

Military Resistance 9H3

HOW MANY MORE FOR OBAMA'S WARS?



May 15, 2011: A seriously wounded Marine arriving to hospital by medevac helicopter north of Sangin, Helmand Province, Afghanistan. (AP Photo/Kevin Frayer)

Taliban Take Down U.S. Helicopter In Afghanistan; 38 Dead:

**“A Senior Pentagon Official In
Washington Confirmed That The
Helicopter Had Been Shot Down”**

**“Taliban Forces Fired A Rocket At
The Downed Helicopter” In Tangi
Saybabad;**

“From Each House At Least One Person Is With The Taliban”

August 6, 2011 By Hashim Shukoor and Nancy A. Youssef, McClatchy Newspapers & Associated Press & By DION NISSENBAUM And HABIB KHAN TOTAKHIL, Wall Street Journal [Excerpts]

KABUL, Afghanistan — Thirty-one U.S. special forces troops and seven Afghan soldiers died when their helicopter was shot down during an overnight operation against Taliban insurgents in eastern Afghanistan, according to statement issued Saturday by Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

The attack took place in a known insurgent stronghold in Afghanistan’s central Wardak province where Afghan officials said the joint military team was carrying out a night raid targeting Taliban fighters.

The Associated Press has learned that more than 20 Navy SEALs from the unit that killed Osama bin Laden were among those lost in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan.

One source says the team was thought to include 22 SEALs, three Air Force air controllers, seven Afghan Army troops, a dog and his handler, and a civilian interpreter, plus the helicopter crew.

The operators from SEAL Team Six were flown by a crew of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment.

The helicopter was a twin-rotor Chinook.

It was the worst single-day toll for American forces in Afghanistan since U.S. troops entered that country nearly 10 years ago, and one of the largest tolls in a single incident of either the Afghan war or the fighting in Iraq.

U.S. officials in Afghanistan provided no details, but a senior Pentagon official in Washington confirmed that the helicopter had been shot down, though he said he could not provide details.

With its steep mountain ranges, providing shelter for militants armed with rocket-propelled grenade launchers, eastern Afghanistan is hazardous terrain for military aircraft.

Large, slow-moving air transport carriers like the CH-47 Chinook are particularly vulnerable, often forced to ease their way through sheer valleys where insurgents can achieve more level lines of fire from mountainsides.

Mansour Majab, a resident of the area, said he saw four to six helicopters in the village around 2 a.m. Saturday morning, as he rose for a pre-dawn meal before beginning his dawn-to-dusk fast during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

The villager told McClatchy he heard rocket fire. He said he later saw the helicopter burning an orchard about a half-mile from his home.

“Smoke was rising from the helicopter till morning,” Mansour Majab said.

In his statement, Karzai said the helicopter went down in Maidan Wardak province, west of Kabul.

The Afghan defense ministry confirmed the death of seven Afghan commandos in the crash. Gen. Zahir Azimy, the Afghan army spokesman, placed the crash in Logar province, however.

The Taliban claimed credit for the attack in a statement.

Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said in a statement that Taliban fighters downed the helicopter during a “heavy raid” in Sayd Abad.

He said U.S. forces attacked a house in Sayd Abad where insurgent fighters were gathering Friday night. During the battle, the fighters shot down the helicopter, killing 31 Americans and seven Afghans, he said, adding that eight insurgents were killed in the fight.

“Last night at 11 p.m. in the Joye Zarin area of Tangi Saybabad district, the invader forces conducted a night raid and faced hard resistance from the Islamic Emirate fighters,” according to the statement, attributed to Zabiullah Mujahid, the Taliban spokesman, and posted on the group’s website.

Shahidullah Shahid, the spokesman for the provincial governor, largely confirmed the Taliban statement, saying the crash had taken place after an operation by the International Security Assistance Force, as the U.S.-led coalition is known, killed eight insurgents.

Maidan Wardak is a volatile province located about 25 miles west of Kabul. It shares a border with Logar, another insecure province.

Majab told McClatchy that night raids by U.S.-led forces happen frequently.

“Every night the helicopters are flying over our house,” he said by phone. He said on Thursday U.S. troops conducting a night raid in another village killed three Taliban fighters.”

He said Taliban forces fired a rocket at the downed helicopter.

“I was in the house and taking some food for the guests who were in our house. I heard the sound of a rocket firing” Majab said. “Later we saw a helicopter downed in an apple and apricot orchard about a kilometer away. There is a river between our house and the place where the helicopter was downed. Smoke was rising from the helicopter till morning.”

