

creased the number of Latinos they nicked for PI and other Class C misdemeanors by 150 percent, while arrests of whites and African Americans for those offenses fell. The Mexican consul issued an advisory telling migrants to avoid Irving. “In this city, one has to be extra careful,” he told a Spanish-language newspaper. “They were clearly choosing to bring more Hispanics into jail,” says Aarti Kohli, coauthor of the Berkeley study. But the feds and local

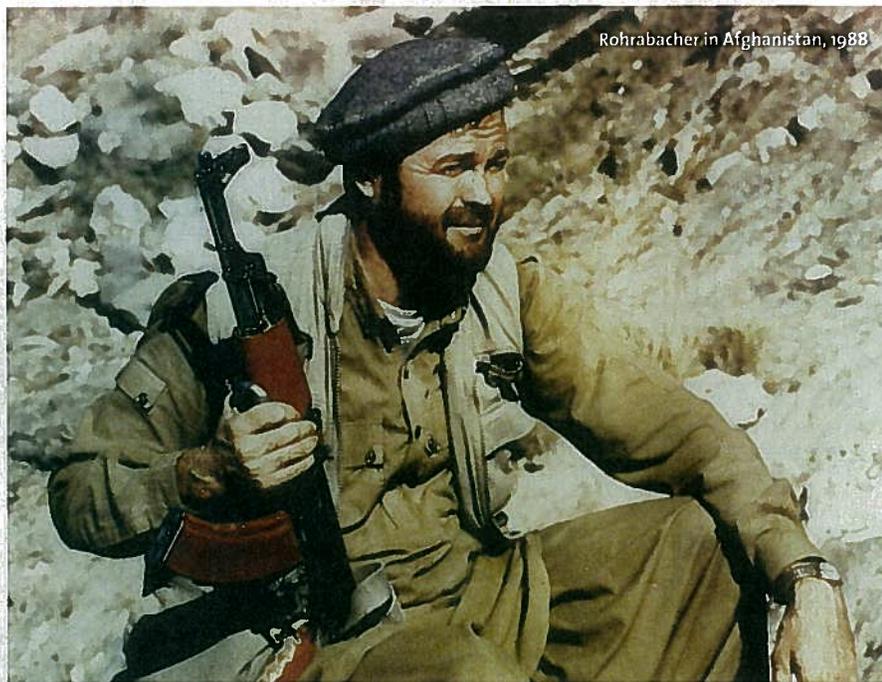
officials hailed the PI sweeps as a victory. Immigration “is expanding this program, saying, ‘Isn’t this great?’” Kohli says. “But the question they’re not asking is: How are these people getting put into jail?”

After community activists took to the streets and airwaves, Irving’s arrest rate for Hispanics plummeted. (Dallas and Irving are no longer part of the federal program.) In Fort Worth, protests over the Rainbow Lounge raid elicited a quick apology from

the police chief and promises to review the PI policy. But the arrests have continued elsewhere, and no one is targeting the public intoxication law itself. Many people don’t care, Novello says, “because they can’t vicariously experience this injustice.” The Houston attorney puts it more bluntly. “As long as police are going out there fucking with the blacks and the Mexicans, until it hits the people with the power, they won’t care.” —Adam Weinstein

DANA ROHRBACHER'S WAR

calling kabulsh*t



Rohrabacher in Afghanistan, 1988

In 1988, shortly after winning his first term in Congress, Dana Rohrabacher dabbled briefly in another vocation—freedom fighter. With Afghanistan’s anti-Soviet insurgency a cause célèbre for conservatives, he traveled to the front lines. Sporting a thick beard and traditional Afghan attire, the congressman-elect joined up with a rebel infantry unit whose mission included laying siege to a Soviet position.

When I met Rohrabacher recently at his Capitol Hill office—adorned with mementos of his Afghan adventures, including a tapestry of the legendary mujahideen commander Ahmad Shah Massoud—I asked if

he’d joined the battle. “Let’s put it this way,” he said, a glimmer in his eye. “I didn’t carry a gun—most of the time.”

It’s the kind of adventure that has earned the Orange County Republican, who’s 62, a reputation as “colorful,” or, as some put it, “bat-shit crazy.” He’s a banjo-playing, folk-singing, arch-conservative surfer, who—at a time when other politicians insisted they’d never inhaled—publicly proclaimed he’d done “everything but drink the bong water.” An outspoken climate change skeptic, Rohrabacher once joked that “dinosaur flatulence” may have caused a prehistoric episode of global warming. For almost two

years, he ran a quixotic congressional investigation into the Oklahoma City bombing, dispatching staff as far as the Philippines to prove that Terry Nichols had ties to Ramzi Yousef, one of the planners of the first World Trade Center bombing. At a cringe-worthy hearing last fall, he lambasted an Iraqi politician over the “type of bloodlust” that “exists in your society.”

