

Military Resistance 9B12

HOW MANY MORE FOR OBAMA'S WARS?



A U.S. Marine carries a wounded colleague to a medevac helicopter after their convoy, including the destroyed truck at background left, hit an IED near Marjah in Afghanistan's southern Helmand Province Jan. 27, 2011. (AP Photo/Kevin Frayer)

**King David's War:
Petraeus Has A New Plan To
Finish The War: Double Down
On A Failed Strategy:
"Petraeus Has Turned To The
Network Of Warlords, Drug
Runners And Thieves Known As
The Afghan Government, Which**

The General Himself Has Denounced As A ‘Criminal Syndicate’”

Razzik, A Drug Dealing Homicidal Maniac Warlord, Is Petraeus’ Dream For Afghanistan: Petraeus “Has Singled Him Out As A Model Ally In The Region”

A media adviser for the mayor of Kandahar, Ghulam Hayder Hamidi, dismisses the notion that things are better now. “Better?” he scoffs. “I didn’t say better. I said there have been only two targeted killings this week.”

“Americans are always choosing stupid friends here,” says Izzatullah Wasifi, a former governor and anti-corruption chief. “Razzik has killed hundreds of people, and Karzai and the rest are all crooked. They’re seeking a weak and fragmented state for their own self-interest.”

February 2, 2011 By Michael Hastings, Rolling Stone [Excerpts]

During his time in Iraq, Petraeus earned the nickname King David, for the imperious manner in which he ruled over the ancient city of Mosul.

In Afghanistan, a more apt honorific might be the Godfather.

To get America out of the war, Petraeus has turned to the network of warlords, drug runners and thieves known as the Afghan government, which the general himself has denounced as a “criminal syndicate.”

Within weeks of assuming command, Petraeus pushed through an ambitious program to create hundreds of local militias — essentially a neighborhood watch armed with AK-47s.

Under Petraeus, the faltering operation has been expanded from 18 districts to more than 60, with plans to ramp it up from 10,000 men to 30,000.

In Afghanistan, however, arming local militias means, by definition, placing guns in the hands of some of the country’s most ruthless thugs, who rule their territory with impunity.

In the north, Petraeus is relying on Atta Mohammed Noor, a notorious warlord-turned-governor considered to be one of the most powerful men in Afghanistan, to prepare militias for a long fight with the Taliban.

Smaller militias in the region — which have been likened to an L.A. “gang” by their own American advisers — are also getting U.S. training.

In the east, where violence has significantly increased, efforts to back local strongmen have already resulted in intertribal violence.

And in the south, Petraeus has given near-unconditional support to Ahmed Wali Karzai, the president’s brother and one of the country’s most unsavory gangsters.

“The Americans have backed so many warlords in so many ways, it’s very hard to see how you unscramble the egg now,” says John Matisonn, a former top U.N. official who left Kabul last June.

“According To Local Reports, Razzik’s Men Also Stopped 16 Civilians On Their Way To A New Year’s Celebration And Summarily Executed Them”

The militia strategy that Petraeus is pursuing is essentially one of outsourcing — and no one better represents the plan’s disturbing downside than Col. Abdul Razzik, who runs the border town of Spin Boldak in southern Afghanistan.

Although Razzik’s militia is not officially part of the new program being ramped up by Petraeus, the general has singled him out as a model ally in the region.

Razzik played a key role during the recent U.S. offensive in Kandahar, and Petraeus himself paid a visit to the colonel last fall.

According to Razzik — who, despite his lower rank, also refers to himself as a general — he and Petraeus hit it off, meeting for an hour and a half and exchanging ideas on how to win the war.

“General Petraeus and I have very similar opinions,” Razzik tells me during a recent interview in an office at his base a few miles from the Pakistani border. “I want to kill the Taliban, he wants to kill the Taliban.”

At just under five feet nine, with a neatly trimmed beard and a sly smile, the 34-year-old Razzik is a bundle of charisma.

A photo of President Karzai hangs above his desk, which is empty of papers, and his black desktop Dell computer is switched off. Razzik doesn’t know how to read, so paper and the Internet would only get in the way of his work, which is basically kicking Taliban ass by any means necessary.

By most accounts, he’s been doing a pretty bang-up job of it, leading a series of operations in the country’s most dangerous province.

“We don’t take prisoners,” Razzik boasts. “If they are trying to kill me, I will try to kill them. That’s how I order my men.”

He pauses, as if recalling the recent PR training he received from U.S. officials. “If they submit and say they made a mistake,” he adds, “then, yes, we will take them prisoner.”

Exactly how Razzik became the most powerful figure in his province is a bit blurry.

By his account, he began fighting the Taliban in 1995, when the religious fundamentalists killed his uncle and took his 11-year-old brother prisoner. Hiding in the sandy mountains south of town, Razzik was taken in by shepherds of his own tribe. He then snuck north to Kabul and Herat, where he fought the Taliban for a few months before returning to Spin Boldak.

In 2002, thanks in part to his tribal connections, he was named chief of the border police. With Hamid Karzai as his patron — along with the president’s brother Ahmed Wali Karzai, the provincial chief of Kandahar and a suspected drug runner — Razzik consolidated his power, creating one of the most stable districts in Afghanistan.

It was a vital district as well, and its proximity to Pakistan offered ample opportunities for self-enrichment for an ambitious young warlord.

U.S. military and diplomatic officials soon came to believe that Razzik had become a central figure in a large-scale drug ring, shipping opium over the border.

More disturbing reports also started to filter up the chain of command concerning executions and “indiscriminate tactics against men, women and children,” according to a human rights official who specializes in Afghanistan.

Razzik’s reputation as a killer grew during a military offensive in 2006, when the young commander reportedly terrorized the population of a rival tribe.

“People began to say he was here to kill every Noorzai he could find,” according to a local elder, in a recent report from the New America Foundation. But the aggressive tactic backfired:

“In our area,” another elder reported, “the Taliban went from 40 to 400 in days.”

According to local reports, Razzik’s men also stopped 16 civilians on their way to a New Year’s celebration and summarily executed them.

Razzik was briefly suspended while his men were investigated, but the results of the inquiry were never made public. As Razzik took a leading role in operations around Kandahar last year, more human rights abuses were reported, though eyewitness testimony was hard to come by.

“We hear complaints about Razzik,” another human rights official tells me, “but people are too afraid of retribution to come forward.” A recent report by Human Rights Watch singled out Razzik, coming to the same conclusion.