Majab said that “most people are awake during night because of night raids” and that the region is dominated by the Taliban. “From each house at least one person is with the Taliban,” he said.

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

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

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

Aug 5 (Reuters)

A foreign servicemember was killed in an attack by insurgents in southern Afghanistan on Friday, the coalition said in a statement. It gave no other details.

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

August 6, 2011 Reuters

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

Slain Soldier Was His Family’s ‘Foundation’

July 21, 2011 By LINDSAY WISE, HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Jacob Molina was just as capable of whipping up a batch of homemade tacos as he was of fighting off a pack of schoolyard bullies.

The 27-year-old Army sergeant from Houston had a protective streak, as well as a domestic side. He could fold and sort your laundry with military precision. Or he could kick your rear if you threatened those dear to him.

A father of two and the second oldest of six siblings, Molina was the glue that held his large family together, said his brother, Javier Ramirez, 18.

“He was the foundation of our family,” Ramirez said.

That foundation was shaken Tuesday when Molina was killed by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan’s Kunar Province.

Also killed in the incident was Staff Sgt. James M. Christen, 29, of Loomis, Calif., the Department of Defense announced on Thursday.

Both soldiers were married. They were assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

Molina grew up in southeast Houston and attended Eastwood High School. He transferred to Houston Can! Academy, where he met his future wife, Stephanie Molina, of Katy.

At Eastwood, Molina started a rugby team. He’d been impressed with a hard-hitting rugby scrum on TV and wanted to try it. Tackle football in helmet and pads wasn’t tough enough for him, his relatives said. “He liked anything physical, full contact,” Ramirez said.

Molina was a big fan of mixed martial arts and such an action movie fanatic that his mother, Janie Torres, nicknamed him Vin Diesel, after the film star.

Ramirez said his brother had talked about joining the military since middle school, inspired by uncles who had served.

“We came from a strong military family, and he wanted to be part of something bigger than he was,” the brother said. “He wanted to make a difference.”

Molina enlisted in the Army on Feb. 15, 2007, as an infantryman. He served a tour of duty in Iraq before deploying to Afghanistan. Molina loved the Army “with a passion,” Ramirez said.

“It made him happy,” he said. “He enjoyed what he was doing, and he told me he wouldn’t want it any other way. If he was going to go out, he wanted to go out doing what he loved.”

Ramirez last talked to his brother Monday. They chatted online. Molina asked Ramirez, a senior at Stephen F. Austin High School, about his plan to follow in Molina’s footsteps

and join the Army after graduation. The brothers had spent a lot of time talking about the possibility, and Molina encouraged Ramirez to do it.

“He said it would be the best life choice to make,” Ramirez said.

The next day, Molina’s mother was hanging laundry in her backyard when Army officers came to the house. At first she thought they were recruiters who had dropped by to visit Ramirez. Then one of them spoke to her.

“When he called me by my son’s last name, I knew,” said Torres, who goes by her maiden name. “I dropped everything and ran into the house.”

She felt numb, frozen. Two days later, she still can’t believe it.

“I want people to know what he did for them, what he did for us,” Torres said. “That was his destiny, his passion. He was a hero to us when he was here, and he was a hero when he was there,” in Afghanistan.

The family’s home on Munger Street bustled Thursday afternoon with friends and relatives bearing food and condolences. An American flag and yellow ribbon hung from the front of the house. A shrine of photographs, flowers and a rosary had sprung up on the kitchen counter.

Some people have suggested to Ramirez that he should reconsider enlisting.

“What I like to tell them is it makes me more determined than ever,” Ramirez said. “He always wanted to make sure I grew up strong and brave like him. He was everything I wanted to be. He was my hero.”

Molina’s awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal (posthumous), Purple Heart (posthumous), Combat Infantryman Badge (posthumous), Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal with Star, and Iraq Campaign Medal with Star.

In addition to his mother, brother and wife, the sergeant is survived by his two children Andrew, 6, and Kassandra, 8, stepfather, Agustin Carreon, brothers Richard Molina Jr., 29, and Shawn Carreon, 7, and sisters Roxanne Ramirez, 25, and Valerie Ramirez, 24.

Funeral arrangements are pending.

“Foreign Troops Attacked A House And Killed Eight Members Of A Family, Including Women And Children”

August 6, 2011 Associated Press & By Michelle Nichols, AFP

In the southern Helmand province, an Afghan government official said Saturday that foreign troops attacked a house and killed eight members of a family, including women and children.

Nad Ali district police chief Shadi Khan said civilians died in the bombardment but that it was unknown how many insurgents were killed.

