

BCA Dispatch

Newsletter of the **December**
Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy 2006

I favor the draft. No exemptions, no deferments, no exceptions. No outs for the rich and influential. If the elected leaders choose war, everybody gets called to chance being sent into a combat zone to be shot, shocked, bombed, or contaminated.

Those that don't like it can make damn well sure they vote for peace candidates, don't pay war taxes, and resort to disobedience by refusing to cooperate with the military. I trust enough would choose the latter and in the refusal process, clog the system to paralysis.

The present poverty draft system targeting the poor in search of a future and the immigrants in search of citizenship is unacceptable. It is a national disgrace—Everybody gets called or nobody gets called.

—Michael Dathe, Veterans for Peace

CHAPTER NEWS (Continued on page 8)

Chapter Calendar

* * Report from Venezuela * *

Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy's next meeting will be on **Wednesday, December 20**, at 7:00 p.m. at **Cambridge Friends Meeting house**, 5 Longfellow Park (10-minute walk from Harvard Square T station, west on Brattle St.), Cambridge.

Agenda

On 3 December, President Hugo Chávez was re-elected by a landslide. Our Boston delegation observed. There were no disruptions or disorders. There was dancing in the streets. Will the opposition again try a coup? How is the revolution going? How were we treated as Yankees? What's life like for the ordinary person?

Join **Richard Krushnic** of Boston's Affordable Housing Office and **Dave Lewit**, editor of *BCA Dispatch*—just back from Venezuela where they and nine other Bostonians observed the elections up close—to discuss these questions and their relevance for US elections and society.

— Refreshments —

U.S.: 3 Million Votes Hacked Out Official Count Belittles Democrat Victory

by Rob Kall, *Altermet.com*, 17 Nov 2006

A major undercount of Democratic votes and an overcount of Republican votes in U.S. House and Senate races across the country is indicated by an analysis of national exit polling data, by the Election Defense Alliance (EDA), a national election integrity organization.

These findings have led EDA to issue an urgent call for further investigation into the 2006 election results and a moratorium on deployment of all electronic election equipment. "We see evidence of pervasive fraud, but apparently calibrated to political conditions existing before recent developments shifted the political landscape," said attorney Jonathan Simon, co-founder of Election Defense Alliance, "so 'the fix' turned out not to be sufficient for the actual circumstances." (Continued on page 2 >>)

EL DIABLO LOS UNE



Pro-Chávez campaign poster: "The Devil Unites Them"

L: Opposition candidate Manuel Rosales, self-declared social democrat, governor of the oil-rich state of Zulia, participant in the 2002 coup. R: Pedro Carmona, cattle rancher, former head of chamber of commerce and industry, crowned "president" for a day during the 2002 coup, now living in Miami. Center: The Devil, aka George W Bush among others.

Venezuela: Sterling Election Process Chávez Wins with 62.9%, 72% Turnout

by Dave Lewit, *Alliance for Democracy*, 10 Dec 2006

In a sweeping victory for both the president and the election process, Chavistas of 24 endorsing parties sang and danced in the streets and exploded firecrackers as Hugo Chávez broadcast results early Sunday evening, December 3rd—a few hours after polls closed to select Venezuela's president for the next 6 years. Despite sporadic threats, opposition supporters of Manuel Rosales from 42 parties swallowed hard but did not try to disrupt either the process or the streets.

Opposition supporters, whose 2002 coup d'etat and 2004 bid to recall the president failed, had no dirty Chavista tactics to complain about. Our Boston Delegation of eleven observed the election, its runup and aftermath, in the mid-sized city of Barquisimeto, 200 miles west of Caracas. The process was outstanding—systematic and transparent. The citizens were well-informed and enthusiastic. Apparently all had good access to the polls, with government-subsidized assistance if necessary (no absentee voting).

Each person in our delegation sat with other observers in one of six rooms of a public building where balloting was proceeding. We each had been given copies of a voter's manual and the highly detailed election officials' manual as well—uniform nationally. The process with its safeguards had been widely publicized. Each voter got individual attention from attendants at 5 stations arranged in a "horseshoe", (Continued on page 6 >>)

Explained Simon, "When you set out to rig an election, you want to do just enough to win. The greater the shift from expectations, (from exit polling, pre-election polling, demographics) the greater the risk of exposure--of provoking investigation. What was plenty to win on October 1 fell short on November 7.

"The findings raise urgent questions about the electoral machinery and vote counting systems used in the United States," according to Sally Castleman, National Chair of EDA. "This is a nothing less than a national indictment of the vote counting process in the United States!... The numbers tell us there absolutely was hacking going on, just not enough to overcome the size of the actual turnout. The tide turned so much in the last few weeks before the election. It looks for all the world that they'd already figured out the percentage they needed to rig, when the programming of the vote rigging software was distributed weeks before the election, and it wasn't enough," Castleman commented.

Ed. Note. (Pew Research Center, 14 Nov 2006): With roughly 95% of the votes tallied so far in House races across the country, the overall partisan breakdown is 52% for Democratic candidates, 46% for Republican candidates and 2% for others. In actual votes, Democratic House candidates in 2006 have already tallied nearly 5 million more votes than they did in 2002, while the Republican tally is down more than 3 million from four years ago.

