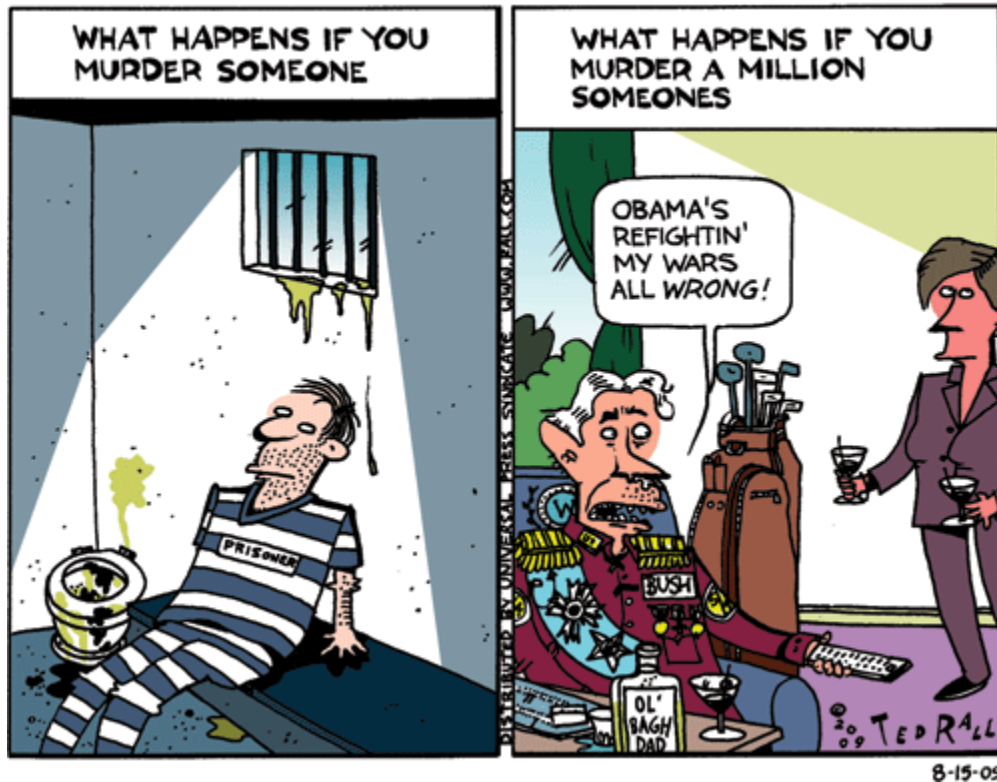


## GI SPECIAL 7H15:



## Fort Hood:

**“Active-Duty Troops In Black T-Shirts Held Up Signs Reaching Out To Other GIs Who Also Might Be Questioning The War”**

**“An Underground Antiwar Newspaper, Written By Local Vets**

# And Active-Duty Soldiers, Was Circulated Through The Crowd”

August 10, 2009 By Holly Lewis, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

THE MORNING sun beat down on the entrance to Fort Hood, the Army base in Killeen, Texas, where Spc. Victor Agosto faced a summary court-martial for refusing orders to deploy to Afghanistan. Carloads of antiwar activists passed through the checkpoint despite warnings from base officials that only a handful would be permitted inside the courtroom.

While the checkpoint clearly marks the line between the civilian world of Killeen and the militarized zone of Fort Hood, there is no abrupt shift in consciousness after crossing the barricade. In fact, the base seems like any generic working-class suburb in Central Texas; what most distinguishes it from the civilian world is its almost total prohibition against intensity. Everything--from the buildings to the combat gear to the dying grass--is the color of concrete, sand and mud.

Spc. Agosto's court-martial was scheduled to take place at 9 a.m. on August 5 inside the offices of the 41st Fires Brigade. Antiwar activists and reporters stood around the parking lot smoking cigarettes and chatting on cell phones, fanning themselves in the baking sun. As Victor suddenly arrived in an unmarked white van, his supporters raised their fists in solidarity. They offered hugs as he walked toward the courtroom. The sergeant accompanying him frowned at the activists, saying, "Well? Don't I get a hug too?"

The summary court-martial itself was already a win for both Victor and the antiwar movement. When he decided to become a public resister against the war in Afghanistan, Victor was fully prepared for a long sentence.

But as Victor and his civilian lawyer, James Branum, prepared to publicly put the war itself on trial, Fort Hood decided to cut a deal. Victor was offered a lesser, summary court-martial with the maximum penalty of 30 days in jail, two-thirds reduction of pay, reduction of rank and an "other than honorable" discharge.

"Thirty days in jail?" Victor Agosto seemed incredulous. "Basic training is longer than that."

