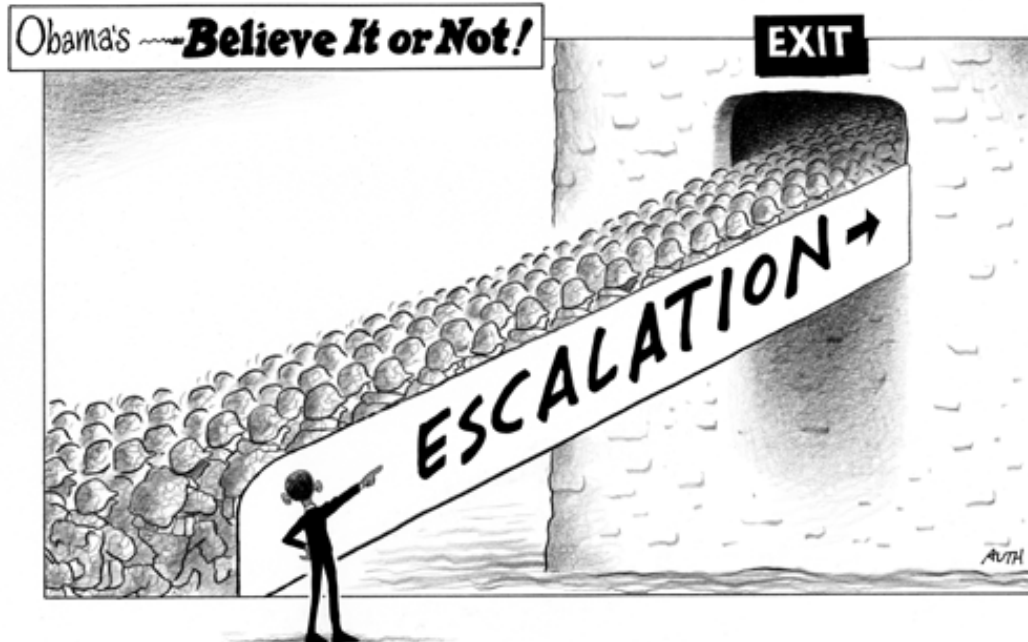


Military Resistance 7L17



12-1-09 THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER UNIVERSAL VECTOR

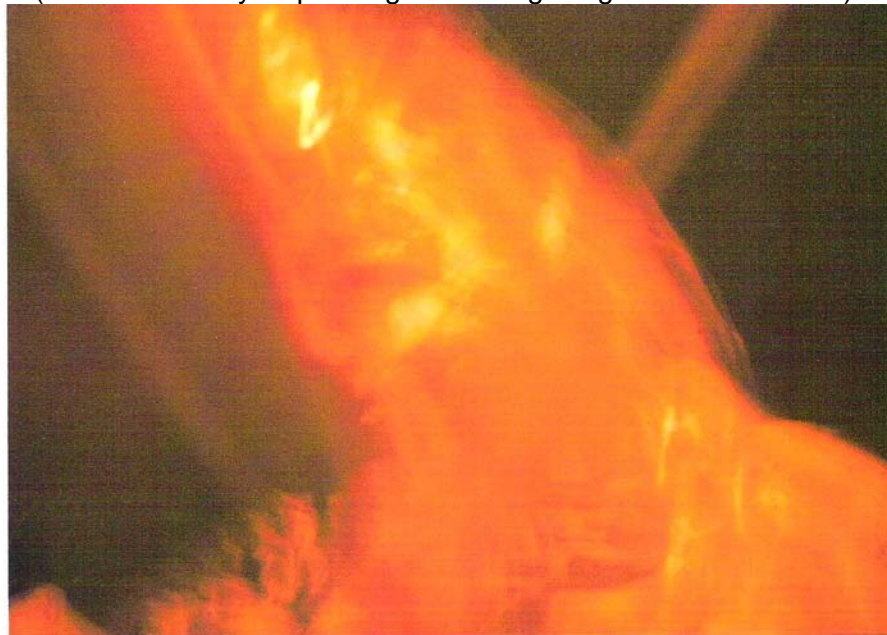
**THE U.S. EMPIRE
SENDS HOLIDAY
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TO THE PEOPLES OF
IRAQ AND
AFGHANISTAN:**

FOR THE KIDS:



FOR THOSE SPECIAL GROWNUPS

(Some assembly required: gasoline + gel ingredients included.)



(Mike Hastie photo)

AND HERE'S SANTA!



MORE:

You Can't Even Win On Christmas Day

From: Dennis Serdel
Sent: December 22, 2008
Subject: You Can't Even Win On Christmas Day

By Dennis Serdel, Vietnam 1967-68 (one tour) Light Infantry, Americal Div. 11th Brigade, purple heart, Veterans For Peace 50 Michigan, Vietnam Veterans Against The War, United Auto Workers GM Retiree, in Perry, Michigan

