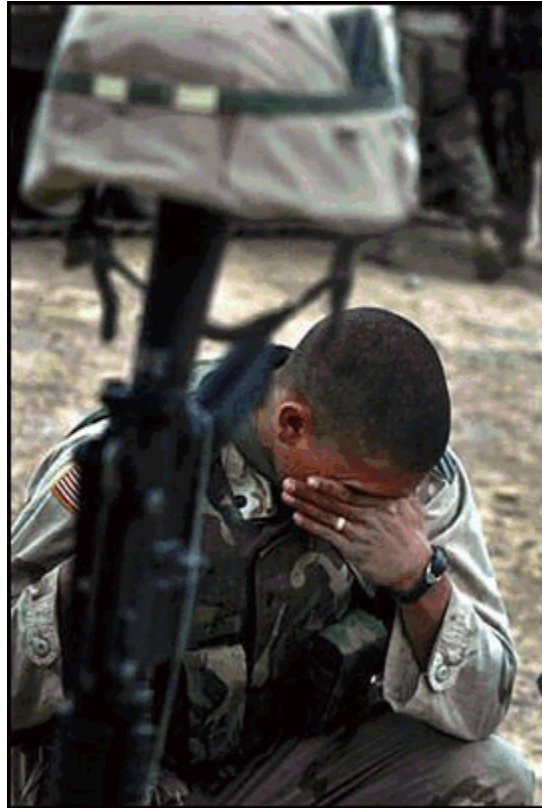


GI SPECIAL 2/1



David Leeson/Dallas Morning News/Corbis

The Deadliest Year For U.S. Soldiers Since Vietnam 1972

Jimmy Breslin Newsday (New York) 12/31/2003

There were 506 killed by the time the newspaper closed last Friday. Since then, another seven have died. **The newspaper has said this is the deadliest year for the U.S. military since 1972, when 640 were killed in Vietnam.**

Interceptor Vests “Non-Priority Items;” How U.S. Political Leaders And Generals Kill Soldiers

By Jonathan Turley 12.18.03 Op Ed. USA Today

I recently received a note from one of the few husbands who knows just what his wife wants as a holiday gift. The Army sergeant (who asked to remain anonymous) e-mailed me from Iraq asking my help in finding him a store to buy body armor for his wife.

Both the sergeant and his wife are serving in Iraq, and both have seen action. **But, like thousands of U.S. soldiers, his wife was not given the vital ceramic plates for her Kevlar Interceptor vest to protect her from bullet wounds. Instead, he said, she had to scavenge to find plates left behind by Iraqi soldiers – plates of inferior quality that do not properly fit her vest.**

The Pentagon confirms that at least 40,000 of the 130,000 U.S. troops in Iraq don't have basic Kevlar Interceptor vests or the ceramic plates needed for full protection.

As a law professor, I am more comfortable researching legal briefs than body armor, but I was thrown into this controversy in early September when I received a call from Richard Murphy, one of my students during his first year of law school.

I wasn't surprised to hear from Richard, but I was a bit surprised that he was calling from Iraq. His Army Reserve unit had been called up, so he had taken a leave from school to serve. **What came as a greater surprise was that Richard's mother had mailed him body armor because his entire unit was issued Vietnam-era flak jackets that are designed to stop shrapnel rather than bullets.** The Interceptor vest can stop AK-47 rounds moving 2,750 feet a second.

I first assumed that Murphy's unit was a mix-up. Then I called retailers and manufacturers of body armor and was told that they had been deluged by such orders from the families of soldiers.

A Pentagon procurement officer then told me Interceptor vests were “non-priority” items, like tents.

Accordingly, the military had decided to slowly phase out the old flak jackets in a one-for-one exchange program over 10 years. We invaded Iraq in the fifth year.

After I wrote about this shortage in a September Los Angeles Times column, I received dozens of e-mails and calls from troops in Iraq giving their own accounts. Some wrote that they had taped plates on the backs of their flak jackets to try to get some protection. Other units, they wrote, shifted the available vests from soldier to soldier.

This “swap and share” approach has forced soldiers in American and British units to play a dangerous version of Russian roulette. The first British death in the war occurred after Sgt. Steve Roberts was forced to give up his plates and was then shot in the chest while on patrol, according to The London Daily Telegraph.

Sgt. Zachariah Byrd from Colorado was luckier. Shortly before his unit was ambushed, a friend gave him his Interceptor vest. Byrd was hit four times by fire from an AK-47 and survived only because of the last-minute swap.

