

Military Resistance 10A6



**My Husband's Going To
Afghanistan
"The Very Morning Deployment
To Afghanistan Was Becoming
A Reality For Nearly 100 Local
Families, President Obama Was
Announcing Plans For A
Reduced American Military"**

**“I Keep Thinking That Maybe
They’ll Just Say It’s Canceled, And
He’ll Come Back,”**

**“Cheer Them On. But All The While,
You Wonder: Will They All Make It
Back?”**

**“America Has Relied On Its National
Guard Volunteers In Unprecedented
Numbers For Its Two Wars”**



January 5 By Petula Dvorak, The Washington Post

They all heard some version of the same thing.

“Whaddaya mean, deployed?” Or “I thought everyone came home.”

Or “Isn’t it over?”

Even across the river at the Pentagon, the very morning deployment to Afghanistan was becoming a reality for nearly 100 local families, President Obama was announcing plans for a reduced American military.

Heading off to war seems so 2002, not 2012.

And yet, here we are.

"It's like all of America forgot that we're still going out there. My husband's going to Afghanistan. I have to tell people it's a whole different war," said Chaniqua Moore, 23, a District mother of two who was one of 80 families saying goodbye to their soldiers Thursday morning at the D.C. Armory.

Amira Ayala, 20, will spend the next year alone in her new Front Royal home with her 2-month-old daughter while her husband is deployed.

"I keep thinking that maybe they'll just say it's canceled, and he'll come back," she said.

Ayala dated a Marine once and dealt with his deployment. But she married a National Guard soldier and hoped it would be different.

But it isn't, because America has relied on its National Guard volunteers in unprecedented numbers for its two wars.

Hundreds of thousands of guardsmen have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan during the past decade.

So Ayala sat among the other families on creaky risers at the armory in Southeast Washington, where she forced a cheer for the soldiers heading to war in an old and emotional ritual: the departure ceremony.

It's like a bittersweet pep rally. You've gotta be strong, hold your head high. Cheer them on. But all the while, you wonder: Will they all make it back?

The 80 members of the Army National Guard units heading to Afghanistan lined up in front of the audience, standing at attention, trying not to react to the waves or smiles or a tiny voice crying "Daddy! Daddy! Daddeeeeeeeeeeeeeee."

They bowed their heads as a chaplain prayed for their safe return. Among those heading to where?

An unemployed father of five whose wife is pregnant.

A college student.

A business consultant whose daughter is 5 months old.

A newlywed.

Three sets of cousins.

They are 23, 38, 45 and then some. Some are soldiers who left the Marines or the Army and went straight to the Guard because that's who they are, what they know. But many are civilians whose family tolerated their weekend drills and even puffed up a little when

they hit the streets of their community to help in Snowmageddon or lined the parade route during the Obama inauguration.

“She was out there helping in the snow,” Vernita Perry said of her daughter, Spec. Nivek Epps, who was standing at attention, to the shock and awe of her large group of friends who came to say goodbye to her.

One was dressed like Snooki; another wore a flashy, diamante bangle. They gave her a bouquet of yellow daisies, hugs and arm punches when she walked over to them. Clearly, they haven’t seen her in uniform often.

“I can’t believe my best friend is doing this,” said the semi-Snooki.

“I don’t have the slightest idea why she ever did this,” said her mother. “But helping with the snow, that was okay. This? Going to Afghanistan? I can’t believe it’s happening. I don’t want her to go.”

Gold and green star balloons sagged lazily over hors d’oeuvres tables. The soldiers ate big plates. The mothers barely nibbled.

The Army band played standards that echoed in the cavernous space, and dads held their kids tight, a final drool stain for their uniforms, a baby’s Godspeed blessing.

“I’m trying not to think about it,” said Lt. Matthew Wilson, who will be away from his 4-month-old daughter, Kennedy, an avid drooler.

His wife, Carolyn Wilson, 23, is new to deployments, to the military and to mothering. But she’s upbeat, even volunteering to coordinate the family support system.

“We’re ready for it,” she said, firmly.

She’ll spend the time talking to other family members, walking their baby in their Northwest Washington neighborhood by the National Cathedral. “I stopped working so I could be with her,” she explained.

Shelby Manning, 36, also put her plans to go back to school on hold during the deployment. With five kids and another on the way, what else could she do?

“The last deployment was really hard. That was a tough one,” she said, holding her 2-year-old back from his constant pursuit of “Daddeeeeeeeee.” This will be their third deployment.