You Can't Even Win On Christmas Day

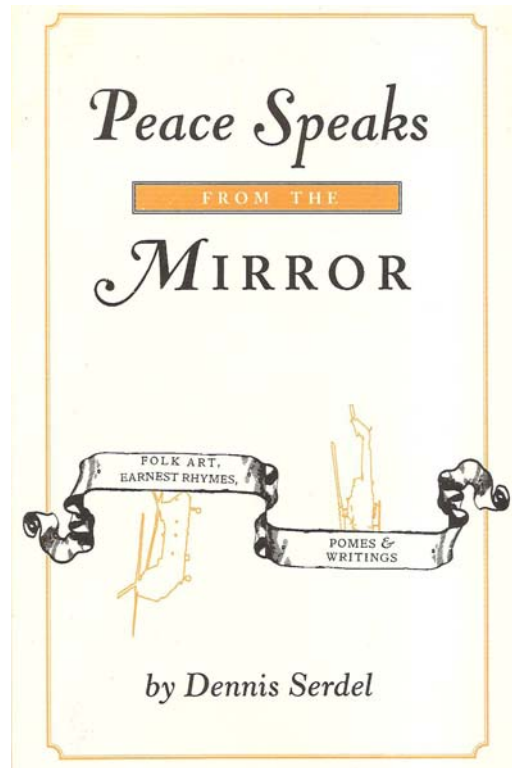
Doug wonders how in the hell he ended up here feeling like a sponge wet all the time, no let up, no enemy, evidently they are not idiots, slipping and falling down the paths for 30 + days straight in 1967 So then they go to these filthy bunkers with empty crushed drab ration cans cigarette butts wrappers spent cartridges

dirt all over watching through a window of time
Orders to just go one at a time not all at once
“one mortar round could get you all killed trained “cliche”
Now go to the Mess Hall so you get killed one at a time
instead, with rust on the outside of your M-16
get some turkey mashed potatoes gravy
cranberries green beans and a roll on a steel tray
that separates all the hot and steaming food
with nothing to cover it and told to be on his way
So by the time Doug makes it back to the bunker
the monsoon rain has killed it as it all swims together
like puke from a Santa Claus drunk so he
eats the turkey and throws the rest away
for the rats to eat while others try to cover
their own with ponchos etc. but then all they could
see is their food slop on their pants, boots, mud
But the Brass should have known by now
that the monsoon rain rains 24 hours a day
like Rudolph and the Reindeer pissing altogether
on the Lz so Dougie like the others
slops in the mud and gives back their steel trays
He still wonders how can he get out of this mess
while America is sucking on his blood
like the leaches do on the jungle green wet leaves
while the princes and kings Officers
eat at the Mess Hall where it is dry warm and
clean, makes him want to kill them.
But he is supposed to protect them
while they drink 7-7's Jim Beam on the rocks
playing cards as he returns the eternal betray
between the Officer's fascist Orders
to grunts like a class war using poor drafted
boys, ok, some joined, mistakes were made,
Silent Night, but Dougie thinks at least, he can see
one half of the enemy maybe more
“don't salute me's” drunk and drunk with power
and of course we will win, just stay steady men.

MORE:

MORE OF DENNIS SERDEL'S WORK IN *PEACE SPEAKS FROM THE MIRROR:*
Get Some While There Still Are Some To Get:

[You know the power of the poems by Dennis Serdel from the front pages of
Military Resistance: now they're in book form: Ordering information below: T]



DENNIS SERDEL:

Shipped to Vietnam in November 1967.

Returned home in October 1968 to Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Joined Veterans For Peace in January 1990.

Joined Vietnam Veterans Against the War when Iraq and Afghanistan War started.

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Forward Military Resistance along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the wars, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Resistance, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657. Phone: 888.711.2550

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Resistance Action

12.20.09 DPA & 12.21 (Xinhua) & Dec 21 (Reuters) & Dec 22 (Reuters) & 24 December 2009 RTÉ & By HAMED AHMED (AP)

15 people, including a provincial councillor, were killed and 70 wounded in a twin bomb attack on Thursday in Hilla, south of Baghdad, an Iraqi security source said.

Among those killed was Colonel Taleb al-Chamri, a police officer in charge of local efforts to eradicate improvised explosive devices.

A policeman was killed when an explosive charge attached to his car detonated and destroyed his vehicle in the city of Fallujah, some 50 km west of Baghdad, a source told Xinhua on condition of anonymity.

A bomb attached to a car wounded Falluja local council member Abdul-Hadi al-Irsan in central Falluja, 50 km (32 miles) west of Baghdad, police said.

Authorities say guerrillas have stormed a checkpoint west of Baghdad, killing four Iraqi police officers. It is the latest in a series of attacks in which guerrillas have targeted Iraqi police and army checkpoints. Two police officials say guerrillas stormed the checkpoint Wednesday morning in the Abu Ghraib area to the west of the capital.

At least three policemen were wounded when a bomb targeting their patrol exploded in south Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

Guerrillas killed an off-duty Iraqi soldier at a medical clinic in northern Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

Guerrillas stormed the house of an Iraqi soldier, killing him and wounding his brother in western Mosul, police said.

In Baghdad, two policemen were injured by a roadside bomb explosion near their patrol while passing in the al-Adel neighborhood in western the capital.

Two policemen were killed Sunday in separate incidents in Mosul.

Insurgents shot dead a policeman in Mosul Monday, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

A grenade wounded two soldiers in Mosul Monday, police said.

Insurgents shot and killed a policeman in Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

Insurgents shot dead an off-duty member of Kurdish security forces on Sunday evening in Kirkuk, police said.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Soldier From Parachute Regiment Killed Near Sangin

23 December 2009 BBC

A soldier from the Parachute Regiment has died in southern Afghanistan, the Ministry of Defence has said.

The soldier was killed on Tuesday by a suspected improvised explosive device. Next of kin have been informed.

