GI SPECIAL 2#B96

BAD WAY TO LEAVE:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!

Wounded Salvadoran soldier evacuated in a U.S. Army Blackhawk medivac flight from Babylon Oct. 19. El Salvador has a small contingent based in Babylon. (AP Photo/John Moore)

"These Boys Are Fighting For Nothing," She Said. "Our Troops Should Be Out Now."

LAS VEGAN KILLED IN IRAQ

October 19, 2004 By Keith Rogers And Frank Curreri, Las Vegas Review-Journal

"It's getting tight around here. There have been a few near misses with road bombs. It's scary, but I'm tough. I'll be okay."

That was how Las Vegas Marine Cpl. William I. Salazar began an e-mail message last week from Qaim, Iraq, to his father, Gus.

Two days later, on Friday, Cpl. Salazar, a 26-year-old videographer who was documenting the war, was killed in a car-bomb attack as he rode in the passenger seat of a Humvee.

As he always did, he carried a rifle as well as a camera, but it wasn't enough to deter the suicide bomber who pulled alongside of the Humvee close enough to detonate the explosive-packed vehicle, causing fatal injuries to Salazar, an Iraqi interpreter and two soldiers.

In it, William Salazar wrote: "I'm still alive and well. Happy Birthday. I always forget your birthday so if I'm late or early, at least I tried to remember."

Gus Salazar wrote back, "You did fine. Thank you very much for remembering my birthday. Love, Dad."

From now on, he said, "My birthday will never be the same ... because I won't be celebrating birthdays, I'll be celebrating memorials."

When his son arrived in Iraq in May, Gus Salazar said his thoughts were that he "needed to support the war and support William."

"Now after this has happened, the war is over for me," he said.

In Bullhead City, Ariz., William's mother, Gloria Salazar, questioned the logic behind the war.

The grieving mother said she supports the troops, but not the rationale for keeping them there.

"These boys are fighting for nothing," she said. "Our troops should be out now."

Gloria Salazar reflects Monday on the life of her son.
PHOTO BY ISAAC BREKKEN/REVIEW-JOURNAL

She said the pain her son endured from breaking up with a girlfriend and outrage over the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks ignited a flame under him. A few months after the attacks, the pudgy graphic designer chose to become a chiseled, disciplined Marine.

"He wanted to better himself and he hoped the Marines would help him accomplish that," Gloria Salazar recalled Monday as she alternately cried and laughed while sifting through photos of her son.

"He said the Marines were the toughest (military branch) and he wanted that," she said. Mother and son shared their last dinner together in May when they dined on menudo and Coronas at a Mexican restaurant in California.

While U.S. casualties mounted in Iraq and Afghanistan, William Salazar remained positive during phone conversations with his mother. He never spoke of bloodshed, or fear.

"Everything's fine," his mother recalled him saying. "How's the family?"

But beginning last month the tone of the dialogue changed. Once, while driving down the road with other soldiers, their vehicle hit a land mine. Gloria Salazar said her son again told her everything was fine.

But then he did something unusual -- he told his mom he had a life insurance policy and to take care of the family if anything should happen to him.

"His morale was low. I felt that he was scared," she said. "I could hear it in his voice. He sounded kind of worried but I could never get it out of him."

About 3:30 p.m. Saturday afternoon, two Marines in uniform showed up at her front door.

"You already know when they are walking up to your door," she said. "They tell you they're there on behalf of the president and then you already know. They tell you they're there to inform you of the death of your son. And you're not listening. You're not listening to that."

Gus Salazar said his son was a trombone player from South Gate High School in South Gate, Calif., who went on to earn a degree in computer graphics design from Santa Monica College and later attended East Los Angeles Community College.

"He had a long-time dream growing up to join the Marines. He wanted to follow in the footsteps of his uncle," he said, referring to his brother, Lou, a Marine from the Vietnam War who now lives in Las Vegas.

So in 2001, his son moved to Las Vegas. He moved in with Lou and Cindy Salazar and worked two jobs as a plumber's apprentice and pizza maker. He had a desire to go to culinary school, his dad said.

"Pretty much 9-11 motivated him to join the Marines," he said, noting that he tried a few times to enlist "but he had a little bit of a weight problem."

Finally, on Dec. 10, 2001 he joined the Marine Corps in Las Vegas and started training at Camp Pendleton, north of San Diego.

After boot camp he was sent to Fort Meade, Md., for advanced training in photography and videography. Then he traveled for a year to such places as Okinawa, Singapore and Japan to train allies until returning to Camp Pendleton for deployment to Iraq.

Over there he was attached to the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines at a forward operating base near Qaim, Iraq, a hot spot along the Syrian border, said Staff Sgt. Paul Anstine, the regimental combat camera chief, who served with William Salazar.

Their job was two-fold: to document the war and use the video as well for combat analysis.

The insurgents, he said, are disguised as civilians and "you don't (know who they are) until they're shooting at you."

When they weren't out on raids or on other missions, Salazar and fellow Marines tried to fine solace in watching videos. Once, Anstine said, they enjoyed a bootleg copy of "Spiderman II."

