

## GI SPECIAL 7G17:

More US Casualties in Afghanistan



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

**“The Taliban’s Operational Art  
Seems Particularly Focused On  
The Mental And Moral Levels Of  
Conflict”**

**“The Taliban’s Strategic Target Is  
The Mind Of Their Adversary”**

**“Outlasting, By Running Away To Fight Another Day Whenever Faced With Superior Forces, Is A Central Part Of Any Winning Strategy Directed Toward Achieving This Aim”**

**“Western Combatant Forces Are Heavily Dependent On Lines Of Communication For Flows Of Supplies And Reinforcements, And Are Highly Vulnerable To Physical Disruption Of LOCs”**

**The geographic distribution of the NATO forces in a large number of small outposts makes them vulnerable to a welter of float-like-a-butterfly, sting-like-a-bee attacks and ambushes, made at times and places of the Taliban’s choosing.**

**The Times report makes it clear that Taliban attacks are aimed at isolating and stressing individual checkpoints and, perhaps, also at triggering a flow of reinforcements to these checkpoints, which could then be ambushed by the Taliban along the long, vulnerable LOCs.**

July 14, 2009 By FRANKLIN SPINNEY, CounterPunch [Excerpts]

Franklin “Chuck” Spinney is a former military analyst for the Pentagon.

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On July 7, the Times (UK) carried a remarkable report describing the trials and tribulations of the Welsh Guards, who are now engaged in the ongoing offensive against the Taliban in Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

It described in riveting detail how accumulating mental and physical stress are grinding down the bodies and minds of what are clearly highly-motivated, well-trained, and competently-led troops.

My aim is to elaborate on the Times report by examining its information from a different perspective. My hope is that this will provide a better appreciation of the Taliban’s game.

With the exception of the last sentence in the penultimate paragraph (i.e., “The Taliban fight not to win but to outlast”), which is silly, the Times provides a graphic description of the pressures on the individual British soldiers, and it is an excellent window into the effects of the Taliban’s military art.

**The information suggests the Taliban’s strategic aim is to wear down their adversaries by keeping them under continual strain and by working on their psychology, or as the late American strategist John Boyd would say, by getting inside, slowing down, and disorienting their adversary’s Observation - Orientation - Decision - Action (OODA) loops.**

**Moreover, the Taliban’s operational art seems particularly focused on the mental and moral levels of conflict.**

**Outlasting, by running away to fight another day whenever faced with superior forces, is a central part of any winning strategy directed toward achieving this aim.**

(Interested readers can find a brief introduction to OODA loops in the last section of my remembrance of Boyd in the Proceedings of the Naval Institute, Genghis John. And for an example of an implicit application at the mental and moral levels of conflict, see my essay in CounterPunch, How Obama Won).

**The Times report also contains information describing NATO’s operational art.**

**It suggests that NATO’s operational focus is aimed at occupying or cutting lines of communication (LOCs) by occupying checkpoints or outposts.**

**This operational level aim reflects NATO’s belief that control of checkpoints along the LOCs will make it possible to control movement of the Taliban, and thereby make it easier to protect the Afghan population from the Taliban.**

By definition, if successful, this outcome would slow down and physically disconnect the Taliban’s OODA loops from the political environment, thus establishing the blanket of military security needed for achieving the strategic aim of winning the hearts and minds of the people through political action.

**But we will see that this is more an exercise in self-referencing than in strategy.**

The differences between the Taliban’s art of war and NATO’s art of war raise the question of who has and will maintain the initiative, or in the context of Boyd’s strategic theory, whose OODA loops are really being slowed down, disoriented, and made more predictable in what is an emerging war over the Afghan LOCs?

The Times report does not address this question, but it contains some very suggestive information in this regard.

**The Taliban live off the land and have weapons/supply caches throughout Helmand province and Afghanistan.**

**They can and indeed have been ordered by their leader in Helmand, Mullah Naim Barach, to concentrate and disperse at will. The Taliban can do this easily, because they can blend seamlessly into the local culture, should they choose to do so.**

**The deployed NATO units, on the other hand, are highly-visible alien conventional military forces.**

**Moreover, the NATO foreigners are deployed in easily discerned, static positions: checkpoints, outposts, and base camps.**

**The geographic distribution of the NATO forces in a large number of small outposts makes them vulnerable to a welter of float-like-a-butterfly, sting-like-a-bee attacks and ambushes, made at times and places of the Taliban's choosing.**

**The Times report makes it clear that Taliban attacks are aimed at isolating and stressing individual checkpoints and, perhaps, also at triggering a flow of reinforcements to these checkpoints, which could then be ambushed by the Taliban along the long, vulnerable LOCs.**

**Not mentioned in the Times report is a closely-related, important asymmetry:**

**Conventional NATO forces can not live off the land and are entirely dependent on a massive thru-put of food, fuel, water, ammunition, and spare parts.**

**In this regard, the report does describe a land resupply route along the canal.**

**It says that British forces are forced to move at a snail's pace, because of the uncertain menace posed Taliban's ever-present mine threat.**

**Cheap mines and simple booby traps, which the Pentagon euphemistically labels as IEDs, or improvised explosive devices, as if they represented something new and unexpected, have long proven themselves to be one of the most effective ways to slow down, distract, and disrupt the OODA loops of an attacking adversary.**

**That is because they directly attack the attacker's mind and slow down or paralyze his decision cycle.**

**Any soldier who has experienced the overwhelming sense of freezing fear created by the mental effect of finding himself ensnared in a minefield during a firefight knows how the known presence of mines can wreck even the best OODA loop.**

**With this background in mind, let us now place these observations and thoughts in a somewhat different context.**

**Every conflict, be it conventional or unconventional, embodies an amalgam of physical, mental, and moral effects.**

The great battlefield commanders have long recognized that strengths and weaknesses in moral and mental effects can be far more influential in shaping outcomes than physical effects.

