

Military Resistance 8D3

HOW MANY MORE FOR OBAMA'S WARS?



March 2, 2010: U.S. Marines carry a wounded Marine to a waiting U.S. Army medevac helicopter, during an ongoing firefight in Helmand province, Afghanistan. (AP Photo/Brennan Linsley)

**Marja: Game Over:
“The Taliban Are Everywhere”
“The Taliban’s Governor For Marja
Returned To The Area On Monday
For The First Time Since The
February Assault And Held A
Meeting With Local Elders”**

Maj. James Coffman Says The Taliban Have “Reseized Control And The Momentum In A Lot Of Ways” “We Have To Change Tactics To Get The Locals Back On Our Side” “Most People Here Identify Themselves As Taliban”

“My greatest fear right now is not knowing if I have put money into the pockets of the Taliban,” Major Coffman said.

“You shake hands with them, but you don’t know they are Taliban,” Colonel Sakhi said. “They have the same clothes, and the same style.

“And they are using the money against the Marines. They are buying I.E.D.’s and buying ammunition, everything.”

April 3, 2010 By RICHARD A. OPPEL Jr., New York Times

MARJA, Afghanistan — Since their offensive here in February, the Marines have flooded Marja with hundreds of thousands of dollars a week. The tactic aims to win over wary residents by paying them compensation for property damage or putting to work men who would otherwise look to the Taliban for support.

Just a few weeks since the start of the operation here, the Taliban have “reseized control and the momentum in a lot of ways” in northern Marja, Maj. James Coffman, civil affairs leader for the Third Battalion, Sixth Marines, said in an interview in late March.

“We have to change tactics to get the locals back on our side.”

Col. Ghulam Sakhi, an Afghan National Police commander here, says his informants have told him that at least 30 Taliban have come to one Marine outpost here to take money from the Marines as compensation for property damage or family members killed during the operation in February.

“You shake hands with them, but you don’t know they are Taliban,” Colonel Sakhi said. “They have the same clothes, and the same style.

“And they are using the money against the Marines. They are buying I.E.D.’s and buying ammunition, everything.”

“The Taliban are everywhere.”

In Marja, the Taliban are hardly a distinct militant group, and the Marines have collided with a Taliban identity so dominant that the movement appears more akin

to the only political organization in a one-party town, with an influence that touches everyone.

Even the Marines admit to being somewhat flummoxed.

“We’ve got to re-evaluate our definition of the word ‘enemy,’ ” said Brig. Gen. Larry Nicholson, commander of the Marine expeditionary brigade in Helmand Province. “Most people here identify themselves as Taliban.”

“We have to readjust our thinking so we’re not trying to chase the Taliban out of Marja, we’re trying to chase the enemy out,” he said. “We have to deal with these people.”

The Marines hoped the work programs would be a quick way to put to work hundreds of “military-aged males,” as they call them. In some places, that has worked.

But the programs have run into jeopardy in other parts of Marja, an area of about 80 square miles that is a patchwork of lush farmland and small bazaars and villages.

In northern Marja, the biggest blow came when the local man hired to supervise the work programs was beaten by the Taliban and refused to help the Marines any more.

The programs are “completely dead in the water” there, Major Coffman said.

In addition to work programs, the Marines are using compensation payments to build support for the newly appointed district governor of Marja, Hajji Abdul Zahir, telling people that to receive money they must get his approval.

That effort has proved equally vulnerable.

“My greatest fear right now is not knowing if I have put money into the pockets of the Taliban,” Major Coffman said.

Despite those reservations, the Marine strategy depends on sowing this community with buckets of cash. The money is a bridge to a day when, in theory, the new Marja district government will have more credibility than the Taliban.

That would be a difficult goal even if the Americans did not intend to rid the region of its lucrative poppy crop. While the United States has abandoned the policy of widespread eradication of the crop, efforts to discourage planting it will still cost farmers and power brokers huge sums.

“There are lots of people with lots of money invested here, and they are not just going to give that up,” General Nicholson said. “Now is the heavy lifting. We have to convince a very skeptical population that we are here to help them.”

