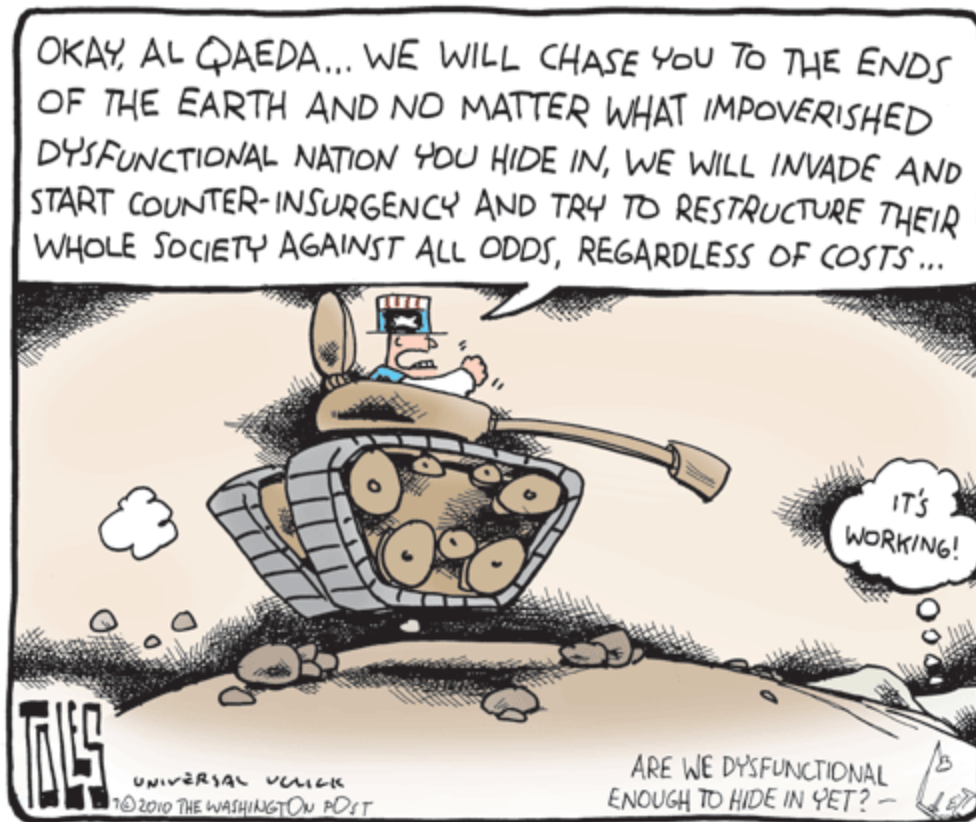


Military Resistance 8G16



Hell Comes Home

July 18, 2010 By Greg Jaffe, Washington Post Staff Writer

The 300-pound bomb blasted Marine Staff Sgt. James Ownbey's mine-resistant truck so high that it snapped power lines before it slammed to the dusty ground in western Iraq.

Ownbey, knocked briefly unconscious by the blast, awoke to suffocating black smoke and a swirling cloud of dirt. He felt for the vehicle's door, then stumbled into the sunlight where he was joined by the rest of his woozy, three-man crew. Their bodies were sore, but they looked fine.

A Marine general visiting from Washington heard about the blast and came to see the survivors. As Gen. James F. Amos laid a hand on Ownbey's neck, his aide snapped a picture, proof of the new vehicle's efficacy against insurgent bombs.

"I kind of felt separated from myself," Ownbey recalled of the aftermath of the 2007 blast. "It didn't feel like anything was real."

Two years after the explosion Amos and Ownbey met again, this time in a cramped room at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda. Ownbey had been overtaken by terrifying panic attacks, puzzling memory loss and strange rib-snapping coughing fits that left him hospitalized for weeks at a time. Doctors diagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury, caused by battlefield concussions.

For Amos, seeing Ownbey's condition was the moment that the bloodless trauma of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars became tangible. "I thought we can't do this anymore," said Amos, referring to the military's slow response to treating PTSD and traumatic brain injury.

Ownbey's descent from dazed survivor to bed-ridden Marine exemplifies the debilitating passage of troops afflicted with PTSD and traumatic brain injury. His story also traces the military's awakening.

Senior commanders have reached a turning point. After nine years of war in Afghanistan and Iraq, they are beginning to recognize age-old legacies of the battlefield - once known as shellshock or battle fatigue - as combat wounds, not signs of weakness.

Gen. Peter Chiarelli, Amos's Army counterpart, has been especially outspoken. "PTSD is not a figment of someone's imagination," Chiarelli lectured an auditorium of skeptical sergeants last fall. "It is a cruel physiological thing."

The challenge facing Amos and Chiarelli has been convincing an undermanned force that PTSD and traumatic brain injury are real injuries that demand immediate care. The generals also have run up against an overburdened military medical system that is short on doctors and reluctant to take risks with new types of treatment.

"I have been asked . . . should you have figured this out sooner?" said Amos, who was recently tapped to be Marine Corps commandant. "Yeah, we should have. But we didn't. It has been evolutionary."

Only a few weeks before the blast that injured him, Ownbey had reenlisted for another four years.

His engineer company's job was to find and destroy roadside bombs, a dangerous mission that had claimed the lives of eight Marines over two tours. The toll weighed heavily on Maj. Jeff Hackett, Ownbey's commander, who had begun to blame himself for the deaths. "I can't stand to look at myself," he confided in an e-mail to his wife.

When Ownbey arrived at his base's aide station following the blast he immediately called Hackett, who rushed to see him and the other wounded Marines. Ownbey remembers the relieved look on his commander's face.

Later that night Hackett told his wife about the apparently unscathed survivors of the massive bomb. "They are so fucking lucky!!!" he wrote.

