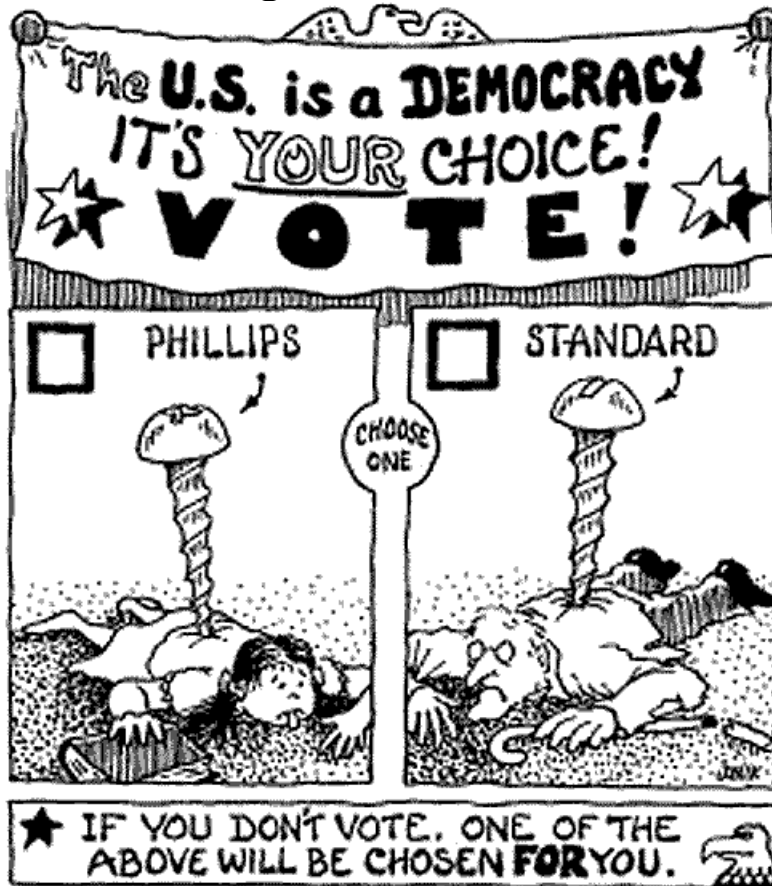


GI SPECIAL 2#B90

Voting - It's Your Choice



John Jonik is a cartoonist and activist living in Philadelphia, USA. He can be contacted by [email](mailto:jonik@earthlink.net).

About The Lampin Case: A Letter Comes From Abu G

To: GI Special
Sent: October 12, 2004
From: Soldier, Abu Ghraib
Subject: SGT Lampin

GI Special,

I am asking you to have what I am about to tell you posted on your news page.

This post pertains to Sergeant Lampin.

I am writing to you in secrecy here at the Abu Ghraib Prison. I do not know if Sergeant Lampin's wife knows about this yet, but in case she doesn't, Sergeant Lampin is not being treated fairly now more then anything.

There is another Soldier here with a P2 (permanent medical profile), and that Soldier is being sent home soon. If you recall in Sergeant Lampin's, wife's letters, Sergeant Lampin has a P3 (permanent medical profile).

I know what is going on around here, and it is not right. A great deal of the officers here are saying that he should be redeployed, but whenever Colonel Short, the commander of the 115th, starts asking questions, they all shut up and tell him what he wants to hear. I have seen and heard this with my own eyes and ears.

Just about everyday, I see Sergeant Lampin go to sickcall with a very noticeable limp, and the sense of pain in his face because of his knee. With all that has been going on now, some of the doctors are not doing anything for him.

A lot of people here read what you post on your site about Sergeant Lampin, and you should here what others say.

I wish I could tell you, but I don't think that is a good idea.

The only thing I can tell you is that a great deal of the Soldiers here including the Soldiers who are not part of this command believe that he should be sent back.

That is all I will say.

Abu Ghraib

**10.11.04
Comment From Brandie Lampin**

I am so glad that someone besides me has written GI Special giving their comment. I just wish there were more. [Re: Letter in GI Special #87]

Brandie Lampin

[Hey Brandie, you just got your wish come true. *This is letter #2.*]

The Lampin Case:

(Louisiana Report)

Louisiana Vets, Activists Join The Fight

From: Ward Reilly, Vietnam Veterans Against The War, Veterans For Peace
To: GI Special
Sent: Tuesday, October 12, 2004
Subject: **Louisiana Report**

I saw the piece you did on Sgt. Lampin. We are working with Brandie Lampin here, and have a meeting with Senator Landrieu Thursday, October 21 at 1 PM. a delegation will meet with her aides to demand that Tony Lampin, and all the troops, be sent home.

We formed two anti-war groups here in Baton Rouge and New Orleans (CAWI and C3), and we have had 25+ street protests combined in our two cities.