Napoleon, for example, pithily encapsulated this view by saying “the moral is to the material as three to one.”

Viewed through a moral and mental lens, the Times report contains information that is strongly suggestive of an asymmetry in the opposing strategies that reflects long standing differences the eastern and western approaches to making war.

**Without explicitly saying so, the Times report makes it clear that the Taliban’s strategic target is the mind of their adversary.**

Its operational schwerpunkt (i.e., main military effort to which all other efforts are subordinated) is also directly aimed at the mind of their adversaries, both in the field or in London and Washington.

It is also pretty clear, that the Taliban’s operational schwerpunkt is to use an omnipresent physical menace (manifesting itself through a welter of large and small attacks, and when faced with opposition, running away to fight another day, as well as mine warfare, terror, etc.) is to undermine mental and moral stability of their adversaries.

This focus on the mind is a way of war that is entirely consistent with the thinking expressed in the first book ever written on the art war by the Chinese philosopher Sun Tzu, as well as their modern incarnation in the guerrilla theories of Mao Zedong.

**Like the Taliban, the strategic aim of the British operation is also directed toward the mental and moral levels of conflict -- namely winning the hearts and minds of the Afghan people.**

**But in sharp contrast to that of the Taliban, the operational-level schwerpunkt of the NATO forces is entirely physical.**

**It is aimed directly at controlling checkpoints and lines of communication.**

**The theory behind NATO’s operational schwerpunkt -- and remember, it is only a theory -- is that through this physical control, NATO forces (i.e., alien outsiders) will provide the means to win at the mental and moral levels of conflict.**

Borrowing terminology from Mao and applying it to the culture of Afghanistan, NATO forces would do this by physically isolating the Taliban fish from a sea of a people supporting them -- people who, in this case, have been conditioned by 30 years of violent civil war in what is perhaps the most xenophobic culture in the world.

Once the Taliban are isolated, the NATO military forces would then be able to play the mental and moral game of winning the hearts and minds of the people by providing greater protection, economic aid, and the construction of economic and democratic political infrastructures.

**This new strategy, named Clear, Hold, Build by the Americans, is actually the resurrection of a famous old colonialist strategy evolved by Hubert Lyautey (1854-1934) who eventually became a Marshall in the French army and ended his days as a virulent fascist.**

Lyautey's theory, named Tache d'huile, a buzz word to connote the idea of spreading oil spots, posited that counterinsurgent forces should aim to secure an ever expanding geographic zone of security, like a spreading oil spot, and then use that security to win over the colonized people (presumably, so the French colonialists could continue to exploit the people and their resources).

**Each new area secured would provide a basis for further spreading, and so on, clearing and holding ever larger regions.**

**Tache d'huile was tried by the French in Morocco, Vietnam and Algeria and by the Americans in Vietnam with the notorious Strategic Hamlets program.**

**Although it worked sometimes in the short term, the long term results speak for themselves.**

(Some contemporary counterinsurgency specialists like to point to the case of Malaya as a successful counter-example of clearing and holding, but one must remember that the guerilla fighters in this case were ethnic Chinese who were hated by the ethnic Malaysians.)

The problem is that to succeed in the moral and mental game in Afghanistan, NATO's tache d'huile strategy must establish a blanket physical security so pervasive that highly visible alien aid providers and reformers spread thinly throughout a traumatized, xenophobic, clan-based population will not be picked off one by one by the Taliban, warlords, criminal gangs, or any others who feel threatened by their presence.

But there is more.

**Not only is the operational focus of the NATO forces physical, it is clearly reflective of and consistent with the interdiction theories of modern western conventional war, particularly those of Baron Antoine-Henri Jomini, a very influential 19th century French theoretician who tried to systematize Napoleon's art of war.**

**These theories reflect the incontestable fact that western combatant forces are heavily dependent on lines of communication (LOCs) for flows of supplies and reinforcements, and therefore, are highly vulnerable to physical disruption of LOCs.**

**NATO's heavy dependency raises the ominous question of whether the fallacy of mirror imaging -- i.e., assuming the Taliban is vulnerable to something NATO is vulnerable to -- is again creating the same mistake it did for the Americans in Vietnam.**

History has shown repeatedly that conventionally-inspired military action (especially interdiction operations aimed at choking off the supplies and reinforcements and

destroying the so-called safe havens of the adversary) aimed at achieving an unconventional end (winning hearts and minds of the people in a guerilla war) can easily degenerate into a mindless, fire-power centric war driven by conventional military thinking.

The Soviets, for example, tried to win the hearts and minds of the Afghan people, but lost sight of their goal and eventually became ensnared in a struggle for control of Afghan LOCs.

This degenerated into a firepower intensive bloodbath in which the Soviets inflicted horrendous damage; but, in the end, they had to leave Afghanistan with their tail between their legs.

The same kind of degeneration into mindless applications of firepower happened to US forces in Vietnam.

In both cases, all the noble sounding rhetoric about winning hearts and minds of the locals was drowned and forgotten in a sea of mindless body counts and wanton destruction.

**As in Vietnam, the tempting response to the welter of Taliban attacks on NATO's LOCs, checkpoints, and outposts in this war will be to increase NATO's dependence on high speed reinforcements.**

**But, as the Times report shows, the Brits are learning to their dismay that guerrilla surprise attacks and mine laying activities force ground reinforcements to move at a snail's pace.**

**The natural response by NATO will be toward a greater reliance on rapid-response reinforcements moved via air to threatened areas by helicopters and Marine V-22s, together with an increase in supporting firepower of air and artillery.**

Such an evolution on a large scale would mean that costs to fight the most recent Afghan war will escalate ever more rapidly.

Operating these aircraft in high mountain ranges or in the dusty high desert plateaus entails a host of very expensive logistics and operational problems.