'Every Day He Deteriorated'

In late September 2007, about three weeks after the blast, Ownbey returned to Camp Lejeune, N.C., after finishing his third combat deployment. This homecoming was nothing like the first two. The Ownbeys had bought a small house near the base. On the first drive home with his wife and three children, Ownbey slammed on the brakes, stopping just short of a pothole that had been repaired. "Why is that there?" he said pointing to the square of pavement, which resembled the holes insurgents use to plant roadside bombs.

"What do you mean?" his wife, Sandy, recalled asking him.

Ownbey jerked the wheel to the right and drove across a neighbor's lawn to avoid the patched pavement.

Sandy took her husband on a mountain getaway a few weeks later. After dinner and a few glasses of wine, Ownbey began rambling incoherently about friends killed in Iraq. "He was walking and talking as if he wasn't really there," she said.

Sandy called up one of her husband's close friends from his Iraq tour. Ownbey spent the next three hours talking and sobbing before he fell asleep with the phone cradled to his ear. The next day he sought counseling for PTSD.

As time passed, Ownbey's hands began to shake and he began to put on weight. Five months after the blast, he finally landed an appointment with a neurologist at the Camp Lejeune hospital. The military cannot fill its pre-9/11 quotas for neurologists, creating agonizingly long waits.

At the examination Ownbey couldn't remember and repeat three simple numbers. He was so twitchy that his doctor ordered him to stop driving.

In late 2008 blood clots caused by the blast injury, migrated to Ownbey's lungs, leaving him so short of breath that he couldn't climb a flight of stairs. He coughed so hard that he snapped six ribs. The doctors at the Camp Lejeune hospital moved him to Bethesda in February 2009.

"Every day he deteriorated for over a year," Sandy said.

'It Was Three Hours Of Hell'

In spring 2009, the top brass in the Marine Corps and the Army were seeing troubling signs that the force was starting to fray. The suicide rate in the two services was on pace to set a record. The percentage of the Army's most severely wounded troops who were suffering from PTSD or traumatic brain injury had climbed to about 50 percent, from 38 percent a year earlier.

Amos and Chiarelli ordered the military's top psychiatrists and neurologists to the Pentagon for a meeting. "We were looking for some treatments," Amos said. "Something we could do right now."

To moderate the session, the generals brought in David Hovda, a UCLA neuroscientist who had worked closely with the National Football League on concussions.

Hovda gave a 15-minute presentation on traumatic brain injury. Then the military doctors began to argue with him and among themselves, according to participants. PTSD and mild traumatic brain injury both cause a similar array of symptoms, such as migraines, sleeplessness, anxiety and memory loss. The military doctors worried that Hovda was too quick to blame repeated concussions for medical symptoms that could also be attributed to PTSD or depression.

"It's not wrong to think these symptoms could be related to concussion," said Army Col. Charles Hoge, one of the military doctors at the session. "What is wrong is to think that they are only related to concussion."

Hovda shot back that Hoge was underestimating the damage caused by repeated battlefield concussions. "I do not agree with Colonel Hoge's position at all," he wrote in an e-mail after the meeting.

Doctors say it is essential to understand what is producing the symptoms they are trying to treat. PTSD is caused by the way the brain remembers a harrowing event. Traumatic brain injury results from the jostling of the brain.

The disagreement was deeply frustrating for both Amos and Chiarelli.

"It was three hours of hell," Chiarelli said. "No one could agree on anything."

Amos and Chiarelli stormed out of the meeting angry. They worried the internal debate was slowing the effort to help suffering soldiers and Marines. At 3:51 a.m. Chiarelli fired off an e-mail to Amos and Hovda. "I am frustrated with the way we are treating, or not treating, [traumatic brain injury] and PTSD," he wrote. "There seems to be a lack of direction and so many different ideas of what right looks like."

The generals asked Hovda to invite a dozen top civilian experts on PTSD and traumatic brain injury to Washington for two days of meetings. They wanted the sessions to focus on treatments that military doctors and researchers had overlooked. To prevent the sessions from bogging down into another academic debate, Amos and Chiarelli did not invite most of the military physicians from the first session.

Amos had his encounter with Ownbey at Bethesda in late August 2009, four days before the meeting with civilian doctors and scientists. The general had been pinning Purple Hearts on wounded troops when he got word that one of the patients wanted to see him.

The Marine was so weak he could barely walk. Electrodes and wires were pinned to his bare, puffy chest. The 2007 blast had damaged Ownbey's pituitary gland at the base of his brain and his weight had ballooned to 240 pounds. He was 165 pounds before the injury.

Amos extended a hand to introduce himself.

"Sir, we've met before in Iraq," Ownbey said.

Sandy watched as the general slowly recognized her husband. Amos's face turned ashen. He hugged Sandy, and she began to cry. "We are going to figure out why this is happening to him," he said.

Amos opened the meeting with the civilian doctors on Sept. 1, 2009, by passing out the now two-year-old picture of himself and Ownbey posing in front of his crumpled vehicle. Then he handed out the snapshot of the Marine in his hospital bed.

"What can you do to help us with this now?" he asked the doctors.

'He Just Feels Numb'

By early October, Chiarelli had become obsessed with the science of PTSD and traumatic brain injury. He turned an awards luncheon in Washington for the Army's 24 noncommissioned officers of the year into a half-hour seminar on the mental wounds of war.

The Army general flashed a picture of three brain scans depicting a normal brain, a patient in a deep coma and a UCLA football player who had suffered a mild concussion. The normal brain glowed red and yellow, indicating that it was actively burning glucose. Both the concussion and the coma scans were blue, a sign that the brains had shut down to heal.

The football player's brain would only return to normal if it were given a couple of weeks to heal before it was struck again, Chiarelli said, according to a transcript of the event.