A steady flow of Taliban attacks have added to the challenge. After the February offensive, the Marines used cash payments to prod more than 20 store owners at one bazaar in northern Marja to open their doors, a key to stabilizing the area and reassuring residents.

By late March, all but five shops had closed, Major Coffman said. A prominent anti-Taliban senior elder was also gunned down in northern Marja, prompting most of the 200 people in his district to flee.

“They have completely paralyzed all the folks here,” Major Coffman said.

In another sign of how little the Marines control outside their own outposts, one week ago masked gunmen killed a 22-year-old man, Hazrat Gul, in broad daylight as he and four other Afghans built a small bridge about a third of a mile from a military base in central Marja.

Mr. Gul’s boss, an Afghan who contracted with the Marines to build the bridge, says he has been warned four times by the Taliban to stop working for the Americans.

And even as the NATO-backed Mr. Zahir struggles to gain credibility as Marja’s leader, the Taliban are working to fortify their own local administration.

According to Colonel Sakhi, the Taliban’s governor for Marja returned to the area on Monday for the first time since the February assault and held a meeting with local elders, many of whom Mr. Zahir is trying to win over. The Taliban governor warned them not to take money from the Marines or cooperate with the Afghan government, Colonel Sakhi said.

MORE:

**Marja: The Taliban Unafriad:
“The Marines’ Immediate Neighbor
Is A Crumbling Mud Mosque Run
By Mawlawi Abdel Rashid, An
Unapologetic Taliban Supporter”
“If I Lived 1,000 Years, Praise God, I
Would Prefer The Taliban,’ Rashid
Said”
“Rashid Tries To Counter The American
Influence By Inviting Afghan Soldiers,**

Police And Military Interpreters To Come Across The Street To Pray”

"They failed before, so now they are trying to win people's hearts using different tactics and strategies," Rashid said of the Marines as several sat listening nearby. "But they will never be successful."

Apr. 04, 2010 By DION NISSENBAUM, McClatchy Newspapers [Excerpts]

MARJAH, Afghanistan -- Among the U.S. Marines at Combat Outpost Turbett, Gunnery Sgt. Brandon Dickinson is better known as "Gunny D."

These days, the 32-year-old non-commissioned officer, who's spearheading U.S. Marine counterinsurgency outreach in this central slice of Marjah, has a new nickname: "The mayor of Koru Chareh."

In the weeks since the Marines with Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment seized control of this opium-rich region from the Taliban, Dickinson has emerged as a neighborhood godfather in the ragtag Koru market outside this Marine outpost.

Every day, Dickinson hands out money to pay storekeepers recovering from the fighting, hires scores of workers to clean canals, and wanders into the street without his flak jacket to talk to Marjah elders.

The new "mayor" only has to walk a few feet to encounter the opposition, however.

The Marines' immediate neighbor is a crumbling mud mosque run by Mawlawi Abdel Rashid, an unapologetic Taliban supporter who makes little effort to hide his distaste for the Americans who've taken over his town.

"If I lived 1,000 years, praise God, I would prefer the Taliban," Rashid said through one of the Marines' interpreters during a brief visit to the military outpost.

"They failed before, so now they are trying to win people's hearts using different tactics and strategies," Rashid said of the Marines as several sat listening nearby. "But they will never be successful."

Dickinson's title as the local mayor is an unintended reminder that, aside from the Afghan police and soldiers working with the Marines, there are few signs of the new Afghan government that at some point will take responsibility for Marjah.

Until the Marines arrived, Rashid said, he had more than 100 Taliban students who'd regularly come to his mosque for classes and guidance. They've gone.

Now that the American military is across the road, Rashid has given permission for the educated commander of the new Afghan police force to hold regular elementary school classes in the mosque courtyard.

When invited to the Marine compound for tea, Rashid politely rebuffed the Americans' politically charged request that he teach 15 minutes of Quran studies each day to the growing number of young boys in the class.

Throughout the days, Rashid tries to counter the American influence by inviting Afghan soldiers, police and military interpreters to come across the street to pray. Sometimes they join Rashid and other local men answering the hoarse, atonal call to prayer.

