

Boot Camps: Children Are Being Treated Worse Than Animals

by Donald Phau

The “Get Tough on Crime” campaign spearheaded by Conservative Revolutionary and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) and continued by President George W. Bush, is now harvesting bitter fruit among teenagers. Throughout the United States, young teens are being starved and tortured, and some are dying, in so-called military-style “boot camps” supposedly designed to teach them discipline. Going under various names, such as “survival camps” or “wildness therapy camps,” most are private, for-profit businesses, unregulated by state or local governments.

On July 1, in Maricopa County, Arizona, Anthony Haynes, a 14-year-old boy, was found dead. According to court documents, he was “forced to stand in sweltering heat as punishment and drowned at a motel where he vomited mud.”

The death is being investigated by the same sheriff, Joe Arpaio, who was the Republican “poster boy” in the 1996 U.S. Presidential campaign, praised by candidate Bob Dole for being “tough on criminals.” Arpaio appeared on many nation-wide television shows, and he became infamous for his having set up tents for the county jail where prisoners were kept in up to 110°F desert heat and given bologna sandwiches, dyed green to make them as unappetizing as possible.

Today, the use of boot camps is growing, but no one knows by how much. Gov. Jane Hull of Arizona said of the camp where Anthony Haynes died, “Camps of this type operate outside government oversight; they occupy a ‘black hole’ in our state’s regulatory scheme.” AFB News on July 10, 1999 reported that there were more than 50 juvenile boot camps in the United States. The actual number is unknown, and may be much larger. The July 15, 2001 *New York Times* reported that since 1980, “at least 31 teenagers in 11 states have died.”

‘The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made’

State governments originally started the use of boot camps, but government studies showed the camps to be a failure. Now, the growth is in the privately run camps. The owners of these camps target desperate parents who can’t control their children and are willing to pay up to several

thousands of dollars to send their son or daughter to a camp for the Summer. The hope is that their offspring will come back “reformed” and “well-behaved.” They don’t, however, and, as in the case of the Arizona camp, they may come back in a box.

The father of Anthony Haynes said that his son had been arrested for shoplifting and then slashed the tires of his mother’s car. After his son’s death, the father said, “At the time, I thought I was doing the right thing. It was probably the biggest mistake I ever made in my whole life.”

No Education, and No Job

The first boot camps were modelled on the military regiments practiced at the U.S. Marines’ Paris Island training camp. Experiments in boot camps were done in New York State in 1987, under a program called “Shock Incarceration.” By 1994, fifty boot camps were operating in 33 state correctional systems and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. A report on New York’s experimental program at the Elmira Reformatory stated:

“Military discipline is found to be exceedingly beneficial in inculcating promptness in obedience, attention, and harmony of action with others. It develops the prisoner physically, quickens him mentally, and, by making him a part of the disciplinary force, gives him a clearer insight into the meaning and benefits of thorough discipline.”

The only problem, is that the camps don’t work. The rate of recidivism, i.e., those who return to prison after they are released from the camps, is the same as for those who went to a regular prison. In a study of a state-run boot camp in Polk County, Florida, of 140 youths released from the camp in Fiscal Year 1996-97, eighty-three were re-arrested, 63 were re-convicted, and 54 were recommitted for new offenses. Other studies show the rate of recidivism to be between 60% and 70%.

In 1988, Edward Leghorn, then-Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services, commented, “To think that 90 days of training is going to undo 17 years of family troubles is a terrible approach. . . . They’re kidding themselves. These kids have no education. No job skills. The counseling is no more than a classroom lecture. . . .

What are these guys doing for a living when they get out? Pushups?"

Reports of Abuses at Other Camps

There have been reports of abuses at other camps. Last year, the state of North Carolina closed down a privately owned "About-Face Youth Boot Camp," taking 19 girls and 43 boys to be sheltered temporarily in a hospital. A social worker had substantiated that a camper had been handcuffed for three days. Parents from around the country had sent their kids there after the camp's founder made several appearances on the nationally televised "Jenny Jones" talk-show, on episodes of "out-of-control" kids. According to its website, the camp charges \$400 per week, with a two-week minimum. A weekend session is \$100. In the Winter, a two-week session costs \$1,000.

