

GI SPECIAL 2#B41

BAD PLACE TO BE: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



A U.S. Army Bradley armored vehicle tries to maneuver in narrow streets of Najaf's old town August 22, 2004. (Chris Helgren/Reuters)

Untrained Marines Sent To Their Deaths: No Weapons Practice; No Money For Ammunition; Combat Training Cut In Half

Staff Sgt. Don Allen, a combat instructor, said his trainees *watch demonstrations* of the M203 grenade launcher, the Squad Automatic Weapon and the .50-caliber machine gun, *but not everyone gets to actually fire the weapons.*

"It's financial," said Allen, a combat engineer who fought in Iraq last year with the 8th Marines. *"I wish I had the money for them to shoot actual rounds. When I went through this training in 1995, we all shot every weapon."*

August 24, 2004 BY DAVID WOOD, NEWHOUSE NEWS SERVICE

Under growing pressure to ship Marines to Iraq, the Marine Corps is cutting in half the rigorous field combat training it gives units preparing to deploy, senior officers say.

The exercise, called a CAX in Marine lingo, has been shortened from 23 to 11 days, Col. Blake Crowe, operations officer for the Marine Corps Training Command at Quantico, Va., said in an interview.

This was done, Crowe said, to "get more battalions through" in a shorter period of time. Until now, the Marine Corps trained 10 battalions in CAX every six months. Under the accelerated schedule, it will train eight battalions in two months.

The intense course, to begin this fall at the Marine desert training base at Twentynine Palms, Calif., will for the first time include thousands of Marines who hold traditionally noncombat jobs such as truck driver, intelligence analyst and jet aircraft technician.

Increasingly, these "noninfantry" Marines are deploying into combat zones where they find themselves suddenly under fire and unprepared. Commanders in Iraq report that some Marines, pressed into the fight from their truck cabs and computer consoles, have not had combat training in a decade.

Approximately 31,000 Marines are in Iraq -- almost 20 percent of the active-duty force.

Across the Marine Corps, the unanticipated and unbudgeted requirements of rotating fresh, well-trained troops through Iraq have forced dramatic and sometimes painful adjustments and compromises.

The new, noninfantry Marines who show up for their crash course in combat at Camp Lejeune each year are well aware of the building pressure. They literally run from one event to the next, and in their final field exercise they work around the clock, snatching 20 or 30 minutes of sleep when they can.

But money is short, and so is time.

"I wish we did have more time," said Capt. Dan Snyder, who oversees the teaching of 54 specific combat skills. "It's difficult to do in the time we have."

Staff Sgt. Don Allen, a combat instructor, said his trainees *watch demonstrations* of the M203 grenade launcher, the Squad Automatic Weapon and the .50-caliber machine gun, *but not everyone gets to actually fire the weapons.*

"It's financial,"* said Allen, a combat engineer who fought in Iraq last year with the 8th Marines. *"I wish I had the money for them to shoot actual rounds. When I went through this training in 1995, we all shot every weapon."

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.**

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

U.S. Soldier Dies, 2 Wounded In Baghdad Mortar Attack

24 August 2004 AFP

Baghdad. A U.S. soldier died and two other were wounded at a mortar attack in Baghdad, **AFP** reported, referring to an announcement of the U.S. Army. **The assault was committed on Monday at about 05:45 a.m. Bulgarian time, when a patrol was hit with a mortar, the announcement states. The three soldiers were carried to hospital, where one of them died of his wounds.**

SOLDIER KILLED IN RPG ATTACK IN BAGHDAD, TWO WOUNDED

August 24, 2004 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND Release Number: 04-08-31C

BAGHDAD – Three Task Force Baghdad Soldiers were wounded when a rocket-propelled grenade hit a patrol Monday around 6:45 p.m.

All three Soldiers were evacuated to a military hospital, where one Soldier died of his wounds.

ONE SOLDIER DEAD IN FALLUJA VEHICLE ROLLOVER

August 24, 2004 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND Release Number: 04-08-32C

LSA ANACONDA, BALAD, Iraq – One 13th Corps Support Command Soldier is dead as the result of a vehicle accident near Fallujah at approximately 2 a.m. August 24.

The Soldier's military vehicle rolled over causing fatal injuries and he was pronounced dead at the scene.

Local Marine Killed: Family Members Urged Him Not To Re- Enlist.

08/23/2004 BY RICK PIERCE, St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Cpl. Christopher Belchik, a native of the Alton-Godfrey area, was killed in Iraq's Anbar province Sunday.

Brian Belchik said he had been told that a mortar round killed his brother and injured several other Marines.

Christopher Belchik, 30, leaves his wife, Mary Belchik, in Alton, at a home that Brian Belchik had been helping to fix up for his brother's return. Christopher Belchik had been scheduled to return home Oct. 9.

"I really believed in my heart that he would make it home," Brian Belchik said. "I'm in shock."

Family members had urged him not to re-enlist.

