

Military Resistance 8/11



**“We Should Just End It.
Bring The Troops Home”**

**“‘I Never Wanted My Son To Be
A Little Old Obituary In The
Paper,’ Donna Shoecraft
Explains, Still Reeling From The
Shock”**

**“Why Are We There? Why Are We
Even There?”**

“Start Taking Care Of Our Own People.”

An Indiana Town Reflects Growing Doubts Among Americans About The Afghan War

[Thanks to Michael Letwin, New York City Labor Against The War & Military Resistance, who sent this in.]

September 18, 2010 By Peter Slevin, Washington Post Staff Writer [Excerpts]

ELKHART, IND. - The Afghan war began more than half a lifetime ago for the teenagers in Adam Meyers's world history class.

“We should just end it. Bring the troops home,” said Ashley Ivory, 17, who thinks the war is doing nothing to stop terrorists. “They’re just sneaking in here while we’re over there. We don’t have enough eyes.”

The views of the students and the community around them echo a growing national skepticism about U.S. involvement in a distant war that will soon enter its 10th year and register its 1,270th U.S. casualty.

A majority of Americans say the war has not been worth its cost, an opinion voiced frequently in Elkhart, a hard-luck town that sees the conflict through the lens of loss and economic hardship.

Meyers and his students have a particular reason to reflect. Army Spec. Justin B. Shoecraft, 28, who attended Elkhart Memorial High School with Meyers, was killed late last month by a roadside bomb, barely a month after he reached Afghanistan.

When his mother in Elkhart heard the news, she screamed, then fainted.

As combat deaths reached new monthly highs this year, 69 of the 301 U.S. soldiers killed in Afghanistan came from a dozen Midwestern states. Among the home towns of the fallen in the past month are Creve Coeur, Ill.; Mulvane, Kan.; Papillion, Neb.; Prairie du Sac, Wis.; White, S.D. And, on the morning of Aug. 24, Elkhart, Ind.

Disapproval of the war was once rare.

When President George W. Bush ordered the invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, four weeks after the Twin Towers fell, American support for the overthrow of the Taliban was strong. Ninety-one percent of Americans supported the war at the end of its second month, 79 percent of them “strongly,” according to a Washington Post-ABC News poll.

This July, however, the number seeing the war as worth it dropped to 43 percent, with 53 percent saying the costs outweighed the benefits.

Even people who think U.S. troops should keep fighting tend to say so in reluctant tones.

"We're stuck. I just wish we could pull out, but we can't," said Becky Cole, an office manager having a drink recently at the Bulldog, a restaurant in east Elkhart. "The one thing I hate about it is we've been there nine years."

"I never wanted my son to be a little old obituary in the paper," Donna Shoecraft explains, still reeling from the shock.

When she learned that Justin was heading to Afghanistan to fight, she tried to talk him out of it, telling him, "You go over there, you're going to be in nothing but dirt, mud and sand."

She and her husband, Carroll, known as "Blue," don't know what inspired Justin to enlist in his mid-20s. Maybe the fact that he had always wanted to drive a tank. Maybe the bonus money and the chance to leave northern Indiana. A few months earlier, his mother had forbidden him from traveling to London. Too dangerous to visit such a big city alone, she said.

"We're just old factory people," Donna Shoecraft says.

Blue wears an enormous gray beard and punches the clock at a local machine shop. On Sundays, he works at the local drag strip. He spends his spare time collecting Schwinn bicycles and fixing up old cars, most recently a '27 Dodge coupe, now a gleaming yellow.

After finishing high school in 2001, Justin Shoecraft showed little interest in the military recruiting pitches that came his way. He spent six years hefting boxes for UPS. "Big heart, do anything for you," said Kevin Doctor, who often gave him a ride to work. "Real mild-mannered, head down. The kind of guy who flew under the radar."

He married his girlfriend the day before he left for basic training.

When a pair of soldiers appeared unannounced at the Shoecrafts' front door the other day, Donna Shoecraft screamed so loudly that neighbors four houses away heard her.

The war that she had long doubted finally broke her heart.

"Why are we there? Why are we even there?" she asked a few days later, the shock still fresh. "Start taking care of our own people."

From the front door of his secondhand shop down the street, Don Fisher watches the comings and goings at the Shoecrafts' home. He was fond of Justin and considers Blue Shoecraft a real friend. But he has not stopped by.

"I need to go down and hug him, and I just can't bring myself to do it," Fisher said. "Because I know that when I do, I'm going to cry, too."

Fisher is an Army veteran who voted twice for George W. Bush and backed Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) over Obama.

Although polls show stronger support for the war among Republicans than Democrats, Fisher says he always considered the Afghan war unwinnable.

The billions in taxpayer dollars should be spent on “people who are sleeping under bridges or living out of food banks,” he said.

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

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Two British Soldiers Killed In Lashkar Gah

19 Sep 10 Ministry of Defence

It is with sadness that the Ministry of Defence must announce that a soldier from The Queen's Royal Lancers and a soldier from the Royal Engineers serving as part of Combined Force Lashkar Gah, were killed in Afghanistan on Saturday 18 September 2010.

The soldiers were killed in an explosion during a vehicle patrol in the Lashkar Gah District of Helmand Province.