“In Afghanistan, an ordinary person can’t do anything,” one Afghan civilian told the human rights group. “But a government person can do what he wants — killing, stealing, anything.”

The swirling allegations of graft and criminality did give NATO pause.

Last February, a deputy to U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry met with a number of U.S. officials charged with combating corruption in Afghanistan, including Maj. Gen. Michael Flynn, then serving as McChrystal’s intelligence chief.

According to a leaked State Department cable, the meeting was intended to figure out how to handle “prominent Afghan malign actors” or “corrupt/criminal Afghan officials.”

Three Afghan officials — including Razzik and Ahmed Wali Karzai — were specifically discussed based on information from “intel and law-enforcement files.”

By embracing Razzik, U.S. officials acknowledged, they were undercutting any chance for legitimate governance. “By ascribing unaccountable authority to Razzik,” another cable noted, “the coalition unintentionally reinforces his position through its direct and near-exclusive dealings with him on all major issues in Spin Boldak.”

U.S. officials briefly considered ways to sideline Razzik and Karzai. Capture them? Take them out? Charge them with corruption?

At a minimum, according to a leaked cable, officials thought they should give them a slap on the wrist by limiting their public appearances and cutting off high-profile visits from congressional delegations. That, the cable concluded, would “help change perceptions held by parts of the Afghan public that the U.S. supports, explicitly or implicitly, known corrupt officials.”

Once Petraeus assumed command, however, any pretense of even the most minimal punishment became a joke.

Razzik received a high-profile visit not only from Petraeus but from Eikenberry as well — which included a photo op.

He was also rewarded with more funding and military support, including a dedicated Special Forces team to personally advise him.

“Sometimes I travel in the American helicopters,” he says with pride.

By supporting Razzik, Petraeus is pushing the limits of American law: A condition in the supplemental spending bill passed last year to fund the war explicitly states that no taxpayer money can go to units where there is “credible” evidence of human rights violations.

Yet instead of holding Razzik accountable for his crimes, U.S. officials have gone into overdrive to refurbish his image.

In October, an American commander in Spin Boldak told The Washington Post that Razzik is a modern-day “Robin Hood.”

The following month, another U.S. commander gushed to The Wall Street Journal that the young warlord is a “folk hero.”

In perhaps the most honest assessment, Maj. Gen. Nick Carter endorsed Razzik as “Afghan good enough” — a play on a phrase imported from the Iraq War, “Iraq good enough,” which basically suggests a high-grade level of shittiness.

When it comes to American strategy, Razzik represents a trade-off. “On one side,” a U.S. official in Kabul tells me, “you have State, DEA, FBI saying, ‘Hey, this guy is a smuggler, a criminal, he’s letting drugs in over the border.’ On the other side, there’s the CIA and the military, who are saying, ‘This guy is giving us good intel in Panjwai or Zabul, or wherever else.’”

The problem is that the militia program undercuts what is supposed to be a central tenet of counterinsurgency — which, according to a memo issued by Petraeus in August, requires drawing the local population away from the enemy by providing them with “accountable governance.”

Razzik and his ilk, by contrast, are essentially warlords-in-training, a specter that terrifies Afghans, conjuring up memories of the bad old days when the warlords raped, ruled and pillaged at will.

“It reminds me of Soviet times,” says Gardesh Saheb, a prominent Afghan journalist. “The militias are a very bad experience for the Afghans. All of the people, all the analysts, all the political groups are against this process. It looks like the end of the communist regime. It’s a big mistake.”

Arming local warlords also fuels existing rivalries and sets the stage for another Afghan civil war: One of the most high-profile cases from last year ended in disaster when a militia outside Jalalabad, emboldened by an influx of U.S. aid, killed 13 members of another tribe.

In dozens of interviews, the only Afghans I met who fully support the militia program are members of the militias.

“Americans are always choosing stupid friends here,” says Izzatullah Wasifi, a former governor and anti-corruption chief. “Razzik has killed hundreds of people, and Karzai and the rest are all crooked. They’re seeking a weak and fragmented state for their own self-interest. We are heading to another civil war. To get stuck in this shit? That’s a shame.”

The killings mean it will be harder for Petraeus to implement his counterinsurgency strategy, since there are fewer friendly Afghans left to counter the insurgency.

I was shown a list of 515 tribal elders and religious figures who have been assassinated over the past nine years, gutting the ranks of the Afghans whom Petraeus hopes to rely on.

A media adviser for the mayor of Kandahar, Ghulam Hayder Hamidi, dismisses the notion that things are better now. “Better?” he scoffs. “I didn’t say better. I said there have been only two targeted killings this week. This calm will not last forever. We have had military operations again and again, and this is not a solution to the problem.”

The mayor’s office is in a dark, dank building, one of those office complexes in conflict zones that seem to be permanently under construction.

“This has been the worst year,” Hamidi tells me.

After two of his deputy mayors were gunned down last year, and he was almost killed in a bombing right outside his office, nearly a third of his staff of 76 quit. (He also had to fire 10 other staffers for corruption.)

He hasn’t had any luck filling the vacant slots — partly, he says, because he can only pay his employees 3,500 Afghanis a month, or about \$80 — half of what they can earn in a local militia.

The central government in Kabul, he says, has promised to give his staff raises, but it’s been months and he hasn’t received the extra funds. Kabul has also been slow to fund his police force, he adds.

It’s this reality that prompts a U.S. official to tell me, “There’s talk of transition next year. But in Kandahar, there’s not going to be anything to transition to in a year.”

I ask the mayor, who is close to Ahmed Wali Karzai, what he thinks of the corruption accusations against the president’s brother. He responds indignantly. Karzai is a victim of “propaganda,” he says, and Razzik is a “hero.”

The real corruption, he insists, is elsewhere — among other Afghan officials and Western reconstruction agencies.

“There are killers, enemies of society, sitting in our peace jirga,” he says, referring to a government-organized conference that was held in Kandahar earlier that week. He also has few kind words for the \$250 million in reconstruction funds being poured into the city: He accuses a Canadian firm of blowing \$1.9 million on a solar-power system that doesn’t work, and a large development firm, IRD, of wasting millions on a program to harvest grapes.

The mayor is of two minds regarding the prospects of success in Afghanistan. The Taliban, he concedes, still have deep roots in the police force and plenty of funding from Pakistan and Iran. On the other hand, his public spiritedness prompts him to insist that this coming summer will be more peaceful than the last.

He has even come up with a new slogan he wants to promote for Kandahar: “Tourism, not terrorism.”

