

GI SPECIAL 2#B89



U.S. Troops Combat Tours “Capped” At 2 Years: (Double Max Vietnam Duty!)

10.10.04 Jim DeBrosse and Mehul Srivastava, Dayton Daily News (Ohio)

As the war in Iraq has dragged on, what began as six months of active duty for most soldiers, including their pre- and post-deployment time, soon became six months in combat, then a full year and, most recently, **up to 18 months at a time.**

Total service in Iraq has been capped [!] at *24 months*. [In Vietnam, everybody knew that one year was it, and then you would never, ever spend one more day in combat. The fools who decided on 24 months in Iraq are begging for a massive rebellion.]

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:

Stryker Blown Up In Mosul, One Dead, Nine Wounded

Oct. 11, 2004 By Matthew Cox, Air Force Times staff writer

MOSUL, Iraq — **Insurgents steered a bomb-packed pick-up truck toward a Stryker combat vehicle and set off the deadly cargo, killing one soldier and wounding nine others in the southwestern part of the city.** The attack came this morning as a unit with the 3rd Brigade of the 2nd Infantry Division was returning from a combat mission to clear a section of the Al Amel neighborhood of people who have been using the area to mount attacks on coalition forces along main roads here.

About a battalion's worth of Stryker vehicles from Task Force Olympia, along with about 250 Iraqi National Guard soldiers, began the hunt for insurgents just before 8 a.m. near the intersection of two main roads here just west of the Tigris River.

Stryker elements shut down traffic heading into two main traffic circles and surrounded the area as soldiers dismounted from Stryker infantry carriers and cleared housing areas overlooking the main roads that insurgents have used to trigger vehicle-carried improvised explosive devices.

During the planning phase of this operation, unit leaders stressed the likelihood of a possible attack as units returned to their nearby base.

They were right.

Just before 11 a.m., units began leaving the area in alternate routes but the small truck maneuvered into the path of a Stryker column and detonated.

The blast left a five-foot crater in the road.

Some units involved in the operation had already returned to base when they heard about the enemy contact. Leaders and staff inside one tactical operations center stood in silence as they listened to scraps of information come in over the radio.

Five of the soldiers were evacuated from the scene to a nearby military hospital; four others returned to duty. **[Memo to Donald R.: Want to win in Iraq? Donate the Strykers to the resistance. That will set them back bigtime.]**

N.C. Guardsman Dies

Oct 11, 2004 By MANDY LOCKE, Staff Writer, The News & Observer Publishing Company

Michael S. Voss was one semester shy of an associate's degree at Sandhills Community College in Pinehurst. But school had been on hold since the N.C. National Guard's 30th Heavy Separate Brigade was called to duty in October 2003.

Voss, 35, a staff sergeant from Carthage in Moore County, died outside Tikrit, Iraq, on Friday. A roadside bomb struck his convoy, according to a military news release.

Voss, a squad leader and motor transport operator for Wilmington's 1st Battalion, 120th Infantry Regiment, rode in the convoy's lead vehicle, said Guard spokesman Maj. Robert Carver.

Voss was the fifth National Guardsman from the 30th Heavy Separate Brigade to be killed during the war in Iraq; the death marks the third for the 120th Infantry Regiment since it was deployed to Iraq at the end of February.

Voss joined the Army after high school and served for nearly a decade. He earned a Purple Heart in 1989 after being wounded during combat in Panama, Carver said. Voss served in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait during Desert Storm. During his career, he earned three commendation medals and a combat infantryman badge.

Voss volunteered for the N.C. National Guard in 1997, shortly after leaving active duty with the Army. "He was clearly a very devoted soldier," Carver said.

Voss worked for Caterpillar Co. in Sanford, according to Powell Funeral Home in Southern Pines. An avid outdoorsman, he enjoyed fishing and hunting.

Voss is survived by his wife, Emily Voss, and two children. His family declined to be interviewed Sunday. The unit is stationed northeast of Baghdad in Diyala Province, a Vermont-sized swath of Iraq that abuts the Iranian border.

Mosque On Fire After U.S. Air Strikes In Hit

Oct 11, 2004 BAGHDAD (Reuters)

U.S. marines engaged in heavy clashes with scores of insurgents near a mosque in western Iraq on Monday, leading to U.S. air strikes which damaged the shrine and left it ablaze, the U.S. military said.

A U.S. military spokesman said marines came under fire from around 100 insurgents near the town of Hit, about 107 miles west of Baghdad, and engaged in an hour-long firefight.

"Air strikes were called in on the mosque position. The mosque is partially damaged and is currently on fire," he said.

Hit is on the main road that follows the Euphrates river toward Syria.

U.S. Command Launches Daring Night Air Attack On Restaurant

10.11.04 AP

FALLUJAH, Iraq - A U.S. warplane early Tuesday destroyed a popular restaurant which the U.S. command said was a meeting place for members of Iraq's most feared terrorist organization.

The 12:01 a.m. blast demolished the Haj Hussein restaurant as well as nearby shops, residents said. There was no report of casualties and the restaurant was closed at the time, but two night guards were missing, residents said.

Ambulances and fire trucks rushed to the scene.

The U.S. military command in Baghdad made no mention of the restaurant but said the target was "a center" for the Tawhid and Jihad terror network, led by Jordanian-born extremist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Catching The Wind In Samarra

03 October 2004 By Michael Ware, TIME.com

Withdrawing, however, can be the most confounding thing the insurgents do.

