

Military Resistance 9D17



**“Petraeus And Obama’s
Counterinsurgency Campaign
Sends Soldiers On Foot Patrols In
Villages And Farms To Make
Friends And Lose Body Parts”
“Quick Off The Mark To Beg
Congress For Money For Hi-Tech
Killer Weapons, The Military Takes Its
Own Sweet Time When It Comes To
Protecting Serving Men And Women”**

“Blown-Away Testicles Is The Newest ‘Signature Wound’”



'General Petraeus and Obama's counterinsurgency campaign sends soldiers on foot patrols in villages and farms to make friends and lose body parts.' Photograph: Adek Berry/AFP/Getty Images

19 April 2011 By Clancy Sigal, Guardian News and Media Limited

Any man who has ever been kicked in the scrotum, on a playing field or in a fight, will know the feeling. If you're hit hard enough down there it's beyond pain, as if the devil had taken a gigantic bite out of your vitals. Oh, it hurts.

Imagine what it must be like to be one of the 58 US soldiers in Afghanistan who had their balls blown apart by roadside bombs last year.

This is a 90% increase over the previous year, a result of General Petraeus and Obama's counterinsurgency campaign, which sees soldiers on foot patrols in villages and farms to make friends and lose body parts.

Numbers of what the Pentagon calls “multiple limb amputations” have risen “unbelievably” according to doctors at the Landstuhl medical centre in Germany, which receives all severe battle casualties. Dr John Holcomb, a now-retired army colonel with combat medicine experience, says: “(We doctors were) taken aback by the frequency of these injuries: the double amputations, the injuries to the penis and testicles.”

Nearly half of the 142 soldiers with “genitourinary (GU) wounds” at Landstuhl last year suffered injury to the testicles. A recent medical journal review of more than 800 GU injuries indicates that testicular injuries are increasing.

After Obama surged 30,000 more troops into Afghanistan, stepped-up patrols went into IED bomb-infested areas wearing body armour that protects from injuries to the front – but does not protect the groin from an upward blast.

The Taliban are clever at using the once-forbidden internet to spy on us, and they've also become better at knowing what really hurts, with more explosive power placed for maximum pain. They plant their IED bombs on fences or anywhere else above ground so that the blast hits the legs and genitals of passing soldiers and marines. The same thing happened early in the Iraq war, when Humvees were hurtled into battle with only scant armour plating.

Quick off the mark to beg Congress for money for hi-tech killer weapons, the military takes its own sweet time when it comes to protecting serving men and women.

Maybe, at some distant point in the 80-year "Long War" which Pentagon intellectuals lovingly predict, those responsible for defence procurement may get around to Kevlar groin flaps.

Nobody in the chain of command really knows what will happen to soldiers whose balls are blown off. The medical literature is sparse, if not nonexistent. The little that is known is that lifetime testosterone supplements will be required and, according to reporter David Brown, "some might be able to have sexual intercourse" and father children.

There's even a thriving business in silicone-based prosthetic testicles.

It strikes close to home.

Based just south of Los Angeles at Camp Pendleton, the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, has had 24 killed and 175 wounded in Helmand province.

More than a dozen of these marines have lost two or more limbs.

Blown-away testicles is the newest "signature wound".

Yet somehow it never quite makes it on to Oprah or Katie Couric's CBS news.

Visually it seems less upsetting to show wounded boys and some women bravely managing their prosthetic arms and legs than to look at the increasing GU caseload.

Maybe it's because to have your sex organ damaged – literally be emasculated – might spoil the "warrior" ethos pushed by Pentagon-funded billboards and TV ads unthinkingly accepted by many of us.

This syntactical shift from the old-style army of civilian soldiers to currently deified teutonic warriors, separate and aloof from the public, is puerile nationalist propaganda.

A lot of people I know find it easier to empathise with the homeless, Guantánamo prisoners, Egyptians in Tahrir Square, besieged Gazans or losers on American Idol than with our own – mainly working-class – boys and girls in uniform.

Yet how can one not identify with an ordinary soldier, sometimes just out of high-school, who never knows whether his next step will castrate him?

We draw a blank. Oh, that's war. Over there somewhere. Let them, the now-warrior class who used to be our children, fight and take the consequences.

This failure of identification with people supposedly protecting our "homeland" is part of the war-numbness that has castrated the American peace movement.

What's so hard about looking at it straight?

A Soldier Comments:

Roger 68

19 April 2011 2:47PM

Good article, Clancy.

A member of my squad had one of his testicles eviscerated and the other badly damaged in Tal Afar in 2005. This was right around the time the uproar over the lack of body armor and up armored vehicles was taking place.

The Pentagon never fails to fail when it comes to getting ahead of the curve. Usually, instead of immediately addressing the problem, the first course of action is denial and excuses.

