

Military Resistance 9G19



**“There’s Thousands Of Guys.
It’s Not Just Me”**

**“The Former Marine Is Trying To
Support A Family Of Four On
\$1,557 A Month While He Waits To
Hear Whether The Government
Will Reinstate Full Disability Pay
For His Gruesome Injury”**

“If A Kid Coming Out Of High School Asked Me Whether To Join? I’d Say Don’t Do It” “It’s A Waste. You’ll Be Expendable”

The determination entitled him to full disability payments, which amounted to \$3,103 a month. But in April 2009, he received a letter telling him his payments were being halved because he missed an appointment with a VA doctor.

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Jun 19, 2011 By Tony Leys - The Des Moines Register [Excerpts]

GREENFIELD, Iowa — Joel Klobnak still looks like a proud Marine — from his buzz-cut hair down to the red-white-and-blue prosthetic that replaced the leg he lost in Iraq in 2006.

But he feels forgotten.

The Department of Veterans Affairs slashed his disability pay two years ago over what he says was a misunderstanding.

The former Marine is trying to support a family of four on \$1,557 a month while he waits to hear whether the government will reinstate full disability pay for his gruesome injury and the mental anguish that accompanied it.

His appeal is trapped in a paperwork backlog that is delaying payments to injured veterans across the country.

“There’s thousands of guys. It’s not just me. It’s a joke,” he said. “I just don’t understand why it takes so long.”

More than thousands of veterans are in his straits.

The backlog of veterans’ disability cases has been growing for years, and it now stands around 1 million despite Congress’ repeated attempts to fix the problem.

The VA said earlier this month that it would comment on Klobnak’s case but then said it couldn’t come up with a timely response.

Klobnak, 24, was a lance corporal who served as a gunner on an armored vehicle in a Marine reconnaissance squad in Iraq in 2005-06, one of the most volatile periods of the war there.

He said he was wounded near the end of his tour, when a 25mm explosive round went off while he was cleaning and reassembling a belt of ammunition for an automatic grenade launcher.

The explosion shattered his left leg, which doctors amputated above the knee.

He was 19.

Klobnak spent six months at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, then returned to Iowa with \$50,000 the military gave him as compensation for his leg. He admits he wasted much of that money in bars and at restaurants.

"I was lonely, I guess," he said. "And I was stupid." When he wasn't partying, he was off fishing by himself.

But then he met his now-wife, Danielle, and she helped settle him down. They have two children, Landon, 4, and Grace, 2.

Government doctors determined that he couldn't work because of the pain in his leg and the post-traumatic stress disorder that troubled his mind.

The determination entitled him to full disability payments, which amounted to \$3,103 a month. But in April 2009, he received a letter telling him his payments were being halved because he missed an appointment with a VA doctor. Klobnak said he didn't know about the appointment, which was to review his disability status, because the notice had been sent to an old address.

He believes the pay cut also might have been partly from an offhand comment he made during an earlier VA interview. He told a VA worker that he would like to get back to work within a few months. He says now that he was describing a wish, not an ability, but the distinction might have been lost in the paperwork.

Klobnak appealed the pay cut, and he was granted a hearing in June 2010.

He said a veterans' appeals judge in Washington presided via a video link to the Federal Building in Des Moines.

When Klobnak was done explaining his side, the judge told him she would consider the matter and get back to him.

He said he was told to expect a decision in three to six months.

It's been a year.

A national expert said Klobnak's frustrations are the norm. Richard Cohen, executive director of the National Organization of Veterans' Advocates, said the VA has a backlog of 800,000 initial disability claims and 200,000 appeals.

The agency has been focusing on the mountain of initial claims, which means appeals are taking even longer, Cohen said.

Appeals can be batted back and forth among regional offices, the national appeals board and the courts.

“You keep getting another ride on what we call ‘the hamster wheel,’” he said with some cases that can drag on for a decade or more.

“The system is broken. Everyone who works with it or who has contact with the VA knows it’s broken. But the VA is like the Titanic trying to change course,” Cohen said. The problem has received national attention, he said, “but it has not gotten better.”

Congress has tried to fix it with money.

They’ve tried to fix it with supervision.

One thing Congress managed to accomplish was to change the law in 2008 so claims wouldn’t expire if a veteran died, Cohen said.

But even after the law changed, he said his group had to sue to make the VA revise its rules so a veteran’s survivors could collect back pay if an appeal succeeded.

Rep. Bruce Braley, D-Iowa, who is the only Iowan on the veterans’ affairs committee, said the national problem has gone on for years.

“It’s a shame on this country when people who have given so much and are struggling to get by and put food on the table for their families are caught in this purgatory of the disability claims process,” he said. “It’s outrageous.”

Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, expressed his frustration in a letter last year to VA Secretary Eric Shinseki, who is a retired general.

Grassley noted that initial denials of disability claims often are overturned on appeal, signaling that mistakes are contributing to the paperwork tangle.

Klobnak sought assistance this spring from his congressman, Republican Steve King, whose staff contacted the veterans appeals board. Someone from the board called Klobnak and told him a judge was reviewing his file.