But though Rohrabacher often comes across as God’s gift to liberal bloggers, on Afghanistan he is recognized as a genuine congressional expert—and he’s staked out a position closer to the Hill’s most liberal Democrats than to his fellow Republicans. He opposes Obama’s surge, warns that the troop escalation will only strengthen the Taliban’s hand, and worries about history repeating itself: “The American Army is playing the role of the Russian army,” he laments.

Rohrabacher’s Afghanistan history dates back to his days as a speechwriter and presidential adviser in the Reagan White House, where he helped shape the Reagan Doctrine—the policy of arming resistance movements to undermine Soviet influence, with the mujahideen serving as Exhibit A. “I’d be there with guys in full Afghan garb in the executive dining room of the White House,” he recalls. Michael Scheuer, the former chief of the CIA’s bin Laden unit, says Rohrabacher was one of the few lawmakers who were “interested in Afghanistan to an extent that surpassed how many dead Soviets there were.”

In the years after the Soviets fled Afghanistan in 1989, Rohrabacher says, his “passion” was to bring back the country’s exiled king, Muhammad Zahir Shah, the only figure he believed could unite Afghans. Instead, by 1996, the Taliban had captured Kabul, and Rohrabacher began actively working to undermine them. At one point

COURTESY DANA ROHRBACHER

he hitched a ride in a UN supply plane to the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif with the aim of organizing a coalition of anti-Taliban warlords such as Massoud and the Uzbek militia commander Abdul Rashid Dostum. "I was flying all over the world," he says. "And I was on my own. You know, I was a real freelancer on that one."

Indeed, the congressman "was seen as having his own foreign policy," says Marvin Weinbaum, a former Afghanistan and Pakistan analyst at the State Department and now a scholar at the Middle East Institute. "He saw all sorts of nefarious plots that we were hatching with the Taliban. He was certainly out to discredit the [Clinton] State Department." Following a 2001 meeting with the Taliban's foreign minister in Qatar, US critics accused Rohrabacher of breaching the Logan Act, which prohibits American citizens from making unofficial diplomatic overtures.

In the fall of 2001, Rohrabacher's friend Massoud was assassinated by a pair of Al Qaeda operatives. Upon hearing the news, Rohrabacher wept in his office. Then he phoned the Bush White House in a frenzy: He believed Massoud's murder was the prelude to a major terrorist attack and requested an immediate audience with then-national security adviser Condoleezza Rice. He got an appointment for the next day—September 11.

In the aftermath of the attacks, Rohrabacher was in demand. In meetings with Rice, as well as Pentagon and CIA officials, he says, he argued that the Northern Alliance and a small US team should oust the Taliban—the more heavy-handed operation favored by some military leaders wouldn't work. Rohrabacher's aides, meanwhile, worked the phones with their Afghan contacts, gathering intelligence on the Taliban's movements. "I had everybody's sat-phone number," says Al Santoli, a former foreign policy aide to Rohrabacher. "I spent as much time at the Pentagon as I did in the congressional office."

Even now, Rohrabacher grins when recalling the overthrow of the Taliban. "Everything was ours," he says. "We had the total faith of the vast majority of Afghans." But, he adds, it all went sour when the administration decided to shift gears. "The turning point was when George W. Bush through his hubris decided he was going to—I can just see him saying, 'We're on a

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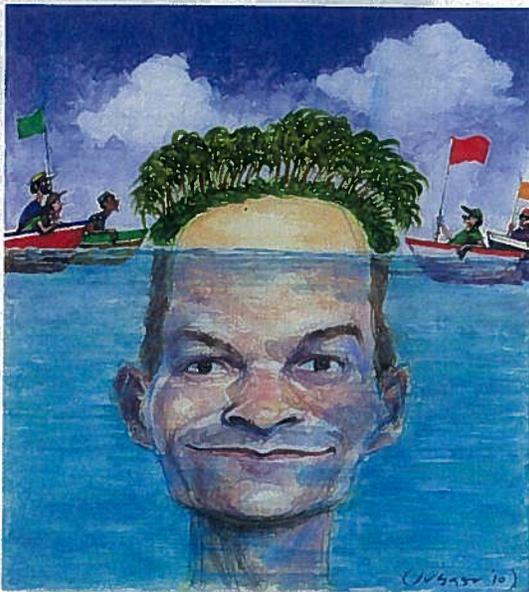
roll, let's go into Iraq.' We didn't have the ability to sustain large-scale military operations in Iraq and still rebuild Afghanistan." Still, Rohrabacher was a steadfast backer of the war during the Bush years, a stance he now considers "a mistake."