Setting aside moral questions about this, or any war (yes, I'm actually anti war) my feeling is that the U.S. isn't getting a very good deal in relation to defense expenditures.

If we can spend more money on our military than the GDP of every country in the world, save the top 14, certainly we can do better to equip our soldiers.

A much better alternative would be to stop fighting all over the goddamned world.

Of course this presupposes that our leaders actually give a shit about sending people off to die for the interests of the wealthy.

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

Goodyear Mother Mourns Fallen U.S. Soldier

07 Apr 2011 MyFox Phoenix

GOODYEAR, Ariz. - For the second time in about a week, a valley soldier is killed overseas.

Loved ones are remembering 30-year-old Sgt. Christian Garcia, a married father of two, who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Christian Garcia graduated from Agua Fria High School in 1999, and joined the military shortly after.

Mom Elanor Villaneuva is devastated.

"I am a mother, there is no greater pain than to lose a child in this world," she says while fighting back tears. The sergeant was killed Saturday during an enemy attack in Iraq. "He died with dignity and honor defending the United States of America and the people he loved."

Garcia joined the military in June 1999 as a chemical equipment repairer, and was later assigned to the maintenance troop in Fort Hood.

He received many awards and decorations, including 2 Army Commendation medals, 4 Army Achievement medals, and the Global War on Terrorism service medal.

"(He was) a man of good morals and character, a man that is short but with a big heart," she says. "I know this war brings a lot of confusion to others and some negative talks about the war. All I can say is pray for the troops and the men and women who are serving his country."

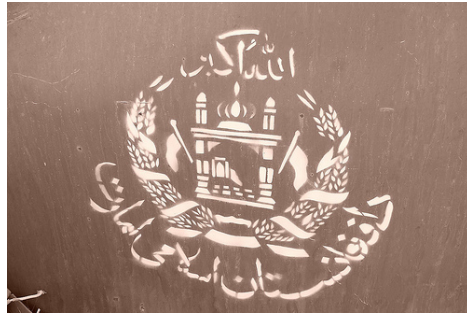
Garcia leaves behind his wife and two children, ages 3 years and 5 months.

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

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

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Resistance Action



[Graphic:flickr.com/photos]

Apr 23 2011 TOLONews.com

At least seven Afghan police soldiers were killed in separate incidents in eastern and southern Afghanistan, local officials said.

Ali Shah Paktiawal, police chief of Nangarhar told TOLONews that two Afghan police were killed on Saturday in Dar-e-Noor district of Nangarhar when insurgents attacked on their vehicle.

One other was wounded in the attack, he added.

Meanwhile, Amir Ahmad, a local official in Dar-e-Noor told TOLONews that 2 Afghan police were killed and 4 others were wounded in the attack.

Dar-e-Noor is an insecure district in the province where insurgents have been active and many times attacked on Afghan police check posts.

The attack comes as five Afghan border police were killed and one other was wounded in a roadside bomb blast in Spin Boldak district of Kandahar on Friday, local officials said.

The incident happened when a mine struck a police car in the district, officials said.

GOT AN OPINION?

Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or send to contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request identification published.

**NEW GENERAL ORDER NO. 1:
PACK UP
GO HOME
FUCK THE POLITICIANS
THIS IS NOT A PRODUCTIVE USE OF TIME**



U.S. Army soldiers with the 1-320 Field Artillery Regiment walk back to their base after a patrol near Combat Outpost Nolen in Arghandab Valley, north of Kandahar April 12, 2011. REUTERS/Bob Strong

**NEED SOME TRUTH?
CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER**

Traveling Soldier is the publication of the Military Resistance Organization.

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

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

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

MILITARY NEWS

HOW MANY MORE FOR OBAMA'S WARS?



U.S. servicemen from Bravo Company, 234th Battalion, 1st Infantry Division, march before boarding a plane bound for Afghanistan at the U.S. transit center at Manas airport near Bishkek April 15, 2011. REUTERS/Vladimir Pirogov

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



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

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

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

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

Frederick Douglass, 1852

**Hope for change doesn't cut it when you're still losing buddies.
-- J.D. Englehart, Iraq Veterans Against The War**

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

**“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**

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

The Silent Wars

From: Dennis Serdel
To: Military Resistance
Subject: The Silent Wars
Date: Apr 19, 2010

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

The Silent Wars

What are they fighting for
Land and it's riches
what kind of riches
Oil Minerals Natural Gas
What else are they fighting for
Positioning in the world
So that's why the wars are
on the other side of earth Yes
Looks like a big country
picking on a smaller one again
You mean like Vietnam Yes
a long time ago
Their people just listen
but all they hear is silence
Yes they have their own problems
many live hand to mouth
they are in a rich depression
Many go to work while
others sit at home eating food stamps
Their government keeps
them poor so they will just
think of their own problems
and keep disconnected
to the silent wars beyond
Some have lost their houses
the rich banks took them away
Why does their rich government
keep them alive
while so many are broken
It's some sort of distraction
just their own silent wars
the wars on TV mean nothing
to them
Many have died
they die in their streets
they die in their cars
in the rich man's prisons
men surrounded by walls
so their screaming can't be heard
silence is torture
silence is death

ANNIVERSARIES

April 24, 1917:

Anniversary Of A Noble Cause: The Irish Take Arms To Fight A Foreign Imperial Occupation



The Easter Uprising began when between 1,000 and 1,500 members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood attempted to seize Dublin and issued the declaration of Irish independence from Britain.

