

OP-ED

New Orleans: Murder capital



CHRISTIAN MCPHATE
STAFF REPORTER

A h ! New Orleans, a city watered down with a rich history of names — the home of Mardi Gras and the “reformed and non-violent” Ku Klux Klan, hurricane city and murder capital of the world.

That’s right. In 2006, a record number of 161 homicides occurred in the Crescent City, shooting the devastated metropolis to the top of the murder charts—America’s Iraq right in our own backyard.

But wait, there’s more. About two-thirds of the slayings remain unsolved in the Big Easy while the gas mask of bafflement blinds the police with the fumes of excuses.

“Without witness testimony, we’ve got nothing,” Deputy Chief Anthony Cannatella said.

Hello, forensics anyone? Law enforcement officials claim the killers are still walking the streets, released because of a lack of evidence, and it’s not their fault.

And with the finger of blame, the uniformed soldiers point their weapons of accusations toward another branch of the judicial system:

The prosecutors. “We can’t be as successful fighting crime as we would like to be until the rest of the criminal justice system works like it’s supposed to

work,” the police superintendent, Warren J. Riley, said.

Police tried to stop the flood of violence by placing 3,100 druggies and dealers behind bars last year—only to release them because of a missed deadline with filing charges and dodging subpoenas to testify against the accused.

In January, law enforcement officials released a record number of 500 criminals back onto the streets of the chaotic city.

The problem has spiraled so far out of control, the neighborhoods of New Orleans are creating charges like “misdemeanor murders” or “60-day murders,” the length of time before the bloody arms of freedom accept them back into the fold.

Of course, District Attorney Eddie Jordan, and a few judicial members have retaliated with fingers of blame and pointed to the long history of police brutality that alienates “a good number of witnesses,” a departmental focus on minor offenses instead of major ones and the “social dysfunction” of Hurricane Katrina.

Yet, anyone who knows anything about the ghetto knows there are no eyewitnesses.

As my cousin Mike, a former resident of Stop Six (one of the many ghettos in Fort Worth), would say, “No one in th’ projects sides with no police because th’ law don’t give a shit about th’ hood!”

And the social dysfunction splattered across the pages of *The New York Times*?

Well, the problem was there long before the hurricane.

In the ‘80s, the “city that America forgot” ranked in the top five

cities for violent crimes based on per capita for murder.

The hood life is all they know. When the dealers are shelling out a grand a pop to stash the merchandise to kids who are obsessed with materialism from the repetitive commercials and reality shows of MTV, what does one expect?

When the oil-obsessed federal government cares more about the freedom of fanatics than freeing a nation of our own citizens going through a restraint on their freedom of safety, life and happiness, what does one expect?

Why must we make things so complicated?

Do I need to draw a How to Act Toward Your Fellow Human Being poster and staple it across the neighborhoods of not only the hood, but suburbia as well?

Let us take the initiative from the federal government!

Let us start subliminally forcing some basic human respect down students’ throats instead of the same old bullshit of “look out for yourself, waste all of your money and the planet’s natural resources while leaving behind your fallen siblings or friends because they were not smart enough to play by the rules and keep up.”

At least then we could up with some cool names like the BHRTO (Basic Human Response to Others) test or the SMSROIBYA (Show Me Some Respect or I’ll Beat Your Ass) test instead of the boring old TAAS, TAKS, TEKS or the whatever-the-hell-you-call-it test.

For once, let us focus on completing the problems in our own country before we try to finish someone else’s.

Campus Voices

Q: What do you think about campus health services?



“I know some people who tried to go to the clinic this summer. They weren’t full-time students because some of the classes they needed weren’t being offered. The clinic wouldn’t help them because they weren’t full time, which isn’t fair at all.”

– Sabrina Maguire, 23, senior special education major

“Honestly, I don’t think it’s readily available. There’s always time conflicts with the hours and student schedules.”

– Susan Mathews, 23, senior social work major



“The campus health services are pretty good. They give you everything you need, like flu shots and meningitis shots. It’s not hard to get an appointment.”