At a September House hearing, Gen. John Abizaid, head of all military forces in Iraq, admitted he could not give House members a good reason “why we started this war with protective vests that were in short supply.”

This left parents and spouses to buy body armor for their loved ones. Murphy’s mother, an elementary school teacher in Sciota, Pa., spent \$650 to buy the protective plates. A Marin County, Calif., National Guard unit was outfitted with body armor donated by local law enforcement officials.

Obituaries and news accounts raise the disturbing prospect that we have had soldiers seriously wounded or killed due to the shortage of body armor. Many note wounds to the chest and stomach areas – areas that might have been protected by the Interceptor vests and plates.

What is baffling is what the military was doing during the years since the previous Iraqi war. **For at least a year before the current conflict, it was aware that an invasion of Iraq was likely, if not certain.**

In response to questions about the lack of body armor, acting Secretary of the Army Les Brownlee simply stated that the attacks in Iraq “differed from our expectations.” But we give Kevlar vests to our police to patrol our cities. Why would the military think it safer for our troops to move around Baghdad than for a cop to walk around Boise?

Despite requests from a few members of Congress, there appears to be little movement to investigate the shortage of what seems to be a basic protective item for our troops. Capitol Hill politicians now have left for holiday vacations. When they return next month, they might want to give these troops more thought and consider whether we sent them into harm’s way but failed to outfit them with a basic item that could help keep them alive.

As for the sergeant, he finally located a set of plates for his wife on the Internet. He just hopes that it arrives quickly so they both can look forward to the New Year.

Jonathan Turley is the Shapiro Professor of Public Interest Law at George Washington University.

GI SPECIAL NEW YEAR'S COMMENT:

YOU TELL ME THIS. IF CITIZENS CAN BUY INTERCEPTOR VESTS, WHY HASN'T RUMSFELD ORDERED OUT BUYERS TO GET EVERY ONE FOR SALE AND SEND IT TO IRAQ?

WHY HASN'T BUSH ORDERED HIM TO?

CAN IT POSSIBLY BE THEY SIMPLY REFUSE TO SPEND THE MONEY TO KEEP SOLDIERS ALIVE?

IS IT POSSIBLE THEY CAN HAND OUT HUNDREDS OF BILLIONS IN TAX CUTS FOR THE RICH BUT DON'T WANT TO SPEND A FEW MILLION TO BUY INTERCEPTOR VESTS, WHICH, BY THE WAY, ARE ALSO FOR SALE IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES?

NO, THIS ISN'T AN ARGUMENT FOR THE IMPEACHMENT CAMPAIGN.

CONGRESS WOULD NEVER DO THAT JUST BECAUSE SOLDIERS ARE BEING KILLED.

NEITHER THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY NOR THE REPUBLICAN PARTY WILL DESTABILIZE THE GOVERNMENT TO SAVE SOLDIERS LIVES. THEY HAVE OTHER PRIORITIES. RUNNING AMERICA FOR THE WEALTHY AND POWERFUL WHO BUY THEM AND THEIR PARTIES IS THEIR FIRST PRIORITY.

THEY'RE DOING THEIR JOB, ORGANIZING THE GOVERNMENT TO SHOVEL EVEN MORE WEALTH TO THOSE ON TOP. DON'T GET SUCKERED INTO THEIR GAMES.

NO, THIS ISN'T THE OCCASION FOR POLITICS AS USUAL. THIS IS JUST ONE MORE CAUSE FOR REVOLUTION.

REVOLUTION, OF COURSE, ISN'T AROUND THE NEXT CORNER.

FOR ONE THING, BUSH IS PROMISING TO GET THE WAR OVER. THE CURRENT LINE IS THAT IN A FEW MONTHS THE IRAQIS WILL BE RUNNING IRAQ AND ALL WILL BE WELL.

SO, THERE'S A LULL UNTIL IT ALL TURNS TO SHIT IN APRIL, WHEN THE WAR GETS WORSE, EVEN MORE SOLDIERS DIE, AND EVERYBODY SEES THAT BUSH LIED AGAIN

THE IMPERIAL MINDS IN CHARGE OF THE GOVERNMENT HAVE NO INTENTION OF STOPPING THE WAR, GETTING THE FUCK OF OUT SOMEBODY ELSE'S COUNTRY, AND BRINGING ALL THE SOLDIERS HOME WHERE THEY BELONG.