"Our worst-case scenario is where we have an enemy who is not coming out to fight," says Pangelinan.

There were a lot of nasty places to be in Samarra last week after U.S. and Iraqi forces began their assault early Friday morning, but one of the nastiest was with the platoon led by Lieutenant Ryan Purdy.

Sweating it out in streets full of smoke and the odor of cordite, Purdy and his troops found cover in firing positions littered with flesh from insurgents blown apart by U.S. cannon fire from an armored vehicle.

Pinned down by snipers, the men were trapped alongside the corpses, battling a stench that grew stronger as the morning wore on and the temperature climbed. When at last the platoon could move, it could do so only under the cover of chattering guns and multicolored smoke grenades.

By then, the rebels that the platoon was fighting had simply melted away. "This enemy wants to erode our forces while preserving his own," a frustrated Purdy said. [Very good, Lt. That seems to be a rather universal objective in war. So far, they're ahead.]

"I'm nervous," confided one member of the 1/14, a 19-year-old infantryman with a wife and baby at home.

The scene in Samarra was similar to those anywhere in Iraq in which soldiers have had to shoot into cities. In one intersection, the body of a rebel lay in pieces, torn apart by 25-mm cannon fire, while a mother hurried by holding her toddler by the hand. The child stared at the remains.

At one point, a group of Purdy's men tumbled into an Iraqi house seeking safety and found themselves facing a woman with her arms around five children. Figuring that the soldiers would not harm her family, she offered the Americans water. Elsewhere, heads kept popping out from front gates as quizzical residents - perhaps numbed after so many months of conflict - looked out at the commotion. "Get inside! Get inside!," soldiers screamed desperately.

Children endlessly scampered across streets, forcing the troops to shoot above their heads. One old man carrying a mop sauntered between the lines. "These people are crazy," said a sergeant.

"By about [2:00 p.m.] they realized what they were up against and withdrew," says Captain Jim Pangelinan, who led his Alpha Company of the 1/14 into the western edge of the city. ***Withdrawing, however, can be the most confounding thing the insurgents do.***

"Our worst-case scenario is where we have an enemy who is not coming out to fight," says Pangelinan.

In a measure of the looking-glass standards that have come to be applied in this increasingly makeshift war, Iraqi Interior Minister Falah al-Naqib told a press

conference on Saturday that the battle for Samarra had been a "very clean" operation.

That may be, but if so, American planners won't want to see messy.

Mahdi Army Weapons Hand-Over Off To Very Slow Start

October 12, 2004 Australian Broadcasting Corporation & AFP By Sinan Salaheddin Associated Press

A Shiite militia disarmament plan that could end weeks of fighting in Baghdad got off to a slow start on Monday.

At Habibiya police station, the biggest of three designated collection points in Sadr City, cameramen were allowed to film only one batch of arms police said had been brought earlier in a civilian vehicle. The weaponry included RPGs, rusty mortars and artillery shells, anti-tank landmines and assault rifles.

"One man brought a Sam-7 anti-aircraft missile," National Guard Captain Duraid Fadel told Reuters.

One Mehdi Army fighter, Kamel Hussein delivered a big stash of RPGs and mortars.

But those three handovers were the only ones to take place at Habibiya in the space of three hours.

Fighters are supposed to be compensated for the weapons they turn in, **but Salman said those responsible for the payments hadn't turned up yet. So, receipts were issued instead. [Fucking brilliant. What a pack of chiselers.]**

The rates ranged from \$5 for a hand grenade to \$1,000 for a heavy-caliber machine gun, police said.

Iraqi National Guards, their faces masked to avoid identification, were deployed at the arms collection points.

"If necessary we will extend the five-day period," a senior security official, Abdul-Karim al-Saffar, told Reuters.

Many Sadr supporters told AFP they thought the militiamen did not trust the Iraqi government or the US military and feared the other side might take advantage of the truce to crush their movement.

"If this whole ceasefire falls through, we will be ready to rearm the Mehdi Army," said Hussein Hashim, a courier for a weapons dealer.

The Occupation Besieged

Oct. 11, 2004 BY PHILLIP O'CONNOR, St. Louis Post-Dispatch

"This is an armed camp," Upton said. "We take fire and we return fire. If you don't they keep shooting at you. They hit soft spots. We try to be a hard spot."

MOSUL, Iraq - (KRT) - **When U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Col. Kurt Ubbelohde wanted to check the progress of reconstruction around Kirkuk last week, plans for the two-hour road trip began days in advance.**

His staff reviewed security reports about the route, arranged convoy vehicles that included armored SUVs and notified a heavily armed eight-member private security team they would be needed as escorts.

Six months ago, the trip might have been considered routine. But the growing insurgency and deteriorating security situation is making even the simplest steps treacherous - and efforts to rebuild Iraq more and more difficult.

Trucks delivering building materials to a site now undergo more stringent inspection. That may entail dumping the load outside the gate to check for bombs and then having to reload it for the move inside. Other trucks carrying tar, water or other products are now X-rayed. Bomb-sniffing dogs also are used.

Projects with a large number of workers that require a large security force can require the construction of expensive, fortified camps that workers often refer to as "Fort Apaches."

