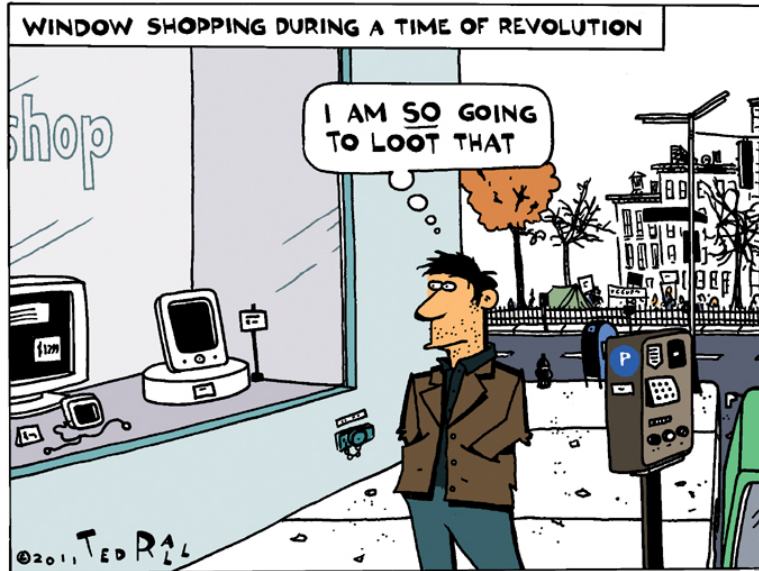


Military Resistance 10B8



**“Truth, Lies And
Afghanistan”**

**“How Many More Men Must Die
In Support Of A Mission That Is
Not Succeeding”**

**“What I Saw Bore No
Resemblance To Rosy Official
Statements By U.S. Military
Leaders About Conditions On The
Ground”**

“I Witnessed The Absence Of Success On Virtually Every Level” “I Heard Many Stories Of How Insurgents Controlled Virtually Every Piece Of Land Beyond Eyeshot Of A U.S. Base”

[Thanks to Don Bacon, LTC, US Army (Ret), Vietnam; Smedley Butler Society: <http://www.warisaracket.org/> & Sandy Kelson, Veteran & Military Resistance Organization & Dave Robinson & Clancy Sigal &

One of the senior enlisted leaders added, “Guys are saying, ‘I hope I live so I can at least get home to R&R leave before I get it,’ or ‘I hope I only lose a foot.’

Sometimes they even say which limb it might be: ‘Maybe it’ll only be my left foot.’ They don’t have a lot of confidence that the leadership two levels up really understands what they’re living here, what the situation really is.”

By LT. COL. DANIEL L. DAVIS, January/February Armed Forces Journal

I spent last year in Afghanistan, visiting and talking with U.S. troops and their Afghan partners.

My duties with the Army’s Rapid Equipping Force took me into every significant area where our soldiers engage the enemy. Over the course of 12 months, I covered more than 9,000 miles and talked, traveled and patrolled with troops in Kandahar, Kunar, Ghazni, Khost, Paktika, Kunduz, Balkh, Nangarhar and other provinces.

What I saw bore no resemblance to rosy official statements by U.S. military leaders about conditions on the ground.

Entering this deployment, I was sincerely hoping to learn that the claims were true: that conditions in Afghanistan were improving, that the local government and military were progressing toward self-sufficiency. I did not need to witness dramatic improvements to be reassured, but merely hoped to see evidence of positive trends, to see companies or battalions produce even minimal but sustainable progress.

Instead, I witnessed the absence of success on virtually every level.

My arrival in country in late 2010 marked the start of my fourth combat deployment, and my second in Afghanistan.

A Regular Army officer in the Armor Branch, I served in Operation Desert Storm, in Afghanistan in 2005-06 and in Iraq in 2008-09. In the middle of my career, I spent eight years in the U.S. Army Reserve and held a number of civilian jobs — among them,

legislative correspondent for defense and foreign affairs for Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas.

As a representative for the Rapid Equipping Force, I set out to talk to our troops about their needs and their circumstances.

Along the way, I conducted mounted and dismounted combat patrols, spending time with conventional and Special Forces troops. I interviewed or had conversations with more than 250 soldiers in the field, from the lowest-ranking 19-year-old private to division commanders and staff members at every echelon. I spoke at length with Afghan security officials, Afghan civilians and a few village elders.

I saw the incredible difficulties any military force would have to pacify even a single area of any of those provinces; I heard many stories of how insurgents controlled virtually every piece of land beyond eyeshot of a U.S. or International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) base.

I saw little to no evidence the local governments were able to provide for the basic needs of the people.

Some of the Afghan civilians I talked with said the people didn't want to be connected to a predatory or incapable local government.

From time to time, I observed Afghan Security forces collude with the insurgency.

“In All Of The Places I Visited, The Tactical Situation Was Bad To Abysmal”

Much of what I saw during my deployment, let alone read or wrote in official reports, I can't talk about; the information remains classified.

But I can say that such reports — mine and others' — serve to illuminate the gulf between conditions on the ground and official statements of progress.

And I can relate a few representative experiences, of the kind that I observed all over the country.

In January 2011, I made my first trip into the mountains of Kunar province near the Pakistan border to visit the troops of 1st Squadron, 32nd Cavalry.