Chiarelli then explained how physiological changes caused by PTSD flooded the body with chemicals and triggered a rush of fear. "Contrary to what some believe, PTSD and traumatic brain injury are not phantom conditions exhibited by weak soldiers trying to get out of a deployment," he said.

As the months passed, Chiarelli began to refer to post-traumatic stress disorder as PTS.

"I drop the D because I believe it is more of an injury than a disorder," he said.

"A lot of doctors agree with me, but there are some who don't."

He sent instructions urging commanders to hold full memorial services for suicide victims just as they would for other Army fatalities. Some field commanders argued passionately against the policy, insisting that it was wrong to salute troops who had shown a lack of resolve. Chiarelli overruled them.

The best way to erase the stigma of mental illness, he insisted, would be to award the Purple Heart to troops suffering from post-traumatic stress. A 2008 study ordered by Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates had concluded that it was too difficult to prove that a soldier was suffering from PTSD. By 2010 Chiarelli countered that the science had sufficiently advanced and was worth reconsidering.

Amos disagreed with Chiarelli on the Purple Heart. "We need to keep that award as pure as we possibly can," he said.

The Marine general was never particularly captivated by the science of PTSD or traumatic brain injury. But Amos was convinced by Ownbey's suffering.

The two generals worked with the civilian doctors from the meeting they had organized in Washington to develop new procedures for treating mental wounds. To prevent traumatic brain injury, the doctors recommended new rules requiring troops who experienced a concussion to rest until a doctor cleared them for duty. After three concussions troops are no longer allowed to return to combat for the rest of the tour.

"We've taken away the opportunity for Marines to say they are good to go after a concussion," Amos said, "because every Marine is going to say he is fine."

To treat PTSD, the doctors recommended therapy be delivered as soon after the triggering incident as possible. Amos and Chiarelli instituted programs to train front-line medics to spot the signs of PTSD and provide immediate psychiatric first-aid. They instructed therapists to use video conferencing to screen troops who might otherwise not get help.

The generals' goal was to fix the flawed system that Ownbey and his men confronted in Iraq and when they returned home to Camp Lejeune.

Gunnery Sgt. Christopher Wellman, who was sitting behind Ownbey when their truck was launched 30 feet in the air, estimated last month that he suffered four or five concussions during his final tour in Iraq. But he never sought medical care or skipped a patrol to rest and heal. "People were dying," he said.

He returned home and began experiencing memory problems, dizziness, nightmares and migraines. Wellman spent a year on limited duty before he made it back to his engineer unit, where he lasted three months before a routine explosion at a firing range caused him to relapse. He was medically retired from the Marine Corps this summer and began work with the Defense Department in Arlington. He stopped receiving treatment when he left Camp Lejeune.

Staff Sgt. Curtis Long, who was driving the truck, came home from Iraq angry and emotionally distant. "He told me that he had to force himself to feel something for me and our kids," said Virginia Long, his wife. "He just feels numb." She urged to him get treatment for PTSD, but he stopped after five sessions.

Last summer Long began to suffer migraines, hand tremors and a nervous eye twitch. Long's platoon sergeant pressed him to seek help from a neurologist, who said his symptoms were caused by stress. Months passed before the doctor was able to squeeze him in for a second exam.

The 25-year-old Marine sat for 45 minutes in the waiting room, then screamed at the receptionist and stormed out of the office. "I just went off on her," Long said. His wife begged him to return, but he refused.

In February Ownbey recommended his former neurologist at Camp Lejeune. More than two years after the blast, the doctor diagnosed traumatic brain injury and put Long on a weekly regimen of four therapy sessions to help him compensate for memory and balance problems.

A Navy medic who was a part of Ownbey's crew said he has suffered no long-term effects from the explosion.

Ownbey's health - though still fragile - has slowly improved. In 2009 the general had ordered Ownbey to stay in the service so that Navy doctors could figure out what was wrong with him. He recently asked Amos for permission to leave the Marine Corps later this summer.

"I can't get to a point where I can go back to combat," Ownbey said. "But I can apply myself to my family. I can get to a better way of living."

'I Deserve Hell'

Ownbey's good friend and company commander, Jeff Hackett, retired as a major from the Marine Corps after 26 years of service.

"He looked like he was really going to miss it," Ownbey recalled. Ownbey hugged him, and for the first time in their three years together called him "Jeff" instead of "sir."

Hackett and his wife bought a house and 40 acres of land about an hour outside of Cheyenne, Wyo. His family said he often seemed distant.

When Ownbey had reenlisted in August 2007, he suggested that Hackett don his blast-resistant suit for the ceremony, which took place outside in 120-degree heat. Hackett did it.

By 2010 Hackett's goofy sense of humor was gone. He could not stop blaming himself for the deaths of the Marines his company lost in Iraq. "I killed eight of my men," he told his sister.

On June 5, Hackett called his wife, Danelle, from the parking lot of American Legion Hall in Cheyenne. "I just want to let you know how sorry I am and that I love you," he said. He called his sister to thank her for her love and support. Then he turned off his phone.

Hackett's sister raced to his house, picked up Danelle and began searching for Hackett.

The retired Marine returned to the American Legion Hall and continued to drink. After about an hour, he pulled out a gun and shot himself.

In the front seat of his Chrysler truck, his wife and sister found an envelope on which he had scribbled "I deserve Hell."

In an interview, Danelle said she was angry at the Marine Corps for doing too little to educate her about PTSD. "The Marines want to brush all of this under the carpet," she said.

Amos called to offer his condolences on July 4. She told him about her 18-year-old son, who is headed to boot camp later this year. "He has his dad's integrity," she said. "He's going to make a hell of a Marine."

Danelle was two months behind on her house and car payments. Because her husband had killed himself, their mortgage insurance did not apply. Amos alerted a Marine Corps charity, which sent a check to help her get through the summer.

"I don't want others to suffer what my sons and I have gone through," Danelle told the general. "I want to be an advocate."

