

GI SPECIAL 2#B21

THIS IS HOW BUSH BRINGS THE TROOPS HOME



Our Lady Fatima Church after the funeral for New Jersey National Guard Sgt. Homberto Timoteo of the 3rd Battalion of the 112th Field Artillery, in Newark, June 12, 2004. Timoteo was one of four soldiers from the same unit killed in Iraq. (REUTERS/Chip East)

SLUMBERING RANKS? “The Picture We're Getting Is Filtered”

JULY 27, 2004 By Alexander Zaitchik, New York Press

Back in March, the Army released the results of a poll conducted to gauge frontline morale in Iraq. It was hardly a shocker to learn that most of those stationed there almost a year after the fall of Baghdad weren't very happy about it.

If more than half the troops in Iraq were losing faith after a *single year* of relatively few casualties, how could U.S. commanders expect to maintain the discipline, order and morale needed for the long haul? **Upon the poll's release, a senior army commander told the *Washington Post* he was "extremely worried by the numbers," adding that they should "set off alarm bells."**

It's now been four months since the Army released its study. Yet disruptive manifestations of widespread discontent among the ranks have not materialized.

What's wrong with this picture?

There are signs that more soldiers may be getting ready to take their chances. The G.I. Rights Hotline, which provides counseling to soldiers considering deployment refusal or conscientious-objector status, claims it is now handling 3000 calls a month—a 50 percent increase from what it received in 2003.

Another possible storm cloud over the now-quiet Iraqi front is the founding of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), which announced itself to the world last Thursday at a press conference in Boston.

The IVAW advocates immediate withdrawal and seeks to create political pressure at home while encouraging active-duty soldiers, reservists and recent veterans to come forward and speak out against the occupation. The founding membership totals just 12—double the number that hatched Vietnam Veterans Against the War in 1967. Within two years that group had grown to more than 30,000 active members demanding an end to the war, including a returning Navy lieutenant named John Kerry.

Michael Hoffman, co-founder of IVAW, stormed Baghdad with a First Marine Division artillery battery and observed the early months of the occupation from Tikrit, an experience that confirmed his worst fears. Not only was the war based and sold on lies, he says, U.S. troops are the problem in post-Saddam Iraq—not the solution. Upon his return he began working with veterans groups opposing the occupation, activity that led directly to the founding of IVAW, which he hopes will provide an outlet for the widespread G.I. anger he believes is simmering in Iraq.

"The organization will fill a void," says Hoffman. "It's really hard for guys over there to express themselves.

Any of their stories that we can relay is a big thing, because the picture we're getting is filtered. The guys with the lowest morale are the guys with the least access to computers—in Najaf, Samarra, Fallujah. The guys in Baghdad who have it the best have the access to the computers all the time. The ones who are pushed out to the other areas are getting the worst of it. Right now there's no outlet for anti-war feeling. We'll be a magnet for venting. I expect a lot of people to come out of the woodwork."

One of the groups Hoffman contacted upon his return from Iraq was Military Families Speak Out, until the founding of IVAW the closest thing to a megaphone for antiwar sentiment among the enlisted. MFSO began with two families in November of 2002; it now contains more than 1500 families with new members joining every day. Co-founder Nancy Lessin, whose stepson completed a tour of Iraq last year, says the organization's growth tends to follow the news, especially when the president says something callous or stupid. When Bush declared the end of major combat on May 1, 2003 ("We knew that it was such a lie," she moans), membership exploded. When Bush taunted, "Bring 'em on!" in the face of rising Iraqi resistance, the phone calls and emails poured in.

IVAW's Mike Hoffman is sadly confident that the occupation will drag on, and that many more than 20 soldiers will soon come out against it, led by returning vets. "If the war continues the way it is," he says, "I expect something like what happened in Vietnam. They have a chance to pull out the troops, but if the government sticks to its guns, it's gonna happen."

Should John Kerry be in the White House when Iraq veterans start tossing their medals in its direction, the irony will be thick. We know Kerry the decorated veteran can throw, but can he catch?

Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward this E-MAIL along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, at home and in Iraq, and information about other social protest movements here in the USA. **Send requests to address up top. For copies on web site see:**<http://www.notinourname.net/qi-special/>

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

Roadside Bomb Kills Soldier Near Samarra

August 02, 2004 Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq — A soldier died of wounds suffered in a roadside bomb attack northwest of the Iraqi capital, a U.S. military spokesman said Monday.

The bomb exploded Sunday near Samarra, 100 kilometers (60 miles) northwest of Baghdad, as a U.S. patrol passed. The blast initially killed one 1st Infantry Division soldier and a second died of his wounds later, spokesman Maj. Neal O'Brien said.

A third wounded soldier was evacuated to a U.S. medical facility in Germany and is in stable condition, O'Brien said.

Mahdi Resistance Army Fights Off Attack On Sadr's Home; Hold Their Ground



Get The Message?

02/08/2004 Telegraph Group Ltd. & Associated Press & sky.com

American troops have been involved in gun battles with supporters of Moqtada al-Sadr, after they surrounded the rebel cleric's house.

Witnesses said al Sadr was in his house at the time.

Armoured vehicles were used to help seal off the neighbourhood in the Iraqi city of Najaf where al-Sadr lives, before the US troops, backed by Iraqi security forces, began exchanging fire with the cleric's Mehdi Army.