\*\*\*\*\*

**MEANWHILE, a protest rally was being organized at the East Gate entrance to Fort Hood. A crowd of about 50 people chanted: "They're our brothers, they're our sisters, we support war resisters."**

**Children in bright colors waved banners and active-duty troops in black T-shirts held up signs reaching out to other GIs who also might be questioning the war.**

**An underground antiwar newspaper, written by local vets and active-duty soldiers, was circulated through the crowd.**

**Passersby joined the protest, and drivers waved and honked their horns in support.**

At the end of the rally, James Branum read a prepared statement by Victor:

“I have learned that nothing is more frightening to power than a direct and principled challenge to its authority. The truth is on our side and those who have incarcerated me know it. This is something that no amount of pro-war propaganda can change.

“My only regret is that I did not begin refusing orders sooner. My only apologies are to the people of Iraq and Afghanistan. I hope that someday they can forgive me for my contributions to their distress...

“I am humbled by your demands for even greater concessions by the United States Army. I am completely content to spend a month in jail for the sake of my conscience. But it seems that reducing my sentence from a year in jail to 30 days in jail is just not enough for you people. This dedication to justice is something that draws me to people in the peace movement...You have treated me with a compassion and kindness that I do not deserve. Your dedication to the cause inspires me to continue struggling for world peace.”

# **An Appeal For Help: You Can Help Active Duty Troops And Iraq/Afghanistan Veterans Meet To Organize Armed Forces Resistance To Wars Of Empire**

**Why will active duty troops and Iraq/Afghanistan veterans meet with civilian activists in Savannah, Georgia, Labor Day weekend?**

**No doubt Barack Obama’s inauguration in January was a great moment for all people concerned about ending racism and promoting the equality that Thomas Jefferson wrote about in the Declaration of Independence.**

**But in the context of the grand struggle to achieve equality for all humans in all areas of life, the President’s inauguration was a mere baby step.**

**A baby step whose ensuing honeymoon period has ended.**

**As President Obama continues to prolong a withdrawal from Iraq and actually escalate the occupation of Afghanistan, the need to continue reaching out to and organizing with veterans protesting the occupations has never been greater.**

**For this reason, The Military Project is working to facilitate a meeting of anti-occupation troops in September.**

**This meeting is to take place near Fort Stewart in Georgia.**

**We are aiming to not only to make gains in the Southeast region of the United States, but to boost the profile of outreach to soldiers on a national level.**

**To achieve this, representatives from Iraq Veterans Against the War from around the country are being invited to lead the discussion and planning to be conducted in Georgia in September.**

**The Military Project will be present to share opinions and facilitate, but truly The Military Project is interested only in empowering the anti-war veterans movement.**

**We are asking for a donation to The Military Project that will be used for the sole purpose of transporting veterans to Georgia in September.**

**Your money will not be used for any sort of overhead cost.**

**The Military Project is taking care of that.**

**But we do need help bringing the veterans' representatives from around the country to this meeting.**

**No one's voices and no one's actions are more important than those of veterans in the struggle to bring home our armed forces from two occupations they should never have been asked to take part in.**

**President Obama made a lot of popular statements about ending the current "wars" in his historic campaign, but he has made it clear that we cannot count on him to turn those messages into action.**

**If we want the occupations to end immediately, we are going to have to work for it ourselves.**

**Please help The Military Project carry out its primary and sole mission of supporting the anti-war soldier.**

**We cannot possibly transport all of these veterans needed at the Conference in Georgia by ourselves.**

**Our goal is to take any donation that you make for this cause, and turn it into action that will be more significant than just a baby step in the fight for equality.**

**Very respectfully,**

Fabian Bouthillette, Lieutenant, USNR  
Member, Iraq Veterans Against the War  
Member, Military Project Organizing Committee

Jeff Englehart, Former Spc., U.S. Army, Iraq Service  
Member, Military Project Organizing Committee  
Member, Iraq Veterans Against the War

Camilo Mejia, Former Staff Sergeant, Florida National Guard  
Member, Military Project Organizing Committee  
Member, Iraq Veterans Against the War

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## YOU CAN SEND YOUR SUPPORT BY MAIL OR CREDIT CARD:

BY MAIL:  
IF YOU SEND A CHECK OR MONEY ORDER,  
**Make Payable To: The Military Project**

Mail to:

The Military Project  
Box 126  
2576 Broadway  
New York, N.Y.  
10025-5657

## CREDIT CARD OR PAYPAL PAYMENT THROUGH OUR PAYPAL ACCOUNT:

CLICK ON THIS PAYPAL LINK OR COPY IT INTO YOUR  
BROWSER ADDRESS FIELD:

[https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=\\_s-xclick&hosted\\_button\\_id=5069540](https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_s-xclick&hosted_button_id=5069540)

<p><b>POLITICIANS CAN'T BE COUNTED ON TO HALT THE BLOODSHED</b></p>
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## **THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE WARS**

### **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

## **AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS**

### **Three British Soldier Killed Near Sangin**

16 Aug 09 Ministry of Defence

It is with great sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm that three British soldiers from The 2nd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers have died following an explosion while on patrol near Sangin in Helmand province this morning.

