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## As OPEC meets in Caracas

# Right-wing violence flares in Venezuela

## Plot to destabilize anti-imperialist government seen

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

A student protest might seem unthinkable in a country that has overcome the scourge of illiteracy in less than three years and that, through its different "mission" educational programs, has helped underprivileged students get free basic education and college degrees.

But what about one that was really directed by forces in opposition to the Venezuelan Bolivarian government, and at a time when Venezuela was preparing to host a very important meeting of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries?

That is exactly what happened on May 24 in the university town of Mérida in the western part of Venezuela. A group

called March 13 Movement (M-13) led a demonstration, apparently of students from the public University of the Andes (ULA), through the streets of Mérida protesting what they labeled an "interference with the university's autonomy."

That day, the Venezuelan Supreme Court had issued an injunction against student elections planned for May 31 at the request of the current student body president, who did not trust the transparency of those upcoming elections. The M-13's response was pure violence.

Armed with heavy weaponry, Uzis and other powerful pistols and guns, their faces hidden under masks, they attacked the police and National Guard who were protecting the

*Continued on page 11*



## Evacuees fight for justice

Katrina survivor Michael Bartley speaks at June 1 NYC press conference on FEMA cutting housing funds. See page 7.

WW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN



## Koreans say no to FTA

Chairman Oh Jongryul (fist in air) leads protest at White House over Free Trade Agreement being forced on Korean people. See page 4.

WW PHOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

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# Why Palestinian freedom is a central issue

*This is excerpted from a speech by Joyce Chediak to the May 13-14 Workers World Party conference on socialism.*

A fundamental vulnerability of imperialism is its underestimation of the workers and oppressed. For example, this weekend marks the 58th anniversary of al Nakbar or the great catastrophe, when approximately 1 million Palestinians were forced out of their country, many at the point of guns supplied by Washington.

Palestine was erased from the map. Israel took its place, built on the bones of the Palestinian people. Palestinians were made refugees around the world.

The imperialists and Zionists thought this extermination of a nation would be easy. Everyone would soon forget. Were they wrong! For 58 years, no matter where they have been—refugee camps in the Middle East, in the U.S. and Europe, in the West Bank and Gaza and within Israel itself—the Palestinian people have fought back. And today around the world, people know who the Palestinians are, get inspiration from their struggle, and recognize that they are entitled to their national rights.

The last eight years of constant struggle on the West Bank and Gaza have been possible because they are based in the growing Palestinian working class, especially in the great proletarian centers of Gaza, Nablus and Ramallah.

If we want to understand the people of the Middle East, we need to understand that the Palestinian struggle is the central cause of the Arab people. This is because Israel is an extension of the Pentagon in the Middle East and its guns are aimed at the entire Middle East. Israel stopped a revolutionary upsurge, it stopped oppressed countries in the region from seizing their own gas and oil resources and using them for development. This has stifled, stunted and warped any independent bourgeois development and left workers in the Middle East locked in poverty.

As a Lebanese-American, I know that Lebanon can never be free until Palestine is free. The same can be said of all the countries and nationalities in the region. So the Palestinian struggle is held important not only by Arabs, but by other Middle Eastern peoples as well. Witness recent demonstrations in Iran of tens of thousands in support of Palestine.

And because the U.S. supplies all the money that keeps Israel afloat, every Israeli attack on the people of the Middle East is really a U.S.-Israeli attack.

The Palestinian struggle is one of the most difficult to get support for in the U.S. Why? U.S. corporations and banks have garnered huge profits from Israel's assaults on revolutionary, progressive and nationalist Arab movements and countries. While there are splits in U.S. ruling circles on what the Pentagon should do in Iraq, the bourgeoisie here has no disagreements on the role Israel plays for the U.S. This is true of the Democratic as well as the Republican Party.

In the Israeli-Palestinian struggle, the U.S. claims it is an impartial mediator. This is an attempt to obscure the real relationship of forces: the U.S. and Israel are the oppressors, and the Palestinians and all the peoples of the Middle East are the oppressed.

The Bush administration's most recent smokescreen was its campaign to bring "U.S.-style democratic elections" to the Palestinian people. Washington's spin was really aimed at using elections to stop struggle. The Bush administration, however, underestimated the Palestinian people. Washington was flabbergasted when Hamas received most of the votes.

Joyce Chediak



WW PHOTO: LAL ROOHK

Hamas was voted in because it is the major Palestinian group that is most intransigent to imperialism and Zionism. Instead of dampening the struggle, as the Bush forces wanted, the Palestinian people used the electoral arena to affirm the struggle. And now they are being punished for their vote. Israel, the U.S. and the European bourgeois governments are denying the Palestinian Authority funds, inflicting great hardship on the Palestinian people.

In the U.S. media, Hamas is called a "terrorist organization, which refuses to recognize the right of Israel to exist, or to renounce violence." But the same media would never think of describing Israel as "a state built on the bones of the Palestinian people, which refuses to recognize their right to exist." Yet this is the truth.

Why should Hamas recognize the "right of Israel to exist" when Israel has never to this day recognized the right of Palestinian people to an independent and sovereign state, or admitted what it did to the Palestinian state and people?

Why should Hamas respect previous agreements when, five years ago, Ariel Sharon became Prime Minister and said his government would not recognize any agreements entered into by past Israeli governments with the PLO?

Israel is a settler state, built on the oppression of another people. It has no right to tell the Palestinians what to do. The Palestinian people have every right to aspire to regain every square inch of historic Palestine, to return to their original towns and villages. They have every right to choose who will represent them in their government.

While talking peace, for more than five years Israel has waged an unprecedented war on the Palestinian people of the West Bank and Gaza. All this was before the Hamas electoral victory, which Israel and the U.S. now blame for everything.

While Israel would prefer Fatah and Mahmoud Abbas over Hamas, Israeli officials just a short while ago refused to speak with Mahmoud Abbas, blaming him for not taking action against Islamic Jihad.

The U.S. and Israel want in Palestine what the U.S. wants in Iraq—puppets, rent-a-cops that do imperialism and Zionism's bidding. The different Palestinian groups, though they may have disagreements, are all trying to build a sovereign governing body for a nascent Palestinian state. Knowing the strategic importance of the Palestinian struggle to the entire Middle East, the U.S. and Israel will not tolerate an independent Palestinian state. The Palestinians, however, will never stop fighting for one.



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## WW CALENDAR

### BOSTON

#### Sat., June 24

Workers World Forum. "The 1916 Irish Rebellion, James Connolly and the 1981 Hunger Strikers." In honor of the 90th anniversary of the Irish Rebellion/Easter Rising led by James Connolly and the 25th anniversary of the 1981 Hunger Strike, this forum will address the Irish and other national liberation movements in the last century of world struggles for socialism. 1-4 p.m. Free and open to the public. At 284 Amory St. (The Brewery), Jamaica Plain, MA (Stonybrook, Orange line T stop).

### NEW YORK

#### Fri., June 9

Workers World Forum. "The FBI raid on Rep. William Jefferson's office: Racist, diversionary tactics and police state methods." Hear a Marxist analysis by Fred Goldstein, WW contributing editor. "Victory in Denver police brutality case." Hear Larry Hales, FIST organizer & WW contributing editor, on his recent court victory. "The 2nd Annual Trans Day of Action for Social and Economic Justice." Hear Imani Henry, a writer for Workers World, on the struggle for a march permit. 7 p.m. At 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl., Manhattan. For info phone 212-627-2994.

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## TRANS DAY OF ACTION

# Focus on social & economic justice

On June 23, New York's trans community will hold its second annual Trans Day of Action as part of Pride month. Below are the points of unity for this event, initiated by TransJustice of The Audre Lorde Project, a lesbian, gay, bi, two-spirit and trans people of color center for community organizing.

As trans and gender non-conforming (TGNC) people of color, we see that our struggle today is directly linked to many struggles here in the U.S. and around the world. We view the second annual Trans Day of Action for Social and Economic Justice on June 23 as a day to stand in solidarity with all peoples and movements fighting against oppression and inequality.

We view this action as following the legacy of our trans people of color warriors, such as Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson, and others who with extreme determination fought not only for the rights of all trans and gender non-conforming people, but also were on the front lines for the liberation of all oppressed peoples.

Why we are taking action on June 23rd:

- We know that the histories of human beings, our cultures and communities have been rich with multiple gender identities, experiences and expressions. In 2006, the two-gender system is enforced everywhere, targeting trans and gender non-conforming people in health care, immigration, bathrooms, clothing, shelters, prisons, schools, government forms, job applications and identity documents.
- We demand the end of gender policing that isolates TGNC people from the rest of our communities that have been socialized with oppressive definitions of gender. As a result, TGNC people live in fear of facing economic, psychiatric, sexual and physical as well as other forms of violence because of who we are. This

transphobic violence has been justified through medical theories and/or religious beliefs. Perpetuated in order to preserve America's racist and heterosexist values, gender policing and violence not only denies our existence as TGNC people, but maintains control over our broader communities being able to build solidarity with each other's struggles.

- On June 23, 2006, we as peoples and activists from diverse backgrounds will unite to rally and march, in order to continue:

1. The fight against police brutality,
2. To oppose the racist and xenophobic (fear of foreigners) immigration policies of the Bush administration,
3. To show our outrage at the lack of access to living wage employment, adequate affordable housing, quality education, basic health care for our communities, and
4. To demand an end to the devastating impacts of U.S. imperialism (so-called U.S. "war on terrorism") being waged against people at home and abroad.

- We see the Trans Day of Action as part of a larger campaign to fight for jobs and educational opportunities for TGNC people, especially [those] of color, who have historically faced systematic discrimination and/or dependency on sub-standard governmental programs for our survival. We strive to change the political climate in this country by organizing the second New York City Trans and Gender Non-Conforming People of Color Job and Education Fair, scheduled for Jan. 20, 2007.

We call upon our allies in corporate and private-sector businesses, non-profit agencies, higher education and the trade union movement to pledge their support for the second New York City Trans and Gender

Non-Conforming People of Color Job and Education Fair.

- On this day, we remember and commemorate the life of Amanda Milan and the lives of countless others who were murdered because of their gender/expression. On June 20, 2000, Amanda Milan, a 25-year-old African-American transgender woman, was brutally murdered in the middle of an intersection near Port Authority Bus Terminal as onlookers cheered. We demand an end to all forms of violence and state repression committed against trans and gender non-conforming people, and it is imperative that the media focus attention on this escalating problem.

- Stop police brutality and all forms of police repression! The police and other government agencies have profiled, harassed, brutalized, arrested and murdered multitudes of people in our communities. Many of those victimized are people of trans experience. As is the case with immigrants, communities of color, women, elders and young people, who also systematically face oppression in society, TGNC people often have no legal recourse because the violence perpetuated against them was, and still is, state-sanctioned.

- We demand that the NYC agency responsible for the administering of public welfare—the Human Resources Administration (HRA)—address the existing systemic problems of discrimination and harassment faced by trans and gender non-conforming people when trying to obtain public benefits such as health care, food stamps, welfare, adult protective services, eviction prevention and other essential services from their agency. We believe that all people receiving public assistance entitlements should be treated with respect and dignity. We stand in solidarity with all people living on public assistance and

against the cutting of funds for welfare in New York and across the country.

- We demand full legalization and an end to the criminalization of all immigrants. We oppose the Bush administration's guest worker proposals, the Real ID Act, all enforcement provisions to build more walls and give greater powers to the Department of Homeland Security, increase barriers to asylum seekers, the HIV ban and other anti-immigrant policies that continue to divide our communities. We are them and they are us. Trans and gender non-conforming immigrants and allies stand in solidarity and find inspiration in the growing immigrant rights movement. We raise our voices today and march together demanding amnesty for all immigrants!

In this spirit, we as trans and gender non-conforming people of color call on all social justice activists from communities of color, lesbian, gay, bi, two-spirit and trans movements, immigrant rights organizations, youth and student groups, trade unions and workers' organizations, religious communities and HIV/AIDS and social service agencies to endorse this call to action and to build contingents to march in solidarity together on June 23. With this march we honor the lives of those who came before us and honor the courage of all of our communities that continue to struggle and fight for liberation and self-determination every day.

In solidarity, TransJustice, a project of The Audre Lorde Project.

To endorse the Second Annual Trans Day of Action, e-mail [endorsetdoa@alp.org](mailto:endorsetdoa@alp.org) or call (718) 596-0342, ext. 18.