In Las Vegas, Lou Salazar said the way his nephew died at the hands of a suicide bomber gave him flashbacks of his days in Vietnam, "a senseless war" that the United States engaged in with its hands tied.

"You're the team with all the rules. They're the team with no rules," he said, during a break in his job as a plumber at the MGM Grand.

He said his nephew was motivated to join the Marines because he wanted to continue his education and use his veterans benefits to buy a home in Las Vegas.

At their home near Bonanza Road and Hollywood Boulevard, Lou Salazar's wife, Cindy, said she thinks the war is going to get worse before it gets better.

"Never in the world would I think something like this would happen to William," she said. "I just felt he was protected and he was so young."

Services have not been set but Gus Salazar said his son will probably be buried this weekend at Resurrection Cemetery, San Gabriel, Calif.

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)

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

Two Psy-Ops Troops Killed In Karabilah

October 18, 2004 U.S. Department of Defense News Release No. 1042-04

The Department of Defense announced today the death of two Soldiers.

They died October 15 in Karabilah, Iraq, when a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated near their vehicle. Both were assigned to the Army's 9th Psychological Operations Battalion, 4th Psychological Operations Group (Airborne) from Fort Bragg, N.C.

Sgt. Michael G. Owen, 31, of Phoenix, Ariz.,
Spc. Jonathan J. Santos, 22, of Whatcom, Wash.

U.S. Soldier Found Dead In Diyala

10.19.04 ABC News

Meanwhile, a 1st Infantry Division Soldier died from a non-combat injury at a base in Diyala province, the U.S. military said Tuesday.

The soldier was found at late Sunday in his living quarters after he did not return to his guard post. The incident is under investigation.

Direct Hit On U.S. Military Base Kills Halliburton Employee & Wounds Soldier

10/19/2004 BAGHDAD (AFP)

The US-led military suffered a direct hit on a compound in Baghdad that left one US contractor dead and seven people injured, including a US soldier, a spokesman said.

"We had mortar and RPG (rocket propelled grenade) fire that hit inside our compound this morning," a military spokesman told AFP.

The US soldier and one of the six Iraqi civilians injured in the attack were in a serious but stable condition, he said.

The Iraqis nationals had all been working in the compound.

Kellogg Brown and Root (KBR), a subsidiary of the US oil services giant Halliburton, confirmed its employee was killed, bringing to 54 the number of deaths suffered by Halliburton and its subcontractors in Iraq.

Baghdad IED Wounds 3

10.10.04 MNF Release #041018m

Baghdad, Iraq– **An improvised explosive device detonated at approximately 4:30 p.m. in western Baghdad Oct. 18, wounding three Task Force Baghdad Soldiers.** All three Soldiers were medically evacuated to a military treatment facility.

Bomber Targets U.S. Military Convoy In Habbaniyah

Oct. 19, 2004 —FALLUJA, Iraq (Reuters)

A car bomber attacked a U.S. military convoy in the western Iraqi town of Habbaniyah on Tuesday, police officials said.

There was no immediate word on casualties. The U.S. military said it had no immediate information on the incident in Habbaniyah, west of the rebel-held town of Falluja.

Fighting In Ramadi, Humvee Burns

10.19.04 ABC News

In Ramadi, U.S. troops clashed with militants in the city's center with fierce fighting taking place near City Hall, witnesses said Tuesday.

A Humvee was damaged and was ablaze when it was hit by a homemade bomb and rocket fire, according to witness Hatif Mahmoud. It was uncertain whether there were any U.S. casualties.

U.S. Casualty Count Skyrockets

Doug Lorimer, Green Left Weekly, October 20, 2004

‘US military casualties (wounded and killed) stand at a monthly average of 747' since Allawi supposedly took over. ‘This contrasts with a monthly average of 482 US military casualties during the invasion' last year and ‘a monthly average of 415 during the occupation' up to June 28.”

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23 U.S. Troops Killed Last Week

October 20, 2004 By Norimitsu Onishi, The New York Times

During the seven days from Oct. 11 to 17, 23 members of the U.S. military died.

REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW

A U.S. Army soldier, on top of a Bradley armored vehicle in Baghdad, October 17. (Ali Jasim/Reuters)

Jefferson County Soldier Hurt In Iraq Attack

October 18, 2004 Rick Terry, NEWS 9

Edwards Injured By Same Land Mine Which Killed Sgt. Rik Morgan

WINTERSVILLE, OH -- Specialist Robert Edwards is originally from Youngstown, but two years ago met and fell in love with Tracy Prager, a divorcee with three kids. They got engaged a year ago, just before Edwards' unit, the 660th Transportation Company of Cadiz, was deployed to Iraq.

Two weeks ago, Tracy got a phone call she will never forget-- her fiancé was injured by the same land mine attack that killed Sgt. Rik Morgan of Belmont County.

Edwards was riding in a Humvee with Morgan in Iraq when the land mine hit, killing Morgan. Edwards sustained a broken hip and broken leg, and had much of his large intestine taken out in surgery, but as Tracy keeps saying, at least he's alive.

"I'm just glad he's OK, because I can't imagine life without him," says Tracy, "I spent 8 days [at Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington, where Edwards is now] with him. He's doing well-- he's in stable condition, communicating with Yes and No answers."

