

GI SPECIAL 2#B26

STILL NO HELP IN SIGHT: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!



“Baghdad Besieged” Iraqi Puppet Army Collapses Again

06 August 2004 By Tom Lasseter, Miami Herald, Baghdad

After the past two days of fighting in southern and central Iraq, the difference between firebrand cleric Muqtada al Sadr and Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi couldn't be any more clear: Al Sadr has an army, and Allawi does not.

In Iraq, security is politics. When Allawi took office, the self-styled strongman lost little time before declaring that his government wouldn't tolerate the insurgency that's swept the country.

But as in previous battles, when al Sadr's Mahdi Army militia began to overrun Najaf and several neighborhoods from Baghdad to Basra, the Iraqi police force and national guard fought for a little while, then ran.

And as in previous battles, Iraq's Achilles' heel was revealed: To defend their country, Allawi and the interim government must go to the American military, an institution that's widely reviled by many Iraqis as an occupational force run amok.

Allawi's Cabinet has approved an emergency provision that would allow for something like a state of emergency to be declared.

But even if such a measure were imposed, it's not clear that Iraqi forces have the training or equipment to enforce it outside Baghdad, a capital that's looking increasingly besieged.

Al Sadr's men certainly didn't seem worried about the Iraqi government or its security apparatus Friday.

Speaking at the Imam al Khadim shrine and mosque in one of Baghdad's predominantly Shiite Muslim neighborhoods, al Sadr cleric Hazim al Arajie took the Iraqi interior minister to task for saying that those who were battling American forces in Najaf and elsewhere were gangsters who would be run out of Iraq.

"We're warning you that if you're going to say these words again, we'll take you from your house and send you to hell," al Arajie said in remarks directed toward the minister, Falah Hassan al Naqib.

Many in Iraq take al Sadr's popularity as a sign of the U.S. failure to provide an alternative. The militia, it seems, may not be as much a coordinated fighting force as an expression of Iraqi rage at the American presence.

Adel Hamid, a vegetable merchant in Sadr City, which was named for al Sadr's late father, said that over the course of about 15 months of suffering through a lack of basic services, he'd come to see the Americans as the enemy.

"The fight will continue and Allah willing we will be victorious," Hamid said. "I will sacrifice my three boys for the Sadr movement; they are in the Mahdi Army now to protect the city."

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

Soldier Killed By Baghdad RPG

BAGHDAD, Aug 7 (AFP)

Another US soldier was killed after his unit was ambushed by insurgents in western Baghdad.

The soldier was killed when a rocket-propelled grenade was fired at troops out on patrol in the western part of the Iraqi capital on Friday afternoon, the military said in a statement.

Eleven US Troops Found Dead In Central Al-Qa'im Friday

Iraqi Resistance Report for events of Thursday, 5 August 2004 through Saturday, 7 August 2004, Translated and/or compiled by Muhammad Abu Nasr, member editorial board The Free Arab Voice

Residents of the town of al-Qa'im on the border with Syria awoke on Friday to find the bodies of 11 US troops, one of them a captain lying in the center of town. All had been butchered according to a report filed by a correspondent of Mafkarat al-Islam. Residents of the town told the correspondent that a car coming from the area of ar-Rummanah dumped the bodies in the town center and then took off to the west.

US forces then closed off al-Qa'im, a small town, but did not immediately retrieve the bodies out of fear that they might have been booby trapped or might be bait for an ambush. The Americans called in a helicopter that carried a steel cage. The bodies were transferred to the cage using devices operated by the crew aboard the helicopter and they were then taken to the US base in al-Qa'im.

An American patrol was attacked at dawn yesterday in the ar-Rummanah area, leaving two Humvees and an amphibious armored vehicle destroyed. The latter vehicle is used under special circumstances by the Americans. The residents of ar-Rummanah had no information on the number of dead or wounded Americans since more US forces came after the battle and any dead and wounded were taken away.

Copter Down In Baghdad

8/8/2004 By Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) A U.S. Army OH-58 helicopter made an emergency landing in eastern Baghdad on Sunday, the military said. There were no reports of casualties.

Three US Armored Vehicles Destroyed In Fighting South Of Baghdad Thursday

Iraqi Resistance Report for events of Thursday, 5 August 2004 through Saturday, 7 August 2004, Translated and/or compiled by Muhammad Abu Nasr, member editorial board The Free Arab Voice

Violent battles erupted on Thursday between members of the Iraqi Resistance and US occupation forces to the south of Baghdad according to the local correspondent of Mafkarat al-Islam. In the course of the fighting, three US amphibious armored vehicles

were totally destroyed when the Resistance opened up on them with rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs).

Eyewitnesses reported that no one ever came out of one of the armored vehicles, indicating that the entire crew was probably killed in the Resistance attack. The complete casualty toll from the attack was not available, however, because US forces closed off the area after the attack for a period of three full hours.

12 Explosions Echo Throughout Baghdad

August 7, 2004 AP

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- A series of at least 12 explosions echoed throughout central Baghdad on Saturday night. Their cause was not immediately apparent.

The blasts appeared to be targeting the fortified Green Zone enclave that houses the U.S. Embassy and Iraqi interim government buildings. An air raid siren sounded three times in the enclave over the span of an hour.

"The siren came on, they said take cover. I have no idea what it is," said Bob Callahan, chief spokesman for the U.S. Embassy. (Right, that would be too much to expect, knowing what's going on.)