Christopher Belchik had attended Alton High and later earned his GED. He had worked as a hod carrier for several years before meeting his wife. **They married in June last year while Christopher was home on leave.**

He had been in Iraq since February. Earlier, he had been in Iraq for several months and also had been in Kosovo.

His father, Stephen Belchik of Staunton, flies a Marine Corps flag beneath an American flag on a pole in front of his home. In the living room, a picture of Christopher in his dress uniform occupies a position of honor on a lamp table. The idea of losing his youngest son had concerned him.

"You always worry about it," he said. "I spent some time in the Navy in Vietnam, and I was aware of the risks."

Christopher's mother, Lynn Lenker of Godfrey, had spoken with her son just last week by e-mail. A webcam also had been set up so she could see her son.

Brian Belchik said his brother was trying to figure out what to get his wife for her birthday.

"He was very upbeat," Brian Belchik said. "He was excited about his wife's birthday. He's over there getting shot at, and that's what he was thinking of."

Brian Belchik said that his brother's body was en route to the United States and that he hoped a funeral for his brother could be held this week.

In addition to his wife, parents and brother, survivors include a sister, Julie Prats of Chicopee, Mass.

Belchik is the sixth St. Louis-area serviceman to die in the Iraq war.



Cpl. Christopher Ward Belchik
(COURTESY OF KSDK-TV5)

U.S. Escalates Fight Against Mahdi Forces In Najaf



The old City of Najaf with the Imam Ali Mosque in the center in seen in this 29 August, 2003 DigitalGlobe Imagery satellite picture. (Reuters - Handout)

8/24/2004 By ALEX BERENSON, The Day Publishing Co & AFP & By Abdul Hussein Al-Obeidi, Associated Press & Aljazeera.net

Najaf, Iraq — American forces sharply intensified fighting here early this morning, as troops attacked soldiers loyal to Muqtada al-Sadr from three sides and pressed into the inner ring of Najaf's old city for the first time.

In the morning, Iraqi national guardsmen and US troops came under a hail of gunfire from the Mehdi Army as they marched down Medina Street which runs parallel to the mausoleum.

"We are under constant enemy small-arms, mortar, and RPG attack."

By early this morning the shrine was shrouded in smoke from a large fire on the northern edge of the old city.

On Monday night, soldiers moved freely through the huge cemetery north of the old city, facing only light resistance, a half-dozen rocket-propelled grenades and occasional sniper fire.

In an attack that began just before midnight, American tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles pushed south through the cemetery and into the northern edge of the innermost part of Najaf's old city, just 250 yards from the shrine.

The tanks then unleashed dozens of shells on buildings north of the shrine, while the Bradleys followed up with heavy machine-gun fire, setting several buildings ablaze.

Explosions filled the night, and smoke poured north from the old city into the cemetery. Later, an AC-130 gunship, a plane armed with heavy machine guns and a howitzer, poured shells into the area, causing fires to burn out of control and the northern edge of the city to glow red.

Meanwhile, Marines swept around the western edge of the city before striking at a large parking garage just west of the mosque. There, too, resistance was relatively light.

South of the shrine, American tanks lined streets at the edge of the old city on Monday afternoon. Overnight, they rolled into a building complex on the southeast edge of the area, which could be seen burning near midnight.

The military released aerial photos Tuesday purportedly showing a complete militant mortar system just **outside** the shrine compound **and accused the militants of launching attacks from holy sites. (What lame bullshit. There's nothing "holy" about ground "outside the shrine compound.")**

A spokesman for al-Sadr's office in Baghdad, Raid al-Kathemy, said: "This is the beginning of the battle."

"They [US forces] will not enter Najaf until we are all dead," al-Kathemy told Aljazeera.



Members of the Mehdi army militia keep watch from a shattered building in Najaf's old town, August 21. (Ali Jasim/Reuters)

He also said "those collaborators with the US forces will be sooner or later heavily punished by the Iraqi people and al-Sadr's movement".

"The whole world has witnessed al-Sadr welcoming any peaceful initiative," al-Kathemy continued.

"But those crooked members of the government, who are collaborating with the US occupation forces, do not want any peace. They are slaves for the occupation forces.

"Even Saddam Hussein has not dared to attack the holy shrines," al-Kathemy added.

Incoherent Raving From Rumsfeld About Najaf

8.24.04 By Abdul Hussein Al-Obeidi, Associated Press

During an appearance Monday at Fort Bliss, outside El Paso, Texas, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld criticized news coverage from Najaf, saying that reports were contradictory and **that journalists were "being jerked around by this guy al-Sadr."**

"I've never seen worse reporting on anything in my life," he told about 1,300 soldiers.

(How soon they forget! How about all that reporting Rumsfeld suckered the press into doing about how Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction? You want bad reporting, that's the classic. Scummy Rummy is just pissed that some of the press isn't kissing his worthless shriveled-up old ass anymore.)