Moreover, by concentrating the troop reinforcement packages in vulnerable helos and V-22s, NATO will run the risk of far greater troop casualties, when the Taliban learn how to shoot down these reinforcing aircraft as they approach their landing zones, as they surely will.

Counter insurgency strategists would do well to remember that the United States lost over 5,000 helicopters in Vietnam, mostly to small arms and machine gun fire as they approached hot landing zones.

The Soviets relied more on ground reinforcements (which resulted in a large number of very bloody ambushes), but their helos also got plastered in Afghanistan.

NATO strategists would also do well to remember how the “strategists” in both of these earlier wars insensibly became obsessed with bombing lines of communication.

In the end, frustration, coupled with the insensible seduction of firepower and conventional dogma, led to attrition and destruction becoming ends in themselves, memorably encapsulated by the American officer who told a reporter, “we had to destroy the village to save it,” and thereby pushed the hearts and minds of the people into the welcoming arms of the insurgents.

No one knows if this kind of ruin is to be our future, but the Times report suggests many of the fatally flawed building blocks are now falling into place.

One unrelated final point: The Times report contains some very interesting information that should be of specific interest to those American officers who have a Haig-like affinity for the comfort of rear echelon command posts.

Of the five battle deaths suffered by the Welsh Guards, the Times says three were commanding officers: one a platoon commander, another a company commander, and last, the regimental commander.

The British officers at the pointy end of the spear seem to be setting high moral examples by sharing the risks and burdens of the grunts they are leading.

**It also would not be surprising if the Taliban are targeting commanding officers, but this high percentage of total losses (admittedly 60% of a tiny specific sample makes it impossible to extrapolate) makes one wonder if they are also receiving the requisite intelligence information to do so.**

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## IRAQ WAR REPORTS

### Resistance Action

July 20 (Reuters) & July 21 (Reuters)

A sniper shot dead an Iraqi soldier in southeast Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad.

A policeman was wounded when a bomb went off while he was trying to defuse it, in northern Mosul.

A bomb blast in Karada area targeted the convoy of Deputy Minister of Water Resources Bakhtyar Abdulrahman, who survived the attack, whereas two of his bodyguards were severely injured, police said. Minutes later a second bomb exploded. Iraqi police forces said, “The two attacks occurred near Almualaq bridge tunnel in Karada area, a very secure area.” **[Yes, it certainly is, isn't it?]**



A roadside bomb targeting the convoy of Water Resources Minister Abdul Latif Rasheed wounded three traffic policemen in Baghdad's central Karrada district, police said. No one in the minister's convoy was hurt.

A roadside bomb detonated near a U.S.-allied anti-insurgent militia checkpoint, wounding 5 militiamen, in Mussayab, 60 km (40 miles) south of Baghdad, police said.

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

## **AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS**

### **Foreign Occupation Soldier Killed North Of Kabul; Two More Injured: Nationality Not Announced**

July 21st, 2009 (CNN)

A service member was killed and two others injured in a vehicle crash north of Afghanistan's capital city, the U.S. military said Tuesday.

The service members were injured when a vehicle they were riding in rolled over north of Kabul, a military statement said.

The military did not release the names of the service members pending the notification of the victim's family members.

An Afghan interpreter was also injured in the crash.

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### **Soldier From The Joint Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group Killed In Helmand**

21 Jul 09 Ministry of Defence

It is with great sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm that a soldier from The Joint Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group was killed yesterday afternoon, 20 July 2009.

The soldier was killed as a result of an explosion that happened whilst on patrol in central Helmand province.

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**“There Have Been Injuries Like  
You’ve Probably Never Seen Or  
Experienced”  
Numbers Of Wounded “So High That  
Medics Have Been Forced To Break  
Their Own Rules By Accepted More  
Wounded Than The Hospital Is Designed  
To Take”**

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

21 July 2009 Richard Norton-Taylor, The Guardian [Excerpts]

Recent fighting in Afghanistan led to a record number of British casualties since the start of the war against the Taliban, with more than 150 badly wounded within a week, defence officials said yesterday.

The figures are in addition to the 17 soldiers killed this month so far.

More than 157 soldiers were treated at the field hospital at Camp Bastion in Helmand province last week, according to army medics. Numbers were so high that medics have been forced to break their own rules by accepted more wounded than the hospital is designed to take.

“The last few weeks have been an extremely busy period.

“There have been injuries like you’ve probably never seen or experienced,” one medic told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme, referring to the horrific wounds explosions roadside bombs can inflict.

The latest figures officially published by the Ministry of Defence reveal a significant increase in the number of wounded even before the latest fighting, which has produced the highest recorded so far. Forty-six soldiers were admitted to field hospitals in Afghanistan in June, compared with 24 in May and 11 in April. The figures are to some extent seasonal, they were higher last summer than in the winter.

The MoD’s figures do not give a detailed rundown of the severity and nature of the injuries to British soldiers.

But they say that 13 were “very seriously” or “seriously injured” last month, descriptions which include life-threatening injuries and amputations. More than 200 soldiers have suffered such injuries since British forces began their campaign in Helmand three years ago.

Most of the deaths and serious injuries in recent months have been the result of roadside bombs or improvised explosive devices becoming increasingly sophisticated and deadly.

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## **Resistance Launches Complex Attack On Gardez Provincial Headquarters**

21 July 2009 Associated Press

Five Taliban bombers attacked government centers in an eastern Afghan city today in a complex attack that has become a signature of major Taliban assaults. Five bombers and five Afghan security forces died, officials said.

Three people died in a similar attack on a second Afghan city in the east.

Using bombings, gunfire and rockets, the militants attacked the provincial governor’s compound, the intelligence department and the police department in the eastern city of Gardez just before 11 am.

A bombing in front of the city’s police station killed two police, while a militant fired a rocket at the city’s intelligence department and killed three officers, said Ghulam Dastagir, deputy provincial police chief of Paktia province. A rocket was also fired at the governor’s house, he said.