The sound of heavy gunfire, mortar shells and rocket-propelled grenade explosions were heard before, **one hour later, the US troops withdrew as dozens of armed insurgents, spread out around the house.**

The violence comes two days after the arrest by multinational forces of Sheikh Mithal al-Hasnawi, a senior lieutenant of al-Sadr in Karbala.

At least six U.S. military vehicles entered the Zahra area in Najaf near al-Sadr's house, which is protected by his militia, the Mahdi Army, witnesses said.

Heavy gunfire and mortar rounds set cars on fire **before Iraqi police intervened and the U.S. forces withdrew**, witnesses said.

"One woman was killed and we have three injured," said Ajwak Kadhim, director at Al-Hakim Hospital in Najaf.

Ali al-Yassiry, a Baghdad spokesman for al-Sadr, said U.S. troops briefly surrounded al-Sadr's house in Najaf but then withdrew from the city. He said the fighting had ended and the Mahdi Army was patrolling the area.

Endless, Hopeless, Deadly Duty:

Bomb Hunters; “I Can’t Wait To Get Out Of Here. This Place Is Horrible. It’s Horrible”

August 02, 2004 By Gina Cavallaro, Army Times staff writer

BAQUBAH, Iraq — A deadly game of cat and mouse takes place here every day.

An unseen enemy plants the traps — roadside bombs intended for traveling coalition soldiers — and coalition soldiers hunt the traps down.

And while one team finds the bombs and another team destroys them, sometimes the bombs hit the teams.

The soldiers working in the western Diyala province under the 1st Infantry Division’s 3rd Brigade Combat Team are the busiest cats in this game. It’s in western Diyala, legend has it, that the first improvised explosive device — as the bombs are called — was detonated against coalition forces last summer.

The area they patrol has the highest concentration of IEDs in Iraq...

Since mid-March, when the 3rd BCT began working in the province, there have been more than 500 IEDs. Some were found and destroyed by U.S. soldiers and Iraqi security forces; some detonated by the enemy.

“We’re in such high demand and we can only cover so much area. Iraq’s a big place,” said Lt. Col. Robert Fode, commander of the 141st Engineer Combat Battalion, a National Guard unit from North Dakota, whose three line companies search for IEDs from Tikrit to north of Baghdad.

“Are we staying ahead of them? I don’t think so. We’re spread thin. And, we’ve seen an increase in vehicle-borne IEDs.”

The hunters of the 141st, the Trailblazers, sweep a 48-kilometer route around forward operating base Warhorse in north Baqubah several times each day. When they find an IED, they call out the 748th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team, the bomb killers who destroy the threat.

Not a day goes by without the discovery of an IED.

“We know that what we do helps and saves lives, but **it really doesn’t seem to be slacking off, at least in this area,**” said Capt. Rusty Romans, commander of Charlie Company, headquartered in Baqubah. His company hunts down the lethal devices, 90 percent of which are then destroyed by the EOD team.

“I guess I think of it as their last-ditch effort to disrupt our efforts at establishing a government elected by the citizens,” Romans said. **(Send the Captain back to propaganda school; the silly man thinks there are some “elections” going on to**

choose a government. Hello? Your U.S. political bosses appointed the collaborator government? Get it?)

The Trailblazers have been attached to the 3rd BCT since the first week of April in this province whose population of more than 850,000 is 40 percent Sunni, 35 percent Shiite and 25 percent Kurd and other ethnic groups.

The brigade's headquarters and its four forward operating bases have been attacked regularly with mortars and rockets that usually don't hit their targets. As some soldiers say, "Mortar man is a bad shot."

But a new and tragic threat visited brigade headquarters June 8, when a powerful car bomb took the life of Capt. Humayun S.M. Khan at the camp's front gate. And July 4, Iraqi police killed two suicide bombers wearing explosives around their bodies before they could detonate their deadly cargo.

Soldiers living at the brigade's camps are required to wear full battle rattle anytime they step outside, a mode of dress one soldier likened to living inside a George Foreman grill.

"The 2nd BCT [of the 4th Infantry Division] had 32 soldiers killed in Diyala," said Lt. Col. Keitron Todd, 40, the executive officer of the 3rd BCT. "They had a tank destroyed. This is a bad, bad area. We feel like we're in the hornet's nest." (Can it be the Iraqis are hostile to the invasion and occupation of their country and are fighting back? Imagine that!)

The clue to a bomb could take any shape — a half-inch piece of wire protruding from a bush or a patch of fresh dirt or a plastic bag, box or brick that wasn't there the day before. The Trailblazers comb every inch of the route visually and rely on huge metal detectors.

It's a dangerous job. One soldier was killed May 3 when the IED they were looking for found them first. But not everything on the roadway is a bomb.

"We run into a lot of fakes, bait. It could just be kids messing around. The other day we found two plastic bottles tied together," Romans said. The prior-service soldier says his experience in a Special Forces unit years ago has come into play for this mission. (Who would have thought Special Forces training was so dimwitted. Using phony IEDs to impede and complicate the work of bomb disposal teams is ABC in insurgent warfare. But then Romans is a Captain. Why expect him to figure anything out?)

"It helps me think more like a terrorist, and I think that's what this is, unconventional warfare. They don't have the means to fight back and resist," Romans said. ("They" are kicking ass all over Iraq. Time to make this idiot a Lt. Col.)

In their arsenal of bomb-detecting equipment is the MeerKat, a four-wheeled vehicle that looks like a creature from a Star Wars movie.