But Tracy fights a daily battle with her inner demons, the instinct to reach out and help--only she can't. "It's hard because usually, when he's sick I can tend to him. And now he's so far away I can't be there all the time," says Tracy, who is lucky to be coping with a vast support network.

Robert's family and her friends are with her constantly. In fact, her best friend, Erin Lane is in the same boat. Erin's husband, Sgt. Tom Lane was with the company at the time of the land mine attack, but thankfully uninjured.

Like Robert and Rik Morgan, Tom was home for two weeks in August, the only two weeks he's spent with his baby girl Madeline. Erin's prayer list is full these days-- Madeline, her husband and Tracy, and especially Rik Morgan's family.

"Rik Morgan was a very good friend of ours," says Erin, "He had been to our house for Halloween parties, things like that. That was very, very hard."

Sylvania Soldier Critically Injured

October 19, 2004 WTOL11News & By ELIZABETH A. SHACK, The Toledo Blade Company

SYLVANIA--A Sylvania man is fighting for his life at this hour in an army hospital in Germany. 21-year-old Matthew Drake was seriously wounded when a car-bomb exploded at a U.S. patrol in Iraq Friday.

"It's the call, that you hope never comes, and somehow in your heart, you just don't believe it's going to come," said his aunt, Linda Domini. Domini was overcome with sadness when she heard her nephew, 21 year old Matthew Drake, was the only

survivor of a car bomb attack near the Syrian border. "When you look at the photos of the explosion, it is unbelievable that he did survive."

Matthew was rushed into surgery at a battalion hospital in Baghdad, then flown to a military hospital in Germany, where he is now in a coma and on life support. "The most severe wounds are to his upper right arm, to his neck, to his jaw, with an open fracture to the jaw. he does have a fractured skull and brain damage."

Matthew wanted to be a soldier ever since he was a little boy. He joined the army two years ago and was sent to Iraq this September. Matthew was excited and ready to serve in Iraq, and when he left, he promised he would return. His family has faith that he will.

The military tells Matthew's family that three out of four people with this severe of injuries do in time come out of the coma. That's no comfort to his younger brother and sister--who are taking it especially hard.

He has had several surgeries for his head injuries and will have more surgeries when he is in a more stable condition.

Private Drake graduated from Sylvania Northview High School in 2001 and attended Bowling Green State University for a year. In October, 2002, he left to join the Army.

A member of the 9th PsyOp Battalion, Bravo Company, Private Drake left for Iraq on Sept. 7, two days after his 21st birthday, assigned to a three-man psychological operations unit. **He drove an armored six-ton truck with a speaker.**

Private Drake, who was a wrestler his junior and senior years in high school and is a certified personal trainer, was thinking of becoming a physical therapist, Mrs. Domini said.

Friends and family described Private Drake, who belongs to Olivet Lutheran Church in Sylvania, as a kind, funny, and generous man.

Matt Serror, who has known Private Drake since they played soccer together in elementary school, said he was quiet and shy in high school but always helped people out, whether he was shoveling snow for an elderly neighbor or dropping a dollar in a can by a cash register.

"It's the little things you might not think about," Mr. Serror said. "He's one of those people that doesn't come around every day."

When his aunt's 150-pound Rottweiler was recovering from surgery, Private Drake carried him outside when needed to go outdoors.

In an e-mail to his mother a week before the attack, he wrote that he had befriended a feral dog that ran around the encampment where he lived with two other men in a room the size of a two-car garage.

"We pray that when he does come out of his coma that he's still Matthew," Mrs. Domini said.

Sky Bank is starting a fund for Matthew Drake. Go to any Sky Bank in the area and make a donation in his honor. **Money will be used to pay for expenses not covered by the military.**

Carthage Soldier Wounded By Sniper

10/19/04 Susan Redden, Globe Staff Writer

CARTHAGE, Mo. - Sniper fire has left a Carthage soldier in serious condition, and family members are awaiting his return to the United States.

Staff Sgt. Danny Baker was injured during the sniper shooting Thursday near Baghdad.

"Just hearing his voice helped, but I won't really feel right until I can get my hands on him," she said. "We've had a lot of people calling to check on him, and he's on a lot of prayer lists."

Baker, who is with the Army's 1st Cavalry Division from Fort Hood, Texas, has been in Iraq since March. **He was part of a security detail for a meeting about 20 miles from the protected Green Zone. There was a single shot from a sniper, and Baker was the only soldier hurt, his mother said.**

"He had on a flak jacket, but there is an unprotected area under the arm," she said. "The bullet went in on the left side and exited out his back."

Baker said she has talked to her son twice since the injury, and has talked daily with his wife, Shelby (Stiles) Baker, who lives in Killeen, Texas with the couple's three children.

She said her son, a 1990 graduate of Carthage Senior High School, has been in the Army since 1992. He is a staff sergeant and is to be promoted to sergeant first class on Nov. 1, she said.

Sacrificed For Imperial Fantasies: Marines Say "All We Are Doing Around Here Is Getting Blown Up."

Oct 19 By FISNIK ABRASHI, Associated Press Writer

QAIM, Iraq - The sound of the Black Hawk medical helicopter is an ominous sign for the Marines patrolling this forgotten western corner of Iraq that borders Syria. It means that one of them is seriously wounded or killed by their elusive enemy.