Petraeus has never been a man to lack confidence. He once sent an autographed picture of himself to a reporter he went jogging with, and signed copies of his photos go for up to \$825 on eBay.

After his speedy approval by Congress last summer, Petraeus returned to CENTCOM headquarters in Tampa, Florida, to pack his bags and thank his staff.

He sounded “psyched” and looked like “a man on a mission, not dreading Afghanistan at all,” according to a source close to Petraeus.

Those who know him say privately that he would never have run for president in 2012, but that hasn’t stopped speculation that he’ll be in the mix in 2016. He joked at a right-wing think tank about running for president, and “Petraeus for President” T-shirts are already available online.

Petraeus is fond of citing his experience during the Bush administration; in meetings, the general “mentions Iraq every five minutes,” as one Afghan official puts it.

But it didn’t take long after Petraeus arrived in Kabul for him to get something of a shock:

This war, it quickly became clear, is nothing like the last one he fought.

“It’s taken him a few months,” says one U.S. official involved in the Afghan strategy, “but I think he’s finally realized that Afghanistan is not Iraq. Afghanistan is much, much harder.”

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

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

“The Government Are Thieves”

“If They Don’t Kill You, They Might Harm You In Other Ways”

“People Are Boiling”

Protesters Yell “Baghdad, Baghdad, Spark A Revolution”

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

February 12, 2011 By Liz Sly, Washington Post Staff Writer [Excerpts]

BAGHDAD - The men who were gathered in Tahrir Square - the Baghdad version, not the Cairo one - were young and old, employed and jobless, Sunni and Shiite.

But they spoke with one voice as they chanted: “No, no to corruption,” “The government are thieves” and “Baghdad, Baghdad, spark a revolution.”

Dozens of small-scale demonstrations have taken place across the country over the past two weeks, most of them protesting poor services, particularly the lack of electricity - a perennial complaint that has spurred Iraqis to take to the streets many times before.

Multiple groups are springing up on Facebook calling for protests to demand reforms, among them No to Silence, Baghdad Won't Be Kandahar, the Blue Revolution and one simply called Join US Soon for the Biggest Ever Youth Sit-In in Baghdad, which initiated the small protest Friday in Tahrir Square.

Another is planned for Monday, but the biggest buzz is building around what has been billed on various Web sites as a “Revolution of Iraqi Rage” scheduled for Feb. 25 in the same square, the city’s most prominent public space, just across the Tigris River from the fortified Green Zone.

“People are boiling,” said Adel Salman, 33, a businessman who was among those attending the protest Friday. “If this continues, it could grow very big.”

[A]ll the ills that provoked Egyptians and Tunisians to take to the streets are thriving in Iraq, too, demonstrating that it is possible to have both democracy and human-rights abuses, an elected government and chronic corruption, and constitutional guarantees of freedom alongside intimidation and fear.

Torture remains widespread in Iraqi prisons, and thousands of Iraqis are detained for long periods without trial, according to an Amnesty International report last week.

The watchdog group Transparency International ranks Iraq the fourth most corrupt country in the world, with Egypt faring far better, at No. 80. The Iraqi

government estimates overall unemployment at 15 percent, higher than Egypt's official rate of 10 percent.

An expanding roster of rules regulating the media and the closure of media outlets critical of the government, including the recently shuttered Baghdadiya TV station and the Arabic service of al-Jazeera, have raised concerns about press freedoms.

Activists say a maze of bureaucratic requirements makes it almost impossible to secure permission to hold demonstrations.

“So many things are happening in Iraq that suggest freedom and rights are jeopardized. Step by step, they are eating them away,” said Ali Anbori, a health consultant and civil rights activist.

Although Iraqis are undeniably freer to speak out than they were under Hussein, “there is a kind of ghost hanging over the head of every Iraqi person,” he said.

“You cannot say everything you want to say all the time. You have to be diplomatic and cautious because you never know what might happen to you. If they don't kill you, they might harm you in other ways or put you in a position where you can't get a job.”

MILITARY NEWS

Obama Regime Traitors Trying To Cut Benefits For Family Caregivers Of Severely Wounded Iraq And Afghanistan Veterans: “VA's Criteria For Determining Who Is Eligible Would ‘Severely Limit’ Who Is Covered” VA Also Defies Order To Begin The Program By January 30

Feb 10, 2011 By Rick Maze - Staff writer; Army Times [Excerpts]

Many caregivers of severely disabled veterans will be unnecessarily excluded from a new benefits and support program because of limitations proposed by the Obama administration, the new chairwoman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee says.

Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., appointed chairwoman just two weeks ago, is launching a high-profile fight with the Veterans Affairs Department over eligibility rules for benefits for the caregivers of severely injured Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

When Congress passed the benefits law last year, lawmakers believed about 3,500 families would be helped.

But Murray said Wednesday VA's criteria for determining who is eligible would "severely limit" who is covered.

At issue is a proposed rule that would provide benefits and support only in cases where severely disabled veterans needs a minimum of six months of continuous support from a caregiver or would otherwise have to be hospitalized because of their medical condition, inability to care for themselves or personal safety.

Murray said that is "simply not good enough."

VA intends "to limit this benefit to an even smaller group of caregivers than intended by Congress, which is unacceptable," she said.

She already has been unhappy with VA because of the long delay in implementing the caregiver support program that was signed into law in May and was supposed to take effect Jan. 30.

VA announced Wednesday it was implementing some of the referral and support services promised by the law now, but said that major new benefits — including monthly stipends for caregivers who receive certain training, health and mental health benefits, and the possibility of getting up to 30 days of respite care per year — won't take effect until later because regulations still must be written and approved.

"I remain concerned by the delay in moving forward with providing this crucial benefit for those that are taking care of our wounded warriors," Murray said."

"This law was passed to help support the thousands of family members of veterans who have left behind careers, lives, and responsibilities to see that their loved one can recover from wounds they suffered defending our country. It's a cost of war that for too long has gone unaccounted for, but it's one that last year Congress very clearly decided that our country must step up to meet."

Surgeries At Cochrane VA Hospital "Have Been On Hold Since Feb. 2

After Potentially Contaminated Surgical Equipment Was Discovered” “Mediocrity ‘Thrives’ At The St. Louis Hospital”

Feb 10, 2011 By Jim Salter - The Associated Press [Excerpts]

ST. LOUIS — No timetable has been set for resuming surgeries at the Cochrane VA Medical Center in St. Louis, U.S. Rep. Russ Carnahan said Thursday following a meeting with the secretary of Veterans Affairs.