BUT BEFORE THAT BECOMES EVEN MORE OBVIOUS, AND THINGS START MOVING MORE QUICKLY, WE HAVE US SOME FEW MONTHS TO REACH OUT TO THE MEN AND WOMEN IN THE ARMED SERVICES.

THEIR WRONGS, LIKE THIS ONE, AND ALL THE REST, ARE OUR WRONGS TOO. TOGETHER WE CAN BUILD A MOVEMENT NO POLITICIANS IN THIS COUNTRY CAN RESIST.

THIS GOVERNMENT HAS NO RESPECT WHATEVER FOR ORDINARY SOLDIERS OR WORKING AMERICANS. THIS GOVERNMENT HAS DECLARED CLASS WAR ON THE AMERICAN WORKING CLASS AND IS TRYING TO USE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN THE ARMED FORCES TO EXTEND CORPORATE GREED WORLD WIDE.

AND THE AMERICAN CAPITALIST CLASS WON'T EVEN GIVE UP SOME TINY PERCENTAGE OF THEIR BILLIONS TO KEEP SOLDIERS ALIVE, WHO ARE DYING IN IRAQ SO THEY CAN GET EVEN RICHER!

EVERY OTHER ISSUE IN THE SOCIETY IS HAMMERED BY ONGOING WAR. THERE IS MONEY FOR WAR, BUT WE ARE TOLD THERE IS NO MONEY FOR US AND WHAT WE NEED, NO

MATTER WHAT THE NEED IS. OUR LIVES AND HOPES ARE BEING DESTROYED. THE WEALTH OUR WORK CREATES IS TAKEN FROM US AND USED AGAINST US.

THAT IS NO LONGER ACCEPTABLE.

THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT POLITICAL MESSAGE WE HAVE TO OFFER.

OFFERING IT TO OUR SOLDIERS MUST BE THE HEART AND DIRECTION OF OUR WORK UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

VETERANS, MILITARY FAMILIES, ANTI-WAR UNION FORMATIONS AND STUDENTS ARE KEY TO THE WORK, BUT COORDINATION AND CONCENTRATION OF OUR FORCES WITHIN A FRAMEWORK UNCONTROLLED BY THE TWO IMPERIAL POLITICAL PARTIES IS ABSENT SO FAR, AND IS NECESSARY TO WIN. TIME TO GET ORGANIZED.

WIN OUR SOLDIERS AND WE WILL HAVE A MOVEMENT THAT CAN WIN ALL AND MAKE SURE NOBODY EVER DECLARES CLASS WAR ON US AGAIN.

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(For more see the article "Nightmare Continues In Iraq: This Isn't Liberation" front page at www.socialistworker.org.)

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. For copies on web site see:**<http://www.notinourname.net/qi-special/>

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

Car Bomb At Baghdad Restaurant For The Rich And Powerful Kills Five

By SARAH EL DEEB and MATTHEW ROSENBERG, Associated Press Writers
12.31.03, CNN, & Reuters

BAGHDAD, Iraq - A car bomb ripped through an elegant restaurant crowded with diners at a New Year's Eve party featuring belly dancers, live music and fine wine. **The blast killed five Iraqis and wounded 35 others, including at least two Americans and one Briton.**

The restaurant, popular with Westerners, and three or four other buildings were flattened in the blast.

The Los Angeles Times said three of its reporters and four local staff members suffered wounds that did not appear life-threatening. The reporters were Chris Kraul, a correspondent who most recently headed the Times' Mexico City bureau; Tracy Wilkinson, the paper's Rome bureau chief; and correspondent Ann Simmons, who formerly was the Times' bureau chief in Nairobi, Kenya. Simmons is British and the two other Times reporters are U.S. citizens.

After the evening explosion, sirens wailed and helicopters buzzed overhead as ambulances and U.S. soldiers converged on **the Nabil restaurant, a popular spot with foreigners that advertised a New Year's Eve party with live music and belly dancing.**

After the blast, dazed and blood-spattered diners staggered through the rubble in smart clothes.

Wrecked cars were scattered across the road outside the restaurant, frequented by wealthy Iraqis and Westerners.

Several cars outside the restaurant were wrecked and in flames. Gunfire was heard after the explosion, which left a large crater on a side street near the building.

"There was an explosion. The glass came flying. Everything else blew up. People were blown apart," said Basam Sarhan, a 25-year-old baker. He had been working in the kitchen at the back of the restaurant, near where the bomb hit.

Sarhan said there were about 25 people in the restaurant at the time of the blast.