Next: Sylvia Rivera: 'Street gay people out front, drag queens behind them, everybody behind us.'

Email: [lfeinberg@workers.org](mailto:lfeinberg@workers.org)

## STONEWALL 1969:

# 'Turning point of rage'

By Leslie Feinberg

No footage or photographs exist of what happened outside the Stonewall bar in the early hours of June 28, 1969. The following descriptions rely on first-person witnesses, whose accounts have been compiled in books, and coverage from the not-so-friendly reporting in the Village Voice by Howard Smith and Lucian Truscott, an army lieutenant on leave who occasionally wrote for the Voice.

The police raid on the Stonewall bar continued to draw more and more people from the surrounding streets in Greenwich Village. Others hurried to the scene after getting a phone call about what was happening. Smith, who was on the scene, described the crowd as "growing very quickly. Every time I'd blink, there were more people."

The mood grew tense and angry as the police wagon arrived. The cops brought out several known members of organized crime, and then the Stonewall employees—including John, the African American men's room attendant; Blonde Frankie, the doorman; and other workers. Many in the crowd reportedly booed the Mafia and cheered the Stonewall employees.

Truscott wrote that the crowd then

shouted and booed at police when the cops loaded transgender and transsexual prisoners into the police wagon.

According to reports compiled by David Carter, one of the police shoved one of the trans prisoners, "who turned and smacked the officer over the head with her purse. The cop clubbed her and a wave of anger passed through the crowd, which immediately showered the police with boos and catcalls, followed by a cry to turn the [police] wagon over."

He added, "Gay men began to go to the many pay phones around the Sheridan Square area and call up friends, telling them to rush down to the Stonewall. Others ran throughout the neighborhood shouting that the Stonewall was being busted, and word of the raid passed through the night like a fever."

Numerous eyewitnesses recall in detail what happened when police dragged out a prisoner described as a masculine lesbian wearing "fancy, go-to-bar drag for a butch dyke."

Stonewall employee Harry Beard said that the lesbian had struggled with police inside the bar. She was handcuffed behind her back and arrested for violation of a New York edict that required each person to be wearing three pieces of "gender

appropriate" clothing. Beard related that when she protested the rough treatment, a cop hit her in the head with a nightstick.

Those outside described the butch lesbian as kicking, shouting and struggling with police all the way to the police cruiser.

When cops put her inside, she immediately got out and fought police all the way back to the entrance of the bar. "But after she reached the Stonewall the police pulled her back to the police car and again placed her inside it. She got out again and tried to walk away. This time an officer picked her up and heaved her inside." The struggle lasted five to 10 minutes.

An anonymous woman witness later wrote in a letter that the fight "set the whole crowd wild—berserk!"

One person there that night, Tom, remembers "Pennies ricocheted off the [police] van, a beer can hit the door." Many in the crowd, who reportedly feared that others still in police custody inside were being beaten, began shouting their names, demanding that the cops release them.

Truscott wrote, "It was at that moment that the scene became explosive."

Smith concluded that when the police forced this butch lesbian into the police car for the third time, "the turning point came."



Lavender & Red focuses on the relationship over more than a century between the liberation of oppressed sexualities, genders and sexes, and the communist movement. You

can read the entire, ongoing Workers World newspaper series by Leslie Feinberg online at [www.workers.org](http://www.workers.org). Stop and get a subscription while you're there!

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# Thousands of laborers walk out

By Erich Struch  
Chicago

Workers represented by the Chicago Laborers District Council went on strike against the Mid-America Regional Bargaining Association, a building and construction contractors' association, early on the morning of June 1, just hours after their five-year contract had run out. MARBA was the only holdout; the union had reached agreement with other contractors' associations.

The impasse with MARBA came after more than a month of talks. The Laborers charge that the bosses' bad faith negotiations forced them out on strike for the first time since a nine-

day walkout in 1991.

This strike isn't just over wages. Like millions of other workers during this period of a capitalist offensive on workers' social wages, the laborers are concerned about the future of their pension fund. They also want a greater degree of control over subcontracted work.

The strike is solid. Other building trades unions and the Teamsters have shown solidarity by observing the Laborers' picket lines.

The bosses and bankers in Chicago are truly shook up over the strike. Jack Ablin, the chief investment officer at Harris Bank, said, "A prolonged strike could have a profound negative impact

on Chicago." What Ablin is really saying is that he is terrified of the organized power of the workers and wants the strike to end before his bank's investments and bottom line are affected.

People like Ablin have good reason to be afraid. The Laborers represent more than 20,000 workers in the Chicago area and 20 to 30 percent of the workers on current highway construction projects. The strike has shut down 150 of 200 road projects. Work at all seven O'Hare Airport projects, affecting contracts valued at \$240 million, has stopped.

The Laborers are in a good position to win this one. □

# Immigrants fight for union

The bosses at Hope Global in Michigan thought they could hide behind Washington's anti-immigrant offensive to easily get rid of union organizers and pro-union workers. But that hope was dashed in the early hours of June 2 when union and community supporters of 20 fired workers massed on the front lawn of the plant, just west of Detroit's city limit.

The bosses then locked the doors and gates, refusing to speak with anyone except Father John Nowlan from the Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice. A Latina Auto Workers organizer quipped that the manager "has a lot of sins to confess."

Why did the workers sign union representation cards with the United Auto Workers? The workers at Hope Global assemble visors, armrests and other upholstered interior parts for Lear Corporation, a unionized just-in-time parts supplier for the big auto corporations. The work, all manual, damages hands and arms, especially



given the high hourly production quotas demanded by the company.

Elena Herrada, an organizer with Centro Obrero, described the issues, "It's the higher production expectation of Mexican workers, over-all discriminatory treatment of workers by managers, in this case who are also Mexican. Many of the workers have carpal tunnel syndrome and are

working with injuries. Most are wearing braces on their wrists. Many have been fired for being unable to keep up production levels with injuries."

Hope Global's headquarters is in Rhode Island; it has facilities in Mexico, Brazil and France. The UAW is filing unfair labor practice charges, but more street actions are planned, too.

— Story & photo by Cheryl LaBash

# Koreans say no to FTA

Several hundred Koreans and their supporters marched from George Washington University to the White House on June 4 to let the Bush administration know they oppose the Free Trade Agreement that Washington is foisting on the South Korean government.

The march was led by representatives of farmers, workers, artists, intellectuals and other organized sectors of Korean society, which have come together in the Korean Alliance against the KorUS FTA. The alliance of 282 organizations has brought hundreds of thousands into the streets in demonstrations throughout South Korea.

Already, the Seoul authorities have agreed to concessions lowering the standards for automobile exhaust fumes, resuming beef importation from the U.S. and agreeing on a higher quota of U.S. films to be shown in Korea.

The protesters fear that the FTA will undermine Korean sovereignty over food production, undermine the people's right to health, education and public services, and impact on their cultural diversity and environment. They also worry that farmers will be forced off their land if surplus U.S. agricultural products flood their market, forcing mass emigration similar to the exodus of Mexicans since the North American Free Trade



WWW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

Agreement went into effect and devastated that agricultural economy.

Before the march, Koreans, Latin Americans, Filipinos and people of color from organizations in the U.S.

shared experiences at a solidarity forum against the FTA and the globalization of war and poverty, held at George Washington University.

—Deirdre Griswold

## ON THE PICKETLINE

By Sue Davis

### NYS day care workers demand union

Hundreds of child care providers rallied on May 24 outside Gov. George Pataki's midtown office in New York to demand that he sign legislation that would allow them to join a union and negotiate with the state. The bill was passed unanimously by the State Senate in April after earlier passage in the Assembly by a wide margin.

Randi Weingarten, president of the United Federation of Teachers, said its effort to sign up the day care workers was the union's biggest organizing campaign since it helped organize paraprofessionals in the late 1960s. The campaign, started last summer, took off immediately "because this predominately female, minority work force is as in need of a union as anyone I've ever seen."

More than 6,000 of the 34,000 child care workers statewide have already signed union cards. A recent study by the Association of Community Organizations to Reform Now found that day care workers earn \$19,933 on average a year. They don't have sick days, health care benefits or pensions. Illinois, Oregon and Washington state already have laws allowing day care workers to organize.

### NYC hospital workers win long battle for union

The Office of Collective Bargaining ruled in mid-May that 1,300 coordinating managers in New York City hospitals could be represented by Communications Workers Local 1180. One immediate result: the workers will begin receiving overtime pay. The ruling ended a battle dating back to 1994. Local 1180 already represents 2,362 workers in the city's hospitals.

### Immigrant workers sue for back pay

Nine former employees of a Brooklyn supermarket, all immigrants from Central and South America, filed suit in May accusing Bogopa Service Corp. of forcing them to work solely for tips over long hours with no breaks at Food Bazaar. They are suing for \$1.56 million in back pay and overtime, including interest.

The workers bagged groceries for 50 to 66 hours a week, earning as little as \$100 a week in tips, from 1998 to November 2005. Members of the Urban Justice Center and the National Mobilization Against Sweatshops, which helped the workers bring the lawsuit, said the Food Bazaar case reflects a growing problem of labor abuses in supermarkets and hotels.

### SF Labor Council supports full immigrant rights

On May 22 the San Francisco Labor Council voted unanimously to endorse the national statement of the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR). This adoption is significant, noted a press release from the Open World Conference of Workers (www.owcinfo.org), because it sends a signal to all members of Congress, as well as the broader immigrant rights movement, that the San Francisco labor movement, including all AFL-CIO and Change to Win affiliates, is fully united in opposition to all so-called "immigration reform" bills currently under consideration by Congress.

The statement affirms, in the words of AFL-CIO Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson, that immigrant workers "should be recognized as full members of society—permanent residents with full rights ... because to embrace the expansion of temporary guest-worker programs is to embrace the creation of an undemocratic, two-tiered society." □

## SOUTH DAKOTA

# Pro-choice forces fight abortion ban

By Sue Davis

Little did South Dakota Gov. Mike Rounds know, when he signed a strict ban on legal abortion on March 6, that pro-choice forces would mount an all-out struggle to stop the law from taking effect on July 1.

On May 30 the South Dakota Campaign for Healthy Families, a diverse coalition, filed petitions to repeal the ban. They contained 38,416 signatures of voters—more than twice the nearly 17,000 valid signatures needed to put a referendum on the ballot in November. Over 1,200 volunteers from 138 cities and towns had canvassed all 66 counties in South Dakota to get the signatures.

The sweeping ban on abortions has offended even some who don't fully support women's right to choose. "People from all walks of life, young and old, Democrats, Independents and Republicans, are saying this law went too far," said Dr. Maria Bell, the official sponsor of the petition drive, in a campaign press release. ([www.sdhealthyfamilies.org](http://www.sdhealthyfamilies.org))

In a state where Native women face a long history of both racism and sexism, they are playing a leading role in fighting the ban. Four pro-choice Native women—Charon Asetoyer, Faith Spotted Eagle, Paula Long Fox and Theresa Spry—are running against anti-choice Democrats in the June 6 primary.

No doubt they were inspired by Cecelia Fire Thunder, tribal president of the Oglala Sioux Indian Nation in South Dakota and a member of the Healthy Families Campaign, who vowed, after passage of the ban, to build an abortion clinic on the Pine Ridge Reservation where all women would be free to receive the medical care they need. However, on May 27 the Oglala Sioux Tribal Council

voted to ban all abortions on the reservation and suspended Fire Thunder for 20 days until an impeachment hearing could take place. By law, the Tribal Council functions within limits set by the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Fire Thunder is accused of soliciting donations for an abortion clinic without the council's approval. ([keloland.com](http://keloland.com)) However, she told Workers World, "This

is all part of the ongoing battle for women's rights." She vowed to continue the struggle.

If the state verifies the signatures and the referendum is placed on the ballot, it will be the first referendum related to women's right to abortion in this country. Foes of abortion are preparing a no-holds-barred fight in the state. Already one anonymous donor has pledged a million dollars to defend the ban.

But pro-choice forces are determined to see the battle through. Thelma Underberg, a spokesperson for the South Dakota Chapter of Naral Pro-Choice America, told Workers World that based on the very positive response to petitioning, "I believe [the ban] has a good chance of being overturned. The South Dakota Campaign for Healthy Families is planning a number of activities and strategies to keep the momentum going."

