

GI SPECIAL 2#22

HOW MANY MORE FOR BUSHS' WAR?



“End This Madness” Army Nurse Says War “A Power Grab For More Wealth And Control”

(2.4.04 We received this message tonight and it will be posted shortly on the Bring Them Home NOW website (www.bringthemhomenow.org). It is from an Army nurse at Walter Reed. In Peace and Solidarity, Nancy Lessin and Charley Richardson, for Military Families Speak Out www.mfso.org)

I am an Army Nurse Corps Captain stationed at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, in Washington D.C., and I feel compelled to share with anyone who will listen what I have seen.

You see, when OIF troops are evac'd out of Germany, the huge majority are brought here to WRAMC by the Air Force flight nurses and docs. I do not have access to any of the numbers of how many wounded and what types of injuries, etc, but I can honestly tell you that the OIF wounded occupy more than half of our two major intensive care units (SICU and MICU) at any given time.

At times, we get so full and are expecting more to arrive, that we have to hound the docs to transfer somebody out of our unit to a ward upstairs so we have some beds for these soldiers. Most of these wounded soldiers come in to our unit on a ventilator breathing for them, with severe wounds caused by IEDs (improvised roadside bombs) or AK-47 GSW (gun shot wounds).

Many, many soldiers have already lost arms, limbs, or eyes before they even get to us, and many have received dozens of units of blood before they left Germany.

I am very proud that I am privileged to take care of these brave men and women, but it breaks my heart to realize that their incredible loss that they and their loved ones will have to deal with for the rest of their life seems to have not been for the good of our country.

Rather, their pain and sorrow has merely allowed a few greedy souls to make a power grab for more wealth and control. One of my dear friends has tried to convince me that this is all part of God's plan, and the death and pain is for some greater purpose that our leaders are not telling us yet. I wish I could believe her. It would make my job and daily life much easier, but I cannot buy it.

I apologize to the reader for my tangential thought processes, but this never ending situation is getting to many military nurses.

Anyway, the following is my main point in reaching out to you. As you might be aware, the press is being tightly controlled and what is being reported from a medical standpoint is only a fraction of the true reality. Yes, I do believe the daily number of killed that CNN and whoever report is accurate. **What I am saying is that the walking wounded are being sorely ignored.**

Don't believe me? Walter Reed is an open base, not a tightly controlled fort. Just have a valid ID and consent to a vehicle search. Then park, and walk inside. You will see so many 20 something mostly men missing arms, legs, and eyes.

The blinders covering your eyes will be ripped away as you see the poor families making their daily walk from the Malogne house to the wards and units to see their son's or husbands. It is so sad to see young wives and fiancee's cry over their honey who was in Iraq less than one month before losing both legs and have several abdominal surgeries which leaves his belly crisscrossed with staples, and now he is fighting for his life from the infection that the injuries have caused. And that is just one example of what I saw this week. I will spare you any more wrenching true stories.

God help our men and women in uniform. Please do something to end this madness.

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:

Airport Mortar Attack Kills 1 GI, Injures 1

AP: 2.5.04

BAGHDAD, Iraq - Insurgents fired a mortar Thursday at a checkpoint near Baghdad International Airport, killing one U.S. soldier and wounding another, the U.S. command said.

The attack occurred about 2:15 p.m. outside the airport, which serves as a major American military base.

STANDING DUCK: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



The sun sets on a Dutch soldier in a watchtower at the Dutch military base in Samawa, 270km south of the Iraqi capital Baghdad.(AFP/Kazuhiro Nogi)

TROOP NEWS

Poisoned Water In The Land Of Semper Fi:

Marines Want To Know Why Base Didn't Close Wells When Toxins Found

By Manuel Roig-Franzia and Catharine Skipp, Washington Post Staff Writers, January 28, 2004

CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C. A military engineer assigned in 1980 to test the drinking water at this sprawling Marine Corps base punctuated his findings with a handwritten exclamation point.

"WATER HIGHLY CONTAMINATED WITH . . . CHLORINATED HYDROCARBONS (SOLVENTS)!" William C. Neal wrote in capital letters on one of his surveillance reports in early 1981.

