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Coup Sustained: Bush Regime Maintains Control Through Second Stolen Election by Matt Erard

Page 2

A financial crisis for Detroit, or highway robbery by Big Business and the Banks

by Michael Harlan

Page 7

Conservatives and Liberals by George Kropog

Page 11

The Socialist Party of Michigan's Letter to the Troops

Page 12



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Coup sustained: Bush regime maintains control through second stolen election

In the midst of the 2000 election controversy over Florida's hanging chads, lost votes, and judicial corruption, it was of little surprise that the most blatant forms of election fraud in the state of Florida received virtually no attention from the corporate media or the challenges by the Democratic Party.

As the corporate media focused on the battle for a recount of the ballots of those who were permitted to vote, the disenfranchisement of tens of thousands of African American voters resulting from the Florida's "felon list" went virtually unreported. Florida's 2000 felon list, which was later determined to be 95% inaccurate, was the innovation of George W. Bush's Brother, Florida Governor Jeb Bush and Bush/Cheney state campaign manager and Florida Secretary of State Katharine Harris.

The felon list, however, was not the only story to be obscured by hanging chads. The questionable election results from Miami-Dade and Palm Beach counties were at least mathematically possible. The same, however, could not be said for Volusia County where the election night returns showed Democratic candidate Al Gore having received a negative 19,000 votes. It was not until a poll monitor noticed Gore's votes decreasing throughout the evening that the errors in the county results were detected.

After election officials sent the Volusia County results to

the media, the machines were restarted and produced a new set of votes showing Gore in the lead. A later report by CBS however, stated that the network would not have called the election for Bush at 2:17AM had it not been for the phony results from Volusia County; an action which shaped public sentiment for the rest of the recount battle.

Volusia County like many other counties in the 2000 election used optiscan voting machines with votes tabulated by a computer manufactured and maintained by Diebold Election Systems. Since the Volusia County irregularities in 2000, several teams of computer scientists have revealed that Diebold machines and tabulators, which are all hooked up to modems, can easily be hacked with no record of changes or evidence of tampering.

Changing vote totals is possible not only by hacking into the machines themselves, but also by hacking into the central tabulators which run on simple PCs using Windows and tabulate up to two million votes at a time. Thousands of pages of Diebold's internal documents showing the machines' vulnerability to tampering were later posted on the internet by investigators led by Black Box Voting author Bev Harris, resulting in cease-and-desist orders from Diebold. Diebold eventually dropped the orders after their publicity began to increase the documents' level of exposure.

In what was ironically portrayed as an effort to correct the problems with Florida's voting machines, the movement for touch-screen electronic voting for the 2004 election became increasingly popular with the media and state election officials across the country. As numerous states and counties prepared for the switch to touch screen computerized voting, Diebold, along with Triad Election Systems and Elections Systems and Software (ES&S), were first in line to soak up every dollar.

All three companies have had longstanding ties with the Republican Party. Diebold CEO Wally O'Dell is a personal friend of George W. Bush who visited him at his Crawford Ranch a year before the November elections. O'Dell also sponsored a \$600,000 fundraiser for Dick Cheney in July of 2003. Most troublesome was a Republican fundraising letter written by O'Dell in August 2003 that stated that he is "committed to helping Ohio deliver its electoral votes to the president."

Republican Senator Chuck Hagel of Nebraska, who was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1996, served as Chairman of ES&S, then called American Informational Systems (AIS), until two weeks before he began his race for the Senate. Fortunately for Hagel, ES&S also happened to be the company that counted the votes in his senatorial election. In addition to the conflict of interest that his position as Chairperson presented, suspicions of computerized election fraud in his unanticipated victory were intensified when it was revealed that Hagel had failed to declare his position or stockholdings in AIS on his required personal disclosure documents.

Tod Rapp, the CEO of Triad Systems, which manufactures punch-card voting systems and wrote the voter tallying computer program for forty-one of Ohio's Counties in the 2004 elections, was a major donor to both the Republican Party and to the Bush/Cheney election campaign. Triad, through its affiliate, Psephos corporation, was also responsible for supplying the infamous butterfly ballot in Palm Beach County Florida in the 2000 Election.