## Women's struggle is key component

*The following is excerpted from a speech by Susan Farquhar of the Detroit Action Network for Reproductive Rights to the May 13-14 conference on socialism sponsored by Workers World Party.*

Workers World Party has understood from day one that a woman's struggle for full rights and equality, including the right to make reproductive choices, is a key component in the working-class struggle.

In addition, we recognize that the reproductive-rights movement must involve women of every nationality, and include immigrant, low-income, lesbian and transgender as well as disabled women.

We also understand that while reproductive rights are under intensified attack, it is not a coincidence that every single social service that supports families has been cut to the bare minimum.

While the right to reproductive choices includes the right to have children, how can women safely plan to have families when decent jobs are scarce, when schools are being closed and when the greatest percentage of our wage taxes goes toward a criminal war in the Middle East?

Spurred on by this crisis for choice, and with impending challenges at home in

Michigan, several women members in our Detroit Workers World branch prepared to struggle.

Recognizing this tremendous vacuum in the struggle for reproductive choice and motivated by the inspiring example of Lakota leader Cecelia Fire Thunder, president of the historic Pine Ridge Reservation, who is leading a fightback in South Dakota, we began to strategize a course of action.

On May 6, the Detroit Action Network for Reproductive Rights was formed. It includes a multinational grouping of working-class women. This network is committed to both saving and expanding reproductive rights, including the right to abortion and full contraceptive access for both women and men.

As we struggle around this issue so cru-



Susan Farquhar

WW PHOTO: LAL ROOHH

cial to women's equality, we also recognize the need to link ourselves with other struggles in the working-class movement in the fight for a socialist future. For it is only through socialism that women will achieve full reproductive rights, the end of sexism and complete emancipation. □

## Chairman Oh Jongryul:

# 'Unite all workers against neoliberalism!'

*Below is the English translation of the speech given by Oh Jongryul, co-chair of the Korean Alliance against the KorUS FTA, at a June 4 rally outside the White House opposing the so-called Free Trade Agreement between South Korea and the United States.*

The reason we came to Washington, D.C., the heart of the U.S., is to oppose the Korea-U.S. FTA. We came to build international solidarity for anti-neoliberalism with Korean Americans, American workers and workers and farmers of the world progressive movement.

The violent U.S. neoliberal agreement, NAFTA, swept Mexico like a tsunami. The FTA tsunami is about to give a big blow to South Korea.

We already experienced the 1997 IMF economic crisis and austerity measures forced upon South Korea. In the name of liberalization, financial and manufacturing and agricultural sectors were forced to liberalize their markets; presently 60 percent of South Korean financial and manufacturing industries are in the hands of U.S. corporations.

Some 86 percent of Kook-Min Bank, the largest South Korean bank; 54 percent of Samsung Electronics, a world-class corporation; 70 percent of POSCO—the cream of the crop of South Korean corporations are owned by U.S.-based transnational corporations. Thus transnational corporations take that portion of earnings to their pocket.

Neoliberalism is another name for the unlimited freedom by which transnational capitals and their tool, military power, pursue endless greed and indiscriminate aggression and exploitation.

Neoliberalism guarantees unlimited protection for transnational corporations but for workers and farmers they rob the

minimum rights to their livelihood.

Thus neoliberalism means neo-imperialism. It is a modern form of imperialism that serves the interest of transnational corporations.

Since NAFTA, U.S. workers are competing with oversupplied Mexican migrant workers in a labor market that has heightened the intensity of labor and job insecurity and worse working conditions. Imperialism sees no border. It also victimizes its own people.

Under neoliberalism, the new economic imperialism, we are one. Workers from Korea, the U.S. and Mexico are one.

South American people who are fighting against the post-NAFTA devastation and South Korean people are one.

To Korean people who are fighting against the Bush administration and transnational corporations who are forcing down Korea-U.S. FTA, which is worse than NAFTA, U.S. workers and Latin American workers are the same.

Thus U.S. workers and Korean workers must fight together against the transnational corporations and capitals.

Not for a U.S. which is condemned by the world but for a U.S. that stands for equality and peace, U.S. workers, farmers and progressive movements must fight back.

Workers, farmers and progressives from South America, U.S. progressives and workers and Korean workers, farmers and progressives must fight together under one unity.

Beyond region and race, workers of the world and social minorities must unite to end imperialism and I urge all of you to join us in building a self-determined, equal and peaceful world.

Oppose globalized neoliberalism! Unite the workers of the world! □

## Iraq-bound supply ships meet resistance

By Jim McMahan

Young protesters in Olympia, Wash., held actions for over a week in solidarity with the people of Iraq, who are resisting the occupation of their country by U.S. troops.

The activists tried to stop convoys of Navy ships carrying death-dealing Stryker combat vehicles and leaving from the Port of Olympia. The Strykers from Ft. Lewis were being loaded onto a ship for deployment with the 3rd Stryker Brigade.

Some 37 people were arrested at the protests, which ran from May 22 to June 1.

For two years, community activists in Olympia had been appealing to the local port commission and City Council and holding marches to stop the military shipments. On May 22, Brendan Dunn was arrested when he stood in front of a Stryker convoy. The next day, May 23, anti-police brutality activist Drew Hendricks from Olympia Cop Watch was arrested. The Thurston County Sheriff's Department said he attempted to lock the gates to the port, which is public property, with a bike lock.

Also on May 23, nine more people were arrested for blocking a Stryker convoy for half an hour. Protesters in front of the port entrance also formed a second blockade, which was attacked by the cops. The Port Militarization Resistance Group said in a statement that "The weapons shipment,

and the use of our public property to prolong and supply the war in Iraq, have made us complicit in crimes against humanity. We refuse to be complicit any longer."

Protests at the port entrance and vigils were then held daily throughout the week.

On May 29, the USNS Pomeroy arrived at the port. When protesters simply shook the gate at the port entrance, the cops pepper-sprayed the crowd.

On May 30, demonstrators were at the port in larger numbers. Activists tore down the gate at the port entrance. When the cops formed a blockade, some protesters lay down inside the port entrance with a large group behind them. A convoy calling themselves "Strykers for Peace" arrived, stating they wanted to take the Stryker vehicles back to Ft. Lewis. The cops refused their appeal.

Nineteen arrests were made on May 30. The cops used pepper spray, pepper spray pellets and rubber bullets against the crowd. But the demonstrators wouldn't be dispersed. Later in the day, a march was held through the streets of town, less than a mile from the State Capitol.

Resistance has built up and the military could face more serious challenges to its shipments from Olympia or elsewhere. The government can't continue to fund an illegal, genocidal war while running away from its responsibility to fund health care, education and all quality of life programs. □

## Look whose office gets raided

# When charge of 'corruption' is a cover for racism

By Fred Goldstein

A recent FBI raid on the Washington, D.C., office of Congressperson William Jefferson, a Democrat from Louisiana, represented the use of police-state methods for the dual purpose of diverting attention from corrupt Republicans while destroying the career of a key Black elected official.

On Saturday, May 20, 15 FBI agents carried out the first-ever raid on the office of a member of Congress in the 219 years of the legislature's existence. It so happens that William Jefferson is the first African American congressional representative to be elected in Louisiana since the end of the Reconstruction era of 1866-1877.

They also carried out the first federal raid in history on the home of a foreign official, the Washington home of Nigerian Vice President Atiku Abubakar.

The FBI has been carrying out a sting operation against Jefferson since March 2005. He is accused in an affidavit submitted to a federal judge of demanding payments and jobs for himself and his family in exchange for his help in promoting the interests of a small Kentucky company, iGate Inc. The firm sought Jefferson's aid in getting its Internet and digital television technology into Nigeria and Ghana. Its special technology uses copper wire and is suitable for use in West Africa, which lacks fiber optic and satellite technology because of the legacy of colonialism.

The CEO of iGate, Vernon Jackson, an African American, was caught in the sting and has pleaded guilty to bribery charges, as has a former aide to Jefferson, Brett Pfeffer. Pfeffer was sentenced to eight years in prison, with a promise from the judge to reduce his sentence based upon further cooperation.

The central player in the sting is a wealthy investor, Lori Mody, who agreed to invest in the iGate project but went to the FBI sometime in 2005 and began to wear a wire. She is alleged to have given Jefferson \$100,000 in marked bills, \$90,000 of which was allegedly to be used to bribe a Nigerian official and was said to be found in Jefferson's freezer during a raid on his home last August. Mody, who has been depicted as a philanthropist, got \$100 million when she sold her technology business in 2002. Her father also had a \$300 million technology business.

Mody was hooked up with the FBI by a company called Risk Control Strategies, which, according to its own website, "has assembled a cadre of former law enforcement and military professionals who have expertise in ... kidnap investigations [under FBI jurisdiction—FG], intelligence analysis, anti-terrorism.... The effectiveness of the RCS relies on our ability to conduct liaison and coordination with local law enforcement agencies." In other words, she was referred to the FBI by former FBI agents. Her lawyer, Bob Cox, is married to Richard Nixon's daughter, Tricia.

### DeLay, Cunningham, Abramoff

The most important thing about the Jefferson case is that it has nothing whatever to do with the FBI wanting to uncover corruption. It has everything to do with trying to draw attention away from the corrupt Republican machine.

The racist, reactionary Republican and

former House leader, Tom "The Hammer" DeLay of Texas, has been indicted on money laundering in connection with a reactionary redistricting scheme and general corruption. Randy "Duke" Cunningham from California is now in jail for taking millions in gifts and money from military contractors. And, in the Jack Abramoff scandals, tens of millions of dollars in bribes were spread around to several dozen legislators.

Given the racist nature of the FBI, their history of persecution of Black elected officials and their notorious reputation for entrapment, stings and frame-ups, it would be completely premature to give any credence at all to their rendition or interpretation of the facts in the case. Jefferson has so far denied the charges and has not been formally charged with anything.

But, regardless of whether or not Jefferson used his office for personal gain, one cannot but notice that in the cases of DeLay, Cunningham and Abramoff, where hundreds of millions and possibly billions of dollars were involved and the cast of characters included big-time players in the corrupt game of capitalist politics who fraternized with the ruling class, no highly publicized FBI raids were launched into the congressional offices or homes of even one of the dozens of suspects. No affidavits were prematurely leaked to prejudice the public and the potential jury pool before anyone was indicted, as in the Jefferson case.

The FBI carried out the raid without notifying Congress and without having present any congressional legal representative or anyone representing Jefferson as a legislator. They entered on May 20 and stayed 19 hours until May 21.

The New Orleans Times-Picayune of May 27 reported: "Jonathan Turley, a law professor at George Washington University ... said that the FBI did not seem to even try to reach an accommodation with House leaders on how to get the documents it wanted. 'It seems to have been orchestrated for prime-time news reports and designed to put pressure on the congressman,' said Turley, referring to reports that TV news desks were alerted to the raid ... as well as to the Justice Department decision to release much of the affidavit used to justify the search warrant."

The FBI was emboldened to make such a reactionary encroachment on Congress by the right-wing atmosphere cultivated by the Bush administration and catered to by the Democratic Party leadership. Clearly impeachable offenses by the National Security Agency—eavesdropping and mining telephone calls—were approved without any serious opposition. General Michael V. Hayden, the architect of this patently illegal NSA spying scheme, has now become the head of the CIA without a congressional peep.

Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez himself was the author of memos that authorized torture. Prisoners are "disappeared" by the process of rendition without consequences. Arbitrary detention continues in Guantanamo on the say-so of the Pentagon. The entire political establishment sat idle as millions of people of Middle Eastern and South Asian descent were subjected to surveillance, intimidation, deportation and frame-ups. The

repressive Patriot Act was renewed with only minor modifications.

The Democratic Party establishment has been entirely complicit in the general shift to the right of capitalist politics—as illustrated by their giving right-wing Supreme Court justices John Roberts and Samuel Alito a free pass. They have contributed to the anti-immigrant hysteria, joining the chorus to build a wall at the Mexico-U.S. border.

In this right-wing, anything-goes atmosphere, the FBI was sure that the raid was a "slam dunk." But to their surprise, the Republican leaders were upset by the intrusion. It was partly because Dennis Hastert, Newt Gingrich and others thought this raid would hurt them in the elections and also because they were fearful of throwing the first stone, when the Democrats could possibly get in and use the same tactics against them. In fact, it is said that Hastert is being looked into in connection with the Abramoff scandal.

Corruption is endemic to bourgeois politics. The most egregious cases of it are out in the open and do not require any sting operations.

