

GI SPECIAL 7H22:



**South African Cops Attack
Unarmed Soldiers Protesting
Low Wages:
“Many Have Threatened To Return
With Their Own Rifles To
Retaliate”**

“Footage From A Local Television Station Shows Police Firing Into The Crowd”

“The Demonstrators Responded By Hurling Firebombs At Police Vehicles”



The Citizen Photo

8.26.09 The Associated Press & The Citizen & DPA & Primedia Broadcasting & Al Jazeera

A virtual war broke out in the streets of Pretoria, the capital, yesterday with AWOL soldiers storming the Union Building government premises.

There was now the potential that military bases were unprotected and that there was a lack of troops to support police if necessary.

Dozens of police and military vehicles set on fire or were damaged.

Demonstrating soldiers are furious police opened fire on them with stun grenades and rubber bullets.

Many have threatened to return with their own rifles to retaliate.

About 2 000 soldiers have been protesting over wage packages.

The South African National Defence Union [the soldiers' union] was demanding a 30 per cent increase in pay and better working conditions. The union is not officially recognised by the government.

The trouble began when soldiers demanded to get inside the Union Buildings' south lawn.

There was a stand-off with military police and the SA Police Services, with soldiers threatening to retaliate if the police shot at them.

Soldiers then found one of the gates to the buildings unmanned and ran inside. While they were sitting on the lawn, police started shooting at them with rubber bullets, resulting in a stampede.

In addition to injuries caused by rubber bullets, some soldiers broke their hands and feet when they jumped over the fence.

Police fired rubber bullets and tear gas.

A policeman and several soldiers were injured.

A police vehicle was set alight and a number of other cars were also damaged in violence during the daylong protest.

Defense Minister Lindiwe Sisulu condemned the violence and said the soldiers' action was a "threat to national security."

Police tried to disperse over 1,000 soldiers who had converged on the lawns of the Union Buildings, the seat of government, even after a court denied them permission to hold their march.

Footage from a local television station shows police firing into the crowd, forcing the protesters against a fence.

Many protesters retreated back over the fence, and police continued firing across a busy thoroughfare near many embassies and hotels.

The demonstrators responded by hurling firebombs at police vehicles.

The protest ended at about 4 p.m. (1400 GMT) when police warned that more force would be used, the South African Press Association reported.

Sisulu told reporters in Cape Town that she had instructed the head of the defense force to immediately suspend protesters.

Two soldiers had been arrested and handed over to the military police, she said.

The striking soldiers announced they would hold further protests.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Local Fallen Soldier Remembered As Hero Of Adventures

08/20/09 ABC 33/40 News

Pinson - A Pinson family is on the way to Dover Air Force Base to pick up a loved-one.

23 year old Pfc. William VanOsdol was killed by wounds suffered during an enemy rocket fire in Iraq on Wednesday.

Friends say he had a fascination with heroes and ordinary people who did extraordinary things, which is exactly what he did when he enlisted.

Michael Taylor met VanOsdol at Erwin High School and even thought about enlisting with his friend after graduation.

"I'd always heard my grandparents went into the army together and heard all the great war stories. I just thought it'd be neat to do it together," said Taylor, VanOsdol's best friend.

On Wednesday, VanOsdol was killed in Iraq when an enemy rocket hit his quarters.

Taylor says he now questions his decision not to go.

"I'm kind of mixed. Maybe if I'd been there I could've helped. But then again knowing the situation, I don't think there is nothing I could have done," said Taylor.

Pinson Valley High School Assistant Principle Karen Mardis only knew him for a few years after he transferred to the high school. But she believes he was living the epic battle he dreamed of her English class.

"When William really lit up is when we were talking about literature, especially stories about heroes or people who came from common backgrounds to do extraordinary things to change the world," said Mardis. "This may have been an end he would have chosen to make. He was a hero of adventures and heroism."

But it's certainly not the end anyone had expected.