Amos promised her he would stay in touch.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Many Dead As Attacks Target U.S.-Allied Militia



Clothing and human remains at the scene of a bomb attack in Radwaniya, southwest of Baghdad, Iraq, July 18, 2010. Twin bombings killed scores of people from a government-backed militia lining up to collect their paychecks near the military base southwest of Baghdad. (AP Photo/Khalid Mohammed)

18 July 2010 By Edward Yeranian, VOA & Reuters [Excerpts]

A suicide bomber attacked government-backed Sahwa militia as they lined up to be paid on Baghdad's southwestern outskirts, killing at least 39 and wounding 41, Iraqi security sources said.

A bomb attached to a car killed Amer al-Tamimi, a brother of Abu Azzam al-Tamimi, the leader of Sahwa militia in Abu Ghraib, on the western outskirts of Baghdad, police said.

A bomber killed four and wounded six at a meeting of local Sahwa militia leaders in the western town of Qaim, near the Syrian border, police in Anbar province said.

The Sahwa, or Sons of Iraq, helped U.S. forces put down insurrection during the worst days of sectarian strife in Iraq.

Baghdad security chief Qassem Mohammed Atta indicated a bomber struck a checkpoint near a military base southwest of Baghdad. Members of the Sahwa militia had been lined up outside the base to receive their paychecks.

The Associated Press reported the men had come to the base for five days in row, hoping to be paid, and that security around the base was lax. Sahwa members complained that government forces were no longer searching people lined up in front of the base.



The bodies of dead government-backed militia members are transported to a hospital from the site of a bomb attack in Baghdad July 18, 2010. A bomber attacked the militia on Sunday as they lined up to be paid on Baghdad's southwestern outskirts, killing at least 39 and wounding 41, Iraqi security sources said. REUTERS/Stringer

Another bomber attacked a Sahwa militia facility in the town of Qaim, near the Syrian border. Sahwa fighters traded fire with the assailant, who blew himself up after being surrounded. Three militiamen were reportedly killed and six wounded in the blast.

The brother of a top Sahwa leader was also killed in a separate bomb blast targeting his vehicle. Abu Azzam al Tamimi said the explosion that killed his brother, as well as the other bombings were part of a planned and coordinated assault on his group.

He says that the attacks were programmed, rather than isolated acts, and they were part of someone's broad agenda. That group, he insists, wants to take advantage of the void inside the country at the expense of the Iraqi people in order to bring the security situation back to square one.

Iraq analyst James Denselow of King's College in London says Sahwa militiamen are at the mercy of their adversaries, as the government drags its feet in deciding what to do with them.

More Resistance Action

July 15, 2010 New York Times & July 18 (Reuters)

In Babil Province, in southern Iraq, a police officer was killed after insurgents opened fire on a police patrol. Two other police officers were wounded in the attack.

In Ramadi, the capital of Anbar Province in western Iraq, a militant riding a motorcycle fatally shot a police officer, the police said.

Insurgents shot dead an Iraqi soldier as he was driving his car south of Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad, police said. Police said a policeman was wounded in a gunfight with the attackers when police responded to the incident.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

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

July 18 AP

A foreign servicemember died as a result of an IED strike in southern Afghanistan today.

Wahpeton Native Killed In Afghanistan



Spc. Keenan Cooper

July 07 2010 By: Heidi Shaffer, The Forum

Keenan Cooper was to turn 20 next week, return from Afghanistan within a month and get married this fall.

The Wahpeton, N.D., native was killed by a roadside bomb Monday while serving his first tour of duty in Afghanistan.

The family's pastor said Tuesday that Cooper wanted to enlist in the Army even as a kid.

"When Keenan thinks things through and makes a decision, that's it," said The Rev. Mike Adams, the family spokesman who met Cooper as an 8-year-old at Faith Evangelical Free Church in Wahpeton.

Adams described Spc. Cooper as a patriotic, soft-spoken guy with a great sense of humor.

"He was a great kid. He will be missed," Adams said.

Cooper's parents, David and Heather Cooper of Wahpeton, were notified Monday night of their son's death. Keenan was the oldest of five children.

The family and Cooper's fiancée, April Travis, will travel today to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, where Cooper's body will arrive back in the United States. Adams said the family's faith is helping them cope. "They truly believe the Lord has a purpose for everything, including the death of their son," Adams said.

At least three other soldiers were killed Monday in Afghanistan, according to the U.S. Department of Defense website.

Cooper is a 2008 graduate of Wahpeton High School. The last North Dakota soldier killed in the wars in the Middle East was Army Staff Sgt. David Kuehl, 27, of Wahpeton. He was killed during combat operations in Iraq on May 22, 2007.

Coordinated Attack Frees Insurgents From Farah Province Prison



Part of the gate blown during a jailbreak in Farah province July 18, 2010. Taliban guerrillas staged a raid freeing 23 insurgent prisoners. REUTERS/Stringer

July 18, 2010 By the CNN Wire Staff

At least 19 inmates escaped after a bomb went off Sunday at the main gate of a prison in western Afghanistan, officials said.

Police later arrested eight, but 11 are still on the loose, said Sha Mohammad Noor, spokesman for Farah province governor.

The explosion killed one police officer, he said.

Police arrested four inmates who they suspect were responsible for planting the bomb, which was smuggled inside the prison, he said. One of them later died in the hospital from injuries suffered in the blast.

Farah Police Chief Gen. Faqir Askar said the blast occurred around 3 a.m. at the prison, which holds 400 inmates. At the same time, suspected Taliban militants were attacking police posts in the area, he said.

Taliban spokesman Qari Yusuf said all Taliban inmates in the province had escaped, and that 15 police and government officials were killed in attacks.

