GI SPECIAL 2#B93

Vietnam: They Stopped An Imperial War
(From http:// www.gifightback.org)

Platoon Defies Orders In Iraq

Miss. soldier calls home, cites safety concerns

[This is the most important news story of the war, so far. Here is the weak link in the chain of Empire. T]

October 15, 2004 By Jeremy Hudson jehudson@clarionledger.com

http://www.clarionledger.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20041015/NEWS01/410150366/1002

A 17-member Army Reserve platoon with troops from Jackson and around the Southeast deployed to Iraq is under arrest for refusing a "suicide mission" to deliver fuel, the troops' relatives said Thursday.

The soldiers refused an order on Wednesday to go to Taji, Iraq — north of Baghdad — because their vehicles were considered "deadlined" or extremely unsafe, said Patricia McCook of Jackson, wife of Sgt. Larry O. McCook.

Sgt. McCook, a deputy at the Hinds County Detention Center, and the 16 other members of the 343rd Quartermaster Company from Rock Hill, S.C., were read their rights and moved from the military barracks into tents, Patricia McCook said her husband told her during a panicked phone call about 5 a.m. Thursday.

The platoon could be charged with the willful disobeying of orders, punishable by dishonorable discharge, forfeiture of pay and up to five years confinement, said military law expert Mark Stevens, an associate professor of justice studies at Wesleyan College in Rocky Mount, N.C.

No military officials were able to confirm or deny the detainment of the platoon Thursday.

U.S. Rep. Bennie Thompson said he plans to submit a congressional inquiry today on behalf of the Mississippi soldiers to launch an investigation into whether they are being treated improperly.

"I would not want any member of the military to be put in a dangerous situation ill-equipped," said Thompson, who was contacted by families. "I have had similar complaints from military families about vehicles that weren't armor-plated, or bullet-proof vests that are outdated. It concerns me because we made over $150 billion in funds available to equip our forces in Iraq.

"President Bush takes the position that the troops are well-armed, but if this situation is true, it calls into question how honest he has been with the country," Thompson said.

The 343rd is a supply unit whose general mission is to deliver fuel and water. The unit includes three women and 14 men and those with ranking up to sergeant first class.

"I got a call from an officer in another unit early (Thursday) morning who told me that my husband and his platoon had been arrested on a bogus charge because they refused to go on a suicide mission," said Jackie Butler of Jackson, wife of Sgt. Michael Butler, a 24-year reservist. "When my husband refuses to follow an order, it has to be something major."

The platoon being held has troops from Alabama, Kentucky, North Carolina, Mississippi and South Carolina, said Teresa Hill of Dothan, Ala., whose daughter Amber McClenny is among those being detained.

McClenny, 21, pleaded for help in a message left on her mother's answering machine early Thursday morning.

"They are holding us against our will," McClenny said. "We are now prisoners."

McClenny told her mother her unit tried to deliver fuel to another base in Iraq Wednesday, but was sent back because the fuel had been contaminated with water. The platoon returned to its base, where it was told to take the fuel to another base, McClenny told her mother.

The platoon is normally escorted by armed Humvees and helicopters, but did not have that support Wednesday, McClenny told her mother.

The convoy trucks the platoon was driving had experienced problems in the past and were not being properly maintained, Hill said her daughter told her.

The situation mirrors other tales of troops being sent on missions without proper equipment.

Aviation regiments have complained of being forced to fly dangerous missions over Iraq with outdated night-vision goggles and old missile-avoidance systems. Stories of troops' families purchasing body armor because the military didn't provide them with adequate equipment have been included in recent presidential debates.

Patricia McCook said her husband, a staff sergeant, understands well the severity of disobeying orders. But he did not feel comfortable taking his soldiers on another trip.

"He told me that three of the vehicles they were to use were deadlines ... not safe to go in a hotbed like that," Patricia McCook said.

Hill said the trucks her daughter's unit was driving could not top 40 mph.

"They knew there was a 99 percent chance they were going to get ambushed or fired at," Hill said her daughter told her. "They would have had no way to fight back."

Kathy Harris of Vicksburg is the mother of Aaron Gordon, 20, who is among those being detained. Her primary concern is that she has been told the soldiers have not been provided access to a judge advocate general.

Stevens said if the soldiers are being confined, law requires them to have a hearing before a magistrate within seven days.

Harris said conditions for the platoon have been difficult of late. Her son e-mailed her earlier this week to ask what the penalty would be if he became physical with a commanding officer, she said.

But Nadine Stratford of Rock Hill, S.C., said her godson Colin Durham, 20, has been happy with his time in Iraq. She has not heard from him since the platoon was detained.

"When I talked to him about a month ago, he was fine," Stratford said. "He said it was like being at home."

Comment From David Honish, Veterans For Peace

THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF THE END. WASN'T IT ABOUT 1969 WHEN WHOLE PLATOONS OR LARGER UNITS STARTED REFUSING STUPID SUICIDAL ORDERS IN VIET NAM? IF THE LEADERS FAIL TO LEAD, THEN THEY WILL HAVE TO FOLLOW THE PEOPLE.

In Your Dreams, Asshole

"The specter of Vietnam has been buried forever in the desert sands of the Arabian peninsula." George Bush, The First, Gulf War, 1991

"Fragging" And "Combat Refusals" In Vietnam

From: Military Law Task Force Website: http://www.nlg.org/mltf/

The question of crimes such as "fragging", "combat refusals", desertion and AWOL within the Vietnam conflict is one which brings emotions to the fore. Many veterans deny that "fragging" or "combat refusals" occurred, whilst others feel desertion and AWOL was merely a means of resisting what was felt to be an unjust and illegal conflict.

