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Democrats bait and switch Betray voters, okay war funds

By Sara Flounders

In a maneuver stunning for its cynicism, Democrats in Congress, fearful of the ire of their anti-war constituents, found a way to support President George Bush and provide continued funding for the war in Iraq while claiming that they were voting against the war.

The Democratic majority elected last November with promises to act against the war maneuvered to strip the war funding bill of any timetable for troop withdrawals or even mandatory benchmarks. They gave Bush all the funds he had demanded and more.

Politicians are notorious for speaking out of both sides of their mouths. They are often charged with being double dealing and two faced, but this week's bill involved a new contortion.

This total capitulation to the war machine was hidden in a double vote arranged by splitting the bill in two parts. Democrats are hailing the second part of the bill, a provision for \$17 billion in new domestic spending and an increase in the minimum wage, as a major victory.

In essence, after four months of debate, discussion and grandstanding as war opponents, the Democrats arranged for the passage of a bill that was allegedly opposed by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and a majority of her party.

In her position as the leader of the majority party in Congress, Pelosi has control of which measures actually reach the congressional floor for a vote. She arranged to send the war funding bill to Congress and then claimed to vote against the provision of \$100 billion for combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The convoluted voting procedure in the House called for two different, separate votes on one bill. One vote was on the \$100-billion war funding. Members of Congress, including Pelosi,

could vote against this section—but too few would vote against it to defeat the bill. Then they could vote for the second section of the bill for the \$17 billion for agricultural subsidies, Gulf Coast rebuilding, and funds for veterans, the military and child health care. The "deal" was that Republicans and right-wing forces could vote against this provision.

The two sections were then automatically merged and sent to the Senate, without a final vote. This spared the Democrats a roll-call vote on money for the war, and it spared the Republicans a vote on basic social spending programs.

The final bill was a back room negotiation between the House and Senate. Senate majority leader Harry Reid also maneuvered to bring a similar bill to the Senate that he, in his position, could have prevented.

The result was that top Democrats in both House and Senate, including presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, could safely vote against funding the war—yet the Democratic Party leadership had assured the passage of the war funding bill.

Politicians' dilemma

The vote was not the result of weak or indecisive leadership, nor was it just the usual political bargaining for votes. It was the clearest example of the dilemma facing U.S. corporate power and its control of the two-party system in the U.S.

These politicians are caught between the overwhelming opposition to the war from the masses, the growing fear of a disastrous outcome and the enormous stake in the region that U.S. multinational corporations hold. The U.S. cannot stabilize the occupation of Iraq due to the determined opposition from the Iraqi masses. Yet U.S. imperialism cannot bear to let go of such a

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TENANTS FIGHT BACK

New York, May 23.

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

Michael Moore's and Cuba's health-care system



By LeiLani Dowell

Much publicity for Michael Moore's newest movie "Sicko," which puts a spotlight on the negligence of the U.S. health-care system, has focused on a U.S. Treasury Department inquiry into Moore's breaking of the U.S. travel ban to Cuba to film the movie.

In "Sicko," Moore takes a number of 9/11 relief workers to Cuba to receive health care. These workers have suffered from a number of severe respiratory and other problems without U.S. government support for their needs. The boats first traveled to Guantánamo Bay—where, despite a systematic pattern of detainee torture that has received worldwide condemnation, the U.S. claims its prisoners receive high-end health care. After being denied services there, the group ends up at Havana's central hospital.

In an article entitled "'Sicko' Stars Thank Moore for Cuba Trip," the May 19 Associated Press reports: "There, the film shows the group getting thorough care from kind doctors. They don't have to fill out any long forms; health care is free in the Communist nation, after all." The group received medical tests and services to deal with conditions ranging from reflux problems to eye and nose infections and dental problems.

Salon.com states, "The pathos of the story makes [Moore's] point for him. A poor Caribbean island, whatever its ideology, can afford health care for everyone while we do not. The only possible conclusion is that our society has chosen not to."

This conclusion is all the more startling given the history of the U.S. blockade against Cuba.

Since the very beginning of the Cuban revolution in 1959, the U.S. has aggressively attempted, and consistently failed, to destroy the communist government of Fidel Castro through "legal" and extra-legal means, including the support and funding of bombings and other acts of terrorism. One of these tactics has been the ongoing blockade of goods and services to the country.

In his book, "Island Under Siege: The U.S. Blockade of Cuba," Pedro Prada explains, "In 1992, 70 percent of Cuba's trade with U.S. subsidiary companies was in food and medicine, accounting for 15 percent of its imports. ... This trade was banned under the Torricelli law (Cuban Democracy Act) in violation of international law and United Nations resolutions that food and medicine cannot be used as weapons in international conflicts."

The U.S. also places immense pressure on other countries to stop their trade with Cuba, often forcing them to request higher prices to compensate. Prada explains the specific effect this has had on medicine: "Medicuba, the Cuban firm that imports medicines and health technology ... in just one year ... had to pay an extra \$45 million for pharmaceuticals. ... According to the list prices, Cuba often pays 80 to 140 percent more than other buyers of medicines, medical technologies or equipment."

Despite this, Cuba has continued to offer free, compre-

hensive health care to all its citizens. In addition, since 1963 Cuba has exported its exemplary health care services around the world, sending doctors and its own technological advancements in medicine to countries throughout Latin America and Africa. Cuba provided medical support after the 2005 earthquake in Kashmir, Pakistan.

When Hurricane Katrina coupled with U.S. government negligence to ravage the lives of the people of the U.S. Gulf Coast, Cuba immediately offered its assistance—an offer that was arrogantly and callously rejected by the Bush administration.

Meanwhile, according to the group Healthcare-NOW, the U.S. is ranked 38 in the provision of health care, and more than 50 percent of U.S. bankruptcies are the result of medical emergencies. (blackcommentator.com, May 24) The National Center for Health Statistics reports that from January through September 2006, 43.8 million persons of all ages (14.9 percent) were uninsured in the United States. (www.cdc.gov)

Break the travel ban!

Another facet of the blockade against Cuba is the travel ban that Moore may face charges for violating. Under current law, U.S. citizens are prevented from traveling to Cuba unless they receive a license from the State Department. The number of these licenses, given to educational institutions and faith-based groups, has been severely slashed under the Bush administration.

Why limit travel to Cuba? In addition to trying to curtail the tourism industry there, the U.S. government knows that despite its propaganda to the contrary, many who visit the island return to become firm supporters of Cuba's sovereignty. They see the gains that a socialist revolution can make for the poor and oppressed, exemplified but not limited to Cuba's health care system.

The responses of some of the relief workers demonstrate one of the reasons why the travel ban continues to exist. At a private screening of the movie, 9/11 volunteer Bill Maher said, "This trip opened my eyes. ... I was uneducated. ... Now, you know what? I'm going back!" First-responder Reggie Cervantes replied, "I'm going with you." (AP, May 19)

In July, several solidarity organizations, including the youth group FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together; the Venceremos Brigade; U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange; and Pastors for Peace, will participate in a travel challenge to Cuba. Some of these groups will be bringing material aid—much needed as the U.S. blockade continues to rob the island of resources. In defiance of the travel ban, each group will openly travel to Cuba without asking for permission from the U.S.

It is expected that all who participate will return with their eyes opened to the potential of socialism—the dedication to people's needs above profit—and with greater resolve to demand "U.S. hands off Cuba!"

Email: ldowell@workers.org

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Workers World
55 West 17 Street
New York, N.Y. 10011
Phone: (212) 627-2994
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Editor: Deirdre Griswold
Technical Editor: Lal Roohk
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National Office
55 W. 17 St.,
New York, NY 10011
(212) 627-2994;
Fax (212) 675-7869
wwp@workers.org

Atlanta
P.O. Box 424,
Atlanta, GA 30301
(404) 627-0185
atlanta@workers.org

Baltimore
426 E. 31 St.,
Baltimore, MD 21218
(410) 235-7040
baltimore@workers.org

Boston
284 Armory St.,
Boston, MA 02130
(617) 983-3835
Fax (617) 983-3836
boston@workers.org

Buffalo, N.Y.
367 Delaware Ave,
Buffalo, NY 14202
(716) 566-1115
buffalo@workers.org

Chicago
27 N. Wacker Dr. #138
Chicago, IL 60606
(773) 381-5839
chicago@workers.org

Cleveland
P.O. Box 5963
Cleveland, OH 44101
(216) 531-4004
cleveland@workers.org

Denver
denver@workers.org

Detroit
5920 Second Ave.,
Detroit, MI 48202
(313) 831-0750
detroit@workers.org

Houston
P.O. Box 130322,
Houston, TX 77219
(713) 861-5965
houston@workers.org

Los Angeles
5274 West Pico Blvd.,
Suite 203
Los Angeles, CA 90019
(323) 936-1416
la@workers.org

Milwaukee
milwaukee@workers.org

Philadelphia
P.O. Box 9202,
Philadelphia, PA 19139
(610) 453-0490
phila@workers.org

Raleigh, N.C.
raleigh@workers.org

Richmond, Va.
P.O. Box 14602,
Richmond, VA 23221
richmond@workers.org

Rochester, N.Y.
(585) 436-6458
rochester@workers.org

San Diego, Calif.
3930 Oregon St.,
Suite 230
San Diego, CA 92104
(619) 692-4496

San Francisco
2940 16th St., #207
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 561-9752
sf@workers.org

Washington, D.C.
P.O. Box 57300,
Washington, DC 20037,
dc@workers.org

Tenants march from Stuyvesant Town to Union Square May 23

By G. Dunkel
New York

Over 7,000 people from 90 tenants' groups, labor unions, homeless organizations and AIDS activists working on housing joined the New York Is Our Home! Coalition for a "Hands around Stuyvesant Town" demonstration on May 23. This diverse population held hands and marched to protest the "flipping" of relatively low-rental housing to luxury apartments in New York City.

Ed Ott, chair of the Central Labor Council in New York City, kicked off the rally with these words: "The price of housing in this city is effectively theft for working and working middle class people." He went on to say that housing and other living costs in this city are an increasingly intolerable burden for working families, even with two incomes.

Every tenant in New York City who works for a living is worried about preserving decent, affordable housing. The Retirees Chapter of AFSCME's District Council 37, CWA 1180, SEIU, UFT, which represents the primary and high school teachers in New York City, Teamsters Local 808 and a number of other city unions had contingents in the line and in the march to Union Square that followed. Acorn and the Working Families Party had members pulling the demonstration together.

Tenant groups from all over the city—in particular, the Lower East Side,

Chinatown, the South Bronx, Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, and the West Side of Manhattan—had sizable contingents. The homeless groups made the point that high rents mean more people on the streets, which official statistics bear out.

Composed of African Americans, Latin@s, and whites, a strong contingent from Starrett City in south Brooklyn raised the issue of flipping the 6,000 apartments there from affordable to luxury. There were two contingents from the Chinese community—the Chinese Progressive Association and Asian Americans for Equality. People coming from work were dressed in jeans and uniforms, as well as business suits.

Stuyvesant Town has around 8,000 apartments in 100 buildings and occupies 80 acres between 14th and 20th Sts., and between First Ave. and Avenue C on the eastern edge of Manhattan. Tishman Speyer Properties recently bought it, together with Peter Cooper Village just to its north, from the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. for \$5.4 billion and now advertises "luxury rentals."

