

GI SPECIAL 2#B42

Grieving Father Burns Marine Van: *Dead 20-Year-Old Was On Second Tour Of Duty*



HOLLYWOOD, Fla. August 25, 2004 NBC6.net - A Hollywood man who had just been told his Marine son had been killed in combat in Iraq set fire to a Marine Corps van and suffered severe burns Wednesday, police said.

Carlos Arredondo, 44, sustained second-degree burns over 50 percent of his body and was being transferred to Ryder Trauma Center in Miami after being taken to Memorial Regional Hospital in Hollywood. He was listed in serious condition with severe burns to his arms and legs.

The Hollywood Police Department's public information officer said Marines went to Arredondo's home Wednesday afternoon to notify him that his 20-year-old son, Alexander Arredondo, pictured at left, had been killed.

Police say that when the father learned the news, he went inside his home, got a tank of gasoline and a blow torch, broke the van's window, poured gas inside and started the fire.

Carlos Arredondo apparently got caught in the blaze and suffered several burns. The incident happened just after 2 p.m. on Tyler Street in Hollywood.



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.**

ROLL CALL

"When the two Army men came to the house to tell us, I was inside cleaning. I started to scream. 'Oh, my God! My son is dead!' He had his rosary beads in his pocket when he was killed. His wife, Crystal, had been out, and when she came over and saw the crowd in the yard she thought he was home on his two-week leave that he was supposed to be on. She's 19. She was going to go to college but she just can't do it now.

"My son was a beautiful young man. Everybody speaks about his smile. He had such a beautiful smile. My husband's smile. I say to my husband, 'Could you please smile so I can see my son's face?'"

Jimmy Breslin August 24, 2004

There were four Marines and an Army soldier killed in Iraq in one 24-hour period over the weekend.

George Bush, who does not like people who go to war, probably will say that they are not dead.

As of Aug. 20, we list 952 of our troops killed in fighting.

That is the Defense Department figure. When the figure goes over 1,000, that can be devastating in an election.

But the figure of 1,000, so easily remembered, already has been reached. That was on July 7, when a rocket-propelled grenade killed Pfc. Samuel Bowen of Cleveland. The people keeping track at the Army Times newspaper, which has given the best, and often the only, coverage of the war, made Bowen the 1,000th. The Army Times, with no election to effect, properly includes deaths in Afghanistan.

The names of the dead in Iraq over the weekend have not been released yet, except for Army Pfc. Kevin A. Cuming, 22, of White Plains.

And so you sat yesterday with all these Department of Defense death notices for the last weeks covering the desk and you glanced at them, with the ages of the dead reaching up from the paper to grab your throat. Now and then you called one of their homes to get a small idea of what they were like when they lived, and what we have lost in a war that now pleases only the mentally unbalanced.

Printing as many names and as often as possible is a gloomy task. These are the deaths that the president and his people try to sneak past the country. The dead were brave men. The president is craven. He buries the war, and the news reporters, indolent and in fear of authority, follow like cattle going into pens. For so long, the public believed the news it was given. Saddam Hussein was going to blow us up with an atom bomb! The Muslims of Iraq love us!

Herewith are some of the names we went through yesterday. It is taken here as an obligation that we print the rest in following columns.

Spc. Anthony J. Dixon, 20. 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, 1st Infantry Division, Schweinfurt, Germany. Killed on Aug. 1 at Samarra when improvised explosive device detonated near his guard post. Home, Lindenwold, N.J. Killed with him was Spc. Armando Hernandez, 22. Home, Hesperia, Calif.

"He lived every day like it was his last day," Spc. Anthony J. Dixon's sister, Mary, said yesterday. "If something came up, he did it right then. We have a 100-foot cell-phone tower in the back yard. Somebody dared them to climb it. Anthony didn't say a word. He and Jay, the two of them climbed right to the top. They came down and my brother said, 'There. I did that.'

"His best friend, Adam Froehlich, was killed in Iraq. In March. He was 21. He and my brother enlisted together. Anthony already was in Iraq. Someone in his troop told him everything about Adam.

"On Sunday afternoon, somewhere between 1:30 and 2 o'clock, on August 1st, there was somebody at the door and my mother opened it. There were two officers, a sergeant and a chaplain. My mother knew what they were here for. She started crying. The two officers couldn't say anything. My mother threw them out."

Sgt. Juan Calderon Jr., 26, of 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, Calif. Killed on Aug. 4 due to enemy action in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. Home, Weslaco, Texas.

Spc. Brandon T. Titus, 20, of 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), Fort Drum, Watertown, N.Y. Killed on Aug. 17 in Baghdad when an improvised device exploded near his checkpoint. Home, Boise, Idaho.

Pfc. Fernando B. Hannon, 19, of 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, Calif. Died Aug. 15 due to enemy action in Al Anbar Province. Home, Wildomar, Calif.

And Pfc. Geoffrey, Perez, 24, of same unit and died on same day, Aug. 15, of wounds in Anbar Province. Home, Los Angeles, Calif.

Spc. Jacob D. Martir, 21, of 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas. Killed on Aug. 18 in Sadr City when his patrol came under enemy small arms fire. Home, Norwich, Conn.