MORE: Hey Donny, here's some reporting for you. Choke on it:

Report Faults Rumsfeld For Prison Scandal

ENEMY COMBATANTS



Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff U.S. Air Force Gen. Richard B. Myers testify on Capitol Hill, Aug. 17. (Larry Downing/Reuters)

August 24, 2004 By Robert Burns, Associated Press & By Charles Aldinger and Will Dunham, (Reuters)

Soldiers running the Abu Ghraib prison are mainly to blame for the abuses there, **but fault also lies with the Defense Department's *most senior civilian and military officials*, according to a report released Tuesday by an independent panel of civilian defense experts.**

The outside four-member panel headed by former Defense Secretary James Schlesinger found that **Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and the Joint Chiefs of Staff failed to exercise proper oversight** over confusing detention policies at U.S. prisons in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

"Military and civilian leaders at the Pentagon share this burden of responsibility."

It said, however, that the abuses were not carried out by just a few individuals, as the Bush administration has consistently maintained.

The report said prisoner interrogation policies in Iraq were inadequate and deficient, and **changes made by Rumsfeld between December 2002 and April 2003 in what interrogation techniques were permitted contributed to uncertainties in the field as to what actions were allowed and what were forbidden.**

The report said an expanded list of more coercive techniques that Rumsfeld allowed for Guantanamo "migrated to Afghanistan and Iraq, where they were neither limited nor safeguarded."

Schlesinger said Rumsfeld's office could be faulted for inadequate supervision.

"There is both institutional and personal responsibility at higher levels."

The commission was particularly critical of Sanchez and other commanders.

"We believe Lt. Gen. Sanchez should have taken stronger action in November when he realized the extent of the leadership problems at Abu Ghraib," the report said. It concluded that he "failed to ensure proper staff oversight" of detention and interrogation operations.

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/>

British Troops Battle Mehdi Army In Amara

AMARA, Iraq, Aug 24 (AFP)

Moqtada Sadr's Mehdi Army fighters in the city opened fire on a British base at around 4:00 pm (1200 GMT) and the British soldiers retaliated, said Mustafa Ali from the Zahrawi hospital.

During the clashes, which lasted until around 6:00 pm (1400 GMT), three mortar rounds landed on the Al-Jadida residential district, killing two adults and a child.

Three Successive Attacks Rattle Japanese Troops

Tokyo, Aug. 24 (AP):

Unidentified assailants fired a shell near Japan's base in Southern Iraq today, **the third attack to rattle Japanese troops in as many days amid signs of deteriorating security** in the region, the Government said.

No injuries or damage were sustained in the explosion outside the Japanese camp in the Iraqi city of Samawah early today, Chief Cabinet spokesman Hiroyuki Hosoda, told reporters.

The Government argued the region was relatively stable when it deployed troops there in January in the face of widespread public opposition. (That was then, this is now. Oops.)

Since the weekend, two other mortar attacks have occurred near the Japanese camp, a Defence Agency spokeswoman said on condition of anonymity.

Just before midnight on Sunday, a shell landed near the base, though it did not explode, the agency spokeswoman said.

Hosoda denied the attacks pointed to a major deterioration in security, but added: "We must keep a close eye on the situation." (This man is ready for a top job at the Pentagon.)

Fighting In Basra: 500 Resistance Soldiers In The Streets

Aug. 24 By James Cordahi, (Bloomberg)

U.K. forces clashed with Shiite Muslim militia in the southern Iraqi city of Basra, the region from which Iraq exports almost all its oil.

As many as 500 militiamen connected with rebel Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr are in the streets of Basra, and U.K. forces have "engaged" with them during the last 24 hours, Captain Donald Francis said by telephone from Basra.

"The situation has been more tense over the last few days than two weeks ago" when al-Sadr began his rebellion in the city of Najaf, south of Baghdad, Francis said.

MORE:

Mehdi Army Troops Set Up Checkpoints In Basra



An Iraqi tribal leader holds up his rifle following clashes between Shi'ite militiamen and coalition forces in Iraq's second largest city of Basra August 24, 2004. **Scores of Shi'ite militiamen took to the streets, brandishing assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades and demanding U.S.-led forces pull out of Najaf.** Photo by Atef Hassan/Reuters

24/08/2004 Thomas Crosbie Media

Shiite militiamen armed with rocket launchers and automatic weapons poured through the streets of the southern Iraqi city of Basra today, setting up roadblocks to protest at US military action in Najaf.

About 200 militiamen supporting firebrand Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr blocked roads in Basra, where most British soldiers are based, with burning tyres and broken concrete blocks.

Witnesses said most shops were shut and government offices were closed down as a result, but Squadron Leader Spike Wilson, a British military spokesman, said the roadblocks had little affect. (Oh. They just closed down the city.)

"Iraqi police service is **pretty much in control** of the centre of Basra," he said. "There's certainly not **widespread** activity and the barricades are only there **temporarily**."