How long will that take? Klobnak laughed bitterly at the question.

“Who knows?” he said.

While they wait, Klobnak, his wife and their two kids live in a house her grandparents own. The couple is supposed to be paying rent, but they’ve lost track of how many months behind they are.

Her family also bought them a sport-utility vehicle, and his family has pitched in with support. Klobnak said he appreciates the help but hates being so dependent on relatives.

He’s sold off many of his possessions, including guns and other hunting equipment, and he returned a pickup on which he could no longer make payments.

Meanwhile, he said he continues to have problems with his leg.

His stump aches when he stands on it, and it swells when he sits too long.

Last winter, he developed a hematoma, which is a pooling of blood, on the stump.

The problem caused excruciating pain, but he said he couldn't get anyone at the VA hospital in Des Moines, Iowa, to call him back about it.

So he went to the emergency room at the hospital here, where a doctor performed minor surgery to remove the hematoma and ease the pain.

The local doctor also wrote a "to whom it may concern" letter about Klobnak.

"In my opinion, he is not currently capable of maintaining full-time employment," she wrote.

Klobnak recently received a letter from the VA saying it would not pay for the surgery because he could have had the procedure done at the VA hospital. He's now worried that his local hospital will send him a big bill.

Klobnak recently pulled out the VA letter and read it over.

"If you do not agree, you have the right to appeal," the letter says.

The veteran shook his head.

"Yeah, right," he said. "And, what, wait two years?"

His mother, Lisa Klobnak of Norwalk, Iowa, has tried in vain to help him deal with the VA.

"You've got this veteran who fought for us — who lost his leg for us — who is going bankrupt," said Lisa Klobnak, who has another son in the Marines and a stepson in the Army. She said she's been stunned at the runaround Joel Klobnak gets.

"The most frustrating thing is all the promises," Lisa Klobnak said. "'We'll send a check. We'll do this. We'll do that.' And it never happens."

Danielle Klobnak, his wife, makes a bit of money teaching dance classes. But she doesn't want to seek a full-time job because her husband soon will need more surgery on his leg. Then he'll be laid up and unable to help much with the kids for a few months.

Joel Klobnak is taking online community-college classes — for which the VA is paying — and he hopes eventually to earn a bachelor's degree and maybe someday start a small business. He doesn't foresee staying on full disability forever.

"I'm 24," he said. "I don't want to not work for the rest of my life." Although his leg still troubles him, the PTSD seems to be easing. Danielle Klobnak tells him that he doesn't cry out in his sleep much anymore, and he gave up drinking in 2009.

Klobnak keeps his hair cropped, as if he is ready to rejoin the military at any moment. His many tattoos include the “soldier’s prayer” on his arm: “I am just a soldier, the protector of our land, a servant called to battle when my country takes a stand,” one of its verses says.

He once was so enthusiastic about the military that he rushed through high school so he could graduate a year early and join the Marines at the same time as his older brother.

He misses the camaraderie of a deployed fighting unit plus the feeling he was doing something important.

But his tangles with the VA have clouded his views.

“If a kid coming out of high school asked me whether to join? I’d say don’t do it,” he said. “It’s a waste. You’ll be expendable.”

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

THIS IS HOW OBAMA BRINGS THEM HOME: ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE

The remains of Army Sgt. Steven L. Talamantez of Laredo Texas, at Dover Air Force Base, Del. July 13, 2011. Talamantez killed July 10 in Iraq when his Army unit came under fire by insurgents. (AP Photo/Jose Luis Magana)...





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

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

Resistance Action

July 23 (Reuters) & July 24 (Reuters) & July 25 (Reuters)

BAQUBA - A parked car bomb targeting an Iraqi police patrol killed two policemen and wounded five more, when it exploded in central Baquba, 65 km (40 miles) northeast of Baghdad, a Baquba police source said.

BAGHDAD - Shots fired in an intersection in southeastern Baghdad killed a traffic policeman, an interior ministry source said.

BAGHDAD - A roadside bomb exploded near a police patrol, wounding two policemen in Baghdad's central Nidhal Street, police said.

MOSUL - A roadside bomb late on Sunday wounded an Iraqi soldier when it blew up near his army patrol in Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

MOSUL - A roadside bomb wounded a policeman late on Sunday when it exploded near a police patrol in Mosul, north of Baghdad, police said.

KIRKUK - Insurgents shot dead a government-backed Sahwa militia member in southern Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

KIRKUK - A roadside bomb went off, wounding a policeman in northern Kirkuk, police said.

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

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Italian Soldier Killed In Afghanistan

Jul 25, 2011 DPA

Rome - An Italian soldier was killed Monday and two others were injured in an attack in north-western Afghanistan, media reports said.

The attack took place near the village of Bala Murghab the ANSA news agency reported.

The killing brings to 41 the number of Italian soldiers killed in Afghanistan since 2003 when Italy began deploying its troops in the country as part of the NATO mission.

Marine Dies Trying To Save Pal



[Gabriella Bass]

July 20, 2011 By KATE SHEEHY and FRANK ROSARIO, NEW YORK POST

A young Brooklyn man who became a Marine to be just like his dad was mortally wounded trying to save a comrade during a bloody clash in Afghanistan last week, grieving kin and the military said yesterday.

