



# IRAQ VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR



## After Action Review

October 20, 2008

Prepared by:

Matthis Chiroux, Kristofer Goldsmith, Jason Lemieux, Jabbar Magruder, and Jose Vasquez

### The action

On Wednesday October 15, 2008, members of Iraq Veterans Against the War led a nonviolent protest outside the presidential debate at [Hofstra University](#) in Hempstead, Long Island. Our demand was simple: We wanted two members, Matthis Chiroux (SGT, USA; IVAW NYC) and Kristofer Goldsmith (SGT, USA; IVAW NYC) granted access to the debate so they could each ask one question of Obama and McCain. If the candidates and debate organizers failed to meet our demand by 7:00PM, we would attempt to enter the debate to have our voices heard.

Chiroux's question for Obama was whether he would support war resisters opposed to the Iraq war since Obama has said the war and occupation were illegal. Goldsmith's question for McCain was whether he would fully fund the VA, despite the fact that he has voted against VA funding for the last several years.

We made our intentions public a week before the debate in a letter and press release sent to the debate moderator, Bob Schieffer, the campaign staffs of both candidates, and hundreds of news outlets. None of the decision makers responded. We were at Hofstra to force the issue that veterans and servicemembers are not being cared for or heard from by our government, and the candidates, CBS, and the Nassau County Police Department (NCPD) couldn't have proved us more correct.

### Arrests and injuries

When the 7:00PM deadline passed, a contingent of uniformed IVAW members and several hundred peaceful protesters marched along [Hempstead Turnpike](#) to the main gate of Hofstra University. As we attempted to cross Hempstead Turnpike, we were immediately stopped by a police supervisor and told that if we went further we would be arrested. We acknowledged the stakes involved and proceeded forward. The officer in charge escorted the group of veterans past the first police line, through the line of mounted police, and then began arresting those who tried to go any further. This resulted in an initial arrest of eight IVAW members:

Matthis Chiroux	SGT, USA	IVAW NYC
James Gilligan	CPL, USMC	IVAW Philadelphia
Kris Goldsmith	SGT, USA	IVAW NYC
Marlisa Grogan	CPT, USMC	IVAW NYC
Adam Kokesh	SGT, USMC	IVAW DC
Nathan Peld	PO2, USN	IVAW Central NY
Mike Spinnato	CPL, USMC	IVAW Boston
Jose Vasquez	SSG, USAR	IVAW NYC



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Nonviolence was stressed at every stage leading up to this action. Chiroux and Goldsmith explained our nonviolent position in person the day before the action to Detective Thomas J. Calvert and Detective Robert Annese of the NCPD. Calvert and Annese were in charge of security for the debate and they assured us they would instruct their officers to respect the nonviolent spirit of the action by using restraint towards peaceful veterans and demonstrators. However, that assurance was not honored.

The NCPD met our actions with poor judgment, violence, and misconduct causing two veterans and one civilian to be injured, one seriously. The police used horses against the crowd to physically push protesters back away from the Hofstra gates. They also used a tactic where the mounted police spun their horses in circles causing injury to most who could not escape their paths. As the order to get back on the sidewalk was being complied with, at least one officer charged his horse onto the sidewalk.

Nick Morgan (SGT, USA; IVAW DC) was trampled, knocked unconscious, and had his face crushed by a hoof (see below for links to media). After being trampled the officers at the scene assured Jabbar Magruder (SGT, ARNG; IVAW Boston) that they would make sure Morgan would be seen by a medical professional, instead they gave him minimal first aid and took him to the bus with the other arrestees. Disoriented and obviously suffering a concussion, Morgan was initially refused medical treatment beyond a simple piece of gauze taped to his face.

When Morgan was escorted onto the bus in handcuffs, he did not know where he was, or why he was arrested. We pointed out that because he had a serious head injury, Morgan wasn't aware enough to speak for himself. One officer responded with, "too bad." Police initially refused to bring him to the hospital regardless of his potentially life threatening condition. It was not until other members of IVAW demanded he be allowed to see a doctor, that the police hesitantly put Morgan into an ambulance. While on the bus, the officers mocked us in an unprofessional manner. When we arrived at the Nassau County Detention Center, the hazing did not cease.