Election Defense Alliance data analysis team leader Bruce O'Dell, whose expertise is in the design of large-scale secure computer and auditing systems for major financial institutions, stated, "The logistics of mass software distribution to tens or even hundreds of thousands of voting machines in the field would demand advance planning at least several weeks for anyone attempting very large-scale, systematic e-voting fraud, particularly in those counties that allow election equipment to be taken home by poll workers prior to the election.

"The voting equipment seems to be designed to support two types of vote count manipulation--techniques accessible to those with hands-on access to the machines in a county or jurisdiction, and wholesale vulnerabilities in the underlying behavior of the systems which are most readily available to the vendors themselves. Malicious insiders at any of the vendors would be in a position to alter the behavior of literally thousands of machines by infecting or corrupting the master copy of the software that's cloned out to the machines in the field. And the groundwork could be laid well in advance. For this election, it appears that such changes would have to have been done by early October at the latest," O'Dell explained.

In a reprise of his efforts on Election Night 2004, Jonathan Simon captured the unadjusted National Election Pool (NEP) data as posted on CNN.com, before it was later "adjusted" to match the actual vote counts. The exit poll data that is seen now on the CNN site has been adjusted already. But Simon points out that both adjusted and unadjusted data were instrumental to exposing the gross miscount.

Simon, surprised that unadjusted polling data was publicly revealed, given the concerns after the 2004 election about the use of exit polls, downloaded as much of the data as he could in real time. Scheduled and planned revisions on the CNN site took place throughout the evening and by the following morning, the unadjusted exit poll data had been replaced with data that conformed with the reported, official vote totals. This was the planned procedure as indicated by the NEP's methodology.

Adjusting the exit poll data is, by itself, not a troublesome act. Simon explained, "Their advertised reason to do the exit polls is

to enable analysis of the results by academic researchers—they study the election dynamics and demographics so they can understand which demographic groups voted what ways. As an analytic tool, the exit poll is considered more serviceable if it matches the vote count. Since the vote count is assumed to be gospel, congruence with that count is therefore assumed to give the most accurate picture of the behavior of the electorate and its subgroups.

"In 2004 they had to weight it very heavily, to the point that the party turnout was 37% Democrat and 37% Republican, which has never been the case--leading to the claim that Rove turned out the Republican vote. This was nowhere witnessed, no lines in Republican voting places were reported. As ridiculous as that was, the distortion of actual turnout was even greater in 2006. The adjusted poll's sample, to match the vote count, had to consist of 49% 2004 Bush voters and only 43% 2004 Kerry voters, more than twice the actual margin of 2.8%. This may not seem like that much, but it translates into more than a 3,000,000 vote shift nationwide, which, depending on targeting, was enough to have altered the outcome of dozens of federal races.

"It should be very clear that weighting by a variety of carefully selected demographic categories, which yields the pre-adjustment exit polls, presents a truly representative electorate by every available standard except the vote count in the present election. So you have a choice: you can believe in an electorate composed of the correct proportions of men and women, young and old, rural and urban, ethnic and income groups, Democrats, Republicans, and Independents—or you can believe the machines. Anyone who has ever wondered what is really in a hot dog should be aware that the machines are designed, programmed, deployed, and serviced by avowedly partisan vendors, and can easily be set up to generate entirely false counts with no one the wiser, least of all the voters."

Simon concluded, "These machines are completely and utterly black box. The idea that we have this enormous burden of proof that they are miscounting, and there's no burden of proof that they are counting accurately--that, first and foremost, has to change."

Rob Kall is executive editor and publisher of OpEdNews.com where this article first appeared, president of Futurehealth, Inc, and organizer of conferences on storying, neurofeedback, and positive psychology.

EDITORIAL

Compare Costs of Balloting Methods!

by Dave Lewit, Alliance for Democracy, 24 Nov 2006

America has long been snookered by corporate-selected, hi-tech toys. What price are we paying for electronic "bells & whistles" on fancy cars? For ever-bigger TV? Cell phones everywhere? Mammoth hi-tech weapon systems? Sealed skyscrapers? Greenhouse-gas-spewing airliners? Supposedly smart nukes? ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINES?

If you disapprove these things, that doesn't make you a Luddite. We can benefit from hi-tech if WE THE PEOPLE thoughtfully select useful applications, not fun toys with destructive consequences.

Just as hi-tech cars have become impossible for Joe Blow to repair at home—forcing him to accept "trust me" corporate dealerships, so we are accepting electronic voting machines. Having just defeated challenger John Bonifaz, the old secretary of state Bill Galvin has ordered one (Continued on page 7 >>)

US Auto Industry Shredded By Market Fundamentalist, War Policies

by Jesse Jackson, *Chicago Sun-Times*, 12 Dec 2006

One casualty of the debacle in Iraq seldom gets much press, but the inevitable focus on the mess in Iraq too often overshadows other vital challenges.

The American automobile industry is hemorrhaging. Today, Ford will announce that it will offer buyouts to 85 percent of its salaried work force. Ford is looking to lay off a staggering 52,000 employees by September 2007. Chrysler has already been merged with the German automaker Daimler-Benz. General Motors is gushing red ink.

This industry has been America's industrial stronghold since Henry Ford perfected the assembly line. After World War II, President Eisenhower's defense secretary, Charlie Wilson, wasn't far off when he said, "What's good for America is good for General Motors and vice versa." GM was America's signature company. Its unionized employees won what became the foundation of the American Dream: secure jobs that paid a family wage, with health care, pensions and paid vacations.