First Lt. Neil Anthony Santoriello, 24, of 1st Battalion, 34th Armor, 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, Fort Riley, Kan. Died on Aug. 13 in Khalidiyah when improvised explosive device detonated near his mounted reconnaissance patrol vehicle. Home, Verrona, Pa.

"He lived for oatmeal cookies," his sister, Amy, said yesterday. "He was an Eagle Scout. He took children hiking, swimming. He went to Penn Hills High School and Dickinson College. What did he do after college? He went right into the Army. He had no time in between. He's only 24."

Capt. Michael Yury Tarlavsky, 30, of 1st Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group, Fort Campbell, Ky. Died Aug. 12 in Najaf when his unit came under small arms fire and a grenade attack. Home, Passaic, N.J.

Gunnery Sgt. Elia P. Fontecchio, 30, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Marine Corps Air Ground Control Center, Twentynine Palms, Calif. Killed by enemy action in Al Anbar Province. Home, Milford, Mass.

His uncle, Dana Fontecchio, says that when Elia told them he was being sent back to Iraq for a second tour, "None of us moaned about it. He's a Marine. The gunnery sergeant. They need him."

The surgeon at the forward hospital where they operated on Fontecchio said a helicopter was waiting to fly him to Baghdad when he died.

Pfc. Raymond J. Faulstich Jr., 89th Transportation Company, 6th Transportation Battalion, 7th Transportation Group, Fort Eustis, Va. Died Aug. 5 in Najaf when enemy using small arms fire and rocket-propelled grenades attacked his convoy. Home, Leonardtown, Md.

"He had a problem with drugs and alcohol and went one place to the other," his mother, Linda, was saying last night. "Then he met a girl he loved. Her family said she couldn't see him unless he straightened out. He did. For her love. He joined the Army, and they married.

"When the two Army men came to the house to tell us, I was inside cleaning. I started to scream. 'Oh, my God! My son is dead!' He had his rosary beads in his pocket when he was killed. His wife, Crystal, had been out, and when she came over and saw the crowd in the yard she thought he was home on his two-week leave that he was supposed to be on. She's 19. She was going to go to college but she just can't do it now.

"My son was a beautiful young man. Everybody speaks about his smile. He had such a beautiful smile. My husband's smile. I say to my husband, 'Could you please smile so I can see my son's face?'"

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

ONE TASK FORCE DANGER SOLDIER KILLED IN VEHICLE ACCIDENT

August 25, 2004 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND Release Number: 04-08-34C

TIKRIT, Iraq -- One Task Force Danger Soldier was killed in a vehicle accident near Tikrit August 25 at about 6:30 a.m. The Soldier died when his vehicle overturned.

Rutherford Marine Loses Arm

8.25.04 WorldNow and WKRN

LAVERGNE, Tenn. A LaVergne Marine was wounded in the explosion that killed an Overton County Marine reservist in Iraq.

Lance Corporal Ryan Autery suffered wounds Thursday that cost him his left arm below the elbow. Autery was riding in the same Humvee as Corporal Brad McCormick, who was killed when the vehicle ran over a mine.

His parents, Rick and Trish Autery, are flying to Washington today to visit their son in a hospital. **Rick says he hopes people will treat his son as the hero he is. He says Ryan is only 19 years old and now has to "rewrite his life."**

Another Local Soldier Wounded in Iraq

(August 25, 2004) WorldNow and WIVB

Army Sergeant Christopher Cruse was injured late last month, when a humvee he was driving ran over an improvised explosive device in Ramadi, Iraq.

Cruse's wife Alysa Cruse said, "He fractured his pelvis, fractured his jaw, broke his neck, broke his arm, and has some soft tissue lacerations on his leg."

Cruse's father is originally from Olean, and his grandmother still lives there. She has friends praying for her grandson.

Cruse's father James Cruse said, "Her whole church - she said she had 24 phone calls I think in one day."

Specialist John Pirinelli of Wheatfield was shot in Iraq last month, and is now also recovering at Walter Reed Medical Center. The two families see each other at the hospital.

Alysa Cruse says hearing of her husband's injuries overseas made for a hard ending to a hard year.

Alysa Cruse said, "My husband and I have been together - we dated since we were about 15, so he's my best friend in the whole world, and to have him be gone, I'm in school and I work, and I'm busy, but he's my life, he's my soul."

U.S. Missile Shakes Najaf Shrine; U.S. Forces Argue With Collaborator Troops About Who Is Supporting Who

25 August 2004, Al Jazeera & By Abdul Hussein Al-Obeidi, Associated Press & (SA) & washingtonpost.com & Bloomberg

A U.S. warplane fired a missile that landed close to Najaf's Imam Ali Shrine, AFP reported. The air strike shook the mosque and filled it with dust, AFP said.

Heavy fighting has continued near the Imam Ali mosque in Najaf, as US and Iraqi forces tightened their grip around al-Mahdi Army fighters after *a threatened assault on the shrine did not proceed.*

Iraqi Defence Minister Hazim al-Shaalán had warned al-Mahdi fighters loyal to Shia leader Muqtada al-Sadr that they would be wiped out if they did not leave the

mosque by Tuesday evening. By Wednesday, there was no indication Iraqi forces had advanced on the religious site.

Shalan, issued a new ultimatum to Sadr and his Mahdi Army militia, warning that the militiamen had "hours to surrender." *Shalan had issued similar ultimatums in the past week,*

US and Iraqi officials have said only Iraqi forces will storm the mosque.

