

Military Resistance 14C9



**In Iraq Army’s Mosul Operation,
Iraqi Soldiers Run Away Again,
And “Completely Deserted Their
Positions”**

**After A U.S. Marine Was Killed
Defending A Position Abandoned
By Iraqi Troops, They Were
Supposed To Have Toughened Up:
“Most Soldiers Ran In Panic, Fleeing
In Their Humvees, Fearing ISIS
Mortar Attacks”**

“In Reality, Not One Mortar Shell Or Bullet Hit Close To Their Positions”



Iraqi soldiers gather during a military operation on the outskirts of Makhmour, south of Mosul, Iraq, March 25, 2016. Azad Lashkari/Reuters



The Iraqi army has begun its campaign to clear the Islamic State stronghold of Mosul. Phase One calls for retaking areas between Makhmour and Qayara, which would cut the supply lines to Bayji and Hawija. (Photo: John Bretschneider/Staff Source: Staff research, The Associated Press)

03.26.16 by Wladimir van Wilgenburg, The Daily Beast

TEL REEM, Iraq – At first, Iraqi soldiers involved in an operation to capture villages close to Mosul on Friday were in good spirits.

“Allah Akbar,” Arabic for “God is Great,” they shouted after they hit an alleged Islamic State (ISIS) suicide bomber with US-provided mortars.

But just one hour later many of them fled, fearing ISIS would strike back.

Early in the day, there were already signs of trouble.

A sergeant named Hussein from the artillery battalion told The Daily Beast, “There has been some delays in what we expected, but it’s mostly because of their heavy use of sniper fire and of IEDS. We have not been really advancing today, but that is not part of our plan as of yet, but in coming hours, we are planning to move forward.”

The first challenge was to capture the strategic little village of Nasr that would open the road for the Iraqi military to take the rest of the area. The ultimate short-term aim is to cross the Tigris River and take Qayarah. This would open the road to the city of Mosul for future operations.

But the combat around Nasr did not go well.

ISIS “left the village, and came back after a few hours,” said one tired Shia Arab fighter named Mohammed who is part of the Shia-led Hashid Shaabi militia forces.

He was angry at the Iraqi army, and the lack of U.S. air support after returning from the fight. “There were no airstrikes, where are the airstrikes?” he complained.

The cloudy weather and the lack of U.S. forward air controllers apparently prevented U.S. aircraft from carrying out strikes on Friday, while on Thursday, when the operation began, airstrikes could be seen hitting ISIS positions.

“The operation continues according to the plan. Only the weather conditions are not good,” said an Iraqi colonel, who refused to talk on the record. “If God wills it, everything will go to plan. The ISIS fighters are just depending on IEDs, and booby-trapped houses, there is no real confrontation. We are just dealing with bombs and snipers.

“There are no civilians, in the area,” he added.

It was stunning to see how quickly the mood changed on the battlefield.

Early in the day, Iraqi soldiers led by the commander of the Nineveh operations, Lieutenant General Najim al-Jibouri, seemed to be in high spirits, dancing traditional dances, and preparing to move out with Humvees into the village of Nasr.

“Our morale is very high, we are just waiting for the order from the commander. We have weapons. We are fighting terrorists. They have no morals, and no goals,” Iraqi soldier Hussein Samij from Diwaniyah province told The Daily Beast.

“As soon we get orders to really advance, we can get there in two days to Qayarah,” he added.

When their artillery struck something that created a huge explosion inside Nasr, Jibouri and his men shouted with joy. They thought maybe they’d hit an ISIS suicide bomber.

General Jibouri looked with his binoculars over the trench to see the result of the artillery, and it seemed he already thought he achieved victory over ISIS militants in the village.

Yet one hour later, his men were not so joyful, when most soldiers ran in panic, fleeing in their Humvees, fearing ISIS mortar attacks. Just a few of his men, including the artillery officers, stood their ground.

This seems to be exactly the biggest problem for the Iraqi army: the lack of morale.

One week ago Iraqi soldiers abandoned their base, which forced the United States to send in more Marines in support, and one of them was killed.

Again this time, Iraqi army soldiers almost completely deserted their positions, fearing an ISIS response to their artillery when, in reality, not one mortar shell or bullet hit close to their positions.

The lack of courage of Iraqi soldiers led to laughter among the Kurdish Peshmerga forces stationed nearby in a supporting role.

Unlike the Iraqi soldiers, the Peshmergas did not move one inch, kept on smoking, and were surprised when they saw suddenly all the soldiers fled.

“Did you film that?” one Peshmerga soldier asked me, with evident disgust.

“This is not the first time the Iraqi army ran away,” said Peshmerga soldier Ali Ahmed, making the case that the Kurds should get more backing. “Unfortunately the world does not appreciate us,” he said. “We have not received much in terms of salaries, weapons or support.

“If this huge force you see here were Peshmerga forces, we would have taken the village easily,” he added. “We are not afraid.”

In the beginning it was difficult to take the criticism by the Kurdish Peshmerga seriously due to ongoing the ongoing rivalry between the Kurds and the Iraqi military over disputed territories.

And it’s worth noting that the Peshmerga had difficulties defending their front lines in August 2014 when ISIS attacked them and quickly overran many positions, including the Yazidi town of Sinjar, leading to the genocide of the Yazidi minority.

