

GI SPECIAL 2#B30



An Iraqi police officer joins Shiites at a protest in Basra, Aug. 12 against the American attack on Najaf, demanding that U.S. troops withdraw from Najaf and condemning Prime Minister Iyad Allawi for his support of the Americans. (AP Photo/Nabil Juranee)

**"Sunnis And Shiites Are
United To Kick Out The
Occupation."
Police Join Protests Against
U.S. Attack On Najaf**

8.13.04 (AFP)

Policemen waved posters of the radical cleric from the rooftop of a nearby police station as some of the men came down and joined the prayers, leaving their weapons inside, to the loud cheers of Sadr's partisans.

A black-turbaned sheikh climbed on an Iraqi police four-wheel-drive vehicle to address the crowd.

"The cowards are shelling the sanctuary of Imam Ali," shouted Sheikh Hazem al-Araji through a loudspeaker referring to the golden-domed mausoleum of revered Shiite Imam Ali in the central city of Najaf.

"We say no to a government that serves as an instrument for the occupation. We demand that criminals like the interior and defense ministers and the Najaf governor resign and face trial."

The faithful raised their fists in the air in union shouting: "No, no, America. Yes, yes, Moqtada."

Araji called on the faithful to march to Najaf, 180 kilometers (110 miles) south of the capital, to protest the US-led military operations in the city against Sadr's Mehdi Army militia.

A similar message of defiance, anger and solidarity with Sadr and the people of Najaf was echoed during Sunni Muslim prayers on the other side of the capital.

"Occupation forces are pursuing the same scorched earth and genocide policies of (Israeli Prime Minister Ariel) Sharon," Sheikh Abdul Ghafour al-Samarrai told the faithful in his sermon at Baghdad's Umm al-Qura mosque.

"They must stop the bloodbath, respect us and leave our land now."

Prayer-goers shouted: "Sunnis and Shiites are united to kick out the occupation." Samarrai urged people to donate food and other essentials to aid convoys that will be sent to Najaf.

In southern Iraq, Sheikh Ahmed al-Maliky held prayers outside Sadr's office in Basra, urging Iraqi police and national guard and former soldiers in the army of ousted president Saddam Hussein to join the Mehdi Army in Najaf.

In Samawa, Sheikh Ghazi al-Zargani condemned "the agent government of Prime Minister Iyad Allawi," threatening that Sadr's followers will storm the local prison to free militiamen held there.

At Kufa's grand mosque outside Najaf, where Sadr usually delivers his fiery Friday weekly sermons, Sheikh Jabir al-Khafaji officiated on his behalf comparing Allawi's government to that of Saddam.

"Do not kneel before the occupiers," he said. "We will not allow a Saddam-like US installed government to exist in Iraq."

GET SOME TRUTH: CHECK OUT **THE NEW 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/>

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

Special Forces Soldier Killed In Najaf

8/13/2004 NAJAF, Iraq (AP)

A U.S. soldier was killed during fighting in Najaf, the military said Friday.

The soldier, from a special forces unit, was killed during a raid on Thursday on a school in the holy city of Najaf.

Troops raided the school, a nearby maternity hospital, and al-Sadr's house in efforts to rout out the militia, dropping a 500-pound bomb on one of the buildings, the military said.

U.S. Orders Stop To Najaf Attack

Aug. 13, 2004 TODD PITMAN, Associated Press & Aug. 13 (Bloomberg)

Iraqi officials and aides to a radical Shiite cleric negotiated Friday to end fighting that has raged in Najaf for nine days, after American forces suspended an offensive against Muqtada al-Sadr's militia. Al-Sadr's aides said he was wounded by shrapnel, but Iraqi officials said the cleric was involved in the talks.

With negotiations under way, the U.S. military said it suspended offensive operations against al-Sadr's Mahdi Army militiamen, who are holed up in the city's vast cemetery and the Imam Ali shrine, one of the holiest sites to Shiite Muslims.

"We are allowed to engage the enemy only in self-defense and long enough to break contact," said Maj. Bob Pizzitola, executive officer for the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment of the 1st Cavalry Division. "That was a blanket order for everybody."

"Hopefully, the talks will go well and everything will be resolved peacefully," Pizzitola said.

Najaf Gov. Adnan al-Zurufi said negotiations were being held between officials of Iraq's interim government and al-Sadr's representatives, without participation by U.S. officials. National Security Adviser Mouwaffaq al-Rubaie and Defense Minister Hazem Shalan were both in Najaf, Iraqi officials said.

Al-Sadr, whose supporters are staging an insurgency in southern Iraq, has set 10 conditions to end clashes with U.S. and Iraqi forces in Najaf, Agence France-Presse reported, citing a spokesman for the rebel leader.

Under the conditions al-Sadr's militias will pull out of Najaf after the withdrawal of all Iraqi and foreign forces from the city, AFP said, citing Sheikh Ali Sumeisim. Al-Sadr also demanded that the Marjayia religious authority take charge of Najaf, home to Iraq's holiest Shiite Muslim shrine, AFP said.

Other conditions included recognizing al-Sadr's militia, known as the Mahdi Army, as an ideological movement with the right to carry weapons for self-defense, AFP reported.

