

## GI SPECIAL 6H22:



[elmugahidin.tripod.com]

“Hi there! Welcome to the occupied United States. We’re doing our job here in Minnesota to make sure it stays that way.”

**The Scum Of The Earth  
Busy Busy Busy:  
Armed Government Terrorists  
Raid Unarmed Civilians In  
Minneapolis  
[They Really Do Hate Our Freedoms]**

[Thanks to SSG N (ret'd) who sent this in.]

August 30, 2008 By Glenn Greenwalk, Salon.com [Excerpts]

**Protesters here in Minneapolis have been targeted by a series of highly intimidating, sweeping police raids across the city, involving teams of 25-30 officers in riot gear, with semi-automatic weapons drawn, entering homes of those suspected of planning protests, handcuffing and forcing them to lay on the floor, while law enforcement officers searched the homes, seizing computers, journals, and political pamphlets.**

**Last night, members of the St. Paul police department and the Ramsey County sheriff's department handcuffed, photographed and detained dozens of people meeting at a public venue to plan a demonstration, charging them with no crime other than "fire code violations," and early this morning, the Sheriff's department sent teams of officers into at least four Minneapolis area homes where suspected protesters were staying.**

Jane Hamsher and I were at two of those homes this morning -- one which had just been raided and one which was in the process of being raided. Each of the raided houses is known by neighbors as a "hippie house," where 5-10 college-aged individuals live in a communal setting, and everyone we spoke with said that there had never been any problems of any kind in those houses, that they were filled with "peaceful kids" who are politically active but entirely unthreatening and friendly.

**In the house that had just been raided, those inside described how a team of roughly 25 officers had barged into their homes with masks and black SWAT gear, holding large semi-automatic rifles, and ordered them to lie on the floor, where they were handcuffed and ordered not to move.**

**The officers refused to state why they were there and, until the very end, refused to show whether they had a search warrant.**

**They were forced to remain on the floor for 45 minutes while the officers took away the laptops, computers, individual journals, and political materials kept in the house.**

One of the individuals renting the house, an 18-year-old woman, was extremely shaken as she and others described how the officers were deliberately making intimidating statements such as "Do you have Terminator ready?" as they lay on the floor in handcuffs.

The 10 or so individuals in the house all said that though they found the experience very jarring, they still intended to protest against the GOP Convention, and several said that being subjected to raids of that sort made them more emboldened than ever to do so.

Several of those who were arrested are being represented by Bruce Nestor, the President of the Minnesota chapter of the National Lawyers' Guild. Nestor said that last night's raid involved a meeting of a group calling itself the "RNC Welcoming Committee", and that this morning's raids appeared to target members of "Food Not Bombs," which he described as an anti-war, anti-authoritarian protest group.

There was not a single act of violence or illegality that has taken place, Nestor said. Instead, the raids were purely anticipatory in nature, and clearly designed to frighten people contemplating taking part in any unauthorized protests.

**Nestor indicated that only 2 or 3 of the 50 individuals who were handcuffed this morning at the 2 houses were actually arrested and charged with a crime, and the crime they were charged with is “conspiracy to commit riot.”**

Nestor, who has practiced law in Minnesota for many years, said that he had never before heard of that statute being used for anything, and that its parameters are so self-evidently vague, designed to allow pre-emptive arrests of those who are peacefully protesting, that it is almost certainly unconstitutional, though because it had never been invoked (until now), its constitutionality had not been tested.

There is clearly an intent on the part of law enforcement authorities here to engage in extreme and highly intimidating raids against those who are planning to protest the Convention.

The DNC in Denver was the site of several quite ugly incidents where law enforcement acted on behalf of Democratic Party officials and the corporate elite that funded the Convention to keep the media and protesters from doing anything remotely off-script.

But the massive and plainly excessive preemptive police raids in Minnesota are of a different order altogether.

**Targeting people with automatic-weapons-carrying SWAT teams and mass raids in their homes, who are suspected of nothing more than planning dissident political protests at a political convention and who have engaged in no illegal activity whatsoever, is about as redolent of the worst tactics of a police state as can be imagined.**

Meanwhile, Indy Media of Twin Cities -- an association of independent journalists in the area -- just told me that several of their journalists have been detained while trying to cover these raids.

The Uptake also has several reports of the various raids, including video of the raid at the property whose owner Bernstein spoke with as the raid occurred.

**That video includes an interview with a lawyer from the National Lawyer’s Guild who was detained and put in handcuffs, explaining that the surrounded house is one where various journalists are staying.**

**Additionally, a photojournalist with Democracy Now was detained at that house as well.**

**So, both journalists and lawyers -- in addition to protesters -- have been detained and arrested even though not a single violent or criminal act has occurred.**

**MORE:**

# A Veteran Witnesses Enemy Combatants At Work: “One Of My Roommates Said ‘I Want To See A Warrant’ And She Was Immediately Detained”

August 30, 2008 By Lindsay Beyerstein, Firedoglake.com

Thanks to the miracle of cellular technology, I was able to talk to a homeowner while his home was surrounded by police conducting an RNC-related raid.

At approximately two-thirty this afternoon, I reached Mike Whelan, a waiter and army veteran, at his duplex at 951 Iglehart Ave. in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Whelan said he'd invited independent observers from the group LegalWatch stay in one half of his side-by-side duplex while they monitored RNC protests.

Whelan described himself as a supporter of the RNC demonstrations, but said he is not affiliated with any particular group. "I want to build a country that's based on good social values," he explained.

When I spoke to him, Whelan was waiting in one half of the duplex with his roommates, Dan and Julian. The three were afraid to go outside because the police were still there. Whelan said he thought that the police were inside the opposite side of the duplex, where the legal observers were staying. "I think they are detaining people," he added.