U.S. Marine Killed In Helmand

September 18, 2010 Reuters

ATLANTA -- A U.S. marine died fighting in Afghanistan on Friday, officials said. The Marine was killed in action in the Helmand province of Afghanistan, authorities said.

They said he died after sustaining a gunshot wound to his neck while conducting combat operations.

Foreign Occupation “Servicemember” Killed BY IED Somewhere Or Other In Afghanistan Friday: Nationality Not Announced

Sept. 18 AP

A foreign servicemember died following an improvised explosive device attack in southern Afghanistan yesterday.

Foreign Occupation “Servicemember” Killed Somewhere Or Other In Afghanistan Saturday: Nationality Not Announced

Sept. 18 Reuters

A foreign servicemember died following an insurgent attack in eastern Afghanistan today.

Another Foreign Occupation “Servicemember” Killed Somewhere Or Other In Afghanistan Saturday: Nationality Not Announced

Sept. 19 Reuters

A foreign servicemember died following an insurgent attack in northern Afghanistan yesterday.

Slain Idaho Marine Was ‘Loving And Caring’ New Dad



Lance Cpl. Cody A. Roberts: Photo provided by Idaho Army National Guard

09/03/10 BY KATY MOELLER, Idaho Statesman

Marine Lance Cpl. Cody A. Roberts, right, was thrilled to become a father in May, and he was already talking about having more children when he was deployed to Afghanistan in June.

Roberts, who grew up in Boise and has family in the area, doted as much as he could on his blond, blue-eyed baby boy, Colten.

“Cody only got to spend a month with him before he left,” said one of Roberts’ closest friends, Channing Curran.

Roberts’ grieving family requested privacy Thursday, but they did release a short statement through military officials: “He made the ultimate sacrifice on the streets of a city in Afghanistan so his son would never have to be afraid for his life or ours. Cody’s memory will forever light up our lives as we wait to be united in heaven with him. He will be forever loved.”

Curran spoke on the phone Thursday as she traveled to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware to support Roberts’ wife, Ashleigh, who was there to receive Roberts’ body.

She described Roberts as a loving, caring husband and father. “He was not just a hero when he died, but a hero when he lived,” Curran said.

Roberts enjoyed pool, poker, fishing, camping and barbecuing. His favorite beer was Coors Light, and he was known to do a hilarious “booty dance.”

“He’s funny, fun to be around and positive - you don’t really hear him saying negative things ever,” said Curran, still processing the fact that Roberts had died.

Back home in Boise, those who knew the 2006 Centennial High School graduate mourned.

Jon Watson, athletic director at the high school, said Roberts was a wrestler and played center on the junior varsity football team.

"I think the most notable thing about Cody was that he was a good person," said Watson, who was a wrestling coach when Cody was a student. "He was just a dang good kid, and it's a shame we keep losing these dang good kids."

Watson said the fallen soldier flag would be flown in honor of Roberts at Centennial's home football game Thursday night, and Roberts would be remembered with a moment of silence. "We'll give him a little love tonight," Watson said, his voice cracking with emotion.

Roberts was killed Tuesday while supporting combat operations in Helmand province of southwest Afghanistan, according to the Pentagon.

The New York Times reported that attacks on U.S. service members and coalition members in Afghanistan intensified this week. Twenty coalition members, including 19 Americans, were killed between Saturday and Tuesday.

Roberts was one of five Americans killed Tuesday. The other four suffered fatal injuries in roadside bombings in eastern Afghanistan the Times reported. In a release, U.S. military officials said Roberts was killed in a "hostile incident." They declined to provide more details Thursday.

Curran said Ashleigh Roberts told her that her husband was shot twice and "didn't feel anything."

"She didn't want to know details. She's in shock," Curran said.

It was Roberts' first deployment to Afghanistan; he was due home in January from the seven-month deployment.

Roberts went into the Marines the same year he graduated from high school, according to public records.

Watson remembered Roberts talking about his plans to enter the Marines after high school. Curran said she thought he had also considered college.

"He's like the biggest Boise State fan on the planet. He really wanted to go (to BSU), but he decided being a Marine was more important," she said. "It was just something he wanted to do, to make a difference."

Curran said Roberts met Ashleigh at a party at Camp Allen, and they soon became inseparable. They married about four months later.

"Except for field ops, they've never been apart until his deployment," said Curran, whose husband is a Marine and currently deployed in Afghanistan.

Curran said Roberts' father and stepmother live in Boise; his mother lives in Alaska. He is also survived by two sisters and a brother.

Redlands Loses Native Son

09/10/2010 By JOY JUEDES, Staff Writer; Redlands Daily Facts

Sgt. Raymond Alcaraz was always smiling.

In person and in photos, his face showed love for his job as an Army medic and being with people.

"People remembered him because of his smile and the way he joked around," said stepfather Paul Murphy of Redlands.

Alcaraz, a 20-year-old Redlands native, was killed along with three other soldiers on Aug. 31. He died of wounds suffered when their vehicle was attacked with an improvised explosive device, the Department of Defense announced Sept. 3. They were on a combat patrol mission in Pul-e-Alam in Logar province, southeastern Afghanistan.

He was 43 days from the end of his tour.