Since then, however, Peshmergas have recovered with the help of U.S. airstrikes, Western coalition training, and German advanced anti-tank rockets and weapons. While the Peshmerga only have two brigades equipped with U.S. weapons, the Iraqi Army is fully equipped with weapons, armored vehicles, and artillery.

Many of the Kurdish Peshmerga have only their self-armored trucks and their old Kalashnikovs. And, still, they advance more quickly than Iraqi government forces.

Commander Zeyran Sheikh Hossani, the deputy commander of the Peshmerga troops here, who closely coordinates with the Iraqi commanders on the front, was shocked.

“The Iraqi army is not moving as strongly as it should be,” he told The Daily Beast. “Taking back Sinjar for us Peshmerga was very difficult near the Syrian borders, but we are not like the Iraqi army, and we took it in two days.”

“We fight for our own blood, but the Iraqi army cannot take one village in one day,” he added.

“If they don’t change their military tactics, they will not reach Qayarra, they will not even reach the river,” he said.

“The main problem is they don’t fight for their beliefs, if we had the same equipment and weapons, we would have already cleared the area in a few days.”

“As you can see they have much better weapons and vehicles than us, at the current pace, I wonder how long it will take for them to take Mosul, if they cannot take even one village in two days,” he said.

Later in the afternoon two ISIS mortars hit close to the Iraqi army positions that had been deserted earlier.

The lack of morale among Iraqi soldiers indicates that maybe more U.S. boots on the ground are needed, or more support for the Kurdish Peshmerga forces, in order to make the Mosul operation more feasible. Another option would be involving the Iraqi Special Operation forces that played a major role in clearing out Ramadi.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Mosul’s Civilian Deaths By U.S. Air Strikes “Benefitting The IS Group’s Propaganda Machine” “Ordinary People Live In Fear, The Islamic State Uses Deaths For

Propaganda And Iraqi Authorities Say Nothing”

“The Airstrikes That Got Ahmad Running Were Targeting Buildings That Were Part Of Mosul University, He Says”

“There Were Big Losses And Civilian Deaths”

03.24.2016 by “Special Correspondent,” Niqash. *Names of individuals still in Mosul, or with families still in Mosul, have been changed for security reasons.

An increase in air strikes on Mosul is causing more civilian casualties.

Ordinary people live in fear, the Islamic State uses deaths for propaganda and Iraqi authorities say nothing.

There are small signs of exactly how nervous the ordinary people of Mosul are. Small tents, swollen bags, cars ready to be driven away – most likely at high speed, and at a moment’s notice – and a non-stop search for the latest news on security developments.

Since June 2014 the northern metropolis, formerly home to an estimated 2 million people, has been under the control of the extremist group known as the Islamic State.

While some of the local population support the Islamic State, or IS, group, many others do not.

And these people are caught in between the IS group’s draconian rules and punishments for breaking them, air bombardment by the international coalition and the possibility of fighting breaking out should the Iraqi military decide to begin their campaign to liberate the city.

That latter possibility appears to be increasingly likely as the number of air strikes on the city seem to be ramping up.

Unfortunately though, because some of the airstrikes are killing civilians, that increase also seems to be benefitting the IS group’s propaganda machine.

“There are no specific times when the airstrikes start,” says Ahmad*, the eldest son of the al-Haj Sheet family, who used to live in the northern Majmouah-Thaqafiyah neighbourhood of Mosul.

“It is common to see people running down the street all of a sudden, at any time of day. I saw them last week. And then I found myself in the middle of screaming mothers and children running down the street too, almost by instinct, after a rocket hit our area and several other blocks around us.”

It is well known in Mosul that the IS group locate their offices in residential areas on purpose - it serves both to hide their fighters and members and to ensure damage to civilian targets.

The airstrikes that got Ahmad running were targeting buildings that were part of Mosul University, he says.

The buildings are only separated from his block by a 20 meter long street. “So there were big losses and civilian deaths,” the 34-year-old told NIQASH. “I was personally able to identify six people among the dead and wounded.”

His family has since moved away to another house in a different part of the city.

Some Iraqis have also started a Facebook campaign to draw attention to the increasing number of civilian deaths in Mosul, posting pictures of the dead and wounded.

The makers of the Facebook page have blamed just about everyone for the deaths: The international coalition, the IS group and even the Iraqi government and provincial authorities, who they accuse of ignoring civilian casualties.

One of the Facebook page producers, Bilal Saad, posted a picture of a friend of his from Majmouah, who died.

Saad was happy to use his real name because, as he explained, he managed to get out of Mosul six months ago with the help of people smugglers and was now in Istanbul. “If I hadn’t gone, I could have been a victim of these air strikes,” he concluded. “I used to work in the area, very close to where the bombs fell. My advice to those who are still in Mosul: Leave now, before it is too late,” Saad said.

Meanwhile the IS group has also taken advantage of these air strikes. Through its news agency, the organization published pictures and video of the bombing and then also of the dead and injured civilians.

The material was re-published by Iraqi news media. What the IS group didn’t do though, was reveal how many of its own fighters had been killed in the raids.

The international coalition started bombing runs against the IS group in Iraq, in August of 2014. Since the beginning of 2016, the coalition jets have bombed an estimated 10 different locations in Mosul, including residential areas. Locals say the deadliest raid took place mid-February in Mosul’s Yabisat neighbourhood.

