

Military Resistance 7K24



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

Bloody Sangin:

“Two KIA. Why Is It Always The Ones With Wives And Children?”

“By The Time The Battle Group’s Tour Ends This Month As Many As One In Four Of These Infantrymen Will Have Been Slain Or Injured”

**“I Didn’t Meet One Soldier There Who Spoke Of ‘Winning’”
“I Thanked God I Have No Son A Soldier There”**



British soldiers from 2 Rifles Battle Group wait for extraction after a patrol in an area of Sangin. (Eros Hoagland/The Times)

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

The shortfall in troop numbers and helicopters favoured the insurgents many times over, allowing them to control 95 per cent of Sangin and to plant minefields that blocked the soldiers into a narrow strip of territory.

After three years in Sangin, British troops still could not move more than about 500m from FOB Jackson, if that, without the likelihood of coming across an IED (Improvised Explosive Device) or running into a small arms contact.

By mid-August their battle group, a composite force from various units built around a core of several hundred riflemen and fusiliers, had the worst casualties of any British brigade sent to Helmand, with just over 100 soldiers killed or wounded: a fifth of their total patrol troops.

October 3, 2009 Anthony Loyd, The Times [UK] [Excerpts]

Beneath the lip of his helmet the colonel’s face had the grey luminosity and glowing eyes of sudden grief.

“I’ve just lost one of my best soldiers.”

His words, so quiet that they were nearly a whisper, could almost have been a question. The identities of two dead soldiers had come over the radio just minutes earlier. Serjeant Paul McAleese, one of the battalion’s most renowned soldiers, had been so recently alive that his death warranted more than a degree of incredulity.

“Shit day,” the colonel added. “Two KIA. Why is it always the ones with wives and children?”

I had seen that look before in the faces of field commanders in Afghanistan. They talk about their mission and their operations with an air of enthusiasm that is either real or projected, becoming a little more cautious as they explain the “small steps of progress”.

Then, bang, one more of their soldiers is dead – “ragdolled” as the men call it. The patter stops, the mask drops fleetingly, and raw grief stares back into your face.

I was here with 2 Rifles, and this moment, August 20, marked the start of Afghanistan’s presidential election in Sangin. The polling booths in the small town had not even been open an hour.

In the sandbagged operations room in FOB (Forward Operating Base) Jackson, Lieutenant-Colonel Rob Thomson and his 2 Rifles headquarters staff were in full body armour and helmets as Taleban rocket fire and mortars detonated haphazardly about the base. On the walls, flickering “Kill TV” screens, as the soldiers call them, displayed in real time the battle space outside courtesy of invisible drones.

Serjeant McAleese and Private Johnathon Young – an 18-year-old battle casualty replacement who had only been in the country for 18 days – had been killed by bombs in the east of the town.

From the gun emplacements on the flat roof of the base’s FSG (Fire Support Group) tower, soldiers blazed away with medium machine-guns, grenade launchers, heavy .50 calibres and Javelin missiles at insurgents in the tree line along the Helmand River to the north. Their delight was almost feverish as those guns ripped away and the brass bullet cases jangled at their feet. For they were hurling much more than lead across those perimeter walls: rage and pain, pent-up frustration and outright vengeance were ploughing the river reed lines with every burst of fire.

Of political process, on this of all days, there was scant sign.

By the time the last poll booths had closed in mid-afternoon, just 434 of Sangin’s 17,000 registered voters had cast their vote.

And when Chinooks finally delivered Sangin’s sealed ballot boxes to the British base in Lashkar Gah, Helmand’s provincial capital, soldiers waiting on the HLS (Helicopter Landing Site) had to leap upon them to stop them being blown away by the downdraught from the rotors.

If there was one single moment in August that most suggested the futility of the loss of life in the province then that was perhaps it: British soldiers running through the hot

beaten air and jumping upon the bouncing plastic ballot boxes and the 434 votes that had been fought for at such frightful cost.

Heavy Casualties

Stack up every accusation that has been made about all that is going wrong in Helmand – too few troops, not enough helicopters, corrupt police, venal local authorities, drug smuggling – and you will find that every one of them has at least an echo of reality in Sangin.

Straddling the Helmand River on the road between Gereshk and Kajaki, Sangin district – home to about 70,000 Afghans from a mix of Pashtun tribes – has claimed more British lives than any other part of Helmand since troops first arrived there in 2006.

In April this year it became 2 Rifles' dubious fortune to be sent to Sangin on a six-month tour.

By mid-August their battle group, a composite force from various units built around a core of several hundred riflemen and fusiliers, had the worst casualties of any British brigade sent to Helmand, with just over 100 soldiers killed or wounded: a fifth of their total patrol troops.

The trend suggested that by the time the battle group's tour ends this month as many as one in four of these infantrymen will have been slain or injured, a figure that compares with British infantry casualty ratios in Europe during the later stages of the Second World War.

Like any other believer in the necessity of the war I could load the dice with fear to justify it all: fear of defeat; fear of another civil war, like the one I had already seen in Afghanistan in the late 90s; fear of Nato's collapse, Britain's disempowerment, and the jihadist Spring that would follow it all; fear of a Taleban thrust into Pakistan and, fear of fears, fear of nukes in fundamentalist hands.