Five Iraqis were killed, according to Lt. Gen. Ahmed Kadhem, deputy Iraqi interior minister and Baghdad chief of police. The wounded included 32 Iraqis and several Westerners, police and hospital officials said.

Police Brig. Hamid Alyasiry is in charge of Karrada, an upscale shopping and restaurant district where the blast occurred.

One witness, Ahmed Hassanain, said a white Toyota Corolla car drove by the area five or six times before the bombing. The last time it passed, he said, the guard at the restaurant shot at it. It drove away. Two minutes later, there was an explosion. He said he did not know whether it was the Corolla that blew up.

Mothafar Mounir, the restaurant manager, said he heard a big blast and then the ceiling caved in on a table where an Iraqi family was seated. He said a restaurant guard and two staff were among the injured.

The area of the blast is frequented by rich Iraqis who shop and visit restaurants, and is lined with chic shops selling items such as cosmetics, curtains and upholstery. There are many pharmacies and two-story houses. Three blocks from the restaurant, the windows of a big clothing shop were shattered.

The Nabil restaurant serves fine wine and other expensive alcoholic drinks — a rarity in Baghdad — and a menu of Western and Arabic dishes.



U.S. Army soldier stands guard in front of the 'Nabil' restaurant in Baghdad Thursday, Jan. 1, A car bomb exploded during New Year's party at Nabil's. (AP Photo/Muhammed Muheisen)

Inside Nabil, big round tables set for dinner were covered with food. **A bottle of White Horse scotch was still standing but its neck was blown off.**

Shortly after the explosion, military helicopters were spotted circling over Baghdad's Green Zone, where the coalition administration is based. Flares were fired into the sky to light up the streets.

"We will act appropriately to make sure that our soldiers and the Iraqi populace is protected from the potential attacks against us," said Brig. Gen. Martin Dempsey, commander of the U.S. 1st Armored Division. (This deranged windbag made his boast just before the attack.)

Another Restaurant Bomb Wounds Three U.S. Soldiers

12.31.03, CNN

Later in the evening, a bomb hidden in shrubs outside a separate restaurant in Baghdad exploded as a U.S. military convoy passed, wounding three American soldiers and three Iraqi civilians.



POINTLESS EXERCISE: U.S. troops secure the area after explosives went off in Baghdad's Palestine street Wednesday, Dec. 31, 2003. At least two people were injured in the incident. (AP Photo/Hadi Mizban)

Five US Soldiers Wounded In Baghdad Ambush

AFX-Focus 2003-12-31

A bomb exploded as a U.S. convoy passed on a Baghdad street full of shops, destroying a Humvee, Iraqi police Sgt. Thabet Talib said. An 8-year-old Iraqi boy was killed and 21 other people were wounded, **including five U.S. soldiers and five Iraqi civil defense personnel, authorities said.**

Brig. Gen. Martin Dempsey, commander of the 1st Armored Division, said it was not clear what kind of bomb caused the blast.

Man Believed to Be South Korean Killed in Iraq

BAGHDAD, Jan. 1 (Yonhap) -- South Korean diplomats said Thursday that they were trying to confirm whether a man killed in an ambush in southern Iraq was South Korean.

A man was shot dead by suspected Iraqi insurgents near the southern city of Basra on Wednesday. The Arabian satellite broadcaster Aljazeera identified him as South Korean.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said his embassy was informed Wednesday afternoon that an Asian, believed to be South Korean, was killed in an ambush while riding in a mini-van.

The Arabian broadcaster said the man was attacked by three or four armed Iraqi insurgents on a road leading from the southern Iraqi city of Basra to Nasiriya.

Another car was also attacked by the insurgents, it said.

South Korea's Seohui unit operating in the area, a non-combat contingent army engineers and medics, was also informed of the incident, the official said.

The area where the attack took place, about 500 kilometers south of Baghdad, is so extremely dangerous that even Iraqis do not dare go out at nighttime, officials said.

US Soldier Kills Another

CNN 12.31.03

A U.S. soldier cleaning a weapon accidentally fired a chambered round, killing a fellow soldier and injuring another, the Coalition Joint Task Force reported Wednesday. The incident happened Tuesday evening at the Tanif crossing near Iraq's border with southern Syria.

Kurdish Troops Fire On Protesters In Kirkuk

CNN & Reuters 12.31.03

Ethnic tensions in the northern oil-rich city of Kirkuk boiled over into violence. At least five Iraqis were killed and more than 20 were wounded when Kurdish Peshmerga troops opened fire Wednesday morning on a crowd of protesters, killing two and wounding 14 others, according to Kirkuk police sources.