Asked about reports some fighters had fled from the shrine, Throckmorton said: "I've seen no evidence they are leaving."

"US warplanes fired missiles that fell near the Imam Ali graveyard," said reporter Hussain al-Haidari, adding that the attack had apparently caused some damage to the mosque's foundation.

US Army Lieutenant Michael Throckmorton, speaking not far from the mosque, said American and Iraqi forces were trying to isolate the fighters in one place before an attack.

"What we are trying to do is shape the battlefield to create the big picture. We are trying to do everything that will give us the advantage," he said.

Asked what Iraqi forces would do, Throckmorton said: "**We hope that they are the first ones to set foot inside.**" ("HOPE"??? If U.S. troops set foot inside, they'll have several million very pissed off Shia coming after them for blood.)

Nearly 2000 US marines backed by aircraft and tanks have done most of the fighting, pounding rebels whose main weapons are AK-47 assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenades and mortars. ("Most?" Try "all.")

Moqtada Sadr's Mehdi army has lost control of significant parts of Najaf, after heavy United States-led attacks in the Iraqi city, said a spokesman for Shiite Muslim militia leader on Wednesday.

"It's not like before. The area we control has significantly shrunk."

"They [the Americans] are trying to maintain their control on Najaf because they have failed everywhere else in Iraq," said Sheikh Ahmed al-Shaibani.

Earlier in the day, Iraqi soldiers backed by U.S. forces began patrolling the streets of Najaf, establishing their presence. U.S. commanders welcomed the battalion -- several hundred troops -- which they said would help in the labor-intensive business of urban warfare.

Officials said the Iraqi troops would be searching for militia members who might be holed up in houses that have already been checked in the U.S. advance toward the shrine. The Iraqi forces were also expected to help Najaf residents return to their homes mostly in the southwest corner of the old city, now well behind the front lines of the battle.

"We're giving them a little experience and, by the way, letting them bring normalcy to their people," Maj. Tim Karcher of the 7th Cavalry Regiment said.

Iraqi officers described their operations as having a more prominent role than was described by local U.S. commanders.

"We are not supporting the U.S. Army, we are here to evacuate the shrine of the outlaws," said Lt. Haider Hussein. "The U.S. Army is supporting us," Hussein said, "because we don't have new weapons to use in this battle."

US armour held the shrine in a pincer grip from the west and east and heavy artillery pounded areas to the south as snipers fired on all those coming or going from the mausoleum. Gunfire rocked the area and smoke rose into the sky.

U.S. Marines backed by Army troops gained a foothold late Tuesday night inside the road that rings the sacred shrine of Imam Ali. The assault seized a multi-story building west of the mosque.

It was the first permanent breach of territory that U.S. forces have opted to take and hold in the neighborhood of winding streets and alleys immediately surrounding the shrine, which Shiite militiamen have been using as a base.

The closest US vehicle was 20m from the western gate of the complex, one of the most-important Shiite pilgrimage sites in the world.

Armored Humvees raced along the roads at high speeds to avoid the constant danger of fire,

All four gates of the compound were bolted by militiamen inside.

Senior Sadr Lieutenant Arrested In Najaf On Way To Negotiations

NAJAF, Iraq, Aug 25 (AFP)

The most influential aide to Shiite Muslim militia leader Moqtada Sadr, Sheikh Ali Smeisim, was arrested Wednesday in the besieged holy city of Najaf, police said.

"It's hard to believe. This government is just like the Saddam regime. They operate just like the Baathists," said a militiamen who gave his name only as Mohammed.

"They arrested Smeisim even though he had the green light to go and carry out negotiations," he added.

Resistance Attacks British In Amara

25 August 2004 Aljazeera.net

A British military spokesman confirmed **bases in Amara, 365km southeast of Baghdad, had come under sporadic small arms fire during a two-hour battle** between Iraqi resistance fighters and British occupation forces on Wednesday afternoon.

Resistance fighters loyal to Shia leader Muqtada al-Sadr also fired rocket-propelled grenades and mortars at the governor's house, locals said.

Residents told Aljazeera that a US-led forces aircraft had attacked the commercial district in the town, though there is no information on casualties.

Polish Embassy Hit By Shells & RPG

Aug 25 WARSAW (AFP)

Poland's embassy in Baghdad was hit twice by shells without causing any casualties, according to a foreign ministry spokesman in Warsaw.

"The shells were probably launched from a car. Jaroslaw Drozd told the TVN24 news and information channel on Wednesday. "The car was probably on a road parallel to the street on which is the embassy is based," he said,

"A man who got out of a car in a road parallel to the embassy got out a grenade launcher and fired in its direction before fleeing in the same vehicle," he said.

"The grenade hit a wall of the embassy without causing injuries or material damage," he said.

Occupation Guards Kill Peaceful Al-Sadr Supporters At Kufa Rally

8.25.04 MSNBC News Services & AFP 8.26

In Kufa, new violence killed several people as protesting supporters of al-Sadr were fired on by Iraqi national guardsmen. The marchers carried pictures of al-Sadr as well as of al-Sistani.

Videotape from Associated Press Television News showed demonstrators wounded during a few minutes of heavy gunfire as they passed a multinational force building. An employee at Kufa's Furat al-Awsat Hospital said two marchers were killed and five others were wounded.

