

GI SPECIAL 2#19

HEARTBREAK IN HONDURAS



THE IRAQ DISASTER: FRESH SACRIFICES

Emelina Antunez, left, mother of soldier Luis Flores who carries his son in his arms; Flores's wife Heidi and Flores's sister Marcia Flores at farewell ceremony of the military contingent in Campo de Parada Marte, in Ocotal, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, Jan. 31.. The second Xatruch military contingent of 370 Honduran Army soldiers will be sent to Iraq in February. (AP Photo/Fernando Antonio)

Deployed Reserves Body-Bag Bait

By Col. David H. Hackworth (Ret'd). January 23, 2004

The 81st Brigade is rated as a combat-ready fighting outfit. But when it came time for this federally activated Washington state National Guard unit to ship out to Iraq, the high brass ruled that it was nowhere near ready to rock 'n' roll down where the bullets fly and people die. **The brigade's foxholes, in one of the most vicious contemporary killing fields in the world, were filled instead by regular units from the combat-worn 82nd Airborne.**

Wait a minute! Isn't the 81st one of the U.S. Army's 13 "enhanced" National Guard brigades? Haven't millions of dollars and platoons of our best-and-brightest regular officers and noncoms been detailed to these special brigades for almost a decade in yet another ill-conceived Pentagon scheme to try to turn part-time citizen soldiers - who drill an average of 40 days a year - into full-time centurions?

When the 81st deployed last year for annual training, its skipper reported that the brigade was all-the-way combat-ready-to-go, with 100 percent personnel. Except that when it was activated last November to play hardball down where the body bags are filled, the brigade's strength and deployment status had mysteriously plummeted to the low 80s.

Brigade soldiers report that at least another 10 percent of their comrades are **now not deployable overseas because of past injuries, bad teeth, failure to qualify with their individual weapons - even after three trips to the firing range and with scores "improved" by instructors** - or the inability of some of the brigade soldiers to wear a flak jacket or a helmet, let alone pack a 7-pound rifle. **(NOTE WELL: One way to stay home.)**

One company had every senior sergeant fall out during a two-mile run, and in another line unit, troopers had to be "carried off on stretchers" halfway through a training exercise. Yet these unfit soldiers - who'd be guerrilla bait on the actual battlefield - are still on the good-to-go-to-Iraq list.

All of which sounds like another case of virtual reality: books being cooked with Ghost Soldiers who show up only on paper and readiness stats sharpened with a pencil rather than actual sweat on training fields. A drill that's sadly - and dangerously - become all too standard in many regular, Reserve and Guard units.

Most of the soldiers in the 81st are good troopers. **But it's impossible to take a conventional Guard combat unit, which trains no more than a month and a half a year, and expect it to be fighting fit after a mere few months of accelerated combat training.**

But strong and experienced leadership, from squad level up to those sporting stars, is also crucial to success in combat. **So while the 81st Brigade general is no doubt a smart guy - he's got a master's degree in criminology, apparently a key asset for commanding a 4,600-strong armor/motorized brigade these days - it's relevant that he's never commanded a combat unit on active duty. Unfortunately, Brig. Gen. Oscar B. Hilman's active-duty experience was more than 30 years ago as an enlisted finance clerk and a medic. Resumewise, he probably weighs in on a good day at a tad below a regular lieutenant.**

Would you like this man to lead your kid through the Sunni Triangle's bloody maze? Would you allow a doctor who practiced only a few months a year and had never slit open a belly to take out your son's or daughter's appendix?

Reserve and Guard soldiers make up about 30 percent of the casualties in Iraq. They probably were rushed to the Middle East before they were ready for Freddy because a bunch of Pentagon clowns didn't get that quality wins fights, not quantity.

SecDef Donald Rumsfeld, reputedly a hard-nosed efficiency expert, needs to determine whether Pentagon pork to states such as Washington is worth putting fine kids in the middle of a red-hot frying pan when they're far from ready. *He should also ask why a regular parachute unit is now doing double combat duty because the 81st wasn't up to snuff.*

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:

Northern Iraq Blast Kills 3 GIs

By SCHEHEREZADE FARAMARZI, Associated Press Writer, Jan. 31, 2004

Three American soldiers died when a roadside bomb ripped through their convoy near the oil-rich city of Kirkuk as a 4th Infantry Division convoy passed by about 25 miles southwest of the city Saturday, killing the three soldiers, the U.S. military said. The deaths raised to 522 the number of U.S. soldiers killed in the Iraq conflict.

US Soldier Wounded In Mosul, Vehicle Burns;

Middle East Online, 1.31.04

KIRKUK, Iraq - An attack on coalition troops left a US soldier wounded.

A US military spokesman said a US soldier suffered minor injuries when suspected insurgents fired a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) at a convoy near the northern town of Mosul on Friday morning.

