

GI SPECIAL 2#10



SUICIDAL ACTIVITY WINS RECRUITS FOR THE RESISTANCE

An Iraqi detainee is taken back to a makeshift prison in Tikrit. (AFP/Jewel Samad)

BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!

Shiites Wheeling Into Position To Oppose Occupation

1. Thousands Of Shiites March In Iraq To Demand Early Elections

(New York Times on the Web, January 15, 2004)

Tens of thousands of demonstrators marched through Basra in southern Iraq in support of a call by the country's most revered Shiite cleric for direct elections to be held within months to select a sovereign Iraqi government. Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani has objected to U.S. plans for a transitional Iraqi assembly to be selected by regional caucuses rather than an election.

2. Shiite Clerics' Rise Reflects A Slip In U.S. Influence In Iraq

(Philadelphia Inquirer, January 15, 2004)

A 22-year-old Shiite cleric wields vast power in the impoverished Iraqi city of Kut, overseeing a network of social and security services, collecting taxes, and even administering a court of law—all independent of the U.S.-backed local government. The cleric, Abdul Jawad al-Issawi, is an example of the eroding influence of the U.S.-led coalition and of how Shiite clerical power is spreading outside the mosques.

3. Shiias Turning Against The Occupation; Unemployed Demonstrations Rock Shiia Cities

By Hamza Hendawi, Associated Press January 13, 2004

Ayatollah al-Sistani has hardened his opposition to Bremers' plan to appoint a new government in comments issued by his office Sunday and repeated in a newspaper advertisement Monday. A provisional national assembly due to be formed by the end of May must be elected, not selected from regional caucuses as provided for in the Nov. 15 accord, al-Sistani said.

And he said security accords governing the continued presence of U.S.-led coalition troops in Iraq beyond July 1, the designated day for the occupation's formal end and the coming to office of a sovereign Iraqi government, must be ratified by an elected legislature. A "basic law," or interim constitution, being drafted by the Governing Council and due to come into effect by the end of February, must also be approved by an elected chamber.

"The ideal mechanism is an election, which many experts believe is possible to hold within the next months with an acceptable level of transparency and credibility," al-Sistani said Sunday.

Shiite Muslims have welcomed Saddam Hussein's ouster despite their misgivings about the Americans, whose arrival delivered them from decades of oppression by Iraq's Sunni Arab minority, to which Saddam belongs. Shiites have generally refrained from attacking U.S. forces, leaving that to the Sunnis. Shiites assume they will soon translate their superior numbers into formal political power.

But the relatively slow pace of reconstruction, soaring unemployment, fuel shortages, inadequate services and widespread charges of corruption have steadily eaten into that goodwill. Al-Sistani's thinly veiled warnings that more violence could beset Iraq if elections are not held may feed the rising frustration.

In Kut, a mainly Shiite city 95 miles southeast of Baghdad, Ukrainian troops fired in the air Monday to disperse about 400 Iraqis who rioted to demand jobs. One Ukrainian soldier, four Iraqi policemen and one protester were wounded.

British troops and Iraqi policemen clashed with Iraqi demonstrators Saturday in the southern, predominantly Shiite city of Amarah, killing six people and injuring 11. People in both cities were protesting the absence of jobs and alleged favoritism by Iraqi authorities in hiring practices.

Many Iraqi Shiites, who revere their top clerics as saints and look to them for guidance in all matters, say they still feel betrayed by the United States for not coming to their aid when they rose in 1991 against Saddam, whose army killed tens of thousands of them. **They say they would take up arms against the Americans if clerics like al-Sistani so order.**

Bremer's coalition authority would not be able to proceed with the implementation of the political plan without assurances that the country's Shiites, estimated at about 60 percent of the population, are on board. In this context, the views of al-Sistani are crucial.