"He'd already started working on the best man speech and told me about it. I already made him a promise two and a half years ago that I was going to let him to do the speech for me. I don't know what I'm going to do," said Taylor who is engaged and now planning a wedding for next year without his best friend at his side.

VanOsdol was stationed with the 172nd Support Battalion out of Germany.

VanOsdol will be buried in Alabama. No word on funeral arrangements.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Four U.S. Troops Killed By “Bomb” Somewhere Or Other In Afghanistan

Aug 26, 2009 AP

A bombing killed four U.S. service members Tuesday.

At least 172 American troops have died in the Afghan war this year -- the deadliest since the conflict began in 2001.

August on pace to be the deadliest month of the war for the U.S. military.

The deaths bring to 43 the number of U.S. troops killed this month. Last month was the deadliest of the war, when 45 U.S. troops died.

Two U.S. Troops Killed Wednesday In Afghanistan

26 Aug. 2009 ISAF Public Affairs Office & BBC

KABUL, Afghanistan - Two U.S. service members died today in separate incidents that occurred in southern and eastern Afghanistan.

One U.S. service member died as a result of an Improvised Explosive Device detonation in southern Afghanistan.

A second was killed in a hostile fire attack in eastern Afghanistan.

U.S. Soldier From Canada Killed In Afghanistan

August 24, 2009 CBC News

People from the Big River First Nation are mourning the death of Cpl. Darby Morin, a soldier serving with the U.S. army.

Morin, 25, was killed last weekend in Afghanistan.

Morin's family told CBC News that Morin fought with the U.S. army for four years.

His body will be flown to Philadelphia. It will then be taken to the Big River First Nation for burial next week.

Big River First Nation is about 140 kilometres northeast of Saskatoon.

Massive Explosion Shakes Kandahar; “The Bomb Went Off Near A Guest House Frequented By Foreigners, Near The Kandahar Provincial Intelligence Headquarters”



Afghans and policemen at the bomb blast site in Kandahar on August 25. With the Taliban-led insurgency at record levels, the Islamist rebels were blamed for setting off a truck bomb in the heart of the southern city which killed at least 43 people and wounded 65, almost all civilians. (AFP/Hamed Zalmy)

Aug 25 by Hameed Zalmai, AFP & Aug 26, 2009 AP & BBC & CNN & AP

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (AFP) – A massive bomb ripped through Afghanistan's troubled southern city of Kandahar on Tuesday, killing 36 people.

The thundering explosion occurred just after nightfall Tuesday.

The bomb went off near a guest house frequented by foreigners, near the Kandahar provincial intelligence headquarters and less than a kilometre from the home of Ahmad Wali Karzai, brother of Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

The Interior Ministry said the blast was from remote-controlled explosives planted in a truck. Local officials had said a cluster of five vehicle bombs caused the blast.

More than 60 were hurt as buildings collapsed in the city centre attack.

The blast was so intense that windows shattered in homes a kilometer (0.62 miles) away.

"It felt like an earthquake. The power went off and there was a huge explosion," said Agha Lalai, a member of the Kandahar provincial council.

MORE:

A Second Attack In Kandahar Hits Provincial Council Offices

26 August 2009 BBC

A blast has been reported in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar, a day after the country's deadliest bombing for a year killed some 43 people there.

The explosion was reported close to the site of Tuesday's car bomb attack.

There are reports of casualties. A local official told the BBC the injured were being taken to hospital.

The blast was said to have happened next to Kabul Bank.

Shops were in flames next to the building, an al-Jazeera journalist reported from the city, and mobile phone footage sent to the BBC shot from a location 500m (a third of a mile) from the scene showed a fire burning.

Rescuers are still searching for survivors in the rubble of buildings destroyed in Tuesday's attack, which left more than 60 people injured.

The explosion struck close to the offices of the Kandahar provincial council. Windows across the city were shattered by the force of the blast.

Some reports said bombs were packed in cars that exploded simultaneously, others that a truck or tanker had been used.