Carl Bunin Peace History April 23-29

By Constantine Fitzgibbon, Users.bigpond.net [Excerpt]

On Easter Monday, April 24, 1916, a force of Irishmen under arms estimated at between 1,000 and 1,500 men and women attempted to seize Dublin, with the ultimate intention of destroying British rule in Ireland and creating an entirely independent Irish Republic to include all 32 counties of Leinster, Munster, Ulster and Connaught.

Their leaders, Patrick Pearse, James Connolly and the others, knew that their chances of success were so slight as to be almost non-existent.

Yet they fought, and died.

Why?

The circumstances that led to the Irish rebellion of 1916 are of an intense complexity, historical, social, political and, perhaps above all, psychological. The Irish writer, Sean

O'Faolain, has written of his country: "Most of our physical embodiments of the past are ruins, as most of our songs are songs of lament and defiance.

"The Easter Rising was a complete failure, which left large parts of Dublin in ruins; yet without it Ireland might never have been free of English rule.

"The leaders, alive, had very few supporters even among the Irish patriots; dead, they became and have remained their country's heroes.

It was a great historical paradox, and one that to this day the British have perhaps never understood.

Had they understood it, it is conceivable that the British might still have an empire, since the overthrow of British rule in Ireland marked the beginning of the overthrow of British imperial might in Asia, in Africa, and elsewhere

**"We Declare The Right Of The People
Of Ireland To The Ownership Of
Ireland"**

**"The Long Usurpation Of That Right
By A Foreign People And
Government Has Not Extinguished
The Right"**

[Stephen-stratford.co.uk]

[Text Of The Declaration Made After The Occupation Of Dublin's General Post Office During The 1916 Easter Uprising]

POBLACHT NA H EIREANN.

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC

TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN:

In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal itself, she now seizes that moment, and, supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength, she strikes in full confidence of victory.

We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible.

The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people.

In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty; six times during the last three hundred years they have asserted it to arms.

Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State, and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of its freedom, of its welfare, and of its exaltation among the nations.

The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and all of its parts, cherishing all of the children of the nation equally and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.

Until our arms have brought the opportune moment for the establishment of a permanent National, representative of the whole people of Ireland and elected by the suffrages of all her men and women, the Provisional Government, hereby constituted, will administer the civil and military affairs of the Republic in trust for the people.

We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God.

Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine.

In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

Signed on Behalf of the Provisional Government.

Thomas J. Clarke, Sean Mac Diarmada, Thomas MacDonagh, P. H. Pearse, Eamonn Ceannt, James Connolly, Joseph Plunkett

“If These Men Must Die, Would It Not Be Better To Die In Their Own Country Fighting For Freedom For Their Class, And For The Abolition Of War, Than To Go Forth To Strange Countries And Die Slaughtering And Slaughtered By Their Brothers That Tyrants And Profiteers Might Live?”

By Ted Grant, Unknown source, April 1966; <http://www.marxists.org/> [Excerpts]

On 17th April 1916 the Irish Citizen Army, together with the Irish Volunteers, rose up in arms against the might of the British Empire to strike a blow for Irish freedom and for the setting up of an Irish Republic. Their blow for freedom was to reverberate round the world, and preceded the first Russian Revolution by almost a year.

The background to the rebellion was the centuries of national oppression suffered by the Irish people in the interests of British landlordism and capitalism. In this they had the support of the Irish landlords and capitalists, of the Catholic hierarchy, who were linked by ties of interest to the Imperialists, and joined with them in fear of the Irish workers and peasants.

It is impossible to understand the Easter Rising without understanding the ideas of its leader, James Connolly, who considered himself a Marxist and based himself on the ideas of Internationalism and the class struggle. Like MacLean in Britain, Lenin and Trotsky, Liebknecht and Luxemburg and other Internationalists, Connolly regarded with horror the betrayal by the leaders of the Labour movement in all countries in supporting the Imperialist War.

Dealing with the betrayal of the Second International, Connolly declared in his paper *The Workers Republic*: “If these men must die, would it not be better to die in their own country fighting for freedom for their class, and for the abolition of war, than to go forth to strange countries and die slaughtering and slaughtered by their brothers that tyrants and profiteers might live?”