She moved in with her parents in Burke, and she’ll concentrate on the kids while her husband is gone.

And she wants everyone to know that this tough, endless cycle — deployment, unemployment, deployment — is still going on.

“We were just talking about that the other day. No one wants to believe he’s being deployed again,” she said. “After everyone came back from Iraq, Americans forget there’s another war still going on.”

Yes, even in 2012.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

McAllen Soldier Remembered For Having Heart Of Gold



Army Spc. Kurt Kern: Courtesy photo

December 29, 2011 Ildefonso Ortiz, The Monitor

McALLEN -- Kurt Kern, 24, of McAllen died Tuesday while serving as a U.S. Army Specialist in Afghanistan.

Family members at Kern's home issued a statement Wednesday afternoon thanking the public for its support and asking for privacy in their time of sorrow.

The Department of Defense officially announced that Kern of "injuries suffered from the detonation of an improvised explosive device."

Kern had been stationed 60 minutes south of Kabul in Afghanistan.

After receiving notification, Kern's childhood friend Jay Honeycutt, 24, couldn't believe that the person who was going to be the best man at his wedding was never coming back.

"He is one of the few people who could smile through everything, and if he was there, he would try to make you laugh," Honeycutt said.

The reference to being Honeycutt's best man comes after a recent Skype conversation in which Honeycutt told Kern that he had broken up with his girlfriend -- a woman to whom he had planned on proposing. He had wanted Kern to be the best man.

"I told him that he would need to write a brand new speech," Honeycutt said. "He said that he would use the same speech but just switch the name of the girl."

Ricardo Barrera, another childhood friend said the news of Kern's death hasn't sunk in.

"He always tried to make you smile," Barrera said. "He supported me when my father was sick with cancer. He was a great person with a good heart ... This morning, I still couldn't make sense of it -- we really won't get to see him anymore."

The two described Kern's life as an inspiration. They saw him deal with a tough financial situation after his father fell ill.

"He dealt with adversity," Honeycutt said.

After not being able to finish culinary school because of a tight financial situation, Kern joined the military and had plans to later go to law school.

"He found his purpose in the military," Honeycutt said, adding that while Kern was stationed at Fort Hood, the two would meet regularly.

Childhood friend Olivia Tamez described Kern as a heart of gold. The two knew each other from their time in elementary, middle and high school. While the two parted ways after their graduation in 2006, they would catch up whenever they would run into each other, Tamez said.

"The last time I spoke to him he proudly told me that he had joined the military and was looking forward to serving," Tamez said. "When I heard of his passing earlier today, I was genuinely shocked.

"I hear about soldiers dying in combat in the news every day but, when it happens to someone you personally know, it's very hard to swallow, especially such a nice person like him."

Kern graduated from McAllen Memorial High School in 2006, said Mark May, spokesman for the McAllen Independent School District.

"The McAllen ISD family has lost one of its own," said district superintendent Jose Ponce in a written statement. "Kurt Kern, a 2006 graduate of McAllen Memorial High School, has passed away while serving his country overseas in the U.S. Armed Forces."

Bill Littleton, head coach at McAllen Memorial High School for nine years, remembered Kern as a good kid who worked hard at school and played hard on the football field. "He played for us," Littleton said. "He played fullback, and we also had him at the defensive line ... You hate it anytime one of our soldiers dies, especially a young person who played with us. He was a good person he wanted to better himself and keep his country free."

Members of America's Last Patrol are scheduled to meet with the Kern family today to pay their respects and offer their services, said commander Ricardo Peña. The Last Patrol offers a flag raising ceremony as well as helping the family with any of their immediate needs and final arrangements.

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

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

**After U.S. Slaughter Of Their
Soldiers On Afghan Border,
Pakistan Military Has Had
Enough:**

**“Pakistan Has Already Stopped
Billing The United States For Its
Anti-Terror War Expenses”**

**“Pakistan Will Further Reduce The
Number Of U.S. Military People In
Pakistan”**

**“Pakistan Also Asked The U.S. Not To
Send Any High-Level Visitors To
Pakistan For Some Time”**

“If the money stops we can get our act together and manage. It is not the first time that American money has dried up and maybe we need to go cold turkey. Maybe in the long term we will be saying, “Thank God this happened.””

Pakistan will further reduce the number of U.S. military people in Pakistan, limit military exchanges with the United States and rekindle its relationship with neighbors, such as China, which has been a more reliable ally according to Islamabad.