In the 2004 Election, computerized voting was nothing new. Companies like Diebold had manufactured computerized vote tabulators for numerous elections in the past and already had a long record of consistently GOP favoring voting anomalies, such as the false vote totals in Volusia County in 2000 and significant irregularities in the vote totals from Diebold's election tabulators in the California recall election of 2003. What was new to the 2004 elections was the widespread use of touch-screen voting machines, which use the same voting tabulators as in earlier elections, but leave no paper trail.

Touch-screen voting machines, like the tabulators they connect to, are not based on an open source code leaving election workers and voters with no knowledge of the accuracy and reliability of their counting mechanisms. For the manufacturing of touch-screen voting machines in the 2004 election as well as significant percentage of vote tabulators, Diebold was the market leader.

When the Ohio exit polls on Election Day showed a four percent lead by Kerry/Edwards over the incumbent, it was

deemed by most election experts as a matter of near certainty that Bush would lose the state. Consequently, it came as quite a surprise to analysts when Bush won Ohio over Kerry by 52.1% to 49.8%. Similarly in Florida, Bush was expected to win over Kerry by the extremely narrow margin of 49.8% to 49.7%. After the election, however, Bush had defeated Kerry in Florida by 52.1% to 47.1%. Additionally, in Pennsylvania, where Kerry was expected to have a strong margin of victory after exit polls showed 54.1% for Kerry to 45.5% for Bush, the final election results for Pennsylvania showed Kerry beating Bush by only 50.8% to 48.6%.

According to University of Pennsylvania Professor Steven Freeman, whose expertise includes research methodology, "the likelihood of any two of these statistical anomalies occurring together is on the order of one-in-a-million. The odds against all three occurring together are 250 million to one." What exit pollsters apparently forgot to include in the margin of error was that computerized machines manufactured by GOP-beholden companies are responsible for the actual counting of the votes.

These anomalies between exit polls and final election results become even more chilling when statistical analysis revealed that results from states and districts using electronic voting gave an advantage of around 5% to Bush while the final results from states and districts using traditional voting methods were almost identical to the exit polls.

These anomalies were not only between exit poll and final election results, however.

Drastic irregularities were also found in the percentage of registered Democrats in Florida and Ohio who voted for Bush. In Baker County Florida for example where 69.3% of voters are registered Democrats, Bush received nearly four times as many votes as Kerry. In Dixie County where 77.5% of voters are registered Democrats, Bush received more than twice as many votes as Kerry. In Franklin County where 77.3% of voters are registered Democrats, Bush received 58.5% of the vote. This pattern continues, however, only within counties that used electronic optiscan machines.

Not only did electronic voting machines present significant irregularities in the results from exit poll and party registration disparities, they were also found, in numerous instances to have added thousands of votes for Bush. Palm Beach County Florida reported over 88,000 more votes than it had voters. Other counties in Florida reported a 400% increase in Republican turnout with a -60% decline among Democratic turnout.

Similarly in Ohio, twenty-five machines in Mahoning County transferred an unknown number of Kerry votes to Bush. The city of Gahanna in Franklin County Ohio gave an extra 4,000 votes to Bush, which county officials described as a glitch in the electronic voting system. The error in Gahanna was only noticed because it gave far more votes to Bush than the city had voters. Likewise in Miami County Ohio over 19,000 votes were recorded for President Bush after 100% of precincts had reported.

In Warren County Ohio, where significant election anomalies were reported, public observers

were locked out of the voting and recounting after election officials cited an unsubstantiated terrorist threat of ten on a one-to-ten scale.

Vote tampering, however, was not the only fraudulent strategy of the Bush regime on Election Day 2004. Illegal voter purging took place at the polls throughout the state of Ohio. Ohio's Cuyahoga County alone purged 10,000 voters over registration errors. Additionally, Ohio Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell's newly imposed restrictions on provisional ballots, as well as his unprecedented decision to reject voter registration applications based on paper-weight, caused the disenfranchisement of tens to hundreds of thousands of predominately working class and minority Ohio voters

For working class and minority Ohio residents who were permitted to vote, efforts were made to make the process as difficult as possible. As part of an effort led by Blackwell and the Ohio Republican Party to reduce the availability of voting machines in working class and minority precincts, thousands Ohio voters in Democratic strongholds were forced to wait in lines for up to ten hours in order to cast their ballots.