(General Cornwallis said the British Army is “pretty much in control” of Yorktown, and that American rebel activity is not widespread, and their army only there “temporarily.”)

Wilson said British units in Basra had reported hearing small arms and mortar-fire overnight, but no casualties were reported.

In Najaf, Even The Dead Are Suspected

Abdul Kadhil, 55, a cousin of Mr Salman's father, said: "The Americans are beasts. They should respect human beings. I was happy when they came to free us from Saddam Hussein but now I see them for what they are: invaders."

24/08/2004 By Toby Harnden, The Independent

For the Salman family, not even the battle raging in the holy city of Najaf could prevent them burying their dead yesterday at the Wadi al-Salam cemetery, the world's biggest necropolis and hallowed ground for Shia Muslims.

An artillery shell exploded 600 yards away as Radhi Salman 25, his son Rassaq, 11, and daughter Najwa, two, were lowered into the arid ground. A gravedigger waved a white cloth at an aircraft overhead.

"Hurry up," he urged the Salmans. "The other day the Americans fired at a funeral group."

Relatives said that Rahdi, a farmer, and his children were killed at 4am in a village near Baghdad when an American convoy was ambushed and a Humvee machine gunner raked the street. They had been sleeping in the garden because of the heat.

As the three Salman coffins were being taken down from van roofs, eight soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division approached nervously.

"Seen anyone with any weapons?" one asked. "The Mahdi army are just two clicks away from here." The troops kicked in the door of the funeral office and entered to search it.

Abdul Kadhil, 55, a cousin of Mr Salman's father, said: "The Americans are beasts. They should respect human beings. I was happy when they came to free us from Saddam Hussein but now I see them for what they are: invaders."

Near the graveyard entrance soldiers had stopped a Toyota van with another coffin tied to the roof. Specialist Brian Phillips, 21, was ordered to open the lid.

"Oh my Jesus Christ," he exclaimed. "He's got a f***** bullet hole right through his face. It's disgusting."

He jumped down from the van and vomited in a clump of bushes.

The mother of the dead man began wailing and shouting.

"Hey," Staff Sgt Brandon George shouted. "Grandma over there is freaking out. Calm her down." He explained: "The problem is that we've found some coffins with weapons in them."

He ordered his translator to ask if any of the relatives were members of the Mahdi army. Digital photographs were taken of the body.

Some in the funeral party said the man had been killed in a family feud; others claimed he had been shot by an American helicopter. With strong suspicions that he had been a Mahdi fighter, **the relatives were told to stay put for further questioning.**

The soldiers, brought down from Baghdad to support the marines, said they were waiting to go home to America after eight months in Iraq.

When did they think the battle for Najaf would be over? "That's what we're all asking," said Specialist Jeremy Clark.

Back at the grave, Mr Salman's father, his dishdasha robe torn and stained with blood, wandered in a delirium. "Radhi, my son, you are my eyes, my life," he cried as in the distance a pall of smoke rose from another bomb. "What am I going to do?"

Local Soldier Injured: "His Skull Is In 500 Pieces"

8/24/2004 By: Edward Muir, TWEAN News Channel of Albany

David Comstock of Queensbury has been on the phone a lot lately. The phone calls come from local friends right on up to Pentagon officials. They follow the call Friday that his son Kenneth had been badly wounded in Iraq.

Comstock said, "It appears a piece of shrapnel went underneath his helmet."

That shrapnel came from a roadside bomb that exploded as 23-year-old Specialist Kenneth Comstock was returning from a combat mission in Samarra Friday. Another soldier was killed in the attack. Comstock might have cheated death, and doctors said there's a good chance he will recover -- but his wounds are serious.

Father David Comstock said, "He took the X-ray and said it looks as if his skull is in 500 pieces in there, and they're going to have to go in and clean all that debris out of there."

Specialist Comstock is a member of Charley Company of the Army National Guard unit based in Glens Falls.

Specialist Comstock is from the same company as Private First Class Nathan Brown from South Glens Falls. He was killed in Iraq on Easter Sunday. David said his son was with Nathan Brown as he died.

He said, "It devastated Ken because, like I said, these guys are like family."

Now Specialist Comstock's family and his extended family hope for the best.

ONE DOWN, ONLY 5,247,936 TO GO



A U.S. soldier escorts an unidentified insurgent, captured in central Iraq August 21. (U.S. Army/Reuters)

TROOP NEWS

Your Children Are Burning

24 August 2004 William Rivers Pitt, t r u t h o u t | Perspective

The presidential campaigns of George W. Bush and John Kerry are at each other's throats like dogs in a fighting pit over a war that ended 29 years ago. The mainstream news media, along with the alternative news media, have enjoyed watching the show, dutifully reporting every detail and nuance of the fiery exchanges between the camps.

