

Letters from our readers

10 April 2008

The following is a selection of recent letters sent to the World Socialist Web Site.

On "Bush snubbed at NATO summit"

I think the most important role of NATO after its creation at the end of WWII was to allow the then colonial powers, UK, Holland, France, Belgium, Portugal, etc., to continue to hold on to their colonies with military force, while the US "protected" the home front from external and internal "enemies." These countries were economically and militarily devastated after WWII, but this way they were able to postpone independence in dozens of countries in Africa and Asia for several decades. For the peoples under the colonial oppression, it meant years of extreme brutality and millions of dead. Because of that, I think NATO is in many ways back to where it started.

BS

4 April 2008

This is very interesting, as the story NPR was spinning yesterday was that President Bush won over NATO with regards to missile defense. There was no mention of this snub at all. Also, it is interesting to me how NPR, and the *New York Times* for that matter, refer to President Bush. When Clinton was president, both would refer to him as President Clinton in the first reference, then alternate between Mr. Clinton and the president or President Clinton. But if you listen to NPR, virtually every reference to Bush is as President Bush, or the president. Very rarely is it Mr. Bush. Just one of the many little ways our media tries to legitimize this horrid little man and his criminal administration.

CW

4 April 2008

On "US financial system faced collapse, bank regulators tell Senate hearing on Bear Stearns bailout"

I watched the hearing closely yesterday. Besides the obfuscation from every panel member, I didn't hear any questioning regarding the \$30 billion given for the questionable subprime paper. The Fed admitted it did not scrutinize this paper. My question is: How did they arrive at \$30 billion if they didn't look at individual securities. I have a hunch. Simultaneous to this debacle, Carlyle Capital collapsed. Also, Carlyle Inc., the parent company and the

source of the Bush and James Baker fortunes, was holding 17 percent of Bear Sterns holdings, all in subprime paper. I'm wondering if all the fuss isn't about the implosion of Carlyle and a backdoor bailout of its subprime paper.

GE

4 April 2008

On "Goodyear worker in Kansas dies after tasering by police"

Very good article on the Goodyear Taser death. There was one minor error in the article. You wrote: "In the 'drive stun' capacity, the Taser is held against a person without firing a cartridge, and is intended to inflict pain and incapacitate the individual."

This is correct, except that in drive-stun the Taser does not incapacitate, as it does in probe mode, because the spread between the electrodes is not sufficient to cause muscle disruption. Drive stun is purely a "pain compliance" device. Its use here was completely unreasonable, in my opinion, based on the facts stated in your article. Regardless, I really doubt that the Taser contributed significantly to this particular death. The tasings were relatively short and few in number, and were drive-stuns, which probably caused relatively minor metabolic changes. Much more significant is the 45-second period (I'll bet the farm it was actually much longer) that Haakespent was proned out, no doubt with officers kneeling on his back, getting cuffed. The asphyxiating effect of this form of prone restraint causes blood chemistry changes that lead to cardiac arrest, probably the mechanism of death here. I don't think this takes away at all from the criticisms of the Taser. In my opinion, the Taser is purely a torture device (akin to a cattle-prod) when used in the drive-stun mode, but it is not likely to be lethal. It has some merit in some situations as probe mode, but its risks of misuse probably outweigh those benefits. The civilian models are utter madness. On the other hand, as the Chicago study you cite proves that repeated "doses" of Taser five-second cycles while in the probe mode drastically lower blood pH (induces acidosis), which can trigger the lethal cardiac arrhythmias.

JA

4 April 2008

On "On-the-spot report from Central Australia: Conditions

of Aboriginal people in Alice Springs and the town camps”

Thanks, guys, for this honest and revealing account of what is actually taking place in the Northern Territory. Coupled with Richard Phillips’s long-overdue insights into “Insight,” this story reflects the truth about what many of us have known and/or suspected since the Intervention began: that the most appalling crimes being committed in that part of the country are being directed against the indigenous population, and have been committed by successive governments. Rudd is not going to change any of that for the better. It was interesting to read what the health workers had to say about the absence of consultation and the scarcity of resources, which, as pointed out, existed long before the blessed establishment decided to turn the region into a military zone. What a horrid state of affairs!

NA

Sydney, Australia

7 April 2008

On “Australia: SBS television’s bogus debate on Northern Territory intervention”

<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2008/apr2008/>

Thank you for telling it like it really was. This programme was a prime example of how the media is being used to convince the general public that the intervention is a good thing and is working. We on the ground know it is not. This is blatant propaganda. SBS has rejected legitimate criticism of this programme and, like the rest of Australia, is not listening. Please keep up your work of telling the true story.

MH

Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Australia

5 April 2008

On “On eve of Petraeus testimony, US launches raids on Baghdad’s Sadr City”

With each passing day and new event on the labor front, on the economic front, and in foreign policy, does it not seem we are reaching toward a tipping point?

On the labor front, the top class, today represented by Mr. Dauch of American Axle, demands a decline in wages. The little man wants the wages to go up. The interest of each class is irreconcilable to the other. Conflict and decision are unavoidable and inevitable, and the reckoning is coming fast. Both cannot have it their way. One class must win, and the other class must lose. Unemployment increases apace, layoffs continue.

On the economic front, contradictions continue to mount, the dollar fluctuates but tends to decline, imports increase, but domestic spending goes down, as inflation goes up. The investment banking system is stopped within hours of a meltdown.

In foreign policy, huge green sums flow from the US Treasury to a Green Zone in a large reinforcement of failure.

The scale of future interventions is reduced by necessity—historical, economic and political.

The latest successful attack on the Green Zone, with 3 killed and 31 injured, makes one awful fact very clear—those in Washington orchestrating this war and this “peace” have no idea what they are doing, except protecting their last few months in office and lining their pockets. Is this the crowning glory of their competence to rule or their lack of conscience? They have put the diplomatic and operational center smack dab in the middle of Baghdad, as if tomorrow they are not going to come under attack like today or yesterday, and instead there will be a sunny, reliable, bourgeois peace. Do they think this is the eighteenth century, that they build such thick fortresses in the heart of the city, like the Bastille? It almost makes me wonder if they take out high, mighty, yet private insurance policies on their soldiers’ heads so they can make out on their deaths. It goes to show, in case one was surprised, that a lack of conscience or a socio-pathology does not guarantee a sound strategic or tactical judgement. Maybe there are a few good out-of-work odds makers from Bear Stearns, or a similar proletarian factory, who can put accurate odds on a repeat of an attack on the Green Zone in the future? But, never mind, this little problem has no need for such high-caliber, high-paid thinking and foresight, or for infallible input for that matter. Is this the beginning of the final stage of a tragedy, or just another bloody day in a melodramatic, sadistic pornography?

How long will men grin and bear this?

Johnson had the foresight to drop out of the race; Nixon, the courage or wisdom to resign; this one, and many others like him, nothing.

JB

7 April 2008



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