On a patrol to the northernmost U.S. position in eastern Afghanistan, we arrived at an Afghan National Police (ANP) station that had reported being attacked by the Taliban 2½ hours earlier.

Through the interpreter, I asked the police captain where the attack had originated, and he pointed to the side of a nearby mountain.

“What are your normal procedures in situations like these?” I asked. “Do you form up a squad and go after them? Do you periodically send out harassing patrols? What do you do?”

As the interpreter conveyed my questions, the captain's head wheeled around, looking first at the interpreter and turning to me with an incredulous expression. Then he laughed.

"No! We don't go after them," he said. "That would be dangerous!"

According to the cavalry troopers, the Afghan policemen rarely leave the cover of the checkpoints.

In that part of the province, the Taliban literally run free.

In June, I was in the Zharay district of Kandahar province, returning to a base from a dismounted patrol. Gunshots were audible as the Taliban attacked a U.S. checkpoint about one mile away.

As I entered the unit's command post, the commander and his staff were watching a live video feed of the battle. Two ANP vehicles were blocking the main road leading to the site of the attack.

The fire was coming from behind a haystack. We watched as two Afghan men emerged, mounted a motorcycle and began moving toward the Afghan policemen in their vehicles.

The U.S. commander turned around and told the Afghan radio operator to make sure the policemen halted the men. The radio operator shouted into the radio repeatedly, but got no answer.

On the screen, we watched as the two men slowly motored past the ANP vehicles. The policemen neither got out to stop the two men nor answered the radio — until the motorcycle was out of sight.

To a man, the U.S. officers in that unit told me they had nothing but contempt for the Afghan troops in their area — and that was before the above incident occurred.

In August, I went on a dismounted patrol with troops in the Panjwai district of Kandahar province.

Several troops from the unit had recently been killed in action, one of whom was a very popular and experienced soldier.

One of the unit's senior officers rhetorically asked me, "How do I look these men in the eye and ask them to go out day after day on these missions? What's harder: How do I look (my soldier's) wife in the eye when I get back and tell her that her husband died for something meaningful? How do I do that?"

One of the senior enlisted leaders added, "Guys are saying, 'I hope I live so I can at least get home to R&R leave before I get it,' or 'I hope I only lose a foot.'

Sometimes they even say which limb it might be: 'Maybe it'll only be my left foot.' They don't have a lot of confidence that the leadership two levels up really understands what they're living here, what the situation really is."

On Sept. 11, the 10th anniversary of the infamous attack on the U.S., I visited another unit in Kunar province, this one near the town of Asmar.

I talked with the local official who served as the cultural adviser to the U.S. commander.

Here's how the conversation went:

Davis: "Here you have many units of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Will they be able to hold out against the Taliban when U.S. troops leave this area?"

Adviser: "No. They are definitely not capable. Already all across this region (many elements of) the security forces have made deals with the Taliban. (The ANSF) won't shoot at the Taliban, and the Taliban won't shoot them.

"Also, when a Taliban member is arrested, he is soon released with no action taken against him. So when the Taliban returns (when the Americans leave after 2014), so too go the jobs, especially for everyone like me who has worked with the coalition.

"Recently, I got a cellphone call from a Talib who had captured a friend of mine. While I could hear, he began to beat him, telling me I'd better quit working for the Americans. I could hear my friend crying out in pain. (The Talib) said the next time they would kidnap my sons and do the same to them. Because of the direct threats, I've had to take my children out of school just to keep them safe.

"And last night, right on that mountain there (he pointed to a ridge overlooking the U.S. base, about 700 meters distant), a member of the ANP was murdered. The Taliban came and called him out, kidnapped him in front of his parents, and took him away and murdered him. He was a member of the ANP from another province and had come back to visit his parents. He was only 27 years old. The people are not safe anywhere."

That murder took place within view of the U.S. base, a post nominally responsible for the security of an area of hundreds of square kilometers. Imagine how insecure the population is beyond visual range. And yet that conversation was representative of what I saw in many regions of Afghanistan.

In all of the places I visited, the tactical situation was bad to abysmal.

If the events I have described — and many, many more I could mention — had been in the first year of war, or even the third or fourth, one might be willing to believe that Afghanistan was just a hard fight, and we should stick it out.

Yet these incidents all happened in the 10th year of war.

As the numbers depicting casualties and enemy violence indicate the absence of progress, so too did my observations of the tactical situation all over Afghanistan.

"How Many More Men Must Die In Support Of A Mission That Is Not Succeeding"

I'm hardly the only one who has noted the discrepancy between official statements and the truth on the ground.

A January 2011 report by the Afghan NGO Security Office noted that public statements made by U.S. and ISAF leaders at the end of 2010 were "sharply divergent from IMF, (international military forces, NGO-speak for ISAF) 'strategic communication' messages suggesting improvements.

"We encourage (nongovernment organization personnel) to recognize that no matter how authoritative the source of any such claim, messages of the nature are solely intended to influence American and European public opinion ahead of the withdrawal, and are not intended to offer an accurate portrayal of the situation for those who live and work here."

The following month, Anthony Cordesman, on behalf of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, wrote that ISAF and the U.S. leadership failed to report accurately on the reality of the situation in Afghanistan.