Jan 3, 2012 By Anne Gearan and Kathy Gannon - The Associated Press [Excerpts]

RAWALPINDI, Pakistan — In what could be the biggest change in a decade in a relationship that has been a mainstay of U.S. military and counterterrorism policy since the 9/11 terror attacks, the United States and Pakistan are lowering expectations for what the two nations will do together and planning for a period of more limited contact.

The change means less cooperation with Washington and a willingness to swear off some aid that often made Pakistan feel too dependent, and too pushed around.

Both U.S. and Pakistani officials said the November killing of 24 Pakistani soldiers in a U.S. airstrike and Washington's refusal to outright apologize for the deaths has been a game changer in a relationship characterized by mistrust and mutual acrimony.

Pakistan has already stopped billing the United States for its anti-terror war expenses under the 10-year-old Coalition Support Fund, set up by Washington after the 9/11 attacks to reimburse its many allies for their military expenses fighting terrorists worldwide and touted by the U.S. as a success story.

“From here on in we want a very formal, business-like relationship. The lines will be drawn. There will be no more of the free run of the past, no more interpretation of rules. We want it very formal with agreed upon limits,” military spokesman Gen. Athar Abbas told The Associated Press in an interview in the garrison town of Rawalpindi.

Pakistan will further reduce the number of U.S. military people in Pakistan, limit military exchanges with the United States and rekindle its relationship with neighbors, such as China, which has been a more reliable ally according to Islamabad.

Earlier this year Pakistan signed a deal with China for 50 JF-17 aircraft with sophisticated avionics, compared by some, who are familiar with military equipment, to the U.S.-made F-16 fighter jets.

Pakistan retaliated for the friendly fire deaths by shutting down NATO's supply routes to Afghanistan and kicked the U.S. out of an air base it used to facilitate drone attacks in Pakistan's tribal belt.

Both U.S. and Pakistani officials expect more fallout, most likely in the form of additional tolls or taxes on NATO supplies into Afghanistan through Pakistan. There could also be charges for use of Pakistani airspace, said some officials in Pakistan.

Pakistan also asked the U.S. not to send any high-level visitors to Pakistan for some time, the U.S. official said.

After past crises, including the flare-up of anti-U.S. fervor following the killing of Osama bin Laden by U.S. forces in May, Pakistan had accepted top-level U.S. officials for a public peace-making session rather quickly. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and the then- top U.S. military official visited Pakistan less than a month after the bin Laden raid, and pledged continued cooperation on several fronts.

U.S. officials said they would like to mend fences quickly, but the senior administration official and others said they assume there will be less contact, fewer high-profile joint projects and fewer American government employees living and working in Pakistan.

With more than 3,000 Pakistani soldiers killed and thousands more injured in border fights with militants as part of the anti-terror war, Abbas said the Pakistan military has grown weary of Washington's repeated calls for Pakistan to do more.

Abbas said U.S. cash payments, made through the Coalition Support Fund, have been erratic. In the last 10 years Pakistan's army has seen only \$1.8 billion of \$8.6 billion in CSF funds.

The rest of the money was siphoned off by the military government of Gen. Pervez Musharraf to finance subsidies and prop up his government.

“The equipment we have been getting from America over the last five years has been almost a trickle,” said former national security advisor retired Gen. Mahmud Durrani.

He complained of “second-hand helicopters that were badly refitted.”

Less aid might propel Pakistan toward greater financial independence, he added.

“If the money stops we can get our act together and manage. It is not the first time that American money has dried up and maybe we need to go cold turkey. Maybe in the long term we will be saying, “Thank God this happened.”“

MILITARY NEWS

“The Pentagon Is Undercounting The Number Of Casualties In Iraq And Afghanistan By Not Including In The Official Tally All The Troops Who Suffer Concussions Caused By A Blast”

“The True Number Of Wounded Is More Than The 47,409 Troops Listed On The Defense Department Website”

1.6.12 By Gregg Zoroya, USA TODAY [Excerpts]

The Pentagon is undercounting the number of casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan by not including in the official tally all the troops who suffer concussions caused by a blast, Defense Department officials say.

Though the undercount has no effect on the medical treatment of those troops, it means the true number of wounded is more than the 47,409 troops listed on the Defense Department website.

“It’s clear that they’re not all being counted,” says Mark Ward, a program manager for casualty affairs.

It is unclear how many concussions have not been counted in the casualty figure.

Potentially thousands occur each year in combat, according to medical and research figures.

A hundred concussions per month were being identified last year in Iraq and Afghanistan through the use of more aggressive efforts to identify and treat blast-related concussions.