Somewhere in these last 24 days of August, however, while arguing over a three-decades-old war, we managed to forget that another war is happening. Here are some details that have been missed:

Army Spc. Armando Hernandez, age 22; Army Spc. Anthony J. Dixon, age 20; Marine Cpl. Dean P. Pratt, age 22; Army Spc. Justin B. Onwordi, age 28; Marine Sgt. Juan Calderon Jr., age 26; Army Pfc. Harry N. Shondee, Jr., age 19; Marine Capt. Gregory A Ratzlaff, age 36; Army Sgt. Tommy L. Gray, age 34; Marine Lance Cpl. Joseph L. Nice, age 19; Marine Gunnery Sgt. Elia P. Fontecchio, age 30; Army Spc. Donald R. McCune, age 20; Marine Sgt. Moses D. Rocha, age 33; Army Pfc. Raymond J. Faulstich Jr., age 24; Marine Sgt. Yadir G. Reynoso, age 27; Marine Lance Cpl. Larry L. Wells, age 22; Army Spc. Joshua I. Bunch, age 23; Marine Cpl. Roberto Abad, age 22; Army Pfc. David L. Potter, age 22; Marine Lance Cpl. Jonathan W. Collins, age 19; Army Capt. Andrew R. Houghton, age 25; Marine Lance Cpl. Tavon L. Hubbard, age 24; Marine Staff Sgt. John R. Howard, age 26; Army Capt. Michael Yury Tarlavsky, age 30; Marine Lance Cpl. Kane M. Funke, age 20; Marine Lance Cpl. Nicholas B. Morrison, age 23; Army 1st Lt. Neil Anthony Santoriello, age 24; Marine Corps Pfc. Geoffrey Perez, age 24; Marine Corps Pfc. Fernando B. Hannon, age 19; Army Spc. Mark Anthony Zapata, age 27; Army 2nd Lt. James Michael Goins, age 23; Army Sgt. Daniel Michael Shepherd, age 23; Army Pfc. Brandon R. Sapp, age 21; Army Sgt. David M. Heath, age 30; Army Spc. Brandon T. Titus, age 20; Marine Lance Cpl. Caleb J. Powers, age 21; Army Spc. Jacob D. Martir, age 21; Marine Sgt. Harvey E. Parkerson III, age 27; Marine Lance Cpl. Dustin R. Fitzgerald, age 22; Army Pfc. Henry C. Risner, age 26; Pfc. Kevin A. Cuming, age 22; 1st Lt. Charles L. Wilkins III, age 38; Pfc. Ryan A. Martin, age 22.

That is the list of dead American soldiers in Iraq from the last 24 days. That is August, so far.

Two other American soldiers - Army Sgt. Bobby E. Beasley, age 36, and Army Staff Sgt. Craig W. Cherry, age 39 - were killed in Afghanistan by an improvised explosive device on August 7th. We don't talk about that war anymore, either.

964 dead American soldiers, 52 since August 1st.

And we wonder why there is an 'insurgency.' We wonder why a nobody named Moqtada al-Sadr has emerged as an Iraqi version of Thomas Jefferson, fighting the good fight against imperial usurpers. We wonder why so many Iraqis flock to his banner, pick up a weapon, and shoot Americans.

Sit in the dark for a year, be unemployed because all the jobs have gone to non-Iraqis, have no place to see your children schooled, have no place to bring your children if they get sick, drink water that tastes like something you squeezed into your toilet, and stand a good chance whenever you step outside of being shot by a sniper, blown up by a laser-guided bomb, or run down by a Bradley Fighting Vehicle, and you might think about picking up a weapon, too.

When a person puts on the uniform of the United States military and swears an oath, that person is promising to sacrifice their life for their country. The only promise they expect in return is that their life not be spent for no good reason. That promise was broken.

Do not forget your dying children. They wear the uniform of your country, they live and die for all of us. Some lie still, wrapped in your flag. Some walk the land trying to remember, or trying to forget, how they got their scars so long ago. Some yet fight, in a war of choice that was not their doing. Do not forget them. Do not insult them. They are your children.

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Send to contact@militaryproject.org. Name, I.D., withheld on request. Replies confidential.

Maryland Man Fighting IRR Recall

(Baltimore Sun, August 24, 2004)

A civilian software engineer in Maryland is appealing his recall to active duty from the Individual Ready Reserve . With the military stretched thin in Afghanistan and Iraq, members are being called up by the thousands for support roles in both theaters.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Armed Resistance Up To 20,000

Green Left Weekly, August 25, 2004

As of August 16, the Washington-based Brookings Institution's Iraq Index estimates that the number of Iraqi resistance fighters has “grown from roughly 5000 to some 20,000 over the last several months”.

Captive Freed, Collaborators Warned

24 August 2004 (AFP)

BEIRUT - The kidnappers of a Lebanese national held in Iraq for more than a week announced his release in a videotape broadcast by a private television station here Tuesday.

Reiterating their accusations that Raad had worked for US-led troops in Iraq, they called on the Lebanese people to “stop their fellow citizens collaborating with the occupation forces”.