Whelan, who seemed remarkably calm for a guy whose flower garden had just been trampled by police with drawn automatic weapons, said he'd just returned from a morning of garage sale shopping when the commotion started. That would have been about one o'clock local time. He described what happened:

**“About an hour and a half ago 20 to 30 heavily armed police officers surrounded the house,” Whelan said. “One of my roommates said ‘I want to see a warrant’ and she was immediately detained.”**

“Are they still outside?” I asked.

“Oh, yes, they're still outside,” Whelan replied cheerfully, “The streets are blocked off.”

“How you did figure out there was a raid going on?” I asked.

“It sounded like people were falling down on my porch,” he said, “Cops were running up both sides of the house onto the porch.”

**Whelan says his roommate, Erin Stalmaker, went out to talk to talk to the police. She asked the officers why they were there. The officers asked why people were running away from them. Erin reportedly told the officers that their drawn automatic weapons probably had something to do with it. She was detained after asking to see a warrant.**

“Are you scared,” I asked.”

“No, I’m a veteran,” he said, “I was in the army. I was a military police officer. I wouldn’t have done this.”

**Whelan said it was especially perplexing that the police would target his home.**

**“There’s nothing here,” he said, “These are the “checking” people. They’re not even going to be in the demonstration. Some are lawyers.”**

Whelan was watching a large crowd of legal observers gathering across the street, many wearing red or green hats. The police officers he could identify were from St. Paul, but he thought there might be other forces on the scene as well.

The officers were wearing black uniforms. Their vehicles were “non-descript” vans, not police cruisers. TV cameras were also on the scene. Whelan couldn’t be sure because a tree was blocking his view, but he thought City Council member Melvin Carter had arrived.

Whelan called him when the raid started. (Talk about constituent service.)

“You figure this would be going on in South Africa, or Russia, not in St Paul,” Whelan said, marveling at the incongruity of it all, “St. Paul is nice.”

**MORE:**

## **THE SAME BOTTOM-FEEDING SCUM-SUCKING TRAITORS HARASS VETERANS MEETING IN BLOOMINGTON, MINNESOTA**

August 30, 2008 Andy Driscoll, Producer/Host & Lynnell Mickelsen, Co-host, Truth to Tell & CivicMedia/Minnesota [Excerpts]

I’ve just returned from taping an RNC Welcoming Committee news conference outside the same old West Side St. Paul building Fletcher’s boys raided last night, kicking in doors, weapons drawn, forcing everyone - including children facedown to the floor where they were handcuffed with large, sharp-edged, plastic straps, searched, then released, one-by-one.

Officers confiscated several computers, maps, programs and some money according to Lisa Fithian, who conducted the news conference.

Defense attorneys say these cross-jurisdictional raids are authorized and coordinated by Homeland Security and encompass all police and sheriffs' departments, the FBI and the Secret Service. The St. Paul Police were supposed to be "in charge" of any security outside the Secret Service "red zone" around the Xcel Center, but it's quite clear every police department in the Metro is under the coordination and direction of a larger entity.

Gena Berglund, a National Lawyers Guild (NLG) attorney coordinating legal observers and recorders calls this Homeland Security operation the Fusion Center, a likely name for granting law enforcement powers across all jurisdictions.

Fithian insisted that, in her 35 years of working in dozens of local and regional venues "for radical change in this country," she had never seen anything the likes of which is occurring this weekend across the Cities.

Among the other speakers [at the News Conference]:

**Michael McPhearson of US Veterans for Peace, which is holding its annual convention in a Bloomington hotel/motel.**

**Police officers from several jurisdictions appeared at that gathering as well, claiming to be scouting the facility for a their own use when, in fact, the VFP group had reserved the entire space for the same period of time.**

**McPhearson was certain this was little more than police intimidation in much the same manner as he and his fellow soldiers used their uniforms and weaponry as intimidation of Iraq and Kuwaiti civilians during the Gulf War I and the current Iraq War.**

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## **Domestic Enemies "Continued The Sweeps On Saturday Morning"**



Police released one person at a time from a protest-planning headquarters where people were detained in St. Paul on Friday night. Robert Stolarik for The New York Times

August 30, 2008 By COLIN MOYNIHAN, New York Times & August 30, 2008 By Jane Hamsher, Cliffschechter.firedoglake.com [Excerpts]

On the weekend before the Republican National Convention, law enforcement agencies detained dozens of people and issued a series of search warrants aimed at groups believed to be organizing demonstrations while delegates and Republican officials are in town.

“They handcuffed all of us,” said Sonia Silbert, 28, from Washington. “They searched everyone.”

People who had been inside said teach-ins and legal training had been conducted there, and that the space was also a repository for such items as computers and bicycles.

The sheriff’s department continued the sweeps on Saturday morning, executing warrants for three houses in Minneapolis and two in St. Paul, detaining more than 50 people and arresting 4.

It’s believed that these were associated with another raid conducted last night, and the target were individuals associated with a group called the RNC Welcoming Committee.

**Glenn Greenwald and I arrived at one of the houses shortly after it was raided this morning. It was a hippie house full of people in their late teens and early twenties who said they were here to “watch history.”**

**They were forced on the floor by roughly twenty cops carrying assault rifles, who initially refused to show them search warrants and joked about the “Terminator” and the “Executioner.”**

We spoke with the people who were staying at the house about the raid in the video above, and they were really sweet and inspirational, interested in “food not bombs.”

We later spoke with Bruce Nestor from the National Lawyer’s Guild who lives in the neighborhood of the second house we went to.

He’d seen the search warrants and said that the laws they were trying to invoke were largely bullshit, meant to suppress free speech and not dissimilar to those used against the Chicago 8 in ‘68

[He] said three people there were arrested on charges of conspiracy to commit a riot.