Michael O’Hanlon, a defense expert at the Brookings Institution, says accurate casualty counts are essential.

“They’re important in terms of the cost of the wars,” O’Hanlon says.

Blast-related mild brain injury is among the most common wounds in Afghanistan because of the many buried explosives targeting convoys and foot patrols. More troops survive such blasts because of armored vehicles and body armor, so brain injuries from shock waves have risen.

The signs of brain injury — including severe headaches, light sensitivity and difficulty with problem-solving — are not always reported to doctors. Tens of thousands of such injuries may have been missed early in both wars.

Although most concussions heal in days or weeks, a second head injury that occurs before the brain has recovered can cause serious, permanent damage.

Some Pentagon officials say that early in the wars, they did not fully understand the wound.

The military has “struggled with how important is mild TBI (traumatic brain injury), and I think people were pretty cavalier going in (to the wars): ‘Get your bell rung, it’s no big

deal,' " says Michael Kilpatrick, a Pentagon health official. "There's been a change in that attitude."

HOW MANY MORE FOR OBAMA'S WARS?



The body of Army Spc. Kurt Kern at the McCreery Aviation Co. hangar on Jan. 6, 2012 in McAllen, Texas. Kern, 24, died Dec. 27 in Paktia, Afghanistan, of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his unit with an improvised explosive device. (AP Photo/The Monitor, Gabe Hernandez)

**Accusations From Oklahoma
National Guard Troops In
Afghanistan That Their Unit Has
Been Issued Inferior Equipment:
45th Vehicles May Be Unfit;
“Negative Feedback’ From Members Of
The 279th Infantry Regiment At Their
Forward Operating Base”**

1/3/2012 By JIM MYERS Tulsa World Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON - U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe said Monday that he is looking into accusations from Oklahoma National Guard troops in Afghanistan that their unit has been issued inferior equipment left over from the Army's regular forces.

"That is not supposed to happen," the Oklahoma Republican said just after returning from spending the New Year's holiday with members of the 45th Infantry Brigade Combat Team in Afghanistan and Kuwait. "We are checking to see what is different."

Inhofe said he received the "negative feedback" from members of the 279th Infantry Regiment at their forward operating base at Ghazni in Afghanistan.

Inhofe said members of the 279th claimed that the vehicles their unit was issued were inferior or leftover equipment.

"They are supposed to have the same equipment," he said.

Inhofe was asked if the troops expressing such concerns believe that their mission was affected by the inferior equipment or that they had been put more at risk because of it.

Inhofe said they implied it.

He said the congressional delegation visiting the base was running out of time and did not actually see the equipment cited by the troops.

Inhofe said he asked the troops to take pictures of that equipment and send those to him.

He noted that historically there is a "fight" between the National Guard and regular military forces over equipment and other issues.

More than 3,000 soldiers with the 45th are stationed in Afghanistan, the largest deployment by the Oklahoma National Guard since the Korean War.

The brigade has lost 14 members in Afghanistan since July.

Inhofe also visited members of the 45th who were deployed to Kuwait.

He remains critical of the Obama administration's "last-minute" decision to send troops to Kuwait, which, he said, was based on political considerations.

"That upset our troops," he said, adding that the Oklahoma troops "felt they were shafted."

**Iraq Combat Veteran Dan Choi
Attacked And Barred From
Bradley Manning Hearing At Ft.
Meade:**

**“They Handcuffed Me, And Then
They High-Tackled Me To The
Ground, Pinned Me Down”**

**“As They Were Throwing Me To The
Ground, And I Was Handcuffed, At
Which Point They Said I Was
Assaulting Them”**

**“And They Said, ‘You’re Assaulting Us,
And We’re Kicking You Out’”**

[Thanks to Felicity Arbuthnot, who sent this in. She writes: “Possible life sentence for allegedly telling the truth, forcibly ejected and humiliated for supporting the alleged truth. ‘Land of the free’, has become a strange place.”]

December 21, 2011 Democracy Now [Excerpts]

NERMEEN SHAIKH: We’re joined here in the studio by former Lieutenant Dan Choi, who attended the trial this weekend but was barred from returning on Monday. Lieutenant Choi is an Iraq combat veteran and supporter of Bradley Manning.

He’s also an openly gay servicemember who was discharged in 2010 under “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”

Welcome, Lieutenant.

LT. DAN CHOI: It’s great to be with you, and it’s great to be with you in the uniform of my country.