Four More Explosions Boom Across Baghdad

8/8/2004 A.P.

Four explosions boomed across central Baghdad on Sunday, sending plumes smoke into the air.

One of the blasts hit the bank of the Tigris River, while a second hit in downtown Baghdad, sending up billows of black smoke.

The cause of explosions was not immediately clear. **(Well, it's either the tooth fairy or the resistance. Duh.)**

Resistance Bombing Kills Four American Troops Near Samarra' Saturday.

Iraqi Resistance Report for events of Thursday, 5 August 2004 through Saturday, 7 August 2004, Translated and/or compiled by Muhammad Abu Nasr, member editorial board The Free Arab Voice

An Iraqi Resistance bomb exploded Saturday morning by a US military patrol in the ad-Dulu'iyah area, southwest of the city of Samarra'. The Resistance blast flipped over and completely burned one Humvee, and knocked another one out of commission.

The correspondent of Mafkarat al-Islam in Samarra' reported eyewitnesses as saying that three US soldiers were killed in the burned up Humvee, and that a fourth was killed in the Humvee that was damaged. It appeared that he was sitting in the back seat of that vehicle at the time of the blast.

20 Mortar Rounds Hit Downtown Baghdad; More Bullshit Flies

08aug04 AFP

In Baghdad, several loud explosions rocked the capital this morning but their cause was not immediately clear, the US military said.

At least 20 mortar bombs fell overnight in the centre of the city without causing injuries or damage. (And if you believe 20 mortar rounds can hit and cause "no damage" in the center of town, I've got some secret WMD locations to sell you.)

Command Admits 20 U.S. Troops "Seriously" Wounded In Najaf Fighting



August 7, 2004 By Henry Chu, Los Angeles Times & By Abdul Hussein Al-Obeidi, Associated Press & August 8, 2004, By ALEX BERENSON and JOHN F. BURNS, New York Times & AFP & By Michael Georgy, (Reuters) & telegraph.co.uk

The United States command said American losses in the fighting up to noon on Saturday included about 20 American servicemen seriously wounded.

A 24-hour government deadline for the militants to leave Najaf expired Saturday without any sign of a pull out – or any major attack. The city was the quietest it's been since fighting erupted Thursday between American troops and militants loyal to Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and spread to several cities across Iraq including the capital.

U.S. warplanes flew overhead in Najaf and American armored vehicles and Humvees blocked the main roads into the city, and most streets were deserted. The militants remained defiant.

"If the occupying forces insist on fighting, we will defend the city until the last drop of our blood," said Mushtaq Khafajy, an al-Sadr spokesman.

Fighters roamed the streets **and fortified their positions with mines around the crypts and mausoleums of the city's ancient cemetery**, one of the oldest in the Middle East and scene of the worst fighting.

The Iraqi police commander in the city, Gen. Galib Hadi al-Jazaery, told reporters at the Marine base that Iraqi police officers and guardsmen had surrounded and attacked a house that Mr. Sadr has used as a headquarters in recent months. But the force did not find the cleric. "We want to rid the city of this devil," General Jazaery said. **"We surrounded the house, but he was not at home."**

Lt. Col. Aqil Khalil of the Iraqi national guard said the attack on the house was botched, and that the guard and police did not work effectively together. The Iraqis are struggling to prove themselves in battle.

There was confusion over who ordered the arrest attempt. U.S. officials said they were not involved in the raid.

In the slum of Sadr City, north of Baghdad, a spokesman for radical Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr said his militiamen attacked US patrols that tried to penetrate the area.

"Our mujahideen (holy fighters) confronted US troops as they tried to penetrate the area from different directions," Sheikh Abdul Hadi al-Daraji told AFP.

Masked young fighters carrying Kalashnikov assault rifles and grenade launchers were seen late yesterday blocking major streets in the area and in some cases planting roadside bombs.

Masked militiamen with rifles and ammunition belts direct traffic and inspect cars at intersections. Their plain-clothes colleagues stand guard clutching pistols as a young boy pours them a glass of water.

"We will join Sadr's army. He offered a truce but Allawi has not responded," said Ali, 18.

In Basra, al-Sadr loyalists battled British troops, firing mortar shells in the morning and rockets at night at a hotel housing British soldiers. But the local Al Mahdi leader vowed not to let up.

“We warn the British troops not to be out on the streets of Basra,” said Sheik Assad Basri. “If they are, their bases all over the city will be under attack.”

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

U.S. Soldier Dies In “Incident”

8/8/04 The Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) -- The U.S. military is investigating the death of an American soldier deployed in Iraq who died in "a non-combat related incident," U.S. command said Sunday.

The soldier died Saturday in Baghdad, the military said, giving no other details.

TROOP NEWS

Open Meeting: Spread The Word!

**Washington Square Church
135 West 4th Street
NY, NY
Friday, August 13th, 2004
7:00 PM**

To: GI Special:
8.8.08

I just wanted to let you know about an event that is coming up this weekend in NYC.

As you know, I am a member of Military Families Speak Out, but I am also a member of a group called Mouths Wide Open which is trying to give a platform for soldiers and their families to speak.

So they have opened up a community center downtown in the Village where people can go to gather, learn and be active participants in their democracy.

So this Friday, we will be having a short film and then a panel discussion with Sgt. Paul Reickhoff (Operation Truth) and Michael Hoffman from Iraqi Veterans Against War.

I am hoping that you will come and **spread the word** onto anyone else in the NYC area who might want to attend.

