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Publication of the U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization

May 6, 2016

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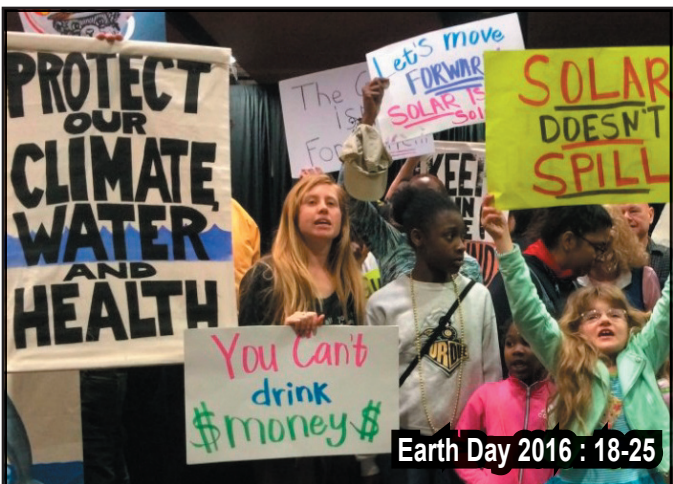
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May Day 2016 in photos : 1-7



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Earth Day 2016 : 18-25

MAY DAY 2016: INTERNATIONAL DAY OF WORKING CLASS UNITY AND STRUGGLE

Stand United in Defense of the Rights of All Abroad and at Home

The U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization (USMLO) salutes all the working people across the country on May 1, May Day 2016. We extend our revolutionary greetings to all those worldwide fighting

for rights and demonstrating this May Day, expressing the international unity of workers of all countries.

Today is a day to reflect on all the many battles that have

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ELECTIONS SHOW RULERS HAVE NO SOLUTIONS

Advance Independent Politics of the Working Class

With the primary in Indiana making Trump the presumptive Republican nominee, more leading Republicans, including Jeb Bush and House of Representatives leader Paul Ryan, are announcing they will not support him. Efforts are also underway to consider

having a different anti-Trump person, like Mitt Romney or Nebraska Senator Sasse, run as an independent candidate. Hillary Clinton meanwhile is openly appealing to various neoconservatives, like retired Army Generals Colin Powell

Advance Independent Politics • 8

EARTH DAY 2016

Organize to Humanize the Natural and Social Environment

Voice of Revolution greets the many people across the country and worldwide standing up to defend Mother Earth. Organizing continues on many fronts, including to secure a ban on fracking everywhere; to stop unsafe and environmentally harmful pipelines;

to stop the dangerous “bomb trains” carrying highly explosive fracked oil through major cities; to stop offshore drilling which has already caused tremendous harm to the environment and health of workers and communities alike, such

Earth Day 2016 • 18

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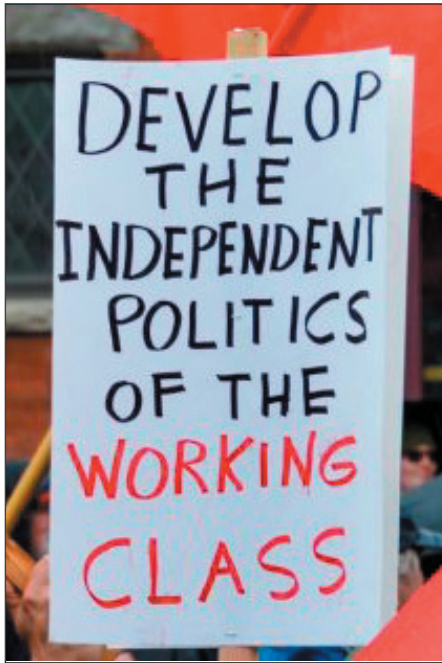
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been waged over the past year — against attacks on pensions, demonizing of unions, against racist police killings and brutality, against deportations and detentions, against U.S. aggression and wars and interference abroad, and for the rights of all, at home and abroad.

On the agenda is discussion on how to further advance these struggles, how to further address the issue of *who decides* — the rich or the workers? Who should wield the power, the rulers who have shown themselves to be undemocratic and incapable of solving any social problem, or the people. And can a change in power that favors the people be brought about, what steps and practical projects are required? For the many who are rightly angry with the rulers, with dysfunctional government, with an economy that cannot eliminate poverty and meet the rights of all, it is this agenda for people's empowerment that is front and center. It is an urgent problem of society to be solved. And it is the working class that has both the ability and responsibility to take up this challenge to find solutions.

In the face of the brutality of the U.S. rulers, their racism and chauvinism, their drone warfare and trampling on sovereignty, the U.S. working class shows its internationalist spirit by standing united in defense of the rights of all, abroad and at home. It shows it by rejecting the efforts of the rich, using the elections, to promote U.S. chauvinism and empire building and strive to bring U.S. workers behind the rulers in their wars and aggression. These efforts are to divert the workers from their own, independent,



anti-war, pro-social agenda. From their own aim to block U.S. empire-building, with its wars and chaos and advance the fight for people's empowerment.

The presidential elections, with its focus on Trump as the biggest danger, is being used to draw people away from the fight for rights, from holding the government to account for its crimes. It is being used to replace demands against the state, such as those demanding that all those responsible for racist police killings, from the top down, be held criminally liable; such as those to end deportations and unjust detentions, especially of women and children; such as those demanding the government uphold its duty to provide the equal right to education; such as those insisting that pensions are a right and governments must guarantee them, and more. Instead, we are to rally round the slogan, "Love Trumps Hate," something even warmonger Hillary

Clinton adopts!

The problem is not one of love or hate, it is one of rights, it is one of who decides, it is one of whether the rulers are to dictate, or the workers are to be empowered.

The targeting the U.S. state, which is racist and chauvinist and anti-democratic to its core, is vital if rights at home and abroad are to be defended. Anyone elected president of the U.S. in this period necessarily embodies its brutal empire-building, pro-war, anti-people and anti-planet qualities. That is the demand of the ruling class, that is the demand of its state machinery.

The working class cannot follow behind the thinking and methods of the ruling class. It cannot replicate its institutions, just substituting better people. Replicating dysfunctional institutions and methods, sticking to the agenda of the rulers and their election spectacle, serves to block and weaken the fight for rights and empowerment. It is by rejecting this set-up and fighting for one that empowers the people to govern and decide that independent politics of the working class can be developed.

The challenge facing the working class is to break free from the stranglehold of the rich and their failing system and advance instead the independent politics of the working class, centered on people's empowerment. It must create its own institutions, its own democracy, guided by its own thinking and theory. May Day is a time to focus on solving these problems step by step as we strengthen our unity and fighting stand in defense of the rights of all abroad and at home.



MAY DAY 2016, U.S. ACTIONS



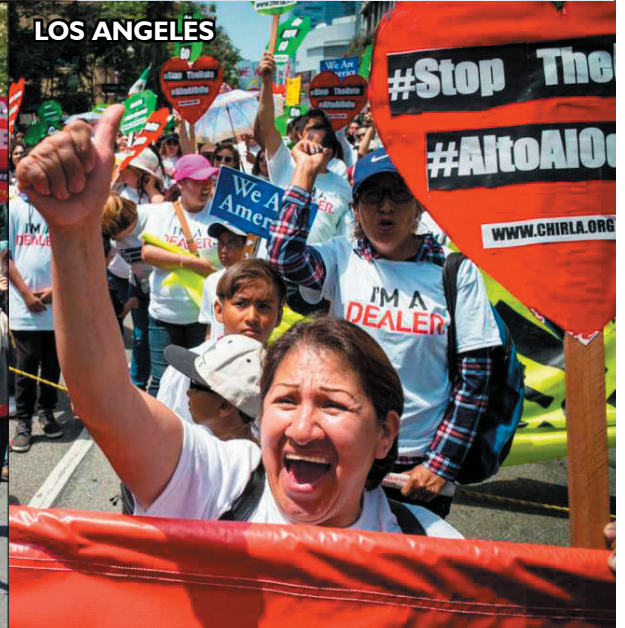
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF WORKING CLASS UNITY AND STRUGGLE



SEATTLE



SAN FRANCISCO



LOS ANGELES



MIAMI

MAY DAY 2016, WORLDWIDE ACTIONS



IRELAND



CANADA



ARGENTINA



BRAZIL



CUBA

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF WORKING CLASS UNITY AND STRUGGLE



PHILIPPINES



GAMBODIA



SYRIA



DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

KCNA



IRAN



Celebrating 30 Years and Defending Collective Bargaining, Workers Jobs and Rights



SOUTH AFRICA

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and Ray Odierno (who favored partitioning Iraq) and Elliott Abrams, former foreign policy advisor for Presidents Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush. All of which indicate that former arrangements, based on the two political parties of the rich vying for power, are finished. The parties do not function as political parties. What remains are vying factions of the rich and promotion of individual leaders, with their individual machinery, to represent them.

The disintegration of any semblance of a Republican Party alongside the open merging of various Republican and Democratic forces, as evidenced by the Clinton campaign, show party rule is a thing of the past. The open opposition to Trump, especially from the military, also shows that the ability of the existing electoral process to sort out differences and have a champion of the ruling class emerge, through the primaries, is also not functioning. Instead contention is increasing. Having unleashed Trump, in part so he could foment U.S. chauvinism and divisions among the people, the rulers cannot control him. He is billionaire, refusing to back down. Efforts to block his nomination are only further intensifying conflicts, both within the ruling circles and between the rulers and the people, as the illegitimate and undemocratic character of the election process continues to show itself.

The maneuvering now taking place represents efforts by the rulers to still sort out their conflicts short of an open, hot civil war. Within these circumstances, links to and support from the military and intelligence agencies plays an even bigger role — because without this the presidency itself comes under fire, something the rulers as a class are desperate to avoid. Hence the move by many who consider themselves Republicans to now openly support Clinton, as someone with close ties to and support from the military and who is thoroughly pro-war and pro-empire.