Protesting against the support by the British TUC of the war, Connolly wrote: "Time was when the unanimous voice of that Congress declared that the working class had no enemy except the capitalist class – that of its own country at the head of the list!"

Connolly stood for national freedom as a step towards the Irish Socialist Republic. But while the Stalinists and reformists today – 50 years after 1916 still mumble in politically incoherent terms about the need for the "national revolution against imperialism", Connolly was particularly clear about the class question that was at the basis of the Irish question.

Without being in direct contact with Lenin and Trotsky he had a similar position. "The cause of Labour is the cause of Ireland, and the cause of Ireland is the cause of Labour", he wrote. "They cannot be dissevered. Ireland seeks freedom. Labour seeks that an Ireland free should be the sole mistress of her own destiny, supreme owner of all material things within and upon her soil".

Connolly had no illusions in the capitalists of any country, least of all Ireland.

On International capitalism he wrote: "If, then, we see a small section of the possessing class prepared to launch into war, to shed oceans of blood and spend millions of treasure, in order to maintain intact a small portion of their privileges, how can we expect the entire propertied class to abstain from using the same weapons, and to submit peacefully when called upon to yield up forever all their privileges?"

And on the Irish capitalists, "Therefore the stronger I am in my affection for national tradition, literature, language, and sympathies, the more firmly rooted I am in my opposition to that capitalist class which in its soulless lust for power and gold would bray the nations as in a mortar".

And again, "We are out for Ireland for the Irish. But who are the Irish? Not the rack-renting, slum-owning landlord; not the sweating, profit grinding capitalist; not the sleek and oily lawyer; not the prostitute pressmen – the hired liars of the enemy. Not these are the Irish upon whom the future depends. Not these, but the Irish working class, the only secure foundation upon which a free nation can be reared."

Writing on the need for an Irish insurrection to expel British imperialism he wrote in relation to the World War: "Starting thus, Ireland may yet set the torch to a European conflagration that will not burn out until the last throne and the last capitalist bond and debenture will be shrivelled on the funeral pyre of the last War lord."

As an answer to the demand for conscription which had been imposed in Britain and which was supported by the Irish capitalists for Ireland too, where the employers were exerting pressure to force Irish workers to volunteer, Connolly wrote: "We want and must have economic conscription in Ireland for Ireland. Not the conscription of men by hunger to compel them to fight for the power that denies them the right to govern their own country, but the conscription by an Irish nation of all the resources of the nation – its land, its railways, its canals, its workshops, its docks, its mines, its mountains, its rivers and streams, its factories and machinery, its horses, its cattle, and its men and women, all co-operating together under one common direction that gather under one common

direction that Ireland may live and bear upon her fruitful bosom the greatest number of the freest people she has ever known.”

He looked at the employers who were opposing conscription too from a critical class point of view: “if here and there we find an occasional employer who fought us in 1913 (the Great Dublin lock-out in which the employers tried to break union organisation, but were defeated in this object by the solidarity of the Irish workers and their British comrades too) agreeing with our national policy in 1915 it is not because he has become converted, or is ashamed of the unjust use of his powers, but simply that he does not see in economic conscription the profit he fancied he saw in denying to his followers the right to organise in their own way in 1913.”

Answering objections to the firm working class point of view which he expounded he declared: “Do we find fault with the employer for following his own interests? We do not. But neither are we under any illusion as to his motives. In the same manner we take our stand with our own class, nakedly upon our class interests, but believing that these interests are the highest interests of the race.”

It is in this light that the uprising of 1916 must be viewed. As a consequence of the struggles of the past Connolly who was the General Secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union had organised the Citizens Army for the purpose of defence against capitalist and police attack and for preparing for struggle against British imperialism.

The Citizens Army was almost purely working class in composition: dockers, transport workers, building workers, printers and other sections of the Dublin workers being its rank and file. It was with this force and in alliance with the more middle class Irish volunteers that Connolly prepared for the uprising.

He had no illusions about its immediate success. According to William O’Brien, on the day of the insurrection Connolly said to him: “We are going out to be slaughtered.” He said “Is there no chance of success?” and Connolly replied “None whatsoever.”

Connolly understood that the tradition and the example created would be immortal and would lay the basis for future freedom and a future Irish Socialist Republic. In that lay his greatness.

What a difference from the craven traitors of the German Socialist and Communist and Trade Union leaders who despite having three million armed workers supporting them, and with the sympathy and support of the overwhelming majority of the German working class (ready to fight and die, capitulated to Hitler without firing a shot.

The British occupying troops suppressed the insurrection and then savagely executed its leaders, including the leader of the insurrection James Connolly, who was already badly wounded.

Connolly was murdered, but in the last analysis, British imperialism really suffered defeat.