Several thousand Arab and Turkmen protesters had marched on the headquarters of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, one of two main Kurdish factions, and surrounded the building, chanting "No to federalism, Kirkuk is Iraqi."

Kirkuk's chief of police said two people were killed in a burst of gunfire. Doctors said three more people died later in hospital and at least 20 were wounded. The rival sides blamed each other for the shooting.

Witnesses said U.S. tanks and armored vehicles quickly moved in to seal off the area, fanning out near the PUK offices and a local government building to keep protesters at bay.

The violence was the latest among Kurds and others vying for power in the city, where Saddam forced out Kurds and Turkish-speaking Turkmen to Arabize the site of Iraq's richest oil reserves.

Kurds on Iraq's U.S.-appointed Governing Council propose a future, federal Iraqi government should grant broad autonomy to the northern zone, with Kirkuk as its capital and having a say over other areas with large Kurdish populations.

The plan is bitterly opposed by Turkmen and Arabs.

Three MPs Wounded In Road Ambush

12/31/2003 The Day.com

Hartford — Three Connecticut guardsmen are recovering from a roadside bomb blast in Iraq last weekend. All three suffered injuries that are not life-threatening and are expected to make a full recovery, military officials said Tuesday.

Sgt. Jessica Walsh, 27, of Plainville, Pvt. Bart Winchowski, 22, of Wallingford, and Pvt. Steven Wabreck, 19, of New Hartford were injured when a bomb damaged their Humvee in Baghdad on Saturday. All are members of the 143rd Military Police Company in Hartford. Walsh and Winchowski sustained cuts to the face. Wabreck, who was hit in the leg by shrapnel and broke an ankle, was medically evacuated to Germany and was listed in stable condition.

TROOP NEWS

**Strange Lack Of Enthusiasm For Bush's Imperial Oil Invasion;
Army Reservists Going Home As Fast As Possible**

Longer deployments blamed for declining retention rate
[Denver Post, December 30, 2003]

The U.S. Army Reserve is having trouble keeping troops. Ongoing conflicts in Iraq and elsewhere are prompting many reservists not to reenlist.

GET 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/>



COMPLETELY FUCKED UP SITUATION: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!

Required to have his weapon with him at all times except during physical training, U. S. Army Pvt. First Class Michael Varga waits, with his M-4, for the new year at a party for the soldiers of the 101st Airborne division at their base in Mosul. Varga, from Chicago, is with the 18th Airborne long range surveillance corps. (AP Photo/Julie Jacobson)

Troops Grind On; “Iraq Sucks”

By Jason Keyser Associated Press December 31, 2003

TIKRIT, Iraq — Through the fog, seven foot soldiers inch along a muddy neighborhood of small homes and trash-strewn lots, drawing a pesky trail of children who still marvel at the site of these strange warriors.

Iraqi men with heads wrapped in checked scarves scowl from the windows of passing cars.

With the luster of Saddam Hussein's capture fading and an uneasy calm settling over the former dictator's stronghold, U.S. forces grind on, patrolling daily, **searching for street fighters who remain elusive, even as commanders say they've honed in on the insurgency's top leadership in this city.**

"We'd love for them to put on uniforms and come out," said Capt. Mitch Carlisle, a company commander from the 4th Infantry Division's 1st Battalion, 22nd Regiment. **"It's an eerie quiet. We don't know what it means. We know there's a lot of bad guys out there."** (December 24, 1776: Letter from Capitan Wilfred Chichester, His Majesty's Royal Fusiliers, to British Headquarters, New York City: **"We'd love for these rebels to put on uniforms and come out. It's an eerie quiet. We don't know what it means. We know there's a lot of miscreant fellows out there."**)

Tikrit is still a dangerous place for American forces. There's the occasional mortar attack, and more feared: roadside bombs. They're hidden under sewage drain covers along Tikrit's main Highway No. 1 and even in the slit-open bellies of dead cats and other animals. Others are painted with yellow and white stripes to match the pattern of street curbs. **for those Iraqis happy at Saddam's downfall, there's still the disappointment of living under an American-led occupation — leaving some feeling simultaneously freed and jailed.**

Outside Tikrit's Birthday Palace — now a soldiers' barracks stacked with cots, TVs, and even outfitted with a weight lifting gym — a daily foot patrol readies to leave. Young soldiers strap on body armor, knee pads and helmets topped with tattered strips of burlap for camouflage.