The St. Louis Democrat, a member of the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, said he asked Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki for a top-to-bottom review of the St. Louis hospital.

“In my years in public service, this is one of the issues that has made me madder than anything I’ve ever seen,” Carnahan said in a telephone conference call with reporters.

Surgeries at Cochrane have been on hold since Feb. 2 after potentially contaminated surgical equipment was discovered. Last year, faulty sterilization at the center’s dental clinic raised concerns that 1,812 veterans were potentially exposed to hepatitis and HIV.

Sterilization problems have arisen at other VA medical facilities across the country.

Officials at the Dayton, Ohio, VA Medical Center announced Tuesday that more than 500 veterans will be offered HIV screenings to determine if they were infected by a dentist who for 18 years failed to consistently follow the infection control standard of changing latex gloves between patients.

Carnahan said mediocrity “thrives” at the St. Louis hospital.

Troops Invited:

Comments, arguments, articles, and letters from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome.

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Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication.

Same address to unsubscribe.

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.

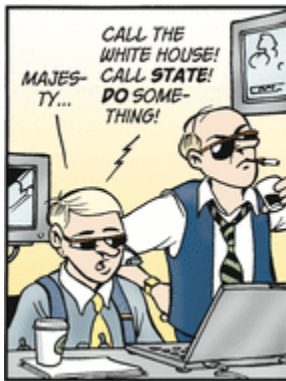
“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

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**



CALL THE WHITE HOUSE! CALL STATE! DO SOMETHING! MAJESTY...



YOUR HIGHNESS, YOU NEED TO CALM DOWN. TAKE A DEEP BREATH, OKAY? GOOD. NOW ANOTHER.



EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE FINE, SIR. WE HAVE A PROVEN PROTOCOL FOR MANAGING CRISIS. BUT THERE ARE STEPS, SO LISTEN CLOSELY, SIR.



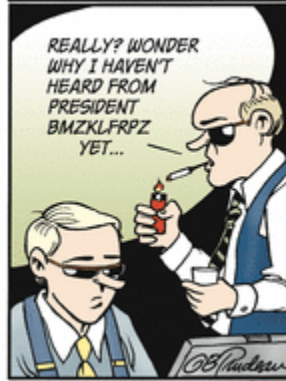
OKAY, FIRST. I NEED YOU TO OVERNIGHT MY RETAINER. CAN YOU DO THAT, MAJESTY? I... I THINK SO.



SO WHO'S STILL IN PLAY, SON? YEMEN, IVORY COAST, TUNISIA - ALMOST OUR ENTIRE CLIENT LIST.



THE PHONES HAVE BEEN LIT UP ALL WEEK. EVERY DESPOT ON THE PLANET IS PANICKING!



REALLY? WONDER WHY I HAVEN'T HEARD FROM PRESIDENT BMZKLRFPZ YET...



MR. DUKE! BERZKERISTAN'S IN FLAMES! PUT IT UP ON SCREEN THREE! THERE YOU GO.



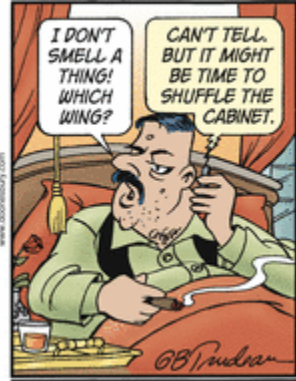
PRESIDENT BMZKLRFPZ? DUKE HERE! HOW YOU HOLDING UP, SIR?



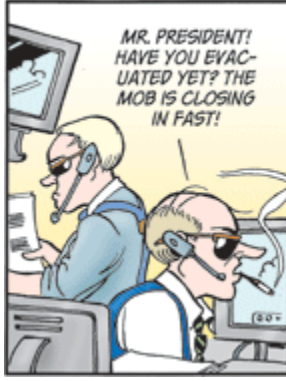
HOLDING UP? WHAT DO YOU MEAN? UM... YOUR PALACE. IT SEEMS TO BE UNDER SIEGE.



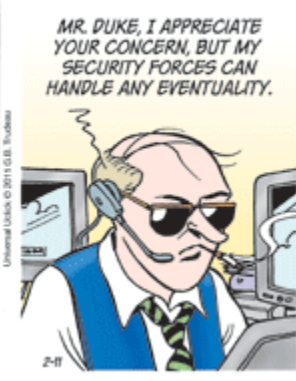
THAT'S RIDICULOUS! I'M WATCHING IT LIVE ON AL JAZEERA, SIR. IT'S DEFINITELY IN FLAMES.



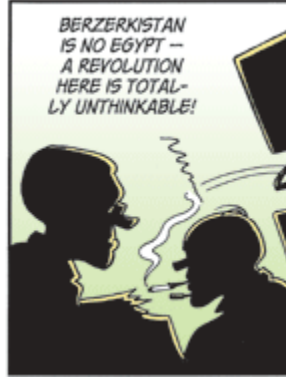
I DON'T SMELL A THING! WHICH WING? CAN'T TELL. BUT IT MIGHT BE TIME TO SHUFFLE THE CABINET.



MR. PRESIDENT! HAVE YOU EVACUATED YET? THE MOB IS CLOSING IN FAST!



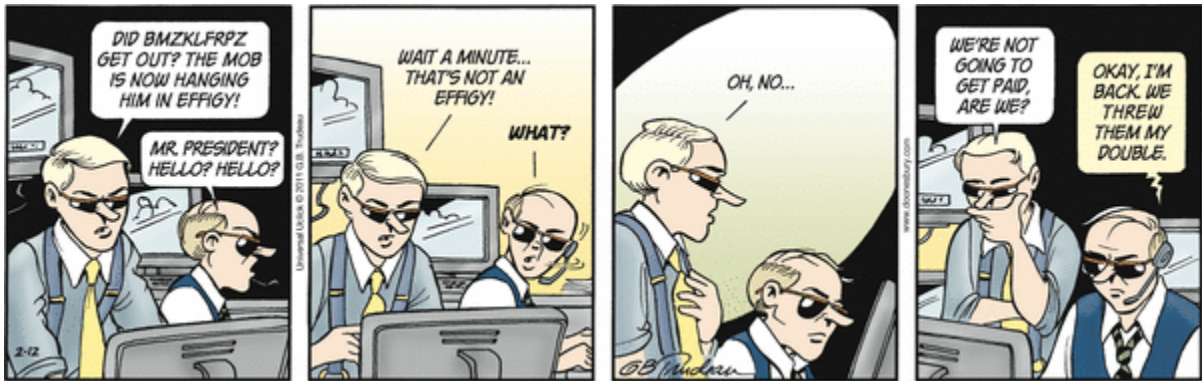
MR. DUKE, I APPRECIATE YOUR CONCERN, BUT MY SECURITY FORCES CAN HANDLE ANY EVENTUALITY.