Met Life originally had it built in the mid-1940s for returning World War II veterans with aid from the city. Tishman Speyer seems to be betting that enough of the "old" tenants with stabilized rents—about one-third the level of current market rates—will be forced to move out. Then Tishman Speyer will charge \$4,000 or more a month for a two-bedroom apartment.

Tenants march from Stuyvesant Town to Union Square May 23, below. At right, solidarity between activist for the tenants and homeless people as well as AIDS activists, all for the right to decent housing.



WW PHOTOS: G. DUNKEL



The host of politicians who spoke were judged on whether or not they supported these demands. Many of the people listening to the speeches follow

local politics closely and had no qualms about telling politicians that they were being watched and judged. Even if a minimum-wage earner could find an apartment in Stuyvesant Town for what the Housing and Urban Development department calls a "fair market rate"—currently \$1,069, they would have to work 122 hours a week—more than three full-time jobs—to afford it. This is the reality that lies behind the fact that more than 100,000 families in New York City pay more than 50 percent of their monthly income for housing.

The New York Is Our Home! Coalition has a clear set of demands: repeal vacancy decontrol, the law that allows landlords an unlimited increase in rents when tenants move out; reinstate full subsidies to public housing; preserve Mitchell-Lama and Section 8 housing, which are different government programs for providing affordable housing; and limit rent payments for New Yorkers living with aid to 30 percent of their income.

In New York City two out of every three people rent homes. In the rest of the country, two out of three own homes. A law regulating New York rents was passed for the first time in 1920 and different versions of it have been in force ever since.

New York City also still has the largest amount of rental housing under some form of rent control of any U.S. city. If the landlords in New York can do away with rent control, they will transfer additional billions of dollars a year from workers to their profits. They will also discourage tenant groups throughout the country from struggling for this kind of protection. □

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Haitian mass murderer to face bank-fraud charges

By G. Dunkel

In a surprise move, the judge in Emmanuel "Toto" Constant's mortgage fraud case vacated Constant's plea bargain and ordered him to stand trial. If convicted, the U.S.-backed mass murderer could now face five to 15 years in a New York state prison.

The Department of Homeland Security and the New York attorney general's office had asked the judge to accept a plea bargain giving Toto credit for the 10 months he had been behind bars and a one- to three-year sentence, which would have meant his release and extradition to Haiti.

Constant was the organizer of FRAPH, the paramilitary group the army used from 1991 to 1994 to terrorize the Haitian people and keep them in line. FRAPH was responsible for 3,000 to 5,000 murders.

The Haitian authorities can't be sure about the exact number because when the U.S. army occupied Haiti in 1994, one of its main items of business was to seize the FRAPH archives, with their "trophy" pictures, videotapes of torture sessions

and other documents relating to how the FRAPH conducted its terror during the three years of the coup. ("Frap" is the Creole word for punch or blow.)

This U.S. Army seizure also obliterated the records of how much the CIA paid Constant for his services.

The Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA) and the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) had brought a federal civil suit against Constant on behalf of three women whom FRAPH members gang-raped and brutalized. After Constant had been arrested on bank fraud charges, this suit resulted in a \$19 million judgment in October 2006 against him for torture, including rape, attempted extrajudicial killing, and crimes against humanity carried out as part of FRAPH's reign of terror.

Constant was so sure of his impunity that he didn't even hire a lawyer to defend himself in the civil suit.

Basing his ruling on the revelations made in this suit, State Supreme Court Justice Abraham Gerger wrote: "On June 7, 1995, defendant was deposed for a fed-

eral case against FRAPH and stated, 'I'm not a member of FRAPH, I'm a leader of FRAPH.' These allegations, if true, are heinous, and the court cannot in good conscience consent to the previously negotiated sentence. The court also cannot consent to time served, as that would be a travesty. The plea is hereby vacated and all counts of the indictment reinstated."

Judge Gerger acknowledged that he had received hundreds of letters expressing concern that Constant would use his influence in Haiti to escape punishment if he were extradited. There also was a demonstration outside the court on May 21.

Constant and Posada Carriles

Progressives and the Haitian community had demanded that Constant stand trial for bank fraud rather than get out with a deal. The question remains, Why did Constant have to face trial while a similarly murderous CIA agent, the anti-Castro and anti-Communist Luis Posada Carriles, was freed in April?

The Cuban government, speaking about Posada, pointed out, "With this decision,

the U.S. government has ignored the clamor that has arisen throughout the world, including in the United States, against the impunity and political manipulation involved in this action."

Releasing Constant might have complicated U.S. policy. It would have added to the protest. It also would have given the government of President René Préval in Haiti the dilemma of either prosecuting Constant for mass murder and rape or releasing him, and could thus have destabilized Haiti further.

Prosecuting Posada might reveal details about U.S. covert operations in Cuba and Latin America that the CIA would prefer to keep secret because they involve ongoing operations. Revelations about what Constant did for the CIA would not have the same impact since the U.N. currently is the tool that the U.S. uses to run Haiti. In this highly political case, Homeland Security and the attorney general's office would have raised a major ruckus if they felt that it threatened U.S. interests to prosecute Constant.

E-mail gdunkel@workers.org

Why immigrant activists oppose the new bill

By Arturo J. Pérez Saad

The U.S. Congress is discussing a new immigration bill supported by President George Bush and major groupings in both the Republican and Democratic Parties. This bill is being presented as a “great compromise” to regulate immigration and make the situation stable for immigrant workers and their employers.

It is true that diehard reactionaries in the Congress oppose the bill. These racists display open hostility to all immigrants here without legal papers and engage in what amounts to a chauvinist appeal to U.S. citizens. Of course all the racist and chauvinist politicians and commentators—of whom Lou Dobbs is the best-known example—must be answered, opposed and protested.

But what is important to take up now, and what this article will discuss, is that many in the immigrant rights movement here also find this bill completely inadequate to the needs of immigrants. Many activists consider it a violation of immigrants’ human rights.

What the bill proposes

If this bi-partisan immigration bill is allowed to become law, it will fundamentally change immigration laws that have been in place since 1965 to ones that are considerably more pro-corporation and anti-worker. While the bill promises “amnesty” or “legalization” to immigrants, it first demands that the following three benchmarks be completed:

First, the militarization of the southern border with an additional 18,000 troops or patrol personnel. By international standards, this deployment resembles an act of war. The latest technology will be employed to detain poor peasants and workers leaving their countries and trying to cross the southern border to find work here. And of course technology will also track who arrives by plane from other regions of the world.

Second, the construction and completion of a 370-mile apartheid wall on the U.S.-Mexican border. This wall will force the migrant workers to attempt to enter over more treacherous terrain. The migrant mortality rate, currently by some accounts over one person a day, will undoubtedly increase.

Third, the construction and completion of 20 additional concentration/labor camps or detention cen-

ters, which can hold and process more than 25,000 migrant workers a day! During World War II, the U.S. government—under the Democratic presidency of Franklin Roosevelt—carried out a program removing and incarcerating all people of Japanese origin into concentration camps.

After the above three benchmarks are accomplished, the undocumented worker can then apply for the temporary four-year “Z”-status visa. The worker must pay \$5,000 to begin the process. At the time of renewal she or he must reapply, pay another fine, leave the country, apply from the home country and pay an additional fine. The cost, at a minimum \$10,500, excluding legal fees, still guarantees nothing.

Nowhere is it acknowledged that the unemployment in these workers’ home countries was caused by neo-liberal policies imposed by Washington. These policies have resulted in increased poverty in and greater migration from those countries where the free trade agreements are in place.

In June, the fees for application of a change of status will increase drastically up to three times their current rate due to the government cutting social program budgets to fund the war. Who can afford these fees? Does the government really want to recognize the rights of current immigrants? Or does it just want to permit the entry of an increased work force that will have no choice but to work without rights, as “guest workers.”

This won’t be the first time. In the 1940s through the 1960s the Bracero program imported from Mexico “unskilled workers” to work in the agricultural sector in slave-like conditions with no rights and low wages—some were not paid at all. Then the U.S. government sent them back home. Many of those uncompensated for their work during that time protested on May 1 last year on the Mexican-side of the border in solidarity with the undocumented workers currently in the U.S. These workers have continued to put pressure on the U.S. government for just compensation now.

It is ironic that in May, as the immigration bill was being discussed, the self-confessed terrorist and CIA operative Luis Posada Carriles was set free after being detained for entering the U.S. and staying without documents since 2005. The message here is that if you are a pro-U.S. ter-

rorist, you will be allowed to walk with impunity, even if you don’t have the proper documentation.

Devil in the details

There are many more macabre provisions in the bill including authorizing state agencies to act as border enforcement agencies, a bi-chip demanded for identification, separation of families made almost inevitable, the point system and the so-called Dream Act. This last Act will allow children of undocumented workers access to either 720 days of higher education or military service. Since the U.S. military is stretched thin and in the midst of a troop build-up in Iraq, the Pentagon sees these youths as potential cannon fodder.

In sum, this “great compromise” bill is far from “amnesty” or “legalization.” This bill will create a permanent underclass of workers who will be barred permanently from having legal status. Since it will grant legalization to those having advanced degrees and special skills, it will thereby promote a brain drain from developing countries. It will also make it easier for immigrants from the other imperialist countries in the northern hemisphere to come to the U.S.

In the 1980s, the U.S. government made similar maneuvers regarding immigrants, finally passing the Immigration and Reform Control Act (IRCA) as the “Great Amnesty” in 1986. While IRCA legalized 2.7 million undocumented workers, it left out over 1.5 million, penalized undocumented workers with hefty fines and criminalized the act of employing them, although employer sanctions never really occurred.

The Bush administration depends on the existing political climate of fear, brought about by daily terror raids on immigrant communities, to prevent a progressive struggle against the new law. But the sentiment of the masses is to continue to struggle.

On the day that the “great compromise” was announced, May 17, over 30,000 immigrants and supporters protested in Los Angeles, demanding the resignation of the police chief William J. Bratton, a full investigation of the LAPD for the attack of May 1 in MacArthur Park and “legalization now!” The immigrant movement apparently realized that the only way justice has ever been won is in the streets.

Congress is in recess until June 4, and the lobby groups for finance capital are positioning themselves and nit-picking those portions of the proposed legislation that will hold them accountable and prohibit them from super-exploiting workers. Immigrant rights activists are putting pressure on elected officials. Yet as the 19th century Black freedom leader Frederick Douglass stated then: “Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never has and never will.”

As was shown by the mass protests on May 1, major sectors of the immigrant community know that movement in the streets is what will achieve the defeat of this bill and win full rights for immigrants. □

Police attack a TV cameraman in MacArthur Park in Los Angeles during a May Day Immigration rights rally.