"Since June 2010, the unclassified reporting the U.S. does provide has steadily shrunk in content, effectively 'spinning' the road to victory by eliminating content that illustrates the full scale of the challenges ahead," Cordesman wrote.

"They also, however, were driven by political decisions to ignore or understate Taliban and insurgent gains from 2002 to 2009, to ignore the problems caused by weak and corrupt Afghan governance, to understate the risks posed by sanctuaries in Pakistan, and to 'spin' the value of tactical ISAF victories while ignoring the steady growth of Taliban influence and control."

How many more men must die in support of a mission that is not succeeding and behind an array of more than seven years of optimistic statements by U.S. senior leaders in Afghanistan?

No one expects our leaders to always have a successful plan.

But we do expect — and the men who do the living, fighting and dying deserve — to have our leaders tell us the truth about what's going on.

I first encountered senior-level equivocation during a 1997 division-level "experiment" that turned out to be far more setpiece than experiment.

Over dinner at Fort Hood, Texas, Training and Doctrine Command leaders told me that the Advanced Warfighter Experiment (AWE) had shown that a "digital division" with fewer troops and more gear could be far more effective than current divisions.

The next day, our congressional staff delegation observed the demonstration firsthand, and it didn't take long to realize there was little substance to the claims.

Virtually no legitimate experimentation was actually conducted. All parameters were carefully scripted. All events had a preordained sequence and outcome.

The AWE was simply an expensive show, couched in the language of scientific experimentation and presented in glowing press releases and public statements, intended to persuade Congress to fund the Army's preference.

Citing the AWE's "results," Army leaders proceeded to eliminate one maneuver company per combat battalion. But the loss of fighting systems was never offset by a commensurate rise in killing capability.

A decade later, in the summer of 2007, I was assigned to the Future Combat Systems (FCS) organization at Fort Bliss, Texas.

It didn't take long to discover that the same thing the Army had done with a single division at Fort Hood in 1997 was now being done on a significantly larger scale with FCS.

Year after year, the congressionally mandated reports from the Government Accountability Office revealed significant problems and warned that the system was in danger of failing.

Each year, the Army's senior leaders told members of Congress at hearings that GAO didn't really understand the full picture and that to the contrary, the program was on schedule, on budget, and headed for success.

Ultimately, of course, the program was canceled, with little but spinoffs to show for \$18 billion spent.

If Americans were able to compare the public statements many of our leaders have made with classified data, this credibility gulf would be immediately observable.

Naturally, I am not authorized to divulge classified material to the public. But I am legally able to share it with members of Congress.

I have accordingly provided a much fuller accounting in a classified report to several members of Congress, both Democrats and Republicans, senators and House members.

A nonclassified version is available at www.afghanreport.com. (Editor's note: At press time, Army public affairs had not yet ruled on whether Davis could post this longer version.)

Tell The Truth

When it comes to deciding what matters are worth plunging our nation into war and which are not, our senior leaders owe it to the nation and to the uniformed members to be candid — graphically, if necessary — in telling them what's at stake and how expensive potential success is likely to be.

U.S. citizens and their elected representatives can decide if the risk to blood and treasure is worth it.

Likewise when having to decide whether to continue a war, alter its aims or to close off a campaign that cannot be won at an acceptable price, our senior leaders have an obligation to tell Congress and American people the unvarnished truth and let the people decide what course of action to choose.

That is the very essence of civilian control of the military.

The American people deserve better than what they've gotten from their senior uniformed leaders over the last number of years.

Simply telling the truth would be a good start.

MORE:

“Mr. Petraeus, Then An Army General, Testified Before The Senate That The Taliban’s Momentum Had Been ‘Arrested In Much Of The Country’”

“Colonel Davis Fiercely Disputes Such Assertions And Says Few Of The Troops Believe Them”

“You Can Spin All Kinds Of Stuff,” Colonel Davis Said. “But You Can’t Spin The Fact That More Men Are Getting Blown Up Every Year”

“It May Be An Act Of Moral Courage, But He’s Gone Outside Channels, And He’s Taking His Chances On What Happens To Him”



Lt. Col. Daniel L. Davis last month after sharing his view on the Afghan war with some members of Congress. "You can't spin the fact that more men are getting blown up every year," he said. Stephen Crowley/The New York Times

February 5, 2012 By SCOTT SHANE, New York Times

WASHINGTON — On his second yearlong deployment to Afghanistan, Lt. Col. Daniel L. Davis traveled 9,000 miles, patrolled with American troops in eight provinces and returned in October of last year with a fervent conviction that the war was going disastrously and that senior military leaders had not leveled with the American public.

Since enlisting in the Army in 1985, he said, he had repeatedly seen top commanders falsely dress up a dismal situation.

But this time, he would not let it rest.

So he consulted with his pastor at McLean Bible Church in Virginia, where he sings in the choir. He watched his favorite movie, "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," one more time, drawing inspiration from Jimmy Stewart's role as the extraordinary ordinary man who takes on a corrupt establishment.

And then, late last month, Colonel Davis, 48, began an unusual one-man campaign of military truth-telling. He wrote two reports, one unclassified and the other classified, summarizing his observations on the candor gap with respect to Afghanistan.