Though Rashid won't take any money for his own needs, the Marines said he accepted about \$150 from the Marines to repair some minor damage to his mosque, and he tacitly acceded to the Marines' plans to build a new community well outside the mosque.

Despite it all, Rashid wants the Americans to leave and the Taliban to return.

"The Taliban have the strongest security in the world," said Rashid, a lean Afghan with oversized glasses and a tangled black beard.

The counterinsurgency work - known colloquially as COIN - is slow.

"I'm a huge believer in COIN; I just don't particularly like doing it because it's so tedious," said Capt. Ryan Sparks, the 35-year-old Bravo Company commander from San Diego.

"It's much easier to say: The enemy is on that side of the line; we're on this side of the line. Go," Sparks added.

COIN "is just so stressful on a day-to-day basis because you talk to a guy who is your friend, and as soon as you walk away from him, he shoots you in the back."

MORE:

The "City" Of Marja Was A Fraud Created By U.S. Occupation Command:

**"It's A Collection Of Village Farms,
With Typical Family Compounds,'
Said The Official"**

**"Marja Is Not A City Or Even A Real
Town, But Either A Few Clusters Of
Farmers' Homes Or A Large Agricultural**

Area Covering Much Of The Southern Helmand River Valley”

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

The Associated Press further confused the issue in a Feb. 21 story, referring to "three markets in town - which covers 80 square miles...."

A "town" with an area of 80 square miles would be bigger than such U.S. cities as Washington, D.C., Pittsburgh and Cleveland. But AP failed to notice that something was seriously wrong with that reference.

Mar 8, 2010 By Gareth Porter, (IPS) [Excerpts]

For weeks, the U.S. public followed the biggest offensive of the Afghanistan War against what it was told was a "city of 80,000 people" as well as the logistical hub of the Taliban in that part of Helmand.

That idea was a central element in the overall impression built up in February that Marja was a major strategic objective, more important than other district centres in Helmand.

It turns out, however, that the picture of Marja presented by military officials and obediently reported by major news media is one of the clearest and most dramatic pieces of misinformation of the entire war, apparently aimed at hyping the offensive as a historic turning point in the conflict.

Marja is not a city or even a real town, but either a few clusters of farmers' homes or a large agricultural area covering much of the southern Helmand River Valley.

"It's not urban at all," an official of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), who asked not to be identified, admitted to IPS Sunday. He called Marja a "rural community".

"It's a collection of village farms, with typical family compounds," said the official, adding that the homes are reasonably prosperous by Afghan standards.

Richard B. Scott, who worked in Marja as an adviser on irrigation for the U.S. Agency for International Development as recently as 2005, agrees that Marja has nothing that could be mistaken as being urban. It is an "agricultural district" with a "scattered series of farmers' markets," Scott told IPS in a telephone interview.

The ISAF official said the only population numbering tens of thousands associated with Marja is spread across many villages and almost 200 square kilometres, or about 125 square miles.

The official admitted that the confusion about Marja's population was facilitated by the fact that the name has been used both for the relatively large agricultural area and for a specific location where farmers have gathered for markets.

However, the name Marja "was most closely associated" with the more specific location, where there are also a mosque and a few shops.

That very limited area was the apparent objective of "Operation Moshtarak", to which 7,500 U.S., NATO and Afghan troops were committed amid the most intense publicity given any battle since the beginning of the war.

So how did the fiction that Marja is a city of 80,000 people get started?

The idea was passed on to the news media by the U.S. Marines in southern Helmand.

The earliest references in news stories to Marja as a city with a large population have a common origin in a briefing given Feb. 2 by officials at Camp Leatherneck, the U.S. Marine base there.

The Associated Press published an article the same day quoting "Marine commanders" as saying that they expected 400 to 1,000 insurgents to be "holed up" in the "southern Afghan town of 80,000 people." That language evoked an image of house to house urban street fighting.

The same story said Marja was "the biggest town under Taliban control" and called it the "linchpin of the militants' logistical and opium-smuggling network".

