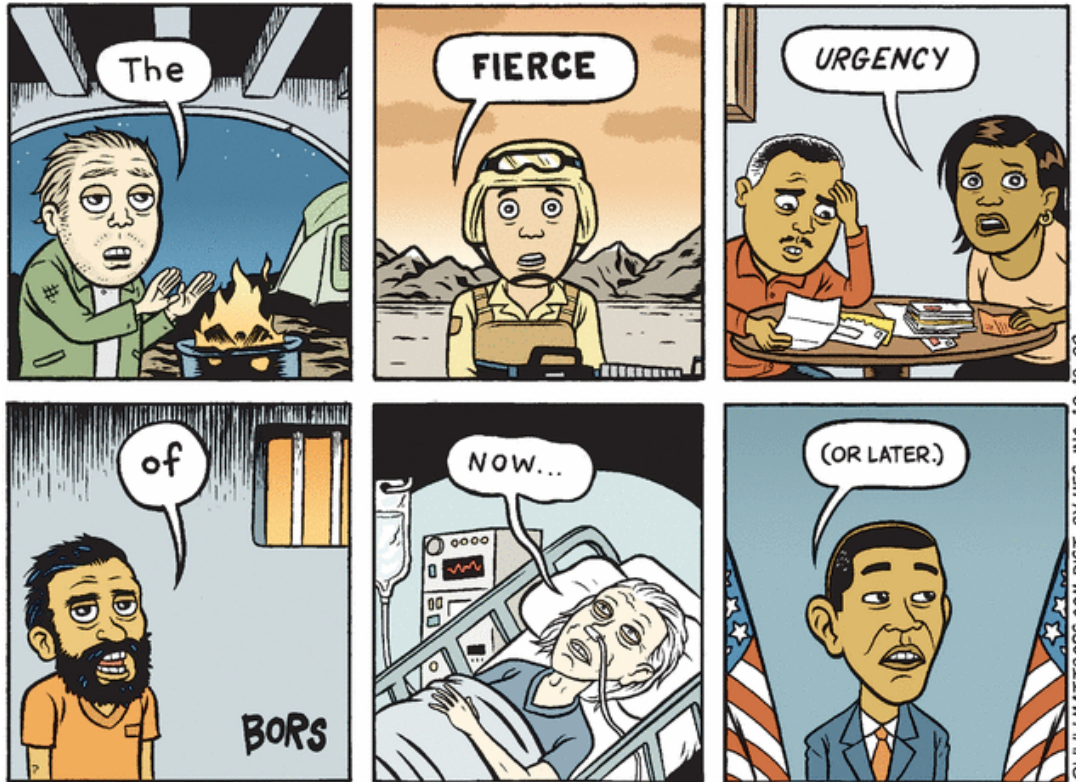


Military Resistance 7J16 [GI Special]



**“In Afghanistan’s North,
Guerrillas Wield Power
In The Once-Stable
Region”**

**“Roadblocks And Ambushes
Are Now Part Of Life”**

“Thanks Be To God, We’re Strong Here,” Said A Taliban Leader. “We Hit Them Just The Other Day, And We Will Hit Them Again”

“Everywhere We Go, They Smile And Wave At Us, And Then They Turn Their Guns On Us”

“The Taliban Aren’t In The City Yet, But They’re Out There Everywhere In The Countryside Around Here”



A truck burned by guerrilla fighters sits in the area of Kunduz. “Thanks be to God, we’re strong here,” a Taliban leader said of the city in northern Afghanistan. (Haroon Khalili / For the Los Angeles Times)

October 22, 2009 By Laura King, Los Angeles Times [Excerpts]

Reporting from Kunduz, Afghanistan - The hulks of burned-out fuel tankers on the doorstep of this provincial capital stand as scorched testament to the growing reach of the Taliban and other insurgents across Afghanistan's once-stable north.

Just beyond the Kunduz city limits, insurgents brazenly tool around in Ford Rangers stolen from the Afghan police.

A Taliban-run shadow administration, complete with a governor, a court system and tax levies, wields greater authority than its official counterpart in much of Kunduz province.

Traffic is thin and nervously quick on the main highway, where insurgent roadblocks and ambushes have been common, spurred in part by a new NATO supply line running south from Tajikistan.

"There's no safety now -- it's war," said Abdul Rahman, an ice cream vendor who is afraid to travel to his home in an outlying district. "The Taliban aren't in the city yet, but they're out there everywhere in the countryside around here. I'm scared."