One partial reason for such sharp differences in the perceptions of veterans: support for the war back home, and the perceived prospects for victory, declined sharply during the seven years of heavy American involvement in Vietnam.

Indeed, military leaders themselves recognized a crisis among Vietnam soldiers in the war's last years. In an article called "The Collapse of the Armed Forces" published in the Armed Forces Journal in June, 1971, Colonel Robert Heinl declared that the army in Vietnam was "dispirited where not near mutinous."

Combat Refusal. Where soldiers refused to obey orders this became known as a "combat refusal". In a report for Pacifica Radio, journalist Richard Boyle went to the base to interview a dozen "grunts" from the First Cavalry Division. The GI's had been ordered on a nighttime combat mission the previous night. Six of the men had refused to go and several others had objected to the order. This is also referred to in *"NAM - The Story of the Vietnam War (Issue 8)"* where a photograph can also be found and

captioned "These battle-weary troops from the 1st Air Cav had just staged a "combat refusal" at the PACE firebase.

"They'll have to court-martial the whole company," one soldier told Boyle. "I say right away they can start typing up my court-martial."

The GI's told Boyle they objected not only to what they saw as a suicidal mission but to the war effort itself. Their commanding officer wouldn't let them wear t-shirts with peace symbols, they complained. "He calls us hypocrites if we wear a peace sign," one GI said. "[As if] we wanted to come over here and fight. Like we can't believe in peace, man, because we're carrying [an M-16] out there." Rough figures for "combat refusals" are indicated in column b. below.

Another soldier piped in: "I always did believe in protecting my own country, if it came down to that. But I'm over here fighting a war for a cause that means nothing to me." Historians say so-called "combat refusals" became increasingly common in Vietnam after 1969. Soldiers also expressed their opposition to the war in underground newspapers and coffee-house rap sessions. Some wore black armbands in the field. Some went further.

Fragging. When one American killed another American, usually a superior officer or an NCO, the term "fragging" came into use. Although the term simply meant that a fragmentation grenade was used in the murder, it later became an all encompassing term for such an action. It is known that "fraggings" did occur during Vietnam, but the precise number is uncertain.

"During the years of 1969 down to 1973, we have the rise of fragging - that is, shooting or hand-grenading your NCO or your officer who orders you out into the field," says historian Terry Anderson of Texas A & M University. "The US Army itself does not know exactly how many...officers were murdered. But they know at least 600 were murdered, and then they have another 1400 that died mysteriously. Consequently by early 1970, the army [was] at war not with the enemy but with itself." Rough figures for "fraggings" are indicated in column a. below.

Desertion and Absence Without Leave (AWOL). Figures for the Vietnam Conflict are also not known but figures for all US forces throughout the world are known. They are indicated in columns c. and d. below. The original source for these figures is here.

Year	Fragging	'Combat Refusal' convictions	World-wide figures for US Forces		Vietnam Drug Offences
			AWOL	Desertion	
	a	b	c	d	e
1965			Not available	Not available	0.25 per 1000

1966			Not available	Not available	0.25 per 1000
1967			46.8 per 1000	13.2 per 1000	0.25 per 1000
1968		82	138.5 per 1000	15.7 per 1000	4.5 per 1000 (marijuana) 0.068 per 1000 (opium)
1969	239	117	46.9 per 1000	21.1 per 1000	8000 arrested
1970	383	131	66.3 per 1000	25.8 per 1000	11058 drug cases (1146 hard drugs)
1971	333	Not provided	84.0 per 1000	33.9 per 1000	7026 hard drugs
1972	58	Not provided	74.9 per 1000	27.5 per 1000	
1973			77.0 per 1000	24.6 per 1000	

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:

Two More Florida Marines Killed

October 15, 2004 AP

BOYNTON BEACH, Fla. -- A Marine officer who volunteered to replace a fellow lieutenant who was killed in Iraq and a corporal who joined the Marines because he wanted to follow his fathers into a law enforcement career were both killed in Iraq, officials said.

Second Lt. Paul M. Felsberg, 27, of West Palm Beach, died Wednesday from injuries received from enemy action in Al Anbar Province, Iraq, according to officials at Camp Pendleton. His family was told he died on the way to the hospital.

Cpl. Ian T. Zook, 24, of Port St. Lucie, was killed Tuesday in Al Anbar Province, the Department of Defense said.

He was completing school when he answered a call for volunteers to replace a lieutenant killed in Iraq.

"I told him he was crazy," his mother, Arlene Felsberg, told The Palm Beach Post. "He said, 'This is what I signed up to do, this is what I trained to do, and that's what I do."'

He arrived Sept. 2 in Iraq, which he described in an e-mail as "kind of like the wild west." Meanwhile, his mother feared he would be killed, or he would return maimed.

"Now," she sobbed, "I'd take him in as many pieces as I could have had him."

A straight A-student, Ian Zook was valedictorian at Faith Baptist School in Fort Pierce in 1999. He performed mission work during high school and attended a year of Bible college while deciding his future.

The family received a photo of him just last week, standing beside a dusty Humvee in Anbar province.

Arkansas Soldier Dies Of Wounds

October 15, 2004 U.S. Department of Defense News Release No. 1029-04

Spc. Ronald W. Baker, 34, of Cabot, Ark., died October 13th in Landstuhl, Germany, of injuries sustained on October 7th in Taji, Iraq, when a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated near his patrol vehicle. Baker was assigned to the 39th Support Battalion, Arkansas National Guard, Lonoke, Ark.