“We wish to inform our brothers in Lebanon that the men of the resistance consider that all those who collaborate with the occupiers or help them in any way are part of the occupation force themselves, whatever their ethnic origin, religious affiliation or nationality,” the kidnappers said.



Iraqi artist Salah Edine Sallat puts the final touches to a wall painting based on the US Statue of Liberty and a widely published photograph of an abused detainee at the Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad's Shiite neighborhood of Sadr City. (AFP/File/Ramzi Haidar)

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

Jordanian Working For Occupation Captured

24 August 2004 (AFP)

AMMAN - A Jordanian has been abducted in Iraq by armed men, foreign ministry spokesman Ali Ayed said here Tuesday citing relatives after reports of his kidnapping along with a Kenyan surfaced on an Islamic website.

“A brigade of the martyrs of Fallujah kidnapped a Jordanian and a Kenyan, two agents working for the American forces in an ambush as they returned to an American base to supply the invasion forces with food,” said the group.

Attack On Collaborator Ministers Kills Five Guards

8.24.04 By Michael Georgy, (Reuters) & AFP

In Baghdad, insurgents tried to assassinate Iraq's environment and education ministers in separate bombings that killed five of their bodyguards.

Environment Minister Mishkat Moumin said she survived a suicide car bomb attack on her convoy in Baghdad.

"I opened the door to leave for work and the blast knocked me over," said Ali al-Tai, standing in front of his home only yards from the blast site, victims' blood splattered on his shirt.

Just 30 minutes later, a roadside bomb exploded in eastern Baghdad alongside the convoy of Education Minister Sami al-Mudhaffar, killing one guard and wounding two others, his office said.

OCCUPATION REPORT

A Taste of Reality from Baghdad

Posted August 21 / 22, 2004 BY Liz Burbank: Written ? By HELEN WILLIAMS

The Mahdi Army have set up checkpoints into Shula and will close down the area at 4 pm. This is when they expect to receive reinforcements and more weapons and it is also the time when the Americans do their 'shift change'.

We asked Ali about the Shula, which is situated past Khadimaya to the north-west of Bagdad. He said it was a big district with a mixture of Shia and Sunni Muslims, but mainly Shia. At first it was just the Shia fighting, but now the Sunni men have joined in. There is staunch support for Moqtada Al Sadr--his photos are everywhere.

Have you heard about Shula in the news? No.

And did you know that the Public Security (secret service) Centre near New Bagdad was bombed--No? And did you know that yesterday, the Ministries of Oil, Sport and Youth came under attack form the Resistance--No.

I went to Sadr City on Monday with 3 of my translator's friends--all guards at the Sheraton/Palestine Hotel complex and all supporters, in name at least, of Moqtada Al Sadr.

Only one car bothered me a bit as it slowed down and stopped for a better look. Moqtada Al Sadr pictures adorned EVERY home.

Children played in the streets in a scene of peace and tranquility--in safety and in great numbers. Sadr City is a place of children and little ones at that. There are far far more children than adults living in this poor neighbourhood--I am sure that they beat the Iraqi average of 46% of the population being aged 15 years and younger. Here it seemed as though at least 50% were under 10 years. And it is this scene of peace, tranquility and little children playing in the streets that America is now pulverising.

These are the people that welcomed the 'liberation' brought to them by America--these were the people most glad to see the back of Saddam Hussein. And now these are the people that resist the most fiercely--they want an end to the occupation and they want America out of their neighbourhood.

There is no question of who is to blame for the recent fighting in these areas--let's face it, if the Americans were not around, who would the Mahdi Army attack and fire their RPGs at?

Anyway, in Sadr City, we visited the family home of one of Wejdy's friends, Ali. This home also had plenty of snaps of Moqtada. I met two of Ali's tiny little nieces and then I met his new, two month old, nephew--his name was Moqtada.

We were talking about how children are being affected by the occupation and we mentioned the 11 year old Mujahdeen fighter we had met in Fallujah. **Ali said "That's nothing, a few streets away from here is an 8 year old boy. During the last attack from the Americans, he got an RPG and fired it at a humvee and blew it up, then he was shot at and injured, but he is still alive"**. Then we left Ali's home and once again walked through the peaceful dusty streets full of children playing to get our taxi home.

Incidentally, I heard a report about the 11 year old Mujahdeen fighter in Fallujah from a man who actually witnessed the boy's bravery and skill.

There were two American snipers placed one each end of the road on which the hospital/clinic we visited was situated. In the darkness, this child rolled his body across the road from one kerb to the other. He called out to a man on the side of the road, under the cover of a building, to throw something white out into the middle of the road.

This was done and the American sniper shot at it revealing his position to the boy who then shot at him and in the same movement he rolled back across the street to the other side, just in case the sniper fired at him. No return fire came and our 11 year old then took night vision binoculars into the middle of the street and could see the American's snipers body slumped over a wall--dead. My friend told me that the boy then left and went down the road--he heard that he used the same procedure there and attacked and shot at another American sniper.