4. The Bremer Follies Roll On: Occupation Shits On Leader Of Shiia Majority; Says There No Early Elections; Fears U.S. Would Lose The Vote

(Washington Post, January 13, 2004, Pg. 13)

Paul Bremer, the U.S. civilian administrator of Iraq, rebuffed a demand from the country's most influential Shiite Muslim cleric for early elections that many analysts say would put power into the hands of the country's large and impoverished Shiite majority. Bremer said that a plan devised last November for a transitional assembly created through a system of regional caucuses would proceed despite the opposition of Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani.

5. Shiite Frustration With Occupation Leads To Open Unrest

(Philadelphia Inquirer, January 13, 2004)

Ukrainian soldiers fired into the air to disperse hundreds of Iraqis who rioted for jobs and food as a second southern Shiite city was rocked by unrest—a barometer of rising frustration with the U.S.-led occupation in a region of Iraq considered friendly to the Americans.

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/gi-special/>

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

Two Dead In Attack On U.S. Corporation Convoy

AFP, From correspondents in Tikrit, Iraq, January 15, 2004

TWO foreign nationals working for a US contractor in Iraq were killed last night when gunmen attacked a convoy carrying military supplies near the northern town of Tikrit, the US military said.

Major Josslyn Aberle, spokeswoman for the US Fourth Infantry Division in Tikrit said **a US civilian and an American soldier were also injured in the attack.**

The nationalities of the two fatalities were not given. Aberle said the convoy of US firm KBR (Kellogg, Brown and Root), was attacked at around 3.30pm local time (11.30pm AEDT) between the towns of Tikrit and Samarra.

"It is believed that civilian motor vehicles pulled up alongside the convoy and fired into the cabs of the trucks," she said.

Car Bomb Devastates Occupation Police Station

14 Jan 2004 ITV.com January 14, 2004 & By Paul Garwood, Associated Press

A car bomb exploded outside a police station in the central Iraqi town of Baquba, killing at least two people and wounding 14 policemen.

Police Col. Salam Omar said the car tried to enter the walled compound of a one-story police station at about 8:20 a.m., and exploded when guards opened fire on it.

The blast killed the bomber and two bystanders, besides damaging the wall and shattering windows at the station and shops across the street, he said.

A policeman at the scene said he saw a white car racing toward the police station before exploding.

Witnesses said many people were thrown to the ground and several appeared to have been killed.

Baquba lies 40 miles north of Baghdad.

SOLDIER DIES IN A NON-HOSTILE INCIDENT

HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND

January 14, 2004 Release Number: 04-01-13C

MOSUL, IRAQ (Jan. 14, 2004) – A soldier attached to the 101st Airborne Division died in a non-hostile incident in Mosul last night.

Hand Grenades Thrown At U.S. Military Administrators Meeting

Associated Press, 1/14/2004

Gunmen in a car fire at a police checkpoint in Ramadi, killing a policeman and a civilian bystander.

Assailants throw two hand grenades at a meeting of Arab tribal leaders and American military administrators in Kirkuk. There are no injuries in the blast, but U.S. troops fire at the assailants, wounding three people, a police commander says.

TROOP NEWS

2,500 Troops Still Waiting For Medical Care After Coming Home

By MATT KELLEY, The Associated Press January 14, 2004

The military still has about 2,500 troops waiting for medical care after returning from overseas, said Dr. William Winkenwerder, the assistant secretary of defense for health affairs. The Pentagon is preparing for even more soldiers on "medical extension" after tens of thousands of troops are rotated home from Iraq this spring, Winkenwerder said.

Since November, about 1,900 of the 4,400 troops waiting for medical care have been treated, Winkenwerder said.

Pentagon Lied: Some Soldiers In Iraq Forced To Stay More Than One Year

January 13, 2004 By Robert Burns, Associated Press

The Pentagon is extending tours of duty in Iraq for about 1,500 soldiers, mainly helicopter and other transportation support personnel, defense officials said Monday.

Commanders determined that allowing the 1,500 soldiers to leave as originally scheduled would create an unacceptable gap in capability. So they will remain in place — some for as few as five extra days, others for as much as 60 more days, officials said.

