

Military Resistance 8L19

HOW MANY MORE FOR OBAMA'S WARS?



A flight medic with Task Force Shadow tries to revive severely wounded Marine during a Sept. 3, 2010 helicopter rescue mission in southern Afghanistan. The Marine died of his wounds. (Brennan Linsley / AP)

Un-Happy Old Years

From: Dennis Serdel
To: Military Resistance
Sent: December 31, 2010
Subject: Un-Happy Old Years

By Dennis Serdel, Military Resistance 2010; Vietnam 1967-68 (one tour) Light Infantry, Americal Div. 11th Brigade; United Auto Workers GM Retiree

Written by Dennis Serdel for Military Resistance

Un-Happy Old Years

**Hundreds of thousands dead Iraqis stand in Time Square
all wearing hats that say Un-Happy Old Years
The Ball is a bunker buster that slowly slides down
on top of their hats is a big question mark that asks
why did we die we did nothing wrong
Other dead Iraqis stand by the dark leveled
Twin Towers thicker than 3000 they ask
what did we do wrong, we were not in Afghanistan
we had nothing to do with the attack on your
Twin Towers
Before the year ends please tell us why you
bombed and invaded Iraq, we were innocent
it's as plain as black and white
Why did our children and mothers and fathers
and the rest of us dead Iraqis have to die
Why did the war shift from Afghanistan to Iraq
the bunker buster in Times Square
slides down some more as the colors of Time Square
turn bloody red as the bunker buster lands
on it's targets that made hundreds of thousands
of innocent Iraqis die until only dead Iraqis
are left that stand by the Twin Towers
and throw their question mark hats in the air
and proclaim we had nothing to do
with your 3000 dead innocent Americans,
you killed the wrong people.
Wall Street gurgles and groans in the middle
of the night and answers
We wanted your oil and our military bases.**

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

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

December 31, 2010 AP

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

Italian Soldier Killed At Guilistan Base

12.31.10 AP

Italian military authorities in Rome said an Italian soldier was shot dead while on guard duty at a base in Gulistan in the western province of Farah.

Services Are Scheduled For North Carolina Soldier Killed In Afghanistan

December 17, 2010 WVEC

CONWAY, N.C.-- Services for Sgt. Will McLawhorn will be held Saturday, Dec. 18, at 11a.m. at Conway Baptist Church with burial to follow in Conway Cemetary.

Army Sgt. Willie A. McLawhorn of Conway, NC was among six soldiers who died December 12 in Kandahar province when insurgents attacked their unit with an improvised explosive device.

His remains were flown into Dover Air Force Base on Monday, according to an Air Force news release.

A family friend contacted by WVEC.com said the flags in the town of Conway in Northampton County were flying at half staff and residents and businesses displayed yellow ribbons for the family, which flew to Dover Monday morning.

Officials on Tuesday said a wreath in McLawhorn's memory would be placed in the Veterans Memorial Park and his name would be added.

McLawhorn was an Infantryman, who joined the Army in November 2006 and arrived at Fort Campbell in April 2007. McLawhorn's awards and decorations include: Army Commendation Medal; Army Good Conduct medal; National Defense Service Medal; Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Iraqi Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal; Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon; Expert Infantry Badge, Parachutists Badge, and Air Assault Badge.

He's survived by his mother, Diane B. McLawhorn, and father, Willie A. McLawhorn of Conway, N.C.

The six soldiers were assigned 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, Ky.

The others killed in the explosion were Cpl. Sean M. Collins, 25, of Ewa Beach, Hawaii; Spc. Patrick D. Deans, 22 of Orlando, Fla.; Spc. Kenneth E. Necochea Jr., 21, of San Diego, California.; Spc. Derek T. Simonetta, 21, of Redwood City, California and Spc. Jorge E. Villacis, 24, of Sunrise, Fla.

Holiday Heartache For Family Of Fallen Marine

12.26.10 Reported by Lou Hillman, WKBT

It will be an emotional weekend for an area family, celebrating the holidays just days after the combat death of one of their loved ones. Cpl. Sean Osterman died last week from injuries he sustained while fighting in Afghanistan.

Even at an early age, Osterman was talking about flying airplanes for the military. So it wasn't much of a surprise when he signed up for the Marine Corps at the age of 17.