Elizabeth Batton

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/>

Contribute to Iraq Veterans Against the War

Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) is a group of veterans from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. We are committed to saving lives and ending the violence in Iraq by an immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces. We welcome all active duty, reservist, and recent veterans into our ranks.

https://www.donate.net/donationselector/basket_add_item.asp?dept_id=590&shopper_id=196522&sku=590500

Casualty Ward

Landstuhl, Germany, Aug. 8, 2004 By Mike Lee, ABC News

It looks like that opening scene from the TV comedy *M*A*S*H*. But Hawkeye and Pierce, Radar, and Clinger don't exist here.

These are real doctors and nurses at the Landstuhl Medical Center in Germany, facing horrors seldom seen by the American public — already over 12,000 battlefield casualties from Iraq.

Their patients speak with tension in their faces. Not even the pain killers can stop all of the throbbing of their injuries. I am amazed that they want to talk about what happened.

"Some shrapnel went through my eye," says Staff Sgt. Daniel Beaty.

Another injured soldier, Cpl. Jeff Swaser says: "The shrapnel came in through my side, punctured my lungs, fractured a couple of my ribs, and broke up into little pieces and put holes into various organs."

He even manages a smile, a combination of sneer and laughter that he had escaped death.

They are all cared for by 1,800 doctors, nurses, and other staff who day after day after day are faced with broken bodies and broken lives. And the sight of each new wounded soldier seems to open up an emotional wound.

"You walk in and you see young kids blown apart," says Col. Bernie Roth, who works in the intensive care unit. "Sometimes half their brain is gone, arms gone, legs gone. It's hard, it's really hard."

Lt. Col. Peter Matsuura is an Army reservist who gave up his private practice in Hawaii for three months to help out at Landstuhl.

"It's hard to see these kids come in, and it tears your heart out," he says while operating on a badly injured leg. "I thought I saw a lot of trauma when I was in training, but there's nothing compared to this."

Back Home, Maimed Vets Fucked Over By A Government That Doesn't Really Give A Shit

August 8, 2004 By Esther Schrader, LA Times Staff Writer

MANASSAS PARK, Va. — The yellow ribbons are faded and fraying outside the neatly appointed house where Jay Briseno lies tethered to a respirator, his nearly motionless, 21-year-old body a shrunken shadow of the young man who last year went marching off to war.

Shot in the back of the neck in Baghdad on a sweltering afternoon in June 2003, Briseno was rushed with all the speed and efficiency the Army could muster to one hospital after another, brought back from multiple heart attacks and strokes.

But Briseno isn't a soldier anymore. He is a veteran, facing a lifetime of excruciating disability. The efficient war-fighting machine he was a part of has moved on. His care is left to his parents and sisters, who, bent over his bed day and night, are struggling to adjust.

For Briseno and his family — as for thousands of others wounded in the Iraq war — the transition from the life they knew as soldiers to a future as disabled veterans is filled with frustration and pain. **The military is more efficient than ever in treating its wounded.**

But after the battle-scarred leave Army hospitals, they often find themselves on their own in an unfamiliar and difficult-to-navigate thicket of benefits and services.

Since the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq began, 6,239 troops had been wounded in action, according to a recent Pentagon count. ***Of those, 57% were so severely injured that they were unable to return to duty.*** Medically retired from active duty military service, they need immediate assistance from the Department of Veterans Affairs healthcare system.

"From the beginning all we got from the VA was lip service," said Joe Briseno, who quit his job to care for his son at home full time. "They questioned every piece of equipment we asked for. They told us Jay should be in an institution. They told us to give up on him. We were desperate when these people from the Army called and said, 'Do you have what you need? Is there any way we can help?' "

Veterans Administration and Army officials say privacy laws prevent them from discussing Briseno's case. But they acknowledge that with soldiers as severely wounded as Briseno being evacuated from Iraq regularly, questions about the adequacy of the system to care for them over the long term are real.

"In previous wars the programs existed, but there was no one who was an advocate for the soldier, so the soldier basically navigated through the programs his or herself."
"That's awfully tough when you are in the hospital and people say, 'Sign this. Sign that. Everything will be OK,' and then you get out and you're suddenly at the VA and people say, 'Where are your medical records? Where is this? Where is that?' And you don't know."

At any one time, more than 3,000 vets are waiting for their first visit to the doctor.

Those whose injuries from battle qualify them for disability compensation often wait six months to two years to receive it.

"The system is under a strain, a serious strain," said David Uchic, spokesman for Paralyzed Veterans of America, which was founded in 1946 to represent soldiers with spinal cord injury or disease.

"Having new patients coming into the system puts a strain on a system that is already under pressure," Uchic said. "It doesn't just end with them going to Walter Reed [Army Medical Center in Washington] and being treated. This is a lifelong situation for them for the next 60 to 80 years. So is the system going to be ready to serve them for all those years? That is the question." **(Bullshit. There is no "question." That's the kind of mushmouth weasel-words politicians specialize in. These soldiers are getting shit on right now, right in front of your face. What fucking "question" do you have about that?)**

Working under banners that say "Army Families Are Special," and "We Love Our Troops," **two women**, both wives of soldiers, take 60 calls a day from wounded soldiers seeking help. One spent four months unraveling a problem that had prevented a soldier who lost a limb in the war from getting paid for six months.

Crammed into a crowded office suite in Rosslyn, Va., staff members spend much of their time struggling to locate wounded soldiers who have been discharged.