The South African-made vehicle has a two-inch-thick V-shaped hull in which the driver sits, and two retractable panels that detect changes in the magnetic field. The panels are lowered to a flattened position and driven over a suspected bomb.

“Sometimes it’s kind of stressful driving this thing. It gets so hot in there. It has three fans, but it sucks in hot air from the engine and the battery,” said Spc. Jeremy Smith, 25. “It’s not invincible, but it’s the best we’ve got right now to get close to the explosive devices.”

Recently, however, the MeerKat proved vulnerable when a 155mm artillery round exploded beneath one and totally mangled the ground-penetrating radar panels and part of the chassis. The driver walked away unscathed, but the machine was put out of commission until new parts could be delivered and installed. (Well, it did detect the bomb.)

The bomb hunters also use remote-controlled cars — the store-bought kind a child might find under the tree on Christmas morning — to approach a danger zone. A digital camera is affixed to the tops of the cars, so the engineers can see still photos or video of the potential explosive without approaching the device themselves.

The other half of the bomb squad are the engineers from 748th EOD, whose dizzying daily schedule is akin to a fire department tasked with putting out the blazes of hell.

The team uses remote-controlled robots to inspect possible IEDs. **Sometimes they use hand tools to dig up live mortar or artillery rounds that have been buried into the dirt on the sides of the road. (Now there’s a combat job for Bush, Cheney and Rumsfeld.)**

Responding to reports of the discovery of two IEDs in a southern area of Baqubah, the EOD team sets out with its trucks and security team for a narrow road alongside an inner-city canal.

The dirt on the edge of the canal is soft from recent dredging and piled up to the level of the driver of any Humvee. In other words, it’s a prime location for a hidden bomb, and the soldiers find and destroy one with their robot.

They find a second IED about 100 meters away on the other side of the road. Before the soldiers can blow it, they must block a steady stream of traffic. Still, some cars slip through.

“If they come up that road, you ... open up fire on them,” Sgt. 1st Class Scott Miller, an EOD technician and team leader, barked at soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 6th Field Artillery Regiment, who had secured the area.

Miller and his team work in six-month rotations, and they move around to different areas of Iraq as needed. Their job is one of the most stressful in the Army and the western Diyala province is the bane of their existence.

“I can’t wait to get out of here. This place is horrible. It’s horrible,” Miller said, describing the unrelenting pace of EOD’s operations here.

After destroying the two IEDs with remote charges, the team prepared to head north of town, where soldiers who had reported another IED had been waiting all day for the bomb surgeons.

But then, BOOM! A third, undetected IED blew as a Bradley fighting vehicle assigned to the 1-6 moved out. No one was hurt, but nerves were rattled and heads shook in disbelief.

“You’ve got to have thick skin to do this job,” said Sgt. Jeremy Caquelin, an EOD technician.

Thick skin, good eyes and resistance to high heat.

Halfway through a typical afternoon hunting expedition in which the 120-degree wind feels like a jet blast, the Trailblazers take a break to rest their eyes and stretch their legs.

It isn’t a long road trip — about three hours — but the painstaking task of looking for clues to the presence of IEDs needs a sharp, fresh eye. What they find — and what they miss — could mean the difference between life and death.

“If we don’t find anything, it’s a quiet day. When we find one, it’s a good day... we know we’re saving someone’s life,” said 2nd Lt. Donovan Blazek, 33, leader of 1st Platoon.

On their IED hunting missions, the soldiers drive at 25 mph or less, said 2nd Lt. Donovan Blazek, 33, leader of 1st Platoon. And that makes them a target. “Finding the bombs is an adrenaline rush. ... Sometimes it feels like they’re setting it out just for us. It’s almost a personal thing.” **(Of course it’s a personal thing. Every year, Vietnam Vets go back to Vietnam for reunions with the North Vietnamese soldiers they fought against, still wondering how we could ever have allowed the politicians to get us into such a stupid, losing Imperial war. Twenty years from now, you’ll be doing the reunions with the Iraqi resistance soldiers and wondering how we could ever have allowed the politicians to get us into such a stupid, losing Imperial war.)**

TROOP NEWS

Master Sgt. (Ret’d) Condemns Bush War; Praises ‘Fahrenheit 9/11’

8.2.04 Letter To The Editor, Army Times

The review of Michael Moore’s “Fahrenheit 9/11” [July 12] misses the mark on one count: It’s not about leaning to the left or to the right.

That is a routine use of labels, but being outraged with our president is really a matter of decency and values.

There are many of us in the United States who are disgusted with President Bush's actions because we know the truth behind his schemes, including his misleading the American people into his own personal war on Iraq.

This president's cohorts are making billions of dollars off the sweat and sacrifice of our dedicated military, and that's just not right. Beyond the war, Bush has turned his back on the environment, children and women's issues and our very Constitution.

If I could appeal to readers, I would not tell them how to vote, but only encourage them to learn everything they can about what is happening.

Perhaps this, and not a movie, will encourage them to vote with their conscience instead of a false patriotic pride.

I am a 28-year Air Force veteran who chose to retire rather than serve under the current administration.

The people in America do support our troops and to us this means electing a new president, someone who cares more about this nation than he does about corporate interests.

Retired Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Mark Diorio

(So far, no major candidate for bringing the troops home now. Not one.)

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Send to the E-mail address up top. Name, I.D., withheld on request. Replies confidential.