MORE:

**The Kandahar Follies Roll On:
Incompetent Fools Running The
Afghan Occupation Three Steps
Behind, As Usual:
As Massive Attacks Rock Kandahar,
Idiots In Command Of U.S. Forces
Announce “A High-Stakes Wager
That The Afghans Have The Ability
To Keep Kandahar Safe”
“U.S. Military Officials” Admit They Sent
Reinforcements To The Wrong Parts Of
Afghanistan, Leaving Kandahar Open To
Attacks**

It is also a tacit admission that the U.S. and its NATO allies erred by sending troops to sparsely inhabited parts of eastern and southern Afghanistan instead of to major population centers, such as Kandahar.

The Taliban run shadow courts throughout the city, tax local businesses and have stepped up an assassination campaign against government officials, according to U.S. officials.

AUGUST 27, 2009 By YOCHI J. DREAZEN, The Wall Street Journal [Excerpts]

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan -- The U.S. and its allies are planning to reinforce Afghan police and army units guarding Kandahar with American and Canadian troops, a move that acknowledges the deteriorating condition of the south's largest city.

According to senior military officials, U.S. and Canadian soldiers will for the first time deploy to bases on the outskirts of the city. The local Afghan forces will be bolstered by an expanded number of embedded American trainers.

The plan represents a high-stakes wager that the Afghans have the ability to keep Kandahar safe, a mission they and North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces have so far largely been unable to accomplish.

It is also a tacit admission that the U.S. and its NATO allies erred by sending troops to sparsely inhabited parts of eastern and southern Afghanistan instead of to major population centers, such as Kandahar.

NATO has grown increasingly concerned about Taliban encroachment into Kandahar, the militant group's spiritual birthplace.

Nearly 4,000 Marines are embroiled in a major offensive in neighboring Helmand province and military officials say the Taliban appear to have taken advantage of the fighting to infiltrate the city with significant numbers of operatives.

In a sign of the escalating violence that has accompanied election season, Kandahar was rocked Tuesday by five simultaneous car bombs that killed at least 41 people and wounded at least 66, the Associated Press reported, citing local officials.

The Taliban run shadow courts throughout the city, tax local businesses and have stepped up an assassination campaign against government officials, according to U.S. officials.

In recent interviews, several longtime residents of the city said that Taliban militants were routinely posting on walls and handing out so-called night letters threatening violence against those who don't abide by their decrees [translation: against those who collaborate with the foreign occupation of their nation].

Kandahar is one of the largest cities in Afghanistan, with a population estimated at more than 800,000. The Taliban's fugitive leader, Mullah Omar, was born in Kandahar and ran Afghanistan's government from the city during the Taliban's years of power here.

Brig. Gen. John Nicholson, the top U.S. commander in southern Afghanistan, said American and NATO officials opted against flooding the city with foreign troops.

"We assess that putting coalition soldiers into the city on a large scale would be counterproductive and would feed into enemy propaganda that the government was just being propped up," he said. **[So, send in the troops, lose the city. Keep the troops out, lose the city. That's the whole stupid, hopeless Imperial war in Afghanistan in a short burst.]**

He said the bulk of the American reinforcements will be deployed to new bases on the main approaches into the city, population centers in their own right. Additional forces will be sent to the Arghandab River Valley, a fertile region of the province that also houses a significant share of the area's population, he said.

In the past, American and NATO commanders focused on battling Taliban militants, stationing forces in violent and sparsely populated areas of the country.

That strategy, combined with the troop shortage, left larger population centers vulnerable.

British Soldier Dies In UK From Wounds Sustained In Sangin

25 Aug 09 Ministry of Defence

It is with great sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm that a British soldier from 2nd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers died at the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine, Selly Oak, today, Tuesday 25 August 2009.

The soldier died from wounds he sustained in an explosion while on a foot patrol near Sangin in Helmand province on the evening of Saturday 15 August 2009.