In a sermon read on his behalf during Friday prayers at the Kufa Mosque, al-Sadr said the United States was intent on "occupying the whole world."

"The presence of occupation in Iraq has made our country an unbearable hell," he said. He called on Iraqis to rebel "because I will not allow another Saddam-like government again."

Mahdi Army militants killed two police officers in an ambush outside Nasiriyah on Thursday afternoon, police said Friday.

Mississippi Soldier Killed

August 10, 2004 By Ryan Clark, The Clarion-Ledger

He'd been in Iraq just five weeks when he died.

Spc. Joshua Bunch of Hattiesburg became the 15th Mississippian killed since Operation Iraqi Freedom began when a convoy he was riding in was attacked in Baghdad. Bunch, 23, enlisted in the Army in 2001 and was a combat engineer with the Bravo 91st Engineer Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division. **Now, his family is left wondering what phrase to put on his gravestone.**

"We're trying to stay sane for Joshua," said his mother, Karen Bunch, sitting in the kitchen at her home in Hattiesburg.

Bunch, a graduate of North Forrest High School, had served a good portion of his time in Alaska, but he wanted to be closer to the action, his adopted father, Bill Bunch, said.

So he transferred to Fort Hood, Texas, in April. Back home in Hattiesburg, his mother worried.

"I worried about him very much," she said.

Joshua Bunch left for Iraq June 21, and after five weeks, he called home to say he was doing fine. He did not talk about his work.

The next day, Aug. 6, Bunch went out on a convoy patrol in Baghdad. Sometime during the trip the group fell under attack, taking fire from small arms and rocket-propelled grenades, Army officials told the family.

In the battle, a Humvee rolled on Joshua Bunch. He was dead before he could make it to a hospital, his family said.

Bunch was supposed to be overseas for eight months, family members said.

Now, they remember a person who loved life.

"He lived everyday ..." his mother said, her voice trailing off.

Sgt. Joe Lee and his wife Sarah Lee, Joshua Bunch's sister, sat in the kitchen with Karen Bunch, reminiscing and making plans. The Lee's 3-year-old son Joey — Karen Bunch's only grandchild — bounced on her knee.

Joe Lee, Bunch's brother-in-law, is training at nearby Camp Shelby and will also soon deploy to a location in the Middle East.

"We don't want him to go," Karen Bunch said.

Albert Meredith watched from the corner of the kitchen. Meredith, a family friend for 20 years, drove over from Hazlehurst to make sure the Bunches were OK.

"These two people raised him so good," Meredith said of Joshua. "They turned him into a fine young man. With all the things young people have to face, he turned out right."

Joshua Bunch is survived by his adopted father, Bill, a retired firefighter, his mother, his sister Sarah Lee, his brother-in-law Joe Lee, and his nephew, 3-year-old Joey Lee.

Because his body is now in Delaware, services for Bunch are not finalized, but the Bunch family said Monday they hope to plan a wake at Moore Funeral Home in Hattiesburg on Wednesday or Thursday, with a funeral the next day at Highland Cemetery in Hattiesburg.

Resistance Forces Take & Hold Central Basra

13 Aug 2004 JAMES BRANDON IN BASRA AND IAN JOHNSTON, The Scotsman.com
& 8.12 By MARIAM FAM, Associated Press Writer

Regular British army patrols in Basra have ceased and squads of Sadr's fighters have rapidly taken over key buildings across the town. They are building up fortified positions near strategic bridges over the canals that criss-cross the city, vowing to repel any British counter-attack.

The city centre fell to Sadr's al-Madhi army on Monday.

"If the British try and cross the bridge, we will attack them," said one of the militants in the city.

"The latest fighting is not because of us. It is because we are fed up with the occupation," he added.

"The thing that changed our minds about the Americans was Abu Ghraib, and when we discovered that America does not care for human rights and their army does not respect the differences between soldiers and civilians.

Thousands of Sadr's supporters marched through the streets of Basra to protest against the United States' assault on Najaf.

"Allawi and the governor of Najaf are responsible for this massacre," said Abed Jassim, a Shiite in Basra. "They provided protection for the Americans to kill the Shiites."

RESISTANCE DONKEY HOLDS BACK U.S. ARMORED COLUMN



Najaf Aug. 13. (AP Photo/Khalid Mohammed)

Kut: US Forces Hit Iraqi National Guard Post By Mistake

2004-08-13 Middle East Online, KUT, Iraq

Seven Iraqis were killed and 34 wounded when US forces attacked suspected Shiite Muslim militia positions in the southern city of Kut, a hospital director said Friday.

"The Americans also hit an Iraqi National Guard post by mistake in the Al-Haidariya neighbourhood, killing one guardsman and wounding 14 others at around 2:00 am (2200 GMT)," he added.

On Thursday, a statement from the Polish-led multinational force in the area described the situation in Kut as "still serious and it is possible that some fights can occur again".

Militiamen attacked and set ablaze Al-Balda police station in central Kut, killing one policeman and wounding nine others, said police Lieutenant Waqar Bashir.

Louisiana Soldier Killed

8.9.04 By AMY WOLD, Advocate staff writer

Joni Fanguy knew something was wrong the minute she drove into her Mount Hermon driveway Friday.