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

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



July 8, 2010: United States soldiers from the 82nd Airborne during a patrol in the Arghandab Valley, outside Kandahar City. (AP Photo/Kevin Frayer)



US soldiers at Kandahar Airfield, Kandahar, Afghanistan, July 16, 2010. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)

TROOP NEWS

HOW MANY MORE FOR OBAMA'S WARS?



Pallbearer's carry Pfc. Edwin 'Eddie' Wood from his funeral July 17, 2010 in Omaha, Neb. Wood died of injuries suffered July 5 when insurgents attacked his vehicle with an improvised explosive device near Kandahar. (AP Photo/Dave Weaver)

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

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

**DoD Traitors Break The Law To
Get Rid Of Disabled Armed Forces**

Members And Pay Them No Benefits:

“He Was Sent To A Physical Evaluation Board For, Was Found Fit, And Then, Two Weeks Later, He Was Told He Was Unsuitable For Service”

“If They’re Going To Get Rid Of You, They Should Pay Your Disability Benefits”

[Here it is again. Same old story. To repeat for the 3,546th time, there is no enemy in Iraq or Afghanistan. Their citizens and U.S. troops have a common enemy. That common enemy owns and operates the Imperial government in Washington DC for their own profit. That common enemy started these wars of conquest on a platform of lies, because they couldn't tell the truth: U.S. Imperial wars are about making money for them, and nothing else. Payback is overdue. T]

April 12, 2010 By Kelly Kennedy, Army Times [Excerpts]

At first, as Kevin Stein's hands began to go numb, he believed he had carpal tunnel syndrome.

Then, the Navy electronics technician first class said his arms and legs began involuntarily jerking as if he were a marionette under someone else's control.

Though Navy doctors weren't able to figure out the cause of Stein's ailment, he was diagnosed with "motor tic disorder," a nervous condition that causes quick, uncontrollable movements.

His doctor recommended that he go before the Navy's Physical Evaluation Board because the uncontrolled movements made it impossible to continue working in his job, which involves handling small components and high-voltage equipment.

His doctor expected that the board would find him unfit for duty and rate him for disability retirement benefits.

But the board found him fit.

Then his sea screening board found him “unsuitable” for ship duty and worldwide deployability and recommended that he be administratively discharged after 14 years of service.

“In a nutshell, he had a condition that he was sent to a Physical Evaluation Board for, was found fit, and then, two weeks later, he was told he was unsuitable for service,” said Jason Perry, Stein’s lawyer.

“They basically said, ‘We’re just going to use a different word for ‘unfit.’ ” But that word — “unsuitable” — means an administrative discharge with no medical benefits.

And, said Perry and others familiar with the process, that is illegal.

Perry, who has taken Stein’s case to federal court, said he hears about similar cases once or twice a week.

“It’s huge in the Navy,” Perry said. “The Army, for all of its problems, has a better take on that. Every once in a while, I see an Air Force case.”

It’s also been an issue with National Guard and reserve troops, he said.

In some cases, the military bars re-enlistment, rather than administratively separating a service member. But that still denies them the disability retirement benefits.

[Air Force Col. Mike] Hayden said the current policy generally does not affect officers because they don’t re-enlist, but he often receives calls from officers worried about their enlisted troops.

The policy under which service members are administratively discharged for medical conditions lists very specific conditions — and requires that any other condition be approved by the secretary of defense before a member can be separated.

They include such things as sleepwalking, obesity, dyslexia and homosexuality, but do not include ankylosing spondylitis (an autoimmune disease), diabetes or motor tic disorders — conditions in some of the cases Parker and Perry have seen.

“The secretary of defense has not, at least publicly, approved any other conditions, defects or circumstances for administrative separation,” Parker said, adding that the Defense Department is not following the rules for administrative discharges.”

Stein, who now has a job troubleshooting telephone systems by phone for a company in Chesapeake, Va., was later rated by the Veterans Affairs Department at 30 percent disability for his tics, 50 percent disability for sleep apnea and 20 percent disability for the numbness in his hands — the same problems the Navy listed as reasons that he was unsuitable for sea duty.

He said he’s encouraged by the proposed change in law.

“It’s hard because the medical system is saying one thing, but the screening board is saying something different,” he said. “If they’re going to get rid of you, they should pay your disability benefits.”

MORE:

The Enemies Domestic Hard At Work: “The Military Has Tried To Deny Disability Benefits To Wounded, Injured And Ill Service Members”

Defense officials deny that budgetary considerations drive such conclusions, but it bears noting that even as the number of post-9/11 wounded troops has ballooned to 40,000, spending on disability retirement benefits has remained flat since 2002 at \$1.2 billion to \$1.3 billion a year.

April 12, 2010 Editorial, Army Times

When former sailor Kevin Stein developed a muscle tic disorder, his doctors expected he would be found medically unfit for service and become eligible for disability retirement benefits.

Instead, the Navy ruled him medically fit but “unsuitable” for ship duty or deployment. So after 14 years in uniform, Stein was unceremoniously administratively discharged — with no medical benefits.

This “fit but unfit” finding is common; one lawyer who works with service members says he hears about one or two such cases a week.

But it is not the only way that critics say the military has tried to deny disability benefits to wounded, injured and ill service members.

Others include dismissing troops suffering from mental health disorders for a “pattern of misconduct,” or denying benefits by ruling that health problems were “pre-existing,” even without clear evidence to support that conclusion.

Defense officials deny that budgetary considerations drive such conclusions, but it bears noting that even as the number of post-9/11 wounded troops has ballooned to 40,000, spending on disability retirement benefits has remained flat since 2002 at \$1.2 billion to \$1.3 billion a year.

The Senate version of the 2011 defense authorization bill addresses this issue with a provision that would prohibit the military from administratively discharging troops with medical conditions.

The House version seeks only a study, but still calls the practice “fundamentally unfair.” When House and Senate conferees meet to reconcile the two bills, the Senate position should prevail.

Lawmakers must ensure the military disability system works for — and not against — wounded, injured and ill troops.