C3 means Concern, Community, and Compassion. It is, C3, our New Orleans based anti-war group, that is sponsoring/organizing the Lampin action. CAWI is the "Coalition Against War & Injustice" and is Baton Rouge based.

Beverly Rainbolt is the chief organizer, and of course we are all helping...we have a pamphlet being made with the facts of the case, and are flyering.

We coordinate all our activities, the first demonstration being 6 months before the war started.

We have also started the Baton Rouge Free Press newspaper a year and a half ago...I spoke at Tulane University at a Forum last Tuesday, with the subject being the potential Draft.

Antoinette Harrel-Miller has will feature the Lampin story on her cable-access show Tuesday, October 19, at 9:30AM and C3 Rep. Beverly Rainbolt will talk about the case and our Lampin event.

We meet once a week, and have since the summer of 2002, to fight against the wars in the Middle East.

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:

Pfc. Dies Of Wounds

October 12, 2004 U.S. Department of Defense News Release No. 1017-04

Pfc. Aaron J. Rusin, 19, of Johnstown, Pa., died Oct. 11 in Baghdad, Iraq, of injuries sustained on Oct. 10 when his military vehicle came under fire from enemy forces. Rusin was assigned to the 44th Engineer Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division, Camp Howze, Korea.

Another Soldier From Ariz. Killed

Oct. 12, 2004 Charles Kelly, The Arizona Republic

U.S. Army Pvt. Carson Ramsey, 22, a personable young man from Winkelman who enjoyed hunting, fishing and fast motorcycles, was killed Sunday in Iraq when an improvised bomb exploded near his military vehicle.

When he came home on leave this summer, he exhibited a workmanlike attitude to the dangers he faced, his father, Cecil, said.

"When he went back, I said, 'Aren't you worried about going back?' and he said, 'No, it's my job,' " his father recalled.

A member of the 1st Cavalry Division based in Fort Hood, Texas, Ramsey was planning to get out of the Army in February when he returned from his tour of duty in Iraq, his father said.

A 2001 graduate of Ray High School in Kearny, Carson did well academically and loved the outdoors, his father said. Kearny and Winkelman are about 90 miles southeast of Phoenix.

"He liked to hunt and fish," his father said. "He was going to get a Harley when he got back. He liked motorcycles."

Carson's latest enthusiasm was bow hunting. He had gotten a compound bow and was practicing with it in Iraq, his father said.

Carson was someone who got along well with people. "He was really outgoing," his father said. "Really friendly. He never got in any trouble."

Funeral arrangements are pending. In addition to his father, Ramsey is survived by his mother, Elaine; a brother, Bobby, 29; and two sisters, Irene, 24, and Sandy, 34.

Ramsey was the 34th soldier with Arizona ties killed in Iraq. And two died in Afghanistan.

Marine Wounded In Babil

12 October 2004 AFP

In northern Babil province, south of Baghdad, two suspected insurgents were killed and a marine wounded as US troops continued their one-week joint operations with Iraqi forces in the area, said the military.

THREE BULGARIAN SOLDIERS WOUNDED IN MORTAR ATTACK; SILLY COMMANDER SAYS “NO REASON FOR ALARM”

12 October 2004 Novinite Ltd

The three Bulgarian soldiers in Karbala, who were lightly injured by a mortar attack on the camp, are in good condition.

Soldiers' life is not at risk, announced Bulgaria's Defence Ministry Spokesperson Romyana Strugarova.

The incident happened on Monday, at about 11:20 pm Bulgarian local time, Defense Minister Nikolay Svinarov confirmed adding that the three injured were immediately rushed to the field hospital of the Kilo Base.

According to the Chief of Army Staff General Nikola Kolev, appropriate measures for tightening security at the base have been immediately taken afterwards and there was no reason for alarm.

U.S. Copter Shot Down In Hibet

10.12.04 Pakistan Times

Some Iraqi insurgents fired down a US helicopter in Hibet area of Iraq.

Fiji Mercenary Near Death

12/10/2004 ABC Radio Australia News

A former Fiji soldier working as a security guard is reportedly fighting for his life after being wounded in a bomb blast near the Iraqi city of Mosul.

Nearly 500 former Fiji soldiers are believed to be working in Iraq for private security organisations.

US Marines Raid Seven Mosques In Ramadi; Chief Cleric Taken Prisoner; Citizens Very Pissed Off

October 12, 2004 AFP & Reuters & By Alexandra Zavis, Associated Press & Aljazeera

RAMADI - US marines and Iraqi forces have kicked off pre-dawn raids on seven mosques in the rebel-bastion of Ramadi, prompting firefights in the city that left two Iraqis dead, say the military and hospital sources.

Anti-US fighters fired two mortars at the city hall and neighbouring police directorate on Monday night, sparking gunfire and rocket-propelled grenade exchanges, residents said.

U.S. forces Tuesday arrested the top cleric in Iraq's volatile western Anbar province. in the regional capital of Ramadi, witnesses said.