Resistance Action



A vehicle used by the Kunduz justice ministry director burns after an explosion in Kunduz province north of Kabul, Afghanistan, Aug 26, 2009. Sayed Jahangir, the justice ministry director for Kunduz province, was killed when his car exploded while driving to work in the provincial capital. (AP Photo)

August 23, 2009 AFP

On Saturday an Afghan army officer driving back to Kabul from leave in Kandahar, the old Taliban capital in the south, was killed when gunmen opened fire around Shash Gaw in central Afghanistan, the defence ministry said.

The head of the justice department for northern Kunduz province was killed when his vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb in Kunduz city, the Interior Ministry said. There were no other casualties.

One Pakistani engineer was killed and two were wounded when militants attacked their vehicle as they were travelling through northeastern Baghlan province, provincial security official Majid Khan said.

A roadside bomb killed one Afghan soldier and wounded two in Mohammad Agha district of Logar province, south of the capital, Kabul, on Monday, the Defence Ministry said.

Two More Down



A burned Pakistani tanker, which was carrying fuel foreign occupation forces fighting in Afghanistan, after it was attacked by militants on the outskirts of Peshawar, Pakistan Aug. 26, 2009. (AP Photo/Mohammad Iqbal)



A burning Pakistani tanker which was carrying fuel for foreign occupation forces fighting in Afghanistan, after it was attacked by militants in an area of Pakistani Khyber tribal region, Aug. 26, 2009. (AP Photo/Qazi Tariq)

**BEEN ON THE JOB TOO LONG:
ALL HOME, NOW:**



U.S. Marines from 5th Marines patrol in a town in the Nawa district of Afghanistan's Helmand province July 6, 2009. (AP Photo/David Guttenfelder)



U.S. soldier of 10th Mountain Division at Combat Operation Outpost (COP) Conlon in the mountains of Wardak Province in Afghanistan July 14, 2009. REUTERS/Shamil Zhumatov



U.S. soldier at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Shank in Logar Province in Afghanistan July 20, 2009. REUTERS/Shamil Zhumatov



A U.S. 41D Task Force Mountain Warrior after an operation near Michigan camp, at the Pesh valley of Kunar Province, August 18, 2009. REUTERS/Carlos Barria



A U.S. soldier 4ID Task Force Mountain Warrior during an operation near Michigan camp, at the Pesh valley of Kunar Province, August 17, 2009. REUTERS/Carlos Barria

OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION ALL TROOPS HOME NOW!

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupations or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance to Imperial wars inside the armed forces.

Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces.

If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers. <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/> And join with **Iraq Veterans Against the War to end the occupations and bring all troops home now!** (www.ivaw.org/)

TROOP NEWS

**NOT ANOTHER DAY
NOT ANOTHER DOLLAR
NOT ANOTHER LIFE**



Aug. 19, 2009: A U.S. soldier from 10th Mountain Division based out of Fort Drum, N.Y., helps evacuate a wounded soldier after their armored vehicle hit an improvised explosive device in the Tangi Valley of Afghanistan's Wardak Province. (AP Photo/David Goldman)

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

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

GI Special Available In PDF Format

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

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**

**“While there is a lower class I am in it; while there is a criminal element I am of it; while there is a soul in prison, I am not free”
-- Eugene V. Debs**

**“What country can preserve its liberties if its rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms.”
Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, 1787.**

**"The mighty are only mighty because we are on our knees. Let us rise!"
-- Camille Desmoulins**

**"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**

One day while I was in a bunker in Vietnam, a sniper round went over my head. The person who fired that weapon was not a terrorist, a rebel, an extremist, or a so-called insurgent. The Vietnamese individual who tried to kill me was a citizen of Vietnam, who did not want me in his country. This truth escapes millions.

**Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
December 13, 2004**

**Firearms are second only to the Constitution in importance; they are the peoples' liberty's teeth.
-- George Washington**

**GI Resistance Under The Radar:
An Interview With Two Former
Soldiers Who Describe How They
Helped Prevent Their Unit From
Deploying To A War Zone:
“It's Really Just About Finding Those
Opportunities For People To Resist And
Then Supporting Them 100-110 Percent
All The Way”**



[Thanks to Katherine Gorell, The Military Project, who sent this in.]

And so we started to talk to our fellow soldiers about this to get a sense of, "are we alone on this, what's going on," and we did quickly realize that everybody else had the same kinds of feelings as us.

They either felt that there was something really fishy about the war, in general, or particular, they would start to say that our leadership was incompetent, that we're totally dependent upon a leadership that obviously doesn't know what they're doing.

03 August 2009 By Sarah Lazare, for Truthout. Sarah Lazare is a project coordinator for Courage to Resist. [Excerpts]

What do you do if you are a soldier being asked to fight a war you do not believe in?

For two former soldiers whose unit was ordered to deploy to Iraq in April 2005, the answer came in the form of work slowdowns, letter-writing campaigns, and one-on-one organizing with fellow soldiers. The result: they helped prevent their unit from deploying to a war zone.

In this interview, Skippy and Robert, who did not give their full names for fear of military retaliation, share their stories, telling how they convinced several in their unit to deliberately fail physical training, called public attention to the insufficient training and gear they were being asked to fight with, and found creative ways to encourage soldiers to "drop the military before the military drops you."

They tell how they dealt with the fear and intimidation of standing up to their command, and about friends and comrades who fell victim to "broken Joe" syndrome.

These stories give a glimpse into the world of GI resistance - the oft-hidden side of the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. AWOL rates in the Army are at their highest since 1980, with the desertion rate having jumped 80 percent since the start of the Iraq War, according to The Associated Press.

Skippy and Robert's experience shows that while some GI resisters go public, much resistance happens silently, under the radar, in circles of trusted friends, in the small acts that fly in the face of military obedience and command.

Their stories serve as a reminder that there are multiple ways to resist military control, and despite military efforts to quash dissent, these varied forms of resistance are as ongoing as the wars themselves.

Sarah: I know that you two were involved in an unconventional form of GI resistance where you essentially ... organized your unit not to deploy to Iraq. Can you tell me the story of how that happened?

Robert: Sure; we were in Fort Polk, Louisiana, in an area called "the box," which is a large training area that is meant to resemble different areas of Iraq or Afghanistan. They basically employ civilians from outside the base and bring in interpreters to try to make a realistic training situation.

We were training to go in and basically rebuild UNAIID, which is military assistance to the United Nations operations. It can be very dangerous, because the Rules of Engagement that govern soldiers under the command of the UN are very limiting and create fear because they are unrealistic in the battlefield - they'll get you killed.

We weren't as a unit prepared for that, and that's where Skippy and I started to look for other actions.

We were against the war and were hoping just to ride out the rest of our military career. We both knew that after that deployment, by the time the next deployment came up, we'd be getting out. As we started to gear up for going to Iraq we started to explore actions for getting out of the military. Skippy went towards a hardship discharge, and I went conscientious objector.

And basically you could say we agitated several other soldiers to take other means to get out of the military.

Skippy: As concerned citizens and concerned soldiers, we were looking at the situation in front of us and saying, you know, this just doesn't seem right to us.

And so we started to talk to our fellow soldiers about this to get a sense of, "are we alone on this, what's going on," and we did quickly realize that everybody else had the same kinds of feelings as us.

They either felt that there was something really fishy about the war, in general, or particular, they would start to say that our leadership was incompetent, that we're totally dependent upon a leadership that obviously doesn't know what they're doing.

The other thing was we didn't even have the proper equipment to train, let alone mobilize.

So it was like, "hey, here's this super dangerous mission, how about let's mobilize the guard for it, they've been in the box for a while, they might be able to handle this." But the reality was, we totally couldn't handle something like that, and we were actually struggling to do a good job in "the box" in my opinion.