He briefed four members of Congress and a dozen staff members, spoke with a reporter for The New York Times, sent his reports to the Defense Department's

inspector general — and only then informed his chain of command that he had done so.

“How many more men must die in support of a mission that is not succeeding?” Colonel Davis asks in an article summarizing his views titled “Truth, Lies and Afghanistan: How Military Leaders Have Let Us Down.”

It was published online Sunday in The Armed Forces Journal, the nation’s oldest independent periodical on military affairs. “No one expects our leaders to always have a successful plan,” he says in the article. “But we do expect — and the men who do the living, fighting and dying deserve — to have our leaders tell us the truth about what’s going on.”

Colonel Davis says his experience has caused him to doubt reports of progress in the war from numerous military leaders, including David H. Petraeus, who commanded the troops in Afghanistan before becoming the director of the Central Intelligence Agency in June.

Last March, for example, Mr. Petraeus, then an Army general, testified before the Senate that the Taliban’s momentum had been “arrested in much of the country” and that progress was “significant,” though fragile, and “on the right azimuth” to allow Afghan forces to take the lead in combat by the end of 2014.

Colonel Davis fiercely disputes such assertions and says few of the troops believe them.

At the same time, he is acutely aware of the chasm in stature that separates him from those he is criticizing, and he has no illusions about the impact his public stance may have on his career.

“I’m going to get nuked,” he said in an interview last month.

But his bosses’ initial response has been restrained. They told him that while they disagreed with him, he would not face “adverse action,” he said.

Col. James E. Hutton, chief of media relations for the Army, declined to comment specifically about Colonel Davis, but he rejected the idea that military leaders had been anything but truthful about Afghanistan.

“We are a values-based organization, and the integrity of what we publish and what we say is something we take very seriously,” he said.

A spokeswoman for Mr. Petraeus, Jennifer Youngblood of the C.I.A., said he “has demonstrated that he speaks truth to power in each of his leadership positions over the past several years. His record should stand on its own, as should LTC Davis’ analysis.”

If the official reaction to Colonel Davis’s campaign has been subdued, it may be partly because he has recruited a few supporters among the war skeptics on Capitol Hill.

“For Colonel Davis to go out on a limb and help us to understand what’s happening on the ground, I have the greatest admiration for him,” said Representative Walter B. Jones,

Republican of North Carolina, who has met with Colonel Davis twice and read his reports.

Senator Jeff Merkley, Democrat of Oregon, one of four senators who met with Colonel Davis despite what he called “a lot of resistance from the Pentagon,” said the colonel was a valuable witness because his extensive travels and midlevel rank gave him access to a wide range of soldiers.

Moreover, Colonel Davis’s doubts about reports of progress in the war are widely shared, if not usually voiced in public by officers on duty.

Just last week, Senator Dianne Feinstein, Democrat of California and chairwoman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said at a hearing that she was “concerned by what appears to be a disparity” between public testimony about progress in Afghanistan and “the bleaker description” in a classified National Intelligence Estimate produced in December, which was described in news reports as “sobering” and “dire.”

Those words would also describe Colonel Davis’s account of what he saw in Afghanistan, the latest assignment in a military career that has included clashes with some commanders, but glowing evaluations from others.

(“His maturity, tenacity and judgment can be counted on in even the hardest of situations, and his devotion to mission accomplishment is unmatched by his peers,” says an evaluation from May that concludes that he has “unlimited potential.”)

Colonel Davis, a son of a high school football coach in Dallas and who is known as Danny, served two years as an Army private before returning to Texas Tech and completing the Reserve Officer Training Corps program.

He served in Germany and fought in the first Iraq war before joining the Reserve and working civilian jobs, including a year as a member of the Senate staff.

After the Sept. 11 attacks, he returned to active duty, serving a tour in Iraq as well as the two in Afghanistan and spending 15 months working on Future Combat Systems, an ambitious Army program to produce high-tech vehicles linked to drones and sensors.

On that program, too, he said, commanders kept promising success despite ample evidence of trouble. The program was shut down in 2009 after an investment of billions of dollars.

In his recent tour in Afghanistan, Colonel Davis represented the Army’s Rapid Equipping Force, created to bypass a cumbersome bureaucracy to make sure the troops quickly get the gear they need.

He spoke with about 250 soldiers, from 19-year-old privates to division commanders, as well as Afghan security officials and civilians, he said. From the Americans, he heard contempt for the perceived cowardice and double-dealing of their Afghan counterparts. From Afghans, he learned of unofficial nonaggression pacts between Afghanistan’s security forces and Taliban fighters.

When he was in rugged Kunar Province, an Afghan police officer visiting his parents was kidnapped by the Taliban and killed. "That was in visual range of an American base," he said. "Their influence didn't even reach as far as they could see."

Some of the soldiers he interviewed were later killed, a fact that shook him and that he mentions in videos he shot in Afghanistan and later posted on YouTube.

At home, he pored over the statements of military leaders, including General Petraeus. He found them at odds with what he had seen, with classified intelligence reports and with casualty statistics.

"You can spin all kinds of stuff," Colonel Davis said. "But you can't spin the fact that more men are getting blown up every year."