The two Marines waiting at her home in the Washington Parish community delivered the news that her stepson Larry L. Wells, 22, was killed Friday during fighting in Iraq's An Najal Province.

Wells had left in early May to serve a second tour of duty in Iraq.

"Our youngest son was home for lunch when they came," Fanguy said of the Marines

Lance Cpl. Wells was a rifleman assigned to the 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit of the I Marine Expeditionary Force based in Camp Pendleton.

He had come home to Mount Hermon a few times in the last year, starting when he returned from his first tour in Iraq in October. He returned again briefly when his dad's battle against cancer took a turn for the worse.

"He got to spend a few days with his dad before his dad passed," Fanguy said.

Wells came home again for a few days in April before shipping out again to Iraq. **Fanguy said he wasn't excited about going back to Iraq, but knew it was what he needed to do.** He was expecting to return home in December.

"He was an exceptional young man; oh God, he was fun," Fanguy said. "Very respectful, well-mannered."

Others in Mount Hermon said Wells will be missed.

"I found out the other day; we were just talking about him," said Felder Goings, who owns a hardware store in town and lived down the road

Inside The Mosque, Mahdi Army Wounded Return From Battle

**WRONG TIME, WRONG PLACE, WRONG MISSION:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!**



An American soldier walks past a picture of Muqtada al-Sadr's father Grand Ayatollah Mohammed Sadiq al-Sadr during a cease fire in the holy city of Najaf Aug. 13, 2004. (AP Photo/Khalid Mohammed)

13 August 2004, Mail and Guardian Online

As the day wore on, more and more injured young men wrapped in bandages were being carried across the sun-baked tiles of the courtyard in the Imam Ali shrine.

In one alcove in the turquoise-tiled wall was a small makeshift hospital with two metal beds and a stack of drugs and bandages. On the far side of the building, behind a large wooden door, was another room, now a crowded ward chilled by two air coolers. Blood-soaked clothes floated in a metal bath outside.

For seven days the militia of Moqtada al-Sadr, the rebel Iraqi Shia cleric, had been fighting the Americans on the edge of the holy city of Najaf. On Thursday, on the eighth day, the Americans finally advanced towards the narrow streets of the old city. The push began before 7am with a wave of heavy bombing, then dozens of tanks and Humvees drove in, blocking roads and fighting off the rag-tag militia.

Some among the cleric's deputies were privately anxious on Thursday. Others tried to shrug off the mounting pressure. By mid-morning one of the cleric's most senior lieutenants, Sheikh Ahmad al-Shaibani, was dozing in his air-conditioned room. Occasionally he took text messages on his mobile phone from his commanders in the streets. Outside, loudspeakers around the mosque issued exhortations to the fighters: "God make your feet steadfast. God make you victorious."

Shaibani, wearing sunglasses, wandered into the courtyard. "They are not in a complete circle around us," he said. "We have been expecting something like this any day. It is either a massive attack or a massive withdrawal and we expect the latter. There is a lot of political pressure in Baghdad."

The sweeping courtyard that encloses the golden dome of the shrine is surrounded by an exquisitely tiled wall. Along its length are a series of alcoves each housing small offices. Most are now locked or abandoned, but one, near the northern gate, is air-conditioned, thickly carpeted and decorated with dozens of posters of Moqtada al-Sadr and his revered father. Under the sofa are stuffed several assault rifles and a pair of umbrellas.

This is the office of the al-Sadr movement, which now controls the mosque.

Fighters walked past with boasts from the battlefield. "We had two tanks coming towards us this morning," said Abu Zara. "We destroyed the first tank. We saw the second tank come to tow it and the soldiers got out and ran away."

Then a crowd gathered to show off trophies of the fight -- chunks of metal from US vehicles, what appeared to be a helicopter tail rotor and an armoured panel from a tank, peppered with bullet holes.

Among the injured men was Hassan Liwis (26) an engineering student from Nassirya, who had left his final exams to fight with al-Sadr's militia during his uprising in April. On Thursday he was badly burned in the face and arm when a helicopter fired a rocket at him as he stood holding a rocket-propelled grenade.

"We didn't see it coming," he said. "I am fighting to defend my leader, the Imam Ali and my religion. We will do anything to stop the Americans. They have sex and drinking and other things and we don't want this." His third child, a boy, was born two months ago and he named him Moqtada, after the cleric.

Later, Shaibani and his men sat in their office talking over the US strategy, insisting it would fail. Then silence fell as a man came in to report the injury of a friend, a young man named Haider, shot in the head by an American bullet and barely alive.

Outside, the body of a dead fighter lay unnoticed in an alcove beside the makeshift hospital. He lay wrapped in a blanket and covered by a sheet as the sun set behind him.

TROOP NEWS

Wounded Soldiers; “They Consider Not Having One Of Your Lungs Not A Disability”

Aug. 11, 2004 By Timothy Dwyer, The Washington Post Company

WASHINGTON - Staley is 20 years old, a U.S. Army tank driver with a quick wit and an accent lush with the tones of the mountains of western North Carolina where he grew up. Staley was nearly killed when a mortar round exploded and blew him 15 feet into the air on a roadside north of Baghdad on Easter Sunday. He lost his left eye and his face was crushed, burned and scarred by shrapnel, which also pierced his neck, cutting his carotid artery.