– Shelton Hawkins, 25, senior mass communication major

“I don’t really go. I have no need to go because I hardly ever get sick. I didn’t even know we had that until about three weeks ago.”

– Elizabeth Quan, 19, sophomore theater and marketing major



Soldiers, use care when speaking



DANIEL CERVERA
FOR THE WICHITAN

of violence in Iraq.

This has prompted inquiry among multitudes across the nation over whether continuing the war effort can be justified.

Is it even a legal one? “No,” said Army 1st Lt. Ehren Watada.

In June 2006, Watada made national headlines when he made his public refusal to deploy to Iraq.

“We have violated American law. We can’t break laws in order to fight terrorism,” he said.

Watching this next to me is airman Warren, the definitive article of

a generation.

He could care less about what’s happening in the Eastern hemisphere, as long as his supply of beer and other diversions aren’t mitigated.

“I know that my case has brought a lot of attention and scrutiny on me by my superiors,” Watada said. “I’m probably very unpopular, if not the most unpopular person on Fort Lewis. But I know out there are people who believe in what I’m saying.”

Warren shifted uncomfortably in his seat.

“This isn’t right,” Warren said. “He’s already going to go to jail for this! Why do they have to report on this stuff?”

Warren, like all men and women who wear the uniform, understand well that the image of a soldier, airman, Navy seaman or Marine can be a powerful one when speaking on some volatile issue.

This is why the U.S. military maintains stringent policies against a U.S. service member using his or her identity when speaking publicly on any issue of political importance.

That image is placed in the hands of each branch’s public affairs office to manage.

Service members are trained constantly to refer all public inquiries to the unit of affairs.

Such policies, of course, are no different than one may expect to find in a large civilian corporation.

Yet violating this rule during wartime in the military is considered a federal offense under the Uniformed Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).

Warren’s point is that not only does Watada’s refusal to obey orders subject him to serious punishment.

The widespread media coverage of his refusal, though sympathetic, will only serve to make things even worse.

After seven years in the Air Force, I’ve learned enough to understand that military regulations provide a commander all the means necessary to rule virtually every aspect of one’s life.

In fact, the military life can at times run perfectly parallel to living under an authoritarian rule, though such terms are temporary and voluntarily accepted by the service member.

Despite such power, seldom will a commander use the full extent of his authority to exact maximum punishment allowable under the UCMJ for an offense.

They instead prefer the local of-

officials to handle the matter on an individual basis.

With rare exception, the leverage of power will always be in the advantage of the commanding authorities, and never in the defendant’s.

The system, after all, is designed to ensure this is the case.

However, as the military is said to be an incidental extension of political ends, commanders are never fully exempt from having to consider the political fallout their choices could have in delicate situations.

Watada’s stand shows how true this can be in domestic situations as well as in foreign affairs.

Though Watada’s bold maneuvering may be initially seen as reckless, it may well be his best chance at escaping severe consequences.

Should he face a court of military jurisdiction alone, he will most certainly lose. However, by throwing his case before the court of public opinion, political leverage may shift closer to his advantage.

Military authorities will have to evaluate whether the benefits of prosecuting this one dissenter is going outweigh the risk of facing the negative reaction of an already unsettled public as well as discouraging potential recruits who might have otherwise taken his place.

Watada’s aversion to the war is already seen as having a negative influence on the morale of both his troops and those among the military’s sister branches.

Seeing military authorities throwing a fellow brother-in-arms into a federal penitentiary probably will not do much to aid in its improvement.

This week, Watada stands before a military panel, facing charges of violating UCMJ Articles 87 (missing movement) and 133 (conduct unbecoming an officer).

If convicted on all counts, he could face a dishonorable discharge and four years in prison.

Watada, however, pled not guilty in Monday’s proceedings.

Unfolding developments since then forecast a difficult legal battle ahead for both him and his defense team.

Whether or not Watada’s case will succeed remains to be seen.

However, even if he should overcome the odds, he’ll still be left to awaken each morning pondering the same question the rest of us who chose instead to don the uniform and report for duty:

“Will history remember me as a hero or as unfortunate accessory to an unworthy partisan effort?”



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