Although the number of insurgents in the north is relatively small compared with that in the south -- the Taliban's birthplace and traditional stronghold -- military officials and local leaders describe a worrying and unusually disparate buildup of insurgents in the region.

Kunduz province, sandwiched between Tajikistan to the north and Baghlan province to the south, is in many ways a microcosm of the country, with an ethnically mixed population, longtime standing as a fighters' haven and smuggling route, and a shrinking sphere of government influence outside major population centers.

It is also a strategic pivot. When the Taliban controlled Afghanistan, Kunduz was the fundamentalist movement's administrative center for all the north. Together with Baghlan, it is the gateway to the Hindu Kush, the towering mountains that represent the only real physical barrier between the north and Kabul.

"If Kunduz fell, the Hindu Kush would be in the hands of the Taliban, and this would be a disaster," said Mohammad Omar, the provincial governor, who recently survived a Taliban assassination attempt.

Insurgents operating in the north have also displayed an acute awareness of the rifts between NATO allies -- seeking, in particular, to exploit tensions between McChrystal's leadership team and the Germans, who make up the main Western contingent in this part of the country.

This month, insurgents ambushed a 40-truck fuel convoy only a few miles outside the gates of Kunduz city. The attack was within sight of a hilltop German military base, but no troops responded; a spokesman said none were available.

Militant commanders "are very much aware of our domestic political situation, and they plan attacks accordingly," said Lt. Col. Carsten Spiering, a spokesman at the Germans' Kunduz base. "They know it is a problem when our troops are killed, and they know it is a problem when Afghan civilians are killed."

A more insidious pattern is the insurgents' steady blocking of reconstruction projects that could help build goodwill between locals and North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces.

This month in Kunduz's troubled Chardara district, the Germans finished building a little bridge over a shallow, muddy creek. Days later, Spiering said, the Taliban blew it up.

Local Afghan officials are frustrated. Their own security forces are spread far too thin, they say -- in Kunduz, fewer than 1,000 police officers safeguard a province of 1.4 million people. Attacks against the Afghan police are relentless: In August, Gov. Omar's brother, a district police commander, was killed in a clash with the Taliban.

"Thanks be to God, we're strong here," said a Taliban leader who calls himself Mullah Ahmad, speaking by telephone from an undisclosed location. "We're very active in Kunduz. Historically, this area is our home, and people cooperate with us."

Ahmad, who describes himself as the deputy governor in the Taliban shadow government, said fighters would continue to harry NATO's new northern supply line, which was set up after the Taliban repeatedly burned and hijacked trucks traveling from Pakistan via the Khyber Pass.

"We hit them just the other day, and we will hit them again," he boasted.

In the north, even more than elsewhere in Afghanistan, Western forces seem at a loss as to how to distinguish friend from foe.

"Everywhere we go, they smile and wave at us, and then they turn their guns on us," said Spiering, the German military spokesman.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

New U.S. Embassy In Baghdad A Fucked Up Piece Of Shit: "Safe Areas Were Not Constructed According To Contract Specifications"

10.23.09 AFP

The United States should seek a refund of up to 132 million dollars from the Kuwaiti company that built the massive US embassy in Iraq, which has "multiple significant" flaws, an audit recommends.

The State Department's Inspector General panned the work done by First Kuwaiti Trading and Contracting, which received five contracts worth 470 million dollars for the project.

Among the flaws cited in the audit, the second of two reviews of the US diplomatic facility, are "safe areas" that were not constructed according to contract specifications, walls and walkways that have begun to crack and a power distribution system that used nonstandard wiring.

The report, which has been submitted to Congress, also warns of plumbing problems in 200 locations in the embassy compound and deficiencies in a water treatment plant.

The state-of-the-art ochre US embassy complex, built at a total cost of 700 million dollars, is located in Baghdad's tightly-secured Green Zone a few hundred metres (yards) from a palace formerly used by Saddam Hussein which became the US embassy from 2004 until January this year.

The sprawling new embassy is the biggest American mission anywhere in the world and the cost of running the new complex was expected to be so exorbitant that the US would be forced to rent out part of the space, according to a state department official.

Resistance Action

Oct. 22 (Xinhua) & Reuters & Oct. 24 (Xinhua)

Two Iraqi soldiers were wounded when insurgents attacked their vehicles with small arms fire while they were patrolling an area near a village, located some 55 km north of the provincial capital city of Baquba, the source told Xinhua on condition of anonymity.

Two members of an Awakening Council paramilitary group were wounded when guerrillas opened fire on them at a checkpoint in the Edhiem area in northwestern Diyala, the source said.

MOSUL - A roadside bomb in western Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, targeted a police patrol, killing one police officer, police said.