The sound of roaring engine, shattering evening calm, gets immediately followed up with a quick whisper among the troops, trying to find out who it was — this time.

At this Marine base, at the far west of the restless Anbar province only miles from the Syrian border, the news spreads quickly.

"We are losing guys left and right," says Cpl. Cody King, 20, of Phoenix, not hiding his anger. "All we are doing around here is getting blown up."

Most of the incidents these days, in this land of endless desert, dried-up river beds and winding dirt roads, include 155 mm artillery shells, mines and other sorts of crude homemade bombs. They make the Marines' enemy faceless and only heighten the feeling of vulnerability.

The armor at their disposal is in short supply.

King and his fellow Marines from the weapons company of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marine **Regiment, spoke between patrols, huddled together and sifting through their log book, venting their anger and frustration. They never talked of fear.**

Among other things their green leather bound book lists are the number of times their company has been hit by homemade bombs since they arrived in the country two months ago. Also listed in book, in fine, careful print, are the names of those who were killed or wounded during those incidents.

On Sept. 3, a thunderous blast from a homemade bomb ripped through a group of Marines providing security for engineers repairing a bridge over the Euphrates River, near the town of Ubayd.

Four were killed and three were wounded. King escaped unscathed.

In recent months, Marine fatalities have exceeded Army deaths — even though the Army has at least three times as many troops in Iraq.

It is difficult to pinpoint the reasons for the unusually high death toll for the Marines because they limit details on the circumstances of battle deaths to either "enemy action" or "non-combat related." The Army specifies the type of weapon that caused the death as well as the city where it happened.

"After you lose so many Marines, you just keep fighting to stay alive," says King, the son of a Vietnam veteran.

But for some of the Marines, lack of armor, few vehicles and too restrictive rules of engagement are partly to blame.

"We need more armor, more vehicles and more bodies," says King.

Gunnery Sgt. Jason Berold says the rules, as they are now, are frustrating. Unless they see insurgents shooting at them or have what they call positive identification, there's little that the Marines can do.

"It is very frustrating," says Berold, 38, of Los Angeles.

"All we are doing is getting Americans killed and we cannot do much about it," says King. The other marines in the room nod in approval.

"None of us are scared of going out ... as long as you get one bad guy."

Because of the existing rules of the engagement, though, the only thing left after the incidents is to "pick up your dead and wounded and get out of there as soon as possible," King says.

Sgt. Ryan Hall, 27, says that a "50-50" chance of getting hurt or killed on patrol is a good bet among his troops. As he walks outside the compound, the Abilene, Texas, resident points to the damage that company vehicles have suffered. There are cracks in the armored windshield of their Humvees from flying shrapnel. There are also holes on the back and damage to its side.

Shortly after darkness fell in this distant base, another sound of the helicopter signaled what they all knew.

"You do not know whether he will survive," King says.

That night, only one made it. A suicide car bomber had rammed into their patrol near the town of Qaim. Two soldiers and one Marine died.

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.

U.S. Forces Bomb Falluja, Release Police Chief

19-October- US News, BAGHDAD

U.S. forces freed the police chief of the rebel-held city of Falluja on Tuesday after warplanes bombed what the military said were houses and arms dumps used by America's top enemy in Iraq.

The police chief, Sabar al-Janabi, and his colleagues were detained on Friday with the city's chief negotiator, Khaled al-Jumaili, who was released early on Monday.

The U.S. military gave no reason for the arrests and never confirmed it was holding the four men.

They were seized as they were moving their families away from Falluja for safety. Townspeople called off a demonstration set for Tuesday to demand the policemen's release. Police in Falluja do not answer to the interim government in Baghdad.

TROOP NEWS

Troops Who Refused Orders Had Reported Fuel Contamination; Were Ignored By Command

Oct. 18, 2004 The Associated Press & NEELA BANERJEE and JOHN KIFNER , New York Times & By Jeremy Hudson, The (Jackson, Miss.) Clarion-Ledger

JACKSON, Miss., Oct. 18 - Members of the Army Reserve platoon in Iraq that disobeyed orders to deliver fuel to another base last week had tried to persuade their superiors for hours to cancel the mission, relatives of the soldiers said Monday.

The 13th Corps Support Command, which the 343rd belongs to, and its commander, Brig. Gen. James E. Chambers, have been singled out for repeated criticism by soldiers on the Web site and column of David H. Hackworth, a retired Army colonel and decorated veteran of the Korea and Vietnam wars.

The soldiers who refused their mission had complained to relatives in months past about the poor quality of their trucks and equipment, though they never indicated they would do anything other than pursue changes through the chain of command, the relatives said.

Some of the trucks, which were due for repairs, broke down on the journey, said Stephanie Parks, the fiancée of Johnny Coates, father of Specialist Major Coates of Charlotte, N.C., a member of the platoon. The platoon returned late on the evening of Oct. 12. At 4 a.m. the next day, they were roused to take the fuel from their base in Tallil to Taji, much farther north, family members said.