The explosion happened during a foot patrol near Sangin in Helmand Province, and this latest death is the third British fatality this week.

Roadside Bomb Kills Canadian Officer In Panjwaii

December 23, 2009 Michelle Lang and Kim Westad, Canwest News Service

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- A Canadian army officer and an Afghan soldier were killed two days before Christmas during a foot patrol in an area southwest of Kandahar City.

On Wednesday afternoon, Lieut. Andrew Richard Nuttall, 30, and the unidentified Afghan soldier died when an improvised explosive device detonated while they were patrolling in the volatile Panjwaii district.

Lieut. Nuttall, who was based in Prince Rupert, B.C., and originally from Victoria, was serving with the Edmonton-based 1st Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

Lieut. Nuttall was killed while Canadian soldiers were searching the area near the village of Nakhonay for insurgent "transit routes."

The village was considered a Taliban supply point until November when Canadian Forces mounted an operation to secure and hold the area.

The death of Lieut. Nuttall, the 134th Canadian soldier to die in Afghanistan, shattered a month and a half of relative calm for the Canadian Forces in the country.

Lieut. Nuttall kept a Facebook site and also a personal blog where he gave periodic cheery updates from Afghanistan.

There are several references to improvised explosive devices, including one in which he wrote that he was making headway with locals and getting information about weapons and IEDs.

“All of us here (including me) are not worried about this extension. We all believe in what we're doing and an extra few weeks isn't going to hurt anyone in the long run (as long as we maintain our vigilance of course),” he wrote.

Soldier From 3 Rifles Killed Near Sangin

22 Dec 09 Military Operations

It is with sadness that the Ministry of Defence must announce that a soldier from the 3rd Battalion, The Rifles, was killed in Afghanistan yesterday, Monday 21 December 2009. The soldier died from wounds sustained during a fire-fight in the vicinity of Patrol Base Almas, near Sangin, central Helmand Province, yesterday evening.

Taliban Destroy Afghan Army Base

December 20, 2009 By Bill Roggio, Public Multimedia Inc. [Excerpts]

Forces under the command of a leader considered to be one of the “good Taliban” by the Pakistani military destroyed an Afghan Army camp.

Taliban forces commanded by Mullah Nazir blew up the Afghan Army base, which was just across the border from the Angoor Adda region in Pakistan. The region is under the control of Nazir, a Pakistani Taliban commander.

“Sources said the Taliban planted explosives all over the base and blew it up, destroying bunkers and installations,” Dawn reported. The base was destroyed after “a contingent stationed there moved out of the fortified compound.” The Taliban and “a group of tribesmen” then looted the base.

<p>IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATIONS</p>
--

Collaborators Killing Each Other



A vehicle used by Mohammad Yunus Shirnagha, from northern Baghlan province, north of Kabul, Afghanistan, Dec. 23, 2009. Shirnagha, a member of the Afghan parliament, was mistakenly killed in an early morning shootout between his bodyguards and police officers, officials said Wednesday. (AP Photo)

Guest House For Foreigners Bombed In Kandahar

December 24, 2009 Reuters

A car bomber killed eight Afghans on Thursday when he detonated his explosives outside a guest house frequented by foreigners in southern Kandahar city, a police official said.

Two police, who were guarding the Continental, a guest house often visited by foreign journalists in the heart of Kandahar city, were also wounded in the blast.

Chaos In Command: Stryker Soldiers Say Officers Failed Them:

“I’ve Lost 14 Friends Since I’ve Gotten Out Here,” Said White. “Now What Have They Died For?”

“As The Casualties From IEDs Began To Rise, So Did The Troops’ Anger With What They Viewed As Their Leaders’ Failure”

“There’s definitely a disconnect between the platoon and company level and the battalion and brigade level,” said a Charlie Company soldier in a leadership position, who requested he remain anonymous.

“If any commander in this brigade goes to sleep at night thinking after we’ve walked through that orchard over there that it’s clear, he’s a fucking idiot”

Dec 24, 2009 By Sean D. Naylor - Staff writer, Army Times [Excerpts]

ARGHANDAB RIVER VALLEY, Afghanistan — The view west from the roof of the Arghandab district center at sunset in mid-autumn is breathtaking, the remaining leaves turning the valley into a sea of green and gold.

But the beauty deceives.

Beneath the branches, the Arghandab’s signature pomegranates lie in rotting piles and the orchards are strewn with booby traps ready to sever a limb or take a life. Gunfire and explosions echo from end to end of the valley’s lush “green zone.” Once known as the breadbasket of Afghanistan, the Arghandab has become a killing field.

Battle has been joined in the valley because of its proximity to Kandahar city, a rich prize two miles to the east across a razor-backed ridgeline. Until this summer, insurgent control of the valley was unchallenged.

Then 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment, 5th Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, moved in, and the fight was on.

The vicious struggle in and around the Arghandab since the battalion’s arrival has killed 21 1/17 soldiers and more than 50 insurgents, led to a popular company commander’s controversial replacement and raised questions about the best role for Stryker units in Afghanistan.

It has also caused the soldiers at the tip of the spear that the United States hurled into the Arghandab to accuse their battalion and brigade commanders of not

following the guidance of senior coalition commander Gen. Stanley McChrystal to adopt a “population-centric” counterinsurgency approach.

And now, reeling from the deaths of their comrades and the removal of their company commander, the troops have been ordered out of the Arghandab, a move they say feels like a defeat.

