

Military Resistance 9K3



**Multiple Missteps Led To Drone Killing U.S. Troops In Afghanistan: “A Senior Marine Officer Described The Decision To Launch The Missile As ‘A Rush To Judgment’”
“In Minutes, Two Americans Would Be Dead”**

November 5, 2011 By David S. Cloud and David Zucchino, Los Angeles Times
[Excerpts]

Reporting from Washington

On the evening of April 5, a pilot settled into a leather captain's chair at Creech Air Force Base in southern Nevada and took the controls of a Predator drone flying over one of the most violent areas of southwestern Afghanistan.

Minutes later, his radio crackled.

A firefight had broken out. Taliban insurgents had ambushed about two dozen Marines patrolling a bitterly contested road.

The Air Force captain angled his joystick and the drone veered toward the fighting taking place half a world away, where it was already morning. He powered up two Hellfire missiles under its wings and ordered a crew member responsible for operating the drone's cameras to search for enemy fighters.

It didn't take long to find something. Three figures, fuzzy blobs on the pilot's small black-and-white screen, lay in a poppy field a couple of hundred yards from the road.

"Hey now, wait. Standby on these," the pilot cautioned. "They could be animals in the field." Seconds later, tiny white flashes appeared by the figures — the heat signature of gunfire. "There they are," he said, now sure he was looking at the enemy.

At an Air National Guard base in Terre Haute, Ind., an intelligence analyst whose job it was to monitor the video to help prevent mistakes on the mission also observed the muzzle flashes — but noticed that they were firing away from the embattled Marines.

Marines at Patrol Base Alcatraz, 12 miles from the firefight, watched their screens too, as they kept in contact with both the drone crew and the platoon members, who had set out from the base just an hour earlier. It would be their decision whether to call in a missile strike.

Thirty-one seconds after the pilot reported muzzle flashes, the Marines at Alcatraz ordered that the Predator be prepared to strike if the shooters could be confirmed as hostile.

At 8:49 a.m., 29 minutes after the ambush began, they authorized the pilot to fire.

In minutes, two Americans would be dead.

“The Video Can Also Prompt Commanders To Make Decisions Before They Fully Understand What They’re Seeing”

The decision to fire a missile from one of the growing fleet of U.S. unmanned aircraft is the result of work by ground commanders, pilots and analysts at far-flung military installations, who analyze video and data feeds and communicate by a system of voice and text messages.

In addition to the platoon taking fire that morning in Helmand province's Upper Sangin Valley, the mission involved Marine Corps and Air Force personnel at four locations: Marines of the 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion at Alcatraz, the drone crew in Nevada, the

analyst in Indiana and a mission intelligence coordinator at March Air Reserve Base in California.

Senior officers say drone technology has vastly improved their ability to tell friend from foe in the confusion of battle.

But the video can also prompt commanders to make decisions before they fully understand what they're seeing.

In February 2009, a crew operating a drone over Afghanistan misidentified a civilian convoy as an enemy force. The Predator pilot and the Army captain who called in the airstrike disregarded warnings from Air Force analysts who had observed children in the convoy. At least 15 people were killed.

“Tensions Quickly Emerged Between The Newcomers And The Other Marines”

The 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion operated in one of the most violent parts of Afghanistan, an area where drones patrolled virtually nonstop. It had recently revised its procedures to speed up Predator strikes, seeking to prevent “delay of missions by injection of comments” from the Distributed Ground System — military terminology for analysts like the one in Indiana.

The embattled platoon was part of the Lone Star Battalion, a reserve unit based in Houston. The unit hadn't seen combat for five years when orders came last year to prepare for a nine-month deployment to Afghanistan.

Like any reserve unit, the battalion was a pickup team. Some Marines had combat experience, others had none at all.

It arrived in Afghanistan in early March of this year. Its 2nd Platoon was sent to Patrol Base Alcatraz.

Befitting its name, Alcatraz is a bleak outpost of mud buildings and tents, frigid in winter, sweltering in summer. “There are no showers, laundry facilities, chow hall or pretty much anything else,” said a Marine who spent months there.

The platoon was put under the 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion, an elite unit whose motto was “Swift Silent Deadly.” Its Alpha company, which had arrived in Alcatraz five months earlier, engaged in near-daily gun battles with insurgents.

Lt. Christopher Huff, a 24-year-old on his first combat tour, and his Texas reservists were given dangerous duty: patrol Route 611, one of the country's most heavily mined roads. The road cuts north-south through opium fields laced with irrigation ditches and mud walls.

Tensions quickly emerged between the newcomers and the other Marines. A master sergeant later said the reservists were ordered “not to go more than 100 meters” off the road. The platoon had a reputation for “not knowing where their guys are located,” he said.

Among the platoon's veterans was Staff Sgt. Jeremy D. Smith, 26, who had enlisted in the Marines in 2003 after graduating from high school in Arlington, Texas. After three tours in Iraq, where his men called him "Warrior Poet" for his sensitive nature and the country music lyrics he wrote, he shifted to the reserves. He got married in April 2009 and talked of getting a job in law enforcement.

His Marine enlistment was almost up, so he didn't have to go to Afghanistan. But he had an American flag tattooed on his shoulder, and his email address included the words "last of a dying breed." He volunteered.