Fraud And Thievery At Arlington National Cemetery: “\$5.5 Million Appropriated Across More Than 35 IT Contracts At Arlington Between 2002 And 2009” “\$4.5 Million Cannot Be Accounted For”

April 12, 2010 By William H. McMichael, Army Times [Excerpts]

The Army will inspect every one of the more than 330,000 graves at Arlington National Cemetery to alleviate concerns raised by a recent investigation that identified more than 200 burial discrepancies, including unmarked graves.

But that will not happen until the cemetery’s burial records and maps are digitized, Army Secretary John McHugh told the House Armed Services Committee on June 30.

That is something lawmakers expected to be done by now — more than seven years after the cemetery began spending money on a digitization project.

All told, more than \$5.5 million was appropriated across more than 35 information technology contracts at Arlington between 2002 and 2009, according to the seven-month Army inspector general investigation.

Yet only one piece of the so-called Total Cemetery Management System — a rudimentary database program for scheduling interments — is functioning, according to the IG.

And most of that money — more than \$4.5 million — cannot be accounted for, Armed Services Committee staffers said.

But equally concerning was the performance of the two Army agencies — the Army Contracting Center of Excellence and the Army Corps of Engineers — that Rep. Howard “Buck” McKeon, R-Calif., says were supposed to look over all Arlington contracts.

“The evidence provided by the IG goes far beyond inadvertent noncompliance by overworked contracting officers,” McKeon, the committee’s ranking Republican, said during the June 30 hearing.

A Republican committee staffer recounted some of the practices of greatest concern to lawmakers:

- Awarding contracts with prices more than double that of cost estimates to do the work.
- Striking out numbers in the cost proposal and rounding them down to make those proposals more advantageous.

The IG also criticized Arlington’s reliance on the Defense Finance and Accounting Service for budget execution.

“No one (at Arlington) could provide contract administration and payment data for its (information technology) contracts,” the IG said.

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**

**“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**

Dead Soldiers



Photograph by Mike Hastie

From: Mike Hastie
To: Military Resistance
Sent: July 17, 2010
Subject: Dead Soldiers

Dead Soldiers

Everything looks perfect.

The spotless white marble headstones.
The manicured lawns.
Such serenity with the utmost of respect.
Duty.
Honor.
Country.
Folded American flag.
Twenty-one gun salute.
Taps.

There is only one thing missing,
which some vets call "Missing in Action,"
and that is the people who start these wars,
and support these wars,
are never buried in military cemeteries.
That's because it's never profitable to serve.
Unless you're being served in the back seat
of a stretch limousine.
Dead Soldiers.
Working Class.
Support The Troops.
Chumps.

Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
July 17, 2010

Photo and caption from the I-R-A-Q (I Remember Another Quagmire) portfolio of Mike Hastie, US Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71. (For more of his outstanding work, contact at: (hastiemike@earthlink.net) T)

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

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

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“Israel’s Right To Exist’ Is The Right Of U.S. Imperialism To Consolidate Its Political, Military, And Economic Rule In The Middle East”

“The Right Of Israel To Exist Is In Fact The Right Of The Zionist Apartheid State To Continue Its Project Of Eliminating The Palestinian People And Subduing The Arab Nations In The Service Of Western Hegemony Over The Region”

Tikva Honig-Parnass interviewed by Leo Fischer, International Socialist Review, July-August 2010 [Excerpts]

ISRAELI SOCIALIST activist Tikva Honig-Parnass fought in the 1948 War as a Zionist.

Years later she would break with Zionism and join the ranks of the Israeli Socialist Organization, also known by the name of its publication, Matzpen (“Compass”). Matzpen distinguished itself as a Marxist anti-Zionist group that was active in Israel during the 1960s and 1970s.

The group called for the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a regional framework that would involve the unification of the Arab East under a socialist and democratic banner, while also granting Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews equal individual, as well as equal collective, national rights. Matzpen exists today as a network of individuals in Israel and abroad.

Tikva Honig-Parnass:

SUPPORTING ISRAEL’S right to exist contradicts any aim related to a progressive secular democracy.

Precisely this discourse has served as the pretext for the “war on terror” that U.S. imperialism has been fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the U.S.-Israeli wars in Lebanon and the bloody assault on Gaza in 2008—09.

Therefore, those on the left who believe in fighting for “Israel’s right to exist” should realize that this implies joining the war against the new demon that U.S. imperialism has created after the fall of the Soviet Union. That is, using “Islamic fundamentalism” as a pretext to crush the resistant forces in the Middle East, be they secular or religious— all this in the name of “secular democracy.”

“Israel’s right to exist” is the right of U.S. imperialism to consolidate its political, military, and economic rule in the Middle East.

You cannot separate Israel as the tool for advancing the Zionist colonial project and its apartheid regime from its role as the enforcer of U.S. imperialist interests in the Middle East.

Israel is the one solid, reliable supporter of the United States, its very own armed watchdog against any state or movement that challenges U.S. imperial interests in the region. As such, its total war against the Palestinians is part and parcel of U.S. strategy to abolish any call for genuine national independence.

Indeed it is sad that the anti-imperialist struggle in the region has not been led by left forces. However, the left should recognize that Hezbollah and Hamas are by now the only organized forces that fight against Zionist Israel, the United States, and the collaborative Palestinian and Arab leaderships. Hezbollah plays the most genuine role in fighting for the national independence of Lebanon.

If not for Hezbollah, Lebanon would be ruled by now by the Lebanese fascist Phalange — indeed “secular” — in collaboration with Israel and the United States.

Hamas was elected to power through the most democratic general elections.

The joint American, Israeli, and Palestinian Authority total war against Hamas is in fact a war of ethnic cleansing against the entire population of Gaza.

This is the nature of the war, cynically claimed to be waged for the “right of the state of Israel to exist.”