It was July when 1/17 deployed to Afghanistan, and August when the battalion moved into the Arghandab.

Within 48 hours, they were in combat with some of the 200 to 300 insurgents in the “green zone” — a 14-mile-by-four-mile patchwork of small fields, orchards and vineyards. The dense foliage and high mud walls offered insurgents ample hiding places for the booby traps the military refers to as improvised explosive devices.

The first 1/17 soldier to die was Spc. Troy Tom, killed Aug. 18 by an IED. The casualties mounted steeply thereafter, climaxing Oct. 27 when seven soldiers and an interpreter died when their Stryker was destroyed by the force of an estimated 1,500 pounds of homemade explosive buried in the banks of the Arghandab River.

By early December, the battalion had lost 21 men.

In late November, brigade commander Col. Harry Tunnell decided a change had to be made. He replaced Capt. Joel Kassulke, the commander of 1/17’s Charlie Company, which had taken 12 of the casualties.

But Kassulke’s former soldiers say that not only was he not to blame for the casualties, the 1/17’s problems started much, much earlier.

Mismatched Training

The battalion had spent much of the previous two years training for combat, but preparing for the wrong theater — until February, when it got orders for Afghanistan, 1/17 was scheduled to deploy to Iraq.

However, 1/17 soldiers said their training, which had been focused on highly “kinetic” urban warfare drills such as room clearing, did not change much to accommodate the change in mission. “The COIN-intensive fight here ... isn’t so much what we trained on,” said 1st Lt. Kevin Turnblom, Charlie Company’s fire support officer.

“We trained urban fighting in Iraq and then they give us Afghanistan,” said Staff Sgt. Jason Hughes, Weapons Squad leader in 1st Platoon, Charlie Company. “The principles are the same but the details are day-and-night different, and we’ve learned that the hard way over the last almost five months.”

The 1/17’s soldiers said their train-up was also marked by an absence of good intelligence on what they would be facing in the Arghandab.

In their zeal to give their men some insight into their future area of operations, noncommissioned officers such as Staff Sgt. Matthew T. Sanders, 1st Squad leader in Charlie Company's 1st Platoon, resorted to printing out information on the Arghandab region from the Long War Journal, a respected non-Defense Department Web site, and posting it on bulletin boards.

"We made our own little S-2 because we weren't getting anything from the S-2 (intelligence directorate)," Sanders said.

"IEDs Also Came As A Huge Surprise To Neumann And Most Of His Soldiers"

When 1/17 got to the Arghandab, the insurgents were lying in wait in the green zone, armed with homemade bombs similar to those that have killed thousands of U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This came as a shock to 1/17 commander Lt. Col. Jonathan Neumann, who hadn't anticipated being drawn into a fight in such constrictive terrain, where the troops learned quickly that they needed to dismount from their Strykers and patrol on foot.

"What we didn't understand is really where the enemy was making his push against Kandahar city," he said. "We did expect more of an open desert fight."

The IEDs also came as a huge surprise to Neumann and most of his soldiers, who said they'd been told to expect that the major threat would come from direct fire.

This, despite the fact that during the first six months of 2009, as the brigade was training up, more than twice as many U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan died from IED strikes than were killed in gunfights.

As the casualties from IEDs began to rise, so did the troops' anger with what they viewed as their leaders' failure to prepare them for the threat.

"The extent of the IED threat was a surprise to us all," Kassulke said. "The enemy we faced in the Arghandab adapted to our TTPs (tactics, techniques and procedures) faster and more effectively than anyone expected."

Failing On The Big Picture: "Intense Frustration In Charlie Company"

In command briefings and interviews, 5/2 Stryker Brigade leaders are keen to give the impression that the unit has fully embraced the tenets of counterinsurgency doctrine. There is much discussion of the governance, reconstruction and development fusion cell headed by Lt. Col. Patrick Gaydon, the brigade special troops battalion commander.

But lower down the rank structure, 1/17 soldiers said that a major factor behind the battalion's difficulties in the Arghandab was the failure of their battalion and brigade commanders to adhere to McChrystal's published counterinsurgency guidance, which states up front: "Protecting the people is the mission. The conflict will not be won by destroying the enemy."

Soldiers in 1/17 say that while the battalion's junior leaders have embraced these principles, Neumann and Tunnell — whose brigade's motto is "Strike — Destroy" — have not.

"There's definitely a disconnect between the platoon and company level and the battalion and brigade level," said a Charlie Company soldier in a leadership position, who requested he remain anonymous.

"McChrystal's guidance is very clear on its population focus," said another junior leader.

But 1/17 soldiers thought that focus was missing from their operations.

"When we first started operations, we were told we were going to stay enemy-focused," said Capt. Jon Burton, an assistant fire support officer who is also 1/17's civil-military and information operations officer co-located with Charlie Company. "That came from brigade."

"That has absolutely been the message that's been delivered from higher," agreed Turnblom, the Charlie Company fire support officer.

When the brigade deployed to Afghanistan, Tunnell announced his intention to pursue a "counter-guerrilla" campaign.

Most observers perceived a conflict between Tunnell's approach and McChrystal's population-centric counterinsurgency campaign.

But Tunnell said that his approach was drawn straight from Army Field Manual 90-8, Counterinsurgency Operations (last updated in 1986), and that it was complementary to, not competitive with counterinsurgency.