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### **IED Kills Two U.S. Troops Somewhere Or Other In Afghanistan, Three More Wounded**

18 Aug. 2009 ISAF Public Affairs Office

KABUL, Afghanistan –Two International Security Assistance Force service members died and three others were injured after their convoy struck an improvised explosive device in eastern Afghanistan today.

U.S. Spokesperson Capt. Elizabeth Mathias confirmed that the two killed were U.S. service members.

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# Foreign Occupation Soldier Killed, Two Wounded In Attack On Military Convoy In Afghan Capitol: “Shouting Matches Between British Troops And Afghan Security Personnel At The Blast Site”



A French soldier (R) keeps guard from atop a military vehicle at the site of a bomb blast in Kabul on August 18, 2009. A car bomber who rammed his car into a convoy of Western troops in the Afghan capital on Tuesday, on the road heading east out of the capital toward the city of Jalalabad. REUTERS/Adrees Latif

August 18, 2009 By CARLOTTA GALL, New York Times & AFP & Hamid Shalizi, Reuters & By FISNIK ABRASHI, Associated Press Writer [Excerpts]

At least seven people were killed in a car bombing in Kabul, including a NATO soldier and two Afghans working for the United Nations mission, officials said.

More than 50 people were wounded, they said.

**Zabiullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesman, claimed responsibility for the blast in a telephone conversation with The Associated Press. He said the attack was “part of our routine operations” and not directly linked to the election.**

One witness said he saw a white car race after a British military logistics convoy and explode as it slammed into it.

“Suddenly we heard a very loud bomb, and a big cloud of dust rose from where the attack happened,” said Ghulam Muhammad, 22, who saw the car from his vegetable store. “The explosion was huge, and I could see many people lying on the road.”

Eighteen cars were set on fire by the explosion and shops and stalls were damaged, he said.

British troops guarded the blast site as rescuers rushed the wounded to hospitals. An AP reporter saw British soldiers collecting what appeared to be body parts from the roof of an Afghan home.

**He also reported shouting matches between British troops and Afghan security personnel at the blast site.**

The attack occurred just off the main road leading east out of the capital to Jalalabad, home to many Western aid and military compounds, as a convoy traveled along the highway near a British military base on the eastern outskirts of Kabul.

A statement from the international security forces said one foreign soldier was killed and two others were wounded in the attack.

The United Nations confirmed that two of its Afghan staff members were among those killed. A third was wounded and is currently being treated for his injuries

Thick black smoke poured from the scene of Tuesday's bombing and police held back onlookers as the wounded were ferried away in ambulances and pickup trucks.

"I saw wounded people and dead people everywhere," said a shopkeeper named Sawad. "I helped some people to ambulances, their clothes were covered in blood stains."

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## **U.S. Soldier Killed By IED Somewhere Or Other In Afghanistan**

Aug 17 (Reuters)

SOUTHERN AFGHANISTAN - A roadside bomb killed a U.S. soldier working with the in southern Afghanistan, ISAF said.

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## **U.S. "Civilian" In A Military Patrol Killed Somewhere Or Other In Afghanistan**

08/17/09 Reuters

A U.S. civilian working with the foreign military was killed when insurgents attacked a patrol in the east of the country on Sunday, the alliance said.

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# **“The Americans Stationed Here Have Been In Combat With Taliban Insurgents Nearly Every Day”**

August 16, 2009 By DEXTER FILKINS, The New York Times Company [Excerpts]

In Tarakai, a village of about 50 families, some local men gathered outside their homes when a group of American Marines approached on foot. Some 10,000 Marines, sent here by President Obama, have fanned out across Helmand Province over the past six weeks and are pressing an offensive against Taliban insurgents.

The Americans stationed here, part of the Second Battalion, Eighth Marines, have been in combat with Taliban insurgents nearly every day since arriving in the area on July 2.

Afghan officials considered setting up polling places across Helmand Province, but concluded that many areas were not safe enough. In the district, which straddles the Helmand River, there will be seven voting precincts in the capital, but none elsewhere. “It’s too insecure in those places,” said Lt. Col. Christian Cabaniss, the Second Battalion’s commander.

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## **Three Occupation Election Staff Members Killed In “Relatively Peaceful” Badakhshan Province**

Aug. 18 (Xinhua) & Hamid Shalizi, Reuters

Two employees of Afghan Independent Election Commission (IEC) along with the driver were killed on Tuesday as their car hit a roadside bomb in relatively peaceful Badakhshan province of northern Afghanistan, an official said.