In preparing for the force rotation in Iraq, *the Pentagon pledged to make every effort to avoid requiring any troops to remain more than 12 months, but some if not all of the 1,500 whose tours are being extended will exceed the 12-month target, the officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity.*

The 1,500 are a mix of Army active-duty and National Guard and Reserve soldiers. Officials who discussed some aspects of the decision did not reveal the specific units involved.

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/>

Pentagon Admits Reserves, Guard Under Stricter Stop Loss Than Regular Army; Rule Spurs Bitterness

(Washington Times, January 13, 2004, Pg. 3)

Pentagon officials acknowledge that Army Reserve and National Guard troops in Iraq and Afghanistan are under a stricter "stop loss, stop move" policy than

active-duty soldiers deployed to the same places, due to a shortage of Reserve specialties such as military police.

Raped Soldier Raped Again By Command

(Denver Post, January 14, 2004)

The Army has offered to discharge a traumatized servicewoman who reported being raped by a fellow soldier if she drops her complaint against the alleged attacker, the woman said. Military Police officer Natalie Longee, 21, said she reported being raped at Fort Hood, Tex., more than a year ago. **She was deployed to Iraq for eight months without counseling and then forced to return to the same base, where she has repeatedly encountered her alleged rapist.**

Strykers Left Twisting In The Wind

(Christian Science Monitor, January 15, 2004, Pg. 1)

In the coming weeks, 18,000 U.S. troops in northern Iraq will be replaced with a force half that size, as soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division are relieved by the new Stryker Brigade, built around the Army's latest high-tech combat vehicle.

Tension Tests Stryker Troops

(Seattle Times, January 12, 2004)

Soldiers of the Army's Stryker Brigade from Fort Lewis, Wash., are patrolling a troubled Sunni region in central Iraq, **sometimes living out of their high-tech vehicles for days at a time. (Why does it seem unlikely their commander is also living in the vehicles for days at a time?)**

Helicopter Crews Dread The Six O'clock Shadow; Iraqi Insurgents Take Deadly Aim At Aircraft From Behind

(Washington Post, January 14, 2004, Pg. 14)

For guerrillas in this volatile Fallujah region 35 miles west of Baghdad, U.S. Army helicopters have become a target of choice. In the past two weeks, three choppers have been hit. **The low-flying helicopters provide cover for ground troops as they raid towns and hamlets looking for guerrilla suspects but themselves become targets for shoulder-launched missiles fired at them from behind.**

Officers Ignored Examination In Charging Soldier With Cowardice

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
January 19, 2004

I'm the mental-health specialist who spoke to Staff Sgt. Georg-Andreas Pogany in Tikrit when he came in for help ["I'm no coward; Iraq vet, facing charges, fights the Army to save his good name," Nov. 24]. His case was no different from the dozens of other cases I had seen.

The process is simple: They come in, we figure out what's going on, then we make our recommendations.

Whether it's rest, suicide watch or medications, it depends on what the soldier needs to get back on track and functioning at a level sufficient to accomplish his unit's mission.

It was routine up to a point. Capt. Mark Houck and I had a long talk with his commander and his command sergeant major, going over the best measures to take with a combat-stress reaction. I was floored when I found out, a couple of days later, that they ignored the recommendations of my team's licensed psychologist, Capt. Houck.

And now, to see how far things have gotten off track is disheartening. The rest of the Army doesn't have problems doing what they are told when it is in the best interest of soldiers.

It's high time Special Forces got with the program when it comes to the mental welfare of the soldiers for whom it is responsible.

Spc. Cheyenne Forsythe
Fort Hood, Texas

Air Force Captain Denies Drug Charges; Says Cocaine Came From Sex Partner's Dick

January 19, 2004, By Nicole Gaudiano, Special to the Army Times

When Air Force Capt. Jacqueline Chester tested positive for having cocaine in her system, her lawyer says, she had no idea how that was possible. Had her prescription painkillers skewed the results?