Therefore, the position of some in the German left regarding Islamist movements like Hezbollah and Hamas is in fact nothing else but a call to support the U.S.- Israeli efforts to intensify the fragmentation of the people throughout the Middle East. In this case, to prevent the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank, to which Hamas aspires, and to delegitimize Hezbollah and its integration into the Lebanese political system.

The right of Israel to exist is in fact the right of the Zionist apartheid state to continue its project of eliminating the Palestinian people and subduing the Arab nations in the service of Western hegemony over the region.

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

18 Israeli Families Control 60% Of Nation's Corporate Equity

July 13th, 2010 Tikun Olam [Excerpts]

Israeli economist Shir Hever, a researcher for the Alternative Information Center, was recently interviewed by RealNews TV about the relationship between economic issues and social control in Israel.

One astonishing fact he noted was that 18 Israeli families control fully 60% of the equity value of all Israeli companies. Their wealth is concentrated in the four largest industries in Israel: banking and insurance, chemicals, high tech, and military/homeland security.

This 2007 Ynetnews article provides more specific background on the families:

"The Dankner, Tshuva, Azrieli, Weisman, Saban, Arison, Bino, Federman, Borovich, Leviev, Hamburger, Fishman, Strauss, Wertheim, and Alovich families are among the 19 families who control the bulk of Israeli business.

"The Dankner family increased its stake in the income generated by Israel's leading companies to 18.7 percent through the purchase of Koor Industries, higher than any other family.

"The Azrieli family joined the club of powerful business lords last year with its purchase of stakes in Granite Ha-Carmel Investments Ltd, acquiring controlling shares in Tambour, Sonol and Supergas.

"The Alovich family purchased Zahav lines from Eliezer Fishman and joined the top-19 club.

"The Wertheimer family exited the club, which numbered 18 in 2005, with the sale of 80 percent of Iscar to American investment mogul Warren Buffet."

When you think about the once proud history of Israel as an egalitarian society which valued the work and skills of every individual (even if it didn't do that for the Palestinian Israelis) and created a social safety net that was the envy of the Scandinavian countries – Israel has become what it once hated.

In 1965, it was rated one of the most equal nations in the world in terms of distribution of wealth. Today, it is a corporate wild west in which a quarter to third of all Israelis live below the poverty line.

There is hardly a safety net to speak of.

According to Hever Israel is the second most unequal country in the world after the U.S. Israel spends 75% less than the average western nation on redistributive programs like health care, unemployment, infrastructure and job creation. The reason: it invests so much of its budget in security it can't afford to properly fund these social programs.

Hever reveals that Israel spends 9% of its budget on maintaining the Occupation (military spending specifically related to the Territories and settler subsidies) making it a very costly drain on Israeli economic development.

Some of Israel's wealth has been drawn to the country by laws allowing Jews to come to Israel no questions asked.

There may be outstanding lawsuits or arrest warrants, but they live comfortably in the knowledge that Israel will not extradite them to face their alleged crimes out of faux-Zionist solidarity.

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



**Democrats And Republicans
Holding The Unemployed Hostage:
“By The End Of June, Congress Had
Still Not Passed A Bill To Fund The**

Emergency Extended Unemployment Benefits”

“They Sit Astride An Increasingly Corrupt And Destructive System”

Editorial, June 28 - July 19, 2010; The Spark,

By the end of June, Congress had still not passed a bill to fund the emergency extended unemployment benefits.

Already, one month had passed since funding had run out for this program – and the benefits for close to 1.5 million workers had already been cut.

One and a half million families were threatened with utter destitution, little or no money for food, shelter, clothing.

The Democrats and Republicans have let vital funding for emergency unemployment benefits run out four times in just the last six months.

Ever since unemployment hit record levels, the Democrats and Republicans have been playing political games with the funding for extended benefits.

Each time the funding has come up for renewal, the politicians from both parties have maneuvered for their own political advantage, blaming the other party for not coming up with the money. And when they finally coughed up the money, it was only for a few more months – at most.

This benefit program is supposed to kick in during an emergency, when unemployment levels remain high for a long time, and millions of workers are running out of the usual unemployment insurance coverage, along with its extensions.

Therefore, those workers have no other means of support.

Funding for this kind of program should be permanently available, to be used in cases of economic emergencies.

If the Republicans truly represented those ruined by the crisis, as they say, if the Democrats represented ordinary working people, as they say, they would have supported permanent funding during times of economic emergency.

Of course, the Democrats and Republicans have done nothing of the kind.

Instead, they have resorted to the usual political rhetoric of blaming the cost of the emergency benefits for the unemployed for driving up the federal budget deficit.

The Republicans have argued the funding is too costly, all together. The Democrats counter by proposing to cut unemployment benefits by \$25 per week.

Both parties are literally snatching the food from the mouths of hungry children.

And for what?

By cutting aid to the unemployed, as well as every other safety net and social program, the politicians are merely making more money available for the banks and big business.

The Democrats and Republicans have already fattened corporate profits and wealth by providing huge tax breaks, obscene subsidies and fat contracts – thus already widening the budget deficit before the crisis broke out.

With the crisis, the government accelerated this aid at warp speed: literally trillions of taxpayer dollars are being shoveled over to the very banks, companies and speculators whose mad drive for profits triggered the crisis in the first place.

It's the money given to the capitalists that has made the budget deficit balloon.

The toll from the record level of unemployment can't just be measured in dollars and cents.

It is a stupendous waste in every way possible: human, social, economic.

It condemns working people to both idleness and abject misery, literally wasting away.

All of this is a product of a society run solely for the profits of big business and the wealthy.

Everyone should have a decent job. And if big business and the state officials don't provide this basic minimum, the very least Congress should do is make sure that people continue to have an income, until they find a job.

Clearly, the capitalists and their government no longer even pretend to do that.