Local man, Saadi Manawi, says that a rocket landed on one of the large warehouses in the area that was actually being used by displaced people. The target was a factory near there that had been being used by the IS group to put explosives in vehicles. But the rocket missed the target.

“Twenty one people were killed,” Manawi told NIQASH, “including 13 children. They were all buried in one big grave. Babies were laid to rest in their mother’s arms,” says the Iraqi man, who lost relatives in the raid.

Mosul locals have criticized both federal and provincial authorities for their complicity in the air strikes; nobody seems prepared to speak out against the international coalition, they complain.

The government in Baghdad has said nothing about the civilian deaths.

When contacted for a statement by NIQASH, the office of Nofal Hammadi al-Akoub, the recently appointed governor of Ninawa province, responded with this statement: “The governor has contacted the US and informed them of civilian deaths and casualties. He has asked them to be more accurate”.

So all the people of Mosul can do is wait and worry. “Even when the air strikes stop, we always hear news of operations on the ground,” says Ahmad of the al-Haj Sheet family. “There are so many questions we cannot answer. Where can we go? Will the IS fighters allow us to leave? Will the Mosul dam collapse and flood us? Will there be a blockade where we may starve? What forces will fight in Mosul? And will they treat us as enemies or friends?”

For the time being, nobody in Mosul has the answers. So the al-Haj Sheet family have made one decision, perhaps the only one they can.

Although they’ve moved house to escape the air strikes near the university, they have simply decided not to unpack.

“Political Crisis Has Rocked Baghdad” “More Destabilizing Than Authorities’ Battle Against Islamic State”

“Weeks Of Protests By Thousands Of Followers Of The Influential Shiite Cleric Muqtada Al-Sadr”

“Ever Since 2003, The Government Has Given Us Nothing”



Followers of the influential Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. (Photo: Khalid Mohammed/AP)

March 31, 2016 by Susannah George and Sinan Salaheddin, The Associated Press
[Excerpts]

BAGHDAD — Iraq’s prime minister proposed a new Cabinet lineup to the country’s lawmakers on Thursday, after weeks of pressure from supporters of a radical Shiite cleric who have staged rallies in the Iraqi capital and a sit-in next to the government headquarters to demand reforms.

The political crisis has rocked Baghdad and put a significant burden on Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, threatening to become a more destabilizing factor — at least in the eyes of the domestic audience — than the authorities’ battle against the extremist Islamic State group.

Al-Abadi came before the parliament on Thursday to tell lawmakers that he has reduced the number of Cabinet ministers to 16, from the previous 21-member government. He submitted the names of nominees for 14 ministerial positions, but said he would not replace the current defense and interior ministers, “given the current hard situation.”

The parliament now has 10 days to confirm al-Abadi’s nominees — or potentially gridlock the process further.

Thursday's developments come against the backdrop of weeks of protests by thousands of followers of the influential Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. His supporters have continued their sit-in outside the Iraqi capital's heavily fortified Green Zone, following the cleric's calls for political reform and an end to corruption.

On Sunday, al-Sadr ramped up the pressure on the government by himself launching a separate sit-in inside the Green Zone, which is home to key government offices and foreign embassies.

On Thursday, all roads leading to the Green Zone were closed and riot police and security forces were deployed around the area.

Shortly after the parliament session, al-Sadr called on his supporters to end their sit-in, but to continue "peaceful protests in all Iraqi provinces every Friday to put pressure on lawmakers to vote on the new Cabinet." In a televised speech from his tent erected inside the Green Zone, al-Sadr warned that if the parliament failed to vote, he would pull out his ministers from the Cabinet and call for vote of no confidence in al-Abadi's government.

Last August, al-Abadi proposed a sweeping reform package to combat corruption, cut government spending and merge ministries, but his efforts have been stymied by sectarian tensions and struggles to contain the Islamic State group.

Al-Sadr first began his public calls for reform in early February as pressure was building on al-Abadi. The Shiite cleric called for corrupt politicians to be held accountable and demanded a government made up of more technocrats rather than political party appointees.

When al-Sadr's supporters first pushed past security forces earlier this month to reach the Green Zone gates, raising the possibility of more violent confrontations, al-Abadi pulled some of Iraq's elite counterterrorism forces back from the fight against IS in the western Anbar province to help secure the capital.

The move delayed an offensive on the town of Hit, controlled by IS, for nearly two weeks.

"It's a big mess," said Assad al-Muttalabi, an Iraqi lawmaker and close ally of former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. "It's a very sensitive time, we are in an open war with Daesh and our finances are not in very good shape." Daesh is the Arabic language acronym for ISIS.

Iraq is also grappling with an economic crisis sparked by plunging global oil prices. Its budget is almost entirely dependent on oil revenues and despite exports being at record highs, the country is running a multibillion dollar a month deficit.

This has exacerbated Iraqis' long-standing frustrations with entrenched corruption and mismanagement that many blame for squandering fortunes while oil prices were high, leaving the country with crumbling infrastructure and poor to non-existent government services.

“Ever since 2003, the government has given us nothing,” said Haydar Ahmad, an al-Sadr supporter from east Baghdad who was camped out at the sit-in outside the Green Zone.