However, Clinton is widely disliked among the people and recognized as part of the establishment and solely serving their interests. Clinton will have a very difficult time suppressing the broad anti-establishment anger evident in the primaries. Thus, the role of elections to sort out conflicts among the rulers short of a hot civil war, while also maintaining the semblance of democracy in the form of the vote, no longer functions. And, as both the primaries and broad lack of participation in elections show, the majority is looking for alternatives that provide solutions. There is serious doubt about the legitimacy of the rulers to rule.

Government of Laws No Longer Prevails

The 2016 elections are taking place in the context of the significant changes that have occurred in governance. This includes the concentration of power in the executive and executive actions with no regard for the rule of law, including completely illegal drone warfare, torture, broad spying, indefinite detention, militarization of the police and their increasing racist killings, and the discrediting of Congress and elected governance more generally as dysfunctional.

The barbarity of the system — with its war economy that can

no longer provide even the semblance of opportunity, with social conditions deteriorating, with basic rights to pensions and jobs attacked, with a political set-up so blatantly favoring the billionaires that it welcomes the candidacy of Donald Trump, then says he is unfit to govern — has only increased doubts about U.S.-style democracy.

Further, the social conditions of increasing poverty and inequality are enforced using racist mass incarceration and continued police killings and impunity as well as the detention and deportation of men, women, children and refugees. Under Obama's watch, two million immigrants, mainly workers guilty of no crime, have been deported. This is one of the indications that reveal the government of laws no longer prevails.

Those vying to be president, like Clinton, represent the U.S. state, whose mission it is to ensure the rigged system keeps the rich in power. When we speak of the U.S. state, we speak of governance and police powers, including military might. Both exist as a single unitary power keeping the rich in power and the people out. Increasingly what we see now, both at home and abroad, is elimination of rule of law. All that is left of the public authority is its police powers, exercised by the executive as well as all branches of the armed forces, police forces and covert agencies.

When police powers are all that is left, the legitimacy of the rule is rightly questioned, which is occurring in the many demonstrations and other actions against police brutality and attacks on the rights of immigrants, refugees, teachers and many others. The elections themselves are further showing this rejection of the existing set-up and the lack of legitimacy of the elections.

Clinton is now being promoted as the one who can rescue the situation for the rulers. A sinister agenda exists to further advance U.S. empire building while covering up the reality that U.S.-style democracy lies in tatters. The government of laws that is required to legitimize rule no longer exists. It is beyond repair and must be re-established on a new basis, which empowers the people, not the rich — but this is precisely what the ruling class will not permit.



Advance Independent Politics of Working Class

The rulers, having no solutions and in the face of growing anger and resistance, will resort to more war and repression to stay in power. It is up to the working class, with its own independent politics and thinking, to advance a way forward. The problem presenting itself is not so much who to vote for, but rather, how to advance the aim of the working class and people for a pro-social, anti-war direction for the country.

It is not an accident that the elections are being used to keep the issue of more wars off the agenda and limit debate to a vote over Iraq — while war there, in Afghanistan, in Yemen, rages on. The elections are also being used to divert the organized resistance, which targeted the state, demanding accountability

for racist police killings, mass incarceration, deportations, attacks on pensions and more.

These battles for rights and the growing consciousness of the necessity for a new direction for the economy and political affairs, a direction that favors the people, are to be disrupted and diverted. Instead it is these battles for rights and against the state that must be strengthened. It is the independent politics of the working class that must be advanced, with demands for people's empowerment, for a democracy of our own making where we the people decide, not the rich. It is by discussing and analyzing how to strengthen such independent politics, how to involve more people in this fight, that the struggle for empowerment is advancing.

Clinton, Trump and the Danger of War

The government establishment and monopoly media have worked hard to present Donald Trump as by far the most dangerous candidate. He is the one promoted as a racist, as calling for violence at rallies, as unfit to be commander-in-chief, and so forth. He is the one who advocates morally reprehensible positions, like banning all Muslims, a position he reiterated after securing enough delegates for the nomination. Leading Republicans like Romney and McCain along with more than 100 “national security leaders” have openly said they would not support a Trump candidacy and continue to do so. George W. Bush's former NSA and CIA director, retired Air Force General Michael Hayden has said the military would not follow Trump's orders. Jeb Bush and Paul Ryan, both leading Republicans have also now said they would not support Trump. All of which supports the conclusion that he is the most dangerous candidate. Indeed, neoconservatives like Max Boot and Robert Kagan, have written that, should Trump be the nominee, “the only choice will be to vote for Hillary Clinton. The party cannot be saved, but the country still can be.”

In fact, it is Hillary Clinton who is the more dangerous warmonger. This reality is evident in what she has actually promoted and done, not just talked about. As Secretary of State Clinton essentially developed a dual presidency, where she pursued foreign policy and Obama often had to accept it. This was especially true in relation to Israel and Israeli aggression against the Palestinians and in the region. Connected with this, she is the one who said the U.S. should “obliterate Iran,” and opposed negotiations. She said, “I want the Iranians to know that if I'm president, we will attack Iran. In the next 10 years, during which they might foolishly consider launching an attack on Israel, we would be able to totally obliterate them.” She currently emphasizes more sanctions and continues to raise the threat of invasion.

Speaking recently at the American Israeli Political Affairs Committee, she emphasized that she would take the U.S.-Israeli “alliance a step further,” and as president a first act would be to invite the Israeli Prime Minister to the White House. Obama has recently refrained from doing so. Such visits are nearly always

a prelude to increased Israeli aggression with U.S. backing and military funding. Speaking about Iran and the agreement concerning nuclear weapons, she said, “This deal must come with vigorous enforcement, strong monitoring, clear consequences for any violations and a broader strategy to confront Iran's aggression across the region.”

As Secretary of State she pushed for invading Syria, which was further confirmed by the recent release of her emails. She also continues to demand a “no-fly zone” for Syria, which would increase the likelihood of confrontations with Russia.

Clinton also directly oversaw the coup against Honduras and ensured the U.S.-installed military government held power. This was an example of her dual-presidency actions, as Obama was thought to support the return of elected President Zelaya. The installed government unleashed brutal suppression against the people, including use of assassinations, such as that most recently against human rights leader Berta Cáceres.

Clinton has long-standing and close ties to the military and NSA, something Trump lacks. She is now openly striving to secure support from people like retired Generals Odierno and Colin Powell. She also has ties to leaders and military forces worldwide, which Trump also lacks. She is the one actually able to carry out U.S. plans for more aggression and war and has pledged to do so. Trump is not trusted, nor supported by U.S. rulers and military, as the open stands to refuse to support him and to defy his orders bring out. Clinton is trusted, and she is all the more dangerous to the people because she is not seen as dangerous.

U.S. rulers cannot afford an open battle between the presidency and military, as it would spell an open hot civil war. Efforts are being made to block this, including now a possible third party Republican candidate to block Trump but leave space for Republicans to vote for someone other than Clinton.

It is also the case that much of what Trump talks about either is already taking place, or likely could not be done. As president he will likely not even attempt to block all Muslims from entering the country, as it could bring impeachment or similar intense conflict that would undermine the presidency,

something the rulers are striving to avoid. He would need the State Department, Homeland Security, FBI and other agencies to support such action, which is not likely. What he can do is expand what is already being done, which is to subject people from Syria, for example, to more extensive, extra screenings, in the name of “terrorism.” Similarly, how would he actually accomplish deporting 11 million people, and contend with the impact on the economy? Or force Mexico to pay for a wall? The U.S. relies on immigrant labor, especially from Mexico, in part to force wages down and as part of their efforts to stir up fear and divisions within the working class.

A main purpose of these proposals from Trump is not necessarily to actually implement them, but rather to succeed in whipping up U.S. chauvinism among the people, so as to support potential war against China, for example. Trump has been left free to incite divisions and chauvinism among the people, even while being opposed for the presidency. This serves the rulers because to gain support for war among a population currently anti-war, such U.S. chauvinism is necessary.

While Trump is busy promoting such chauvinism, he also diverts from the greater danger posed by Clinton, who can and will wage more war, as her comments about Israel and Iran indicate. The U.S. ruling class is racist and chauvinist to the bone and always has been. Anyone who becomes president necessarily embodies that chauvinism and racism. Trump simply wears those colors more openly.

For people in the U.S., the issue of U.S. wars and aggression are among the most crucial. To stand as one humanity against injustice, there is a responsibility to reject all U.S. wars and warmongers — Clinton being foremost among them. The issue is not that Trump is the more dangerous, but rather finding the ways and means to step up efforts for an anti-war government. Constraining discussion to the candidates of the rich and their agenda serves to block the much needed discussion on the anti-war, pro-social agenda of the working class. What is needed is not the politics of the rich, but the independent politics of the working class and ensuring it is given expression, during and after the elections.

Hillary Clinton and Neoconservatives Ready to Join Forces

Jon Queally, May 5, 2016

As Donald Trump is declared the presumptive Republican nominee for president, members of the neoconservative establishment, disgusted by the prospect of Trump in the White House, appear to be heading into the welcoming arms of someone more sympathetic to their imperial worldview: Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton.

Steve Schmidt, a prominent Republican strategist and former senior aide to Senator John McCain, is just one of several political insiders to have made the case over the last couple days — and he has done so repeatedly while speaking as a contributor for MSNBC.

With Trump at the head of the GOP ticket, Schmidt predicted on Chris Matthews’ show earlier this week, “You’re going to see a concerted and organized effort by the Hillary Clinton campaign to go after senior members of the Republican foreign policy establishment — big names. I’m not trying to put a partisan imprint on David Petraeus. But names like Petraeus, retired General Odierno, Colin Powell, Brent Scowcroft — men and women who served in senior positions, in national security positions, in Republican administrations. The Clinton campaign is going to go after them. They’re going to go after them forcefully.”