Every war has its toll but the numbers don't show the emotional toll of war, the impact each death has on families and the life changes forced on those who suddenly find themselves without a leg to walk on, a hand to button a shirt or lace a shoe, or a lung to catch a breath.

Depression is common among recovering soldiers, and it often turns to frustration as they face the daunting task of figuring out what they are going to do with the rest of their lives because plans changed in the time it takes for a mortar round to explode.

Losing his eye is what brought Staley to Przybyla.

Przybyla, a 48-year-old Detroit native, is an ocularist; he makes artificial eyes. He had recently fitted Staley with a new eye, and after a few days of testing it, Staley was back in his office for a follow-up visit before heading home to Millers Creek, N.C.

"I think it's fine," Staley said of his artificial eye, "but my mom thinks it looks a little high." Przybyla leaned on his workbench, which is loaded with plastic containers of paint that he uses to get the color of the artificial eyes just right.

"I don't want you kicking my butt, but your mom might be right," the doctor said. "It needs to come down a hair. Not much. ... Bring your head here, we're going to take it out."

Staley stayed put.

"Oh, I forgot," Przybyla said. "I know you want to take it out yourself."

Staley bowed his head and manipulated the artificial eye out of the socket. He lifted a mirror from the workbench and held it in front of his face, staring hard with his one good eye at the wound he brought back from Iraq.

"I can't say for sure that anybody ever wants to go to Iraq," he said. "Once you get there and come back, it's family, and you want to go back. If they told me I could go back to my unit tomorrow, I would." For now, his goal is simple: to get used to his new eye, get healthy and then get out of the Army and into college.

The cost of treating America's wounded is difficult to measure because much of the medical infrastructure is permanently in place. A spokesman for Walter Reed said **the hospital spent \$42.3 million in fiscal 2003 treating wounded soldiers from Iraq and Afghanistan. So far in fiscal 2004, the cost has been \$37.1 million, and that number is expected to rise.**

The war cost Mike Cain a leg.

Cain, 23, grew up in Berlin, Wis., and was on his high school basketball, track and cross country teams. He loved running best of all. He joined the Army after high school, was posted to Italy and then Fort Hood, Tex., where he met his wife, Leslie. She grew up in Gladstone, N.D., a town with a population of 233 in the shadows of the Badlands, and that is where they will live and raise a family.

Cain went through periods of depression during his rehabilitation. With the help of family and the support of the hospital, he came out of it, and now he hopes to get his retirement papers by Sept. 1. He wants to get home to Gladstone in time for the birth of his first child. After spending time at home with his wife and new baby, he intends to find a college nearby and study physical therapy so that he can work with amputees.

On Aug. 10, 2003, Cain was a passenger in an Army flatbed truck in Tikrit when a land mine exploded, severely wounding both legs and breaking his jaw. Cain spoke in a flat voice when he recalled his last moments in Iraq. "Nothing really," he answered quietly when asked what he remembers. "Just waking up and seeing the blood all over the place. . . . It's the worst pain you can ever feel in your life."

He wasn't awake for long. He lapsed into a coma and woke up about a week later at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany. His mother, father and two sisters, flown in from Wisconsin, were there when he came to.

"I remember when I looked up and I saw them," he said, giving the fishing pole a slight jerk to try to get a fish interested. "I was happy as hell. [The doctors] just told me that I was in an accident, an explosion. And I was, like, 'Yeah, no [expletive].' And then they told me I lost my leg."

Mike Cuscianna, 25, an Army specialist from Braintree, Mass., was wearing a sleeveless T-shirt, and a scar that ran like a zipper from his breastbone to his backbone was visible.

His right bicep was scarred and not as muscular as his left because he had lost some bone and muscle, the result of a bullet ripping through his arm.

Cuscianna, the son of a dentist, assigned to the 1st Battalion, 77th Armored Regiment of the 1st Infantry Division, was riding in a Humvee on patrol in Balad in the Sunni Triangle on April 19 when his unit came under attack. He was shot three times, once through the arm and twice in the upper body. Despite his wounds, he said he kept firing until his sergeant noticed blood coming out of his mouth and decided to get him out of there.

He's had five rounds of surgery since and has lost two-thirds of his right lung. He's ready to get out of the Army, and has started looking for a job.

"Well," he said, "if I didn't appeal my disability rating, I'd probably be out by now. They didn't give me a very good disability rating. They consider not having one of your lungs not a disability. It kind of pisses me off a little bit, to do all of this and then have them not recognize what you've done."

He said the Army ruled that his injuries left him 10 percent disabled, while he thought losing most of his lung left him nearly fully disabled.

On Feb. 25, Victor Thibeault left Walter Reed and went on a field trip to Congress. Testifying before the House Armed Services subcommittee on Total Force, Thibeault talked about fighting off depression and feeling alone when he had to come to grips with the fact that the career he had planned in the military was no longer an option because of wounds he suffered fighting the Taliban.