### What about Cheney?

Jefferson is accused of helping a corporation get favors. But what of Dick Cheney? This man, just a heartbeat away from the presidency, is the former president of and still a stockholder in Halliburton, an oil industry service company. Right after the election, he invited the heads of the entire oil industry to his office for a secret session to write energy policy for the entire U.S. and a good part of the world economy. The White House refused to reveal the transcripts of the proceedings.

If the FBI were looking for a way to put an end to the illicit and undue influence of corporate executives on government officials, they could have started by raiding Cheney's office.

What of the no-bid contracts for Halliburton and its subsidiaries in Iraq, with all their overbilling? That is outright thievery but there have been no FBI raids.

What about the generals who retire and go to work for the military-industrial complex? The Pentagon is famous for its "revolving door" of officials who go back and forth from industry to the military.

In the 1980s Senator Henry Jackson from Washington state was known as "the senator from Boeing" because he was in their corporate pocket and advocated for every weapons system they made. Sam Nunn of Georgia was known as "the Senator from Lockheed" for the same reason. Racist Jesse Helms of North Carolina was "Mr. Tobacco." And so on. All the big monopolies have their stooges in Washington, either as lobbyists, representatives, senators, bureaucrats or cabinet members. The FBI never pays a visit to these corrupt politicians because they deal with the interests of the real ruling class.

So why is the FBI spending so much time and money on an attempt to sting William Jefferson? It is because the FBI is a profoundly racist institution in the service of an oppressive, racist ruling class. The inside story of the Jefferson case may never fully come out, but objectively his case is just one more in an endless stream in which Black elected or appointed offi-

cials and political leaders are hounded by the racist authorities.

### Jefferson had clout in Congress

Jefferson is an eight-term congressperson, allowing him to be a senior member of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee, which deals with taxation and money. He is also on its trade subcommittee and on the House Committee on the Budget. He is co-chair of the Africa Trade and Investment Caucus as well as the congressional caucuses on Brazil and Nigeria. He is also current chair of the Board of Directors of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation and its research and educational institute.

Jefferson rose from the poverty of a sharecropping family growing cotton in northeast Louisiana to graduate from Harvard. He rose in municipal and state politics to become an instrumental figure totally immersed in the capitalist legislative process. He has risen far above the masses of the Second District in Louisiana, 65 percent of whom are African American in the poorest state in the South.

He is hardly a revolutionary or even a mildly radical figure and is said to be pro-business. But to the FBI that is of little matter. The rule of the capitalist class is based upon national oppression. Its most racist institutions, like the FBI, are constantly trying to curtail the basic democratic right of political representation for African Americans and all oppressed people at the higher levels of authority.

There are about 9,000 Black elected officials in the U.S., heavily concentrated in the South and in densely populated urban areas in other parts of the country. This is the result of the massive resistance and sacrifices of the civil rights and Black liberation movements of the 1950s and 1960s, which forced concessions from the ruling class.

But most of these officials are in municipalities and state houses. At this level, they can only divide up the crumbs after the big bourgeois politicians at the federal level, the vast majority white, have parceled out a \$2.7 trillion federal budget to the corporations and the rich.

The higher echelons of political representation, the top level of the capitalist state, is far more closed to African Americans than the total number would suggest. There is not one Black governor. There is only one Black senator. Appointees like Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice are conservative representatives of U.S. imperialism and light years away from any concern for the masses.

The only semblance of national political representation for African Americans within the framework of the U.S. capitalist political system is the Congressional Black Caucus. Marginalized already, the CBC would be further weakened by the removal of such a key figure as Jefferson, who is at least accessible to and can serve as a channel for the CBC in matters of trade, taxation and the budget. Additionally, it will weaken the ability to get congressional funding for the reconstruction of New Orleans. In other words, the removal of Jefferson would weaken the democratic right of representation and tend to strengthen national oppression.

This is in the tradition of racist, ruling-class politics. Adam Clayton Powell, the

*Continued on page 11*

## FEMA denies housing as

# Katrina survivors keep fighting for justice

By Monica Moorehead  
New York

On June 3, the New York Solidarity Coalition with Katrina/Rita Survivors sponsored a Special People's Legislative Town Hall Meeting with Federal, State and City Elected Officials at Fordham University in New York. The meeting was hosted by the Department of Campus Ministries at the school.

The main goal of those meeting under the slogan "Nothing About Us Without Us Is For Us!" was to encourage a dialog between elected officials and hurricane survivors who have been denied the right to have any say on how to reconstruct their neighborhoods and cities in order to eventually return home.

The right to return includes having decent jobs with a living wage, health care, education, a safe environment and better housing before more hurricanes hit.

The meeting began with introductions and greetings from more than a dozen survivors who now reside in New York, New Haven, Conn. and other cities because their homes were destroyed in rural parts of Mississippi or in New Orleans, the city hardest hit by Katrina.

The survivors spoke about how unwelcome local officials, like billionaire New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, have made them feel since they were displaced by the hurricanes. Some of the hardships they have faced over the months include being threatened several times with eviction from hotel space or shelters; being unemployed, underemployed or without any secure financial assistance; lacking educational and health care opportunities; police harassment and much more.

Survivors who spoke included Christine Gavin-Latham, Brandon Pellerin, Veronica Ogden-Smith, Kathy Gibbs, Maya Dempster, Ada Hahn, Leon Paredes, Shanalyna Palmer, Brandi Kilbourne, Belinda Beecham, Brian Bilal Moran, Ivy Parker and Dick Darby. Many supporters of the evacuees also attended and participated in the meeting, including City Council member Charles Barron, Brenda Stokely from the Million Worker March Movement and Ajamu Sankofa from Physicians for Social Responsibility.

Darby, from New Orleans, commented that what displaced the survivors wasn't the storm but neglect on the part of all levels of government. A big part of this neglect was the fact that the levees in New Orleans were not shored up ahead of time before Katrina hit. The breaking of the levees caused massive flooding that decimated the poorest areas of the city, like the predominantly African-American area known as the Ninth Ward. Those same levees still remain insecure as the new hurricane season begins.

### Gov't neglect of the people

In a report released Feb. 6 called "Supplementary Report on the Findings of the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation and Response to Hurricane Katrina," Congressperson Cynthia McKinney from Georgia explained the impact of Katrina on the Ninth Ward: "As our tour bus for the Congressional Delegation made up of Select Committee Members, guest members and their staff drove through the devastated Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans, not far from downtown, one could still get a sense of the charm. Aside from the roads having been

cleared, little had changed in four and a half months since a 20-foot wall of water was unleashed upon the community of lower-income, mostly African American residents.

"Fourteen percent of residents in the Lower Ninth Ward were senior citizens. Another 14 percent were handicapped. A full 60 percent owned their own homes, ranking the home ownership rate in this community among the highest in the country. At the same time, only 40 percent of residents were literate."

McKinney's report went on to conclude, "A single weather event, Hurricane Katrina, has brought about the greatest population dislocation in the United States since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Katrina was not the strongest hurricane ever to hit the Gulf Coast, but it was perhaps the most destructive ever due to its extraordinary storm surge on the one hand, and due to human failure on the other: the inadequacy of levees, the inadequacies of the evacuation plan, the inadequacy of governmental response and a social environment characterized by widespread poverty, racial inequities and a history of racial discrimination." (The entire report is at [www.house.gov/mckinney/katrina.supplemental.pdf](http://www.house.gov/mckinney/katrina.supplemental.pdf).)

### Resisting FEMA's inhumane treatment

The criminal behavior that the Federal Emergency Management Agency, under the auspices of the Department of Homeland Security, showed toward the hurricane survivors will be a major focus of a national protest, including a press conference in Washington, D.C., on June 13.

Katrina/Rita survivors from as far away as New Orleans, Atlanta, Houston, Mobile,

parts of North Carolina and New York and other cities will be coming together in front of the FEMA office at 12 noon. They intend to expose the fact that FEMA has refused to live up to its promise to provide local governments with one year to 18 months' worth of paid rent and utilities for displaced Gulf Coast residents.

The cut-off date for federal housing assistance for the majority of 55,000 families of hurricane evacuees was May 31. (Washington Post, May 31) For families living in 11 districts in Texas—including Austin, Dallas and Houston—it is June 30. A lawsuit to enjoin FEMA from ending payments to voucher holders was rejected by the courts on May 30. A trial on the merits of the case is scheduled for June 20.

The New York solidarity committee is demanding that the U.S. government adhere to United Nations standards on the treatment of internally displaced persons. The UN standards call for two to three years of housing assistance as well as job placement, counseling and assistance to return to one's home. Looking at these guidelines alone, FEMA and the U.S. government have completely failed the people of the Gulf Coast.

The People's Hurricane Relief Fund, Advocates for Environmental Human Rights, U.S. Human Rights Network, the Gulf Coast Renewal Campaign, Saving Our Selves Coalition and other groups and individuals are calling the June 13 protest and assisting in helping Katrina/Rita survivors to travel and stay in Washington, D.C., for the protest. They are urging that supporters be there to show solidarity with the right of the Katrina/Rita survivors to be seen and heard by the government. □

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## 'Rue Mumia Abu-Jamal'

# Police vs. activists in struggle over street

By LeiLani Dowell

The Philadelphia Chapter of the Fraternal Order of Police, its allies in Congress and the media have arrogantly attacked local officials from the Paris suburb of St. Denis in France for naming a street after world-renowned journalist, freedom fighter and political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. (See Workers World, May 11.)

Abu-Jamal has been on death row for almost 24 years, convicted of the fatal shooting of a Philadelphia police officer. However, he and his supporters point to a long list of inconsistencies in evidence raised during a racist, unfair trial back in 1982.

The movement is demanding a new trial for a number of reasons, including that Abu-Jamal was framed up because of his outspoken writings against police violence in communities of color and also that he is a former Black Panther.

On May 19, Philadelphia congressperson Michael Fitzpatrick and 13 cosponsors introduced House Resolution 407, which not only condemns the decision of St. Denis officials to name the street, but also urges the government of France to "take appropriate action against the city of St. Denis" to force them to change the street name.

In yet another slap in the face to those

fighting police brutality and the prison-industrial complex, the resolution commends all police officers in the United States and throughout the world for their "commitment to public service and public safety."

Suzanne Ross, co-chair of the NYC Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition, said, "Surely that includes those cops who sodomized and tortured Abner Louima, the cops who shot 41 shots and killed Amadou Diallou, and the cop who killed Anthony Baez because his football hit the police car—just to mention a few police officers who would be included in this blanket honor."

On May 25, Philadelphia's City Council joined in the attack, voting unanimously to support Resolution 407.

In response to the resolution, Patrick Braouezec, former mayor of St. Denis and president of a community of a dozen suburban cities including St. Denis, said in a letter, "It is true that in choosing the name of Mumia Abu-Jamal we made a choice, a political choice, a choice aimed to show that we stand at his side in the struggle he is waging to obtain legal recognition of his innocence—and we proclaim our choice for all to hear. ... What is our claim today? We hail from the large numbers of people who are simply asking that Mumia be granted a new trial so that the evidence of

his innocence can be upheld."

Supporters of Abu-Jamal, who have been instrumental in raising awareness of his case around the world, are responding in force to the attack by the FOP. On May 25, the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal held a news conference in front of the FOP's offices in Philadelphia, which Ross says "quickly turned into a confrontation with the FOP, who came out with their 'Fry Mumia' raggedy banner and tried to silence our attempt to get out information." Several days later, ICFMAJ went to City Hall and confronted the City Council about its support of the FOP.

ICFFMAJ and its supporters will return to the City Council on June 8 to continue presenting their case of support for the St. Denis decision to create "Rue Mumia Abu-Jamal." To get involved, call 212-330-8029.

Email: [ldowell@workers.org](mailto:ldowell@workers.org)



WWW PHOTO: LAL ROOJK

The inauguration of "Rue Mumia Abu-Jamal" in St. Denis, a Paris suburb, was celebrated with beautiful posters.

## Oil, gas and power

# Behind Australia's intervention in East Timor

By John Catalinotto

An Australian-led military intervention has put East Timor back in media headlines four years after its independence. More than 2,500 troops and police—some 1,500 from Australia, and the rest from New Zealand, Malaysia and Portugal—had landed in Dili, the capital of East Timor, by June 5.

The deployment of these troops and police follows a rebellion, begun in March by about one-third of the 1,800 troops in the Timorese armed forces, and a week of street fighting in May among groups in Dili called “gangs” in the big-business media. Tens of thousands of Timorese have fled Dili neighborhoods where homes have burned and the fighting continues.