Now that social contract is being shredded by the global marketplace. The foolish, ideological commitment to mindless trade policies over the last several decades has devastated Detroit. U.S. automakers must now compete with companies from Europe and Japan that bear no health care costs.

General Motors has about three retirees for every one auto worker; Ford has two for every active employee. Toyota in this country has about 100 retirees in total. The health care and pension costs put U.S. automakers at a staggering cost disadvantage: over \$1,200 a car. If they compete on price, they lose money. If they don't compete, they lose market share.

At the same time, we desperately need the industry to move to hybrid and alternative-fuel cars. Detroit is ready to build cars that use alternative fuels made from corn or grasses. But the oil industry that resists putting in the E85 (85 percent ethanol) pumps. These would cut the demand for oil drastically—and put a crimp in their record profits.

The Ford layoffs alone will hit Michigan, New Jersey, Georgia, Missouri and Ohio big-time, and states like Kentucky will feel the pain. It won't stop with the auto jobs. The auto suppliers, housing markets, hotels, the retail industries that depend on the demand generated by relatively well-paid auto employees will be depressed. We see the pain caused by the steel industry's decline. But the steel industry is a pimple compared with the rash of economic losses that the decline of Detroit will cause.

Obviously, this crisis requires urgent, intense national action. Are we prepared to let the auto industry die? If not, what steps can be taken to relieve the burdens of their health care and pension costs? What should be expected from the automakers in return in terms of investment, jobs guarantees, fuel efficiency and alternative-fuel cars? What penalties or incentives should be provided to the oil industry to force proliferation of alternative-fuel pumps in gas stations? How does all this fit into a concerted drive for energy independence?

Yet when the CEOs of the auto industry sought to meet with George W. Bush before the election, he canceled two meetings with them. When they finally met, an obviously distracted president gave them all of one hour, and nothing was decided.

This is catastrophic. Understandably, the president and his advisers are focused on what may be the worst foreign policy debacle in our history, in Iraq. But the collapse of Detroit may well be the equivalent defeat in our economic history. Surely our auto companies' futures cannot be left to a market in which their competitors enjoy massive state subsidies and mercantile trade

policies. We need a considered national policy for our industrial future.

We tend to think of Iraq as a crisis "over there." In fact, it is taking casualties here at home. The cost of the war is evinced not just by the brave men and women who are sacrificing life and limb, not just by the literal trillions of dollars that will be wasted, but by the collapse of America's own economy. It remains neglected as our leaders focus on troubles abroad rather than threats here at home.



Remember That Water Film "Thirst"? Privatization Reversed in Stockton Decision

by Polaris Institute, November 8, 2006

Judge Elizabeth Humphreys of the San Joaquin County [California] Superior Court handed down her ruling late last week in a case challenging the City of Stockton's massive water privatization contract with OMI/Thames Water Stockton. The court concluded that the OMI contract violated state environmental laws, and found that the city council must rescind its resolution approving the contract "in its entirety." Under the court order, the city may not consider re-approving the contract without first conducting environmental review as required by law. The court further found that the city could resume municipal operations and management of the city's water utilities within 180 days.

"The decision by the court is a huge victory for Stockton and indeed for all of America," said Sylvia Kothe, Chair of the Concerned Citizens Coalition of Stockton. "Adherence to environmental quality review is essential if water is to remain a public resource—one that is conserved and protected from pollution."

The city's water privatization contract with OMI has been the source of intense controversy since its approval in February 2003. Under the \$600 million contract, the city turned over to the private company virtually every aspect of the municipal water, wastewater and stormwater utilities for a period of 20 years. The Contract also includes some \$58 million worth of capital improvements. Despite the evidence of severe environmental harm that could result from the project, the city did no environmental review prior to approving the contract.

In 2003, the Concerned Citizens Coalition of Stockton, the League of Women Voters of San Joaquin County, and the Sierra Club filed suit to overturn the contract. In January 2004, Judge Bob McNatt of the San Joaquin County Superior Court ruled in favor of the coalition, ordering the city to rescind the contract. That ruling was later vacated, however, to enable the court to examine further legal arguments advanced by the defendants.

In the present ruling, Judge Humphreys states that the Court has "review[ed] the entire history of this litigation...and determined that the petition is correct and the requirements of CEQA [the California Environmental Quality Act] have not been met." In particular, the court found that "there is substantial evidence in the administrative record to demonstrate that transfer of the city's water utility operations for 20 years will have a significant environmental impacts."

Attorneys for the citizens are confident that the decision would withstand any appeal by the City and OMI/Thames. #

MEXICO UPDATE

Undaunted, 80 Thousand March Stay Organized Despite Killings, Arrests

by APPO, <http://elenemigocomun.net/671>, 10 Dec 2006

"Our demands: Freedom for political prisoners. Live presentation of disappeared people. PFP [Federal Police] and Ulises Ruiz out of Oaxaca"

OAXACA. In the midst of military personnel disguised as police, Human Rights Day was celebrated with a multitudinous march that started out from the Viguera intersection. With this mobilization, hundreds of thousands of Oaxacan people begin a new stage in the APPO's [popular assembly] struggle: Days for Peace, with Justice, Democracy, and Freedom—without Ulises Ruiz Ortiz.

Early in the morning contingents of neighborhood people, students, farmers, and teachers began to form at the Benito Juárez monument. In view of provocateurs at past demonstrations, the APPO security commission put the contingents in order and kept close watch over them.