The Army doesn't keep track of their addresses, and the Veterans Administration doesn't keep track of their disability status in a way that would help pinpoint those most in need. To fill in the gaps, employees have gotten creative — combing through newspaper articles and databases to locate the most seriously wounded former soldiers and get them help.

(They got TWO VA staff members who have to *read newspapers* to find the disabled vets?? This is too incredible to believe, if it weren't for the plain truth that this government doesn't give a shit, regardless of who the President is, and never has. There's no money for corporate campaign contributors in helping disabled vets, so fuck 'em. This government of, by, and for the wealthy and powerful couldn't care less. They're the enemy, not the Iraqis.)

Kristopher Atherton, 24, lost his left arm on July 26, 2003, when an improvised explosive device hit the Humvee he was driving near Abu Ghraib. With the remains of his arm dangling, he clenched a rag in his mouth to blunt the pain and drove another 20 minutes to get himself and his passengers to a hospital.

"I had a lot of things going for me," Atherton, now living in Orting, Wash., said of that day. "About a month before I got injured my daughter was born. I had not seen her yet. I was thinking about coming home alive at least and making sure everybody else comes home. I had a newborn daughter I hadn't seen. I didn't know about the other guys. Maybe they had someone they hadn't seen."

Atherton spent five months at Walter Reed getting what he said was excellent care, even though the amputee ward was severely understaffed at the time. **He said it was not until he got out of the hospital and left the Army that his troubles began.**

For almost two months, he wasn't paid at all. He arrived at Ft. Riley, Kan., where his family was waiting, and was told he had to be out of his free, on-post housing in 60 days.

"There were times like that [when] I didn't know who to talk to, but Hank helped me out when he came into the picture," said Atherton, referring to Hank Minitrez, one of the civilians working to help the newly Army disabled veterans.

The future is far more limited for Jay Briseno.

In his parents' home, he lies in his bed, a stuffed animal from his childhood tucked into his motionless arms.

A photo of him in uniform rests on the mantle nearby. Although conscious, he is unable to move and his ability to communicate is severely impaired.

His teenage sisters have dropped many of their after-school activities to help out. The deacon of their church comes by three times a week.

His mom and dad don't stay in their bedroom anymore — they sleep on a futon next to their son's bed to care for him through the night.

They have to: *The money they get from the VA is only enough to pay for 19 hours a day of nursing care and he needs help all 24.*

Renton Man Seriously Hurt; “My Brother Will Never Be The Same”

2004-08-07 Mike Archbold, Journal Reporter

RENTON -- Rory Dunn and Troy Martin grew up together, attended Liberty High School, played baseball and football and hunted together when pheasant season rolled around.

After high school graduation in 2000, they went off to college or to jobs but they stayed in touch.

When Dunn joined the Army two years ago, he would still take leave to join Martin and other buddies for pheasant hunting near Colfax in Eastern Washington.

Dunn left for Iraq last March with the 10th Mountain Division. **Martin remembered how excited he was to be able to do the job he was trained for and defend his country.**

“I think his perspective changed a little after he got there,” Martin said. “I didn't know there was still so much war going on.”

Martin got the phone call in late May. Dunn had been critically injured when the Humvee he was riding in was hit by an improvised bomb hanging in a tree. Two of the soldiers with him were killed outright, another was paralyzed from the armpits down.

Dunn was hit in the head and not expected to live.

“It was real emotional when I got that phone call,” Martin said. “It was the last thing I expected.”

But Dunn had an inner strength that wouldn't let him die, despite major brain and skull damage. He came out of his coma after three weeks. He lost one eye, but surgeons hope they can restore sight in the other. He is learning to use his limbs again. And he is learning to talk.

Next Friday, Dunn's buddies plan to fly to Washington, D.C., and visit him in the Army brain trauma center in Virginia where he is recovering. The doctors there told him a visit from friends would be a great tonic. Perhaps the doctors will let them take him outside for a while.

“It's a miracle he is still alive,” Martin said.

Dunn's sister, Heather Dunn, would agree with that assessment.

She remembers sitting in the intensive care unit at Landstuhl, and the doctors saying her brother might not live. He was in a coma, and his injuries made him hard to recognize.

The good news, she said, is that her brother is remembering everybody and is learning to reprogram his brain. He will need reconstructive surgery and faces many months of rehabilitation.

Beneath her hopes for her brother's future, however, lies frustration and anger at what happened to him.

“He is just one of those people,” Heather Dunn said. “He is a handsome, 22-year-old guy who had everything in this world going for him. He had so many friends. People loved to be around him.”

But the sight of all those terribly injured soldiers in Germany and at Walter Reed are burned in her memory.

“So much is going on this world is not seeing,” she said. “Soldiers are getting hurt every day, not just those killed but those who are maimed. My brother will never be the same. It has changed everybody's lives.”

Non-Deployable Soldier Deployed: A Call For Help

To: Traveling Soldier
BLampin4036@aol.com

8.6.04

Hello, my name is Brandie Lampin and I am the wife of a Sgt. Tony Lampin, a mechanic for the 115th Field Hospital, stationed at Fort Polk, La.

I have sent every media company that I could find or know and the President this letter because my husband and other soldiers, that are medically unfit for service, were forced to go back to Iraq for a second tour.

One soldier's name that I have been given permission to name is Sgt. Jacqueline Stinnett. All left on the 25th of July bound for Abu Ghraib Prison.