BERZKERISTAN IS NO EGYPT - A REVOLUTION HERE IS TOTALLY UNTHINKABLE!



YOU'RE STILL IN BED, AREN'T YOU? WHAT PART OF "PRESIDENT-FOR-LIFE" DON'T YOU GET?



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

Military Resistance Available In PDF Format

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

Hidden History -- The Egyptian Revolution:

The First March On The First Day Began When A Working Class Neighborhood Decided To Begin The Fight For Liberation:

“These Demonstrators Weren’t, As The Popular Narrative Has Held, Educated Youth Who Learned About Protests On The Internet”

“They Were Instead Poor Residents Who Filled A Maze Of Muddy, Narrow Alleyways, Massed In Front Of A Neighborhood Candy Store”



2-1-11 THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER. UNIVERSAL PICTURE

The plotters say they knew that the demonstrations' success would depend on the participation of ordinary Egyptians in working-class districts like this one, where the Internet and Facebook aren't as widely used.

They distributed fliers around the city in the days leading up to the demonstration, concentrating efforts on Bulaq al-Dakrou.

FEBRUARY 11, 2011 By CHARLES LEVINSON And MARGARET COKER, Wall St. Journal [Excerpts]

CAIRO—The Egyptian opposition's takeover of the area around the parliament this week began with a trick—the latest example of how, for more than two weeks, young activists have outwitted Egypt's feared security forces to spur an uprising many here had long thought impossible.

On Tuesday, young opposition organizers called for a march on the state television building a few blocks north of their encampment in central Tahrir Square.

Then, while the army deployed to that sensitive communications hub, protesters expanded southward into the lightly defended area around Egypt's parliament building.

The demonstrations that now bedevil Mr. Mubarak across Cairo and Egypt took seed in part thanks to one trick play, interviews with several protest planners show.

On Jan. 25, the first day of protests, the organizers from the youth wings of Egypt's opposition movements created what appeared to be a spontaneous massing of residents of the slum of Bulaq al-Dakrou, on Cairo's western edge.

These demonstrators weren't, as the popular narrative has held, educated youth who learned about protests on the Internet. They were instead poor residents who filled a maze of muddy, narrow alleyways, massed in front of a neighborhood candy store and caught security forces flatfooted.

That protest was anything but spontaneous. How the organizers pulled it off, when so many past efforts had failed, has had people scratching their heads since.

The plotters, who now form the leadership core of the Revolutionary Youth Movement, which has stepped to the fore as representatives of protesters in Tahrir Square, in interviews over recent days revealed how they did it.

"We had to find a way to prevent security from making their cordon and stopping us," said 41-year-old architect Basem Kamel, a member of Mohamed ElBaradei's youth wing and one of the dozen or so plotters.

They chose 20 protest sites, usually connected to mosques, in densely populated working-class neighborhoods around Cairo.

They hoped that such a large number of scattered rallies would strain security forces, draw larger numbers and increase the likelihood that some protesters would be able to break out and link up in Tahrir Square.

The group publicly called for protests at those sites for Jan. 25, a national holiday celebrating the country's widely reviled police force.

They announced the sites of the demonstrations on the Internet and called for protests to begin at each one after prayers at about 2 p.m.

But that wasn't all.

They sent small teams to do reconnaissance on the secret 21st site.

It was the Bulaq al-Dakrour neighborhood's Hayiss Sweet Shop, whose storefront and tiled sidewalk plaza—meant to accommodate outdoor tables in warmer months—would make an easy-to-find rallying point in an otherwise tangled neighborhood no different from countless others around the city.

The plotters say they knew that the demonstrations' success would depend on the participation of ordinary Egyptians in working-class districts like this one, where the Internet and Facebook aren't as widely used.

They distributed fliers around the city in the days leading up to the demonstration, concentrating efforts on Bulaq al-Dakrour.

"It gave people the idea that a revolution would start on Jan. 25," Mr. Kamel said.

In the days leading up to the demonstration, organizers sent small teams of plotters to walk the protest routes at various speeds, to synchronize how separate protests would link up.

On Jan. 25, security forces predictably deployed by the thousands at each of the announced demonstration sites.

Meanwhile, four field commanders chosen from the organizers' committee began dispatching activists in cells of 10.

To boost secrecy, only one person per cell knew their destination.

In these small groups, the protesters advanced toward the Hayiss Sweet Shop, massing into a crowd of 300 demonstrators free from police control.

The lack of security prompted neighborhood residents to stream by the hundreds out of the neighborhood's cramped alleyways, swelling the crowd into the thousands, say sweet-shop employees who watched the scene unfold.

At 1:15 p.m., they began marching toward downtown Cairo. By the time police redeployed a small contingent to block their path, the protesters' ranks had grown enough to easily overpower them.

The other marches organized at mosques around the city failed to reach Tahrir Square, their efforts foiled by riot-police cordons.

The Bulaq al-Dakrour marchers, the only group to reach their objective, occupied Tahrir Square for several hours until after midnight, when police attacked demonstrators with tear gas and rubber bullets.

It was the first time Egyptians had seen such a demonstration in their streets, and it provided a spark credited with emboldening tens of thousands of people to come out to protest the following Friday.

On Jan. 28, they seized Tahrir Square again.

The Night Of The Camels: Inside The Bloody Battle For Tahrir Square: “On The Rooftop, Piles Of Rocks Await Any Baltageya Assault” “Another Squad Of Protesters Has Wrapped Rocks In Petrol-Soaked Rags

That They Will Ignite And Use To Swing And Hurl The Projectiles A Greater Distance”

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

In the midst of battle, the protesters realised they needed someone to act as a leader.

The nominees included those who had remained most calm during tough situations and those who displayed the best tactical sense.

“Battle naturally creates leaders,” Mohammed said.

06 Feb 2011 Al Jazeera Online Producer [Excerpts]

CAIRO, EGYPT - Behind a barricaded front door across the street from the famed Egyptian Museum, through a tight, fluorescent-lit hallway crammed with a makeshift kitchen, bed and debris meant to obstruct intruders, up a winding, outdoor metal staircase with a view over a darkened back street, we find Mohammed, a smiling, skinny 23-year-old with a buzzed head and a scarf around his neck.