ON THE PICKET LINE

By Sue Davis

Protest NWA execs \$297 million bonus

Ten months ago on July 31, 2006, the judge overseeing Northwest Airlines’ bankruptcy case imposed a no-strike order against NWA flight attendants after they voted down two draconian take-back contracts. Though the flight attendants’ union, AFA-CWA, sued to overturn that order, a U.S. Appeals Court upheld it. That allowed NWA to extract \$195 million in concessions—a 20 percent increase in work hours and 40 percent reduction in pay, benefits and work rules. As of May 18 the bankruptcy court ruled that NWA could emerge from bankruptcy on May 31. NWA offered a new contract that restores many terms like sick pay and vacation leave and includes an equity claim of \$182 million. The flight attendants must vote by May 29 on whether to accept it. If it’s approved, each worker is eligible to collect a lump sum of anywhere from \$15,000 to \$18,000. That payback would surely ease some of the hardships forced on the workers over the past year. But it hardly compares to the \$297 million bonus (4.9 percent ownership in the airline) for NWA’s top 400 executives. The CEO is slated to collect a \$26.6 million slice of that pie.

No wonder all NWA workers are hopping mad. The CEO “grossly overreached and missed another opportunity to share the gain with the employees whose excessive concessions funded the airline’s turnaround,” Capt. Dave Stevens, chair of the NWA branch of the AirLine Pilots Association, told the Wall Street Journal on May 7. Since then, NWA workers have held a series of protests, including picket lines at the Minneapolis/St. Paul airport on April 26 and May 15. Another one on May 30 at the Minnesota Capitol in St. Paul will protest the “cruel and outrageous” NWA Executive Stock Plan and why greedy policies like this led to the bankruptcy in the first place.

In a similar but unrelated case, representatives of the Transport Workers Union presented the CEO of ARM, the company that owns American Airlines, with an online petition bearing 17,000 signatures protesting ARM’s executive compensation practices at the May 16 meeting of the shareholders. The New York Times reported: “AMR employees and unions have taken pay cuts and made other concessions worth \$1.62 billion a year through 2008. Last month, the company’s top executives received \$21 million in bonuses, a figure that generated more than 500,000 e-mail messages in protest. Union members feel betrayed by such bonuses, said a spokesman.”

New minimum-wage bill passed

A new minimum wage bill raising hourly wages from \$5.15 to \$7.25 by 2009 was passed May 25 as part of a \$120 billion Iraq war spending bill. Salaries for 5.6 million of the working poor—4 percent of the population—will rise from less than \$11,000 to about \$15,000 a year. But that’s not enough to hike these workers—mostly young, female, single and Black or Latin@—out of poverty. Already more than two dozen states and the District of Columbia have minimum wages higher than \$7.25. Linking the minimum wage raise with spending for the war was a Democratic strategy to get President Bush to sign the bill. But it exposes the cynical nature of capitalism: the ruling class is willing to spend billions for war and destruction but only gives pennies to alleviate the suffering of the poorest working women.

Machinists barely approve Boeing contract

Nearly 2,600 union machinists in suburban St. Louis averted a strike May 20 by approving a contract with Boeing. But the vote was very close: 951 for, 883 against. Even though the workers who make fighter jets and missiles will receive a 9.5 percent raise and a 17 percent increase in pension benefits through 2010, the contract contained a potentially dangerous provision allowing new classifications within labor grades. “It’s not a money issue,” machinist Chris Myrick told the Associated Press on May 21. “It’s our job security. The new classifications scare a lot of people.” The workers are worried that Boeing might lay them off and then rehire them under a new job classification with lower pay. It’s yet another tactic in capital’s war against labor. □



As users expose police brutality

Monopolies seek stranglehold on YouTube

By Greg Butterfield

YouTube, a popular Web site for free sharing of online videos, is increasingly being used by communities, youths, progressive movements and radicals worldwide to expose injustice, protest the horrors of imperialist war, and promote revolutionary ideas to a global audience.

At the same time, U.S. corporate monopolies—including YouTube's owner, Google, and rivals like Viacom and NBC Universal—are battling to exercise control over the site's contents and censor those voices that interfere with their goal of turning it into a profit-making machine.

Created by three former PayPal employees in 2005, YouTube now streams more than 200 million videos and adds 200,000 new videos to its library daily. It is a truly global phenomenon, with viewers outside the U.S. watching 70 percent of all videos streamed. (Associated Press, May 20)

According to the Toronto Star, the site has 40 million visitors monthly, and the number is climbing.

YouTube's creators sold the site last year for \$1.65 billion in Google stock. Chad Hurley and Steve Chen, two of the creators who remain spokespeople for YouTube, seem content to accommodate Google's moves to introduce aggressive advertising on the site, develop software capable of censoring material objectionable to advertisers and the state, and clamp down on posting of so-called copyright-protected materials, like clips from TV shows and Hollywood films.

But the site, with its millions of users worldwide, has far outgrown the proprietary claims of any individuals or corporation. It has become a truly mass, participatory forum and should be the common property of all.

Police terror exposed

In the U.S., the most dramatic effect of mass YouTube use has been to expose cases of police brutality—incidents that otherwise would have been completely covered up by the cops or quickly silenced by the mainstream media.

And thanks to features allowing users to easily share videos, these exposures can spread like wildfire.

In November 2006, no fewer than three cases of brutality by the Los Angeles Police Department were exposed via YouTube videos.

William Cardenas was punched in the face repeatedly by cops, who accused him of being a "gang member." The FBI was forced to open an investigation into violations of Cardenas' civil rights after the video was widely seen. A second video showed cops beating a restrained prisoner in a police cruiser.

The third—shot on a camera phone in the University of California-Los Angeles Library—showed police shooting with taser guns Mostafa Tabatabaiejad, a 23-year-old Iranian-born student, because he had forgotten his ID. The video also shows angry students demanding the cops' names and protesting the violation of Tabatabaiejad's civil rights. A cop then threatened to attack these students, too. (MoJo Blog, Nov. 16, 2006)

Based on this video evidence, Tabatabaiejad has now brought a lawsuit against the LAPD.

These exposures have sown fear among cops and concern throughout the capitalist state. In today's world of high technology combined with growing repression, every worker is a potential George Holliday—the amateur videographer who captured the

brutal LAPD beating of Rodney King in 1991.

The phenomenon isn't limited to Los Angeles. From Pennsylvania to Florida, from Middleport, N.Y., to Denver, YouTube has been used as a platform to expose cop terror.

After Michigan State University students were arrested protesting a Minuteman bigot in East Lansing on April 19, organizers posted videos showing the police use of excessive force, witness statements, and interviews with university administrators exposing their collaboration with the racists.

And when police attacked immigrant rights demonstrators in both Los Angeles and New York on May Day, YouTube was used to rapidly spread the word.

Outside the U.S., forces fighting back against imperialism have adopted the medium as well. You can watch videos explaining the views, methods and aims of the revolutionary movement in Nepal, witness May Day marches in India and Turkey, or watch subtitled films from Cultural Revolution-era China that are unlikely to ever see commercial release on DVD.

Corporate media in the U.S. and Israel reacted with outrage in May when clips of "Tomorrow's Pioneers" appeared on YouTube. This children's show, produced by the Palestinian Hamas movement, promotes resistance to U.S. imperialism and Israeli occupation and is hosted by a Mickey Mouse-like character called Farfur.

Pentagon hypocrisy

Of course, it's not only anti-imperialists who are using this technology. The Minutemen and other Klan types use it. And now the Pentagon has joined in, hoping to exploit YouTube as a recruiting device by showing clips of U.S. troops triumphant in battles with "the enemy" in Iraq.

The Pentagon launched the "Multi-National Forces Iraq" channel in March. The Los Angeles Times reported that the channel was viewed more than 120,000 times in its first month.

Now—not coincidentally—the Defense Department has put a blanket ban on the use of YouTube and 12 other popular information-sharing sites by U.S. military personnel.

CNN reported May 14: "Iraqi insurgents and their supporters have been posting videos on YouTube at least since last fall. The Army recently began posting videos on YouTube showing soldiers defeating insurgents and befriending Iraqis.

"But the new rules mean many military personnel won't be able to watch those achievements—at least not on military computers. ... Defense Department computers and networks are the only ones available to many soldiers and sailors in Iraq and Afghanistan."

Nobody's buying the government's claim that the ban is needed to save Defense Department bandwidth. It's an obvious ploy to keep angry and demoralized U.S. troops from exposing the dire quagmire they find themselves in or posting videos of Pentagon abuses.

Many military families have expressed outrage, since these sites were one of the few ways soldiers could keep in touch with their loved ones at home.

Next up is the 2008 presidential election—already dubbed the "YouTube Election" by some mainstream pundits. Democratic Party candidates Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama are making extensive use of the site.

YouTube and MySpace, the social networking Web site owned by Rupert Murdoch, are both co-sponsoring primary debates of the Democratic and Republican candidates. (Los Angeles Times, May 20)

Battle for control

The corporate struggle to dominate YouTube and profit from its popularity has many similarities to the battle over file-sharing programs like Napster, which peaked a few years ago with music-industry lawsuits against students (in some cases, minors) for swapping music files. While free file sharing still exists, much of it has been co-opted by pay-per-song sites and file-protected CDs.

However, in the case of YouTube, there is a basis for a much broader struggle based on the mass, participatory character of video file sharing—of which the exposures of police brutality are powerful examples.

Again, the public battle lines are being drawn over the issue of "copyright protection" and "intellectual property" by mammoth media companies.

But this is really just a smokescreen. It amounts to positioning by the media monopolies for a bigger cut of the profits once a way is eventually found to turn free video sharing into a controllable, profitable business model.

The real action is going on behind the scenes—the moves to introduce a video advertising component to YouTube and to develop software to curtail the site's free-for-all contents and make it more "advertiser friendly."

The posture of the U.S. capitalist political establishment at this juncture seems to be to let this process of "free market censorship" play itself out rather than mount a frontal assault on those who use the site for progressive and revolutionary ends.

Of course, there is no guarantee that this will remain the case.

Who will control new technology?

Workers World wrote about file-sharing: "The controversy over Napster raises important issues for the international workers' movement. Chief among them is: Who will control the revolutionary new technology that allows the free exchange of music, art and all kinds of information?"

"Will it be dominated by capitalists seeking profit? Or will workers and oppressed people control it?" ("Napster and the right to free music," WW, Aug. 10, 2000)

YouTube is another example of how technology has outgrown the constraints of private property and capitalism. What could be more natural than for people to freely share videos with their community, family or comrades, down the block or across the ocean?

Yet capitalism must find a way to constrain, control and censor so that the profit system isn't compromised. The genie must be shoved back into the bottle by any means necessary.

What is needed is an international struggle for control by YouTube users, along with communities, organizations of workers and oppressed people, and unions, to ensure the right of the people to use the service, end corporate domination and rout the apologists for imperialism and racism.

It's a fight that can't be confined to the computer keyboard. It must come out into the streets, as exemplified by those who are using the technology today to expose police brutality. □



Katrina Survivors fight for housing

Katrina survivors join tenants demonstration May 23 near New York's Stuyvesant Town. (see article page 3).

WWW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN

Archaeological dig exposes racist U.S. history

By **Betsey Piette**
Philadelphia

Hidden below the modern skyscrapers lay the ruins of Philadelphia's history—the foundation of a city, and a nation, built and maintained by the labor of enslaved Africans.

An excavation near the cracked Liberty Bell is laying bare the history of the first "White House," where George Washington resided in the 1790s and kept nine enslaved Africans: Oney Judge, Moll, Austin, Hercules, Giles, Paris, Richmond, Christopher Sheels and Joe. It is also providing strong evidence to support the movement for reparations.