Colonel Davis can come across as strident, labeling as lies what others might call wishful thinking. Matthew M. Aid, a historian who examines Afghanistan in his new book "Intel Wars," says that while there is a "yawning gap" between Pentagon statements and intelligence assessments, "it's oversimplified to say the top brass are out-and-out lying. They are just too close to the subject."

But Martin L. Cook, who teaches military ethics at the Naval War College, says Colonel Davis has identified a hazard that is intrinsic to military culture, in which a can-do optimism can be at odds with the strictest candor when a mission is failing.

"You've trained people to try to be successful even when half their buddies are dead and they're almost out of ammo," he said. "It's very hard for them to say, 'can't do.'"

Mr. Cook said it was rare for an officer of Colonel Davis's modest rank to "decide that he knows better" and to go to Congress and the news media.

"It may be an act of moral courage," he said. "But he's gone outside channels, and he's taking his chances on what happens to him."

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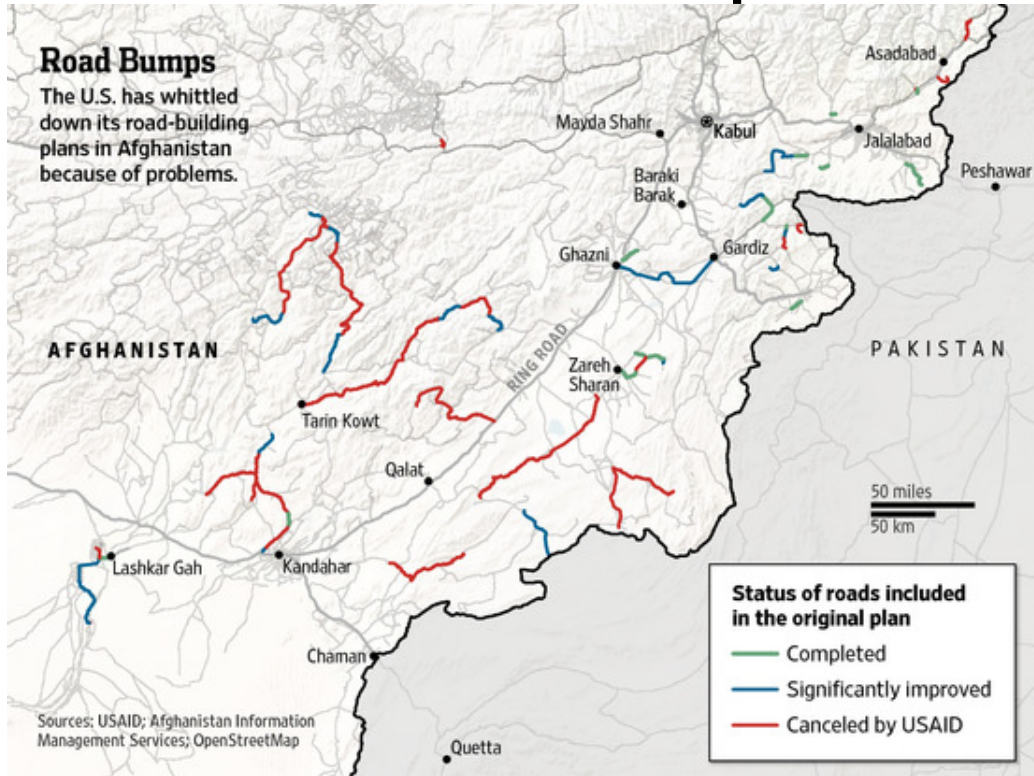
AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

“U.S. Taxpayers Paid Afghan Entrepreneur Ajmal Hasas Millions Of Dollars As Part Of A Plan To Win Over Villages In The Country’s Insurgent Heartlands”

“Instead, Mr. Hasas’ Seven-Mile Road Construction Project Went So Awry That His Security Guards Opened Fire On Some Of The Very Villagers He Was Trying To Woo On Behalf Of His American Funders”

“Mr. Hasas Was A Point Man In A \$400 Million U.S. Agency For International Development Campaign To Build As Much As 1,200 Miles Of Roads”

“Three Years And Nearly \$270 Million Later, Less Than 100 Miles Of Gravel Road Have Been Completed”



FEBRUARY 10, 2012 By DION NISSENBAUM, Wall Street Journal [Excerpts] Ziaulhaq Sultani, Habib Khan Totakhil and Mali Khan Yaqubi contributed to this article.

KABUL — U.S. taxpayers paid Afghan entrepreneur Ajmal Hasas millions of dollars as part of a plan to win over villages in the country’s insurgent heartlands.

Instead, Mr. Hasas’ seven-mile road construction project went so awry that his security guards opened fire on some of the very villagers he was trying to woo on behalf of his American funders.

Mr. Hasas was a point man in a \$400 million U.S. Agency for International Development campaign to build as much as 1,200 miles of roads in some of Afghanistan’s most remote and turbulent places.

Three years and nearly \$270 million later, less than 100 miles of gravel road have been completed, according to American officials.

More than 125 people were killed and 250 others were wounded in insurgent attacks aimed at derailing the project, USAID said.

The agency shut down the road-building effort in December.

"You can find programs and projects that have been successful, but for me it is quite obvious that huge amounts of money have been misspent," says Kai Eide, the Norwegian diplomat who headed United Nations operations in Afghanistan in 2008-2010. "There has been no clear strategic thinking on development assistance."