A second bomber at the police station was shot and killed, as were three bombers who tried to attack the governor’s house, Mangal said. At least two bombers were clothed in women’s burqas when they were shot and killed, said Interior Ministry spokesman Zemer Bashary.

Militants tried to carry out attacks in a second eastern city — Jalalabad — at around the same time. Mohammad Ayub Salangi, the provincial police chief, said two bombers on a motorbike and a police officer were killed after a gun battle broke out.

A Taliban spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid, claimed that 15 militants attacked government centers in Gardez. He said they were carrying AK-47 assault rifles and rockets.

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**BAD IDEA:  
NO MISSION;  
POINTLESS WAR:**

## **ALL HOME NOW**



Soldiers from the U.S. Army 26th Infantry during an operation in the Korengal Valley of Afghanistan's Kunar Province on May 13, 2009. (AP Photo/David Guttenfelder)

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## **TROOP NEWS**

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



The remains of U.S. Army Sergeant Justin J. Duffy, June 4, 2009 at Dover Air Force Base, Del. Duffy, of Cozad, Neb., died in Baghdad when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. (AP Photo/ Gail Burton)

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## **Burn Pits Exposed Troops To Deadly Poisons:**

**“A Toxic Brew That Is ... Much  
More Dangerous Than Individual  
Chemicals Alone”**

**“Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary  
Disease Cases Have Risen By 12,000  
A Year Since The Wars In Iraq And  
Afghanistan Began”**

**“The Absorption Onto Particulate Matter  
Then Allows These Chemicals Not Only  
To Deeply Penetrate Into The Lungs, But  
Also To Have A Dwell Time In The  
Lungs”**

7.20.09 By Kelly Kennedy, Army Times

When epidemiologist Shira Kramer first saw data about some 400 service members who say they were sickened by open-air burn pits in Afghanistan and Iraq, she said she was shocked to see how well their symptoms matched up with symptoms associated with toxic exposure.

“I was appalled but not surprised to learn that there were so many serious adverse health effects,” she said.

“We know open-pit burning is very dangerous.” Kramer, who has a doctorate in epidemiology and co-authored a textbook about it, was invited by lawyer Elizabeth Burke to research the burn pits to compile evidence for several class-action lawsuits against military contractor KBR.

The military typically disposes of waste in burn pits during contingency operations, but KBR took over burn-pit operations for the largest of the pits at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

**In a memo dated Dec. 20, 2006, Air Force Lt. Col. Darrin Curtis, former bioenvironmental flight commander at Balad, said the chemicals to which troops there may have been exposed include: dioxin, the same chemical that made Agent Orange so toxic; benzene, an aircraft fuel known to cause leukemia; arsenic; dichlorofluoromethane, or Freon; carbon monoxide; ethylbenzene; formaldehyde; hydrogen cyanide; nitrogen dioxide; sulfuric acid; and xylene.**

Kramer said the mix of chemicals, and their combination with particulates such as ash and sand, may have made the problem worse.

**“You have a toxic brew that is ... much more dangerous than individual chemicals alone,” she said.**

**“The absorption onto particulate matter then allows these chemicals not only to deeply penetrate into the lungs, but also to have a dwell time in the lungs.”**

Air Force officials say the burn pit at Balad has been cleaned up — the 90,000 water bottles a day that were being burned are now recycled, and hazardous materials are no longer making their way to the pit.

**But even if the pit burned only wood and paper, the troops would still be at risk, Kramer said, noting that burning wood produces dioxin.**

“Uncontrolled, open burning of any of these materials represents a hazard,” she said.

She said the symptoms can be signs of acute respiratory problems and blood cancers.

**Troops stationed near burn pits who began coughing and spitting up black stuff — “plume crud,” they call it — should have served as a warning to military officials, she said.**

“The acute effects are a tip-off that something quite troubling is going on,” she said.

She said military data showing that chronic obstructive pulmonary disease cases have risen by 12,000 a year since the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan began are especially troubling.

“You would not expect to see COPD in a young, healthy population ... in this age range,” she said. “It’s extremely unusual and unexpected.”

**MORE:**

**Army Staff Sgt. Danielle  
Nienajadlo:**

# **KIA By The Traitors Who Ran The Balad Burn Pit:**

**“Nienajadlo, Who Died Waiting For A  
Bone-Marrow Transplant, Said She  
Wanted To Make Sure Other People  
Know About The Dangers Of The  
Burn Pits”**

**“People Are Dying Out There, And This  
Needs To Be Discussed”**

**Of the 70 service members who developed cancer after exposure to the burn pits, 30 have a form of blood cancer, including 10 with leukemia. Typically, leukemias make up 2 percent of all cancers.**

7.20.09 By Kelly Kennedy, Army Times [Excerpts]

**When Army Staff Sgt. Danielle Nienajadlo arrived at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, in April 2008, she had a clean medical history and recent blood work to prove it.**

**But three months later, after weeks of muscle fatigue, nausea, headaches and coughing up black phlegm, she went to the base emergency room after she spent a night vomiting and in pain.**

**On July 26, 2008, she was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia.**

**“I am now a number, a statistic, a secret that no one wants to face,” she told Military Times last fall.**

**“I know that I got my disease in Iraq.”**

**The 32-year-old mother of three died March 20.**

Her case, and those of 70 other cancer victims who contacted Military Times or Disabled American Veterans in recent months, have left experts debating whether their leukemias and lymphomas could have developed so quickly.

Dr. Shira Kramer, an epidemiologist who co-authored a textbook about the subject, says yes.

“The burn pits really began seven years ago, so we have a number of years of exposure,” she said.

“And the latency period can be quite a bit shorter (for blood cancers) than for solid tumors.”

**Of the 70 service members who developed cancer after exposure to the burn pits, 30 have a form of blood cancer, including 10 with leukemia.**

**Typically, leukemias make up 2 percent of all cancers.**

Kramer said latency periods vary but can be as short as two years.

