

GI SPECIAL 2#B98



Jackie Butler (left) and Patricia McCook
(J.D. Schwalm/The Clarion-Ledger)

“He’s Fighting A Double Battle”

October 20, 2004 By Jeremy Hudson, The (Jackson, Miss.) Clarion-Ledger

“I know how the military can cover things up,” said Patricia McCook, a former Army reservist. “They are trying to say our husbands and the others were never arrested or detained. That’s a lie. But this is something we are not going to let them sweep under the rug.”

Patricia McCook and Jackie Butler have accepted a mission created when their husbands refused a fuel convoy order in Iraq last week. “He can’t speak because he has to live that life in the military right now,” Patricia McCook said of her husband.

“I’m his voice on the outside, and there is nothing the military can do about it.”

“It’s our job now,” Jackie Butler said. “It’s our duty.”

Their husbands — Sgts. Larry McCook and Michael Butler, both of Jackson — and 16 other members of the Rock Hill, S.C.-based 343rd Army Reserve Quartermaster Company refused an order to deliver fuel citing “deadlined” vehicles that were not armored, poor leadership and contaminated fuel, their relatives said.

Brought together by their husbands’ decision, the women have become soldiers on the homefront. They’ve been bombarded with interview requests from news agencies around the world since the story of the platoon’s refusal of orders first appeared in The Clarion-Ledger.

Ask Jackie Butler and Patricia McCook about what kind of strain the past week has brought them. They’ll pause — look at one another and communicate without saying a word. Then Butler speaks.

“Look at these bags,” Butler said, removing her glasses and pointing to the circles beneath her eyes. “I just accumulated them this week. It has been a nightmare.”

Stress has come with the realization their husbands are caught in two battles in Iraq.

The women expected their husbands to face the threat of attacks from Iraqi insurgents when the Army reservists were deployed in February. But they never imagined a scenario that would have their own military holding their husbands under armed guard, or, according to the soldiers, sending them on missions with ill-equipped vehicles.

“He’s fighting a double battle,” Butler said of her husband. “That’s what hurts the most.”

Patricia McCook had never met Jackie Butler before Saturday. In an interview with The Clarion-Ledger on Tuesday, the two women said they have forged a bond by swapping stories about their husbands, offering words of encouragement and a shoulder to lean on.

“Jackie is the only person in my world right now who knows exactly what I am going through,” Patricia McCook said.

“I’m sick-feeling, constantly,” Jackie Butler said. “Twenty-four hours (a day).” Sgt. McCook has been in the Army Reserves “off and on” for about 10 years, his wife said. Sgt. Butler is a 24-year reservist. Both men knew the severity of refusing orders and were not afraid to travel down dangerous routes, their wives said.

Outside of having a crew from The New York Times follow Jackie Butler to church or Patricia McCook talking with a reporter from NBC’s Dateline while taking her children to the dentist, the women are trying to carry on routinely with their lives.

“I didn’t think it would make the national news,” Patricia McCook said. “I knew it was going to be in The Clarion-Ledger because we went to you first. I sure didn’t think it was going to take on a life of its own like it has.”

The women said they think the upcoming presidential election may have played a role in why the national media took to the story.

Patricia McCook and Jackie Butler said their husbands are fearful of speaking with reporters while the investigation is ongoing because their phone calls or e-mails might be monitored.

“I know how the military can cover things up,” said Patricia McCook, a former Army reservist. “They are trying to say our husbands and the others were never arrested or detained. That’s a lie. But this is something we are not going to let them sweep under the rug.”

Patricia McCook said she has received just one “hateful” phone call from a person in Texas who wished ill luck for her husband. Jackie Butler has received no flack, she said. **People they see in Jackson, mostly strangers, offer them support, they said.**

Both women had a talk with their children and stepchildren about why reporters keep calling their home and why their fathers are on television. The McCooks have two children, 16 and 14. Jackie Butler is a stepmother to two children, ages 14 and 10.

“I just told them to be careful of what they say around people,” Patricia McCook said. “I have to do that, too.

“But my husband and Jackie’s husband had the guts to stand up and do what they felt was right. We have to have the guts to stand up and tell the world that how they are being treated is wrong.”

MORE:

U.S. Commander Loses Post; Iraq Unit Refused Mission

Oct. 21 (Bloomberg)

The commander of the 343rd Quartermaster Company reserve unit in Iraq was relieved of her duties, the military said. Soldiers from the unit last week refused to deliver fuel along dangerous routes in the country, the Associated Press reported.

Her name and rank weren't given.