Slain Marine Is County's First Casualty

Oct. 15, 2004 By CLARISSA ALJENTERA Herald Staff Writer

Nineteen-year-old Victor A. Gonzalez usually called his family at 1 a.m. to tell them he loved them. But it was a knock on the door, not a ringing phone, that roused the Pajaro family Thursday morning.

Marines at the home of Sergio and Amalia Gonzalez told them their son was dead.

"He used to call us at 1 a.m. from Iraq to say that he loved us," said his sister Edenia, 15.

"He was scared of never coming back," Edenia said.

Family members were surprised with Gonzalez's decision to join the Marines and never gave his parents a clear answer about his choice.

His sister described Victor, the oldest of four siblings, as the tough guy in the family.

He worked with the police for three years and was highly regarded, Watsonville Police Capt. Eddie Rodriguez said.

Gonzalez was back in the area in September and spent almost every day at the station.

Gonzalez had desperately wanted to be a police officer after spending endless hours riding around with police officers and just hanging out with officers in his down time.

Racine Marine Killed After Only A Few Weeks In Iraq

10.15.04 RACINE (AP) -- **Laura Watson will never forget the day Marine Lance Cpl. Daniel Wyatt proposed.**

It was March 9 -- the same day he was called up for active duty that would eventually take him to Iraq, where he died this week.

"He proposed to me at eight o'clock in the morning, and at eight at night, 12 hours later, he got the call.

"I was bawling my eyes. I didn't want him to go," his fiancee said Thursday.

"He was like, 'I've been training for three years. This is the time people need me to help.'"

Wyatt, 22, a rifleman from Racine, was killed Tuesday in the Babil province southwest of Baghdad.

Family members described Daniel as quiet but venturesome, and a lover of music, reading history and sports. His mother died when he was a boy, and the family later moved from Prospect Heights, Ill., to the Racine area in 1992, Sullivan said.

Senator Murray Demands Rumsfeld Help Supply Base "Mortaritaville"

(Baltimore Sun, October 15, 2004)
A member of the Senate Armed Services Committee is pressing Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld for more troops to protect the largest U.S. supply base in Iraq—dubbed "Mortaritaville" because of the frequency of mortar and rocket attacks—**after the base commander's requests for more troops were rejected.** The senator, Patty Murray, is a Democrat who represents Washington state, the home of the Army National Guard unit serving at the embattled base.

WELCOME TO THE GREEN ZONE CAFE

Remains of the Green Zone Cafe, Oct. 15, 2004. (AP Photo/John Moore)

Army Hospital Flooded With Green Zone Explosion Victims

October 15, 2004 By Edward Harris, Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq — **Little remains of the once-popular Green Zone Cafe except overturned tables, body parts, shattered glass and shreds of plastic sheeting — reminders of Thursday's deadly attacks inside Baghdad's most heavily secured area.**

“When you’re in a fixed site like this (Green Zone), they’re going to get you. You can’t run away,” said an Army sergeant surveying the site who requested anonymity. “We don’t know how long it took them to build (the bomb) or how. Maybe there are more. “

Much of the explosion’s blast was directed downward, he said, pointing to a three by three foot wide hole created by the blast. The cafe’s plastic walls probably kept the casualty toll down, he said. “If this had been a stone structure, probably no one would have lived,” he said.

Flies swarmed on the grisly remains, including a piece of what appeared to be a human skull, still lying at the cafe.

At the Ibn Sina hospital inside the Green Zone, American officials said three victims had been transferred to another medical facility in Iraq, but that five remained in intensive care.

One of the patients, identified as an American civilian contractor, could be seen in the intensive care unit after brain surgery to repair injuries from the explosion. The exact number of wounded in the blast still in the hospital wasn’t immediately available.

Medical staff were treating victims for broken limbs, burns, shrapnel wounds and other wounds.

“We filled up this whole damn place. We had wounded in the hallways,” said Lt. Col. Greg Kidwell, of the Army’s 31st Combat Support Hospital, and chief nurse of the emergency room.

“There were lots of body parts; they found pieces on the roofs nearby,” said the 49-year old from Clarksville, Tennessee.

Recovering in one room was Michael Fitzpatrick, a British civilian contractor, who had his back and head riddled with small shrapnel wounds, burns on his legs and arms. “I was sitting in the Green Zone Cafe, having a coffee. Then there was this incredible explosion and I was somersaulting in the air,” said the 32-year old from Leyland, England.

“I thought I was dead. But I got up and I was on fire, but I put out the flames. Next to me there was a woman on fire. I told her that Jesus loved her and help was on the way. When some soldiers came in with a blanket for her, I got up and walked to the hospital.”

BE ADVISED:

NEW WEAPON DEPLOYED BY RESISTANCE

To: GI Special
From: Soldier, Salah Ad Din
Sent: October 14, 2004 4:24 PM
Subject: roadside bombs

just a quick bit of info:

if you dig thru the news about some army engineers who were killed in baghdad today by a roadside bomb, you may (or may not, i doubt if this will actually go public) find that the new roadside bomb the insurgency is using is no fucking joke!

its actually something us combat units have been dreading since we got here. luckily for us, the iraqis never figured it out until now.

the new roadside bomb is what we call a "shape charge". the technique is actually nothing new at all. its been used all throughout modern warfare and is strikingly similar to our claymores.

all it is really is a metal tube, approximately 6-8 inches in diameter. this tube is packed with a mortar round (same thing rebel forces have been using this whole time), packed with any random jagged objects that would serve as shrapnel, and the most key ingredient part is **[deleted by GI Special].**

when this thing fires, the tube actually **[deleted by GI Special].** this, plus the initial explosion and shrapnel, acts sort of like a shotgun round using .00 shot as the projectile.