“In my mind it’s a classic preventive detention charge,” Mr. Nestor said.

He said the authorities were permitted to hold those they arrested without charging them for up to 36 hours -- excluding weekends or holidays -- in essence detaining them for the length of the convention.

**It's not clear what the Ramsey County Sheriff was doing conducting raids in Hennepin County, but the lawyer suggested a strong likelihood that it had to do with a desire for a bigger piece of the \$50 million security pie.**

On Saturday morning the father of one woman who was arrested said he was outraged.

"There is no cause for this," said Dave Bilking, whose daughter, Monica Bilking, a 23-year-old student, had been removed in handcuffs.

The sheriff's department did not respond to a phone message requesting comment.

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## **As Usual, Stupidity Goes Hand In Hand With Hatred Of Liberty: Enemy Forces Search For "Urine," "Feces," Seize House Plants**

8/30/08 By Paul Schmelzer,Minnesotaindependent.com [Excerpts]

9:45 A woman named Heather Adams just came out of the Food Not Bombs house and gave Guntzel the following account: She arrived from Chicago at 3 a.m. this morning with plans to protest at the RNC.

At 8 a.m. she woke up to find police in the house wearing riot gear and camouflage flak jackets. She says they had rifles drawn.

Adams has a broken ankle, and when officers ordered her to roll over on her stomach, she says she was slow to do so and the officer, she says, pushed her with his boot.

Adams says one arrest was made. Nathanael Secor, a main organizer of FNB, was arrested on charges of conspiracy to riot, she says.

9:54: Guntzel says a Ramsey County warrant was served, and the house is now occupied only by law enforcement agents. Evidence has been taken out the back of the house.

Adams said law enforcement took photos of maps of St. Paul which were present in the house, as well as house plants.

10:03: Guntzel has in hand a Hennepin County warrant. It indicates law enforcement was searching for incendiary devices, smoke bombs, urine and feces, and other items.

Officers and agents from the Minneapolis Police Department, Hennepin County Sheriff's Office, Ramsey County Sheriff's office and the FBI collaborated on the raid.

MORE:

**“They Pulled Drew Their Guns On Everyone—including A Five Year Old Child Who Was There With His Mother, Forced Everyone Down On The Floor. It Was Terrifying”  
[Right. That’s The Point Of Enemy Terrorism: To Terrify]**

**“Cops Have Been Raiding Houses Where Activists Are Staying, Bursting In With The Same Bogus Warrant And Arresting People, Including A Four Year Old Child”**

This is the America that eight years of the Bush administration have brought us, a place where dissent is no longer tolerated, where pre-emptive strikes have become the strategy of choice for those who hold power, where any group can be accused of ‘bombmaking’ or ‘terrorism’ on no evidence whatsoever in order to deter dissent.

August 30, 2008 By Starhawk, Cliffschechter.firedoglake.com [Excerpts]

It’s Friday night. Our Pagan Cluster is sitting on the bluff of the Mississippi having our first real meeting, when Lisa gets a call.

The cops are raiding the Convergence Center, where we’re organizing meetings and trainings for the protests against the Republican National Convention.

It’s not a role play, the caller says. It’s real.

Instantly, we jump up and hurry back the six or eight blocks to the old theater we are using for meetings, trainings and social gatherings.

Nobody can keep up with Lisa, who speeds ahead like an arrow, walking, not running, but still covering the ground quickly.

We're stopped by a line of cops just before we reach the building. They refuse to let us through, or to move their van which is blocking Scarecrow's car. There's an investigation underway, they say, and won't say more.

Brush, our dear friend, is inside, having gone to a jail solidarity meeting, ironically enough. So are two very young people who had just joined our cluster that night. I try calling Brush's cell phone, but get no reply.

**We wait.**

**That's what you do when the cops have guns trained on kids inside a building.**

You wait, and witness, and make phone calls, and try to think of useful things to do.

We call lawyers. We call politicians. We try to call media. We call friends who might know politicians and media.

Through the kitchen door, we can see young kids sitting on the floor, handcuffed.

We walk across the street, back, made more phone calls. An ambulance is parked in front, and the paramedics head into the building, leaving a gurney ready.

**Susu, from her car around the corner, reports that the cops have been grabbing pedestrians from the street, forcing them down to the ground, handcuffing them.**

A protestor has been released from the building. A small crowd has gathered across the street, and Fox News has arrived. They interview Song, who does her first ever Fox media spot. She tells them the truth — that people were in there watching movies — a documentary about Meridel Le Seuer. Meridel would be proud, and I'm glad she is with us in some form.

One by one, protestor's trickle out.

Now we get more pieces of the story.

**The cops burst in, with no warning. They pulled drew their guns on everyone—including a five year old child who was there with his mother, forced everyone down on the floor. It was terrifying.**

They had a warrant, apparently, from the county, not the city, to search for 'bomb making materials.' They were searching everyone in the building, then one by one releasing them as they found nothing.

They continue to find nothing, as we wait through long hours. Meanwhile, more and more media arrives.

These cops are not as creative as the DC cops during our first mobilization there against the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Those cops confiscated the lunchtime soup—which included onions and chili powder, claiming they were materials for home made pepper spray.

**We wait until the last person gets out. He's a twenty year old who the cops have accused of stealing his own backpack — but apparently they relented.**

And now it's morning.

**I wake up to the news that cops have been raiding houses where activists are staying, bursting in with the same bogus warrant and arresting people, including a four year old child.**

**They've arrested people at the Food Not Bombs house—a group dedicated to feeding protestors and the homeless. They've arrested others, presumably just for being in the wrong place at the wrong time.**

The Poor Peoples' Campaign, which had set up camp at Harriet Island, a park in the middle of the Mississippi, has also been harassed, its participants ordered to disperse and its organizers arrested.