Today, Rohrabacher vows to vote against any funding for Obama's surge in Afghanistan. Instead he favors, perhaps unsurprisingly, a revival of the Reagan Doctrine. He regards the Karzai government as hopelessly corrupt and sees a decentralized power structure as the only solution. Rather than putting more American troops in harm's way, he'd prefer that the US reinvigorate and perhaps arm Afghanistan's militias (including those associated with his ex-Northern Alliance friends)—the same forces the US and international forces initially tried to dismantle. And instead of spending some \$33 billion on the surge, Rohrabacher wants to allocate \$5 billion for "buying the good will of local village leaders" while also embedding small US units in villages. "We have to have our people become part of the Afghan family," he says. Rohrabacher has distributed a blueprint—authored by a Special Forces major whose unit developed a close rapport with an eastern tribe—for doing just that to all of his colleagues.

As the Obama administration formulated its war strategy last fall, Rohrabacher made his case to top officials, even the president himself—to little avail. (Only Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, who in diplomatic cables expressed doubts about the surge, concurred with him over glasses of Uzbek brandy during a dinner party at his house, Rohrabacher says.) Still, some of DC's top Afghanistan experts think Rohrabacher's ideas have merit: His argument for a decentralized approach "deserves serious consideration," Paul Pillar, former national intelligence officer for the Near East and South Asia, told me. "I would underscore that it is a totally different approach from what the administration has adopted."

As our interview drew to a close, an aide came in to announce Rohrabacher's next appointment. The visitor was a young Afghan expat, who'd been referred to him by a retired US general who figured the congressman might appreciate his insights. "Here's an Afghan for you," Rohrabacher said, striding out with a boisterous laugh. "This is typical." —*Daniel Schulman*

democracy with a view



I first met Srdja Popovic last spring at a bustling café in the Maldives, where he had just helped overthrow the government. Sipping espresso and smoking cigarettes, he spoke in passionate bursts as he told me about how he had guided the local opposition—now the ruling party of this tiny nation in the Indian Ocean—in the ways of peaceful revolt. Yet even with five revolutions already under his belt, Popovic insisted that he sought only to educate rebels, not lead them.

"You cannot take the revolution in a suitcase and take it to one place," Popovic told me when I caught up with him again in a restaurant in wintry Washington, DC, where he'd been meeting with pro-democracy organizations. Popovic has been credited with giving activists the tools to oust unpopular regimes from Ukraine to Lebanon—earning him and his small band of nonviolent storm troopers a name as Che-like globe-trotting agitators. "We have the notorious reputation of being capable of toppling dictatorships all over the world," he said with nonchalance. "We are the world's best known troublemakers."

But that notoriety has also made it more difficult for the tall, sinewy 37-year-old to

slip into places where his services might be of use. While he boasts that he's never been arrested outside of his native Serbia, nor deported or even denied a visa, he acknowledges that there are "a few countries that I would be prohibited to go." Iran, he says with a smirk, "would love me—for dinner."

Luckily, Popovic is on the verge of acquiring a place where the world can come to him. If all goes according to plan, this spring a tropical atoll in the Maldives will become home to "Democracy Island," a campus where activists can study non-violent resistance amid coconut trees, white sand, and lagoons the color of Cool Mint Listerine.

Srdja Popovic (pronounced sir-JA POP-o-vitch) grew up in Belgrade, the son of journalists. In the 1980s, he got into rock and roll, which in the former Yugoslavia was "subversive in itself." But it wasn't until after the fall of communism and Slobodan Milosevic's rise to power that Popovic got serious about politics. One day in October 1998, he and 10 student activists huddled in a Belgrade café and formed an opposition group called Otpor ("Resistance"). They chose a clenched fist as their symbol. For the next two years, Otpor rallied the silent majority of Serbs to call for Milosevic's ouster. The regime accused Popovic and his cohorts of being terrorists and agents of the United States. On October 5, 2000, massive demonstrations swept through Serbia, and Milosevic stepped down.

After that, Popovic won a parliamentary seat in Serbia's first free and fair election. He advised Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic until his assassination in early 2003. By then, Popovic was growing restless. He wanted to take his brand of popular rebellion on the road. "I am not a politician; I am a revolutionary," he says. "I see the world as a big battlefield between those who believe in the power of the people and those who try to control the power of the people."

With another Otpor founder, Popovic founded the Centre for Applied Non-violent Action and Strategies (CANVAS)