At the hospital, Morgan received stitches given nothing more than Motrin for the pain. It was discovered after an x-ray that his right cheekbone was clearly displaced and pushed back into his skull. After treatment, the semiconscious veteran was brought to Nassau County's jail and shackled to a bench with the rest of the "Hempstead 15," with no further medical attention.

Carlos Harris' (SPC, USA; IVAW Boston) and Jabbar Magruder (SGT, USA; IVAW Boston) both suffered foot injuries when a horse stepped them on. Geoff Millard (SGT, USA; IVAW DC) a disabled veteran of Iraq with degenerative spine disease was knocked to the ground, dragged from the sidewalk and arrested. One civilian, Nadine Lubka (Washington, DC), had her nose bloodied.

In our opinion, the use of horses as a first line of defense was excessive and unnecessary against a peaceful crowd. The fact that an Iraq combat veteran, Nick Morgan, was nearly killed by being trampled by a horse *on the sidewalk* is outrageous and shameful.



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Two more veterans and five civilian supporters were arrested:

Geoff Millard	SGT, ARNG	IVAW DC
Nick Morgan	SGT, USA	IVAW DC
Paul Blasenheim	Washington, DC	
Megan Day	Portchester, MA	
David M. Disimino	Tacoma Park, MD	
Lianne Gillouly	Boston, MA	
Ryan Olander	Highland Park, NJ	

## While in custody

After being arrested, Chiroux brought up the prospect of speaking to a lawyer but an officer threatened to, "Put you in the back (jail)," where, "the big boys will pop your cherry!" When Chiroux asked this officer if he had just threatened an honorably discharged veteran of Afghanistan with prison rape and told the officer he wanted his name and rank, he refused and told him to look it up on the police report, which the NCPD has thus far refused to provide.

With the Hempstead 15 sitting in the detention center, the officers and detectives began taunting us, especially when Morgan was brought back from the hospital. We heard statements like, "You're cowards, you're idiots," and, "This non-violent protest stuff is retarded," and, "See how it got your friend's face fucked up?" There were several heated debates between the police and us during our six-hour detention.

In addition, the three female arrestees were sexually harassed by the police who went so far as to hold their identification cards next to the handcuffed women's faces and make comments like, "You look like you came out of a Barbie magazine." Such behavior on the part of city employees is completely inappropriate and we will hold them accountable.

## Charges and court date

We were all issued the same case number and charged with "disorderly conduct" and "failure to obey a lawful order". Initially, only fourteen were released on appearance tickets for November 10, 2008 (USMC birthday and the day before Veterans Day) returnable to:

First District Court, County of Nassau, Arraignment Part  
99 Main Street, Room 268  
Hempstead, New York 11550

Adam Kokesh refused to sign the summons on principle and said he could not appear that day. He spent the night in jail and saw a judge the next day. He was released on October 16, 2008 at 6:30PM on \$250.00 bail. He will appear in court with us on November 10<sup>th</sup>.

## After being released

We saw the same officers, who we just spent six hours with, at the Colony Diner where we went to eat after. Chiroux recognized the officer who threatened him with prison rape, and when he



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respectfully approached the officers' table to again ask for their names, the officer who made the threat leapt to his feet, threw his finger in Chiroux's face and began threatening to "beat his ass" if he didn't drop it.

Afterward, another police officer approached Chiroux and accused him of being drunk and said he was about to be arrested again. Chiroux retorted that his accusations were false (considering he'd only gotten out of jail 30 minutes prior) and that he was only interested in learning the names of the officers who arrested and harassed us. He responded with only his name, Officer Peter Sikinger (Badge # 1351), but refused to reveal the names of his partners, though to his credit, he did back down from threatening Chiroux with arrest. He was also the officer that escorted Morgan to the hospital and was cooperative there.