So we endeavored to talk to our fellow soldiers, and we told them to call their parents and let them know what was going on and complain about it.

So that's where the letter-writing campaign really came in handy, and the parents are really the backbone of this whole thing.

Rob, maybe this is a good time to go into how you helped set up initially that conference call with Dick Durbin, senator from Illinois.

Robert: Ok, sure. So it was set up by my fiancé, who was working with different groups who were doing antiwar work, and they were able to set up a conference call, and basically we carried forth some of the demands of the soldiers there. You know, complaints about no body armor, our leadership was absolutely horrible - for example, in our infantry unit, our sergeant major had been a cook his entire military career.

Same thing with our company commander, who was absolutely horrible - there was no confidence, at least within our platoon, in his ability.

Skippy: It was during kind of this dialogue phase, we would cut out the various pictures in the magazines and we'd make these flyers and we'd put them up as another sign of resistance.

Initially I think we would just distribute them in random places.

I actually found this advertisement for the National Guard from way back when, and it was a guy's head yellin' "hoo-wah" so I cut his head out with the hoo-wah phrase kind of echoing from his mouth and I put it in the center of the toilet. We cut out these letters you know so that it says "drop the Mili before the Mili drops you."

It's really strange in the military, you almost feel like you shouldn't do these things, because somebody might catch you, but then when you start talking to people, it's like they have the same ideas that you do, in a way, so it's like you find yourself in this weird position where you feel like you're alienated but then there's signs that maybe you're not. So we wanted to create another sign to say that you're not.

Sarah: The latest study that was done, which was in 2006, showed that 72 percent of all the troops in Iraq are against the war and want immediate pullout. Do you think there was an organic natural sentiment against the war or at least skepticism within the ranks?

Skippy: I guess from my humble perspective it did seem like that was out there and a lot of that had to do with what people were getting from the news, mixed with what they actually saw on the ground.

Since we were in a training scenario, it was a little different for us, because we weren't actually in country. We were just in Fort Polk, Louisiana. But I think the premise is the same because we were out there trying to mimic what was going on in country, so a lot of our missions would be very similar to what missions were like over there. So we could still connect the dots in a similar way.

Sometimes people would understand that a lot of the training scenario just seemed really bizarre in and of itself. We would play the bad guys some rotations and then we would play the good guys some rotations, so we would really get this juxtaposition of perspectives.

So when we did eventually engage in dialogue at chow or whatever, or when we were in down time, talked about how messed up would it be to go over there, how unfair that would be, how ridiculous this scenario was, etc.

It starts to click together that all that's really going on is that there's this deep network of factions warring and backstabbing each other while we get caught in the middle. Folks didn't really want to be a part of that.

It reminds me a lot of how people felt about isolationism; it's like an isolationist kind of perspective. Like, "Well, what's our business over there, why is that our responsibility" kind of thing, like; "Why can't they just deal with their own issues." But Robert and I were relatively enlightened on these matters. At least in our small circle of influence, were able to put out the idea that this is sort of systemic.

We'd make sure to point out that this has deep roots in capitalism and history, and that these are patterns that extend between nations and over time, and so we were kind of bringing that flavor to it.

Maybe it helped, maybe it didn't, I don't know, but I know folks really did begin to pick up the idea that they could resist.

We did do something akin to a slow-down strike.

I know personally I did encourage troops to not qualify as best as they could.

When you get mobilized you have to qualify with your weapons and that kind of thing and we realized that we were just so ate up anyway that it really didn't matter anyway how well we did on these things because it's not going to really accurately reflect who we are.

Our rationale was to just do the bare minimum, don't try to prop up what we look like on paper any more than it's already distorted.

It was kind of scary because we didn't want to publicly broadcast that we were doing these things to anybody, but we wanted to make sure that it was kept within like teams or squads, so I don't know how far it did get out.