The 24-year-old dropped out of Arabic language studies at university this year to work at a supermarket to help support his family. “Al-Sadr is different from the other Iraqi leaders, he’s with the people,” he said.

Ahmed Ali, an Iraq analyst and senior fellow at the Institute of Regional and International Studies at the American University of Iraq, says the political crisis is likely to translate into a power struggle among government-sanctioned Shiite militia groups that have grown more powerful than Iraq’s security forces in the fight against ISIS.

Al-Sadr’s militia, which in the past often battled U.S. troops in Iraq, has rebranded itself as Saraya al-Salam and is among the dominant militias.

“The big shift now is that the battle among the Iraqi Shiite groups is not just about military success anymore, it’s about political success,” Ali said.

MILITARY NEWS

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



Marine Corps personnel move a transfer case containing the remains of Marine Corp Staff Sgt. Louis Cardin, of Temecula, Calif., at Dover Air Force Base, Del. (AP Photo/Cliff Owen)

Sharp Increase In Hurt Veterans Denied V.A. Benefits:

“I Really Don’t Know What I’m Going To Do”

“Afghanistan Happened. But No One Really Wants To Hear That”

“Former Members Of The Military Being Refused Benefits At The Highest Rate Since The System Was Created At The End Of World War II”



Joshua Bunn, who served in the Marine Corps, with his daughter and a friend, Patrick Goza, left, at home in Jonesboro, Ark. Credit Andrea Morales for The New York Times

The G. I. Bill instructed the veterans agency to care for veterans if their service was “other than dishonorable.” The agency interpreted this as excluding “other than honorable” discharges.

MARCH 30, 2016 By DAVE PHILIPPS, New York Times

Joshua Bunn was a rifleman in one of the bloodiest valleys in Afghanistan, where his infantry unit killed hundreds of enemy fighters and lost more comrades than any other battalion in the Marine Corps in 2009.

“We were so far out in Taliban country we rarely got resupply,” Mr. Bunn, 27, said in an interview from his apartment in Jonesboro, Ark. “We just got rockets and small-arms fire every day.”

After deployment, Mr. Bunn, suicidal and haunted by nightmares, went absent without leave. The Marine Corps charged him with misconduct and gave him an other-than-honorable discharge.

As a consequence, the Department of Veterans Affairs does not technically consider Mr. Bunn a veteran and has denied him permanent health care, disability pay and job training intended to ease his return to civilian life.

According to a new report, he is one of a growing number of veterans ruled ineligible for benefits because of less-than-honorable discharges.

Former members of the military like Mr. Bunn are being refused benefits at the highest rate since the system was created at the end of World War II, the report said.



Joshua Bunn, a veteran whose category of discharge precludes him from getting various V.A. services, walks to and from work despite the injury to his legs and back that makes it painful for him to do so. Credit Andrea Morales for The New York Times

More than 125,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have what are known as “bad paper” discharges that preclude them from receiving care, said the report, released Wednesday by the veterans advocacy group Swords to Plowshares.

The report for the first time compared 70 years of data from the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs.

It found that veterans who served after 2001 were nearly twice as likely as those who served during Vietnam to be barred from benefits, and four times as likely as men and women who served during World War II.

“We separate people for misconduct that is actually a symptom of the very reason they need health care,” said Coco Culhane, a lawyer who works with veterans at the Urban Justice Center in New York.

About 6.5 percent of all Iraq and Afghanistan troops have bad paper discharges, the report said. The highest rate is found in the Marine Corps, where one in 10 is now ineligible for benefits.

“It has gotten worse with every generation, and it appears to hit the veterans Congress intended to protect,” said Bradford Adams, a lawyer and an author of the report. “They knew these folks had been through combat, and wanted to make sure they had help. The V.A. doesn’t seem to be doing that.”

Specifically who is eligible for veterans benefits was detailed in the original Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944, also known as the G. I. Bill. The law barred troops with dishonorable discharges — those convicted at court-martial of serious crimes — as well as spies, deserters and a few others considered particularly heinous.

To allow leeway for less serious misconduct that might result from combat, Congress left open the door to benefits for a spectrum of discharges between honorable and dishonorable, including “undesirable” and “other than honorable.”

“We are trying to give the veteran the benefit of the doubt, for we think he is entitled to it,” Harry W. Colmery, a World War I veteran who wrote most of the G. I. Bill, told Congress at a hearing in 1944 before the bill was passed.

The rising proportion of ineligible veterans is largely due to the military’s increasing reliance on other-than-honorable discharges, which have been used as a quick way to dismiss troubled men and women who might otherwise qualify for time-consuming and expensive medical discharges.

The G. I. Bill instructed the veterans agency to care for veterans if their service was “other than dishonorable.” The agency interpreted this as excluding “other than honorable” discharges.

Though veterans can apply for a category upgrade, the process is confusing, inconsistent and slow, Mr. Adams said.

Only 10 percent of veterans are successful; a decision takes, on average, four years, the report said.

In some regions, all requests are rejected.

In a statement, the deputy secretary of veterans affairs, Sloan D. Gibson, said he welcomed the report's findings. "Where we can better advocate for and serve veterans within the law and regulation, we will look to do so as much as possible," he said.

Research has shown that veterans with bad paper discharges may be more likely to commit suicide. Those with untreated post-traumatic stress disorder are at higher risk of drug abuse and incarceration.