basically, this **[deleted by GI Special]** is very fucking powerful.

it will penetrate our toughest up-armor truck, including the turret of our stout armored tanks. it goes thru the armor like a hot knife thru butter. today, from what we were told, those soldiers in baghdad who died were hit with this shape charge. the driver and front passenger were mangled and killed immediately. the gunner died later as a result from wounds.

this shit is serious. all the iraqi has to do is place the charge firmly in the ground, hide it just as well as he has been doing, and aim it in the direction that would do the most damage. if nothing we have will stop a shape charge, then i would have to guess that there will be many more deaths in roadside bombs in the not so distant future.

i dont know if the technicals for this bomb should go public. if the wrong sources read it, it could actually mean more casualties. **[which is why deleted by GI Special. The resistance obviously already knows, since they're turning them out, but we wouldn't want our very own homegrown neo-Nazi militia assholes trying it out.]**

hey, the way i see it, if it raises awareness of the ingenuity of the resistance in iraq, print it. im all for it. and its no secret, and these new roadside killers will certainly be used much more frequently as they see how effective they really are.

looks like we're fucked.

Soldier Asks "How Many Of Us Have Gotta Die Before We Get To Go Home?"

October 15, 2004 Borzou Daragahi, Chronicle Foreign Service, San Francisco Chronicle

In Baquba, a hotbed of insurgency, a soldier with the Army's 4th Infantry Division who wished to remain anonymous, says, "The only question for us is how many of us have gotta die before we get to go home."

Fifteen years ago, Iraqi exile Kanan Makiya published "The Republic of Fear," a terrifying, surreal account of a country where President Saddam Hussein's security apparatus wrought havoc on the lives and psyches of ordinary Iraqis. Today, the country feels almost as surreal and terrifying, with a new kind of fear -- that the violence, the hatred, the chaos of "liberated" Iraq keeps edging closer to one's own life, family and closest friends.

Car bombs and mortar fire shake the day and night. A trip to the supermarket becomes a life-threatening exercise when a gunfight erupts outside. **An Iraqi teenager wearing an AC Milan hat glares at an American in a guard post. The burly soldier, carrying an M-16, stares back, stone-faced.**

Shop owners who used to welcome foreign reporters with tea now politely but firmly order them out. "I'm sorry, it's not you," one shop owner explains. "I'm just scared someone will target my store because they see foreigners here. "

At a stall in the Bab al Sharji "thieves market" -- a sprawling bazaar in the old section of Baghdad now filled with pickpockets, car thieves and prostitutes -- 13-year-old Allawi Ali Haydar does a brisk business selling videos of insurgents fighting U.S. forces and Iraqi national guards. Bloody scenes flickering on a monitor show the Mahdi Army militia of firebrand cleric Muqtada al-Sadr firing on U.S. soldiers from alleyways.

A little way down the pockmarked Sadr City road, past a blue and-white Mercedes bus riddled with bullet holes, a smiling Mahdi Army fighter is giving orders. He has an infectious laugh and flashes perfect teeth, giving his name as Ali "Abu Hossein." At 24, he leads a group of pumped-up followers -- some as young as 12 -- for a night of what passes for fun in Sadr City: resetting remote control bombs that failed to detonate during the previous night's battles with U.S. soldiers.

A group of Iraqi police stands 20 feet away. "The police are with us," says Ali. "Or they are afraid," says one of his followers.

Throughout the country, graffiti-covered walls read "Iraq will be America's graveyard," "Long live the holy warriors," "The occupier will leave, by God," and "Traitors and spies beware."

Paranoia infects every move, even among hardened foreign correspondents - - fear of being followed or of being sold out for a few hundred dinars to kidnappers, or that the next car bomb could have one's own name on it.

"We have to keep moving," a journalist's Iraqi translator says, abruptly ending an interview. "We'll be safer if we keep moving. Let's get out of here. "

The dwindling cadre of U.S. officials in Baghdad continues to express unbridled optimism for the future of Iraq and America's aims.

But Thursday's bomb attacks in the Green Zone proved even that fortress, home to U.S. and Iraqi officials, is no longer safe.

"I like the Iraqi people," says Pfc. Isaac Staley, 30, of Springfield, Ore., standing guard at a joint U.S. Army-Iraqi police checkpoint in central Baghdad. "But there's so much separating them from us, from our Western civilization, that it's hard to get past. There's prejudice. ... There's prejudice on our side, and there's prejudice on their side."

The Iraqi police radio crackles out an all-points bulletin. **"A guy with a beard named Mohammad," says the dispatcher. "If you see him, detain him."** A Black Hawk helicopter roars overhead. Then another one.

Many soldiers suspect the people who smile at them during the day are the ones firing rocket-propelled grenades at them by night. "Don't trust anyone, not even the 10-year-old kid on the street," says U.S. Army Capt. Jeff Mersiowsky of Tucson.

In Baquba, a hotbed of insurgency, a soldier with the Army's 4th Infantry Division who wished to remain anonymous, says, "The only question for us is how many of us have gotta die before we get to go home."

For droves of young Iraqis who have grown weary of the fear and paranoia, passport offices have become popular destinations. Ahmad Ibrahim, 21, worked as a translator for the U.S. Army, an $800-a-month job as dangerous as any in Iraq. Iraqis on the street told him he was a traitor. Three of his friends who were translators have been killed. He

found one of his friends, Mohammad, who had been abducted -- lying close to the river, a bullet in his head.

Still, he stayed on. But when a battalion commander handed him a pistol during a violent confrontation with insurgents and advised "Watch your back," Ibrahim knew it was time to go.