With USAID's road project cut short, special internal auditors from the agency have been trying to figure out what went wrong. Afghan construction companies are still seeking millions of dollars for unpaid bills from the American nonprofit, International Relief and Development, or IRD, that ran the program.

And remote Afghan villages that were supposed to benefit from the U.S. initiative have been left with unfinished roads and unfulfilled promises. USAID officials say the program fell short of its goals, which is why they canceled it.

"I call it hijacking," said one USAID official formerly stationed in Afghanistan. "Aid as a weapons system has never been tested — and they are putting it into the field with no evidence that it works."

In Iraq, U.S. officials embarked on the largest rebuilding project since the Marshall Plan that helped rebuild Europe after World War II. But the \$53 billion initiative was hobbled by the spreading insurgency, massive security costs that sometimes ate up more than half of contract costs, uncooperative government leaders and constantly shifting priorities, according to Stuart Bowen, America's special inspector general for reconstruction in Iraq.

After concluding that at least \$4 billion in U.S. aid had been squandered in Iraq, Mr. Bowen warned American officials in 2009 that they were making the same mistakes in Afghanistan. State Department officials said at the time that they had learned lessons from Iraq and were working to better coordinate military and civilian efforts in Afghanistan.

As part of America's \$85 billion reconstruction program in Afghanistan, USAID has spent more than \$15 billion since 2002, more than in any other country.

As in Iraq, the program in Afghanistan has been repeatedly disrupted by the spread of the insurgency across the country, poor oversight, an overreliance on outside contractors, cost overruns and corruption, according to U.S. officials and government investigative reports.

A \$260 million effort to upgrade southern Afghanistan's Kajaki hydroelectric dam has repeatedly faltered and remains incomplete. Meanwhile, a \$300 million contract to build a major power plant outside Kabul cost more than twice the original estimate and remains largely idle as Afghanistan relies on cheaper power from its neighbors.

But road projects have received the single largest slice of USAID money—more than \$2 billion. One of the biggest beneficiaries has been IRD, founded in 1998 by Arthur Keys.

From the start, President Barack Obama's administration saw road construction as key for winning support from Afghans by making it easier to travel, by opening up new trade

routes — and by connecting remote villages to Afghan government institutions and services.

It certainly wasn't the cheapest way to get roads built.

A typical gravel road in Afghanistan is supposed to cost about \$290,000 per mile, according to USAID. It cost American taxpayers about \$2.8 million for each mile of gravel road completed by IRD, making them the most expensive miles of road ever built by the U.S. government in Afghanistan.

Less than half the \$269 million spent on the project went to actual road construction, IRD officials say.

A quarter of the funds were paid to IRD administration and staff. About 15% was spent on security, and 8% was allocated to the community-development projects IRD said were central to the success of the project.

As part of the Strategic Roads Project, USAID set aside millions of dollars in the contract to set up small soap factories, run reading programs for illiterate villagers, dig wells and teach sewing to Afghan women—all with the expectation that it would win American troops good will.

But the community program was hobbled when IRD put a halt to awarding grants in southeastern Afghanistan for eight months after discovering that IRD staff were falsifying reports and exaggerating the impact of the development projects, according to former IRD workers.

After revamping the staff and project, IRD resumed handing out grants for things like "flower literacy" programs that taught Afghan women how to make flower arrangements.

Then, after conferring with USAID, IRD tried to press ahead with construction without setting up new community projects, said U.S. officials.

"You had these villages with no community ownership or buy in and they just made the situation worse," said one USAID official. "That's when things really started going sour."

In Khost, the volatile eastern province along the Pakistani border where Mr. Hasas was paid \$3 million to build seven miles of gravel road, tensions flared soon after he began work in 2008.

Ajab Noor Mangal, a local construction-company owner hired to work on the project, said Mr. Hasas alienated the community by only hiring workers from two of the five local clans.

Afghans excluded from the project looted Mr. Hasas's construction sites and stripped them bare. At one point, Mr. Hasas said, four men affiliated with the project were kidnapped, killed and dumped in public with a warning note signed by insurgents. The deaths brought construction to a halt.

"We couldn't find a single person to work on the road," Mr. Hasas recalls.

Under the IRD contract, Mr. Hasas and the other Afghan firms working on their roads were responsible for providing their own security. So Mr. Hasas said he cobbled together nearly 100 gunmen and armed them with rented rocket-propelled grenades and heavy machine guns.

Things reached a nadir in the fall of 2010, when around 100 angry Afghans, including a small number of suspected insurgents, tried to storm the construction site, according to Messrs. Hasas and Mangal.

Mr. Mangal, who was in Kabul at the time, says he ordered the contractor's gunmen to open fire on the demonstrators, including some armed protesters who he said shot at the security team. Mr. Mangal says he is still paying for the wounded villagers' medical treatment.

Villagers who took part in the demonstration told a different story.

Two men involved in the protest said IRD security sparked a larger confrontation after opening fire on a dozen unarmed men protesting IRD's refusal to move staff from an office overlooking homes where outsiders could see into private family compounds — a major slight in the conservative culture.

"All the villagers criticize the construction company because they were just here to earn money and they did not care about the quality of the road," said Najib, a local resident who worked on the road project and had two relatives injured during the protest.