The excavation was planned to clear the site in order to lay the foundations for a memorial pavilion to the presidential house and its occupants, including the enslaved Africans. Intended to be completed in time for Philadelphia's upcoming annual July 4 extravaganza, reaction to the dig may result in a change of plans as many people echo comments of an African-American visitor who murmured, "They should leave this. The truth is finally there to see."

The first weekend the archaeological dig opened in mid-May, it drew over 1,000 visitors, stunning Park Service officials. A steady stream of visitors gathered on a small elevated viewing platform for the opportunity to see the building outlines and hear archaeologists explain what they were seeing. The tone was almost solemn, the discussions serious about just what role slavery played in the founding of the U.S.

The floor of the kitchen where Washington's enslaved African chef Hercules toiled is visible. The dig has uncovered new evidence that the kitchen had a cellar and that an underground passageway connected it to the main house.

The outline of a curving neoclassical window that would inspire the current White House Blue Room and Oval Office

lies close to the viewing platform. The "important" visitors Washington received in front of this window, however, could not look out onto the quarters of the enslaved Africans. Archaeologists have uncovered the foundation of a wall they believe was built to hide the slaves from public view. Washington was violating a Pennsylvania law that entitled enslaved Africans to freedom after a six-month residency.

One of Philadelphia's premier tourist attractions, Independence Hall, is visible behind the dig. Other enslaved Africans, who were never compensated for their labor, built Independence Hall.

That Washington and other early U.S. presidents kept slaves in Virginia has never been denied. But when it was discovered about 30 years ago that he also kept enslaved Africans in Philadelphia, the National Park Service buried the discovery. To keep slaves in a free state, Washington exploited a loophole, by periodically swapping his Philadelphia slaves with some of the 316 he kept in Virginia. When some managed to escape, Washington relentlessly hunted them down.

Historical archaeologist Cheryl Janifer LaRoche commented that the dig is offering an opportunity to touch a past that's been buried and walled away. LaRoche explained the role played by influential financier Robert Morris Jr., who moved from his mansion so it could be used as Washington's residence. Morris, a key delegate to the 1775 Constitutional Convention, was a major slave merchant for 40 years as a partner in the Philadelphia mercantile shipping firm Willing & Morris.



First president used loophole to keep Africans enslaved.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE



LaRoche, like many others, does not want to see this site covered over when the Liberty Bell memorial is constructed. Michael Coard agreed with LaRoche. "It would be a crime and a sin to bury this," stated Coard, a member of the memorial oversight committee and founder of Avenging the Ancestors Coalition (ATAC).

Coard was recently honored by the Philadelphia City Council for his work that compelled Independence National Historical Park to acknowledge the enslaved Africans who lived and worked at this site. Coard is an activist lawyer who also teaches a course on hip-hop culture at Temple University. He had launched a letter-writing campaign and petition drive that evolved into ATAC, which organized a 500-

person demonstration on July 3, 2002, to demand that the Park Service acknowledge Washington's Philadelphia slaves.

Understanding past U.S. history is more critical than ever today, as the crisis of capitalism is creating a new era of super-exploitation of labor around the world. Billions of workers around the world receive less than \$1 per day. Millions at home are forced into a twenty-first century variety of slavery behind prison walls. The fight for reparations necessitates digging up this rotten system to the roots and burying it once and for all. □

Botched execution angers Ohio abolitionists

By **Sharon Danann**
Cleveland

On May 24, Ohio set a new record—for the length of time taken to execute a prisoner. The medical technicians worked for 90 minutes to put shunts into the veins of Christopher Newton, so long he had to be allowed to get off the execution table to have a bathroom break. During this time activists barraged the office of Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland with phone calls, threatening to alert the media.

Once the injection of lethal chemicals began, it took an additional 16 minutes for Newton to die, compared to an average of 7.5 minutes. According to the Associated Press report, his stomach contorted, his chin shook and his body had two mild convulsions. This indicates that the deadly "cocktail" was not performing as expected.

Prison officials blamed Newton's weight for the difficulty in finding veins. Newton was 6 feet tall and weighed 265 pounds.

Kathy Soltis of the Cleveland Coalition Against the Death Penalty and the Cleveland Lucasville Five Defense Committee, made the following comment: "The sentence, to which we object in absolute terms, is death, not death preceded by torture. Being stuck repeatedly with needles is not part of the deal."

A year ago, the botched execution of

Joseph Clark took more than 80 minutes, much of the delay also caused by difficulties in finding a vein. Clark begged to be killed in some other way. The prison system promised to make procedural changes to prevent a recurrence.

Following Clark's traumatic execution, a group of prisoners filed a class action lawsuit challenging the lethal injection method. The courts have allowed executions of inmates who are plaintiffs in this suit.

The ACLU of Ohio called for an immediate end to all executions in light of two botched executions a year apart. Gov. Strickland stated that the May 24 debacle "is not a justification for a change of position regarding the death penalty in Ohio." He is also "personally satisfied that everything was done" to show consideration for Newton.

The Cleveland Lucasville Five Defense Committee has been active in the movement to bring the broad opposition to the death penalty to Gov. Strickland's attention, including the use of a postcard campaign circulated through its prisoner network.

To contact Gov. Strickland on this issue, people can write to him at 77 South High Street, Columbus, OH 43215, fax 614-466-9354, or call 614-466-3555. For Web mail, go to governor.ohio.gov, click on "Constituent Affairs," and then click on "Contact the Governor." □

Gideon award honors attorney

By **Larry Hales**
Denver

Attorney Mark Burton, member of the Colorado chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, received the Gideon award from the Colorado Criminal Defense Bar this May. The award states, "Presented to Mark Burton for remarkable effort to fulfill the promise of Gideon v. Wainwright and dedication of advocacy on behalf of the poor." The Gideon award is given for the top *pro bono* attorney in the state and nomination for the award is anonymous.

Burton, who has contributed articles to Workers World newspaper, has been a lawyer since 1999, graduating from the University of Denver with a Juris Doctorate. He was born of British parents here in Colorado and also worked in the labor movement in Great Britain for six years, representing hospital workers there.

Burton humbly represents many poor and indigent clients, many from oppressed nationalities. Many of the cases he takes are the usual variety of poor people of color being criminalized by the conditions of capitalist society and the racist justice system, which are intrinsically political. The case which he received the nomination for was overtly political.

That case involved Shareef Aleem, an anti-racist activist who was staring down a minimum of four years in prison and maximum of 12 for a trumped up charge of second degree aggravated assault on a cop. (www.workers.org/2006/us/shareef-aleem-0308/)

Shareef Aleem's first trial ended with a hung jury. Burton, along with Tom Carberry, who received the Gideon award as well, represented him in the retrial and won a tremendous victory for Aleem, his family, supporters and for oppressed people around the Denver metropolitan area and the country.



Mark Burton in courthouse corridor during Shareef Aleem's Trial.

The victory continues to resonate to this day, as Aleem, an important militant fighter for the oppressed, continues to fight against the repressive state, especially against the cops and their brutal treatment of workers, the poor and oppressed.

The Gideon Award is a reference to Gideon v. Wainwright, a case before the Supreme Court in 1963, when the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the sixth and fourteenth amendments require that lawyers be provided for criminal defendants who are unable to afford legal services. It was the latest of a series of decisions involving similar circumstances.

In 1932, in Powell v. Alabama, the case of the Scottsboro Brothers, the racist trial of nine Black youths, a rape story was fabricated by a white racist mob after a scuffle between white and Black youths. The nine young Black men, who were riding a boxcar to get to Memphis to look for jobs, had gotten into the scuffle with the white youths after an affront by the white youths that led to taunts, rock throwing, and finally an heroic deed by one of the Black youth, who saved one of the whites from falling off the train. The trial was

Safety or racist repression?

What's really behind the NSI

By Bryan G. Pfeifer
Milwaukee, Wis.

Over the two days of May 20 and 21 well over two thousand mourners came to a Black church in Milwaukee to pay their respects to Jasmine Ariel "Juicy" Owens, her family and friends.

Owens, a four-year-old African-American child, was killed by a stray bullet during a drive-by shooting May 14 while she jumped rope outside her home. For over three hours on each day of the visitation and funeral, the anger, grief, pain and sadness of the Black community since Owens's death was visceral.

At a May 16 press conference Owens's mother Alicia Owens invited the entire community to her daughter's services and announced that there would be an open casket.

"All of this has to stop, I mean, all of these young people dying over nothing," said Owens.

She added: "My baby was just out there having fun, jumping rope 'cause it was nice outside. And for somebody to just come down the street just shooting, I can't even explain the pain I'm going through right now for my baby. I miss her so much, so much. I want her here with me so bad."

Owens' death as well as many other recent injuries and deaths because of random violence in the community have sparked an already explosive situation in the Black community here. There is non-

stop debate and ongoing discussion.

The May 16, 2007, "Word Warrior's" talk show radio program hosted by Black City Alderman Michael McGee Jr. encapsulated the raging discussions and actions now taking place.

Regarding the violence in the community, many callers, the majority Black, expressed opposition to drive-by shootings but also steadfastly opposed more racist police occupation of their community. The callers were angry about the ongoing violation of the Black community's self-determination with regard to white politicians and their bosses. And virtually all the callers pointed to the semi-apartheid economic and social crisis facing the Black community.

A woman caller called for organizing the Black community in an effort to gain more living wage employment instead of more cops. Another asked, "What about a mandatory policy that police stop treating people like animals and degrading the community?" Another caller said, "Not only can the police do something. We can do something too." Others mentioned the billions going to fund the war in Iraq while cities across the U.S. are in severe crisis.

These callers echoed long-time African-American community activist Jeannetta Robinson, executive director of Career Youth Development, quoted in the May 15 Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Robinson herself has lost two children to street violence.

"Across America and in this city, more money is being poured in the Police Department. That's not going to help. It has to be from the community down. ... We can take control of the neighborhood," said Robinson.

McGee agreed with the callers by calling for more living wage jobs in the Black community and said, "I don't agree more police should be in the community."

McGee also read to on air listeners portions of a letter he, along with all City Council members, received from police Chief Nannette Hegerty on May 14 requesting even more taxpayer money for more police and equipment.

Within hours of Owens' death, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle and police Chief Nannette



Jasmine Owens
PHOTO: ALICIA OWENS

Hegerty—all of them white and after virtually no consultation with the Black community—held a press conference in Milwaukee the morning of May 15 to announce a "Neighborhood Safety Initiative" (NSI) targeted towards the Black community.

NSI to strengthen long-time occupation

This initiative, ostensibly in response to Owens' death, was later revealed by African-American Common Council President Willie Hines to have been in place for some time. Hegerty's letter to the Common Council was dated May 14. Owens died at approximately 8:20 p.m. on May 14.

Hegerty's letter asks for \$2.2 million for the NSI. Gov. Doyle has pledged to work with the Wisconsin Legislature to provide \$1 million of this. The money is mostly for police overtime according to Hegerty. But the NSI goes beyond just requesting money for overtime. It reads like a blueprint for a paramilitary style occupation targeted primarily at the Black community but negatively affecting the working class and oppressed as a whole. The NSI is an accompaniment to other local, state and federal repressive "programs" already in place.