It wasn't the painkillers. It was her ex-husband, her lawyer says.

"Her husband will testify that he used cocaine on the tip of his penis as a means to prolong his sexual pleasure," Charles Gittins said. "He used it topically on his penis more than once."

Gittins will present Chester's unusual defense in a scheduled February court-martial at Dover Air Force Base, Del. He argues that the charge against Chester — wrongful use of a controlled substance — requires that the accused must have knowingly ingested the drug. Unknowing ingestion or exposure is a "complete defense," he said.

Gittins admits it is an unusual defense. "The truth is stranger than fiction," he said. "As soon as I heard it I thought, 'That's interesting. How could this be?'" Gittins said. "I found out that, what seems absurd a lot of times isn't absurd."

The investigation is ongoing, said spokesman Lt. Col. Jon Anderson, and the February courts-martial date may be extended.

Chester, 46, a nurse at Dover's medical center, took a drug test in January 2002 and the results showed a trace level of cocaine, though not enough for a positive result. A month later, she did register positive and the Air Force began pursuing a drug charge against her.

At the time, Chester was divorced from her husband, but they were trying to get back together. It was Chester's 20-year-old daughter who learned of the father's use of cocaine. When she told him that her mother was facing an unexplained drug charge, he confessed.

"The husband is prepared to testify that he never disclosed to his wife ... that he was using cocaine," he said. "His statement about using cocaine is corroborated by his medical records and his employment records."

Kenneth Gagnon, technical manager of forensic chemistry at the Massachusetts State Police Crime Laboratory, said the defense has some merit: Cocaine "can be absorbed through vaginal lining."

After Gittins disclosed his defense, the lawyer said, the government asked for a continuance in the case.

Chester would not be the first airman to beat a cocaine charge with an "innocent exposure" defense. In 2002, Airman 1st Class Scott Hepburn was acquitted on a drug charge after his attorney presented studies showing that a small amount of cocaine can be ingested without the person knowing it.

As with the case against Hepburn, the urine test is the only evidence against Chester, Gittins said.

“All a drug test shows is that somehow the drug got into your body,” he said. “It doesn’t have anything to do with the knowing.”

Chester, who is assigned to the 436th Medical Operations Squadron, has been suspended from patient-related duties, though she still is working at the hospital. She has been in the Air Force since November 1992 and has received decorations for good conduct.

She could face a maximum penalty of five years confinement, a dishonorable discharge and forfeiture of all pay and allowances if convicted.

Nicole Gaudiano is a staff writer for Air Force Times.

Dogfighting And Bombing US Jets Make English Run For Cover

(London Times, January 13, 2004)

An American fighter jet on a training mission dropped a dummy practice bomb on Yorkshire, England, by mistake. The device smashed into concrete near the privately owned Allied Grain Fisheries storage plant at Market Weighton, plunging more than a meter into the ground. No one was injured. **Commenting on the mishap, a spokesman for the Fisheries concern said, "We have made the assumption that this was not done deliberately."**

(London Daily Telegraph, January 15, 2004)

Days after bombing Yorkshire, two U.S. Air Force F-15 jets staged a low-level dogfight over a Leicestershire village, scattering residents who thought "war had broken out."

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Crowds Chant “Bush You Coward;” Relative Of Arrested Bride Says: “They Know We Will Come To Them”

By Sarah El Deeb, Associated Press January 13, 2004

In the volatile town of Fallujah, north of the capital, hundreds of Iraqis protested in the streets, shouting “Bush, you coward!” after U.S. troops detained a young woman while searching for a Saddam Hussein loyalist. The woman, whose relatives acknowledged was handled only by female soldiers, was released after several hours questioning.

The detention of a 17-year-old woman sparked outrage in Fallujah, a stridently anti-American city. Fallujah residents, like many in the Sunni Triangle, are religiously conservative and equate a woman's dignity with family honor.