"The last thing I told him when he came home for Thanksgiving was, 'Be safe, Jabari. I want you to come back home alive.' And he smiled -- he had a lovely smile," recalled Njaye Shinhoster, 57, the shattered stepmom of slain Lance Cpl. Jabari Thompson, 22.

"He said he loved us and that he'd be back," she said.

But Thompson, a machine-gunner, never recovered from the horrific wounds he sustained in combat July 13 in Afghanistan's Helmand province, succumbing at a military hospital in Germany on Sunday.

"We were told that he was trying to help a friend who got shot," said Thompson's aunt, Novlette Hanson, 48.

But in his heroic rush to his friend's aid, he stepped on a landmine and "was injured very badly. He lost both his legs," Hanson said.

"I was always so worried about him, but he would tell me not to worry. He said, 'Auntie, it's OK. I'll be back,'" she said.

"I got a letter from him last week. He told me he was supposed to be back here the week of August 1," she added.

Jabari's dad, Gregory, his big sister, Chekesha Thompson, 28, and his fiancée, Shemiah Louis, took a heartbreaking flight to Germany to be at his bedside when he died.

"I just told him that I loved him and that I wanted him to try to make it because I knew he had a strong heart," said Chekesha.

"He had gone through so much," she said sadly, noting that their beloved mother had died more than 10 years ago.

Jabari had always wanted to become a Marine because his father had been one, his family said.

"He wanted to follow in his dad's footsteps," Shinhoster said.

As a kid, he had moved to Brownsville, Brooklyn, from Florida -- where his father still lives -- after his mom passed away. He wanted to be with her family and go to school in the city.

"The City of New York did so much for him," Chekesha said of Jabari, who graduated from South Shore HS in Canarsie.

She said the family may bring him back to New York one final time -- for burial at Pinelawn Cemetery on Long Island, where his mother was laid to rest. But she said the family hasn't decided.

Jabari's dad hopes to bury him in Fort Lauderdale, Shinhoster said. "His dad wants him here so he can go to his gravesite and talk to him," she said. "He was so proud of him."

In tribute to the fallen soldier, Gov. Cuomo ordered flags on state buildings to be flown at half-staff this Friday.

Jabari's aunt, Hanson, said she has plans to honor her beloved nephew in another way.

"He kept a special picture album. I remember he said, 'Auntie, please take care of my album. My whole life is in that book. Please protect it for me,'" she said. "And that's what I'm going to do."

Foreign Military Helicopter Down In Afghanistan: A Government Spokesman Said "It Was Shot Down By A Rocket"

25 July 2011 BBC & The Associated Press

A foreign military helicopter has crashed in eastern Afghanistan, but there have been no casualties, officials say.

Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said that troops were dropping out of the helicopter for an assault on militant fighters when the helicopter was targeted.

The US-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) said it was investigating the cause of the crash.

It said in a statement that the troops came under fire from militants but the crew and passengers of the helicopter were safe.

Kunar provincial spokesman Safiullah Wasifullah Wasify said the helicopter went down before dawn in Kunar's remote mountainous Chapa Dara district. He said that his report showed it was shot down by a rocket.

The Taliban have in the past shot down helicopters of foreign forces in Afghanistan.

“U.S. Taxpayer Money Has Been Indirectly Funneled To The Taliban Under A \$2.16 Billion Transportation Contract”

The Watan Group, A Business Conglomerate Run By Relatives Of Karzai, “Involved In Making Payments To Taliban Commanders”

“\$3.3 Million Was Transferred To Insurgents In The Form Of Weapons, Explosives And Cash”

“The Attitude Is Crazy — It’s Okay To Pay The Enemy Because Then We Have Better Snacks”

July 24 By Karen DeYoung, The Washington Post [Excerpts]

A year-long military-led investigation has concluded that U.S. taxpayer money has been indirectly funneled to the Taliban under a \$2.16 billion transportation contract that the United States has funded in part to promote Afghan businesses.

The unreleased investigation provides seemingly definitive evidence that corruption puts U.S. transportation money into enemy hands, a finding consistent with previous inquiries carried out by Congress, other federal agencies and the military.

Yet U.S. and Afghan efforts to address the problem have been slow and ineffective, and all eight of the trucking firms involved in the work remain on U.S. payroll. In March, the Pentagon extended the contract for six months.

According to a summary of the investigation results, compiled in May and reviewed by The Washington Post, the military found “documented, credible evidence . . . of involvement in a criminal enterprise or support for the enemy” by four of the eight prime contractors.

Investigators also cited cases of profiteering, money laundering and kickbacks to Afghan power brokers, government officials and police officers.

Six of the companies were found to have been associated with “fraudulent paperwork and behavior.”

The military summary included several case studies in which money was traced from the U.S. Treasury through a labyrinth of subcontractors and power brokers.

In one, investigators followed a \$7.4 million payment to one of the eight companies, which in turn paid a subcontractor, who hired other subcontractors to supply trucks.