April 24, 1971: Magnificent Anniversary



Peace History April 23-29

500,000 demonstrated against the Vietnam War in Washington, D.C. It was the largest-ever demonstration opposing U.S. war in Southeast Asia. 150,000 marched at a simultaneous rally in San Francisco.

MILITARY RESISTANCE NEWSLETTER BY MAIL FREE FOR ACTIVE DUTY TROOPS

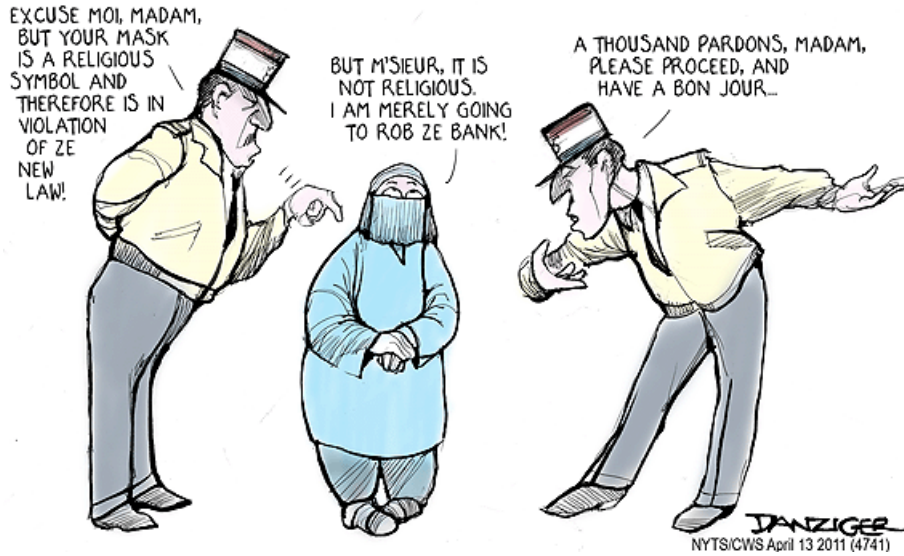
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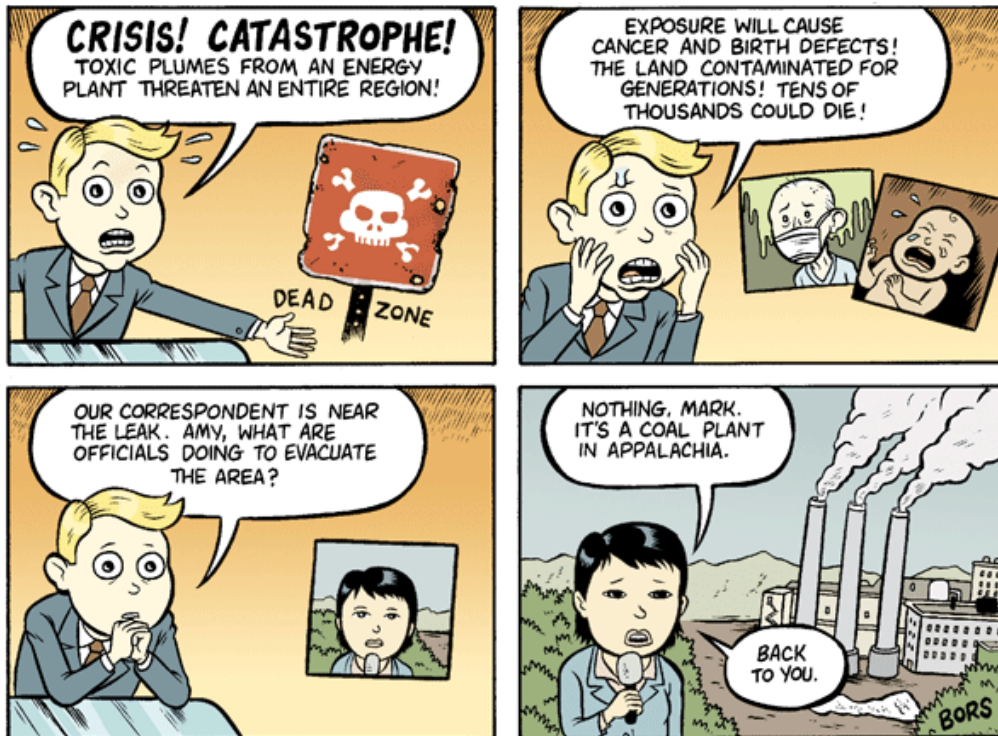
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same issue.***

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Religious Coverings Outlawed in France



CLASS WAR REPORTS



Another Tyrant Falls! The Dictator Saleh Quits As General Strike Shuts Down Yemen: “A Day Earlier, Protesters Staged The Largest Of Two Months Of Demonstrations, Filling A Five-Lane Boulevard Across The Capital With A Sea Of Hundreds Of Thousands Of People”

4.23.11 By AHMED AL-HAJ, AP & By Mohammed Hatem and Glen Carey, Bloomberg

SANAA, Yemen — Yemen's embattled president agreed Saturday to a proposal by Gulf Arab mediators to step down within 30 days and hand power to his deputy in exchange for immunity from prosecution, a major about-face for the autocratic leader who has ruled for 32 years.