Before they are allowed on job sites, Iraqi workers undergo extensive searches that can delay the start of the workday by hours. Once on site, the workers must be escorted by soldiers or U.S. government employees. A shortage of such escorts limits the number of workers allowed inside the gates, further delaying projects. And every day that work is delayed, the costs go up. The overhead for the reconstruction bureaucracy alone runs \$6 million a day.

Ubbelohde said. "It's challenging for the U.S. or the coalition to get to some of these rural areas and be able to operate in an environment that they consider safe." **[Where might that 'safe' environment be?]**

Last month was typical of the problems the American rebuilding effort is facing. Threats against Iraqi workers, attacks on trucks and the death of a driver along supply routes prompted other drivers to refuse to deliver materials halting construction on several projects, according to Maj. Paul Dansereau, who is responsible for operations and security in the Corps' north district.

Shots fired at Iraqi workers hired to help sandbag a Corps base camp delayed work for several days.

Thieves also stole four electrical generators bound for a major military base, causing further strain on the country's already taxed electrical grid.

Since the transfer of sovereignty on June 28, the number of attacks affecting reconstruction projects increased by 5 percent to a weekly average of 21 incidents.

Reports of bombings, kidnappings and rocket and mortar attacks also make it difficult for the Corps to recruit its own civilian employees necessary to complete the mission. About 300 Corps employees are currently in Iraq.

"We need a lot more people," Snyder said. "It's a struggle to get them over here."

For those who do come, the conditions are Spartan. **Most of the workers live in fortified military compounds protected by heavily armed soldiers. They work and live behind 15-foot-high concrete barricade walls, concertina wire and sandbags.** They sleep and relax in trailers that offer living space smaller than most college dorm rooms.

Many regularly work 12 to 14 hours a day or more. And even the civilians are required to follow the Army's General Order Number One, which among other things prohibits the consumption of alcohol. Still, some manage to sneak a beer every now and then.

Despite the chance for some civilian Corps employees to earn double or more than their stateside salary because of overtime and danger pay, **some believe the perceived risks far outweigh any financial gain. [Duh.]**

Although no Corps soldier or civilian employee has been killed in Iraq, there have been plenty of close calls.

On the afternoon of Sept. 16, Major Erik Stor traveled north out of Baghdad to inspect damage caused by an insurgent attack on an oil pipeline. On the return trip, a bullet smashed at head level into the reinforced windshield of the SUV in which he was riding. The bullet's impact caused a spiderweb of cracks in the glass, but Stor was unharmed.

Less than two weeks later, Stor, who helps oversee the reconstruction of Iraq' electricity grid, again rode to visit a power plant north of Baghdad when a roadside bomb exploded. The blast split the windshield, blew out both front tires and shredded much of the vehicle's front end. A 12-inch, three-pound hunk of shrapnel landed near Stor's left foot.

Other than a slight concussion, Stor again was uninjured.

Early Wednesday morning, Col. Ubbelohde and three others huddled with a private security team who briefed them about their trip to Kirkuk. Dansereau shared information with the group about a car-bomb attack against a military convoy the previous night in Mosul. The explosion overturned a large armored vehicle, injured six American soldiers and rattled the windows of the Corps' offices about a mile away.

The security team leader told the passengers in a thick Scottish accent about the route they would be following, recent incidents along the road and what to do if the convoy was attacked. He told them they were required to wear body armor, Kevlar helmets and eye protection.

Once on the move, the three vehicles wove through choking traffic at high speed, honking horns and blinking headlights to clear the road ahead. When forced to stop at an intersection, a bodyguard jumped out and warily eyed other nearby vehicles. When a car began to move up alongside Ubbelohde's SUV, the guard menacingly pointed his AK-47 at the young driver who stopped.

After dropping off their passengers in Kirkuk, the security team headed back toward Mosul. In an area known as "ambush alley," they were attacked by small arms fire. Several bullets struck two of the vehicles and flattened a tire on each.

The guards returned a hail of fire and wounded and possibly killed one attacker. They didn't stop to find out.

In Kirkuk, Ubbelohde visited a 2,300-acre base being built to house and train 3,000 soldiers for the new Iraqi army.

A similar project in the United States might require one or two security guards to man the main gate "so a truck didn't get stolen," said Bill Upton, an American who is managing the \$64 million project. Here, he employs 140 guards. He estimated that security and related equipment on some projects could represent 20 percent of costs.

"This is an armed camp," Upton said. "We take fire and we return fire. If you don't they keep shooting at you. They hit soft spots. We try to be a hard spot."

TROOP NEWS

Families Remember

September 9, 2004 Matthew B. Stannard, San Francisco Chronicle Staff Writer

As the U.S. war in Iraq passed a grim milestone this week, 1,000 American soldiers killed in action, The Chronicle brought together family members from Northern California whose loved ones are among the dead.

"He was killed 100 days ago today," said Karen Meredith, Lt. Ballard's mother. "You just miss their voice. You miss every single day. And it isn't 100 days ago, it's one day 100 times over. ... When's it going to stop hurting? And when do you stop missing them?"

"It's harder every day," said Nadia McCaffrey, whose son, Sgt. Patrick Ryan McCaffrey of Tracy, was killed three months ago. "It's one day at a time, and frankly I don't think this is going to end until I die."

"Right after the twin towers fell ... I think I've never felt such camaraderie with Americans my whole 47 years of life," said John Layfield, whose son, Lance Cpl. Travis Layfield of Fremont, was killed in April.