Ted Wilson, a Vietnam veteran in Concord, Calif., was hospitalized in 1966 in Okinawa, Japan, for a suicide attempt days after he participated what he called a "village massacre." When the Marine Corps sent him back to combat, he went AWOL and got an undesirable discharge in 1968.

He fell into a drug abuse and crime and spent years in prison. "I had to deal with everything myself," he said. "Maybe having help would have made a difference."

Mr. Bunn feels the same.

He was hospitalized for slashing his wrists when he got home from Afghanistan. He then became a target of abuse in his platoon and was denied help, he said, so he ran away from his base in California. When he was caught in 2010, he said, he was told that a medical discharge would take years, and that he would be better off voluntarily taking an other-than-honorable discharge.

Now he works part time as a dishwasher but finds it hard to keep a job, he said. He has been in and out of jail. He has five years of health care given to all combat veterans, which is set to run out this year.

"I really don't know what I'm going to do," he said. "Afghanistan happened, and I'm a whole different person. But no one really wants to hear that."

MILITARY RESISTANCE BY EMAIL

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**Fools In Command, As Usual:
Soldiers In Montenegro Will No Longer
Be Permitted To Have Long Hair, Visible
Tattoos, Body Piercings, Smoke In**

Public, Carry “Bags Or Oher Items” In Their Hands, Or Carry An Umbrella!



Photo: The Ministry of Defence

30 Mar 16 by Dusica Tomovic BIRN

Podgorica

Montenegro's Defence Ministry is planning to tighten up the dress code for serving soldiers, worried by the lax appearance of the military.

Under the new military code, which BIRN has seen, soldiers will no longer be allowed to smoke in public places, use umbrellas and “carry bags or other items” while in uniform.

In the past, the military did not worry much about tattoos as long as they were not too exposed, vulgar or racist. Now, they cannot be visible anywhere on the neck or head.

Hair must be trimmed and kept short, no lower than where the ear meets the head. Soldiers must also be clean-shaven at all times, even on leave.

Men may not wear cosmetics or nail polish, visible body piercings of any kind, or earrings.

Unlike previous regulations, dyeing hair and moustaches will now be allowed - but only in “natural shades”.

The use of “medical sunglasses” will be permitted but regular sunglasses will be banned at parades and military ceremonies, the new military code says.

Women may only wear cosmetics “conservatively and subtly.” Any makeup that creates an unnatural appearance, including fake eyelashes, will be prohibited and only clear nail polish is authorized. Women soldiers must also wear their hair neatly and inconspicuously fastened or pinned.

Bangs are not authorized.

The Defence Ministry said the new rules will apply to troops in the country and to military personnel deployed in international forces and other activities abroad.

The idea is that military personnel, even in civilian clothing and off-duty, must not dress in any way that detracts from the dignity of the profession.

Unsurprisingly, excessive alcohol consumption and the use of drugs are a complete no-no. Soldiers may be discharged if checks find they have consumed illicit drugs.

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.

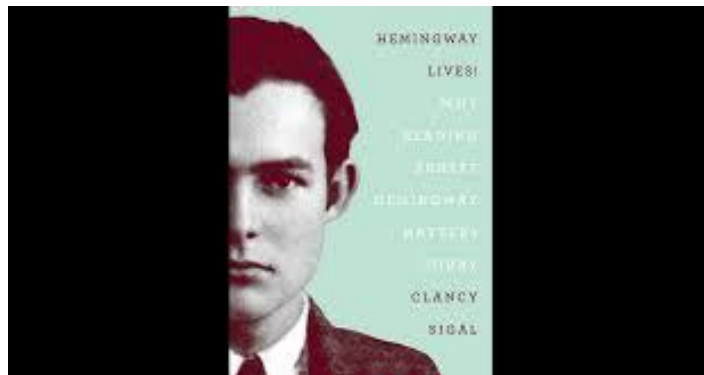
“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

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

Frederick Douglass, 1852

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

HOW WOULD HEMINGWAY'S 'ROBERT JORDAN' VOTE?



From Wikipedia:

Clancy Sigal was The Observer [UK] correspondent for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games, and decided to settle in Los Angeles after falling in love there. His wife, Janice Tidwell Sigal, is featured in the recent BBC TV series *The Trap*.

He was one of several co-writers of the screenplay for the 2002 Salma Hayek film *Frida*, based on the book *Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo* by Hayden Herrera. In 2013 he published *Hemingway Lives! Why Reading Ernest Hemingway Matters Today*. (OR Books)

Mar 30, 2016 by Clancy Sigal

Written 76 years ago, *For Whom The Bell Tolls* is Senator John McCain's favorite novel, also an "inspiration" to Obama.

Toward the end of the Spanish civil war, up in the mountains looking over a steel bridge the American hero Robert Jordan must blow up to stop the Fascist advance on Madrid, he faces certain death on a mission he fatalistically knows is messed up.

Even so, while sighting his machine gun, he engages in a serious political argument with one of his comrade guerrillas, El Primitivo.

Jordan, a former Montana college instructor, lectures Primitivo that the United States isn't like Spain; democratic change is possible. He cites President Roosevelt's mild tax reform.

Primitivo warns Jordan that any attempt to take money from the American rich will surely make them angry enough to violently revolt, "exactly as the fascists have done here".