## The Hempstead 15

### IVAW members:

Matthis Chiroux	SGT, USA	IVAW NYC
James Gilligan	CPL, USMC	IVAW Philadelphia
Kris Goldsmith	SGT, USA	IVAW NYC
Marlisa Grogan	CPT, USMC	IVAW NYC
Adam Kokesh	SGT, USMC	IVAW DC
Geoff Millard	SGT, ARNG	IVAW DC
Nick Morgan	SGT, USA	IVAW DC
Nathan Peld	PO2, USN	IVAW Central NY
Mike Spinnato	CPL, USMC	IVAW Boston
Jose Vasquez	SSG, USAR	IVAW NYC

### Allies:

Paul Blasenheim	Washington Peace Center	Washington, DC
Megan Day	CAN, UMASS-Boston	Portchester, MA
David M. Disimino	A.N.S.W.E.R.	Tacoma Park, MD
Lianne Gillooly	CAN, Boston Univeristy	Boston, MA
Ryan Olander	CAN, Rutgers University	Highland Park, NJ

## Strategic assessment

The strategic purpose of this action was to put pressure on the presidential campaigns to address the war and veterans issues. Chiroux assesses the event as a strategic success: He reached out to the campaigns via email and sent hundreds of press releases to media outlets. The NCPD liaison told Matthis before the event that Mr. Schieffer was aware of his letter. However, they ignored our requests and a veteran was seriously injured as a result. Several other veterans were peacefully arrested. Because of this, the candidates' decision to ignore us reflects poorly on them and is ripe for exploitation.



However, most of the debriefers have strong reservations with this assessment. We believe that the strategic effect of this action is limited:

It's unlikely the candidates themselves were ever cognizant of our presence outside. Mr. Schieffer was only addressed via an email to which he never responded; we do not know if he even received it in time to respond. Not much follow-up work was done to ensure that media outlets would act on the press release. Very few if any mainstream media outlets were present for the action, so the candidates probably had little to fear from any public connection with the IVAW arrests. Absence of pressure on the candidates to respond is evident in NCPD's eagerness to arrest and harass the arrestable members and then escalate force on the gathered crowd.

Morgan's injury was serious; frankly, he is lucky to be alive. IVAW can now pressure the candidates to condemn NCPD's assault on him. We may also be able to use this injury as a leverage to get an answer to Chiroux and Goldsmith's questions, which would constitute a considerable strategic advancement for IVAW. However, this advancement will come at a significant cost. Morgan's injury was NOT a part of the initial plan, nor do we believe his injury a desirable outcome. Any strategic assessment must consider this fact.

His unfortunate and preventable injury provides IVAW with a strategic leverage that we should exploit to the fullest extent, but had his injury not occurred this action probably would not have created a significant opportunity to apply political pressure on the candidates. Even with the injury, the candidates are not directly responsible for NCPD actions over which they had no control.

### Some lessons learned:

1. Conduct civil disobedience training
2. Consider the time of day. Weekdays constrain our ability to properly brief people.
3. SLOW DOWN, when confronting a police line.
4. Have a post arrest plan including legal, media, police liaison, and crowd control.
5. Have medics on site and emergency contact info for IVAW members.
6. Plan to record our own actions.

### Next steps

Moving forward, IVAW-NYC asks that other chapters strategically exploit the injustice of Nick's injuries by encouraging members and supporters to pressure both presidential campaigns IN THEIR RESPECTIVE STATES (research and call the phone number for their state's campaign headquarters, not just the national phone number) to:

1. Condemn NCPD's reckless assault on Nick that fractured his skull and endangered his life.
2. Answer Chiroux and Goldsmith's questions as listed above.