"He had that glimmer of adventure, so yeah, I had reservations but I knew the Marine Corps would be good for him. It gave him direction," said Kelly Hugo, Osterman's mother.

Hugo says her son will always be known as the family jokester.

"If it were fun, he was going to be in the middle of it and that's what I want people to remember," said Hugo.

Memories ... that's what the family is holding onto now.

Osterman was shot earlier this month while leading his platoon on a mission in Afghanistan. Doctors were able to keep him alive long enough for his mother to visit him at a hospital in Germany. He died on December 18.

Hugo then flew home with her 21-year-old son's body.

"The dignified transfer was really hard because that's when it hit home that he is in that coffin and he is coming home. It's really hard," said Hugo, while fighting back tears.

Osterman had just started his second tour of duty. It was going to be his last, his mother says, because he wanted to go to college.

"But I know in my heart that if he were standing here, he'd tell you that better me than any one of the men," said Hugo.

A young leader in the military, who will be remembered at home for his fun-loving antics.

Two Australian Soldiers Shot At Bomb Site In Oruzgan

January 1, 2011 Fairfax Media

Two Australian soldiers have been shot while guarding a bomb site in Afghanistan, taking the number of Australian soldiers wounded in Afghanistan last year to 64.

The pair, from a Mentoring Task Force in Oruzgan province, were shot on Thursday afternoon, local time.

The first soldier had been guarding the site of a suspected improvised bomb when he was shot by an unknown person. A second soldier, guarding the landing zone for a medical evacuation helicopter for his comrade, was then shot from a unknown location a short time later.

They were taken to the International Security Assistance Force base at Tarin Kowt. One was later transferred to Kandahar for further treatment.

Both were in a satisfactory condition yesterday, a Defence spokesman said.

Local Marine Injured In Afghanistan

December 30, 2010 News4Jax

FLEMMING ISLAND, Fla. -- Sgt. John Hayes, a Marine who grew up in Clay County, recently stepped on a bomb while stationed in Afghanistan. Hayes suffered severe injuries and lost both his legs.

"He's a very strong young man," said Hayes' mother, Alice Thompson. "We're thankful he's alive, just badly injured."

Thompson is planning to go up to Bethesda Naval Hospital, where Hayes will be transferred, but she doesn't think it will be easy to see him in this condition.

"I'm concerned. I don't know if I can handle it," said Thompson. "But if he can handle what he's going through, we can handle the hard part."

Hayes' wife, Janel, and three young daughters live in Okinawa, Japan, where Hayes is stationed. The family will be flying to be with Hayes when he returns to the states. Hayes mother-and father-in-law, who live in Clay County will be making the trip, too.

Hayes has done multiple tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Hayes' family is taking donations through Facebook to raise funds to travel to Maryland to see Hayes.

Resistance Action

Dec 28 Associated Press & Dec 31 (Reuters)

Insurgents killed an employee at the Kandahar mayor's office as the man walked down a street Tuesday, deputy police chief Fazel Ahmed Sherzad said.

Two Afghan soldiers were killed in a bombing in an eastern Afghan town near the Pakistan border, the defence ministry says. "Two soldiers were martyred and another was injured in a suicide bombing on Tuesday in Barmal town," the defence ministry said on Wednesday, giving no further details.

KABUL - Two Afghan police and one insurgent were killed during battle in northern Takhar province on Thursday, provincial police chief Shah Jahan Noori said.

<p>IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATION</p>

The Sewer You're Dying For #1:

**“Webs Of Connections Between
Members Of President Hamid
Karzai's Family, Businessmen,**

Corrupt Officials, Drug Traffickers And Taliban Commanders”

**“Azimi Has Bribed Senior Officials,
Moved Money For Drug Traffickers
And Kept The Taliban Flush With
Cash”**

**“‘The Corruption Went From The Top (Of
The Government) To The Bottom,’ Said
Another U.S. Official. ‘It Ran Sideways
To The Taliban’”**

Officials say the case against Mr. Azimi exemplifies how a major, two-year campaign to cut Taliban funding and clean up President Karzai's corrupt administration is floundering, in part because of resistance from the president himself.

DECEMBER 29, 2010 By MATTHEW ROSENBERG, Wall St. Journal [Excerpts]

KABUL—U.S. officials in Afghanistan have spent thousands of hours over the past few years charting what they call "Malign Actor Networks"—webs of connections between members of President Hamid Karzai's family, businessmen, corrupt officials, drug traffickers and Taliban commanders.