Those killed in the strike were members of a family that had fled fighting in neighboring Uruzgan province, police said.

Ten Fuel Tankers Burned Near Kabul Airfield

August 4, 2011

KABUL, Afghanistan – Several fuel tankers caught fire near Camp Warehouse, in Kabul, this evening resulting in the destruction of a unknown quantity of fuel.

Local Afghan firefighters responded to the fire, bringing it under control, with the assistance of foreign military firefighters from Kabul Airfield.

Initial reports indicate that as many as 10 fuel tankers may have been damaged. There are no reports of casualties.

Drone Down In Jalalabad



Remains of military drone in Jalalabad

2011/08/05 Mathaba

An unmanned U.S. aircraft crashed in the eastern province of Nangarhar, Afghanistan, the alliance said on Wednesday.

The aircraft came down in the Hada Farm area on the outskirts of Jalalabad, the provincial capital, at 7pm on Tuesday.

Police cordoned off the site and transferred the aircraft wreckage.

A Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, claimed the drone had been shot down by the insurgents.

Afghans Killed For Protesting Snatching Of Bodies Of Dead Afghans From Funeral

05 Aug 2011 Reuters & Sapa-dpa

At least four Afghans including a policeman were killed when police fired on an angry crowd on Friday, after foreign forces had killed a number of civilians overnight.

The International Security Assistance Force [translation: foreign occupation forces] in Kabul said there had been an operation targeting insurgents overnight in the Qalad district of Zabul province

Zabul police chief Mohammad Nabi Elhaam said angry residents took to the streets after they said three Afghan civilians had been killed during a "night raid" by foreign troops.

"A night raid by NATO forces killed three civilians and that provoked people to go out on the streets," Elhaam said.

The crowd of demonstrators in Qalad numbered in the hundreds.

Local Taliban leader Mullah Sharifullah and a few other insurgent commanders and fighters were killed this week in a coalition operation, he said. "Local Afghans were trying to bury the bodies of the dead insurgents when the police interrupted the funeral ceremony to take the bodies to determine if the dead were indeed Taliban commanders," Elham told the German Press Agency dpa.

He said five others including a police officer were injured.

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

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

WELCOME TO OBAMAWORLD. HAVE A NICE DAY.



7.31.11 AFP: US soldiers assigned to the Kandahar media support center and journalists seek shelter in a concrete bunker during a rocket attack in Kandahar military base.

SOMALIA WAR REPORTS

U.S.-Backed Government Troops Steal Aid Food From Starving Somalis And Kill Them: “Mostly Women, Old Men And Children”

8.5.11 Mareeg

At least 10 people were killed and over 10 others wounded after some of Somali national army who robbing aid food to the IDPs exchanged fires in one of internally displaced people in the capital Mogadishu today, reports said.

Some of the Somali transitional federal government soldiers with an armed vehicle robbed two of 10 trucks carrying aid food to Badbaado refugee camp in Dharkenlay district in the capital Mogadishu this morning and exchanged heavy fires killing about 10 people and injuring over 10 others mostly women, old men and children, reports said.

Badbado Camp was recently established by Somali transitional federal government in Dharkenlay district south the capital Mogadishu and this was worst event occurred in that camp as the dead and injuries are mostly very poor people who fled from far region for the sake of droughts hit in their regions.

Reports indicate that some of the internally displaced people were among the robbery case.

The situation in the areas isn't quiet yet and the aid was brought there by world food program.

MILITARY NEWS

Cut Troops Pay? No, Get Rid Of Surplus Generals First!

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
August 1, 2011

Adm. Mullen (“Everything on the table,” July 18) surely needs some suggestions to figure out how to cut pay. Cuts being necessary, as he claims, why don't we go back to the old days?

First, there should be no four- or three-star generals in times short of all but war such as we had in Vietnam or Korea. There should be a cap for two-stars.

Best information available (says) our relatively small military has (approximately) 35 four-stars and 924 general officers.

Way too many.

Many general officers are performing duties formerly done by lower-ranking officers.

Colonels could take over many commands of division level or less, or perhaps a one-star might suffice as a division commander. Majors and lieutenant colonels could command units smaller than brigades. Same idea could apply to all the armed services.

Second, let us reinstate the law that prohibited retired officers from drawing two salaries from the federal government.

Then, let's go back to the old days when everybody had both a permanent and temporary rank.

So, one was promoted to specialist 4 temporarily, but his permanent rank was private first class. Every officer had a permanent and temporary rank as an officer, such as major and first lieutenant, for example.