I could mantra the list just like the next man, and block my ears to the whispers of anyone trying to suggest that I sounded like an American in '69 talking about South East Asian domino theories and the spread of communism.

Ideological conflict?

If only it were so pure.

I should declare my personal interest here. In 1991, after just over five years in the Army, I left the Royal Green Jackets, the infantry regiment which was the ancestor to The Rifles prior to amalgamation. I left because I was bored. The era in which I had served was that of the Cold War's end. It was dull.

My understanding of the word "honour" is linked foremost to the institution of the British Army.

I am loosely aware of the current whereabouts, rank or civilian status of men such as Melia, McLeod, Morrell and McCaffrey – the corporals with whom I once served, men who made me laugh more than any other. My first company commander lives not far away, and although we do not see each other often, we still discuss “serious” matters past and present.

Unsolicited, he turned up at my mother’s funeral a few years ago, simply because he knew it would be a tough day and he was staunch, and tough days and staunchness are what soldiers sign up to share. Tough days and staunchness are what I went to Sangin to see.

Medics At Work

The morning of August 13 was not yet hot and the war seemed far away. I had just taken a shower. I had shaved. I could taste the mint in my mouth as I walked to the entrance of the field hospital in Camp Bastion, where I had travelled en route for Sangin.

A wounded British soldier arrived by helicopter at that moment. He was a young, dark-skinned man in his prime, with the torso of an athlete. He was still conscious. I was surprised.

One of his legs had been blown off above the knee. The other had been grotesquely stripped so that it was no more than bone and ligament.

In the operating theatre they used an electric saw to tidy him up.

One of the soldier’s hands was so damaged as to also suggest amputation. It seemed the soldier would leave the hospital “a triple”.

Of all the thousands of dead and wounded people that I have seen in wars over the past 17 years, women and children among them, there was something profoundly haunting in the vision of that young soldier as he lay on the table, arms outstretched while his tattered uniform was cut from his body: he was the emblem of a British institution that I had always been raised to admire, even love. It lay there before me in bloody rags and terrible ruin.

Soon, more wounded arrived.

One, appallingly injured by a bomb, was dying. He became the 200th British soldier to lose his life in the war.

Three others, men from the 2 Rifles battle group, were already there. They lay dead in “Rose Cottage”, the hospital’s morgue: a bombardier, a captain and a rifleman.

They had died just a few hours earlier in an incident that was still ongoing, one that epitomised the type of war experienced in Sangin.

Troops from A Company had moved out of FOB Jackson in the early hours that morning on a search operation in the vegetated "Green Zone" along the River Helmand south of Sangin town.

Just before sunrise one of their number, a sniper, was blown up by a bomb in a compound and lost a leg.

Two other soldiers were wounded.

Corporal Henry Sanday, 28, an acting platoon serjeant, moved into the compound with a medic and other soldiers to extract the casualties. Nearby, the rest of the company tried to clear a landing site for the medevac helicopter, but ran into difficulties as their Vallon mine detectors started emitting alarm signals indicating more bombs.

Then, as a captain and riflemen carried the wounded bombardier through the compound door, a second device exploded.

It left all three men dead or dying.

Amid the dust cloud and carnage, the dead and wounded, Sanday's surviving troops froze.

They were already familiar with the Taleban's habit of planting multiple devices close to one another.

Earlier in the summer, five of their comrades had been killed by a cluster of bombs in a single incident as they tried to evacuate casualties.

Moreover, though Vallon detectors warn of nearby metal yields, they cannot necessarily pick up the low metal content of the more sophisticated pressure plate devices used in Helmand.

Sanday, desperate to remove the casualties from the scene for evacuation, began yelling for another Vallon operator to start sweeping a withdrawal route. But no one stirred.

Among the survivors some soldiers appeared paralysed with shock. Others were crying.

Eventually a teenage rifleman stood up. "Fuck it," he said. The soldier grabbed a Vallon and started clearing an exit route.

But Sanday's problems were not over. He tried to guide an American medevac helicopter on to the compound roof, but it was too small a space for the helicopter to land on.

Nor were there enough stretchers for all the casualties.

Eventually the surviving sniper commander grabbed one dying soldier and ran 200m with him, through the mine-infested green zone, to reach a new landing site.

Despite having lost three dead and two wounded, A Company continued with their operation throughout the rest of the day.

But when night fell, as they patrolled back towards Jackson, they suffered casualties to two more mines. Two interpreters were killed and two more soldiers wounded.

Back in Jackson, A Company went through a ritual that was by then all too familiar to 2 Rifles.

They packed up their dead comrades' personal effects.

They wrote their eulogies.

Some of these were long, sorrowful odes, later published on Army websites, cyberspace war memorials for our era. Others were read out by the dead soldiers' friends at the small memorial services that were held on the HLS a day or so after each death, where steel-eyed, grim-jawed men choked as they tried to describe all that their lost mates had meant to them.

Like any ritual of death, these were designed to give safe passage for the spirits of the fallen.