The military said the commander requested her own change of duties. She will be reassigned to a position of similar rank, according to the statement.

MORE:

The Bush administration is trying to defuse the controversy by minimizing what occurred. Jonathan Turley, Los Angeles Times, October 21, 2004

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

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

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

Marine Killed In Al-Anbar

October 21, 2004 U.S. Department of Defense News Release No. 1054-04

Sgt. Douglas E. Bascom, 25, of Colorado Springs, Colo., died Oct. 20 as result of enemy action in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. Bascom, a member of the Individual Ready Reserves, was mobilized and assigned to 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Helicopter Pilot From Bethlehem Killed

10/18/2004 By Diane Scarponi, WOODBURY, Conn. (AP)

From the time William Brennan was a boy, he wanted nothing more than to fly.

He got his dream as pilot of an Army helicopter. He died in the cockpit, when his helicopter went down Saturday over Baghdad.

His brothers and sisters Monday remembered Brennan as an outgoing, friendly, somewhat wacky guy who was proud of his Army service.

"He was very adamant that he was doing the right thing," said his sister-in-law, T.J. Brennan.

Chief Warrant Officer William Brennan, 36, who sometimes went as "Will," was the youngest of seven children born to a Bethlehem family that is well-known in the area for running the Curtis House, a Colonial-era inn and restaurant in nearby Woodbury.

He leaves behind his wife, Kathy, with whom he served in the Army in Bosnia, and two daughters, 4-year-old Katelin and 2-year-old Cassidy. They live in Hawaii, where Brennan was stationed.

Brennan's siblings remember him as fun-loving. He liked to ride his bicycle with the family cat, Ralph, on his head. He took care of goats for a 4-H project and played lacrosse and other sports.

When he was older, his many nieces, nephews and cousins called him "Uncle Buck," after the sloppy but lovable character in the John Candy film.

He also was the kind of guy who made friends wherever he went. A quick trip to the store might take hours, because of all the buddies he would encounter on the way.

Military service runs in the Brennan family. William Brennan was named after a cousin, who also was a helicopter pilot during the Vietnam War. An uncle was a bomber pilot in World War II and Korea.

His father, who was a commander in the Navy, died when William Brennan was 3.

He graduated from Roman Catholic schools in the Waterbury area, then studied at a community college, but a pilot's life was his dream, said his brother, Nicholas Brennan. "He just wanted to fly," he said.

William Brennan joined the National Guard and Reserves and applied to Army flight school. He almost never made it an Army bureaucrat spilled coffee on his first application and threw it away.

Army flight school eventually took him in, and Brennan studied up on various kinds of helicopters to figure out which ones he wanted to fly most, his sister-in-law recalled.

In letters e-mailed to his relatives, Brennan spoke about the daily goings-on of his service and the respect he felt for the Iraqi people, who he said had suffered under Saddam Hussein and were grateful for American aid.

In an Easter letter to his sister, Briana Wall, Brennan spoke more privately of his fears, but he wanted to keep these feelings secret from his wife, so she would not worry, his sister said.

"I say a hell of a lot of prayers before getting into the aircraft, and after getting down," he wrote. "It is not the fear of death that weighs me down, it is the feeling of not being there for my three girls."

"There is a very real chance that something bad could happen and they would never know me," he wrote.

Brennan met his wife at a Superbowl party, his brother recalled. Kathy Brennan was in the infantry. They were both stationed at Ft. Drum and shipped out together for Bosnia. While overseas, she learned she was pregnant with their first daughter and was discharged.

"I am so glad I keep a journal," he wrote to his family in September. "I think it might make a good book someday."

Death Of Macomb County Soldier, 22

10/18/2004 SHELBY TOWNSHIP, Mich. (AP)

SHELBY TOWNSHIP, Mich. (AP) — The Pentagon has confirmed the death of a 22-year-old Macomb County soldier who was in a vehicle that hit a roadside bomb in Iraq. Private Mark A. Barbret of Shelby Township, north of Detroit, was killed Thursday.

Barbret and Nicole Hale had a 3-year-old son, Christian.

The Army mechanic attended Utica Eisenhower High School. He served a year in Korea before his unit was transferred to Iraq about six weeks ago, said his father Kim Barbret.

Pendleton Marine Combat Photographer Killed

October 18, 2004 NBCTV4

LOS ANGELES -- A 26-year-old Marine combat photographer was killed during fighting in Iraq, base officials said Monday.

Cpl. William I. Salazar of Las Vegas, Nev., died Friday while fighting in the al Anbar province, Camp Pendleton officials said. Salazar was assigned to Headquarters Battalion, 1st Marine Division, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, base officials said.