NERMEEN SHAIKH: Can you explain, Dan, what happened on Monday at the trial?

LT. DAN CHOI: I went to the main gate with Dan Ellsberg, and we were stopped for about 10 minutes, delayed from entering the base. They knew that we were going there for trial.

I had been there the few days beforehand, in full uniform.

And I was accosted as to why I'm wearing the uniform if I was discharged, that I'm not allowed to wear the uniform.

And I argued with them, said, "Take a look at the Army Regulation 670-1, as well as Schacht v. The United States, 1970. I have the right to wear this uniform."

And he said, "I'm not trying to fight you." And I said, "Well, I will pick a fight with you, because I know the law, and it's my right to be there to support Bradley Manning." He let us in—

NERMEEN SHAIKH: Why did they say that you can't wear the uniform? What kind of law were they invoking?

LT. DAN CHOI: I think — well, the real reason, I think, is they're angry that anybody who's a combat veteran of the Iraq War, who served in our military, who's proud of their service, would dare sit in support of Bradley Manning.

And it was a way for the military public affairs office to control the message and the images that go out to the public.

I think that's the real reason. And so, as I've noticed throughout many times, throughout not only this ordeal and this event, but throughout my military service and watching the military now from the outside, they do find other ways to punish those who they disagree with.

AMY GOODMAN: So, on Monday, exactly what happened when you tried to go in? They handcuffed you?

LT. DAN CHOI: When I tried to go in, they said that I was heckling the hearing, which was impossible because I wasn't in the hearing that morning.

The past two days I was absolutely quiet and peaceful, adding to the decorum and the dignity of the event.

But they said that I was heckling, and so they ejected me. They said, "Get out of here."

AMY GOODMAN: Get out of the base.

LT. DAN CHOI: Yes.

Major Sides and a U.S. marshal named John, they said that I was disruptive, at which point they handcuffed me, and then they high-tackled me to the ground, pinned me

down. And I have a picture of—and actually x-rays that I took the night of—that show that I was bruised in my left leg. I was given this because of my wrist sprain.

AMY GOODMAN: You're wearing a wrist brace.

LT. DAN CHOI: Yes. I was — I'm actually supposed to wear it on both, but it's really the right wrist that was damaged the most. And this is my rank, that doesn't go back on anymore. So—

AMY GOODMAN: Because?

LT. DAN CHOI: Because they assaulted me. And when they ripped off the rank, it was — don't know if it was intentional. I wasn't watching everything.

AMY GOODMAN: They ripped the rank off your shoulder?

LT. DAN CHOI: As they were throwing me to the ground, and I was handcuffed, at which point they said I was assaulting them. I was yelling, "I have a right to be here. There's no charge. There's no reason why you should be assaulting me and using excessive force. There's no reason why you should be invidiously prior restraining me. There's no reason. I know my rights. This is an open trial."

And they said, "You're assaulting us, and we're kicking you out." So then they said, "You're not allowed to go back for the entire duration of the pretrial."

NERMEEN SHAIKH: So, I just want to turn to the statement that the military issued, the statement which defended its decision for handcuffing Lieutenant Dan Choi and ejecting him from Fort Meade, where Bradley Manning's pretrial hearing was taking place. The statement said, quote, "Mr. Choi violated the terms of the hearing by being disruptive, and calling out ranks and names of individuals in uniform supporting the procedures. The security detail directed him to refrain from such conduct. When he continued his disruptive behavior, he was asked to leave, which he refused.

"During the process of escorting him from the facility, Mr. Choi was combative, which required the security personnel to restrain him for his own safety, and the safety of the escorts.

Mr. Choi was escorted off the installation and advised he could not return to Fort Meade for the rest of the day." Dan, can you...

LT. DAN CHOI: We've heard some of that same language before used on Bradley Manning, that for his own safety, we have to strip him naked for months and have him sleep in the cold without any covering, while being watched and humiliated.

We've heard the same arguments used and recycled again.

And looking at the military now, the way that they treat me—I've been through a lot in the military, being discharged under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and the oppression of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." But I'll tell you, sitting in that trial over all this entire ordeal this weekend, America has not seen a lower moment.

And when you talk about the reason why there's a trial, to begin with, whether the American people have a right to the truth, you see the public affairs state-run media organization telling the American people absolute misleading half-truths about what happened.

I wasn't in the hearing. I wasn't heckling anybody. I've never heckled anybody.

I'm a public speaker. I find it very difficult when people do heckle.