“An IEC car was heading from capital city of Faiz Abad to Urgo district carrying some electoral material hit a roadside bomb, as a result, two employees of the IEC and their driver were killed,” Abdul Jabar Mosadiq district chief of Urgo told Xinhua. Taliban militants have set on fire a school which was supposed to be a temporary polling station in eastern Paktia province.

A school intended for use as a polling station was bombed in Ghazni province causing casualties, and two schools that would be used as polling stations were hit by rocket-propelled grenades in Logar province south of the capital.

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# Rocket Attacks On Kabul Hit President's Palace Grounds And Capital's Police Headquarters

August 18, 2009 By CARLOTTA GALL, New York Times & Hamid Shalizi, Reuters  
[Excerpts]

Of the rockets that hit Kabul about 7 a.m. Tuesday, one caused some damage inside the sprawling, fortified presidential palace compound, where President Karzai had started work half an hour before, his spokesman said.

A second hit the capital's police headquarters.

No one was wounded by the rockets, officials said, but the audacity of the attacks demonstrated the power of the Taliban to disrupt and intimidate. **[Fuck the "audacity" - - worry about the precision targeting. T]**

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## WELCOME TO OBAMALAND; UNREMITTING HELL ON EARTH; ALL HOME NOW



A soldier from the U.S. Army 26th Infantry returns fire on a Taliban position as their base Camp Restrepo comes under attack in the Korengal Valley of Afghanistan's Kunar Province May 8, 2009. (AP Photo/David Guttenfelder)



A soldier from U.S. Army 26th Infantry, takes cover as Taliban fighters open fire on his squad's position in the Korengal Valley of Afghanistan's Kunar Province May 13, 2009. (AP Photo/David Guttenfelder)



U.S. Marine from the 3rd Marines is helped by a fellow Marine after injuring his ankle in a fall when Taliban fighters opened fire on him and his squad inside a mud walled compound during a gun battle near Now Zad in Afghanistan's Helmand province June 20, 2009. (AP Photo/David Guttenfelder)



June 20, 2009: U.S. Marines from the 3rd Marines step through a hole they blew in a mud wall during a battle against Taliban fighters near Now Zad in Afghanistan's Helmand province. (AP Photo/David Guttenfelder)



U.S. soldiers of 10th Mountain Division detonate discovered IED placed on the road near Combat Operation Outpost (COP) Conlon in mountains of Wardak Province, Afghanistan, July 2, 2009. REUTERS/Shamil Zhumatov



US Marines of 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade search for missing marines after an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blast in Garmsir district of Helmand Province on July 13, 2009. (AFP/File/Manpreet Romana)



A U.S. soldier of 4th Brigade runs across an open area while receiving small arms fire at Michigan Base in the Pesh Valley in Afghanistan's Kunar Province August 2, 2009. REUTERS/Tim Wimborne



U.S. Army soldiers from Gator Company, 2-12 Infantry, 4th Brigade take cover from small arms fire following an attack on a transport convoy in the Pesh Valley in Afghanistan's Kunar Province August 4, 2009. REUTERS/Tim Wimborne

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## **An Anonymous British Captain Writes From Afghanistan: “There Is No Refuge, No Place To Go To Deal With Your Grief” “It’s Not Worth It”**

[Thanks to Max Watts, Australia, who sent this in.]

**Due to the pitiful numbers of support helicopters and Apaches needed to escort them, every day troops on the ground are forced to expend an enormous amount of hours and manpower just standing still.**

**They sacrifice their reserves of energy, motivation and willpower securing and picketing routes for the never-ending vehicle convoys that have to keep happening in order to resupply the patchy spread of patrol bases with water, ammo and rations; as well as recovering the vehicles that invariably go into**

**ditches and securing helicopter landing-sites for the evacuation of casualties from improvised explosive device strikes.**

10 August 2009 Independent, By Anonymous [UK]

**The author's name has been withheld**

**In the first ever unauthorised dispatch from an officer on the frontline, one young Captain offers a brutally honest account of life in Afghanistan, revealing the pain of losing comrades, the frustration at the lack of equipment, and the sense that the conflict seems unending and, at times, unwinnable**

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My motivation is simple.

Writing this helps vent off some of the frustration at what is happening out here in Afghanistan to those serving in the British Army, where death and serious injury are sickeningly common occurrences.

Before coming here, I had done two tours in Iraq which saw fierce fighting against the enemy.

But, sometimes out here I feel I might as well be on my first tour, as a novice second lieutenant instead of a so-called senior captain with over eight years experience in the Army, due to a shocking rate of attrition that I have never encountered before.

**Commentators keep citing previous figures for casualty rates in the Falkland's conflict, as well as the years in Northern Ireland, suggesting that, spread over the time we have been in Afghanistan, the figures here are not that bad.**

**How reassuring.**

**For a moment I thought the rates might be quite bad; but thank goodness I have been shown that what we are experiencing is in fact a tolerable "medium" number of casualties.**

Can we really only analyse the death and injury rate, or view it as a cause for concern, once we get past a certain benchmark or once the average number outstrips a previous average?