"That's when everything went haywire," said Ricky Shealey, father of Specialist Scott Shealey. "My son says they argued for three hours trying to get some sense into them people. They utilized their chain of command."

On Monday, Ricky Shealey of Quinton, Ala., father of one of the soldiers involved, told The Associated Press that his son, Spc. Scott Shealey, said the trucks earmarked for the mission had hauled jet fuel and were then loaded with diesel fuel without purging the tanks. ***They even had a civilian out there. He said it was contaminated.***

"The fuel was mixed and he wasn't going on a mission to deliver fuel that could harm those with the helicopters," Ricky Shealey told the AP.

Shealey said his son spent three hours trying to convince his commander the mission "was inappropriate and it should not be done."

Soldiers have complained bitterly on Colonel Hackworth's Web site about low morale at the 13th Corps Support Command, and about General Chambers himself.

Shealey said his son refused to go on the mission because the fuel they were to haul was tainted and he feared it would be put in a helicopter that would later crash.

"The command just totally ignored them when they told them the fuel was contaminated and they was still going to send them out on this mission with contaminated fuel," Shealey told CBS. "The command was completely aware of the situation and I think it's a command issue and not a soldier issue."

Pentagon officials indicated efforts were under way to defuse the situation. For example, the Army is considering returning all but five of the unit's members to duty, one senior official said. But two who may face discipline have past instances of wrongdoing in Iraq, in particular of substance abuse, the official said. He did not give names and the accusations could not be confirmed.

The accusations have incensed relatives of the soldiers. "They have to make them look bad," said Stacy Shealey, Specialist Shealey's sister. "It's just another reason to mess with them."

The soldiers' action has brought international attention to procedures and the conditions of equipment being used in the more than year-old war in Iraq. ***Several soldiers' relatives appeared on national television on Monday.***

Patricia McCook said her husband told her he's getting some unusual stares from some people.

"He's not letting that bother him," she said. "He's just trying to do his job."

Five soldiers, including Sgt. Larry McCook and Sgt. Michael Butler, both of Jackson, have been reassigned to different units.

“This does not mean that these five individuals were reassigned as punishment,” Army legal correspondent Lt. Col. John Miller said in the report The Clarion-Ledger obtained from Thompson. “(This) does not mean the 13 individuals (not reassigned) will not receive administrative action, does not mean that only 18 individuals were involved (could be more or less). Investigation is ongoing.”

From X To GI Special: THE COMMAND IS LEANING ON THE FAMILIES. BUT 5 OF THE GI'S HAVE BEEN "SEPARATED" FROM THE OTHERS AS SO-CALLED "RINGLEADERS".

Troops Stuck Driving The Deadly BMI (Barely Makin’ It)

October 19, 2004 By Jim Krane, Associated Press

"They wanted the mission to go out at 7 a.m. to take that same fuel and those same vehicles, without any maintenance checks or maintenance after coming off a mission," Ricky Shealey said. "The vehicles were deadlined, meaning something on a vehicle is going to be a problem. They had 12 to 13 deadlines, and these vehicles were not supposed to roll."

BAGHDAD, Iraq - Blowing sand. Blistering heat. Shrapnel-spewing roadside bombs. The U.S. Army says it does its best to keep its hard-pressed vehicles and helicopters running despite these conditions, but soldiers say Iraq sometimes trumps their best efforts.

Across the country, the brutal conditions can be seen on the Humvees on patrol with smashed or cracked front windshields or punctured doors and fenders where chunks of shrapnel have blown through. Worse, dozens of vehicles have been lost in attacks. Video clips of burning Humvees have become a staple of Iraqi insurgent propaganda DVDs.

The Army’s fleet of Black Hawk helicopters, which dates as far back as the late 1970s, requires lots of maintenance to keep flying. The helicopters’ engines and rotors suffer even more than land vehicles from blowing sand and the heat, and ***the craft are in higher demand than ever to ferry passengers trying to avoid Iraq’s ambush-prone roads.***

"Most of the problems we’re having are from dust. Most of the bearings are open bearings, it gets in there and wears them out quicker," said Sgt. Amos Ritter of Allentown, Pa. "It’s not making it to the point where we can’t finish a mission. But it’s a problem we need to work around."

Ritter, a 31-year-old crew chief and flight mechanic for the Army's 30th Medical Brigade, said his fleet of helicopters dates to 1982. **The Army has been able to deliver common spare parts more quickly, but some parts are still tough to get.**

"There are difficulties getting spare parts, it's a bit more of a wait than we're accustomed to, like back when we were in garrison," Ritter said on his base near the ancient ruins of Babylon in central Iraq.

"When you're in a combat zone, you should have the priority on parts, but it seems like you're not really getting the priority down here."

In the western town of Qaim, a U.S. Marine complained that his unit lacked vehicles and protection - as well as troops - to replace those killed and destroyed by roadside bombings, ambushes and anti-tank mine blasts.

"We need more vehicles, more armor, more bodies," said Cpl. Cody King, 20, of Phoenix, Ariz., of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment.

At times, breakdowns have turned tragic.

In May, two soldiers in the Army's 1st Cavalry Division were killed and five wounded when a roadside bombing in Baghdad tore apart a Humvee that had broken down and was being towed.