Using intelligence drawn in part from informants and a powerful wiretapping system, these officials say they have found an economic and political order — underwritten by billions of dollars in aid, reconstruction and logistics funds from the West — that is undermining the Afghan government from within and aiding a Taliban insurgency that is trying to topple it from without.

The officials and their Afghan allies have had less success, however, breaking these bonds.

The futile attempts so far at prosecuting one individual — a banker named Haji Muhammad Rafi Azimi — illustrate the depth the problem.

Mr. Azimi has bribed senior officials, moved money for drug traffickers and kept the Taliban flush with cash, say several current and former Afghan and U.S. officials who described what they say are hours of wiretaps, information provided

by informers and financial documents connected with the bank where Mr. Azimi works.

Mr. Azimi features in several of the scores of PowerPoint slides drawn up to chart the Malign Actor Networks, officials say, with squiggly lines that represent family ties, business partnerships or other links that connect people from spheres across Afghanistan.

In November 2009, Afghan prosecutors issued a warrant for Mr. Azimi's arrest after he was allegedly heard on a wiretap discussing bribes paid to the country's then-Islamic affairs minister. Such payments would secure government contracts for Mr. Azimi's travel business to take Muslims on the annual Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, Afghan and U.S. officials say.

The minister fled Afghanistan before he could be arrested.

Almost immediately, President Karzai asked Afghanistan's Attorney General to quash the warrant against Mr. Azimi, according to a former Afghan prosecutor involved in the investigation. The action was taken because of Mr. Azimi's connections to top officials, said a senior adviser to President Karzai.

Mr. Karzai's office denied meddling in the investigation.

In an interview, Deputy Attorney General Rahmatullah Nazari said prosecutors didn't charge Mr. Azimi because they lacked evidence. He also said wiretaps aren't admissible in Afghan courts and that authorities felt it "unfair that a minister (who allegedly took bribes) should be free while another man sat in jail."

Yet a lower-ranking Islamic Affairs Ministry official connected to the case was convicted in May, in part because of a wiretap recording in which Mr. Azimi was heard discussing the alleged bribes. The recording prompted the judge to ask why Mr. Azimi wasn't on trial, said Afghan and U.S. officials who have seen a videotape of the proceedings.

Mr. Azimi denied giving bribes. Of the wiretap, he said: "It is not my voice."

Officials say the case against Mr. Azimi exemplifies how a major, two-year campaign to cut Taliban funding and clean up President Karzai's corrupt administration is floundering, in part because of resistance from the president himself.

"Everyone's got protection here," said a U.S. official in Kabul involved in the investigations. "No one's afraid of getting caught so no one's got to take a fall."

"In this government, we have mafia networks," Afghan national security adviser Rangin Dadfar Spanta said in an interview. These networks "begin with the financial banking system, with corruption networks, with reconstruction and security firms and also with drugs and with Taliban; they are in parliament and they are in government."

In those networks, U.S. and Afghan investigators say, Mr. Azimi is a player.

Apart from the alleged bribes to win Hajj business, wiretaps have also captured a voice investigators say is Mr. Azimi's allegedly bribing an official to shut down an investigation into a money-transfer firm linked to him, and talking with Taliban commanders about transferring funds.

The speaker on these tapes has also bragged to associates that the Americans were listening and would never put him in jail, say people who have heard them.

Mr. Azimi was on the board of directors of the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce until last year and once ran the influential association of money changers.

He also is an occasional informant for Afghanistan's U.S.-funded intelligence service, the National Directorate of Security, say people familiar with the matter. Afghan officials say he hasn't provided much helpful information. The NDS declined to comment.

Mr. Azimi came to attention of U.S. investigators and intelligence agents roughly two years ago, when a powerful wiretapping system came online as part of efforts to disrupt Taliban financing networks.

Investigators started picking up conversations that included individuals from across Afghan's business and political elite, and members of the insurgency, said a former U.S. official involved in the initial wiretapping effort.

"All these people talking about bribes and pretty much any kind of corruption you can imagine started coming up" on the wiretaps, the official said. "It was all linked together."

Links began emerging between various individuals who themselves were suspected of various crimes, from taking and passing bribes to moving money for the Taliban. "We looked around and realized how deep all this ran. The corruption went from the top (of the government) to the bottom," said another U.S. official. "It ran sideways to the Taliban. It went in every direction."