No one in the crowd could be seen firing a weapon, and it was an unprovoked attack on the demonstration. **Witnesses said the gunfire appeared to come from an Iraqi National Guard post, which sat behind concrete blast walls along the parade route**

The incident happened outside a US base also patrolled by Iraqi national guardsmen between Najaf and Kufa.

The demonstration by hundreds of al-Sadr supporters was headed to Najaf from Kufa, with plans to break the U.S.-led siege there, witnesses said.

The demonstrators' chants praised al-Sadr and condemned Allawi as "a coward" and an American collaborator."

Abbas Hamid, 32, told AFP from his hospital bed that the demonstration in support of cleric Moqtada al-Sadr began at 4pm outside the Kufa mosque.

"We were heading towards Najaf but when we reached the Al-Abassiya bridge, Iraqi police opened fire," he said.

TROOP NEWS

Judge Rules Former Reservist Doesn't Have To Report For Recall

08/25/2004 By TIM WHITMIRE, Associated Press

A federal judge agreed Wednesday to delay a former Army reservist's Friday deadline to report for recall to Iraq.

U.S. District Judge Louise Flanagan granted Todd Parrish's request for a temporary restraining order, pending a full hearing next week on whether the Army may force him to return to uniform.

Parrish, who lives in the Raleigh suburb of Cary, believes his eight-year commitment to the Army expired Dec. 19, after four years of active duty and another four years in the reserves.

But the Army says Parrish never formally resigned his commission as a lieutenant, making him indefinitely eligible for involuntary recall to duty. In May, the Army ordered Parrish to report to Fort Sill, Okla., for processing and deployment to Iraq.

Parrish sued the Army last month, contending he was never informed "of any requirement or need to 'resign' his Army Reserve commission in order to terminate his status with the U.S. Army Reserves."

With a Friday deadline looming for Parrish to report for duty and discussions with the Army going nowhere, Parrish's lawyer Mark Waple said he filed a motion Monday for a temporary restraining order in Raleigh federal court.

Flanagan granted the request Wednesday and scheduled a hearing on whether to grant a preliminary injunction against the Army for Sept. 1

In her order, Flanagan said the Army's willingness to postpone Parrish's reporting date several times in recent months shows the military will not be harmed by delaying the case until a full hearing can be held.

When Parrish tried to resign his commission, the Army told him it was too late. Waple said he has taken affidavits from two other former reserve officers who have completed their service obligations and say they were unaware of any requirement that they resign their commission upon leaving the Army.

Waple has said he believes Parrish is a victim of efforts by the military to keep as many people as possible in the Individual Ready Reserve so they can be called to active duty.

Parrish, who grew up in Durham, attended North Carolina State University on a Reserve Officers' Training Corps scholarship. He served four years on active duty in the United States, completing that obligation in December 1999.

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.

Made In Iraq: New Antiwar Veterans Organize

August 25, 2004 By Robert J. Lifton, The Boston Globe

ON THE FRINGE of the recent Democratic National Convention in Boston, there was a miniconvention of a group called Veterans for Peace. Most of the 400-plus participants were Vietnam veterans, though there were smaller contingents of veterans of World War II, the Korean War, and the first Gulf War. But the most dramatic presence was that of a group of new kids on the block, veterans of the war in Iraq.

A significant number of Vietnam veterans found meaning in opposing their war while it was in progress. The hearings on American war crimes and the throwing away of medals were their way of rejecting the war and holding not just themselves but their country accountable.

Their impact on the nation was different from that of other antiwar protesters because they were able to bring the Vietnam death scene directly to the American public,

Iraq veterans are beginning to express similar sentiments. In Boston they sounded not unlike their Vietnam predecessors. They emphasized the large-scale killing of Iraqi civilians by American firepower, along with their own widespread confusion. "We were lost. We had no idea what we were doing," was the way one put it.

These veterans formed a new organization at the convention, Iraq Veterans Against the War, modeled on the earlier Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

American soldiers fighting in Iraq are also saying things reminiscent of their Vietnam veteran fathers and uncles.

The British newspaper The Guardian reported American soldiers as saying: "It's really frustrating cause I mean we can't find these guys. They shoot at us all the time, they run away, we try to figure out who it is, we interrogate people -- do they know who it was? No, nobody knows who it was"; and "This is the last place I'd probably ever want to die"; and "I don't have any idea of what we're trying to do out here. I don't know what the [goal] is, and I don't think our commanders do either."

MORE:

Iraq Veterans Against the War

IVAW Needs your help to take our fight to the RNC.

As many of you already know the Republican National Convention is almost upon us and IVAW plans on making our presence felt. We hope to have speakers spread out to the numerous marches and rallies showing opposition to this horrible war. To do this however we need funds. Our members are scattered across the United States and since they have just left military service can not afford to travel to NYC on their own. Please help us bring the troops home and end this brutal war.

Mail donations to:
Veterans For Peace
World Community Ctr.
438 North Skinker
St. Louis MO 63130

Make checks payable to Veterans For Peace, Inc. and place IVAW in the memo line.

IVAW is a non-profit organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

The IVAW Mission

Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) is a group of veterans from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. We are committed to saving lives and ending the violence in Iraq by an immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces. We also believe that the governments that sponsored these wars are indebted to the men and women that were forced to fight them and must give their Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, and Airmen the benefits that are owed to them upon their return home.