The Arizona boot camp, where Haynes died, is run by a strange group called the "America's Buffalo Soldiers Re-Enactors Association." Its members dress up and parade on horses in 19th-Century cavalry uniforms. Their program is called the "Summer Endurance Boot Camp." The founder of the camp, Col. Charles Long, advertises the camp on its website stating: "America's youth are running wild like undomesticated horses on the plains. Before wild horses can ever be of real service, you must corral and saddlebreak them or they will continue to run astray."

Financially Lucrative

From a business accounting standpoint, the camps appear to be very profitable. While parents pay thousands of dollars for the Summer, in return their children get, according to an AP report on the Maricopa County camp, "forced marches, black uniforms, and a diet consisting of an apple for breakfast, a carrot for lunch, and a bowl of beans for dinner." The children sleep "in sleeping bags on concrete slabs." The kids' "supervisors" were 17- and 18-year-olds, with no medical personnel at the camp.

The Arizona camp's owners had taken their lead from the methods that Sheriff Arpaio used in his Maricopa County jail. The model is the concentration camps of Nazi Germany. The concentration-camp victims were marched to work in nearby factories, but were fed only a few hundred calories a day. They worked for a few months until they dropped. Sheriff Arpaio makes inmates pay for their meals. Canines eat \$1.10 worth of food a day; the inmates, 90¢, Arpaio told a CNN reporter in a July 1999 story. "I'm very proud of that."

After Haynes' death, Sheriff Arpaio exclaimed, "There has [sic] been some serious allegations at that boot camp." It should have been of little surprise, however, that he has had a long-term relationship with the "Buffalo Soldiers," having often marched together with them in parades. Last year there was a Federal investigation of the boot camp, but no charges were filed.

We Lack Public Health For Bio-Terror Defense

by Carl Osgood

Over the last couple of years, a number of hearings, meetings, and exercises have been held to test the response capabilities of municipalities, states, and the Federal government, in case of a terrorist attack employing biological agents. As one result, there is a crescendo among elected and public health officials, in particular, around the lack of preparedness of the U.S. public health system to deal with such an incident.

The most dramatic of these events was a "senior level wargame," dubbed Dark Winter, conducted at Andrews Air Force base in Maryland on June 22-23. It was described to the Subcommittee on National Security, Veterans Affairs, and International Relations of the House Government Reform Committee on July 23, by former Deputy Secretary of Defense John Hamre. Hamre is now president of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, which along with several non-governmental organizations, helped to develop the scenario for the war game. Hamre described a frightening scenario involving the release of smallpox in a major American city, and the inability of officials across the spectrum, from local emergency personnel up to the National Command Authorities, to respond adequately to the developing crisis.

'Dark Winter'

The Dark Winter scenario involved the release of smallpox in three different locations — Oklahoma City, Pennsylvania, and Georgia — at the same time as crises were developing in the Taiwan Strait and Southwest Asia. The Pennsylvania and Georgia releases were botched, but the Oklahoma City release resulted in an epidemic, and was not reported until some 25 cases had been counted. Smallpox is especially feared as a biological agent because it can only be controlled by vaccination and containment, is 30% fatal, and hasn't been seen in the United States since 1949. Vaccination was stopped in the United States in 1972, and in the rest of the world by 1980. Hamre told the subcommittee that one of the problems in dealing with an outbreak is the limited supply — 12 million doses — of vaccine in the United States. The immediate question that arises, is, how does the government allocate such a supply when there's only enough for one out of every 23 Americans?

Hamre described a frightening series of events during the 12 days of the scenario, an unfolding crisis complete with fake news broadcasts. Problems that rapidly became apparent, were the overwhelming of the public-health system and,