A private firm followed up with tests the next year. One of its samples showed an astonishing result: 1,400 parts per billion -- 280 times the level now considered safe for drinking water -- of trichloroethylene, a likely cancer-causing chemical used for degreasing machinery that can impair the development of fetuses, weaken the immune system, and damage kidneys and livers.

The number of people who may have drunk the tainted water, bathed in it, had water fights with it is staggering: The Marine Corps estimates 50,000 Marines and their families lived in base housing areas that may have been fed by the wells before they were closed in 1985. **Victim advocacy groups place the figure even higher, at 200,000, which would make Camp Lejeune one of the largest contaminated-water cases in U.S. history.**

Already, more than 270 tort claims have been filed with the Navy's judge advocate general's office by former residents, who are required by law to file claims with the military before proceeding with any possible action in civilian courts.

One of those claims was filed by a Marine air traffic controller named Jeff Byron. **Within months of the 1982 tests, Byron moved his family into base housing at Lejeune,** grateful to leave behind a rickety mobile home in favor of a modest townhouse with a postage-stamp back yard. **Byron and his wife, Mary, were not told about the water-sampling results, and nearly two decades would pass before they would find out about them.** Now he wakes up thinking about all the frozen lemonade and apple juice he mixed with tap water for Andrea, who was born three months before he moved on base, and for Rachel, who was born two years after.

Both of his girls have been beset with a lifetime of ailments: Rachel, who is developmentally disabled, was born with a cleft palate and needed leg braces as a child. She has spina bifida; a gangly, arachnoid cyst on her spine that cannot be removed; and brittle, rotting teeth. Andrea had a rare bone marrow syndrome known as aplastic anemia and has been told by her doctors that the disease could recur if she becomes pregnant.

"I find myself asking, 'What if I hadn't joined the Marine Corps?' " said Byron, who left the military for the private sector in 1985.

Both Marines and civilians living on base -- hundreds of whom have organized into a lobbying group known as Water Survivors. The group's members blame the contamination for a variety of ills, from chronic headaches to virulent cancers, from infertility to the incurable leukemia that claimed their children's lives.

The battle over the water contamination at Lejeune has strained age-old loyalties, matching Marine veterans against the power structure of an organization that prides itself in the motto *Semper Fidelis*, or "always faithful." The Marine Corps has not denied that contamination took place at Lejeune.

In a written response to questions from The Washington Post, the Corps said the wells were not shut down for five years because there were no federal drinking-water regulations then for the chemicals found in Lejeune's water:

trichloroethylene, or TCE, the metal degreaser that federal researchers say was kept in leaky underground storage tanks, and tetrachloroethylene, or PCE, which researchers believe leaked into the wells from a dry cleaner that still operates across the street from Lejeune's main gate. The Environmental Protection Agency had recommended levels -- not enforceable standards -- at the time,

For many former residents, the contamination saga did not begin until 1999, when they received questionnaires from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, or ATSDR, which studies polluted Superfund sites, such as Lejeune.

The ATSDR, which focused its research on women who were pregnant while living on base from 1968 to 1985, issued a progress report in July that identified 103 cases of birth defects or childhood cancers among nearly 12,600 births included in the survey. Jeffords and his research staff say the rate is three to five times the normal rate.

The release of the ATSDR report came after three years of often bitter clashes between members of Water Survivors, who used the Freedom of Information Act to gather mounds of evidence that they say proves federal officials have not been forthcoming about the contamination. **In a series of 1998 e-mails recently disclosed on the Marines' Web site, officials at Lejeune discussed how public concern about water contamination could be stoked by the release of the film "A Civil Action," which traced the legal battle over contaminated drinking-water wells in Woburn, Mass.**

"Just a thought," Neal Paul, director of Lejeune's toxic cleanup program, wrote to an official at Marine headquarters. "With the movie coming out in Dec., can we delay the questionnaires until April/May time frame?"

The ATSDR estimates that the Lejeune wells may have been contaminated as many as 30 years before being closed -- going back to the mid-1950s -- a projection that would greatly expand the number of potential contamination victims to encompass the massive buildup of troops at Lejeune between the Korean and Vietnam wars.