On Wednesday, the Clinton campaign at least hinted at this approach by posting a list of people it described as “prominent activists, journalists and elected officials” in the Republican Party who have decided to reject Trump, quoting some who explicitly said they would vote for Clinton if she ends up as the Democratic nominee. A verbatim sampling from the list (which was further updated by the campaign on Thursday) follows:

Lifelong Republican, foreign policy expert Max Boot:

“[Hillary Clinton] would be vastly preferable to Trump.”

Billionaire Bush-backer Mike Fernandez: “If I have a choice — and you can put it in bold — if I have a choice between Trump and Hillary Clinton, I’m choosing Hillary.”

Elliott Abrams, former foreign policy advisor for Presidents Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush: “won’t be voting for Trump”

According to journalist and political commentator Sam Sacks, who spoke with D.C.-based Sputnik Radio about the same dynamic, observers can expect to “see a lot of the neoconservatives, people who were, ironically, very close in the George W. Bush administration... coming home and supporting Clinton, who has a foreign policy record that hews pretty neoconservative.”

Offering a taste of what this looks like, one unnamed Republican who works on national security issues for the right-wing American Enterprise Institute in Washington D.C., explained to *ThinkProgress* why he will not be supporting Trump in November and why Clinton might ultimately be the best choice.

“If a conservative emerges that approaches foreign policy in a principled, coherent manner, and that understands and values the important role that America plays in world affairs, I will support them,” he wrote in a text. “Otherwise, I have faith that Clinton’s foreign policy would align with what I’m looking for, and she would have my vote.”

With various factions of Republicans and so-called “movement conservatives” still holding the line on what has become known as a #NeverTrump effort, Ryan Cooper writes at *The Week* on May 5 that “Neocon elites are probably the likeliest faction to defect to Clinton, and what they’d want is blood-curdling

aggressiveness overseas and Benjamin Netanyahu in charge of Middle East policy.”

Not that this is good news in the mind of Cooper. And though he acknowledged it “would be bad” in numerous ways, he also suggested it might not make that much difference in terms of the Republican base. Cooper writes:

“Clinton probably won’t be able to get meaningful numbers of Republican defectors. She is absolutely loathed among the Republican base and has been for years and years. Reuters says 84 percent of Republicans have an unfavorable view of Clinton, CNN has them at 85 percent. While she might get a few prominent neocons like Max Boot or Robert Kagan, they won’t bring anyone over with them. And those few aside, the vast majority of the party will accommodate themselves to Trump eventually. It’s happening already.”

Besides, even if lots more conservatives came out for Clinton, the entire story of the GOP primary has been Republican elites completely losing control over the party. If they could not get conservatives to vote for Jeb Bush, there is little chance they will get them to vote for someone they dislike much more than him.

That may well be accurate in terms of the electoral calculus, but the deeper question is how Clinton’s ties to the neoconservative movement will impact foreign affairs if she is elected to serve as commander-in-chief.

Long known as an aggressive interventionist and regime change advocate on military matters — including her vote approving the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003; the leading role she played in the assault on Libya in 2011; her backing of the Honduran coup in 2012, her repeated call for a “no-fly zone” in Syria; and a stated commitment to back Israel’s subjugation of the Palestinian people despite the outcry of human rights campaigners — Clinton has an extensive and “hawkish” record.

And neither the question about the symbiotic intellectual relationship she has forged with the neoconservative movement, or the charge she is a neocon herself, is new. In 2014, the *New York Times*’ Jacob Heilbrunn wrote a lengthy examination of the question, “Are neocons getting ready to ally with Hillary Clinton?”

During an interview on Democracy Now! on May 3, journalist Jeremy Scahill described Clinton as one of the “legendary Democratic hawks in modern U.S. history” and said the former secretary of state is what he likes to call “a cruise missile liberal” — someone who believes “in launching missiles to solve problems and show they’re tough across the globe.”

And, as a profile in the *New York Times Magazine* last month highlighted, Clinton has made a concerted effort — both as a U.S. senator and during her tenure heading the State Department — of fostering deep and meaningful ties to powerful members of the global military-industrial establishment.

As Mark Landler, the author of that profile and a new book on Clinton’s foreign policy mindset, reported in the *Times*:

“As Hillary Clinton makes another run for president, it can be tempting to view her hard-edged rhetoric about the world less as deeply felt core principle than as calculated political maneuver.

But Clinton’s foreign-policy instincts are bred in the bone — grounded in what one aide calls “a textbook view of American exceptionalism.” It set her apart from her rival-turned-boss, Barack Obama, who avoided military entanglements and tried to reconcile Americans to a world in which the United

States was no longer the undisputed hegemon. And it will likely set her apart from the Republican candidate she meets in the general election. For all their bluster about bombing the Islamic State into oblivion, neither Donald J. Trump nor Senator Ted Cruz of Texas has demonstrated anywhere near the appetite for military engagement abroad that Clinton has.

“Hillary is very much a member of the traditional American foreign-policy establishment,” says Vali Nasr, a foreign-policy strategist who advised her on Pakistan and Afghanistan at the State Department. “She believes, like presidents going back to the Reagan or Kennedy years, in the importance of the military — in solving terrorism, in asserting American influence. The shift with Obama is that he went from reliance on the military to the intelligence agencies. Their position was, ‘All you need to deal with terrorism is NSA and CIA, drones and special ops.’ So the CIA gave Obama an angle, if you will, to be simultaneously hawkish and shun using the military.”

“Unlike other recent presidents — Obama, George W. Bush or her husband, Bill Clinton — Hillary Clinton would assume the office with a long record on national security. There are many ways to examine that record, but one of the most revealing is to explore her decades-long cultivation of the military — not just civilian leaders like Gates, but also its high-ranking commanders, the men with the medals. Her affinity for the armed forces is rooted in a lifelong belief that the calculated use of military power is vital to defending national interests, that American intervention does more good than harm and that the writ of the United States properly reaches, as Bush once put it, into “any dark corner of the world.” Unexpectedly, in the bombastic, testosterone-fueled presidential election of 2016, Hillary Clinton is the last true hawk left in the race.”

Clinton remains the one “true hawk.” And, as a nascent body of evidence suggests, the members of the pro-war and military establishment know it. (*Common Dreams*)



Third-Party Run a Daunting Task for GOP Establishment

Sam Stein, The Huffington Post, May 3, 2016

Hopes of stopping Donald Trump short of the Republican nomination ahead of this summer's convention came to a crashing end Tuesday night, May 3, after Senator Ted Cruz of Texas dropped out of the race following his loss in Indiana. What hope remains is being channeled into a Plan C: Have another Republican run. Around Washington, chatter about the possibility of an independent run by a traditional conservative is becoming louder. [...]

There are political reasons to run an independent candidate. A traditional conservative on the ballot who could peel a few points away from Trump would virtually assure Hillary Clinton of victory — giving business-minded conservatives who prefer Clinton a way to support her without having to support her directly. As importantly, a third-party conservative candidate could potentially draw in Republican voters disaffected by having Trump on top of the ticket, thereby giving a much-needed boost to down-ballot candidates.

“That would be good,” Tim Miller, Jeb Bush’s former communications director and a leading operative in the Never Trump movement, said of guaranteeing Trump’s loss by running someone else. “To the extent that there is a conservative third-party candidate that would give Republicans who can’t stomach voting for Donald Trump a person to vote for, and conceivably solve the depressed turnout problem, I think there is something to be said to that.” [...]

But the real problem with launching a third-party candidate against Trump is not the uncertainty of the results, it is making it actually happen. “There will certainly be some talk about it, especially for those who want a serious constitutional conservative to vote for,” said Doug Heye, a former top aide to Eric Cantor. “The challenge is that there is a high barrier to entry to making that a reality.”

Among the most obvious hurdles is finding a willing individual. That is because such a bid would be a kamikaze mission for the candidate’s reputation. A large chunk of the Republican Party would instantaneously blame the candidate for costing it a chance of winning the White House (presuming they sincerely believe Trump has a shot). And the official party apparatuses would formally oppose what the candidate is doing. Only a candidate with no plans to ever win the White House in the future would make the bid.

“Anything less than a unified Republican Party is ultimately helping Hillary Clinton become president,” said Sean Spicer, a top aide at the Republican National Committee, when asked about the third-party bid chatter.

Beyond that, a third-party candidate would be subjecting himself or herself to months of incoming fire from Trump, who is not exactly known for treating his political opponents tenderly.

“Who is going to run? Who are they going to put up there?” asked John Feehery, a longtime Republican operative who recently encouraged the party to rally behind Trump despite his own reservations...

Even if the insurgents were able to recruit someone to run against Trump, that candidate would have to actually get on a ballot. For the purposes of helping House and Senate candidates and denying Trump the presidency, qualifying in certain swing states would do (though appearing on all 50 would make the bid look much more credible). But even then, signatures have to be gathered and deadlines met. A group of conservative donors was reportedly looking into ballot access for just such a purpose back in February. Republican sources in the know say the effort has tapered off in recent months.

Still, a sense of panic over the impact that Trump may have on the party, and the alarm over how he would act as a president, has kept the talk of running someone else firmly alive. A top fundraiser for the party pointed to Sen. Pat Toomey (R-Pa.) as a candidate who would uniquely benefit from seeing another presidential candidate in the race: giving moderate conservatives in the suburbs a reason to go to the polls while not overly offending the Trump die-hards in the middle of the state.

“I think in Pat’s case, he is very concerned,” the fundraiser said. “And I think he is concerned because he has to run across the state, including in so many areas where Trump won’t run as well.”

But the question inevitably turns to who would actually be willing to help out the Toomeys of the world and, as importantly, do it effectively. To date, several top Republican donors tell The Huffington Post that they have been privy to talks to try to recruit a candidate, only to be begged off.

“There is [currently] some chatter around General [James] Mattis,” emailed one donor who has raised tens of millions of dollars for the party. “But I don’t believe it comes together.” (Mattis has said he’s not interested.)