They never quite succeeded: there was never a patrol went out without an attachment of ghosts. All the soldiers seemed to know that however hard they concentrated on the days ahead, a renewed sense of grief was waiting to ambush them when the tour finally ended – if they made it that far.

Three days later, August 16, A Company went out on another operation. They ran straight into another multiple bomb incident in the green zone. Three more soldiers were blown up and killed: two more were wounded.

In this way the summer passed.

Boredom

FOB Jackson's one feature of salient appeal is the narrow strip of the Helmand River, chest-deep in places, that runs in a canal directly through the base, allowing the troops to swim and wash when not on patrol. In the day mynah birds and kingfishers bounced on the boughs along the river edge and a colony of mongooses hunted through the bankside reeds.

At night the soldiers gazed into the depths, smoking, talking quietly. Some fished, too.

That stretch of moving water was something special among Helmand's FOBs.

As many hours as possible were spent sleeping, the soldiers shrouded in their domed mosquito nets, which sat in rows along each side of the sandbagged blockhouses in

which the men lived. They were a tightknit unit, though, and aside from sleeping, it was more common to see them in their fire teams or sections than as individuals.

They ate centrally, in a tent, though had not had fresh rations for weeks by the time I saw them – not since a food contractor’s helicopter had been shot down, with the loss of all crew, beyond the perimeter.

But the water, that was something else; it made them dive and splash and laugh and shout; it gave them a slither of delight.

“I can’t see how I won’t get hit before the tour is through,” a soldier told me one night, sitting by the river.

The soldier had already been blown up a number of times but, so far at least, had survived.

“I’ve just got that feeling that it’s going to happen again,” he said. “You can tell sometimes. The last time we got hit, just before the bomb went off, I looked at the sky and something about it made me think, ‘This is just about to go wrong,’ and it did. Now I’m expecting it again.”

He was not seeking consolation, merely confiding how he saw his chances in a manner so matter-of-fact it was chilling.

Soldiers, however questioning, do not weigh risk against gain in the way of civilians.

“Young riflemen don’t discuss the Brigadier’s mission – they just get on and do it,” Lieutenant Will Hignett, one of A Company’s platoon commanders, told me.

This courage, born out of commitment to one another, was what would define them as “soldiers” for the rest of their lives, separating them from a group that could only ever be alien once their tour was over: “civvies”.

Nevertheless, by the river that evening, I tried to tell the soldier that everyone had feelings of dark prescience after a long exposure in war, but that it did not necessarily mean anything: intuition can be wrong.

He was 20 years younger than me. Until recently, rather familiar with death after so long reporting wars, I might have felt that I had some wisdom worth imparting. In Sangin, though, I felt lacking in experience.

Those lanky, colt-limbed, dazzle-eyed, tattoo-covered youths – some of whose bodies were so undeveloped it was amazing that they could ever manage to pack the mule loads of weapons, ammunition, water, body armour and electronic equipment that they carried on each patrol in that dreadful heat – often sounded like wizened old men whenever they discussed anything serious.

“When we first came here we were whingeing that we weren’t getting enough action,” a corporal told me. It was the first of a two-line ode to his lost youth. Of the 27 men in his platoon, four had already been killed and five wounded. “How we take those words back now – massively.”

A couple of days after our conversation by the river, during yet another memorial service at Sangin, I saw the soldier again.

The traditional minute's silence for the dead was initiated and concluded by an explosion of pyrotechnics, which seemed an odd and slightly perverse way to commemorate men who had been blown up.

The soldier jumped at both detonations. His was not the normal nervous reactive flinch of fighting troops to a sudden loud noise.

It looked instead as if a shock wave went through him, starting at his right-hand side, flipping his elbow out, slapping his shoulder up, his knee in and head sideways. He was getting blown up all over again, I realised, standing to attention beneath a flag at half-mast.

I thought by the end of the service he must be crying, but his eyes were dry. I never once saw him look anything else but angry.

If ever a soldier had refused to go out on patrol in Sangin then I never heard of it. When they formed up at the gates of the base with all their gear, already pouring with sweat before things had begun, some even looked carefree, joking among one another about how, if he died, they would fuck their comrade's sister after his funeral, and the like.

But no one ever volunteered for a patrol they did not have to do.

And I didn't meet one soldier there who spoke of "winning".

Death By Drone

From time to time the riflemen got lucky and shot an insurgent dead. Shooting men who were shooting at them had a natural appeal for teeth arm (combat) troops.

It was a rite of passage and mark of superior skill that most had signed up for, as opposed to having their legs ripped off at the hip by a pressure plate device. But in truth rifle kills happened too rarely for their liking.

The shortfall in troop numbers and helicopters favoured the insurgents many times over, allowing them to control 95 per cent of Sangin and to plant minefields that blocked the soldiers into a narrow strip of territory.

After three years in Sangin, British troops still could not move more than about 500m from FOB Jackson, if that, without the likelihood of coming across an IED (Improvised Explosive Device) or running into a small arms contact.

But asymmetric warfare cuts both ways, and the Taleban in Sangin found that death more often came from a hellfire missile launched by a pilotless drone than a bullet fired by a soldier.