It gave the figure of 125,000 for the population living in "the town and surrounding villages".

ABC news followed with a story the next day referring to the "city of Marja" and claiming that the city and the surrounding area "are more heavily populated, urban and dense than other places the Marines have so far been able to clear and hold."

The rest of the news media fell into line with that image of the bustling, urbanised Marja in subsequent stories, often using "town" and "city" interchangeably. Time magazine wrote about the "town of 80,000" Feb. 9, and the Washington Post did the same Feb. 11.

As "Operation Moshtarak" began, U.S. military spokesmen were portraying Marja as an urbanised population centre.

On Feb. 14, on the second day of the offensive, Marine spokesman Lt. Josh Diddams said the Marines were "in the majority of the city at this point."

He also used language that conjured images of urban fighting, referring to the insurgents holding some "neighbourhoods".

A few days into the offensive, some reporters began to refer to a "region", but only created confusion rather than clearing the matter up. CNN managed to refer to Marja twice as a "region" and once as "the city" in the same Feb. 15 article, without any explanation for the apparent contradiction.

The Associated Press further confused the issue in a Feb. 21 story, referring to "three markets in town - which covers 80 square miles...."

A "town" with an area of 80 square miles would be bigger than such U.S. cities as Washington, D.C., Pittsburgh and Cleveland. But AP failed to notice that something was seriously wrong with that reference.

Long after other media had stopped characterising Marja as a city, the New York Times was still referring to Marja as "a city of 80,000", in a Feb. 26 dispatch with a Marja dateline.

The decision to hype up Marja as the objective of "Operation Moshtarak" by planting the false impression that it is a good-sized city would not have been made independently by the Marines at Camp Leatherneck.

A central task of "information operations" in counterinsurgency wars is "establishing the COIN (counterinsurgency) narrative", according to the Army Counterinsurgency Field Manual as revised under Gen. David Petraeus in 2006.

That task is usually done by "higher headquarters" rather than in the field, as the manual notes.

The COIN manual asserts that news media "directly influence the attitude of key audiences toward counterinsurgents, their operations and the opposing insurgency." The manual refers to "a war of perceptions...conducted continuously using the news media."

Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, commander of ISAF, was clearly preparing to wage such a war in advance of the Marja operation.

In remarks made just before the offensive began, McChrystal invoked the language of the counterinsurgency manual, saying, "This is all a war of perceptions."

The Washington Post reported Feb. 22 that the decision to launch the offensive against Marja was intended largely to impress U.S. public opinion with the effectiveness of the U.S. military in Afghanistan by showing that it could achieve a "large and loud victory."

The false impression that Marja was a significant city was an essential part of that message.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Massive Car Bomb Attacks Target Foreign Embassies In Baghdad:

“It Was Not Immediately Clear Whether Any Diplomatic Staff Were Among The Victims”



Smoke billows across Baghdad following multiple explosions. (AFP/Sabah Arar)



Apr 4 By ADAM SCHRECK and QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA, Associated Press Writers & By ROD NORDLAND and RIYADH MOHAMMED, New York Times [Excerpts]

Attackers detonated three car bombs near embassies in the Mansour District and nearby on the western side of Baghdad on Sunday, killing at least 35 people and wounding more than 200 in back-to-back bombings, authorities said

Bombs and rockets went off at widely scattered locations, paralyzing traffic and disrupting communications throughout the city.

Sunday's blasts went off within minutes of each other - one near the Iranian Embassy and two others in an area that houses several embassies, including the Egyptian Consulate, and the German and Spanish embassies, said Maj. Gen. Qassim al-Moussawi, a spokesman for the city's operations command center.

"These explosions targeted diplomatic missions," al-Moussawi told The Associated Press, saying the death toll was likely to rise.

The force of the blasts shook buildings and rattled windows miles away. AP Television News footage showed civilians outside the Iranian Embassy loading casualties into police vehicles and ambulances. Stunned victims in bloody clothes fled the scene as smoke rose.