Then there were soldiers who were not too motivated necessarily against the war. For example, this one guy, you know that wasn't his big thing, I don't think that

was really even on his mind, but his thing was, he just hated the military, and he wasn't gonna try.

There's this peculiar broken Joe syndrome you could call it, it's like where folks kind of see the despair already so they just kind of reiterate it in their own individual ways.

It's like "Oh well, like the war is bullshit anyway it's not as if it's legitimate and I can feel ashamed, it's actually illegitimate and I can feel proud to dog it."

Sarah: Can you talk about the outcome of your organizing and what happened? You ended up not having to deploy, right?

Robert: Skippy got out on a hardship discharge for family-related reasons. I went out on conscientious objection; once the investigation started, things went really sour. Two weeks after I went conscientious objector, somebody else from another platoon within our company went conscientious objector too. I think they were kind of fearing that people are really looking for a way out.

While we were there within our platoon, one or two people got out for drug-related reasons.

Afterwards two more got out for the same reason. They would kick people out for, say, smoking pot. People would be like, well, do I stay in the military and go to war or smoke some pot?

After I left, I don't think there was a lot of momentum left within resisting; it was hard to have other people take initiative and be a strong voice against it. I'm not sure exactly how strong that sentiment against the military is within our old unit, but when we got back, about a year or two years after, there were people getting out or finding ways to get out. So that continued for sure, and then there were people who would have re-upped and stayed in the military decided not to.

Sarah: So the letter-writing campaign played some kind of role, in at least pressuring the military to not deploy you all; could you explain a little bit about that?

Robert: We don't know 100 percent if that's exactly the case. So the letters go in and we get a meeting at Durbin's office and we're basically on video cameras with some of his representatives in DC. I believe that there was around 2,000 letters sent out within a week, so for them it was probably like "OK, why are we getting hit with so many letters, what's going on, it's something we'll probably have to address." And then within our company and battalion, basically our entire leadership was constantly being brought out on these meetings, there was definitely a lot that was going on, you'd hear people talking about the letter campaign.

Skippy: Remember that time we came back on leave and then they put the whole battalion into formation? They were like "who's writing, whose calling back home telling their family that the weapons are broken and the unit's messed up?" And meanwhile we're just standing there like (muffled laughter).

Robert: They brought a company in at a time to a church, and then they gave everyone an hour-long speech on how the unit is prepared, how you're not supposed to be calling home about this stuff, you have a chain of command, don't go writing home. Sergeant Major the cook, who all of a sudden became infantry, he was like you know, "When I call home I tell my wife I have a good weapon and I'm prepared to use it and I know how to use it. And I'll be safe."

And I'm thinking well, maybe you have a weapon, but we don't have a weapon.

I was on CQ duty, which is, basically within the company they have a headquarters and the CQ sits there, you're at the desk if they need you to do something, you'll do it. It's a 24-hour watch, so I'd kind of hear what's going on with the other companies and they'd have their battalion meetings in there. And they'd be like "We've got to find out whose doing this," and I'm just sitting there like "Oh man, I know who it is."

Skippy: I believe there's another component to it. Remember when Private Joe shot himself in the guard tower? Private Joe was in another company, but in the same battalion. He had a lot of mental issues. He had gone to the Army shrink and everything, and for whatever reason they told him he was fine. So he's on guard duty in this guard shack and he convinces the other soldier to go grab the sergeant for something. Then he puts the barrel of his weapon into his mouth and blows the back of his brains all over the guard shack.

So when Private Joe shot himself, that's when all of the leadership just went apeshit, I don't know how, maybe that played a factor too in our getting denied the deployment as well.

I remember distinctly the next day being appalled by just the regularity of the military machine and it just not giving a damn about Private Joe for one second. It was almost like it was a joke to them, and they cleaned it up and everything marched right on; it was very surreal. They did eventually honor him and say something, but it took a while; it wasn't like an immediate concern of theirs, it seemed.