Protests continued throughout the day and expanded to include a general strike.

Schools, government offices and private companies shut their doors in response to the Yemeni opposition's call for a strike aimed at putting more pressure Saleh to step down.

Thousands of protesters kept up sit-ins at city squares in at least five provinces, while Saleh accused the opposition of “dragging the country into a civil war” in a televised speech to a military academy.

Protests continued today in the city of Taiz, where crowds demanded the end of Saleh's rule, Rashad Mohammed, an eyewitness, said by telephone.

A majority of the city's shops were closed for a general strike, he said. In Aden, more than 90 percent of the shops, schools and businesses were closed Saturday, said Marwan al-Yafee, an eyewitness.

A day earlier, protesters staged the largest of two months of demonstrations, filling a five-lane boulevard across the capital with a sea of hundreds of thousands of people.

A deadly crackdown by government forces and Saleh supporters has killed more than 130 people and prompted key allies to abandon the president and join the protesters.

The opposition movement, fed up with poverty and corruption under Saleh, took inspiration from the toppling of leaders in Tunisia and Egypt.

Highly Intelligent American Public Overwhelmingly Says Tax The Rich And That Both Parties In Congress Are Shit

Washington Post-ABC News Poll: [Excerpts]

This Washington Post-ABC News poll was conducted by telephone April 14-17, 2011, among a random national sample of 1,001 adults, including users of both conventional and cellular phones.

4/17/11 – Summary Tables

In order to reduce the national debt, would you support or oppose Raising taxes on Americans with incomes over 250-thousand dollars a year

Support: 72%
Oppose: 27%

Do you approve or disapprove of the way they are doing their job?

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
a. The Democrats in Congress	36	60	4
b. The Republicans in Congress	34	63	3

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.

Protests Explode Across Syria: “The Largest Outbreak Of Antiregime Unrest”

“Major Protests For The First Time Penetrated The Cordon Of Security Police Protecting The Capital, Damascus”



Protestors gather during a demonstration in the Syrian port city of Baniyas April 22, 2011. REUTERS/Handout

APRIL 23, 2011 By BILL SPINDLE, NOUR MALAS and FARNAZ FASSIHI, Wall St. Journal [Excerpts]

Syria's leadership, despite weeks of scrambling to appease and intimidate demonstrators, faced the largest outbreak of antiregime unrest in its four-decade rule Friday, leading to the deaths of dozens of protesters.

Major protests for the first time penetrated the cordon of security police protecting the capital, Damascus, and tens of thousands of people chanting antiregime slogans took to the streets in most other major Syrian cities.

Security forces in several cities fired live ammunition and used tear gas in an attempt to disperse the crowds, leaving at least 70 people dead, according to activists.

The day amounted to a showdown between the regime of President Bashar al-Assad and a protest movement that has steadily gained momentum for more than a month.

On Saturday, a witness said security forces opened fire at a funeral procession near Damascus, killing at least four people, according to the Associated Press.

The witness said more than 50,000 people were taking part in the funeral in the suburb of Douma.

Despite warnings of government reprisal, demonstrators have become emboldened in recent days, escalating demands from the kind of changes Mr. Assad has announced to louder calls for the end of the regime.

Protesters on Friday described harrowing scenes of security forces firing into crowds and peaceful demonstrations quickly turning deadly.

Some said the crackdown only weakened the government.

“At first, we went down to the street asking for freedom. When they blocked us from getting to the mosque and started firing, we started asking for the downfall of the regime,” said a resident of Homs, in central Syria, reached by phone. In the background, gunshots rang in the air.

“The window of opportunity is closing for Assad. The government got behind in this race,” said David Lesch, a Syria expert and professor of Middle East history at Trinity University.

“The opposition is not a monolithic mass and many of them have different agendas and objectives but more and more they are coalescing around the idea that Assad must go.”

Videos posted on YouTube of Friday's protests show emotionally charged crowds in an unidentified city roiling with anger at the government.

In one, protesters shouting “martyrs, martyrs,” carried casualties away. In the Middle East, calling victims martyrs evokes powerful symbolism of Islamic saints killed while fighting injustice.

The Syrian turmoil has brought the “Arab Spring” uprisings to a new corner of the Middle East, for the first time threatening a regime in the Levant region. U.S. allies Jordan and Israel are on Syria's southern border, and Lebanon sits to its west. That cluster of countries plays an important role in several high-stakes geopolitical struggles, including the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and maneuvering between the West and Iran, Syria's main ally.