U.S. officials say they have recorded phone conversations between Mr. Azimi and the Taliban, who they say used a money-transfer service linked to Mr. Azimi, called New Ansari Exchange, to move money.

Mr. Azimi says his bank has cut its links to New Ansari, an assertion that U.S. and Afghan investigators dispute, citing evidence from wiretaps, documents and informants.

In one conversation recorded last year, recounted by U.S. officials, a Taliban commander is heard apologizing for accidentally kidnapping Mr. Azimi's brother. The Taliban commander promised to release the man immediately, these officials said.

Mr. Azimi caught U.S. attention again over the summer, when U.S. and Afghan officials say he used intermediaries to try to bribe an aide to President Karzai to halt an investigation into New Ansari.

The attempted bribe—a car worth about \$10,000 for the son of the Karzai aide—led to the aide's nighttime arrest by a pair of Western-backed Afghan investigation units. President Karzai ordered the aide's release.

Mr. Azimi denied the allegation. Prosecutors have since dropped the investigation.

Teams of Afghan investigators in the country's Interior Ministry—trained and vetted by U.S. officials—continue to do their anti-corruption work. Afghan officials say they have developed more than three dozen corruption and drug smuggling cases against senior Afghan officials, many of them cabinet ministers.

But a senior U.S. official says these investigations have hit a roadblock at the Attorney General's office, where the official says the Karzai administration has sought to "eviscerate" a specially vetted anti-corruption cell of prosecutors by forcing out its chief and limiting the access of U.S. and British advisers.

"We've got investigations," the official said. But prosecutions "are in a deep freeze."

MORE:

The Sewer You're Dying For #2:

**\$55 Billion Spent In Afghanistan
And “No One Can Say With Any
Authority Or Precision How That
Money Was Spent And Who
Profited From It”**

**“The Money Flows From Washington
To Afghanistan And At Every Step
Along The Way Someone Else Takes
A Cut”**

**“Staggering Amounts Of U.S. Tax Dollars
Virtually Vanish Down A Black Hole”**

Dec. 27, 2010 David Francis, The Fiscal Times [Excerpts]

KANDAHAR CITY -- In its bid to win the hearts and minds of Afghanistan's teeming population, the United States has spent more than \$55 billion to rebuild and bolster the war-ravaged country.

That money was meant to cover everything from the construction of government buildings and economic development projects to the salaries of U.S. government employees working closely with Afghans.

Yet no one can say with any authority or precision how that money was spent and who profited from it.

Most of the funds were funneled to a vast array of U.S. and foreign contractors. But according to a recent audit by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), there is no way of knowing whether the money went for the intended purposes.

“The audit shows that navigating the confusing labyrinth of government contracting is difficult, at best,” SIGAR said in releasing the audit. “USAID, the State Department and the Pentagon are unable to readily report on how much money they spend on contracting for reconstruction activities in Afghanistan.”

One large part of the problem is that the United States is not demanding accountability for outgoing funds from U.S. companies which have little incentive to fully disclose where the U.S. money is going.

The money flows from Washington to Afghanistan, with little oversight and accountability, and at every step along the way someone else takes a cut.

As staggering amounts of U.S. tax dollars virtually vanish down a black hole, many of the government projects designed to foster improved relations with the Afghan people and undermine the appeal of the Taliban have fallen far behind schedule or simply aren't completed.

In October, SIGAR found that six Afghan National Police buildings were so poorly built that they are unusable. They were constructed at a cost of \$5 million by Basirat Construction, an Afghan construction company.

Another report found that the United States has spent nearly \$200 million on Afghan security service buildings that cannot be used.

SIGAR also found that the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) couldn't account for nearly \$18 billion that was paid to some 7,000 U.S. and Afghan contractors for development projects.

Afghan contractors often pay kickbacks to local warlords, like Ahmad Wali Karzai, the president's brother and the so-called “King of Kandahar.”

Botched construction projects aren't the only U.S. failures.

Earlier this summer, coalition forces cleared Malajat, a longstanding Taliban stronghold in the eastern flatlands just outside of Kandahar City. But after they were forced out in September, many of the residents of Malajat remained sympathetic to the Taliban's cause.