The trucking subcontractors then made deposits into an Afghan National Police commander’s account, already swollen with payments from other subcontractors, in exchange for guarantees of safe passage for the convoys.

Intelligence officials traced \$3.3 million, withdrawn in 27 transactions from the commander’s account, that was transferred to insurgents in the form of weapons, explosives and cash.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the State Department, the GAO said, have no vetting system in Afghanistan, and the Defense Department’s practice is to vet contractors only after contracts have been issued.

Massive amounts of food, fuel and warfighting material are needed to support U.S. troops in Afghanistan; their number has more than tripled to about 100,000 since President Obama took office. Most supplies are brought by ship to neighboring Pakistan and transported by truck to central military depots in Afghanistan.

From there, the goods are trucked to hundreds of military installations across the country, usually along desolate stretches of road controlled by or vulnerable to attack from warlord militias and Taliban insurgents.

Moving the supplies requires 3,000 to 4,000 trucks per week.

Six of the eight companies chosen as prime contractors under the Host Nation Trucking contract are owned by Afghans or are joint Afghan-international ventures. Two are considered U.S.-owned, including the Washington-based Sandi Group and NCL Holdings, whose founder and president, Hamed Wardak, is the son of Afghanistan’s defense minister.

For the life of the contract — one year, with options for a second year and the recently exercised six-month extension — each company was guaranteed a minimum of \$250,000 and a maximum of \$360 million. U.S. expenditure was capped at \$2.16 billion, although less than \$600 million had been paid out through March.

Prime contractors were responsible for furnishing up to 600 trucks and protecting them. But five of the eight prime contractors had no trucks of their own, two had fewer than 200, and all hired subcontractors to provide security, according to the investigation. From the start, the companies have served largely as brokers atop scores of subcontractors.

As early as the summer of 2009, amid frequent reports that subcontractors and middlemen were paying contract money to warlords and the Taliban to guarantee safe passage for the convoys, U.S. Army investigators prepared a briefing for senior commanders that bore the blunt title “Host Nation Trucking Payments to Insurgents.”

Investigators estimated that the going rate for protection was \$1,500 to \$2,500 per truck, paid by contractors and their subs to private Afghan security companies allied with warlords or insurgents — or, in some cases, directly to militias or Taliban commanders.

Many military officials in charge of overseeing the contracts were reluctant to disturb the status quo, believing it was far more important that food, fuel and bullets for U.S. forces were delivered intact and on time.

“These people should be fired and sent home,” the senior defense official said of the military overseers.

“The attitude is crazy — it’s okay to pay the enemy because then we have better snacks” if the convoys travel unimpeded. “I think everybody gets that now.”

Last summer, after the release of the House subcommittee report, the then-U.S. commander in Afghanistan, Gen. David H. Petraeus, appointed task forces to investigate contracting and corruption, including Task Force 2010, which carried out the investigation of the trucking contract. In September, he released new guidelines making commanders accountable for monitoring contracts within their areas of responsibility.

The next month, a separate Senate Armed Services Committee investigation into contracting confirmed the House report, concluding that the military had only minimal knowledge of — and exercised virtually no control over — the thousands of Afghans contracted to guard its installations and supply convoys.

Both reports identified the security wing of the Watan group, a business conglomerate run by relatives of Karzai, as involved in bribing officials for control over convoy routes and making payments to Taliban commanders.

In the most substantive action by the military, Watan was barred in December from receiving new U.S. contracts.

But it has contested the action in court, denying the allegations, and has been allowed to continue its security work so the company could “fully exercise due process,” the senior defense official said.

“The Taliban Movement Watched The Security Transition With A Mixture Of Scorn And Menace”

“Even With The Help Of The Coalition Armies, Afghan Forces Couldn't Safeguard These Areas”

“So How Can They Keep Them Safe Now?”

“Most Believe That If Taliban Fighters Are Determined To Strike A Given Target, They Will, No Matter How Well-Guarded The Area”

July 25, 2011 By Laura King, Los Angeles Times [Excerpts]

By Monday, seven cities or provinces, most of them relatively tranquil, will be under the full control of the Afghan police and army, despite persistent fears about the Afghan forces' ability to maintain order, build the trust of local people and fend off the Taliban.

Security transfer fears are pronounced in places such as Bamian, a mountainous central province that is considered one of the country's safest. Its main connection with the insurgency dates back a decade: the Taliban's destruction of its ancient Buddha statues. Other than that, it has been nearly untouched by the wave of insurgent violence in neighboring areas.

But soon after the province was designated as a transfer site, a prominent local politician was abducted, his mutilated corpse dumped by the roadside. Many residents saw it as a message from the insurgents: Don't count yourselves secure.

In the western city of Herat, whose transfer took place Thursday, similar worries were voiced. Although insurgents attacked a NATO base on its outskirts in May, the city's placid, tree-lined streets seem a world away from the capital, Kabul, where blast walls and checkpoints give the air of a garrison city.

But the insurgents have a substantial foothold in districts just outside Herat, and some observers say the notion of depending on the police for protection is generating a wave of apprehension among the citizenry.