Sarah: Skippy, you were out already on hardship discharge when you heard that your unit was not going to be deploying, right?

Skippy: Yeah, I was long gone. It was in March 2005 that I officially got out. When I heard the news from Rob, I guess even then I really didn't kind of connect our resistance with the canceled deployment, because what we were doing kind of felt more instinctual than anything.

A lot of our resistance just kind of felt like the thing that we should do at the time.

Even though we did kind of have a broad articulated strategy between each other and amongst some sympathizers, it still felt like anything could happen at any moment. The atmosphere was totally precarious, and the uncertainty just made all of us so anxious. I remember Rob and I were coming up with just alternatives; we had like 100 alternative plans, like "If this goes wrong, if the other thing goes wrong ..." I remember us just revisiting it to each other constantly and now it just reminds me of how anxious we really

were and how scary everything really was. So it was definitely a sigh of relief but really hard to put what caused it into a direct line.

Sarah: What do you hope GI's and the peace and antiwar movement can learn from your experience?

Skippy: To question everything and be critical; the trend in the military is to not be critical. In order to survive properly, you actually have to be very critical.

That's the biggest one piece of advice I could or would give any soldier or GI in the military now.

You can do similar things that we talked about here today, which is just to slow down things, talk to your fellow soldiers, and just begin to realize that you're not alone in that sentiment and you can do something to get out of the situation.

I think that the peace movement can learn a lot from what we've said here, because they have a really important role to be playing that they seem to want to play, but really haven't articulated.

In our little micro-scenario, you could say those parents who wrote letters were part of the antiwar movement just in that brief instance of time and space. They represented what a lot of people are trying to replicate in different places at different times.

So it's really just about finding those opportunities for people to resist and then supporting them 100-110 percent all the way and responding to their needs and trying to play an auxiliary force to what the troops want.

It's hard to communicate to the troops because they're either in country or on leave. If you can get veteran groups, I think antiwar movement people - if they're serious about antiwar - they would volunteer or get involved with organizations that are already formed for that purpose.

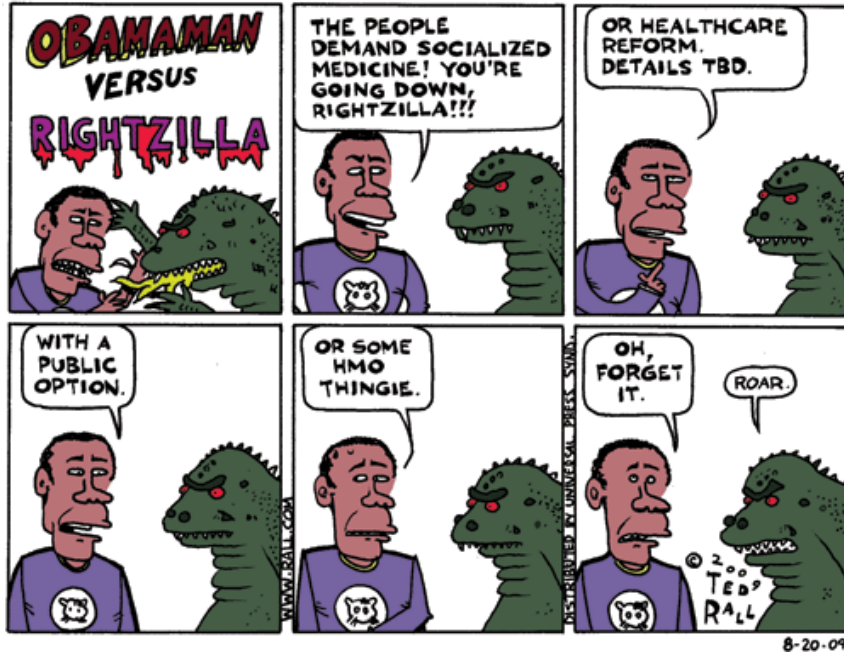
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We also need to get our heads together to come up with new and surprising projects and tactics.

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