Last month, on the 9th of June, my husband had a follow up appointment with his orthopedic surgeon, Maj. Granger, for his knee that was operated on for a second time due to damage. **After several follow ups, the doctor said that my husband's knee has not gotten any better, and that his knee is permanently damaged, and that he**

recommends that he be medically discharged out of service, and that he is NON DEPLOYABLE.

He gave my husband a permanent medical profile stating this, and is also marked that he CANNOT RUN, should only walk at own pace and distance, that he is unable to move with a fighting load at least 2 miles (48 lbs., includes helmet, boots, uniform, LBE, WEAPON, protective mask, pack, etc.), **unable to do 3-5 second rushes under direct and indirect fire**, and that **he is UNHEALTHY by medical condition that prevents him from deploying**. It also says that he is to not lift or carry a max weight of 30lbs., no prolonged standing for a max of 20 min., no marching with field gear and no impact activities such as jumping.

My husband has gone through two surgeries on his knee, gone through physical therapy, water therapy, and has taken numerous medications all to no prevail. The current medications he is on right now are Celebrex, Ultracet, and Percocet.

Just a little information on the meds” Celebrex, is for his arthritis, and one of the warning labels on it is: avoid prolonged or excessive exposure to direct sunlight. I ask you this, what does Iraq have plenty of?

Ultracet, and Percocet are taken for pain, and both have a warning label that says: may cause drowsiness/dizziness, and SHOULD NOT operate machinery.

He has not gotten any better after the second surgery, and in fact, it is starting to get worse once again.

His doctor even told him that his knee is permanently damaged, and that being sent back to Iraq would only make it more worse.

In my husbands medical records, the last entry that was entered by his doctor reads this:

“At this point we will begin a permanent profile. I'd like to switch him over to Arthrotec to see if that treats his osteoarthritic symptoms better. I'd additionally like him to consider having a steroid injection at the lateral portal site if he is not better in another three to six weeks at the lateral portal site. If he continues to persist and we are unable to find a nonsteroidal that can control his osterarthritic symptoms, I would consider offering a Viscus supplementation, Hyalgan injections. He is reticent to have that many injections in his knee and I can understand that but his may help him significantly with his pain. We discussed that at today's visit. Permanent profile was written today recommending him for a medical board as he has attempted to take a walk and bicycle PT test and had been unable to pass either of them and this has now been two years from his initial injury to the knee that he's not a record PT test.”

This was entered on June 9, 2004 by Doctor Shawn P. Granger, MAJ. U.S. Army, Bayne Jones ACH Fort Polk, La.

Now here is where the being forced back to Iraq comes in. After showing this profile to his Battalion Commander, Colonel Richards, he stated that he would override the medical board, and force him to go back to Iraq for a second time with the company.

The Colonel promised that he would take care of him and the other soldier and see that nothing will happen to them. Here is the thing, how can the Colonel do this if he himself is not going to Iraq.

That he has been reassigned to another duty station sitting behind a nice desk, safe and sound in a hospital in Milwaukee. He said that my husband and the other soldier were badly needed and that there was nothing they could do.

I ask this, if, God forbid, something was to happen to them, what would the company do, pack up and go home?

Get this, before he was relieved by a Colonel Short, Colonel Richards changed his mind and decided to not take my husband and the other soldier and have their deployable status changed back to non-deployable status.

After doing this, the new Colonel said that why bother because he would just change it back and still force them to go. That he wants to hear from their doctor himself saying that they would only get worse if deployed to Iraq.

My husband's doctor had been saying this for over a month. If he was told this, he would not take them.

This is where Colonel Short lied to his soldiers.

They were forced to go anyway.

He also, like Colonel Richards, promises to keep them safe. What is he going to do, keep them by his side at all times? How can he do this if my husband will be on a convoy from Kuwait to Abu Ghraib Prison where they are being sent to set up a hospital for the prisoners/soldiers.

A convoy is one of the most dangerous places to be for a soldier, and the prison alone isn't really all that safe. It has been attacked 6 times in the past 3 months. Which includes a mortar attack that hit the quarters that my husband's company was to be placed in. There also, they have to wear their protective gear at all times. Which means my husband will be forced to go against his medical profile of not to carry or lift anything over 30lbs.

During all this, we then began to write our State Senator of Texas, Mrs. Kay Hutchison. We sent all the information that was needed for an investigation into why was my husband not allowed his medical board and forced to go to war. All this was done last month, but yesterday, Aug. 3, I was informed that my husband's Congressional has come back, and was read to me by phone. It basically said that my husband's commander, Colonel Richards, has the say if my husband can be deployed or not.

I find it unacceptable. No one should be able to tell a soldier that he can no longer receive treatment and not be able to be medical boarded out of service and then force him to go to war where his life would be at greater risk.

The stories of older soldiers in their 50's and 60's, I hear, are being told to America that they have been called back for duty. Some of these soldiers died in Iraq due to heart failure, heat stroke, and various other medical conditions.

If I am not mistaken, did or did not the Army ordered retired personal without medical problems back for duty. Hence the word **without**.

Why doesn't this apply to soldiers who are active? How do you think Americans would react to medically unfit soldiers being sent back to war? Unable to fend/protect themselves and other's properly. On medications that makes them sleepy or dizzy. How do you think they would feel if they knew that their tax dollars are being used to send unfit soldiers to war?