From the footage on the screens the skies seemed full of these invisible, unmanned craft, the killer drones Predator and Reaper among them. They beamed live footage of Helmand's desert on to the "Kill TV" screens in various operations rooms around the province. Every now and then the scurrying activities of an individual or group on the screens would attract special attention.

It Is A Spooky Way To Watch A Man Die.

One minute his granulated image is hunched planting a bomb, unaware that the eyes of men as far away as Creech airbase in Nevada and perhaps as near as the closest FOB are scrutinising his every move. Their guilt or innocence is quickly judged according to a set of strict criteria that the Reaper people and local commanders must answer. The final decision is then given to the senior officer present.

On his word the men on the screen live or die.

I was angry one day in Sangin, when, in the Colonel's absence the acting commander asked me to leave the operations room as he made that decision.

I had seen the moment several times before in Afghanistan, the point at which the men on the screen hunch a second before disappearing into a black cloud. It seemed contrary suddenly to deny me the opportunity to witness it once more. Besides, after all the hours staring at the screen, the killing was the main event. Who would miss it?

"I was just about to kill two men," the officer explained afterwards. "I wanted a moment without someone on my shoulder judging my decision."

It had been too easy, I reflected, what with all the grainy excitement of the miniature figures on the flickering screens, to forget that it was really death that was at hand: so cold-blooded it was effectively an execution.

Lt-Col Thomson was keen to emphasise that his men's experience in Sangin was not exclusively adversarial, and that stability and development were strands that were equally important in their counter-insurgency operations.

But there was no escaping it: this summer attrition was the dominant currency in the district, affecting the populations in both Britain and the Upper Sangin valley far more than any of the shuffling development steps.

Given the number of soldiers slain and maimed there, it was no surprise that revenge was often close to men's thoughts.

Sometimes it stepped right into the open. On the evening of August 16, by which time the colonel had lost seven soldiers in three days, he urged his staff to find and kill a Taliban commander thought to be behind the upsurge in insurgent operations. "I'm not after his head on a plate," he told them. "But I want him dead. He's my oppo here and that would be fitting enough vengeance."

In The Insurgents' Back Yard

Eventually, inevitably, 20 years later than I would have wished, I was with the riflemen when they got into a firefight.

I was asleep in the shade under a wicker table inside a local compound when the shooting started, and leapt from my dreams looking rather more startled than I might have wanted as a bullwhip crack of bullets shredded the air above us.

It was one of those rare days for A Company when there were enough Chinooks available to lift them out of FOB Jackson, over the Taleban minefields, across the River Helmand, to drop them right into the insurgents' back yard before the sun was risen.

Not everything went to plan.

As we came in to land in the dark wastes of the desert the rear wheels of our Chinook became caught on a ledge of rock. The pilot, unable to see the nature of the obstacle, gave it a blast of power that all but severed one of the wheels and had the aircraft grinding along the rocky ground in an alarming fashion. This lasted perhaps two seconds and came to nothing. It seemed a very long two seconds, though, and I noticed the soldiers with whom I travelled seemed as eager as I was to run down the ramp and out of the machine once it had finally settled.

Nearly four hours later, as the troops moved through the village of Doab, a couple of Taleban appeared close by and engaged them with rocket-propelled grenades and automatic fire. They were quickly joined by other insurgents, firing from several different positions.

Firefights are seldom more than a series of jumbled images for the individuals concerned, and only make sense for those few commanders who may have an overview.

So from my perspective the whole of what followed seemed to pass in a rather leisurely fashion from a comfortable vantage point behind a thick wall. There was a lot of shooting for a few minutes, which then petered out to be rekindled sporadically over the next hour or so.

For others, however, it was much more intense.

One of the platoons involved ended up trading fire with Taleban at close quarters as both sides jockeyed for a position in the same compound.

A drone's hellfire rocket killed a couple of the Taleban, whose bodies were quickly extracted by their comrades. When riflemen finally secured the compound they found it empty save for rubble and blood. It was as close to a "win" as most troops are likely to get in Sangin.

I left a few days later, with a curious mixture of relief and guilt.

The helicopter I took out of Sangin passed me effortlessly on to a plane flying to Kabul, which in turn allowed me to get a civilian flight to the UK with such ease that I was back home in a Devon village little more than three days later.

Here the deepening colours of the woods along the valley and the warm glow of the autumn light should have provided a swift tonic for all that had passed in Helmand.

But it unsettled me, and it unsettles me still, as I try to connect what possible relevance links it with the Upper Sangin valley, where the price of attrition has teenage soldiers talking not of "when the tour ends", but instead "if I make it home".

They looked rather brilliant, I thought, so far from any reference point of home, so up against it. But I thanked God I have no son a soldier there.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Notes From A Lost War:

“700 Yards From The Police Checkpoint, Two White Flags Flapped In The Breeze”

“A Few Days After We Started Showing Up Here, The Taliban Put Up Those Flags,’ Said Beutel.