A damaged military vehicle at the site of a bomb attack near the Iranian Embassy in Baghdad April 4, 2010. The blasts near the Iranian, Egyptian and German embassies followed mortar attacks on the Iraqi capital's Green Zone, home to government buildings, official residences and foreign embassies. REUTERS/Thaier al-Sudani

It was not immediately clear whether any diplomatic staff were among the victims.

Several Iraqi guards at the Egyptian Consulate and one Iraqi guard at the German Embassy were killed, authorities said.

Guards at the Egyptian Consulate opened fire on one of the attackers as he drove toward them, but were unable to stop him before the blast hit concrete barriers, al-Moussawi said.

Four Egyptians working at the consulate were wounded by shrapnel, according to Egypt's Foreign Ministry. The Spanish government said one of the explosions caused "considerable damage" to its embassy, but injured no one.

Police officials said at least 19 people were killed outside the Iranian Embassy and at least 16 were killed in the other explosions. Some 215 people were reported wounded.

One of the police officials said many of the victims were employees at a state-run bank near the Iranian Embassy.

Sunday's explosions occurred shortly before 11:30 a.m. after a number of far smaller blasts overnight and early Sunday.

Continuing Mortar Attacks On Green Zone

April 4 (Reuters) & By ROD NORDLAND and RIYADH MOHAMMED, New York Times

Two mortar rounds landed in the Green Zone diplomatic and government compound with no immediate word on casualties, an Interior Ministry source said.

Four more mortar rounds landed in the Green Zone late on Saturday without casualties, police said.

Two mortars were also fired into the Green Zone on Sunday, the Interior Ministry official said.

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/)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Comment Unnecessary



Taliban insurgents celebrate victory with hugs in front of a destroyed German military vehicle in Isaa Khail village of Char Dara district of the northern Kunduz Province April 3, 2010. Three German soldiers were killed and five others seriously injured in the fighting. REUTERS/Wahdat

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

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

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

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

**WELCOME TO THE LONELY SIDE OF HELL:
ALL HOME NOW!**



A soldier with the Army National Guard 162 Engineer Company attached with 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion of U.S. Marine Corps during a route clearance mission across a desert of Helmand province, southern Afghanistan, March 15, 2010. REUTERS/Shamil Zhumatov



U.S. Marines from Kilo company 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines patrol in Marjah district, Helmand province March 28, 2010. REUTERS/Asmaa Waguih



U.S. soldiers from 20th Battalion, 584 Mobile Augmentation Company (MAC), Route Clearance Patrol stand guard on a road in Kandahar April 1, 2010. REUTERS/Tim Wimborne



Soldiers from the U.S. Army's 20th Battalion, 584 Mobile Augmentation Company (MAC), Route Clearance Patrol (RCP) inspect a security grill fitted over the end of a culvert in Kandahar April 2, 2010. The security grills assist in preventing the placement of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in drainage culverts. REUTERS/Tim Wimborne

TROOP NEWS

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



The body of Jason H. Estopinal, a 21-year-old Marine from Dallas, Ga., who was killed in Afghanistan, leaves Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Ga., Feb. 20, 2010. Estopinal was killed Feb. 15 in Helmand province. He was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force out of Camp Lejeune, N.C. Estopinal was a 2007 graduate of East Paulding High School in Dallas. (AP Photo/Rich Addicks)

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



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

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

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

Frederick Douglass, 1852

Hope for change doesn’t cut it when you’re still losing buddies.

-- J.D. Englehart, Iraq Veterans Against The War

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

-- Al Jaccoma, Veterans For Peace

“The Nixon administration claimed and received great credit for withdrawing the Army from Vietnam, but it was the rebellion of low-ranking GIs that forced the government to abandon a hopeless suicidal policy”

-- David Cortright; Soldiers In Revolt

**It is a two class world and the wrong class is running it.
-- Larry Christensen, Soldiers Of Solidarity & United Auto Workers**

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

They Got That Right #1 Majority Of Americans Understand The Government Is The Enemy

03 April 2010 By Patrik Jonsson, The Christian Science Monitor [Excerpt]

A Pew poll in early March found 71 percent of Americans "dissatisfied with the way things are going in the country today," while a CNN poll showed that 56 percent of Americans are more than just discontented with Washington.