But I have been adding to the decorum of the trial, and I don't see why they did that to me. So they're finding ways to spin, spin, spin, and that's exactly what this show trial is all about.

AMY GOODMAN: Can you talk about why, Lieutenant Dan Choi, you've chosen to stand up for Bradley Manning? When did his case come to your attention?

LT. DAN CHOI: Well, Bradley Manning and I actually served in the same unit, the 10th Mountain Division. This is my combat patch.

And we're not at the same time in the same unit, but I deployed with some of his same supervisors.

So, to sit there in trial and to see Master Sergeant Adkins essentially plead the Fifth and see some of the other commanders worried more about their rank and status and privilege and what happens to their pension after they get discharge or a demotion, you sit there in disgust, because you realize that the oath that Bradley Manning, Master Sergeant Adkins and everybody up and down the chain of command, including President Barack Obama, took, did not say that "I promise to gain a certain rank or a certain stature."

They said, "I promise to defend the Constitution."

And when you see our Constitution under attack — and to quote Barack Obama, "the rule of law," a nation of laws, under attack, habeas corpus and the right to a fair trial— what ever happened to "innocent before proven guilty"?

Just because you're in the military doesn't mean that you give up what it means to be American.

And so, when I stand for Bradley Manning, I don't stand for him because we share the identity as gay Americans, but I support him because he's a good soldier.

We are trained in the Geneva and Hague Conventions, the rules of law, the law of land warfare, as well as the United States Code on war crimes. It is an ethical responsibility, and therefore a dereliction of duty, when you see a war crime, to stay silent.

One thing about the gay community—I know you brought this up to Ed, and we've been talking about this quite a bit with gay groups — I'm a little bit shocked and disappointed that a lot of the gay groups have not spoken up for Bradley Manning.

What Bradley Manning did, as a gay American, as a soldier, a good soldier—in fact, the only soldier in his entire chain of command who did the right thing, and suffers the consequences, unjustly — there’s no choice but for patriotic Americans to sit there and support Bradley Manning in the dignity and full honor of the uniform of service.

NERMEEN SHAIKH: *You don’t count Iraq as a just war then?*

LT. DAN CHOI: No, I don’t. I think it was an illegal war, and I am ashamed of what happened.

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 email contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe.

“For Iraq- And Afghanistan-Era Veterans The Jobless Rate For December Was 13.3%” “That Is Greater Than The 11.1% Reported For November 2011”

Jan 6, 2012 By Rick Maze - Staff writer, Army Times [Excepts]

Young veterans continue to have problems finding jobs even as the overall economy is improving, according to Friday’s employment situation report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The national unemployment rate fell to 8.5 percent in December and 200,000 jobs were created, continuing a trend of slow but steady improvement since August.

However, for Iraq- and Afghanistan-era veterans — those separated from active duty since Sept. 11, 2001 — the jobless rate for December was 13.3 percent. That is greater than the 11.7 percent unemployment rate for this generation of veterans recorded in December 2010 and also greater than the 11.1 percent reported for November 2011.

For veterans of all generations, the unemployment rate for December was 7.7 percent, slightly up from the 7.4 percent jobless rate reported for November but down from the 8.3 percent reported in December 2010.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



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

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

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

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

Frederick Douglass, 1852

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

**The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.
-- Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach”**

Sierra Hotel

[See For Yourself]

Excerpts from *Introduction To Ferdinand Lassalle's Speech To The Jury*
by Leon Trotsky (July 1905)

Imposing its own type of economy and its own relations on all countries, capitalism has transformed the entire world into a single economic and political organism.

And just as modern credit binds thousands of enterprises together by an invisible thread and imparts astounding mobility to capital, eliminating numerous small and partial crises while at the same time making general economic crises incomparably more serious, so the entire economic and political functioning of capitalism, with its world trade, its system of monstrous state debts and international political alliances, which are drawing all the reactionary forces into a single worldwide joint-stock company, has not only resisted all partial political crises but has also prepared the conditions for a social crisis of unprecedented dimensions.

Internalizing all the pathological processes, circumventing all the difficulties, brushing aside all the profound questions of domestic and international politics, and hiding all the contradictions, the bourgeoisie has postponed the denouement while simultaneously preparing a radical, worldwide liquidation of its supremacy.

This small planet on which we live will only complete this task once.