As in prior demonstrations, men and women of all ages holding up posters with photos of different faces headed the march. They are the mothers, sisters, sons, wives and husbands of the political prisoners of this regime, which views a dissident as a dangerous criminal.

After the families of the political prisoners were members of the Popular Council of the Peoples of Oaxaca, who marched despite a long list of arrest warrants that have been issued for them.

March participants included contingents from the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Michoacán, as well as the Electrical Workers Union and senators and officials of the Broad Front of Progressive people, who were there in solidarity with this struggle.

The march began at 11:00 a.m. and as it went along, different contingents came down from surrounding neighborhoods to join in. All along the way there were signs of support—applause, shouts, signs, water, more shouts and applause.

There they were—the people of Oaxaca who had not bowed down before anti-riot tanks, teargas, arrests, killings. There they were—the people who were forced into hiding for the last few weeks in a state where demanding justice is a crime.

The destination of the long line of people was the Plaza de la Danza, where there was a rally and forum in which cases of repression were denounced. Once again we've shown the bourgeoisie and their State that we are in the majority and that our people will never give up.

Personal email from Gustavo: (via Monty Neill)

I think that the march yesterday was a spectacular success. We were used to marches of hundreds of thousands, one of almost a million. But to have a joyful march of 80,000 in the current conditions, with all the intimidation and repression, in a city occupied by the police, is something pretty special.

As I mentioned before, some sectors (like the students, teachers, etc.) opposed the march because the PRD was involved. (Only 5000 of PRD were in the march). In spite of that and the real fear felt by many people, this march, without any violence or incident, was a success. In order to avoid any provocation a very solid system of internal security was in operation.

During the last ten days we have had an incredible number of activities and initiatives, first of all to do something for our people

in prison but also for the continuation of the movement.

APPO is alive and well. Yes, the Council, which met today for the first time since November 25 and has been hiding and disperse, is not leading APPO. That is not the problem. This is an additional proof that APPO *does* operate from the bottom up.

Mexicans Fete Parallel Government Cheated in Election, Lopez Obrador Sworn In

Mexico City, by Associated Press, 21 Nov 2006

Leftist Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador swore himself in as Mexico's "legitimate" president and launched a parallel government, promising to legally limit the power of big corporations and the "neo-fascist oligarchy" that he said now controls Mexico.

"I pledge ... to serve loyally and patriotically as legitimate president of Mexico," Lopez Obrador said during a ceremony on a blustery, bone-chilling Monday afternoon in the capital's main central plaza, the Zocalo—just 11 days before President-elect Felipe Calderon [was] sworn in as the nation's legal president.

"I pledge to protect the rights of Mexicans... and ensure the happiness and welfare of the people," the former Mexico City mayor told an estimated 100,000 supporters—a smaller crowd than that generated by previous Lopez Obrador events.

The ceremony, which took place on the national holiday commemorating the Mexican Revolution, opened the latest chapter in Lopez Obrador's unsuccessful battle for the presidency.

He claims fraud and dirty campaign tactics were responsible for Calderon's narrow victory in the July 2 vote, and his parallel government could spend the next six years calling for the kind of street protests that have already prompted travel warnings from the US Embassy.

Rosario Ibarra, a human rights activist and senator for Lopez Obrador's coalition, placed the red-green-and-white presidential sash across his shoulders. While the action lacks legal recognition, Lopez Obrador hopes to assume the moral leadership of millions of poor Mexicans.

His parallel government, with a 12-member Cabinet, will not collect taxes or try to make laws, and it will rely on donations.

Lopez Obrador plans to spend three days a week in Mexico City and spend the other four days touring Mexico "to create the most important citizens' organization in all our history."...

"We are going to make Calderon realize at all times that he is an illegitimate leader," said 55-year-old Lopez Obrador supporter Beatriz Zuniga, an unemployed professor of Latin American studies. "He's got a limited amount of time. This man will not finish his term."...

Lopez Obrador's supporters carried signs criticizing not only Calderon, but a variety of targets they say had tried to marginalize Lopez Obrador: the Roman Catholic Church, mainstream news media and even rival leftists such as Zapatista rebel leader Subcomandante Marcos.

But some members of his Democratic Revolutionary Party, or PRD, have already expressed disagreement with Lopez Obrador's strategy of using Congress—where the PRD is now the second-largest force—as an arena for protests rather than [for] negotiations. Lopez Obrador pledged Monday to make more legislative proposals.

(Continued on page 8 >>)



Screwing Iraq Vets—and Us Death, Disability Could Cost \$2 Trillion

Conn Hallinan, *Foreign Policy In Focus*, 10 Nov 2006

War is hell," Union General William Tecumseh Sherman famously said 14 years after the end of the bloodiest conflict in U.S. history. "It is only those who have neither fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for blood, more vengeance, more desolation."

Clearly the U.S. Civil War is not on the reading list of psychiatrist Sally Satel, a scholar at the right-wing American Enterprise Institute (AEI). Indeed, Satel sees war less as hell than as a golden opportunity for veteran layabouts to milk the government by "overpathologizing the psychic pain of war."

Satel, whom the AEI trots out anytime the Bush administration needs cover for cutting veteran services and benefits, says the problem for former soldiers is not Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). "The real trouble for vets," she writes, is that "once a patient receives a monthly check based on his psychiatric diagnosis, his motivation to hold a job wanes." Her solution? "Don't offer disability benefits too quickly."