Mohammed and the group of mostly young men he commands on this 10th floor rooftop exposed to the damp Cairo night are the vanguards of the pro-democracy protests that have flooded Tahrir Square for 12 days.

They are the occupiers of this apartment building and its defenders against assault by supporters of Egypt's president, Hosni Mubarak.

They are a diverse crowd.

Mohammed idolises Gamal Abdel Nasser, the socialist and nationalist hero of modern Egyptian politics, but elsewhere on the rooftop we find Sohail, the son of a wealthy businessman who professes no religious ideology but admires the Muslim Brotherhood's organisational skills.

Mohammed has admitted us to their rooftop ramparts not because he is particularly fond of our company, though we all get along well, but because he no longer trusts the Egyptian media to report fairly on the story of Tahrir Square and the hundreds of thousands of protesters there who are eager to change their country's ossified political and social system.

There on the roof, ducking behind a large satellite dish when the ever-present military helicopter circles nearby, Mohammed and Sohail offer us a nuanced look at who is protesting, what motivates them, and how a group of untrained 20-somethings came together to fend off a co-ordinated, determined attempt - likely backed by elements

within the government - to crush them beneath a hail of rocks, Molotov cocktails and gunfire.

The combat between anti-government protesters and Mubarak supporters around the museum on Wednesday night and Thursday morning was intense and bloody, involving thousands on either side.

Citizen video obtained by Al Jazeera has also shown anti-government protesters apparently being hit by live gunfire after being targeted by a green laser.

After 12 hours of overnight combat, the protesters in the square managed to advance their wall of shields - metal barricades scavenged from a nearby construction site - around 200 metres from where the fighting began, and they eventually overwhelmed and defeated the outnumbered Mubarak supporters.

Mohammed and his group of around 15 men, like others that night, fought their way hand-to-hand into the apartment building they now occupy.

In the midst of battle, the protesters realised they needed someone to act as a leader.

The nominees included those who had remained most calm during tough situations and those who displayed the best tactical sense.

“Battle naturally creates leaders,” Mohammed said.

One man, curiously, nominated himself.

Most of the others nominated Mohammed.

After it was clear that Mohammed would win, the man grabbed a metal pipe and tried to attack, declaring that he was actually a member of the state security forces. The protesters quickly subdued him and dragged him off to a makeshift prison that had been established at a metro station in the centre of the square.

Like other groups, Mohammed's crew started wearing badges - handwritten pieces of tape - stating their role and unit.

Realising these could be forged, they switched to a simple password system to grant entry to the building, one that changes every 12 hours.

The rooftop leaders in the area, including Mohammed, communicate with ground-level leaders and others by mobile phone, tracking the movements of any approaching baltageya, or “thugs”.

Dozens of soldiers armed with automatic assault rifles and wearing flak jackets and ballistic helmets stand outside, keeping watch over the square and guarding the museum, but they take no action against the parallel civilian authority right next door.

The army did ask the man who owns the occupied building, as well as three others nearby, to boot the squatting protesters out, but the protesters refused, and the army has yet to act.

The owner of the top-floor apartment, which Mohammed's group found unlocked and have been using, told the young men they were free to make themselves at home as long as they did not ruin the place.

On the rooftop, piles of rocks await any baltageya assault.

Atop a nearby building we visited earlier, another squad of protesters has wrapped rocks in petrol-soaked rags that they will ignite and use to swing and hurl the projectiles a greater distance.

A stockpile of the Molotov cocktails, as they are known, left behind by retreating Mubarak supporters lies nearby.

Mohammed said he had seen people at the Sayyida Zeinab metro station, south of Tahrir Square, handing out 350 Egyptian pounds per person to encourage Mubarak supporters to mass near the square.

These are the same "thugs," Sohail said, who the government unleashes on election days to overrun polling stations, guarantee access for the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), and intimidate opposition voters.

"The president has managed to keep power through the marriage of money and authority," Mohammed told us.

**“Oppressive Arab Regimes
Sustain (And Are Vitally Sustained
By) Liberal Democracies In The
West In The Name Of Stability
Whose Unholy Trinity Is Oil, Israel
And Islamophobia”**

**“The Idea That Arabs Are Unfit For
Self-Determination Goes Back To The**

Very Origins Of The Arab State System After World War I”

“This Racist Notion Rears Its Ugly Head Once Again To Mask The Mantra Of Stability During This Magnificent Moment Of Common Humanity”

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

February 7, 2011 By Jens Hanssen, Stabroeknews.com [Excerpts]. Jens Hanssen is Associate Professor of Middle East History at the University of Toronto.

Events in Tunisia and Egypt remind us that there is nothing universal about Western liberal democracies and that it is the wretched of the earth who keep the promise of democracy alive.

We are witnessing a historic moment in the Arab world, a moment to envisage a shared humanity and a common destiny.

While much depends on international solidarity, the future of a rejuvenated, inclusive and democratic Arab world is determined by the millions of pro-democracy demonstrators in Egypt who are shattering the violent post-cold war order and who are redefining the culture of Third World politics.

The community that is defending Cairo’s Liberation Square is instilling enormous national pride across the Arab world from Rabat to Baghdad and from Yemen to Syria. And sooner or later it will lead to the fall of more authoritarian regimes across the region.

The political storm in Tunisia and Egypt broke too quickly and too unexpectedly to be aligned with American and UN scripts as happened in the Ukraine, Lebanon or Iran.

In fact, it suggests that oppressive Arab regimes sustain (and are vitally sustained by) liberal democracies in the West in the name of stability whose unholy trinity is oil, Israel and Islamophobia.

It is moments like these, precious and all too fleeting in history, that remind us that the universal ideals of humanity and freedom are safeguarded by the wretched of the earth against the interests of Western liberalism.

Did not the Haitian revolution keep the promise of these ideals alive at a time when Napoleon’s France descended into dictatorship?

In the twentieth century, they mobilized people in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America against Western counterinsurgency: Mossadegh's Iran, Lumumba's Congo, Allende's Chile, and Aristide's Haiti were democratic revolutions against dictators owned by the West.

And like in Spain in the 1930s and in Hungary in 1956 they were betrayed by Western liberal democracies.

These fragile moments of the past communicate to today's Tunisia and Egypt the possibility of a common humanity.

The 'Cairo Commune' and the support it is getting from protestors in all other major Egyptian cities are demonstrating to Arabs and the whole world that as one placard read "Yes we can, too," and we do it on our own terms.