"I think (Bush) used that to go into Iraq, where nothing was found. ... Yes, Hussein was a butcher to his people, and something needed to be done about him. He used weapons of mass destruction. Where are they? Show me. Why did my son have to -- why did our sons have to die?"

Cindy Sheehan held up a threadbare doll. "This is his teddy bear. He ate all the fuzz off of it while he was a baby, but he wouldn't go to bed without it. He would cry, 'Bear, bear, mama, bear.' He was my oldest," she said. "I know how worried their moms are ... I know the mom of the 1,000th soldier was praying all day, 'Please don't let it be my child.' "

NEED 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/> And join with Iraq War vets in the call to end the occupation and bring our troops home now! (www.ivaw.net)

1133rd Soldiers Get Ready To Leave For Middle East

October 11, 2004 Adam Sodersten, MASON CITY, Iowa (KIMT)

It's just about go time for some area National Guard soldiers. In just a few days 24 soldiers from the Mason City based 1133rd Iowa National Guard Transportation Company will be heading overseas. **This weekend Joyce and David Andersen, of Swaledale, went to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to say goodbye to their son Johnathon, who is one of those soldiers.**

"They seem good...they seem really good," says Joyce.

The unit will leave Fort Sill on Wednesday, but after that, there's only speculation.

"I don't really think that they know exactly...he just kinda well rumor have it possibly to Germany and then Kuwait," comments Joyce.

Once they get to the Middle East, David knows the battle will be completely different than it was the last time the 1133rd was in Iraq.

"Ya don't know who your enemy is because they're gonna sneak up on ya. They're not gonna come face to face with ya," comments David.

Being a military man himself, David offered his son the only advice he could.

"Just be careful and stay safe," states David.

Be safe...and a request to come back to North Iowa.

"I just grabbed him very tightly and everything and then I told him to come home...that's basically all that I can do," comments Joyce.

Congress Approves Doubling U.S. Troops In Colombia To 800

(New York Times, October 11, 2004) & Associated Press

The number of American military personnel in Colombia will double, to 800, in the coming months, based on a weekend vote in Congress. The 2005 United States Defense Department authorization act also permits the Bush administration to increase the number of American citizens working for private contractors in Colombia to 600 from 400.

Some lawmakers have said they are worried that piece-by-piece increases in assistance there could draw the United States into a quagmire like Vietnam. [Hello? Iraq?]

The bill restates the standing restriction against Americans engaging in combat operations in Colombia except when acting in self defense or attempting rescue operations. **[Exactly the same as the first U.S. military "advisors" in Vietnam. What a coincidence.]**

Rumsfeld The Union Buster

(Washington Post, October 11, 2004, Pg. B2)

The American Federation of Government Employees launches "DoD Action Week" today to protest Pentagon plans that will revamp the collective bargaining rules at the Defense Department. Pentagon officials are about to start writing regulations for a National Security Personnel System that will be published in the Federal Register in December. **The new system would change how Defense civilians are hired, paid and disciplined.**

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Iraqis Ungrateful To Be Re-Occupied! “We Will Not Support Imperialism.”

October 11, 2004 Dexter Filkins, NY Times

In the areas recently freed from insurgents, like Samarra and Babil Province, the attitude seems to be not one of gratitude, or even ambivalence, but of anger and resignation. [Imagine that. Silly Iraqis aren't grateful for being handed over to the Bush occupation.]

Leaders of Iraq's crucial Sunni Arab minority say they have failed to generate any enthusiasm for nationwide elections scheduled for January, and are so fearful of insurgent violence and threats that they can meet only in private to talk about how - or even whether - to take part.

What elections are you talking about said Raad Rahim Ahmed, 50, a resident of Samarra who said U.S. soldiers had killed his wife and two children when they cleared the city of insurgents last week.

"I've lost my entire family," he said. "Why should I trust this government? Why should I vote at all?"

"What we think is that people ought to vote," said Dhari al-Samarrai, a senior leader of the Islamic Party, a largely Sunni group. **"But people are telling us, we won't take part in the elections. What is the use, with all these bombings? The big tribes, Dulaimi and Jabouri, all of them are telling us this."**

Already, one of the largest independent Sunni groups, the Association of Muslim Scholars, has announced that it will not take part in the elections. The group claims to represent 3,000 Sunni mosques around the country.

"A lot of people want democracy here, but they are just not comfortable with elections under American supervision," Wamid Omar Nadhmi said. "If they don't meet our conditions, we will call for a boycott. Otherwise, we would be accused of being puppets of America." Nadhmi, like many other Sunnis here, is afraid to campaign or hold public gatherings, for fear that he will become the target of insurgents.

Although several Sunni-based political parties have taken root here, their leaders say their attempts to rally constituents are failing to resonate in the face of cynicism and violence. **Many of those who want to take part in the elections say they can do so only in secret, lest they risk assassination by Sunni insurgents.**

In the areas recently freed from insurgents, like Samarra and Babil Province, the attitude seems to be not one of gratitude, or even ambivalence, but of anger and resignation. [Imagine that. Silly Iraqis aren't grateful for being handed over to the Bush occupation.]

Such bitterness seems widespread in the Sunni Triangle. At a recent meeting in Baghdad, a tribal leader from Falluja, a town still under insurgent control, gave a grim assessment of the coming elections.

"You will not have one office to run the elections in Falluja," said Ismail Abdid Fayad, a tribal leader taking part in peace negotiations with the government.