Along with the seven-man patrol is their interpreter, Ali Ahmed, a 31-year-old Iraqi Kurd who says he's been warned by Iraqi police officers that he's marked for death by local Sunni Muslim fighters who consider him a traitor for working with the Americans.

"Sometimes people downtown yell at me or call out bad words. They call me a spy," said Ahmed, whom the soldiers have nicknamed **"Fabio,"** because his shoulder-length, curly hair is slightly reminiscent of the Italian model Fabio Lanzoni.

The patrols have been largely quiet in recent days, **giving soldiers time to talk with shopkeepers and residents in hopes of ferreting out tips on insurgents or hidden weapons. No luck this time out. Residents smile uneasily, shake their heads and say they've seen nothing.**

The soldiers are a source of intense curiosity for the children. **One of the boys throws a rock** and Sgt. Stephen Latch, 24, who carries a hulking M-240 machine gun and belts of ammunition over his shoulders, shouts, "Hey," scaring off the kids.

"It's weird over here. I joined the Army to see places. I guess this is places," he said, scanning the street.

One of his comrades, Pfc. Sanzabeeedee Guerrero, 20, who arrived here in April, remembers when those he was fighting on these patrols still wore uniforms. Now, "it's a different war out here," he said.

The relative calm worries him. "It's been scary quiet," he said. He thinks insurgents are using the lull to re-arm.

As a new year begins, he's thinking of home. He's due to return in March or April, after a year of duty.

"People think time stops when you're out here. Unfortunately it doesn't," Guerrero said.

Many soldiers now talk of getting home, as new replacements are due to arrive. *Graffiti scrawled on the wall of an Army latrine seemed to sum up the feelings of many: "Iraq sucks!"*

Resistance Hitting The Precarious Lifelines; Truckers Drive The Front Lines In Guerrilla War

December 31, 2003 By Jim Krane, Associated Press

CAMP ANACONDA, Iraq — Spc. Chanss Carpenter was driving his supply truck when a roadside bomb rocked the cab and fired a chunk of shrapnel through the windshield. Flying metal deflected off his M-16 rifle lying across the dashboard, narrowly missing him.

Sunday's blast was the latest of a dozen similar attacks Carpenter has endured in Iraq, where roadside bombs have become the weapon of choice for the anti-American resistance. Convoys seem to be the preferred target.

"We believe we're still in combat," said Carpenter, 24, from Jackson, Mich., one of about 600 soldiers in the 181st Transportation Battalion.

He and other truckers at this sprawling logistical base north of Baghdad are the lifeline for 130,000 U.S. troops flung across this California-sized country. Despite the attacks, they operate supply lines stretching over 800 miles, hauling food for 475,000 meals per day, as well as a million gallons each of fuel and water.

The truckers have developed defensive driving techniques, like keeping to the center lane and blocking civilian cars from entering the convoy. They watch for suspicious bomb-disguising debris at the roadside.

They're even retrofitting trucks with steel plates and mounted guns that look like something out of Mad Max, the 1979 cult movie about warring gangs who drive customized armored cars.

"We've said since summer that it's a trucker's war, and the 181st is on the front lines," said Curran.

For truckers, the war began in May, just after President Bush declared major combat over. That month, convoys emerged as the main target of guerrilla cells harrying U.S.-led occupation forces in Iraq. ***Attacks on convoys have risen every month since then, except December, Curran said.***

Sixty-nine convoys sent by the 181st across Iraq have been ambushed or hit by hidden bombs.

"The whole cab pretty much shakes, and you go deaf for a while," Carpenter said while his truck was being fixed at Camp Anaconda, headquarters for the Army's 3rd Corps Support Command.

Fourteen 181st soldiers have been wounded while hauling freight across Iraq. None have been killed, Curran said. **On Nov. 2, an Iraqi contract driver was killed when five daisy-chained roadside bombs exploded near the western town of Hit. Four other Iraqi drivers have been injured, Curran said.**

On Monday, Iraqi welders clambered over an Army 5-ton truck at Camp Anaconda, converting it into a sinister-looking gun truck — one of 50 the garage has finished.

They welded ½-inch-thick steel plates onto the doors, floor and rear of the cab. They erected a steel-ensconced perch for the passenger-seat gunner. And they covered all but a narrow slit of the truck's windshield with steel plate.

With the cab almost completely boxed in — and the driver and gunner wearing body armor and helmets — it would take a very unlucky shot to hit one of them.