The commentary makes an interesting contrast to a powerful piece in the October 2006 issue of the California Nurses Association's magazine *Registered Nurse* titled "The Battle at Home" by Caitlin Fischer and Diana Reiss. They found that "in veterans' hospitals across the country—and in a growing number of ill-prepared, under-funded psych and primary care clinics as well—Registered Nurses ... are treating soldiers ... and picking up the pieces of a tattered army."

According to the authors, RNs across the country "have witnessed the guilt, rage, emotional numbness, and tormented flashbacks of GIs just back from Iraq and Afghanistan," as well as older vets from previous wars, "whose half-century-old trauma have been 'triggered' by the images of Iraq."

How many soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan will eventually fall victim to PTSD is not clear, although a U.S. Defense Department study in 2006 found that one in six returnees suffer from depression or stress disorders, and 35% have sought counseling for emotional difficulties. The Veterans Administration (VA) treated 20,638 Iraq vets for PTSD in just the first quarter of 2006 and is currently processing a backlog of 400,000 cases.

Out of 700,000 soldiers who served in the 1991 Gulf War, 118,000 are suffering from chronic fatigue, headaches, muscle spasms, joint pains, anxiety, memory loss, and balance problems, and 40% receive disability pay. Gulf vets are also twice as likely to develop amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's Disease) and between two and three times more likely to have children with birth defects.

The Ills of War

Modern battlefields are toxic nightmares, filled with depleted uranium ammunition, exotic explosives, and deadly cluster bomblets. The soldiers are shot up with experimental vaccines that can have dangerous side effects from additives like squelene. In short, soldiers are not only under fire, they are assaulted by their own weapons systems and medical procedures.

Satel need have no worries about the VA rushing to hand out cash to veteran couch potatoes. According to Fischer and Reiss, "A returning vet must wait an average of 165 days for a VA decision on initial disability benefits. An appeal can take up to three years."

Reserve and National Guard troops—who make up between 40 and 50% of the frontline troops in Iraq and Afghanistan—have a particular problem, because their military medical insurance benefits only cover conditions diagnosed in the first 100 days. PTSD sometimes takes years, even decades to kick in.

When they do complain, vets can expect that their ailments will be dismissed or their cause stonewalled.

When Gulf War vets complained about the symptoms which have come to be called "Gulf War Syndrome," the Pentagon told them it was in their heads, in spite of studies by the *British Medical Journal* and the U.S. Center for Disease Control that showed the returnees were suffering illnesses at 12 times the rate of non-Gulf vets.

For five years after the Gulf War the Pentagon denied that any troops had been exposed to chemical weapons. It took pressure from veterans' organizations and Sen. Donald Riegle (D-MI) to get the Pentagon to admit finally that as many as 130,000 troops (the vets say the number is higher) were exposed to chemical weapons from the destruction of the Iraqi arms depot at Khamisiyah.



Veteran organizations are currently fighting the Pentagon over its refusal to screen returning soldiers for mild brain injuries. Figures indicate that up to 10% of the troops suffer from concussions during their tours, a figure that rises to 20% for those in the front lines. Research shows that concussions can cause memory loss, headaches, sleep disturbances, and behavior problems. The Pentagon, arguing that the long-term effect of brain injuries needs more research, is unwilling to fund a screening program.

Given the wide use of roadside bombs, "Traumatic brain injury is the signature injury of the war on terrorism," George Zitnay, co-founder of the Brain Injury Center, told *USA Today*. And according to researchers at Harvard and Columbia, the cost of treating those brain injuries will be \$14 billion over the next 20 years.

In Iraq

Upwards of 20,000 Americans have been wounded in Iraq, some of those so grotesquely that medicine has invented a new term to describe them—polytrauma. An estimated 7,000 vets have severe brain and spinal injuries, and have required amputations. For the blind, brain damaged, and paralyzed, war is indeed hell.

Calculating the cost of war is tricky, but Nobel Prize winning economist Joseph Stiglitz recently calculated that the price tag for the long-term health care for Iraq War vets will exceed \$2 trillion.*

But the hell we bring home is only a pale reflection of the hell we leave behind. According to a recent estimate by the British

medical journal, *The Lancet*, upwards of 650,000 Iraqis have been killed since the 2003 invasion. Most of the country's infrastructure—already damaged in the first Gulf War or degraded by a decade of sanctions—has essentially collapsed.

Iraq's experience is not unique.

The Vietnam War ended more than 30 years ago, but according to the recent book, *Vietnam: A Natural History*, Laotians, Vietnamese, and Cambodians are still dying from it.

From 1964 to 1973, the United States dropped over 14 million tons of bombs on those three countries, including 90 million cluster munitions on tiny Laos alone. Somewhere between 30 to 40% of those fiendish devices never exploded, and, according to the British Mines Advisory Group, they have killed or maimed 12,000 Laotians since the end of the war. They continue to extract a yearly toll of 100 to 200 people, many of them children.

Traces of the 20 million gallons of Agent White, Agent Blue, and Agent Orange herbicides that the United States sprayed over Vietnam still poison the water, soil, vegetation, animals, and people of Southeast Asia, producing cancer and birth defect rates among the highest in the world.

So war is indeed hell—for those who fight it, those caught in the middle of it, and those who eventually pick up the pieces.