BAQUBA - A roadside bomb wounded the head of a Diyala province Awakening Council, an anti-guerrilla group, and another person south of Baquba, 65 km (40 miles) northeast of Baghdad, police said.

Guerrillas shot dead an off-duty guard in central Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

Guerrillas shot dead a traffic policeman in eastern Mosul, police said.

A sniper shot and wounded one soldier at an Iraqi army checkpoint in western Mosul, police said.

A roadside bomb targeting an Iraqi army patrol killed one soldier in Baaj, 375 km (233 miles) northwest of Baghdad, police said.

A policeman was killed in Mosul's central Bab al-Tob neighborhood.

Another policeman was killed when an unidentified armed group showered him with bullets near his house in the al-Karama neighborhood, in eastern Mosul.

A soldier was killed when a roadside bomb detonated near his army patrol as it was passing in al-Ba'aj area, some 110 km west of Mosul; one of the vehicles was badly damaged by the blast.

A sniper shot injured another soldier when he was manning a checkpoint in the al-Siha neighborhood in western Mosul.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Two U.S. Service Members Killed Somewhere Or Other In Afghanistan

Oct 24, 2009 South Asia News

Two US service members were killed in a roadside bombing, the alliance said in a statement.

U.S. Service Member Killed Somewhere Or Other In Afghanistan

22 Oct. 2009 ISAF Public Affairs

A U.S. service member died of wounds sustained in an improvised explosive device attack in southern Afghanistan, Oct. 21.

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

Oct 24, 2009 South Asia News

A NATO soldier was killed in firefight.

California Soldier Killed In Argahndab



Specialist Michael A. Dahl, 23, of Moreno Valley, Calif., died Oct. 17 in Argahndab, Afghanistan, of wounds suffered from an improvised explosive device. (AP Photo/US Army)

RMP Soldier Killed In Central Helmand

22 Oct 09 Ministry of Defence

It is with great sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm that a soldier from the Royal Military Police has been killed in Afghanistan today, Thursday 22 October 2009.

The soldier was killed as a result of an explosion that happened during a foot patrol near to Gereshk district centre in central Helmand province this morning.

Military Helicopter Crashes In Baghlan Province

KUNDUZ, Afghanistan, Oct 22 (Reuters)

A military helicopter crashed in northern Afghanistan on Thursday, causing casualties, but it was not yet clear whether the aircraft was Afghan or foreign, a senior intelligence official said.

The helicopter crashed in the northern part of the Hindu Kush mountains in Baghlan province, said the province's intelligence chief General Majid.

A senior Afghan army general in the northern region, Murad Ali Murad, confirmed a military helicopter had crashed, but said the aircraft did not belong to Afghan troops.

Foreign troops sometimes charter aircraft operated by foreign security firms, mostly for cargo, around the mountainous nation.

Somebody's Full Of Shit: Take Your Pick:

#1:

Gates: NATO Sending More Troops To Afghanistan

Oct 23 By LARA JAKES, Associated Press Writer

BRATISLAVA, Slovakia – U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates says NATO allies are moving toward sending more troops and civilian aid to Afghanistan.

Gates said Friday he was "heartened" by allies' commitment to the 8-year-old war, even as the Obama administration mulls whether to order tens of thousands more U.S. troops to the fight.

#2:

NATO Backs New Afghan Strategy But No New Troop Offers

October 24, 2009 LORNE COOK, AFP

NATO nations acknowledged Friday that their operation in Afghanistan is not working and agreed they need a new approach to seize the initiative from the Taliban, Al-Qaeda and their backers.

NATO defence ministers, meeting in Bratislava, Slovakia, supported a plan to shift toward a fully-fledged counter-insurgency strategy but they did not say how they aimed to make it work, or commit troops to the move.

“It does not solve the problems in Afghanistan just to hunt down and kill individual terrorists,” NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen told reporters.

“I have noted a broad support from all ministers on this counter-insurgency approach, but let me stress, without discussing the resource implications of these recommendations,” he added.

But while the United States is considering sending as many as 40,000 troops, few others nations have been willing to stump up resources, although Britain made a conditional offer of 500 soldiers prior to the talks.

#3: Gee, Looks Like #2



Staring weirdly, SecDef Gates pukes in his hand during meeting of NATO defense ministers in Bratislava, Oct. 23, 2009. Nobody offered him new troops for Afghanistan. Urp. (AP Photo/Virginia Mayo)

**“Every 1,000 Troops Deployed To
Afghanistan Costs \$1 Billion”**

“The Pentagon Pays An Average Of \$400 To Put A Gallon Of Fuel Into A Combat Vehicle Or Aircraft In Afghanistan”

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

10/15/09 By Roxana Tiron, The Hill [Excerpts]

The Pentagon pays an average of \$400 to put a gallon of fuel into a combat vehicle or aircraft in Afghanistan.