According to the Washington Post, the misallocation of machines in Columbus Ohio alone reduced the number of voters by 15,000 votes. Hearings since the Post's article have determined that this was a conservative estimate and that it is quite probable that the shortage of machines caused the loss of hundreds of thousands of votes statewide. Blackwell, who, like 2000 Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris, happens to be

the state chairperson of the Bush/Cheney election campaign, refused to answer any questions about the misallocation of machines.

To add to the problems for Ohio voters already imposed by fraud, purges, and misallocating machines, the Republican Party sent thousands of agents known as "election challengers" throughout working-class and minority precincts of Ohio, Florida, and Detroit to harass and mislead voters. Over 1,074 complaints of voter intimidation were made to the Election Protection Hotline on Election Day, not including complaints on other methods of disenfranchisement.

Republican challengers, often posing as election officials, misled voters waiting in line to believe that they had weeks to vote, demanded to see identification, challenged the eligibility of thousands of voters inside the polls, phoned and mailed voters notices about date and location changes for voting, went door to door to pick up absentee ballots, and subjected voters to verbal and sometimes physical harassment and threats. According to the Election Protection Coalition, more complaints of voter intimidation were received in Ohio than any other state. Blackwell, unsurprisingly, has refused to investigate a single instance of voter intimidation or misinformation.

As a result of the systematic vote fraud and disenfranchisement led by Republicans in the 2004 Elections, Green and Libertarian Party presidential candidates David Cobb and Michael Badnarik raised the money to perform a recount of the state of Ohio, despite the fact that voting

machines without a paper trail make a full accurate recount practically impossible.

During the course of the recount a representative from Triad systems entered a county Board of Elections office unannounced and illegally tampered with and temporarily disassembled the county's vote tabulator.

The Triad representative then suggested to election workers that due to the difficulty of memorizing the numbers so that the vote comes out exactly right, they should post the series of numbers on the wall while disguising them as employee information so that they would be unnoticed to observers. The hand-counters could then report those numbers no matter what the ballot count revealed. Since the revelation of the Triad agent's visit, Triad has essentially admitted that it made rounds to various counties throughout Ohio before the recount to provide cheat sheets to hand-counters.

Efforts to subvert the recount were not limited to the cheat sheets, however. Under the rules, or lack thereof, established by Blackwell for the recount, nearly all of Ohio's eight-eight counties violated Ohio election law by not choosing the precincts to be manually counted for the initial sampling procedure in a random manner. By violating the law requiring random choice of precincts, Ohio Election officials were given the opportunity to do test recounts only in precincts without known discrepancies.

On January 6th, for the first time since 1877, a joint session of the House and Senate were forced back into separate meetings to discuss the

possibility of electoral fraud after Senator Barbara Boxer and members of the Congressional Black Caucus made a formal objection to the certification of Ohio's electoral votes. Although widely depicted as a bold act of resistance by the Democratic Party, the House and Senate Democrats refused to mount any serious contention.

Boxer, likely motivated by the exposure of the entire U.S. Senate refusing to support the Congressional Black Caucus' challenge to the 2000 stolen election in Florida in Michael Moore's 2004 film Fahrenheit 9/11, was the sole Democratic senator to agree to officially sponsor the objection. John Kerry, most notably, refused to give the objection his sponsorship or support.

Although congressional Democrats made some references to systematic fraud, agreement was nearly unanimous among them that it did not detract from the legitimacy of Bush's victory. The final outcome of the challenge, in essence, was the recognition by the Democratic Party of the legitimacy of a stolen election and the dispensability of democratic rights.

As a political party of the capitalist class, a serious challenge from the Democratic Party would not have been possible. While beholden to the same business interests of the ruling class as the Republican Party and committed to the propagation of the same agenda, the Democratic Party could not mount an effective resistance without losing the support of its capitalist base. To mount a serious challenge to a stolen election would cause Americans to question the very legitimacy of the United States democratic

system. This is the same reason that the Democrats failed to seriously challenge the most direct elements of fraud and disenfranchisement in the 2000 presidential election. For the ruling class, such widespread systemic questions simply cannot be tolerated.