We welcome all active duty, reservist, and recent veterans into our ranks. To join the IVAW please send email to www.ivaw.net

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/>

Hogs At The Trough: Democrats, Republicans In Congress Vote Themselves Millions While Military Families Have To Mail Toilet Paper And Socks To Iraq

(Thanks to Alma C. who emailed this one in 8.20.04.)

Perhaps we are asking the wrong questions during election years.

Our Senators and Congresswomen do not pay into Social Security and, of course, they do not collect from it.

You see, Social Security benefits were not suitable for persons of their rare elevation in society. They felt they should have a special plan for themselves. So, many years ago they voted in their own benefit plan.

In more recent years, no congress person has felt the need to change it. After all, it is a great plan.

For all practical purposes their plan works like this:

When they retire, they continue to draw the same pay until they die.

Except it may increase from time to time for cost of living adjustments.

For example, former Senator Byrd and Congressman White and their wives may expect to draw \$7,800,000.00 -- that's Seven Million, Eight-Hundred Thousand Dollars, with their wives drawing \$275,000.00 during the last years of their lives.

This is calculated on an average life span for each of those two Dignitaries.

Younger Dignitaries who retire at an early age, will receive much more during the rest of their lives.

Their cost for this excellent plan is \$0.00. NADA....ZILCH....

This little perk they voted for themselves is free to them. You and I pick up the tab for this plan. The funds for this fine retirement plan come directly from the General Funds;

"OUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK"!

From our own Social Security Plan, which you and I pay, or have paid, into,-every payday until we retire, which amount is matched by our employer,-we can expect to get an average of \$1,000 per month after retirement.

Or, in other words, we would have to collect our average of \$1,000 monthly benefits for 68 years and one month to equal Senator Bill Bradley's benefits!

Social Security could be very good if only one small change were made.

That change would be to jerk the Golden Fleece Retirement Plan from under the Senators and Congressmen. Put them into the Social Security plan with the rest of us ... then sit back and watch how fast they would fix it.

MORE:

Pricey War For Grunts' Families

Patt Morrison (Los Angeles Times, August 24, 2004)

For families of enlisted men in Iraq, *living back home on a paycheck of \$2,000 or \$3,000 a month*, the costs of overseas phone calls and care packages can take a big bite of their income. (No shit?)

Pentagon Doesn't Get It: Buck Stops Higher Up

(USA Today, August 25, 2004, Pg. 12)

The independent report implicating the Pentagon leadership as sharing responsibility for the Abu Ghraib prison scandal comes in sharp contrast to the Defense Department's own investigations. To date, they blame only a few soldiers, and give the top brass a pass. That is why outside probes are needed. When left to investigate itself, the Pentagon came up short of full accountability.



**Replacement Troops For Hard-Hit Unit
Head To Iraq;
Two Weeks Training For One Of "Most
Dangerous Places On Earth"**

August 25, 2004 By KYLE ODEGARD, Gazette-Times reporter

SALEM: Karen Gustafson tried to smile for the photograph because, after all, her Corvallis family was posing with Gov. Ted Kulongoski.

Her eyes stayed sad, though.

Her son Will Gustafson, an Oregon State University student, heads out to Iraq in two weeks.

Pvt. Gustafson is one of 31 replacement soldiers for the hard-hit 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry, which has suffered 29 serious injuries and five deaths in a year of fighting.

Such a replacement call up has never been done by the Oregon National Guard.

He noted that the mobilization was extremely quick, with a two week notification **and two weeks training, and that the soldiers would be going to one of the most dangerous places on Earth.**

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Sistani Calls For Mass March On Najaf

25 August 2004, Al Jazeera & MSNBC News Services & AFP

Influential Shia cleric Ayat Allah Ali al-Sistani is reportedly on his way back to Iraq from treatment in London and wants all Iraqis to march on the battle-scarred city of Najaf, a senior aide said on Wednesday.

The aide, Hamid al-Khafaf, told Aljazeera al-Sistani arrived in Basra and would lead a march on Najaf on Thursday.

In the Baghdad neighborhood of Sadr City, many left for Najaf in cars and buses in answer to a call from the mosques to "help stop the bloodshed."

Abdel Hadi al-Daraji, an al-Sadr spokesman in Baghdad, followed that call with one of his own for all Muslims to march on Najaf.

"I call on all my Sunni brothers and also our brothers in all of Iraq's provinces to immediately head to Najaf and to protect the shrine," he said on Al-Arabiya television.

Earlier in the day, **Najaf Gov. Adnan al-Zurufi** said Iraqi security forces had **“taken all needed measures to prevent any crowds from entering the province,”** calling it a “military area.”

If protests called by al-Sistani against U.S. political plans for Iraq months ago are anything to go by, *hundreds of thousands of Shiites could march on Najaf.* (And occupation Gov. al-Zurufi will run for his fucking life.)

“All the elder clerics left Najaf to make it easier for the United States to finish off al-Sadr,” said Jabbar Hashem, who is from a poor, east Baghdad district. **“They did not really care how many people got killed.”**

The head of Sistani's London office, Hamad al-Khaffaf, said earlier, "We call on all Iraqis ... to be ready to return to Najaf."