In an effort to project provincial and national authority and strengthen Afghan infrastructure, Canada's Commander's Emergency Response Program and the USAID ordered the construction of four government buildings in Malajat where local residents could meet with government officials to air grievances.

The complex was meant to symbolically supplant Taliban power and influence.

In accordance with U.S. General David Petraeus' plan to expand contracting awards to Afghan firms, Afghan companies were hired late in September. The contractors then hired Afghan subcontractors to begin construction in the shadow of a fortress built by Alexander the Great around 330 B.C.

Since then, however, little work has been done and the project has fallen behind schedule.

As of early November, Afghans earning about a dollar a day had only dug holes for the foundation of the building complex, which was optimistically scheduled to be completed by July.

Most Afghans do little work in the winter months.

Despite numerous inquiries, U.S. and Canadian officials could not estimate the cost of the project.

Projects like the Malajat government building are essential to keeping the Taliban out once the fighting season resumes next spring, especially as the U.S. strategy review has shown tenuous progress here.

But there is little confidence among soldiers and development workers that this project will be completed in time.

"We can pour as much money as we want into this and it's not getting done by the spring," said an official with the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team (KPRT), a civilian and Canadian-led organization jointly operated with the United States. "These people (Afghan contractors) have no accountability."

Thomas Ford, a spokesman for the KPRT project, said he could not reveal the identities of Afghan contractors involved because of security concerns. He also said he did "not have the exact cost figures in front of (him)" and declined to provide them.

As a result of U.S. pressure, the Afghan government recently arrested American Roy Carver, CEO of Red Sea Engineers and Constructors, a company that has received \$500 million in Pentagon contracts to construct buildings at U.S. bases. Carver is charged with not paying his Afghan subcontractors.

It's an endless cycle of frustration and failure.

We'll Help You Have A Nice Day In Beautiful, Scenic Nangahar



Dec. 13, 2010: Taliban fighters staff checkpoint in Nangarhar province, east of Kabul, Afghanistan. A Taliban commander on the ground said that they were checking the traffic looking for people working for the Afghan government, for occupation non-governmental organizations or who work at the US military bases. (AP Photo)

ENOUGH OF THIS SHIT; ALL HOME NOW



U.S. soldiers of Bravo Company 2-327 Infantry patrol in Chowkay district near the Pakistani border in Kunar province, eastern Afghanistan Dec. 20, 2010. (AP Photo/Rafiq Maqbool)



U.S. soldiers of 2nd Platoon Bravo Company 2-327 Infantry take cover after Taliban attacked them during a patrol in Chowkay district near Pakistani border in Kunar province, eastern Afghanistan, Dec 28, 2010. (AP Photo/Rafiq Maqbool)



U.S. soldiers of Bravo Company 2-327 Infantry take cover during a sudden attack by Taliban on Badel Combat Out Post in eastern Afghanistan near Pakistani border, Dec 29, 2010. (AP Photo/Rafiq Maqbool)

MILITARY NEWS

MSG [Ret'd] Says “My Retirement And Medical Benefits Are A Pittance In Comparison To What Our ‘Fat Cat’ Politicians Receive Upon Retirement”

Army Times
Letters To The Editor
12.20.2010

It's appalling that congressmen have the courage to call for reductions in Tricare [the DoD health care plan] that will hold up keeping children on Tricare until they're 26 and freeze pay increases for active-duty soldiers and freeze pay and benefits for retirees.

How dare they?

Here's a suggestion: Let's put an end to retirement and medical benefits for all congressmen until they obtain 20 years of federal service and deny any benefits to them until they are 60 years old.

Cancel medical coverage for all their children over 21 unless they're carrying 12 units per semester in college until age 23, and forget coverage up to 26 years old.

My retirement and medical benefits are a pittance in comparison to what our “fat cat” politicians receive upon retirement.

And you know what? The vast majority of those folks on the Hill haven't put themselves on the line for their country.

Master Sgt. Jeff von Beltz (ret.)
Suisan Valley, Calif.

Traveling Soldier:

Posted At:

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

THIS ISSUE FEATURING:

“A WAR WITH NO CLEAR OBJECTIVE”

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/12.10.war.php>

“WE SHOULD JUST END IT. BRING THE TROOPS HOME”
“I never wanted my son to be a little old obituary in the paper”
<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/12.10.troops.php>

THE POLITICIANS WON'T TALK ABOUT THE WAR:
“*But for the Olechnys, avoidance is not an option*”
<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/12.10.avoidance.php>

[And More.....]