Although the Timorese government officially invited Australia's intervention, there are three reasons many suspect the Australian government of having a role in provoking the crisis that destabilized East Timor.

It only took two days after the invitation for the Australian government to land 1,500 troops in Dili. Such a deployment requires preparation.

The nominal leader of the rebellious Timorese troops, Maj. Alfredo Alves Reinado, received training in Canberra, Australia, just three months before the military intervention.

And East Timor and Australia have been embroiled in negotiations over exploiting the substantial oil and gas reserves located in the ocean between the two countries, in an area known as the Timor Gap.

### Bloody road to independence

East Timor, about the size of Massa-

chusetts and with a population of about 900,000, occupies the eastern half of an island on the southeastern end of the Indonesian archipelago in the Indian Ocean. It lies about 200 miles from Australia's northern coast.

The Timorese people's fate has been complicated by the role of Australia and Indonesia, which are the two regional powers; of Portugal, which is the former colonial power; and of U.S. imperialism, a long-time sponsor of the bloody Indonesian military.

After 400 years as a Portuguese colony, East Timor was on the verge of independence in 1975. One year earlier, national liberation wars in Portugal's African colonies had opened up a revolution in Portugal itself against the fascist colonial regime there. By 1975, the new Portuguese government was reaching agreements with all the national liberation movements in the colonies, on the basis of self-determination, in order to end fighting. These negotiations included an agreement with Fretilin, the national liberation movement in East Timor.

U.S. strategists, however, were concerned that Fretilin might usher in a pro-socialist country: a “Cuba in the Indian Ocean.”

In December 1975, when Portugal announced it would end its colonial rule over East Timor, the Indonesian regime—led by the military dictator Suharto—prepared for an invasion of East Timor.

During a meeting in Jakarta just before the invasion, Suharto told U.S. President Gerald Ford and his Secretary of State Henry Kissinger about his plans to take over East Timor.

“We will understand and will not press

you on the issue,” Ford replied, according to U.S. government documents. Kissinger added, “It is important that whatever you do succeeds quickly.”

The ensuing invasion and 24-year-long occupation cost the lives of as many as 200,000 East Timorese—about one-third of the population. But the U.S. government remained Indonesia's staunch ally, valuing its strategic alliance with the anti-communist Suharto regime over the lives of the Timorese people. Fretilin waged a heroic struggle, but took heavy losses.

When the Suharto government was finally removed in Indonesia in 1998, the Timorese organized a referendum and voted overwhelmingly for independence. In response, pro-Indonesian militia threatened a bloodbath. The Timorese groups requested assistance from Australia and other countries. On May 20, 2002, the Timorese finally established a new, independent East Timor.

### Oil and the current crisis

Today, East Timor—one of the poorest countries in the world—expects a potential income of as much as \$25 billion from its oil and gas deposits over the next 20 years—if it isn't all taken away from them.

In the past year, the Australian government has continually pressured Timorese Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri to sign away rights to these resources. Under international boundary law, 80 percent of the oil and gas are under Timorese waters. Australia has insisted on a 50-50 split.

Australia has also lined up internationally with U.S. and British imperialism, sending troops to Iraq and Afghanistan. In pursuit of its own economic interests, Australian troops have also gone into

Papua New Guinea.

Even though Australian military ships were in Timor's waters during Fretilin's congress this May 17-19, and Australia has been sharply critical of Alkatiri, the former liberation front again selected him as its leader. Fretilin, which won 57 percent of the vote in the 2001 election, is by far the most popular party. As the ruling party, it had also selected Alkatiri as prime minister in 2002.

Alkatiri has invited a few dozen Cuban doctors and sent a few Timorese to Cuba to study medicine. These small attempts to improve life for the Timorese have aroused charges from Major Reinado and others that Alkatiri is a “communist.” The Australian government and media call him “incompetent.”

The truth is he has been trying to get a better cut for Timor from the oil and gas income.

Some other Timorese political leaders who are opponents of Alkatiri—such as President Xanana Gusmao and Foreign Minister Jose Ramos-Horta—also have roots in the independence movement. But Alkatiri has the support of Fretilin and has said he would mobilize 100,000 supporters if he is deposed. This may be the only reason he has survived this long.

In March, some 600 Timorese soldiers went on strike, claiming discrimination because they were from the western part of the country. They speak the same language and share the same religion as people in the eastern part. The most important difference is that people from the western part are believed to have collaborated more with the Indonesian occupation. Alkatiri fired the soldiers, whereupon they rebelled. □

## Garment strike in Bangladesh

# Whose responsibility, whose interests?

*A general strike and workers' rebellion in Bangladesh this May exposed the horrible exploitation of that country's garment workers, who toil in locally owned factories to supply Wal-Mart and others in the imperialist retailing industry with ready-made clothing. Responding to attacks from police and mercenaries, workers burned 300 vehicles and a few of the over 4,200 garment factories that employ over 2 million workers—40 percent of the total industrial work force in this South Asian country, whose total population is 148 million, the majority peasants.*

*The Brussels-based International Textile, Garment and Leather Worker Federation on May 24 estimated that in “February 2005 a garment worker in Bangladesh received only 6 cents as wage per hour, compared to 20 cents in India and Pakistan, 30 cents in China, 40 cents in Sri Lanka and 78 cents in Thailand.” (Asian Tribune, May 28) Behind the low wage scale in Bangladesh, however, is not only the drive of the local capitalists to maximize their profits, but the pressure of the giant retail monopolies like the U.S.-based Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., the world's largest retailer.*

*Wal-Mart had \$312.4 billion in sales worldwide in the fiscal year ending Jan. 31—more than its next four competitors. Wal-Mart directly employs over 1 million workers worldwide; at sweatshops, it indirectly employs millions more. Monopolies like Wal-Mart and France-based Carrefour use their leverage to beat down prices and wages all over the world. Both called up the Bangladesh government for assurances on deliveries when the government shut down 1,000 factories during the May strike actions.*

*Not only do the local capitalists compete on a world scale, but in effect these retail monopolies force workers all over the world to compete with each other to work for the lowest wages—unless they join in solidarity in struggle against the imperialist monopolies. The following is a report that a Bangladeshi journalist and political activist sent to Workers World about the May events.*

By Mohammad Basirul Haq Sinha  
Dhaka, Bangladesh

The country has observed the largest garment-worker uprising ever in Bangladesh from May 22-24. Although this sector earned \$6.4 billion of the \$9.4 billion total in foreign exchange last year, the

laborers have no proper employment contract, no standard working hours (they work 13 instead of eight hours per day), no days off, no lunch hour, no break to drink water or go to the bathroom, no proper toilet facilities, no medical leave, etc.

The well-to-do upper classes' indifference to the growing chaos and suffering of the poor is much more noticeable in Bangladesh than what prevailed during the turbulent days of 1966 or 1969 during the struggle for independence from West Pakistan that succeeded in 1971. The deaths of five students by police firing on Feb. 21, 1952, stirred up the entire province of East Pakistan, eventually leading to the creation of Bangladesh.

In the last 35 years, hundreds of deaths of unarmed civilians by law-enforcement agencies and paramilitary forces, more so during the last decade or so, have hardly stirred up the well-to-do classes. And today things have turned even nastier and more violent than they were 35 years ago.

The latest attacks on several garment factories in and around Dhaka city by garment factory workers, who are the most productive and most exploited, the least rewarded and appreciated sections of the poor, have made headlines. The whole country seems to be worried. The predatory, rapacious garment factory owners,

who always brag as the biggest foreign exchange earners for Bangladesh, have come out on the street demanding “justice” and government intervention.

However, one wonders what type of “justice” the poor garment factory workers have been getting from either the garment factory owners (who remind one of the ruthless slave owners and the colonial plantation owners of the past) or the government. Is it fair to pay around 60 U.S. cents to a factory worker per day, when anyone earning less than a dollar per day is living below the poverty line? Are not human-rights activists in Bangladesh and abroad aware of the fact that Bangladeshi garment factory workers have a lower average calorie intake than slaves in 19th century U.S. plantations, and are not much better off with regard to freedom, leisure and human dignity?

The answer to the question, “Who is responsible for burning down of garment factories?” during the May 22-24 rebellion is that they are the same people who are responsible for hundreds of deaths of garment factory workers by fire in factories. It was appalling to hear the quick outcry from both the government, the opposition and the garments and textiles' owners blaming anarchists and conspirators from

*Continued on page 9*



# U.S. shift in strategy toward Iran?

By Ardeshir Ommani

The U.S. government, through Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, announced on May 31 that it would be ready to participate in meetings with Russia, China, Germany, Britain, France and Iran over the nuclear issue.

Over the past 27 years, the United States has refused to meet directly with the Iranian government, except on some occasions through a third party, and involving low-level officials.

The question of Iran agreeing to suspend its uranium enrichment project is tightly inter-related with its receiving a security guarantee that the U.S. will not interfere in its internal affairs, politically or militarily. But according to an article in the New York Times of June 7, the U.S. administration "rejected entreaties by the other powers to give Iran explicit security guarantees that the United States would not intervene politically or militarily in Iran's internal affairs...." Given this inter-relationship, Iran cannot afford to shut down the two processes of conversion and enrichment of uranium, temporarily or otherwise, as long as the United States does not put aside its clearly hostile intention.

Analysts around the world are divided on the question of whether the U.S. has made a "major policy shift" or is merely carrying out a tactical maneuver, a sort of "diplomatic game." It would be a major policy shift only if the U.S. has decided to modify its objectives with regard to Iran and the entire Middle East. However, it would be naïve to think that the U.S. has given up its aim of hegemony and its plan for domination over the oil resources in the region.

The U.S. entered into the multilateral negotiation process under the same old directive: that its participation is conditioned upon Iran's suspension of all activities relating to uranium enrichment. At a press conference, Secretary of State Rice said that "as soon as Iran fully and verifiably suspends its enrichment and reprocessing activities, the United States will come to the table."

Another source of threat to Iran comes from a close ally of the United States: Israel. Amazingly, the background for this latest "overture" in diplomacy came on the heels of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's visit to Washington. On May 24, given a forum to speak to the U.S. Congress, Olmert leveled poisonous and rabid anti-Iran propaganda, saying that it "stands on the verge of acquiring nuclear

weapons. With these weapons, the security of the entire world is put in jeopardy.... This challenge, which I believe is the test of our time, is one the West cannot afford to fail." He added, "Our time is now. History will judge our generation by the actions we take now, by our willingness to stand up...."

Does this invitation to Olmert fit the demeanor of a government that claims it is ready to carry on negotiations with Iran? However, the attacks against the Islamic Republic of Iran do not end here.

Just a few days later, U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, at an international conference in Singapore, called Iran "one of the leading terrorist nations in the world." Is this the way that any government prepares the diplomatic ground for real negotiations?

Some say that the U.S. administration is divided between a camp of neo-cons—Vice President Dick Cheney, Rumsfeld and UN Ambassador John Bolton—on the one hand and George Bush and Rice on the other. The famous Iranian historian Ervand Abrahamian, author of "Between Two Revolutions," strongly suggests that the U.S. ruling class is at this point divided on the issue of how to deal with Iran's nuclear technology. (WBAI-FM's Wake Up Call, June 5 interview)

Whether or not there is a division at the White House level, one thing remains certain: the pre-conditions set out by the U.S. offer contradict the essence of negotiations. Even Hans Blix, the former chief UN weapons inspector during the period before the start of the Iraq war, recently said that one cannot demand the suspension of uranium conversion and enrichment that itself is supposed to be the subject of negotiations. Furthermore, at no time has the Bush administration taken the option of war off the table.