Let me be perfectly clear here — all of us here are planning nonviolent protests against an administration which is responsible for immense violence, bombs that have destroyed whole countries, and hundreds of thousands of deaths.

**This is the America that eight years of the Bush administration have brought us, a place where dissent is no longer tolerated, where pre-emptive strikes have become the strategy of choice for those who hold power, where any group can be accused of 'bombmaking' or 'terrorism' on no evidence whatsoever in order to deter dissent.**

**Please stand with us. Because it could be your home they are raiding, next.**

Call the Mayors of St. Paul and Minneapolis. Tell them you are outraged by these attacks on dissent. Urge them to let Poor People encamp and to let dissent be heard.

FLOOD THE MAYORS' OFFICES ASAP

St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman  
651-266-8510

Minneapolis Mayor RT Rybak  
(612) 673-2100  
(612) 673-3000 outside Minneapolis

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## **Arrested Citizens Charged With Nothing At All:**

# Thrown In Jail “To Scare People From Participating In Protest Activity”

And according to the Hennepin County Jail records they're being held on probable cause. Which means no formal charges have been issued. No complaint has been reviewed or signed by a prosecutor or a judge.

8.30.08 Ken Avidor Reporting, The UpTake [Excerpts]

Raid- 3240 17th Ave. South

**When I arrived at the home at 3240 17th Ave. South in Minneapolis, the police and city inspectors were boarding up the house.**

**The city said they had to board up the house because the owner wasn't available, but the owner was in jail.**

Bruce Nestor of the National Lawyers Guild was on hand to explain what happened.

“I got a phone call from our legal hotline that a raid was happening, that the occupants called the hotline . I live about four blocks away and I got in my office which is actually three blocks away and I said I would come over. So I got here about 8:15 (AM) and there were 20 to 25 officers present.

**One of the first things I saw there was an officer with an army helmet, automatic weapon, automatic rifle over his.. and flak jacket coming out. A number of other officers in bullet proof vests ... armed. And a number of undercover officers.**

*Reporter: so they did take some things and left with*

They did.

**They took cash from the home.**

I had a brief opportunity to review the inventory before we sent it off to be copied.

**They took foam mattresses. They took old tires. They took cans of paint thinner. I saw the truck it was loaded with stuff that's in my garage right now.**

I represent the homeowner Monica Bicking. So there were 13 people in the home.

**They were all forced to lie face down. They were all handcuffed. They were handcuffed throughout the duration of the search.**

And then 10 of them were released one by one. Three people out of this home were arrested.

I was told by Sgt. J. Maher of Ramsey County special investigations intelligence unit that those individuals those individuals were being charged with conspiracy to commit riot.

13 were detained and three were arrested.

**And according to the Hennepin County Jail records they're being held on probable cause. Which means no formal charges have been issued. No complaint has been reviewed or signed by a prosecutor or a judge.**

**But the police have detained these people.**

**They can be held on probable cause until Wednesday at 12 noon.**

**In my view this is a preventive detention action by the Ramsey County Sheriff's department . It's designed to keep people off the streets.**

**It's designed to scare people from participating in protest activity.**

**The single best thing that other citizens can do is to speak out against these violations of people's rights and to come out in the streets and join people in a democratic exercise over the next week**

*Reporter: This raid warranted or un warranted?*

**Look if this raid was warranted people would be arrested on criminal complaints.**

**MORE:**

## **St. Paul Filth In Blue Break Through Attic To Detain "Democracy Now" Journalist; "They Came In With Pistols Drawn" Reporter Says**

8.30.08 The UpTake [Excerpts]

Elizabeth Press is a producer with "Democracy Now" and is in St. Paul to help the group "iWitness Video" document any police abuses during the Republican National Convention.

She was staying in a house on Iglehart in St. Paul (949 Iglehart)

**She says a Federal agent came to the door this morning and asked for someone named Fred who was involved with a bike ride a few months ago and they wanted**

to question him. He said it wasn't related to the Republican National Convention. He then left.

The iWitness video group decided then to move from the house because they felt their meeting wasn't safe.

Around 1pm about 20 St. Paul police officers surrounded the house.

A few of the group went outside and were handcuffed.

They had to wait for the search warrant to arrive.

When the warrant arrived, it was not for their house. It was for the apartment next door.

Police went into that other apartment and then busted through the attic into where the journalists were.

"They came in with pistols drawn" said Press.

"I was pointing my video camera back.

They said 'St. Paul Police, put your hands on your head' and then we were all detained for the next several hours in the back yard.

Police then searched the journalists' belongings, unhandcuffed them and let them go.

"I feel like these are intimidation tactics. iWitness video has been in the news recently, in the New York Times and all over the internet. Their video work has gotten over 400 people's charges dropped from the National Republican Convention in New York City and they are going to be here today and through out the week to document police behaviors at the 2008 Republican National Convention.

Three members of the group were biking away from the home at the time of the raid and were detained by police on the sidewalk.

All of their belongings were searched.

They went through their maps, their notes and wrote things down after viewing the notes. The police had riot gear and tasers.

**MORE:**

## **Police Swarm & Seize Earth Justice Bus In St. Paul**

8.30.08 By Chuck Olsen, The UpTake [Excerpts]

This appears to be part of a series of police actions preceding the Republican National Convention in St. Paul.

Surrounding a green painted former school bus are a half dozen highway patrol squad cars and several Ramsey County Sheriff's office cars. The sign on the bus says "Earth Activist Training Permaculture Demonstration Bus."

Chuck reports the bus was declared a "commercial vehicle" and then towed, leaving the people who were on the bus stranded and temporarily homeless.

**MORE:**

## **BREAKING NEWS:**

# **Thomas Jefferson Sends Appeal To The Minnesota National Guard Concerning Enemy Combatants Terrorizing Minneapolis**

"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, 1787.