Military mortality data shows that cancer rates have remained stable or decreased in most categories, including blood and lung cancers. Only brain and thyroid cancers have increased significantly over the past seven years, according to Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center data.

**But “all other neoplasms” — abnormal tissue masses that may or may not become malignant — increased from 12,588 in 2001 to 23,913 last year.**

At press time, defense officials had not responded to a request for comment after a team of Army doctors linked a soldier’s lung disease to burn-pit exposure and a Vanderbilt University doctor linked bronchiolitis in 56 soldiers to “inhalational exposure.”

An initial study of the Balad burn pit has been classified, and a second military study found toxin levels at acceptable levels.

**In a last note to Military Times, Nienajadlo, who died waiting for a bone-marrow transplant, said she wanted to make sure other people know about the dangers of the burn pits.**

“People are dying out there, and this needs to be discussed,” she said.

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# THE NEW ISSUE OF TRAVELING SOLDIER IS OUT!

## 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>

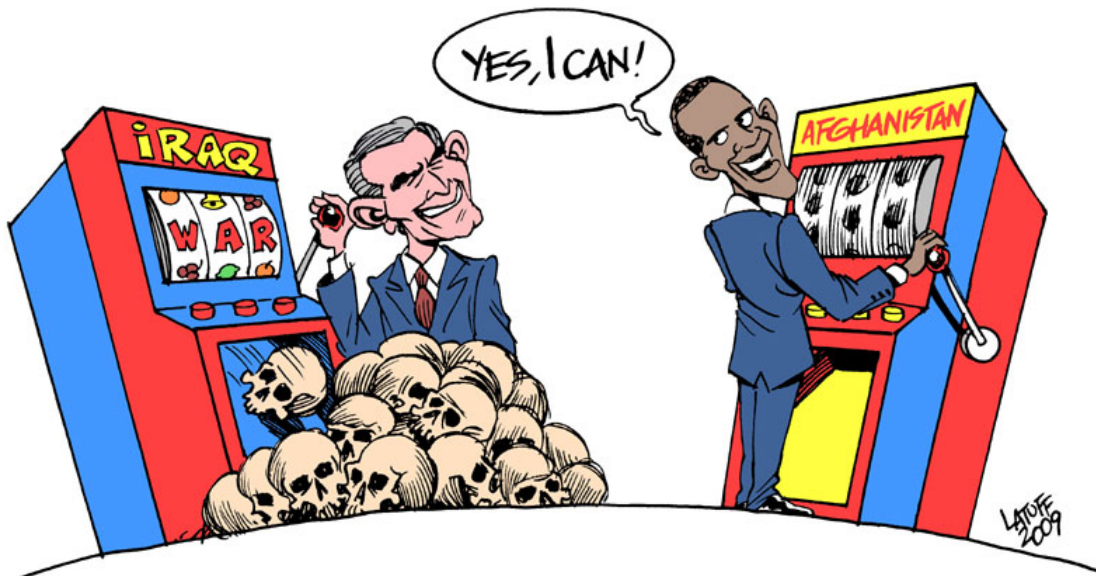


3. "I Lost Three Buddies In My Platoon In Iraq And For What?" says an Iraq vet.

<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>



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

## 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

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**July 22, 1877:  
American Workers Exploded With  
Rage — And The Rulers Of The  
Nation Feared The Fury Of The  
“Terror” From Within:  
“Pittsburgh Was ‘In The Hands Of Men  
Dominated By The Devilish Spirit Of  
Communism’”**

**THE GREAT STRIKE OF 1877**



**REMEMBERING A WORKER REBELLION**

Carl Bunin Peace History July 16-22

United Electrical Workers News - 06/02 [Excerpts]

**One hundred and twenty-five years ago, American workers exploded with rage — and the rulers of the nation feared the fury of the “terror” from within.**

**A headline in the Chicago Times in 1877 expressed the capitalists’ anxious outrage: “Terrors Reign, The Streets of Chicago Given Over to Howling Mobs of Thieves and Cutthroats.”**

After three years, the nation still suffered through a major economic depression.

**A strike by railroad workers sparked a coast-to-coast conflagration, as workers driven by despair and desperation battled troops in the streets of major U.S. cities.**

The foreign born were widely blamed for the unprecedented, collective expression of rage against economic hardship and injustice.

**The ruling elite, badly shaken by the widespread protests, thought a revolution was underway.**

**The New York Sun prescribed “a diet of lead for the hungry strikers.”**

When the fires turned to cold ash and working-class families buried their dead, no one — neither labor nor capital — would be the same again.

**If there ever was such a thing, this was no ordinary strike.**

**It was an explosion of “firsts.”**

**The Great Railroad Strike of 1877 was the first major strike in an industry that propelled America’s industrial revolution.**

**It was the first national strike, stretching from Atlantic to Pacific.**

**In some cities, especially St. Louis, the struggle became one of the nation’s first general strikes.**

**This was the first major strike broken by the U.S. military.**

**Probably in no other strike had so many working people met a violent death at the hands of the authorities.**

## **BORN OF DEPRESSION**

The Great Strike was a creature of one of the periodic economic downturns that have caused misery for working people throughout U.S. history.

A bank panic on Sept. 18, 1873 disintegrated into depression. “Weekly the layoffs, wage cuts, strikes, evictions, breadlines and hunger increased,” wrote Richard Boyer and Herbert Morais in Labor’s Untold Story. The winter of 1873-74, especially in large cities,

was one of great suffering for the tens of thousands of unemployed workers and their families who were starving or on the brink of starvation.

As the depression stretched into 1874, the unemployed demanded work and unions fought wage cuts. But the depression itself became a powerful weapon in smashing unions.