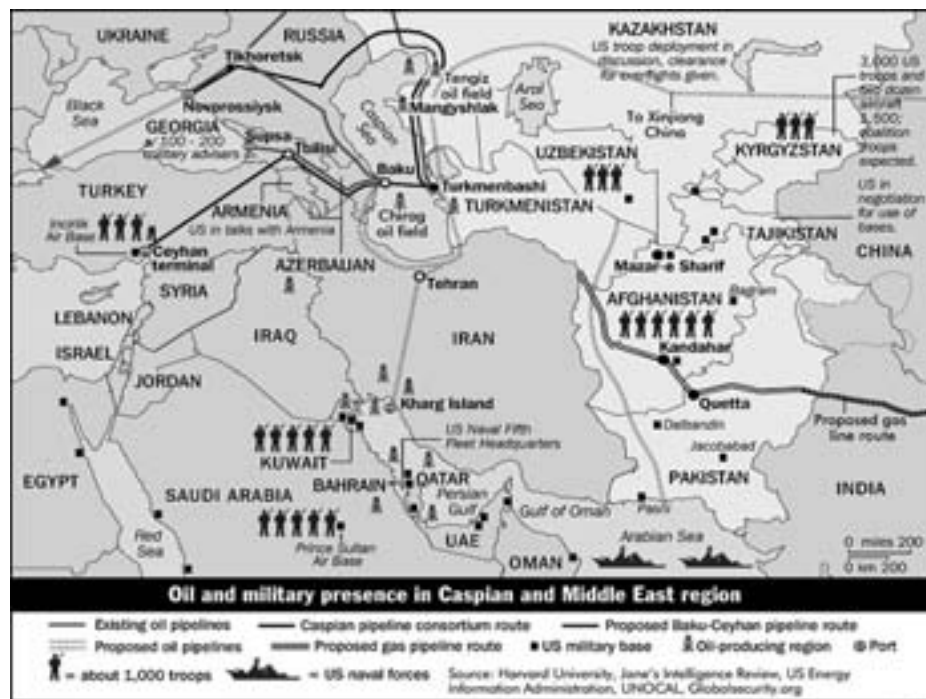
## U.S. on defensive

After having heard Rice say a few times on selected news channels that the United States has decided to accept a situation where Iran could have nuclear energy production, some Iranian liberal analysts reached the ultimate conclusion that Iran should jump at this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, embrace the U.S. offer and, as the condition requires, suspend the process of uranium enrichment.

This group of pundits pays little attention to the fact that the new package with all its "incentives" is not fundamentally different from the old one, which required that the fuel necessary for Iran's nuclear facilities be processed in another country, possibly Russia or the United States. Is this a strategic concession? Absolutely not.

Let us look at the U.S.-Iran nuclear dispute from another angle. The U.S. is well aware of growing world public opinion against Washington's threats toward Iran and its discriminatory policy of embracing some countries with nuclear weapons—such as Israel, India and Pakistan—while denying Iran the right to have civilian nuclear energy facilities.

It is interesting to note that the U.S. offer of negotiations with Iran was announced one day after a meeting of the 114-nation Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Malaysia. A communiqué issued by the NAM countries emphasized the right of all nations "without any discrimination" to enjoy the benefits of civilian nuclear energy and warned against any attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. According to the French press agency AFP, the NAM communiqué warned the U.S. that "any attack or threat of attack against peaceful nuclear facilities—operational or under construction—poses a great danger



to human beings and the environment, and constitutes a grave violation to international law."

It is easy to reach the conclusion that the U.S. is on the defensive.

Another reason, but not less important, is the gradual but persistent tendency of Iran of establishing economic, diplomatic and even security relations with countries in Asia and Latin America, including China, Russia, some republics of the former Soviet Union, Indonesia, Venezuela and Cuba. For the U.S. empire, it is strategically important to stop or even slow down the cooperation tendencies and new alliances among these countries.

Russia is already in the final stages of finishing Iran's first nuclear plant in the southern city of Bushehr. A week before the U.S. made the "new" offer, on May 23, the chief executive officer of the Russian energy giant Gazprom, Alexei Miller, held a talk with Iran's ambassador in Moscow, Gholamreza Ansari. According to a Gazprom statement, the discussion included "possible cooperation in gas production, transport and use."

In a fascinating analysis in *Asiatimes.com* entitled "U.S. 'allies' keep Iran option open," veteran diplomat M.K. Bhadrakumar says that "an expanded energy partnership cementing a strategic axis involving Russia, China and Iran—this would be an ultimate nightmare for Washington."

The U.S. State Department recently sought "clarification" from Moscow as to why President Ahmadinejad of Iran was invited to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit scheduled for June 15. Clifford Kupchan, a former U.S. diplomat currently with Eurasia Group, a Washington-based think tank, says, "The potential realignment ... crystallized by those participating in the SCO meeting is new and is of concern to U.S. interests."

It is wishful thinking to assume that the U.S. as a hegemonic power is ready to revamp its plan of domination over the Middle East and recognize Iran as an independent regional power with its own geopolitical and economic space to grow.

Vice President Dick Cheney once said that the country that controls Middle East oil can exercise a "stranglehold" over the global economy.

How could the United States shift its strategy toward Iran when Bush as recently as last month once again declared Iran a "number one state sponsor of terrorism"?

Either the "shift" should not be taken seriously or the U.S. must acknowledge that it has misrepresented Iran's foreign policy for years. Iran has pursued a principled position of non-aggression and anti-occupation with regard to oppressed nations in the region. Its support for the Palestinian people, Syria and Lebanon

must be recognized as an effort in defense of their emancipation from the atrocities of the Zionist regime of Israel and its paymaster, the United States.

## Elements for a REAL shift

The most important elements in the mix of any real shift away from current U.S. policy toward the Middle East would include its departure from Iraq and Afghanistan and the dismantling of the U.S. military bases in those two countries, as well as in the Persian Gulf states and in republics of the former Soviet Union. Other changes would include the nuclear disarmament of Israel and a just resolution to the Palestinian question by Israel's complete withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the entire West Bank, so that the Palestinian people can establish their own state, independent of the control of Israel, the U.S. and Europe.

With regard to these strategic issues, is U.S. policy moving in the direction of the relaxation of tensions, eradication of regional insecurities, respect for the sovereignty, independence and national integrity of the countries in the region?

NATO's frenzied construction of military bases in the countries of Eastern Europe and Washington's intelligence and military involvement in Azerbaijan tell us otherwise. It didn't go unnoticed by the peoples in the Middle East that, on the same day that Rice announced U.S. plans to negotiate with Iran, eight NATO ships arrived at Haifa port in Israel and it was announced that in July Israeli naval craft would participate for the first time as an "integrated force" in a NATO exercise.

To make its offer to Iran rosy and attractive, the U.S. on June 5 made an announcement through the European Union's foreign policy director, Javier Solana, that Washington was ready to allow Iran to purchase aircraft parts from Boeing and to purchase U.S. agricultural machinery, waiving trade sanctions it had imposed against Iran 27 years ago. The next day MSNBC revealed that the package of so-called incentives included U.S. agreement to provide its own nuclear technology to Iran, but with the same restriction: that Iran give up its project of nuclear fuel enrichment.

It is not hard to see that the U.S. government is still using every threat to get what it wants in Iran, including trade sanctions, possible Israeli aggression, U.S.-provoked unrest among Iranian national minorities in Kurdistan, Azerbaijan and Iran's southern province of Khoozistan, and freezing Iran's assets in the U.S. All these threats belie assertions that the U.S. is sincerely offering honest and fruitful negotiations. Should the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran expect such rectitude and forthrightness? □

## Garment strike in Bangladesh

Continued from page 8

other countries for the outburst of violent protest that rocked the garments and textiles industries.

Every single journalist and commentator was trying to protect the owners of these sweatshops in the name of saving the national export industry. These so-called owners mistreat their most valuable resource—the employees of their factories. I think Bangladesh government treated this lumpen class better than they treat the workers. I have seen with my own eyes nine years ago how an owner of a so-called factory kicked an employee so hard that the employee soiled himself. And now these owners want protection and sympathy?

Garment workers from Bangladesh deserve your support and support of workers all over the world. □

NEWS  
analysis



## A diversion that flopped

Few are impressed with President George W. Bush's renewed push for a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage, which has failed to pass in the Senate. It is so clearly an attempt at a diversion from the real issues at stake for people in the United States that even some conservative Republicans didn't go along.

The vote to close debate, which required 60 votes, got only 48. For the amendment itself to actually pass, the right-wing would need 67 votes.

Katrina and Rita survivors are still in a struggle for their very lives. The war in Iraq continues its toll on Iraqis and U.S. GIs. A growing number of people in the United States face poverty as jobs and pensions are slashed. Health care has almost become a luxury in the most technologically advanced country in the world.

Lesbian, gay, bi and trans people across the country are affected by all of the above, in addition to discrimination on the job and in immigration policy, police brutality and many other horrors of capitalism.

However, as is often the case in imperialist politics, when the ruling class needs a diversion it chooses an oppressed group of people as the "problem." In the past few years, they said it was immigrants. Yet while the struggle for immigrant rights continues, the tide of resistance in the past few months has caused the ruling class to wonder whether they've picked the wrong scapegoat.

It should be noted that this tide of resistance also rejected the divide-and-

conquer tactics of the ruling class by joining immigrant with non-immigrant as well as the full spectrum of genders and sexualities in the struggle for full rights for all workers.

Now "activist judges" and same-sex marriage are the problem. The corporate media reports this is part of a "strategy" to highlight the Republican Party's convictions and concrete political beliefs. (New York Times, June 7) With regard to votes in a midterm election year, some Republicans apparently believe the strategy is "important in re-energizing conservatives who have grown disaffected in the last year or two."

What the ruling class should really be worrying about—and no doubt is, in private—are the growing masses of working people who are becoming disaffected with the entire system of imperialism.

It cannot be said often enough that discrimination against LGBT people, in any form, is unacceptable and must be struggled against in unity—particularly when it involves a democratic right such as marriage that applies directly to economic benefits. The struggle must be waged by an independent movement, as the Democratic leadership has made it all too clear that they will defend the right of the state to continue to discriminate against same-sex partners.

As we support the right of LGBT people to marry, we say that everyone should have the economic benefits that marriage bestows—gay or straight, documented or undocumented, married or single. □

## 'Terror' or sting?

Newspaper headlines blazing, television news shows pumping out the wildest claims, the media with few exceptions are buying and pushing the Canadian government's "case" against 17 mostly young Muslims of South Asian origin, saying that "terror" was again about to strike the Western Hemisphere. Allegations of planned bombings and beheadings dominate the news. Government snipers scanned Toronto from rooftops as the shackled "terrorists" were brought to court.

It's important to consider the general maxim regarding cop cases and court cases: the greater the initial presentation, the less evidence exists. The greater the claims to the media, the less there is to the alleged plot. If the maxim holds in this case, there is very little of substance indeed.

Fortunately, the Toronto Star published a few stories that went beyond the announcements of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police—their counterpart to the FBI—and the pronouncements of rightist Premier Steven Harper. These stories make it easier to provide another view of the events. The following points of fact are important:

The delivery of three tons of what the government pretended was ammonium nitrate fertilizer, supposedly to be used to make a bomb of the Oklahoma City

variety, was entirely arranged by government agents. Without the cops' participation, there was no plot.

The young people, for alleged conspirators, were quite open about their activities, posting messages on a publicly available website about taking target practice with guns or holding paintball exercises. The prime minister, the mayor of Toronto and many people near the group's "training camp" knew that this group was being watched.

The group had been under investigation and the close watch of the authorities for two years. Thus the government had complete control of the timing of the arrests.

Timing—that's key.

Harper has just decided to keep over 2,000 Canadian troops in Afghanistan for another two years, a less-than-popular decision among Canadians. And the Canadian Parliament has been considering a five-year extension of Canada's "anti-terror" laws.

Domestically, Harper obviously can exploit a dramatic arrest and "terror" scare. In addition, Harper's sting operation helps his friend to the south, including George W. Bush, whose occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan are suffering from exposures of war crimes in Haditha and rebellion in Kabul.

All in all, the three tons of fertilizer smell like a political setup. □

## Gasoline price hike hits West Africa

By G. Dunkel

West Africa was sent reeling when gasoline prices suddenly shot up a few months ago. The area contains some of the poorest countries in the world, like Mali, Niger and Mauritania, where the gross domestic product per person per year is much less than \$900. Even in Senegal, which is somewhat better off, the figure is just \$1,800.

By comparison, the GDP per person in the United States is over \$36,000. ("Encyclopedia of Nations," compiled by the UN)

Only one in three Africans has access to electricity. Some 40 percent of the continent's energy needs are supplied by wood and other natural products. Nevertheless, gasoline and diesel fuel run its economy. When gas costs go up, farmers can't afford to get their crops to market, workers can't afford to get to their jobs, and companies are under pressure to close because the price of electricity follows the price of gas and oil.