‘Pretty Much Everything Past That Is Theirs’”

“The Taliban Control The Villages Even In Daylight, And The Roads And Paths Are Larded With Bombs And Mines”

“Before The Police Disappeared From The Checkpoint, Beutel Had Been Feeling Good About The Last 25 Days”

Explosive booby traps are set into walls, and the insurgents have dug fighting positions with "spider holes," bunkers, camouflaged trenches and even tunnels reminiscent of the Vietnam War.

November 29, 2009 By Jay Price, The Charlotte Observer [Excerpts]

KOLK, Afghanistan When the improvised bomb exploded in a mud-walled compound about 300 yards from a new traffic checkpoint, the six Afghan police officers at the post just looked at one another.

Another violent day on Afghanistan's Highway 1 had begun.

"Tell them to send three guys and go check it out to make sure no locals were hurt," U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Hans Beutel told a translator. "Tell them not to get too close, but go take a look."

Then Beutel, a 23-year-old from Huntersville, and the rest of his team from the 4th Brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division drove off to a half-finished nearby base to grab a quick lunch.

When they returned to the police checkpoint in the early afternoon, they found it deserted.

Staff Sgt. Tony Locklear, 44, from Robeson County, who had spent the morning coaching the officers on running a checkpoint, cursed when he saw they were gone.

Training the Afghan national and local police, who function as a paramilitary force, is essential to the Obama administration's efforts to find an exit from Afghanistan.

U.S. trainers say they must tell the Afghans repeatedly to do the simplest things, such as separating passengers they've searched from ones they haven't when they stop a vehicle.

[Note: Isn't it peculiar that the Afghans fighting the occupation, who don't have all this training and hand-holding micromanagement by foreigners, don't have this problem? Why, they can even figure out complicated things, all by themselves. This is from the same article, below: "We've even seen them shoot at helicopters, slide down awhile when the choppers fire rockets at them, then pop up and shoot again." T

Fuel is often in short supply.

The central police headquarters in Kandahar, in southern Afghanistan, provides the district police with whom Beutel works one tank of diesel fuel a month per truck. That often means that when Beutel wants to mount a mission, he has to carry American fuel in jerrycans for the Afghan vehicles.

This area along Highway 1 about 25 miles west of Kandahar illustrates the challenge the police face.

Down a dusty side road about 700 yards from the police checkpoint, two white flags flapped in the breeze one recent morning.

"A few days after we started showing up here, the Taliban put up those flags," said Beutel. "Pretty much everything past that is theirs."

After nearly two dozen assaults into Taliban turf in the past three months, Beutel and the soldiers he commands describe a nightmarish place in which the Taliban control the villages even in daylight, and the roads and paths are larded with bombs and mines.

Explosive booby traps are set into walls, and the insurgents have dug fighting positions with "spider holes," bunkers, camouflaged trenches and even tunnels reminiscent of the Vietnam War.

For now, all the local police and Afghan National Army units can do is try to keep the highway safe along the 12 miles that Beutel's police are supposed to patrol.

Before the police disappeared from the checkpoint, Beutel had been feeling good about the last 25 days.

His soldiers had worked with the police to beef up several checkpoints. The plan had been to monitor who was entering and leaving villages and to keep the Taliban away from the highway.

The operation had been a success: The number of bombs planted on the road had fallen by 70 to 80 percent, Beutel said.

The mission couldn't last indefinitely, however, because it required too many police officers, and its last day would underscore the security challenges.

The explosion at the nearby compound was only the first of a series of incidents.

Next, a U.S. Army truck filled with soldiers from another unit hit a mine, which blew off one wheel.

Then the attack that many had been expecting came just after Beutel's paratroopers drove off for lunch at the U.S. base.

This time, the insurgents struck an Afghan army convoy about 1,000 yards east with rocket-propelled grenades and small arms.

Beutel's troops, hearing the attack just as they were beginning to eat, jumped in their armored trucks and raced out through the gate.

Beutel got on the radio with the pilots of two U.S. helicopters overhead.

The pilots fired rockets at yet another taunting white flag south of the highway, near where Beutel told them the insurgents had been seen last, but they didn't flush any.

Locklear's men have found networks of trenches near the villages.

"We've even seen them shoot at helicopters, slide down awhile when the choppers fire rockets at them, then pop up and shoot again," he said.

Beutel asked through a translator why the six policemen had abandoned the checkpoint.

"Did the Taliban shoot at them?" he asked Hamayun, a battalion officer.

Hamayun drew himself up.

"We wouldn't put on these uniforms if we were afraid of the Taliban," he said.

"They left because the Americans never came back."

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

**OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION
ALL TROOPS HOME NOW!**

**Total Disconnect:
Blind, Stupid, Silly, Arrogant U.S.
Command Tries To Appease Angry
Afghans With Pretty Little Trinkets
And Some Piped-In Music:
Afghans Say "We Are Getting Tired Of
The Marines -- They Are Making
Problems For Us"**

November 29, 2009 By Tony Perry, The Los Angeles Times [Excerpts]

Reporting from Nawa, Afghanistan - Under an awning set up at a tiny outpost guarded by U.S. Marines, the district governor of Nawa is pleading with three dozen solemn-looking farmers and village elders not to plant the crop that feeds the world heroin market.