Cleric Abdel A'leem al-Saadi, the top Sunni cleric in Anbar, and his son, Usama were arrested at a mosque in rebel-held Ramadi and six other people were detained at other mosques, the witnesses said.

A prominent cleric, Shaikh Abd al-Alim al-Saadi, the provincial leader of the al-Anbar Scholars League, were also detained, Aljazeera reported.

There was no reason to arrest Shaikh al-Saadi, the spokesman said. He was in his mosque getting ready to perform prayers, he said.

"This is not the first shaikh the US forces have arrested," he said. "Many others have been detained before, such as Shaikh Uthman Mishaal, Shaikh Khalil Ata Allah and other imams, from inside their mosques by US forces," the AMS spokesman said.

Angry residents also accused US forces of breaking down doors and throwing around furniture inside the mosques.

"This cowboy behavior cannot be accepted," said cleric Abdullah Abu Omar of the Ramadi Mosque. "The Americans seem to have lost their senses and have gone out of control." [Busy winning more hearts and minds.]

Marine Corps Claims Resistance Now Has Combat Air Force (Or This Is The Most Witless Lie Of The War So Far This Year)

10.12.04 By Alexandra Zavis, Associated Press

At least 15 people were reported killed in an attack on an Iraqi National Guard outpost near the Syrian border. Residents claimed an *American* plane fired on the compound *but the Marine Corps said insurgents staged the attack.* [Either the resistance now has an air force, a previously well-guarded secret, or the “Marine Corps” has at least one lying stack of shit giving out press statements who’s too stupid to live. Hello? It was an *air* attack. You know, things that fly through the *air*? Get it? *Air* attack.]

The Iraqi National Guard outpost east of Qaim was attacked in the early hours of the morning. **Residents said U.S. warplanes were in action over the area, but the U.S. Marines said there were no American operations there and insurgents staged the attack. Between 15 and 20 people were killed in the attack,** according to Hamid Ahmed Ali, a city hospital official.

The Marines sent a team to the outpost to assess the situation and see whether any assistance was needed. **[Finding those deadly resistance planes might be a place to start. Or assisting the liar who gave out the press statement in removing his head from his ass.]**

<p>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.</p>
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Welcome To Camp Dirty Bird: Soldiers Weary Of Baghdad Slum, Iraqis & Mission

Oct. 11, 2004 By Patrick Kerkstra, Knight Ridder Newspapers

"And they're winning," the young officer replied. "It seems like it, sir. It seems like they're outsmarting us.,"

FORWARD OPERATING BASE EAGLE, Iraq - There's no shortage of dangerous, austere and just plain miserable military postings in Iraq, but the American soldiers of the 1st Cavalry Division bunking at this base just outside Baghdad's Sadr City slum might have drawn the shortest straw of all.

Since March, insurgents have flung more than 800 mortar rounds at Eagle, turning a walk to the mess tent into a life-and-death proposition. On patrol, the soldiers routinely encounter roadside bombs, small-arms fire and rocket-propelled grenades.

The constant combat and bleak camp conditions have pumped up the pride of many. They've seen the worst, and they have the swagger to show for it.

But seven grueling months also have chipped away at the optimism many had when they arrived, lending a jagged edge to their attitudes about Iraqis, the war and the prospects for success.

"I used to want to be nice and friendly with the Iraqis. Now I don't care. I'm all about getting home. I got a wife and baby, and I'm not going to take a chance that someone might be friendly and find out that they're not," said Spc. Jarred Mafouz, who's part of a tank crew.

The Dirty Bird, as Eagle is unaffectionately known, has none of the commodious lounges, movie theaters, bicycle fleets and other amenities that U.S. soldiers enjoy at other camps across Iraq.

"You hear people griping about how the swimming pool isn't working, the chow hall is too small, and I'm like, `We get mortared every night. What are you talking about?'" Pfc. Jeremy Chapman said.

The Dirty Bird convenience store consists of one small, dimly lit room lined with half-empty shelves and bizarre items such as dusty tins of sardines and just four magazine titles that were all, inexplicably, about hair: Bridal Star Hairstyles, Short Cuts, Sophisticated Black Hair and Celebrity Hairstyles.

"Yeah. Pretty depressing," Capt. Matthew Benigni said while giving a visitor a tour. "If you want something, call home. Care packages are very important here."

While troops at other Baghdad installations have been treated to live performances by the likes of the Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders, the only entertainers willing to risk playing at Eagle were the members of ThundHerStruck, "the ultimate all-girl tribute" band to rock group AC/DC.

But it's the pounding of mortar rounds, above all else, that makes Eagle one of the worst.

Virtually everyone has had a close encounter with an incoming explosive. They've killed one soldier and two contractors and injured about 120, all in a 60-acre camp

with little more than 1,000 soldiers. About 25 have been seriously injured, many of them losing limbs.