As socialists we recognize that there would be no substantive difference between a Kerry presidency and a Bush presidency and our efforts to expose election fraud and disenfranchisement are in no way an effort to help candidates of the Democratic Party win elections in the future. It is impossible, however, to truly hold a socialist viewpoint from either a principled or tactical perspective without recognizing that the struggle for socialism cannot be separated from the struggle for democracy.

Although the United States has

never at any point in its history been a truly democratic country, it is essential that socialists fight to defend the minimal elements of electoral democracy that the United States has established and maintained. Out of a fundamental commitment to democratic rights, Socialists fully support the citizens of the United States to vote for whomever they choose even when under the illusions of false consciousness and cooption.

As with the increased level of overt military imperialism and the emerging police state, we also recognize that ease with which a second consecutive election can be stolen by the Bush regime is only another symptom of the nascent fascistic apparatus being established by the U.S. capitalist government in which the Democrats and Republicans are united in their complicity. Ultimately, this emergent apparatus can only be resisted by revolutionary means.

Matt Erard

A Financial "Crisis" For Detroit, Or Highway Robbery By Big Business And The Banks ?

A Socialist perspective

We are hearing constantly these days about a massive financial crisis facing the city of Detroit --- a close to \$250 million "deficit", and counting. We read articles in the local Detroit newspapers (like the Metro Times, supposedly a "progressive", "alternative" newspaper) that play up the idea that Detroit has "too many" workers compared to other big cities. We are told that the "only" kinds of solutions are to lay off or fire permanently 900 or more city workers, cut the

pay of city workers, and eliminate 24 hour bus service on major Detroit bus lines. This last little item will mean financial ruin and homelessness for thousands of Detroit residents who are barely hanging on as it is and will now lose the meager night shift jobs that they cling to for survival. We are told that, "sad as it is, there is just no other choice". So what is the truth ?

The truth is that for decades now the federal government has stripped financial aid to the

cities of this country to the bone. The truth is that for decades the city "fathers" have given fat tax breaks (abatements) to big corporations in order for them to stay in the city and "provide jobs", when in reality jobs have been taken away and destroyed by these same corporations. The truth is that for years the city "leaders" have given in to the blackmail of big business and provided expensive infrastructure projects to make it cheaper to build stadiums and new office buildings for the profit of slick business geeks. The truth is that for years the city has failed to track down big property owners who are light years behind in their property taxes, while threatening small property owners and home owners with losing their homes and small businesses if they dare get even a little bit behind. The truth is that the city pays the big banks and bond holders Hundreds of million's a year in interest payments, never even touching the principal. THE TRUTH IS THAT HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS HAVE BEEN PAID BY DETROIT AND MICHIGAN RESIDENTS TO PAY FOR THE CRIMINAL IMPERIALIST WAR AGAINST IRAQ --- money that could be spent on healthcare, housing, job creation, and the creation of a decent public transportation system. ONE OR TWO DAY'S WORTH OF THE MONEY SPENT TO PAY FOR THIS WAR COULD TOTALLY ELIMINATE DETROIT'S "DEBT" AND TAX MONEY SHORTFALL, AND THEN SOME !

The truth is that we are being lied to from beginning to end about this "crisis". What is wrong is not that Detroit has "too many" workers making " too much money" or has too many buses. The truth is that Detroit is a captive of a social system that has priorities that have

nothing to do with the needs security and well being of working people and the poor. It is a social system that thinks it is OK to take bus service away from desperate people who can not survive without it, but that will not consider for one minute taking tax breaks away from fat cats or halting massive interest payments to robber baron banks. It is a social system that finds unlimited money for wars of conquest and plunder, but that just can never quite see any way to fund healthcare for all or make sure that the Social Security system is not looted to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy or to keep the military in hardware. That system is called CAPITALISM, and it must be replaced by a new system of real social-economic-political democracy, human rights, social well being, peace, economic security and justice for working people, health care for all, decent housing, destruction of racism and sexism, and much more. That system is called SOCIALISM. .

You may say at this point, "Ok, fine and good. An interesting idea, socialism. Well worth looking into. But what do we do right now, today, about this crisis facing Detroit ? What do you propose RIGHT NOW ?"