Soldiers in his unit of the 173rd Brigade Support Battalion, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team put Crest whitening strips near his memorial in Bamberg, Germany, where he was stationed, Murphy said.

"He loved to make people laugh," said his mother, Alma Murphy of Redlands. "He would just be sitting there and he would just do something (funny)."

"He would break the mood," said his older brother, Army Sgt. 1st Class Lucas Gonzales.

The brothers are 13 years apart, but were as close as if they were born nine months apart, their mother said.

"It didn't feel like it, it was like he was my twin brother," said Gonzales, who leaves today for Dover, Del., where he will escort his brother's body home to Redlands. On Saturday, local law enforcement officers, firefighters and motorcycle groups will escort Alcaraz on the 10 Freeway from Ontario International Airport to Redlands.

Alcaraz called Gonzales before every mission, and was always upbeat, his family said.

"I understood, I could physically see what he did because I know what he was doing," said Gonzales, who has also served in Afghanistan, overlapping his brother for four months in 2008. One of Gonzales' closest friends, Israel Garcia, was killed in July 2008 in the Battle of Wanat, a conflict that killed nine soldiers and wounded 27. Alcaraz called him after the battle to make sure he was all right, he said.

"I'd seen the worst of it and when I talked to him I never sensed that from him," said Gonzales, who is based at Fort Irwin. "He'd say, 'Hey, I'm going out, this is what I'm doing, just pray for me.' I'd sit there and pray for him."

Alcaraz never wanted to worry his mother, who kept her phone close at all times. He usually called in the wee hours of the morning, weekly or monthly, his mother and stepfather said.

"(He said), 'Sorry, mom, I got you up' - he was always thinking and worrying about me," Alma Murphy said.

He always wanted to join the Army, his family said, partly to follow Gonzales. He did, a month after graduating from Redlands High School in 2007. He was 17.

"It was what he wanted to do, that and be a firefighter," his mother said.

He was born Nov. 4, 1989, at Redlands Community Hospital. He played on Redlands Baseball for Youth teams, where his stepfather helped coach. He attended Kingsbury Elementary, Moore Middle School and Redlands East Valley High School. He chose to transfer to Redlands High School so he could graduate there, his family said.

"He couldn't wait to get out of high school," Paul Murphy said. "Once he joined the Army he loved every minute he didn't want to come home on leave sometimes because he was enjoying himself so much."

Alcaraz planned to serve four years, then attend a local fire academy. After basic training, he went through airborne school, then medic training.

"He had a drive, he was very competitive - whatever he did he wanted to exceed expectations," his mother said.

He was stationed in Fort Benning, Ga., then Bamberg, before being deployed as a platoon medic to Afghanistan in 2008 as part of Operation Enduring Freedom VIII. He lived in Germany about a year, then was deployed again to Afghanistan in November 2009 for Operation Enduring Freedom X.

While in Logar Province, he completed about 50 missions as a health care sergeant, according to the military. "He loved saving kids, he was always working on kids over there," his stepfather said. He helped local people, Afghan soldiers and U.S. soldiers, Gonzales said.

"He loved it because it was such a challenge," he said. "That's why they used him so much over there, because he's so dependable."

He was near improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, twice in the past six weeks before he was killed, Paul Murphy said.

He was young, but people who served with him were impressed by his maturity, his mother said.

“He was just starting to turn into a man in the past year, you could see it in him,” Paul Murphy said.

He asked his family to find him a house in the area, he said.

“We were going to help him buy one and he said he was doing it on his own,” he said.

“He wanted to be independent,” his mother said.

His bubbly spirit impacted a lot of people, she said. A man recently said he would send 173rd Airborne ties for Alcaraz’s pallbearers without charge, Paul Murphy said.

“He had met Raymond in Germany a year and a half ago, he remembered him because of his smile and the way he joked with the guys,” he said.

Erik Johnson, an Army occupational therapist who became close friends with Alcaraz in Afghanistan, created a tribute page for Alcaraz on his website.

“We all used to laugh at Ray because how hard he worked on his physical appearance,” he wrote. “He definitely had an incredible smile. His white teeth would blind us all the time.”

Their battalion held a memorial for Alcaraz Sept. 3. “There’s a ‘final roll call’ that they do where they call out names and then eventually the hero,” he wrote. “When they did this for Ray, I lost it. (A) 21 gun salute followed and I wept. We all did.”

The Redlands City Council had a moment of silence for Alcaraz at their meeting on Tuesday.

The Redlands High School football team invited Alcaraz’s family onto the field Friday night before their game against Great Oak. Local veterans raised a flag, then lowered it to half-staff. Alcaraz’s accolades were announced and there was a moment of silence, according to Esther Armendariz, whose son, Paul Gonzales, plays for the Terriers. Paul Gonzales is Lucas Gonzales’ half-brother and stood on the field with the family.

He helped organize the tribute, Armendariz said.

Visitation is from 5 to 8 p.m. Tuesday at Emmerson-Bartlett Memorial Chapel, 703 Brookside Ave., Redlands. Services are at 9 a.m. Wednesday at the Rock church, 2345 S. Waterman Ave., San Bernardino. Burial will be at Hillside Memorial Park in Redlands.