"I didn't sign up for this. I just wanted to be an interpreter," he says after he was granted a visa. "I want to leave, but it's still my country. I feel so bad about it. **Everything is starting to get worse and worse."**

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT THE NEW TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation, the cuts to veterans' benefits, or the dangers of depleted uranium - is the first reason Traveling Soldier is necessary. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces. Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces. If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers. http://www.traveling-soldier.org/ And join with Iraq War vets in the call to end the occupation and bring our troops home now! (www.ivaw.net)

ENOUGH
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW

Humvee vehicle burns following attack in Mosul, October 13 (Namir Noor-Eldeen: Reuters)

TROOP NEWS

“Never Leave A Fallen Comrade?” Government’s New Motto: “Always Shit On A Fallen Comrade”

Oct. 14, 2004 By BRIAN ROSS, DAVID SCOTT and MADDY SAUER, ABC News

"Where are the politicians? Where are the generals?" he asked. "Where are the people that are supposed to take care of me?"

Many of the severely wounded soldiers returning from Iraq face the prospect of poverty and what they describe as official indifference and incompetence.

"Guys I've met, talking to people, they'd be better off financially for their families if they had died as opposed to coming back maimed," said Staff Sgt. Ryan Kelly, who served as a civil affairs specialist for the Army while in Iraq.

On July 14, 2003, the Abilene, Texas, native had been on his way to a meeting about rebuilding schools in Iraq when his unarmored Humvee was blown up. A piece of shrapnel the size of a TV remote took his right leg off, below the knee, almost completely, Kelly said

Kelly attests to receiving excellent medical care at Ward 57, the amputee section of Walter Reed, but said he quickly realized that the military had no real plan for the injured soldiers. Many had to borrow money or depend on charities just to have relatives visit at Walter Reed, Kelly said.

"It's not what I expected to see when I got here," he said. "These guys having to, you know, basically panhandle for money to afford things."

Perhaps as a sign of the grim outlook facing many of these wounded soldiers, Staff Sgt. Peter Damon, a National Guardsman from Brockton, Mass., said he is grateful for being a double amputee.

"Well, in a way, I'm kind of lucky losing both arms because I've been told I'll probably get 100 percent disability," he said.

Damon, a mechanic and electrician, lost both arms in an explosion as he was repairing a helicopter in Iraq. He initially woke up in the hospital worried and anxious to learn that both forms of livelihood were taken away from him.

"Now what am I doing to do?" Damon said, faced with the prospect of supporting his wife Jennifer and two children. "I can't do either, none of those, with no hands."

The military fails to provide a lump sum payment for such catastrophic injuries. And Damon still has not heard from the military what they plan to give in terms of monthly disability payments.

The last time Damon asked about the payments, he was told by the military that his paperwork had been lost.

"And then when I went to go back to inquire about it again, just to ask a question, I just wanted to see if they had found my paperwork, I was told I had to make an appointment and to come back five days later," he said.

Jennifer Damon said the shock of her husband returning with no arms has been replaced by the fear of destitution, as well as a frustration over her husband's final discharge. Like his disability benefits, Peter's release is being held up by the lost paperwork and unanswered phone calls.

"It's hard to understand," she said. "I mean, I need him more than they need him right now. It's been a long time. You've had him for a long time. I want him back."

Staff Sgt. Larry Gill, a National Guardsman from Semmes, Ala., wonders whether his 20 dutiful years of military service have been adequately rewarded.

Last October, Gill injured his left leg when on patrol during a protest outside a mosque in Baghdad. A protester threw a hand grenade which left Gill, a former policeman, with leg intact, though useless. He received a Purple Heart from the military, but no program, plan, or proposal of how to make a living in civilian life.

"It's not fair, and I'm not complaining," Gill said. "I'm not whining about it. You know, I just, I just don't think people really understand what we're being faced with.

Gill expects he will have to sell his home, the dream house he and his wife Leah designed and built, where they raised their children.

"I've never questioned my orders," he said. "I've slept with rats and stood in the rain and wondered why I was standing in the rain, and, you know, for my children to have to do without based on a lack of income from me, it's frustrating."

His wife Leah Gill agreed. "I just don't feel we should have to uproot because of an injury that he received while he was serving the country," she said. "It shouldn't come down to that."

Gill and the others in Ward 57 have had their pictures taken frequently with visiting politicians.

"Where are the politicians? Where are the generals?" he asked. "Where are the people that are supposed to take care of me?"

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.

Chemicals Sickened '91 Gulf War Veterans, Latest Study Finds

(New York Times, October 15, 2004, Pg. 1)
A federal panel of medical experts studying illnesses among veterans of the 1991 Persian Gulf was has broken with several earlier studies and concluded that many suffer from neurological damage caused by exposure to toxic chemicals, rejecting past findings that the ailments resulted mostly from wartime stress. Story at: http://www.veteransforcommonsense.org/NewsArticle.cfm?ID=2217),

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Paralyzed Soldier Has No Idea Why The Fuck They Were Sent To War

Bob Herbert
(New York Times, October 15, 2004)
An Army sergeant paralyzed from injuries suffered from a roadside bomb in Iraq says "We were over there, all these young guys, doing our jobs, but we really didn't know why we were there," he says. "I ask myself, 'What was our purpose?' And to this day I still can't figure out our purpose for being there."

Auditors Question $31.6 *Million* Handled By Iraq Commanding Officers: Paperwork Gone AWOL

15 October 2004 By Larry Margasak The Associated Press

Washington - U.S. and Iraqi officials doled out hundreds of millions of dollars in oil proceeds and other moneys for Iraqi projects earlier this year, but there was little effort to monitor or justify the expenditures, according to an audit released Thursday.