How fortunate is the generation that will shoulder this responsibility

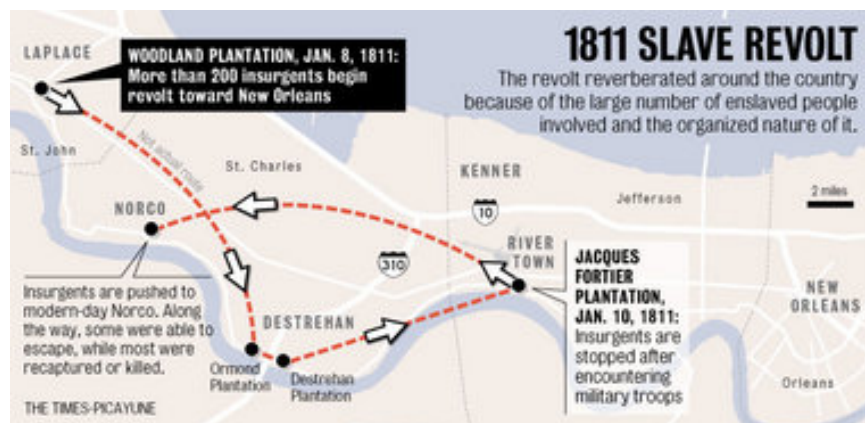
ANNIVERSARIES

**Jan. 8, 1811:
Magnificent Anniversary:
The Largest Slave Revolt In U.S.
History:**

“There Were People Willing To Make The Ultimate Sacrifices To Better Not Just Themselves But Other People”



Art by renowned River Parishes artist Lorraine Gendron depicts the revolt by enslaved people in 1811 in St. John and St. Charles parishes that reverberated around the country. The art hangs in the Destrehan Plantation exhibit commemorating the 200-year anniversary of the revolt. David Grunfeld, The Times-Picayune



January 03, 2011 By Littice Bacon-Blood, The Times-Picayune [Excerpts]

More than a century before the first modern-day civil rights march, there was Charles Deslondes and his make-do army of more than 200 enslaved men battling with hoes, axes and cane knives for that most basic human right: freedom.

They spoke different languages, came from various parts of the United States, Africa and Haiti, and lived miles apart on plantations along the German Coast of Louisiana.

Yet after years of planning at clandestine meetings under the constant threat of immediate death, they staged a revolt on Jan. 8, 1811, that historians say is the largest uprising of enslaved people in this country.

“Slavery was very harsh and cruel, but the slaves themselves were not mindless chattel with no aspirations and no basis for humanity,” said John Hankins, executive director of the New Orleans African American Museum. “This revolt demonstrates that there were people willing to make the ultimate sacrifices to better not just themselves but other people.”

To mark the 200 year anniversary of that revolt, Destrehan Plantation, in conjunction with Tulane University and the African American Museum, located in Treme, is organizing a yearlong look at the uprising that reverberated around the fledgling nation because of the large number of enslaved people involved, its military strategy and oddly enough, because it demonstrated that all was not well among those held in bondage.

“I don’t think the United States as a whole understood that the enslaved black population were as unhappy as they were,” said Hazel Taylor, the special project coordinator at Destrehan Plantation. “Slave owners had a tendency to say that (slaves) were happy. What this did was put awareness on the people who were being oppressed.”

The revolt, which started in St. John the Baptist Parish about 30 miles west of New Orleans, also raised awareness of the harshness of the slave system and fueled the abolitionist movement, Taylor said.

It occurred just a year before Louisiana gained statehood and 50 years before Louisiana and 10 other southern states voted to secede from the union in favor of forming the Confederacy.

While historians may differ on whether there was one specific catalyst for the uprising, the historical accounts of the events that unfolded on Jan. 8 are generally uniform.

It started in LaPlace on the Woodland Plantation, led by Charles Deslondes, the son of an enslaved black woman and her white owner.

Deslondes, along with more than 200 others known mainly by first names, were headed to New Orleans in the hopes of joining with other revolution-minded free and enslaved black people.

Historian Daniel Rasmussen spent two years researching the revolt as part of his senior thesis at Harvard University and has expanded his initial work into a recently published book, called “American Uprising: The Untold Story of America’s Largest Slave Revolt.”

According to Rasmussen, the revolt had been planned for years and was “highly organized.”

“There were 11 separate leaders of the revolt, representing various different ethnic groups. In my book, I profile a few of these leaders, mainly Charles Deslondes, Kook, and Quamana. Kook and Quamana were Asante warriors brought over from Africa a mere five years before,” Rasmussen said.