"A masked assailant got out of a car and fired an RPG on a convoy before fleeing," witness Badran Hamed al-Badrani, 59, said.

"The rocket hit a vehicle, which burst into flames," he added.

Traffic policeman Abdel Karim al-Mashhadani confirmed the attack took place in al-Wihda street, saying that one vehicle sustained a direct hit.

Fort Riley Hit Hard; Five More Soldiers Killed

Jan. 30, 2004: Dodge Globe.com (Kansas)

FORT RILEY, Kan. (AP) -- Five soldiers based at Fort Riley were killed in Iraq, bringing to 26 the number of troops from the Army post who have died in the war, it was announced Thursday.

Post spokeswoman Christie Vanover identified three of the dead as:

Capt. Matthew J. August, 28, of North Kingston, R.I., who joined the Army in May 1997 and had been stationed at Fort Riley since June 2002.

Sgt. 1st Class James T. Hoffman, 41, of Whitesburg, Ky., who joined the Army in November 1984 and had been at Fort Riley since November 2001.

Sgt. Travis A. Moothart, 23, of Brownsville, Ore., who joined the Army in April 2000 and had been at Fort Riley since October 2001.

All three were killed in a bomb attack in Khalidiyah, east of Ar Ramadi, on Tuesday. They were deployed to Iraq in September and assigned to the 1st Engineer Battalion, 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division.

Vanover said a fourth soldier was killed in the same attack and a fifth died in an unrelated incident. She said their names won't be released until families have been notified.

Exploding Handcart Gets Collaborators

Agence France-Presse, January 29, 2004

A pick-up truck carrying ICDC soldiers was also hit by an explosive device concealed in a handcart on the roadside near the town of Baquba, north of Baghdad, ICDC officer Muslim Jabbar said.

Eight ICDC officers and two civilians were wounded in the attack, which occurred shortly before 9:00am (local time).

Kader Aziz, the driver of the pick-up which had been carrying 15 people three kilometres east of Baquba, said he saw the explosive device, but did not think it suspicious.

"I saw a small cart in the road, I thought it was for someone selling something, when we were close to this, it exploded," he said.

Another ICDC officer said a remote control device was later found in the area, and a man had been seen fleeing the scene in an Opel car.

Three More Collaborators Killed By Resistance In Mosul

MOSUL, Iraq (AFP) Jan 30, 2004

Three Iraqi soldiers were killed and a fourth seriously wounded Friday when resistance soldiers opened fire on them at a military checkpoint in this northern city, a coroner and police said.

Three assailants in a car sprayed bullets at the soldiers who were guarding a checkpoint at the entrance of a palace formerly used by Saddam Hussein, a police officer told AFP, requesting anonymity.

"The three soldiers were killed and a fourth was wounded," the policeman said, adding that the gunmen sped away from the scene.

Payday Surprise: Occupation Cops Blown Up At Police Station

By SCHEHEREZADE FARAMARZI, Associated Press Writer & The International Herald Tribune, Jan. 31, 2004

MOSUL, Iraq - A car bomb targeting a police station in Iraq's third largest city killed nine people and injured 45 others Saturday.

Witnesses in Mosul, Iraq's major northern city, said the attacker drove through a security barricade in front of the police station before blowing up his vehicle outside the building. (!) Officials confirmed a car bomb but wouldn't say if it was a suicide attack.

One policeman, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the blast was so powerful that there were casualties not only on the street but also inside the building.

Saturday was a pay day and the two-story police station was crowded with staff at the time of the midmorning bomb attack, said police Lt. Mohammed Fadil.



Front of an Iraqi police station in the northern Iraqi town of Mosul after a car bomb attack explosion on Jan. 31, 2004. (AP Photo/Karam Hussein)

Severed limbs, some of them smoldering, and decapitated bodies were seen in the bloodied street in front of the police station. Windows of buildings were shattered and pieces of burning car wreckage spewing acrid black smoke littered the streets. At least five cars were destroyed.

Lt. Ahmed Abdul Kader, 30, who was inside the police station, said he was thrown in the air "with the force of the blast."



SO MUCH FOR PROTECTION WALLS: A car is smashed under a concrete protection wall following an explosion in front of a local police station in Mosul., January 31, 2004. REUTERS/Namir Noor-Eldeen

"I fell to the ground and hit my head. I couldn't get up. There were people with horrible injuries all around me," said Kader.

Stunned survivors stumbled down the street, their clothing soaked in blood. A huge crater was gouged out by the blast.

Staff at the Republican Hospital in Mosul said nine people including civilians and policemen were killed and 45 others were wounded.

American soldiers in full combat gear hurried to the scene and cordoned the area. No American troops were near at the time of the blast.



