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They could win - just ask the Godfather

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Life as an embedded reporter in Afghanistan means you're almost always kept inside the wire.

But being stuck on a army base isn't as bad as you might think. There are many comforts and distractions. You can even rent DVDs, for example.

I picked up The Godfather series this week. Not to watch the entire trilogy. Just one scene.

In Part II, the reluctant mobster Michael Corleone (played by a young Al Pacino) finds himself in pre-revolutionary 1950s Havana. He's part of a crooked consortium from Las Vegas that's plotting to take over Cuba's gambling resorts.

The politicians are all onside. The only problem is a growing insurgency.

"I assure you this: We will tolerate no guerrillas in the casinos and the swimming pools," a Cuban official jokes, as he courts investment from the gangsters.

But Corleone is skeptical, especially after his car is stuck in traffic. He sees police try – and fail – to arrest a revolutionary.

"I saw an interesting thing happen today. A rebel was being arrested by the military police," he tells his fellow gangsters.

"And rather than being taken alive, he exploded a grenade he had hidden in his jacket," he continues.

"He killed himself and he took a captain of the command with him."

The mobsters mutter that the rebels are lunatics.

"Maybe so," says Corleone. "But it occurred to me: The soldiers are paid to fight. The rebels aren't."

"What does that tell you?"

"They could win," Corleone says.

A senior gangster chokes on that one.

"Michael," he says, patiently. "We're bigger than U.S. Steel."

I fell asleep. The rest of the movie is about how Cuba falls, before everything devolves into anarchy and assassination.

I woke up. I read a small item on the news wire.

It's the kind of story that's so commonplace it doesn't really rate as news any more.

A Taliban rebel exploded a suicide vest at a police chief's compound near Kandahar this week. He killed himself and three police.

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