Hegerty's letter reads in part: "Department members will be expected to take action against all violations and conditions that threaten an enjoyable summer for our residents and visitors."

The letter continues: "We would of course work very closely with other local, state and federal agencies taking advantage of their intelligence and resources. We also expect to work directly with other city agencies to address quality of life issues on a neighborhood level."

The letter describes in detail components of the NSI that began May 20 and, according to Hegerty, will only run until Sept. 8. The "program" will include "predictive analysis" and "intelligence" gathering, "containment zones," tactical squads, "monitoring," stop-and-frisk and other repressive activities. All of these procedures will be deployed towards "targeted areas," Hegerty and the white politicians' code word for the Black community, approximately 40 percent of Milwaukee's total population.

Hegerty closes the letter exposing the real intent of the NSI. She says the Milwaukee police will meet with other agency leaders for "activity, arrests and seizures generated by this initiative," and these agency heads will "assist us in the review, detention and prosecution phases."

Black Milwaukee under siege

In the aftermath of Owens' death the white politicians and the corporate bosses whom they serve are using the severe anguish and anger of the Black community and many who are in genuine solidarity with this community to essentially liquidate serious, genuine discussion on how to overcome the grinding oppressive conditions for Black people in Milwaukee.

This is nothing new. It's a continuation of Milwaukee history in new forms.

Hegerty's letter is the latest evidence that white politicians, their bosses and allies are using a situation such as the death of Owens in an obviously opportunistic way for more repression.

They are also putting the blame solely on the Black community for the brutal economic and social conditions inflicted upon it by the bosses in an attempt to obscure the state violence inflicted on the Black community, which includes police terrorism, a drug epidemic, skyrocketing rates of infant mortality, the disastrous effects of the prison-industrial complex and W-2.

Next: Black Milwaukee's economic, political and social conditions

ey for the poor



Shareef Aleem with his family.
WWW PHOTOS: LARRY HALES

drawn out for years, further highlighting the injustice of a system based on racism and exploitation.

The 1932 case left it up to individual states to decide how and whether or not counsel to the poor should be provided.

In 1942, in *Betts v. Brady*, the Supreme Court decided that the right to counsel depended on each case.

The 1961 case of Clarence Earl Gideon of Panama City, Fla., involved a charge of burglary. Gideon was being charged with breaking into a business and stealing money from a vending machine. Gideon could not afford a lawyer. The 1963 Supreme Court decision that he must be provided one became the benchmark.

While Supreme Court decisions have sometimes represented an important victory, no court in the U.S. can be relied on to obtain justice. It is the movement itself, the righteous indignation and mobilization of the masses that buckles the system and forces the legal decisions, including the victories.

Progressive attorneys like Burton, who take on cases defending poor and oppressed people, are the ones the movement counts on to argue for justice. Their passionate arguments and determination, often out of the limelight, help safeguard those who cannot afford counsel and are criminalized by the system. □

MARXISM, REPARATIONS and the Black Freedom Struggle

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by Larry Holmes

Black labor from chattel slavery to wage slavery
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by Mumia Abu-Jamal

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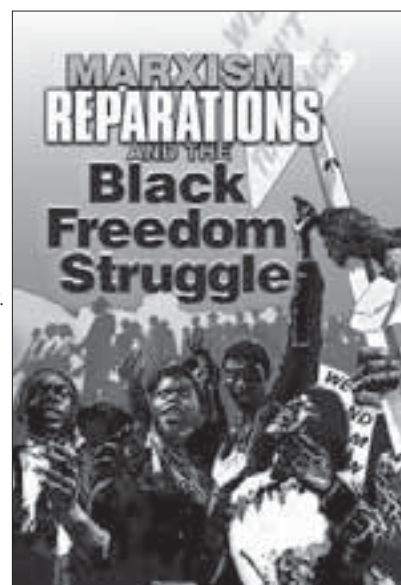
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LEBANON

Palestinian refugees caught in the cross-fire

Hezbollah leader condemns Beirut for accepting U.S. military aid

By Joyce Chediak

In an attempt to flush out the fundamentalist group Fatah al-Islam, the Lebanese army has laid siege to the Nahar al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp for two weeks as of May 28, indiscriminately pounding it with artillery, depriving the population of food and water, and forcing most of the camp's 31,000 impoverished residents to flee in any way they can.

By directing its guns against Palestinian civilians, the government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora has leaned further toward the U.S., further polarizing an already tense Lebanon, and unleashing a wave of racism against Palestinians refugees, the most impoverished and vulnerable sector in Lebanon.

As of this writing on May 29, a shaky truce has permitted Palestinian groups to enter the camp and attempt to negotiate a solution. Under a 1969 Arab-wide agreement, the Lebanese Army may not enter the 12 Palestinian refugee camps

in Lebanon, which are administered by Palestinians. Meanwhile, the army is using the truce time to fortify its positions around the camp.

Siniora's onslaught against Palestinian families has Washington's full support. Claiming the Lebanese Army has acted in a "legitimate manner" (electronicintifada.net, May 27), the Bush administration is now airlifting weapons to the Lebanese regime. To date, eight military transport planes carrying arms have landed in Beirut since May 24, four from the U.S., two from the United Arab Emirates and two from Jordan—both close U.S. allies.

While the Pentagon says these weapons are for use against Fatah al-Islam, which it brands as "terrorist," this is just a pretext for the arms airlift. Just a week before the weapons airlift, U.S. Undersecretary of State for the Near East David Welch visited Lebanon and met for the first time with the commander-in-chief of the Lebanese Army.

Massive weaponry is not needed for

the army to fight Fatah al-Islam, a group whose numbers BBC puts at 150-200. U.S. weapons are more likely meant to be used against Hezbollah, or the Palestinians and other progressive forces in Lebanon, which Washington opposes and would like to destroy.

Meanwhile, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, has condemned Beirut for accepting U.S. military aid. Nasrallah argued that a U.S.-identified government in Lebanon could draw al-Qaeda fighters into Lebanon, as they have been drawn into Iraq. He warned against "transforming Lebanon into a battleground in which we fight al-Qaeda on behalf of the Americans." (Englishaljazeera.net, May 27)

It should be noted that when Israel attacked Lebanon last summer, it was Hezbollah and other people's militias which defended Lebanon's territorial integrity, not the Lebanese Army.

What is Fatah al-Islam?

The group Fatah al-Islam, which has fighters in the Nahr al-Bared camp, was formed about six months ago, and is alleged to have a philosophy similar to al-Qaeda. Its leader, Shakir al-Abssi, has been connected in the Western press with the 2002 killing of Laurence Foley, a U.S. AID official in Jordan.

The fighting in Lebanon began on May 20 when Lebanese forces pursued Fatah al-Islam members, claiming they were involved in bank robbery. The group responded by attacking Lebanese army positions near the Nahr al-Bared camp.

While Fatah al-Islam is headed by a Palestinian, it is not seen by the Palestinians as a group arising from their community, or even a group which gives support to the Palestinian cause, but merely as a group which has situated itself in a Palestinian camp. In a May 23 interview on Al-Arabiya TV, Lebanese Defense Minister Ilyas Murr stated that of the several dozen fighters killed, he said that they are mostly Lebanese, Saudi, Yemeni, Algerian, Tunisian and Moroccan. Not one is identified as Palestinian.

According to BBC and electronicintifada.net (May 27), Palestinian groups have distanced themselves from this group, and Palestinian and Hezbollah leaders have not supported its attack on the Lebanese Army.

In fact, many progressives in Lebanon wonder out loud how Fatah al-Islam could become situated in the camp without the knowledge and possible complicity of the Lebanese army, which surrounds the camp on all sides.

The Palestinian community in Lebanon feels that they are paying a price for a fight that has nothing to do with them.

Racism unleashed against Palestinians

The army assault on the Nahr al-Bared camp has unleashed a wave of racism against the Palestinian people, with some rightwing elements openly calling for wiping out the camp. Rightwing militias, some armed with M-16s, came to the camp and tried to enter it. Palestinian civilians reported being fired on by these militias. (electronicintifada.net, May 27)

Caught in the crossfire

Nahr al-Bared, housing 31,000 Palestinians packed into one square kilometer, was relentlessly pounded for three days with army artillery rounds and tank fire.

"It was worse than hell," said Yasmin

Abdel Ai. "The army and Fatah al Islam would fire on each other, but the bombs and bullets landed on us. We were waiting for death." (New York Times, May 23)

Ashraf Abu Khorj, a youth organizer, said on May 21, at the height of the bombing: "The situation is very bad. No electricity for the past two days. There is no water. There is nothing. ... The people that were killed yesterday, there is no hospital in the camp, no place to put the dead. This morning, our neighbor was killed—at 6:30 a.m.—and he is still in the room, and his body is starting to smell within the house. The injured—the same situation." ("Live from Lebanon," May 23, electronicintifada.net)

Sultan Abul Ainain, head of Fatah in Lebanon, said, "No Palestinian or Palestinian faction in Lebanon will accept seeing the Palestinian people slaughtered in a collective punishment as is happening in Nahr al-Bared." (electronicintifada.net, May 27)

"We will not let our Palestinian brothers and sisters be slaughtered," chanted Palestinians in demonstrations held in camps throughout Lebanon. (AP May 22)

According to the U.N., 25,000 of the camp's 31,000 residents have left. At least 10,000 are being put up in schools or are staying with families in the nearby Beddawi camp "sometimes 40 people to a room." (electronicintifada.net May 27)

"Beddawi is miserable; people are sleeping all together on the floors in the dust," said Dr. Ayed Abou Hussein, a resident of Nahr al-Bared who arrived in Beddawi on Wednesday. (Beirut Daily Star, May 25)

"There are many people who left their houses without being able to take their money with them. They are completely reliant on others," he continued.

The Safad Hospital in Beddawi is operating on a double shift to accommodate the wounded and those suffering from shock, dehydration, low blood sugar and hunger, according to hospital director Ahmed al-Hajj. "Although the International Red Cross, the Lebanese Red Cross and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society have provided many things it is not enough to meet the needs of such a war," said Hajj

Sitting in one of the hospital's many full rooms, Rehan Khoadr, 20, was recovering from shrapnel wounds to her abdomen, chest and legs. "When the war started we became scared and tried to flee the camps," she said. "As we were getting ready to leave, a bomb fell on our house. That is all I remember. Now I know my father is dead and my mother is in a coma."

Hajj added, "We are not responsible for this conflict and why should the Palestinians pay for it?" □



Displaced children from Nahr al-Bared camp.

PHOTO: MARCY NEWMAN

Life in Nahr al-Bared

Most of the Palestinians in Nahr al-Bared are the descendents of those forced out of Palestine by Zionists in 1948. According to Samar Assad, executive director of the Palestine Center in Washington, they live in conditions that "are the worst of virtually any refugee population." (electronicintifada.net, May 22)

The 300,000 Palestinians in Lebanon, comprising a tenth of the population, live under a form of apartheid. They have no political rights, and little access to jobs, housing or education. The following excerpts from the Minorities at Risk Project, part of the Center for International Development and Conflict Management at the University of Maryland, describe the plight of Palestinians in Lebanon:

- Most Palestinians in Lebanon are refugees who live in overpopulated camps (some in existence for over 50 years) that have suffered repeated damage as a result of fighting in the region. ... Since 2000, the living conditions in the camps have deteriorated even more.
- Lebanon's immigration policies ... classify all Palestinians as foreigners and not citizens, excluding them from most political rights, such as participating in national elections. ... Most Palestinian refugees are unable to obtain citizenship in Lebanon.