Haji Abdul Manaf, a farmer and onetime leader in the fight against Russian occupiers, has several parts to his passionate anti-poppy pitch.

When Manaf talked about poppy, his audience, sitting cross-legged on the ground, said little. But when he threw open the gathering to other topics, the reaction was swift and heated.

The farmers complained about lack of water, and elders talked bitterly about the U.S. detaining their sons and tribesmen as suspected members of the Taliban.

"I don't know why these things are happening," said one farmer, staring angrily at McCollough.

"We are getting tired of the Marines -- they are making problems for us."

Before the farmers left, the Marines distributed Korans, prayer rugs and small radios. A U.S.-run station plays pro-government, anti-Taliban, anti-poppy messages, along with music and some news.

Marines continue to find roadside bombs and detain villagers for possessing bomb materials.

Three community leaders friendly to the Americans were killed over a two-week period, one of them just hours after attending Manaf's speech.

He was a former Taliban who had switched sides.

Obama's Military Dictatorship Runs "Black Prison" On Bagram Base: "All Three Detainees Said The Hardest Part Of Their Detention Was

That Their Families Did Not Know Whether They Were Alive” “The Military Had Mistaken Them For Taliban Fighters”

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

While Mr. Obama signed an order to eliminate so-called black sites run by the Central Intelligence Agency in January, that order did not apply to this jail, which is run by military Special Operations forces.

November 29, 2009 By ALISSA J. RUBIN, The New York Times [Excerpts]

KABUL, Afghanistan — An American military detention camp in Afghanistan is still holding inmates, sometimes for weeks at a time, without access to the International Committee of the Red Cross, according to human rights researchers and former detainees held at the site on the Bagram Air Base.

The site, known to detainees as the black jail, consists of individual windowless concrete cells, each illuminated by a single light bulb glowing 24 hours a day. In interviews, former detainees said that their only human contact was at twice-daily interrogation sessions.

“The black jail was the most dangerous and fearful place,” said Hamidullah, a spare-parts dealer in Kandahar who said he was detained there in June.

While Mr. Obama signed an order to eliminate so-called black sites run by the Central Intelligence Agency in January, that order did not apply to this jail, which is run by military Special Operations forces.

The black jail is separate from the larger Bagram detention center, which now holds about 700 detainees, mostly in cages accommodating about 20 men apiece, and which had become notorious to the Afghan public as a symbol of abuse.

That center will be closed by early next year and the detainees moved to a new larger detention site as part of the administration’s effort to improve conditions at Bagram.

All three detainees said the hardest part of their detention was that their families did not know whether they were alive.

“For my whole family it was disastrous,” said Hayatullah, a Kandahar resident who said he was working in his pharmacy when he was arrested.

“Because they knew the Americans were sometimes killing people, and they thought they had killed me because for two to three months they didn’t know where I was.”

The three detainees said the military had mistaken them for Taliban fighters.

“They kept saying to me, ‘Are you Qari Idris?’ ” said Gulham Khan, 25, an impoverished, illiterate sheep trader, who mostly delivers sheep and goats for people who buy the animals in the livestock market in Ghazni, the capital of the province of the same name.

He was captured in late October 2008 and released in early September this year, he said.

“I said, ‘I’m not Qari Idris.’ But they kept asking me over and over, and I kept saying, ‘I’m Gulham. This is my name, that is my father’s name, you can ask the elders.’ ”

Ten months after his initial detention, American soldiers went to the group cell where he was then being held and told him he had been mistakenly picked up under the wrong name, he said.

“They said, ‘Please accept our apology, and we are sorry that we kept you here for this time.’

And that was it. They kept me for more than 10 months and gave me nothing back.”

In their search for him, Mr. Khan’s family members spent the equivalent of \$6,000, a fortune for a sheep dealer, who often makes just a dollar a day.

Some of the money was spent on bribes to local Afghan soldiers to get information on where he was being held; they said soldiers took the money and never came back with the information.

In Mr. Hamidullah’s case, interrogators at the black jail insisted that he was a Taliban fighter named Faida Muhammad. “I said, ‘That’s not me,’ ” he recalled.

“They blamed me and said, ‘You are making bombs and are a facilitator of bomb making and helping militants,’ ” he said.

“I said, ‘I have a shop.

“I sell spare parts for vehicles, for trucks and cars.”