TRAVELING SOLDIER:

Telling the truth - about the occupations or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance to Imperial wars inside the armed forces.

Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces.

If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers. <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/>

Traveling Soldier is the publication of the Military Resistance Organization

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



“The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppose.”

“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**

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**

The Social-Democrats ideal should not be the trade union secretary, but the tribune of the people who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression no matter where it appears no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalize all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth before all his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for all and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat.”

-- V. I. Lenin; What Is To Be Done

**A revolution is always distinguished by impoliteness, probably because the ruling classes did not take the trouble in good season to teach the people fine manners.
-- Leon Trotsky, History Of The Russian Revolution**

**“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**

**Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number,
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you-
Ye are many — they are few
-- Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1819, on the occasion of a mass murder of British workers by the Imperial government at Peterloo.**

**What Else Are You Dying For?
Military Experts Said December
2009 That U.S. Troops Will Die In
Afghanistan To Re-Elect Obama:
“We Believe The President Knows
Perfectly Well That Afghanistan Is
Vietnam All Over Again”
“He’s Seeking The Same Cynical Exit
Strategy That Richard Nixon And Henry
Kissinger Did”**

DECEMBER 10, 2009, BY THOMAS H. JOHNSON, M. CHRIS MASON, Foreign Policy
[Excerpts]

Thomas H. Johnson is research professor of the Department in National Security Affairs and director of the Program for Culture and Conflict Studies at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif.

M. Chris Mason, a retired Foreign Service officer who served in 2005 as political officer for the provincial reconstruction team in Paktika, is senior fellow at the Program for Culture and Conflict Studies and at the Center for Advanced Defense Studies in Washington.

As German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer once said, truth is ridiculed, then denied, and then “accepted as having been obvious to everyone from the beginning.”

So let’s start with the obvious: There isn’t the slightest possibility that the course laid out by Barack Obama in his Dec. 1 speech will halt or even slow the downward spiral toward defeat in Afghanistan. None.

The U.S. president and his advisors labored for three months and brought forth old wine in bigger bottles. The speech contained not one single new idea or approach, nor offered any hint of new thinking about a conflict that everyone now agrees the United States is losing. Instead, the administration deliberated for 94 days to deliver essentially “more men, more money, try harder.”

It sounded ominously similar to Mikhail Gorbachev’s “bloody wound” speech that led to a similar-sized, temporary Soviet troop surge in Afghanistan in 1986.

But the Soviet experience in Afghanistan isn’t what everyone is comparing Obama’s current predicament to; it’s Vietnam. The president knows it, and part of his speech was a rebuttal of those comparisons. It was a valiant effort, but to no avail.

Afghanistan *is* Vietnam all over again.

First, Obama noted that Afghanistan is being conducted by a “coalition” of 43 countries -- as if war by committee would magically change the outcome (a throwback to former President George W. Bush’s “Iraq coalition” mathematics).

The truth is, outside of a handful of countries, it’s basically a coalition of pacifists.

In fact, more foreign troops fought alongside the United States in Vietnam than are now actually fighting with Americans today.

Only nine countries in today’s 43-country coalition have more than 1,000 personnel there; nine others have 10 (yes, not even a dozen people) -- or fewer. And although Australia and New Zealand have sent a handful of excellent special operations troops to Afghanistan, only Britain, Canada, and France are providing significant forces willing to conduct conventional offensive military operations. That brings the coalition’s combat-troop contribution to approximately 17,000.

Most of the other 38 “partners” have strict rules prohibiting them from ever doing anything actually dangerous. Turkish troops, for example, never leave their firebase in Wardak province, according to U.S. personnel who monitor it.

The president’s final argument, that Afghanistan is different because Vietnam never attacked American soil, is a red herring.

History is overflowing with examples of just causes that have gone down in defeat. To suggest that the two conflicts will have different outcomes because the U.S. cause in Afghanistan is just (whereas, presumably from the speech, the war in Vietnam was not) is simply specious.

The courses and outcomes of wars are determined by strategy, not the justness of causes or the courage of troops.