They grumble that the insurgents time their attacks for the breakfast, lunch and dinner hours, forcing the soldiers to don flak jackets and helmets just to get fed. Morning runs are no longer mandatory, given all the shrapnel.

"Everybody's had a close call. I've had about a dozen or so. Everyone's got the same story," said 2nd Lt. Brian Panaro. "Close isn't close anymore unless you're covered in dust."

Mafouz remembers speaking to his wife from the camp's phone center when a particularly fierce mortar attack began. One round hit the building, wounding several soldiers who also were trying to call family and friends.

"My wife's on the phone crying her eyes out. The mortars are landing," Mafouz said. "I'm saying, 'Look, I got to go help these guys.'"

Some of the soldiers said they'd become so accustomed to the explosions that they found them comforting.

"They rock you to sleep after a while. Boom. Boom. Boom. You feel the building shake. Like your mother rocking you to sleep," Chapman said.

Chapman, who's been sprayed with tiny bits of shrapnel from a roadside bomb while on patrol, had an equally close call on base when a mortar round landed right outside the company headquarters.

"My bottle of water got a Purple Heart that day," he said.

Given the conditions at Eagle - and the maddening inability to respond to mortar attacks with artillery for fear of hurting civilians - it's little surprise that the soldiers there relish their chances to take the fight to the insurgents' homes, instead of their own.

The day after a big operation in Sadr City, Panaro gleefully described to other soldiers how a speeding tank towing a disabled military vehicle demolished marketplaces, sideswiped cars and crushed houses.

Asked later if the offensives were wearing the enemy down, Panaro shrugged and said, "They're like cockroaches. You kill one and there's three more right behind them."

Several doors down, a smiling Benigni watched a video of a Predator drone wiping out a cluster of insurgents with a Hellfire missile. He replayed it for passers-by. "We're the tip of the spear, man," he told one of his men as they celebrated and relaxed after the exhausting operation.

Usually, though, the mood is less jubilant. Later that day, Benigni worked to raise the spirits of a young officer, likening the long fight with insurgents to a chess match.

"And they're winning," the young officer replied.

"No, they're not," Benigni said.

"It seems like it, sir. It seems like they're outsmarting us," the young lieutenant said. [Cool it, young officer. Your Captain is a silly, happy-talking fool, and having no grip on reality, will ignore everything you have to say. He gets off watching videos of missiles butchering Iraqis. That should tell you something very important right there. Going around babbling about being "the tip of the spear" and such bullshit, he's obviously got some pretty serious issues. Maintain a safe distance. Do not try to reason with it.]

The next day, Benigni's company continued the game, rolling outside the camp's gates to meet with local sheiks and visiting schools to survey reconstruction needs. It was a day of diplomacy and some small progress, the kind of work Benigni said he wanted to focus on more.

But when the company returned to Eagle, it had a new assignment, which had nothing to do with reconstruction: **Eight hours, beginning at 1 a.m., of watching a long stretch of a crucial road to prevent insurgents from planting any bombs, at least for one night.**

Benigni and his Humvee crew shared embarrassing stories and crude jokes and occasionally sang songs to stay awake.

"The soldiers at this camp, they know without a shadow of a doubt that they've been in some serious combat, in some of the worst conditions," Benigni said. "When they get back home they'll be proud of it." [Yeah, right. **The delusional system marches on.**]

"But," he added, "you won't have any trouble finding people to complain about it now." [And suddenly, reality.]

Simple Courtesy Call Takes An Armored Column: Insurgents Rule The Countryside

(Washington Post, October 12, 2004, Pg. 18)

Staff Sgt. Chris Fritz set out for a meeting with the mayor of Musayyib to discuss the needs of the city in a convoy of nine armored trucks equipped with .50-caliber machine guns and Mark 19 automatic grenade launchers. He was protected by three dozen Marines wearing full body armor and carrying assault rifles and assorted mortars and grenades.

TROOP NEWS

Iraq Troops Want "Fahrenheit 9/11"

(Chicago Tribune, October 11, 2004)

The movie "Fahrenheit 9/11" may be one of the most-watched DVDs among the troops in Iraq. [Hey George, your war is fucked.]

Why Did My Son Die? A Military Mom Demands An Answer

October 12, 2004 Common Dreams

"Mr. Bush is under no obligation to answer Mr. Moore's charges, but he will have to answer to Mrs. Lipscomb." The New York Times, June 23, 2004.

WASHINGTON - October 11 - **"How do you think it feels for a grieving mother to hear Charles Duelfer, the top CIA weapons inspector for Iraq, state last week that Iraq destroyed its weapons of mass destruction years ago and had no ability to produce more, under sanctions?"**

How do you think it feels to hear White House officials now admit that Saddam Hussein had nothing to do with 9/11?

I want to know: did Michael die for a lie?" asked Lila Lipscomb, the military mother from Flint, Michigan, who is featured in Michael Moore's "Fahrenheit 9/11" reading from the last letter her son, Michael, sent home from Iraq before he died.