**Ed. Note: Not exactly. Stiglitz and Bilmes (Milken Institute Review, Dec 2006) estimate the total cost of the Iraq war at well over \$2 trillion. But they go on to say "Accrued liabilities for U.S. federal employees' and veterans' benefits now total \$4.5 trillion. Indeed, our debt for veterans' health and disability payments has risen by \$228 billion in the past year alone." So perhaps the vet's overall costs will approach or exceed \$2 trillion.*

VENEZUELA ELECTION (Continued from page 1)

with the "president" at station #2 guiding the voter through the process. At Station (table) 1 the voter showed ID and his/her name was written in the log book, and thumb print taken (with electronic image) to ensure—through a national data bank—that they did not vote twice. At Station 2 the president sought assurances that the voter knew the process, and gave instructions where necessary. (S)he would then visibly press a button to activate the equipment at Station 3—the top of the horseshoe.

There the voter faced two electronic machines on a table screened by a wide corrugated cardboard about 18 inches high with wings extending around the sides. One was a flat display of the 86 political parties with their candidate and candidate's picture, arranged in 4 columns, and the other a cube-shaped touch-screen monitor. The party display, familiar to all voters through fliers and posters, required the voter to press an oval next to their chosen party/candidate. This flashed the name and photo of the candidate onto the monitor screen. The voter could then change his/her choice, or would press "vote" on the screen, and the monitor would register the vote and emit a "ticket" with that choice printed on it. The voter would examine and verify that this was the chosen candidate, or otherwise signal the "president" watching from Station 2. Often they would converse, loudly, with the president rectifying any problem. Elderly or disabled voters often had a family member or friend assist them in this process.

The machines—6500 of them—had been tested and used in last year's municipal elections. They were made by the Italian firm Olivetti under licence from Smartmatic, Inc., based in Boca Raton FL, which says in its web blurb: *In the August 2004 Venezuelan Presidential Recall Referendum, Smartmatic's SAES3000 electronic voting solution reliably and accurately*

recorded, transmitted and tallied nearly 10 million votes. Smartmatic's transparent, secure and auditable electronic voting solution includes a parallel, voter-verified paper trail (each paper ticket is marked with a unique digital signature). As a result, international observers the Carter Center and Organization of American States were able to audit and confirm election results.

I asked about the wires visibly connecting the machines to the power supply and the activation button at Station 2. A wall outlet and presumably a rectifier was used, but there was also a backup car-type storage battery which might have been the sole supply in some rural settings. Could the connection with Station 2 connect the voter's choice with his or her name? No—there was no further connection with ID Station 1. Most important, the whole setup, wiring and all, had been publicly checked and approved by all interested parties last year, with much fanfare.

Folding the ticket, the voter then proceeded to Station 4—a large cardboard box with a slot on top—and deposited the ticket. (S)he then proceeded to the final Station 5 where their pinky finger was dipped in a colorless solution and then in a silver solution to dye the tip bright purple, making obvious any attempt to vote twice (redundantly with the thumb print at Station 1). The voter then left the room.

Instant Audit

At the end of the day, when polls closed, a soldier-attendant sealed the ballot box and placed the voting machines in their cases, sealing them too. Then came the publicly agreed audit of 50% of the machines in each polling place, chosen at random. I had the honor of blindly pulling three numbers out of six in a bag—one for each room. So the machines and ticket boxes of rooms 2, 5, and 4 were to be audited, each in its own room. I watched in the room in which I happened to have observed voting.

First a young technician removed the screen at Station 3, set up the machines, and produced a long tape from the monitor with all 300 or so votes on it, each identified by a random number unrelated to the voter's ID. This grouped and counted the votes for Chávez, for Rosales, and for each other candidate. It happened that Rosales won majorities on each of the machines in this neighborhood. Cheers went up from his supporters—ten witnesses from the general public were admitted to each audit room. Officials on the street had been careful to admit roughly equal numbers of Chávez and Rosales supporters, who had been waiting hours for this opportunity.

Then another official opened the ticket box and painfully counted out the tickets, while two observers sorted them by candidate. At the end, the ticket counts matched the tape counts. Any mismatch would be recounted, and any discrepancy entered in a record book of proceedings. The tape counts for each candidate, thus audited, were transmitted to some central tallying place.

With all this hand-counting audit, why bother with machines? In Venezuela, experience had shown that delays in reporting results provided space for partisans to make trouble and disrupt the tallying process. The machines made reporting speedy. (This may not be the case in the US, although delays cause media reporters and candidates to be exasperated.)

Our total access to the process was arranged through our delegation leader Jorge Marin—Venezuelan-born engineer living in Bridgewater MA and a leader in the Bolivarian Circle of Boston—and Eliecer Calderon, also of the Bolivarian Circle of Boston, with contacts in Barquisimeto useful for authorization to observe the election. #

Hug A Friendly Turkey

So What About Christmas Dinner?

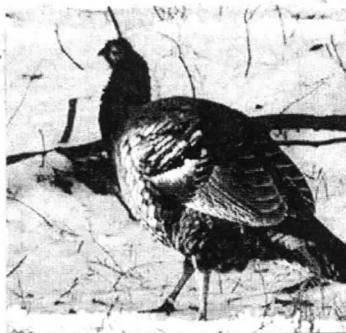
by Colleen Patrick-Goudreau, *AlterNet*, 23 Nov 2006 (Abridged)

For those who have never met them, turkeys are magnificent animals, full of spunk and spark and affection, with individual personalities and charms. These animals, who have been abused and discarded by human beings, whose beaks and toes have been mutilated, and whose genetically overgrown bodies are susceptible to heart disease and leg deformities, still display immense affection towards humans. They are incredibly curious and follow you wherever you go, and their wonderful vocalizations include an array of clucks, purrs, coos, and cackles.