Junction Native Wounded

October 18, 2004 By SALLY SPAULDING, The Daily Sentinel

A 21-year-old Grand Junction native was injured Sunday in Iraq while transferring prisoners of war. "We don't know a whole lot at this point," said Beatrice Archuleta of Grand Junction, the Marine's grandmother. "His face is damaged, and he may lose his eye. We just don't know."

Lance Cpl. Cory J. Hixson was hit with shrapnel near Fallujah, according to family members.

Hixson was in his second rotation in Iraq after serving seven months in 2003. He was sent back to Iraq this September, Archuleta said. Hixson's brother, Gregory, is also a Marine serving in Iraq.

Gregory O. Hixson, 22, was able to visit his brother in a Baghdad infirmary Sunday and reported the news of Cory Hixson's injury to their father.

Oliver Archuleta of Grand Junction, the men's grandfather, said the brothers were close, both in age and interests. The two wrestled for Moffat County High School in Craig and joined the Marines within six months of each other.

Three Soldiers From 109th Wounded

10/21/2004 Robert Kalinowski , Citizens' Voice Staff Writer

Three soldiers from the 109th Field Artillery, Pennsylvania Army National Guard, were injured Friday in an explosion near Baghdad, Iraq, local military officials confirmed yesterday.

"They were in convoy and their Humvee was hit with an IED (improvised explosive device)," said Capt. Gerard Wrazien of the 109th Field Artillery Armory.

Wrazien identified the soldiers as Spec. Dave Miscavage, 20, White Haven; Spec. Ryan Craig, 20, Swiftwater; and SSGT. Patrick O'Boyle, 41, Mountain Top.

Miscavage, of Service Battery, Kingston, sustained the most severe injuries, according to Wrazien.

During the incident, Miscavage was struck in the face with shrapnel, which injured his left eye and broke his jaw, Wrazien said.

He was initially treated at the 31st Combat Support Hospital in Baghdad, where surgery was performed on his eye. **Wrazien said Miscavage's exact medical status was unknown Wednesday, only adding that in civilian terms, it probably wouldn't be considered critical condition.**

He said military officials have spoken with him and "he's in good spirits." His military future is uncertain, however.

Wrazien said Craig of Headquarters Battery, Kingston, and O'Boyle of Bravo Battery, Nanticoke, were treated and released after the incident.

Craig took some shrapnel and sustained ruptured eardrums. O'Boyle also took shrapnel to his face and received three stitches.

He didn't give an exact location of where the explosion occurred, only confirming the soldiers were en route to Baghdad.

Combat In Falluja: Two Women Arrested

FALLUJAH, Iraq, Oct. 21 (Xinhuanet)

US troops launched an attack on a house near the Karma area outside Fallujah at about 2:00 am (2300 GMT Wednesday), arresting two women, Abdul-Rahman said.

He said that people in the area and some religious and tribal leaders were preparing for a demonstration on Thursday to protest the arrest.

**ALL TANGLED UP:
BRING THE TROOPS HOME NOW!**



Fallujah (Photo: John Moore / AP)

Losing Mosul

16 October 2004 By Andrew Lee Butters, Time

A recent wave of killings...threatens to turn this multiethnic, Arab-dominated northern gateway city into the next Fallujah, as areas of the city are slipping out of the control of U.S. forces and the Iraqi government.

Week after week, car bombings, improvised explosives and shootings take a steady toll of Iraqi National Guard and U.S. personnel

"The situation is bad and getting worse," says a surgeon at Salaam Hospital, the city's largest. Adds a colleague: **"We feel like there are eyes watching everyone, and that the resistance is growing stronger every day."**

The sad irony is that Mosul had once been a postwar model for U.S. involvement in Iraq.

These days the local economy has stalled as foreign companies have fled. According to Pire, about 600,000 breadwinners are unemployed in a city of somewhere between 2.6 million and 3 million people.

The 20,000-strong 101st is gone, replaced last February by the 8,700 soldiers of Task Force Olympia, a multinational brigade of coalition troops. Although they include a large number of U.S. National Guard reservists, American soldiers have largely taken a backseat to the Iraqi National Guard.

The offices of the major political parties have already been attacked.

TROOP NEWS

Guardsman Wins Fight Against Stop-Loss

[San Francisco Chronicle, October 21, 2004, Pg. B3]

An unidentified Iraqi war veteran who challenged the Army's extension of his combat service under the stop-loss policy has been excused from redeployment to Iraq and has dropped his lawsuit.

A similar suit filed by another soldier will be considered next month by a judge, lawyers for both men said.