Brenda Donnell, spokeswoman for the Maneuver Center of Excellence at Fort Benning, Ga., said FM 90-8 had been superseded by FM 3-24.2, Tactics in Counterinsurgency. "It's not supposed to be used anymore," she said of the counter-guerrilla manual.

Tunnell, who was badly wounded as a battalion commander in Iraq in 2003, was adamant that the situation in the Arghandab lent itself to the counter-guerrilla approach.

"Here in the green zone ... they're hard-core guerrillas," Tunnell said. "They form and they operate in teams and squads, and they mass into platoons very quickly. So I think you can't ignore that. We haven't seen any \$10-a-day Taliban here."

He outlined how he intended his approach to work. "(W)hen it comes to the enemy, you have leadership, supply chains and formations. And you've really got to tackle all three of those," Tunnell said. "I was wounded as a battalion commander and they had a

perfectly capable battalion commander in to replace me very quickly; our supply lines were interdicted with ambushes and they never stopped us from getting any resources, but when you degrade a formation substantially, that will stop operations. And then if you degrade formations, supply chains and leadership near simultaneously, you'll cause the enemy in the area to collapse, and that is what we're trying to do here."

Asked if this was an enemy-centric approach, Tunnell replied: "The enemy informs how you gain access to the population. You cannot ignore it. We were taking horrible casualties trying to gain access to the population, and we knew that we needed to get to the population, and so if we didn't conduct the types of operations that we're conducting throughout the brigade's area ... we wouldn't be able to get to the population. So you can't separate the two."

Tunnell's counter-guerrilla vision has driven his brigade's missions, particularly in 1/17's area of operations. "We definitely haven't been COIN-focused in the Arghandab, we've been counter-guerrilla focused," Burton said.

The perceived disconnect between Tunnell's approach and McChrystal's guidance has led to intense frustration in Charlie Company. One young soldier said all the squad leaders in his platoon "have done COIN fights before, and they're pissed that we're not doing COIN properly."

Clearing Operations

What has particularly angered soldiers here is the series of brigade-level clearing operations through the Arghandab ordered by Tunnell to cement his troops' hold over the Arghandab and particularly the green zone, where the bulk of the population live, according to Tunnell.

"That's one of the challenges of a population-centric strategy: you have to go to where the population is," he said.

One operation, Opportunity Hold, at the end of August, "was a unique opportunity to mass resources and go right to the hold" phase of counterinsurgency doctrine's "clear, hold and build" model, Tunnell said. "So we did that and seized initial key terrain, mainly on the periphery."

Sustain Hold was aimed at getting 1/17 deeper into the green zone and establishing platoon-level patrol bases, he said.

The most recent operation, Focus Hold, which began in late November, focused on the green zone's southeastern section. "It's really one of the final approaches to Kandahar city," Tunnell said, adding that Focus Hold's operational goal was "to dislocate the enemy so they don't want to continue operations."

But while the logic behind the operations is clear to Tunnell, it is less so at the company level.

"We have done absolutely nothing as a company to improve the quality of life for the average Afghan living in the central Arghandab Valley," Sanders said. "What we're doing

is not working, and we need to go on a different tack.” Asked what that tack should be, Sanders replied: “Basic counter-insurgency — give them a better option than Islamic extremism.”

That is the prevalent view in Charlie Company.

“The ‘clear, hold, build’ thing that we’re supposed to be doing ... we’re not doing that,” Hughes said. “If any commander in this brigade goes to sleep at night thinking after we’ve walked through that orchard over there that it’s clear, he’s a fucking idiot.”

Hughes added a comment that could have been taken straight from McChrystal’s guidance: “The non-kinetic side of the house is what wins counterinsurgency, not attrition.”

Frustration has bred a cynical humor at the Joint District Coordination Center where Charlie Company has made its home.

A quote posted on the wall of the company’s command post and attributed to the first sergeant, Charles Burrow, reads: “Apparently COIN stands for Clearing Operations in November.” Burrow declined to be interviewed for this story.

Trying To Do Both

Among the young leaders who chafed against the “counter-guerrilla” approach was then-Charlie Company commander Kassulke, described by a subordinate as “a really smart, really knowledgeable guy” who “was the company commander that everybody in the battalion wanted to work for.”

“He made no dice about the fact that he was openly trying to conduct a more counterinsurgency fight,” Turnblom said, adding that Kassulke was trying to nest population-focused missions inside the enemy-focused operations imposed by Neumann and Tunnell.

“We were working to bring some security to the region, and that meant that we went to the areas where the enemy was,” Kassulke said in an e-mail. “We still did all we could to effectively engage the population before, during and after all of our operations.”

But soldiers who worked closely with Kassulke said he harbored deep misgivings about the enemy-centric focus of the missions he was ordered to conduct. Those doubts, along with his determination to do what he thought was right, brought him into conflict with his battalion and brigade commanders, his soldiers said.

In one instance, the point of friction was a quote from McChrystal’s counterinsurgency guidance posted on the wall of Kassulke’s command post.

It read: “Sporadically moving into an area for a few hours or even a few days solely to search for the enemy and then leave does little good, and may do much harm. The local insurgents hide in plain sight and the people remain ambivalent.

Once we depart, the militants re-emerge and life under insurgent control resumes.”

In the context of Charlie Company’s experience, the McChrystal quote seemed right on point. But when Neumann saw the quote during a visit to the JDCC, he told the battalion operations officer to direct Kassulke to take it down.