Syria's demonstrations began in Dara'a, a southern Syrian town, over the jailing of some teenagers for scrawling antiregime slogans that mimicked those used during protests that overthrew the leader of Egypt.

Since then, Mr. Assad has labored, largely unsuccessfully, to contain the growing unrest with a series of reforms coupled with warnings that the demonstrations must stop. Yet the outbreaks of anti-Assad sentiment have only grown and spread to new cities and towns.

In addition to the protests inside Damascus, thousands of people demonstrated in a suburb of the capital known as Douma; in the city of Homs in the center of the country; Baniyas on the coast; and the northeastern Kurdish region. There were also more protests in Dara'a, according to human-rights activists.

One factor in the unrest has been Syria's faltering economy.

Living standards have stagnated, and an extended drought in the northwest of the country has forced tens of thousands of Syrians, many of them Kurds, off their land and into destitute migrant encampments surrounding the capital.

Many Syrians have looked to their young president for relief and reforms, but have been dissatisfied with what he has delivered since he took power after his father's death in 2000.

In recent weeks, with protests bubbling, Mr. Assad has pushed through reforms faster than at any time during his rule. He has lifted a five-decade-old emergency law that gave the government almost unlimited powers, and disbanded the security courts used to prosecute the law.

He has also approved citizenship for thousands of ethnic Kurds who had long been denied that status and have been a restive part of Syria's sectarian mosaic. Mr. Assad has also dismissed his cabinet and appointed a new one, while calling for parliamentary elections this year.

But Mr. Assad has also increasingly painted protesters as religious zealots and foreign elements plotting to bring down the regime.

Between the 45-year-old Mr. Assad and his father, Hafez, the family has ruled since 1970.

During that time the Assads, who belong to a minority sect known as Alawites, have held together the country's eclectic mix of sects and ethnic groups, sometimes uneasily, under a single umbrella. The country is predominantly Muslim—roughly 74% Sunni and 16% other Muslim groups—with about 10% belonging to other religions, including Christians and Jews.

While Syria's support for Hezbollah and Hamas angers Israel and the West, Syria has at times played a role in restraining those groups, just as the regime has at times stabilized the factional infighting in Lebanon.

“Who will step in for Syria? No one, it will be decided in the streets,” said Joshua Landis, director for Middle Eastern studies at the University of Oklahoma.

Truck Drivers In Shanghai Strike Against The Dictatorship:

**“Only A Few Of The Containers
Are Still Sneaking Out”
“Truck Drivers Are At The Lowest
Level Of Society”
“If The Strike ‘Is Handled Poorly, It Will
Intensify Conflict In The Whole Economy
And Society, And Also Be A Model For
Other Industries””**



He said the government's recent decision to raise state-set fuel prices at a time when food and housing prices are already climbing was partially driving the truckers' concerns.

“If you do that in an environment where people are already stressed out about rising prices then it can create a very volatile situation.”

APRIL 23, 2011 By JAMES T. AREDDY and BRIAN SPEGELE, Wall St. Journal
[Excerpts]

SHANGHAI—As protests by truckers flared into a third day in China's biggest port city and shippers offered the first indications that trade is being slowed, idled trucks illustrated how inflation worries could gum up the world's No. 2 economy.

The truckers' demonstrations and work stoppages, which began Wednesday, are perhaps the starkest sign yet of the widespread public frustration over inflation in China that has persisted despite six months of tightening moves by the government.

Truckers have gathered at port facilities to demand higher incomes, citing rising diesel costs and new dock fees.

Early Saturday, China's Xinhua news agency said the Shanghai government has decided to reduce certain port fees paid by truckers. The report, which said Shanghai's ports are functioning "normally," marked the first government comments about the industrial action.

Particulars about the fee-reduction proposal weren't spelled out in the brief Xinhua report and a government spokesman couldn't be reached Saturday.

With no details available about how the strikers are organized—for instance, whether they have formal leadership—it remains uncertain how the government's plan will be regarded among drivers.

A driver surnamed Huang on Saturday said the government's plan doesn't appear to address key grievances. He said that what he has heard sounds like a limited move, both in terms of the fees targeted and the kinds of truckers it will help, and that it wouldn't save the trucking industry much money.

On Friday, at least 100 parked flatbed trucks at a lot in the city's northern Baoshan district offered evidence of the drivers' resolve to persist with the strikes, which they say will continue until their demands for financial relief are met.

There were also signs of the violence that has sometimes affected the strikes, such as a broken truck windshield.

One driver said the strikes will continue “until the government says something. The government isn't saying anything.”

The driver said it was more economical to pay the monthly parking-lot fee of 500 yuan, or \$77, than to work. The lot was so crammed that walking under vehicles was the only way to move between some trucks.