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

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

U.S. Soldier Wounded By Kandahar IED



Members of a U.S. military medic team carry a U.S. soldier who was injured from a roadside bomb blast onto an ambulance after evacuated aboard a “Dustoff” medevac helicopter from 101st Airborne Division, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, Task Force Shadow in Kandahar, September 18, 2010. REUTERS/Erik de Castro

Marja Marine Base Attacked

Sept. 18, 2010 By ROD NORDLAND and ALISSA J. RUBIN, New York Times

Voter turnout was extremely low in Marja, the Helmand Province battleground, as bullets flew over the polling station near the district center, and insurgents launched a rocket-propelled grenade into the main United States Marine base here.

No one was injured in the rocket blast, which landed close to an ammunition supply area and destroyed the wooden platform of a tent housing several Marines. Marine commanders responded with three Hellfire missiles shot from Reaper drones, which they say killed at least two insurgents who had launched the rocket a quarter mile from the base.

Rocket Attack On Occupation Headquarters In Kabul

Sep 17 AFP

KABUL: A huge blast that rocked Kabul in the early hours of Saturday was a rocket attack on the headquarters of NATO's mission in Afghanistan, a NATO spokeswoman told AFP.

"It was a rocket of unknown caliber, it landed in the vicinity of ISAF HQ," said Lieutenant Commander Katie Kendrick, referring to NATO's International Security Assistance Force.

More Resistance Action: "The Letters, Signed By The Taliban's Military Commander For Kandahar, Al Haj Ahmad Sayid, Gave Two Phone Numbers, One For Information About The Warning, And Another For Complaints"

September 18, 2010, Lynne O'Donnell, AFP & By David Nakamura and Ernesto Londono, Washington Post & By ROD NORDLAND and ALISSA J. RUBIN, New York Times

In Kandahar, the Taliban papered the city with nightletters on the eve of the election, warning people not to vote in "Americanized elections." The letters, signed by the Taliban's military commander for Kandahar, Al Haj Ahmad Sayid, gave two phone numbers, one for information about the warning, and another for complaints.

Late Saturday, Defense Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak told reporters that insurgents had carried out attacks in 17 of the country's 34 provinces throughout the day. The attacks killed three police officers, authorities said, and wounded 13 police officers.

Interior Minister Bismillah Khan said authorities recorded 63 incidents involving heavy gunfire and 33 bomb explosions.

On Saturday morning, officials reported one rocket attack in Kabul, one in Baghlan province in the north and six in Nangahar province in the east.

Jalalabad police spokesman Abdul Ghafar said insurgents launched at least six rockets Saturday morning. Three were aimed at the NATO base by the airport, he said, and the others landed in the Besoud, a district in northern Jalalabad. Ghafar said there were no reports of casualties.

The city of Kandahar seemed particularly hard hit. Explosions were heard every half hour through the morning, and 31 had occurred by mid-morning including rockets fired by insurgents, according to a security official there.

In the southeastern province of Kandahar, one of the country's most dangerous areas, Gov. Toryali Wesa was on his way to inspect three polling centers in the Dand district when his convoy struck a roadside bomb hidden in garbage, spokesman Zalmay Ayoubi said. No one was injured and the governor proceeded to the centers, he added.

"When the explosion happened, black smoke was in the air. We were not able to see anything," Ayoubi said. He said security forces also discovered about 10 explosive devices hidden throughout the province and detonated them through controlled explosions.

"The blast caused no casualties but it shattered my vehicle's windows," Toryalai Wesa told AFP.

FUTILE EXERCISE: ALL HOME NOW!



U.S. marines from 1st Light Armoured Reconnaissance Battalion scan for roadside bombs during a patrol in Taghaz, Helmand September 9, 2010. REUTERS/Erik de Castro

MILITARY NEWS

HOW MANY MORE FOR OBAMA'S WARS?



The casket of Army Ranger Staff Sgt. Vinson Adkinson III is carried out of Ray of Hope Church in Comanche, Okla., by a Ft. Sill honor guard, following his funeral Sept. 13, 2010. Adkinson, 26, was killed by an improvised explosive device on Aug. 31, 2010, in Afghanistan. (AP Photo/Sue Ogrocki)

**Disabled Veterans Fucked Over
Again As Usual:
Eval Boards Refusing To Follow
Disability Ratings Rules:
This “Can Leave Disabled Troops
Without The Benefits They Are Entitled
To”**

9.20.2010 By Kelly Kennedy, Army Times [Excerpts]

When injured Marine Sgt. Roy Sanchez asked his Medical Evaluation Board if every one of his medical conditions should be considered as part of his case, he said he was told no.

And when the Iraq war veteran asked if his disabilities should be rated by his Physical Evaluation Board according to the Veterans Affairs Department's disability rating schedule, he was told that rule applied only to cases being considered under a limited pilot program at certain military installations.

"I was lost," Sanchez said. "I would ask my doctors, 'What's the next step?' and I couldn't get any answers."

But in both cases, the answers Sanchez received were, in fact, wrong: All of his medical issues should be documented by his Medical Evaluation Board, and disabled service members must be rated according to VA's rating schedule.

Those rules were mandated in the 2008 Defense Authorization Act after the Walter Reed scandal showed disabled troops were being improperly discharged.