"It is possible," Jordan says.

"Then you will have to fight in your country as we fight here."

"Yes, we will have to fight."

"But are there not many fascists in your country?"

"There are many who do not know they are fascists but will find out when the time comes."

In Hemingway's time American fascists either wore Nazi-like uniforms in street brawls or \$1000 suits and stiff collars scheming up at the opulent offices at 23 Wall Street where a small group of J.P. Morgan rich men calling themselves "Sentinels of Liberty" were so envious of Hitler and Mussolini that they plotted to sacrifice part of their fortunes to overthrow the new "socialist" president Franklin D. Roosevelt.

They dreamed of molding unemployed war veterans into a "Khaki Shirt" fascist army to take over the White House whose New Deal tax scheme drove them nuts.

With riots in the factories, farmers lynching bailiffs and even Boy Scouts marching in protest against hard times, the rich truly believed they were witnessing their own Last Days, the apocalyptic end of capitalism.

They were angry and frightened with a poor sense of reality, although they were astute enough to own or run businesses that, combined, had more assets than the U.S. government they wanted to overthrow.

As far as I know the Koch Brothers have not (yet) given money to Donald Trump in the way that, for example, German "captains of industry" loaded up Hitler with slush funds to finance his path to power.

They too felt existentially threatened by social disorder, economic instability and the absence of A Strong Leader who "tells it like it is" to the despairing German masses hungry for jobs and a hatred for the old elite.

For Whom The Bell Tolls was written out of Hemingway's own despair at Gen. Franco's fascist victory in his beloved Spain.

Critics like to pass lightly over Ernest's politics. He could be, and was, anti-Semitic (until he married a half Jew), racist (until he fought side by side with African American volunteers in the Lincoln Brigade), sexist (always), and let's not even think what this most macho of men felt about his youngest transgender son Gregory or Gloria.

But most consistently, in his gut, Ernest was antifascist and on the side of the losers.

He knew that U.S. soldiers under General Douglas MacArthur bayoneted starving war-vet Bonus Marchers within sight of the Capitol. And from his Florida house he'd seen hundreds of jobless, messed up war vets drowned in a Matecumbe Key hurricane into which they'd been exiled by FDR to rid himself of potential troublemakers.

Hemingway wrote Bell in the white heat of anguish, rage and the bloody unfairness of it all.

Let's rewrite Hemingway.

After all, this is Hollywood.

A Sierra Club mountain climber just died at 103.

"What if" by some miracle Robert Jordan had survived the Spanish debacle and was alive today, how would he vote?

“Coke-Pepsi Antics”
**“I Don't Drink Any Soda – They
Are All Laden With GMOs And
Other Toxins”**
**“I Don't Choose A Democrat Or
Republican When I Vote – For The
Same Reasons”**
**“Trying To Defeat The Empire From The
Inside Is Like Trying To Put Out A Forest
Fire By Pouring Gasoline On It”**

March 31, 2016 by Cindy Sheehan, La nueva Televisión del Sur C.A. [Excerpts]

“No matter how cynical you become (regarding politics), it’s never enough to keep up.” Lily Tomlin, U.S. comedian and actress.

The cola company Pepsi had a decades-long marketing tool called “The Pepsi Challenge” wherein consumers would be given two cups, one with Pepsi in it and one with Coca-Cola in it, and asked consumers to give a preference. With a little manipulation (temperature of the soda, etc)

Pepsi would always win: Now, PepsiCo wouldn’t do this challenge if it didn’t know that it would always win.

If one has at one time or the other partaken of Coke and Pepsi, it’s easy to tell that the two products are essentially the same, with some minute differences.

For myself, I don’t drink any soda – they are all laden with GMOs and other toxins, and I don’t choose a Democrat or Republican when I vote – for the same reasons.

This is the same with U.S. presidential electoral politics.

When we look at the two choices between the Democratic and Republican candidate, a thinking person who pays attention to the actual deeds (votes, policies) of each one, it’s natural to think “Coke or Pepsi.”

And as with the Pepsi Challenge, the establishment (the war machine, Wall Street, bankers, CEOs of major corporations), never loses.

Here in the United States, it seems like the election “season” is year-round, every year, but the POTUS or president of the United States is a special two-year event. Seriously, candidates start PACs, known as Political Action Committees and exploratory committees and fundraising well before the actual election and the Coke-Pepsi antics get tiresome long before that.

This POTUS election year has brought us some entertainment though with the advent of “Trumpism” and “Sandersmania.”

For sure, Donald Trump has said some horrific things out on the campaign trail especially about immigration.

Democrat partisans have hypocritically gone to stop Trump rallies never mentioning that Obama has deported more immigrant workers than any president before him; breaking up families and holding young people in detention centers.

Trump really has never held an elective office and I believe all of the support he is getting from the Republican base reflects its distaste of politics as usual in D.C.

As I view it, the rise of The Donald is a true insurgency campaign and there has been much reflection and panic from the Republican National Committee that his ultimate victory may be the beginning of the end of that party. I am all in favor of that, but

Democratic partisans who are celebrating that fact should also be rooting for the end of their own party.

Even if any of the candidates in the bourgeois political parties were worth voting for, the electoral system in the U.S. is rigged to protect the interests of the bankers, war profiteers and other corporate interests.