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.

Marine Supports Anti-War Demonstrator

October 21, 2004 by Richard Pearsall, Courier-Post, (Camden, New Jersey)

PHILADELPHIA -- Lillian Willoughby, a Deptford Quaker who will turn 90 in January, went to jail Wednesday to protest the war in Iraq.

Shortly before noon, Willoughby rose from her wheelchair, gave her husband of 64 years, George, a hug and a kiss, and disappeared into the federal detention center at Seventh and Arch streets here.

Reporting with her were five other peace activists, including a young couple from Camden, Cassie Haw, 22, and her husband, Chris, 23. All were convicted of obstructing the entrance to the federal building in Philadelphia on March 20, 2003, the day the United States invaded Iraq.

A young Marine from North Philadelphia came to speak with Willoughby.

"I wanted to thank her for resisting this war," said Lance Cpl. Elliot Ruiz, 19, who spent 5 1/2 months in Iraq before he was wounded when a car ran a checkpoint he was guarding near Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's hometown.

"It tore the back of my leg open," said Ruiz, who had two decks of campaign ribbons, including a Purple Heart, on the chest of his blue, full dress uniform.

Tens Of Thousands Throng London To Protest Iraq War

October 17, 2004, Agence France Presse

LONDON - Tens of thousands of demonstrators took to the streets of central London to protest against the Iraq war as Prime Minister Tony Blair struggled to shake-off fierce criticism of the invasion back home.

Organisers said that between 65,000 and 75,000 protesters had taken to the streets for the peaceful march, which began at Russell Square, close to the British museum.

"Troops out," screamed one of many placards being waved by protesters.

"Blair must go," said another.

The brother of Kenneth Bigley, the British hostage recently executed by his captors in Iraq, had urged people to turn out in force for Sunday's march.

"For Ken's sake and for the sake of everyone in Iraq I ask you to make your feelings known to our government, to protest and to join the demonstration," Paul Bigley was quoted as saying by the Press Association, Britain's domestic news agency.

Lack Of Vehicle Armor Confirmed

[Seattle Times, October 21, 2004, Pg. 1]

The lack of armor for military vehicles used in Iraq has U.S. troops concerned about their own safety. The military has begun adding armor and ballistic windshields, along with other improvements, to its truck fleet, but **the effort is far from complete.**

By The Thousands, Soldiers 50 And Older Being Deployed

October 17, 2004 BY ANA M. ALAYA, Star-Ledger Staff

Of the 160,000 men and women deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan, 4,119 are 50 or older. At a time in life when most people are looking forward to retirement or eyeing Florida real estate, these soldiers are leaving behind corporate jobs and grandkids. Some even voluntarily postpone military retirement to go to war.

As of late last week, 10 of the more than 1,085 soldiers to die in Iraq were 50 or older, according to the Associated Press' War Casualty database. That is a tiny fraction of overall fatalities and **those men were more likely to die of medical causes, including heart attacks and heat stroke, than their younger counterparts.**

Three of the 10 older soldiers died in action, including New Jersey National Guardsman Frank Carvill, 51, who was killed when his convoy was attacked in Baghdad on June 4.

Army Command Sgt. Maj. Edward Barnhill, 50, of Shreveport, La., died of a heart attack, collapsing in the hallway of the Coalition Provisional Authority headquarters in Baghdad in May. **"His age was never a concern to him," said Barnhill's widow, Paula Barnhill, in a recent interview. "His son told him, 'Daddy, you're too old to go,'"** Barnhill said. "But he was in good physical condition."

Younger troops sometimes have mixed feelings about serving with men and women old enough to be their parents or even grandparents.

"We have quite a few older guys in our combat unit, and some it seems close to the time they should be retiring," said Joseph Bates, 34, of Montclair, an Army National Guardsman deploying in several weeks for Iraq with the 250th Signal Battalion out of Westfield.

"I don't mean disrespect, but some of them are physically starting to slow down," Bates said. "It's 50-50.

"I also think they're a great asset, a lot of them Vietnam vets. They know what they're doing, even if they don't talk about it."

10,000 More Guard To Go To Slaughterhouse Next Year

[Baltimore Sun, October 19, 2004]

The National Guard, a draft-era haven during the Vietnam War and an afterthought during much of the Cold War, is a major force in Iraq. **The current Guard contingent in Iraq, about 32,000 troops, is expected to increase to 42,000 next year.**

How U.S. Dollars Bought Polish Soldiers' Lives

10/17/04 By Robert Little, Baltimo Sun National Staff

As the Bush administration scrambled last year to pull together a "coalition of the willing" to wage a war in Iraq, it simultaneously negotiated and financed an unprecedented multibillion-dollar arms deal with Poland - a compact that promises to funnel at least \$6 billion in U.S. investments into the former Warsaw Pact nation, which has become one of the United States' primary wartime supporters.