The reality on the ground is that Afghanistan is Vietnam redux.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai’s regime is an utterly illegitimate, incompetent kleptocracy. The Afghan National Army (ANA) -- slotted to take over the conflict when the coalition pulls out -- will not even be able to feed itself in five years, much less turn back the mounting Taliban tide.

The U.S. Center for Army Lessons Learned determined by statistical analysis that the ANA will never grow larger than 100,000 men because nearly 30 percent either desert or fail to re-enlist each year. The ANA is disproportionately Tajik, drug use is a major problem, all recruits are illiterate, and last month the ANA reached only half its modest recruiting goal despite 40 percent unemployment nationwide.

The American media, in its own regression to 1963, simply regurgitates Pentagon press releases that vastly inflate the actual size of the Afghan military, which is actually less than 60,000 men, just 32,000 of whom are combat troops.

The strategy’s other component for dealing with the Taliban, “negotiating with moderates,” is also ludicrous to anyone who is familiar with the insurgents. There is no one to negotiate with, and from their perspective, nothing to discuss.

And the Taliban know they are winning.

Meanwhile, commanding Gen. Stanley McChrystal’s plan to secure the urban areas (rather than the rural countryside where the insurgency is actually metastasizing) is plagiarized from the famous never-written textbook, How to Lose a War in Afghanistan, authored jointly by Alexander the Great, the British Empire, and the Soviet Union.

And that is why the United States is now headed for certain defeat in Afghanistan.

Obama’s new “strategy” is no strategy at all.

It is a cynical and politically motivated rehash of Iraq policy: Toss in a few more troops, throw together something resembling local security forces, buy off the enemies, and get the hell out before it all blows up.

Even the dimmest bulb listening to the president's speech could not have missed the obvious link between the withdrawal date for combat troops from Iraq (2010), the date for beginning troop reductions in Afghanistan (2011), and the domestic U.S. election cycle.

So we are faced with a conundrum.

Obama is one of the most intelligent men ever to hold the U.S. presidency.

But no intelligent person could really believe that adding 30,000 troops to Afghanistan, a country four times larger than Vietnam, for a year or two, following the same game plan that has resulted in dismal failure there for the past eight years, could possibly have any impact on the outcome of the conflict.

Arthur Conan Doyle's character Sherlock Holmes used to say that "when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth."

The only conclusion one can reach from the president's speech, after eliminating the impossible, is that the administration has made a difficult but pragmatic decision: The war in Afghanistan is unwinnable, and the president's second term and progressive domestic agenda cannot be sacrificed to a lost cause the way that President Lyndon B. Johnson's was for Vietnam.

The result of that calculation was what we heard on Dec. 1: platitudes about commitment and a just cause; historical amnesia; and a continuation of the exact same failed policies that got the United States into this mess back in 2001, concocted by the same ship of fools, many of whom are still providing remarkably bad advice to this administration.

We believe the president knows perfectly well that Afghanistan is Vietnam all over again, both domestically and, as we wrote in Military Review this month, in Kabul and out in the Afghan hills, where good men are bleeding and dying.

And he's seeking the same cynical exit strategy that Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger did in 1968: negotiating the best possible second-place position and a "decent interval" between withdrawal and collapse.

In office less than a year, the Obama administration has already been seduced by the old beltway calculus that sometimes a little wrong must be done to get re-elected and achieve a greater good.

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.

Arab Responses To Nazism [A Book Review] “Achcar Has Once Again Provided Leftists With A Useful Ideological Tool In The Battle Against Zionism”

[T]hese anti-Semitic ravings or mindless denials of the Holocaust, far from undermining the Israeli cause as their authors intend, in fact help Israel produce anti-Arab propaganda.

By Sherry Wolf, International Socialist Review, November-December 2010

The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives; By Gilbert Achcar; Metropolitan Books, 2010; \$30] 400 pages

SINCE 9/11 the term “the Arab Street” has been used in the United States to caricature opinions across the Arab world, mashing together the thoughts of tens of millions as if they have one mind with a common world-view.

This funhouse mirror image of a complex tableau of opinions among a huge swath of humanity has been further distorted in the bigoted clamoring against the proposed “Ground Zero mosque” in lower Manhattan.

Gilbert Achcar’s scholarly but accessible work, *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives*, is a powerful antidote to these ahistorical notions of Arab public opinion, specifically regarding the Holocaust and anti-Semitism.