They sit astride an increasingly corrupt and destructive system.

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 Afghanistan, Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the wars, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Resistance, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657. Phone: 888.711.2550

**The Motive Behind Obama's
Whistle-Blower Prosecutions:
"Secrecy Is The Religion Of The
Political Class, And The Prime
Enabler Of Its Corruption"
"In All Of These Cases Where The
Obama DOJ Is Persecuting Whistle
Blowers, They're Punishing The Greatest
Sin There Is -- Exposure Of High-Level
Government Wrongdoing"**

The real criminals are not those who are leaking embarrassing information about corruption and wrongdoing -- those whom the Obama DOJ is prosecuting with an unprecedented vengeance -- but rather the political officials who are misusing powers of secrecy to hide information for which there is no legitimate secrecy basis.

Jul 14, 2010 By Glenn Greenwald, Salon.com [Excerpts]

One of the more flamboyant aspects of the Bradley Manning arrest was the claim that he had leaked to WikiLeaks 250,000 pages of "diplomatic cables." Those were the documents which anonymous government officials pointed to when telling The Daily Beast's Philip Shenon that the leaks "could do serious damage to national security."

Most commentary on the Manning case has tacitly assumed that the leaking of "diplomatic cables" would jeopardize national security secrets. But a new BBC article today contains this quote from former UK intelligence analyst Crispin Black:

"Diplomatic cables don't usually contain huge secrets but they do contain the unvarnished truth so in a sense they can be even more embarrassing than secrets."

As usual, government concern over leaks is about avoiding embarrassment and other accountability; national security harm is but the fear-mongering excuse.

Similarly, a new Washington Post article today details the Obama DOJ's prosecution of NSA whistle blower Thomas Drake, whose disclosures resulted in no claimed national security harm, but rather, was evidence of "waste, mismanagement and a willingness to compromise Americans' privacy without

enhancing security" (leaked only after his use of the official channels resulted in nothing, as usual).

The Post today quotes Obama DOJ spokesman Matthew Miller's justification for the administration's escalated war on whistle blowers as follows: "We have consistently said that leaks and mishandling of classified information are matters that we take extremely seriously."

There's no doubt that they take such acts "extremely seriously," but what's the reason for it? There's been no identified harm to national security from any of these leaks.

In all of these cases where the Obama DOJ is persecuting whistle blowers, they're punishing the greatest sin there is -- exposure of high-level government wrongdoing -- not harm to national security.

Amazingly, that was even the explicit rationale used by Obama when he and the Democratic Congress re-wrote FOIA to shield photographs of detainee abuse from court-ordered disclosure: these photos would reflect poorly on the U.S. government and therefore harm national security.

And, of course, the administration's repeated, Bush-replicating invocation of the "state secrets" privilege has been justified with vague appeals to National Security but actually motivated by a desire to shield government crimes of detention, surveillance and interrogation from disclosure and accountability.

Most of what the U.S. Government does of any significance -- literally -- occurs behind a vast wall of secrecy, completely unknown to the citizenry.

While a small portion of that is legitimately classified, these whistle blower prosecutions and other disclosure controversies demonstrate that the vast majority of this secrecy is devoted to avoiding embarrassment and accountability.

It has nothing to do with "national security" -- one of the all-justifying terms (along with Terrorism) for what the Government does.

Secrecy is the religion of the political class, and the prime enabler of its corruption. That's why whistle blowers are among the most hated heretics.

They're one of the very few classes of people able to shed a small amount of light on what actually takes place.

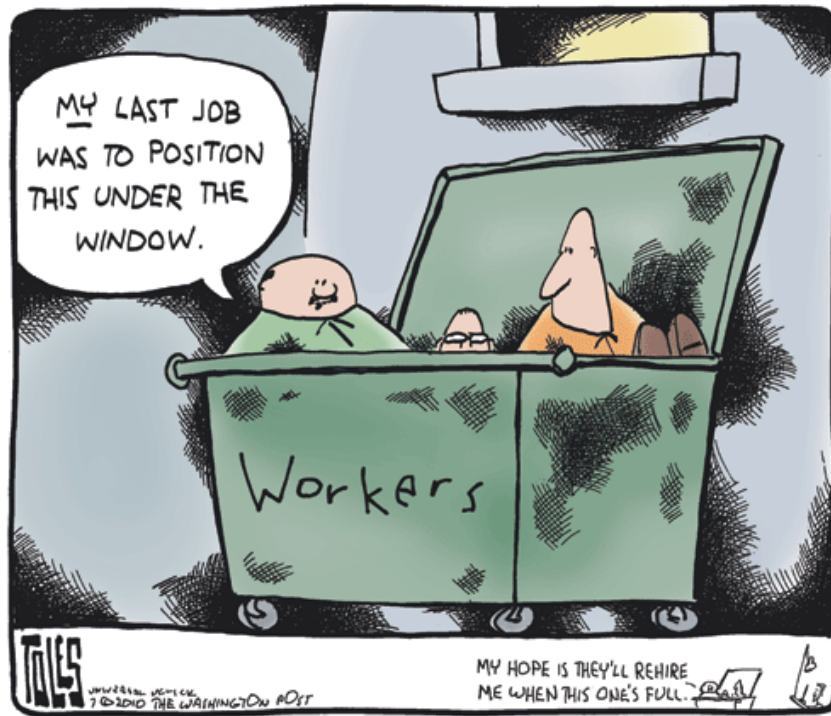
The Government (and its private corporate partners) know more and more about citizens, while citizens know less and less about the actions of the government-corporate axis which governs them.

The real criminals are not those who are leaking embarrassing information about corruption and wrongdoing -- those whom the Obama DOJ is prosecuting with an unprecedented vengeance -- but rather the political officials who are misusing powers of secrecy to hide information for which there is no legitimate secrecy basis.

Troops Invited:

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