When I took my husband to Fort Polk for departure on July 25th, I noticed a female soldier, whose name I do not know, was on crutches. What was wrong with her? She had a broken foot. Was she going? Yes. **I have a question for you, how is she going to protect herself if an attack was to occur? Was she to shoot the enemy with her crutches?**

The last I heard from my husband was this past Saturday.

I asked how things were going so far, and he said not great. The soldier that has a broken foot, was forced to walk on it without her crutches.

Now, I know that depending on the fracture, you can apply force, but this soldier is in a war. She can't just rush into things. **As for him, he told me that his knee was giving him problems and is really hurting him. That he had to take himself off a shooting range in Kuwait because the drugs mixed with the heat was causing him to almost pass out.**

My husband has served in the Army for 12 long years. He has been to the Gulf War, where he first initially hurt his knee during training, gone to Kuwait last year for Operation Iraqi Freedom, and after being forced, is now there again despite being medically unfit for duty.

I don't know how long he was there for the Gulf War. He was in Kuwait last year for only 3 months, and during this next tour, they told him to be prepared to be there between 6 months to a year. Can you just imagine what further damage his knee will be in?

I will leave this letter at this.

The 115th Field Hospital's motto is Warrior Medic and that they are here to take care of patients. My husband is a patient. How are they taking care of him? By not letting him get the medical attention he needs and sending him back to war.

<p>My husband has served proudly for his country, but look how he is getting treated for it. He deserves better than that. Our country owes him its gratitude. America, let my husband, the father of my children, your son, come home.</p>
--

Brandie Lampin,

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Leesville, La. 71446
(337)238-0121
Wife of a medically unfit soldier:



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/>

Son Paralyzed, Father Says “ I Hated This War, There Is No Reason For This War”

8/2/2004 By Stacy St. Clair, Daily Herald Staff Writer

Eight-year-old Julio Sanchez stands next to his uncle's bed and watches him go through occupational therapy.

The therapist is urging Joel Gomez to flex his biceps and hold it there. A simple task for most people, the exercise is painful and exhausting for the Army sergeant, who was paralyzed from the neck down in an accident in Iraq.

In an effort to entertain the boy and his 9-year-old sister, Sonia, Joel has created an imaginary Gomez military. Joel is the general of the army, with five stars on his collar.

His father, Algimiro Gomez, used to go to the hospital every day, but he recently returned to his construction job after a three-month sabbatical. He is working extra shifts to recoup some of the money he lost during his absence, a move that has limited his visits to mostly weekends and evenings.

The grind has begun to show on their faces. Noemi Sanchez recently started taking the weekends off, staying at home on Saturday and Sunday to run personal errands and give her children some semblance of a normal summer.

Emilia Gomez, a Mexican immigrant who has spent most of her adult life in Wheaton, goes every day to sit by her son's bedside. She hasn't slept well since the accident, and her eyelids are heavy with exhaustion. She occasionally nods off in an uncomfortable hospital chair while her son naps.

She has been in poor health herself in recent years, but she somehow summons the energy each day.

"It's hard," Emilia says. "But up to this point, God has given us the strength."

Hospital officials have encouraged the family to consider placing Joel in a nursing home after he is discharged. Though he will qualify for in-home nursing care, they warned the Gomezes that having their son in their Wheaton apartment will be a round-the-clock job.

Algimiro and Emilia Gomez will not consider anything else.

"He is our son," Algimiro says. "He belongs in our home. It is not an option for us."

Joel appreciates the sacrifices his family has made since the accident. He sees the VA patients whose families don't visit them, and it worries him.

In early June, there was a patient from Texas who had no visitors. He sat in the day room for hours doing puzzles by himself and talking to nobody.

Joel heard his family talk about the man, and he felt sorry for him. The Texan could walk and use his arms, yet Joel still pitied him.

"Did you see him?" Joel asked. "Some of these guys' families never come to see them. I'm really, really lucky."

Algimiro still prays for those wounded veterans, while his own paralyzed son tries to regain use of his arms.

"There was one man who lost his jaw," he says. "When I saw that, I hated this war. War is never good, but there is no reason for this war."

Wounded in Iraq, Tortured By The Real Enemy In Washington DC

August 8, 2004 Bill Nemitz, Blethen Maine Newspapers Inc.

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The pain pinched his face as Sgt. Curtis Mills pulled on the weight machine inside the Walter Reed Army Medical Center's physical therapy annex. His right shoulder, a jagged maze of red and purple scar tissue, crackled with each pull as if packed with sand and gravel.

But that's not what made this veteran soldier cry.

"What's happening is . . . you see, I'm not fit for duty anymore, so they're going to medically put me out," Mills said, his voice breaking as tears mixed with his sweat.

Wiping his face with a towel, he took a deep breath and continued.

"I love my country. I love the military. I'm proud to serve," he said. "But being here is a tough pill to swallow because I feel I've given the Army everything they've ever asked of me . . . and I feel like that's not happening here."

In other words, Mills feels shortchanged. He understands that his career as a soldier effectively ended that night last September when his three-vehicle patrol, part of the U.S. Army Reserve 94th Military Police Company, came under attack on a road outside Ramadi, Iraq. He'd like nothing more than to leave the single Army hotel room in which he, his wife and their two kids have lived for months, and go home to Shapleigh and whatever civilian life has to offer.

But he can't. This 30-year-old reservist, who's spent fully half of his seven years in the military deployed to El Salvador, Bosnia and Iraq, is fighting a bureaucratic battle with no end in sight.

"You're told by everybody not to let them put you out until they're done fixing you," Mills said. "They owe you that."

