

KHAKI & BLUE: A KILLER COMBINATION

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the US Army was deployed to “protect” displaced women while the National Guard was in Iraq. Many poor Black women were raped while the US Army “guarded” shelters in the South.¹ Meanwhile, many of our troops in Iraq were engaging, and continue to engage, in the rape, torture, and murder of innocent civilians.

As military and domestic police forces work ever closer together in a hyper-militarized world, women, children and trans folks of color — both here and abroad — are increasingly subjected to law enforcement violence that shares many characteristics, forms, tactics, targets, language and even personnel with the US and other military forces.²



Art by Cristy C. Road, croadcore.org

⇒ IN IRAQ

An Iraqi woman in her 70s had been harnessed and ridden like a donkey by U.S. soldiers at Abu Ghraib after being arrested without charge in July 2003.³

Images of US female soldiers engaging in the sexual torture of imprisoned Iraqi men have been sensationalized, and made national and international headlines for weeks. In reality, **the majority of rape and sexual torture by US military forces is at the hands of American male soldiers, against Iraqi women and children as well as fellow US women soldiers.** These atrocities are far more prevalent, but they go unreported, since they are “business as usual.”⁴

The US Military has trained the new Iraqi police force, who now follow the model of a hostile occupying army, and engage in arbitrary arrests of civilians, as well as widespread torture of detainees, including women and children, in pre-trial detention facilities.⁵

Hundreds of innocent Iraqi girls and women (some as young as 9, others in their 70s) have been arrested, detained, abused, raped and tortured by US-trained Iraqi police, in some cases to pressure them to collaborate with the Occupation, and to inform against the resistance.⁶

⇒ IN THE U.S.

Since SWAT teams, modeled on the US Military’s Special Forces, were introduced in the 1970s, police departments of major US cities such as Seattle, New York, and Los Angeles have increasingly been trained in aggressive military philosophy, strategy, tactics, and weaponry, and to perceive entire groups of people and neighborhoods as “threats.” In fact, most police units in the US have trained with active duty military experts in special operations or police officers with military special operations experience.⁷ Police officers’ training in “counter-terrorism” is often conducted through videos produced by the Israeli Army, which is known for discriminatory policies and its brutality against Palestinian women and children.⁸

Over the past two decades, policing of the border between the US and Mexico has become increasingly militarized, as evidenced by the introduction and integration of military units in the border region and changes to Border Patrol to make it more like the US military in equipment, structure, and tactics.⁹



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“Many women who cross the border report that rape was the ‘price of not being apprehended, deported, or of having their confiscated documents returned.’”

-- Sylvanna Falcon¹⁰

These military tactics include the use of rape as a weapon to literally enforce the border on women’s bodies. Rape of Mexican, Central American, and Latina women at the border by Border Patrol and military forces is widespread.

Policing of political demonstrations is also evidence of increasing militarization, as officers are trained to use military formations and weapons to disrupt and disperse lawful protests.¹¹

⇒ IN PALESTINE

In August 2007, there were 572 Israeli roadblocks within the Occupied West Bank, a 52% increase over August 2005, not including checkpoints along the Green Line. These “chokingpoints,” every single one of which is illegal, severely restrict women and children’s movement through militarized police blockades.

Data released by the United Nations indicates that Palestinian stillbirths increased by 56% in one year (from 1999 to 2000), following the Israeli clampdown on the West Bank, carried out in response to the popular uprising against the illegal occupation. Because of the checkpoints, hundreds of pregnant women deliver their babies in dangerous situations and locations because Israeli soldiers prevent them from reaching a hospital.¹³

On September 4, 2008, Naheel Abu Ridah, seven months pregnant, was rushed to the hospital in severe pain. When she reached the Huwara checkpoint with three relatives, soldiers refused to let them cross by car despite the family’s plea’s. She delivered in the car, and the baby was born dead. The checkpoint commander was sentenced in a disciplinary hearing to 14 days in an army prison.¹²

⇒ IN THE U.S.

In many communities of color across the US, and most recently and obviously in New Orleans, police set up “checkpoints” in neighborhoods and public housing, routinely stopping, demanding identification from, questioning and searching residents.¹⁴

⇒ IN AFGHANISTAN

In 2006, US-appointed Afghan President Hamid Karzai drafted a proposal to re-establish the Department for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, raising serious concerns about potential abuse of the rights of women and vulnerable groups. Under the Taliban, the vice and virtue police ruthlessly beat women publicly for, among other things, showing their wrists, hands, or ankles, or not being accompanied by a close male relative. They stopped women from educating girls in home-based schools, working, and begging.¹⁵



Art by Favianna Rodriguez, favianna.com

⇒ IN THE U.S.