Millions suffered through months upon months of mounting misery. "By 1877 there were as many as three million unemployed (roughly 27 percent of the working population)," according to Boyer and Morais. "Two-fifths of those employed were working no more than six to seven months a year and less than one-fifth was regularly working.

"And the wages of those employed had been cut by as much as 45 percent, often to little more than a dollar a day." Newspapers reported cases of starvation and suicide.

## **FIXED ELECTION**

Political crisis seemed to mirror the economic mess.

Many Americans in 1877 believed their new president had reached the White House through fraud.

Certainly Rutherford B. Hayes, a Republican, was not the man for whom a majority of voters had cast their ballots the previous year. Democrat Samuel Tilden overcame the Ohio governor in the popular vote but 20 disputed electoral votes from Florida and other states threw the election into House of Representatives.

Thomas Scott of the Pennsylvania Railroad reached a deal with Hayes: in exchange for a federal bailout of his troubled investment in the Texas and Pacific Railroad, the millionaire industrialist would deliver Congressional votes to Hayes.

**As a further inducement, the Republicans promised to end Reconstruction, a blatant betrayal of African Americans. Southern Congressmen deserted Tilden, handing the election to Hayes.**

**President Hayes withdrew federal troops from the South, ending Reconstruction and its promise of political equality for former slaves. The troops would soon have other uses.**

## **PAY CUTS**

The Pennsylvania Railroad had already slashed wages by 10 percent when it cut wages by another 10 percent in June 1877. The following month that railroad company, the nation's largest, announced that the size of all eastbound trains from Pittsburgh would be doubled, without any increase in the size of crews.

Angry railroad workers took control of switches and blocked the movement of trains.

Meanwhile, on July 13, the Baltimore & Ohio cut the wages of all workers making more than a dollar a day, also by 10 percent. The company also reduced the workweek to only two or three days, a further pay cut.

On July 16 firemen and brakemen refused to work.

The company tried to bring on replacements — many experienced men were unemployed because of the depression — but the strikers assembled at Camden Junction, three miles from Baltimore, would not let trains run in any direction.

**The word quickly spread to Martinsburg, W. Va., where workers abandoned their trains and prevented others from operating them.**

**The railroad company appealed to the governor, who called out the militia.**

**Militiamen and workers exchanged gunfire. The scabs ran off, the militia withdrew — and the strikers were left in control of their idled trains.**

The strike swiftly followed the rails to Wheeling and Parkersburg.

As Harper's Weekly reported the following month, "Governor Matthews evoked the aid of the national government. President Hayes responded promptly."

Federal troops armed with Springfield rifles and Gatling guns arrived in Martinsburg on July 19. The show of force got the trains running, releasing the 13 locomotives and 1,500 freight cars bottled up in Martinsburg.

## **STRIKE SPREADS**

But the strike was far from over. "Indeed, it was barely begun," reported Harper's Weekly.

**"As fast as the strike was broken in one place it appeared in another," wrote Boyer and Morais. The revolt against the powerful railroad companies spread into western Pennsylvania, Kentucky and Ohio.**

Believing that strikers in Cumberland were stopping the eastbound trains from Martinsburg, Maryland's governor ordered out the state militia.

Thousands of the jobless and underpaid in Baltimore clearly saw whose interests the governor's proclamation served.

Within a half hour of the call, "a crowd numbering at least 2,000 men, women, and children surrounded the (Maryland Sixth Regiment) armory and loudly expressed their feelings against the military and in favor of the strikers," according to Harper's Weekly. The crowd added bricks and stones to the curses hurled against the armory. The police were powerless.

Once the troops emerged for their march to Camden Station, shots were fired — and shots were exchanged.

The militia killed at least 10 and wounded many others, among them curious onlookers. The Fifth Regiment was also attacked, although no shots were fired.

## **BATTLE IN PITTSBURGH**

Sympathy for the strikers was even stronger in Pittsburgh.

**Here, said Boyer and Morais, the strike against Tom Scott's Pennsylvania Railroad "had the support even of businessmen, angry at the company because of extortionate freight rates." The police and local militia sided with the strikers, so the authorities had to appeal for troops from Philadelphia.**

**When the militiamen arrived and marched out of the station, they were met with the cries of an angry crowd — and, according to Harper's, "a shower of stones."**

**They emptied their rifles into the crowd, killing 20 men, women and children and wounding 29.**

"The sight presented after the soldiers ceased firing was sickening," reported the New York Herald; the area "was actually dotted with the dead and dying."

A newspaper headline read: "Shot in Cold Blood by the Roughts of Philadelphia. The Lexington of the Labor Conflict at Hand. The Slaughter of Innocents."

As the news reached nearby rolling mills and manufacturing shops, workers came rushing to the scene.

**Workers broke into a gun factory and seized rifles and small arms. Wrote Boyer and Morais, "Miners and steel workers came pouring in from the outskirts of the city and as night fell the immense crowd proved so menacing to the soldiers that they retreated into the roundhouse."**

**By midnight, Harper's said, some 20,000 surrounded the roundhouse, 5,000 of them armed.**

**Workers and soldiers exchanged gunfire throughout the night. The workers nearly succeeded in burning out the troops by sending a blazing oil car hurtling against a nearby building.**

## **'A NIGHT OF TERROR'**

**A Civil War veteran among the besieged troops told a New York Herald reporter that he had seen some "wild fighting" in that conflict, but "a night of terror such as last night I never experienced before and hope to God I never will again."**

**The next morning the troops evacuated the roundhouse and fought their way out of town.**

**Pittsburgh policemen were among those reportedly taking aim at the strikebreakers.**

**The angry crowd then torched the railroad station, roundhouse, company offices and scores of railroad cars.**

**The New York World told its readers that Pittsburgh was “in the hands of men dominated by the devilish spirit of Communism.”**

Meanwhile, on July 21, President Hayes had issued a proclamation warning strikers and their sympathizers to disperse within 24 hours. The next day, Pennsylvania’s governor had ordered every regiment in the state to report for duty. Clashes between troops and strikers in Reading added to the death toll among workers.