I had hoped that human progression was a bit more advanced than that, and that there might be more to the situation than a comparison of statistics.

**Then there are the injuries.**

**I am talking about limbs removed, double or even triple amputations, on a scale that we've never seen before.**

**When you read about a “very seriously injured” casualty, that person's life is never going to be the same, nor is it for the rest of their family, who will be sucked in and forever affected by the aftermath.**

So what effect does this have on us all out in Afghanistan?

My experience of this is from the 1st Battalion Welsh Guard's Battle Group, who have endured a significant number of fatalities and seriously injured personnel, including the death of their commanding officer.

With each death I think each of us experiences a feeling of total shock, powerlessness and impotence.

Within your mind you feel you have to do something, especially if you knew the individual. Back at home that might be to jump in the car and drive to some secluded spot where you can get out and scream at the top of your lungs to let out all the anguish. But here nothing of the sort is possible.

You are all enclosed within your camp or patrol base; there is no refuge, no private corner to go to, to deal with your grief.

Around you everything else has to continue, and cannot stop.

The radios still have to be manned and answered, the patrols still have to be planned, the convoys have to be organised. It is not as if you can take a day off to deal with the grief, to come to terms with it. And even if you could, what good would that do?

Who wants to go and sit in their tent, sweating in temperatures in the high 40s, brooding on the possibilities: what were they thinking in those last few moments, did they know what had happened, did they know they were dying, how terrified and alone did they feel?

The only option available is to embrace the alternative: keep joking with your friends, maintain the banter levels, swapping smutty jokes and stories – literally forcing yourself to keep smiling.

I do not say that as a praiseworthy example of that renowned, age-old, plucky, English stiff upper lip. Far from it – it may be our worst enemy.

After death, life obviously has to go on, but I have always felt that life should go on having learnt a lesson from that death, improving your life as a testament to that life robbed – not merely moving on with a smile, whilst showing “fortitude”.

I am just speaking for those of us who deal with the deaths and injuries in Afghanistan indirectly, as an explosion in the distance, followed by a report on the radio, then a helicopter coming in to pick up the casualty.

As for those who deal directly with the deaths and injuries, who have to go into the Viking vehicles after the explosion to pull out the casualties, who have to tourniquet the remaining stumps after both the legs of a person have been blown off, those who have



to pick up the leftover pulpy fragments of a disintegrated body and put them into a bag, I am not sure how they react.

I would imagine in a similar way to the rest of us: you put it aside as soon as you can, as there is nothing to be achieved in thinking about it. All you will do is think yourself into a corner, where you are faced with the absurdity and horrid waste of it all.

And if you let that take a hold, how are you meant to perform, drag yourself out of your tent at 4am after just three hours sleep, to go on another foot patrol, another 18-hour convoy, another 12-hour shift in the operations room?

It does not work. There is so much that still needs to be done, there are still weeks to get through, more patrols and convoys that need to be completed. So the event of each death is placed away, zipped up in a mental body bag, back in the recesses of your mind.

However, unlike a real body bag, which fortunately disappears, that mental body bag remains in the morgue of your sub-conscious, quite possibly to come out and be re-opened, once you return home and have the chance to think about each death, each injury, each friend gone.

**Then there are the equipment shortages.**

**Due to the pitiful numbers of support helicopters and Apaches needed to escort them, every day troops on the ground are forced to expend an enormous amount of hours and manpower just standing still.**

**They sacrifice their reserves of energy, motivation and willpower securing and picketing routes for the never-ending vehicle convoys that have to keep happening in order to resupply the patchy spread of patrol bases with water, ammo and rations; as well as recovering the vehicles that invariably go into ditches and securing helicopter landing-sites for the evacuation of casualties from improvised explosive device strikes.**

I think if Sisyphus (the Greek mythological character cursed to roll a huge boulder repeatedly up a hill, only to watch it roll back down again, throughout eternity) could see us now, he would offer his sincere condolences and offer a friendly arm around the shoulder, saying that he knew what it felt like.

If someone provided one of those garishly coloured (army) pie charts depicting the percentage of time and effort sucked up into the black hole of orchestrating these road moves, it would provide a statistic that would be both shocking and embarrassing.

**It might also partly explain why the military is struggling to gain an advantage over the Taliban and cannot hold a significant amount of ground.**

**Its energy, time and focus is bound up with those road moves, and our most vital asset, our troops, are either sweating on the sides of the roads, securing them, or sweating inside the vehicles of those often doomed convoys.**

I am not criticising the military on the ground, who have to deal with this dilemma.