When cutbacks were necessary, the old Army knew how to cut and did so ruthlessly. So, one might be a colonel one day and the next a major, or even chief warrant officer.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Patrick L. Clark (ret.)
San Jose, Calif.

MORE:

**Cut Troops Pay? Fuck No!
Remove High Paid Toxic Leaders
From Command:
“Roughly One In Five Sees His Or
Her Superior As ‘Toxic And
Unethical’”
“A Command Climate Is Toxic When A
Majority Of The Subordinates Feel It Is”**

August 1, 2011 By Michelle Tan and Joe Gould, Army Times [Excerpts]

According to the report, toxic leaders commonly exhibit these behaviors: avoiding subordinates, behaving aggressively toward others, denigrating subordinates, hoarding information, hoarding job tasks, blaming others for their own problems, being overly critical of work that is done well, and intimidating others.

The Army is working to flush toxic leaders from its ranks.

A survey of more than 22,630 soldiers from the rank of E-5 through O-6 and Army civilians showed that roughly one in five sees his or her superior as “toxic and unethical,” while only 27 percent believe that their organization allows the frank and free flow of ideas.

According to the report, toxic leaders commonly exhibit these behaviors: avoiding subordinates, behaving aggressively toward others, denigrating subordinates, hoarding information, hoarding job tasks, blaming others for their own problems, being overly critical of work that is done well, and intimidating others.

They also routinely see their subordinates as disposable instruments rather than people, have a destructive personality or interpersonal skills that are detrimental to the command climate, and appear motivated primarily by self-interest, according to the report.

Toxic leaders, who should not be confused with incompetent leaders or those who don't exhibit effective leadership behavior, work to "promote themselves at the expense of their subordinates and usually do so without considering longterm ramifications to their subordinates, their unit and the Army profession," according to the report.

The report also cites a personal communication from retired Lt. Gen. Walter Ulmer, a former III Corps commander, that estimates roughly 8 percent to 12 percent of Army officers at the rank of colonel and higher "are so toxic that they need to be removed from command."

Toxicity can be subjective, Thomas [Ted Thomas, head of the CGSC's Command and Leadership Department] acknowledged.

But, generally, a command climate is toxic when a majority of the subordinates feel it is, he said.

In his experience, Campbell [Gen. Charles "Hondo" Campbell, who recently retired after commanding Forces Command] said, leaders who become toxic often become that way because of arrogance.

"They have an exaggerated sense of their own importance, and it is the belief that they are important — as opposed to their understanding that they do important things," he said.

**Order Bans Soldiers From
Wearing Shoes That "Are The
Best Thing Out There For
Rehabilitating Lower Extremity
Injuries"
"Inherent Hypocrisy"
"The Top Brass Claims These Shoes
Aren't Conducive To A Military
Appearance"**

“These Dictators Of Policy Have No Problem With Lime-Green Nikes”

Lt. Cmdr. John Mahoney, a Navy doctor and physical therapist, endorses the shoes with a statement that many podiatrists currently echo: “Vibram FiveFingers are the best thing out there for rehabilitating lower extremity injuries.”

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
August 1, 2011

After reading the order that bans soldiers from wearing Vibram FiveFingers during physical training, I couldn't help but chuckle at the inherent hypocrisy.

The top brass claims these shoes aren't conducive to a military appearance, but these dictators of policy have no problem with lime-green Nikes and other running shoes with outrageous color schemes and ridiculous soles.

The faulty logic behind the order makes it seem that much more inane.

Since the Pentagon is willing to ban a piece of clothing because it makes appendages more pronounced, then they should ban gloves as well.

I happen to run in Vibram FiveFingers. They're black, they're incredibly conservative in appearance, and they keep me from experiencing the recurring knee pain that I get with conventional running shoes.

I'm not the only one supporting this type of shoe, either; many of my soldiers endorse this type of minimalist footwear and attest to the benefits of barefoot running.

Lt. Cmdr. John Mahoney, a Navy doctor and physical therapist, endorses the shoes with a statement that many podiatrists currently echo: “Vibram FiveFingers are the best thing out there for rehabilitating lower extremity injuries.”

With such positive feedback from medical professionals and soldiers alike, there is absolutely no reason why the Pentagon should hesitate to authorize Vibram FiveFingers for wear during physical training.

To the top brass who are stuck in their ways, I propose this question:

How much longer are you going to enforce a double standard while simultaneously holding soldiers back from running as nature intended?