Fair enough, so here we go. But keep in mind that we do not and are not going to have the same assumptions about what is "OK" that the current system has We are not going to shy away from stepping on the toes of the "rich and famous". We don't give a damn about violating the "rules" of the usual game. We are uncompromisingly on the side of the working class and the oppressed people of this world, and so our "solutions" are not the same as those of the professional politicians or the

corporate CEO's. With all that in mind, this is what we would propose to deal with the immediate financial problems facing Detroit, the state of Michigan, and all the other cities and states (and the federal government too, for that matter). Along with that we will give an overview of the kinds of changes that we propose and envision that go way beyond just these immediate financial problems, because in the final analysis, the money problems facing Detroit can not be separated from the totality of the mega problems facing all humankind.

We must organize a broad and massive united front coalition of organized labor, the whole working class, the poor, the communities and organizations of people of color and other super-oppressed sectors; students, progressives and activists, etc. Call for and organize mass mobilizations, demonstrations, strikes, rallies, sit-ins, and facility occupations. This united front should demand:

- + Absolutely NO cuts in city services ! No layoffs of city workers ! No wage or salary cuts (except for high paid officials --- like the Mayor himself !). NO ending of 24 hour bus service! Expand the bus service and hire more drivers!

- + The stop of all payments to the banks, and the freezing of any further accumulation of interest. Then, slash the principal amount "owed" to the banks by at least 1/2 to 2/3 and slash the interest rate by the same amount. Or cancel the "debt" altogether. Demand at least two year's worth of retroactive payback of interest paid to the banks by the city.

If it can become the majority view (and socialists should push for this) demand the nationalization of the banks under democratic workers' and consumers' and community control. Take control of local banks under city control --- municipalization.

- + The immediate seizure of the assets of big business property tax delinquents to pay back taxes. If they can not be found or their assets are beyond the reach of Detroit law, seize their property altogether and place it under city ownership and democratic worker/community control to be sold, leased, rented, or --- better yet --- used for needed housing or other benefits to the people.

- + An end to all tax abatements for big business and demand back payments of taxes for at least 3 years of abatement.

- + An end to all city subsidies of big business projects. Demand paybacks from big business for past subsidized projects.

- + Raise the city income tax rate for the rich.

- + Worker-citizen review of all city contracts and vendor arrangements to ensure against rip offs and over charges.

- + Reduction of the pay of all city officials to the pay of the average city worker. For those who refuse or balk, let them go and replace them with elected committees and councils of city workers and community members who can hire whatever technical experts are needed.

The coalition should also organize mass demonstrations to demand an immediate end to the US occupation of Iraq. Bring the troops home now ! Slash the

military budget by 2/3. Use the money to rebuild the cities and to provide jobs, healthcare, housing and more for the working people ! Make alliances with troops and demand decent pay, housing, medical care, and benefits for them, as well as union rights and full democratic rights.

The united front coalition should also move to form a working class based, independent electoral movement to select and run candidates for office on a program of the above demands and other vital social and economic justice issues. No support to candidates or parties of the wealthy and of "business as usual" --- the Democrats and the Republicans.

Socialists would go even further. Socialists would educate for, organize for, and mobilize for the idea of a city government made up of elected councils of working peoples' representatives in all city districts, and a citywide assembly to represent the whole city --- to replace the current government altogether, as the Declaration of Independence gives us the right AND THE DUTY to do if the old government fails to provide "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. It HAS failed to do so, big time.

All representatives would be immediately recallable and be paid no more than the average worker. Such a new form of government would also hold mass meetings/rallies in all the big stadiums, theaters, and halls to give direct voice and power to the people so the kinds of miseries we face now would not be created --- or tolerated. This government would demobilize the current police department and replace it with democratically run and

controlled worker-community militias and patrols, based right in the neighborhoods, to protect and defend the people and ensure real safety and security. The new government would take control of the basic industries, the banks, and the system of commerce and place them under the full democratic control of the working class, oppressed peoples, and the general community at large in order to plan for and create abundance and a good, secure life for all. This kind of system is what we mean by SOCIALISM. This government, mass movement, and political organization would not be alone. The same kinds of struggles are taking place and will take place all over the world. We would work to organize with the working people and oppressed and progressive forces of the whole nation, and the world, for all the above (and more !) and move toward the abolition of monopoly capitalism and imperialism and the creation of revolutionary democratic socialism worldwide.