- The Lebanese government does not provide health services to Palestinian refugees, who rely on the UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East—WW] and UNRWA-contracted hospitals.

- The economic plight of the Palestinians in Lebanon is dismal, and is generally worse than those Palestinians in Jordan and the territories, since they are unwelcome by their host country. For example, in 2001 the Lebanese Parliament enacted a law that prohibited Palestinian refugees from owning property in the country. Under the new legislation, Palestinians may not purchase property and those who already own property will not be allowed to pass it on to their children.

- Palestinians are forced to reside in the designated refugee camps.

- Although the Lebanese government has abolished the law that denies work permits to foreigners, Palestinian refugees are prohibited by law from working in 72 professions. In the available job market, Palestinians are largely unable to find stable jobs or work unskilled occupations because they are discriminated against in the economic sector. ... In recent years, the income level of Palestinians continued to decline.

—Joyce Chediak

'END ALL OCCUPATION!'

The U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation and United for Peace and Justice have called for a protest and teach-in on June 10 and a lobby day on June 11 in Washington, D.C., "to protest the 40th anniversary of Israel's illegal military occupation of the Palestinian West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip."

The International Action Center will participate in the Liberation and Return Contingents organized by the Al-Awda Right to Return Coalition. Call 212-633-6646 for transportation information.

U.S. spurs Iraq's 'sectarian violence'

By Deirdre Griswold

One of the main reasons to keep U.S. troops in Iraq, say apologists for the ferocious U.S. occupation of that country, is to stabilize a government representing all Iraqis and prevent a bloodbath between Sunnis and Shias, which they say would be inevitable once U.S. forces left. Such arguments are coming from both sides of the aisle in Congress.

This professed concern by Washington and the Pentagon for the Iraqi people—instead of for their oil—could not be further from the truth. In fact, this argument turns reality on its head. Since their invasion of Iraq, imperialist strategists have done everything possible to turn Iraqis against each other and keep them from uniting against the foreign invaders—primarily the U.S. and Britain.

While the current U.S. position is to maintain the fiction of a central Iraqi government in Baghdad, it is also known that other plans on the drawing board include partitioning the country into three separate entities: a Kurdish north, a predominantly Sunni center, and a Shia south. Most of Iraq's oil is in the north and south,

not in the central region that includes Baghdad, where there is the largest concentration of people.

After several years of focusing on "pacifying"—that is, virtually destroying—cities in central Iraq like Fallujah that are considered strongholds of the resistance, the U.S. and Britain have in recent weeks been concentrating their firepower on Sadr City in Baghdad and Basra in the south—both areas where the Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr has a very strong following.

On April 9, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis had rallied in Najaf, south of Baghdad, in support of al-Sadr after his party withdrew from the Iraqi parliament. It was a huge rebuff to the occupation and was followed by many U.S. attacks on his followers. Al-Sadr then went underground. The imperialist media were rife with speculation that he had gone to Iran, which was being accused of giving support to elements of the Iraqi resistance. Both Al-Sadr's followers and the Iranian government deny he was in Iran.

On May 25, however, al-Sadr surfaced briefly in Kufa, where he again called on all Iraqis to unite to get U.S. troops out of Iraq. The very next day, the U.S. called in

air strikes on densely populated Sadr City and Basra.

The Washington Post had reported on May 20 that many Sunni leaders had already responded favorably to this call and that there are good prospects for unity against the occupiers. This is exactly what the Pentagon fears the most.

Lessons of Vietnam

It is probably just a matter of time until some of the truth comes out about clandestine U.S. operations to blow up mosques or other targets in Iraq in order to enflame sectarian passions. But that should not be surprising.

It took years, but government sources finally admitted that, during the Vietnam War, South Vietnamese allied to the U.S. were ordered to put on the garb of National Liberation Front fighters and then attack villages, where they committed horrible atrocities. At the time, articles immediately appeared in the corporate media blaming the "V.C." and were flashed around the world. It was a brutal and cynical attempt to undercut the immense popular support for the Vietnamese patriots fighting foreign

domination, but it failed.

The extent of war crimes committed by U.S. troops themselves in Vietnam is still being revealed. In August 2006, the Los Angeles Times ran a series based on declassified Pentagon documents that admitted to over 300 incidents in which U.S. troops "murdered, raped and tortured with impunity." The Times said that these crimes "were not confined to a few rogue units. ... They were uncovered in every Army division that operated in Vietnam." Soldiers who blew the whistle on many of these crimes said that orders to "kill anything that moves" came from higher up and were not just the actions of individuals.

How many of these murders were attributed to the liberation forces?

When the U.S. imperialists had designs on conquering all Southeast Asia, north and south Vietnamese were presented as antagonistic to one another. In fact, the problem was the occupiers. Today, Vietnam is one.

Iraqis will be able to solve their own problems, once the U.S. and British colonial occupiers are finally forced to leave.

E-mail: dgriswold@workers.org

Democrats bait and switch

Betray voters, okay war funds

Continued from page 1

source of fabulous wealth and power.

The U.S. Constitution grants Congress the power to provide or deny funds for government activities. Thus, Congress can fund or refuse to fund a war. Congress could, if it had the political will, end the war in Iraq tomorrow by using its power over appropriations to cut off funds that keep the war going.

But actually cutting the Pentagon's funding is the very step that the Democratic majority refuses to take. Because the war is unsuccessful and unpopular, they are more than willing to speak against it. But because their elected positions are based on defending imperialist interests—and dependent on corporate donations—they fear to act against the war in a decisive way.

Even a determined congressional minority of Democrats could block the funding for the war—if they had really decided to end the war. They could disrupt and filibuster. They could call on people from around the country to surround Congress. Instead, while posing as the "anti-war" majority party, the Democrats have capitulated to Bush and the Pentagon.

A few voices of opposition

One of the few Democrats who expressed a consistently anti-war position in this debate, Rep. Dennis Kucinich of Ohio, exposed the cynical strategies of the Democratic leadership, who inserted an increase in the minimum wage into the war funding bill.

"It tells American workers that the only way they will get an increase in wages is to continue to support funding the war which is taking the lives of their sons and daughters," Kucinich said. "First, blood for oil. Now, a minimum wage for maximum blood. Aren't the American people giving enough blood for this war without having to give more to have a wage increase?"

Congressperson Barbara Lee, who voted against the current Iraq war funding and previously condemned the Iraq bill, asked: "Mr. Speaker, in 2003 Congress approved a \$78 billion dollar supplemental. In 2004 it was \$87 billion. In 2005 it

was \$82 billion. In 2006 it was \$72 billion. And now the administration wants almost \$100 billion more?"

The deep frustration of millions of people who are opposed to the war and had faith in the Democratic Party to carry out their mandate was expressed in a public letter to the Democrats in Congress by Cindy Sheehan.

She wrote on May 26: "Congratulations Congress, you have bought yourself a few more months of an illegal and immoral bloodbath. And you know you mean to continue it indefinitely so 'other presidents' can solve the horrid problem BushCo forced our world into. It used to be George Bush's war. You could have ended it honorably. Now it is yours and you all will descend into calumnious history with BushCo. ...

"As for myself, I am leaving the Democratic Party. You have completely failed those who put you in power to change the direction our country is heading. ... We gave you a chance, you betrayed us."

The letter was signed, "Cindy Sheehan, Founder and President of Gold Star Families for Peace. Founder and Director of The Camp Casey Peace Institute. Eternally grieving mother of Casey Sheehan."

The capitalist ruling class always wants to divert the mass movement into safe channels—into lobbying and voting and trusting in the bought-and-paid-for politicians. The challenge is to develop clear demands that move the struggle into the streets.

September—the next congressional vote

The next critical votes on the war are expected to be cast in September, when the House and Senate debate war funding for 2008. According to the Associated Press (May 26), the September votes probably will come after Iraq war commander Gen. David Petraeus tells Congress whether Bush's troop buildup plan is working. Also due by September is another government assessment of progress made by the Iraqi government.

The Troops Out Now Coalition (TONC) has circulated widely a proposal to the

anti-war movement to hold an encampment outside the Capitol starting Sept. 22 and culminating in a mass march on Sept. 29. The encampment has the potential to ensure that another war vote does not go unchallenged. The proposal opens an opportunity for an independent intervention representing millions of workers and oppressed people.

Both the Democratic and Republican parties are committed and loyal to the same imperialist system of corporate rule, based on private ownership of the resources and labor of all of society on

a global scale. Without this basic understanding of the U.S. political system, the struggle for change can lead to demoralization and confusion.

If there is no strong political intervention from below, then weak, non-binding resolutions and continued war funding can demoralize the mass opposition to the war. Militant action independent from both capitalist political parties is the only way that millions of poor and working people will gain an understanding of the system that oppresses and impoverishes them. □



From Protest to Resistance

The Democrats have caved in
Congress won't end the war!

**It's up to the people—
time to take it back to the streets!**

On June 16, from 1 - 5 pm, the Troops Out Now Coalition is hosting an Anti-war Strategy Meeting at the Solidarity Center (55 W. 17th St. 5th Fl, in Manhattan). All progressive organizations, coalitions, individuals—anyone interested in mobilizing to shut down the war—is welcome to join us for the discussion, as we examine and begin planning for the necessary "Surge" of anti-war mass action this Summer and Fall.

Some of the proposed topics for discussion include:

- Assessing the state of the anti-war movement: where do we go from here?
- Congress, Bush and the war funding issue: what's really going on?
- From anti-war to anti-imperialism: making the connections—Iran, Palestine, the Philippines, Cuba, Venezuela, Africa, etc.
- The war at home: Immigrant Rights, Katrina, Anti-racist organizing
- Update on the student movement
- The growing GI anti-war movement

Go to www.troopsoutnow.org or call 212-633-6646 for more information.



Cindy Sheehan breaks with war party

We salute Cindy Sheehan for the work she has done and the sacrifices she has made in the past three years to stop the Iraq War and bring the troops home. Sheehan sent out a letter to the movement on May 28 about why she's decided at this time to pull back from activism.

Sheehan was courageous and determined from the beginning. She was willing to meet President George Bush head on and demand he answer whether her son Casey Sheehan "died for a noble cause" in Iraq in April 2004. When the corporate media publicized her confrontation with Bush in Crawford, Texas, this immediately catapulted her into the position of spokesperson for the U.S. anti-war movement.

Speaking constantly to millions here and worldwide is an enormous responsibility, doubly hard when connected so closely with a painful grief. Probably to the surprise of the same media that publicized her Crawford struggle, Sheehan managed to answer the hardest questions, face up to vicious insults, attacks and threats from the right-wing, and stay on message: bring the U.S. troops home.

She also never lost sight of the suffering of the Iraqis, as well as the pain of U.S. youth sent to kill and die for what was obviously not a noble cause. And she wouldn't let baiting stop her from making allies anywhere in the world if it would aid the anti-war effort.

Sheehan has done in three years more to stop a U.S. war of aggression than most people have the opportunity to do in a lifetime. Today 70 percent of the U.S. population rejects the war.