A Son's Fallen Soldier

MARTIN C. EVANS, Newsday (New York) - October 11, 2004

BRIDGEHAMPTON, NEW YORK - The little boy keeps the basketball trophy his soldier father won in Kuwait on a shelf near his bed.

When it is time to sleep, he snuggles in a beige blanket, a comforter his father gave him to keep away the chill.

"They are going to be special to me for the rest of my life," said Brandon Pettaway, 11, "because I don't have a father anymore."

Yesterday, Brandon, a sixth-grade student at Southampton Intermediate School, buried his dad, Staff Sgt. James L. Pettaway Jr. Pettaway, 37, an Army reservist who

lived in Baltimore, died last Sunday at the Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas, of wounds he suffered in Iraq Aug. 27.

He was badly burned in Fallujah when his truck was hit by a roadside bomb, which killed Pfc. Luis A. Perez, of Theresa, N.Y.

Yesterday, the funeral for Pettaway packed about 200 people -- including three Army generals and an honor guard from the Maryland Division of Correction -- into the sanctuary of the First Baptist Church of Bridgehampton. More watched from a television monitor in the church basement, where cupcakes and coffee waited for a gathering planned for after the burial.

During the service, Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly, chief of the Army Reserve, approached Brandon and placed a Bronze Star in his hands -- a medal that had been awarded to his father.

As he did, a falling tear traced a crystal path from Brandon's face, gleaming for an instant.

Pettaway, who joined the Army three years after graduating from Center Moriches High School in 1985 and remained in the Army Reserve, was sent to Iraq for a second tour of duty. He said goodbye to his son in early August.

At a wake for his father the night before the funeral, Brandon approached a reporter and shared memories of his dad.

"I thought he was just playing with me," Brandon said, recalling the day his father told him he had been called to the battlefield for the second time in less than a year. "I didn't think he really had to go back until he was getting ready to go. He is always joking around, so I didn't believe him.

"When I heard about the accident, I was crushed."

Though Brandon's parents were divorced when he was young, his father had remained a joyful presence in Brandon's life. Pettaway, a Maryland correction officer who helped run a prison "boot camp," taught the boy how to play basketball, coaching him to dribble with either hand so defenders couldn't strip him.

"Once, I almost beat him," Brandon said. "But I never did."

And always, he counseled his son to avoid peer pressures that might lead him astray and to listen to his own conscience instead. "He taught me to be a man," Brandon said, "and to take care of my mom."

Pettaway's uncle, Winston Pettaway of Southampton, said his nephew had gone off to war willingly, but worried as he did.

Several soldiers who served with Pettaway during his first stint in Iraq said the battlefield seems more dangerous now than it did in the early days of the war. "The second time he went over there, you could tell he was frightened, because he would always say, 'Pray for me,'" Winston Pettaway said.

First Baptist, a modest church tucked just north of Route 27, helps glue together a small community of descendants of migrant workers and domestics -- African-Americans who have helped define the Hamptons for generations.

Residents, who yesterday swayed in rhythm to gospel hymns that filled the tiny sanctuary, then followed Pettaway's hearse to Southampton Cemetery, say they lean on one another to endure hard times.

First Baptist's former pastor, the Rev. Henry Faison Jr., twice flew with members of Pettaway's family to see him in Texas. Faison had been with Pettaway the day before he died.

In a eulogy, Faison urged the community to look out for Brandon. "He's a young man who will have to be raised without the loving care of his father. We have enough fatherless homes. But we have enough good men to meet that challenge."

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)

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Politician And Cops Killed In Mosul

10.12.04 Aljazeera

Armed men in a car killed a local council member as he drove to work in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul on Tuesday, a local government spokesman said.

Abd al-Majid al-Antar was shot dead at about 9.30am (0630 GMT) in an eastern district of the city, 390km north of Baghdad. His bodyguards survived

Three policemen and a civilian were killed, said Dr Dia Abd al-Karim at the city hospital.

Militants Behead U.S. Spy

Oct 12, 2004 (Reuters)

Militants from the Army of Ansar al-Sunna group said in an Internet statement on Tuesday it had beheaded an Iraqi because he had been spying for U.S. forces, Al Jazeera television said.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Najaf Destroyed In Order To Save It; A £280m Rebuilding Bill

(London Daily Telegraph, October 12, 2004)

When U.S. officials view the broken and pock-marked buildings of Najaf, they see an improbable success story. In August American troops bombarded the city to drive out militiamen loyal to the rebel cleric Muqtada Sadr. **They succeeded but caused Â£280 million worth of damage. Fighting highlighted the paradox underlying American efforts to crush an insurgency while rebuilding the country.**

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



John Kerry telling an audience October 11 in Santa Fe, New Mexico that on Iraq, he and Bush are only “about this far apart.” “I will never let the sun never set on the American Empire,” he said. He said he remains steadfast in his commitment to keep U.S. troops in Iraq, and would recruit 40,000 new troops to replace the ones he plans to kill and maim as the war continues. (AFP/Luke Frazza)