## AAR Notes

### Points of Improvement:

- Next time, schedule debriefing, writing, and posting of AAR into the initial plan!
- Before beginning the action, express to the crowd how you want them to act. This would have avoided the crowd rushing forward with the arrestables and creating havoc.
- Brief IVAW members on the whole plan, even if you're in a rush.
- Media, legal, police liaisons, and crowd marshals must be non-arrestable and stay that way!
- Everyone should have had a copy of Kris and Matthis' questions on them. If those two were arrested without reading them off, the questions would have went unheard. The event should have focused more on getting those questions in front of the candidates, not getting arrested.
- Have IVAW medics or, failing that, trained civilian medics who stay back from the action.
- Take charge of the crowd. Crowd marshals could have helped keep the crowd back, allowing for:
  - photo opportunities
  - less tension with the police
- Matthis: crowd was told wait for IVAW if arrestables. Didn't realize so many would be willing to risk arrest.
- Have unified chants for the crowd that are respectful-this time the crowd starting yelling about fascist pigs after the arrestables were voluntarily arrested. Just upped the ante to the cops.
- Have the widest possible variety of tactics to calm the cops down. For example, if everyone sat down in the road they'd be less threatening and simultaneously harder to move.
- Along with the crowd marshals, a designated leader at the front of the action giving commands would have helped.
- Plan for a ride home for everyone, arrestables and nons alike. Planning should cover from the moment we all leave "home base" until we all return.
- Double bind not very effective in this case: Mainstream media not present to pressure police and, more importantly, candidates. Action happened too fast for the campaigns to be made aware and step in to do something. Need to ratchet pressure up slowly.
- Should have had a plan B - perhaps a man on the inside to hold up a banner or something.
- Clearer comm all around- between planners and members, members and civilians, etc.
- Could have had non arrestables all the way across the street; have arrestables cross 2 at a time to avoid blocking the road.
- Building up the tension slowly like DNC makes us look in control.
- Follow up on press releases-"you don't need numbers, you need background work."
- Kris wanted people to get to his house beforehand and brief there. People came late and didn't have time to prepare.



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## Tactical Successes:

- Kris's conversation with the commissioner who gave the public space to Obama campaign
- Got stage time for supporters, making it not just an IVAW event. Got buy in.
- Decent supporter turnout-lot of organizing with Long Island peace movement-put IVAW on the map in Long Island.
- Ad hoc press conference-disassociated us from whatever happened after we left, showed good exploitation of event outcome.
- Addressing crowd and cops-also helped disassociate us from what happened after we left, German analogy probably affected cops.
- Megaphone a good idea
- Initial coordination with cops was active-allows us to show later that the cops assured attacks would not happen.
- Live video stream on the uptake. Got a lot of emails.
- A lot of Internet buzz following the event.
- Footage to Limon after event-helping us to produce the investigative piece.

## Strategic assessment:

What was the strategic purpose of this action? Could we have found a better way of accomplishing it? What affects the candidates, and how important are they?

- Matthis: extremely important. painted candidates in very bad light.
- Jose: informing both campaigns of what happened outside, then force them to respond. if they don't we can play that. Also need to connect this action with the DNC. To Obama campaign: did you know we were outside? NCPD is least of strategic part. issue for the debate was domestic and VA wasn't discussed.
- Kris: press release-should have included questions, perhaps in smaller form. media could have done our job if we'd made the questions more available. making effort now to call and harass candidates instead of police.
- Nick's attack needs to be talked about, but in context of the questions we wanted to ask.
- Kelly, Francesca and Nick worked immediately on press release when we called them Wed night.

## Next steps:

- Doug Limon investigative piece about action
- ACLU documented horses on sidewalk, etc. putting together a lawsuit for Nick, investigation into use of horses, getting copy of police report.
- Have people demand that the candidates answer the questions.
- NLG will defend IVAW pro bono.
- Start a Google Group for the Hempstead 15.
- Fundraise for Nick Morgan's medical bills.