1st Lt. Bruce Rosenbloom
Hohenfels, Germany

Traveling Soldier

Issue 35

At: <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/>

FEATURING:

“The Pentagon Must Be Shit Worried Knowing These Soldiers Have Minds Of Their Own And No Fear In Expressing Their Opinions”

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/7.11.action.php>

Afghanistan:

“All My Guys Are Hurt. No One Cares”

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/7.11.afghanistan.php>

Americans Don't Support The War On Afghanistan:

“Lopsided Majority” Says Get Out

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/7.11.americans.php>

TRAVELING SOLDIER

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

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

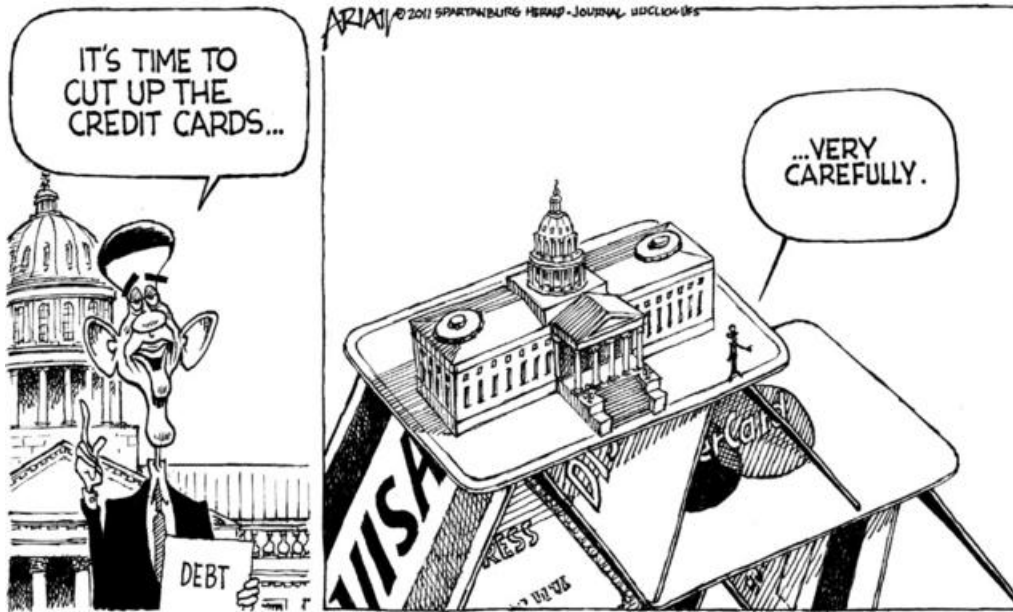
If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers. <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/>

Traveling Soldier is the publication of the Military Resistance Organization

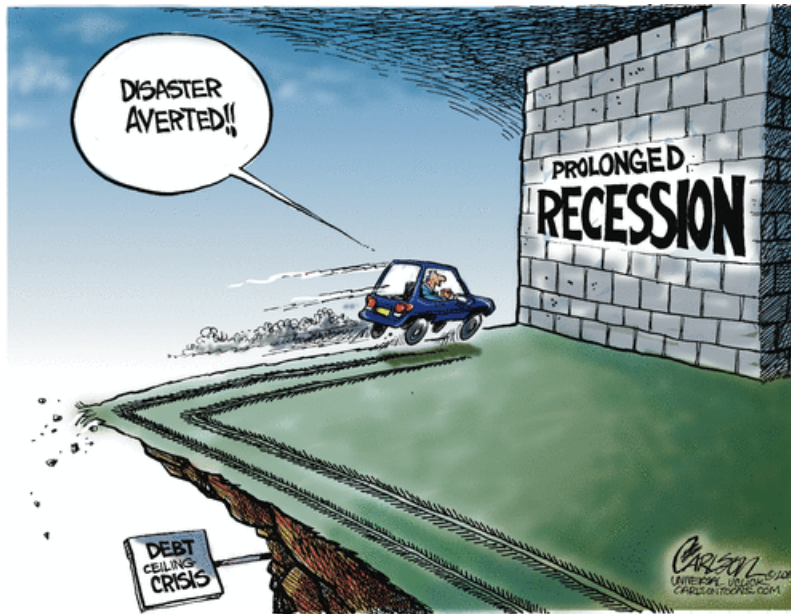
DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE MILITARY?