“I had them take it down to not get ahead of ourselves,” Neumann said in an e-mail to Army Times.

“The quote was deliberately put up to make a point, probably one I was out of my lane to make,” said Kassulke. “I knew that the quote would be a point of contention when I put it up.”

Kassulke said the incident was “not even a big deal at all,” but to his soldiers, the fact that their battalion commander was ordering the removal of a quote from McChrystal emphasizing the population-centric approach to counterinsurgency summed up the apparent disconnect between the company-grade leadership and their higher chain of command.

“Tunnell’s Removal Of The Popular And Charismatic Kassulke Stunned Charlie Company”

In early November, Tunnell visited the JDCC. According to soldiers who were there, he asked Kassulke if he had any concerns about the upcoming Focus Hold operation. According to Turnblom, Kassulke “expressed reservations about the idea of undertaking another brigade-level offensive operation.”

A few days later, Tunnell announced that he would be replacing Kassulke early as commander of Charlie Company.

The replacement was not a formal relief. Kassulke and the incoming commander, Capt. Max Hanlin, conducted a regular change-of-command ceremony Nov. 24 at 1/17’s headquarters at Forward Operating Base Frontenac, 364 days after Kassulke took command. A standard company command lasts two years.

But Tunnell’s removal of the popular and charismatic Kassulke stunned Charlie Company.

“His guys absolutely loved and respected him,” Burton said. “He just exemplified everything a leader should be and for him to be removed, it just never made sense to me, and kind of made me question leadership in general and how the Army perceives leadership.”

“The glue that was holding the company together was Captain Kassulke,” said Spc. Nicholas White, a machine gunner in 4th Platoon’s second squad, who was not alone in describing Kassulke as “the backbone” of Charlie Company.

None of the Charlie Company soldiers interviewed said Kassulke was at fault for the heavy casualties his unit had suffered.

"I certainly don't think the company-level leadership could have done anything differently" that would have prevented the casualties, Turnblom said.

Neumann said if it had been up to him, he would not have replaced Kassulke, but the decision was Tunnell's. "His main point to me was (that he was) worried both about the company and about the man," Neumann said. "Either one can hit a breaking point."

But Kassulke's troops didn't see any strain affecting him.

"I saw him every day," said Staff Sgt. David Myers, also of 4th Platoon's second squad. "He never once lost focus. He was on top of his game."

"The Soldiers Were Unanimous In Their View That Tunnell Was Making Kassulke A Scapegoat For The Battalion's High Casualty Rate"

Tunnell said that the casualties suffered by Charlie Company influenced his decision to replace Kassulke "a month or two" earlier than planned. "It was going to happen in the December/January time frame anyway," he said.

But the soldiers were unanimous in their view that Tunnell was making Kassulke a scapegoat for the battalion's high casualty rate. "He (Kassulke) didn't do anything wrong, but he was thrown under the bus," said one leader in Charlie Company.

"He's the last guy that should've lost his job."

Some in Charlie Company thought Tunnell's replacement of Kassulke so soon after the captain had told the colonel of his concerns over Focus Hold was no coincidence.

"It's probably bad juju for an O-3 to tell an O-6, 'Hey, you're not doing what the four-star wants you to do,'" said a soldier.

But Tunnell denied this through DeSantis, who said Tunnell had visited and spoken with Kassulke at the JDCC prior to Focus Hold as part of a routine process of gathering "input" from subordinate leaders prior to a major operation. "(I)t did not have any bearing on his assignment within the brigade," DeSantis said.

Kassulke, who was moved to a brigade staff position in Zabul province, likewise played down the conversation's significance. "As far as I am concerned, this was a normal conversation about operations, and ... he was genuinely interested in hearing my opinions as one of the company commanders who would be participating," he said.

Army Times asked Tunnell via e-mail to respond to Charlie Company soldiers' comments about his removal of Kassulke. In response, DeSantis e-mailed that "other than change of command ceremonies ... details about the assignment of officers not released."

Kassulke declined to detail the conversations he had with Tunnell regarding the switch. "The change of command was a surprise to me, but the brigade commander had a plan and this was part of it," Kassulke said.

The impact on the company of Kassulke's reassignment was exacerbated by Tunnell's decision to pull the unit back to Frontenac for two weeks, coinciding with the memorial ceremony for two of the company's soldiers killed in a Nov. 5 IED strike and the change of command. The move to Frontenac kept the company out of the fight "when we needed to get back on the horse," Hughes said.

But the final blow to the company's morale was still to come: the new RC-South commander British Maj. Gen. Nick Carter chose to pull Charlie Company and the rest of 1/17 out of the Arghandab permanently and replace them with elements of the 82nd Airborne Division's 4th Brigade.

Carter had a new mission for Tunnell's brigade: ensuring freedom of movement along the major highways in his area of operations. The mission was a vital one for which the Strykers were uniquely suited, the British general said in an interview with Army Times.

Restoring security to Afghanistan's major highways is a necessary and important step in boosting southern Afghanistan's economy and restoring governance to the region, Carter said.

After analyzing the forces at his disposal, Carter concluded that the Stryker brigade was the best fit for the freedom-of-movement mission, in part because of its high-tech command-and-control gear. "In terms of an organization that can bring freedom of movement as an effect to me, there is no better capability than the Stryker brigade."

Soldiers in both Bravo and Charlie companies said the order to pull out felt like "a defeat." For Charlie Company, with the heavy toll it has taken, the move is particularly painful. Soldiers feel they are leaving the Arghandab without being given the chance to achieve success in the mission for which their comrades died.