Mediafilter.org

**Troops Invited:**

What do you think? Comments 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 [contact@militaryproject.org](mailto:contact@militaryproject.org): Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Replies confidential. Same address to unsubscribe. Phone: 917.677.8057

## IRAQ WAR REPORTS

### Town Mourns Marine Killed In Iraq Fighting



Marine Dan McGuire, 19, was killed Thursday in Iraq while supporting combat operations in Anbar province. (Courtesy: Boston Herald)

August 16, 2008 By Eva Wolchover, Colneth Smiley Jr. and Renee Nadeau, Boston Herald

Flags are flying at half-staff in Mashpee today as townspeople mourn the loss of native son Dan McGuire, 19, a Marine killed in Iraq on Thursday.

Friends and loved ones recalled a “brave, smart and kind” young man with a fierce love of his country, whose lifelong dream had been to follow in his grandfather’s footsteps as a Marine.

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**FUTILE EXERCISE:**

## **ONLY 10 MILLION MORE TO GO: ALL HOME NOW!**



June 17 2008: Soldiers from the 101st Airborne pick up another suspect. Photograph: Sean Smith/Guardian [Thanks to JM, who sent this in.]

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## **AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS**

### **Romanian Soldier Is Killed In Afghanistan, Three Wounded**

Aug 31, 2008 South Asia News

Bucharest - A Romanian soldier was killed in Afghanistan and three colleagues were wounded Sunday when their patrol vehicle was blown up, the Romanian news agency Mediafax quoted the Bucharest defence ministry as saying.

Their vehicle, one of four in a convoy, hit an improvised mine on the Kabul-Kalat highway.

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# **Resistance Attacks Threaten Occupation Khyber Pass Supply Line; “On The Verge Of Losing It”**

August 31 2008 By Nick Meo, The Telegraph

Taliban raiders are trying to strangle Nato's mission in Afghanistan by stepping up attacks on convoys in the Khyber Pass, the perilous mountain trail that carries most supplies into the country.

A prominent tribesman from the regional administration said that the Pakistani army was close to losing control of the pass.

“You see vehicles destroyed by rockets on the side of the road. The wreckage isn't there for long, the army soon removes it to make it look as if they are still in control of the road. But they are on the verge of losing it.”

He claimed attacks were occurring almost daily. Earlier this year, 42 oil tankers were destroyed in one Taliban foray.

**About 70 per cent of the fuel, clothes and food needed by Nato's mission is transported in civilian Pakistani trucks through the Khyber Pass, a vulnerable point in a long route to Kabul, which begins at the Pakistani port of Karachi.**

The importance of the pass has been underlined because hopes that Russia would ease Nato's difficulties by granting access through its territory later this year now look doubtful after the war in Georgia.

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## **TROOP NEWS**

# **Sgt. Juan Jimenez Was “Struck By Two Roadside Bombs”**

**“A Second Bomb Sprayed Scrap Metal Into His Face, Leaving Him Brain Damaged”  
Over Three Years Later, VA Still Denying Benefits -- They Don't Believe His Wounds Came From War: V.A. Rat Says “While A Veteran's Claim Is Pending, There Is A Way He Can Bring His Case To A Close: He Can Kill Himself”**

[Here it is again. Same old story. Used up, thrown away, and the politicians couldn't care less. To repeat for the 3,527th time, there is no enemy in Iraq. Iraqis and U.S. troops have a common enemy. That common enemy owns and operates the Imperial government in Washington DC for their own profit. That common enemy started this war of conquest on a platform of lies, because they couldn't tell the truth: this war was about making money for them, and nothing else. Payback is overdue. T]

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The VA's diagnosis: too much caffeine. “They said I was drinking too much Red Bull. That's what was causing my problems.”

August 27, 2008 By Joshua Kors, The Nation [Excerpts]

Sgt. Juan Jimenez had one of the most dangerous jobs in Iraq, ushering top Administration officials through the war-torn streets of Baghdad. He returned home with two Purple Hearts and shrapnel lodged in his right arm. Today he is gravely ill.

What Jimenez didn't realize is that before he could receive benefits for his wounds, he'd have to prove that those wounds came from war.

Three and a half years later, the sergeant is still making his case. The Department of Veterans Affairs isn't convinced.

And it won't give him his benefits until it is.

**The VA requires all veterans to prove their wounds are “service-connected” before it writes them a check.**

Jimenez thought that hurdle was merely a formality.

**The Army sergeant had been struck by two roadside bombs. The first sliced into his arms; six months later, a second bomb sprayed scrap metal into his face, knocking him unconscious and leaving him brain damaged.**

He began having seizures and suffering from memory loss. The blast left a persistent ringing in his right ear. The stress sparked nightmares, flashbacks and acid-reflux disease.

**The VA’s diagnosis: too much caffeine. “They said I was drinking too much Red Bull. That’s what was causing my problems.”**

Jimenez got mad.

At that point, he did something few veterans even consider: he sued the VA. The sergeant is a member of Veterans for Common Sense (VCS), one of the most prominent veterans’ groups in the country. In July 2007, executive director Paul Sullivan filed a class-action lawsuit on behalf of Jimenez and the thousands of veterans in his organization who were wounded in Iraq and, he says, were rebuffed by the VA when they sought disability and medical benefits.

April 24, the fourth day of the VA trial.

**A crowd of wounded veterans sit in the San Francisco Federal Courthouse in stunned silence.**

**On the courtroom’s TV screen, a woman is explaining how her career fell to pieces.**

There is an unmistakable look of defeat on her face. As she pushes forward in her testimony, she slumps a bit in her white-striped pantsuit, and her voice begins to crack.