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



CLASS WAR REPORTS



**“Vannay Saw Two Tank Crews
Leave Their Vehicles To Join
The Demonstrators”**

**“Across Syria, Protesters On
Friday Chanted Slogans In
Solidarity With Hama” As Outrage
Grows:**

**“I Met Quite A Few Soldiers And
Policemen In Hiding Who Said They
Had Been Told To Kill The Population
Or Be Killed By The Security Forces”**

**“The More The Assad Regime Is Using
Violence, The More The Protests Are
Growing”**



Antigovernment protesters march Friday in Idlib, in northwestern Syria. Youtube /
Agence France-Presse / Getty Images

August 6, 2011 By NOUR MALAS, Wall Street Journal & 5 August 2011 Mark Tran and Paul Owen, Guardian News and Media Limited [Excerpts]

Syrian protesters poured out into the streets of most major towns and cities in the first Friday of Ramadan, braving a broad military crackdown that began this past Sunday.

Since Sunday, the pace of both the protests and the government campaign to squash them has escalated, likely in anticipation of a hardened stand-off in Ramadan, analysts say.

The exception was the city of Hama, now in the sixth day of a military siege, where demonstrators couldn't march or pray in public mosques due to sporadic shelling, activists said.

Friday's protests appeared to repeat a pattern started with the brutal attack on Deraa, where violence inspired larger protests, in turn attracting a fresh government crackdown.

Across Syria, protesters on Friday chanted slogans in solidarity with Hama, where activists say electricity and water have been cut off for three days.

But the revival of large protests in the southern city of Deraa, which in April faced the same attacks by government forces as Hama, appeared to show the resilience and resolve of Syria's protest movement as it moves past its fifth month.

In Hama, tanks resumed shelling of residential districts around 4am, as people were beginning their fast for Ramadan, a resident told Associated Press.

State-run Syrian TV released footage from inside Hama for the first time, showing widespread devastation on the streets.

Scenes of burned-out buildings, barricaded roads and damaged cars suggest the battles have been far more intense than the regime has previously admitted. With journalists unable to operate freely in Syria it is not possible to verify claims by activists that 200 people have been killed by military shelling and sniping in the city during the last six days.

In YouTube footage purporting to come from protesters in Hama, heavy gunfire can be heard amid improvised road blocks in the street with a tank in the background.

A voice says: "Hama, 5 August 2011, severe artillery shooting in Hama ... tanks incursion of Hama ... gangs of Bashar al-Assad are shooting Hama neighbourhoods." The date and name of the city are repeated.

As the attack on Hama continued, protests took place throughout the country.

At least seven people were killed in the Damascus suburb of Arbeen, according to the London-based Observatory for Human Rights and the Local Coordination Committees, a group that tracks protests. Another was killed in the suburb of Moaddamiya and two in the central city of Homs.

“Hama, we are with you until death,” a crowd marching through the central Damascus neighbourhood of Midan shouted.

In another district, Qadam, protesters carried a banner reading: “Bashar is slaughtering the people and the international community is silent.”

There were also protests in the southern province of Daraa and in Deir al-Zour in the east.

Other demonstrations were reported in Qamishli, near the Turkish border.

There has been a near-total communications blackout in Hama but Gaëtan Vannay, a journalist with Swiss Radio, managed to enter Syria secretly and spent 10 days in the besieged city. He was there on Sunday when Syrian forces began their attack.

“Until then the demonstrations were absolutely peaceful,” he told the Guardian. “They were well-organised, the protesters were always writing new songs, coming up with new slogans against the regime. On the Thursday before the attack there were two speakers with different sound systems entertaining the crowds, playing off one another. It was very festive. On Sunday at 4.30am people gave the alarm, shouting ‘Allah u akbar (God is great)’. People lit tire barricades to make it difficult for the tanks and fought back with sticks, stones and molotov cocktails. The fighting lasted until around 1pm in the afternoon.”

Vannay left Hama on Monday, the day tanks shelled the city’s two hospitals.

“They had positioned tanks at three or four places in the city, strategic locations,” said Vannay, who saw two tank crews leave their vehicles to join the demonstrators.

“When I left I met quite a few soldiers and policemen in hiding who said they had been told to kill the population or be killed by the security forces,” he said. “Sometimes we would be hiding in the same house.”

Murhaf Jouejati, professor of Middle East studies at the National Defence University in Washington DC, said: “The more the Assad regime is using violence, the more the protests are growing.”

“The regime’s violence is increasingly counterproductive and what is remarkable is that there is no protester fatigue.”