A recent editorial in al-Akhbar the popular Beirut daily has noted, "young Egyptians are struggling not only to get rid of President Hosni Mubarak but also to restore the self and the dignity of Egypt and Arabs from the abyss of defeat."

Since the Egyptian military defeat in the June 1967 war against Israel, the editorial continues, Arabs have suffered from the Camp David peace process, from the unfettered occupation of Palestinian land, the civil war in Lebanon, militant Islam, the slaughter in Iraq under Saddam Hussein and under the on-going American occupation, and the looting of national wealth by comprador business elites aligned with their dictatorships.

This then becomes a moment of cultural catharsis that has the potential to liberate Arabs from almost half a century of crippling self-doubt and humiliation.

The revolution did not start on Liberation Square.

In the day-long battle of Qasr al-Nil Bridge, they now chanted the Tunisian national anthem on the march, now collectively lowered their heads for prayer to hold their ground.

Egyptians know what they owe to the Tunisian uprising that toppled President Ben Ali's Western-supported regime of 23 years.

For it was from the town of Sidi Bouzid on the fertile but neglected plains of southern Tunisia, far away from the buzzing world of the internet, that this revolutionary moment spread on December 17, 2011.

On that day, a young orphaned peddler who had abandoned his studies to sustain a family of eight set himself on fire in a final act of protest against the repeated confiscations of his meager livelihood and the constant abuse he and others suffered at the hands of the authorities.

When the ensuing protests in rural Tunisia swept into the capital, trade unions mobilized and soon the army fraternized with the masses of demonstrators.

The Tunisians' struggle against remnants of the old regime continues but their spark has ignited Egyptians who held a national "day of rage" on January 25, Police Day.

The dramatic events in Tunisia and Egypt have drawn comparisons with the fall of the Berlin Wall that brought an end to the cold war.

When Mubarak's regime thugs tried to crush the protesters on horseback, it raised specters of the Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing in 1988.

The demonstrators prevailed and their resilience over the past ten days is reminiscent of the waves of Serbian demonstrations that brought down Slobodan Milosevic in 2000.

In their tactics, the demonstrations also evoke the self-sacrifice and tenacity of Gandhi's non-violent resistance, while their long-term effect on Arab culture may turn out to be what the civil rights movement in the US and the Rodney Riots in Jamaica were to black consciousness.

Despite these affinities, the protest movement is deeply rooted in modern Egyptian history of political dissent against decades of arbitrary rule under emergency law, Mubarak's embezzlement of billions of dollars, and his complicity with Israel's incarceration of Palestinians in the Gaza Ghetto.

Among the demonstrators on the square was Nawal Saadawi, the legendary Egyptian feminist and activist for social justice.

At 80 years, she embodies the Egyptians' memory of resistance: "We have demonstrated against King Farouk, and against Nasser. I was imprisoned by Sadat and I have been exiled by Mubarak, but this I have never seen so we have to sit and stay."

As the 'Communards' sit and stay put on Liberation Square, they will no doubt be debating the lessons of the past and the choices their political ancestors made.

For example, the great nationalist leader Saad Zaghlul who shamed the British into getting the Egyptians' voice heard at the Paris peace conference in 1919 and who, through passive resistance, wrested partial independence from the clutches of British occupation three years later.

Seasoned activists like Nawal Saadawi would have reminded the younger crowd of the dangers of compromising with the regime: In 1954, Nasser conceded to mass protests demanding that the army return to the barracks and allow for free elections, only to rescind his promise and arrest their leaders after the demonstrations stopped. This turned out to be the last time a strong parliament was conceivable in Egypt, until now.

Many of today's demonstrators are seasoned activists in their own right who came of age in the solidarity committees in support of the second Palestinian Intifada since 2000, the anti-war movement protesting the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the labour unrest of 2006 and 2007 in the Nile Delta. These most recent events in which 25,000 Egyptian workers went on strike, were supported by social activists called "The April 6 Youth Movement" who transmitted the strikes to the world wide web.

It was the martyrdom of one of their own, the blogger Khaled Said who was beaten to death by Egyptian security forces in July 2010 that reenergized the anti-Mubarak protest movement.

Groups like “April 6” and “We are all Khaled Said” have emerged as tenacious organizers of the protests.

Their democratic vision is clear and self-evident: Mubarak must lift restrictions and leave office; they will negotiate with a caretaker government the transition to new and free elections; a new constitution be drafted for parliamentary ratification; and the army must be subordinate to civilian authorities.

The historical background and the universality of these demands notwithstanding, Western pundits and politicians claim that Egyptians, like all Arabs, do not have a tradition of democracy, and need a big man to rule over them.

The idea that Arabs are unfit for self-determination goes back to the very origins of the Arab state system after World War I.

At that time the aspirations for independence in the wake of the demise of the Ottoman empire were dismissed by the British and French imperialists and cheaply abandoned by the American president Woodrow Wilson.

The fact that this racist notion rears its ugly head once again to mask the mantra of stability during this magnificent moment of common humanity gives D-Day in Cairo a more universal dimension than the mere departure of Mubarak.

It demands nothing less than the decolonization of democracy.

“The Reality Is That The U.S. Government Is No More Interested In The Freedom Aspirations Of The Egyptian People Than It Is In Freedom And Justice For The Mass Of Americans”

February 10, 2011 By Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

Life within the United States is not exactly the model of a just and democratic society.

Similar to Egypt, the gap between rich and poor in the U.S. is the widest it has been in 80 years.

Millions of Americans are unemployed and descending into poverty. The number of Americans living in poverty is higher than it has been since 1994--44 million. Millions more would be in poverty except for meager unemployment benefits that keep them slightly above the national poverty line. Twenty-two percent of American children live in poverty. Millions of people don't have health insurance, and millions more are losing their homes because of the rise in foreclosures and evictions sweeping the nation.

One quarter of Blacks and Latinos live in poverty in this country, while more than a third of children of color live in poverty. Just steps from the White House, more than 40 percent of Black children in the nation's capital live in poverty. Blacks and Latinos are disproportionately targeted by law enforcement and are imprisoned because of racism and rampant corruption in the American in-justice system.

Finally, the recent FBI raids on and repression of Palestine and Colombia solidarity activists should make everyone skeptical of this government giving advice on respecting free speech and free political association.