Turkeys love to be caressed, and people often remark that they respond just like their own dogs and cats. Turkeys even make a purring sound when they are content, and not until you've had a hen fall asleep under your arm have you lived. She will literally melt under your touch, relax her body, and begin to close her eyes, softly clucking all the while. It's a sight to see, and I'm moved every time I have the privilege to witness it.

Some turkeys are more affectionate than others, climbing into your lap and making themselves as comfortable as can be. At an animal sanctuary I frequent, a particularly friendly turkey became known for her propensity to hug. As soon as you crouched down, she would run over to you, press her body against yours, and crane her head over your shoulders, clucking all the while.

One turkey became my personal protector when I was trying to clean a barn and was continually accosted by a particularly rude and aggressive bird. Each time the aggressor would begin to close in on me, my hero would waddle over and get between me and his barn-mate. It was remarkable, and it happened over and over (turkeys are very persistent). What made this scene even more touching was the fact that these toms suffered from bumble foot, abscesses on the footpads that resemble corns, a common occurrence in domesticated turkeys. Between their grotesquely large breasts and inflamed feet, turkeys walk very awkwardly and with a lot of effort. I was very touched that such an effort was made on my behalf.



Colleen Patrick-Goudreau writes on food for *VegNews* and *Satya mags*.
Ed. Note: It's about time we begin to actualize the myth of brotherhood with Native First Peoples. Yes, the "Indians" saved the Pilgrim colonists by providing dinner and teaching them appropriate agriculture. But no, too many colonists caved in to the authorities of the Massachusetts Bay Company, privatized the land of the indigenous people, warred against them, and joined in an ethnic cleansing and genocide unmatched by Spanish conquistadors. Thus, some folks are rethinking Thanksgiving, under the new name National Day of Mourning. Next "Thanksgiving" gather at noon at Cole's Hill, Plymouth MA, to remember and make new friends and connections with all Earth.

BALLOTING METHODS (Continued from page 2)

Diebold voting machine for each polling place in Massachusetts. Idiot? Or Good-Old-Boy persuaded by his industry friends? Or caving in to fidgety candidates and reporters? Or to earphones-only champions of the blind? Is he setting us up for another

2004- (or 2006-) type vote steal by the White House psychopaths?

Your editor proposes good old fashioned hand-counted paper ballots (HCPB). This is what founder Ronnie Dugger advocates after decades of studying election systems. HCPB is what Jonathan Simon and Election Defense Alliance advocate. Why spend millions on risky electronic equipment when we have to hand-count many ballots afterward to be fairly sure of accurate vote count? Why not just hand-count in the first place? Why not sit next to your Republican neighbor and your Green Party and Libertarian cohorts and the four of you count the votes and post the tally at the precinct door?

Bring In Your Local Auditor

Here is how we can do it—Compare the cost of using machines vs the cost of HCPB. And do it soon, because the bait of \$\$ from the federal "Help America Vote" Act is "persuading" even small towns to adopt machines, and soon there won't be any HCPB districts to audit—unless some towns or counties deliberately experiment, putting aside their machines. Actually it might be easier to locate towns which recently adopted machines, and compare their election expense records before and after adopting them.

My guess is that it will be cheaper, as well as more accurate, to hand-count. HCPB has certain costs: making or buying secure ballot boxes preferably of transparent plexiglass, printing ballots, training poll workers, paying poll workers and citizen vote counters for their time on election day and night, paying police officers on duty at the polls, transporting and storing equipment and ballots, renting extra phone lines for tough questions and emergencies—anything else?

OK. Machine voting has much the same cost factors, but generally higher: the machines cost far more and require far more maintenance and special conditions of storage and possibly insurance. For optical scan machines, more expensive paper ballots have to be printed or purchased. Poll workers require more training, in the use and adjustment of the machines. Police officers and poll workers can go home shortly after polls close—a savings. But then there are law suits—probably more with machine voting—which are costly.

OK. There are also intangibles: grumbles and satisfactions by both voters and poll workers and counters. Grumbles of candidates and reporters who have to stay up hours after the polls close (Imagine!!). Satisfaction of spending time counting with neighbors—doing something useful, and learning that most are decent folk and maybe actually nice companions. Maybe that contributes to community harmony.

OK, we've done this audit. We discover that HCPB is cheaper as well as inspiring confidence in accuracy. Will town or county officials be happy to return or junk the machines they've already invested in? Will they be willing to restore the personnel lines they eliminated from their budgets a few years back? My guess is that they will—if they and the citizens see the savings from HCPB. Even if the costs turn out to be equal, will the officials appreciate the increased confidence and neighborliness of the counters and voters? Yes they will, if they are publicly interviewed by panels and published in local newspapers and on community cable TV.

Many folks will parrot the manufacturers' line that "we have to keep up with progress" and we "can't go back to horse-and-buggy days". We can counter that with "responsibility"—look at the mess created by this machine—this hi-tech toy, and look at the money we are throwing away on it. Maybe we can find another job for the Diebold salesman. (Continued on page 8 >>)

Yes, local officials say their hands are tied because the secretary of state of the Commonwealth approved Diebold Accu-Vote machines. Hey, he also may approve of HCPB! Just ask! In fact, he may be forced to back down on the machines if enough local officials show audits and complain.