"This was going to be my career in life," he told the committee. "But now it has changed. So I have to make a change in my life. It's a rapid change. So it's hard for me to make certain decisions. And I don't know about getting out of the military and going on to college or doing whatever."

Thibeault, 22, of Riverside, Calif., spent about seven months at Walter Reed after his left hand was blown off by a grenade that had been tossed into the Humvee he was driving in a crowded marketplace in Kandahar, Afghanistan, on Dec. 3, 2003. Thibeault, an Army specialist with the 110th Military Intelligence Battalion of the 10th Mountain Division out of Fort Drum, N.Y., grabbed the grenade and tossed it under his seat. He said the grenade had a seven-second fuse, and just about the time he got it under the seat, it exploded, ripping off most of his hand and cutting up his legs with a shower of shrapnel.

His reaction was purely logical. "My buddy didn't see it, and so that's why I grabbed it. My thought process was, if it crossed over my body as I threw it out the window, it might have killed me and my buddy. If I threw it out into a crowd on the side of the road, it would have killed innocent women and children, and we would have all kinds of bad propaganda." So he ditched it under his seat, and when he pulled up his arm, his hand was pretty much gone except for his little finger. He kept driving with the hand he had left, getting himself and his buddy to safety and treatment.

Thibeault is now back at Fort Drum, reporting for duty every day and then doing nothing. He submitted his retirement papers in April and was told that it would take a few weeks

for his retirement to be finalized. He accepted a job with the Disabled American Veterans office in Philadelphia and recently rented an apartment near the Temple University Campus.

But the Army told him that his retirement papers might not come through for another three months or longer because of paperwork. Thibeault said he worked through the rehab just fine, though he found it difficult to deal with the depression when he first landed in the hospital.

"The depression is too great," he testified in February, "and you don't have anyone there supporting you to help you get through that depression unless you go find someone yourself."

Now the depression is gone. **But it has been replaced by deep frustration. He is paying rent on an apartment in Philadelphia and has a job waiting for him and he's more than ready to start his new life.**

"I stand around and I wait," he said recently. "I wait until they give me a final answer. I have to report for duty every day, and I can't even tie my own boots and I can't button the buttons of my shirt unless I button it first and then slip it over my head. . . . There are a lot of wounded soldiers who are taking way too long to get out of the military and I think it should be a quick process."

Thibeault wears a glove on his left hand. He said surgeons offered to remove one of his big toes and attach to his hand like a thumb, but he declined, saying he didn't want to lose any other body parts.

Mercenary Business Booming; \$1500 A Day And No Stop-Loss

11 Aug 2004 By Paul Keilthy, LONDON (AlertNet)

Between 10,000 and 20,000 former military or security personnel are earning up to \$1,500 a day working in Iraq and Afghanistan on a variety of tasks, including the armed protection of Afghan President Hamid Karzai, protecting the United Nation's cash and supporting the Afghan elections.

It's big business and it's expanding fast, **fueled by the enthusiasm of the United States and other Western governments for outsourcing risk.**

According to International Alert, the global market for private security is expected to grow to \$210 billion in 2010 from \$55.6 billion in 1990. A third of the U.S. budget for the war in Iraq is reportedly spent on private military companies -- a projected \$30 billion in 2004.

Employees have engaged in fatal gun-battles with local militia. Some 30 operatives have been killed.

Fresh Meat For Bush's Slaughterhouse: 3,000 Texas National Guard Troops Report For Iraq

8.12.04 Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO About three-thousand Texas Army National Guard troops ticketed for duty in Iraq will report for duty by Monday.

The San Antonio Express-News reports the deployment is the biggest by the Texas Army National Guard since World War Two.

Officials say the troops were notified of their mobilization weeks ago. Representatives of the 22 units called up will attend a Sunday mobilization ceremony in Fort Worth.

Then, they'll undergo months of training at Fort Hood in Central Texas before moving out to Iraq in January.

MORE:

One-Thousand Kaneohe Marines To Be Deployed

8.13.04 HONOLULU (AP)

Nearly one-thousand Hawaii-based Marines are expected to be deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq, and possibly as early as September.

The Marines are part of the 3rd Marine Regiment at the Kaneohe Marine Base Hawaii.

The regiment is part of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit based on Okinawa.

Marine Forces Pacific spokesman Chuck Little says the U-S Central Command has requested that the Okinawa unit replace a similar unit that has been in Afghanistan since February.

The deployment will boost the number of Hawaii troops in the Middle East to about 12-thousand.

BROKEN BY THE WAR

Aug 13 2004 By Patrick Mulchrone, Mirror.co.uk

AN IRAQ veteran who returned from the desert a broken man has killed himself.

Private Peter Mahoney went to war believing Saddam Hussein was threatening world peace with weapons of mass destruction.

But the loving father-of-four came home disillusioned and convinced he was the victim of a political smokescreen.

Peter, 45, told his family how his unit came up against Iraqi troops armed only with sticks and stones.

Since his return from action last year, the former Territorial had raged against Britain's involvement in the second Gulf War. His distraught wife Donna watched helpless as he plunged into depression.

Their 21-year marriage was on a knife edge and five weeks ago they agreed to part. Unable to battle his demons, Peter was found dead in his car from carbon monoxide poisoning.