Other names floated have included Governors Susana Martinez (New Mexico), Brian Sandoval (Nevada) and Nikki Haley (South Carolina) — popular Republicans of color who might help the party with the very voters Trump has driven away. But none have shown any willingness to enter the presidential fray, and they lack both the national name ID and personal wealth to make a run work.

Why do it? For a candidate with no future political ambitions, a sacrificial run would ingratiate them with an extremely high-net-worth set of Republicans, and could serve as a golden parachute from public life. Beyond that, there is little incentive. Unless you feel the higher calling, which some hope could draw Mitt Romney or former Sen. Tom Coburn back into the fray.

Other prospective third-party candidates are likely to support Clinton (former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg) and some long-shot Republicans will end up supporting Trump (think former House Speaker John Boehner).

“The only model for a third party bid would be Trump himself. That’s the joke of it. You need a megalomaniacal rich guy with existing fame,” said John Podhoretz, the conservative columnist who has been vocally anti-Trump. “He is the classic third party candidate.”

Support Verizon Strikers

More than 39,000 Verizon strikers walked off the job April 13, including for the first time Verizon Wireless workers from seven stores. It is the largest strike in the past five years. The company is pushing to offshore and outsource jobs, and to force workers away from home for up to two months at a time. Meanwhile it is making \$1.8 billion in profit a month, \$39 billion in the past three years. Verizon also announced that it will cut off striking workers' health insurance as of May 1.

Landline technicians and call-center employees from Massachusetts to Virginia, plus 100 Wireless technicians in New York City, are on strike. Members of Communication Workers of America (CWA), they have been without a contract since August 1, 2015. Joining them on strike for the first time are workers at seven Verizon Wireless stores. Members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) are also part of the strike.

Workers and supporters from various unions and community groups are filling the streets in energetic rallies, especially in New York City. Midtown Manhattan was a sea of 8,000 red shirts of the CWA the first week of the strike. Mobile pickets have been organized to be a hot on the heels of scabbing managers. Outside any buildings where managers are doing union work, dozens of strikers gather in a matter of minutes.

The workers also activated a union "alarm clock." At fancy Manhattan hotels housing out-of-town strikebreakers, hundreds of strikers — backed up by Teamsters Local 814 and the Hotel Trades Council — picketed loudly in the early morning hours. They succeeded in getting the hotels to cancel any reservations made in Verizon's name.

May 5 saw a national Day of Action, with various unions, community and rights organizations joining Verizon workers on picket lines and holding rallies across the country. A thousand members of the New York State Nurses joined the strike lines in Albany.

In addition various union locals and community organizations are joining to "Adopt-a-Store"— meaning they organize to picket and leaflet outside Verizon Wireless corporate stores twice a week for two to three hours.

In Tulsa, Oklahoma, Transport Workers from American Airlines, National Association of Letter Carriers, IUE-CWA Local 84809 members from Steel Warehouse, a local steel plant and those from AT&T picketed the busiest Verizon Wireless store in their area. As one worker put it, "We saw our union brothers and sisters in the Northeast struggling and we wanted to let them and Verizon know that they're not alone."

In Indiana, members of CWA Local 4900 organized informational pickets outside of Verizon Wireless locations in



South Bend, Kokomo, Anderson, and Fort Wayne. Local 4900 represents 3,000 telecom workers throughout Indiana, mostly at AT&T.

There is broad recognition that the attacks on Verizon workers, like those against Teamsters and their pensions, and teachers in Chicago, Detroit, Buffalo and elsewhere, are all expressions of the brutal anti-social offensive of the U.S rulers. Everywhere, the demand is for workers to submit to whatever the monopolies claim they need to be competitive in the global market. Instead, workers are demanding their rights to wages and benefits consistent with the job they do, and treatment as human beings, not machines.

As one IBEW worker brought out, Verizon is trying to merge jobs, so that all technicians must be able to do everything. "They're trying to mechanize our jobs more and more," he said, "to make us pieces of machinery they can just move around."

Said an AT&T strike supporter, "Whether it's Verizon or it's us, or any of the companies out there, it seems to be the same struggle we're going through —more work, less pay; reducing headcount; reducing benefits and increasing healthcare costs; cutting or eliminating pensions."

Verizon is also targeting more experienced, better paid workers. By demanding that workers accept being sent anywhere in the Verizon system for two months at a time, it is driving workers with families out. Most Verizon workers have been on the job for ten years, and the company wants to get rid of them and replace them with cut-rate contractors, whose workers are paid less and often have no benefits or pensions.

Along with the 39,000 strikers, the negotiations affect 80,000 retirees. The company is proposing to raise the price on their medical benefits at the same pace as current employees' benefits, even though retirees are on a fixed income. In recent months, crews of retirees have organized pickets and parking-lot blockades to defend their health care.

To join the organizing efforts, go to www.standuptoverizon.com or call your Local CWA or IBEW union office to join picket lines at local Verizon Wireless stores.

Issues at Stake at Verizon

Communication Workers of America

Despite making record profits — \$39 billion in profits over the last three years — Verizon executives have been pushing to offshore jobs to the Philippines, Mexico and other locations, outsource work to low-wage contractors and transfer workers away from their families for months at a time.

Some of the core issues for bargaining:

- **Offshoring Good Jobs** – Verizon has already contracted out work to more than 5,000 employees in the Philippines, Mexico, the Dominican Republic and other overseas locations. These offshore workers handle customer service calls originating in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeastern states. Verizon wants to increase the number of calls — and jobs — that are transferred overseas.

- **Outsourcing Work to Low-Wage Contractors** – Verizon is pushing to dramatically expand its outsourcing of work to low-wage non-union contractors. The company wants to sharply expand the amount of contracting out of outside line work, particularly vital work installing and maintaining telephone poles.

- **Hanging Up on Wireless Workers** – Verizon is also refusing to negotiate a fair first contract for Verizon Wireless retail workers who formed a union in 2014. Verizon says Wireless workers make the company huge profits, but it is refusing to give them any improvements — even though they are some of the lowest paid people at Verizon. Also, Verizon is failing to negotiate a fair contract for the 100 wireless technicians who maintain the network in downstate New York.

What Is at Stake for Verizon and Verizon Wireless Workers

- **Call-Center Closings** – Despite the high-demand for customer service, hundreds of Verizon workers are at risk of losing their jobs or being forced to commute as much as three hours more each day because of the company's plan to close and consolidate call centers.

- **Out of State Assignments** – Verizon executives want wireline technicians to work away from home for as long as two months at a time, anywhere from Massachusetts to Virginia, without seeing their families. Working parents like Isaac Collazo, a cable splicer from New York, fear they will be forced to choose between caring for their kids and keeping their jobs.



- **Freeze Pensions and Cut Sick Days** – Despite its massive profitability, Verizon is insisting on freezing pensions at 30 years of service and slashing five sick days. CWA already agreed in 2012 that newly hired workers will not have defined benefit pensions; instead they have a 401(k) plan.

- **Drastic Increases in Retiree Health Care Costs** – Verizon is pushing for retirees on fixed incomes to pay dramatically more for health care. This is perhaps the cruelest cut the company is seeking in negotiations, since retirees who dedicated their lives to the company are now being squeezed to further pad the company's profits.

Verizon Maneuvers to Not Pay Taxes

From 2008 to 2013, Verizon utilized tax code trickery to manage an effective federal tax rate of *negative 2.5%*, despite \$42.5 billion in profits. It actually got money back from the Government.

Verizon did pay federal taxes the last two years — on \$27.5 billion in profits — but its federal tax rate was 20%, less than its typical employee pays.

Over the last 15 years, despite \$121.3 billion in profits, Verizon's tax manipulations enabled them to pay federal taxes at the rate of 12.4%, far less than a typical worker.

And Verizon does not just evade taxes in the U.S. In 2009, Verizon converted \$1 billion of equity into debt, using a Dutch subsidiary, and escaped virtually its entire European tax burden.

Verizon is currently trying to slash the health, job and retirement security of its East Coast workers — despite \$39 billion in profits over the last three years.

DEMAND GOVERNMENT GUARANTEE CENTRAL STATES FUND

Pensions Are A Right!

The government is considering allowing the Teamsters' Central States Pension Fund, which covers more than 410,000 workers, to cut pension benefits by 50-60 percent. Many, for example, will see their pensions fall from \$40,000 a year to \$16,000 — that is below the poverty line. The \$18.7 billion Fund is the nation's second-largest multiemployer pension plan. Similar multiemployer union plans, all government-insured, cover an estimated 10 million Americans in the private sector workforce. Many are now underfunded and at least a million workers face similar cuts. The Upstate New York Pension Plan, for example, covering 35,000 Teamsters, has just announced its own first steps to slash benefits.

Workers have been protesting and organizing in many cities for several months, including a rally at the Capitol in Washington, DC. Teamsters from Buffalo participated alongside those from many other cities. Actions, including pickets and meetings of hundreds have taken place across the country. Eight hundred filled a hall for a recent rally in Detroit. Columbus and Kansas City drew 500 and 1,200, Minneapolis 750, Milwaukee 300, Cincinnati 200, Houston 300. Retirees have formed "Committees to Protect Pensions" in 20 cities, with Facebook pages set up in a dozen more. All are demanding that the government block the cuts and fully fund the pensions. As many bring out, the government provided the Wall Street financiers with a \$700 billion bailout in 2008, but is refusing to fund pensions for retirees. An estimated \$42 billion would cover current gaps in the multiemployer union pension plans.

The Central States Fund is among the first, and largest, demanding cuts and workers are acting to prevent such a precedent, knowing that many more retirees can be impacted in the future.

The government, far from guaranteeing these pensions that belong to workers by right, is the one behind these cuts. During budget battles last year, with a government shutdown threatened, language was inserted into the "cromnibus" budget bill in the middle of the night. There was no debate, many did not even know it was in the giant bill. The language required pension trustees to make pension funds whole exclusively by



cutting retirement benefits. Retirees and members are also blocked from contesting such cuts in court. While retirees can vote on reductions, the Secretary of the Treasury can override any vote and slash benefits if the secretary deems such cuts to be "systemically important."