But, but—what about the disabled? What if you are blind and can't see a printed ballot? The secretary of state insists that each precinct have at least one electronic machine for them. But, but they can't see the screen? Well they can use earphones to guide their fingers. Do you smell a boondoggle here? If they don't want to bring a friend as interpreter, there's a low-tech item for sale—a cardboard template they can feel—something like an egg-crate, braille—with holes where they can put pencil marks. Come on, Bill!

So friends, how about starting by asking your town clerk for the cost breakdowns for recent elections, back to lever machines and on back to paper balloting? Send the results to Sally Castleman at Election Defense Alliance at SallyC@ElectionDefenseAlliance.org 781.454.8700, or to *BCA Dispatch* at boston@newenglandalliance.org 617.266.8687. And if you know a film-maker, or a high-school or college teacher of film, see if they want to document this audit, and show it on cable TV. #

OBRADOR SWORN IN (Continued from page 4)

Some average citizens also have tired of Lopez Obrador's brand of political activism, which includes endorsing the leftist protesters who seized Oaxaca city for five months to demand the resignation of the state's governor. Lopez Obrador's own supporters blocked Mexico City's main boulevard for nearly two months this summer. "This affects the country's image," said Marco Ramirez, 34, a university researcher watching the protesters from a sidewalk cafe, "It puts out a very bad image."

[Outgoing] President Vicente Fox canceled a traditional Nov. 20 parade commemorating the country's 1910-1917 Revolution, apparently to avoid friction with Lopez Obrador's event.

Columnist Armando Fuentes described Lopez Obrador's ceremony as "a circus act, a farce" in the newspaper *Reforma*. But Oscar Aguilar, a political science professor at Mexico City's Iberoamerican University, said "the social and political conditions (in Mexico) are fertile ground for this kind of leadership... Many of the poor ... see this type of leadership as a solution." #

CHAPTER NEWS

November's BCA meeting drew an appreciative crowd to hear **Jonathan Simon & Sally Castleman** opening eyes to the 2006 election fraud, short-changing the Democrats even though they took control of both houses of Congress. But, hey, you can read about it starting on Page 1 of this issue, or read in more detail Jonathan's exposition at www.ElectionDefenseAlliance.org.

Venezuela Trip—It Happened!

Jorge Marin beautifully organized and led—with crucial help from **Elicer Calderon**—our 9-day exploration of the Bolivarian Revolution peaking with detailed observation of the presidential election (see article, page 1). Other members of our Boston Delegation were **Richard Krushnic** (see notice of report-back, page 1), AfD activist **Bonnie Preston** of Blue Hill ME, **Bill Stevens**, **Kendra Fehrer**, **Susan Foster**, **Jennifer Ashley**, **Leam Leahy**, **Kate Krovatin**, **Marc Becker** of Madison WI, and **Dave Lewit**. A few personal impressions and thoughts:

* I look forward to Leam and Kate's professional film—they worked hard shooting interviews all along our itinerary.

* Thanks to Kendra we visited with **Gregory Wilpert** in Caracas.

He shifted from working as a sociologist to working as a journalist thru his web site www.VenezuelaAnalysis.com —a wealth of up to date info, news, and analysis.

* Apart from the election, the Bolivarian "missions" were most impressive—grassroots folk getting training and running professional services in education, health, housing, and others. For example, we visited primary and secondary medical facilities providing free care, with Cuban doctors and slick facilities at the secondary and tertiary (hospital) levels. At the primary community level shots and preventive work are done, and referral not just to further medical but to all sorts of social services.

We visited a night school for literacy for a handful of local folk. The London educated volunteer teacher systematically used video tapes with discussion, not just on Spanish language, but on math, history, and culture—perhaps 100 VHS tapes on file. That's Mission Robinson. Mission Ribas is secondary schooling and Mission Sucre is college prep. These missions reach out to all, not just the standard school constituencies.

* Participatory democracy (PD): We participated in a neighborhood meeting open to all, where budgeting decisions are made for substantial funds provided by the federal government thanks to oil revenues. Unfortunately, rather than conduct such business, they asked us questions about Boston PD, with Richard, Kendra, and myself responding—in Spanish. And then there were cakes galore, if not ale!

* We visited a co-op complex near Caracas, manufacturing shoes and garments. Labor intensive—providing more jobs.

* Amazingly, neither in Caracas, Barquisimeto, Puerto Cabello, Valencia nor in rural areas we visited—not a single beggar! And not a single abandoned kid! People were friendly and optimistic!

* Thanks to Bill, I read parts of an excellent book *Hugo Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution* by Richard Gott, who writes and edits for the *Guardian* (UK).

JOIN THE BCA

YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIVE IN BOSTON TO LOVE BCA

Please help us as we fight to make a better future for ourselves and our children -- Join the Boston/Cambridge Alliance for Democracy. (Cut out or copy this form and send it to Dave Lewit, 271 Dartmouth St., Boston, MA 02116.)

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___ \$26/Year - "Count me in!"

___ \$52/Year - "Contributor" (We need to average this amount.)

___ \$104/Year - "Sustainer" (Helping us thrive.)

___ \$208/Year - "Community Steward"

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COLOPHON

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Web builder: Sergio Reyes. Webmaster: Stan Robinson