Marine's 'Fahrenheit 9/11' Comments Bring On Shitstorm

8.2.04 By Sandra Jontz, Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — Comments made by Marine Cpl. Abdul Henderson in Michael Moore's controversial film "Fahrenheit 9/11" prompted the Marine's commanders to look into the appropriateness of his film debut.

Henderson, a reservist with the 3rd Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company out of Long Beach, Calif., was featured, wearing his service dress Alpha uniform, alongside Moore outside the U.S. Capitol as the pair unsuccessfully solicited legislators to enlist their children into the U.S. military and to fight in the war in Iraq.

At one point, Moore asked the 29-year-old Marine, who served in Iraq last year, whether he'd return to the Middle East to fight again.

Moore: "If you get called up, will you go back to Iraq?"

Henderson: "No."

Moore: "Why not?"

Henderson: "No."

Moore: "What repercussions do you face if you don't"

Henderson: "It's possible jail time. That's one possible thing."

Moore: "Are you willing to risk that?"

Henderson: "Yes. Yes, I will not let my person ... I will, I will not let anyone send me back over there to kill other poor people. Especially when they pose no threat to me and my country. I won't do it."

Army and Marine Corps officials interviewed by Stars and Stripes knew of no other servicemembers in the film who were being investigated.

Henderson could not be reached by Stripes for comment, but in an interview featured in Wednesday's edition of USA Today, the paper quoted Henderson as saying: "The question kind of surprised me, because I wasn't expecting it. But my answer came from the heart."

"This definitely is not anything routine, where a Marine appears in a movie, especially in a movie of this nature," Peter Kerr, a spokesman for Marine Forces Reserves in New Orleans said.

Henderson is a fire supportman with the 3rd ANGLICO, which helps coordinate artillery fire and naval gunfire for U.S. Army and coalition ground forces.

According to the USA Today article, he describes himself as a spiritual Christian, and prefers to remain out of the limelight. Henderson, a business major at California State University-Los Angeles is spending the summer in Washington, D.C., with his wife, a student at Howard University, and their newborn son.

Wounded Soldiers Fucked Over By Government (Surprise Surprise)

(Colorado Springs Gazette, August 2, 2004, Pg. 11)

The military's system for compensating soldiers who become sick, injured or wounded can be as unforgiving as the battlefield: Fewer than one in 10 applicants receives the long-term disability payments they request. **Almost one-third of injured National**

Guard and Reserve veterans returning from the Iraqi and Afghan wars are being forced to wait more than four months to learn if they will even be compensated. That is a long time for soldiers who might not have other sources of income.

U.S. Army Reservists In The Slaughterhouse; “I Don’t Like This Place At All”

Jul 23 By CHRIS TOMLINSON, Associated Press Writer

LOG BASE SEITZ, Iraq - Whenever strangers walk into the recreation tent she manages, Sgt. Katherine Harper immediately shows them the quickest way to the nearest bunker in case of a mortar attack.

"I don't like this place at all," the U.S. Army reservist said. "Any day we don't get mortared is a good day, but we get mortared almost every day."

When Harper, a 32-year-old mother of two from Benton, Ark., finished three years on active duty in the Army, she joined the Army Reserve to continue serving her country in a way that allowed her to raise kids and stay home with them.

Ten years later, she and hundreds of other reservists are stationed at Log Base Seitz, a logistical camp near Baghdad International Airport that comes under regular mortar fire from insurgents living in nearby Abu Ghraib town. She has been here six months, with six more months to go.

"I thought being in the Reserve meant we wouldn't go overseas until all the active duty had gone first," Harper said. "Honestly, people go into the Reserve not to be sent here."

But with the U.S. Army spread thin across Iraq, Afghanistan, Korea, Germany and a dozen other countries, ***the Pentagon relies on reservists and National Guard troops to serve in combat zones, often for longer terms than their active duty counterparts.***

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| In June, 21 of the 42 U.S. military deaths in Iraq were members of the National Guard or Reserve. In May, the breakdown was 22 out of 80, and in April it was 17 of 136. |
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At Log Base Seitz, men and women who are X-ray technicians, electricians, college students, professors or draftsmen in the civilian world have been ordered to give 545 days — a year and a half — of their lives to work in Iraq. Of these, they spend 365 days in Iraq, with a two-week leave if they're lucky — not all get it.

The men and women have virtually no privacy, crammed into former Iraqi Republican Guard warehouses where dissidents scratched messages to their loved ones in the pale green paint before being put to death.

Faced with frequent deployments, re-enlistments and new recruits for the Reserve and National Guard are falling short of the Pentagon's needs.

Troops on active duty are having their tours of duty extended and 5,600 former soldiers are being involuntarily recalled to active duty. Soldiers in Iraq call it "the backdoor draft."

While reservists in Iraq do their jobs professionally, the experience leaves many of the younger troops less than enthusiastic.

If he'd known what he was in for when he enlisted, he said, "I probably wouldn't have joined."

GET SOME TRUTH: CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation, the cuts to veterans' benefits, or the dangers of depleted uranium - is the first reason Traveling Soldier is necessary. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces. Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces. If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers. <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/>

EXACTLY THE RIGHT IDEA!



South Korean anti-war protesters scuffle with riot policemen as they attempt to get into a training compound to rescue troops to be deployed to Iraq: Kwangju, east of Seoul, Aug. 2. (AP Photo/Yonhap, Lee Jun-seo)

Ex-Army Reservist Sues To Fight Recall

July 8, 2004, By TIM WHITMIRE, Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) - A former Army reservist who returned to civilian life in December - only to be recalled five months later - filed a lawsuit Thursday to avoid duty in Iraq.