Kerry Campaign Exceeds Fund Raising Goal



The Kerry Campaign press office announced today their October fund raising goal had been exceeded, as banks, insurance companies, technology and other manufacturing corporations and America's wealthy and privileged showered money on his campaign. "We need somebody who can invade more countries," said one major donor. "Bush is toast. Nobody would believe him. Kerry can take out Venezuela, Iran, or anywhere else we decide to grab. All those chumps out there will love him for it, and what soldier wouldn't want to die for a vet?" (AFP/File/Choi Jae-Ku)

OCCUPATION HAITI



Haitian resistance uses rocks and other debris as barricades to block one of the main entrances of the predominantly pro-Aristide slum of Bel-Air, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2004. (AP Photo/Ariana Cubillos)

OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION

BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME NOW!

CLASS WAR NEWS

Pigs On Top Grabbing It All

Oct. 03, 2004 HOLLY SKLAR, Knight Ridder/Tribune & Wall St. Journal 7.20.04 By Jon E. Hilsenrath And Sholnn Freman

The economy is booming again, if you're a billionaire. The new Forbes list of the 400 richest Americans has 313 billionaires -- up 51 billionaires from 262 last year.

What's a billion dollars anyway? You'd have to rake in \$1 million every day for 1,000 days to reach a billion bucks.

The \$1 trillion in combined wealth held by the 400 richest Americans is nearly as much as the combined wealth of the more than 100 million households in the less moneyed half of the population.

It's boom time for billionaires, not for most Americans. **The economy is growing, but wages are falling, poverty is rising and the middle class is shrinking.**

As the Census Bureau reported recently, the number of Americans below the poverty line grew by more than a million people in 2003, reaching 36 million. The official poverty rate rose to 12.5 percent -- up from 12.1 percent in 2002, 11.7 percent in 2001 and 11.3 percent in 2000.

The poverty rate would be much higher if the poverty line were adjusted to realistically reflect the cost of minimally adequate housing, health care, food and other necessities such as childcare for employed parents.

A family of four was not considered poor unless their income was below \$18,810 in 2003.

Median household income (half earn below the median; half earn above it) dropped to \$43,318 in 2003. That's \$1,604 less than it was in 1999, when the median was \$44,922, adjusting for inflation. **The share of national income going to the middle class last year was nearly the lowest on record, with data back to 1967. The share going to the bottom fifth of households was the lowest on record.**

Households with incomes above \$1 million will receive tax cuts averaging \$123,600, in 2004, says the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. That will cause their after-tax income to jump by more than 6 percent -- widening the gap with those below.

Changes in federal tax policy legislated between 2001 and 2003 "ended up transferring income share from the bottom 99 percent to the top 1 percent," the Economic Policy Institute reports.

"To date, the recovery's primary beneficiaries have been upper-income households," concludes Dean Maki, a J.P. Morgan Chase (and former Federal Reserve) economist who has studied the ways that changes in wealth affect spending.

In research he sent to clients this month, Mr. Maki said, **"Two of the main factors supporting spending over the past year, tax cuts and increases in stock wealth, have sharply benefited upper income households relative to others."**

Longer-term issues are also at work.

Wage and income disparities between the rich and poor have generally been widening for nearly 20 years.

In 1980, the top 10% of households in income accounted for 33% of total household income, according to economist Emmanuel Saez at University of California, Berkeley. By 2000, that had risen to 44%. The figures exclude capital gains.

More Pigs At The Trough

9/29/2004 Jim Hightower, Hightower & Associates

I bring you tidings of great joy! **At last, our congress critters have done something tangible to lift people up from the economic doldrums we're in. They've raised wages in America!**

You're not silly enough to think for a moment that congress would raise your wages, are you? No, no Nanette – for the past several years they've kept the minimum wage in our country stuck at the paltry poverty level of \$5.15 an hour.

It's their wages that they've just raised. Again. By "again," I refer to the fact that this is the sixth pay hike that our lawmakers have bestowed upon themselves in the past six years. This time, the members will pocket an extra \$4,000 each, raising their gross pay to about \$162,000 a year.

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>

Taking It To The Streets



Thousands of Costa Ricans participate in an anti-corruption march in San Jose, Costa Rica, Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2004. (AP Photo/AI Dia/Albelardo Fonseca)



A clown holds a dog in a dress during a march of striking government employees in Bogota downtown, Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2004. Thousands of workers, students and Indians marched to protest government economic policies and ongoing free trade negotiations between Colombia and the United States. (AP Photo/Javier Galeano)



People push a statue of Christopher Columbus through the street after pulling it down from a plaza in Caracas, Venezuela, Oct. 12, 2004, to protest against Columbus Day, known in Venezuela as '**Indigenous Resistance Day**.' (AP Photo/Luis Noguera, El Globo)

Received:

Sign The Petition Please Help War Resisters Stay In Canada

Hi Everybody,

I am passing along this petition urging the Canadian government to give refuge to Americans refusing to participate in the US led war against Iraq. I hope you will add your name to the petition at the link below.