Veterans advocates say the Navy isn't the only service not following the new rules, which can leave disabled troops without the benefits they are entitled to.

Army and Air Force MEBs are sometimes failing to follow these standards as well, and PEBs are not uniformly enforcing the new Disability Evaluation System laws and provisions that came about after the Walter Reed scandal, said veterans advocate Mike Parker, a retired Army lieutenant colonel who has been assisting Sanchez and has helped many other troops going through the process.

In Sanchez's case, Parker has documents and audio recordings to back him up.

Retired Air Force Col. Michael Hayden, deputy director of government relations for Military Officers Association of America, said he can't understand how any service could legally interpret the rule about following the VA ratings schedule for disabilities as applying only to cases being handled under the new Disability Evaluation System pilot program.

"Their actions fly in the face of the Office of the Secretary of Defense guidance," Hayden said.

Hayden noted that OSD issued specific guidelines, in the form of a "directive-type memorandum," or DTM, to the services indicating the rule should apply to all disability retirement cases, not just those in the pilot program.

Cynthia Smith, a Pentagon spokeswoman, said updated Defense Department policy states that all medical conditions should be included on MEB write-ups, and VA's disability schedule should be used for all disability decisions.

She also quoted the Defense Department policy specifying that the VA schedule shall be used to make disability ratings "for each of the medical conditions" found to make a member unfit for continued service, "independently or due to combined effect."

If more than one condition exists that would make a member unfit for continued service, the VA schedule “will be used to determine a combined disability rating for each unfitting condition,” the policy states.

In fact, the Navy put out its own policy letter March 3, 2008, stating that adjudicators should abide by the new laws mandated by Congress.

But when Parker asked why those rules were not applied in Sanchez’s case, he said the response from the Navy’s PEB legal section stated that the rules apply only to cases handled by “military treatment facilities ... actively participating in the DoD/DVA Disability Evaluation System Pilot Program.”

The legal section also wrote that the PEB did not have the VA disability ratings schedule work-sheets because they “are not necessary.”

Sanchez’s Medical Evaluation Board, the first step in the medical retirement process, considered only his knee problems that led to surgery, but not his back pain, joint pain or a lump found in his chest.

The informal PEB rated Sanchez at 10-percent disabled for only the knee problems.

According to an audio recording of Sanchez’s formal hearing that was obtained by Parker, the board declared Sanchez’s records complete despite not including all of his medical conditions.

Parker said the recording also has the presiding officer saying he was unaware of the Pentagon policy that all conditions must be included in the MEB’s documentation, and also saying that the boards do not rate combined conditions.

“What good are law and policy changes if they are not followed or enforced?” Parker said.

Parker and Sanchez have filed a petition asking the PEB to consider Sanchez’s other injuries, and use the VA ratings schedule to determine his disability rating.

But Parker worries about other troops whose cases may have been improperly adjudicated and who received improper discharges and disability ratings.

A new Physical Disability Board of Review was set up to examine cases that may have been improperly adjudicated, but the board will consider only cases of troops medically separated before Dec. 31, 2009.

Parker said that cutoff date should be extended.

Given that the services still do not appear to be uniformly following the new rules instituted by Congress and the Defense Department, “it really is a no-brainer that these provisions (should) apply to legacy cases,” he 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

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

“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

Film: “The Tillman Story”
“It’s These Politicians And The Brass
Who Are Responsible For This
Cover-Up That Are The Anti-Soldier
Guys”

“It’s Shocking In The Film To See The
Way They Force These Soldiers To Lie
To Each Other--The Way They Throw
This General Under The Bus As A Kind
Of A Scapegoat”



Photography Plus via Williamson Stealth Media Solutions

Nobody’s ever taken responsibility for it. As recently as a week ago, they were continuing to lie by saying, “We apologize to the Tillman family for the mistakes we made.” They chalk the whole thing up to bureaucratic mistakes, which is itself a lie. Dannie was able to prove, in those documents, that this was a deliberate attempt, not a mistake or a misstep or an error.

Pat Tillman was an NFL star who turned down a multimillion-dollar contract to join the U.S. military.

In 2004, he died in Afghanistan by friendly fire, a fact that the U.S. government deliberately concealed--until the truth eventually came out.

Amir Bar-Lev, director of The Tillman Story, appeared on the radio show of left-wing sportswriter Dave Zirin to discuss the shocking government cover-up--and the courageous efforts of Pat's family to bring the truth to the light of day.

This is a transcript of their discussion.

Give us the image of Pat Tillman that you feel was sold to the American people and the actual human being who you got to know through his family and through making this film.

THE THING about heroes and the thing about people we're told we should look up to is you've got to be able to connect with them.

The Pat Tillman who was this sort of square-jawed guy, with a one-track mind who gave it all up to serve his country--it's something you could look up to, but there's just no humanity to it. It's just this one-dimensional, simplistic thing.

Pat was a guy who was absolutely loyal and committed.

He was a guy with very strong beliefs who was willing to question those beliefs. That's the part of the story that people don't know. That he was a guy, like the rest of us, who had doubts--who was willing to change his mind.

And in fact, he went to Iraq--that was his first tour of duty--and because he was involved in the phony Jessica Lynch operation, he started to have second thoughts about what he was involved with. He actually had questions about being in the military at that point, as probably most thinking people would.