He left four children, Matthew, 19, Ashley, 17, Ben, nine, and Vicky, six. Donna, 41, said last night: "Iraq changed him. I don't know what happened because I wasn't in his head but it changed him.

"He was a broken man. I really don't know what happened out there."

Council worker Peter spent six months in the Middle East last year with the Royal Logistics Corps, delivering medical supplies and helping injured front-line troops.

Last July he wrote in his local newspaper: "The general consensus among the troops was that we were in Iraq so George Bush could seize control of the oil fields.

"All this talk of weapons of mass destruction was simply a smokescreen as far as we were concerned. There was certainly no evidence they existed.

"From what we saw Saddam's regime did not have advanced weapons. Iraqi troops were using ancient Russian machines. They were firing sticks and stones. They might as well have had catapults."

He added: "I think Tony Blair was just following whatever Bush said. He was simply his puppet. He got in too deep and couldn't back out."

And he said: "I was considering leaving the TA before I went out there but I will definitely be leaving when my time is officially up in September. I will be happy to turn my back on the TA. It also gives my wife and children peace of mind."

Donna, his childhood sweetheart, said the contrast between photos of her husband before and after the war sum up how he had changed. In a passport

photo taken just before he left for Iraq, Peter looked happy, lively, and alert. In a similar picture this year he looks drawn and pale.

Donna said: "You can see how he was and you can see how he changed. He was so lively before he went, so happy. Then when he came back - I don't know - he'd lost his character."

Before her husband was called up, Donna had made an emotional plea to the PM, telling him: "This is someone else's war."

"He volunteered to go to Bosnia in October 1998 because he thought it was a good idea. But this time it's different," she wrote. **"We just don't understand the moral point of this war. It's not justified.**

"We're just backing up George Bush - and we'll be fighting somebody else's battle."

An inquest has been opened and adjourned.

Britons Join Sadr's Militia In Battle For Najaf; Fighter Says Bush Convinced Him

LONDON, Aug 11 (AFP)

At least two Britons have taken up arms in Najaf on the side of Moqtada Sadr, and they say there are more foreigners like them in the militia in Najaf, The Times reported Wednesday.

"It is our country and there are invaders here," the older of the two Iraqi-born Britons told the newspaper's correspondent in Najaf. "We have taken the side of Moqtada Sadr because we believe it is the right side."

The Times said the two men, an uncle and nephew just two years apart in age, spoke in "distinctive London accents" and refused to identify themselves beyond their noms de guerre.

"They insisted they were not the only foreign fighters in Najaf and expected some of their friends to follow their lead" Stephen Farrell reported.

Abu Turab, or "father of dust," linked his decision to go to Najaf to what US President George W. Bush had said after the September 11 attacks in 2001.

"Bush said you are either with us or against us," he said. "We had to decide whether to be with him or against him, so we are against him, obviously."

The Times said both men disavowed Osama bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda network, as well as deposed Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, and that they had taken up arms to fight the US-led occupation.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Thousands Of Shiites To Form Human Chain In Najaf Guarding Shrine, Sadr

BAGHDAD, Aug 13 (AFP) & Brudirect.com News & TODD PITMAN, Associated Press & Aljazeera

Thousands of Shiite Muslims vowed Friday to flock to the holy city of Najaf to form a human chain around the revered Imam Ali shrine after militia leader Moqtada Sadr was reportedly wounded in battle.

Pro-Sadr demonstrations were held across Iraq, while in the main southern city of Basra, a Sadr aide called on Iraqi police and national guards to join the ranks of the Mehdi army.

In one of the biggest protests, enraged Iraqis in the southern town of Diwaniya on Friday swarmed over the local office of his political party, ripping down signs and throwing rocks.

The Najaf offensive has also infuriated residents of the Sunni-dominated town of Falluja, which has been a significant anti-US occupation spot.

About 3000 people marched in the centre of Falluja carrying pictures of al-Sadr and placards denouncing the US bombing of Najaf, where the cleric and his followers are surrounded. "Fallujah is with Najaf, the target is America."

"Long live Sadr. Falluja stands by Najaf against America," the marchers shouted.

South of Baghdad, in the small town of Kut al-Hayy, more than 1000 people - both Sunni and Shia Muslims - marched through the streets after Friday prayers to demand an end to bloodletting.

Sadr's local representative, Ashraf al-Hussaini, called for an immediate end of the occupation and for the assault in Najaf to stop, as protesters held up a banner calling for the dismissal of the defence, interior and prime ministers.

"Either you are with us or against us," warned Sheikh Ahmed al-Maliky, the deputy governor of Basra, as more than a thousand faithful gathered for weekly prayers held on the street in the city centre outside Sadr's office.

Thousands of Shiites also marched towards Najaf from Kufa, while demonstrations supporting Sadr were being held in most key cities of Iraq.

The religious importance of Najaf to Shiites, who make up the majority in Iraq, was highlighted in early April 2003 when US troops invading Iraq entered the city of half a million.

They were confronted by hundreds of angry civilians who blocked soldiers from approaching the shrine, which is off-limits to non-Muslims.

A spokesman for the Shiite Muslim militia leader urged thousands of partisans in Baghdad to march to Najaf on foot after Friday prayers.