"People will not vote. We will not participate in the elections. We will not support imperialism." "All the revolutions in Iraq have been made by the Sunnis," he declared. "We will make a revolution again."

Samarra Burning

October 03, 2004 Girl Blog from Iraq

The last few days have been tense and stressful. Watching the military attacks on Samarra and hearing the stories from displaced families or people from around the area is like reliving the frustration and anger of the war. It's like a nightmare within a nightmare, seeing the corpses pile up and watching people drag their loved ones from under the bricks and steel of what was once a home.

To top it off, we have to watch American military spokespersons and our new Iraqi politicians justify the attacks and talk about 'insurgents' and 'terrorists' like they actually believe what they are saying... like hundreds of civilians aren't being massacred on a daily basis by the worlds most advanced military technology.

As if Allawi's gloating and Bush's inane debates aren't enough, we have to listen to people like Powell and Rumsfeld talk about "precision attacks".

What exactly are precision attacks?! How can you be precise in a city like Samarra or in the slums of Sadir City on the outskirts of Baghdad? Many of the areas under attack are small, heavily populated, with shabby homes several decades old. In Sadir City, many of the houses are close together and the streets are narrow. Just how precise can you be with missiles and tanks? We got a first-hand view of America's "smart weapons". They were smart enough to kill over 10,000 Iraqis in the first few months of the occupation.

The explosions in Baghdad aren't any better. A few days ago, some 40 children were blown to pieces while they were gathering candy from American soldiers at the opening of a sewage treatment plant. (Side note: That's how bad things have gotten- we have to celebrate the reconstruction of our sewage treatment plants). I don't know who to be more angry with- the idiots and PR people who thought it would be a good idea to have

children running around during a celebration involving troops or the parents for letting their children attend. I hope the people who arranged the explosions burn within the far-reaches of hell.

One wonders who is behind the explosions and the car bombs. Bin Laden? Zarqawi? Possibly... but it's just too easy. It's too perfect. Bin Laden hit the WTC and Afghanistan was attacked. Iraq was occupied.

At first, any explosion or attack on troops was quickly blamed on "loyalists" and "Baathists" and EVERYTHING was being coordinated by Saddam. As soon as he was caught, it became the work of "Islamic extremists" and Al-Qaida and Zarqawi suddenly made his debut. One wonders who it will be after it is discovered that Zarqawi has been dead for several months or that he never even existed. Whoever it is, you can bet his name will three syllables or less because that is Bush's limit.

A week ago, four men were caught by Iraqi security in the area of A'adhamiya in Baghdad. No one covered this on television or on the internet, as far as I know- we heard it from a friend involved in the whole thing. The four men were caught trying to set up some explosives in a residential area by some of the residents themselves. One of the four men got away, one of them was killed on the spot and two were detained and interrogated. They turned out to be a part of Badir's Brigade (Faylaq Badir), the militia belonging to the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq . Should the culprits never have been caught, and should the explosives have gone off, would Zarqawi have been blamed? Of course.

I'm very relieved the Italian hostages have been set free... and I hope the other innocent people are also freed. Thousands of Iraqis are being abducted and some are killed, while others are returned... but it is distressing to see so many foreigners being abducted. It's like having a guest attacked in your own home by the neighbor's pit bull- you feel a sense of responsibility even though you know there was no way you could have prevented it.

I wasn't very sympathetic though, when that Islamic group came down from London to negotiate releasing Kenneth Bigley. I do hope he is returned alive, but where are all these Islamic groups while Falluja, Samarra, Sadir City and other places are being bombed? Why are they so concerned with a single British citizen when hundreds of Iraqis are dying by the month? Why is it 'terrorism' when foreigners set off bombs in London or Washington or New York and it's a 'liberation' or 'operation' when foreigners bomb whole cities in Iraq? Are we that much less important?

Mahdi Army “A Populist Movement”

04 October 2004 By Edward Wong, The New York Times

Graffiti in English decorated some walls: "Vietnam Street - We'll make your graves in this place."

BAGHDAD, Iraq, Oct. 3 - On the groom's last night as a single man, a bachelor party on his front lawn kicked off with song and dance.

"We love you to death, Moktada," a pair of singers crooned in praise of Moktada al-Sadr, the fiery anti-American cleric who, though absent, overshadowed the groom. "We love you as much as there are leaves on a tree."

Out came one of the groom's best friends, waving his arms like a carnival barker. "Those who follow the Americans are dogs," he yelled. "We swear by Moktada that we won't let our machine guns stop!"

Loyalty to the Shiite cleric burns fierce here in northeastern Baghdad, and especially in Sadr City, a vast slum of 2.2 million people, despite frequent American raids and almost nightly airstrikes. The American military has stepped up its campaign to rout the Mahdi Army, Mr. Sadr's militia, on its home turf here, to drive him to the bargaining table. **But it is often impossible to distinguish between civilians and fighters.**

A reporter, photographer and interpreter with The New York Times recently spent nearly 24 hours being guided through the battleground streets - and even to a guerrilla bachelor party - by one of Mr. Sadr's midlevel aides.

It became apparent that the Mahdi Army here is less a discrete military organization than a populist movement that includes everyone from doctors to policemen to tribal sheiks, and whose ranks swell with impoverished men willing to die.