Pentagon officials have told the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee a gallon of fuel costs the military about \$400 by the time it arrives in the remote locations in Afghanistan where U.S. troops operate.

The Pentagon comptroller's office provided the fuel statistic to the committee staff when it was asked for a breakdown of why every 1,000 troops deployed to Afghanistan costs \$1 billion.

Afghanistan — with its lack of infrastructure, challenging geography and increased roadside bomb attacks — is a logistical nightmare for the U.S. military, according to congressional sources, and it is expensive to transport fuel and other supplies.

A landlocked country, Afghanistan has no seaports and a shortage of airports and navigable roads. The nearest port is in Karachi, Pakistan, where fuel for U.S. troops is shipped.

From there, commercial trucks transport the fuel through Pakistan and Afghanistan, sometimes changing carriers. Fuel is then transferred to storage locations in Afghanistan for movement within the country. Military transport is used to distribute fuel to forward operating bases.

For many remote locations, this means fuel supplies must be provided by air.

One of the most expensive ways to supply fuel is by transporting it in bladders carried by helicopter; the amount that can be flown at one time can barely satisfy the need for fuel.

And moving fuel by convoy or even airlift is expensive, according to the Army news release from July 16, which quoted Geiss [Kevin Geiss, program director for energy security in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army].

In some places, Geiss said, analysts have estimated the fully burdened cost of fuel might even be as high as \$1,000 per gallon.

Energy consumed by a combat vehicle may not even be for actual mobility of the vehicle, Geiss said, but instead to run the systems onboard the vehicle, including the communications equipment and the cooling systems to protect the electronics onboard.

Some 80 percent of U.S. military casualties in Afghanistan are due to improvised explosive devices, many of which are placed in the path of supply convoys — making it even more imperative to use aircraft for transportation.

The Marines in Afghanistan, for example, reportedly run through some 800,000 gallons of fuel a day. That reflects the logistical challenges of running the counterinsurgency operations but also the need for fuel during the extreme weather conditions in Afghanistan — hot summers and freezing winters.

With the military boosting the number of the all-terrain-mine resistant ambush-protected vehicles (M-ATVs) in Afghanistan meant to survive roadside bombs, the fuel consumption will likely rise even higher, since those vehicles are considered gas-guzzlers.

Australian Government Eyes Early Afghanistan Troop Withdrawal

21 October 2009 By Phil Mercer, VOA News

The Australian government has asked military commanders to find ways to complete their missions in Afghanistan as soon as possible.

The announcement is being seen as a clear hint that Canberra may pull its 1,500 troops out of Afghanistan earlier than expected.

This review of its operations there comes after the senior allied commander in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal, called for a large increase of troops.

Canberra says that the soldiers it sent to provide security during elections in August will stay for the presidential run-off, next month.

A total of 11 Australians have died in Afghanistan in a war that Prime Minister Kevin Rudd acknowledges is unpopular with voters.

<p>OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION ALL TROOPS HOME NOW!</p>
--

**Happy Afghans Celebrate U.S.
Government Military Occupation Of
Their Country!**

1. Honoring U.S. Government By Performing The Ancient Afghan Fire Ritual



Oct. 22, 2009: An American flag is consumed by fire in Khost, south of Kabul, Afghanistan. Hundreds of happy Afghan citizens gathered to perform the Most Honorable Ritual Of The Burning Flag, an ancient custom that shows limitless respect for the government whose flag is being burned. The symbolism expressed in this case is that the ritual unites the U.S. government with holy, powerful and purifying fire. (AP Photo/Nishanuddin Khan)

2. Afghan Citizens Praise The Wise Leadership Of Their Savior, U.S. President Barack Obama By Performing “The Sacred Ritual Of The X”



Oct. 22, 2009: Afghans citizens carry a portrait of U.S. President Barack Obama during a demonstration in Khost, south of Kabul, Afghanistan, Oct. 22, 2009. The “X” mark on the portrait of Obama indicates that “he is the one” who is saving them from all evil, and that they recognize he is their omnipotent savior, who will be cheerfully obeyed in all things earthly and divine. (AP Photo/Nishanuddin Khan)

NEW GENERAL ORDER NO. 1: PACK UP GO HOME



Soldiers from the U.S. Army’s Charlie troop, 371 Cavalry, 3rd brigade of 10th Mountain Division based in Fort Drum, New York, leave Cop Cherokee base to go on patrol in Kherwar district in Logar province October 6, 2009. REUTERS/Nikola Solic



U.S. Marines patrol in southern Helmand province October 9, 2009. REUTERS/Asmaa Waguih



SOMALIA WAR REPORTS

Insurgents Fire Mortars At Somalia's President

22nd October, 2009 Argentina Star

Islamic insurgents have fired mortars at Somalia's president as he was boarding a plane Thursday at the main airport.