Todd Parrish, 30, served four years of active duty and another four years in the reserves, a commitment he believed expired Dec. 19. The Army maintains he will be in a voluntary reserve status until he's 50.

The Army says Parrish never formally resigned his commission as a lieutenant, making him eligible for involuntary recall to duty. He received a letter May 10 to report for duty at Fort Sill, Okla., and is due Aug. 10.

Parrish says he did not know he had to resign. Believing he was free, he married, bought a house and began preparing for a career as a civil engineer.

"It was a life-altering experience when I read the orders to report to active duty," Parrish said in a recent interview. "I felt like I was being drafted without a draft being instituted."

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| <p>The complaint filed in federal court in Raleigh contends Parrish was never informed in any enlistment contract or other document "of any requirement or need to 'resign' his Army Reserve commission in order to terminate his status with the U.S. Army Reserves."</p> |
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Parrish's attorney, Mark Waple, said the papers his client signed in 1992, when he accepted an ROTC scholarship, made no mention of a resignation requirement.

"What is clear is, it's an eight-year service obligation," Waple said in a telephone interview. "What is not clear is, what someone has to do to end this relationship."

Waple said when Parrish contacted the Human Resources Command about being recalled to duty, he was told "because he didn't resign his reserve status, they put him in a voluntary reserve status until the year 2024."

The Defense Department has been taking numerous steps to keep enlistment up during the Iraq conflict, included issuing a "stop-loss" order that prevents soldiers from leaving the military when their obligations end and multiple deployments of guard and reserve units.

Financial “Friendly Fire”-- Pay “Errors” Fuck Over 95% Of Deployed Reservists

August 02, 2004 By Vince Crawley, Army Times staff writer

Some 95 percent of reservists who deployed since Sept. 11, 2001, experienced pay problems — a dilemma that can’t be solved anytime soon, military officials told Congress.

In a July 20 hearing before the House Government Reform Committee, reservists described how they or their units endured chronic pay errors and delays that undermined morale and, **in many cases, persisted more than a year after they returned home.**

At the July 20 hearing, GAO officials testified on a review of 348 deployed Army Reserve soldiers in which 332 out of 348 people were hit with pay errors. **GAO also found rampant problems in Army and Air National Guard pay going back several years during an inquiry last year.**

Military pay officials testified problems often stem from old computers requiring laborious workarounds every month just to keep paychecks flowing. **These systems are due to be replaced later this decade, but that’s cold comfort to the 40 percent of the Iraq force made up of reservists, which may rise to 50 percent in the months ahead.**

“It’s a wonder anybody gets paid accurately,” said Lt. Gen. James Helmly, chief of the Army Reserve. He described “confused, overlapping procedures and policies” affecting reserve pay.

“This is ... intolerable,” said Rep. Tom Davis, R-Va., House Government Reform Committee chairman. “It is the equivalent of financial friendly fire.”

Army Reserve Sgt. Melinda DeLain deployed to Kandahar, Afghanistan, in February 2003 as part of a 20-member medical unit, the 948th Forward Surgical Team out of Southfield, Mich.

DeLain is a civilian nurse and military combat medic, but due to her prior experience on active duty, her commander put her in charge of handling the unit’s endless personnel problems.

During the deployment, she testified, pay problems for all 20 unit members were so rampant that she wound up keeping track of their earnings on computer spreadsheets and spent hours each week comparing the spreadsheets to pay statements.

The 82nd Airborne Division, on patrol in the Kandahar area, should have handled the team’s pay issues but said the Reserve unit had to work instead with a reserve pay

detachment in Uzbekistan. When that failed, division clerks worked with DeLain to scour four months of pay statements to figure what each unit member was owed.

As a single parent who took a salary cut when she mobilized, she worried that delays in getting her pay would make her fall behind on mortgage and car payments at home. Fortunately, her parents covered the expenses until the Army sorted out her pay, she said. Once the pay did start, it came as four separate checks each month, complicating the efforts of unit members to keep their bills paid.

Morale sank and stress soared, DeLain said.

The problems continued after the unit returned home in late August. DeLain didn't get a final pay settlement until November 2003, and some soldiers were waiting on money this February, when DeLain gave unit pay records to her higher headquarters.

WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND



A former Iraqi serviceman awaiting back salary is arrested by US soldiers.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Women Demand & Win Right To Fight In Mahdi Resistance Army



Umm Muhamad is a female fighter for the Mahdi Army of cleric Muqtada al-Sadr in Sadr City, Iraq. Khampha Bouaphanh / Fort Worth Star-Telegram

Jul. 27, 2004 By Hannah Allam, Knight Ridder Newspapers

BAGHDAD, Iraq - Umm Muhammad's green eyes flashed one day last week as she listened to the imam at a rundown Baghdad mosque preach about how women should be silent and unseen, traveling only "from the home to the grave."

She knew the edict didn't apply to her; the same imam had blessed her before battle when she became one of the first female commanders in rebel cleric Muqtada al Sadr's Mahdi Army militia.

"Even my husband didn't know I was fighting, or he pretended not to know," Umm Muhammad, 34, said. "He tells me, 'One day you're going to go and never come back.' I tell him I dream of martyrdom."