“The police are not well trained — they are undisciplined, corrupt and badly behaved,” said Qader Rahimi, the Herat-based regional chief for the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission.

And most believe that if Taliban fighters are determined to strike a given target, they will, no matter how well-guarded the area.

That was underscored last week when assailants killed a senior aide to President Hamid Karzai in an wealthy district of Kabul. Volleys of gunfire rang late into the night.

The Taliban movement, meanwhile, watched the security transition with a mixture of scorn and menace.

“Even with the help of the coalition armies, Afghan forces couldn’t safeguard these areas,” said a spokesman, Qari Yousef Ahmadi. “So how can they keep them safe now?”

BEEN ON THE JOB TOO LONG: HOME, NOW



A U.S. soldier, 27th Infantry Regiment based in Hawaii, returns to his bunk at sunrise after pulling an overnight shift in the watchtower July 10, 2011 at Observation Point Mustang, elevation 6,000 feet, in Kunar province, Afghanistan. (AP Photo/David Goldman)...

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

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

What Have Workers Gained From Egypt’s Revolution?

“How Can A Life Be Worth 50 Pounds?”

“I Don’t See A Future Until I Get My Rights”

“That’s What I Want”

July 20, 2011 By Joel Beinin, Foreign Policy [Excerpts]

Joel Beinin is the Donald J. McLachlan Professor of History and Professor of Middle Eastern History at Stanford University. His latest books are *The Struggle for Worker Rights in Egypt* (Solidarity Center 2010) and *Social Movements, Mobilization, and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa* (Stanford University Press, 2011); co-edited with Frédéric Vairel.

CAIRO — Since June 12, half of the 18,000 workers who operate and service the Suez Canal have been on strike.

They are employed in maritime services by seven subsidiary companies of the Suez Canal Authority in Suez, Isma’iliyya, and Port Said. In contrast, those employed directly by the canal authority have always received higher wages and better benefits. Long before January 25, 2011 subsidiary company workers raised the demand for parity, effectively a 40 percent wage increase.

Management of the subsidiary companies accepted this demand in April, an expression of the new possibilities of the post-January 25 era.

But the interim government has maintained that wages and working conditions of public service workers are established by parliamentary legislation, and therefore, no changes can be made while the parliament is dissolved.

The strike expresses workers’ rejection of this logic.

Egyptian workers have achieved increased strength and self-confidence in the course of the revolutionary movement.

This is expressed by the capacity to sustain a five-week-long strike in an industrial sector linked to the economically and strategically critical Suez Canal and by insisting that economic demands be met despite the absence of the legal framework established by the old regime.

Labor unions continue to rebuff myriad accusations in the press and by some of the “revolutionary youth” that workers’ economic demands are narrow “special interests” rather than “national interests.”

In this respect, workers share the achievement of all Egyptians who heeded the revolutionary call, “Lift your head high. You are an Egyptian” -- the recovery of their human dignity.

The removal of former president Hosni Mubarak and the top layer of his regime empowered Egyptians to find their voices and demand “dignity, democracy, and economic justice” -- a popular chant during the occupation of Tahrir Square in January-February and since then.

This was not an entirely new experience for millions of industrial and white-collar workers. Many of them won substantial economic gains, like those demanded by the Suez Canal Authority subsidiary company workers, during the movement of over 4,000 strikes, sit-ins, and other labor collective actions that began escalating in 1998 and continue today.

During the three days before Mubarak’s departure on February 11, workers visibly contributed to the revolutionary process by engaging in some sixty strikes, some with explicitly political demands.

Strikes and sit-ins have continued regularly since then at the rate of several per week.

The total of perhaps two-hundred workers’ collective actions for the first six months of 2011 is at the same order of magnitude as the pace of labor protest since 2004.

This has allowed workers to consolidate several gains.

The most important institutional achievement is the consolidation of the right to organize independent trade unions.

Since its establishment in 1957, the Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF) has been an arm of the Egyptian state and a key institution in its repressive apparatus.

ETUF enjoys a legal monopoly on trade union organization established by Law 35 of 1976 and subsequent amendments. ETUF elections, especially the most recent in 2006, were rigged. State Security Investigations arbitrarily disqualified oppositional political elements of any stripe - from Communists to Muslim Brothers - from running for union office. ETUF and most of its local officials stood aloof from or actively opposed the workers movement of the last decade.

Before January 25, three independent unions unaffiliated to ETUF were established.

The largest and most important was the 35,000-member union of Real Estate Tax Authority (RETA) workers. A dramatic sit-in strike of 3,000 RETA workers in front of the Ministry of Finance in December 2007 resulted in a 325 percent wage increase. Kamal Abu Eita and other strike leaders used the momentum of this victory to establish an independent union in December 2008.

In April 2009 the government recognized it as the first non-ETUF affiliated union since 1957. The independent RETA workers' union was a founding member of the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU), whose existence was announced at a press conference during the Tahrir Square occupation on January 30.

Among the newly-established unions affiliated with EFITU are eight unions and a city-wide labor council in Sadat City, where 50,000 workers are employed in 200 enterprises -- mainly textiles, iron and steel, and ceramics and porcelain.