He was actually given an opportunity to get out of the military, but didn't do it because he was a guy who was true to his word. He had committed for three years, and he wasn't going to shirk that responsibility. And that led to his death.

ONE OF the things that makes the film exemplary is the involvement of Pat's family, and the very rounded view they give of Pat as a human being. You talk to his mother Mary, who is also known as Dannie Tillman, and you talk to Pat Sr. This is a very courageous family, but they are also a very private family. How were you able to secure their involvement in this film?

WE JUST committed ourselves to not contributing to that cartoon that I was talking about before.

They really felt that they had lost Pat twice. They didn't recognize him in the public persona of Pat, the persona that most people are familiar with--and they said that guy is a guy that Pat, the real Pat, would have hated.

So when we got on board and said we were going to try and paint him in a more complex light, they said they'd be willing to work with us. As you said, they are an exemplary family. I think one misperception about this film and about this story is that people feel like, "Oh, it's very important that you go see this," and that it's like almost taking medicine. You've seen it. It's actually very uplifting. This is a great family. They're funny, they are prone to dropping "f-bombs," so much so that we got slapped with an R rating.

They're just an incredible American family with a lot of love for Pat, and they didn't stop loving him once he was gone.

His mother was doing all this because she hadn't stopped loving Pat. She was a schoolteacher at the time. She took on the most powerful institution in the world, the American government, and she is winning that fight.

And that is what's so remarkable about this story.

THE STORY really exists in two interwoven parts. There's what we've been talking about, which is Pat as three-dimensional human being and not as cartoon. But then there's the other side of the film, which is almost a mystery, almost a "whodunnit." It's a look at the circumstances around Pat's death, and the efforts of the Tillman family to find the truth.

Going into the film, was there any gap between your opinion of how the military handled it, and what you found out as you were investigating the circumstances around Pat's death?

ABSOLUTELY. THAT'S a good question.

Most people's understanding of how Pat died is wildly off the mark, because what was reported up to this point is what the government spread.

It's a lie actually.

This idea that it was the "fog of war" and that there were mistakes in terms of reporting--this is a cleverly disseminated lie that Dannie, Pat's mom, was able to unravel through years and years of investigative work.

We basically benefited from what she did.

The government made a huge mistake when they gave her all these documents connected to Pat's death--3,500 pages of documents, almost all of them totally redacted. Never thinking that this woman, living in this little cabin in the Santa Cruz Mountains, would be able to make heads or tails out of what she was reading.

But she hooked up with Stan Goff, one of the original Delta Force guys. He's a retired Army Ranger. He's been in Haiti, Somalia, Vietnam. He's a really heavy-hitting Special

Ops guy, and he was in Pat's platoon years before Pat was in there. And together, the two of them led the family in this investigation to uncover the truth.

I think people are going to be shocked when they see how far off the mark the handed-down story has been.

LET'S GO to that because Mary Tillman says in the film that she feels that Pat's eventual death was the result of an "over-testosteroned" military force that just really wanted to shoot things and didn't take the time to actually see what they were doing--and then the cover-up happened in the aftermath of that.

Of course, she'd be the first to say that's her conjecture based on what she's been reading.

The people who engaged in the conspiracy to cover it up and lied to the American people have never been called to account for their actions.

So as you said, there's more questions out there than there are answers.

But the beginning point is that this was not what the government said. Even when I started working on this film three years ago, I had in my mind a kind of a "fog of war" scenario, where Pat just happened to be caught by an errant U.S. bullet in a chaotic, confusing ambush.

But it wasn't a chaotic, confusing ambush.

In fact, there's very little proof, and a lot of questions, about whether there was even an ambush to begin with. And if there was, there was a couple of guys from a very, very far distance, popped off a couple rounds and ran--you know ran like hell.

And that was 10 minutes before Pat was shot. When Pat was actually shot, it was from 40 meters away. It was from a minute to two minutes of shooting, which is an ungodly amount of time. He had time to wave his hands, to throw a smoke grenade to indicate that he was a friendly.

And the guys who shot him, in their testimony, in some of these sham investigations, they admit that they knew they were shooting, that there were friendlies up on the hillside where Pat was. So there's just a lot of questions, and I think people are right to be trying to press for answers.

HAVE THERE ever been any answers given to why Pat's uniform was burned and why his military journal was destroyed?

NOT REALLY. The conjecture is that it was proof. U.S. military bullets have green tips. So it would have been immediately evident to anybody that he was killed by our own men, so it had to be destroyed.

But this was a conspiracy that was a bottom-up and a top-down conspiracy.

The soldiers on the ground knew right away that it was a disaster--that they had killed the most famous enlisted man. But then something kicked in. The higher-ups kicked into gear within 24 hours.

Everybody knew it was friendly fire.

And then one of the most shocking parts of this whole story is the way they throw the soldiers under the bus.

We've been very gratified that people aren't perceiving this as a film that is anti-soldier or anti-military in some way, because really, it's these politicians and the brass who are responsible for this cover-up that are the anti-soldier guys.

It's shocking in the film to see the way they force these soldiers to lie to each other--the way they throw this general under the bus as a kind of a scapegoat.

The conspiracy went as high as the White House.