"I've lost 14 friends since I've gotten out here," said White. "Now what have they died for?"

Several junior leaders in the battalion said the change of mission was a reflection of their chain of command's failure to embrace population-centric counterinsurgency.

"I know exactly what my soldiers feel," Hughes said. "This is hallowed ground to them. ... They want to do good things here.

They were fully committed and mentally and physically prepared to fight for the rest of the year to make our guys not die in vain." Hughes said that at every battalion formation, 1/17 soldiers had to recite the Army's Warrior Ethos, which includes the line, "I will never accept defeat."

"Us leaving here, I'm pretty sure that qualifies as a defeat," he said.

UNREMITTING HELL ON EARTH; ALL HOME NOW



U.S. soldier from 12th Infantry moves towards a firing position as incoming fire hits inside the Command Outpost Michigan at the Pech River Valley in Kunar Province, Afghanistan, Dec. 19, 2009. (AP Photo/Dario Lopez-Mills)



U.S. soldier from 12th Infantry aims towards the hills as incoming fire hits inside Command Outpost Michigan at the Pech River Valley in Kunar Province, Afghanistan, Dec. 19, 2009. (AP Photo/Dario Lopez-Mills)



12.19: A US soldier during a battle with Taliban fighters in Gardez in eastern Paktia province. (AFP)

SOMALIA WAR REPORTS

Insurgents Hit U.S.-Backed Government With Artillery Barrage

22 December 2009 Garowe Online

At least four people are killed and over a dozen others injured in heavy clashes between pro-government forces and rebel fighters in Somalia's restive capital of Mogadishu.

The fierce clashes erupted in the capital's southern district of Medina where the warring sides exchanged heavy gunfire from assault rifles, artillery and mortar shells, claiming the lives of at least four civilians.

According to eyewitnesses, several mortar shells reportedly fired from African Union troops' base in Halane in response to a barrage of artillery shells they received from anti-government side.

Several mortar shells were fired towards Hodan and Hawlwadag districts but could not immediately be confirmed the casualties that it caused.

TROOP NEWS

HOW MANY MORE FOR OBAMA'S WARS?



The coffin of Army Sgt. Dale Griffin in Terre Haute, Ind., Nov. 11, 2009. Griffin was killed Oct. 27 by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan. (AP Photo/Darron Cummings)

NEED SOME MORE TRUTH? CHECK OUT THE DECEMBER TRAVELING SOLDIER:

“I Am Thoroughly Opposed To The Army As A Whole, And The War In The Middle East”

[An Army Sergeant Sends An Open Letter To Active Duty Soldiers]

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

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

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

And join with Iraq Veterans Against the War to end the occupations and bring all troops home now! (www.ivaw.org/)

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.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852

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

**I say that when troops cannot be counted on to follow orders because they see the futility and immorality of them THAT is the real key to ending a war.
-- Al Jaccoma, Veterans For Peace**

**“What country can preserve its liberties if its rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms.”
Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, 1787.**

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**

**A revolution is always distinguished by impoliteness, probably because the ruling classes did not take the trouble in good season to teach the people fine manners.
-- Trotsky, History Of The Russian Revolution**

Drafted Dumb Boy Blues

**From: Dennis Serdel
To: Military Resistance
Subject: Drafted Dumb Boy Blues
Date: Dec 24, 2009 5:53 AM**

By Dennis Serdel, Vietnam 1967-68 (one tour) Light Infantry, Americal Div. 11th Brigade, purple heart, Veterans For Peace 50 Michigan, Vietnam Veterans Against The War, United Auto Workers GM Retiree, in Perry, Michigan

Drafted Dumb Boy Blues

**The dumb boys go down to the Armory
show their piece of paper their ID
then hustled off on a bus
more dumb boys climb onto the bus
as it goes to other towns on it's route
it stops in Detroit at a rundown hotel
while they get drunk and hustle whores
it's induction day tomorrow
they look at the dumb boys trigger finger
and they all pass
the dumb boys never thought of going
to Canada or not showing up
never thought of college**

that's how dumb boys think
The dumb boys were given one more chance
before they took the pledge
put all your guns and long knives
on this table and nothing will happen to you
so out came some blades and out came
some steel and everything was okayed
Vietnam was not much different
from where they were raised
it was nothing to see a dead man
on the side walk
as the dumb boys walked to school
Many dumb boys died in Vietnam
but who cares about the dumb boys
in America everybody was happy
to hear about a dumb boy dead
in the neighborhood war its good
to get rid of the unwanted
in fact a blessing
leaving the smart college kids
and the down home married kids
the kids in Canada would be
welcomed back
it all makes for a better America
even now some dumb boys join
held in place by the cold money
not so many die so they feel safe
if that is a possible or a lie

Troops Invited:

Comments, arguments, articles, and letters from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or send email to contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe. Phone: 888.711.2550

**“These Generals At The Top, They
Had No Sense Of Reality”
“Nothing Was Achieved While I Was
There”**

“On Sunday Night, A Group Of Old Women, Some Of Them Wearing Black Scarves, Will Shuffle Into A Drab Apartment On Mikhailov Street And Light Candles For Their Dead Sons”

[Thanks to Sandy Kelson, Military Resistance, who sent this in.]