There were only two unions in Sadat City before this year.

A largely non-unionized labor force was only one of the generous incentives to private investors offered in special economic zones established in the new satellite cities of Cairo.

Another is that in Qualified Industrial Zones, if 10.5 percent of a product's assessed value comes from Israeli sources, it receives duty-free and quota-free access to the United States.

EFITU and the Center for Trade Union and Workers Services (CTUWS), a non-governmental organization established in 1990 to promote trade union independence, successfully resisted the imposition of the original candidate of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), the former ETUF treasurer, as Minister of Manpower and Migration in the transitional government.

Instead, they proposed Ahmad Hasan al-Burai, a professor of labor law at Cairo University who had publicly advocated trade union pluralism for years.

SCAF accepted the nominee of the independent workers' movement.

With al-Burai's approval, the Ministry of Manpower and Migration has formally registered about twenty-five independent unions not affiliated to ETUF. Dozens of other independent unions are in the process of formation.

Some independent unions -- like the Cairo Joint Transport Authority union of bus drivers and garage workers and the RETA workers' union -- are quite large and command the loyalty of a great majority of the potential bargaining unit. Others have only fifty to one hundred members in factories employing hundreds or thousands.

Another workers' achievement is an increase in the minimum wage.

In 2010 Nagi Rashad, a worker at the South Cairo Grain Mill and a leading figure in the workers' protest movement, successfully sued the government over its 2008 decision not to increase the national minimum wage. Khaled Ali, director of the ECESR, was the lead attorney on the case.

As a result, the minimum wage was raised to £E 400 (about \$70) a month - still a woefully inadequate amount that would leave the average Egyptian family of five with two-wage earners well below the World Bank's poverty line of \$2 a day. It is also far less than the consensus demand of £E 1,200 (about \$200) that has emerged from the workers protest movement since 2008.

The interim government promised a further increase to £E 700 (about \$120) monthly, effective July 1, 2011. However, the state budget for the fiscal year that began on that day reduced the amount to £E 685. Workers and their supporters continue to press the demand for £E 1,200.

The minimum wage, however, applies only to those employed on permanent contracts (the equivalent of tenure). The private sector operates primarily on the basis of indefinitely renewable “temporary” contracts lasting one-year or less. The “informal sector” is unsupervised by the government. Therefore, the minimum wage applies primarily to public sector workers on permanent contracts.

Struggles to obtain permanent status for public sector employees have escalated.

For two weeks in June, some 200 workers on temporary contracts at Petrojet, an oil services firm, conducted a sit-in demonstration in front of the offices of their employer, the Ministry of Petroleum.

Although access to the offices was not blocked, five workers were arrested.

On June 29, they were convicted in a military court and received suspended sentences of one year in jail.

This is the first implementation of SCAF’s Decree 34 of March 24, which established penalties of up to £E 500,000 (about \$83,400) and up to one year in jail for participating in a “disruptive” strike or demonstration.

The suspended sentence suggests the delicate balance SCAF must maintain.

But the SCAF cannot repress all popular demands and remain legitimate in the eyes of the people.

The April 6 Youth Movement and other “revolutionary youth” groups that emerged from the Tahrir Square occupation from January 25 to February 11 were, at first, reluctant to embrace specific economic demands, despite the popular chants demanding “social justice.”

Since the mass demonstrations of July 1 and July 8 and the reoccupation of main squares in Alexandria and Suez as well as Tahrir in Cairo, the April 6 Movement has raised the slogan, “The families of the martyrs and the poor first.”

Economic demands have become more prominent since clashes between families of the martyrs and thugs of the Ministry of Interior in Cairo in late June.

A large banner overlooking occupied Arabain Square in Suez supported the general demands of the current phase of the revolutionary movement. Speedier public trials for Hosni Mubarak and the high officials of his regime accused of corruption and purifying the Ministry of Interior, which commands the police and other security services, are high on the list.

The banner also demands a jobs program for youth - unemployment is especially high in Suez - and a national minimum and maximum wage. The later demand has been adopted by those continuing to occupy Tahrir Square.

In addition to SCAF's reluctance, there are many obstacles to fulfilling the revolutionaries' aspirations for social justice.

Personnel, practices, attitudes, and institutions of the old regime are entrenched throughout the country.

For instance, a manager at the Suez Maritime Arsenal, one of the subsidiary companies of the Suez Canal Authority, coordinated with military intelligence and then imposed his presence on an interview with a striking worker on July 11 (1,200 workers of the Maritime Arsenal are currently on strike).

The same manager reported to military intelligence that he and others had intervened in the Arbain Square sit-in on July 8 to force those occupying the square to retract a "stupid" statement they had made. (One journalist shared with me his inadvertent recording of the conversation between the manager and a military intelligence officer.)

On June 7, one hundred women formerly employed at the Mansura-España textile firm tried to collect their monthly wages for April, ranging from £E 250-300 (about \$42-50), from the United Bank offices in Mansura. In 2008 Mansura-España, a private-sector firm established in the 1980s in the Nile Delta town of Talkha, across the river from Mansura, went bankrupt. United Bank, its largest creditor, acquired most of its shares.