Ten months after a roadside bomb ripped into the side of his Humvee and peppered the right side of his body with shrapnel, Mills still talks about it in the present tense:

"After the IED (improvised explosive device) goes off, I grab the mike and I'm able to call in that we've been hit. At the same time, I'm looking at my gunner, who is now slumped over in his seat. And my driver is yelling and driving, so I'm like, 'OK, he's good.' And I'm trying to tell them that I've been hit and I'm getting no response from my gunner."

That's when the pain from his own injuries - a compound fracture of his upper right arm, massive shrapnel wounds to his upper right leg, no feeling whatsoever below his right knee - washed over him.

"I drop the mike . . . and they came back (on the radio) and I need to call back on them again . . . so I end up grabbing another mike - instead of being just on the platoon (frequency), it was squadronwide. I didn't care, I had to let them know. Then I finally get the other mike by grabbing the cord and yanking it up."

He paused and let out a long, hard breath.

"We continue driving and we stop underneath the bridge with the other two trucks - one is pointed one way and the other's pointed the other way and we pulled in between. And I'm telling them to get my gunner out of the turret - and they pull him up out of the turret and they're trying to clamp on his neck because he's bleeding."

While some soldiers tended to the gunner, Spc. Christopher Kotch, 21, of Brunswick, others began assessing Mills' wounds.

"They start trying to work on my arm and my leg. But when they're cutting away at my shirt, the bone is sticking out. So one guy's working on my arm and another on my leg and I know I'm bleeding out my back but I've got all this stuff on . . . and what's going through my head at this point, out of everything else, I'm thinking 'medevac.' "

His comrades finally got through on the radio. The news wasn't good.

"They say it's going to be 20 minutes. No way. We can't wait 20 minutes for no damn medevac. The other thing is that it's dark and I can't see down by my legs and I can't feel. . . . I'm actually anticipating my foot is gone - it's blown off. And I'm trying to psych myself up to look, 'cause I gotta look, right? I need to look so I can tell them if I need a tourniquet on my leg. But at the same time, I need to be ready to see it because I don't want to go into shock. Shock at this point could kill me too."

Finally, he grabbed a light and flashed it on his right foot. It was still there.

"There was just so much pain. Every part of me is numb and hurting and I'm talking and trying to help them work on my arm and finally, like, we've gotta get out of here. We can't wait 20 minutes for a medevac to get here."

With that, the convoy started back to its base. The right front tire of Mills' Humvee - the one right under him - was destroyed. The vehicle was riding on its wheel rim.

As they sped through the site of the first attack, another roadside bomb went off. Then, from somewhere in the darkness, snipers opened fire.

Mills, who is right-handed, picked up his M-16 with his left hand, balanced the barrel as best he could and fired back as the stricken Humvee tried to keep up with the rest of the convoy.

"My driver loves talking about that," he said with a smile. "He goes, 'There was shooting coming from everywhere and all of a sudden I can distinguish shooting directly to my right and I look over and there's Mills shooting!' "

He didn't realize it at the time, but as they passed through the second attack, an enemy bullet hit Mills in the right thigh, passed completely through his buttocks and lodged in his upper left leg.

It's still there.

Upon arriving back at their base, Mills and Kotch, who survived a severed carotid artery in his neck, were immediately loaded onto a medical helicopter.

Five days later, after stops at military hospitals in Iraq, Kuwait and Germany, Mills woke up at Walter Reed.

Except for occasional trips home on postoperative "convalescent leave," he's been there ever since. So have his wife, Penny, and their son, Conan, 2, and, since July 4, their daughter, Jessica, 16. They share one room in Mologne House, an Army hotel for outpatient soldiers adjacent to Walter Reed's sprawling medical buildings.

And they want to go home.

"It's definitely bonding time," Penny said gamely last week as Jessica kept an eye on Conan, who had just picked a handful of flowers for his dad.

The problem is, as the anniversary of the attack fast approaches, Mills can't go home. He now finds himself with a paralyzed lower right leg, a shoulder and left thigh that still require additional surgery and a military bureaucracy that seems reluctant to either perform the surgery or "medical board" him out of the Army so he can have the procedures done in Maine.

In short, he wants to get on with his life. But the system, much to his unpleasant surprise, won't let him.

"Curtis was one of the first guys we got back from Iraq," said Solomon Montgomery, the physical therapist who first met Mills the day he arrived. "His attitude toward recovery is excellent."

Five days a week, Mills reports to the physical therapy annex. Walter Reed has treated an estimated 3,300 soldiers from Operation Iraqi Freedom and many - **including a startling number who have lost arms or legs or both** - end up in physical therapy.

Under Montgomery's watchful eye, Mills rotates among a series of weight machines designed to increase his strength and balance. The exercises often leave him doubled over, gasping for air and, most noticeably, wincing with pain.

"He works hard," Montgomery said, noting that at best Mills will have 70 percent use of his right shoulder. **"But his thing is that he's a little disappointed about some of the red tape he has to go through as far as the military is concerned."**

As well he should be.

Ask Mills how many operations he's had since last September and he'll smile, look upward and reply, "I don't know . . . three, six, nine, 10, 11, 12 . . . more?"

The last one, to allow better movement in his shoulder, took place on St. Patrick's Day. But because his arm and shoulder bones continue to send jagged spurs out into his muscle tissue, Mills said, doctors have told him he'll need at least one more surgery to "clean it all up."