**Everyone seems to already agree on this issue of the equipment, in particular the lack of support helicopters – which rather begs the question of how on earth is nothing done about it?**

**And how does the fact that nothing gets done about it seem to be the status quo and keeps occurring year after year, budgetary policy after budgetary policy, operational tour after operational tour?**

If a magic genie were to appear in front of my eyes, who in keeping with the spirit of the present credit crunch cutbacks, could afford to grant me just one wish, I think I would simply choose a massive increase in helicopters and pilots – a wish that would have such a crucial influence on what is happening to the British Army out here.

**We are dealing here with a tenacious and stubborn enemy. Despite our dropping bombs on compounds that the enemy is using as firing-points, the very next day, new enemy fighters are back.**

On the one hand, perhaps the enemy command is so feared, authoritative and manipulative that they force unwilling fighters into those compounds as pure cannon fodder. On the other, perhaps, the fighters willingly go back, despite their comrades having been killed there, so strong is their faith in an afterlife, or so strong is their belief in the jihad they are fighting.

**Whatever the reason, they come back undaunted to the same firing-points, despite our overwhelming fire power.**

**Their numbers seem to stay constant, as opposed to decreasing – all of which gives a strong indication that we will not be able to reduce their numbers to a level where they are tactically defeated.**

It seems increasingly true that a stable Afghanistan will only be possible with some sort of agreement, involvement or power-sharing deal with the Taliban. However, as the British Army units here are increasingly sucked into the turmoil of the latest “fighting season” there seems little evidence that anything is happening on the political and diplomatic stage.

In the meantime, tour follows tour, during which the most intense fighting appears to achieve not much more than extremely effectively inflicting casualties on both sides, whilst Afghanistan remains the sick man of Central Asia.

I think of a scene near the end of Pat Barker's novel *The Ghost Road*, set at the end of the First World War, in which a seriously injured soldier lies in hospital, gradually dying.

The soldier regains consciousness but due to his injuries can only slur a sentence together, which he keeps repeating. His family agonisingly try to decipher what he might be saying, which sounds like “shotvarfet, shotvarfet”.

His doctor realises what he is trying to say and translates: “He's saying, 'It's not worth it.'”

The man's father, a retired Army major, in grief blurts out: “Oh, it is worth it, it is.”

This incredibly powerful passage goes some way to articulating our response to this conflict.

We seem to know and say that it is not worth it, whilst instinctively reacting and saying that it is worth it – it has to be worth it.

If I am honest, I do not know what I think about it all conclusively; my reasoning is lost in the storm of media, opinions, analysis that are at play here.

However, I know that no matter how hard I try to see through the clutter of opinions and utter something of my own in order to explain or justify what I'm involved in, I just cannot shake off that nagging, repetitive voice in my head that says “shotvarfet, shotvarfet”.

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The Welsh Guards' casualties

Guardsmen Christopher King a 20-year-old from Merseyside was killed in an explosion while on patrol in Helmand on 20 July.

Private John Brackpool was killed by a gunshot wound on 9 July while attached to the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards. The 27-year-old from Sussex was shot near Lashkar Gah.

Lance Corporal Dane Elson was 22 when he was killed by an improvised explosive device during an attack on a compound in Babaji, near Gereshk on 5 July.

Lieutenant Colonel Rupert Thorneloe was a 39 year old from Oxfordshire. He was killed by an IED in Lashkar Gah on 1 July.

Major Sean Birchall a 33-year-old, was killed in an explosion on 19 June while on patrol in Basharan near Lashkar Gah.

Lieutenant Mark Evison, 26-year-old from London, died in hospital in Birmingham on 12 May after being shot in Helmand.

Lance Sergeant Tobie Fasfous was killed by an explosion while on patrol in Helmand on 28 April.

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## **TROOP NEWS**

# **The “Coffin On Wheels”**

**British Army Vehicle Is  
“Fundamentally Flawed”  
“It Is Manslaughter To Send Troops  
Out In A Vehicle Which You Know  
Cannot Meet The Threat”  
“Such Is The Problem From Mines That  
Convoys Travel At Four Miles An Hour,  
With A Minesweeper On Foot Walking In  
Front”**

[Thanks to Felicity Arbuthnot, who sent this in. She writes: “If it was so serious it would be farcical. Man with flag and minesweeper walks in front .... back to 1901. Wonder how they get these 'volunteers'?”]

9 August 2009 By Andrew Johnson, The Independent [Excerpts]

Military experts yesterday called into question the safety of the latest armoured vehicles to be supplied to British troops in Afghanistan after three soldiers were killed by an explosion while travelling in a Jackal vehicle.

That the men were killed while riding in a Jackal is “particularly worrying”, according to the defence expert Dr Richard North, author of Ministry of Defeat, about Britain's role in Iraq.

The Jackal was supposed to offer greater protection to British troops than the much-criticised Snatch Land Rover, in which at least 37 personnel have died in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Yet 13 soldiers have now died in Afghanistan in a Jackal, which is based on a Land Rover design, since September.