## **CHICAGO AND ST. LOUIS**

**The strike continued to spread. Reported Harper’s, “On the morning of the 25th the strike had reached its height, when hardly a road was running, from the Hudson to the Mississippi, and from Canada to Virginia.”**

The strike reached Chicago, as workers on the Michigan Central followed the example of the men on the other lines. General Sheridan’s cavalry, newly recalled from the South, attacked a group of workers there, killing many and wounding many more.

**The workers of the Missouri-Pacific Railroad joined the strike in St. Louis, where the Workingmen’s Party coordinated a general strike.**

**The Workingmen’s Party had several thousand members.**

**At one of its huge meetings, writes Marieke van Ophem, “a black man was the voice for those who worked on the steamboats and levees. He asked: ‘Will you stand to us, regardless of color?’ The crowd shouted in response: ‘We will!’”**

**Not only did the trains cease running, but breweries, flour mills, foundries and other shops stopped operating as well.**

**As a result of this working-class solidarity, bosses agreed to pay raises and shorter working hours without a reduction in wages.**

**Then the military arrived — the U.S. Army and state militia, as well as armed vigilantes in the service of the bosses.**

**Although there had been no violence, St. Louis came under martial law. Strike leaders were thrown in jail. Bosses canceled the wage increases and the eight-hour day.**

**‘SHOT BACK TO WORK’**

Business leaders became better organized, rallying their political allies, who mobilized the might of the military. Tom Scott of the Pennsylvania Railroad had recommended giving strikers “a rifle diet for a few days and see how they like that kind of bread;” in the end, the government’s ability to inflict violence on strikers and supporters got the trains rolling again.

As one worker put it, “We were shot back to work.” By early August the strike had collapsed everywhere.

**It had been an unforgettable event, and many railroad workers seemed to have been justifiably proud.**

**“Without any organization they had fought with bravery and skill and the country had been behind them,” wrote Boyer and Morais. “The strike had been as solid as it was spontaneous. There had been few desertions and few scabs.”**

**Some 100,000 workers had gone on strike, and countless unemployed workers in numerous cities had joined the strikers in protests against intolerable conditions. Farmers, who hated the railroad companies and their extortionate practices, fed the strikers.**

More than half the freight on the nation’s 75,000 miles of track stopped moving.

More than 100 had died and 1,000 had been jailed, although those imprisoned were not the ones directly responsible for the deaths.

The results of the Great Strike were mixed.

## **GUNS AND PROMISES**

Even as they agreed to some worker demands, bosses were determined to never again allow workers the upper hand.

“The railroads made some concessions, rescinded some wage cuts, but also strengthened their ‘Coal and Iron Police,’” writes van Ophem. “In several large cities, National Guard armories were constructed, with loopholes for guns.”

Working people learned that without strong unions and nationwide organization they could not defeat the alliance of capital and government.

America’s Industrial Revolution was underway, and with it, born in the blood of men and women who yearned for a better life, a modern labor movement.

### **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**



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## **DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK**

# **John McCain Finally Wins One: His “International Republican Institute” Sponsors And Bankrolls A Military Dictatorship In Honduras**

July 6, 2009 By Eva Golinger, Tlaxcala.es [Excerpts]

**The International Republican Institute (IRI), considered the international branch of the U.S. Republican Party, and one of the four “core groups” of the congressionally created and funded National Endowment for Democracy (NED), apparently knew of the coup d’etat in Honduras against President Zelaya well in advance.**

IRI is well known for its role in the April 2002 coup d’etat against Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and its funding and strategic advising of the principal organizations involved in the ouster of President Jean Bertrand Aristide of Haiti in 2004.

In both cases, IRI funded and/or trained and advised political parties and groups that were implicated in the violent, undemocratic overthrow of democratically elected presidents.

**IRI, chaired by Senator John McCain, was created in 1983 as part of the National Endowment for Democracy’s mission to “promote democracy around the world”, a mandate from President Ronald Reagan.**

**In reality, one of NED’s founders, Allen Weinstein, put it this way in a 1991 interview with the Washington Post, “A lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA.”**

IRI’s own history, according to its website ([www.iri.org](http://www.iri.org)) also explains that its original work was in Latin America, at a time when the Reagan administration was under heavy scrutiny and pressure from the U.S. Congress for funding paramilitary groups, dictatorships and death squads in Central and South America to install U.S.-friendly regimes and suppress leftist movements.

“Congress responded to President Reagan’s call in 1983 when it created the National Endowment for Democracy to support aspiring democrats worldwide. Four nonprofit,

nonpartisan democracy institutes were formed to carry out this work – IRI, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), and the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS).”

“In its infancy, IRI focused on planting the seeds of democracy in Latin America.”

In its initial days, IRI, along with the other coup groups of the NED, funded organizations in Nicaragua to foment the destabilization of the Sandinista government. Journalist Jeremy Bigwood explained part of this role in his article, “No Strings Attached?”, “‘When the rhetoric of democracy is put aside, NED is a specialized tool for penetrating civil society in other countries down to the grassroots level’ to achieve U.S. foreign policy goals, writes University of California-Santa Barbara professor William Robinson in his book, A Faustian Bargain.

Robinson was in Nicaragua during the late ‘80s and watched NED work with the U.S.-backed Nicaraguan opposition to remove the leftist Sandinistas from power during the 1990 elections.”

The evidence of IRI’s role in the 2002 coup d’etat in Venezuela has been well documented and investigated.

None of the claims or evidence regarding IRI’s role in fomenting and supporting the April 2002 in Venezuela and its ongoing support of the Venezuelan opposition has ever been disclaimed by the institution, primarily because all evidence cited comes from IRI and NED’s own internal documentation obtained under FOIA.