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

BEEN ON THE JOB TOO LONG: COME ON HOME, NOW



U.S. soldiers from the 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion walk on patrol near the town of Pul-i-alam, Logar province, Afghanistan, Nov. 18, 2009. (AP Photo/Dario Lopez-Mills)

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/)**

“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

TROOP NEWS

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



The casket of Sgt. 1st Class Bradley Bohle of Glen Burnie, Md., Oct. 5, 2009 at St. Bernadette Catholic Church in Severn, Md. Bohle was killed when a vehicle he was in struck by an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan. Bohle was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group, Fort Bragg, N.C. (AP Photo/Steve Ruark)

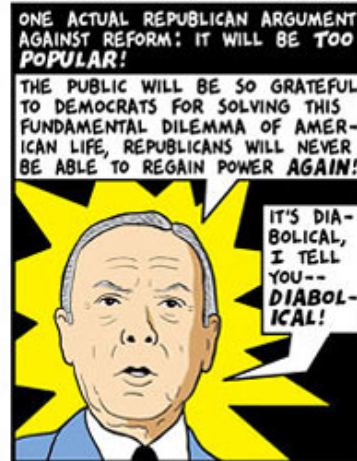
**POLITICIANS CAN'T BE COUNTED
ON TO HALT THE BLOODSHED**

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



www.thismodernworld.com
TM TOMORROW © 2009

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

CLASS WAR REPORTS



California Campuses Explode As State U Trustees Raise Fees 32%: Three Days Of Strikes, Protests And Building Occupations Spread Across The State:

“Students At Far-Flung Universities Across The Country Sent Messages Of Support And Thanks To The Student Occupiers In California”

While the tumult continued outdoors, inside Kerr Hall, police began to back down.

They first invited occupiers to leave through the front entrance and be arrested one by one. When those inside rejected this proposal, the cops offered occupiers a decision between leaving voluntarily through a back door and being arrested.

All the occupants opted to leave, and did so without being detained or identified.

November 23, 2009 By Rachel Cohen, Socialist Worker [Excerpts].

POLICE, ACTING on orders from university and state officials, cracked down on protests and occupations at campuses across California, in a clear escalation of force against the growing movement of students, staff and faculty protesting severe budget cuts and tuition increases.

The last police attack of the weekend, and one of the most violent, came early Sunday at the University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC).

Officers clad in riot gear forced their way through lines of protesters at an occupation of Kerr Hall, the central administration building on campus--and began manhandling demonstrators. One faculty member, who was acting as an observer, was injured when he fell 12 feet to the ground while trying to avoid the dangerous crush at the top of a staircase.

The UCSC occupation and other actions that continued through the weekend began as part of three days of strikes and protests in the University of California (UC) system and other schools.

While the UC Regents--the governing board of one of the nation's most prestigious state university systems--met to approve a 32 percent fee increase, student took part in coordinated actions starting November 18.

The UC Regents met in Los Angeles, and the UCLA campus was host to hundreds of protesting students who came by bus from across the state to take their message directly to the board.

When news reached the crowd outside that the Regents had affirmed the 32 percent hike, students took direct action to obstruct the Regents' exit, linking arms and surrounding the building, and later sitting down to block their vehicles leaving campus.

Students also took over Campbell Hall, renaming it "Carter-Huggins Hall" in honor of two leaders of the Black Panther Party, Bunchy Carter and John Huggins, murdered there in 1969.

While the occupiers left the building peacefully, protesters across the campus faced police attacks. Fourteen people were arrested in all.

At UC Berkeley, during the early hours of Friday morning, around 40 students barricaded themselves in Wheeler Hall on the UC Berkeley campus.

Shortly afterward, hundreds of students began to gather outside in support of the occupiers inside Wheeler--by noon, the crowd had grown to between 1,000 and 2,000.

Riot cops from the Berkeley, Oakland and UC Police Departments, as well as Alameda County Sheriff's Department, arrived and began aggressively pushing back the crowds of students with batons and rubber bullets. Dozens of students were injured by police, some suffering broken fingers and bruising.

Despite efforts by some faculty members to persuade students to disperse, the crowd remained committed to staying put as long as the Wheeler Hall occupation continued.

The police and campus administration refused to negotiate, and at around 5 p.m., a SWAT team arrived and broke through the barricades to arrest the students inside Wheeler.

The continued presence of thousands of students outside forced police to release the occupiers into the crowd. However, three of the occupiers face bogus felony burglary charges, and are due to appear in court on Monday.

Throughout the days of protests, students at far-flung universities across the country sent messages of support and thanks to the student occupiers in California.

On Saturday, students in Vienna, Austria, marched on the U.S. Embassy to protest police violence used against students in California.

Rachel Cohen Reports From The University Of California Santa Cruz:

“As We Waited For The Sun To Rise, We Discussed The Range Of Consequences We Might Face”

THE DEMONSTRATIONS at UCSC [University Of California Santa Clara] began on Wednesday, November 18, with an occupation of Kresge Town Hall.

The decision to occupy was nearly unanimous among the crowd of 400 protesters who gathered for a General Assembly.

Kresge Town Hall is a large auditorium and ideal for mass meetings, but it rents for about \$50 an hour, so students took over the space to claim it as a free center for organizing.

The following afternoon, students gathered at a General Assembly in the occupied auditorium voted to expand their occupation by taking over the campus' central administration building Kerr Hall.

On Friday, Kerr Hall's new occupants selected seven key points from a list of 30 previously adopted demands--among them, keeping resource centers such as the Women's and Ethnic Resource Centers under the management of individual directors;

protection for undocumented students and workers; a freeze on layoffs of campus employees and restoration of reduced hours for custodians; and guaranteed funding for graduate students who lost teaching assistant positions and undergraduates who lost work-study positions.