His proud father, Jerry, called his son "a Marine's Marine" who wanted to be in Afghanistan to lead his men in combat.

Another volunteer was Benjamin D. Rast, 23, a burly Navy hospitalman on his first tour. After graduating from high school in Niles, Mich., he went to a local college. He also played a season of semi-professional football, but tore up his knee.

Rast enlisted in the Navy in 2008 and was sent to the Naval Medical Center in San Diego. He yearned to see combat.

He was assigned to the Lone Star Battalion as a corpsman, the Marines' term for a combat medic. At Camp Pendleton, where the unit trained for five months before its deployment, he was dubbed "Doc Rast."

"What if something happens to you? What will I say to everybody?" his father, Robert, asked his son.

"Tell them I wanted to be on the front lines covering the guy on my left and on my right," the young man replied.

"As They Crossed A Field, Shots Suddenly Crackled In Their Direction"

Searching for buried bombs had a numbing sameness. Although more than 30 improvised bombs exploded along the road in 2nd Platoon's first month in Afghanistan, it had managed to avoid casualties.

The morning of April 6 would start the same way.

Huff, Smith, Rast and the rest of the platoon, along with an Afghan interpreter and a bomb-sniffing dog named Susie, left Alcatraz about 7:20 a.m. in four armored trucks, heading north.

After half an hour, a bomb exploded beneath the third vehicle, but it caused minimal damage. Huff had planned to conduct foot patrols nearby, so they drove another 300 yards and unloaded.

Huff ordered part of the platoon to search the road for more bombs. Seven others, including Smith, Rast and a sniper squad, were told to take positions 50 yards or so west of the road to guard against an ambush.

Smith led the team single file down an irrigation canal perpendicular to the road, intending to turn and set up positions as instructed. But walls and other barriers blocked their way, so they went farther west. As they crossed a field, shots suddenly crackled in their direction.

“We all hit the deck and returned covering fire,” one of the snipers recalled. No one was sure where the shots had come from, he said, but a cluster of buildings about 200 yards to the west seemed likely.

Another member of the team, Sgt. Jared Hammonds, a 27-year-old reservist from Conroe, Texas, yelled their coordinates into the radio.

Once the shooting let up, the squad ran to the nearest canal and splashed through knee-deep water. They were still trying to get a fix on the insurgents. When vegetation in the ditch forced them into a poppy field, they came under fire again.

They dropped to the ground again and fired toward the buildings.

“At The Air National Guard Base In Indiana, The Air Force Analyst Watched The Battle Unfold On The Drone’s Video Feed”

At the Air National Guard base in Indiana, the Air Force analyst watched the battle unfold on the drone’s video feed. The analyst, a technical sergeant in a reserve unit, was to message minute-by-minute reports to the mission intelligence coordinator in California, who could pass them on to the crew controlling the drone.

Like the drone pilot, the analyst in Indiana saw three men and muzzle flashes.

The analyst typed “3 friendlies in FOV,” meaning three non-insurgents in the camera’s field of view.

A second later, he wrote “Pers are shooting W,” meaning they were firing west, away from the Marines on the road.

He sent the fragmentary reports to March Reserve Air Force Base, his communications link to the drone crew. A trainee studied the video there under supervision of the mission intelligence coordinator.

Almost immediately, the analyst had doubts.

“Disregard,” he wrote, followed by “Not friendlies,” followed by “unable to discern who pers are.”

But he was certain of one thing: The shots were aimed away from the Marines.

The mission intelligence coordinator and the trainee were dubious. They thought the shots were aimed east toward the Marine convoy.

The trainee messaged the Indiana analyst to “double check” his coordinates — and didn’t relay the information to the drone crew.

“Building 58 Is The Wrong Building!”

As debate about the direction of the gunfire continued over the chat system, the analyst did not have access to radio traffic indicating a strike was imminent.

And as he was preparing to strike, the Predator pilot was unaware of the analyst’s doubts.

At Alcatraz, a captain and a gunnery sergeant from 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion’s Alpha company had requested air support after the platoon first reported gunfire at 8:20 a.m.

When a Marine unit comes under attack, air or artillery support is supposed to be available within 10 minutes. The Predator was circling overhead in seven minutes.

The Marines at Alcatraz asked the drone crew to search for Marines along the road and for insurgents to the west. They also pressed Huff to confirm his men’s positions.

Huff reported that his men were on the road, or within 50 yards of it. In fact, some were more than 200 yards away.

At 8:41 a.m., the Predator pilot in Nevada reported seeing the muzzle flashes from three prone figures in the poppy field. The Marine officers quickly issued a “preemptive” order to prepare the Predator to fire.

The captain radioed to confirm where platoon members were and told Huff that the Predator was prepared to strike near a low-slung structure marked as Building 58 on detailed military maps “if it was still a viable target.”

The gunnery sergeant radioed in the captain’s call sign to authorize the missile strike eight minutes later.

Hearing the order, Huff warned his scattered squad over the radio: “Get your guys down — danger close.”

Hammonds shouted at a corporal to find Building 58 on their map.

“I hear (Huff) on the radio for us to take cover and I relayed it to my guys,” he recalled. “Near the canal on the west side is a low wall that I tell everyone to get behind.”