The Central States fund is a "defined benefit plan," with workers getting a set, "defined" amount, depending on their years of service and age at retirement. Many workers sacrificed wage increases to ensure pension benefits — meaning pensions are basically deferred wages. Cutting them is a way of stealing wages for work already done.

Wall Street Makes Big Score

It is also the case that the large Wall Street firms manage many of these funds. The Teamster fund, for example, was taken over by the government in 1982 in the name of blocking union "corruption." In recent years, the government gave the bulk of the fund's assets to big financial monopolies, including Morgan Stanley,

Northern Trust, JPMorgan Chase and Goldman Sachs.

All the discretionary investment decisions for Central States Pension Fund are made by financial firms rather than by the fund's board. Roughly a third of the pension system's shortfalls — or almost \$9 billion — can be traced to investment losses accrued during the financial industry's 2008 collapse. And while the fund lost, these financiers made a big score, grabbing more than \$250 million in fees in just the last 5 years. But the government is not holding them accountable for making the pension plans whole!

In addition, these monopolies had the plans invest in their companies. By 2010, Goldman Sachs ensured the Fund owned \$43 million in Goldman stocks and bonds. Similarly, Northern Trust directed the Fund to purchase \$400,000 in their corporate bonds. As one expert says, the government claims to be concerned about corruption, but "doesn't seem interested in looking into whether or not Wall Street is on the take."

Pensions are a human right that belong to workers by right. It is the duty of government to guarantee this right. The workers are refusing to take the blame or bear the burden of Wall Street and government failures. They are demanding their pensions be funded in full now!

Teamsters Defend the Right to Pensions

Alexandra Bradbury, *Labor Notes*, April 22, 2016

More than 2,000 retirees and Teamsters from 20 states rallied in front of the U.S. Capitol April 14, calling on the Treasury Department to stop their pensions from being slashed by 50 to 70 percent.

The department's Special Master Kenneth Feinberg is slated to make a recommendation to the Treasury by May 7 on whether to accept the cuts proposed by the Central States Pension Fund, which would impact 410,000 Teamsters and retirees from Florida to Minnesota.

Retirees have formed "Committees to Protect Pensions" in at least 20 cities [including Buffalo]. These committees organized the rally, with support from the Teamsters and other organized forces.

Davey Grubbs, a volunteer organizer of the North Carolina Committee to Protect Pensions, drove for almost 32 years, beginning at age 21 — mostly doing carhaul, a physically taxing job that involves loading cars onto trucks. After two back surgeries, a doctor told him he could not go back to work. But Grubbs, determined to get his full pension, kept working "till I couldn't feel my feet anymore." After a third back surgery, he is permanently disabled.

"Basically I gave my health for the pension," he said, "and now they're trying to take it away." His pension would be reduced from \$3,400 a month to \$1,261, and the age he could draw it without penalty would rise from 62 to 65.

Back to Work at 75

The North Carolina Committee sent four busloads of activists, including Brad Colesworthy, who retired after driving a truck for 32 years. Colesworthy will see his pension cut almost in half, from \$2,500 to \$1,303 a month, if the cuts go through. He is concerned about his wife's medical bills and their mortgage. So at age 75, he is back to work full-time, driving a school bus.

Central States [Pension Fund] projects that it only has \$18 billion available to pay the \$34 billion it owes to current and future retirees, after the Fund lost \$8.8 billion in the 2008 stock market crash. At the time, Goldman Sachs and Northern Trust were running the Fund's investments, thanks to a 1982 consent decree [imposed by the government, supposedly] to rid the Fund of corruption.

[Since Goldman played such a large role in bringing on the financial crisis, many consider they should be held accountable for funding now needed — VOR Ed. Note].

Grassroots Movement

In North Carolina, retiree activists began their organizing by holding small meetings in restaurants. After the Fund sent letters out last year to notify individuals just how much their



pensions would be cut, "that's when we really started cranking up," Colesworthy said. "We had meetings all over the state."

They organized bus trips to Washington, D.C., to lobby their senators and representatives, rallied in front of a congressman's local office, and held letter-writing drives, generating 3,000 letters at a time.

"Our feeling is, if they can get away with something like this, what's next? Is it Social Security?" Colesworthy said. "This basically opens the door to any pension fund that has been underfunded or mismanaged to submit the same application."

Congress brought on the problem when it passed the *Multi-employer Pension Reform Act* in December 2014, after heavy lobbying from the Fund, with no public hearings and no debate. Neither the House nor the Senate voted on the bill; it was attached to the omnibus budget bill, literally in the middle of the night. [...]

Next, a Congressional Vote?

If Treasury rejects the Fund's proposal, the retirees will get some breathing room. The matter would be back in the hands of Congress, where it is unlikely anything good or bad could pass till after November's elections.

On the other hand, if Treasury approves the cuts, the Fund has 30 days to put the plan to a vote by members. In that case, "we will do everything we can to vote it down," Grubbs said. "Unfortunately, they stacked the cards against us."

The law allows a vote by email — which many retirees do not use — and if you do not vote, it counts as a yes. "So much for democracy," Grubbs said.

If members vote no, the law permits the Treasury Department to overturn the vote — and denies the retirees the right to sue. [Through their actions, many retirees are taking the stand that Congress does not have the right to take away pensions, which belong to all as a human right. — VOR Ed. Note.]

UPDATE

Treasury Department Blocks Plan to Cut Pension Benefits for Teamsters

On May 6, the Treasury Department rejected a plan to cut benefits for 270,000 Teamster union drivers and retirees who belong to the Central States pension fund. The proposal to sharply cut pensions was seen as an important test case of what pension trustees can get away with in the name of “rescuing” pension funds. Problems exist in part because of large layoffs in the industry and a situation where fewer workers are contributing to a fund providing benefits for more retirees. The government, instead of guaranteeing the right to a pension for all, passed a law allowing funds to make cuts, with the approval of the

Treasury Department. In this case, Treasury refused, saying the reorganization plans was based on flawed assumptions and did not demonstrate it would successfully rescue the fund. The fund’s trustees can submit another plan to pursue their efforts to cut pension benefits for hundreds of thousands of workers, who deferred wages to secure their pensions.

Thomas Nyhan, the executive director of the Central States fund, said the trustees had not decided how to respond to the Treasury’s rejection. He threatened, “Central States participants could see their pension benefits reduced to virtually nothing.”

Inequality Soars as Retirement Benefits Dwindle for All But the Rich

Andrea Germanos, Common Dreams

The dominant form of retirement plan for U.S. workers, a 401k is leaving many high and dry.

A report released May 5 from the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) offers more evidence that the shift away from traditional pensions to 401(k)-like plans contributes to inequality. As *Bloomberg* reported Friday, “The U.S. retirement landscape is starting to look like a Charles Dickens novel.”

These “defined contribution (DC)” plans, the report notes, “have become the dominant form of retirement plan for U.S. workers,” but 60 percent of all U.S. households in 2013 had no retirement savings in one. Further noting the wealth divide, GAO found:

“While 81 percent of working, high-income households had savings in a DC plan, only about 25 percent of working, low-income households had any savings in one.

“From 2007 to 2013, the average balance in such accounts held by white working households did not significantly change, but for black working households, the average balance in plans dropped significantly — from \$31,100 in 2007 to \$16,400 in 2013.”

Further, as noted by GAO:

“According to GAO’s projections, households in the lowest earning group accumulated DC savings that generated lifetime income in retirement, as measured by an annuity equivalent, of about \$560 per month on average (in 2015 dollars). Yet, 35 percent of this group had no DC savings at retirement. In contrast,

households in the highest earning group saved enough to receive about 11 times more per month in retirement and only 8 percent had no DC savings.”

A 2013 paper from the Economic Policy Institute showed how this shift away from traditional pensions to 401(k) retirement plans has been a “disaster,” fueling inequality and creating more insecure retirements.

Economist Dean Baker also noted that, “Your retirement prospects are bleaker than ever,” attributing it to “the disappearance of traditional defined benefit pensions and the failure of 401(k)-type plans to fill the gap.”

“The vast majority of Americans who expect to retire in the next decade can count on little income other than their Social Security. This is true not only for low-income workers, who have struggled most of their lives, but also for millions of middle-income workers,” Baker wrote. “Although Social Security is a tremendously important program, and provides a solid base that retirees can depend upon, its \$16,000 average annual benefit does not go very far. Many if not most can expect to see sharp reductions in living standards.”

And *A Tale of Two Retirements*, a report released last year by the Center for Effective Government and the Institute for Policy Studies, showed that 100 Fortune 500 CEOs’ retirement assets together totaled \$4.9 billion, the same amount as that held by 50 million families — 41 percent of American families — combined.

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as what occurred with the BP oil spill; and for alternatives.

In New York, for example, a statewide rally is planned for May 14 in Albany, demanding No Bomb Trains, No Fracked Gas Or Oil Infrastructure, No More Pollution. As organizers bring out:

“New York, and Albany in particular, has become a major hub for crude oil coming to the east coast from the Bakken shale fields of North Dakota. That oil has been rolling through New York on trains. One corporation, Global Partners, operates a terminal, which offloads crude oil onto barges to be shipped to refineries to the south. The terminal is situated in the Port of Albany, immediately behind Ezra Prentice Homes, a low-income housing development. Explosive bomb trains pass just feet from the playground and the back of an apartment building. Oil cars are parked behind the apartments off-gassing toxic fumes which waft through the neighborhood. Global Partners is currently being sued for violating its air pollution permit.

“From every end of the state, these trains are rolling through densely populated neighborhoods and cities. Oil trains come south from Canada along the shores of Lake Champlain. Trains come along the Mohawk Valley, through Buffalo and Rochester. Much of the oil train traffic passes through CSX’s Selkirk yard, where there was an oil train derailment in February 2014, and south along the banks of the Hudson River to refineries in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware.

“So this is where we plan to take our stand, to protect those most in harms way, and to say we must keep these fossil fuels in the ground for a just and livable future.”