Sheehan writes of her need to pull back from her public role, to mend herself and relations with her loved ones. Those who appreciate her contributions will support her, and of course, she would be welcomed back.

Political lessons

But Cindy Sheehan is not only an individual anti-war activist. Her "resignation" is itself international news. War supporters try to interpret it as their victory. We think this is a false reading of the events. Her letters are a sign of impending political change.

A few days before she wrote about the need to step back from her role in the movement, Sheehan sent another message: her resignation from the Democratic Party. It pulled no punches in attacking the deal that the Democrats made to pass the Iraq funding bill.

"There is absolutely no sane or defensible reason," wrote Sheehan, "for you to hand Bloody King George more money to condemn more of our brave, tired, and damaged soldiers and the people of Iraq to more death and carnage. You think giving him more money is politically expedient, but it is a moral abomination and every second the occupation of Iraq endures, you all have more blood on your hands."

This is the kind of statement that marks Sheehan's contribution. Over the last three years, Sheehan has reflected the feelings of people in the

U.S. whose political positions have changed under the impact of the war, the Iraqi resistance, the intransigence of the Bush administration and the failure of the Democratic Party to offer a real alternative. She has translated these feelings into determined action and a readiness to put her body on the line to stop the war.

What is most hopeful about these latest events is not her resignation, but the righteous anger she expresses at the capitalist politicians of both parties who refuse to end the war. The positive messages from hundreds of people who have responded to her letters on Web sites and blogs add to that hopefulness. Some "leaders" of the anti-war movement who refuse to break with the Democrats may have abandoned Sheehan, but there is a broad rank-and-file who offer her support.

The lesson then is that it is beyond time to break with the capitalist parties and move to a more determined resistance to the war and occupation. Those who claim to lead the anti-war struggle, but fail to do this, will be left by the wayside.

Practical steps

One of the anti-war coalitions, the Troops Out Now Coalition (TONC), has issued a proposal for an encampment around Congress starting Sept. 22 and a mass demonstration Sept. 29—the dates when war funding is again expected to come up in Congress. According to its call, "TONC welcomes and encourages discussion and suggestions for modifying and improving this proposal." Its goal is to "demonstrate independence from both political parties" and "continue the shift from dissent to resistance."

TONC is holding a conference June 16 in New York City (full details at www.TroopsOutNow.org) to discuss how to proceed with the proposal. It is an opportunity to move forward with the discussion of the next steps for the anti-war movement, taking into account the serious questions raised by Cindy Sheehan's two letters.

They are a sign of more intense struggle to come. □

Venezuela frees the airwaves of coup-plotting RCTV

By Jaimeson Champion

On May 28, the broadcast license of Radio Caracas Televisión (RCTV) expired. Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez has said the government will not renew RCTV's license, effectively ending the station's reign on the airwaves as a coup plotting and counterrevolutionary propaganda machine. A new public station, TVes, has taken over that small section of the airwaves that the money-driven RCTV used for 54 years.

The worldwide corporate media, especially that in the United States, has tried to distort the government's sovereign right to deny RCTV's license by turning it into an international human rights issue. This imperialist media has given enormous publicity and exaggerated the size of demonstrations of a few thousand Venezuelan reactionaries. They have also downplayed the massive celebrations greeting the new public station—still a small opposition voice to the dominant private media.

Venezuela's Foreign Affairs Minister Nicolás Maduro said May 28 that 95 percent of the country's TV stations still belong to private companies, as well as 94 percent of radio stations and 98 percent of newspapers. The wealthy private owners are uniformly hostile to the revolutionary Chávez government.

RCTV was an active participant in the imperialist sponsored April 11, 2002, attempted coup against democratically elected President Chávez. During the days leading up to the coup, RCTV intentionally reported false information and lies meant to destabilize the Chávez government.

RCTV's repeated false news reports broadcast on April 11, 2002, of Chávez supporters firing into unarmed crowds were cited by many of the coup leaders as the rea-

son for their participation in the attempted overthrow. Those news reports have since been completely discredited and have been proven to have been intentionally planted in an effort to stir up support for the coup.

While the coup was underway, RCTV broadcast nonstop coverage and interviews with the coup leaders, lauding them as heroes of the Venezuelan people even as they attempted to illegally oust the president whom the vast majority of Venezuelans had freely voted for.

One of the leaders of the coup, Vice Admiral Víctor Ramírez Pérez, prematurely proclaiming success on the night of April 11, 2002, said, "We had a deadly weapon, the media, and now that I have the opportunity, let me thank you." RCTV gave no news coverage to Chávez's reinstatement as president after the coup failed, opting instead to run old U.S. movies and cartoons.

The corporate media in the U.S. has attempted to frame the Chávez government's decision not to renew RCTV's license as a "free speech" issue, claiming the non-renewal is an attempt to silence opposing viewpoints. But the active role RCTV played in attempting to overthrow a democratically elected president would certainly be grounds for immediate termination of broadcasting privileges in almost any other country. It is not hard to imagine the severity of penalties the U.S. Federal Communications Commission would enact on a television station that actively attempted to overthrow the U.S. president.

The Chávez administration followed all the appropriate procedures laid out in the Venezuelan Constitution regarding broadcast license renewal. RCTV should consider itself lucky that it was allowed to broadcast for the remaining length of its 20-year license. □

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Cuba brought science, not scapegoating, to AIDS care

By Leslie Feinberg

Cuba tried to isolate the spread of AIDS as soon as the epidemic appeared in the island population, explained then Cuban Deputy Public Health Minister Héctor Terry in 1987. But Cuba did not try to socially isolate people with AIDS.

Terry stressed of Cubans living in the sanatoria: "They visit their families at home, go out on pass; their families visit them, every day. Their friends can visit them." (Interview with Karen Wald, Guardian, Oct. 28, 1987)

Cuba attempted to quarantine the spread of the epidemic based on a scientific approach to a medical emergency, without using scapegoating to isolate people with AIDS.

In the U.S., AIDS activists had to fight a protracted battle to replace the bigoted label of "high-risk groups" with a rational understanding of "high-risk behaviors." Cuban medical workers and educators approached transmission scientifically.

Researchers Lourdes Arguelles and B. Ruby Rich observed in the autumn of 1987 that, "Cuba is unusual in publicizing the disease, not as a gay disease, but rather as a sexually transmitted disease regardless of specific sexual practice."

The primary route of AIDS transmission in Cuba was via international contact, including Cubans who had worked or studied abroad.

Of the first 99 people quarantined in 1986, only about 20 percent were believed to have contracted AIDS through same-sex contact.

Terry articulated this clearly: "We are carrying out our program by giving the public a lot of scientific information, speaking to them clearly about the modes of transmission and not generating phenomena such as homophobia or sexual repression.

"In some countries the mass media, for commercial reasons, generate those phenomena to sell more magazines or newspapers. But we don't need to sell more magazines or newspapers. We don't need to use AIDS to get people to watch more

TV or to get some corporation to finance AIDS research. We don't need any of that here."

Terry summed up, "We start from the ideas that AIDS is transmitted not because of what you are but because of what you do, and therefore there's no reason to generate any kind of persecution or phobia against any patient."

Interviewer Karen Wald added: "Members of the gay community interviewed here said there has been no increase in homophobia or attacks on gays as a result of AIDS. They attribute this in part to the fact that the government has not singled out gays as carriers of the disease."

And unlike in the U.S., same-sex love was not against the law in Cuba.

Eyewitness to Cuban care

Cleo Manago was part of a delegation of 200 people from the U.S. who challenged Washington's travel ban to visit Cuba in August 1994. Manago wrote about his visit to an AIDS sanatorium in an article entitled "Cuba, from a Black, Male, Same-Gender-Loving Perspective."

"The widely reported rumors and articles on AIDS concentration camps in Cuba are out of context and pure anti-Cuba propaganda," Manago stated. "I visited Cuba's largest AIDS sanatorium and was taken aback by the humane, considerate, intuitive and life affirming approach to care taken by this center.

"The sanatorium was similar to a large housing complex where all who chose to live there had 24-hour health care, the option of having family members, even a dog or a cat stay with them. Same-gender-loving and heterosexual couples living together at the complex is a common occurrence.

"I asked people living there about the conditions in which they live. None were happy about having HIV or AIDS but all were very appreciative of the care they received. Many who could go home if they wanted chose to stay where they were

guaranteed prepared food, a comfortable home and prompt medical attention. This particular center offered ambulatory care for those with jobs or who wanted to continue with school. To my knowledge there is nothing similar in the USA."

Manago concluded, "The main problem people with AIDS faced was the difficulty in getting the medicines and treatments (pentamidine, bactrim, condoms, etc.) needed from other countries, due to the U.S. blockade of Cuba." (www.sonoma-countyfreepress.com)

'Information without sensationalism'

Dr. Héctor Terry emphasized: "We are treating the patients medically to maintain their present state of good health. Every time some new information comes up in the scientific community, some new kind of drug or medicine,

we try to find out if it could be useful in preventing the virus from becoming activated into a full-blown disease."

Terry added: "Information is reaching the public without any sensationalism, without creating any hysteria or panic. We haven't yet been using the mass media as much as we should; we think that's a deficiency in the program. We've been using state agencies and all the ministries a lot, organizing conferences for all the workers in certain ministries, especially those in the high-risk areas. We also utilize the health education program and the popular video centers throughout the country. We run videos and have doctors there to answer questions. We've used that a lot and many young people attend these.

"We're now preparing other activities with the mass organizations, the Committees to Defend the Revolution, student and women's organizations," he continued. "We are working with other scientific institutions in the country, which are providing invaluable assistance and we are looking at all possibilities anywhere in the world. We try to synthesize what is being done internationally.

"Here we have the SUMA group, which is developing Cuban technology to do mass-scale diagnostic testing. With an infinitesimal blood sample we can diagnose for AIDS. We'll be trying to get this equipment into all the country's blood banks next year, and in all the hygiene and epidemiology centers. And we'll be preparing ourselves for carrying out at least annual blood tests of the whole population, in every blood bank and epidemiology center, in every hospital. We're preparing a very wide-range program."

Terry concluded: "I repeat that the method of quarantine in a sanatorium isn't permanent. It will be treated dialectically. We are studying the situation and when we see that it is not the correct solution, or that other possibilities offer themselves, we will act accordingly—always basing ourselves on scientific data. Otherwise we wouldn't be scientists."

Clearly quarantine in Cuba was a tactic at the moment the epidemic emerged, not a scientific principle.

Joseph Mutti wrote from Havana in June 1999: "The government undertook extensive efforts to learn more about transmission of the virus and to discover a cure. It wasn't until the early 1990s that officials felt enough was known to end the quarantine and focus on public information, education and prevention." ("Love and Honesty: The Dawn of Gay Rights," Resource Center of the Americas.org)

Cuba began an out-patient pilot reintegration project in 1993 that proved successful. (Denver Post)

Those who left the sanatoria received ambulatory care that included regular doctor's care, visits to specialists and dietary supplements—all free. (medicc.org)

However, the Denver Post concluded in February 2003, "Today, 48 percent of those who are HIV-positive or have AIDS choose to live in the 16 sanatoriums around Cuba."

Next: "Cuba has much to teach the world about AIDS."