Smith and Rast were still out in the poppy field. Hammonds’ radio blared again: The Hellfire missile would hit in 17 seconds. He shouted at Smith and Rast to hustle.

Suddenly the corporal found the building on his map. It was behind them, not the suspected Taliban position farther west. He yelled out, “Building 58 is the wrong building!”

“The Missile Exploded Almost On Top Of Smith”

The missile exploded almost on top of Smith.

Running across the field, Hammonds found Rast face down with a large wound behind his ear. Smith lay five yards away, but his condition was clear. “I knew he was dead,” Hammonds said.

Other Marines rushed to try to save Rast. They restored his pulse, but only briefly.

They noticed Hammonds intently searching the ground. “What are you doing?” the sniper team leader demanded.

“Trying to find Smith’s wedding ring,” Hammonds replied.

Smith had worn the silver band on a chain around his neck. He found the ring and would return it to Smith’s wife, Rachel.

The Investigation

The Pentagon investigation into the deaths of Smith and Rast, the first friendly-fire deaths known to have been caused by a drone attack, was led by Marine Col. Randy Newman, a former regimental commander in Afghanistan.

The incident raised a series of broad questions: How did the battalion’s new rules for handling Predator strikes affect the decision to strike?

Was the missile fired too quickly? Did the system built to help commanders make better decisions break down again?

Newman’s 381-page report placed much of the blame on Huff, maintaining that up until the moment the missile was fired, he could have called it off.

It criticized Huff for failing to keep track of his men, and two sergeants for sending inaccurate radio reports that misled the lieutenant about their locations — and led the Marines at Alcatraz to call in the drone strike on the wrong location. However, it said the deaths were due to “miscommunications,” and that no one was “culpably negligent or derelict in their duties.”

The names of everyone involved except Smith and Rast — and, in one place, Huff — were redacted in a copy of the report obtained by The Times.

In addition to material contained in the report, this article is based on interviews with family members and Marine Corps and Air Force officers involved in the case.

Newman’s report said the analysts should have been more aggressive in raising their concerns in the minutes before the missile attack. But the analysts said they were

trained not to intercede when U.S. troops were in danger unless they saw women and children present, or evidence of a possible war crime.

In the minutes after the attack, an apparently distraught Huff radioed back to Alcatraz that he “didn’t know why we had to hit that position,” said a Marine officer who received the transmission.

While acknowledging that he didn’t know some of his Marines were so far away, Huff told investigators that insurgent fire had mostly died down prior to the Predator attack and that he “felt like he had the situation under control.”

Others, in both the Marine Corps and Air Force, also question the speed of the strike.

“We simply ran out of time,” the mission intelligence coordinator said. A sergeant in Huff’s platoon said that the time between the Predator’s arrival overhead and when it fired the missile “was too short to allow for assessment and actions” by Marines on the ground.

At the Pentagon, a senior Marine officer described the decision to launch the missile as “a rush to judgment.”

After the Predator pilot learned of the fatal mistake, he asked to be relieved at the controls. “The gravity of the matter overcame my ability to continue focusing on the task at hand,” he explained.

Replaying the video and voice communications, he was stunned to see that the muzzle flashes were aimed away from the road.

He was “completely confused as to how I saw exactly the opposite sitting in the seat.”

He asked for the video to be stopped and left the building. An Air Force chaplain was waiting outside.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Spanish Soldier Killed Near The Town Of Ludina

[Thanks to Alan Wallis, who sent this in.]

11/6/2011 PÚBLICO.ES

A Spanish soldier died today in Afghanistan fired on by insurgents near the town of Ludina.

The deceased is first sergeant Joaquin Moya Mirror, Cordoba 35, who was part of Task Force Advisory and Liaison Service (OMLT) that instructs Afghan National Army (ANA) in the work of the Afghan military deployment in the province of Badghis.

The soldier had a son and was stationed at the Garigliano 45 Infantry Regiment, based in Vitoria. His relatives have been informed of his death.

The incident occurred northwest of Ludina, when an Afghan Army unit was deployed on a hill, next to the Spanish team of mentors and a team of precision shooters that protected the units progressing through the valley.

At that time they were attacked by small arms fire from a distant position, and Staff Sergeant Joaquín Moya Mirror, who was fitted with bulletproof vest, was hit in the chest by a shot.

The first sergeant was evacuated by U.S. helicopter to Role 2 hospital Bala Murghab, and went into cardiac arrest during flight. His death was certified when he arrived at Role 2 hospital Bala Murghab.

It is the first Spanish soldier killed by gunfire during an attack in almost ten years of participation of the Spanish armed forces in the Afghanistan mission began in January 2002.

With today are 98 Spanish soldiers killed in Afghanistan, and two interpreters were killed.

Of the 97 soldiers killed so far, 79 were in aircraft accidents (Yak-42 and Cougar), fourteen in insurgent attacks (twelve of them with improvised explosive devices or IED's), two in traffic accidents and two from natural causes.

The Defence Minister, Carme Chacón, will move in the coming hours to Afghanistan, accompanied by Chief of Staff of Defense (JEMAD), Jose Julio Rodriguez, to receive first hand information about the event and expedite repatriation the body of deceased military.

Chacon has been suspended for this reason the trip was planned for tomorrow on the island of El Hierro.