Actions are also being organized to stop the Dakota Access



pipeline, to demand nuclear waste be dealt with in a safe manner; for safe drinking water free of lead and other poisonous and cancer causing contaminants, and more.

Control of Decision Making Needed

As people in the U.S. and worldwide advance their fight against fracking, offshore drilling and many other battles to defend and protect Mother Earth, they are contending with the reality that we, the people, do not control the decisions being made. We do not decide what to produce, how to produce it, and what use to make of the wealth we working people create. Instead, the giant energy and military monopolies, like Exxon and Halliburton, impose their monopoly right against public right and against Mother Earth.

The drive of U.S. rulers for profit and world empire is causing disasters and chaos, here and

worldwide. Indeed, the U.S. war machine is the single largest polluter worldwide and responsible in large part for current wars; for the refugee crisis; for contaminating lands and water on and surrounding their hundreds of bases worldwide; for fracking, including increased demands to do so on public lands; for yet more offshore drilling; and for blocking alternative energy sources. Stopping this war machine and fighting for an anti-war government is integral to protecting the human and natural environment.

Control, especially by working people, over the decisions that impact everyone’s lives is necessary to protect Mother Earth and human beings. The two are intertwined. Advancing democracy, so as to empower the people to be decision makers, is necessary to humanize the social and natural environment. Let us together advance this fight!

Lakota Lead the Fight Against the Dakota Access Pipeline

Jason Coppola, *Truthout*

Natives and non-Natives have joined together for a 500-mile-long relay race to deliver a petition to the Army Corps of Engineers in Omaha, Nebraska, which is expected to soon decide on a permit for the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) pipeline's construction.

As the start of 2016 shatters last year's record as the hottest year on record, the Oceti Sakowin (Seven Council Fires of the Great Sioux Nation) once again find themselves on the front lines of the battle against the fossil fuel industry.

Members of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe have established a Spirit Camp at the mouth of the Cannonball River in North Dakota as a means of bringing attention and awareness to a proposed pipeline and act as an enduring symbol of resistance against its construction.

The Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) is set to cut through several U.S. states, delivering hundreds of thousands of barrels of crude oil from the Bakken and Three Forks oil fields in North Dakota to Patoka, Illinois.

The Dallas-based Energy Transfer Partners pipeline will cross the Ogallala Aquifer — a million-year-old shallow water table spanning eight US states, which provides fresh water for drinking and agriculture — while twice crossing the Missouri River and running alongside the Standing Rock Indian Reservation.

A spill could contaminate the Ogallala Aquifer, one of the worlds largest, which is already in crisis and under threat of running dry in the coming decades. [...]

Cedric Goodhouse, the Hunkpapa Lakota chairman of the Long Soldier District of Fort Yates on the Standing Rock Reservation, said, "We are working on many fronts to coordinate opposition to the pipeline's construction." In addition to the camp, the tribe's government "is working through federal agencies as well as reaching out to their own communities and schools in order to educate their people about the consequences of the pipeline," he says. [...]

Natives and non-natives have joined together for a 500-mile-long relay race, which they are calling *Run for Your Life: A Relay Run Against the Dakota Access Pipeline*. It began on April 24 in Cannonball, North Dakota, and ended on May 3 at the office of the Army Corps of Engineers in Omaha, Nebraska. The runners delivered a petition to the Corps, which is expected to soon decide whether to grant a permit for the pipeline's construction.

"Don't Worry, It's Safe"

Energy Transfer is offering many assurances, saying: "The Dakota Access Pipeline will be monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year by full-time operations maintenance staff. Additionally, the pipeline will include automated valve technology that will automatically close if a problem is detected." However, not everyone is convinced.

Just last month, a leak of TransCanada's Keystone I pipeline



spewed nearly 17,000 gallons of oil in South Dakota, the largest spill in state history as officials struggled to find the cause despite similar safety assurances. This is the same TransCanada that would have built the Keystone XL pipeline, [which was blocked last November] after a long, hard grassroots battle against it by Lakota and ranchers alike, Indigenous activists, environmentalists and many others.

Dana Yellow Fat is a Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Councilman. He is organizing meetings with the Army Corps of Engineers and exhausting all avenues within the legal system as an elected official of his tribe. But he's starting to get nervous.

"This is sort of our last peaceful effort I guess," Yellow Fat said. "Our leadership has to work on the ground. Leaders have to lead by example, in my opinion."

"It's kind of hard as an elected official. I don't want to discourage our people," he says, "but sometimes its hard to keep 'em in check. You know, there's a lot of our people out there I have spoken with that believe so strongly about this that they are willing to lay down their lives if they have to stop this pipeline."

Yellow Fat cites the "Winters Doctrine" as the Lakota Nation's legal right to clean Missouri River water. The doctrine was based on a landmark Supreme Court case in 1908, which clarified water rights for Native American reservations.

"We gave the Unites States the right to use our water, not the other way around," Yellow Fat says. "The US government is once again allowing big money to trample all over our rights."

"We once had land as far as the eye can see. Now we are in a prison camp. Now they are chipping away at that," he continues.

Yellow Fat, representing the home of the late Lakota leader Sitting Bull, hopes peaceful means prevail. But he warns, "I get messages from other reservations in other states who are offering to come in and stop this in their ways," says Yellow Fat. "This is a fight for our future. Look at how our ancestors as recent as our great grandparents have fought and died for what little we have now. We are not going to allow them to take any more."

NEUTRAL IS NOT ACCEPTABLE

Nationwide Protests Demand Colleges Go Fossil Free

Nika Knight

College students in New York, Montana, Arizona, New Hampshire, Maine, and more are standing up to demand their schools divest from fossil fuels.

A series of sit-ins and protests urging universities to divest their endowments from fossil fuels gained new strength this week, as students at the University of Montana, Vassar College, Northern Arizona University, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison launched their own actions to combat climate change.

Two nights in a row, on April 25 and 26, multiple students at Northern Arizona University (NAU) were arrested for taking part in a nonviolent action demanding their school divest from oil and gas companies. “Our administration would rather arrest students than take serious action on climate change,” said Fossil Free NAU on its Facebook page. [...]

In Montana, 16 protesters were issued citations for trespassing on April 26 when they refused to vacate a university building where they were attempting a sit-in. “It’s not acceptable anymore to be neutral,” on climate change said protester Shannon Curry.

In New York, students at Vassar College on April 25 began the largest climate justice protest in the school’s history, staging a peaceful sit-in outside of the college president’s office. The sit-in was maintained for a week and secured support from the large majority of students, including a referendum.

“We cannot continue to fund our education with profits made from fossil fuel exploitation, which destroys communities and lives, not just the environment. How can Vassar claim to be a leader when it has so clearly fallen behind in the fight for climate justice?” said Martin Man, a college senior.

[The Vassar College Fossil Fuel Divestment Campaign facebook page reported April 29: “Over 400 students and community members joined us this week in the largest climate action in Vassar

history! From Monday through Friday, we sat in at President Cappy’s office calling on her to support divestment from direct holdings in fossil fuel companies.

“Due to the overwhelming pressure from students, alumnae/i, faculty, and community members, Cappy has conceded to many of our demands. She has promised to set up a meeting between us and the executive committee of the board of trustees and we have begun the process to rebalance the Campus Investor Responsibility Committee to make it more fair and representative...

“The Fossil Fuel Divestment Campaign continues moving forward. Join us in our fight against climate change.” — VOR Ed. Note]

Meanwhile, student protesters at the University of Wisconsin-Madison organized a march for divestment on April 29 and soliciting alumni donations for an alternative, fossil-free fund until their school agrees to divest. [...]

In Maine, Bowdoin College students advocated for divestment in a letter to the editor. In New Hampshire, Dartmouth students are organizing a rally calling for divestment and protesting their school’s invitation to Royal Dutch Shell’s climate advisor for a campus speech.

Leehi Yona, a senior fellow at Dartmouth and organizer of Divest Dartmouth, decried the “cognitive dissonance” of elite universities. “The college argues that its role is to engage in research; I argue that we are chronicling unprecedented chaos in very great detail, yet doing nothing to stop it,” Yona wrote.

“More protests at additional schools are planned for the coming weeks,” according to a 350.org spokesperson.

The environmental campaign *Go Fossil Free* has also collected hundreds of petitions created by students and alumni demanding their universities divest from fossil fuels. (*Common Dreams*)

Constitution Pipeline Stopped by Anti-Fracking Movement

Earthjustice, April 22, 2016

In a win for climate activists and the anti-fracking movement, and a blow to fossil fuel polluters and the federal regulatory agencies that enable them, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) denied a key permit to companies seeking to build a 124-mile fracked gas pipeline.

The Constitution Pipeline Project — a joint venture between four oil and gas companies — was proposed to transport fracked natural gas from Susquehanna County in Pennsylvania through Broome, Chenango, Delaware and Schoharie counties in New York to existing interstate pipelines. The pipeline route would have crossed hundreds of streams and wetlands, including those supplying drinking water to families along the proposed route. Using the power granted under the *Clean Water Act*, DEC officials rejected the companies’ permit application, citing damage the project would

do to water supplies along the pipeline route... [Resistance has included numerous demonstrations, legal action and more than 15,000 public comments to the DEC opposing the pipeline].

The nonprofit environmental law organization Earthjustice has been staunchly opposed to the project and represented a coalition of groups — Catskill Mountainkeeper, Riverkeeper, Clean Air Council, Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society, Delaware Riverkeeper Network, and the Pennsylvania and Atlantic chapters of Sierra Club — in pipeline approval proceedings before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC.)

Last month FERC gave the go-ahead to pipeline developers to clear-cut 20 miles of trees along the pipeline’s planned route through Pennsylvania. Pointing to the fact that New York State had not yet issued a permit, Earthjustice and other environmental

groups called FERC's move premature and illegal. New York's rejection of the project today bolsters support for criticism of FERC as an agency that rubber stamps fossil fuel infrastructure projects. [...]