"The government calls Sadr an outlaw. How can he be?" asked

In a peaceful demonstration outside the heavily fortified Baghdad Green Zone, which houses the US embassy and some government offices, the Shiite men, women and children vowed to guard the shrine and shield Sadr in the fighting at Najaf.

The men chanted such slogans as "We want to be martyrs for you, Muqtada al-Sadr" and "He's the bridge to paradise" while making their way through the centre of the city.

The men held aloft a sea of flags and carried banners reading "Shoot Down American Planes" and "Leave Muqtada al-Sadr".

Aayam Mohammad, who had come to the demonstration despite a shoulder injury, while a young supporter sprinkled rose water on the sweating crowd.

Mohammad was also headed to Najaf later Friday.

"He (Sadr) is son of this land, of this religion. It is (Prime Minister) Iyad Allawi who is the outlaw, an American spy. He and his ministers should quit and also exit Najaf without any more bloodshed."

As the crowd gathered, dozens of American soldiers and Iraqi national guards took positions outside the gates of the convention centre in the Green Zone.

"We are not here to fight. We are here to give a message to the government and the Americans that they should quit Najaf," said Mortada Mohammed, a 25-year-old student of French literature.

One of Iraq's most senior Shiite religious leaders called for an end to the Najaf battle, as Iraqis took to the streets across the country to protest the fighting.

"What is going on in Najaf and the rest of the Iraqi cities is a violation of sanctities, an aggression on holy sites and shedding of innocent blood that could lead to a vicious civil war," Grand Ayatollah Mohammed Taqi al-Modaresi said during Friday prayers in Karbala.

"I call on everyone to shun violence, stop all military operations **and for the immediate withdrawal the troops from the cities.**"

An Iraqi political source said a delegation of tribal leaders and political parties met Prime Minister Iyad Allawi on Thursday and demanded he try to put an end to the US offensive on Najaf, Reuters said.



Falluja

Supporters of Muqtada al-Sadr rally during a demonstration in Fallujah, Aug. 13, 2004. Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Mohammed Taqi al-Modaresi condemned U.S. (AP Photo/Abdul Khader)

Najaf Officials & General Quit To Protest U.S. Attack

"I am a part of this nation, I am a part of these people. My fellow tribesmen are now fighting in Najaf and Sadr city," said Major-General Marid Abd al-Hasan.

13 August 2004 Al Jazeera

Sixteen of Najaf's 30-member provincial council resigned in protest at the US-led assault on the Najaf.

"We have decided to resign due to what has befallen Najaf and all of Iraq from the hasty US invasion and bombardment of Najaf," the council said in a statement to the press.

The council's resignations came several hours after the deputy governor of Najaf resigned in protest against the US offensive on the city.

"I resign from my post denouncing all the US terrorist operations that they are doing against this holy city," Jawdat Kadam Najim al-Quraishi, deputy governor of Najaf, said on Thursday morning.

On Thursday evening, the director of tribal affairs at the Iraqi Interior ministry announced his resignation through Aljazeera and said he could no longer work with the interim government in good faith given the "carnage and barbaric aggression of the US-led forces in Najaf".

Former U.S. Ally Declares U.S. Now The Enemy

13 August 2004 al Jazeera

When the United States wanted a Shia cleric to strengthen the credibility of the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), it turned to Muhammad Bahr al-Uloum, whose family had lost many members for opposing Saddam Hussein.

Watching his hometown of Najaf come under US bombardment to crush Muqtada al-Sadr and his supporters, **Bahr al-Uloum has lost faith in US intentions toward Iraq, and says millions of moderates like him, who welcomed last year's invasion, now regard Washington as an enemy.**

"The Americans have turned the holy city into a ghost town. They are now seen as full of hatred against Najaf and the Shia. Nothing I know of will change this," the former president of the now defunct council said on Friday.

"I do not understand why America craves crisis. A peaceful solution to the confrontation with Muqtada could have been reached. We were hoping that Prime Minister Iyad Allawi would lead the way, but he sided with oppression."

Bahr al-Uloum had been one of the most outspoken critics of violence fuelled by Sadr and his supporters, who have challenged the authority of elder clerics such as Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and Bahr al-Uloum himself.

The established clerical class has come under mounting criticism from ordinary Shia for remaining silent over the US offensive.

Although the young Sadr lacked political maturity, dealing with him through force only bolstered his support, especially among the poor and unemployed, Bahr al-Uloum said.

"The government has lost the support of the Middle Euphrates region and the south, even if it manages to calm down these areas temporarily using brute force," he said, referring to clashes in central and southern Iraq.

He said Sadr should have been given a political voice in government to avert violent confrontation. "There is no wisdom to what the Americans and Allawi are doing," he said. "The consequences are unthinkable."