The record shows that early last year, the United States brought the full force of its powerful economy to bear, helping to negotiate Poland's \$3.5 billion purchase of 48 F-16 fighter planes from Bethesda-based Lockheed Martin Corp.

The Polish deal also included more than \$6 billion in U.S. business investment that Lockheed promised to channel into Poland, an economic "offset" that caused Polish officials to call the purchase "the deal of the century."

The type of economic incentives won by Poland were called "economic bribes" this year by Rep. Duncan Hunter of California, the Republican chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.

Poland's allegiance seemed shakier Friday, when Prime Minister Marek Belka said that his country will start withdrawing its troops - the fourth-largest contingent in Iraq - early next year.

The announcement came weeks after Polish officials complained that the F-16 deal is not producing as much U.S. investment as they anticipated, though they have long denied any relationship between the deal and the troops.

<p>Seventeen Polish troops have been killed in Iraq, and Polish public opinion has been anti-war from the start of hostilities. Eight other members of the coalition, including Spain and the Philippines, have withdrawn their troops.</p>
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The deal, which allows Poland to defer payments for eight years and then begin repayments at below-market interest rates, has fostered such trans-Atlantic

ventures as building General Motors cars in Gliwice, manufacturing U.S. Army explosives in Bydgoszcz and, after the intervention of the Federal Aviation Administration, selling Polish airplanes in southern Florida.

"Lockheed didn't win the contract, the U.S. government did, with pressure and support coming from the very highest levels," said Gregory Filipowicz, a defense industry consultant who lives in Poland and has helped arrange at least two of Lockheed's "offset" investment deals related to the F-16 contract.

"They created a program that, politically and economically, was very hard to say no to," Filipowicz said.

Armenia May Not Send Troops To Iraq

Oct. 15, 2004 Associated Press

YEREVAN, Armenia - Armenia's prime minister suggested Friday the Caucasus country might not send troops to Iraq, saying conditions there have changed since they were promised. [No shit. Like being targets for a very pissed off national liberation movement.]

Prime Minister Andranik Markarian stressed that it was up to the Constitutional Court and the parliament to make the decision on sending the troops even though Armenia's president pledged the troops during a visit to Poland last month. **[Get this fucking hot potato out of my hands!]**

The 50 troops Armenia is considering sending - bomb disposal experts, doctors and transport teams - would work under Polish command in Iraq.

"Let's not forget that ... there have been certain changes from the conditions under which we gave preliminary approval," Makarian said.

Armenia, a former Soviet republic has sought to portray the decision to send troops to Iraq as a way to boost ties with Europe, but critics worry that it will endanger the 25,000-person Armenian community living in Iraq.

"We also have concerns on this count. It's possible that as a result Armenia could become of the targets of terrorists," Markarian said.

Netherlands Tells Allawi To Fuck Off; Won't Keep Troops In Iraq

Oct. 21 (Bloomberg)

The Netherlands will pull its troops from Iraq in March after **Dutch Defense Minister Henk Kamp turned down a request from the Iraqi government to extend their mandate there**, Algemeen Dagblad said, citing Kamp.

Iraqi interim President Ayad Allawi asked Kamp to keep Dutch troops in the Southern province of Al Muthanna, where about 1,200 soldiers have been on a peace-keeping mission, after the end of the current mandate in mid-March, the paper said. Coalition troops also want Dutch soldiers to stay, it said.

The paper quoted Kamp as saying that the Dutch had already made a "large effort" in keeping its troops in Iraq for 20 months in March and wouldn't stay longer. **It also cited Kamp as saying the security situation in Iraq had worsened since his previous visit to Baghdad last year and that he expected the U.S. to remain for "years" in Iraq.**

Study Finds 65,000 Gays In The Military

[Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, October 21, 2004]

More than 65,000 gay men and women are in the military, according to a survey conducted by the Urban Institute, a non-profit independent policy research and educational organization. The study included active duty, reserves and National Guard members. **[Given how desperate the army is for bodies, we can expect Rumsfeld to try to marry a cute young soldier soon --- but who would want to marry Rumsfeld? Yetch. A better match would be Rumsfeld and Allawi. They might as well make it official.]**

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP



(Graphic: London Financial Times)

Mortar Rounds Explode in Mosul Near Allawi; Some Of His Staff Killed In Baghdad

Oct. 21, 2004 Associated Press

MOSUL, Iraq - Mortar rounds exploded near Prime Minister Ayad Allawi on Thursday as he visited this northern Iraq city, but there were no reported injuries in the attack.