IRD officials say they never heard about the conflict between the contractor and the villagers.

The project was part of the ongoing "Afghan First" initiative meant to support Afghan companies instead of the international firms that have received the lion's share of the billions in aid that have flooded Afghanistan.

But IRD is still embroiled in payment disputes with Afghan subcontractors who say that the company has failed to pay its bills.

Now that the project is shut down, IRD said it has told contractors final payment decisions rest with USAID. USAID said it couldn't comment on the question of payments.

The animosity escalated in 2010 when embittered Afghan subcontractors secured arrest warrants for two IRD officials. Afghan police briefly detained one of the Westerners in Kabul who oversaw the project, according to officials familiar with the incident.

Faced with more arrest threats during the spring, IRD hid another top manager in the back of an SUV, flew her to Kandahar and quietly spirited her out of the country before she, too, could be detained, according to former IRD employees familiar with the controversy. IRD declined to comment on the incident.

Still, the project's failures appeared to have no impact on USAID's confidence in IRD.

Last year, as construction delays mounted and American officials moved to shut the program down, USAID awarded IRD nearly \$140 million to launch three new projects in Afghanistan, though none involved roads.

USAID officials said they still had confidence in IRD's ability to carry out big projects in Afghanistan.

Afghan entrepreneur Delawar Faizan, meanwhile, says that IRD still owes him nearly \$4 million for his work in constructing roads in eastern Afghanistan's Nangarhar Province.

He said that IRD gave him a check last fall to settle some of his claims, but it bounced because the company's bank account was frozen.

Now, he said, IRD has told him he has to wait for approval from USAID to get paid.

"Where has the money gone?" he asked.

MILITARY NEWS

NOT ANOTHER DAY NOT ANOTHER DOLLAR NOT ANOTHER LIFE



The remains of Army Pfc. Dustin P. Napier Jan. 10, 2012 at Dover Air Force Base, Del. Napier, 20, of London, Ky., died Jan. 8, 2012 in Zabul province, Afghanistan of injuries sustained from small-arms fire. (AP Photo/Steve Ruark)...

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

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

Soldier Says Syrian Atrocities Forced Him To Defect “I Could Not Live With Myself If I Had Remained”

February 1, 2012 By DAN BILEFSKY, New York Times [Excerpts]

HATAY, Turkey — Ammar Cheikh Omar recalled the first time he was ordered to shoot into a crowd of protesters in Syria. He aimed his AK-47 just above their heads, prayed to God not to make him a killer and pulled the trigger.

Mr. Omar, 29, the soft-spoken and wiry son of Syrian parents who immigrated to Germany in the 1950s, grew up in Rheda-Wiedenbrück, a prosperous village of half-timbered 16th-century houses, where he listened to Mariah Carey and daydreamed about one day returning to Syria.

Today, he is still trying to make sense of his unlikely transformation from a dutiful German student to a killer for the brutal Syrian government of President Bashar al-Assad and, ultimately, a defector.

“I was proud to be Syrian, but instead became a soldier for a regime that was intent on killing its own people,” Mr. Omar said on a recent day, chain-smoking at a cafe in this Turkish border town. “I thank God every day that I am still alive.”

Human rights groups estimate that there are at least 5,000 defectors; an exact number is difficult to confirm because many remain in hiding. There is no way to corroborate much of Mr. Omar's account of his journey to becoming an enforcer for the Assad government.

Though human rights groups and activists operating in Syria say it fits the pattern of hundreds of defectors who have fled the country, it is simply one man's tale.

It began in 2004 when he left Germany for Aleppo, in Syria's north, with the aim of getting in touch with his roots, studying law, improving his Arabic and finding a wife.

He managed to do all that, entering law school, marrying a doctor and, eventually, having a child. His parents, meanwhile, had moved back to Aleppo because his father wanted to live out his final years in the old country.

In late 2010, Mr. Omar was conscripted into the Syrian military, just weeks before a Tunisian fruit seller immolated himself and set off the wave of regional protests that eventually buffeted Syria.

At first, said Mr. Omar, who had always felt like an outsider in Germany, he was proud to be serving the government. Soldiers were initially told that their main task was to defend the country against Israel, he said.

But when demonstrations erupted, they were told that the protesters were “terrorists” or “armed gangs” sponsored by foreign forces. Access to cellphones, non-state television or the Internet was strictly prohibited; breaching that rule was punishable by up to two months in jail.

Mr. Omar’s first deployment was in the southern city of Dara’a, near Jordan, where he and his 350-strong unit were sent in March to help crack down on intensifying demonstrations.

He said he had been ordered to arrest and shoot at dozens of protesters, including many young students, who had scrawled antigovernment graffiti on the walls of the town.

“The army needed everyone. It was very brutal,” he said. “But if there’s an officer of the Mukhabarat next to you,” he added, referring to the country’s feared security services, “you don’t have a choice but to shoot.”

Every soldier was armed with 60 bullets and given new ammunition each night, Mr. Omar said. His unit shot at the protesters from above a roof overlooking the mosque, killing at least six people and wounding dozens more. One of his fellow soldiers began to scream uncontrollably when he realized that his 18-year-old brother, demonstrating below on the street, had been shot. The soldier buried him two days later.