Earthjustice attorney Moneen Nasmith said, "The 124-mile Constitution pipeline, planned to run through five counties and two states, and hundreds of waterways is the sort of massive fossil fuel investment that would have locked our region into continued extraction and burning of fossil fuels and irreparably damaged precious water resources at a time when we need instead to be

protecting these resources and speeding the transition to 100 percent renewable energy for all...The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission which is failing to do its job and evaluate the environmental and climate impacts of the massive fossil fuel infrastructure projects it approves. FERC is an outlier agency that, with every day, is exposed as being drastically out of step with its peers. It is time for fossil fuel industry enablers and apologists to step aside and let the rest of us continue the work necessary to solve the climate crisis and transition our society to 100 percent renewable energy."

The Flint Chess Game: The Politics of the Battlefield

Marsha Coleman-Adebayo, Black Agenda Report

The game of chess is a complicated game employing zero sum, competitive Machiavellian strategies to protect key political or military principals. The object of the game is to checkmate the opponent's king, and to protect the queen, the most powerful piece in the game, as long as possible. One fallen knight on the political chessboard of the Flint, Michigan water crisis is Susan Hedman, the EPA Regional 5 Administrator whose callous disregard for the health and safety of Flint citizens triggered her forced resignation although she has escaped any criminal liabilities.

Hedman was sacrificed to protect the EPA Queen, Gina McCarthy who could have used her congressionally authorized emergency powers under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) to seize control of Flint's environmentally dangerous designs created by the governor and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. Congress has given the EPA Administrator under SDWA Section 1431 this authority:

"...upon receipt of information that a contaminant that is present in or likely to enter a public water system or an underground source of drinking water, or there is a threatened or potential terrorist attack or other intentional act, that may present an imminent and substantial endangerment to the health of persons, the EPA Administrator may take any action she deems necessary to protect human health."

Thus, Administrator McCarthy failed to exercise her power over both the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and Michigan Governor Snyder. As a result, thousands of Flint citizens were poisoned with hundreds of children facing a life-time of medical and intellectual challenges.

CNN reported that low-level employees at the Michigan Environmental Quality Commission were indicted as sacrificial pawns in defense of the King, Michigan Governor Rick Snyder. The chess game is on in earnest now in Flint. However, to be clear, it's not that McCarthy or Snyder are of any consequence as individuals — it is the power that they so diligently serve that demands their protection.

The King and Queen in this scenario enjoy "sovereign immunity." These politicians acting on behalf of the "sovereign" operate above the law while the battlefield is strewn with the blood and guts of their minions. While poisoned water flows from taps inside homes, the Royals remain above criminal prosecution, if not investigation. According to news reports, Michigan's Republican Governor Rick Snyder has not been questioned by prosecutors (neither state nor federal) in connection to the crisis.

Similarly, there is no indication that the Department of Justice has placed EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy under investigation much less indictment.

But the pawns feel the tenuousness of their situation and with visions of prison in their future. No question, everyone involved in poisoning thousands of Flint citizens should be held accountable. But, at this point, those protected by power have been excluded from the process that is now being exacted against their underlings facing indictments.

It will only be through political activism and unrelenting protest that the actual political players — whose jobs should be defined by "the buck stops here" — will be charged and held accountable.

This week two state employees were charged with misleading the U.S. government about the poisoning: Michigan Department of Environmental Quality employees Stephen Busch and Michael Prysby. In addition, a Flint employee, Michael Glasgow, was charged with altering water test results.

One of the heroes of the Flint water crisis has been Dr. Marc Edwards. Dr. Edwards is a Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Virginia Tech. He is an expert on water treatment and corrosion. It was Edwards's research on elevated lead levels in Washington, DC's municipal water supply that gained national attention and caused the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to admit to publishing a report so rife with errors that a congressional investigation called it "scientifically indefensible." He is considered one of the world's leading experts in water corrosion in home plumbing, and is a nationally recognized expert on copper corrosion. When asked by BAR to comment on the recent criminal charges brought against low-level state employees, he offered:

We felt from the start, that environmental crimes were being committed in Flint by both the state MDEQ and an upper EPA administrator. Apparently others now feel the same way, at least in terms of the state MDEQ. On the basis of our experience and the evidence I have seen, the Flint employee charged did make mistakes, but he was also placed in an impossible situation and is not in the same league as the other bad actors. [...]

Had Flint citizens received precautionary warnings and water filters this crisis could have averted. But the same political players who now receive sovereign immunity and protections will remain above the law unless citizens across the country demand accountability.

CAUSES CANCER

Contamination at Largest U.S. Air Force Base in Asia: Kadena, Okinawa

Jon Mitchell, *Asia-Pacific Journal*

Located in the center of Okinawa Island, Kadena Air Base is the largest United States Air Force installation in Asia.

Equipped with two 3.7 kilometer runways and thousands of hangars, homes and workshops, the base and its adjoining arsenal at Chibana sprawl across 46 square kilometers

of Okinawa's main island. Approximately 20,000 American service members, contractors and their families live or work here alongside 3,000 Japanese employees. More than 16,000 Okinawans own the land where the installation sits.

Kadena Air Base hosts the biggest combat wing in the USAF — the 18th Wing — and, during the past seven decades, the installation has served as an important launch pad for wars in Korea, Vietnam and Iraq. Given the long history of Kadena Air Base and its city-sized scale, it is easy to understand why the USAF calls it “The Keystone of the Pacific.”

But until now, no one has realized the damage the base has inflicted on the environment and those who live in its vicinity. Documents obtained under the U.S. *Freedom of Information Act* reveal how years of accidents and neglect have polluted local land and water with hazardous chemicals including arsenic, lead, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), asbestos and dioxin. Military authorities have often hidden this contamination, putting at risk the health of U.S. service members, Okinawan base employees, and the 184,000 Okinawan civilians living in neighboring communities.

Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) and the environment

Japan hosts 130 U.S. bases — 32 of which are located on Okinawa — but the Americans who serve upon them and local residents know nothing of the dangers these installations pose to human health or the environment.



At the root of the problem lies the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), which makes no allowances for Japanese officials to conduct pollution checks within U.S. bases. Nor does it hold the military responsible for cleaning up land returned to civilian usage.

In 2015, Washington and

Tokyo tagged a supplementary agreement onto SOFA giving local authorities the right to request a base inspection following a spill. However so far, the Pentagon has failed to green light any such requests.

Since SOFA absolves the U.S. of all financial responsibility to clean up contaminated land, the costs are borne by Japanese taxpayers. The financial burden of military contamination is particularly heavy on Okinawa, Japan's poorest prefecture, where U.S. bases take up roughly 20% of Okinawa's main island but contribute only 5% to the prefecture's economy.

In Chatan Town in 2002, for instance, the cost to clean up 187 barrels of unknown chemicals dumped by the U.S. military amounted to approximately 20 million yen. Elsewhere redevelopment of land returned from Camp Kuwae, has been delayed for more than 12 years due to contamination from arsenic, lead and oil.

With both SOFA and the new agreement failing to protect Japan's environment, it comes down to Japan Environmental Governing Standards. The guidelines set out when U.S. forces need to report spills to the Japanese government, for example, after they surpass a certain volume or contain a substance listed as hazardous. However, they do not assign punishments to bases breaching environmental policies or hold the military responsible for cleaning up contamination inside or outside its bases.

This combination of flawed regulations and lack of transparency creates obstacles for researchers trying to ascertain pollution within U.S. bases in Japan. Scientists can only check

land already returned to civilian usage — by which time it is too late to prevent contamination — or conduct tests on wildlife captured near active bases to determine whether their tissues contain traces of toxins. Given these constraints, perhaps the most effective way to lift the lid on what goes on behind the fences of U.S. bases in Japan is the *Freedom of Information Act*.

8725 pages released under FOIA

In January, the USAF released 8725 pages of accident reports, environmental investigations and emails related to contamination at Kadena Air Base. Dated from the mid-1990s to August 2015, the documents are believed to be the first time such recent information detailing pollution on an active U.S. base in Japan has been made public.

The documents catalogue approximately 415 environmental incidents between 1998 and 2015; 245 of these occurred since 2010. Incidents range from small leaks, which stayed within the base, to large spills discharging tens of thousands of liters of fuel and raw sewage into local rivers.

During the 1998-2015 period, leaks totaled almost 40,000 liters (more than 10,500 gallons) of jet fuel, 40,000 liters (3430 gallons) of diesel and 480,000 liters (126,800 gallons) of sewage. Of the 206 incidents noted between 2010 and 2014, 51 were blamed on accidents or human error; only 23 were reported to the Japanese authorities.

The year 2014 saw the highest number of accidents: 59 — only two of which were reported to Tokyo.

Because large parts of the documents have been redacted and there are no reports for the 2004-2007 period, the actual statistics are likely much higher.

The impact on local water

Due to its location in densely populated southern Okinawa, Kadena Air Base plays an integral role in the supply of the island’s drinking water. Within the installation, there are 23 wells, some of which contribute to on- and off-base drinking water. More than 300,000 meters (more than 186 miles) of drains carry the installation’s storm water into local rivers — including the Hija River, which supplies drinking water for six municipalities and Okinawa’s capital, Naha.

U.S. documents suggest that mistakes and negligence on the base have repeatedly endangered this water supply.

For example, in August 2011, 760 liters of diesel spilled into the Hija River when an operator abandoned a generator tank prior to the arrival of a typhoon. In December 2011, 1,400 liters of diesel leaked from USAF housing on Camp McTureous due to officials ignoring a warning light; the fuel contaminated the Tengan River. In August 2011, a failure to empty a generator prior to the arrival of a typhoon caused the leak of 760 liters of diesel into a local river. [...]



As well as fuel leaks, the base mistakenly released at least 23,000 liters of fire suppressant foam between 2001 and 2015. In August 2012, a Japanese firefighter set off a fire system in an accident that leaked 1,140 liters. Then in May 2015, a drunk U.S. Marine released 1,510 liters in an act of vandalism.