Nobody's ever taken responsibility for it. As recently as a week ago, they were continuing to lie by saying, "We apologize to the Tillman family for the mistakes we made."

They chalk the whole thing up to bureaucratic mistakes, which is itself a lie. Dannie was able to prove, in those documents, that this was a deliberate attempt, not a mistake or a misstep or an error.

THE FILM is absolutely fantastic. I can't say it enough, congratulations to you. The question that I keep coming back to is whether you are having a difficult time getting this message out.

Because the film is rockin', it's got a great rating on the Rotten Tomatoes Web site, but I read a very negative review in the New York Post. I don't know if you saw that.

I DID, but that that and one far-right-wing site were the only ones, and I have to say that we're absolutely flattered that there have been so many good reviews.

But I'm really glad you asked me how the film is doing, because I'm going to hang my ego up and just grovel to your listeners for just a second. When you see the film, you'll see how far off the mark the reporting from the mainstream press has been on this story, and it's shocking. But if you want these kinds of films to make a difference, you've got to see them in the theaters.

You can't wait until they're on Netflix and stuff.

I know it's easy to do that. But if you want to support this kind of moviemaking, to correct the record about a lot of these things, you've got to try and support these films. It's not because it's going to pad my wallet or anything like that. These films, if you don't see them in the first couple of weeks when they arrive in your town, they go. The exhibitors say, "We've got to show the Expendables, we have to put food on the table," which I totally understand.

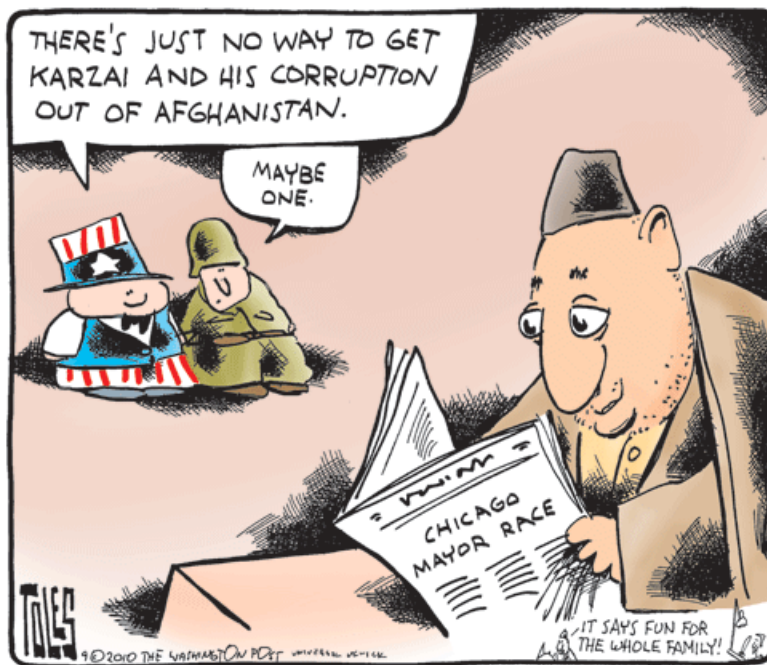
But as I said earlier, this film is not medicine. You couldn't write this stuff. It's got humor, it's got world-class conspiracy, and when you see the way Rumsfeld and those guys got away with it, it's like watching a Mafia movie.

IT'S UNBELIEVABLE, and you did a great job.

It's outrageous that on political principle they would tell people not to see a film that actually does right by the soldiers.

It does right by basic questions of democracy and transparency, and I'll say it to my listeners, it does right by the art of film itself. It's a crazily entertaining movie. People should see it.

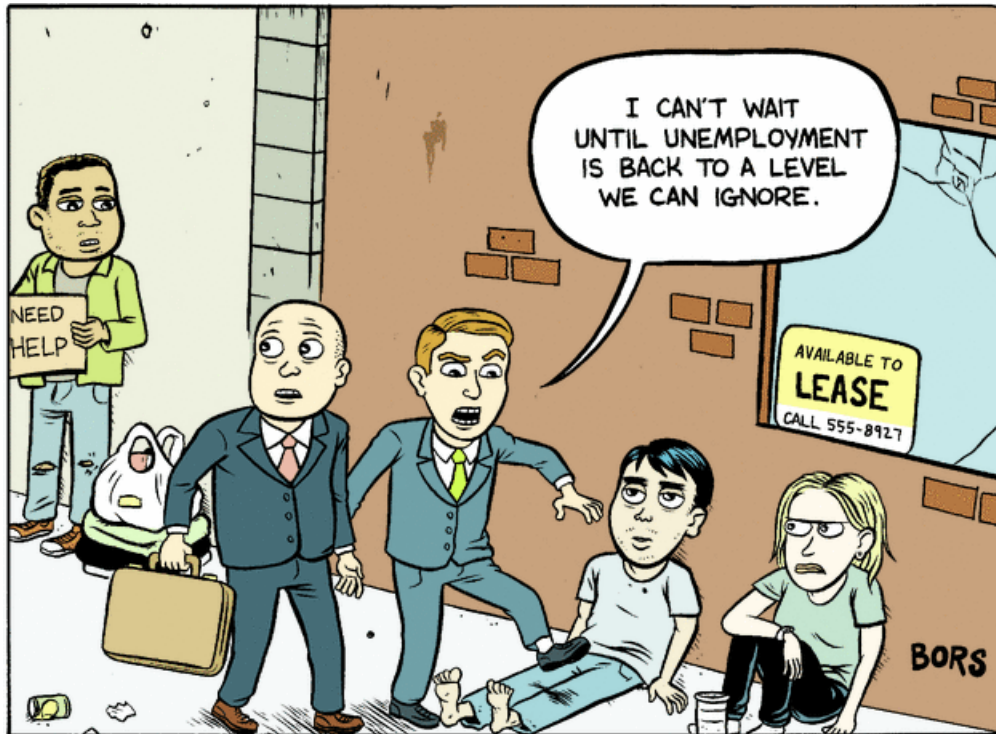
DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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.

