sandino's original intentions were to restore constitutional government under Sacasa, after the Pact of Espino Negro agreement his objective became the defense of Nicaraguan sovereignty against the United States.

Receiving his main support from the rural population, Sandino resumed his battle against United States troops.

At the height of his guerrilla campaign, Sandino claimed to have some 3,000 soldiers in his army, although official figures estimated the number at only 300.

Sandino's guerrilla war caused significant damage in the Caribbean coast and mining regions.

After debating whether to continue direct fighting against Sandino's forces, the United States opted to develop the nonpartisan Nicaraguan National Guard to contain internal violence. The National Guard would soon become the most important power in Nicaraguan politics.

The late 1920s and early 1930s saw the growing power of Anastasio "Tacho" Somoza García, a leader who would create a dynasty that ruled Nicaragua for four and a half decades.

Moncada won the 1928 presidential elections in one of the most honest elections ever held in Nicaragua. For the 1932 elections, the liberals nominated Juan Bautista Sacasa and the conservatives, Adolfo Díaz. Sacasa won the elections and was installed as president on January 2, 1933.

In the United States, popular opposition to the Nicaraguan intervention rose as United States casualty lists grew.

Anxious to withdraw from Nicaraguan politics, the United States turned over command of the National Guard to the Nicaraguan government, and United States marines left the country soon thereafter.

President Sacasa, under pressure from General Moncada, appointed Somoza García as chief director of the National Guard. Somoza García, a close friend of Moncada and nephew of President Sacasa, had supported the liberal revolt in 1926.

Somoza García also enjoyed support from the United States government because of his participation at the 1927 peace conference as one of Stimson's interpreters. Having attended school in Philadelphia and been trained by United States marines, Somoza García, who was fluent in English, had developed friends with military, economic, and political influence in the United States.

After United States troops left Nicaragua in January 1933, the Sacasa government and the National Guard still were threatened by Sandino's EDSN.

True to his promise to stop fighting after United States marines had left the country, Sandino agreed to discussions with Sacasa. In February 1934, these negotiations began.

During their meetings, Sacasa offered Sandino a general amnesty as well as land and safeguards for him and his guerrilla forces. However, Sandino, who regarded the National Guard as unconstitutional because of its ties to the United States military, insisted on the guard's dissolution.

His attitude made him very unpopular with Somoza Garcia and his guards.

Without consulting the president, Somoza Garcia gave orders for Sandino's assassination, hoping that this action would help him win the loyalty of senior guard officers. On February 21, 1934, while leaving the presidential palace after a dinner with President Sacasa, Sandino and two of his generals were arrested by National Guard officers acting under Somoza García's instructions.

They were then taken to the airfield, executed, and buried in unmarked graves.

Despite Sacasa's strong disapproval of Somoza García's action, the Nicaraguan president was too weak to contain the National Guard director.

After Sandino's execution, the National Guard launched a ruthless campaign against Sandino's supporters. In less than a month, Sandino's army was totally destroyed.

President Sacasa's popularity decreased as a result of his poor leadership and accusations of fraud in the 1934 congressional elections. Somoza García benefited from Sacasa's diminishing power, while at the same time he brought together the National Guard and the Liberal Party (Partido Liberal-PL) in order to win the presidential elections in 1936. Somoza García also cultivated support from former presidents Moncada and Chamorro while consolidating control within the Liberal Party.

Early in 1936, Somoza García openly confronted President Sacasa by using military force to displace local government officials loyal to the president and replacing them with close associates.

Somoza García's increasing military confrontation led to Sacasa's resignation on June 6, 1936. The Congress appointed Carlos Brenes Jarquín, a Somoza García associate, as interim president and postponed presidential elections until December. In November, Somoza García officially resigned as chief director of the National Guard, thus complying with constitutional requirements for eligibility to run for the presidency. The Liberal Nationalist Party (Partido Liberal Nacionalista--PLN) was established with support from a faction of the Conservative Party to support Somoza García's candidacy.