The battalion has also armored Humvees for the unit's "tiger teams" that cruise ahead of the convoys and search for bombs and ambush zones. **When a convoy comes under fire, the tiger teams circle back and take on the guerrillas long enough for the convoy to pass.**

Earlier this month, a convoy had just pulled out of the base when it came under attack from armed men in an empty house across the road, said Capt. Issac Bristow, 38, of Fairfield, Calif., who leads one of the teams.

"There were two large-caliber automatic weapons putting down a lot of fire in our direction," Bristow said, as a knot of his men gathered around him.

Within a few minutes, there were two tiger Humvees and one armored gun truck parked in front of the house, blasting it with four .50 caliber machine guns and RPG rounds. Five minutes of sustained fire was enough to get the convoy past safely. **They didn't bother**

to try and round up the rebels because escorting the convoy is more important, Bristow said.

Hotspots on Iraq's roads come and go. This week, the stretch of Highway 1 between Balad and Tikrit is precarious, the soldiers said. So are the major roads passing through Baghdad. A few weeks ago, a rash of bombings hit convoys on the western highway near Fallujah, Curran said.

Blinding Flash Of The Obvious #1

Saddam's capture may not be enough to discourage rebels. *[Washington Times, December 31, 2003, Pg. 12]*

Blinding Flash Of The Obvious #2

[Denver Post, December 31, 2003]

Disturbing news---the Army Reserve and National Guard can't fill their ranks. **Long stints overseas may be why reservist enlistments have shrunk.**

Extensions Of Duty "A Slap In The Face" For Military Families

I am not concerned about my ability to care for my children. I have it much better than many military spouses right now. I have only two kids, they are far apart in age and my husband's employer has been very supportive of our family, What concerns me is his employer's ability to continue that support.

We were told my husband's orders were for 365 days from the day they were issued. We didn't have a firm homecoming date, but we had a time frame to work with.

[With his extension of duty to a year and a half] what I stated was that I couldn't expect my husband's employer to be willing to help us for almost a year and a half. Then what's my family supposed to do?

,And not just my family, buy the families of all our Soldiers. Extensions for Army reservists and National Guard soldiers are causing increased hardships on Civilian employers and the families: who had to take pay cuts because of the deployment. I have yet to see any provisions being made for these families.

I don't like being made out to be a whiner. I know I married a soldier. I knew it was always a possibility he could be deployed. **I was prepared to endure that hardship and separation, even though I didn't agree with this war.**

What I was not prepared for was the poor treatment of our soldiers and their families by the government.

The extension of Army reservists and National Guard soldiers' was just one more slap in the face in a series of many. Yes, these soldiers signed up for the military and have an obligation to this government. But the government also has obligations to these soldiers, and it has yet to live up to them.

Letter To The Editor
Candance Robison
Texas
Army Times 10.20.03

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Send to the E-mail address up top. Name, I.D., withheld on request. Replies confidential.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Resistance “Unfettered And Growing”

[Los Angeles Times, December 30, 2003]

Even with Hussein in custody, anti-American sentiment fuels Iraqi midsection's insurgency. Saddam Hussein is behind bars, but the anti-American sentiment that fuels a tenacious insurgency goes on---unfettered and growing, especially in towns like Fallouja

U.S. Fumbling + Resistance Attacks Cripple Oil Production

[Atlanta Journal-Constitution, December 30, 2003, Pg. 4]

Smugglers have been draining up to a fifth of Iraq's daily gasoline supplies, while sabotage and refinery breakdowns have limited production to about 60 percent of what it was a year ago.

OCCUPATION REPORT

U.S. Occupation Trains Iraqi Cops To Follow U.S. Police Methodology: Corrupt and Violent

[Washington Post, December 30, 2003, Pg. 1]

Trying to produce an Iraqi security force of 220,000 in the next few months has created a situation that indicates such a force may not be totally reliable. **More than 200 policemen in Baghdad have been fired in the past four months and dozens more have had their pay slashed for crimes ranging from pawning government equipment to extortion and kidnapping.**

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

How The Occupation Lost Mosul

[*Miami Herald, December 31, 2003*] Rising Tensions Endanger U.S. Soldiers Mosul Hit By Student Demonstrations, Assassinations And Hostility To American Forces. **The death of an Iraqi during a demonstration supporting Saddam Hussein in Mosul has set this town against U.S. troops in the area.**

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Stunning News: No WMDs

December 31, 2003 By Dafna Linzer, Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq — In nine months, not a single item has been found in Iraq from a long and classified intelligence list of weapons of mass destruction which guided the work of dozens of elite teams from Special Forces, the military, the CIA and the Pentagon *during the most secretive, expensive and fruitless weapons hunt in history.*

Late Entry: Madman At Work

By Randall Mikkelsen Oct. 9, 2003 MANCHESTER, N.H. (Reuters)

President Bush, challenging critics of the Iraq war in face of growing doubts at home and mounting U.S. deaths in the country, said on Thursday he had acted to protect Americans from "madman" Saddam Hussein

"I acted because I was not about to leave the security of the American people in the hands of a madman."