I have been a candidate for federal office and the obstacles that are put up to prevent independents or third-party candidates to even achieve ballot access are almost insurmountable and the rules are stacked in the favor of wealthy Democrats or Republicans.

Sanders' campaign is not about challenging the establishment, but about supporting it. The candidate himself has already pledged support for whomever ultimately receives the nomination of the Democratic party and he has supported proven corporate candidates as Bill Clinton, John Kerry, and Barack Obama.

In conclusion, the U.S. is obviously not a democracy, but a corporatocracy and only grassroots social and political activism that stands firmly, confidently, courageously, and honestly outside of the system can defeat it.

Trying to defeat the Empire from the inside is like trying to put out a forest fire by pouring gasoline on it.

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OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Zionist Forces Arrest Palestinian Patient At Erez Crossing, As Usual:

“He Was Attempting To Leave The Gaza Strip For Medical Treatment”

“Many Patients Need Medical Treatment That Can Only Be Provided Outside The Gaza Strip”



March 26, 2016 Ma'an

GAZA -- Israeli forces detained a Palestinian Thursday at the Erez crossing as he was attempting to leave the Gaza Strip for medical treatment in Israel, it was revealed Saturday.

A human rights lawyer told Ma'an that Sharab is the fifth case of a Palestinian patient being detained at the crossing since the start of the year.

Palestinians detained at Erez are often interrogated for several hours, sometimes for days, before they are either allowed into Israel or sent back to Gaza.

Erez is the only land crossing between the Gaza Strip and Israel, and travel is heavily restricted by Israeli authorities as part of a crippling blockade on the coastal enclave in place since Hamas took power in 2007.

As part of the siege, Israel limits medical equipment allowed into the Gaza Strip and restricts travel for doctors seeking further medical training and specialization.

According to rights group B'Tselem, "One outcome of this situation is a harsh reality in which many patients need medical treatment that can only be provided outside the Gaza Strip.... (and others) have no choice but to go without care, including people suffering from severe orthopedic problems, hearing and visual impairment and other grave illnesses."

The UN has warned that unless current trends in the Gaza Strip are altered, the coastal enclave could become uninhabitable for residents in just five years.

"The social, health and security-related ramifications of the high population density and overcrowding are among the factors that may render Gaza unlivable by 2020," the UN's development agency said last year.

Unarmed Gaza Farmers And Shepherds Forced To Leave Land After Occupation Forces Open Fire: “A Policy That Has In Effect Destroyed Much Of The Agricultural And Fishing Sectors Of The Impoverished Palestinian Territory”

March 26, 2016 Ma'an

GAZA CITY Israeli forces opened fire on Palestinian farmers and shepherds in the Gaza Strip Saturday morning, forcing them to leave their fields, witnesses said.

Witnesses told Ma'an that Israeli military forces deployed east of Juhur al-Dik in the central Gaza Strip opened fire on the workers while they were in their agricultural fields, forcing them to leave the area.

An Israeli army spokesperson told Ma'an they were looking into the reports.

Palestinian farmers face frequent fire from Israeli forces inside of or near the military-imposed “buffer zone.” While the exact limits of the zone are often unclear, they are enforced with live fire.

The Israeli army often says in such circumstances that the use of live fire is necessary to deter potential “security threats,” a policy that has in effect destroyed much of the agricultural and fishing sectors of the impoverished Palestinian territory, which has been under a crippling Israeli blockade since 2007.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs last month reported at least 42 cases of Israeli forces opening fire on Palestinians in the buffer zone, on both land and sea sides.

Occupation Forces Return To Dehumanizing Number System In Hebron:

Palestinians “Forced To Register With The Israeli Forces As Residents, And Each Given A Number Used To Identify Them”

“No Protection Against Harassment, Threats, Abuse And Being Arbitrarily Denied Passage Through Shuhada Checkpoint”



The number 230 on the outside of this Palestinian ID has faded with age. It denotes that Israeli forces should theoretically allow its holder to pass into the Tel Rumeida and Shuhada Street neighborhoods, but provides no protection against harassment, threats, abuse and being arbitrarily denied passage through Shuhada checkpoint

March 26, 2016 26th March 2016 by| International Solidarity Movement, al-Khalil team
[Excerpts]

Hebron, West Bank, occupied Palestine

After completely closing Shuhada checkpoint to Palestinians in occupied al-Khalil (Hebron) on Thursday, 24th March 2016, Israeli forces have now returned to the practice of ‘numbering’ Palestinian residents in order to restrict access to the adjacent neighborhoods.

Soldiers are now barring all Palestinians without numbers, and sometimes even those already registered as residents, from entry into the closed military zone.

The neighbourhood of Tel Rumeida and the tiny strip of Shuhada Street that remains accessible for Palestinians after the closure of the rest of the street following the 1994 Ibrahim Mosque massacre have been declared a closed military zone since November 1st, 2015.

Palestinian residents – in contrast to the Zionist extremist settlers living in the illegal settlements nearby – were forced to register with the Israeli forces as residents, and each given a number used to identify them.

The closed military zone was designed deliberately to include the Palestinian neighbourhoods while excluding illegal settlements, thus facilitating settler movement on roads that connect the settlements inside the city center of al-Khalil with the Kiryat Arba illegal settlement on the outskirts of the city, roads that only settlers and Israeli forces are allowed to drive on.