To find out more about Cuba, read parts 86-99 of Lavender & Red at workers.org.

'Free the Cuban Five!'

National Network on Cuba announces Nov. 9 rally

By Teresa Gutierrez
San Francisco

The National Network on Cuba (NNOC) held its biannual meeting here on the weekend of May 19. The NNOC is the main umbrella organization in the U.S. made up of members of every major Cuba solidarity organization in the country. It meets twice a year to take up current political developments in Cuba, U.S.-Cuba relations and solidarity work carried out by its members.

The NNOC is solidly in defense of the Cuban Revolution and is a strong opponent of the U.S. blockade of Cuba.

The meeting heard reports from several organizations carrying out work on the Cuban Five—political prisoners in the U.S. arrested for defending Cuba from U.S.-backed terrorist acts. The International as well as the National Committee to Free the Cuban Five reported about important work being done such as speaking tours on several college campuses. The New York Committee reported on the campaign of Rainbow Solidarity for the

Cuban Five.

Art Heizer, a lawyer from Minnesota, updated the movement on Washington's current policy on the U.S. travel ban on Cuba. Despite a decades-long policy of prohibiting travel to Cuba, the Cuba solidarity movement continues to organize travel challenges to the island every year. Heizer explained that despite an increase in scare tactics to the solidarity movement, there has not been an escalation of penalization.

This year, the Venceremos Brigade and Pastors for Peace will once again organize travel challenges to Cuba in mid-July. The youth organization FIST—Fight Imperialism Stand Together—is also organizing a delegation to join the travel challenge to Cuba. The FIST trip will cross the border from Canada to Buffalo, N.Y., on its return July 28, along with the Venceremos Brigade. Pastors for Peace



PHOTO: ALEX MAJUMDER

National Network on Cuba (NNOC) biannual meeting on May 19.

will return on July 28 at the U.S./Texas border.

The NNOC agreed upon a major event: a solidarity rally to be held in Toronto, Canada, on Nov. 9. The Cuba solidarity movement is urged to support this event because a highlight will be the presence of several family members of the Cuban

Five. It will be a rare opportunity to hear directly from the families about the case of the Five.

FIST and the International Action Center, a member of the NNOC, are making plans to support this important event. □

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Washington en líos desde Abu Dhabi hasta Pakistán

Por Sara Flounders

Mayo 15—La declinante posición global del imperialismo estadounidense se pudo ver claramente en dos recientes y muy diferentes visitas a Abu Dhabi.

El viernes 11 de mayo, el vicepresidente Dick Cheney se paró en la cubierta de un portaaviones en el Golfo Pérsico frente a la mortífera fuerza de cinco aviones Super Hornet F-18 para emitir una siniestra amenaza. Cheney declaró: “Con dos grupos de portaaviones en el Golfo, estamos enviando un mensaje claro tanto a amigos como a adversarios. ... Estados Unidos estará firme junto a otros para prevenir que Irán obtenga armas nucleares y domine la región.”

Al día siguiente, Cheney discretamente visitó Abu Dhabi en los Emiratos Árabes Unidos (EAU) como parte de un apurado viaje a los regímenes bajo el control de los Estados Unidos, incluyendo a Irak, Arabia Saudita y Jordania, para elevar la degenerante posición de Washington.

A sólo un día después de la visita del vicepresidente y en gran contraste con la callada recepción dada a Cheney, el Presidente Mahmoud Ahmadinejad de Irán llegó a Abu Dhabi el 13 de mayo recibiendo una gran bienvenida. Esta era la primera vez que un jefe de estado iraní visitaba los EAU desde la revolución iraní del 1979.

Además de reunirse con los altos oficiales en la capital, el Presidente Ahmadinejad fue a la ciudad de Dubai, donde pronunció un alentador discurso en un mitin frente a miles de personas que llenaban un estadio de fútbol para saludarle. Esto tuvo que haber sido presenciado por Washington como otro desafío más al dominio estadounidense de la región.

El simple hecho de que la pequeña capa de gobernantes privilegiados de los EAU, quienes han dependido de la presencia militar de los Estados Unidos en sus países para preservar sus posiciones, haya permitido el mitin a pesar de una permanente prohibición de manifestaciones, muestra cuán temeroso está este grupo de la presión de las masas populares.

Los EAU están gobernados por una pequeña pero fabulosamente rica y poderosa familia real que tiene poderes dictatoriales. Los partidos políticos no están permitidos. No hay elecciones. Hay tres bases militares localizadas en los Emiratos y tres barcos navales de los Estados Unidos en sus puertos.

De su población de 4 millones de habitantes, el 80% no son considerados ciudadanos. Millones de obreros en todos los estados del Golfo tienen estatus similar. Ya hayan vivido en la región por décadas o

hasta por generaciones, se les considera obreros inmigrantes.

Estos obreros no tienen derecho a la educación, al cuidado de la salud, a pensiones, a salarios mínimos y ni siquiera a formar un sindicato o participar en una actividad política. Sin embargo un creciente número de huelgas y acciones laborales han acompañado la creciente actividad política.

Medio millón de personas de herencia iraní viven en Dubai, la ciudad más grande en los EAU. En tres charlas públicas durante su visita de dos días, el entusiasta líder iraní llamó a las tropas de los EEUU a “empacar las maletas” y salirse de las bases militares en el Golfo. Al pedido de hacer un comentario sobre las amenazas de Cheney contra Irán hechas dos días antes a bordo del portaaviones USS John C. Stennis, Ahmadinejad contestó, “¿Qué están haciendo estos forasteros en nuestra región?”

Los EAU, junto a Arabia Saudita, Kuwait, Omán, Bahréin, Qatar y hasta Cisjordania, son gobernados por monarquías semif feudales cuyo poder y vasta riqueza están defendidas por la fuerza de las armas y las bases de los EEUU en la región. Todos estos regímenes tienen miedo de que la guerra de los EEUU en Irak y la amenaza de guerra contra Irán puedan socavar su odiado dominio. En cada una de estas tres monarquías cualquier intento de efectuar un cambio democrático es brutalmente aplastado.

Además de la enorme fuerza que el Pentágono tiene en Irak, más de 40.000 tropas están desplegadas en otros países del Golfo, junto a 20.000 marineros e

infantería de marina en portaaviones y otros buques de guerra.

Ahmadinejad salió de los EAU para una visita de dos días al vecino Sultanado de Omán, donde EEUU tiene el uso de cuatro bases aéreas. Irán y Omán están en orillas opuestas del estratégico Estrecho de Hormuz, a través del cual pasan dos quintas partes de todos los cargamentos del petróleo mundial.

La agencia de noticias estatal de Irán, IRNA, reportó el 14 de mayo que Ahmadinejad espera establecer oficinas gubernamentales de comercio en Muscat, la capital de Omán y en la ciudad portuaria de Jasab, que está ubicada cerca del estrecho, justamente frente a Irán. En Jasab también está un aeropuerto que ha sido utilizado por el Pentágono como base militar.

Cheney vendió tecnología nuclear a Irán

Hasta que ocurrió el explosivo ascenso de millones de trabajadores y campesinos en la revolución del 1979, Irán también había sido liderado por una odiada familia real fabulosamente rica—el Sha y la dinastía Pahlavi. Como era el país más grande y poblado de la región, Irán fue considerado la fuerza policial de los EEUU para la región entera.

La dictadura del Sha fue impuesta a Irán después de que un golpe de estado dirigido por la CIA en 1953 derrocará el gobierno de Mohamed Mossadegh, que fue elegido democráticamente. Durante los años en que el Pentágono era el verdadero poder en Irán, cuando su riqueza petrolera fluía a los canales de las corporaciones, bancos y contratistas militares de los EEUU, Washington estaba ansiosa por construir una industria masiva de energía nuclear en Irán.

Fueron Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld y Paul Wolfowitz, oficiales todos en la administración de Gerald Ford, que en 1976 coordinaron la venta de plantas nucleares y grandes cantidades de plutonio y uranio enriquecido—la misma tecnología que George W. Bush y Cheney dicen ahora que Irán no debe adquirir o desarrollar.

En 1976 Cheney era jefe de personal, Rumsfeld secretario de defensa y Wolfowitz responsable de las cuestiones de no-proliferación en la Agencia de Control y Desarmamento de Armas. Su punto de vista entonces era que Irán debía gastar miles de millones de dólares para comprar, a corporaciones estadounidenses, más de 20 reactores nucleares. (Washington Post, 27 de mayo, 2005)

Todo este desarrollo tecnológico fue cortado después de la Revolución Iraní de 1979. La energía nuclear iraní se

convirtió en una “amenaza” tan pronto las corporaciones petroleras estadounidenses no tuvieron acceso ilimitado a la fantástica riqueza de petróleo de Irán y los Estados Unidos perdiera su fuerza policial iraní en la región.

La erosión del control estadounidense

Bajo la dictadura del Sha, Washington podía dominar toda la región al armar el ejército iraní. El Pentágono no necesitaba estacionar decenas de miles de tropas estadounidenses en el Golfo. No necesitaba una cadena de bases militares. Irán fue la policía para toda la región. Pero después de la Revolución Iraní, la posición global de Washington cambió drásticamente.

En 1979, después de que el poder corporativo estadounidense perdiera el control del país más grande y poblado de la región, tuvo que hacer que Washington comenzara a enviar tropas estadounidenses y establecer bases en otros lugares en un esfuerzo de preservar sus fabulosas ganancias.

Hoy en día — aún con dos grupos de portaaviones en el Golfo, decenas de miles de tropas en la región y 150.000 tropas en Irak — el dominio que los imperialistas estadounidenses tenían en esa región se está claramente perdiendo.

Cada esfuerzo de mantener su posición a través de guerras e invasiones ha resultado en más erosión de su control.

Washington trató de debilitar los estados del Golfo armando a ambos países, Irán e Irak durante la guerra de 1980 a 1988. La estrategia, como la explicó Henry Kissinger, fue “Espero que se maten uno al otro”. Más de un millón de personas murió en la guerra.

En 1990, con el colapso de la Unión Soviética, Washington trató nuevamente de re-establecer la posición que había tenido, esta vez a través de la enorme destrucción de la guerra en Irak. Luego, durante los años de las crueles sanciones de los Estados Unidos y la ONU contra Irak, Estados Unidos pudo mantener su asedio del comercio en toda la región.

La invasión y ocupación estadounidense de Irak en el 2003 fue el próximo paso para tratar de recolonizar la región. Pero el Pentágono y las corporaciones petroleras no contaban con la enorme resistencia del pueblo iraquí. Luego de cuatro años después de la invasión, está claro que la guerra para reconquistar Irak es un tremendo desastre y hasta los generales más importantes en el Pentágono consideran que la guerra es imposible de ganar.

La guerra estadounidense/OTAN en Afganistán también tiene problemas graves. El mejor aliado de Washington en esa región, la dictadura de Musharraf en Pakistán, se enfrenta a una crisis de manifestaciones, huelgas y paros de trabajo.

El viaje desesperado de Cheney por la región y sus amenazas desde la cubierta de un portaaviones no restaurará la dominación imperialista de los Estados Unidos. El odio a los Estados Unidos está al rojo vivo por toda la región. Más guerra sólo resultaría en más resistencia. □