In Alabama, Ricky Shealey, whose son, Spc. Scott Shealey, was one of the soldiers who refused the convoy run to Taji, said "They wanted the mission to go out at 7 a.m. to take that same fuel and those same vehicles, without any maintenance checks or maintenance after coming off a mission." "The vehicles were deadlined, meaning something on a vehicle is going to be a problem. They had 12 to 13 deadlines, and these vehicles were not supposed to roll."

Propaganda Break

From: **C. U.S. Army**
To: GI Special
Sent: October 17, 2004 3:26 PM
Subject: IRAQI AMERICAN VISITS TO US MILITARY INSTALLATIONS

Yep it's really me! They haven't thrown me in jail yet. Just looked at my unit's family bulletin board and saw the most funniest piece of propaganda.

C

IRAQI AMERICAN VISITS TO US MILITARY INSTALLATIONS

Michael Mills - Oct 1, 2004

Categories: Family Readiness: The National Guard Bureau received information this morning that there is an opportunity for some of our family members who have loved ones deployed to Iraq to be part of an audience that will receive information on how life in Iraq has changed since the fall of Saddam Hussein.

This is strictly volunteered based function, funding is not available. More information is in the attached word document.

The dates and locations are below. If you believe that you have family members that would like to attend, I would encourage you to go through your Public Affairs office for coordination with the Installation Public Affairs.

I also ask that if any of your families do attend, to please let us know.

The final schedule below is what we'd like to execute to support the visits by the Iraqi American delegation.

This is based on inputs received thus far from the Services and availability of delegation members.

More will follow.

5 October - Fort Hood
7 October - Fort Bliss, Fort Drum
14 October - West Point, Fort Lewis

Blair Plan To Send British Troops To Baghdad Hated By Everybody

A poster is held up by one of thousands of anti-war campaigners taking to the streets of London, October 17, 2004, calling for an end to the illegal occupation of Iraq. (David Bebber/Reuters)

19th October 2004 TIM RIPLEY, IAN JOHNSTON AND JAMES KIRKUP, Mirror.co.uk

TONY Blair was left isolated last night as his decision to send Black Watch soldiers into Iraq's infamous Sunni Triangle to cover American troops was greeted with total opposition.

Even pro-war MPs refused to back the deal with the United States.

In the House of Commons yesterday, Geoff Hoon, the Defence Secretary, insisted that no decision had been taken, but then all but confirmed it had when he said Britain would have "failed in our duty as an ally" if it turned down the request from the US for help.

The answer provoked angry shouts from the Labour benches.

The suspicion that British troops could be deployed to help the US and, by extension, the re-election campaign of President George Bush, left usually loyal backbenchers angry at the government.

Labour MP Andrew MacKinlay, an outspoken supporter of the war, said that the proposed redeployment was a bridge too far even for him and begged Mr Hoon to reconsider. *"There has not been a single member of the parliamentary Labour Party supporting this deployment," he told the Commons.*

Defence sources told The Scotsman that it was originally intended to agree to the US request and make this public only after the Black Watch had begun to move north.

The story leaked last week after soldiers from the Black Watch on end-of-tour leave and training courses were recalled to Iraq for the new mission, resulting in relatives complaining to the media.

"It was going to be a fait accompli," said a ministry source. "The whole thing has turned into a dog's breakfast because of poor 'opsec' or operational security."

"Dog's Breakfast"

A senior army officer added: "It's a done deal. The activity of the next days is all about creating a favourable media and political climate to sell the deployment to parliament and the public."

Annabelle Ewing, the Perth MP and deputy leader of the SNP at Westminster, said Mr Hoon had "failed to deal with the question as to why 600 UK troops will be needed when the US has over 130,000 troops in their area".

MORE:

British Military Families Outraged Over Lies

Oct 19 2004 By Bob Roberts, Deputy Political Editor, Mirror.co.uk (England)

Yesterday, furious James Buchanan – whose sons Gary, 27, and Craig, 25, are corporals in the Watch – demanded his boys should come home. Widower Mr Buchanan, 56, of Arbroath, stormed: "They know they have to fight, but they hate being lied to.

"HIS COUNTRY NEEDS YOU"

OUTRAGED Army families accused the Government of betrayal yesterday after Geoff Hoon signalled that 650 British troops would cover for a US blitz in Iraq.

The families claimed ministers were sending the men in to "pull the Yanks out of the fire" – and the move was a ploy to bolster the chances of President Bush's re-election next month. One parent said: "It stinks to high heaven."

Defence Secretary Mr Hoon told a shocked Commons the UK would be "failing in our duty as an ally" if it refused the US request. Nor did he deny that the troops would be mostly Black Watch, currently the reserve force in Basra, southern Iraq.

Some of the regiment, earmarked to be merged, believed they would be coming home before their six-month tour ends later this year.

Yesterday, furious James Buchanan – whose sons Gary, 27, and Craig, 25, are corporals in the Watch – demanded his boys should come home.

Widower Mr Buchanan, 56, of Arbroath, stormed: "They know they have to fight, but they hate being lied to.

"It's a bloody disgrace how the Government has treated them. It's us going to pull the Yanks out of the fire once again – they need our boys to sort out their mess.