Files that could explain many of the payments are missing or nonexistent, and contracting rules were ignored, according to auditors working for an agency created by the United Nations.

In a program to allow U.S. military commanders to pay for small reconstruction projects, auditors questioned 128 projects totaling $31.6 million. They could find no evidence of bidding for the projects or, alternatively, explanations of why they were awarded without competition.

Ex-Agawam Man Dies On Duty; "We're All Very Mad At The Government."

October 15, 2004 The Republican

AGAWAM - City native Jeremy Regnier, 22, was killed Wednesday when his armored vehicle drove over an improvised bomb during a patrol in Iraq.

"We still can't believe it," his aunt, Sherry Velozo of Agawam, said yesterday. "We're all still trying to wake up, and hope it's a nightmare. We know it isn't, but it's just a very hard thing. He was such a young person."

"He was fun-loving kid," Kip Regnier said. "He was great."

Family members said Regnier hoped to make a good life for himself in the Army. He dropped out of Littleton High School after the 11th grade, but earned an equivalency diploma while working manufacturing jobs.

"He wanted to better himself," another aunt, Judy Ash, told the Caledonian-Record.

Velozo said Kevin didn't encourage his son to re-enlist.

"Right now he's blaming himself," Velozo said.

"We're all very mad at the government," Velozo added. "We just don't think they should have been over there."

Stop The Loss Of Freedom!

Soldiers Fighting Stop-Loss Bullshit

10/14/2004 Orange County Register Editorial Board , Orange County Register (California)

Two members of the California National Guard have filed a suit contending that the military's controversial "stop-loss" program, which forces those whose enlistment is about to run out to stay in the military, is illegal when applied to National Guard soldiers. About 40,000 National Guard members are now deployed in Iraq.

"John Doe," identified only as a member of the 2668th Transportation Company and "married and the father of two young children," is about to become one of them. His unit left last Wednesday for training at Ft. Lewis in Washington state. It is expected to depart for Iraq in seven weeks or so.

Both "John Doe" and another National Guard member who filed suit in August are in the National Guard "Try One" program reserved for military veterans. **The program allows veterans to bypass basic training while enjoying military education and family medical benefits for a one-year trial period. Before their one year was up, however, they were called under stop-loss orders for an 18-month tour that includes deployment to Iraq.**

Attorneys for the soldiers say that the 9/11 commission's report that found no "collaborative operational relationship" between Iraq and al-Qaida means deployment to Iraq is not covered by an executive order written in response to 9/11.

They argue additionally that the executive order doesn't cover "nation-building," and that **in the absence of a declaration of war by Congress, an involuntary call is a violation of the National Guard enlistment contract.**

Joshua Sondheimer, the San Francisco attorney who is handling these cases, told us he expects the federal District Court in Sacramento to hear the request for a preliminary injunction within five weeks.

He points to a law that says National Guard members can't be kept in federal service beyond their period of enlistment.

Although it would be foolish to predict how a court will rule, this case suggests that the policy may be not only objectionable but illegal. **We are especially pleased that the case raises the issue that the U.S. Constitution gives Congress - not the president acting unilaterally - the power to declare war. That check on executive power has been ignored for too long.**

If "John Doe" wins this case, it will probably open the legal floodgates for other soldiers to challenge stop-loss orders.

That would be healthy. It is important for a country that claims to be fighting in part for the rule of law to do so in ways that uphold rather than undermine the rule of law.

Censored At Military Base Theaters, 9/11 DVD Is A Hit With Ranks Anyhow

10/11/2004 Nancy Montgomery , Stars and Stripes

"Anything that makes the government look bad, they don't want us to see." "It almost made me want to throw my ID away,"

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — **The highest-grossing documentary in movie history, winner at the Cannes Film Festival, hailed in Boston but banned in Kuwait, "Fahrenheit 9/11" never made it to Yokosuka Naval Base theaters — or to any movie theater located on a military base.**

But the DVD version of Michael Moore's cinematic indictment of the current commander-in-chief and his administration came in the doors at the base video store this week — and went right out again.

Employees of the store, operated by Softland Video, said all 22 copies it received Tuesday were checked out that day, and when they came back, they went out again. The movie was available for home viewing last week at most overseas military bases.

Francis Anglada, a retired petty officer first class who now works for Morale, Welfare and Recreation, got the last one in stock on Thursday around 11:30 a.m. **He'd been waiting a long time to see it, and said it was a "scandal" that it never showed in base theaters.**

"If you look at all the evidence," Anglada said, "there's no reason they couldn't have gotten it in time."

In June, when the movie came out in theaters, AAFES, the Army and Air Force Exchange Service, said it was pursuing prints, and that it eschewed politics when choosing movies, basing decisions only on profits and popularity.

But a spokesman for the Fellowship Adventure Group, formed to distribute Moore's film in conjunction with Lions Gate Films and IFC Films, said it told AAFES in mid-July that prints of "Fahrenheit 9/11" would be available, and that "from that point on, they were unresponsive."

A Department of Defense civilian in Naples who corresponded via e-mail in June with a decision-maker at the Navy Motion Picture Service in Tennessee had no better luck. When the civilian asked if the movie would play at overseas bases, the NMPS official said no decision had been made. **"Why do you have such an interest in this movie?" the NMPS official asked, according to an e-mail.** The civilian agreed to share his correspondence with Stars and Stripes but asked that his name not be used.

“I think it’s reprehensible they’d practice this kind of censorship,” the DOD civilian said.

Last month, the official again told the civilian no decision had been made, adding, “There’s not a great deal of ‘wanna see’ on the part of our customers — actually **you seem to be the most interested party.** Our survey of the field is informal — asking ships, base theater managers and CO’s if they have had requests,” the official’s e-mail said.