**POINTLESS, USELESS, DANGEROUS WASTE OF TIME;
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!**

A 101st Airborne Division soldier kicks away a piece of a car bumper **while posting security (!)** around a car bombing site at an Iraqi police station Jan. 31 in Mosul. (AP Photo/Julie Jacobson)

Senior Cop's Car Blown Up; He Offers Brilliant Deduction

By SCHEHEREZADE FARAMARZI, Associated Press Writer, Jan. 31, 2004

Also Saturday, a bomb exploded under the car of senior police officer Col. Adnan Radeef al-Ani, who heads a quick response team, in front of his house in Baghdad, slightly injuring five children in the street. Al-Ani told The Associated Press the bomb was apparently triggered by a timer. "We woke up frightened when we heard a big explosion," he said.

"Maybe I was targeted because I am working with the Americans," he told The Associated Press.

Ho Hum: Pipeline Blown Up Again

By SCHEHEREZADE FARAMARZI, Associated Press Writer, Jan. 31, 2004

Friday, saboteurs blew up a section of a pipeline carrying crude oil from Kirkuk to Iraq's main refinery in Beiji, an oil industry official told Dow Jones Newswires. He said a group of experts had traveled to al-Fatha to assess the damage, **which he said did not disrupt refinery operations, because of two days' worth of stocks on hand. (How's that one for desperate bullshit? Based on an average of the 43,069 prior attacks on the Kirkuk area pipelines, repairs take about two weeks each.)**

Rocket Attack On Dutch Embassy In Baghdad

AFP 1.31.04

The Dutch embassy in Baghdad was engulfed in flames late Friday after a rocket-propelled grenade struck the unoccupied building sparking a major alert in the capital, the US military said, quoted by [AFP](#).

"The grenade started a fire that was quickly extinguished by the Baghdad fire department," a US military spokesman said.

The attack at 8:40 pm was confirmed by Dutch foreign ministry spokesman Martine de Haan, who said there were no casualties but **part of the building was severely damaged by the fire.** "The Netherlands was clearly targeted in this attack," she said in The Hague.

TROOP NEWS

Shit-Brain General Swannack Boasted Of "Glide Path To Success" Just Before His Troops Were Slaughtered

By Charles Clover in Baghdad, Financial Times January 29, 2004

Eighteen combat deaths - more than half the January total - occurred in one province, Anbar, in central Iraq, where the restive cities of Falluja, Ramadi, and Khaldiya are located. Nine soldiers were killed when a Blackhawk helicopter was shot down near Falluja on January 8.

Four further fatalities from the two most recent helicopter crashes , on January 23 and 25, are still under investigation to determine if hostile fire was involved.

Only three weeks ago, on January 6, Major General Charles Swannack of the 82nd Airborne Division, who commands Anbar province, declared that the region was largely under control. "I'm here to tell you that we have turned that corner," he told a news conference.

"I also can tell you that we're on a glide-path toward success," he said, adding that attacks against US forces in Anbar province had decreased "almost 60 per cent over the past month".

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/>

Soldiers Battle Anguish As Iraq Tours Extended Again; “Is The Mission Worth The Risk?”

BY HAL BERNTON, The Seattle Times, Jan. 26, 2004

Rushing across central Iraq in a low-flying Chinook helicopter, Sgt. Rachel Green perches at the edge of an open tail ramp, a finger near the trigger of her M-60 machine gun.

Green scans for the telltale flash of a tracer round, or worse, a heat-seeking missile that could down her Boeing-made Chinook with deadly consequences.

Green, of Olympia, Wash., is a flight engineer with the Fort Lewis, Wash.-based Washington Army Reserve Alpha Company. Back home, the company performs high-altitude rescue work in the Cascade Mountains and also fights forest fires. In Iraq, everything changed.

She has no interest in pursuing a career with the Army. "I miss my freedom of speech. I miss my opinions. ... The military can tell what you say, what you do. And respect isn't necessarily gained by intelligence or by brains. It is just not a career path for me. I want other things."

Most of all, she wants to teach high school math and science. When Alpha Company was mobilized in January, she was one year shy of earning her bachelor's degree at St. Martin's College in Lacey, Wash.

Here, at this U.S. base in central Iraq, flight crews bunk with other soldiers in a heated tent erected inside an old concrete bunker, where they are protected from the mortars that slammed the base this fall.

At least once, a Russian-made, heat-seeking missile was shot at an Alpha Company helicopter, according to Haugen, the commander. Five to 10 times, insurgents unsuccessfully tried to down Alpha Company helicopters with rocket-propelled grenades. And dozens of times, the crews have been subject to small-arms fire.

So far, only one bullet has pierced an Alpha Company helicopter. "I never did see the guy that fired it - just a little hole in the floor," said Haugen, who was flying that day. But a National Guard company from the Midwest, attached to the 12th Aviation Brigade, based out of a nearby hangar, was not so lucky. A Nov. 2 attack downed a Chinook, claiming the lives of 16 soldiers.