The day began with a drive to the home of the Sadr aide, a slim, balding 35-year-old man who gave his name simply as Muhammad. Donkey carts plied the dusty streets, mounds of trash lined wide avenues and posters of chubby, black-turbaned Mr. Sadr were plastered across every block. **Graffiti in English decorated some walls: "Vietnam Street - We'll make your graves in this place."**

Muhammad's home was tucked into a narrow alley in the Chewadar neighborhood. A reeking channel of open sewage ran along the street. A boy dashed around with a toy rifle propped on his shoulder like a rocket-propelled grenade launcher. Nearby, other children played soccer in dirt lots, and women in black robes peeked out from their doorways.

The home was typical of many in Sadr City: a two-story ocher building, with an extended family of 35 squeezed into 1,500 square feet. Muhammad's family moved here in 1962 from Amara, a southern city, before his birth. He is the second-oldest of six brothers, many of whom are members of the Mahdi Army.

"If the Americans didn't try entering Sadr City with their tanks, I can guarantee you not a single bullet would be fired," Muhammad said over a lunch of lamb kebab, a

framed portrait of Mr. Sadr on the wall behind him. "Everyone here is part of the resistance."

Muhammad and several of his brothers ate lunch sitting on rugs in the bare concrete living room. Later, one of the brothers, Kassim, a Mahdi commander, picked up an AK-47 and disassembled and assembled it in a couple of minutes. "Mahdi Army basics," he said.

"I fought against the Americans twice in Najaf," he said proudly. "The battle in August was very bloody. There were two armies - one had much better technology, and there was no comparison. But we managed to stay for 26 days."

"We're willing to fight, and we won't let the Americans enter this city," he said, staring down the barrel of his rifle. That sentiment is widespread in Sadr City, where American patrols routinely encounter ambushes and roadside bombs.

In the afternoon, Muhammad drove his black sedan to a street that he said had been the target of an American airstrike three days earlier. Dozens of men from the neighborhood walked to one house and pointed out small indentations in flagstones in the outer courtyard. They said the craters had been made by shrapnel.

Looking in the house, Muhammad pointed to a pool of blood in a corner of the living room and to a family portrait on the wall. The parents and their three children were killed in the strike, he said.

"Everybody was asleep after midnight," a neighbor, Ahmed Faisal, 32, said. "The electricity went off, then the plane came after 1 a.m. It was very noisy."

Mr. Faisal emulated the sound of the plane firing, a jackhammer noise made by the cannons of an AC-130 gunship, which the Americans often deploy over Sadr City.

A senior military official said the strikes were not aimed at civilians, but there was no guarantee that civilian casualties could be avoided.

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

Pipeline Hit Again, Not Reported At Time

10.11.04 AP

Iraqi oil exports were halted from its southern terminal for a day **last week** because of insurgent attacks and the fires they started.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Iraq: Failure Is Not An Option: It Is A Certainty

September 26, 2004 William Pfaff, Seattle Times

Simply consider the numbers. Compare the ratio of troops (coalition plus Iraqi: fewer than 200,000) engaged today in an Iraq of 29 million people, with the total 500,000 American and 450,000 Vietnamese troops that were unable to pacify a Vietnam of 19.6 million people.

If John Kerry wins the U.S. presidency in November, he will find himself in the same plight as Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon when they took office. Each inherited another man's war. Each prosecuted that war — Johnson reluctantly, Nixon because he thought he could do better. Both failed and were destroyed by the war.

This does not have to happen to Kerry. There is an alternative. However, it is an alternative that he seems determined to exclude.

Johnson anticipated and dreaded his failure. He told his press secretary, Bill Moyers, "I feel like a hitchhiker caught in a hailstorm on a Texas highway. I can't run. I can't hide. And I can't make it stop." The murdered Kennedy's foreign-policy advisers told him that if he didn't press on with the war, "Asian Communism" would conquer one non-Western state after another — dominos tumbling. So did practically everyone else in the Washington policy community. It was one of those things "everybody knew."

Kerry expresses no such doubts. He apparently accepts what "everyone knows" in Washington today: that "failure in Iraq is not an option."

This is true, but not in the way they think. Failure is no longer an option; it is a certainty.

The questions that remain are failure's timing, and the gravity of its consequences.

According to the available polls, 98 percent of the Iraqis want the Americans to leave.

Simply consider the numbers. Compare the ratio of troops (coalition plus Iraqi: fewer than 200,000) engaged today in an Iraq of 29 million people, with the total 500,000 American and 450,000 Vietnamese troops that were unable to pacify a Vietnam of 19.6 million people.

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.

That's One Way Of Looking At It:

Lenin: From: **The Defeat of Our Government Aug. 1915**

The war cannot but call forth among the masses the most stormy feelings which destroy the usual sluggishness of mass psychology. Without adjustment to these new stormy feelings, revolutionary tactics are impossible.

What are the main currents of these stormy feelings?

1. Horror and despair. Hence growth of religious feelings. Once more the churches are full, the reactionaries rejoice. 'Wherever there are sufferings, there is religion,' says the arch-reactionary, Barres. He is right, too.
2. Hatred for the 'enemy,' a feeling carefully fanned by the bourgeoisie (more than by the priests) and of economic and political value only to the bourgeoisie.
3. Hatred for one's own government and one's bourgeoisie—a feeling of all class-conscious workers who understand, on the one hand, that war is a 'continuation of politics' on the part of imperialism, which they meet by 'continuing' their hatred for their class enemy, on the other hand, that 'war against war' is a silly phrase if it does not mean revolution against their own government.