There's also the issue of the bullet still lodged in his leg.

Despite X-rays from Germany that revealed its presence, Mills said, it took doctors at Walter Reed days to even acknowledge it was there.

Then they told him it wasn't posing a medical threat, so there was no need to remove it.

"Now it's moving around and it's cutting and it's killing me," Mills said. "It's like I'm getting stabbed with a knife when I'm walking - and this is my good leg."

All he wants, Mills said, is for doctors at Walter Reed to operate on the shoulder and the leg, medically retire him from the service and send him home to Maine, where he hopes to go back to his job as a carrier with the U.S. Postal Service.

But the doctors "don't want to do the surgery here," he said. "They said, 'We're going to med board you out and you can have it done back in Maine by the VA (Veterans Administration).'"

Mills said many military friends, some with far more experience than his, have warned him, "For God's sake, don't let them do that. Make sure everything I need gets done here, not by the VA."

Thus, he insisted for months that the surgeries be done before his medical discharge. Then, earlier this year, he began to have second thoughts.

The room at Mologne House was getting smaller by the day. Penny and Conan had seen every tourist attraction in Washington, D.C., "right down to the botanical gardens." And with Jessica spending most of her sophomore year at Massabesic High School living with extended family and friends, her parents wanted the family reunited back in Maine in time for her junior year - at the latest.

All of which prompted Mills to finally tell hospital officials, "If you're not going to operate, then please just go ahead and med board me out. I've got to get out of here."

That was seven months ago.

The delays are, in a word, torture.

One day, after waiting four weeks for a single form to be signed by one of his doctors - the secretary had told Mills, "Once it's signed, I'll get back to you." - Mills confronted the secretary and demanded that she hand over an unsigned copy of the medical form.

"I then took the paperwork, walked to the other end of the hospital, went up three floors, went into the doctor's office and said, 'Here, can you sign this?' He signed it and I brought it back and said, 'Thanks for wasting a month.'" "

Then in June, during one of his frequent inquiries about the status of his medical discharge, Mills was told "they were waiting for a bit of information from this one doctor - and they would get back to me when they had it."

Three and a half weeks later, Mills grabbed his cane and walked across the Walter Reed campus to the doctor's office. There, he was told "the doctor left July 1. He transferred to Arizona . . . so I have to call this lady on the phone and tell her, 'That doctor you're waiting for has left! That's why you're not getting a response!'"

Finally, there's his primary care physician. Mills visited her recently to tell her he's been having nightmares in which he can't breathe - only to wake up gasping for air.

"She told me she was afraid to give me referrals to see any other doctors because she could get her hand slapped by someone above her because I should have been med boarded by now," Mills said. "So to see these specialists, I don't even go through her. I just go directly to their offices now and, you know, try to get my way in."

Much as he treasures having his wife and kids with him, Mills said he'll probably send them home to Maine - with or without him - when school starts for Jessica in September. Penny can go back to her job as a nursing assistant at Maine Medical Center and maybe start catching up on the bills.

And Mills, like so many of the soldiers here, will limp through what's left of his military career alone.



Staff photo by Gregory Rec

Sgt. Mills sits and rests against his cane after walking a short distance from a physical therapy building at Walter Reed Army Medical Center

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.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP



Followers of Moqtada Sadr patrol the streets of the Sadr City section of Baghdad, where the cleric's militia clashed with U.S. forces. (Thaier Al-sundai -- Reuters)

Bomb Gets Some Collaborators

Aug 8, 2004 Reuters

A security source said one Iraqi National Guard was killed and another wounded Sunday when a roadside bomb hit their patrol north of Baghdad.

And Another In Baquaba Gets More

08aug04 AFP

In Baquba, an Iraqi national guardsman died and another was injured late yesterday as security forces were attempting to defuse a roadside bomb on the road to the village of Kanaan south-east of the city.

"I went there with my comrades after we received information that somebody planted a roadside bomb on the road and as we were trying to keep people from approaching the area the bomb went off, killing one of my comrades and injuring another," said Abdul Saheb Ridha, a member of the Iraqi National Guard.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

INDECIPHERABLE CHATTER TURNS OUT TO BE BUSH: Trying to Confuse Evildoers, President Says

August 8, 2004 The Borowitz Report

A stream of completely indecipherable chatter that intelligence agents had been trying to decode for the past three and a half years has turned out to be the utterances of President George W. Bush, the White House confirmed today.

The intelligence community, who had long thought that the mangled, incomprehensible messages might be those of a terror mastermind, had been frustrated in their attempts to decode them because they appeared to be spoken in a language bound by no discernible rules or logic.

But at a White House press briefing on Sunday, Mr. Bush revealed that he in fact was the source of the undecipherable chatter, telling reporters that he had emitted the perplexing messages on a near-continuous basis in an effort to confuse the enemy.

"If the evildoers in the world do not think that I am not trying to not confuse them, they are sorely mistaken," Mr. Bush said.

Mr. Bush's strategy of intentional unintelligibility has made him almost impossible to understand even by his closest advisers, but it may yet pay big dividends in the war on terror, says intelligence expert Lawrence K. Devore of the University of Minnesota.

"If al-Qaeda has been listening in on the President's chatter, they must be extremely confused by now," Dr. Devore says. "At the very least, their heads probably hurt."

Elsewhere, new questions arose about the current orange terror alert after it was revealed that the most recent music file found on the seized al-Qaeda computer was "Dancing Queen" by ABBA.

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