**Dr. Frances Murphy had been one of the VA’s shining stars. In 2004 she helped draft the Mental Health Strategic Plan, a blueprint for overhauling the VA.**

**The plan called for 265 changes to the organization, among them: installing a tracking system to stay in touch with suicidal veterans, creating rehabilitation programs that involve veterans’ families and streamlining the benefits process to resolve wounded veterans’ immediate needs.**

**The plan was hailed by military leaders and veterans’ groups. VA officials extolled it to reporters and members of Congress, citing it as proof of the organization’s rapid transformation.**

**There was just one problem: the VA had done little to put the plan into practice.**

A recent Inspector General report found that 70 percent of VA facilities don't have a system to track suicidal veterans. Only a handful of VA hospitals have rehab programs that include families.

And soldiers injured today face a benefits waiting list more than 650,000 veterans long.

**Dr. Murphy knew it. She decided to speak out.**

And she had the perfect platform to do so: on March 29, 2006, almost two years after the plan's release, a group of prominent mental health organizations asked the doctor to address them in Washington.

Following her speech, she would be given the Leadership in Government Award before an audience of high-profile figures: Senator Ted Kennedy, Surgeon General Richard Carmona, 60 Minutes's Mike Wallace and former First Lady Rosalynn Carter.

Dr. Murphy was blunt. Right now, she said, wounded veterans must climb over "a number of barriers" to receive their benefits.

"It can be very confusing for veterans and family members to understand the services available to them and to navigate the systems." The VA promises veterans high-quality care.

But "the promise of our state-of-the-art programs and scientific research is a hollow one if veterans who are struggling with the aftermath of severe trauma do not have equitable and timely access to quality mental healthcare near their homes. In some communities, VA clinics do not provide mental health or substance abuse care--or waiting lists render that care virtually inaccessible."

**Dr. Murphy's portrait of the VA was dramatically darker than the official version put forward by the organization's other top officials.**

As recently as March 2007, as waiting lists surged, Dr. Michael Kussman, head of the VA's health department, stepped before a Congressional committee and said, "We are ideally poised to be able to take care of the patients as they transition out" of the Army.

Dr. Kussman's comments meshed well with the warmer depiction of the VA put forward by Dr. Ira Katz. Katz, the VA's head of mental health, has become a key spokesman for the organization in recent years, underlining its success with the wounded and suicidal. With an MD and a PhD, soft speech and a gentle lisp, Katz has the credentials and the demeanor to paint a convincing image of a thriving VA.

**In July 2007, after The Nation revealed that military doctors were purposely misdiagnosing soldiers wounded in Iraq as being mentally ill, the VA tapped Dr. Katz to appear before the House VA Committee and explain.**

The doctor had assuring words for the disgruntled legislators. "We have seen the press reports about that happening and are very concerned about those tragedies," he said. Dr. Katz said VA officials felt a "paternal" devotion to veterans' care and were committed to improving "the quality of care as well as access to care."

In November Dr. Katz was on camera again, this time on CBS News. Reporter Armen Keteyian had produced a groundbreaking report on veteran suicides.

His five-month investigation found that in 2005 alone, more than 6,250 soldiers had committed suicide--120 deaths each week, eighteen suicides every day. Again, Dr. Katz was reassuring. "We are determined to decrease veteran suicides," he told Keteyian. But "there is no epidemic of suicide in the VA."

Keteyian's report sparked a second Congressional hearing. There Representative Steve Buyer, a Republican from Indiana, pressed Dr. Katz to explain his views.

**Dr. Katz used the opportunity to publicly attack CBS's suicide figures. "Their number is not, in fact, an accurate reflection of the suicide rate," he told the committee.**

**Privately, however, the doctor's views were very different. In an internal e-mail written days after his testimony, Dr. Katz embraced CBS's findings as a flat fact. "There are about 18 suicides per day among America's 25 million veterans," he told Dr. Kussman. "(This) is supported by the CBS numbers."**

Three months later Dr. Katz returned to his computer, this time to express dire concerns about the growing number of veteran suicides. "Our suicide prevention coordinators are identifying about 1000 suicide attempts per month among the veterans we see in our facilities," he told his department's chief of media relations.

**It was information Dr. Katz did not want the public to see. He began the e-mail by writing, "Shh!" and concluded it by asking, "Is this something we should (carefully) address ourselves in some sort of release before someone stumbles on it?"**

**It was information the doctor didn't want Keteyian to find either. Dr. Katz titled his e-mail: "Not for the CBS News Interview Request."**

Dr. Murphy was intent on taking a different path. Speaking to the mental health leaders gathered in Washington at the 2006 conference, she concluded her comments by highlighting the danger of creating ambitious plans, then failing to enact them.

**"Government likes to begin things, to declare grand new programs and causes," she told the audience. "But good beginnings are not the measure of success, in government or any other pursuit. What matters in the end is completion. Performance. Results. Not just making promises."**

**Days later Dr. Murphy was fired.**

A few weeks after that, the VA brought in a new official to be the public face of the organization: Dr. Ira Katz.

In the San Francisco courtroom, on the TV screen, Dr. Murphy's eyes are near tears. "(I was) very surprised," she says.

She asked her boss to explain the VA's decision. He "chose not to answer that question."

Dr. Murphy approached Dr. Kussman about other VA positions that had become available. "(Kussman) said he'd be happy to give me an early retirement."

**You might think that when soldiers return wounded from Iraq, it is assumed that they were wounded in Iraq.**

**Not so.**

**Under current VA policy, all soldiers have to prove that their wounds are the result of military service, even if they come home missing a leg or, like Sergeant Jimenez, with an arm heavy with shrapnel.**

**Those who fail to make a convincing case cannot collect disability benefits.**

**To begin, veterans are asked to gather proof that they were wounded.**

**The injured come to the VA carrying Purple Hearts and combat medals, folders thick with medical evaluations created in Iraq following their injuries.**

**They are asked to provide the date and time they were wounded, to describe the circumstances surrounding the mortar or rocket blast.**

**Veterans are often asked to contact those who witnessed the attack, to gather "buddy statements" that confirm the veracity of their stories.**

"The system really pisses me off," says Bob Handy, chair of Veterans United for Truth.