12.22.09 By TOM LASSETER, McClatchy Newspapers [Excerpts]

MOSCOW -- Thirty years ago this week, the Red Army began its invasion of Afghanistan, a move that sank the Soviet Union in a decade of guerrilla war and hastened the collapse of the Cold War empire.

Today, as former Soviet soldiers watch American troops trying to pacify the same stretches of Afghan land they once fought for, aging Soviet generals and grunts alike are reminded of a war they would rather forget.

As the Obama administration sends in 30,000 to 35,000 more troops by next summer - raising the total of U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan to at least 140,000 - men such as Alexander Tsalko say they can't fathom why anyone would want to fight in that land of sharp mountain ridges and hot desert sands.

“Nothing was achieved while I was there. ... There wasn't anything good there; they fired at us, we fired at them,” said Tsalko, who commanded a helicopter unit in Kandahar from 1982 to 1983.

What are his thoughts in late December, the period when the Soviets thrust into Afghanistan with a troop buildup on Dec. 24 and Dec. 25 and then the overthrow of the government on Dec. 27?

“Bitterness and regret that we were drawn into this war,” Tsalko replied.

In short, he said, “those who fought there do not want to talk about it when they're not drunk.”

“It's especially difficult to remember those episodes that so many would like to leave behind,” said Vladimir Kostyuchenko, a helicopter pilot for three tours in Afghanistan who's now active with an Afghan veterans group in Russia.

“These generals at the top, they had no sense of reality. They gave us murderous orders. I still bear a cross because I fulfilled those orders.”

Kostyuchenko, a slightly pudgy man with a friendly face whose helicopter was shot down in 1988, continued the thought: “Later we saw the results, and they were terrible.”

Igor Rodionov, who from 1985 to 1986 commanded the Soviet 40th Army, its main military force, said it wasn't just the troops who were conflicted.

“On one hand, I was indignant when I understood what this decision to invade Afghanistan would result in. I could say that to my friends, but I could not say it out loud because I was a general,” said Rodionov, who retired as a four-star general and later was a Russian defense minister and then a parliament deputy.

“Our sacrifices were not needed.”

Rodionov, who's now 73, looked down at a table in front of him and arranged a pen, plate of crackers and a napkin to demonstrate the flanks of a troop position. He gazed at them for a moment with a bemused expression, as if to recognize the absurdity of talking about the violence of war while pointing at a napkin.

Pushing the items forward, Rodionov said commanders often sent their men to hunt for the enemy in villages on either side of mountain gorges near vital transport routes.

“We could fight for two weeks in this gorge, killing the Afghans,” he said in a gravelly voice.

“In return they kill our guys. We have used all our water, ammunition and food, and then we must go back to our rear position.”

Rodionov pulled the pen, crackers and napkin back to their starting places: “Then the mujahedeen” - meaning holy warriors, the term used by Afghan fighters - “would return to the gorge, and the whole thing continues.”

“Afghans will fight foreign troops as long as foreign troops are there,” said Lev Serebrov, whose time there was bookended by the Soviet invasion and retreat.

He arrived in 1979 and stayed through 1981 as a lieutenant colonel and deputy division commander, and returned from 1987 to 1989 as a major general and deputy to the Soviet operations commander for the Afghan war.

“No one should go there armed,” said Serebrov, who's now a deputy in Russia's lower house of parliament.

Kostyuchenko, the helicopter pilot, hosts a neighborhood remembrance of the war on Dec. 27, the date that Soviet forces murdered Afghan President Hafizullah Amin in order to replace him with a more loyal pawn. Killing Amin was the point of no turning back, Kostyuchenko explained.

On Sunday night, a group of old women, some of them wearing black scarves, will shuffle into a drab apartment on Mikhailov Street and light candles for their dead sons.

The candles, from a nearby church, are thin so that they'll fit into the spent bullet cartridges that Kostyuchenko lines up in a row at a small exhibit about the war that he tends.

Tsalko, the veterans' issues advocate, didn't say whether he'd be attending any memorial services.

After speaking of the bad dreams and drinking that come after a war ends, Tsalko thanked a reporter for his time and headed toward the door.

Putting on his scarf, long winter coat and thick brown fur hat, he had one last thought: "It's very hard to fight in Afghanistan. Your leadership will have to find a way out."

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



**OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION
ALL TROOPS HOME NOW!**

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

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

CLASS WAR REPORTS

facebook CIA FBI NSA NYPD Warrantless Search

What's in your mind?
THE GOVERNMENT WANTS TO KNOW!
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Friends

Rob Phelps can't believe you left the lid up again.

Julie McCoy wonders if throwing away that Obama in 2012 mailer unopened is a good idea.

Barack Obama isn't terribly thrilled that you've been hanging around with the wrong crowd.
Today 15 minutes from now
Leon Panetta likes this.
Robert Mueller likes this.
Robert Gates likes this.
Nancy Pelosi and 434 members of Congress likes this.
Provide more evidence for your total...
Barack Obama thinks you should seriously reconsider that letter-to-the-editor in light of the weird stuff you look at at night when your spouse is sleeping.
Yesterday 15 minutes ago

Suggestions We Can See All
1984 friendly requests to calm down and watch more TV—streaming rocks!

Invitations We Can See All
GITMO CONCENTRATION CAMP
Gitmo is moving to Illinois!
George W. Bush is a fan, Barack Obama is a fan.

Events We Can See All
Langley VA Facebook Intel Processing Party (with Donuts !!!)

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