The presence of women in the ranks of al Sadr's militia is another troubling sign that al Sadr, who has said he's considering forming a political party, is building his military capability. Already, his militia has shown itself to be adaptable - surprising U.S. military commanders with a broad insurrection in April and continuing to flourish in many areas of Baghdad despite a determined U.S. effort to crush it.

Now, with a cease-fire and a government ban on militias in place, al Sadr's Mahdi Army is relying more on women like Umm Muhammad - smart, covert and willing to die - to transport guns and gather intelligence. In traditional flowing garments that are ideal for concealing firearms and allowing them to weave through crowds without raising suspicion, the women are much less likely than black-clad militiamen to draw the attention of American and Iraqi officials.

At least 150 women in the Mahdi Army are being trained as suicide bombers, weapons experts and intelligence agents, according to a dozen female recruits and their male commanders in Baghdad and southern Shiite holy cities. Hundreds of others are sympathizers, marching in black cloaks in a stunning debut in April in the streets of Baghdad like an army of wraiths.

Women fought alongside men during al Sadr's uprising against U.S. forces in April, and at least two female guerrillas died in combat. Their funeral banners proclaimed them "shaheeda," the feminine form of the Arabic word for martyr.

Sabriya Beqal, a 50-year-old mother of eight, was killed by U.S. fire last month as she was bringing water to the Mahdi Army fighters camped out in her courtyard, her family said. Her sons and other militiamen carried her coffin to the cemetery and noted the shock of passersby who overheard that the fallen fighter was a woman.

"No less than 10 Americans will be killed to avenge my mother," said Beqal's 25-year-old son, Ahmed. "She was such an honor for us. All my friends wish their mothers could be martyrs, too. When we're all dead, we know the women will still be there, fighting."

Shiite clerics and militiamen who were once reluctant to embrace female fighters now hail their sacrifices. A popular recruiting video for the Mahdi Army features two veiled women - one wearing a necklace of hand grenades, the other holding an assault rifle with an ammunition belt slung across her black robe.

"We will carry out our martyrdom operations against the pagan American government," one of the women intoned. **"We'll make this a second Vietnam.** We will fight anyone who dares to harm Muqtada al Sadr."

Last week, a newspaper aligned with al Sadr ran a front-page story under the headline, "The Mothers of Mahdi Army." The accompanying photo showed an elderly woman hitching up her robes as she fired a mortar round.

Jihad, or holy war, isn't a religious obligation for Muslim women, and many Shiite clerics still frown upon women bearing arms. Women were first excluded from al Sadr's forces, several women said, but eventually they won acceptance by invoking the story of the cleric's aunt, a revered scholar and activist known as Bint al Huda.

When al Sadr's uncle, Mohammed Baqr al Sadr, a Shiite cleric, opponent of Saddam Hussein and al Huda's brother, was placed under house arrest, she stayed by his side, speaking out against Baath Party brutalities. She was executed with her brother in 1980.

The clerics relented and formed a women's wing of the Mahdi Army with units dubbed "Fist of Huda" and "Bint al Huda Brigade." The recruits were mainly the sisters and wives of militiamen from the filthy labyrinth of alleys in Sadr City, the sprawling Shiite ghetto in Baghdad. They are an impoverished, street-smart bunch that grew up with the twin burdens of being Shiite under Saddam and women under an often-stifling patriarchy.

When al Sadr launched his uprising against U.S. forces in April, women from Sadr City traveled south to the cities of Najaf and Kufa to help with supplies. They cooked for the men and bandaged wounds, consoled widows and took in orphans.

But many itched for action.

"They were supposed to just deliver the weapons, but they started shooting," recalled a militiaman who goes by the name Abu Muhammad. "Some of them even asked us for explosives belts."

Umm Muhammad, who's now seven months pregnant, received her own brigade in the early months of her pregnancy and shared the weapons expertise she calls "the only benefit" reaped from Saddam's regime. Saddam made gun training mandatory for women during the Iran-Iraq war. Umm Muhammad - who taught her soldiers how to aim a grenade launcher through a veil - has since earned the nickname "Lightning Bolt" from her impressed comrades for her sharp shooting.

She and other women from the Bint al Huda Brigade formed a human shield when armored U.S. vehicles rolled into Sadr City to demolish al Sadr's office. After the abuse scandal at Abu Ghraib prison, her brigade sent letters through intermediaries to the U.S. military demanding the release of all female prisoners. They turned their homes into arsenals and safe houses for rebels. **Some even joined the fighting by dressing as men.**

Because of the fragile cease-fire between the Mahdi Army and U.S. military, Umm Muhammad's platoon stopped combat operations and turned to intelligence work and checkpoint duty at the main mosque in Sadr City.

On a sweltering Friday this month, Umm Muhammad's soldiers offered her kisses instead of salutes. They pushed her toward the only chair in the teeming women's section of the mosque, in deference to her pregnancy.

The women soaked their veils in ice water to keep their faces cool as they searched female worshipers at the mosque. They tied green satin bands around their heads to signal their membership in the Mahdi Army. They proudly displayed their plastic credentials...

Umm Muhammad watched in silence as her brigade confiscated cell phones and riffled through purses for contraband. Young women rushed to give her cups of water and ask about her pregnancy. Umm Muhammad smiled and pulled her robe close to reveal the bulge in her stomach.

"If it's a boy, I'll name him Muqtada," she said. "But I'm hoping for a girl, so I can train her myself."

**OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION
BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME NOW!**

Resistance Cuts Jet Fuel Supply Line:

Turkey Won't Truck Goods To U.S. Bases

Aug. 02, 2004 SUZAN FRASER, Associated Press & By TODD PITMAN, Associated Press Writer

ANKARA, Turkey - Turkey's truckers association said Monday it would stop delivering goods to U.S. forces in Iraq, in what appeared to be a direct response to insurgents' brutal, videotaped killing of a Turkish hostage and an attempt to win freedom for two other captives.

Cahit Soysal, head of the International Transportation Association said that 200-300 Turkish trucks bring supplies to U.S. forces in Iraq every day.

He said trucks carrying supplies not destined to the U.S. forces would not be affected. Turkish trucks mostly transport fuel and jet fuel to the U.S. troops, an official from the group said.

Earlier Monday, the Turkish trucking company for which the two drivers worked said it was unilaterally halting business in Iraq.

"We have halted all transportation to Iraq," company chief Omer Ozturk said. "We are now waiting anxiously for our drivers to be released."

In the videotape, posted on an Islamic Web site used by militant groups, a man kneels in front of three armed men and reads a statement in Turkish. He identifies himself as Murat Yuce from the Turkish capital, Ankara, an employee of a Turkish company that subcontracted for a Jordanian firm.

"I have a word of advice for any Turk who wants to come to Iraq to work: 'You don't have to be holding a gun to be aiding the occupationist United States. ... Turkish companies should withdraw from Iraq," he says.

At the end of the statement, one of the masked men takes out a pistol and shoots the Turk in the side of the head.

Occucops Killed For Dinner

02aug04 From correspondents in Kirkuk, Herald and Weekly Times

THREE Iraqi policemen were shot dead and four wounded today as they were eating on the terrace of a restaurant in Kirkuk.

Gunmen in two Opel cars fired a hail of bullets at members of two police patrol units as they were having supper at the Kabab Rashid restaurant, said police General Mones Ishaq.

Tired Of The Whining About Abductions

From: Veterans for Peace Discussion Group Via Diane Rejman
August 02, **Subject:** report from a Baghdad civilian

{The following was written by a young well-educated ex-computer programmer in Baghdad. She lost her job after our invasion. She discusses some truths that I don't read about elsewhere.}

Saturday, July 31, 2004

I get emails by the dozen from people crying out against the abduction of foreigners. Endlessly I read the lines, "But these people are there to help you- they are aide workers." or "But the press is there for a good cause.", etc.

What people abroad don't seem to realize is the fact that everything is mixed up right now. Seeing a foreigner, there's often no way to tell who is who. The blonde guy in the sunglasses and beige vest walking down the street could be a reporter or someone who works with a humanitarian group- but he could just as likely be 'security' from one of those private mercenary companies we're hearing so much about.

Is there sympathy with all these abductees? There is. We hate seeing them looking frightened on television. We hate thinking of the fact that they have families and friends who worry about them in distant countries and wonder how in the world they managed to end up in the hell that is now Iraq.

But for every foreigner abducted, there are probably 10 Iraqis being abducted and while we have to be here because it is home, truck drivers, security personnel for foreign companies and contractors do not.

Sympathy has its limits in the Iraqi summer heat.

Dozens of Iraqis are dying on a daily basis in places like Falloojeh and Najaf and everyone is mysteriously silent- *one Brit, American or Pakistani dies and the world is in an uproar- it is getting tiresome.*

OCCUPATION REPORT

Iraqi "Leader" Uses Only U.S. Guards; Elite Forces Protecting Allawi Resented

(Baltimore Sun, August 1, 2004)

Even as Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi attempts to assert his nation's newly restored sovereignty, he travels through his own turbulent land and around the Middle East with a

protection detail supplied by the U.S. military. **His accompaniment by gun-toting Americans—in plainclothes but with U.S. flags on their vests—has been noted with dismay by some critics in Iraq and the Arab world as a visible symbol of his dependence on the United States, experts on the region say.**

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Afghanistan Slip Slidin' Away; Resistance Increasing Attacks

August 1, 2004 By ERIC SCHMITT and DAVID ROHDE, New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 31 — **Attacks against American troops in Afghanistan and Afghan security forces and civilians have increased steadily in the past several months**, posing new hurdles for reconstruction and political stability efforts, American commanders and Afghan officials say.

Fighting has intensified, particularly in the east along the rugged, 1,500-mile border with Pakistan and in the south near Kandahar.

Twenty-three American troops have died from ambushes, land mines and other hostile fire this year, compared with 12 combat deaths in all of 2003, according to military statistics. An increasingly popular weapon may have been inspired by insurgents in Iraq: remote-controlled bombs.

The Taliban have stepped up recruiting in the south and intensified strikes against newly trained Afghan soldiers and police officers, as well as foreign-aid workers. This week, the international aid agency Doctors Without Borders said it was withdrawing from Afghanistan after 24 years, in part because of the deteriorating security there.

The attacks appear to be having the most impact in rural areas of southern and eastern Afghanistan, where the Afghan government is still struggling to establish its authority nearly three years after the Taliban fell. That part of the country has been a traditional Taliban stronghold. **Reconstruction in some areas has come to a near standstill, and local people remain hostile to the Americans and the Afghan government.**

American commanders nonetheless paint an optimistic picture, saying the increased attacks are signs of the Taliban's desperation and of expanding allied operations. (This is exactly the same lame lying bullshit the fools in command tried to peddle about the growing strength and success of the Iraqi resistance. Sorry assholes, it just won't fly here either.)