**"These soldiers are seriously injured and emotionally traumatized, and when they get home, they make them jump through hoops to get their benefits."**

Handy's organization joined VCS in its lawsuit against the VA. He says he's especially disturbed by cases like Sergeant Jimenez's.

**"When you go into the VA with two Purple Hearts and X-rays show that you have shrapnel in your body, and you still can't get your benefits, that's punishing someone who's done a tremendous amount for this country."**

VA spokeswoman Kerri Childress says the proof system is not meant as a swipe at soldiers. She says it's a standard mechanism to protect the VA from phony disability claims. "Veterans are human," says Childress. "Some are in desperate situations. Some have the choice of going to jail or the military. So a portion of them would commit fraud." If soldiers were no longer required to prove they are wounded, "it would be a travesty for veterans--an assault to the pride of honest soldiers when other vets scammed the system."

Eliminating the proof requirement would open the VA's checkbook to fraudulent claims, says Childress, which is why granting claims without investigation would be "an abdication of our responsibility to the taxpayer."

The wounded veterans who gathered at the San Francisco trial say they are sensitive to the VA's economic concerns.

Still, Childress's words leave them cold.

For many, her fraud explanation sounds like an echo of Col. Steven Knorr. Knorr, former chief of the Department of Behavioral Health at Evans Army Hospital, at Fort Carson, Colorado, gained notoriety last year when NPR's Daniel Zwerdling broadcast a memo Knorr had written.

The memo, which Knorr posted on his office bulletin board, warned doctors not to take soldiers' descriptions of their ailments at face value. "We're not naïve, and shouldn't automatically believe everything Soldiers tell us," the colonel wrote.

**Military leaders assured the public that Knorr's admonition did not reflect the military's views on treating physically or psychologically wounded soldiers, including those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).**

**As the commander of Fort Carson, Gen. Robert Mixon, told Zwerdling, "We expect leaders to support soldiers' getting care and treatment without bias. And if we see evidence of bias, we will take disciplinary action against the leaders."**

**But Knorr was never disciplined.**

And as the San Francisco trial revealed, the fraud concerns present in Knorr's and Childress's statements fit squarely with VA policy.

**A baffled crowd of veterans watched as their lawyer read from Chapter Fourteen of the VA's official training guide.**

**The guide urges doctors to track down documents from veterans' schoolteachers and families, people who knew them before they say they were traumatized.**

That "before and after" comparison is critical, says the guide, since the doctor may wonder "about the degree of distortion or fabrication in the interview. The clinical picture of PTSD is relatively easy to fabricate."

**None of these issues were on Sergeant Jimenez's radar when he entered the West Los Angeles VA in 2005 seeking treatment and benefits.**

**Jimenez carried proof of his Purple Hearts as well as medical documents inked in Iraq following the two roadside bomb blasts.**

**Eventually he was checked into the facility for an overnight exam so VA doctors could monitor the seizures and sleep apnea that began after the blow to his head. There, with the clinicians watching, Jimenez had an epileptic attack.**

His doctor put him on a powerful anticonvulsant, Gabapentin. The medication would mix with other VA-prescribed drugs: Prozac for depression, Prazosin for nightmares and Bupropion to help the sergeant sleep.

Jimenez was hesitant to take so much medication.

**Still, he says, he was relieved the VA had finally recognized the effects of his traumatic brain injury.**

**His relief was short-lived. Five months after he filed for disability, Jimenez received a letter from the VA.**

**The ratings officer handling his case said there wasn't sufficient evidence to prove that Jimenez had a seizure disorder.**

**The rater further expressed doubt as to whether the sergeant had suffered a head wound at all while serving in Iraq, noting that reports of his traumatic brain injury were "based on an oral history."**

**He suggested that Jimenez's health problems may be the result of a car accident twenty-one years ago in which he bumped his head on the steering wheel.**

**Jimenez's claim was denied and so was his request for disability pay.**

**"I couldn't believe it," he says. "The VA is saying I don't have seizures. But they watched me have a seizure. And they're giving me medication for it. It doesn't make sense."**

**The VA also turned down his claim for chronic headaches. "Everything the VA doctors said I had, the VA rater turned around and said I didn't have."**

**Jimenez appealed. His appeal is pending.**

**Legally, raters are required to accept doctors' diagnoses.**

**But in practice, some don't. As Jimenez learned, some raters substitute their own medical judgment, though they have no medical accreditation.**

That fact haunted Jimenez, especially after his seizure and headache claims were rejected.

The sergeant wonders whether his rater would have changed his mind and accepted his doctor's diagnosis if only he had seen the scars on Jimenez's face and talked with him for a minute or two about what it's like to wake up in the middle of the night, petrified and wet with your own urine.

Many veterans say their greatest frustration is much simpler: they would like to pay a lawyer to make their case for them. Current VA regulations bar them from doing that.

The result is that all veterans have to fill out the twenty-six-page disability application on their own.

The application is loaded with charts and legal jargon, requests for dates when the veteran was injured, the locations where he was treated, his family and employment history, questions about his pension and readjustment pay, and inquiries as to aggregate value of the veteran's spouse's mutual funds, along with her Social Security number, the name of her previous husband and the location of their wedding.

There's also a large space for an essay on the veteran's military and medical history.