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

A Little Attitude Here



Najaf Aug. 13. (AP Photo/Jim MacMillan)

OCCUPATION REPORT

Indian Truckers' Days Of Terror

AUGUST 11, 2004 ANKUR, TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Just like Tilakraj, Antaryami and Sukhdeo Singh, the abduction of three Indians has meant the beginning of a fresh horror story for several other truck drivers. Indians in the Iraq-Kuwait region are driving trucks through turbulent zones. **They want to return home. But their Kuwaiti employer or agent "wouldn't let them", goes the claim. Their employers insist on holding them back till the situation improves.**

Nindi of Dehlan village in Himachal Pradesh went to Iraq after his fellow villager Antaryami was taken hostage. Today, Nindi and several others want to come back.

"I have seen seven people dying in front of me and the worst part is that our companies are not bothered about returning the bodies," Nindi said over phone from Kuwait.

Shamsher Singh, who works with KGL — Antaryami's employer — narrated one of his horrifying experiences. **"We were returning after offloading a consignment in the base camp at Habbaniyah, when Iraqi insurgents launched a missile attack on a convoy of 13 trucks. Six trucks were totally destroyed.**

Two drivers they raised their hands and asked for help. But instead of rescuing them and providing medical assistance, American troops shot a rocket and killed the two."

After two hours of fighting with Iraqi guerrillas, their bodies were burnt on the roadside, Singh said. "There is no value for a man's life. Indians are treated like slaves."

Said Al-Hamada employee Rakesh from Kuwait, "I have made 12 rounds to Iraq and my convoy has been attacked everytime." Rakesh said he has seen several people dying in attacks.

So far, Kuwaiti transport companies have returned 27 drivers to India. **The returnees had refused to sign letters stating the companies are not responsible if they die in Iraq.** Intervention by the Indian embassy is also partially responsible for their return.

The Indian embassy has put a halt to Indians entering Iraq, so Kuwaiti companies have started sending Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Lankans and Egyptians to Iraq.

Al-Fahji employee Bhag Singh said from Kuwait, "These companies are dependent on their contracts with Americans; that's why they are bound to send people to Iraq. It does not matter if India has stopped sending people, they have other options." Bhag Singh has been to Iraq seven.

Iraqi “Sovereignty” So Much Bullshit

11 August 2004 By Ahmed Janabi, Aljazeera.Net

Iraqi government officials' regular statements that Iraq has become a sovereign state and that occupation has gone do not go down well with some in the country.

A spokesman for the Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq (AMS), Muhammad Ayash al-Kubaisi, cited the recent arrest of the editor-in-chief of the association's mouthpiece newspaper al-Basaer (Insight) as an example of "absent" sovereignty.

"How can a group of foreign soldiers stop an Iraqi citizen like Dr Muthana al-Dhari and arrest him if there is a sovereign government? What are those soldiers doing in the heart of Baghdad? Why did the Iraqi police not arrest him instead?" al-Kubaisi said.

"Moreover, after two days of interrogations, they handed al-Dhari over to the Iraqi police, as if they are saying to them we are finished with him, take him if you like now."

Salah al-Mukhtar, a former Iraqi ambassador to India, says the status of Iraqi detainees, who are held without charge by the US army in Iraq, has not changed since the handover of responsibilities.

"US occupation forces are still enjoying the right of establishing prisons and the searching of houses," al-Mukhtar said.

Salah al-Mukhtar described the relationship between US officials and the interim Iraqi government as remote-controlled.

"The US-installed Iraqi president, Ghazi al-Yawir, announced last month that there would be a pardon for those Iraqis who carried guns before the formation of Iyad Allawi.

"But the US ambassador to Iraq, John Negroponte, sent him the instructions through the media, when he said those who killed Americans would not be pardoned.

"The following day all Iraqi officials announced in their media statements that the planned pardon would not include those who killed Americans in Iraq. Where is the sovereignty?"

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.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

McProtests R US

8.13.04 By MICKEY Z., <http://mickeyz.net>.

Let's recap for all the ABBers who don't want to do anything to embarrass Yale-educated War Criminal #2:

1. Do not protest against the Democratic Party when there's a Republican in office.

2. Participate only in government-sanctioned protests at a government-sanctioned location.

3. Stay away from crazies and anarchists (or am I being redundant?).

4. Unruly = bad. Carefully crafted = good.

5. If arrested, disavow Kerry for his sake. Claim to be a Nader supporter.

6. Hold your nose when voting for JFK2...also: comb your hair, remove all piercings, and, for chrissake, be patriotic.

Welcome to the Michael McMoore era of dissent.

"Complain all you want; but do as you're told." --Frederick the Great of Prussia

“Tell Those ‘Peace’ Wimps To Line Up. They Can Kiss My Ass One At A Time.”



Kerry in Williams, Ariz. Aug. 9. (AP Photo/Laura Rauch)



UNDISCLOSED LOCATION DISCLOSED

An alert news photographer took this photo of Vice President Dick Cheney August 12, 2004 He was discovered hiding among the tall plants near the East Wing of the White House.

The Vice President appeared disoriented, and offered no explanation for his behavior.

An informed source at the White House said that Cheney was on a mission to find Saddam Hussein's missing weapons of mass destruction, after receiving information from what were described as reliable intelligence sources that they had been moved to the White House grounds in late 2002 by evildoers, vampires, members of the American Civil Liberties Union, abortion rights advocates, gay squirrels and vegetarians who wear small metal rings between the third and fourth fingers of their right hands. (Kevin Lamarque/Reuters)

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