Saying the shrine had been "tarnished and violated," he added, **"We are coming to your place, even with our dead bodies to erase the stains and for the dome of your mausoleum ... to continue to shine."**

Occupation Defense Ministers’ Brother-In-Law Captured

8.25.04 MSNBC News Services & AP

The resistance claimed Wednesday to have kidnapped a brother-in-law of Iraqi Defense Minister Hazem Shaalan, **saying he would be killed unless military operations in Najaf ceased.**

Last week, Shaalan spoke harshly about ending the militant resistance in Najaf and the occupation at the Imam Ali Shrine.

The militants, calling themselves the "Divine Wrath Brigades," said they kidnapped Maj. Gen. Salah Hassan Lami, Shaalan's brother-in-law and the director of military affairs at the Defense Ministry, according to Al-Jazeera.

The militants also demanded the release of Sheik Ali Smeisim, a top aide to radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who was arrested in Najaf earlier Wednesday.

Six U.S. Occuguards Killed In Haditha

25 August 2004 Aljazeera.net

Six Iraqi national guards have been killed in a missile attack on a check-point in the Alus district, east of the Iraqi town of Haditha.

Resistance Blows Up Gas Pipeline

HILLA, Iraq, Aug 25 (AFP)

An important gas pipeline in southern Iraq was on fire Wednesday after an act of sabotage, a spokesman for the Hilla Oil Company told AFP.

"Unidentified attackers caused an explosion today in a gas pipeline used to transport liquid gas from the province of Basra to the other towns in the south, setting off a fire in the pipeline," Muayyed Yussef, a company engineer, said.

"The explosion happened at 7:00 am at Aawazel, a region about 30 kilometres (18 miles) south of Hilla", which is 100 kilometres (62 miles) south of Baghdad, he added.

The pipeline feeds the south of Iraq with gas for local consumption, but the fire was still raging at the end of the morning and teams of firefighters were on the scene trying to get the blaze under control, Yussef said.

Combat Training, Courtesy of Fallujah

By Zainab Naji in Baghdad (ICR No. 80, 24-Aug-04)

Two young men from Fallujah sat in a house in the Baghdad suburb of Sadr City, eating a meal of rice and stew prepared by local women.

They had come to this sprawling neighbourhood to give the Mahdi Army militia – supporters of radical Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr - the benefit of their experience fighting the United States Marines.

According to these men, the Shia militia needs all the help it can get.

"They don't know how to fight. We came to offer experience," said one of the "trainers", who both declined to be named.

Fallujah street fighters have a solid reputation for combat skills, sometimes honed in training with the old regime's elite military units, and more recently put into practice in battles with US Marines.

According to these men, the Mahdi Army does not know how to handle weapons properly, and does not have no small-unit leadership. Instead, they fight in groups of equals, with no one giving directions.

Unlike Fallujah, where insurgents often use radios or other electronic means of communication, the Mahdi Army sends children as runners to convey military information.

Because of such deficiencies, the Mahdi Army has suffered heavy casualties and territorial losses. As a result, it withdrew from a number of districts in Sadr City under the American onslaught.

Members of the Mahdi Army agree about their weak points.

"We have many weapons, but we don't know the right way to use them," said fighter Ali Abd al-Kadhem, 28.

For example, he said, his fellow-guerrillas place mortars on the roofs of buildings, instead of on the ground from where they are designed to be fired. As a result they miscalculate the settings needed to get mortar rounds to fall the correct distance.

Bomb teams use many ingenious methods to hide their explosives, but they don't pack enough to make an effective blast, said the fighter.

Sometime Mahdi Army fighters plant mines or bombs under the road surface and run a detonator cord to a nearby house. Other bombs are placed in hollowed-out watermelons. **But according to civil servant Jawad Muhammad, 35, "This method does not seem expedient with American armoured vehicles, because the watermelon bomb is too lightweight."**

Also, he added, "civilians, especially children, are more affected by it than the Americans."

Yaseen Badr, a fighter from the al-Falah neighbourhood close to Muqtada al-Sadr's main headquarters in Sadr City, described how one ambush went wrong.

Fighters set up a roadblock on the main road, hoping the tank would turn onto a side road where they had rigged explosives. They also set up an ambush, firing on the American vehicles from all sides to drive them into the mined street.

The plan went perfectly, said Badr, as one of the tanks drove right into an explosion. But it went out the other side again unscathed since the bomb wasn't big enough to do any damage.

One thing that the Mahdi Army does not appear to lack in Sadr City is volunteers.

Batool Ibrahim, 32, is one of a number of Sadr City women who recently volunteered to fight with the Mahdi Army.

"I learned to shoot with a small pistol which I bought for 200 US dollars two weeks ago," she said. **"Today I am learning how to use rocket-propelled grenade launchers, and I received one from the Mahdi Army a few days ago.**

"Our love for the Sayyid Muqtada al-Sadr inspires us to sacrifice our lives for him and not to fear death," she added.

She finished with the militia's chant, "We are the Mahdi Army and followers of Sadr, who are always victorious against America."

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

OCCUPATION REPORT

Occupation Cops Seize Reporters Who Covered U.S. Attack On Shrine

8.25.04 Aljazeera.net

Iraqi policemen rounded up dozens of journalists at gunpoint in a Najaf hotel and took them to police headquarters before later releasing them.