The daylight attack came as Alpha Company flight crews were already struggling to come to terms with their tour of duty, which had been extended beyond Christmas into next spring.

"When this other company's bird got hit, it was kind of a breaking point," Green said. "It was a culmination of a lot of different anxieties and frustrations. There was a period when I was scared to fly. I got to the point where I could never fly another day, and it wouldn't matter to me. But you just work through that."

At the time of the attack, the Chinooks already were flying just a few hundred feet off the ground. The crew's goal was to avoid being seen from long distances, giving insurgents more time to take aim. The loss of the Chinook triggered tighter security measures.

Alpha Company was ordered to fly only at night and to turn off its running lights.

Night flights are dangerous. Even with night-vision goggles, the crew must strain to avoid electric wires, and it can be rough to navigate in nasty weather.

Sometimes, when the freight loads are light and the distance long, Green wonders whether the mission is worth the risk.

"You don't want to die hauling tires. Granted, we're not complaining. ... It's the validation of the mission that bothers me," she said.

Later, in her tent, she sifts through the memories of home - safely held in a picture scrapbook.

"God willing," Green said, "we've got 90 days to go, and counting down."

Vets Hit By Bush Overtime Pay Cut

Sent by James Starowicz, Vets For Peace

President Bush is taking overtime pay away from millions of Americans who rely on it to make ends meet, and veterans will be among the first victims of the new rules.

The new regulations will allow employers to define some military training as equivalent to a four-year degree and declare their veteran employees ineligible for overtime pay.

That's President Bush's program for those who join the military: drop into a war zone, risk your life for your country, then come home to find you aren't eligible for overtime pay.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Shiite Leader Tells Iraq Minister: Prepare To Visit Hell

January 31, 2004 AL-AWDA-News

"We have been told that the electricity minister has said that we have no objection to selling electricity to Israel," Sadr told worshippers at the main weekly Muslim prayers at this Shiite shrine in central Iraq.

"We won't have any objection at all once we send you and your followers to hell," he said.

Rumsfeld Take Note: How To Plan Ahead

By SCHEHEREZADE FARAMARZI, Associated Press Writer, Jan. 31, 2004

Suspected insurgents in Fallujah were seen handing out leaflets to locals detailing a plan to take over Iraqi cities 'once US-led coalition troops leave.'



GET THE POINT?? Iraqi Shiias demonstrate for free elections outside a shrine in Kufa, Iraq Jan. 30, 2004. (AP Photo/Hadi Mizban)

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

Collaborators Given Ten Days To Stop Helping Occupation

Jan. 30, 2004 CJAD News (Canada)

Shopkeepers in Ramadi, a city west of Baghdad, reported receiving leaflets on Thursday warning Iraqis to stop working for or with Americans within 10 days - or face death.

The undated statement was signed by a previously unknown group, "Anbar Mujahedeen Brigade, the Military Unit." Anbar is the province that includes Ramadi.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

The Occupation Of Iraq, Palestine And The Antiwar Movement In The U.S.

Statement by the International Socialist Organization January 28, 2004

In recent weeks, the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq has been further exposed as a goal of the Bush administration from its first days in office. Moreover, the failure to find weapons of mass destruction and the administration's latest admission of a lack of connection between Saddam Hussein and A1-Qaeda has provided further evidence—if any more were needed—that the global antiwar movement was correct to oppose this criminal war.

Nevertheless, the occupation of Iraq continues, with no end in sight—since the stated reasons for the war were simply pretexts to establish that occupation. The deaths and suffering by, Iraqi civilians, and the deaths of soldiers from the U.S. and other nations underscores the urgency of continued protests. **This is a war for oil and empire—not liberation and democracy.** The current U.S. resistance to direct elections in Iraq is only one indication of this. The situation in Afghanistan—occupied by the U.S. and other nations—is another example of imperial conquest carried out under false pretenses of “fighting terrorism.” Far from being “liberated,” the country remains dominated by warlords. Women's' rights—a key justification for the war—exist only on paper.

For these reasons, we continue to oppose attempts to “internationalize” the occupation—whether under the umbrella of the U.S.-British “coalition,” the United Nations, the Arab League or some other international body. The recent refusal of several Bulgarian soldiers to go to Iraq highlights the question. Their lives are worth no less than those of U.S. soldiers. No one should be forced to take part in a military occupation of another nation for the sake of Washington's attempts to dominate the Middle East and the profits of multinational corporations. That is why **we support the demand, voiced by military families and others, to bring the troops home now.**

The U.S. invasion and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan are, however, not ends in themselves. These occupations are aimed at reordering the entire Middle East to better serve U.S. interests. **The state of Israel is now—and has been since its inception—integral to maintaining U.S. dominance in the region.** Those of us who are activists in the world's only superpower should be loudest in decrying this new “white man's burden” in which great powers carry out conquest and occupation under the banner of liberation and democracy. **The fact that the United Nations has legitimized the occupation of Iraq—and may play a role in a “transitional” government there—does not alter the imperialist character of the occupation.**

It is in this context that the question of Palestine must be seen.