"This is a political game to help George Bush win the election – and it stinks.

"They promised my sons troops could come home this month. That was a lie. Mr Hoon says they won't go to Fallujah. That's another lie. They'll be in the firing line."

Rob Scott, 61, from Fife, has a grandson Charles, 18, with the Black Watch.

Mr Scott, a former warrant officer in the regiment, said: "It's disgusting the lies this Government is telling our boys. Morale is just going through the floor. We're going to clear up the muck the US have left behind because they're so pathetic."

Anne McMillan, of campaign group Save the Scottish Regiments, said she was besieged by calls from worried mothers and wives of Black Watch squaddies. She said: "One woman was devastated about the possibility of the men being called in. They could be sent to a really bad war zone."

Experts say US forces are now so overstretched any extra assignments would require a return to vote-losing draft conscription.

In Britain, anxious General Walker has forcefully expressed his concern at the sudden change in policy. **Labour MP and war supporter Andrew MacKinlay said: "Many find it incredible the US can't find the infantry to fill this gap. Some of us have provided political cover for this Government. Do not try to stretch the envelope too much."**

Italy Won't Redeploy Troops Closer To Baghdad

October 19, 2004 Associated Press

ROME — **The Italian defense minister on Tuesday ruled out that Italian troops in Iraq, currently based in the southern part of the country, will redeploy near Baghdad, as some British troops have been asked to, an Italian news agency said.**

The comments by Antonio Martino were made hours after the British government said it is strongly considering a U.S. request to redeploy some British troops closer to Baghdad so the insurgency in central Iraq can be dealt with ahead of Iraqi elections.

“This is not something that has to do with us,” Martino, asked about a possible redeployment of Italian troops, told the ANSA news agency. He did not elaborate.

Lying For A Living

It was 1974. A bunch of broke Pfc's were getting high & playing cards in the barracks. The game was interrupted by a son of a lifer coming in to announce that he had re-upped for a guaranteed job as a recruiter in CONUS. His statement kind of ruined our high. The silence was finally broken when one of the players asked him "How are you going to sleep at night man, knowing that you lie to HS kids for a living?" David Honish, Veterans For Peace

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.

Missouri Reserve Unit Goes Begging For Body Armor

October 18th, 2004 By Associated Press

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa (AP) — Members of a Missouri Army Reserve unit will have some extra protection while on duty in Iraq thanks to Iowa law enforcement.

The Iowa State Patrol and the Linn County Sheriff's Department have donated outdated body armor to the 189th Ordnance Co. based in St. Joseph, Mo.

.

``Any added protection is going to be nice,'' said Spec. John Wickman, 26, of Cedar Rapids.

Wickman is among 164 members of the 189th called to active duty in September. His wife, Tina, began working the phones soon after the unit was called up, seeking surplus bulletproof vests from local police.

They responded with more than 200 pieces of body armor.

Wickman and other member of the 189th drove from Fort Sill, Okla., and collected the vests on Sunday at the sheriff's offices in Cedar Rapids.

``They can either wear them or line their vehicles with it,'' said Sheriff Don Zeller.

Body armor must be replaced when its warranty expires after several years, but it's usually sound, said Sheriff's Lt. Ron Cummins. Outdated armor, which can cost up to $500 a set, is usually destroyed.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

100 Occupation Guards Killed & Wounded In Mashahidan Attack

10.19.04 ABC News & By TINI TRAN, Associated Press Writer

A mortar attack on an Iraqi National Guard headquarters north of Baghdad on Tuesday killed or wounded at least 100 Iraqis, officials said.

Six mortar rounds fell on National Guard offices in an early morning attack in Mashahidan, 25 miles north of Baghdad, said Iraqi police and National Guard officers under condition of anonymity.

The guardsmen were lined up in formation when six mortars hit.

The U.S. military cited the Iraqi Defense Minister as saying four guard members were killed. The military said U.S. helicopters helped ferry out the wounded.

Northern Pipeline Blown Up

10.19.04 ABC News & IOL.com.za

In northern Iraq, partisans attacked and set on fire a key oil pipeline that connects the Beiji oil refinery with Turkey, police said Tuesday. The pipeline runs from the oilfields around Kirkuk to the Turkish port of Ceyhan. **Firefighters were battling to control the flames.**

A huge explosion in the early hours of Tuesday destroyed the pipeline, said a Beiji police officer on condition of anonymity. The attack happened about eight miles from the refinery. Beiji is 155 miles north of Baghdad.

The attack halted exports of oil via Turkey

OCCUPATION REPORT

Allawi Sneaks In And Out Of Sadr City

London Daily Telegraph, October 18, 2004] & CNN & By Steve Fainaru, Washington Post, October 18, 2004

Iraqi interim Prime Minister Allawi became the first leader of his country to visit the Shia slum area of Sadr City. **Allawi's trip to Sadr City, the stronghold of rebel cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, was shrouded in secrecy and conducted with almost unprecedented security.**

His visit to that site was delayed, however, when a mortar round hit the stadium about 15 minutes before his scheduled arrival.