MORE:

Syria:

“If The Military Faces An Ongoing Mobilization In Several Larger

Cities And Towns Simultaneously, It Could Be Stretched To The Breaking Point”

**“If They Don’t Have Enough Loyal
Units To Take Hama, They Don’t Have
Enough Loyal Units To Take On
Much Bigger Cities Like Homs,
Aleppo Or Damascus...”**

**“I Don’t Think They Have Enough Of
These Units To Crack Down In A Major
Way On Multiple Cities At The Same
Time, At Least Not Without Seeing
Defections”**

August 3, 2011 By Eric Ruder, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

The regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is carrying out a bloody offensive against the four-month-old popular uprising in the hopes of dealing it a lethal blow at the beginning of the monthlong celebration of Ramadan, the Muslim holy month.

The ferocity of the latest assault shocked Arab public opinion and was rebuked around the world. The offensive began July 31 and took 75 lives in the town of Hama, the same city where Assad’s father ordered a mass slaughter nearly three decades ago.

In all, more than 150 people were killed by security forces throughout Syria on the eve of Ramadan, making it the bloodiest day yet in the government crackdown on dissent that has claimed more than 1,600 civilian lives so far and wounded many thousands more, according to pro-democracy and human rights organizations.

Since the beginning of the Arab Spring earlier this year, protests have often emerged from the gatherings for Friday prayers, as youth leave the mosques and take to the streets. In fact, since government security forces regularly crack down at the first sign of political dissent, Friday prayers have often provided the only opportunity to bring masses of people together.

For this reason, rulers throughout the Middle East have looked with dread on the approach of Ramadan this year. According to an Agence France Presse report:

Arab governments are bracing for increased tensions during the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan, which this year comes amid a wave of unprecedented uprisings sweeping the region.

“Throughout history, Ramadan has been the month of revolutions and victory,” said Abdullah al-Amadi, director of the Qatar-based Islamic website IslamOnline. “I think it will inspire the youths of the Arab Spring to complete their struggles against injustice and tyranny,” he said.

In Syria, tens or even hundreds of thousands of people have taken to the streets after Friday prayers in recent weeks.

Now, during Ramadan, when observant Muslims fast during the day and then gather nightly for prayer and to break their fast, pro-democracy forces in Syria are planning to transform every night into a Friday prayer-protest night in order to ratchet up pressure on the government and the military, which is already showing signs of strain.

According to experts on Syrian military affairs, the Syrian military is held together by a fiercely loyal officer corps, drawn from the minority Alawite sect that forms the backbone of Assad’s ruling Baath Party. However, the rank-and-file troops are primarily made up of Sunni Muslims, who make up the majority of Syria’s population.

So far, the military has been able to send its most loyal units to crack down on one hotbed of resistance, and then redeploy to the next center of rebellion.

But if the military faces an ongoing mobilization in several larger cities and towns simultaneously, it could be stretched to the breaking point.

According to analyst Firas Abi Ali:

“If they don’t have enough loyal units to take Hama, they don’t have enough loyal units to take on much bigger cities like Homs, Aleppo or Damascus...I don’t think they have enough of these units to crack down in a major way on multiple cities at the same time, at least not without seeing defections and without risking expanding the scope of the protests.”

And the regime’s use of naked force to ensure discipline within the ranks of the military is an indicator of how the regime’s control is balanced on a knife’s edge:

Syrian exiles, citing accounts from relatives, say that in cases where Sunni troops are deployed on the frontline, they are coerced into firing on demonstrators because security agents positioned to their rear will shoot them if they disobey orders.

“If you don’t kill, you will be killed,” said Ahmed Hussein, originally from the eastern city of Deir al-Zor, demonstrating against Assad outside the Syrian embassy in London.

According to Burhan Ghalyoun, professor and Syrian opposition figure in exile:

“Syrians will determine the fate of Syria...The Syrian people are closest to the Palestinian people, and they are more protective of the Palestinian cause, the Golan Heights and Arab solidarity than the current regime whose leaders have made the country feudal and do not care for anything except for protecting their own interests and existence.”

As the regime continues its crackdown, it will be important to seek out opportunities to demonstrate solidarity with the just ambitions of the Syrian revolt.

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.

“Worker And Student And Struggles Have Broken Out Across Chile” “80,000 Returned To The Streets In Santiago, Doing Battle With The Police For Control Of The Streets”

August 1, 2011 By Jason Farbman, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

Worker and student and struggles have broken out across Chile in recent months in a series of challenges to the new right-wing government and its polices.

High school students are at the center of the new movements.

Since mid-June, tens of thousands of students and teachers have been fighting back against the administration of President Sebastian Piñera, a right-wing billionaire.