It's no coincidence that the U.S., which has long provided Israel with military and financial aid, is now using the same tactics in Iraq that Israeli forces have used against the Palestinians: systematic house-to-house searches and mass roundups of suspects; bulldozing the homes of suspected resistance fighters; torture of prisoners; the use of bombs and missiles from planes and helicopters in residential areas, and more. Israeli military and intelligence officials have provided direct assistance to the U.S. in carrying out these tactics. **Indeed, the growing symmetry of U.S. and Israeli military tactics have exposed the common strategic aims of those two countries in “transforming” the Middle East—that is, eliminating all resistance to their economic, political and military dominance of the region.**

That is why the U.S. antiwar movement must confront the question of Palestine. Virtually everywhere else in the world, the antiwar movement expresses support for the Palestinian struggle as a matter of course. In the U.S., the longstanding ties between the U.S. and Israel and the distortions of the government and the media have created a blind spot on these issues.

This must be overcome if the antiwar movement is to take up the challenge that the realities of the day have placed before us—military occupations that deny self-determination for the peoples of the Middle East. In Palestine, the occupation is now taking the shape of the systematic exclusion of Palestinian communities through “security walls” while illegal Israeli settlements continue to be built in the Occupied Territories. If the wall and other “security measures” are carried through to their conclusion, they will create a powerless and impoverished series of Palestinian communities even more isolated than the so-called “Black homelands” established by apartheid South Africa. Moreover, Israel would continue to use the world’s most advanced—that is to say, U.S.—military technology to maintain its dominance. Moreover, Palestinians still would be denied the right of return to lands from which they were dispossessed in 1948, perpetuating a monumental historical injustice.

For these reasons, the antiwar movement must take up the call for an end to the occupation of Palestine as well as of Iraq. The two are part of a single strategic drive by the U.S. to strengthen their grip on the Middle East, and they must be opposed as such. Moreover, the Palestinians have for decades seen their struggle ignored or sidelined by antiwar and peace movements in the U.S. because it is deemed “too controversial.” It should be recalled that this initially was true of the movement against the war in Vietnam—the issue was for years excluded from the civil rights and labor movements. But organizing, activism, education, along with the escalation of the war itself, eventually pushed the issue to the forefront.

Some in the antiwar movement claim that raising the occupation of Palestine as an issue will prevent us from “broadening” the movement in the U.S. Yet a movement that claims to oppose a military occupation in one part of the Middle East cannot afford to remain silent about another when precisely the same issues are involved—the denial of the right of self-determination by Arab peoples by military force and repression. The U.S. attempt to dominate the Middle East not only hinges on the occupation of Iraq, but is ever more openly reliant on Israel’s occupation of Palestine. **The two occupations are central to Washington’s imperialist project; our opposition to that project must face those facts squarely in order to meet the political challenges ahead.**

Today, a wide range of Arab and Muslim groups have stepped forward to assert their issues. In this, they must be fully supported. Continued education, debate and organizing on this issue is essential for the movement to go forward.

Unfortunately, the issue has been sidetracked into competing plans for the March 20 International Day of Action against the occupation of Iraq. This has raised the possibility of separate demonstrations in some cities—some aligned with the

International ANSWER coalition and others with the United for Peace and Justice coalition.

We support efforts to find common ground for united demonstrations across the U.S. on March 20. But the organizational rivalries must not obscure the essential issue: Antiwar and peace organizations that aim to continue to organize for justice in the Middle East can't ignore this issue. We cannot allow the issue of the end of the occupation of Palestine to be postponed yet again; neither can we permit ultimatums and organizational rivalries weaken the movement at a time when the challenges before us are so great. Our movement will be judged in large part over how we take up this issue—not just in the U.S., but around the world.

Given the distortions of the U.S. media and politicians about Israel and Palestine, we have a special responsibility for education and organizing around this issue. Organizational power plays have no part in such work. Therefore, we call on all organizations in the antiwar movement to support the demand for an end to the occupation of both Iraq and Palestine. Our shared opposition to U.S. war aims and commitment to justice compel us to take up this issue. The tasks we face compel us to do so as a united movement.

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.

Would A Democrat In The White House Make A Difference?

From "The Other War Party," Lance Selfa, International Socialist Review, Jan.Feb. 2004

If one takes the Democrats at their word, a Democrat taking the Oval Office in 2004 might change the style of U.S. foreign policy, but not the substance. This is so for two reasons. First, none of the leading contenders has promised a radical break with Bush's policies. Second—and more importantly-- powerful forces would push a Democratic administration to continue many of Bush's policies whether it wanted to or not.