In Baghdad, three employees from Allawi's office, including two women, were gunned down Thursday in a drive-by shooting in the western part of the city, according to the Interior Ministry. A fourth employee was wounded.

Five mortar rounds fell about two blocks away from Allawi and his entourage as they readied for a helicopter trip after talks with the governor and other officials in Mosul, 225 miles northwest of the capital. A small blaze and a plume of black smoke could be seen after lift-off. No injuries were immediately reported.

4 Occupation Staff Killed On Way To Baghdad Airport

21 October, 2004 By Luke Baker (Reuters)

Partisans have fired on a bus carrying Baghdad airport employees to work, killing four people and wounding 11.

Security sources said two cars of armed men stopped the bus as it was driving on the highway to the airport, on the western outskirts of the capital, shortly after 7 a.m. (5 a.m. British time).

One attacker threw at least two hand grenades into the packed bus and then three gunmen opened fire on the vehicle from outside, strafing it with bullets in a well-planned attack.

"The bus was riddled with bullet holes. There was broken glass everywhere," said an airport employee who asked not to be named. She said most of the passengers were office workers. There were thought to be at least 25 people on board.

Baghdad's airport, formerly a huge military base is protected by an independent British contractor. [Translation: mercenaries.]

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Losing The War And Peace: Strategies For Iraq Withdrawal Being Considered

18oct04 Patrick Walters, The Australian. Patrick Walters is The Australian's national security editor.

"We have not yet been able to secure one single province in Iraq. In terms of the age-old measure of military success – territory won and occupied – we are no better off now than we were a year ago," a US military source writing from Iraq observed recently.

So serious is the deteriorating security situation in Iraq that, privately, coalition military leaders are contemplating strategies for eventual withdrawal from a war they admit probably cannot be won.

Writing in The New York Times last week, Dexter Filkins, now a hardened veteran of the paper's Baghdad bureau, described Iraq as a shrinking country.

"Village by village, block by block, the vast and challenging land that we entered in March 2003 has shriveled into a medieval city-state, a grim and edgy place where the only question is how much more territory we will lose tomorrow.

Patrick Cockburn of London's Independent newspaper says the situation on the ground is far worse than portrayed in the media precisely because much of the country is now too dangerous for journalists to operate in.

"I have spent most of the past year-and-a-half traveling in Iraq and I have never known it so bad," observes Cockburn. "The insurrection is spreading each month under its own momentum. It does so because the dominant fact in Iraqi politics is the overwhelming unpopularity of the US occupation."

Like an isolated Crusader citadel the sprawling, heavily fortified 10sqkm green zone in central Baghdad, which is home to about 10,000 foreign military, diplomatic and civilian personnel, remains a relative haven.

But the primary mission for coalition soldiers and diplomats, including the Australians, is now the business of staying alive – self-protection rather than the rebuilding of Iraq.

Sunni and Shia fighters have shown an impressive ability to adapt to US military tactics. "They are learning very fast. They used to pick off the last vehicle in a

convoy but now they mount co-ordinated assaults and circular ambushes with up to 100 fighters," says one coalition military expert.

The insurgents use mobile phone chips to set off simultaneous improvised explosive devices and global positioning system jammers to disrupt US tactical communications.

"We have not yet been able to secure one single province in Iraq. In terms of the age-old measure of military success – territory won and occupied – we are no better off now than we were a year ago," a US military source writing from Iraq observed recently.



(Why the Peace Movement is stressed out.)

Tom – I'll call you back, I think someone is following me!

Photo and caption from the I-R-A-Q (I Remember Another Quagmire) portfolio of Mike Hastie, U.S. Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71.

(Please contact at: hastiemike@earthlink.net) for more examples of his outstanding work. T)

THE YEAR OF SURRENDERING QUIETLY

Excerpts: ALEXANDER COCKBURN New Left Review 29, September-October 2004

The Kerry candidacy in 2004?

As an inspirational candidate, he's a dud, even damper a political squib than Michael Dukakis and, by dint of his chill snobbery, less appealing. Democrats know this in their hearts. Twit them about Kerry's dreariness, reminiscent of tepid chowder on a damp day in Boston or of Weeping Ed Muskie amid the snows of New Hampshire, and one gets the upraised palm and petulant cry, "I don't want to hear a word against Kerry!"