By June 13, some 100 schools were being occupied across Chile, 80 of which were in the Santiago metropolitan area.

Demonstrations have repeatedly brought out tens of thousands, including 80,000 on June 14.

More than 100,000 filled the streets June 30 in what is estimated to be the largest protest since the fall of the longtime military dictator Augusto Pinochet in 1990.

Another day of action on July 14 saw protests across the country, including 20,000 marching in Valparaíso and 4,000 in Concepción.

And 80,000 returned to the streets in Santiago, doing battle with the police for control of the streets. "It is really common to see 20,000-30,000 people marching," said student protester and journalist Max Rubio.

Eyewitness Paul Kearney reported on the takeover of a high school in the Los Lagos region of Chile:

"At 1:30 in the morning, in what must have been sub-freezing temperatures, (30-60 students) had jumped the fence, opened the locked doors, disabled the alarm, put up signs and chained the gates against the public.

"In the school, the students were busy. They opened the canteen, and worked out how to make food there last as long as possible. They divided themselves up into groups, including cooking duty, guard duty, treasurer and heating. Even, after some debate, a discipline committee. They organized places to sleep, mealtimes and a Nintendo Wii."

Students spent time during the toma removing graffiti and improving the school. But they hadn't occupied their school to demand local improvements. They took action in solidarity with the national student strike against the latest attacks on public education in Chile.

President Piñera's response has been inconsistent and ineffective.

He has vigorously defended for-profit education, selling education as an investment opportunity, both for students and for corporations looking to profit from it. "Education is a consumer good," he has said, and, "profit is the reward for effort."

He also downplayed the protests. "However massive and crowded the marches are, most students want to study."

The president ordered a police crackdown on students in Santiago July 14. "The students must understand that the street is not theirs," his spokeswoman said.

When brash overconfidence and repression failed, Piñera tried shuffling his cabinet several times, first replacing his minister of education, and then replacing the replacement.

This juggling act has had little effect on protests. The same could be said for his administration's attempt to buy tranquility, by proposing a \$4 billion scholarship fund for poorer families. This offer was rejected. The students are demanding more.

The movement's central demand is for the re-nationalization of the public school system, which 90 percent of the 3.5 million Chilean students attend.

The nationalized school system was first pried apart during the Pinochet era, when early forms of market-oriented neoliberalism were forced through by the military regime.

The current system, of education under localized control, has resulted in underfunding and inequality between wealthy and poor localities. Instead, students want free, publicly financed education from preschool through university.

Other demands include ending school vouchers, which leads to underfunding of public universities; reduction of the role standardized testing plays in university admissions; liberal arts classes in technical schools; greater accessibility for disabled students; and the elimination of state-guaranteed private loans that generate enormous student debt.

“Workers At The Escondida Mine Recently Announced An Indefinite Strike”

Then, on July 11, as student protests were well under way, nearly 40,000 union and subcontracted copper miners struck for a day against the state-run Codelco company. Workers shut down the Chuquicamata mine, the largest copper mine in the world and source of nearly a third of Chile’s copper.

Despite enjoying some top pay and benefits in Chile, miners were refusing to accept 2,600 job cuts that were likely laying the groundwork for privatization. Warning signs included Codelco’s announcement that its new CEO would be Diego Hernandez, formerly of multinational Anglo-Australian corporation BHP Billiton.

Support for nationalization of the copper mines is growing in Chile not just because of the improvements to working conditions for copper miners.

If controlled by the state, the vast mining profits could be used to fund education, health care and other development programs. This had been the intended effect in 1971 when they were first nationalized.

Workers at the Escondida mine recently announced an indefinite strike to combat bonus drops of up to 70 percent.

The work stoppage could cost BHP Billiton 3,000 tons of copper--worth nearly \$30 million--each day.

With Codelco workers now threatening to strike again for improved benefits, there are worries in the business community of “contagion risk,” or strikes spreading further.

And despite the government’s intention to steer sharply to the right, strikes and calls for nationalization seem to be contagious, while Piñera’s legislative agenda has sputtered to a halt.

As the political research and consulting firm Eurasia Group put it, “We’ve already kind of seen that he’s stopped putting things forward, because that seems to be the tactic to avoid confrontation, or basically failing.”

The protests dogging Piñera don’t appear to be going away any time soon.

The student struggle reflects the spirit of resistance. In a recent nine-hour discussion, representatives in the student coalition Confederación de Estudiantes de Chile (Confech) agreed to continue the tomas.

Despite that fact that a few universities have ended their occupations, the number of taken schools had grown to 148 by July 19.

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