**Crest Graduate Killed In Afghanistan:
“A Red Velvet Cake And Pecan Pie Sit In
Her Freezer. She Was Going To Send
Them To Newman In A Few Days”**



U.S. Army Sgt. Christopher Rod Newman

Oct 31 2011 By Alicia Banks, The Star

SHELBY — A suicide bomber smashed a vehicle piled with explosives into an armored NATO bus Saturday in Kabul, Afghanistan. At least 17 people were killed. Thirteen were Americans including a 2004 Crest High School graduate.

U.S. Army Sgt. Christopher Rod Newman, 25, was on the bus.

The bus was en route to a hospital, said Newman's aunt, Teresa Gregory. Military personnel confirmed his death Sunday morning to Newman's family. The attack was labeled as a deadly strike against the U.S.-led coalition in Kabul since the war began, according to the Associated Press. The explosion tilted the bus on its side and a fire ensued. The bus was surrounded by military vehicles.

Newman was raised in Shelby by his grandparents. Gregory said he joined the Army just after he graduated high school. He was a counselor in the Army.

Newman was supposed to come home Dec. 31 for two weeks. He left behind a wife and five-year-old daughter from a previous marriage.

"It doesn't seem real," Gregory said. "We were really shocked."

Brent Newman said his older brother had a big heart and enjoyed making people laugh. It is hard for him to say his brother was gone.

"I felt angry when I found out, but now it's just sorrow," Brent Newman said. "I loved him. That's it."

The family used Facebook Chat to stay in touch with Newman while he was deployed. Gregory said a week never went by when Newman didn't talk to a family member.

Newman bought a car in Shelby while in Afghanistan. He looked to buy a home in Shelby after he retired from the military, Gregory said.

"He'll never get to see that car, and he was such a hard worker," she said. "He would've given the shirt off his back."

Randy Birch said Newman, his cousin, was also his best friend. Birch was one of the last people from home to talk to Newman before he died. Birch said they spoke Friday morning.

“He was concerned about what to get people for Christmas,” Birch said. “I told him not to worry about gifts and just come home safe.”

Birch described Newman as a big guy, standing around 6 feet 6 inches tall. Birch said his cousin was good with computers and loved the Army.

“My mother came crying to me and told me what happened. I was in shock,” Birch said.

Birch said the family often sent care packages to Newman. The family would always send Livermush, Newman’s favorite. Birch said his grandmother sent his cousin desserts in the packages.

A red velvet cake and pecan pie sit in her freezer. She was going to send them to Newman in a few days.

Newman’s grandparents planned to join his wife in Dover, Del. Sunday to claim his body.

Newman will be buried in Shelby with funeral arrangements announced this week. The family wants to bring him home, Gregory said.

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

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

MILITARY NEWS

**“The March Was Led By A
Contingent Of A Couple Dozen
Veterans Who Are Members Of
Veterans For Peace And Iraq
Veterans Against The War”**

“‘I’ve Been One Of Those People Saying Something Is Wrong, Something’s Got To Give’ Said IVAW Member Grant Bailey”

November 3, 2011 Eric Ruder, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

Actions in solidarity with Occupy Oakland took place around the country on November 2.

In Portland, Ore., 3,000 people--singing the union anthem “Solidarity Forever”--marched down Broadway Avenue in the heart of Portland’s downtown.

“As we walked past a park, activists were waiting there for us, proclaiming with a huge banner that the park had been renamed Aaron Campbell Park, who, like Oscar Grant in Oakland, was an unarmed Black man killed by Portland police a few years ago,” said Nicole Bowmer.

The march was led by a contingent of a couple dozen veterans who are members of Veterans for Peace and Iraq Veterans Against the War--which may explain why the Portland police allowed the march to continue, even when some 250 marched across Hawthorne Bridge, one of the main bridges connecting the east and west sides of Portland.

Micaiah Dutt served in the Marines from 2001 to 2009 and was deployed to Iraq four times.

Like Scott Olsen, he was radicalized by his experience in the military. “What Scott Olsen experienced by being shot in the head gave the veteran community just a glimpse of what the African American community experiences every day, what the Latino community experiences. That’s why we called everyone out today to say this has to stop!”

-- In New York City, more than 1,000 people marched from the Occupy Wall Street encampment at Liberty Plaza to NYPD headquarters, chanting, “Oakland, NYC, stop police brutality!”

“This building looks like an administration building,” a member of the People of Color Committee told the rally via the people’s mic. “To the 99 percent who are people of color, this building is a tomb. Here lies Sean Bell, here lies Patrick Dorismond, here lies Alberta Spruill. We honor the West Coast and Bay Area by saying ‘Presenté’ for Oscar Grant.”

Marine Sgt. Shamar Thomas, famous for his rant against cops in Times Square that went viral in a YouTube video, told the rally, “You have a right to be here. We’re here to protect you. I love you.”

Thomas was part of a contingent of veterans participating in the march. Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) member Andrew Johnson explained that he supported Occupy Wall Street because “the war economy is part of the reason for the mess we’re in.”

Earlier in the day, about 40 members of IVAW and Veterans for Peace marched from the Vietnam Veterans memorial to the New York Stock Exchange, and then to Liberty Plaza.