Anglada, getting his copy on Thursday, said that view didn’t seem grounded in reality, based on the huge success of the movie in the United States.

“The population on the base reflects the population you have stateside,” he said.

Some overseas military members did see “Fahrenheit 9/11” on the big screen, however. It played in Japan.

“It almost made me want to throw my ID away,” said one petty officer third class who saw the movie while he was home on leave in Florida.

“It shows how Bush reacted (when he was told about the 9/11 attacks). He just keeps reading. It shows how he tries to cut the veterans’ benefits. It shows they don’t care about us.”

The sailor’s words, spoken in the Yokosuka video store, got the attention of Petty Officer 2nd Class Mark Dutton. Dutton had just said he didn’t know much about the movie and that he’d rather see “Van Helsing” or “Troy,” also new releases. But after hearing his fellow sailor’s recommendation, Dutton changed his mind.

“I want to see it now. In fact, I might buy it,” Dutton said. “Anything that makes the government look bad, they don’t want us to see.”

In Case You Missed It The First Time:

The Comrades Kerry Abandoned
The Real Story of Vietnam Veterans Against the War
By JOE ALLEN
http://www.counterpunch.org/allen09182004.html

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Notes From A Lost War:

“Unannounced” U.S. Searches For Resistance Finds Nobody Home In Rebel Towns

October 16, 2004 By James Glanz, The New York Times

"Something happened, and they knew we were coming," said Staff Sergeant Norm Witka of the 1st Brigade, 23rd Infantry Regiment.

Yusufiya, Iraq: **Nobody tends the stalls at the main market under the big painted signs. Nothing moves on the streets. No one answers when U.S. soldiers pound on the flimsy metal gates of the houses.**

No objections are raised when the soldiers peer into kitchen pantries or, their heads cocked with suspicion, pull the dust cover off a television set that is being stored in the corner of a living room.

Out of the hundreds of homes here and in a neighboring town, Mulla Fayyad, most were empty when the soldiers descended at dusk and began an overnight search, house by house, for insurgents and their weaponry. Families were at home in only a small number of houses, perhaps a few dozen.

It is not as though no one lives here. Fresh onions and tomatoes sat on a counter, some of them cut up and ready to eat. Children's sandals lay where they were kicked off on a porch or at the bottom of a stairway. Small Iraqi banknotes tumbled to the floor when a cupboard was pulled open.

But nobody was home. While terrorism suspects and militia fighters have routinely slipped away from their pursuers ever since last year's invasion, the sudden emptying of whole towns before unannounced raids appears to be a new phenomenon.

"Something happened, and they knew we were coming," said Staff Sergeant Norm Witka of the 1st Brigade, 23rd Infantry Regiment, whose unit was one of those that poured into the towns and searched nearly every room of every house.

The mystery of the disappearing populace has repeated itself during sweeps by soldiers and marines in northern Babil Province, a patch of land about 50 kilometers, or 30 miles, south of Baghdad. It is an area that is not only hostile to the allied occupation but thought to contain important supply lines for insurgents elsewhere in the country.

The 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, which is leading the operation in Babil, has indicated that weapons caches and people suspected of being insurgents have been rounded up. But most of the finds have been modest, as illustrated by the

haul in Yusufiya and Mulla Fayyad: three AK-47s, a 9-millimeter pistol and some flak jackets.

In one house, said Captain Rob Robinson, who described the finds, soldiers discovered paramilitary literature and some photos of one of the residents with Saddam Hussein. "It didn't look threatening, but it generally seemed out of place," Robinson said of the stash.

Theories about why the people are fleeing are varied, and little is known of where they go, or for how long. Robinson said he believed insurgents hoped that Americans would attack the town and then be ridiculed by the residents. But there was no attack - only the searches.

When asked where all the people had gone, one of the few residents shrugged and made a sweeping gesture toward the countryside. "Felah," he said, using the word for farmer.

In the moonless darkness, the towns were defined by the sounds that ricocheted through the warm night air: the barking of dogs, the hollow "thunk" of soldiers kicking in doors, shotgun blasts to rip away padlocks, broken glass falling onto a concrete floor.

The soldiers were generally as respectful as possible to the people who remained, and there appeared to be no unnecessary damage inside the houses **after** the searches.

But as the night wore on and nothing of value turned up, some of the young Americans in uniform seemed to grow bored. They fired several times at one lock but failed to open it. A few moments later, a soldier stepped forward, made a tremendous swing with a crowbar and fell on his behind. The group roared with laughter.

One soldier said, "This isn't even a mission anymore," saying he and his colleagues were "just doing whatever we want."

As the soldiers tromped down the street, a lone Iraqi boy leaned out of the shadows in one doorway and silently took it all in. On this street, at least one resident had remained.

OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION
BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME <u>NOW!</u>

U.S. Arrests Chief Iraqi Negotiator, More Terror Bombing Of Falluja; Resistance Leaders Tell Occupation Go Shit In Your Hat

10.15.04 By Terry Friel, BAGHDAD (Reuters) & By TINI TRAN, Associated Press Writer & By Fares Dulaimi, Middle East Online & By SCHEHEREZADE FARAMARZI, Associated Press Writer

U.S. forces arrested Falluja's chief negotiator on Friday as he left a mosque after Friday prayers in a village about 10 miles south of Fallujah **after air strikes on the rebel-held city.**

Falluja police, who do not answer to the U.S.-backed interim government, said U.S. marines detained Sunni Muslim cleric Khaled al-Jumaili, the city's police chief and two other police officers while they were moving their families to a nearby resort town for safety from American air raids.