**It is “fundamentally flawed”, according to Dr North. The driver sits over the front wheel, the most vulnerable part of the vehicle which is also the most likely to trigger, and so take the full force of, a mine.**

**The bottom of the Jackal is flat, meaning the blast is not dissipated. Reinforcing the bottom with more armour – as with the Jackal II – means that the vehicle will flip over with the force of a blast and crush its passengers.**

One soldier writing in a blog last week said: "I was out there using them last year they are very dangerous and very difficult to work on! You would think that in the 21st century we could develop a MRAP (mine-resistant ambush-protected) vech with an open top."

Upgraded Jackal II and Coyote vehicles due to be deployed last month will not address this flaw, Dr North added.

**"It is manslaughter to send troops out in a vehicle which you know cannot meet the threat."**

The Jackal is just the latest failure by the Ministry of Defence to provide a mine-resistant vehicle to both Iraq and Afghanistan.

**A quarter of the 195 service personnel to have died in Afghanistan were travelling in poorly protected vehicles. Such is the problem from mines that convoys travel at four miles an hour, with a minesweeper on foot walking in front.**

Two hundred Vector vehicles – dubbed the "coffin on wheels" – were ordered in 2007 at a total cost of £100m, but are being withdrawn because of their vulnerability to roadside bombs.

An order for 401 all-terrain Panther vehicles was made in 2003 as a replacement for the Land Rover at a cost of £400,000 each. In July, the Government revealed the vehicles needed upgrading for use in Afghanistan and only 67 have had the work carried out. The MoD's 10-year £16bn plan to provide a fleet of new armoured vehicles has also been mired in delays.

**Its best vehicle, the Ridgeback, is also being used in Afghanistan, although it emerged last week that nine were marooned in Dubai because the MoD did not have enough planes to fly them to theatre.**

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## **FORWARD OBSERVATIONS**



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

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

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

**Frederick Douglass, 1852**

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

**I say that when troops cannot be counted on to follow orders because they see the futility and immorality of them THAT is the real key to ending a war.**

**-- Al Jaccoma, Veterans For Peace**

**“What country can preserve its liberties if its rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms.”**

**Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, 1787.**

**“When someone says my son died fighting for his country, I say, “No, the suicide bomber who killed my son died fighting for his country.”**

**-- Father of American Soldier Chase Beattie, KIA in Iraq**

**Review: Pulse Of The People,  
A New Album From Dead Prez:  
“If Ever There Were A Time That  
Cried Out For An Uncompromising  
Radical Narrative About Urban Life,  
This Is It”**

# “A Slap In The Face To The Laughable Equation Of ‘Black President Equals The End Of Racism’”



[[www.dking-gallery.com/store/SCRG\\_DeathPrez\\_060](http://www.dking-gallery.com/store/SCRG_DeathPrez_060)]

**While Obama and company seem convinced that the current state of Black America is the result of some kind of pathology, tracks like “Gangsta, Gangster” and “Life Goes On” place the blame where it belongs, and make the novel assertion that the so-called undesirables of society might be the very people who can permanently shake it up.**

07/25/2009 By Alexander Billet, The Society of Cinema and Arts

By now, we've all heard ad nauseam that President Obama is a “fan” of hip-hop.

He has Jay-Z on his iPod, he loves its “entrepreneurial spirit” and he's still famously referred to as “the first hip-hop president.”

But if anything can be taken from Obama's recent address to the NAACP, it's that his understanding of hip-hop is, shall we say, a bit different from most people's.

Rehashing the tired rhetoric from his campaign, he claimed that there were now "no excuses" for Blacks not pulling themselves up by their bootstraps.

And though he said nary a word about the Supreme Court decision ruling against affirmative action for Black firefighters in Connecticut, he went out of his way to say, "Our kids can't all aspire to be LeBron or Lil Wayne...I want them aspiring to be president of the United States of America."

**It's safe to say that Obama doesn't have Dead Prez on his iPod. If he did, he might hear this:**

***He go to school just to battle MCs in the cafeteria  
Fellas sleep in third period to the theory that  
The president is Black  
So he should try to be that  
Better yet put a gat on your back  
And go to Iraq***

The Brooklyn-based duo's new mixtape Pulse of the People is a surprisingly catchy slab of hip-hop militancy, a slap in the face to the laughable equation of "Black president equals the end of racism" and a fine addition to the increasingly political turn that popular music is taking in these troubled economic times.

Over their 15-year career, M1 and stic.man have had influence over what hip-hop is today, despite most of the big music press's dismissive treatment of them.

Their "Revolutionary But Gangsta" stance is proof that there is no iron wall between "mainstream" and "conscious" rap music--even if their method wasn't always effective.