In November 2010, the bank sold its interest in the firm without paying legally required severance compensation to the workers remaining on the payroll.

Among the workers seeking their salaries was Mariam Hawas, a 44-year-old mother of three.

United Bank employees refused to pay the women, taunted them, and told them, "Go and block traffic in the streets if you want your rights." So they did.

A traffic policeman urged one truck driver who could not move his vehicle through the ensuing traffic jam, "Run them over. The blood money for each one is £E 50 (about \$8)."

The truck ran into Mariam Hawas and another woman, Samah Isa. Mariam died on the way to the hospital and Samah was badly injured.

Neither has yet received any compensation. The truck driver who ran into the two women has been charged with causing wrongful death and injury. But he was released without bail, an indication that he may be treated leniently if he can be located at all when the trial begins in late July. The traffic policeman has not been found.

Ten days after Mariam Hawas died United Bank paid severance packages to Mansura-España workers at the rate of 2 ½ months' salary for every year of employment. The total cost to the bank was \$62,000.

The lives of Egyptian working people are still cheap in the eyes of a great many policemen, government officials, and managers of firms in both the private and public sectors.

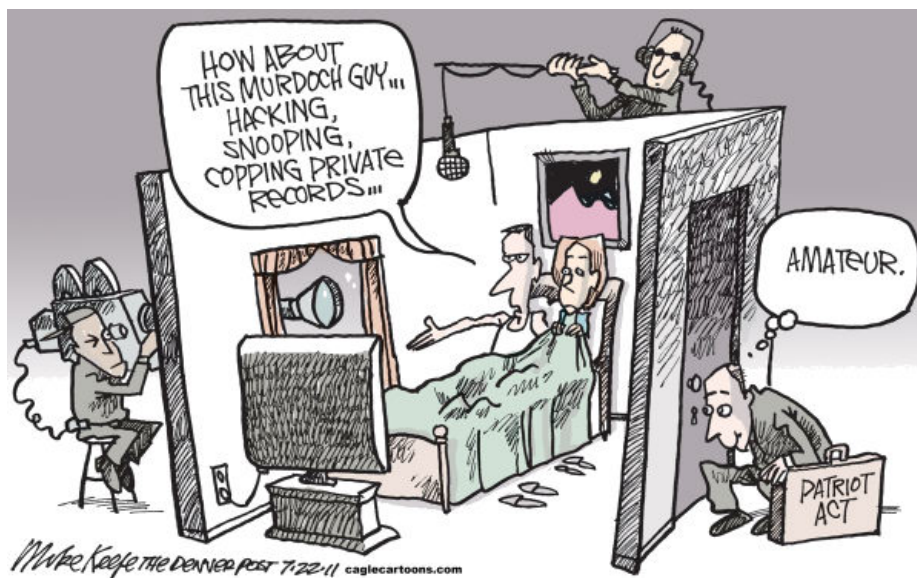
What has changed, and this is the most important gain of the revolutionary movement, is that workers no longer accept this.

Recovering in the hospital, Samah Isa asked, "How can a life be worth 50 pounds? I don't see a future until I get my rights. That's what I want."

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DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



“President Barack Obama And The Entire West Wing Lost Access To E-Mail For More Than Seven Hours”

“A Tree-Trimmer Had Accidentally Cut The Lines Running Out Of The White House Data Center”

So, Spurred By Vendors, Obama Regime “Is Opening The Door To Centralized Monitoring Of Any Private Communications In The Name Of Increased Security”

Jul 24, 2011 By Susan Crawford, BLOOMBERG L.P. [Excerpts]

(Susan Crawford, a professor of law at Cardozo School of Law, specializing in Internet policy and communications law, is a Bloomberg View columnist. The opinions expressed are her own.)

On Feb. 3, President Barack Obama and the entire West Wing lost access to e-mail for more than seven hours. A tree-trimmer had accidentally cut the lines running out of the White House data center. White House Communications Director Dan Pfeiffer sent a bulletin via Twitter -- the only way he could get the news out, he said -- letting the world know that “Verizon is working to solve the problem.”

A single, careless scissor snip had compromised the center of the most powerful government in the world.

Staffers accustomed to constant, twitchy BlackBerry attachment were stopped in their tracks. “It felt like a snow day,” one adviser told the Washington Post.

Relying on a single data connection to ensure that the leader of the free world can communicate seems shortsighted. Redundant, competing backup systems would be better.

Rather than focus on the shortcomings in its own electronic operations, though, the Obama administration -- spurred by vendors such as Booz Allen Hamilton -- is opening the door to centralized monitoring of any private communications in the name of increased security.

Howard Schmidt, the White House cybersecurity coordinator, doesn't buy the hype.

"My father was in a war, my son has been in a war, I've been in a war, and this is not what we're going through right now," Schmidt said in an interview with National Public Radio.

"To label every cyberintrusion, every theft of intellectual property, as cyberwar is just a total mischaracterization of what's going on in the world today," Schmidt has said.