Instead, that majority of respondents agreed that the government is "so large and powerful that it poses an immediate threat to rights and freedoms of ordinary citizens."

MORE:

They Got That Right #2 Popular Support For Either Party Has Struck Bottom

April 2, 2010 By Bill Moyers and Michael Winship, Salon [Excerpt]

The individualist, greed-driven free-market ideology that both our major parties have pursued is at odds with what most Americans really care about.

Popular support for either party has struck bottom, as more and more agree that growing inequality is bad for the country, that corporations have too much power, that money in politics has corrupted our system, and that working families and poor communities need and deserve help because the free market has failed to generate shared prosperity - its famous unseen hand has become a closed fist..

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

DOMESTIC ENEMY UNFIT FOR COMMAND UNWORTHY OF OBEDIENCE



Democratic National Committee meeting Washington February 6, 2010. REUTERS/Yuri Gripas/Files

**Quit Whining And Pissing On
Everybody In Sight With Your
Condescending Bullshit About How
Stupid & Apathetic Americans Are:**

If You Don't Spend Time In The Real World Reaching Out To Real Troops, You Have Nothing Whatsoever To Sneer At Others About. Just Shut The Fuck Up And Get The Fuck Out Of The Way

"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



**Welcome To The Occupied
USA:**

“Three Seattle Police Officers Used A Stun Gun On A Pregnant Mother”

“Seven-Months-Pregnant Malaika Brooks Suffered Repeated 50,000 Volt Shocks For Refusing To Sign A Speeding Ticket, And A Federal Court Of Appeals Ruled It Justified”

“Just This Week, Indiana Police Officers Used A Stun Gun On An ‘Unruly’ 10-Year-Old Child”

"As police officers, they could have hurt me seriously," Brooks told the Seattle Post-Intelligencer in 2005. "They could have hurt my unborn fetus. All because of a traffic ticket. Is this what it's come down to?"

April 2, 2010 By Liliana Segura, AlterNet

You are a police officer on traffic patrol and you pull over an irate driver who refuses to admit she was doing 32 mph in a 20-mph zone. She won't sign the speeding ticket, not even when you call for backup. Also, she is pregnant. What do you do?

- a) Finish writing the ticket, making note of the fact that the driver refused to sign, and send her on her way, perhaps admonishing her in the process.
- b) Grab the keys from the ignition, tase her three times, force her out of her car, and arrest her.

In the minds of three Seattle police officers in 2004, the latter was the reasonable course of action when they stopped seven-months-pregnant Malaika Brooks -- and last week, a federal appeals court agreed.

In a 2-1 ruling, Judges Cynthia Holcomb Hall and Diarmuid F. O'Scannlain of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled the officers were justified in their use of force, because of the threat that Brooks might somehow "retrieve the keys and drive off erratically," and because the third tasing allowed the officers to "finally extract her from her car and gain control over her."

"Police officers have to have the ability to compel people to obey their lawful orders," Ted Buck, a lawyer for the police officers, said following the ruling.

The decision was met with outrage -- not the least of which came from the dissenting judge in the case, Judge Marsha Berzon, whose opinion reminded the court that, after Brooks was tased, "the Officers then dragged Brooks from the car, laid her on her stomach in the street, and held her down while they handcuffed her, despite her protestations that she was pregnant and they were hurting her stomach.

"The Taser left burn marks on Brooks's thigh, shoulder, and neck. It also left scars, including a scar on her arm that is probably permanent," she wrote.

"I fail utterly to comprehend how my colleagues are able to conclude that it was objectively reasonable to use any force against Brooks, let alone three activations of a Taser, in response to such a trivial offense."

Two days before Thanksgiving, in 2004, Malaika Brooks was rushing to drop off her son at school at the African American Academy in Seattle, when she was pulled over speeding in a school zone. Her son got out of the car and headed for school; meanwhile, Brooks, seven months pregnant and stressed out, told the officer she was not speeding and refused to sign her name to the ticket.