The fact is that Detroit's problems are not isolated. They are only a reflection of the kinds of things that plague the entire planet, and they can not be solved on a one city at a time, or even a one country at a time, basis. They can not be solved under the outdated and backward system of imperial monopoly capitalism, or any concept of overall capitalism. This fact must be faced and understood, and sooner or later, it will be.

So this is who we are. These are the kinds of approaches that we take to social, economic, and political problems and issues.

Not your usual, so-called "practical" solutions, eh ? All we ask is that you think about

it. Contact us and talk about it. Read from our suggested readings, available at michigansocialist.net. Check out the web site for other items as well. E-mail us at michigansocialist@hotmail.com .

Come to our monthly meetings (announced on the web site). Give it a chance. What do you have to lose ?

Michael Harlan

Conservatives and Liberals

While sitting at a teach-in at U of M on inauguration day, I realized that I was probably the only person in the room that would have attended a similar teach-in if Kerry had won and the conservatives were pissed off. Granted, it would have been very strange for me to be sitting there with my SPMI button on, with its modified version of the hammer and sickle plus pen, at a conservative teach-in, but I would have done it just the same.

Arguments made by conservatives and liberals are very stupid. They both believe it is inevitable that there will always be an elite ruling class. I think that many of them desperately want it that way. Conservatives and liberals simply wish that the ruling class were more benevolent, but they differ on how this "benevolence" is defined.

Arguments between conservatives and liberals are like a call girl peering down her nose at a crack whore, they're both prostitutes, they just have different philosophies about how to practice their trade!

During the teach-in, a student asked a professor who spoke about pacifism and told us that she was a Quaker, if she paid her income tax. The professor said that she did and that she didn't want the problems

associated with not paying her taxes. She didn't like that most of her federal taxes went towards the military, but there are real consequences in not paying ones taxes. The student rolled his eyes and said indignantly, "I don't pay my taxes and I don't have any problems. I refuse to pay my income tax!" The prof. just shrugged her shoulders.

Later, another professor gave a very interesting lecture on Social Security and the distortions given by the Bush administration. During the question and answer period, the same student who grilled the Quaker about her taxes asked how one could "opt out of the program." The professor said that Bush has not yet given any details about his program and he had no idea if one would be able to opt out of the privatization portion of the new version of Social Security.

"No, no," the student said, "I want to opt out of Social Security altogether and have all of my money go into the stock market."

Now I rolled my eyes.

I didn't say anything to him though. I'd like to believe that his views are atypical, but they probably aren't. Liberals love profit and a high return rate just as much as conservatives

do.

Accumulation of wealth and a select group of rulers who maintain power, this philosophy is shared by both conservatives

and liberals alike. "Free trade" is true democracy in their eyes. Conservatives and liberals deserve each other, we as the working-class majority of society deserve neither.

George Kropog

Letter to the Troops

The Socialist Party of Michigan would like to tell you that:

You Have the Right to Organize!

Military personnel and their families have the right to organize. Only you will watch out for your safety and security. Only you can protect yourselves from poor decisions made by your superiors. When bad things happen, do your superiors take the blame? Are they the ones who take the risks? Do your superiors consider the interests of your family and you? You still have the right to form groups and protect yourselves. The right to organize has never been taken away from you!

Don't Follow Unlawful Orders!

Your superiors may give your orders that go against the rules of war and your personal beliefs. You have the duty and the right to refuse any order that is unlawful.

The excuse of "I was only following orders" does not exist. During Vietnam, in the case of the United States v. Keenan, the accused (Keenan) was found guilty of murder after he obeyed an order to shoot and kill an elderly Vietnamese citizen. The Court of Military Appeals held that "the justification for acts done

pursuant to orders does not exist if the order was of such nature that a man of ordinary sense and understanding would know it to be illegal." The soldier who gave Keenan the order, Corporal Luczko, was acquitted by reason of insanity.

You Have the Right to Survive!

You still can consider your family's rights. Dangerous missions may occur, but you know the difference between duty and suicide. Nothing is more valuable than your life.

The Socialist Party of Michigan Demands:

- Full democratic rights for soldiers, sailors, airpersons and marines!
- Full union rights for all!
- For the right to refuse suicidal and murderous orders!
- For elected soldier committees and councils!
- All U.S. and other foreign troops out of Iraq and every other land now!

Organize and Protect Yourselves!