It is impossible to arouse hatred against one's own government and one's bourgeoisie without wishing their defeat, and it is impossible to be a non-hypocritical opponent of 'civil' (class) 'peace' without arousing hatred towards one's own government and bourgeoisie!!!"

OCCUPATION REPORT

Surprise Surprise: Bush Regime Faking "Good News" About Iraqi "Security" Forces

Sean Flynn (*New York Times*, October 11, 2004)

The author of "3,000 Degrees: The True Story of a Deadly Fire and the Men Who Fought It" writes that **Iraqi security forces are in such dreary shape for the same reason the rest of the country is a spiraling disaster**: the Bush administration ignored the advice

of its own people and tried to do the job on the cheap. **To claim that 125,000 Iraqis will be "fully trained" by year's end is to redefine the term so far downward as to be meaningless. Thousands of police recruits are simply handed a badge and blue shirt on their first day.**

Worker Complained, So Mercenary Company Sent Him And 14 Year Old Son Into Falluja Unprotected

October 9, 2004 T. Christian Miller, L.A. Times Staff Writer

One of the highest-profile security companies in Iraq has been suspended from doing business with the U.S. government after being accused of overbilling millions of dollars through a series of sham companies.

Custer Battles, a security firm based in Virginia, sent fake bills to the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority that had run Iraq during the U.S. occupation, according to an Air Force memo obtained by The Times.

The company, which provided all security at the Baghdad airport, is also the target of a lawsuit unsealed Friday that accuses employees of systematically bilking U.S. taxpayers and threatening one worker and his 14-year-old son at gunpoint.

The firm, which has a former Republican candidate for Congress as one of its principals, is the latest in a string of companies linked to Republicans that have been accused of wrongdoing in Iraq.

The company is also under investigation by the FBI and the Pentagon inspector general's Defense Criminal Investigative Services, the memo said.

Mike Battles, one of the company's owners, unsuccessfully ran for the House as a Republican from Rhode Island in 2002. **He has also contributed to Republican causes and had received campaign contributions from the nation's top GOP officials.**

The Custer Battles case "is corruption at its worst," said Alan Grayson, a lawyer for the men who filed the lawsuit unsealed Friday, which is separate from the suspension action. "It's perpetrated by Bush cronies, and it's protected by the Bush administration."

Custer Battles was a fledgling firm with no experience in the security industry when it landed a \$16-million contract in the spring of 2003 to secure the Baghdad airport after the fall of Saddam Hussein.

The company hired Nepalese Gurkhas to fill out its limited staff and quickly expanded its presence. It won a contract in August 2003 to provide logistical support for a massive currency exchange in which Iraqis turned in trillions of old dinars for the nation's new currency.

That contract committed the Coalition Provisional Authority to paying for all the company's costs for setting up centers where the exchanges would take place, plus a 25% markup for overhead and profit, according to the Air Force memo signed by Deputy General Counsel Steven A. Shaw.

Custer Battles then purchased trucks, equipment and housing units to carry out the contract. It created a series of "sham companies" registered in the Cayman Islands and Lebanon, the memo said.

The companies were then used to create false invoices making it appear as though they were leasing the trucks and other equipment to Custer Battles. The scheme inflated the 25% markup allowed under the contract, the memo said.

In October 2003, company representatives accidentally left a spreadsheet in a meeting and it was later discovered by CPA employees. The spreadsheet showed that the currency exchange operation had cost the company \$3,738,592, but the CPA was billed \$9,801,550 — a markup of 162%. [Crooked and stupid.]

The false claims complaint said that after Isakson complained about Custer Battles practices, he and his 14-year-old son were held at gunpoint by company employees. The employees then kicked Isakson and his son off the airport base, leaving him to take a taxi through war-torn Fallouja to return to Jordan.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Lithium?



Miami

Ritalin?



St. Louis

Ask your doctor about which Bush may be right for you

Serious side effects may occur, including loss of appetite for reality and (if taken in conjunction with military enlistment) death. Side effects are similar to those experienced by citizens with placebo leaders and crazed dictators. Not to be taken while binge drinking or operating heavy machinery, such as an army.

Catastrophic Success

The Worse Iraq Gets, The More We Must Be Winning

Sept. 28, 2004 By William Saletan, MSN

When violence there was subsiding, he said it proved he was on the right track. Now violence is increasing, and Bush says this, too, proves he's on the right track.

On July 23, 2003, three months into the occupation, Bush scoffed that Iraqi insurgents were confined to "a few areas of the country. And wherever they operate, they are being hunted, and they will be defeated.... " A week later, he assured reporters, "Conditions in most of Iraq are growing more peaceful..."

A year later, the insurgents are not defeated, conditions are not more peaceful, the blanket of fear is spreading, cooperation is fraying, and attacks on U.S. personnel are growing bolder. Does this prove Bush is failing? No. It proves he's succeeding.

When the violence increased this spring, Bush, Vice President Cheney, and White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan said insurgents were growing "desperate" in their efforts to "derail the transition"—the handover of sovereignty scheduled for June 30. The violence proved Bush was on the right track, and the handover would soon be complete, demoralizing the enemy. The insurgents would be crushed.

Three months after the handover, the attacks continue to escalate. Is this failure? No, it's success. Things are getting even worse because we're doing even better.