The firing, which was aimed at President Sheik Sharif, only hit the outer edge of the airport.

The battles that ensued after the mortar fire killed at least 20 people.

Return fire from soldiers hit people, shops and houses in nearby residential areas.

The president's plane took off safely with an uninjured president.

About 20 people were killed while 60 others were injured in the residential district.

TROOP NEWS

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



The casket of Army Spc. Stephen Mace at Arlington Cemetery, Oct. 19, 2009. Mace was killed in Afghanistan. (AP Photo/Susan Walsh)

**Incredibly Stupid Prison Guards At
Fort Lewis Caught In Some Incredibly
Stupid Lies;
Soldiers' Lawyers Subjected To
Incredibly Stupid Harassment**

10.26.09 By Jon R. Anderson, Army Times [Excerpts]

An attorney representing two convicted soldiers held in the Fort Lewis, Wash., jail is accusing military officials of videotaping strip searches of inmates there; posting female military police to watch his clients being strip-searched, showering and using the bathroom; and hampering protected communication and access to his clients.

Army officials deny wrongdoing.

Oklahoma-based attorney James Branum represents Travis Bishop and Leo Church, both convicted of going absent without leave from their units at Fort Hood, Texas. Both were sent to Fort Lewis' Northwest Joint Regional Correctional Facility several weeks ago to serve their sentences.

Branum said both of his clients have hinted at wider abuses, but have been reluctant to expand on them with guards present during conversations.

Army officials say both prisoners are being treated fairly and have "all the privileges of other prisoners" including "phone calls, access to mail and visitors," Fort Lewis spokesman Joe Piek said.

Piek said phone calls between Branum and his clients were recorded because Branum had not filed the proper paperwork registering as their attorney of record.

That claim was repeated by Steve Andraschko, deputy director of Army Corrections Command.

Branum insisted the paperwork had been filed on time.

When pressed by Military Times for specifics on when the Army had received Branum's registration, officials took back the claim.

Branum was on file as the attorney of record when officials refused to provide protected communication, Andraschko said.

"There was an internal problem that day," he said. "It was wrong and we regret that the mistake occurred." He added, "The commander is evaluating local procedures to ensure that this problem does not occur again."

Attempting to see his clients on Oct. 13, however, Branum was denied access to the detention facility.

Initially told he had to complete a background check, he said, he was then informed that there were not enough personnel available to support his visit.

"I've never in my life heard of a brig that's so short-staffed they can't handle an attorney visit," Branum said.

He was permitted to see his clients the next day.

Andraschko said the facility is not short-staffed.

The New Issue Of Traveling Soldier Is Out, Featuring:

1. Fun Times at Fort Drum: My Story

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/10.09.paul.php>

2. Mailbag: Mass Casualties

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/10.09.mail.php>

3. "If You Are A Private, You Are Treated Like Complete Dog Shit"

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/10.09.dogsh.php>

4. Veterans Call For Immediate Withdrawal From Afghanistan

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/10.09.ivaw.php>

5. "Vietnam Without Napalm"

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/10.09.napalm.php>

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

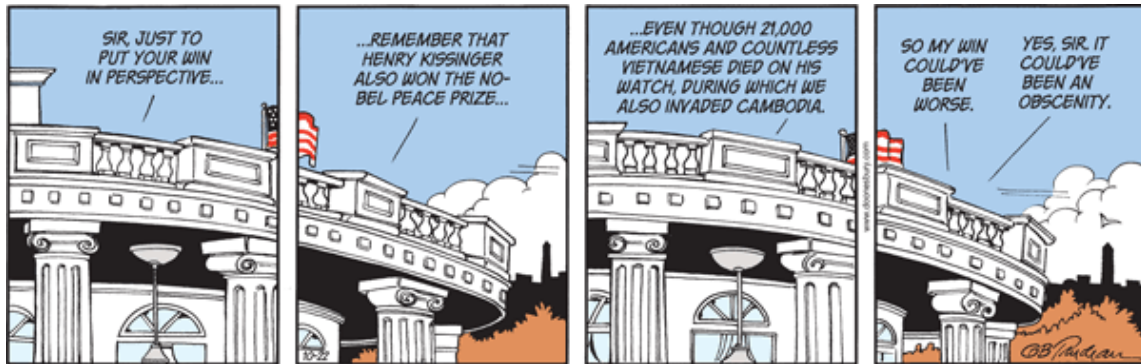
<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/TS25.pdf>

DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE MILITARY?