It is as though the Democratic candidate has been entombed, pending resurrection as president, with an honour guard of the National Organization of Women, the afl-cio, the League of Conservation Voters, Taxpayers for Justice and the NAACP. To open the tomb prematurely, to admit the oxygen of life and criticism, is to blaspheme against political propriety.

Amid the defilements of the political system, and the collapse of all serious political debate among the liberals and most of the left, the Democratic candidate becomes a kind of Hegelian Anybody, as in Anybody but . . .

Kerry's inner emptiness is thus peculiarly appropriate. Insecurely positioned from childhood on the margins of the elite, a heavily calculating opportunism has been his life's guiding compass, whether pursuing wealthy women or plotting his political career.

His four months in Vietnam transferred to a desk job as an admiral's aide in New York, and to earn the soubriquet Quick John from the crew members he left behind after a year and a half's cautious consideration, by five months of high-profile media coverage as a leading spokesman for Vietnam Veterans Against the War, the springboard for his first (unsuccessful) Congressional bid.

His tour in Vietnam became the target of damaging campaign ads in late August 2004 that clearly rattled Kerry, who fumed at these onslaughts on his martial honor from a president so indifferent to the Call to Arms that he declined even to undergo a routine medical check to maintain his status in the National Guard. **But Kerry has only himself to blame, since it was his decision to exploit what he once, with no less opportunism, repudiated, preening at Boston with the medals he so carefully declined to toss away during the anti-war rallies in which he insisted on a starring role back in the early 1970s.**

Internationally, Kerry offers himself largely as a more competent manager of the Bush agenda, a steadier hand on the helm of Empire.

War in Iraq?

A majority of the country wants out, certainly most Democrats. Kerry wants in, even more than Bush.

When the Democratic National Committee told Dennis Kucinich what to do with his peace plank, the Representative from Ohio tugged his forelock and told his

followers to shuffle back in under the Big Tent and help elect a man who pledges to fight the war better and longer than Bush.

Feminist leaders kept their mouths shut when Kerry flew his kite about nominating anti-choice judges. Gay leaders did not utter so much as a squeak when Kerry declared his opposition to same-sex marriages. Did we hear a peep from Norman Lear and People for the American Way as Kerry, the man who voted for the Patriot Act, revived his Tipper Gore-ish posturing about the evils of popular culture and said he would draft laws to elide the constitutional separation of church from state, permitting "faith-based" organizations to get some purchase on Federal funds?

Many attest to a slack political tempo this campaign season. A simple refusal to vote at all on the presidential candidate could see the turnout drop below 50 per cent, as bleak a register of popular cynicism about the realities of the democratic mandate in the US today as the Venezuelan turnout was exhilarating.

The next US president could even be denied a majority "mandate" from the sliver of those voters going to the polls.

By the same token, the shape of resistance in the coming years will not derive from a vote for Kerry, or even one for Nader, but from the harnessing of those vital, idealistic energies that always move through the American firmament, awaiting release.

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.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Iraq Commanders Warn Soldiers Lives Endangered By Politicians Idiocy

[New York Times, October 17, 2004]

U.S. military commanders in Iraq have warned Washington **that delays in reconstruction projects caused by red tape are putting the live of troops in jeopardy and undermine the military mission in Iraq.**

Australians Run For The Green Zone

10.19.04 ABC News

Australia's government said Tuesday that it was moving its embassy in Baghdad into the strife-torn city's heavily fortified Green Zone.

The announcement came less than two days after a car bomb blast close to the Australian embassy in the fashionable Jadiriya district killed six people late Sunday.

Killing Drives Big Wedge Between U.S. & Allawi Regime Troops

[Los Angeles Times, October 18, 2004] By Edmund Sanders and Suhail Ahmed, Times Staff Writers

Federico Merida, a National Guard member, has been convicted of murdering an Iraqi national guardsman.

Merida has been sentenced to 25 years in prison.

The trial and conviction have driven a deep wedge between U.S. and Iraqi troops in the region where the murder occurred.

At the Ad Dawr base, the incident has been a source of friction between U.S. and Iraqi forces. U.S. and Iraqi soldiers no longer work in lone pairs at the joint military facility, Iraqi soldiers say.

Budding camaraderie at the base quickly disintegrated into distrust and suspicion as U.S. soldiers turned their guns on some Iraqi counterparts in the chaos after the shooting.

Zaggam's family was told by U.S. troops that he was being held in prison for attacking an American soldier.

"They lied to me," said Amir Zaggam, one of the victim's brothers. "We didn't know the truth until the next morning when our brother Faris was summoned by Iraqi sergeants and soldiers to retrieve Falah's body."