Hundreds of people poured into the streets of Fallujah on Monday night after hearing the news and continued demonstrating Tuesday, shouting "Bush, you coward!" and "Release our woman!" They dispersed without incident by noon.

Relatives said the woman, who was married six days ago, was alone at home Monday when she was taken away by U.S. troops and kept in custody for five hours before being freed unharmed.

Maher Turki, the brother of the woman's husband, said the soldiers were looking for another of his brothers in the hope he would lead them to Khamis Sarhan, the leader of Saddam Hussein's Baath party in Fallujah. Sarhan is wanted by occupation forces and has a \$1 million bounty on his head.

Turki said his brother, who has fled, was acquainted with Sarhan but was not an associate. Turki said the troops were not looking for the detained woman's husband.

"The girl was alone so they took her because they know our weakness. When they take our honor they know we will come to them," Turki told The Associated Press.

He refused to identify his sister-in-law, saying she was hospitalized with her husband, recovering from the shock of custody.

Iraqi Cops Arrested For Aiding The Resistance

Iraqi Resistance Report for 14 January 2004. Translated and/or compiled by Muhammad Abu Nasr, member, editorial board the Free Arab Voice.

US occupation forces arrested seven members of their own Iraqi puppet police in the city of Kirkuk on the suspicion that they were carrying information to the Iraqi Resistance, helping the Resistance to carry out operations against the occupation and its stooges in the local puppet police.

All those puppet policemen arrested are of Arab nationality. They were taken to the local airport where the US occupation forces have their headquarters and will be interrogated there, according to Major General Turhan Yusuf of the local puppet police.

Tribal Leader Warns Against Continued Raids In Tikrit

(USA Today, January 13, 2004, Pg. 7)

U.S. forces risk alienating Iraqis in Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's hometown, if they continue raiding homes in search of suspected insurgents, Sheik Yehia Attawi, a local tribal elder, warned.

“Curse The Americans, Curse Them”

(Washington Post, January 13, 2004, Pg. 1)

Conversations with Sunni Muslims who served Saddam Hussein's regime indicate that they are not loyal so much to Hussein as to a subsidized, predictable way of life. "Now we are the losers," says one. "We lost our positions, our status, the security of our families, stability. Curse the Americans. Curse them."

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Flaw In Command Strategy: Assuming Enemy Fights Like You

January 19, 2004, By David Wood, Newhouse News Service

“Central to Western culture is the belief that ordinary citizens can do nothing without a strong leader. But in the far older Eastern cultures, people have long realized they can make a tremendous difference, together, without any leader at all,” said H. John Poole, a veteran Marine Corps war fighter and tactics instructor.

That, Poole said, means that the enemy in Iraq is decentralized, small and loosely connected cells operating autonomously and sparking almost spontaneous local attacks.

<p>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.</p>

OCCUPATION REPORT

Family Slaughtered At Checkpoint

By Sarah El Deeb, Associated Press January 13, 2004

In Baghdad, U.S. troops reacting after a deadly roadside bomb shot at a car, killing its Iraqi driver and a 10-year-old boy, relatives said.

The shooting took place Monday at a checkpoint.

A roadside bomb went off near the checkpoint, hitting a Humvee and killing a soldier. Soldiers in another Humvee started shooting, hitting a car carrying the civilian family, said Wijdan Abdel Wahab, aunt of the slain boy.

The boy, 10-year-old Mustafa Jamal Shaikhly, and the family driver, identified only as Haider, were killed, Abdel Wahab said. Mustafa's 30-year-old mother and another aunt were seriously wounded, she said. Also in the car were the slain boy's 8-year-old son and 6-year-old daughter, who suffered minor cuts.

"The Americans have ruined an innocent family, children and women," Abdel Wahab said, distraught and weeping at the hospital. "They didn't even bother to look back at them after shooting them."

She said the family is fed up with the situation and wants to "leave Iraq because of the Americans and the (U.S.-installed) Governing Council."