In Burkina Faso, where the GDP per person is \$1,178, the trade union movement called a two-day strike May 23 and 24 to protest the high cost of gasoline. Laurent Ouédraogo, president of the National Confederation of Burkinabe Workers, explained that "Our primary demand is for respect for workers and their trade union organizations." The unions were negotiating for a 25 percent increase in pensions and pay and lowering the 42 percent tax Burkina Faso imposes on gasoline. But in early May the government pulled the rug out from under them and announced a sharp increase in fuel prices.

According to Sidaway, a daily paper from Burkina Faso, the unions gathered in front of the Trade Union Hall in Ougadougou on May 23 and marched in contingents behind banners to a traffic circle in front of the United Nations building, then marched back to the Trade Union Hall. The slogans of the march were "No to a petroleum price hike" "No to the high cost of living" and "Raise our salaries."

Copies of the speeches at rallies at the beginning and end of the march were to be turned over to the government, headed by Blaise Compaoré, so it would be aware of the preoccupations of the workers.

Women and taxi drivers also strongly supported the protest. The unions announced that similar protests took place in the major cities of the country.

Niger, which the United Nations considers the poorest country in the world, is located between two major oil producers—Nigeria and Algeria. Most of the gasoline available in Niger is smuggled from Nigeria in old liquor bottles, a very dangerous procedure. But street hawkers sell gas for \$0.68 a liter compared to \$1.24 at official pumps.

When the cops in Birnin-Konni on the border between the two West African countries tried to stop the trade, protesters set up barricades of burning tires and clashed with police, who finally resorted to teargas. The cops arrested 20 people and seized stocks of gasoline from warehouses, which they claimed had been smuggled.

The way people in West Africa handle gasoline is indeed dangerous but it is hard to live without it. More than 50 people were killed and dozens more badly burned in Porga, Benin, on May 26 after they tried to siphon gasoline from a tanker that had gone into a ditch. Benin has recorded about 700 fires involving gasoline in the past three years.

Around 200 people were burned to

death in Nigeria, Africa's top oil producer, on May 12 when a pipeline exploded on the outskirts of Lagos as people tried to tap it and draw off fuel.

### Migrants risk all

Young men and a few women used to walk from all over West Africa through the Sahara to two Spanish enclaves on the Moroccan coast, Ceuta and Mellila, climb over the fences and find their way to Europe. Their trips could take a couple of years on foot walking through some of the most desolate and dangerous terrain in the world, but they risked it for a chance at a decent job and a better life.

But Spain and Morocco closed this route, so people started going by sea to the Canary Islands, an autonomous region of Spain in the Atlantic Ocean off the west coast of Morocco. The Canaries can be reached by open boats from Senegal and Mauritania if the weather is good.

Hundreds of people a day have been landing on the main island of Tenerife, filling up the reception centers. It is a dangerous trip from Senegal and Mauritania, yet thousands make it successfully. No one knows how many don't. The Associated Press carried a story from far-off Barbados in the Caribbean on June 1 describing how a drifting boat containing 11 bodies of people who had left Senegal Christmas Day 2005 was discovered by fishermen. Barbados was trying to discover their identities.

While the Canary Islands recorded 4,750 immigrants in all of 2005, so far in 2006 it has listed 6,000 immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa. The local authorities have complained that Spain is more interested in defending its oil interests in Bolivia than in helping a small, isolated, autonomous region deal with a sudden influx of desperately poor people.

After this complaint surfaced, the head of the Spanish government announced that ships and planes from Austria, Finland, Portugal, France, Italy, Great Britain, Germany, Greece and the Netherlands would be patrolling off the coasts of Mauritania, Senegal and Cape Verde to turn back open boats heading for the Canary Islands.

European authorities have been trying to blame greedy smugglers for this massive migration from Africa. But President Compaoré of Burkina Faso told the French press agency AFP on May 30 that "France can't keep Africans from coming to its soil if Africa remains so poor. Only the development of Africa could discourage people from the South from going to the North."

The Spanish authorities have hundreds of Senegalese whom they want to repatriate, but the first 84 sent home were treated so badly, according to Senegal, that it is refusing to accept any more.

Senegal has been especially hard hit by the recent rise in oil prices. According to its minister of mining and energy, 60 percent of its budget is devoted to paying for oil imports, consuming 40 percent of its earnings from exports. SAR, the national oil company, has refused to supply Senelec, the electricity company, with enough fuel to run its generating plants because Senelec hasn't been paying its bills.

A left-wing group in Senegal, the Union of African Workers, put out a statement in March that explains the situation not only in Senegal but in much of West Africa:

"SAR is only national in name; the majority of its capital (91.4 percent) is held by foreign multinational corporations: Total [French] (54.6 percent), Shell [British-Dutch] (25 percent), Mobil [U.S.]

## As OPEC meets in Caracas

# Right-wing violence flares in Venezuela

## Plot to destabilize anti-imperialist government seen

*Continued from page 1*

streets, wounding at least 26 police and one National Guard.

Sofia Aguilar, a police woman, was interviewed by Venezuelan national television (VTV) about what happened to her and her male partner. She said they were on their official motorcycle answering a woman's question when suddenly the "students" got out of a bus and began attacking them. Her partner was shot in the chest at close range and then furiously beaten on the head to the point of unconsciousness. When they finished the beating, the group took his helmet and placed it on top of the bus as a trophy.

She said she ran, trying to escape, and hid in an empty house. They followed her and tried to rape her at gunpoint, hitting and scratching her body. She was finally saved by the shouts of a woman who lived nearby. She identified the main attacker as Nixon Moreno, head of M-13. ([www.vtv.gov.ve](http://www.vtv.gov.ve))

Who are Nixon Moreno and the M-13? Why do they accuse the Venezuelan National Guard of "invading the university"? According to VTV, Venezuelan Minister of Interior and Justice Jesse Chacón has denied that the National Guard and police forces raided the ULA.

In an article entitled "Ordinary Mérida students at ULA can't really handle UZIs with such precision," published June 2 on the Internet website Vheadlines, Spanish-language news chief Jesus Nery Barrios writes: "That is the reality of the ULA student movement and its leadership ... a mob of gunmen, rapists and students who do not study at all, but enjoy the university privileges: free transportation within the city, almost free canteen, free residence and a very low registration fee ... all paid by the Bolivarian government. Only that now (in 2006, for the first time in history) university authorities are having to report to the national government how they spend their millionaire budget, causing them to protest."

Nixon Moreno himself, a "veteran" student who has been at the university more than 10 years, was a presidential candidate in the ULA's postponed elections. He had been indicted for conspiracy, civilian rebellion, offense to the state chief, and

several other charges relating to the U.S.-sponsored coup in April 2002 against President Hugo Chávez. His case was being handled by National Prosecutor Danilo Anderson, who was assassinated more than a year ago.

These developments in Mérida—which had echoes on the ULA campus in San Cristobal, in neighboring Tachira state, and to some extent in Caracas—have been widely seen not as student protests but as part of the destabilization campaign against the Bolivarian Revolution. Their timing—just when Venezuela was about to host a crucial OPEC meeting in the capital—reinforces that view.

Chavez's speech to the OPEC gathering, which was vigorously applauded, emphasized Venezuela's view that the era of U.S. imperialism's unchallenged domination of the world is coming to a close and that the resource-rich countries of the Third World can advance by integrating their economies independently of the imperialist banks and corporations. The talk was aired in the U.S. on C-Span2.

### Moreno connected to political opposition

In a public release, Venezuelan Vice President Jose Vicente Rangel had said earlier that the authorities had information about "preparations for a plan to generate violence in the street" during the OPEC gathering. He further declared that "The intention of initiating actions in Caracas amid the next OPEC meeting exists; its aim is to project the image abroad of chaos in Venezuela."

Thanks to the diligent action of the Venezuelan government and the majority of student organizations, which support the Bolivarian process, these destabilizing actions did not have the organizers' expected outcome.

Tarek El Aissami and Alberto Cautelar, two National Assembly representatives, presented evidence of the terrorist background of the group led by Nixon Moreno to the media and the national legislature.

These destabilizing attempts are also viewed as a drive to affect upcoming presidential elections, due to be held next December, and began after the launching of a nationwide campaign to get 10 million votes for Chávez in 2006. In that context, the assembly members also demonstrated links between M-13 and Teodoro Petkoff and Julio Andrés Borges, declared candidates of the opposition.

In an article published in Vheadline on May 30, ULA professor Franz J.T. Lee wrote: "As fake window-dressing, the 'opposition' has also named its candidates; among them, Teodoro Petkoff, who has already begun his anti-chavista campaign in Mérida. In a press conference at the airport, he caustically launched his diatribal garbage against the 'Chávez regime,' against the Bolivarian Revolution ... he was fetched and welcomed at the airport by Nixon and cohorts."

Several reports state that the student groups that staged the violent demonstrations are presumed to have been infiltrated by paramilitary elements.

### Response of students

In a public statement widely circulated over the Internet, several student groups opposed the Mérida developments.

They say, "We, Revolutionary Student Movements, the Federation of University Centers of the University of the Andes, and the Popular Movement of Mérida, wish to make public our rejection of the terrorist acts perpetrated by the pro-coup opposi-



Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's speech to the OPEC gathering emphasized Venezuela's view that the era of U.S. imperialism's unchallenged domination of the world is coming to a close.

tion groups 13th of March Movement, 20 Movement, Red Flag and other splinter groups, led by the 'pseudo student' Nixon Moreno.

"We the revolutionary student movements, the FCU and all of the men and women affected by this wave of violence and unknown guerrilla acts of destabilizing intent, demand the defense of the true University autonomy, in which there is no room for paramilitaries, terrorists, coup plotters, conspiracists, sell-outs, lackeys, mercenaries, and in sum, all those who act against the peace of the Venezuelan people.

"No to violence, no to the 'Guarimbas,' no to impunity, no to international interference, no to psychological and physical terrorism, no to coup seeking. We will remain united all for the defense of peace and sovereignty in the face of the hatred which threatens to do away with all of our hopes."

### Role of Washington

According to the article by Nery Barrios and several other reports, Moreno is

implicated in the U.S. campaign against the Bolivarian Republic. Barrios says that Moreno "has met U.S. Ambassador William Brownfield in a hotel in the neighboring state of Barinas."

At a time when the Venezuelan government is preparing its military and civilian population for a possible U.S. attack because of increasing hostility from the Bush administration, a meeting of the opposition with U.S. government representatives cannot be seen as a pure diplomatic gesture. The U.S. has funded the opposition, particularly the anti-Chávez Sumate electoral group. A long list of U.S. complaints against that sovereign nation accuse it of being a "destabilizing agent in the region," "aiding terrorists" and even "human trafficking." The U.S. has also opposed the Bolivarian Republic's nomination to the UN Security Council.

It is a critical time for all progressive organizations in the United States to loudly and clearly state to the U.S. administration: "Hands off Venezuela." □

# When 'corruption' is a cover for racism

*Continued from page 6*

first Black congressperson from New York City, who became chair of the important House Education and Labor Committee, was driven out of office in 1967 by charges of corruption. Edward Brooke, a Republican who became the first Black senator since Reconstruction in 1972, was defeated for a second term after being vilified in the capitalist press over a divorce process.

Far more damaging has been the FBI crusade against radical and revolutionary forces. COINTELPRO operations under the Nixon administration carried out a virtual campaign of subversion and extermination against the Black Panther Party. Malcolm X was stalked by the FBI for years. J. Edgar Hoover, the head of the FBI, let it be known that he was out to get Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was spied upon and hounded by its agents. Many suspect it had a hand in his assassination.

### Racist FBI and courts

The FBI and the racist courts should not have the right to deal with William Jefferson. A case in point is that the authorities took the Jefferson case outside of Washington, D.C., a majority Black city where his office and home are. They moved it to a white section of Virginia, where both a grand jury and trial jury will be selected if the case goes to trial.

On a purely democratic basis, that

should disqualify the case. It is a case being made by the racist oppressor in a situation that excludes the oppressed from the process. If Jefferson has given grounds for suspicion, it should be grassroots representatives of the Black community in his district, the Congressional Black Caucus and other appropriate forums and institutions from within the African American community that have the right to pass judgment. This is a matter of the right of self-determination.

The idea that the racist, political police of the U.S. ruling class are interested not in destroying the career of yet another Black elected official but in stamping out corruption is preposterous. All capitalist administrations—the Clinton and Bush administrations are examples—send trade delegations all over the world that take along representatives of big business, banking and agribusiness to make contacts with private capitalists and government officials. Instead of dealing in hundreds of thousands of dollars, however, they deal in millions and billions.