“Charles Deslondes was the half-white son of a planter who had risen to the rank of driver, but was, actually, the ultimate sleeper cell, plotting revolt. These leaders took advantage of clandestine meetings in the cane fields and taverns of the German Coast, the slave dances in New Orleans, and the vast network of slave communications that extended throughout the Caribbean.”

Rasmussen and other historians say the revolt was inspired by the 1791 events in Haiti where the enslaved population took over that island nation and abolished slavery.

These revolutionists had similar dreams as they marched to the beat of drums and under waving banners toward New Orleans.

“These three men, each with different insights and abilities, had planned their insurrection and spread word of the uprising through small insurrectionary cells distributed up and down the coast, especially at James Brown’s plantation, the Meullion plantation, and the Kenner and Henderson plantation,” Rasmussen writes in his book.

Along the way they burned plantations and crops and collected weapons and ammunition. Two white planters were killed; their wives and children were spared.

“I realized that the revolt had been much larger -- and come much closer to succeeding - - than the planters and American officials let on. Contrary to their letters, which are the basis for most accounts of the revolt, the slave army posed an existential threat to white control over the city of New Orleans,” he said. “My biggest surprise as I dug into the sources was . . . just how close they came to conquering New Orleans and establishing a black Republic on the shores of the Mississippi.”

But their dreams of freedom were not to be realized.

On Jan. 10 at Jacques Fortier’s plantation near present-day River Town in Kenner, the makeshift army was forced to turn back after encountering a detachment of military troops, but found their retreat blocked by a group of local militia organized by planters. The number of insurgents killed when they were forced back to an area close to present day Norco varies: Some say 40 to 66, but the end result was that the uprising was stopped in Kenner.

Historians say some survivors were able to escape into the swamps, while others were returned to bondage.

On January 13, 1811 a tribunal convened at Destrehan Plantation and after three days of hearings, 45 men were either sentenced to death or sent on to New Orleans for further trials. Those sentenced to death, among them Charles Deslondes, Kook and Quamaan, were executed by a firing squad and beheaded.

Their heads were stuck on poles and placed along the river levee from New Orleans to LaPlace in an attempt to discourage similar rebellions.

““It was really brutally put down,” said Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, a New Orleans author and historian who is now an adjunct history professor at Michigan State University. “It was incredibly bloodthirsty in the way the elite put it down, cutting people into little pieces, displaying body parts.”

“There’s been a historical amnesia about anything that showed a really bitter exploitation and violence directed on the slave and former slave population,” Hall said. “A lot of historians didn’t want to talk about it and a lot of the public didn’t want to hear about it. But that’s evidently changing and I’m glad I lived long enough to see it.”

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STUCK ON STUPID

Why Few Trust The Big Media: Case In Point:

#1:

Militant Groups In Pakistan Form United Front

January 3 By Karin Brulliard and Haq Nawaz Khan, The Washington Post [Headline & Story lead]

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — At the urging of the Afghan Taliban, four major Pakistani insurgent factions have joined the Afghan guerrilla group known as the Haqqani network

in a council aimed at resolving infighting and ending militant violence against civilians in Pakistan.

The council's formation was announced in a leaflet distributed in recent days in North Waziristan, a remote Pakistani tribal area that is the base of the Haqqani network, a cross-border group that NATO forces in next-door Afghanistan call their most lethal foe. In the pamphlet, the Shura-i-Muraqba said it had formed in consultation with the Afghan Taliban and called on "all holy warriors" to avoid criminal activities or face punishment under Islamic law.

The new coalition could indicate a unified effort to strike harder against U.S.-led troops as they begin their withdrawal from Afghanistan, or it could signal a recognition that splintering has weakened the insurgency inside Pakistan, where the incidence of terrorist attacks fell 7 percent in the past year, according to data released Tuesday.

#2: Pakistan Taliban Commanders At Each Other's Throats

Jan 3, 2012 By Chris Allbritton, Reuters [Headline & Story lead]

Al Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban and Pakistani militants have held a series of meetings aimed at containing what could soon be open warfare between the two most powerful Pakistani Taliban leaders, militant sources have said.

Hakimullah Mehsud, the head of the Pakistani Taliban, also known as the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and his deputy, Wali-ur-Rehman, were at each other's throats, the sources said.

"You will soon hear that one of them has eliminated the other, though hectic efforts are going on by other commanders and common friends to resolve differences between the two," one TTP commander said.

Any division within the TTP could hinder the Afghan Taliban and al Qaeda's struggle in Afghanistan against the United States and its allies, making it more difficult to recruit young fighters and disrupting safe havens in Pakistan used by the Afghan militants.

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

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