Allawi was en route to the Sinaa soccer stadium when a mortar round struck it around 1 p.m., killing two Iraqi soldiers and an Iraqi civilian and wounding at least two others. It was unclear whether the attack was aimed at Allawi, who was scheduled to meet with members of Sadr's office and clerics at the stadium minutes later.

Iraqi guardsmen opened fire after the attack, shooting their automatic weapons randomly in response to reports of sniper fire. Two Iraqi police officers sitting in a nearby vehicle were wounded.

Authorities immediately shut down the weapons handover program for the rest of the afternoon.

Allawi's convoy was diverted to a Sadr City government office building and his meetings with Sadr officials were postponed until later in the afternoon.

Ahmed Saleh, 21, showed up at the stadium to turn in an old 60mm mortar launcher. Saleh, who said he was a member of the Mahdi Army, said the launcher was "not very good. I have another one at home that is much better."

Asked if he planned to hand it in, he said: "No, I'm going to keep it."

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

Najaf Pissed Off By Slow Pace Of Rebuilding

[New York Times, October 18, 2004]
Business owners and residents in Najaf complain that the future of their city is in doubt because U.S. and Iraqi officials aren't doing enough to rebuild areas that were heavily damaged after a three-week battle.

Soldiers Fear They Are "Sleeping With The Enemy" Occupations Silly Plan Collapses

18/10/2004 The Telegraph U.K.

Adrian Blomfield discovers deep mistrust between American troops and Iraqi soldiers they are training

If the US marines and Iraqi national guardsmen living at the Karmah military barracks near Fallujah talk at all, they speak through the bars of a small window.

The Americans peer out from the ammunition room, filled with weapons confiscated from suspected insurgents, trading banter with the Iraqis who stand on tiptoes in a huddle outside, their eyes squinting against the glare of the late summer sun.

Though there is laughter, things are not as they should be at Karmah barracks. "This is camp poison," whispers a marine. "Watch your back."

The sinister atmosphere at Karmah barracks is not difficult to understand. **The marines are convinced that many, perhaps most, of the 140 members of the Iraqi National Guard (ING) they share the camp with are double agents working on behalf of the insurgents holding Fallujah.**

In the past week alone the marines have arrested five of the guardsmen, including their commanding officer, Capt Ali Mohammed Jasim.

It is just one example that a Vietnam-era experiment Washington resurrected to form the backbone of an offensive planned by the end of the year to retake Fallujah, the crucible of Iraq's insurgency, is going disastrously wrong.

Under the Combined Action Platoon (CAP) scheme, US soldiers train Iraqi guardsmen, live with them in the same barracks and venture out on joint patrols, all steps towards a longer-term objective of the withdrawal of American troops.

The plan was first developed in Vietnam, where US marines cohabited with local militias to defend villages from Vietcong raids. At the same time the marines trained the militiamen with the intention of turning them into an effective fighting force, but they were too ill-equipped and underpaid for the plan to have much success.

Mark II of the CAP programme seems to be running into even greater problems. Across the country American troops work with their poorly equipped Iraqi colleagues in an atmosphere soured by distrust - especially in provinces where the insurgency is at its most intense.

With Fallujah under insurgent control, US marines such as those at Karmah are trying to secure the surrounding al-Anbar province.

Their efforts have been blighted by remotely detonated mines, known as improvised explosive devices (IEDs), targeting the patrols that nervously venture out on to the lawless streets of towns that have become insurgent havens.

Since June, some platoons have seen up to half their men wounded in action. Eighty marines have been killed in the province.

The marines are convinced that the ING knows where many of the IEDs are planted, and even say they have caught guardsmen in the act of laying mines.

When joint patrols come under attack, they say, the ING simply refuses to fight. As the relationship worsens, more and more ING are simply refusing to turn up at work.

Of the 140 guardsmen based at Karmah an average of between 40 and 60 turn up on any given day.

At other CAP barracks, that number is sometimes as low as two.

Since the arrest of the Karmah ING captain, the rapport has become even more sullen. The marines sit under canvas shelters, convinced that the guardsmen lurking in their dormitories are traitors and murderers.

"We know when this place is about to come under mortar attack because the ING suddenly disappear," one marine said, staring across the dusty compound at two guardsmen smoking on a wooden bench. "We are supposed to be fighting together, instead we are sleeping with the enemy."

In their bare dormitory angry guardsmen queue up to tell their side of the story, accusing the marines of arrogance, bullying and a cavalier disregard for civilian life. Twelve guardsmen spoke to The Daily Telegraph, but all refused to identify themselves, saying they feared reprisals from the marines.

"The first mistake they make is that when they are attacked they don't just fire at the terrorists, they shoot everywhere," one said.

Other guardsmen alleged that the marines publicly humiliated and even physically assaulted them for minor misdemeanours. Another said he, like many others, had been arrested on suspicion of involvement in planting an IED. He said he was held for 14 days in a tiny "cooler" and then tortured during interrogation.

"They would make me drink water and drink water and then kick me in the stomach till I vomited," he said.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Five Dead As Explosion Hits Electoral Vehicle

Oct 18 KABUL (AFP)

Five people were killed when an explosive device hit a vehicle being used by election staff in southeastern Afghanistan, a United Nations spokesman said.

He said the explosion occurred in Paktika province, which has many mines and other explosive devices.

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