“I’ve been one of those people saying something is wrong, something’s got to give,” said IVAW member Grant Bailey, who was on the march and has been participating in Occupy for weeks now. “I came here to check this out and then started learning a lot more about what those somethings are.”

HOW MANY MORE FOR OBAMA’S WARS?



FORT CARSON, CO - NOVEMBER 04: Jacqueline Shweiki, 6, clings to her Afghanistan-bound mother Lt. Bonnie Hartstein at a departure ceremony on November 4, 2011 in Fort Carson, Colorado. Hartstein, an emergency room doctor, is one of some 250 medical soldiers from the U.S. Army 10th Combat Support Hospital deploying to Afghanistan in the next two weeks. Military doctors, nurses and medics from the unit are tasked with saving the lives of wounded American, coalition and enemy wounded brought in from the battlefield. (Photo by John Moore/Getty Images)

**THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO COMPREHENSIBLE
REASON TO BE IN THIS EXTREMELY HIGH RISK
LOCATION AT THIS TIME, EXCEPT THAT THE
PACK OF TRAITORS THAT RUN THE
GOVERNMENT IN D.C. WANT YOU THERE COVER
THEIR ASS:**

That is not a good enough reason.



A wounded U.S. soldier is carried away from the site of an attack in Kabul October 29, 2011. REUTERS/Omar Sobhani

**DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN MILITARY
SERVICE?**

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 and economic injustice, 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

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

**Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number,
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you-
Ye are many — they are few**

-- Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1819, on the occasion of a mass murder of British workers by the Imperial government at Peterloo.

The New World Order

“America, Your Drones Are Coming Home”



Occupy Portland. Photo by Mike Hastie

From: Mike Hastie
To: Military Resistance Newsletter
Sent: November 06, 2011
Subject: The New World Order

The New World Order

These words by H.G. Wells at Occupy Portland, Oregon, is the most profound message I have seen since the Occupy Movement got started almost two months ago. The U.S. economy cannot survive without America inflicting war on some poor country that cannot defend itself.

This is the evil that Empire's inflict with terror on the rest of the world.

It is so evil that it can only be compared to a newborn nursery chainsaw massacre.

How many children did the U.S. Government kill in Iraq in the past twenty years?

UNICEF has claimed that 500,000 Iraqi children have died as a result of American weapons and economic sanctions.

How many Afghanistan children have died as a result of American weapons in that country in the past ten years? America has no empathy for the living outside of its borders. It is as if the whole country has become drug affected by apathy. Greed has turned America into a modern day Roman Coliseum. The tortured are set on fire, so the audience can see and be entertained with explosive violence.
America,
your Drones are coming home.

Mike Hastie
Army Medic Vietnam
November 6, 2011

The truth was obscure too profound and
too pure--to live it you have to explode.
Bob Dylan

Photo and caption from the portfolio of Mike Hastie, US Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71. (For more of his outstanding work, contact at: hastiemike@earthlink.net) T)

One day while I was in a bunker in Vietnam, a sniper round went over my head. The person who fired that weapon was not a terrorist, a rebel, an extremist, or a so-called insurgent. The Vietnamese individual who tried to kill me was a citizen of Vietnam, who did not want me in his country. This truth escapes millions.

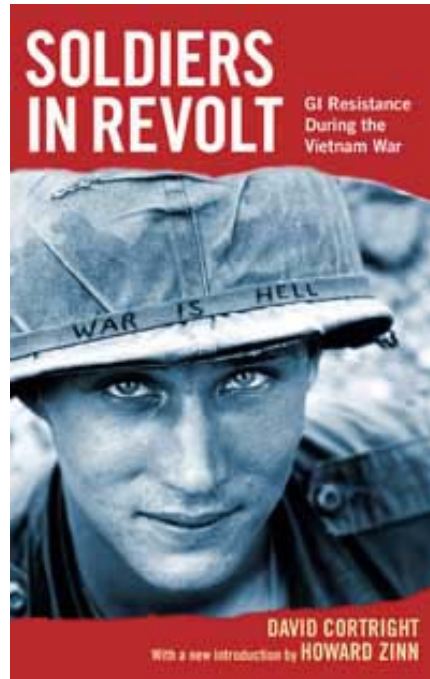
Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
December 13, 2004

How To Stop A War:

“On April 27 [1968] A Group Of Forty Active-Duty People Marched At The Head Of An Anti-War Demonstration In San Francisco, The First Time GIs Led A Civilian Peace Rally”

“On February 16, 1969, The Alliance Sponsored A Peace Rally In Downtown

Seattle, With Two Hundred Active- Duty People Leading A Crowd Of Several Thousand”



[No, they didn't go to DC begging the Imperial Congress to stop the war. They weren't fools. They knew that when the army rebelled, the war would end. They did, and it did. Duh. T]

Excerpts from: SOLDIERS IN REVOLT: DAVID CORTRIGHT, Anchor Press/Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1975. [Reprint available from Haymarket Books]

The young people forced into the ranks by the Vietnam build-up expressed a sometimes articulate, sometimes desperate, opposition to an unwanted mission.

The GI movement imbued the military with the voice of a troubled citizenry, providing a measure of democratic restraint on though otherwise unresponsive and imperious institutions of war.