Forward Military Resistance 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 Resistance, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657. Phone: 888.711.2550

"The single largest failure of the anti-war movement at this point is the lack of outreach to the troops." Tim Goodrich, Iraq Veterans Against The War

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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

CLASS WAR REPORTS



**“Fire, Fire, The Rich
Want A Fire”**

“We Must Fuel The Fire”

**200,000 March During General
Strike October 15:**

**“The Current Government,
Through Its Secretary Of
Commerce, Has Openly Declared
That Puerto Rico Belongs To The
Rich”**

**“The Government Knows That The
Working Class, Students And
Impoverished Puerto Ricans Are
Infuriated — And That There’s
Enough Fuel To Start A Fire”**

**“The Police Are Certainly Getting Ready
For An Uprising Involving Thousands Of
People”**

[A detailed, first hand report on events U.S. media have failed to notice. Puerto Rico, a U.S. government colony since the invasion and occupation of 1898, is ruled by a pack of stupid, greedy politicians serving only their rich masters, as is the USA to be sure, but Puerto Rico is moving more quickly in the direction of an explosion of rage from below. Let the fire come, and speed the day. T]

October 19, 2009 By Yolanda Rivera, Organización Socialista Internacional; Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

AT LEAST 200,000 people marched during a general strike October 15 to protest Law 7, legislation that overrides all collective bargaining agreements between the government and Puerto Rican unions, and that has allowed the government to attempt to fire nearly 30,000 people in a matter of a few months.

After the massive march and walkout, the governor of Puerto Rico, Luis Fortuño, congratulated all involved parties for their civility and composure during the march—which is ironic, since he threatened strikers and protesters with prosecution under anti-terrorism laws.

But according to Fortuño—leader of the Partido Nuevo Progresista (PNP, the equivalent of the Republican Party)—government offices were operating normally.

In reality, most schools and many government offices were closed. Plus, the government cancelled a meeting with investors, scheduled for October 15, to organize public-private alliances and sell the island's public services and lands.

A group of university students blocked the busiest expressway in Puerto Rico, Highway 52, burned tires, and refused to move for hours until a former union leader talked to the students and convinced them to open the highway.

During the march, people showed their anger with the government's policies.

Several workers said the massive layoffs were part an effort to "sell the island"—that is, to destroy public services in order to justify privatization and provide subsidies to companies owned by the governor's friends.

Among angry workers, this group of privileged Puerto Ricans are known as "guaynabitos" and "blanquitos," names given to members of the Puerto Rican bourgeoisie and upper-middle class.

The week before the general strike, 10 campuses of the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) closed their doors to prevent student protesters from using the facilities to mobilize. Students, during democratic assemblies that gathered record numbers, had already closed the university in solidarity with fired government workers, including both teaching and non-teaching personnel, such as janitors and other service employees.

Such actions — including a variety of other protests and an incident in which an unemployed worker threw an egg at the governor — have given a significant number of Puerto Ricans the confidence to challenge the government's anti-union and privatization policies.

However, there is a significant contrast between the rage of union members — including teachers, service workers, social workers, secretaries, electric company workers, students and college professors—and the position of some leaders on the left and in the unions, who are willing to negotiate with the government over the pillage of workers' salaries, benefits and collective bargaining rights.

For example, the chief of police sat down with some union leaders to negotiate conditions imposed by the government on the October 15 activities. Moreover, the group of students, professors and university employees that marched that day could not walk through the original route, which included "la Milla de Oro," a stretch of street filled with banks and corporate office buildings. The government negotiated a change in plans with the Brotherhood of Non-Educational Employees (HEEND, according to its initials in Spanish) that represents non-teaching employees at UPR.

The last-minute retreat over the route of the march symbolized the debate in the Puerto Rican labor movement and the left.

The working class, students and their allies are willing to fight, but some union leaders and other political and religious leaders associated with the former ruling party (Partido Popular Democrático, or PPD, the equivalent of the Democrats) are holding back the struggle.

They are simply afraid of not getting any concessions from the government--and some are even trying to stop the protests.

The current administration has, openly and without qualms, approved legislation that allows it to cancel the government's contractual obligations to the unions.