Israeli forces completely closed the checkpoint on March 24th, barring any Palestinian from entering, after soldiers gunned down and killed Abed al-Fattah Yusri al-Sharif and Ramzi Aziz al-Qasrawi, both 21 years old, summarily executing al-Sharif with a shot to the head after he was already lying incapacitated.

Throughout the day, Palestinians trying to go back to their homes were denied passage through the checkpoint and Israeli forces at times forced people to wait for more than twenty minutes only to tell them that they would not be allowed in – even though they were officially registered, numbered residents.

An elderly woman was repeatedly told by Israeli forces to 'wait' when trying to walk to her home through the checkpoint; only after waiting for more than twenty minutes was she finally told that no-one would be allowed to pass that day. She had to turn around and leave after standing outside the checkpoint for close to half an hour..

As of Saturday, 25th March, Israeli forces entirely returned to the practice of 'numbering' Palestinians, checking the numbers of anyone attempting to cross the checkpoint against a list of numbers of residents that have previously been registered.

Many Palestinians were forced to wait for hours outside the checkpoint, only to be denied to go to their homes – even though they had registered and thus did appear as a number on the soldiers' lists.

The soldiers were extremely aggressive, yelling at Palestinians in the closed-off 'room' inside the checkpoint loudly enough to be clearly audible to anyone waiting outside.

When Palestinians tried to seek shelter from the pouring rain in the vicinity of the checkpoint, soldiers exited the checkpoint, yelling and screaming at them to move back.

All of the soldiers had removed the orange pin that acts as a safety on their Israeli-government-issued assault rifles – a practice that seems to have become common policy throughout occupied al-Khalil.

When a woman and her four children tried to pass Shuhada checkpoint, the three smallest children were initially allowed through. When Israeli soldiers delayed the mother and older daughter inside the checkpoint, continuously yelling at them, the young girl on the other side of the checkpoint started crying as she was waiting in the rain for her mother to be allowed to go home with them.

After an ordeal of more than ten minutes, soldiers arbitrarily decided that the mother would not be allowed to pass – even though she is registered and numbered – and yelled at her till she finally left.

Her children that had been allowed to pass earlier came back to be with their mother, the girl still crying. With many extremist settlers gathering and walking freely on Shuhada Street, the children were too terrified to go home without their mother.

This practice of assigning numbers to Palestinians clearly demonstrates the intent to dehumanize them, to make them solely into ‘numbers’ as if they were not human beings.

For the Israeli forces – and thus the government supporting and commanding them – this is precisely the case:

Palestinians are not considered as human beings, but rather solely as ‘terrorists’ and potential threats.

How this influences the behaviour of the Israeli forces was clearly demonstrated when on March 24th soldiers gunned down two Palestinian youths in Tel Rumeida and then executed one of them with a shot to the head at point blank range. A shot in the head of an unarmed man, struggling for his life and being denied any medical assistance, did not cause so much as a twitch from the soldiers looking on.

This practice of ‘numbering’ Palestinians in Tel Rumeida and Shuhada street, and of dehumanizing the entire Palestinian population, is a government policy that intends to force Palestinians out of the area declared a ‘closed military zone’ in particular and ultimately the whole of the occupied West Bank.

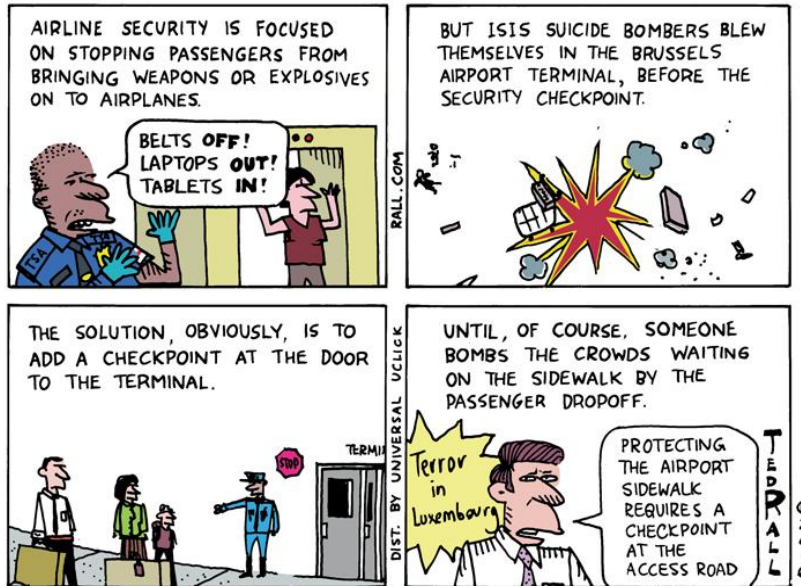
These policies pave the way for the brutal actions must recently exemplified by the killings in Tel Rumeida, practices falling under the internationally recognized definition of ethnic cleansing which the Final Report of the Commission of Experts established pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 780 defines as “a purposeful policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or religious group from certain geographic areas.”

To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation commanded by foreign terrorists, go to:

**<http://www.maannews.net/eng/Default.aspx> and
<http://www.palestinemonitor.org/list.php?id=ej898ra7yff0ukmf16>**

The occupied nation is Palestine. The foreign terrorists call themselves “Israeli.”

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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