The appearance of coffeehouses and a burgeoning GI press, in an atmosphere of mounting disillusionment over stalemate in Vietnam, set the stage for the first significant GI action.

The Army's huge armored training center at Fort Hood experienced a particularly rapid deterioration of troop morale, especially among combat returnees, and throughout the Vietnam period witnessed extensive unrest and drug use (the base's copious marijuana supplies earned it the sobriquet "Fort Head").

The civilians who opened the Oleo Strut in the summer of 1968 thus met with an enthusiastic response; with the founding of Fatigue Press, a long history of successful GI activism began.

The first political gathering of Fort Hood soldiers occurred in Killeen on July 5, 1968.

A “Love-In” and countercultural festival was held in Condor Park, featuring rock music and anti-war speeches; approximately two hundred soldiers attended, most of them white.

The atmosphere at the base grew considerably tenser in the following weeks, however, as thousands of troops were prepared for possible use against civilian demonstrators at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago — culminating in a dramatic and important act of political defiance among black troops.

On the evening of August 23, over one hundred black soldiers from the 1st Armored Cavalry Division gathered on base to discuss their opposition to Army racism and the use of troops against civilians.

After a lengthy, all-night assembly, which included a visit from commanding general Powell, forty-three of the blacks were arrested for refusal to follow orders.

The action of the blacks was spontaneous and unrelated to the work of the white soldiers (reflecting a common pattern of parallel but separate development of dissent among blacks and whites), but the Oleo Strut GIs supported the brothers and helped with their legal defense.

Because of widespread support for the resisters, especially among blacks, the Army’s treatment of the Fort Hood 43 was not as harsh as it might have been; most received only light jail sentences.

The San Francisco Bay Area has been in the vanguard of most of the radical movements in the United States during the past decade, and the GI movement was no exception.

With the support of two local GI newspapers, The Ally and Task Force, area servicepeople were among the first to speak out in 1968.

On April 27 a group of forty active-duty people marched at the head of an anti-war demonstration in San Francisco, the first time GIs led a civilian peace rally.

Two months later, also in San Francisco, nine AWOL enlisted men (five soldiers, two sailors, one airman, and one Marine) publicly took sanctuary at Howard Presbyterian Church in moral opposition to the war. After a forty-eight-hour “service of celebration and communion,” they were arrested by MPs on July 17.

In the fall, the growing network of GI activists in the area laid plans for the largest servicemen's peace action to date — an active-duty contingent for the scheduled October is anti-war rally in downtown San Francisco.

Among the efforts to mobilize area soldiers and distribute literature about the march was Navy nurse Susan Schnall's daring feat of dropping leaflets from an airplane onto five area military bases (for which she was later court-martialed).

As the demonstration date approached, military authorities became nervous that a large number of GIs might become involved, and, in a manner that became standard whenever protests were planned, sought to prevent servicemen from attending.

A communication from the Military Airlift Command in Washington, later anonymously released to *The Ally*, depicted the military's attitude toward even lawful dissent: it urged that "this demonstration be quashed if possible because of possible severe impact on military discipline throughout the services."

On the Saturday of the actual march, soldiers at the nearby Presidio were detained for mandatory company formations, while special maneuvers and other diversions were held at several West Coast bases.

Despite such obstruction, two hundred active-duty GIs and some one hundred reservists marched at the head of the demonstration, in what was the largest gathering yet of the expanding GI movement.

Two days later, in an incident partly inspired by the show of antiwar strength on October 12, twenty-seven inmates of the Presidio stockade held a sit-down strike to protest the shooting death a few days earlier of fellow prisoner Richard Bunch and to call attention to unbearable living conditions—what became known later as the Presidio mutiny. (For a sensitive and penetrating account of the Presidio incident see Fred Gardner's *Unlawful Concert*.)

As the GI movement emerged, civilian radical organizations played an important role in helping to sustain rank-and-file dissent. One of the first agencies to recognize the changes taking place within the Army was the Student Mobilization Committee (SMC) and its closely allied counterpart, the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA).

One of the first examples of this co-operation was the GI-Civilian Alliance for Peace (GI-CAP) and the newspaper *Counterpoint* at Fort Lewis.

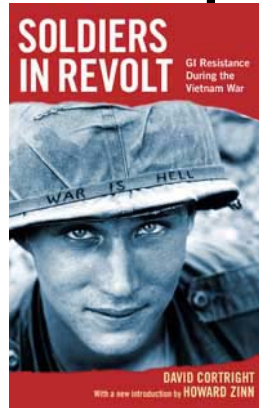
Aided by SMC activists, GI-CAP developed into one of the most successful early GI-movement groups, with as many as fifty servicemen at regular weekly meetings.

On February 16, 1969, the Alliance sponsored a peace rally in downtown Seattle, with two hundred active-duty people leading a crowd of several thousand.

A few months later, the servicemen formed their own organization apart from the civilians and continued their work as an all GI group.