Women of color, and particularly transgender women of color, are routinely profiled as sex workers. Police often cite what we are wearing, who we are talking to and where we are hanging out as evidence that we are engaged in “lewd” conduct or soliciting sex for money, and as an excuse to verbally and physically abuse us, refer to us as ‘ho’s, “bitches” and prostitutes, to sexually harass us, and arbitrarily search, question, detain, and arrest us.¹⁶



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ENDNOTES

¹ See, for example, C. Neville, *How We Survived the Flood*, and A. Bierria, M. Liebenthal, and INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, *To Render Ourselves Visible: Women of Color Organizing and Hurricane Katrina*, both in *What Lies Beneath: Katrina, Race, and the State of the Nation*, Ed. South End Press Collective. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2007 (28-30, and 31-47); *Katrina Rapes Counted; U.S. Cuts Social Programs*, <http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm?aid=2583>.

² See T. McClary and A. Ritchie, *In the Shadows of the War on Terror: Persistent Police Brutality and Abuse in the United States* 19, a shadow report to the UN Human Rights Committee, May 2006.

³ L. Harding, *Women--the Other Iraqi Prisoners*, *The Guardian*, May 20, 2004, Online at: www.religiousconsultation.org/News_Tracker/women_the_other_Iraqi_prisoners.htm

⁴ L. Harding, *Women--the Other Iraqi Prisoners*, *The Guardian*, May 20, 2004, Online at: www.religiousconsultation.org/News_Tracker/women_the_other_Iraqi_prisoners.htm; Z. Byron Wolf, *Sex Assaults Against Women in the Military 'Epidemic': GAOReport*, *abcnews.go.com*, July 31, 2008.

⁵ See, for example, Yifat Sussking: "Iraqi Police Commit Rape__Armed,Trained, and Funded by the US" February 22, 2007, *CommonDreams.org*, <http://www.commondreams.org/views07/0222-25.htm>.

⁶ Women are arrested in violation of international law, not because of crimes they have committed, but because of their "potential intelligence value," as daughters or wives of Baa'th party members. Since November 2005, the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI) has conducted a Women's Prison Watch project and has found that "torture and rape are common procedure of investigation in police stations." At least nine Iraqi organizations, as well as Amnesty International, the U.N. Assistance Mission in Iraq and the Brussels Tribunal have documented the sexualized torture of Iraqi women while in police custody. These include [Women's Will](#), Occupation Watch, the [Women's Rights Association](#), the Iraqi League, the [Iraqi National Association of Human Rights](#), the Human Rights' Voice of Freedom, the Association of Muslim Scholars, the Iraqi Islamic Party and the Iraqi National Media and Culture Organization. Most of this documentation is available in the OWFI annual reports, available online through www.madre.org.

⁷ P. Kraska, *Militarizing Criminal Justice: Exploring the Possibilities*, *J. Pol. & Mil. Soc.* 27:205-215 (1999).

⁸ In addition to the Israeli military training the police forces of major US cities, private companies staffed by Israeli military officers hold training camps in the US for various "private security" businesses here. One such business venture is the Instinctive Shooting International, whose home-page proudly asserts:

Since 1993, ISI, Inc. has successfully provided high caliber training and consulting services to Police Departments, SWAT teams, Military Personnel, Government Agencies and Private Security entities throughout the United States.

At ISI, Inc., we believe in training that not only meets, but exceeds current professional training standards. We firmly believe in proactive, innovative and practical training methods that work in the real world. "

http://isittrainingcenter.com/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1.

⁹ National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. "Preliminary Report and Findings of the Emergency National Border Justice and Solidarity Community Tour: Militarization and Impunity at the Border." October 2006; Dunn, Timothy, *The Militarization of the US-Mexico Border 1978-1992: Low-Intensity Conflict Doctrine Comes Home*. Center for Mexican American Studies, University of Texas at Austin, 1996.

¹⁰ Sylvanna Falcon, "Rape as a Weapon of War: Advancing Human Rights or Women at the US-Mexico Border," *Social Justice*, Summer 2001; 28-2, pp 31-50.

¹¹ See K. Williams, *Our Enemies in Blue* 224-27, Soft Skull Press, 2004 (republished, South End Press 2006).

¹² *Soldiers Prevent Pregnant, Bleeding Woman From Crossing Checkpoint And She Gives Birth To A Stillborn Baby*, *Palestine Monitor*, September 18, 2008, <http://www.palestinemonitor.org/spip/spip.php?article639>

¹³ See, for example, http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20080912/wl_mideast_afp/mideastconflictwestbankdeath_080912120500

Israeli soldier gets 14 days in prison after a Palestinian delivered a stillborn baby after being delayed at checkpoint. The article reports that, between 2000 and 2006, at least 68 Palestinian women gave birth at Israeli checkpoints, including 35 who miscarried and five who died in childbirth.

¹⁴ See, e.g., *New Orleans to Combat Crime Wave with Overnight Checkpoints*, *Fox News*, January 10, 2007; *Latino Groups Slam Richmond Police Checkpoints*, *cbs4.com*, August 28, 2008; Corey Roush, *Warrantless Public Housing Searches: Individual Violations or Community Solutions*, *American Criminal Law Review*, Vol. 34, 1996.

¹⁵ See the news archive of the Revolutionary Afghan Women's association, at

<http://www.rawa.org/temp/runews/2006/07/17/afghanistan-vice-and-virtue-department-could-return.phtml?story=Kabul>.

¹⁶ For more information, see the *Policing Sex Work* fact sheet in this toolkit.





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