Shaken by what he had seen, Mr. Omar said, he was determined to defect. But before he could act, he was sent to Duma, northeast of Damascus, the capital, to work in a security unit interrogating detainees.

Mr. Omar said he had been asked to take notes during the interrogation of prisoners, some as young as 15 years old.

He said demonstrators had been blindfolded and forced to strip to their underwear before their hands were tied behind their backs. Interrogations were conducted by four or five soldiers and officers in a dark, windowless room. He said the interrogating officer had ordered him to write down confessions naming protest leaders, confessions that detainees were then asked to finger stamp rather than sign, since their hands were bound.

To force confessions, Mr. Omar said, the soldiers tortured the detainees with electrified cattle prods, beat them or urinated on them. Some passed out. Others bled heavily. Many disappeared.

“The soldiers demanded to know why they had gone to the streets and who had paid them,” he recalled. “It was painful to watch. At the beginning I couldn’t sleep, but after a while, I got used to it. But I could not live with myself if I had remained.”

As the protests gathered pace over the summer, Mr. Omar was sent to the central city of Hama, where he was relieved of his AK-47 and instead given a shield and a stun gun, he said. With tens of thousands of people on the streets in Hama, he said, he hoped he could disappear into the crowd.

At noon on July 26, he said, he and two fellow officers decided to defect from their army base, changing into civilian clothes and jumping over the base’s wall.

They found refuge in the homes of people opposed to the Assad government, Mr. Omar said, and wrapped scarves around their heads to conceal their faces. Fearing that he would be kidnapped or “disappeared” in Syria under some false pretext, Mr. Omar made a video, which he posted on YouTube, to establish that he had defected.

The defectors traveled to the Turkish border in daylight, eventually abandoning their car and walking through woods to avoid detection. At 7 a.m. on July 30, he said, they crossed illegally into Hatay, where they met up with members of the rebel Free Syrian Army, settling in a refugee camp.

At the camp, a gaunt and pale Mr. Omar produced another video to post on YouTube, in which he said he was ashamed that he had been part of Mr. Assad’s forces.

“I will never forget the dead bodies of young and old men, but also women and children on the streets,” he said, dressed in a uniform of the Free Syrian Army and appearing with a Syrian flag.

Appealing directly to Germany, he added, “Hitler died in Germany, but awoke in Syria.” Germany eventually helped get him out of the camp so he could get a stamp in his passport to remain in Turkey.

Mr. Omar joined the rebel army, a scruffy group numbering around 10,000 soldiers, whose mandate is to protect civilians from the government.

He is now helping to smuggle wounded rebels into Turkey, some of whom he houses in his home. He said he supported the political demonstrations but warned, “We cannot afford to meet guns with only talk and slogans.”

He fears for his family, including his wife, their 1-year-old daughter and his parents.

After his escape, he said, his brother-in-law was fired from his architecture job, and the family’s house in Aleppo was vandalized.

But he said he had no regrets. “My family knows I made the right choice.”

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



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

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

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

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

Frederick Douglass, 1852

The Social-Democrats ideal should not be the trade union secretary, but the tribune of the people who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression no matter where it appears no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalize all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth before all his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for all and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat.”

-- V. I. Lenin; What Is To Be Done

The Face of Youth Being Arrested in D.C.



Photograph by Mike Hastie: Taken at a demonstration near The White House in D.C.
September 2005

From: Mike Hastie
To: Military Resistance Newsletter
Sent: February 10, 2012
Subject: The Face of Youth Being Arrested in D.C.

The Face of Youth Being Arrested in D.C.

**You wonder where it is all leading to.
You wonder how much longer the
Police State is going to get away with
everything.**

**The innocence of youth in America is
getting more and more disillusioned
with the future of their lives.**

Eventually, that innocent face will turn

to hopeless resentments that will no longer trust any generation that came before them.

"The Road,"

is becoming more traveled.

America has become the thousand yard stare.

The U.S. Propaganda State has become high on everything.

The most profound realization I had when I came back from Vietnam, was that I was the enemy in Vietnam.

I was still young then, but that innocent face I took to Vietnam was battered and beaten by the previous generation of Americans who said they loved me.

That political incest betrayal took me to a padded cell nine years after I got back from Vietnam.

When I went back to Vietnam in 1994 to make amends to the Vietnamese people, I found my soul again.

I followed my path, and it led to the truth.

I was born in America, but my heart is Vietnamese.

The youth in America will have to find their way back home, and that path will force them to become a citizen of the world.

It is the last thing the political elite in America want them to discover.

Betrayal is like having a lifelong mentor turn on you and become your worst enemy.

That enemy still lives inside of you, and in order to survive, you have to outgrow the lies that once defined your life.

Mike Hastie

Army Medic Vietnam

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

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

Mike Hastie, U.S. Army Medic; Vietnam 1970-71

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



CLASS WAR REPORTS



Comment Unnecessary



February 10, 2012: A demonstrator confronts riot police during protests in Athens against planned attacks on wages, retirement benefits, and public services by Greek government. Photo By REUTERS/Yiorgos Karahalios



A riot policeman kicks an anti-austerity protester who fell during clashes in Athens' Syntagma (Constitution) square, February 10, 2012. Photo By REUTERS/John Kolesidis

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