Now it's the January 2005 Iraqi elections, not the June 2004 handover, that's supposedly inspiring the enemy's desperation. If we stay the course till January, we'll turn that corner we thought we'd turned in June.

"Yes, it's getting worse, and the reason it's getting worse is that they are determined to disrupt the election," Secretary of State Colin Powell insisted Sunday on *This Week*. "And because it's getting worse, we will have to increase our efforts to defeat it." **Bush understands that the resistance is evidence that history is on our side. As he explained Tuesday, the violence is growing "because people are trying to stop the march of freedom."**

If the situation in Iraq improves in the coming weeks, Bush will take credit. If it deteriorates, he'll take credit for that, too.

"Terrorist violence may well escalate as the January elections draw near," he warned Thursday. "The terrorists know that events in Iraq are reaching a decisive moment. If

elections go forward, democracy in Iraq will put down permanent roots, and terrorists will suffer a dramatic defeat."

So take heart. We've got 'em right where we want 'em.

NOT A SATIRE

October 10, 2004 The Korea Herald

The intelligence alert on possible kidnap attempts against Koreans came amidst increased security in Seoul and South Korea in general.

As part of security measures, the government is also planning to distribute publicly a booklet titled "How to Detect Terrorist Suspects" at major public gatherings and places. **It advised the public to watch out for anyone who leaves a bag in a public area, carries large amounts of cash, or wears thick, layered clothing in warm weather.**

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Got That Right

11 October 2004 By Justin Huggler, The Independent U.K.

A little way down the street from the carpenter's shop, Gholam Rabbani said: "There were a lot of violations. In Wardak, one person voted 100 times."

"If they declare Karzai is the winner, it will be a puppet government. It will be the puppet of Isaf [the international force in Kabul] and behind them the Americans."

CLASS WAR NEWS

Kicking Ass In Amsterdam; "To Hell With The Government"

2 October By Andy Clark, Radio Netherlands, in Amsterdam

Museum Square, in the heart of Amsterdam, is as large as several football fields.

But it was not big enough to hold the largest demonstration in The Netherlands for more than two decades.



The streets of the Dutch capital were jammed as more than 200,000 protesters turned up to vent their anger over the biggest cutbacks in public spending the country has ever seen.

As the numbers grew throughout the day the police had to ask people to stop making their way to the square.

Several streets ground to a complete standstill.

The protesters came from across the country.

Their numbers were bolstered by a deal struck between the unions and the national rail company to give free tickets to the capital for anyone taking part.

The demonstration's official slogan was the functional, if a little un-exciting, "Nederland Verdient Beter" - "The Netherlands Deserves Better".

But the home-made banners and slogans were far more colourful.

The country's Prime Minister, Jan Peter Balkenende was one of the chief targets.

The Dutch leader has been sidelined from duties for several weeks because of a nasty foot infection - not a very macho injury for a politician who, at the best of times, struggles with his image.

"To hell with the government," read one banner nailed beneath a plastic foot.

Another protester had made a puppet of Mr Balkenende, complete with bandaged foot.

Elsewhere, his head was transposed onto a statue of Saddam Hussein, a message on the plinth saying "Overthrow Balkenende".

Finance Minister Gerrit Zalm was also in the firing line: **"Throw Zalm in the Rhine,"** read one banner, another targeted them both under the title "Dumb and Dumber".

Chief among the protesters' concerns are government plans to scrap financial benefits making early retirement possible.

Plans to extend the working week to 40 hours, from the current 36, and proposals for cuts in sickness benefits are also a focus of anger.

Special early retirement rules for police and firemen are under threat and large numbers of emergency services workers took part. Currently, these workers can retire at 55, but there are plans for this to change.

"Can you imagine a 65-year-old fire-fighter carrying someone down a ladder? I can't. It's not possible, people can't work this long," said 50-year-old protester John van den Heuvel.

"Earlier we could retire at 55, but now we will have to work for an extra 10 years," said flight attendant Gert Jan de Vries from Amsterdam. "It's dangerous, we are there primarily for flight safety reasons but will someone of 65 really be able to do the job properly."

Sylvia Hendriks, 22, from Heemskirk is also angry about plans to cut back early retirement.

"My father was going to stop work in 2 years, when he was 60, but now it looks like he will have to go on until he is 65 and that is wrong," she said.

Pensioner Gre van der Valk, 65, made her way to Museum Square to make a similar point: "I know how good it is to retire early and that's why I'm here to protest. **It's sad that Mr. Balkenende is sick, but other than that he's a worthless prime minister.**"

The cutbacks being proposed by the government are the biggest in Dutch history.

The demonstration was organised by a broad coalition of Dutch trades unions - the FNV, CNV and MHP - representing workers from low, middle and even higher income groups.

<p>The unions say the cutbacks are being made at the expense of ordinary working people and those receiving benefits whilst people earning top incomes are left alone.</p>

RECEIVED:

**LOOKING FOR DOC. LEVY AND DONALD
DUNCAN**

From: "Joe Allen" joeallen705@hotmail.com
To: GI Special
Sent: Monday, October 11, 2004 9:45 PM

I was wondering if you knew how to get in touch with Dr. Howard Levy and Donald Duncan. I was hoping to interview them for the International Socialist Review. Let me know if you have any leads on them.

Joe Allen

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/qi-special/> ; www.qifightback.org ;

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

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