**James Terry, chair of the VA's Board of Appeals, says the application isn't terribly complicated. "I have a PhD," he says, "but even if I only had a third-grade education, I think I could fill out the form."**

**But Sullivan says the application has proved a significant obstacle for many members of his organization, especially those who are brain damaged due to combat or haven't had a good night's sleep in months due to PTSD. "What's happening is that many veterans are saying, 'Aw, forget it' and not filing a claim," says Sullivan. "That really concerns us because these are the guys who need the benefits the most."**

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**April 28, the fifth day of the VA trial. On the stand this morning is Michael Walcoff, one of the VA's top officials.**

**He is facing sharp questions about how long it takes to get benefits to wounded veterans.**

Walcoff begins his two days of testimony with calm, confident words, but as the questions grow more pointed, the deputy under secretary starts to stammer and stumble.

**Walcoff is having a particularly tough time defending a key VA statistic: that when a wounded veteran applies for benefits, it takes the VA an average of six months to process the claim.**

To Elinor Roberts, the number sounded wrong. Roberts is a director at Swords to Plowshares, a nonprofit organization that guides low-income veterans through the VA process. "I've been working with veterans for fifteen years, and I'll tell you, six months to process a claim--that would be warp speed."

Roberts says the majority of the veterans she has worked with have waited "significantly longer." Like many others at the trial, she wanted to know how the VA calculated that figure.

**From the witness stand, Walcoff explains. The VA does take an average of six months to complete a claim.**

**But it depends on what you consider a "claim."**

By "claim," the VA is referring to both disability claims and pension claims, which take significantly less time.

Internal VA documents show that some pension actions can be completed in less than an hour. Those rapid resolutions provide a counterbalance to more complicated claims, like a PTSD disability claim.

A recent report from the Government Accountability Office shows that PTSD claims often take longer than one year.

**Completing a claim in six months also depends on what the word “complete” means.**

For thousands of veterans, filing a claim and receiving the VA's response is just the first step in a much longer journey toward collecting their benefits. That group includes veterans who decide to appeal the VA's decision.

Like Sergeant Jimenez, they are upset that the VA rejected their claim or that the organization labeled their injury as a minor health issue and gave them a low disability rating. Ratings, from 0 to 100 percent disabled, dictate how large veterans' disability checks are and whether they are eligible for a lifetime of VA medical care.

**In 2007, more than 32,000 veterans appealed the VA's initial decision. Those soldiers waited an average of three and a half years for their appeals to be processed, in addition to the six-month wait for the initial decision.**

**Asked to explain the three-and-a-half-year delay, Walcoff seems at a loss.**

When a veteran's claim is denied, the VA appeals board has the ability to reverse the decision. It also has the power to boost a veteran's disability rating.

At other times the appeals board takes a third route: if the board sees an error in the paperwork, it can send the veteran's case back to the local VA that decided it the first time and demand that the local office do its work again. Returning the veteran's case to the local VA gets the claim fresh consideration.

But it also means that essentially the veteran is back at square one.

For wounded veterans in immediate need of benefits, having to pass through the entire system again can be a great strain.

**This strain, however, doesn't appear in the VA's statistics. That's because, in calculating its decision time, the VA counts only a veteran's first pass through the system.**

Sullivan says some of the vets in his organization were rushed through the initial decision process in about three months.

Then after their cases were returned to the local VA, it took about nine months to decide their claims the second time. A case like that, notes Sullivan, leaves the veteran waiting twelve months for benefits, but it lowers the VA's six-month average, since the organization counts only that first three-month pass through the system.

Walcoff's testimony ends with a gruesome coda.

He acknowledges that while a veteran's claim is pending, there is a way he can bring his case to a close: he can kill himself.

For VA statistical purposes, a death is recorded as a "resolved" claim.

Death "is a form of resolution," says Walcoff, but "it's certainly not the form that we want to see." When veterans die early in the claims process, their cases provide the VA with especially deceptive figures.

**When veterans wait four or five months for disability benefits, then take their own life, family and friends often point to the VA for failing to provide care.**

**But on paper, cases like that improve the VA's image. They are claims "resolved" in less than six months, further lowering the VA's average processing time.**

Jimenez, meanwhile, is working to get his life in order.

He is also still clashing with the VA. Recently he had an appointment with his VA psychiatrist. When he arrived at the Loma Linda facility, he was turned away and told the doctor would not be coming in that day.

The sergeant has convinced the VA of some of his injuries. He is now receiving benefits for sleep apnea, chronic dyspepsia, PTSD and tinnitus. But the organization still believes his seizures and brain injury are unrelated--and insists caffeine is a key culprit in his ills.

That kind of logic, says Jimenez, reminds him why the Conti ruling is such a disappointment.

**"I wanted the system to get fixed," he says, "not for me or other soldiers in the lawsuit but for the next group of guys, so when they come back from Iraq, they won't be overlooked."**

## **DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE SERVICE?**

**Forward GI Special 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 war, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Project, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657. Phone: 917.677.8057**

## **OCCUPATION REPORT**

# **U.S. OCCUPATION RECRUITING DRIVE IN HIGH GEAR; RECRUITING FOR THE ARMED RESISTANCE THAT IS**



Iraqi women and children are forced out of their house and ordered to sit on dirt covered mats by foreign occupation soldiers from the U.S. army during an armed home invasion in Al-Fadhaliyah district, east of Baghdad August 29, 2008.

**[There's nothing quite like invading somebody else's country and busting into their houses by force to arouse an intense desire to kill you in the patriotic, self-respecting civilians who live there. But your commanders know that, don't they? Don't they?]**



[images.google.com]

## English soldiers search an American settler's house (1770's)

**Declared Bill Ehrhart, a marine in Vietnam:**

**In grade school we learned about the redcoats, the nasty British soldiers that tried to stifle our freedom. Subconsciously, but not very subconsciously, I began increasingly to have the feeling that I was a redcoat. I think it was one of the most staggering realizations of my life.**



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