The lobbyists for the corporations write legislation for their big business clients while sitting in congressional offices. They make corruption the normal way of life in Washington.

The only way to get rid of corruption is to put an end to the racist, capitalist establishment and its system of exploitation that is the source of it all. □

## West Africa

*Continued from page 10*

(11.8 percent). The other 8.6 percent belongs to the state-owned ... Senegalese Oil Company. This has been the reality since 1963. SAR has held the strategic energy products in its hands and is holding Senegal by the throat. The multinational corporations that make it up are systematically looting the Senegalese people and destroying their economic efforts, while repatriating the bulk of their profits derived from this exploitation.

"But SAR does not stop here. The agreements with the state of Senegal provide that in case of loss from its commercial operations of importation and refining of oil products and of importation of butane gas, the state of Senegal will pay for those losses."

While the poorest countries are hit and hurt first, the big oil companies also have their sights set on the workers of the developed world, where even bigger profits can be made.

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## Rennert demanda a WW/MO

# Cuestión de pensiones enfrenta multimillonario contra periódico socialista

Por Deirdre Griswold

La compañía Renco Group, propiedad del multimillonario Ira Rennert, va adelante con una demanda de difamación presentada en la Corte Suprema del Estado de Nueva York en contra del periódico Workers World/Mundo Obrero y su Partido Mundo Obrero/Workers World Party.

La acción legal se basa en la publicación de un artículo sobre el sufrimiento de los trabajadores en una planta fabricante de acero en Warren, Ohio. El título del artículo es “La bancarrota de la WCI Steel roba las pensiones de los trabajadores”, el cual estaba en la edición impresa del 23 de febrero del 2006 y también en el Internet en la página [www.workers.org](http://www.workers.org).

Al momento en que el artículo fue escrito, Renco era propietario de la WCI Steel pero había apelado al Artículo 11 de bancarrota. La corte de bancarrota tenía todavía que dar su veredicto sobre un plan de reorganización presentada poco antes por Renco. Renco también estaba tratando de librarse de una movida por un grupo de financieros que habían prestado cientos de millones de dólares para la compañía metalúrgica y trataban ahora de adquirirla.

Según la Corporación Pension Benefit Guarantee (PBGC), una agencia casi gubernamental que existe para garantizar las pensiones de jubilación de los trabajadores, al fondo de pensiones que estaba bajo el control de Renco le faltaban \$117 millones para cumplir con su obligación con los trabajadores.

Una publicación del departamento de Asuntos Públicos de la PBGC con fecha del 30 de marzo, explicó que “Bajo el propuesto plan de reorganización que fue sometido a la corte federal de bancarrota, el plan de pensiones quedaría abandonado por la reorganización del magnate del acero.”

Ira Rennert ya había aparecido en los titulares a comienzo de febrero cuando la PBGC fue a la corte pidiendo que se le asignara como fideicomisario del plan de pensiones y se le diera la autoridad para rescindir el plan. Según un artículo del periódico The New York Times del 3 de febrero, la PBGC parecía estar lista para “tomar posesión de la residencia de 29 dormitorios del Sr. Rennert, junto con otros bienes, para asegurarse que él entregara cientos de millones de dólares en pensiones prometidas a un grupo de trabajadores metalúrgicos en Ohio.”

Sólo la mansión de Rennert en Long Island, descrita por Wikipedia como la mansión más grande en los Estados Unidos, tenía un valor mayor que el dinero faltante del fondo pensionario. Con 29 dormitorios, 39 baños y un garaje suficiente para 200 automóviles, se valoró en \$185 millones de dólares.

Sólo para alquilar una casa durante el verano en el área exclusiva de Hamptons, al final de Long Island donde Rennert escogió para construir su mansión, cuesta más de \$600.000 dólares. (Bloomberg.com, Mayo 10)

Es como la lucha entre David y Goliat. Este moderno Robin Hood a la inversa ha empleado una poderosa firma de abogados, basada en Wall Street, la Arnold & Porter, para llevar a la corte a un periódico socialista que depende de la labor voluntaria y de muchas pequeñas contribuciones para poder llegar hasta su audiencia principal-

mente en los movimientos progresistas de la clase trabajadora.

Su argumento se basa en una limitada definición de la palabra “robar” aparecida en el artículo. Ellos definen robar como “un robo forzado” acompañado por el uso de amenaza con fuerza física. Esta es la base legal para los cargos de Rennert, que dice que el artículo es “malicioso, falso y difamatorio”.

El artículo de Workers World/Mundo Obrero no dijo que Renco había cometido un acto criminal, mucho menos proponer una ridícula imagen de un multimillonario, armado con una pistola o un cuchillo amenazando a los trabajadores para poderles robar sus billeteras. Sino que este pone la pérdida de pensiones de jubilación de los trabajadores de la WCI en el contexto del amplio asalto contra todos los trabajadores por las grandes empresas en el periodo reciente.

El declararse en quiebra se ha vuelto la táctica preferida por los súper ricos y sus ejecutivos. Las leyes de quiebra les permiten romper los contratos colectivos con los sindicatos y deshacerse de las obligaciones contractuales que aceptaron hace muchos años. Esta tendencia amenaza a millones de trabajador@s con la miseria o la falta de seguro médico, o ambas cosas en los años de su vejez, incluso después de toda una vida de trabajo duro y frecuentemente peligroso.

Hoy, los trabajadores en muchas industrias están tensos con anticipación. Como destacó el artículo en WW/MO, “Este es un episodio de una campaña más amplia de corporaciones como la United Air Lines, Delphi Automotive Systems y Bethlehem Steel de usar la quiebra para robarse las pensiones de los trabajadores”.

Evidentemente, el artículo en WW/MO fue publicado en un momento crucial para los trabajadores en la industria del acero.

A fines de marzo, la lucha sobre el control de WCI Steel fue resuelta por un acuerdo entre los accionistas y Renco, en el cual Renco renunció a su posesión de la compañía y, frente a la demanda de la PBGC, se comprometió a pagar el dinero necesario para asegurar el fondo ya existente de pensiones. La PBGC reclama el crédito por este acuerdo resuelto en la banca de quiebra y ha retirado su demanda contra Renco. Dijo en su declaración a los medios de comunicación el 30 de marzo, “Porque la PBGC actuó ... Renco mantuvo la responsabilidad de las obligaciones pensionarias de WCI”.

Esto no fue solo altruismo por parte de la PBGC, que esta endeudada por miles de millones de dólares. Si el plan original de reorganización de Renco hubiera sido confirmado por la corte, la PBGC hubiera sido forzada por ley a producir la mayoría de los \$117 millones desaparecidos de los fondos de pensiones de la WCI Steel.

Los trabajadores involucrados, que están organizados en el sindicato de trabajadores de la industria de acero, USW, ahora han votado por un contrato, aunque mucha oposición fue expresada por los recortes en la fuerza laboral y en los beneficios demandados por los nuevos dueños.

¿Ha terminado la cuestión? ¿Realmente van a recibir los jubilados las pensiones que se les deben? Ya veremos.

Mientras tanto, la demanda de Renco contra este periódico sigue en pie.

Él ha tomado acciones legales contra

activistas progresistas anteriormente.

En 1998, inició una demanda por traspaso y obtuvo un orden judicial de restricción contra el cineasta Michael Moore, que había ido a su casa y a su oficina para presentarle el premio “Hombre del Año” por haber sido el mayor contaminador del ambiente. Fue reportado después que “La Agencia para la Protección del Ambiente (EPA) considera al grupo de empresas que están controladas por Renco como el décimo peor contaminador de la nación”. (Business Week del 17 de febrero de 2003) Eventualmente la demanda fue abandonada y la restricción cancelada.

Rennert es también uno de los dueños principales de la AM General Corp., la cual produce para la General Motors, los vehículos Hummer que consumen una cantidad enorme de petróleo y contaminan grandemente el ambiente.

Multimillonarios como Rennert no siempre ganan en sus demandas pero saben que forzar a sus oponentes a defenderse en un caso de difamación cuesta mucho, irrespec-

tivamente del resultado. Afortunadamente Workers World/Mundo Obrero será defendido gratuitamente por abogados del famoso despacho legal de Davis Wright Tremaine, que se especializan en medios de comunicación y derecho de libertades civiles constitucionales. Mientras esto elimina la necesidad de que WW/MO pague los honorarios, sin embargo el periódico y el partido todavía tendrán que pagar los costos de la corte, que pueden llegar a ser muy altos.

Más importante aún es que WW llevará a cabo una ofensiva política vigorosa alrededor de las cuestiones importantes del caso en la corte al igual que en los medios de comunicación, y seguiremos revelando el robo monumental de pensiones de trabajador@s que comenzó con las reestructuraciones corporativas y sigue sin parar. Contribuciones al Proyecto Defensa de Pensiones/Workers World por medio de este periódico son bienvenidas y reforzarían la campaña.

Manténgase sintonizad@. □

## EDITORIAL

### Sublevación en Afganistán expone mito estadounidense

Miles de afganis corriendo el riesgo de morir, se han manifestado y protestado en Kabul desde el 29 de mayo, tirando piedras a estadounidenses y a otros extranjeros. A los afganis le han disparado y algunos fueron asesinados después de un fatal choque de automóviles el 29 de mayo que involucró a vehículos militares estadounidenses. La explosión de furia popular expuso un mito de la Casa Blanca.

Lo que hizo el “accidente” y la sublevación que siguió fue despejar el mito de estabilidad política que Washington había creado sobre su gobierno títere en Kabul.

No, la situación no será solucionada reparando los frenos en las camionetas estadounidenses. No, las nuevas fuerzas de la OTAN alistadas para reemplazar las tropas estadounidenses no mejorarán la situación. No, no saldrá todo bien si se prueba que las tropas EEUU no dispararon hasta que alguien les disparó antes — lo cual es dudoso de todos modos. No, unos puestos más de trabajo para jóvenes afganis desempleados no conquistarán sus corazones y sus mentes.

La mayoría de las 24 millones de personas hambrientas de Afganistán odia la ocupación estadounidense y unas migajas no les van a ganar su favor.

Esta historia no empezó el 29 de mayo. Desde hace décadas el imperialismo estadounidense ha intervenido en Afganistán, siempre en perjuicio de su pueblo.

Olvidémonos de la propaganda de Washington contra el “Islam fundamentalista” y los jefes militares locales. Después de una revolución allí en 1978, Washington dio miles de millones de dólares en efectivo y armas a los líderes religiosos reaccionarios y jefes militares para suplantarlo un régimen progresista que tuvo la audacia de educar a mujeres y promover los derechos de los campesinos. Éste provocó al gobierno anti feudal pedir ayuda soviética, pero no fue lo suficiente

para competir con el ejército ayudado por Washington.

Después que se fueron las tropas soviéticas y lo que quedó de la revolución del 1978 fue ahogado en sangre en los años 90, Afganistán fue gobernado por jefes feudales que competían entre sí. Ellos fueron derrocados por el Talibán respaldado por Pakistán. Al comienzo, Washington recibió este cambio con beneplácito. Sin embargo, la invasión estadounidense de 2001, con el supuesto propósito de eliminar a las fuerzas de al-Qaeda dirigidas por Osama Bin-Laden, expulsó al Talibán y llevó a la situación actual.

El mito de la Casa Blanca es que un gobierno central democráticamente elegido en Kabul dirige legítimamente el país pero se enfrenta a una “insurgencia del Talibán” dirigida por “terroristas” en ciertas provincias distantes, y que las tropas estadounidenses y de la OTAN están ayudando a este gobierno a controlar y finalmente derrocar a los “terroristas”.

La verdad —y esto es lo que la rebelión del 29 de mayo sirvió para clarificar— es que los jefes feudales basados en un comercio de opio facilitado por los Estados Unidos, mandan en varias provincias, y que la “insurrección Talibán” está haciéndose un movimiento nacional de resistencia contra la ocupación extranjera, y también que la mayoría de afganis ve a las tropas estadounidenses y de la OTAN como fuerzas brutales y arrogantes de ocupación.

Hamid Karzai, quien era un ejecutivo de la compañía estadounidense de energía Unocal, es supuestamente el presidente de todo el país pero ya está siendo llamado “el alcalde de Kabul”.

El Pentágono de Rumsfeld pensó que con el “susto e intimidación” (shock and awe), podía conquistar el mundo. No puede ni siquiera controlar a Kabul, y el 29 de mayo del 2006 será visto como el momento crucial que hace ver esto claro.