[A] ... first hand account of why the occupation is detested and why the Coalition Forces and the Western Companies are despised.

Last night my translator and I were walking down Kerrada main street when a humvee passed us going the other way. My translator made his usual cheeky, rude gesture at them and we carried on our way. A minute or so later he was roughly grabbed on his shoulder and pulled around by a mad little jumped-up American soldier who obviously could not control his temper.

I intervened and shouted at the soldier to stop and get away right now. He released his grip, but carried on shouting. I explained to him that since America had 'freed' this country, Iraqis were entitled to make their feelings known towards their occupiers in a peaceful manner. After all, isn't that what democracy and free speech are all about?

Well, not according to this idiot. Free speech is only allowed if you are saying nice things! His friend turned up then--the first soldier had literally got the humvee driver to stop and had jumped out in temper and had run over to us.

Then along came his sergeant. Now, he was nice. A huge towering, 6'6" black guy with a very pleasant way about him. He was furious with the crazy soldier, who still could not control himself, and he was also angry with their Iraqi translator. Their translator was busy lip servicing the Americans saying that they got rid of Saddam and Iraqis owe them--no wonder so many translators working with Americans are targeted!

Anyway, the nice sergeant explained that they couldn't have Iraqis making cheeky signs at them--if they let one do it, next time there will be ten!! I said that it was better to have rude gestures than bullets and he agreed.

He really started on the idiot soldier then, who had still not calmed down and we had a nice chat in all the mayhem!! I said that the actions of this soldier did nothing to win the 'hearts and minds' of the Iraqis and I explained that he had put all of them in great danger by jumping out of the humvee in this way and coming down onto the street where they were now surrounded by Iraqis.

I mentioned Abu Gharib and the sergeant tutted and said "Look Americans put up with this shit in our prisons in America all the time".

I pointed out that America was supposed to be the shining example of democracy, freedom and fairness--and things like this just showed the USA Army's true colours. He agreed. In fact, he agreed with most of what I said and I with him--in the end I actually took a big risk and shook his hand in front of the assembled onlookers.

I wished him safety and I wished the idiot soldier a long stay in Iraq. I think I shook his hand because he admitted to me that he had not agreed with the war and certainly did not agree with the way things were going in Iraq right now.

He had such a kind face and dealt with the situation so well, that I really felt for him.

But in the idiot soldier, I could see all the reasons why the American Army are hated here. His was the face of the abusive soldiers in Abu Gharib, and his was the face of the

soldier that murdered Shafaq's dad and blew away Abdul Azziz's leg, and his was the face of the murdering snipers that kill 10 year old boys in Fallujah.

During this exchange a big crowd of onlookers had gathered. AbuWalid (a man I was going to rent an apartment off, but didn't in the end) joined in with us and was shouting at the soldiers' translator.

We all know the reasons why America doesn't pull out of the disaster that is Iraq. But if they did, there would be no roadside bombs, no Mahdi Army Resistance in Nagaf, Sadr City, Basra etc and probably no kidnappings. I wish they would go and give it a try--after all things can't get much worse than they are now. Or can they?

5 minutes later, Qusay, one of the Baker Boys, called around. Anyway, about 12 of these really loud bangs occurred and people were looking out and fussing. We heard the air raid sirens go off in the Green Zone and saw plumes of smoke up in the night sky above Kerrada.

And then we realised what the loud bangs were. They were from mortars or rockets being fired at the Green Zone across the river from the top of the taller buildings around us in Kerrada. This was why the bangs were so loud--the booms from each one fired were terrific. Later Al Jazeera, banned but not silenced from reporting the truth from within Iraq (so they must be doing something right), said that 10 rockets had hit the Green Zone.

The next day, a friend visiting us, told us how he had seen lorry loads of rubble being removed from the Green Zone. And again that night, another 10 or 11 rockets or mortars were fired from Kerrada and the sirens went off again in the Green Zone. We went out on the street, as did many of our neighbours, to listen and watch. Everyone seemed pretty happy and were saying 'ba'ad', meaning 'more', as we waited for more to go off.

Talk was of Mahdi Army fighters climbing the stairs of tall buildings, such as the apartment blocks around here, in the darkness. From the roof of the building, the fighter would fire off as many as he could and then slip away into the night, possibly to another building. This seems feasible, the bangs were coming from all around us, and, although not an expert in such matters, I would estimate that all were launched within a kilometre or so from us.

Last night, with another apartment full of visitors, another 6 or 7 mortars or rockets took off and the sirens went off again. **We decided that it was a clever tactic of the Mahdi Army. There are no 'on the ground' fighters in Kerrada, so the military cannot really attack the area. By day Kerrada continues as always--you would never guess that at night the area has been used a launchpad for attacks on the Green Zone.**

And the BBC is busy report that 'lawless' Sadr City is where the attacks are being launched from. Popycock!! The Mahdi Army could never hit the Green Zone from Sadr City and they would not even try--what utter rubbish! And we certainly would not hear the bangs or see plumes of smoke from here--Sadr City is around 10 kilometres away.