Fierce air strikes hit Falluja after the blasts as U.S. and Iraqi forces intensified pressure on suspected Zarqawi targets in and around the bastion of Sunni insurgency west of Baghdad.

A hospital doctor, Thamim al-Nuaimi, said five civilians had been killed and 11 wounded in the overnight raids.

U.S. officials, however, indicated the bombing was not a prelude to a major offensive into Fallujah that officials have said they might launch sometime this fall. In Washington, a senior military official, speaking about operational matters only on the condition of anonymity, said the strikes were against specific targets, similar to airstrikes that have gone on for months against suspected militant hideouts.

"Iraqi and multi-national forces have taken up vehicle checkpoints around the city of Fallujah with the purpose of channeling anti-Iraqi forces through these main points of passage, identifying and detaining them," spokesman Lieutenant Lyle Gilbert said.

The military said the Falluja raids at 2.38 a.m. (2338 GMT Thursday) hit "command and control sites" used by senior Zarqawi leaders to store weapons and plan attacks, adding that air strikes since Thursday had destroyed many other Zarqawi targets.

Falluja residents have scoffed at such statements in the past, saying they have no knowledge of Zarqawi or his group and accusing the Americans of bombing civilian homes.

In a statement read at sermons in mosques in Baghdad and elsewhere, Fallujah's clerics called for civil disobedience across Iraq if the Americans try to overrun the insurgent bastion. And if that doesn't halt an offensive, the clerics said they would proclaim a jihad, or holy war, against multinational forces "as well as those collaborating with them."

The clerics insisted al-Zarqawi was not in the city as U.S. and Iraqi commanders claim, saying his presence "is a lie just like the weapons of mass destruction lie."

"Al-Zarqawi has become the pretext for flattening civilians houses and killing innocent civilians," the statement said.

``In case the interim government and occupation troops make no response following the civil disobedience campaign, Muslim scholars and representatives of all Islamic and national groups will declare jihad all over Iraq and declare a mobilization against the occupation troops as well as those collaborating with them,'' the statement said.

Abu Abdullah said he's a phys ed student who became an insurgent after the U.S.-led invasion. ``When the Americans first came to Fallujah, we were hoping our lives would improve,'' he said. ``But after they raided mosques and homes, how do you expect us to open our arms to them?''

Hameed Jassim, a 42-year-old businessman, said: ``We feel pain when any Iraqi citizen is hurt. Ours is a direct resistance with the enemy.''

Ahmed al-Issawi, 26, said local and foreign fighters are battling for the same cause against Americans in vastly superior numbers.

``Only God saved Fallujah and God will keep protecting Fallujah from infidels and people like Allawi,'' al-Issawi said.

``When 13 members of a family are killed in one U.S. attack, who is the terrorist here? Isn't that terrorism?''

Elsewhere, several mortar rounds believed fired from Syria exploded Friday near the border town of Husaybah, said Marine Lt. Col. Chris Woodbridge. There were no casualties. Marines say mortar attacks from Syrian territory have increased in recent weeks though it's unclear who is launching them.

Baghdad Occupation Cops Hit; Many Casualties

October 15, 2004 By Tini Tran, The Associated Press & AFP

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- A car loaded with 300 pounds of explosives blew up today near a police station in southwest Baghdad.

One Iraqi civilian was killed and 15 people wounded, mostly policemen. "One person was brought here dead and 15 injured, 10 of whom were policemen," said Mazen Jappar, a doctor at Baghdad's Yarmuk hospital.

Interior ministry spokesman Adnane Abdelrahmane said a suicide bomber carried out the attack in the southern Baghdad suburb of Dura at about 9:45 am (0645 GMT).

"A man behind the wheel of a car drove up to a police patrol and blew himself up," one police officer told AFP.

Witnesses said many of the victims appeared to be in a life-threatening condition, and efforts to reach Iraqi officials and hospitals for an update failed because switchboards were shut down for Ramadan festivities.

Associated Press Television News footage showed two destroyed police SUVs, a crater caused by the explosion, and a charred engine believed to be that of the exploded car.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Two More Schofield Barracks Soldiers Killed

October 15, 2004 Gregg Kakesako, Honolulu Star-Bulletin

Two more Schofield Barracks soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan, raising the death toll for Hawaii-based troops in that country to six.

The Pentagon said today that Spc. Kyle Ka Eo Fernandez, 26, of Waipahu and Staff Sgt. Brian S. Hobbs, 31, of Mesa, Ariz., were killed yesterday in Miam Do, Afghanistan.

The two members of the 25th Division's 2nd Battalion, 5th Infantry, were victims of a homemade bomb that exploded while they were on foot patrol.

Fernandez's wife live in Wahiawa. He enlisted in the Army in March 2001 and was assigned to Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion of the 25th Division in August.

Hobbs was a member of Headquarters & Headquarters Company. He came to Hawaii in September 1994 and joined the 25th Division in October 2001.

There will be a private prayer service for both soldiers at Schofield on Tuesday.

To date, 21 soldiers and one civilian with Hawaii ties have been killed in Iraq and Afghanistan since U.S. forces invaded Iraq in March 2003. Of the 15 deaths in Iraq, 13 were due to hostile action.

Seven of those killed in Iraq were from the 25th Infantry Division.

IED Wounds U.S. Soldier

October 15, 2004 Associated Press

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — A remote-controlled mine detonated under an American military vehicle on patrol in southern Afghanistan, injuring one soldier, an Afghan official said Friday.

The mine blast happened Thursday afternoon in the Kishi area of the province's Charcheno district. American and Afghan forces have stepped up patrols in the area.

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