<http://www.petitiononline.com/resister/petition.html>>

Regina Peace Action Coalition

<http://reginapeace.tripod.com>

RECEIVED:

Solidarity With The Basra Oil Union - Please Read And Forward

From: "Ewa Jasiewicz"

Date: Thu, 07 Oct 2004

Subject: Solidarity with the Basra Oil Union - please read and forward

Attached is a call-out for solidarity and support for the newly organised Basra Oil Union, lead by Hassan Jumaa Al Saadi, the General Secretary of the Southern Oil Company Trade Union in British occupied Basra.

The Basra Oil Union needs recognition, support and solidarity – please read the enclosed information and history plus the letter from Hassan Jumaa himself.

All the best
Ewa Jasiewicz

Photographs of SOC trade unionists and reconstructed sites available

URGENT APPEAL: SOLIDARITY WITH IRAQI OIL WORKERS! SUPPORT THE BASRA OIL UNION!

The Southern Oil Company trade union is the biggest and most powerful union in the South and since the almost total paralysation of the Northern Oil fields in the North since last November, the only company regularly exporting.

The SOC Union is a leading force in the newly established Basra Oil Union, of which Hassan Jumaa, General Secretary of the SOC Union was unanimously voted President of in July.

The Basra Oil Union has stressed its autonomy and independence from any political parties and agendas and as such is a leading force in independent trade unionism in Iraq and against political party or governmental co-optation.

The Basra Oil Union represents over 30,000 oil sector workers in the British-occupied south.

The Union comprises:

1. Southern oil company- 15,000 workers

2. Southern gas company - 4,000 workers
3. Southern refinery company - 5,000 workers
4. Iraqi excavation company- 3,000 workers
5. The Oil carrier company - 1,750 workers
6. The Gas packing company - 750 workers
7. The oil production company - 2,500 workers
8. The oil projects company- 2,000 workers
9. The oil pipe lines company - 2,000 workers

Due to its' size and pivotal, crucial role to the Iraqi economy and also the profits and privatisation motives of the Occupation and neo-Baathi government, the Union is on the front line of the struggle to keep Iraqi resources and reconstruction in the hands of Iraq workers and communities.

SOC workers have achieved the following since the fall of the regime:

They have collectively physically expelled a number of their Baathist managers. Some however were brought back to work, albeit in different oil company sectors by the Occupation Authority.

Last Autumn workers also threw out Kellogg Brown and Root employees - both the imported Pakistani and Indian labourers and the top brass of the company, declaring the SOC a no-go zone for all foreign occupation-serving workers and interests.

KBR staff have been re-admitted now but their presence according to Hassan Jum'aa 'is very limited' and basically controlled by the Union.

Since the beginning of the Occupation, SOC workers have also carried out autonomous reconstruction of their workplaces, initially using spare parts from the local market and black market, before finally being offered and accepting parts from KBR. SOC workers reconstructed their own workplaces after the 1991 Gulf War. They see it as a matter of honour, pride, control over their workplaces and a way of smashing the Myth of 'West Knows Best' and western corporations rather than Iraqi working class people reconstructing their own country.

SOC Workers also succeeded in raising their own wages. In December they threatened to 'Shut Down Iraq from North to South' and go on armed strike in over the Occupation's Order Number 30 decreed wage table which set the minimum wage for all Iraq state sector employees at 69,000ID per month or £35.

The Union drew up its own wage table in accordance with rent, water, fuel and market prices and demanded that 155,000ID be the minimum wage plus risk and location benefits - on pain of strike action.

The Occupation capitulated and agreed to a negotiated 102,000 ID per month minimum plus 30% total wage risk and location payments. This was a massive and inspirational victory for Iraq workers.

Southern Oil Company workers and Basra Pipeline workers also shut down all exports for a period during the siege and attack on Najaf this August in resistance to the Occupation forces' devastation of the holy city and in solidarity with the people of Najaf.

The Basra Oil Union (which comprises the SOC Union) needs your help.

How To Help?

***Please pass motions and resolutions of recognition, solidarity and support through your local union branches**

***Write messages of solidarity direct to Basra oil workers. This can apply to unions or solidarity campaigns, NGOs, pressure groups, direct action groups, associations and organisations. Written collective messages or statements of solidarity make trade unionists in Iraq make feel much less isolated and vulnerable, and also show employers and occupation administration officials that there are people watching the backs of workers in struggle.**

In March 2004, the International Longshore and Warehouse Workers Union (ILWU) sent a letter of solidarity to workers at Umm Qasr, who were working for SSA Marine (formerly Stevedoring Services of America), ILWU workers' main employer. The letter expressed the shared experiences of lock-outs and struggle against the same employer and the same dynamics of oppression at the hands of the United States government. ILWU workers encouraged Umm Qasr workers to form a union and pledged their full support to them. A few weeks later a union was at the docks was founded.