Somoza García was elected president in the December election by the remarkable margin of 107,201 votes to 108.

On January 1, 1937, Somoza García resumed control of the National Guard, combining the roles of president and chief director of the military.

Thus, Somoza García established a military dictatorship, in the shadows of democratic laws, that would last more than four decades.

MORE:

July 17, 1979: Honor Restored: 22 Years Later To The Day, Sandinistas Overthrow The Traitors So Beloved By The U.S. Empire

Carl Bunin Peace History July 16-22

Fighters of the Sandinista National Liberation Front overthrew the U.S.-supported dictatorial regime of Anastasio Somoza in the Central American republic of Nicaragua and forced him to flee the country.

The notorious and feared U.S.-trained National Guard crumbled and its surviving commanders negotiated a surrender, despite their superiority in armaments.

THE SANDINISTAS TAKE POWER

Countrystudies.us/nicaragua/15.htm [Excerpts]

The new government inherited a country in ruins, with a stagnant economy and a debt of about US\$1.6 billion.

An estimated 50,000 Nicaraguans were dead, 120,000 were exiles in neighboring countries, and 600,000 were homeless. Food and fuel supplies were exhausted, and international relief organizations were trying to deal with disease caused by lack of health supplies.

Yet the attitude of the vast majority of Nicaraguans toward the revolution was decidedly hopeful.

Most Nicaraguans saw the Sandinista victory as an opportunity to create a system free of the political, social, and economic inequalities of the almost universally hated Somoza regime.

One of the immediate goals of the new government was reconstruction of the national economy.

The junta appointed individuals from the private sector to head the government's economic team. They were responsible for renegotiating the foreign debt and channeling foreign economic aid through the state-owned International Reconstruction Fund (Fondo Internacional de Reconstrucción--FIR). The new government received bilateral and multinational financial assistance and also rescheduled the national foreign debt on advantageous terms.

Pledging food for the poor, the junta made restructuring the economy its highest priority.

At first the economy experienced positive growth, largely because of renewed inflow of foreign aid and reconstruction after the war.

The new government enacted the Agrarian Reform Law, beginning with the nationalization of all rural properties owned by the Somoza family or people associated with the Somozas, a total of 2,000 farms representing more than 20 percent of Nicaragua's cultivable land.

These farms became state property under the new Ministry of Agrarian Reform. Large agroexport farms not owned by the Somozas generally were not affected by the agrarian reform. Financial institutions, all in bankruptcy from the massive capital flight during the war, were also nationalized.

The second goal of the Sandinistas was a change in the old government's pattern of repression and brutality toward the general populace.

Many of the Sandinista leaders were victims of torture themselves, and the new minister of interior, Tomás Borge Martínez, tried to keep human rights violations low.

Most prisoners accused of injustices under the Somoza regime were given a trial, and the Ministry of Interior forbade cruelty to prisoners. In their first two years in power, Amnesty International and other human rights groups found the human rights situation in Nicaragua greatly improved.

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

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



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

GI Special Available In PDF Format

If you prefer PDF to Word format, email contact@militaryproject.org

CLASS WAR REPORTS



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

GI Special distributes and posts to our website copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available in an effort to advance understanding of the invasion and occupation of Iraq. We believe this constitutes a "fair use" of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law since it is being distributed **without charge or profit** for educational purposes to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for educational purposes, in accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107. **GI Special has no affiliation whatsoever with the originator of these articles nor is GI Special endorsed or sponsored by the originators. This attributed work is provided a non-profit basis to facilitate understanding, research, education, and the advancement of human rights and social justice.** Go to: www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml for more information. If you wish to use copyrighted material from this site for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use', you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

If printed out, this newsletter is your personal property and cannot legally be confiscated from you. "Possession of unauthorized material may not be prohibited." DoD Directive 1325.6 Section 3.5.1.2.