The United States has doubled the number of troops in Afghanistan in the last year, to about 20,000 troops at its peak recently, and expanded their presence throughout the country. (Right, a sure sign of success.)

The death toll continues to mount. **Afghan government officials said they had kept no overall tally of the number of Afghans killed across the country, including soldiers and police officers.**

But the review of attacks reported by news agencies indicates that in the first six months of 2003, Taliban fighters killed 119 Afghans. In the first six months of 2004, they killed 179 Afghans, an increase of 50 percent. Most of the killings involved Afghan police officers or soldiers being killed in ambushes, attacks or clashes with Taliban forces in rural areas in the south and east.

Beginning in early 2003, Taliban fighters also began singling out aid workers, killing at least 16 Afghan aid workers and at least one foreign aid worker between March 2003 and the present, according to the review.

This year numerous other attacks on foreigners have occurred, but it has been unclear whether the Taliban are responsible. In the first six months of 2004, attacks on foreigners soared, with 17 foreign contractors and foreign aid workers killed across the country. But it is not known whether the unidentified assailants were factional fighters, Taliban supporters or simple thieves.

In rural Zabul, Oruzgan, Khost, Kandahar and Helmand Provinces, attacks have grown in intensity in the last year, according to the review. **Zabul Province, in particular, now produces reports of clashes between Afghan and American forces and Taliban fighters roughly each week.**

An example of the trend in rural areas is northern Helmand, a drought-stricken area where the Taliban have gained strength this year, Afghan officials and aid workers said.

Mullahs in local mosques in northern Helmand have begun openly preaching jihad against Americans and the Afghan government, they said. A local warlord who tolerated the provincial governor has begun threatening government workers.

Shir Mohammad Akhundzada, the governor of Helmand Province, said in an interview in late June that Taliban forces had killed 15 to 20 soldiers in the province in the past four months. In all of the previous year, they killed 14 soldiers.

Mr. Akhundzada and his intelligence chief said that for the first time since 2001 the Taliban were recruiting young people in northern Helmand. Until now, fresh Taliban recruits had come from Pakistan, they said, where three million Afghan refugees still live. "Nowadays, I'm feeling that lots of local people also join them," the governor said. "Some of the people are a little bit angry with the Americans and some are unhappy with the government." (A "little bit" angry? What happens if they get truly pissed off?)

He said severe drought in northern Helmand continued to fuel poverty and frustration. He also called on American forces to "act very carefully with the people," as elections approach, and ensure that intelligence tips they receive are genuine and do not lure them into local feuds.

Fueling Local Anger House searches and arrests of innocent Afghans by American forces have angered the local population, highly conservative ethnic Pashtuns, he said.

He complained about one raid where American soldiers confiscated heavy machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades from a government police station. "When they are going and arresting the police, the police will get very disappointed and angry," he said. "There are no other people to send there to north Helmand."

Malim Dadu, the intelligence chief in Helmand Province, estimated that the Taliban were 50 percent stronger now than a year earlier and were increasingly well financed. He said that local people were now helping the Taliban "a lot" and admitted that the Afghan government was failing on its own in some areas. He said security was lacking on the highways and government "administrative people are taking bribes."

Afghan officials say the situation is not yet dire. (They still hold the U.S. Embassy.)

But they expressed concern about the growing strength of the Taliban in rural areas. "God willing, we are stronger than the Taliban now," said Mr. Akhundzada, the Helmand governor. "But we don't know about the future."

Afghan War In The Toilet

(Washington Times, August 2, 2004, Pg. 3)

The United States lacks the security forces in Afghanistan to match an "increasing threat" from terrorist insurgents killing civilian workers, and the State Department is not adequately staffing the embassy in the capital of Kabul, ***according to an internal Bush administration memorandum.***

Received:

Good News From The UK

From: "L" (UK)
To: GI Special
Sent: Monday, August 02, 2004 3

Thanks for subscribing me. I head about you from a friend who's involved in solidarity work against the Palestinian and Iraqi occupations.

I've posted your web address to a few friends -- they all think it's great and ***some are sending it to family members who are serving with the britforces.***

I've found out that there's very strict rules about incitement to disaffection within the UK armed forces-- no freedom of speech or right to literature.

There's a peace group called 'At Ease' that informs serving soldiers about their rights, it's mainly pacifists who want to support conscientious objectors.

I prefer the stance of your magazine -- class based, rather than morally anti-war.

Lots of people in poor areas of the UK are being recruited into the army because their areas are economically depressed; the recent wars have given the army a lot of free publicity.

I'm sorry that I don't have the time to put together a magazine for UK service (wo)men, but if I circulate yours to people maybe one will be stimulated over here.

Many thanks

L

Reply: You may also wish to check out our sister publication, Traveling Soldier, designed to be handed out face to face. Find it at: <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/>

You have nothing to apologise for. You may not have time to do a newsletter, but you're doing what you can, and moving things forward in a way that is tremendously important, reaching out to people in the armed services with arguments against this war. Respect to you.

And yes, it is a question of class.

T.

If printed out, this newsletter is your personal property and cannot legally be confiscated from you. "Possession of unauthorized material may not be prohibited." DoD Directive 1325.6 Section 3.5.1.2.