At the most basic level, a change in administrations will not change the military and industrial bureaucracies with a vested interest in promoting and extending an aggressive U.S. foreign policy. Pentagon projects and arms contracts extend over years and outlast administrations. The officer corps and the vast military bureaucracy remain largely unchanged even when civilian administrations change. This promotes continuity in military policies across administrations—as well as inertia and challenges to civilian authority.

The Clinton years witnessed what Bacevich calls “the rise of the pro-consuls,” where “On an ever-widening array of foreign-policy issues—where the U.S. should engage, how and for what purposes—the military functioned as an independent and powerful policy advocate that civilian officials ignored at their peril.” Regional Commanders In Chief (CINCs)—like Generals Tommy Franks and John Abizaid, the two most recent Central Command CINCs—exercise more political power in making U.S. foreign policy than any group of officers since the 1940s.



WHO NEEDS THIS SHIT? BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!

Feb. 1, 2006: President Kerry announced today U.S. forces will come home “as soon as conditions in Iraq are stable.” Near a U.S. military base in Tikrit, a US soldier takes cover as an Iraqi man (not in picture) opens fire and refuses to give up his weapon. (AFP/Jewel Samad)

For the foreseeable future, any U.S. administration will inherit a geopolitical environment in which the U.S. spends more on its military than the rest of the world combined. The U.S. economy remains the world’s largest. So the U.S. will retain the ability to bully and bribe other nations to follow its demands. **And no American administration dedicated to defending the interests of the American ruling class will ever voluntarily renounce the power it has.**

As the exposition of the Democratic critique of Bush here has shown, a Democratic administration may reflect ruling-class desires for a “kinder, gentler” imperialism. But it would be dedicated to imperialism just the same.

While many “anybody but Bush” proponents in the antiwar movement would concede this, they are willing to look the other way. Unfortunately this is not only incorrect, but it can also have damaging consequences for building an opposition to U.S. militarism. Bill Clinton’s ability to sell his overseas adventures with the rhetoric of human rights and the international community dampened opposition that needed to be built.

The Bush Doctrine has placed before the massive antiwar opposition the challenge of combating imperialism and colonialism. It’s understandable that many mobilized in this opposition would want to get rid of Bush in 2004. But trading one imperialist politician for another isn’t a step forward. The challenge that Lenin faced—that of tackling imperialism at its roots in the capitalist system—is ours today.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



President Bush receiving messages from his hand during his arrival on Marine One helicopter on the South Lawn of the White House Jan. 31. The President told reporters that God speaks to him through his finger nails, so he frequently inspects his hand to make sure it is still there. He denied reports that he also receives Divine messages when he sticks his head up his ass, accusing evildoers and Albert Gore diehard-remnants of circulating the rumors.

The former Vice-Presidents' press secretary said Gore could not respond at this time because he could not respond at this time, but that he might respond at some later time, or that he might not respond at all, if, after careful consideration, he decided a response was merited, or not. (AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais)

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Israeli Troops Execute 5 Palestinian Workers in Cold Blood

29/01/2004 - Palestine Media Center – PMC

Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) executed five Palestinian workers in cold blood while their work colleagues were watching during their pre-dawn invasion of southern Gaza City on Wednesday., and shot dead an 11-year old boy and two teenagers, in what the Israeli daily Haaretz described as “indiscriminate killings.”

The five workers went out of their workshop raising their hands but the IOF troops executed them one by one while their work colleagues were watching. Bakr Abu Saffiyeh, head of the emergency services at Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City, told AFP that five had been shot with “a single bullet to the head or the nape of the neck.”

(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.)

CLASS WAR NEWS

The Bankrupt Empire On The Edge Chooses Kerry

COMMENT:

(The writer below dances all around the basic problem: an empire lacking the material basis for expansionary war, and financially bankrupt. As for the digs at Lenin, of course Imperialism has changed since Lenin’s time, but that’s beside the point. Lenin wasn’t focused on a previously flourishing empire on the edge of a devastating currency crisis. In fact, it was Marx in “Capital” who wrote about that kind of problem, which, he pointed out, meant contraction for any nation state with such horrific balance of payments and governmental deficits as the U.S. Empire is running now.

The idea that politicians in Washington DC can repeal the laws of motion of capitalism in general and the international movements of money-capital in particular is silly idealism. When an Imperial currency enters a crisis, it really doesn’t matter how many guns you have, since the capital markets will not respond on that basis.

Of course the more politically sophisticated sections of our ruling class understand why Kerry must be president.

First, if severe financial/currency crisis requires “sacrifice,” they know that it will initially create less bitter opposition from the working class if a Democrat is in office sticking it to us. He can certainly count on the usual poodle dog labor union bureaucrats to explain why our class has to pay for the expenses associated with a dollar collapse brought on by Imperial over-reach.