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

Pentagon Lies: Occupation Takes Hostages; Hussein VP's Family "Detained"

(Dallas Morning News, January 15, 2004)

U.S. forces moved a step closer to the most wanted man in Saddam Hussein's regime, former Iraqi vice president Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, detaining his four nephews in a pre-dawn raid and capturing another top fugitive thought to be a paymaster in the anti-U.S. insurgency. **They captured one of the targeted nephews and his two brothers. The second nephew was seized at a nearby home. His wife and daughter were arrested on Nov. 26 and remain in custody. (So much for last weeks lie from the Pentagon that the occupation never, ever takes hostages.)**

"If You Don't Shut Up I'll Fuck You"

Luke Harding Guardian (United Kingdom) 1/12/2004

Baghdad, Iraq -- The international news agency Reuters has made a formal complaint to the Pentagon following the "wrongful" arrest and apparent "brutalisation" of three of its staff this month by US troops in Iraq.

The complaint followed an incident in the town of Falluja when American soldiers fired at two Iraqi cameramen and a driver from the agency while they were filming the scene of a helicopter crash.

The US military initially claimed that the Reuters journalists were "enemy personnel" who had opened fire on US troops and refused to release them for 72 hours.

Although Reuters has not commented publicly, it is understood that the journalists were "brutalised and intimidated" by US soldiers, who put bags over their heads, told them they would be sent to Guantanamo Bay, and whispered: "Let's have sex."

The US troops, from the 82nd Airborne Division, based in Falluja, also made the blindfolded journalists stand for hours with their arms raised and their palms pressed against the cell wall.

"They were brutalised, terrified and humiliated for three days," one source said. "It was pretty grim stuff. There was mental and physical abuse."

He added: "It makes you wonder what happens to ordinary Iraqis."

The US military has so far refused to apologise and has bluntly told Reuters to "drop" its complaint.

On January 2 Reuters' Baghdad-based cameraman Salem Ureibi, Falluja stringer Ahmed Mohammed Hussein al-Badrani and driver Sattar Jabar al-Badrani turned up at the crash site where a US Kiowa Warrior helicopter had just been shot down, killing one soldier.

The journalists were all wearing bulletproof jackets clearly marked "press". They drove off after US soldiers who were securing the scene opened fire on their Mercedes, but were arrested shortly afterwards.

The soldiers also detained a fourth Iraqi, working for the American network NBC. **No weapons were found, the US military admitted.**

Last night the nephew of veteran Reuters driver and latterly cameraman Mr Ureibi said that US troops had forced his uncle to strip naked and had ordered him to put his shoe in his mouth.

"He protested that he was a journalist but they stuck a shoe in his mouth anyway. They also hurt his leg. One of the soldiers told him: 'If you don't shut up we'll fuck you.'"

A spokeswoman for the US military's coalition press and information centre in Baghdad hung up when the Guardian asked her to comment.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Pentagon Demands Right To Poison Anybody With Anything Anytime Anywhere

(Los Angeles Times, January 15, 2004)

The Defense Department, having won exemptions from three major environmental laws in the last two years, now is seeking to be excused from three more. Requirements of the Endangered Species Act, the Marine Mammal Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act already do not apply to the Pentagon. **Now it wants exemptions from the Clean Air Act and two toxic waste laws, which Congress has refused to grant in each of the past two years.**



George Bush denying that he ever had one tiny little thought about attacking Iraq until 2003, when “God told me to strike Saddam Hussein.” He told reporters that proof that he has been chosen by God the “halo” seen in this photo released by the White House press office.

Bush Disputes Ex-Official's Claim That Iraq War Was Early Goal

(New York Times, January 13, 2004)

President Bush disputed a suggestion by former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill that the White House was looking for a reason to go to war with Iraq from the very beginning of his administration, **with one White House official calling the idea "laughable."**

(For more see the front page article "Bush Wanted War At Any Cost at www.socialistworker.org.)