More than a dozen people interviewed at the site declined to provide their names, saying police had detained other drivers.

Trucking is a key component at the Port of Shanghai, the world's busiest container handling port in 2010. Last year almost 80,000 containers a day moved through its multiple locations.

Some shipping analysts said they aren't worried about major disruptions.

But several shipping and logistics companies in Shanghai said Friday they were being squeezed.

Shanghai Li Wan International Freight Co., a logistics firm, said roughly 60% of its containers were stuck as a result of the strikes. “There's nothing clients can do,” said an official at the firm. “Only a few of the containers are still sneaking out.”

JC Trans Logistics Inc., one of China's largest logistics companies, said its operation was affected because it said containers have been unable to enter Shanghai's terminals. "Our customers have expressed understanding," said an official with the company, who also declined to be identified. The official said the company expected the dispute to be resolved quickly.

Analysts said it's too early to determine whether the strikes could have broader economic impact. But Xianfang Ren, a senior analyst at IHS Global Insight, said Shanghai's status as the country's financial capital made the labor dispute even more pressing for officials to handle. "Shanghai is such a high-profile city. So they really have to nip this in the bud."

The strikes underscore the challenge facing the government as it struggles to deal with consumer-price inflation, which hit 5.4% in March, its fastest pace in 32 months.

"It's a sign of rising tensions and people are finding it more difficult to make ends meet," said Patrick Chovanec, an associate professor at Tsinghua University's School of Economics and Management in Beijing.

He said the government's recent decision to raise state-set fuel prices at a time when food and housing prices are already climbing was partially driving the truckers' concerns.

"If you do that in an environment where people are already stressed out about rising prices then it can create a very volatile situation."

Chang Kai, a labor expert at Renmin University in Beijing, said the government had made a mistake in raising fuel prices so quickly.

"Truck drivers are at the lowest level of society," Mr. Chang said. If the strike "is handled poorly, it will intensify conflict in the whole economy and society, and also be a model for other industries," he said.

Drivers in the Shanghai port areas said they rarely see so many trucks idled except on public holidays. Still, roads around Shanghai's primary ports remained jammed Friday. Trucks hauling plywood, white bags of polypropylene from Saudi Arabia and indistinguishable containers with logos of the world's biggest shipping companies were crawling at 20 kilometers, or 13 miles, an hour.

China's official reaction appeared to highlight a concern about the trucker activity.

Police were manning checkpoints at the entrance to various port, warehouse and depot sites around Shanghai on Friday.

Virtually no mention of the industrial action has appeared in the country's government-run media, nor on Chinese websites.

"Do you know why TV hasn't reported about us?" asked the wife of one driver at the Baoshan truck depot.

Though the Communist Party run labor union that represents Chinese workers at many factories doesn't normally sanction strikes, authorities have sporadically faced—and sometimes appeared to sanction—industrial action aimed at improving work conditions, especially pay.

Last year, a handful of Japanese auto and auto-part plants faced calls for higher wages in what appeared to be government-sanctioned agitation by employees, who in some cases won raises.

Earlier this year, Shanghai's Mayor Han Zheng used a press conference to chide French supermarket operator Carrefour SA to meet long-term worker demands for higher pay.

And on Thursday, Shanghai authorities appeared to take preventive action to address how rising operating costs have discomforted a traditional source of public grumbling: taxi drivers.

A top official of the Shanghai Municipal Transport and Port Authority, Sun Jianping, said drivers of the city's 49,000 taxis would from May 1 be charged lower tolls and other fees that he estimated would save them 350 yuan a month.

Noting “high turnover” among taxi drivers, Mr. Sun explained the fee adjustments were made “in order to maintain the market order in the taxi industry, to protect the legal rights of taxi drivers and passengers, as well as to ensure a good public service.”

The authority's statement made no mention of truckers.

Like taxi drivers, the independent truckers involved in the Shanghai protests are a low-income, high-competition component of the transportation system with little representation or scope to raise their own prices as costs go up.

It is unclear what sparked the protests or will end them.

Drivers said their gripe centers on the “transportation payment” to move a container, which varies according to the job, but hasn't been adjusted for years.

They complained about facing higher operating costs, not only with a diesel price that has been lifted twice this year but also on fees such as a crane-operators charge of up to 135 yuan to load or unload a container, which drivers said cost 75 yuan a year ago.

At the Baoshan depot, clothes dried on makeshift lines as drivers snapped mahjong tiles in the cheap motel rooms that surrounded it and one driver's son shouted from behind a plastic mask of a Chinese folk hero.

“We don't dare go out,” said a driver with a gleaming smile and a brown leather jacket.

He cited not only the cost of driving but also a fear his vehicle will be damaged by others determined to remain on strike.

GOT AN OPINION?

Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or send to contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request identification published.



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