It needs to be said, for every five or six hot tracks in Dead Prez's catalogue--walking that fine line between the politically righteous and aesthetically satisfying--they've also put out ham-handed flops like "Be Healthy" or "Mind Sex."

One is certainly willing to forgive these songs because others like "Hip-Hop" and "I'm a African" are just so inspiring, but their tendency to drift into preachiness often had this writer wondering when DP were going to stop singing and start swinging.

I was almost ready to throw in the towel on Dead Prez, but then I heard Pulse of the People. Artists are always evolving, and with the system failing more and more people every day, Dead Prez seem to be hitting a stride.

Good thing too, because if ever there were a time that cried out for an uncompromising radical narrative about urban life, this is it.

"Tired of watchin' all these companies get bailed out/And the only thing that poor people get is another jailhouse," they declare in "Don't Hate My Grind," a firm rebuke to the "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" mantra.



It's delivered over a dark, organ-driven beat, courtesy of the near-omnipresent "evil genius" DJ Green Lantern.

Green Lantern's presence aids DP greatly. His tracks have always had a defiant swagger, and it's no wonder that MCs from Nas to Immortal Technique are scrambling to work with him. The process of working with Green was "fast and fun," according to stic.man. "We did the whole thing in four days. We didn't try to edit it too much, man. We just wanted to do (something) in the tradition of the original mixtape, where you come in the booth, you spit, and it hits the streets."

Green's mixtapes have always thrived on the bottom-up immediacy that's inherent in the format. The mixtape that he and DP have produced (along with a list of guest MCs that ranges from Ratfink to Chuck D) ties together the reality of an economic crisis that devastating poor communities with an urgent vision of a people's planet.

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"Warpath," possibly the best song on Pulse, rides on funk-metal guitar and pumping bass.

It's almost shocking in its brash call to arms against the New York Police Department, highlighted by the memorable line "so I rolled into the precinct, and I shot the sheriff."

To be sure, Pulse of the People has its flaws. "Summertime" confirms the suspicion that Dead Prez should stop writing romantic lyrics. Combined with its uncharacteristically disappointing beats, this track makes the listener glad that it's a rarity.

But if there is one song that sums up the timeliness of this mixtape, it would have to be "\$timulus Plan." Peppered with "ka-ching" audio clips and sound bites of outraged citizens, M and stic put nearly everything in their sites--from the recent bank bailouts, to the war on terror, to the American dream itself:

***It's a cold game  
And it's the same from the top of the food chain  
All the way down to the little homie in the street-gangs  
Slangin' cocaine, it's how they do thangs  
It's the American way  
Imperialism, have it your way  
Whatever it takes  
Whoever gets fucked in the process, that's okay  
That's how they play  
So you can't blame us  
Them dead white men on that paper ain't us  
We still gotta hustle for the benefits, man  
My grind is my stimulus plan...***

There are plenty of artists who miss the mark when they try to make relevant music.

Some pile on the rhetoric but forget the craft.

Others slave away for years, struggling to find an audience for their message.

And while Dead Prez have been keeping their head up for a decade and a half now, Pulse collides with a certain point in time that makes it all the more urgent and listenable.

**While their calls for revolution might not yet be on the lips of every member of the oppressed and exploited, the volatile mixture of hope and anger in American society gives us a glimpse of what is possible when people fight.**

**With any luck, the “Pulse of the People” might end up being a lot more than just a cool album title.**

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## **OCCUPATION PALESTINE**

### **“Oh Vanished Town Of Bethlehem” “The Bethlehem District Lost More Than 85% Of Its Land To The Israeli Colonial Settlements And The Apartheid Wall”**

August 16, 2009 Mazin Qumsiyeh, from occupied Palestine [Excerpt]

The Bethlehem district lost more than 85% of its land to the Israeli colonial settlements and the apartheid wall that snakes around us and captures most of the good natural resources, the agricultural lands, the water and more.

More than half of the residents in this shrinking ghetto of Bethlehem are refugees or displaced people.

Nearly 35,000 are the refugees from the original frenzy of ethnic cleansing that happened between 1947-1949 and their descendents. Another 30,000 represent displaced people who moved into the remaining shrinking enclave when their lands were stolen by colonial settlements since 1967 or are the security and other PLO people that came to Palestine after the Oslo accords.

At a population density in this area of over 1300 per square kilometer, this is still better than Gaza (4000 per square kilometer) but certainly not viable long term.

Unemployment is at 30% (also better than Gaza).

But again one asks about relativity.

Indeed we are relatively better than Gaza but certainly far worse off than if we had not been subjected to colonial occupation that robbed us of the best lands and water resources and prevents us from development economically.

Israel's strategy is to prevent any sustainable development for the Palestinians and ensure we are dependent on foreign aid which Israel profits from since we are a captive market under its thumbs.

Israel gets about 40% of all humanitarian aid to the Palestinians.

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

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## **DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK**



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