Moreover, the current government, through its Secretary of Commerce, has openly declared that Puerto Rico belongs to the rich.

BUILDING OPPOSITION to these attacks has been difficult, in large part because of divisions in the Puerto Rican labor movement and the anti-union role of labor's supposed allies in the PPD.

Bureaucratic unions like the Service Employees International Union, which organizes Puerto Rican public employees under the banner of Servidores Públicos Unidos, together with other unions affiliated with the Change to Win and AFL-CIO labor federations, have asked Gov. Fortuño for a meeting to talk about the layoffs.

But mistrust of SEIU is widespread in the Puerto Rican labor movement.

This corporate-style union has already tried to destroy an independent teachers' union (Federación de Maestros de Puerto Rico, or FMPR), the only union that held a strike against former Gov. Acevedo Vilá in order to challenge Law 45, legislation that forbids strikes in exchange for granting collective bargaining rights.

Acevedo Vilá received substantial contributions from SEIU and its leaders, Dennis Rivera and Andrew Stern. Last year, the SEIU launched a dirty union election campaign to replace the FMPR as the teachers' union, handing out coolers and other gifts to Puerto Rican teachers to try to buy their votes.

Teachers rejected these dirty tactics overwhelmingly and voted to retain FMPR as their union, even though the government refuses to recognize it.

For its part, the PPD has showed up at different activities organized by “Todo Puerto Rico por Puerto Rico” (All of Puerto Rico for Puerto Rico), a coalition of unions, religious organizations and community groups. This coalition has organized protests against Law 7 that have attracted a large number of participants.

However, their protests have had a religious and pacifist rhetoric, asking the governor to reconsider the layoffs instead of calling upon the fired employees to start a general strike.

Some union leaders have even suggested a reduction in working hours to solve the fiscal crisis in the government, a problem created by the ruling class through years of pillage.

On the other hand, there’s hope that other unions with a more democratic tradition will push for another, more widespread general strike instead of negotiating with the government.

For example, during the October 15 walkout, the HEEND called for a workers’ party. And crucially, the FMPR challenged former governor’s privatization and anti-union policies.

The FMPR and other independent unions have maintained internal democracy and still organize from the bottom up.

The leadership in these unions earns a salary equivalent to that of other workers in the organization.

Rank-and-file members of these organizations participated massively in the protests against Law 7 and the October 15 strike.

WHILE THE October 15 mobilization marked a big step forward, halting and reversing the trend towards privatization will require a still higher level of struggle.

Consider the case of health care.

In a country of 3.5 million people, where 500,000 live without private insurance or public health services, the island’s insurance commissioner has just closed the insurance company for 68,000 government employees, Preferred Health, without providing any kind of support to these workers.

Meanwhile, privatization has virtually destroyed all public health services as the government has sold public hospitals to private companies.

Nevertheless, the wealthy retain access to top quality health care.

So much so that Norma Burgos, a ruling party legislator, announced a new bill to promote “medical tourism” in the island.

Caribbean Business, the developers' newspaper, reported the day after the general strike: "Norma Burgos wants to standardize and expand on what Eastern Caribbean residents have long known: that Puerto Rico is the place to seek specialized medical treatment for illnesses including cancer and cardiovascular diseases, among others."

Other projects are geared to rich tourists, such developing the Riviera del Caribe, a casino and entertainment complex in the former military base in Ceiba; the San Juan Waterfront, which, according to developers, will feature "new housing, a boutique hotel district, restaurants and cafés, retail shops, a mega yacht marina"; the Golden Triangle, another upscale development in San Juan; and the development of eco-tourism in places that will exclude most Puerto Ricans.

The government is clear about its anti-worker agenda.

In a meeting between the government representative for Riviera del Caribe, Jaime González, and the Ceiba community, González told the residents that they had to accept the project proposed by the government.

He told them that they could stroll along the public areas of Riviera del Caribe and watch rich people buy expensive clothes, even though the residents could not purchase those items.

Instead of getting mad, he suggested that the residents could play the Lotto or accept reality because "such is life."

His remarks infuriated many working class Puerto Ricans.

For many Puerto Ricans, these events have made it more than clear that the government works to protect the interests of the rich, and that class has everything to do with the development of these projects.

Moreover, much of the money assigned for these developments comes from President Barack Obama's stimulus plan — dollars that have come to the island to save the rich.

The U.S. Census Bureau reported recently that poverty on the island has reached 44.8 percent. In women-headed households, the poverty rate is 58.6 percent.