"I swear to Allah, that even if I went to the States and found that Merida and killed him with my own hands, I still would not be satisfied," said Faris, Zaggam's older brother.

The U.S. military paid the family \$2,200 in compensation, but the Zaggams said the money didn't even cover the \$4,500 they spent on a funeral.

"When I heard about the sentence I laughed because I don't think he'll ever have to serve the whole thing, despite the seriousness of his crime," said Matar At-Shammari, an Iraqi national guard soldier and friend of the victim.

OCCUPATION HAITI



Brazilian Occupation troops search a motorist at a roadblock near the Haitian port office in the port area of Port-au-Prince, October 13, 2004. **Occupation troops in Haiti “urgently need reinforcements to cope with surging violence”** Brazil's foreign minister said on Thursday. **[Looks like Haitians don't like being invaded and occupied either.]** (Daniel Morel/Reuters)



Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Friday Oct. 15, 2004. Burning tires smoked in Bel-Air, a slum stronghold of Aristide loyalists who barricaded streets with wooden market stands and debris. (AP Photo/Ariana Cubillos)

**Chinese Empire Sends Soldiers To Help U.S.
Empire Occupy Haiti**

[Los Angeles Times, October 18, 2004

Ninety-five heavily armed Chinese police have arrived in Haiti for their first occupation duty in the Western Hemisphere.

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

Haitian Resistance Drives Off Occupation Cops With “Thunderous Volley”

15/10/04 Port au Prince, Haiti(HIP) Full article at http://www.williambowles.info/haiti-news/hip_151004.html

Armed units of the Haitian National Police (PNH) entered the pro-Aristide slum of Bel Air as thousands of residents took to streets to demand the return of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Marchers defied a shutdown of the capital by the business community and threats issued by the former military.

Heavy gunfire erupted as the police reportedly fired shots to disperse the crowd. The police were then forced to withdraw as unidentified gunmen returned fire from surrounding buildings in a thunderous volley.

Aristide supporters had braced themselves for today's attacks after the U.S.-backed government and United Nation's forces allowed armed units of the former military to enter the capital unchallenged over the past two days.

This has led to charges by Lavalas representatives of a “second coup” and UN complicity in allowing the former military to return to power in Haiti. Two trucks of former military opened fire on residents at Delmas 2 in the slum of La Saline this morning and could be seen setting up roadblocks on Route Frere.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

President Bush blasted Army reservists who refused to carry out a convoy supply mission in Iraq last week, saying, "What do they think this is, the Alabama National Guard?"

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BUSH WINS SECRET FOURTH DEBATE

October 17, 2004 The Borowitz Report

President George W. Bush notched his first debate victory early Sunday morning, winning handily in a fourth presidential debate that was kept secret from his Democratic rival, Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass).

The debate, which was held at 2 AM Sunday morning in the basement of the White House and moderated by Fox News personality Bill O'Reilly, was a must-win affair in the eyes of the Bush campaign strategists who planned it.

"We knew that we needed to win at least one debate going into November," said Bush strategist Karl Rove. "Mission accomplished."

While aides to Sen. Kerry complained that the debate did not count since Mr. Kerry was kept totally in the dark about its time and place, Mr. Rove said, "They can spin this any way they want, but a win is a win."

The White House today released a videotape of the president's triumphal fourth debate, showing Mr. Bush gesturing towards an empty podium with Mr. Kerry nowhere in sight.

"Looks like my opponent didn't make it today," a smirking Mr. Bush says on the tape. "I guess he must be back in Massachusetts, busy being a liberal and such."

Four minutes into the debate, Mr. O'Reilly declares Mr. Bush the winner and abruptly excuses himself, saying, "I've got a few phone calls to make."

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

AIRMAN DIES AS A RESULT OF HH-60 HELICOPTER CRASH

October 21, 2004 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND Release
Number: 04-10-21C

KABUL, Afghanistan – One U.S. Air Force Airman died today as a result of injuries sustained from an HH-60 helicopter crash 170 kilometers east of Shindand, Afghanistan. The crash occurred at approximately 11 p.m. Wednesday.

Two other Airmen were injured in the crash and were transported to a medical facility at Kandahar Air Field, along with a local national who works for the Joint Electoral Management Body.

The helicopter crew was on a medical evacuation mission transporting the injured local national when the accident occurred.

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Check This Out:

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/iraq_4all/message/2917

(To see about what life is like under a murderous military occupation by a foreign power, go to: www.rafahtoday.org. The foreign army is Israeli; the occupied nation is Palestine.)

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