Achcar’s writings on Palestine, Israel, and Islam are familiar to those who’ve studied the Middle East, and in *The Arabs and the Holocaust* he again applies a Marxist analysis to Arab reactions to both Nazism and anti-Semitism to explain the competing narratives on Israel-Palestine.

Even for those well versed in the field, this work contains real gems and useful insights. By laying out the distinctive histories of the liberal Westernizers, Marxists, nationalists, and fundamentalist pan-Arabists, Achcar allows readers to sort through — and cut against — the dominant trends in English-language historiographies that virtually ignore all but the most extreme reactionary writings.

The outsized attention often given the right-wing anti-Semitic Islamists such as Jerusalem’s Grand Mufti during the Second World War, Amin aHusseini of “your enemy’s enemy is your friend” fame regarding Nazis, is set against the position of the vast majority of the Arab world at that time.

During the war, even throughout the 1939 — 1941 Stalin-Hitler pact, most nationalists, liberals, and communists of the Middle East rejected Nazism and anti-Semitism outright.

The most compelling story that exemplifies this political trend took place in Iraq in June 1941. Baghdad's Jewish community was set upon by a mob in a pogrom that killed between 129 and 180 Jews. Yet during this two-day assault, Arab Muslims opened their homes to safeguard their Jewish brethren, the government deployed troops against their fascist attackers, of whom hundreds were killed in retaliation for their anti-Semitic violence, and the Jewish victims were paid compensation by the Iraqi state.

What's more, it was the pro-British prime minister of Iraq, Nun al Sa'id, whose threats to expel Jews after the war led to the exodus of 135,000, the largest Jewish community of the Arab East.

As Achcar cites from Robert Satloff's pro-Israel work, *Among the Righteous*:

"At every stage of the Nazi, Vichy, and Fascist persecution of Jews in Arab lands, and in every place that it occurred, Arabs helped Jews.

"Some Arabs spoke out against the persecution of Jews and took public stands in unity with them. Some Arabs denied the support and assistance that would have made the wheels of the anti-Jewish campaign spin more efficiently.

"Some Arabs shared the fate of Jews and, through that experience, forged a unique bond of comradeship. And there were occasions when certain Arabs chose to do more than just offer moral support to Jews. They bravely saved Jewish lives, at times risking their own in the process.

"Those Arabs were true heroes."

In a theme that echoes throughout, it is often the Arab forces most aligned with the interests of imperialism, first British then American, that express the deepest hostility toward Jews.

The Saudi monarchy, perhaps the only family to name a country after itself, lies at the heart of the most reactionary pan-Islamism.

Oil wealth from what is now Saudi Arabia is the source of Western governments' silence about the sharia law of the Wahhabi monarchy, which is hostile even to non-Sunnis.

As Achcar explains, its "close and enduring ties with the United States go a long way toward explaining the curtain of silence drawn, with American complicity, around the basic features of the Saudi state, the most obscurantist, antidemocratic, and misogynistic in the world."

The Arabs and the Holocaust exposes the well-financed propaganda machine out of Washington, with Web sites such as that of the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) that translate and pull Arabic and Persian documents out of context to create a tapestry of anti-Semitism out of anti-Zionist writings.

Achcar, however, makes no excuses for those liberal Arab forces that in their zeal to oppose Zionism conflate it with anti-Semitism.

He writes, "Every Arab who recognizes that these anti-Semitic ravings or mindless denials of the Holocaust, far from undermining the Israeli cause as their authors intend, in fact help Israel produce anti-Arab propaganda has already taken a big step toward understanding why they are so inept."

Today's Palestine solidarity activists, daily inculcated with lies and half-truths in the mainstream media, could make great use of the documents cited here from early movements like that of the main leftist armed organization of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, headed by George Habash.

In 1969, the PFLP wrote, "The aim of the Palestinian liberation movement is the establishment of a national democratic state in Palestine in which the Arabs and Jews can live as equal citizens with regards to rights and duties...."

Achcar has once again provided leftists with a useful ideological tool in the battle against Zionism.

Perhaps the best way his publisher can gain attention in the current U.S. environment is to mail off copies to Rush Limbaugh, Glenn Beck, and Sarah Palm. After all, its title has two of the most incendiary words in the English language today— "Arabs" and "Holocaust." Perhaps if these clowns were to attack it, as they surely they would (without cracking it open), more scholars and activists will discover this treat.

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