Firing their guns in the air, the dozen odd policemen, some masked, stormed into the rooms of journalists in the Najaf Sea hotel and forced them into vans and a truck.

An AFP correspondent, who was also forced into a van, said the police pushed and pulled many reporters at gunpoint.

The reporters were taken to the office of the police chief. "You people are not under arrest," Najaf police chief Ghalib al-Jezari told them.

"You are brought here because I want to tell you that you never publish the truth. I speak the truth, but you never broadcast what we are."

The reporters, packed into the office, with some sitting on the floor in front of the police chief, protested at their detention.

"You have kidnapped us at gunpoint," said one reporter.

Iraqi police also arrested five members of a Dubai-based television news crew after they reported that US planes had fired missiles within feet of the Imam Ali mausoleum.

Their detention came within minutes of a 17:00 GMT broadcast with live coverage of seriously fierce fighting in Najaf. Damage to the Imam Ali complex, already the scene of major resistance to US occupation forces, would almost certainly exacerbate the conflict.

Iraqi security officials arrested the TV crew at their hotel in Najaf, taking five members into custody - including Iraq correspondent Diyar al-Omari.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

The Dems-Do-War-Better Campaign

August 24, 2004 By JEREMY SCAHILL, Counterpunch

Jeremy Scahill is a reporter and producer for the national radio and TV show [Democracy Now!](#)

On the closing night of the Democratic National Convention in Boston, John Kerry took to the podium, raised his hand in a military salute and declared, "I'm John Kerry, and I'm reporting for duty."

There couldn't have been a more fitting end to the convention and the official launching of Kerry's bid for the White House. **Since September 11 and the start of George W. Bush's "war on terror," Kerry has consistently reported for duty. In fact, Kerry has served as one of Bush's top legislative foot soldiers.**

During the DNC in Boston, former President Bill Clinton extolled Kerry's virtues, firing up the house with a rhetorical riff about how John Kerry has always said "Send me!" when asked by Uncle Sam to do his duty, from his service in Vietnam to the his career in the Senate. Kerry, the crowd was told, has always said...dramatic pause...(everyone in unison now) "Seeend Meee!"

Let's pick up where Clinton left off. When President Bush asked Senators to vote for the USA Patriot Act, John Kerry said, "Send Me!" When he asked for a blank check to attack Afghanistan, John Kerry said, "Send Me!" When Bush looked for senators to make fraudulent claims about Iraq possessing weapons of mass destruction, Kerry said, "Send Me!" When the president looked for Senate approval to invade Iraq, Kerry said, "Send Me!" When Bush sought more support for Israel's apartheid wall, Kerry said, "Send Me!"

With all of the bashing of Ralph Nader for having the audacity to run for president and the Democrats continuing to blame him for Bush taking power, **it is important to note that Kerry did not say, "Send Me!" when the Congressional Black Caucus needed one senatorial signature to reopen the question of the illegitimate 2000 elections.**

The Boston convention was a meticulously orchestrated show. Speeches were vetted, the slightest anti-war message relegated to a non-primetime slot and party dissidents kept off the platform. But under the tons of confetti, balloons and printed signs cheering

on Kerry, there was tremendous frustration and disillusionment among the 4,300 delegates inside.

Several polls indicated that 9 out of 10 delegates were anti-war. Yet in their major addresses in Boston, both Kerry and John Edwards called for more U.S. troops and a doubling of Special Forces. **Bush was not criticized for invading and occupying Iraq--he was bashed for how he did it. The message was, "Dems do war better."**

So marginalized was the peace camp at the DNC that some Kucinich delegates had their signs confiscated or were told to remove their pink scarves that read, "Peace Delegate." Medea Benjamin from Code Pink was dragged off the floor of the convention by police for holding up a pink banner reading: "End the Occupation of Iraq." That apparently was not one of DNC Chair Terry McAuliffe's approved messages for the day.

Not one speaker at the podium inside the convention said anything about the razor-wired "protest pen" outside the convention that one federal judge called an "internment camp." There was no mention either of the camouflaged U.S. Army reserve soldiers around the convention's perimeter, patrolling bridges and train overpasses. So much for posse comitatus.

What is clear is that disgust and outrage at the Bush administration is so severe that the Democrats could field Mr. Potato Head and he'd get about as much support as Kerry.

The hawkish Democratic leadership successfully pushed through a candidate out of step with the vast majority of his supporters who just want to end one of the most violent and repressive administrations in U.S. history. Such is the state of our democracy.

With John Kerry on the ticket, the Democrats have ensured a victory in November for the small but powerful pro-war special interest. Kerry is their sleeper, their private Manchurian candidate. They face a win-win scenario. Even if Kerry wins, the initial euphoria sparked by a Bush-free White House will eventually be replaced by this reality: no matter what Kerry and Edwards may have said from the podium in Boston, for most of the world neither help nor hope is really on the way.

It's not that a Kerry administration wouldn't implement some significantly different policies from Bush's. But a Kerry victory will not bring significant change to the system.

After the defeat of Bush's father in 1992, Bill Clinton's policies paved the way for many of the international and domestic horror stories we now see unfolding. His devastating welfare-reform policy and his Omnibus Crime Bill were practically pulled from Newt Gingrich's playbook.