The police officer, Juan Ornelas, was joined by his partner, Ofc. Donald Jones, who threatened Brooks with arrest if she did not sign the ticket. When she still refused, they called for backup; Sergeant Steven Daman pulled up, ordering the officers to arrest her.

According to court documents, "initial attempts to arrest Ms. Brooks were unsuccessful." They tried to forcibly remove her from the car using a "pain compliance hold" -- twisting her arm up behind her back -- but she "stiffened her body and clutched her steering wheel."

"Ofc. Jones then brandished a taser and threatened to use it on Ms. Brooks," according to court documents. "He 'yelled' at her, and asked her if she knew 'how many volts' the taser had."

"I also informed Brooks that the taser was fifty thousand volts and that the taser was going to hurt extremely bad if applied," Jones said in a statement.

Ms. Brooks told Ofc. Jones that she was pregnant, and was two months away from her due date. According to Ms. Brooks, Ofc. Jones asked "How pregnant are you?"

Ofc. Jones demonstrated the arcing of electricity between the two contact points of the taser, but this did not persuade Ms. Brooks to leave her car.

After discussing where to tase her -- eventually "deciding on her thigh" -- "Officer Jones discharged the Taser against Brooks's thigh, through her sweat pants, which caused Brooks 'tremendous pain.'

She began to yell and honk the car's horn."

Within the next minute, Officer Jones tased her two more times, against her shoulder and neck, the latter being the only area of exposed skin.

Brooks was unable to get out of the car herself during this time because her arm was still behind her back.

The third tasing moved Brooks to the right, at which point Officers Ornelas and Jones were able to extract her from the car through a combination of pushing and pulling.

Brooks was arrested and charged with failing to obey a police officer, for her refusal to sign the ticket, as well as resisting arrest. (She was also given medical attention "immediately.") Two months later, she delivered a healthy baby girl, named Taria.

Six months after her arrest, the Seattle police "adopted a new policy on Taser use," according to the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, "that guides officers on how to deal with pregnant women, the very young, the very old and the infirm."

The new policy emphasized that "the need to stop the behavior should clearly justify the potential for additional risks."

Around the same time, in May 2005, Brooks was convicted of the first charge; the second charge was dropped after the jury could not make a decision.

During her criminal trial, Officer Ornelas admitted that Seattle Police Department rules did not actually authorize him to arrest her for refusing to sign the ticket, a fact that would be disputed in subsequent court documents. (In 2006, the Seattle legislature amended the law books to forbid police officers from arresting motorists for failing to sign their tickets.)

Malaika Brooks sued the officers for violating her constitutional rights.

In June 2008, U.S. District Judge Richard Jones ruled that the lawsuit could go to trial. "Any reasonable officer would have acknowledged numerous factors limiting the degree of force he could use against Ms. Brooks," he wrote.

What's more, "Ms. Brooks did not pose a danger to the public or to the officers, and there was no danger she would flee the scene." (The officers had taken her keys out of the ignition.) "Throughout the standoff between herself and the officers, Ms. Brooks did not use force against the officers or threaten to do so."

"Using a taser to inflict extreme pain to effect the arrest for a minor regulatory offense of a non-violent pregnant woman already under police control is a Fourth Amendment violation," the judge concluded. The Ninth Circuit ruling overturns this conclusion.

Malaika Brooks is not the first pregnant woman to be tased, nor is she likely to be the last.

Such episodes have been documented with disturbing regularity -- from an Ohio woman who was tased in a police station lobby in 2007, to a backyard picnic in Virginia last year, where the pregnant mother of two boys celebrating their baptism was tased in the back after trying to help a guest who was also tased by police.

(She was charged with assaulting a police officer.)

As Scott Thill wrote for AlterNet last year, thanks to their classification as "non-lethal weapons," "cops have nearly lost their minds using it on everyone from children, the elderly, and pregnant mothers to the mentally unstable and physically disabled."

Just this week, Indiana police officers used a stun gun on an "unruly" 10-year-old child.

The latest ruling in the Brooks case might suggest that the courts, too, have lost their minds when it comes to the appropriate use of such weaponry on civilians.