MORE:

**FREE TO ACTIVE DUTY:
A Vietnam Soldier Wrote The Book All
About How An Armed Forces Rebellion
Stopped An Imperial War**



SOLDIERS IN REVOLT: DAVID CORTRIGHT, Anchor Press/Doubleday, Garden City, New York

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ANNIVERSARIES

Election Day 1920: A Hero In A Prison Cell Who Opposed U.S. Imperial War Gets One Million Votes



[Kansasheritage.org]

Carl Bunin Peace History November 1-7

November 2, 1920

Socialist Party candidate Eugene V. Debs received nearly one million votes for President though he was serving a prison sentence at the time for his criticism of World War I and his encouraging resistance to the draft.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

**British And U.S. Regimes
Delivered Libyans To The
Murderous Rat Gaddafi For
Torturing:**

**“Belhaji Was Far From The Only
Libyan Whose Torture Was Aided
And Abetted By The British And Us
Intelligence Services”
“Their Children, Girls Aged 14 And Six,
Boys Of 12 And 10, ‘Cried And
Screamed’ All The Way”**

26 October 2011 By Eamonn McCann, Belfast Telegraph [Excerpts]

On September 4, researchers for Human Rights Watch (HRW) gained access to the Tripoli headquarters of the Libyan foreign ministry and discovered documents which threw light on the real attitude of powerful interests in the West towards torture under Gaddafi.

There's been little mention of these revelations in the comment and coverage of recent days - not even when Tony Blair popped up to hail the overthrow of Gaddafi and hope it would speed the spread of the Arab Spring.

This is the man who, even as hundreds of thousands gathered in the name of freedom in Tahrir Square, issued a statement praising dictator Hosni Mubarak as “a force for peace and stability”.

HRW discovered a letter, written in 2004 by the head of MI6's anti-terrorism division, Mark Allen, to Moussa Koussa, head of the Libyan intelligence service, welcoming news of the 'safe' arrival in Tripoli of anti-Gaddafi activist Abdelhakim Belhadj, who had been kidnapped in Malaysia by the CIA, on the basis of intelligence supplied by MI6, and 'rendered' to the Libyans for torture.

“This was the least we could do for you and for Libya to demonstrate the remarkable relationship we have built over recent years,” wrote Allen.

His regular letters to Koussa began “Dear Moussa”. One, dated Christmas Day 2003, was signed, “Your Friend, Mark”.

The correspondence makes plain that Belhaji was far from the only Libyan whose torture was aided and abetted by the British and US intelligence services.

The Allen-Koussa exchanges took place in the period immediately preceding Blair's first visit to Gaddafi.

The rendition of another opponent of Gaddafi, Sami al-Saadi, kidnapped in Hong Kong with his wife and four children and held for three days in the Maldives, coincided exactly with Blair's desert jaunt.

Saadi and his wife were handcuffed and hooded for the journey onwards to Tripoli. He says their children, girls aged 14 and six, boys of 12 and 10, "cried and screamed" all the way.

His wife and children were released after two months in a Tripoli jail. Saadi was held and, he says, tortured for six years.

The sequence was this: Saadi family kidnapped; Blair meets Gaddafi and signs half-billion pound oil exploration deal; family delivered to Tripoli.

Work it out for yourselves, people.

Very soon after these events, Allen was knighted on Blair's recommendation.

Very soon after that again, Sir Mark resigned his job with MI6 and went to work for British Petroleum, then jockeying at the front of the pack for a share of the contracts now becoming available as a result of the improvement in UK-Libyan relations which Blair and Sir Mark had done so much to promote.

MI6 has let it be known that everything done by Allen and others complied with "ministerially authorised Government policy".

In other words, the Blair Government gave the thumbs-up to torture. Last I've heard, Sir Mark isn't crouching in his home besieged by journalists demanding that he explain his role.



CLASS WAR REPORTS

OK, HERE'S THE DEAL -
WE'LL INCREASE YOUR CREDIT...

... AND YOU AGREE
IT WAS ALL YOUR FAULT.



“Thousands Of Defectors From The Regular Syrian Army Have Formed Themselves Into The Free Syrian Army (FSA) And Have Undertaken Military Operations To Protect Civilians From The Regime’s Security Forces”

“Homs, With More Than 1 Million Inhabitants, Has Emerged As The Scene Of Intense Battles Between The Regime’s Army And The Military Defectors”

“A Strike Wave Started In The Southern Province Of Daraa And Spread To Other Areas”

“The General Strike Was Observed In All Areas Where Protests Have Been Taking Place”

November 3, 2011 Yusef Khalil, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

Syria’s revolution against the Bashar al-Assad regime is now in its eighth month, but neither side can claim victory.

Though the dictatorship’s heavy-handed repression against mass demonstrations has intimidated many people from coming out into the street, large protests continue.

This stalemate, which has taken a heavy toll on the Syrian people--estimates put the number killed at more than 3,000--has brought into question the movement’s ability to maintain its momentum and succeed in overthrowing the regime without resorting to arms.

Thousands of defectors from the regular Syrian army have formed themselves into the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and have undertaken military operations to protect civilians from the regime’s security forces.

So far, there are no formal ties between the FSA and the civilian organizations of the revolution, such as the Coordinating Committees, the Syrian Revolution General Commission and the Syrian National Council (SNC).

Some activists are calling for militarizing the revolution as the only way to defeat the dictatorship, while others fear that resorting to arms will actually put them at a disadvantage against the regime’s better-trained and better-equipped military forces.

Homs, Syria's third-largest city with more than 1 million inhabitants, has emerged as the scene of intense battles between the regime's army and the military defectors in the FSA.