Yesterday Ali (with the smile) visited us.

Ali told us how the House of Mercy was situated next to a US Army Base in Al Rashad. The Mahdi Army was attacking this base nightly with RPGs, mortars and AK47's. Then the Americans would set off flares which stay in the sky lighting up the area for 5 minutes in order to be able to see the Mahdi Army fighters so that they could counter attack. When the flares die, the Mahdi Army attack again and so it goes on and on.

Ali had been to the office yesterday for something else and had seen 2 US tanks destroyed and burnt out from fighting with the Mahdi Army the night before.

As the boys spoke, there was a bang from Kerrada as a rocket was fired off. A second later, Wejdy could hear commotion and shouting from Ali's end of the phone. The checkpoints at the Palestine/Sheraton had come under attack--the rocket we had heard leave had hit the first checkpoint on Abu Newas Street which protects the rear of the Bagdad Hotel--casualties so far unknown. We are very concerned about the safety and well-being of our friends during this trying time. **Although they work as guards for the coalition, they fully support Moqtada Al Sadr and the Mahdi Army.**

Where will all this end, I don't know? **But I feel certain that if America pulled out and went home, the situation would be sure to improve. And how much of this do you get in the news? You tell me!**

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Terrorist Arrested



Brave heroic freedom democracy peace-loving Israeli soldiers arrest a fiendish Palestinian terrorist cleverly disguised as a child in the West Bank town of Bethlehem, August 24.

Millions of so-called Palestinians have come from all over the world to infiltrate the peace-loving nation of Israel, pretending to have lived in the area for thousands of years. Notice in this picture how the terrorist has dark skin, proving that the so-called Palestinians seek only to contaminate the racial purity of the Zionist settlers. Fortunately, Israel has self-defense laws that insure such lower forms of human life will not be able to succeed in their disgusting plots, and that the purity of the people of Israel will be preserved.

The Israeli people have only the most peaceful intentions towards nations that border Israel, seeking only enough territory to permit living-room for their descendents in land cruelly taken from them by enemies when they were weak and helpless. Fortunately, the leader, Sharon, is unafraid of the scheming designs of the clannish, degenerated, money-grubbing Palestinian filth. Hail Sharon. (Photo: Magnus Johansson/Reuters)



Israeli soldiers escort **arrested Palestinians in a school** in the Askar refugee camp near the West Bank city of Nablus August 24, 2004. **The Israeli army rounded up more than 300 Palestinians between the ages of 16 and 50 and formally arrested at least one.** (Abed Omar Qusini/Reuters)

(To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation by a foreign power, go to: www.rafahtoday.org. The foreign army is Israeli; the occupied nation is Palestine.)

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Bush Lunacy Confirmed; Sees 'Progress' In Iraq

(wsj.com, August 23, 2004)

President Bush said U.S.-led forces were "making progress" in Iraq.

CHENEY DENIES PLAYING GRAB-ASS WITH BUSH



Vice President Dick Cheney denied today that this unauthorized press photo, taken at Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas August 23, showed Cheney engaged in sexual contact with President George W. Bush.

An angry Cheney said there was no truth to Beltway rumors that he and Bush have had a longstanding sexual relationship. Cheney said the picture was taken as he was replacing the C-size batteries than cause Bush to move and speak. "Somebody fucked up this morning, and forgot to put in fresh ones. He froze," Cheney said. (Jeff Mitchell/Reuters)

RECEIVED:

Australian Government Accused Of Lying About Iraq

8-8-4 Rense.com

(THANKS TO Stephen Darley WHO E-MAILED THIS IN: HE WRITES:

("You may not have heard of a recent Open letter by high-ranking former Australian officers, diplomats and intelligence officers attacking Australia's involvement in the war. Since the letter came out (with prominence in our (or at least the non-Murdoch-owned!) media) **it has become clear that the group see themselves as speaking also for serving soldiers who cannot speak openly.** I attach a news story on it below.")

A group of more than 40 former Australian diplomats and defence chiefs has accused Prime Minister John Howard's government of deceiving the Australian people about the reasons for invading Iraq.

"We are concerned that Australia was committed to join the invasion of Iraq on the basis of false assumptions and deception of the Australian people," the statement said.

"Saddam's dictatorial regime has ended but removing him was not the reason given to the Australian people for going to war. "The prime minister said in March 2003 that our policy was the disarmament of Iraq not the removal of Saddam Hussein."

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Web Copies

For back issues see: GI Special web site at <http://www.militaryproject.org/>

The following that we know of have also posted issues:

<http://www.notinourname.net/gi-special/> ; www.gifightback.org ;

<http://www.albasrah.net/magalat/english/gi-special.htm>