Pentagon Auditor Requests Probe Of Bush Buddies At Halliburton; Vice-Presidents' Corporation On The Hot Seat

(Wall Street Journal, January 15, 2004)

The Defense Department's top auditor has asked the Pentagon to open a formal investigation into whether Halliburton overcharged for fuel deliveries into Iraq. One Pentagon official said the request indicates the audit agency saw "potential wrongdoing" that requires the full reach of the department's inspector general, the office charged with internal investigations.

U.S. To Give Every Iraqi \$3544.91; Let Free Market Capitalism Do The Rest

The Onion, 14 January 2004

WASHINGTON, DC—At a Monday press conference, U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld announced a "change of plans" for the \$87.5 billion aid package Congress approved in October: Instead of being used to fund an array of military and reconstruction operations in the Middle East, the money will be divided equally among Iraq's 24,683,313 citizens.

"Yes, we had planned to do all sorts of things with that money, like repair Iraq's power grid and construct new sewers and roads," Rumsfeld said. "But then we realized that, really, there's no reason for us to rebuild Iraq's infrastructure when the forces of free-market capitalism can do it with greater efficiency."

Rumsfeld said that, while the U.S. public's desire to hasten the end of America's presence in Iraq is growing, continued insurgence against the occupation has rendered previous initiatives for political and economic recovery untenable. The situation prompted the Bush Administration to "think more creatively" about its Iraq policy.

"I assure you that our new plan for economic recovery is not only easier, it's better," Rumsfeld said. "If we simply step back and let the market do its thing, a perfectly functioning, merit-based, egalitarian society will rise out of the ashes. Probably some restaurants or hardware stores or something, too."

During the next six months, Rumsfeld said, each Iraqi man, woman, and child will receive a one-time payment of \$3,544.91. On June 30, the transaction of all funds will be complete, and the sovereignty of a "brand-new, prosperous, secular, pluralistic, market-driven nation" will be handed to an as-yet-unformed government, probably one with a president and a congressional body of some sort.

"Heck, whatever form of democratic utopia comes out of this will be great," Rumsfeld said. "Why wouldn't it be? It'll be based on freedom of individual economic enterprise, and supply and demand will maximize consumer welfare."



A Child In Basra Receives His \$3544.91

About 100,000 citizens have already received their money, which was distributed in cash to circumvent the country's currently inadequate banking system.

The 14-member Allawi family in Tikrit received \$49,628.74 Monday.

"I'm very excited," Ahmed Allawi said. "A free, unregulated market will swiftly and efficiently lead to the establishment of an array of fairly priced goods and services. Any day now, there should be something available to spend this money on. As for today, the open-air market down the street is still on fire."

Allawi was quick to assert, loudly and repeatedly, that none of his family's money was actually on his person.

According to U.S. civil administrator in Iraq Paul Bremer, reconstruction and repair of Iraq's dilapidated, damaged, destroyed, or non-existent sewers, roads, power grids, airports, phone lines, and hospitals will be handled by the private sector, with contracts being awarded to the companies offering the most attractive bids in terms of cost and quality of service.

"Yes, there have been difficulties securing building materials for construction projects, and there have been problems with guerrillas targeting contractors—some dynamiting has occurred," Bremer said. "But such setbacks are the remnants of Saddam's regime. As of July 1, these problems will not exist. As soon as the money is handed out, we'll be able to dismantle our entire security framework."

Even the building and running of Iraq's schools will be privatized.

I believe we've seen what state-funded education did for Iraq," Bremer said. "I can say with confidence that it's the last thing they need."

According to Bremer, as soon as capitalism brings an end to ethnic and religious tension, U.S. troops will pull out of Iraq.

Fortunately, few Iraqi government structures need to be put into place. In accepting the \$87.5 billion aid package, the Iraqi Governing Council has agreed to banish all restrictions on trade, capital flow, and foreign investment.

While the original aid package included \$100 million to support the writing of a constitution and the holding of national elections, the new "\$3,544.91 For All" plan contains no such allotment. Bremer did, however, help the Iraqi Governing Council draft a 25-word "Iraqi Promise Of Excellence."