Second, Bush can't do another war. Nobody trusts him anymore, here or abroad. To do another Imperial War and send more U.S. soldiers to Imperial death, they need war-veteran Imperial Democrat Kerry.

Some activists will collapse into Democratic Party politics, many never to be heard of again. Others, who genuinely wish an end to Imperial war, and see through the electoral con game, will continue building the only force that works: movements on the ground. T)

By Andrew Higgins, Wall St. Journal 1.30.04

Though America is sometimes loosely called an empire, it defies the Imperial economic script described by Lenin (who called imperialism "the highest form of capitalism").

The U.S. doesn't seek vassal states as outlets for surplus capital. **In an anomaly for such a powerful nation, America sucks in money from abroad. With its large national debt and trade deficits, the U.S. binds not by lending but by borrowing and by importing.**

Its status as a "hyper-debtor" makes this "hyper-power" oddly reliant on weaker partners, says Niall Ferguson, a professor at New York University and scholar of imperial history. "If you are dependent on the willingness of others to hold your assets, there is a limit to how unilaterally you can act."

The U.S. has been a net capital importer since at least the 1980s. This is in stark contrast to Britain at the height of its imperium before World War I, when the British had net foreign assets valued at 150% of their own GDP. **America, though often described as Britain's successor as the world's dominant power; does the opposite.** Recent figures from the Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis show that foreign holdings of U.S. stocks, bonds and other assets exceeded America's foreign assets to the tune of \$2.3 trillion—or 22% of GDP—at the end of 2002.

"America is certainly a hegemon and may be occupying Iraq but, economically at least it does the opposite of what-Lenin described as imperialism," says Angus Madison; a British economist whose many books include a survey of the world economy over the last millennium.

Tax cuts, spending in Iraq and other factors have stirred alarm among some economists that America's debt is getting out of control. A recent International Monetary Fund report said America's net foreign obligations could rise in a few years to 40% of GDP, and warned of an "unprecedented level of external debt for a large industrial country"

China didn't create this potentially unstable edifice, but it does, at least for the time being, help to keep it upright. China has loans outstanding to the U.S. government of more than \$120 billion, in the form of Treasury debt that China owns. It holds probably that much again in Fannie Mac; and other dollar-denominated debt securities.

But China has reasons of its own to buy dollar assets—reasons that show how intricately the officially Marxist country fits into a U.S.-led world economic order. As China lends to the U.S. by buying U.S. government notes, it stows in a safe place the vast surplus cash its export economy generates.

Its buying of dollar assets buttresses another Chinese policy: keeping the yuan pegged at a low exchange rate against the greenback. Every time China buys a Treasury note it sells yuan. This selling helps stop the yuan from rising. By keeping its currency cheap, China keeps its exports especially inexpensive abroad—one of the trade policies the U.S. complains about.

What worries some Americans most isn't the loss of menial jobs to tens of millions of Chinese but a migration of white-collar work as China moves up the economic ladder. A Godzilla role once played by Japan is now assigned to China, and sometimes India. **“When you hear that Intel, IBM and Goldman Sachs plan to move high-end jobs to China and India, what’s going to be left here—restaurants?”** asked Sen. Charles Schumer of New York at a Banking Committee hearing last year.

Capitalism At Work: Billions In Desperate Poverty While Manufacturing Has “Too Much” Capacity

Wall St. Journal 1.26.04

MANUFACTURING, until recently the punching bag of the recession, won't be a drag on the U.S. economy in 2004—but it won't be a significant growth engine either, especially when it comes to jobs.

The problem is a glut of capacity in the U.S. and around the world. In the late 1990s, a broad range of industries, from telecommunications to aerospace, added capacity. **Once the recession hit, companies cut costs and began outsourcing work, idling plants or production lines in the U.S.**

At the same time, emerging and developing economies invested huge amounts in new production and privatized state-owned industries. **The upshot: a huge net gain in capacity across the globe.**

“I don't think there's any major country that isn't operating with a lot of excess capacity in manufacturing,” contends Daniel Meckstroth, chief economist with the Manufacturers Alliance. **Although U.S. manufacturing activity picked up significantly in the last half of 2003, capacity utilization is about 74%, well below the average 80% for the period of 1972 to 2002.**

(Why? Check out the article “The German Ideology” at www.isreview.org.)

Received:

Chickens Of Mass Distraction

The Background:

From Max Watts, Australia, Jan. 27, 2004

Liz (UGee) who is here now, and whom I have just interrogated says:

The attack by chickens on the U.S. Command ship Blue Ridge Bay happened on 8 Sept 1999.

We were desperate, we had just come out of East Timor, and had watched the beginnings of the massacres of the Timorese by the Indonesians and their "militias" and we were hearing day by day of the escalations.

The U.S. Command ship was at quay in Darwin, Stakes Hill wharf.