**Hence, when the recent coup d’etat occurred in Honduras, against democratically-elected President Manuel Zelaya, there was little doubt of U.S. fingerprints.**

**IRI’s name appeared as a recipient of a \$700,000 Latin American Regional Grant in 2008-2009 from NED to promote “good governance” programs in countries including Honduras.**

**An additional grant of \$550,000 to work with “think tanks” and “pressure groups” in Honduras to influence political parties was also given by the NED to IRI in 2008-2009, specifically stating, IRI will support initiatives to implement (political) positions into the 2009 campaigns. IRI will place special emphasis on Honduras, which has scheduled presidential and parliamentary elections in November 2009.”**

**That is clear direct intervention in internal politics in Honduras.**

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) also provides approximately \$49 million annually to Honduras, a large part of which is directed towards “democracy promotion” programs.

**The majority of the recipients of this aid in Honduras, which comes in the form of funding, training, resources, strategic advice, communications counseling, political party strengthening and leadership training, are organizations directly linked to the recent coup d’etat, such as the Consejo Nacional Anticorrupción, the Archbishop of Tegucigalpa, the Honduran Private Enterprise Council (COHEP), the Council of University Deans, the Confederation of Honduran Workers (CTH),**

**the National Convergence Forum, the Chamber of Commerce (FEDECAMARA), the Association of Private Media (AMC), the Group Paz y Democracia and the student group Generación X Cambio. These organizations form part of a coalition self-titled “Unión Cívica Democrática de Honduras” (Civil Democratic Union of Honduras) that has publicly backed the coup against President Zelaya.**

IRI’s press secretary, Lisa Gates, responded to claims that IRI funded or aided (which also involves non-monetary aid, such as training, advising and providing resources) groups involved in the Honduran coup as “false reports”.

**However, there are several interesting links between the republican organization and the violent coup d’etat against President Zelaya that do indicate the institute’s involvement, as well as to the above mentioned funding that exceeds \$1 million during just this year.**

In addition to its presence on the ground in Honduras as part of its “good governance” and “political influence” programs, IRI Regional Program Director, Latin America and the Caribbean, Alex Sutton, has recently been closely involved with many of the organizations in the region that have backed the Honduran coup.

**But a more damning piece of evidence linking IRI to the Honduran coup, is a video clip posted on the institute’s website at <http://www.iri.org/multimedia.asp>.**

**The clip or podcast, features a slideshow presentation given by Susan Zelaya-Fenner, assistant program officer at IRI, on March 20, 2009, discussing the “good governance” program in Honduras.**

Curiously, at the beginning of the presentation, Zelaya-Fenner explains what she considers “a couple of interesting facts about Honduras.”

These include, “Honduras is a very overlooked country in a small region. Honduras has had more military coups than years of independence, it has been said. However, paradoxically, more recently it has been called a pillar of stability in the region, even being called the U.S.S. Honduras, as it avoided all of the crisis that its neighbors went through during the civil wars in the 1980s.”

Important to note is that what Zelaya-Fenner refers to as “U.S.S. Honduras” and “avoid(ing) all of the crisis that its neighbors went through during the civil wars in the 1980s” was because the U.S. government, CIA and Pentagon utilized Honduras as the launching pad for the attacks on Honduras’ neighbors.

U.S. Ambassador at the time, John Negroponte, and Colonel Oliver North, trained, funded and planned the paramilitary missions of the death squads that were used to assassinate, torture, persecute, disappear and neutralize tens of thousands of farmers and “suspected” leftists in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

Zelaya-Fenner continues, “Thus, Honduras has been more recently stable, and it’s always been poor, which means that it’s below the radar, and gets little attention.

“The current president, Manuel Zelaya and his buddies, the leftists in the Latin American region have caused a lot of political destabilization recently in the country. He is a

would-be emulator of Hugo Chavez and Hugo Chavez' social revolution. He has spent the better part of this administration trying to convince the Honduran people, who tend to be very practical and very 'center' that the Venezuelan route is the way to go. Zelaya's leftist leanings further exacerbate an already troubled state. Corruption is rampant, crime is at all time highs. Drug trafficking and related violence have begun to spill over from Mexico. And there's a very real sense that the country is being purposefully destabilized from within, which is very new in recent Honduran history.

**“Coups are thought to be so three decades ago until now (laughs, audience laughs), again.”**

**Did she really say that?**

**Yes, you can hear it yourself on the podcast.**

**Is it merely a coincidence that the coup against President Zelaya occurred just three months after this presentation?**

State Department officials have admitted that they knew the coup was in the works for the past few months.

**Sub-secretary of State Thomas Shannon was in Honduras the week before the coup, apparently trying to broker some kind of deal with the coup planners to find another “solution” to the “problem”. Nevertheless, they continued funding via NED and USAID to those very same groups and military sectors involved in the coup.**

It is not a hidden fact that Washington was unhappy with President Zelaya's alliances in the region, principally with countries such as Venezuela and Nicaragua.

**It is also public knowledge that President Zelaya was in the process of removing the U.S. military presence from the Soto Cano airbase, using a fund from the Bolivarian Alliance of the Americas (ALBA – Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Dominica, Honduras, Nicaragua, St. Kitts, Antigua & Barbados and Venezuela) to convert the strategically important Pentagon base into a commercial airport.**

IRI's Zelaya-Fenner explains the strategic importance of Honduras in her presentation, “Why does Honduras matter? A lot of people ask this question, even Honduran historians and experts. Some might argue that it doesn't and globally it might be hard to counter.

“However, the country is strategic to regional stability and this is an election year in Honduras. It's a strategic time to help democrats with a small 'd', at a time when democracy is increasingly coming under attack in the region.”

There is no doubt that the coup against President Zelaya is an effort to undermine regional governments implementing alternative models to capitalism that challenge U.S. concepts of representative democracy as “the best model”.

## **DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE MILITARY?**

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

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