Bremer said returning the government to the men and women of Iraq solves one problem that had confounded his team: deciding how rule would be divided among Sunni Muslims, Shiites, and Kurds.

"Under the new system, the religious, ethnic, or political group offering the best service will naturally beat out the competition," Bremer said. "It's that simple!"



A U.S. Aid Worker Distributes Funds In Fallujah

Privatization Strikes Again; Half Academy Aircraft Grounded

Maintenance Company Flaws Lead To Grounding
(*Colorado Springs Gazette, January 14, 2004, Pg. 1*)

The Air Force Academy grounded more than half its aircraft while investigators dug into maintenance problems uncovered after an engine failed on one of the planes. Maintenance contractor Doss Aviation said the problems centered on record-keeping and did not endanger the cadets.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Record Number Of Rockets Fired At U.S. Base

January 15, 2004 By Amir Shah, Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — About a dozen rockets were fired at a U.S. base in eastern Afghanistan, but they caused no casualties, Afghan and U.S. officials said Thursday.

The rockets exploded in fields near the Khost airport, about 90 miles southeast of Kabul, at about 11 p.m. Wednesday, said Hayatullah Taniwal, a spokesman for the provincial governor.

“So many rockets have never been fired at the airport before,” Taniwal told The Associated Press.

He said the fire came from mountains to the south of the city.

Khost airport is home to more than 500 U.S. and allied troops, as well as American aircraft, making it the third-largest coalition base in the country.

Aid groups and deminers are also being targeted. **A time bomb exploded at a mine-clearance site between the eastern city of Jalalabad and the Pakistani border on Tuesday, but no one was injured, said Fazel Karim Fazel, director of the OMAR demining agency. Another device was discovered and defused. Three deminers’ vehicles were destroyed in another blast about two weeks ago, he said.**

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

**This Is What Mass Resistance To
Occupation Looks Like;
Courage At A Checkpoint In Gaza**

By Ghada Ageel, International Herald Tribune January 13, 2004

ZAHRA, Gaza Last month, I went to visit my cousin Muhammad Aqil Abu- Shmaleh at the European hospital. Muhammad had been wounded in October in an Israeli missile strike that killed two of its intended targets and a bystander. A piece of shrapnel had plunged into Muhammad's spinal cord and left him paralyzed.

On our way home from visiting Muhammad, my husband Nasser, my 3-year- old son Tariq and I were stuck at the checkpoint between Khan Yunis and Gaza City for more than six hours. This should be a 40-minute trip.

At 6:50 p.m., the Israeli soldiers finally allowed some cars to pass. After five minutes they closed the checkpoint again. **The people stuck on the other side of the checkpoint became so angry that they left their taxis and started to walk, challenging the Israelis and their guns. I felt a mixture of shock that people in Gaza were confronting guns with their chests, pride that Palestinians could do such things, when it was all too possible that nonviolent resistance could result in their death, and fear of what would happen.**

I had good cause for concern. Israeli soldiers started to shoot toward the people. It was very close and absolutely terrifying. I have lived with war, violence and occupation for all of my 33 years, but will never become accustomed to the horror and the fear.

Adding to my fear was the presence of our son. Close by, a young man was shot in the back of his leg. Incredibly, the people continued to walk. Friends of the youth put him in our car.

The youngster was bleeding and crying and his sobs mixed with those of my child. There is a powerful instinct, which I believe all mothers have, to protect children at any cost. But there, at that time, I felt totally powerless. Yet I was not completely immobilized. I started to shout at people to open the way for our car to move. At the same time I punched the numbers I know all too well for the hospital to send an ambulance.

After 15 minutes of shouting and maneuvering, we got the youth into an ambulance. I discovered I had lost my voice from screaming.

When you see people walk unarmed into gunfire to reach their destination you realize that they are striving for something more than a physical destination. This is what I believe can be best expressed as the very human desire for freedom. No power and no force can enter our hearts and extinguish it.

(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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