CLASS WAR REPORTS



**Cop Who Executed Day Laborer Praised By L.A. Mayor:
The Murderer Is Currently A Defendant In A Federal Lawsuit Alleging That "He Covered Up A Shooting By Falsely Claiming That The Suspect Possessed A Gun"
"The Shooting Resulted In An Eruption Of Protest, With Residents Angrily Confronting Police For Several Nights"**

[T]he Los Angeles Times reported that Hernandez had been involved in two previous officer-related shootings and is currently a defendant in a federal lawsuit alleging that he covered up one shooting by falsely claiming that the suspect possessed a gun.

September 15, 2010 Victor Fressie, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

THE LOS Angeles Police Department struck again the day before Labor Day.

A 37-year-old Guatemalan day laborer--who witnesses say was unarmed--was shot in the head and killed by an officer from the notorious Rampart Division, site of one of the worst police scandals in U.S. history.

But this time, the shooting resulted in an eruption of protest, with residents angrily confronting police for several nights and an ongoing vigil to demand justice in yet another case of deadly police violence.

The killing took place in the Westlake area of LA, which is sandwiched between the increasingly gentrified downtown and the predominantly immigrant MacArthur Park neighborhood.

Manuel Jamines was shot and killed by LAPD officer Frank Hernandez after supposedly lunging at Hernandez with a switchblade.

According to official police story, Jamines had been threatening two women. One of the women flagged down three bicycle police officers, the cops say--after they drew their weapons, Jamines allegedly charged at them with the knife, and the officers responded by killing him on the spot.

A cafeteria worker in the Los Angeles Unified School District has appeared publicly to contradict the police story.

Asking to be called only Ana, for fear of police harassment, she said she was across the street and saw no weapon in Jamines' hands. She said Jamines seemed drunk and was having a hard time keeping his balance.

Within a minute of the cops' shouted warnings at Jamines, Hernandez fired twice at point-blank range--Ana said Jamines' blood splattered to the other side of the street.

A day after Ana's statement, the Los Angeles Times reported that Hernandez had been involved in two previous officer-related shootings and is currently a defendant in a federal lawsuit alleging that he covered up one shooting by falsely claiming that the suspect possessed a gun.

Anyone who knows the history of the Rampart Division ought to be suspicious. In the 1990s, more than 70 cops from the division's CRASH anti-gang unit were implicated in unprovoked shootings and violence, routine planting of evidence to frame suspects, stealing from residents, bank robbery and dealing drugs.

ON THE night Jamines was killed and the following two, residents and activists turned out for angry demonstrations, with some throwing rocks at police and setting dumpsters on fire. Dozens of people were arrested.

The media took the cops' side and hinted that the confrontations were the work of "outside agitators."

LA Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa called the officer a hero, according to the KPCC radio station in Pasadena.

On September 8, the Rampart Division held a community forum, where Police Chief Charles Beck read a statement from the LAPD's unnamed main witness, who said Jamines tried to attack her and a pregnant woman. He was met by an explosion of boos and heckling from the more than 300 people into a school auditorium for the forum.

LA City Council member Ed Reyes, flanked by a small army of city officials, tried to reassure the crowd that there would be a fair investigation into the shooting. But promises like that, as in the case of Oscar Grant III's murder by a transit officer in Oakland, always turn out to be hollow.

While the images in the media have focused the nights of altercations between police and residents on the streets, there is an ongoing campaign to hold the LAPD accountable for this shooting and call attention to its history of violence and abuse.

Many residents gather for daily vigils at the site of the shooting, where the discussion has turned to further organizing. Citywide organizations are offering their support--on September 18, demonstrators will gather at Union Avenue and 6th Street at 10 a.m. for a march organized by the ANSWER Coalition, Consejo de Federaciones Mexicanas en Norteamérica and Unión Del Barrio.

Residents and activists are demanding justice in the case of this awful crime.

We know that city and police officials always promise a fair investigation, but the outcome is almost always to clear police of wrongdoing and quiet dissent.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

Traveling Soldier is the publication of the Military Resistance Organization.

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/)

Vietnam GI: Reprints Available



Vietnam: They Stopped An Imperial War

Not available from anybody else, anywhere

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

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

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

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

“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



Military Resistance Looks Even Better Printed Out

Military Resistance/GI Special are archived at website

<http://www.militaryproject.org> .

The following have chosen to post issues; there may be others:

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