The next day, a group of protesters began negotiations on these demands with representatives of the administration, but more than eight hours of talks yielded only a tepid response from administrators--and as students debated these terms, UCSC's two top officials personally rejected even these terms. Student negotiators were informed that the administration would issue a formal warning to occupiers, after which police would be called in.

Inside Kerr Hall, students gathered to fine-tune plans for responding to the police. Following several days and nights of occupations, many participants were exhausted, and anxieties ran high, yet students carried on a clear and concise discussion.

After about 45 minutes, the protesters voted by a narrow margin to barricade doors from the inside and maintain a human barricade on the patio outside. Inside, 40 to 50 occupiers planned to peacefully sit in, waiting to be physically removed from the building.

Outside, over 100 students and faculty said they would observe the police action, taking photographs and video to help ensure the safety of those who were willing to risk arrest.

NO WARNING ever came from the administration, and occupiers waited through what must have been the coldest night of the winter thus far.

Minutes after 5 a.m., police cars arrived at the base of campus, and students and faculty assembled again.

As we waited for the sun to rise, we discussed the range of consequences we might face.

At a quarter to 7 a.m., teams of riot cops rolled into view. By the dozens, they marched down the hill toward Kerr Hall.

Stopping some yards before the patio outside the building, police declared that any assembly in the building, on the patio or in "the surrounding area" was unlawful. Protesters and observers alike were given 3 to 5 minutes to disperse.

Protesters lined up along a concrete staircase on the opposite side of the patio from police. The police then advanced in a line that was able to break through the human barricade of students who had linked arms. Once the cops got through this line, they fanned out behind the seated students and began to push them toward the staircase.

Yelling "We are peaceful, how about you?" we watched as police used batons to shove a dense group of students and faculty observers along the railing of the stairwell, producing a dangerous crush at the top of the staircase. Several people were forced to climb over the railings and jump to safety. One of these, UCSC anthropology professor Mark Anderson, fell about 12 feet to the ground below while trying to escape.

While police above continued to grab, push and prod protesters with their batons, a handful of cops surrounded and inspected Anderson.

Incredibly, the police then brought dogs onto the patio to further intimidate protesters.

Minutes later, police lingering in front of the doorway to Kerr Hall made a show of tearing down a large banner that read "Raise hell, not costs," congratulating themselves with high fives and pats on the back.

Some 20 minutes later, Anderson was finally taken by ambulance to a hospital where he could be checked for spinal injuries. He was released later in the day.

But long before Anderson was carried off on a stretcher, police set to work breaking through several entrances to the building to get at the occupiers still inside.

After a period of anxious waiting, police showed signs that they intended to bring the occupiers out through a back entrance.

No sooner had half the protesters split off to observe the removal of the occupiers in back than word reached us that police had resumed use of their batons to stampede students the rest of the way down the stairs.

While the tumult continued outdoors, inside Kerr Hall, police began to back down.

They first invited occupiers to leave through the front entrance and be arrested one by one.

When those inside rejected this proposal, the cops offered occupiers a decision between leaving voluntarily through a back door and being arrested.

All the occupants opted to leave, and did so without being detained or identified. So the occupation ended without arrests.

After the occupiers emerged from the building, the crowd began to move, marching back to Kresge Town Hall for a rally.

"I'll be honest," said one participant at the open mike at Kresge "About 15 minutes before the cops arrived, I was ready to split." But then, he said, as the cops arrived, he saw dozens of fellow students stand their ground. "That's what made me stay," he said.

Despite the enthusiastic mood following an occupation that ended with no arrests, protesters also agreed to several concrete next steps. Students organized a collection to support Mark Anderson.

Some participants also underscored the fact that while the protests of the past few days were a new step forward for the movement, we still have a long way to go in the struggle to defend public education.

None of the concrete demands raised by the occupiers have been met. Future actions must continue to engage broader forces among students, the faculty and staff.

As protesters agreed to reconvene in Kresge Town Hall--a space that will no longer be occupied, but which Kresge College Provost Juan Poblete is working to secure as a free meeting space for future discussions--the applause ringing through the auditorium showed that no one is ready to quit the struggle.

Got an opinion? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or send to contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request identification published.

Vietnam GI: Reprints Available



Vietnam: They Stopped An Imperial War

Not available from anybody else, anywhere

Edited by Vietnam Veteran Jeff Sharlet from 1968 until his death, this newspaper rocked the world, attracting attention even from Time Magazine, and extremely hostile attention from the chain of command. The pages and pages of letters in the paper from troops in Vietnam condemning the war are lost to history, but you can find them here.

The Military Project has copied complete sets of Vietnam GI. The originals were a bit rough, but every page is there. Over 100 pages, full 11x17 size.

Free on request to active duty members of the armed forces.

Cost for others: \$15 if picked up in New York City. For mailing inside USA add \$5 for bubble bag and postage. For outside USA, include extra for mailing 2.5 pounds to wherever you are.

Checks, money orders payable to: The Military Project

Orders to:
Military Resistance
Box 126
2576 Broadway
New York, N.Y.
10025-5657

All proceeds are used for projects giving aid and comfort to members of the armed forces opposed to today's Imperial wars.



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

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