THANKS TO B WHO E-MAILED THIS IN: B WRITES:

Problem: it IS in the hands of a madman. And his name is B-U-S-H

You Have The Right To Be Poisoned By The Government; You Do Not Have The Right To Know With What

[Baltimore Sun, December 30, 2003]

National Security Agency officials refuse to share with either Army officials or government regulators critical information about environmental conditions on a section of the agency's Odenton, Md. Post.

Halliburton Gets The Boot: Losing Iraqi Oil Import Project

By LARRY MARGASAK, Associated Press Writer 12.31.03

WASHINGTON - Just weeks after Pentagon auditors said Halliburton may have overcharged taxpayers to import oil to Iraq, the Defense Department is removing the Army Corps of Engineers from its role in supervising the program.

The Defense Energy Support Center, which buys fuel for the military throughout the world, will supervise the shipments and choose new contractors to replace Halliburton, Vice President Dick Cheney 's former company.

"We're taking over the mission," the center's spokeswoman, Lynette Ebberts, said Tuesday.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Afghan Elected Delegates Say US Occupation Stooge Ignores Them (What A Surprise)

Afghans Clash At A Conference To Work Out A New Constitution
[New York Times, December 30, 2003]

Delegates at Afghanistan's constitutional convention accused the chairman of allowing government interference in the final drafting, while ignoring the views of the elected representatives.

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Israeli Terrorists Kill Two Newborn Palestinian Babies At Checkpoint

The Palestine Monitor A PNGO Information Clearinghouse
29 December 2003

On the 22nd of December 2003, the Qasim family lost their new born twins, after Israeli soldiers delayed their mother during her journey to hospital.

Lamis Qasim (26), from the village of Der Balout in the Nablus district, was leaving the village to get to hospital. In spite of severe birthing pains, Lamis and her husband were very excited, as Doctors had told them that Lamis was expecting twins. The Qasim's car was stopped by Israeli soldiers, at the checkpoint to the entrance of the village. The soldiers started shouting at Lamis, her husband and the other two female passengers, who were relatives of Lamis and there to help her.

Lamis's husband Raed, was very worried for his wife and got out of the car. He began to call the soldiers, begging them to allow the car to pass through the checkpoint. However, they ignored his pleas.

Raed decided to walk towards the soldiers, but after a few meters they ordered him to stop, claiming that they would check with their Commander about what to do. They threatened to shoot him if he walked any further.

After one hour of waiting, Raed called an ambulance, which arrived at the other side of the checkpoint, within ten minutes. However Lamis's suffering was set to continue.

The soldiers refused to allow the ambulance cross the checkpoint to reach Lamis, forcing the medical personnel to walk to her with a stretcher. However, although the soldiers let Lamis cross the checkpoint, they prevented Raed from accompanying her.

According to the medical staff, the soldiers also stopped them whilst they were transferring Lamis to the ambulance, in order to check what was on the stretcher. They lifted the blanket that was covering Lamis and protecting her from the cold weather.

Within ten minutes of driving, while still on the road, Lamis gave birth to the first twin, a girl, and the second girl was born within fifteen minutes, still inside the ambulance.

Unfortunately, there was bad news for the mother After she reached Ramallah hospital, the doctors told Lamis that the first child died in the ambulance because of the delay at the checkpoint. Furthermore, the doctor failed to save the second child's life, so she died for the same reasons.

After one day, Lamis went back to her village, but was accompanied by mourning clothes, not two baby girls. The soldiers turned what should have been a happy event into a tragedy.



Palestinian girls throw rocks at Israeli troops during clashes protesting against the separation barrier in the West Bank Palestinian village of Budrus, Jan. 1. Clashes erupted when Palestinian and foreign demonstrators protested near a construction site where Israel is building a segregation wall between different parts of Occupied Palestine. Israeli occupation troops fired tear gas and rubber bullets at the demonstrators. (AP Photo/Kevin Frayer)

(To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation by a foreign power, go to: www.rafah.vze.com. The foreign army is Israeli; the occupied nation is Palestine.)

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