And official figures don't even include poverty among undocumented migrant workers, mostly from the Dominican Republic, who constitute the poorest group and work for a fraction of regular wages.

And with all the layoffs, the poverty rate will rise significantly. According to Labor Secretary Miguel Romero, unemployment rose to 16 percent in September with 17,000 more unemployed, two months before the massive layoff of government employees.

Unemployment lines are so long that people arrive at 7 p.m. the day before they have an appointment at the Labor Department to claim unemployment benefits.

Certainly the government knows that the working class, students and impoverished Puerto Ricans are infuriated—and that there's enough fuel to start a

fire following massive unemployment, a significant increase in prices and billing for public services, foreclosures, widespread poverty, privatization of basic services, and, with Law 7, an open attack on workers rights, salaries and labor conditions.

Nevertheless, despite the obvious popular rejection of government policies among the majority, the ruling party is standing firm.

The governor said during an October 16 interview with Univision that after the October 15 walkout, nothing would change — that those who received the pink slip will not get their jobs back.

The legislature and Senate have said publicly that they are “concerned” with the layoffs to try to calm down their constituents. But they have done nothing to change these policies.

In the event of a possible uprising against such policies, Puerto Rican Police Superintendant José Figueroa Sancha has moved to implement repressive policies to keep workers quiet.

Figueroa Sancha is a former FBI agent who has been charged with civil rights violations against news reporters when searching the residence of a political activist, Liliana Laboy.

And under his direction, during the last few weeks, the police have beaten and arrested students at UPR, thrown tear gas into students’ dorms, beaten and arrested high school students for throwing eggs at the governor, and arrested union leaders who protested peacefully, among many events.

To be sure, the Puerto Rican police have often killed people and committed unpunished crimes.

However, this time, the cases of brutality involve large numbers of people.

And the police are certainly getting ready for an uprising involving thousands of people.

According to the newspaper Nuevo Día, Figueroa Sancha sent 15,000 police to the march/walk-out on October 15.

The government and its foes have cornered Puerto Rican public service workers, students and other impoverished members of the Puerto Rican society.

What Puerto Rican workers need and want is another general strike — one that is larger and more effective.

Despite the role that mainstream unions and some self-appointed “leaders” have played in demobilizing the struggle, the Puerto Rican working class, migrant workers, students and even many impoverished members of the middle class are still enraged.

In the 1970s, a popular nationalist singer, Roy Brown, created a song with lyrics calling for an uprising against imperialism: “Fire, fire, the Yankees (the U.S.) want a fire.”

The working class is now willing to sing these lyrics with a twist: “Fire, fire, the rich want a fire.”

We must fuel the fire.

300,000 March In Mexico City Against The Government After It Fires 44,000 Electrical Workers: “Mexico’s Massive Central Square, The Zócalo, Was Filled With Demonstrators”



Photo by Frecuencias Populares

October 23, 2009 By Stuart Easterling, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

THE MEXICAN government has recently taken dramatic steps to openly break one of the country’s most militant independent trade unions.

On October 10, in the middle of the night, Mexican federal police occupied more than 100 electrical installations across central Mexico belonging to the public power company Luz y Fuerza del Centro (LyFC).

Simultaneously, a total of 44,000 workers--members of Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (SME), Mexico's electrical workers' union--were fired.

The government claims some 8,000 to 10,000 workers are eventually to be rehired, but with their union contract and union representation eliminated. This represents the most direct attack on the Mexican labor movement in the country's recent history.

The SME and its allies have responded to the campaign against them with various mobilizations, including a mass march in Mexico City on October 15.

Roughly 300,000 people attended, despite its being called with only a few days' notice. Mexico's massive central square, the zócalo, was filled with demonstrators.

Marchers from SME locals across central Mexico were present, with their own banners, chants and homemade signs. Large contingents from numerous other union organizations and locals from the nation's capital also came. The mood was extremely angry and militant throughout. Contingent after contingent was chanting or singing, many with fists pumping in the air in unison.

Students also participated in large numbers, with at least 1,000 students marching together from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), roughly the same number from the Metropolitan Autonomous University (UAM), and several hundred from the National Technical Institute (IPN). They all came with banners, signs and chants supporting SME.

Various organizations of the left are arguing that marches and rallies will not be enough, and that the legal route is very likely to fail in the courts.

They are calling for a wider solidarity strike--or a general strike--by Mexican unions. The idea of a solidarity strike has also been publicly raised by the leaders of some of Mexico's independent unions.

Whether they will take this step remains to be seen.

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 to contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe. Phone: 888.711.2550

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THE BLOODSHED**

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