Figure 1: Sector Sketch

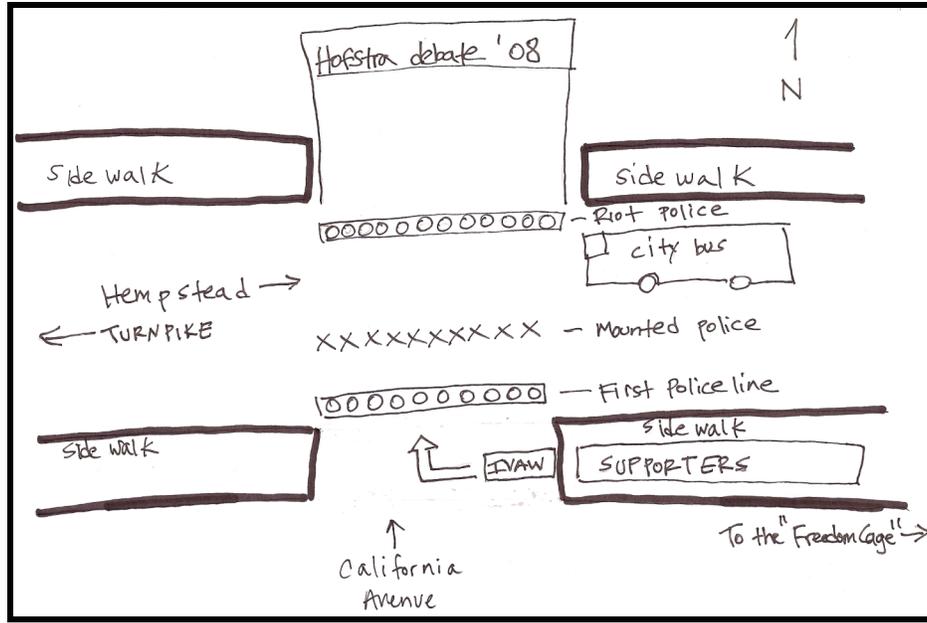
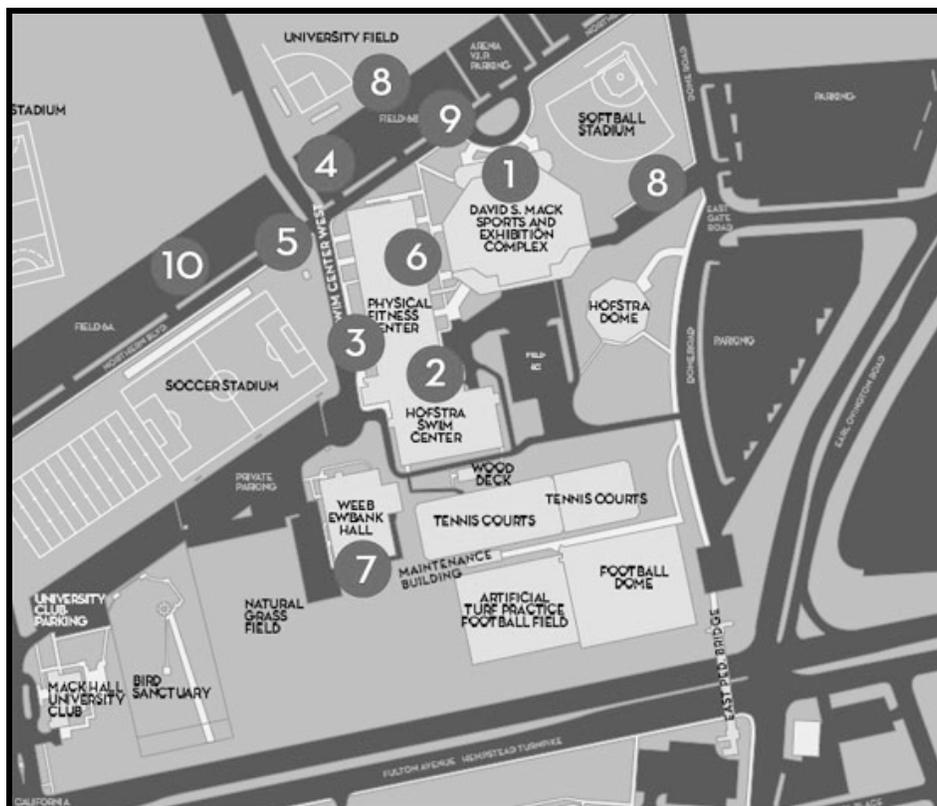


Figure 2: Debate Area





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**IVAW.ORG**

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 16, 2008

CONTACT: Jason Lemieux, [jasonlemieux@ivaw.org](mailto:jasonlemieux@ivaw.org), 760-409-9403 or  
Kristofer Goldsmith, [kgoldy1985@gmail.com](mailto:kgoldy1985@gmail.com), 516-457-1260

**Iraq War Veterans Arrested While Attempting to Deliver Questions to Obama and McCain**

HEMPSTEAD, N.Y. – One hour before the final presidential debate of the 2008 campaign, fourteen members of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) marched in formation to Hofstra University to present questions to the candidates. IVAW had requested permission from debate moderator Bob Schieffer to ask their questions during the debate, but received no response.