His 1996 anti-terror legislation paved the way for the Patriot Act. He presided enthusiastically over the most deadly regime of economic sanctions in history and began the longest sustained bombing campaign since Vietnam in the so-called "No-fly Zones" in Iraq. He scorned the United Nations and bombed Yugoslavia for 78 days.

Clinton attacked Afghanistan and bombed a pharmaceutical plant in the Sudan. He tightened the blockade against Cuba and pushed through NAFTA, which sacrificed worker and environmental rights in favor of corporate profits.

During the demonstrations outside of the Fleet Center in Boston, protesters from the Bl(a)ck Tea Society set fire to a two-faced effigy of Bush and Kerry. Perhaps that message is not ready for most living rooms in the U.S. But in a few years, it could be prophetic.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Situation Report: From Bad To Preposterous

20 August 2004 By Nick Meo in Zabul Province, The Independent

Colonel Scott McBride had gathered together the villagers of Daychopan, a Taliban stronghold in the mountains south of Kabul, to make them an offer they could not refuse.

The villagers were on edge. Two hours earlier the Americans' had arrived in terrifying style. Three giant Chinook helicopters, each the size of a bus, had dropped out of the sky at dawn and landed in boiling clouds of dust and sand thrown up by the rotors. Startled farmers emerged blinking from their mud fortress-homes to see what was happening.

Assault guns pointing in every direction, young American soldiers began methodically searching for arms caches and Taliban suspects, barging into homes and training machine guns on the streets as their radios crackled out instructions.

The morning before two teenagers with AK-47s had been shot as they tried to make a run for it during a raid on a village in a neighbouring valley. One boy's head was blown apart by a burst of gunfire.

So the atmosphere across the cups of green tea and plates of banana creme biscuits was tense at first as the American officers sat awkwardly cross-legged on the carpet in kevlar helmets and bullet-proof jackets addressing a collection of anxious-looking men in huge turbans.

What happened next left the villagers bemused. What did they want the most, Colonel McBride demanded - a new school, a well to be dug, a doctor for the derelict clinic? "Just tell us what you want and how we can help you," he urged.

On the roof above were snipers in position, watching the scruffy bazaar where GIs in sunglasses tried smiling and waving at scowling tribesmen in a charm offensive. The soldiers have been warned to tone down the raids and ensure fewer

doors are kicked in and suspects handcuffed. The military is here to make friends as well as hunt down enemies.

The days of "smoke 'em out" must seem like long ago for the 17,000 US combat troops still scouring Afghanistan for Al-Queda and the Taliban, whose insurgency refuses to die and is probably growing.

The military, overstretched in southern Afghanistan's endless barren mountain ranges and facing often hostile populations, accepts that it will never by itself beat the Taliban, a stubborn if disorganised enemy.

They are still fighting a vicious war 235 Charlie Company has suffered 11 casualties since it arrived in April and the tactiturn FBI men who took charge of blindfolded suspects were evidence of the ongoing hunt for Al-Queda and the Taliban.

But now the emphasis is on building up Afghan security forces and winning over the conservative Pushtun tribes who have always been the Taliban's main supporters.

The hope is that development projects funded by the US government - the Vietnam-era phrase Hearts and Minds is meticulously avoided - will win friends while security sweeps force the Taliban into the high mountains.

In the complex world of Pushtun tribal politics, however, where hedging your bets and saying what your listener wants to hear are strategies for survival, finding the right people to make friends with does not always prove easy.

District police chief Mohammed Wahid was the man chosen to do business with in Daychopan.

Mr Wahid was doubtful that any doctor would dare to come to his village, deep in lawless Zabul Province, and he was sure that teachers would be killed by the Taliban. He liked the idea of a new well but didn't think the Americans would find a contractor brave enough to dig one.

Outside his delapidated headquarters the soldiers inquired about bullet holes sprayed in the police chief's pick-up truck, obviously the result of a kalashnikov magazine being emptied into the vehicle from dead ahead.

It was a Taliban ambush that killed one of his twenty men, Mr Wahid said vaguely. The Taliban had also killed a man last week, a government employee.

Exactly how Mr Wahid managed to survive in such a Taliban-afflicted area was not explained. One of the American's Afghan translators didn't like the village and wasn't taking any chances. He kept his checked scarf wrapped around his face at all times, even while conveying the colonel's generous offers of help.

"The people here are scary motherfuckers," he said later in Afghan-accented GI-speak. "I have a nice life in Kandahar city. If they come there and recognise me,

I'm dead." The US officers admit that four months in-country they can rarely be sure who is a friend, who is an enemy, and who can be both at different times.

Last month the American's difficulties were graphically exhibited when a police chief and district chief in the nearby Khak-e-Afghan valley were caught playing both sides of the street, lending four US-provided cars to the local Taliban to use at night.

When rumbled the administrator fled with most of the USD 100,000 cash he'd been given for building a school and paying the salaries of his men, presumably over the border to Pakistan, while the policeman is now in jail pleading that his survival required an accommodation with the enemy.

"Even these guys who aren't pro-Taliban, they are still with the Taliban because they have no choice," said Captain Mike Berdy.

One of the grunts put it another way. "They smile at you in the morning, and at night they might be planting a mine in the road or firing a rocket at your ass."

Received:

To: GI Special
From: R
8.25.04

Thanks for these emails. Finally, an unedited account of what happens. They dont show most of this stuff on the news.

R (USMC, OIF Vet)

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