The live chickens were thrown onto deck from quay, about half a dozen. The objective was to say the US government was being "chicken" about stopping their Indonesian allies' massacres of the East Timorese.

One may have fallen or flown into water. We were accused of cruelty to animals. As all participants were "green," very sensitive re this. The point had to be made was that the Timorese were being massacred, (well, they were used to that- Max) and this was a "desperate" situation

Prime Minister Howard would not act against Indonesia (unless told to, or covered by, U.S. government and U.S. at that point avoiding the issue.

Since 1975 Australian and U.S. had, of course, supported Indonesians against Timorese. 25% -35% of Timorese population had been killed by Indonesians between 1975-1999 with full blessing of U.S. and Australian governments.

This was a crucial moment when it became possible to affect Australian and UN troop deployment.

The Story

From: Rob Wesley Smith, January 27, 2004
MORE ON Live Chickens (from memory)

The US command ship USS Blue Ridge Bay had been sitting at the dock at Darwin whilst the murder, mayhem and burning in East Timor continued and developed. Activists in Darwin thought the ship should be over in East Timor not sitting at rest in Darwin. [No doubt it was using its vast array of electronics to gather useful data].

I was part of an earlier action on the wharf, Monday morning, 8 Sept 1999, when East Timorese matriarchs in Darwin presented a letter to the ship's Captain addressed I believe to President Clinton, accepted by a beautiful young female lieutenant who looked like she maybe came from Hawaii - but who appeared bemused. I was happy to provide further explanation but she was whisked away.

Wednesday I was NOT part of the action at the wharf. As I headed down there I passed the Indonesian Consulate and saw a friend being bounced up and down on the footpath inside by NT Police. I left the car on the edge of the road and ran to the fence calling out for them to behave. Once the person was in a Police van the sergeant told me to clear off. I said I had a right to be there etc etc and got arrested for loitering, and slammed into the lockup for 10 hours, but released by senior Police saying I had no case to answer. However the politicians clearly did not agree and so at the subsequent court case, despite the cops' agreement I had been there less than 60 seconds, I was convicted [but no penalty apart from the humiliation, loss of freedom, time and travel costs etc including return from East Timor] - so it was probably the shortest loiter in history.

Vaughan Williams, Darwin activist, had gone to a chook farm and bought some old layers. As it happens these birds had lived their life in cages, so were not experienced flyers. Vaughan put water in a dish in his car etc, and parked on the wharf.

About 4pm when shade had appeared the birds were gently elevated onto the foredeck, most flapped down safely, one or two landed with a thump. Fearing the warship was under attack, perhaps 'birdflew', the hatches slammed shut etc. It was left to the US Navy to try to work out what was going on and why.

After an hour or so some intrepid sailors crept out onto the foredeck where the birds were strutting their stuff, looking for the parade, but were scooped into plastic garbage bags and taken to a fate we know not. This act of putting into plastic garbage bags could be seen as cruel, but only Vaughan was later convicted of cruelty in what I thought as a farcical case.

The US Navy did eventually support Interfet, which arrived in Dili 20th September, for which Interfet and East Timor supporters were and are grateful. A few fleet visits continue, delivering civilian aid to this poorest country in the region.

I was in Dili in November 2003 when the US Navy paraded up and down offshore, and a note from the US Ambassador reminded the East Timor government they only had 4 days left to the deadline to sign the demand from US to never submit US personnel to any war crimes court no matter what they might have done. Around 20 countries have succumbed to this blackmail as the NeoCons demand that US citizens and ONLY US citizens are covered by total IMPUNITY no matter what they do in foreign countries.

Rob Wesley-Smith
Spokesperson for 'Australians for a Free East Timor',
Darwin

Additional Notes From Max Watts:

TV PICKED UP AND RAN, IN DARWIN AND INTERNATIONALLY. SEEN IN LONDON, ELSEWHERE?

US NAVY ORDERED: DO NOT TOUCH THE CHICKENS! (? CHICKEN POX FEARED???) QUARANTINE!

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY CALLED. TOOK 1-2 HOURS TO ARRIVE. THEY TOOK OVER THE CHICKEN CASE! THEY CHASED AND PUT CHICKENS INTO PLASTIC BAGS, WHICH WERE THEN LEFT IN SUN FOR CHICKENS TO DIE! BOOO! CRUEL!!

EARLIER ON CHICKEN THROWERS HAD ASKED US NAVY TO GIVE CHICKENS SOME DRINKING WATER. US NAVY REFUSED. AS USUAL, THE PEOPLE ARRESTED WERE NOT THE CRUEL ONES.

“Iraq Intelligence Failure Poses Risks for Bush”

(AP Headline Jan. 31, 2004)

THANKS TO B WHO E-MAILED THIS IN WITH PHOTO: B WRITES: “This here IS the intelligence failure.”



(AP Photo/Ron Edmonds)

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