All messages of encouragement and support will be compiled into an international solidarity portfolio and taken over to Iraq shortly.

***Raise money for the Union – from official Union donations to bucket-shakes, benefit gigs or jumble-sales – funds will go towards further autonomous reconstruction, strike support funds, publicity and out-reach for the Union. This too will be taken directly to the Union in Iraq shortly**

***Provide research on British companies currently actively privatising in the British-occupied south in terms of: corruption, corporate crime, ties to the British government and policy and practical response to unions, workers rights and strike activity.**

This information can be translated into Arabic and distributed amongst workers who have no information on the companies privatising their workplaces. US Labour Against the War compiled the excellent 'The Corporate Invasion of Iraq' which was translated into Arabic, distributed amongst trade unionists in Basra and earned USLAW a blessing from the Grand Ayatollah Sistani who also read it and said it would 'influence (his) view of the corporations active in Iraq'.

www.uslaboragainstar.org

Please spread the word about the achievements of these workers and their representatives whose struggle is set to escalate in response to the escalation of privatisation policies, political repression and violence of the Occupation and the neo-Baathi Alawi government. The repression against the Basra Oil workers could be murderous if their struggle is not supported and widely publicised. This is a struggle which has the potential to undermine not just the Occupation's free-market project in Iraq and the Middle East but the very occupation itself.

A kid on the street from Birmingham to Madrid to Warsaw to Harare will articulate that the reason Britain and the US launched a war against Iraq was 'for oil'. But what is behind the oil industry, the economic addiction to oil, what is its role and significance in perpetuating capitalism and global apartheid? And what are the conditions, experiences and capabilities of those who produce that wealth? What is their role in perpetuating or sabotaging the onslaught of occupation, the free market and neo-colonial agendas?

It's necessary for us to expand and explore that reality, create practical solidarity with the producers of that wealth, and offer an informed class and ecological analysis of that industry and its role in the literal refuelling of global capitalism.

An understanding of, and solidarity with, the struggle of oil workers in Iraq is key to re-invigorating the international resistance to the occupation and vital in keeping grassroots forces practically capable of ending the occupation, alive. This is a part of the resistance movement we can support practically and with practical effect.

For more information or for speaking possibilities please contact:

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(Ewa spent 9 months in Iraq, four of which were spent working with, supporting and reporting about the SOC and other Union struggles, including the Union of the Unemployed. She also organised the itinerary for and guided the US Labour Against the War delegation to Iraq in October 2003.)

Below is a letter from Hassan Jumaa, the Head of the Basra Oil Trade Union, which was founded in July 2004. It calls for international support and recognition of the Union's independent identity and role in struggling for justice and self-determination for the Iraqi people. The letter was read out at the Tolpuddle trade unionists commemoration festival in July and also at a Labour Against the War Labour Party Conference fringe meeting.

To Miss. Ewa

After 35 years of severe oppression by Saddam's Regime on trade unions and with the help of God, and after the start of the British occupation to the Mesopotamian land, the land of history and civilisation, several worker activists from the Southern Iraq oil company put their first poster in the offices of the company and asked to rebuild the trade union organisation in Basra and particular in the government offices where it is needed the most.

This organisation is needed to remove the oppression of the Baathist criminals. At the beginning we started with 30 activists and then we grew to several areas in Basra, including the deep port, north Rumaila and other places where we worked secretly as we were not sure what the occupying force would do.

With the help of God we started organising our trade unions in places of work and we managed to establish democratic trade union organisations in 10 different places within the Southern oil company area.

After we established all our organisations, I was unanimously elected the leader of the Basra oil company trade union. In last 31 years I have worked and leaved the criminal oppression of Saddam's regime.

We have now identified our goals for our trade union works in this critical time which are as following:

1. The trade union will work hard to improve the wages of the workers under these hard and difficult conditions.
2. To protect the oil installations from the terrorist attacks, as these installations are needed to improve the standard of living for Iraqis.
3. Ensure that workers work in accordance to the agreed time in to not give excuses to the occupiers to take over our oil installation.
4. To ensure that the union will be involved in all company activities to improve reconstruction.
5. To meet the managers within the ministry of oil, in order to explain how to improve the working and living standards of the workers.
6. The union is working hard to return all the workers who have been sacked for political reasons (This refers to workers sacked for activity against the Baath management under the regime and those active in various parties now)

Finally the trade unions in the Southern oil company are in a very difficult situation and we are asking all international trade unions to help and to co-operate with us, as we are a free trade union, which does not belong to any political party and we are an independent trade union.

We hope that God will help us all and will be with all of us.

Mr. Hassan Jumma AL-Assadi
Head of the Basra oil trade union

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