Such foams can contain carcinogens, chemicals known to cause reproductive and neurological disorders, and, has recently become the focus of concerns both on Okinawa and in the U.S.

In January, Okinawa Prefecture announced that waterways around Kadena Air Base were currently contaminated with perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), PFOS, categorized by the EPA as an emerging contaminant. In 2008, levels in an on-base well measured as high as 1870 ng/L.⁹ The EPA’s provisional health advisory limit for drinking water is 200 ng/L. In March, the USAF promised to conduct tests for PFOS contamination on 664 bases in the U.S.

Ikeda Komichi, adviser at the Environmental Research Institute Inc., Tokyo, emphasized the potential dangers of PFOS. “Current research suggests it may cause cancer, reproductive disorders and damage the next generation. Pregnant women and young children ought to be especially careful to avoid consuming water contaminated with PFOS.”

Since 2008, Kadena Air Base has also spilled at least 1,670 liters of hydraulic fluid, a known source of PFOS; meanwhile drains from the base’s fire-training area, where foams containing PFOS are routinely sprayed, feed into local waterways.

Another threat to Okinawa’s drinking water comes from leaks of raw sewage, which the base apparently only started recording in 2010. In November 2010, a 57,000-litre spill contaminated the Shirahi River and the sea with sewage measuring 36,000 fecal coliform colonies/100ml, 90 times the EPA’s maximum limit for swimming waters. [...]

Lead and asbestos

Back on the ground, the FOIA-released documents point to

the exposure of U.S. and Japanese nationals to dangerous levels of lead and asbestos.

For many decades, a furnace within the installation burnt ammunition and “other exotic pyrotechnics” without any emission controls. In 1993, investigators discovered this incineration had contaminated nearby land with lead at 13,813 mg/kg and more distant jungle with 6000 mg/kg. There were “small farms and vegetable plots” in the area and the site was near a waterway.

Another burn pit, cited in an April 1994 report, was blamed for lead concentrations in soil exceeding 500 mg/kg with fields again apparently in the close vicinity.

The Japanese government’s clean-up standard for lead contamination in soil is 150 mg/kg. Japan has no standard for agricultural land but in Germany the maximum level permitted is 100 mg/kg.

“People working in the area need to worry about intellectual disabilities and damage to their nervous systems. Also if they inhaled this lead and other substances over a long period it may have caused reproductive damage and harmed organs such as the blood and kidneys. Because the levels are so high, there is the very strong chance that the land remains contaminated today,” said environmental expert, Ikeda Komichi.

She also criticized the reports for their lack of data on other heavy metals likely discharged during the incineration of ammunition, including depleted uranium, which the USAF used widely in the 1990s.

Moreover, surveys from 2000 to 2001 revealed serious contamination from asbestos in many buildings such as dormitories, mess halls and boiler rooms. Inspectors found large chunks of deteriorating asbestos materials scattered onto nearby lawns.

One of the locations was an abandoned hospital which, prior to 2000, had been used for “readiness training.” Investigators noted how military personnel had used axes and chainsaws to breach asbestos-packed doors — resulting in the spread of “friable” (easy to crumble) material across a 460 m2 area.

WHO estimates that asbestos is responsible for one third of occupational cancer fatalities worldwide. In recent years, Japanese base employees have struggled to win compensation from Tokyo for illnesses attributed to their work in asbestos-contaminated environments. Many were ordered to work without proper safety equipment. In 2014, the Japanese government finally agreed to pay compensation to 28 victims, but survivor support groups and base worker unions estimate the number of sick is likely much higher. [...]

Past Negligence Returns to Haunt Current Service Members
Before Okinawa’s reversion to Japanese rule in 1972, Kadena Air



Base and the adjacent ammunition depot at Chibana stored one of the largest arsenals of weapons of mass destruction on the planet: 800 nuclear warheads, a stockpile of herbicides suspected to be Agent Orange and thousands of tons of mustard, VX, and sarin gas. In the late 1960s and early ‘70s, two leaks of chemical weapons hospitalized 27 Americans while so much jet fuel seeped into local water wells that they actually caught fire.

During the 1970s, the disposal of surplus chemicals from the Vietnam War also contaminated Camp Kinser (then known as Machinato Service Area) with PCBs, heavy metals, pesticides and Agent Orange dioxin.

The current U.S. custodians of Okinawa’s bases know very little of their hazardous history - particularly when it comes to the disposal of toxic

substances.

At Kadena Air Base, documents dating from the 1990s to 2015 repeatedly record service members stumbling upon pollution caused, but not reported, by their predecessors. Underground discoveries include POL (petroleum/oil/lubricant) contamination, white phosphorous and abandoned storage tanks.

PCBs

This struggle to control information about past contamination is highlighted by the base’s ongoing troubles with PCBs. Throughout much of the 20th century, PCBs were a common component of electrical transformers but they were banned by the US in 1979 when linked to cancers and problems with the nervous, reproductive and immune systems.

During the 1970s, service members at Kadena Air Base stored PCB-contaminated oil in a 21-meter wide outdoor pool from where it was “subsequently sold for disposal off base or mixed with fuel and burned on base.”

The pool was located on a hilltop near Kadena Marina, a popular recreation spot, and past tests revealing PCBs in the sea suggest contamination had spread from the base via groundwater or storm drains. The existence of the pool only came to light in 1998 when it was reported by a whistleblower, sparking an official investigation.

Environmental adviser Ikeda has criticized such disposal techniques. Burning contaminated oil, she explained, can lead to the inhalation of toxins and the resulting ash can pollute the soil. Ikeda also expressed concern for local waterways. “PCBs can build up in river bottoms and then enter shellfish, crustaceans, fish and the entire ecosystem of the seashore. Because PCBs are persistent and bio-accumulate, if people consume the fish over a long period of time, the levels increase in their bodies.”

In the 1990s, Kadena Air Base collected PCB-contaminated oil

from “various locations on island” and leaks gave rise to a number of hot spots within the installation. Inside one mechanical room, contamination levels spiked at 17,000 mg/100cm². The EPA’s decontamination requirement for indoor areas — even those where access is restricted — stands at 10 mg/100cm².

As of 1999, the base only checked its drinking water for contamination from “PCBs and other constituents” once a year from a single tap. Water leaving the installation was only monitored four times a year. Today, the installation claims to test its water supply twice a year for PCBs and at specific intervals for other substances, for instance quarterly for arsenic and annually for lead. However the 2014 discovery of high levels of lead in water fountains in an education building and recent failures to warn on-base personnel of elevated PFOS levels have called into question the reliability of such tests.

Reports from the 1990s claimed PCB hot-spots on the base had been cleaned up - but these assurances appear false. In 2011, internal investigators slammed the base’s policies regarding PCBs as a “major deficiency.” They underlined the absence of a safe storage area for contaminated transformers and failures to label equipment deemed hazardous. According to the same report, in 2012, the installation had approximately 500 transformers but checks for PCBs had been conducted on less than half of them.

Recent reports reveal instances of transformers leaking and exploding. One email from August 2014 showed emergency teams’ frustrations after dealing with the third transformer leak within a two-week period. [...]

Contamination at Kadena Air Base: The human impact

Okinawa’s pollution shares many similarities with contamination discovered on military bases in the U.S. In 2014, the EPA listed 141 Pentagon installations as Superfund sites in need of remediation and last year the Department of Defense reportedly ranked third among the worst polluters of U.S. waterways.

In one of the most publicized cases of contamination, tens of thousands of service members and their families were exposed to contaminated drinking water for decades at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

The basic problem is that nobody yet knows the full impact of military contamination on people living on or near the 130 U.S. bases in Japan. The Pentagon has repeatedly attempted to downplay the risks to service members and the Department of Veterans Affairs has not conducted any surveys. Likewise Japan lacks a centralized disease control system, which could identify spikes in certain illnesses among civilians living close to military installations.

However, some Americans are convinced that pollution from Kadena Air Base has destroyed their families’ health.

“Kadena officials have known about this contamination the entire time but they will do whatever they can to keep it all hush-hush,” said Telisha Simmons.

Simmons and her family were stationed at Kadena Air Base between 2011 and 2012. Before arriving on Okinawa, none of them had experienced any serious medical problems but during their time on the island, one of her sons developed a brain cyst and her daughter bone tumors; Simmons herself was diagnosed with



a pituitary tumor and other serious illnesses, which resulted in a hysterectomy at the age of 35.

Speaking on condition of anonymity because they feared for the careers of family members currently serving with the USAF, more than a dozen parents described severe illnesses among children who attended the two schools or played on their fields [contaminated by the military dumping more than 100 barrels of hazardous waste] between 1999 and 2013. Illnesses include cancers, autoimmune, respiratory and neurological problems.

According to contamination expert Ikeda, children are particularly susceptible to toxic chemicals.

“An adult and a child can drink the same glass of water - but they can be affected differently because of their lower body weight. All of these substances found on Kadena Air Base — PCBs, lead, dioxin, PFOS — accumulate in children’s organs, damaging their bodies in a variety of ways.”

Paula Davidson and her family lived on Kadena Air Base in the 1980s. During this time, her two children developed illnesses that were later diagnosed as cancer. A third child, conceived on Okinawa and born in the U.S., fell sick with cancer of the brain. “I believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that being exposed to toxic chemicals on Okinawa caused his illness.”

Two of her children died in their thirties. “Now that they have gone, I guess they have just become another statistic,” said Davidson.

Given the severity of contamination on Kadena Air Base, these cases may be the tip of the iceberg of health effects on both U.S. service members and their families and Okinawans living and working on and near the base. The FOIA-released documents reveal decades of dangerous exposure, including Okinawan farmers tending fields tainted with incinerated munitions, service members and base employees ordered to work among crumbling asbestos, civilians sold PCB-contaminated oil without warnings; and on-base residents and Okinawans drinking water containing PFOS, fuel and raw sewage.