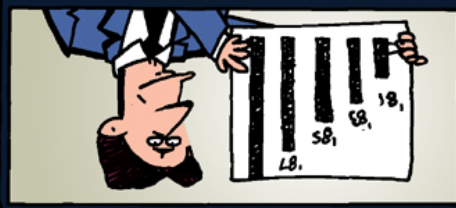
The reality is that the U.S. government is no more interested in the freedom aspirations of the Egyptian people than it is in freedom and justice for the mass of Americans--and that's why the cheerleaders of American capital have met the goals and pursuits of the Arab revolution with suspicion or outright hostility.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

HEY YOUNG'UNS! IT'S THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF RONALD REAGAN'S 100TH BIRTHDAY!
TIME TO LEARN UP ABOUT THAT DEAD DUDE ALL REPUBLICANS LOVE LOVE LOVE:

RONALD REAGAN FUN FACTS

Former actor Ronald Reagan advocated small government. When he left office, the federal government was half the size of ten times the size it was when he came in.



ODD... I HAVE A STRANGE URGE TO MURDER KHADAFI'S YOUNG DAUGHTER



After he died, a secret coven of GOP high priests broke into Reagan's crypt, stole his corpse, ground it up, and sprinkled the bits into food and beverages fed to Republican political figures.

Reagan's positive, aw-shucks grin won over everyone, even the gays he let die by the thousands.



Republicans are all about family values. But every Republican politician is allowed one fetish: Reagan!



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

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

**Chicago Police Commander Gets Short
Prison Sentence For Confessions
Obtained Through Torture:
“It’s Sad That Burge Could Go To Prison
And Get Out, And Scores Of His Victims
Will Still Be Incarcerated Screaming For
Justice”**



Stanley Howard

February 8, 2011 by Stanley Howard, Socialist Worker. First published in the New Abolitionist.

Stanley Howard is a former Illinois death row prisoner who was exonerated and pardoned by former Gov. George Ryan in 2003.

He was a victim of police torture carried out by Chicago police, and from behind bars, he formed the Death Row 10 with other victims of torture. Though still imprisoned unjustly, Stanley works with the Campaign to End the Death Penalty and writes regularly for its newsletter, the New Abolitionist.

You can write to him at: Stanley Howard N-71620, 2600 N. Brinton Ave., Dixon, IL 61021

I was very disappointed that U.S. District Court Judge Joan Lefkow sentenced former Chicago police Commander Jon Burge to only 4 and half years in prison on January 21.

It felt like he received a slap on the wrist for all the pain and suffering and mayhem he caused in so many lives and in the African-American community. We deserve every bit of those 30 years that the prosecutors requested.

Before handing down the sentence, Judge Lefkow told Burge that she didn't believe his denials of torture. And she also harshly criticized local, county, state and federal officials for not taking actions sooner. "How I wish there had not been such a dismal failure of leadership in the police department that it came to this," Lefkow said. "If others, such as the United States Attorney and the (Cook County) State's Attorney, had given heed long ago, so much paid could have been avoided."

I've long said that it was because of the actions and inactions of the past state's attorneys—Richard M. Daley (who became mayor of Chicago), Cecil Partee, Jack O'Malley and Dick Devine—that this scandal ballooned to the largest police corruption scandal in U.S. history.

They all either lied, denied, ignored, covered up, turned a blind eye to or claimed ignorance about this scandal to obtain and maintain scores of wrongful and tainted convictions.

This practice continues today with the current state's attorney Anita Alvarez, and the special prosecutor appointed to all of the Burge post-conviction cases, retired judge Stuart A. Nudleman.

Even special prosecutors Edward Egan and Robert Boyle (may they both rest in peace) tried to cover up the scandal by hiding behind the statute of limitations.

Egan and Boyle could have charged Burge and his cronies with many counts of attempted murder, heinous battery, conspiracy, etc. And they could have exposed how the state's attorney office was knowingly complicit in this scandal for over 30 years, instead of claiming there was only some "slippage."

After over 20 years of complaining and begging for a federal investigation, the U.S. attorney's office finally brought perjury and obstruction of justice charges against Burge in 2008 for lying under oath about the torture.

"I think it's important to send a message to people that this sort of thing doesn't happen in a civilized society," U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald said after the sentence. "Justice should have come sooner, but justice delayed isn't justice completely denied." Fitzgerald stated that the investigation isn't over.

The fact that Burge is going to prison at all is a true testament of the unbending will and years of hard work put forth, collectively, by activists, lawyers, torture victims and our families.

But it's sad that Burge could go to prison and get out, and scores of his victims will still be incarcerated screaming for justice.

Daley recently served as guest speaker at a ceremony where Anita Alvarez swore in 23 new assistant state's attorneys. Daley, who served as state attorney from 1981 to 1989, spoke to the new prosecutors about professionalism and the responsibilities of their new careers.

Keeping it Real, I wonder if that speech had anything to do with his involvement in the torture scandal, or how he wrongfully sent many prisoners to prison and death row based on confessions he knew were obtained through torture.

RECEIVED:

Save Our Homes Valentine Day Press Conference & Protest [New Orleans]

Feb 12, 2011 Press Release: Valentine Day Housing Action via NOLA_C3_Discussion

New Orleans housing activists, in conjunction with housing activists around the U.S., are holding a Save Our Homes Valentine Day Action.

The focus on this action is to mobilize opposition to plans by the White House and members of Congress to slash federal funding for Section 8 vouchers, public housing, homeless assistance, and aid to homeowners who are in foreclosure or facing foreclosure.

In addition, New Orleans housing activists are demanding that HUD reject HANO's request to radically downsize public housing at Iberville and shift 263 units of government subsidized housing now available at the development to a remote and economically challenged section of Algiers on the West Bank.

**Save Our Homes Valentine Day Press Conference & Protest.
11:30 AM Monday/February 14, 2011.
2000 Murl Street/Entrance to Christopher Park Homes.
Sponsors: C3/Hands Off Iberville, May Day New Orleans.
Contact person: Mike Howells 504-587-0080**

Our Demands:

- 1. No cuts and full funding for Section 8, public housing, homeless and other vital housing programs.**
- 2. Prevent proposed cuts in Fiscal Year 2011 Budget that would take effect March 4th.**
- 3. Prevent proposed cuts in Administration's Fiscal Year 2012 HUD Budget.**
- 4. Prevent HUD from giving HANO a Neighborhood Choice Grant to downsize public housing at the Iberville Development and to meet one for one replacement requirements by shifting hundreds of government subsidized, low income apartments from the existing housing project to an isolated and economically challenged area of the West Bank.**

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