The day after a tree-trimmer's lapse paralyzed the White House, a website called KnowledgeEmpire asserted darkly that the outage had been caused by a "malware cyber-attack" supposedly aimed at British diplomats.

It may be in consultants' interest to create an atmosphere of fear when it comes to the Internet. But mindless saber-rattling is hardly in America's interest.

Some basic work is needed to improve security of the government's own networks.

Beyond that, if we want to make private networks more secure, the answer involves calmer approaches: investing in research and development, spurring the creation of safer software and educating our citizens and companies about computer security.

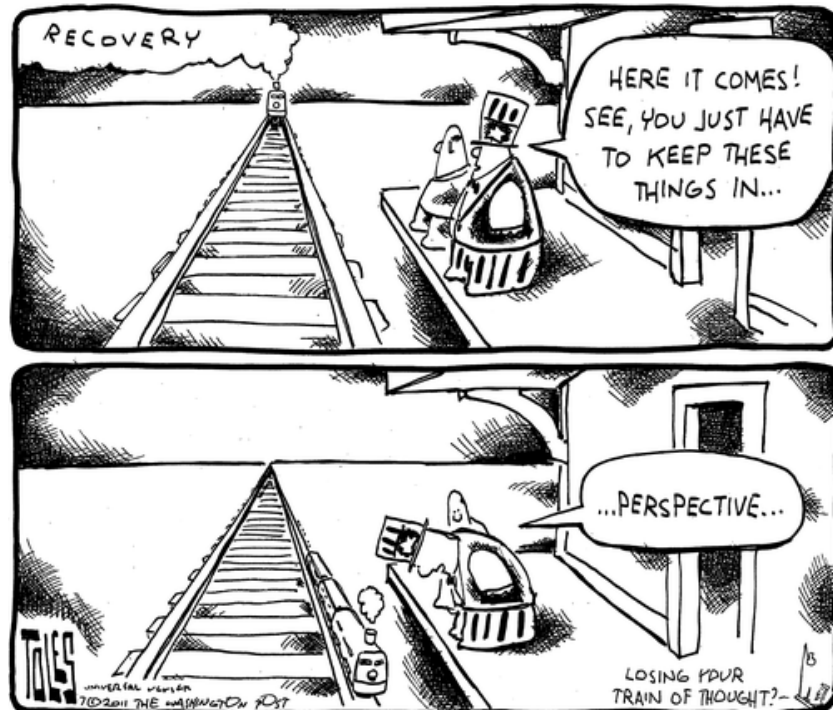
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CLASS WAR REPORTS



Capitalism At Work:

“U.S. Income Grew \$11,684 On Average Between 1969 And 2008”
“Every Dime Of Income Growth Went To The Top 10%. Income For The Bottom 90% Declined”
“Big Company CEOs Got A 23% Raise Last Year And Corporate Profits Are At Record Highs”

July 25, 2011 by Holly Sklar, CommonDreams [Excerpts]

Big company CEOs got a 23 percent raise last year and corporate profits are at record highs.

But the minimum wage has less buying power now than in 1956 – the year Elvis Presley first topped the charts, videotape was breakthrough technology and the Dow closed above 500 for the very first time

It's no accident wages are down while corporate profits are up. As JPMorgan's July 11 "Eye on the Market" newsletter put it, "Reductions in wages and benefits explain the majority of the net improvement in (profit) margins... US labor compensation is now at a 50-year low relative to both company sales and US GDP."

Today's minimum wage is \$7.25 – just \$15,080 annually.

CEOs make more in a few hours than minimum wage workers who care for children, the ill and the elderly make in a year.

Median CEO pay was \$10.8 million last year among 200 big companies measured by Equilar.

The \$15,080 minimum wage workers have for rent, groceries, transportation, medicine and everything else for the year doesn't even buy 2 pounds of the imported caviar featured in the Forbes Cost of Living Extremely Well Index.

The last increase in the minimum wage to \$7.25 on July 24, 2009 was so little so late it left workers 30 percent below the minimum wage peak of \$10.38 in 1968 – \$21,590 annually – in 2011 dollars.

Today's retail clerks, health aides, child care workers, restaurant workers, security guards and other minimum wage workers have \$6,500 less in annual buying power than their 1968 counterparts.

U.S. income grew \$11,684 on average between 1969 and 2008, the year Wall Street drove our economy off a cliff. But there was nothing average about the actual income distribution.

Every dime of income growth went to the top 10 percent. Income for the bottom 90 percent declined.

Compare that to the period between 1917 (when the data began) and 1968. Income growth averaged \$26,574. The top 10 percent got 31 percent of that growth. The bottom 90 percent got 69 percent.

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.

Vietnam GI: Reprints Available



Vietnam: They Stopped An Imperial War

Edited by Vietnam Veteran Jeff Sharlet from 1968 until his death, this newspaper rocked the world, attracting attention even from Time Magazine, and extremely hostile attention from the chain of command.

The pages and pages of letters in the paper from troops in Vietnam condemning the war are lost to history, but you can find them here.

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**“The single largest failure of the anti-war movement at this point is the lack of outreach to the troops.”
Tim Goodrich, Iraq Veterans Against The War**

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