Government forces are engaged in a massive military operation for months, where they have used tanks and heavy machine guns in an unsuccessful attempt to subdue the city.

“A Strike Wave Started In The Southern Province Of Daraa And Spread To Other Areas”

It is in this context that a strike wave started in the southern province of Daraa and spread to other areas.

The success of that strike wave led activists in the central city of Homs to call for a strike to protest the government's attacks, and the revolutionaries called upon the rest of the country to observe the action.

This was not the first time that Syrian activists called for a general strike, but previous attempts had failed.

However, this time, with the success of the strikes in the south and the expansion of the strike wave, the Coordinating Committees and SNC called for a nationwide general strike on October 26 to coincide with the Arab League delegation's visit to Syria.

The Arab League is widely seen as having stood by silently and given the Assad forces time to crush the revolt and massacre the protesters.

The October 26 general strike, according to the Syrian National Council, is seen as a “prelude to bigger more comprehensive strikes leading to large scale civil disobedience capable of overthrowing the regime using the Syrian people's own power.

“The general strike is a signal that the revolution of dignity and freedom is entering a new phase of struggle, and an expression of continuing peaceful resistance until victory.”

The strike in Daraa continued for eight consecutive days, paralyzing the city. The strike only ended when hundreds of soldiers started breaking windows and forcing shops to open under threat of violence.

According to a Reuters report:

“The strike illustrated the growing strength of a new young clandestine leadership behind the protests, who residents say have taken local public officials in Daraa by surprise with their organizational skills.

“Witnesses said masked youths took to the streets at night hanging posters and writing graffiti on school walls, shops and public buildings in support of the strike and warning businessmen against opening up. ‘There are many merchants who complained about the closure and said their interests were hurt but had no choice but to heed the calls of

the activists with such a strong climate of public opinion in their favor,' said Ahmad Aba Zaid, an instructor in a vocational college.

"Activists said the strike had emboldened the people of Daraa to expand their defiance beyond daily protests to acts of civil disobedience. 'The strike had many meanings. It gave us confidence that if we are able to go that far (then) we are capable of doing much more as long as the street is with us,' said an organizer who calls himself Abu Salman."

The general strike was observed in all areas where protests have been taking place, especially in Homs, where most workers stayed home and most shops were closed, and Hama, Idlib, Deir el-Zour, Qamishli, Daraa and its surrounding towns.

"We found that it was time to escalate from demonstrations to strikes within the framework of our peaceful actions, especially since strikes have direct impacts on the regime's economic situation which is its weakest point," a member of the SNC told Al-Sharq al-Awsat. Going on strike does not jeopardize the lives of the activists, continued the paper, and it decreases the number of dead and wounded and makes possible the transition into a stage of civil disobedience.

"The Revolution's Movement Is In Waves--It Is Not A Path Of Continual Expansion Without Turns"

The Syrian revolution has had many ups and downs.

The protesters have come out in huge numbers which slowly waned over time as casualties mounted, only to surge back again recently. The regime is betting that they can break the will of the revolutionaries with sheer force, and that an impasse will erode the confidence and momentum of the protests.

The government is also playing on religious and ethnic differences, pitting Arabs against Kurds and stoking fears among the Alawite Muslim and Christian minorities that the revolution would bring Sunni Muslim fundamentalists to power.

But Assad's divide-and-rule strategy hasn't been able to crush the revolution. As Syrian writer and dissident Yassin Al Haj Saleh puts it:

"Our only bet is on the movement of the Syrian street. It has already changed Syria in irrevocable ways. The revolution's movement is in waves--it is not a path of continual expansion without turns.

"While the occupation of public spaces by demonstrations and public opposition to the regime remain the basic forms of protest of the Syrian Revolution, it is important to diversify the forms of struggle so we can at some time reach the national general strike. This may require local rehearsals and experiments which display the cause of the revolution and are less costly in human terms. This could lead wider layers of today's silent masses into participating in the revolution."

The economic conditions for a strike wave have been present in Syria for years. As the Assad regime and its close businessmen have adopted free-market, neoliberal policies to open up the Syrian economy to the world market, the standard of living of Syrian

workers has plummeted. This despite official figures showing an average economic growth around 5 percent [5] over the last five years.

But while the economy has been privatized, and the corruption, nepotism, mismanagement and obscene wealth of the regime's closest businessmen has been on public display, the official trade unions have not fought back against this exploitation of workers.

The example of the Egyptian Revolution points the way forward for the struggle in Syria. As Egyptian socialist Sameh Naguib points out, years of working class struggle in Egypt prepared the ground for the moment when a strike wave delivered the decisive blow to the Mubarak regime in February.

The Syrian working class does not have the same recent history and years-long experience as their Egyptian brothers and sisters. But in the past few months, Syrian workers have shown that they are just as capable and creative in fighting for their freedom and dignity, while resisting the most severe forms of state repression.

The strikes, both local and general, can show a way out of the current impasse, and may become weekly occurrences. The question now is how to use these strikes effectively as weapons against a violent regime.

At the same time, the strikes can become tools to build independent unions and organizations capable of advancing the struggle and uniting the Syrian working class across sectarian and ethnic lines.

The future of the Syrian revolution hangs in the balance.

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