The contingent of veterans in dress and combat uniforms attempted to enter the building where the debate was to be held in order to ask questions about poor veterans' healthcare and supporting war resisters of the candidates, but were turned back by police. IVAW members at the front of the formation were immediately arrested, and others were pushed back into the crowd by police on horseback. Several members were injured, including former Army Sergeant Nick Morgan who suffered a broken cheekbone when he was trampled by police horses before being arrested.

"Neither of the candidates has shown real support for service members and veterans. We came here to try and have serious questions answered, questions that we as veterans of the Iraq war have a right to ask, but instead we were arrested. We will continue to ask these questions no matter who is elected. We believe that the time has come to end this war and bring our troops home, and we will be pushing for that no matter what happens in this election." said Jason Lemieux, a former Sergeant in the US Marine Corps who served three tours in Iraq, and member of IVAW.

A total of ten veterans were arrested during the action, including Matthis Chiroux (Army Sergeant), Kristofer Goldsmith (Army Sergeant), Adam Kokesh (Marine Sergeant), Mike Spinato, Geoff Millard (Army Sergeant), Marlisa Grogan (Marine Captain), Nathan Peld (Navy, 1998-2004), Nick Morgan (Army Sergeant), James Gilligan (Marine Corps, 6 years) and Jose Vasquez (Army & Army Reserves, 1992-2007).

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Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) was founded in July of 2004 to allow servicemen and women from all branches of the military a chance to come together and speak out against an illegal, unjust and unwinnable occupation. IVAW currently has over 1,300 members in 49 states, Canada and on military bases in the United States and overseas. To learn more about IVAW you can visit our website at [www.ivaw.org](http://www.ivaw.org).



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## Media of the event

IVAW: <http://ivaw.org/node/4405>

GlassBeadCollective: [http://glassbeadcollective.org/emily/IVAW\\_NICK\\_MORGAN.mov](http://glassbeadcollective.org/emily/IVAW_NICK_MORGAN.mov)

The Uptake: <http://the-uptake.groups.theuptake.org/en/videogalleryView/id/975/>

iReport: <http://www.ireport.com/docs/DOC-115455>

GoogleVideo:

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-6962936515243468480&hl=en>

NewsDay:

[http://www.newsday.com/news/printedition/nation/ny-usprot165885245oct16\\_0.6652656.story](http://www.newsday.com/news/printedition/nation/ny-usprot165885245oct16_0.6652656.story)

Air Force Times:

[http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2008/10/military\\_veteransarrested\\_debate\\_101608w/](http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2008/10/military_veteransarrested_debate_101608w/)

OpEdNews:

<http://www.opednews.com/articles/Iraq-War-Veterans-Arrested-by-Kevin-Gosztola-081016-85.html>

CommonDreams:

<http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2008/10/16>

CensoredNews: <http://bsnorrell.blogspot.com/2008/10/veterans-arrested-trampled-at-debate.html>

NextLeftNotes: <http://www.nextleftnotes.org/NLN/>

YouTube:

Part 1: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4un9lejuMo>

Part 2: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dWzWhT0pCO0>

Part 3: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YxL6rrRv4xg>

Part 4: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLRwdHIkr48>

Part 5: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fU8iFUEjAY>

Part 6: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OjTzNx7cvTU>

Part 7: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZDf\\_J2UoNM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZDf_J2UoNM)

Part 8: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-OMTvCa\\_Oo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-OMTvCa_Oo)

Part 9: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wyfRSF\\_U7mE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wyfRSF_U7mE)

Part 10: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9Qy9\\_IcInY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9Qy9_IcInY)

Part 11: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9Qy9\\_IcInY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9Qy9_IcInY)

Part 12: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VU5A1gq1WGw>