Yet, in December, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit -- the court that just ruled in favor of the Seattle police officers -- issued a ruling, heralded as a landmark decision, which held that police officers could be held individually liable for using a Taser on a person without reason.

"The objective facts must indicate that the suspect poses an immediate threat to the officer or a member of the public," the court ruled.

"The federal finding substantially changes the landscape of Taser usage," Raj Jayadev and Aram James wrote for New America Media earlier this year, "and may signal the end of Tasers for law enforcement agencies who are now more vulnerable to civil and criminal action than ever before."

Of course, this can only be true if judges presiding over such actions see Tasers as the potentially lethal torture devices that they are, rather than a natural extension of police power. (Not to mention a finite concept of said power.)

"As police officers, they could have hurt me seriously," Brooks told the Seattle Post-Intelligencer in 2005. "They could have hurt my unborn fetus. All because of a traffic ticket. Is this what it's come down to?"

CLASS WAR REPORTS

Neo-Nazi Politician Hacked To Death In South Africa:

Nazi-Inspired AWB Leader Refused To Pay Workers On His Plantation And They Killed Him: “His Party Tried Terrorist Tactics In Which 21 People Were Killed And Hundreds Injured”



Eugene Terre'Blanche gestures while addressing a meeting of South Africa's white far right in Ventersdorp Photo: The Guardian 12.10.09: Photo: REUTERS

4 April 2010 David Smith, Johannesburg, The Observer [Excerpts]

A notorious white supremacist who once threatened to wage war rather than allow black rule in South Africa was hacked to death at his farm yesterday following an argument with two employees.

Eugene Terre'Blanche's mutilated body was found on his bed along with a broad-blade knife and a wooden club, police said.

"He was hacked to death while he was taking a nap," one family friend, who did not wish to be named, told Reuters.

Local media quoted a member of Terre'Blanche's Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging party (Afrikaner Resistance Movement, or AWB) as saying that the 69-year-old had been beaten with pipes and machetes. Police said two males, thought to be workers on the farm, have been arrested and will appear in court on Tuesday.

Terre'Blanche, with striking blue eyes and white beard, was the voice of hardline opposition to the end of racial apartheid in the early 1990s, and the AWB was infamous for its swastika-like symbols and neo-Nazi anthems.

But he had been in relative obscurity since his release in 2004 after a prison sentence for beating a black man nearly to death.

Last year he attempted a comeback, announcing plans to rally far-right groups and to apply to the United Nations for a breakaway Afrikaner republic.

Police in South Africa's North West province said last night that Terre'Blanche had been attacked and killed at his farm 10km outside Ventersdorp.

Captain Adele Myburgh said Terre'Blanche was attacked by a man and a minor who worked for him after they allegedly had an argument about unpaid wages at around 6pm, the South African Press Association reported.

"Mr Terre'Blanche's body was found on the bed with facial and head injuries," Myburgh said. "There was a panga (broad-blade knife) on him and knobkerrie (wooden club) next to the bed. A 21-year-old man and 15-year-old boy were arrested and charged for his murder.

"The two told the police that the argument ensued because they were not paid for the work they did on the farm."

Terre'Blanche founded the white supremacist AWB in 1970, to oppose what he regarded as the liberal policies of the then South African leader, John Vorster.



AWB Insignia

His party tried terrorist tactics and threatened civil war in the run-up to South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, won by the ANC and Nelson Mandela, who became the country's first black president.

In 1998, Terre'Blanche accepted "political and moral responsibility" before South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission for a bombing campaign to disrupt the 1994 elections in which 21 people were killed and hundreds injured.

Revelations of his extramarital affairs also undermined his reputation with religious Afrikaners.

He was jailed for assaulting a black petrol attendant and the attempted murder of a black security guard, serving three years of a five-year term before his release in 2004.

He said last year that he had revived the AWB after several years of inactivity and that it would join with like-minded forces to push for secession from South Africa.

"The circumstances in the country demanded it," he told South Africa's Mail & Guardian newspaper. "The white man in South Africa is realising that his salvation lies in self-government in territories paid for by his ancestors."

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