Extending the contamination dates to the 1950s would draw in veterans, such as Tom Townsend, a retired Marine major, whose wife, Anne, is ineligible for the study because she was pregnant with their third child, Christopher, in 1966 -- two years before the start

date of the ATSDR study, which was chosen because it marks the beginning of computerized birth records in North Carolina.

Christopher always had a "strange cry," Anne Townsend recalled, "not a healthy, full-wallop cry." Christopher's father, who was on duty in Vieques, Puerto Rico, got home just in time to see him die of a heart defect when he was 3 months old.

Tom Townsend trades documents and talks strategy with Jerry Ensminger, another retired Marine once based at Lejeune, whose eyes still well with tears when he talks about Janey, the 6-year-old daughter he lost to leukemia in 1985. Ensminger said he wonders whether doctors would have been able to change her treatment if they had known about the contamination.

For Townsend and Ensminger, one of the most galling pieces of paper they have unearthed is a notice sent in 1985 to residents of Tarawa Terrace, a large housing development at Lejeune where Byron and Ensminger once lived, by the base's then-commander, Maj. Gen. Louis H. Buehl. The notice announces the closure of two wells because "minute (trace) amounts of several organic chemicals have been detected," though it does not specify which chemicals were found.

Some water-contamination experts believe the lack of enforceable regulatory standards for the chemicals would be a weak defense if the case ever made it into the courts.

"Even in those days, that would have constituted pretty close to a drinking-water crisis," said Richard Maas, director of the environmental studies department at the University of North Carolina at Asheville. "That information was all out there; it was being used in the late 1970s and early 1980s. . . . If a typical town had done that [sampling], they probably would have abandoned that as a water source."

The ATSDR has been assailed by the Water Survivors group and by Jeffords for limiting the scope of the study to pregnant women.

"We didn't want the whole world to know, or they'd all start calling -- we couldn't handle that," said Marie L. Socha, an ATSDR researcher who has worked on the Camp Lejeune project.

Michael Gros, an obstetrician at Lejeune from 1980 to 1983. Gros, who has T-cell lymphoma and can no longer practice, has been pushing for the ATSDR to notify all former residents, regardless of age.

"They've just done the biggest ghoulish experiment on adults, and they don't want to know the results," Gros said. "What's happening while they're stalling us is everybody's gone hither and yon, and they're dying."

Leaders of the Water Survivors group, increasingly skeptical about the pace of federal research, are hoping the possibility of congressional hearings could speed their efforts to get compensation for the medical bills of possible victims.

"We want to force these people, under oath, to come in and talk about this stuff," Gros said. "How do you know your water is contaminated for five years and do nothing about it? How do you explain that away?"

But, for all the passion, some of Ensminger's old Marine pals want him to let up. "They say, '*Semper fidelis* -- give 'em a break. Why do you want to hurt the Corps?' " said Ensminger, a former master sergeant who retired in 1994 after 24 1/2 years in the Corps.

But an image that rattles around inside Ensminger's stubborn, crew-cut head will not let him give up. He sees Janey, all big, brown eyes and silly smiles, watching him as her doctors advised him to stop treatment because there was no hope. Janey looked up at them, Ensminger recalls, and said: "You're talking about *me*. I'm not dead. You're not giving up on me."

One week later, she was gone.

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/>

What The Military Won't Tell Soldiers

By Roberto Barreto, Socialist Worker, February 6, 2004, Page 2
http://www.socialistworker.org/2004-1/485/485_02_PRResister.shtml

PEOPLE ACROSS Puerto Rico rallied to the side of "el Desertor Boricua"--and helped to save him from military prison after he was arrested and charged with desertion from the U.S. Army. Josean González joined the armed forces because he wanted to study medicine and hoped that the Army would help him. But his first months in the military--at a language school in San Antonio, Texas--turned out to be a nightmare.

He faced racism and was subjected to physical and mental abuse. Desperate to get out, Josean got leave to visit his sick mother. There, he announced that he wouldn't return because of the abuse. The army classified him as a "absent without leave" (AWOL).

When González's mother, Magdalena Acevedo, called Fort Buchanan in Puerto Rico, hoping to arrange for psychiatric care for her son--who she feared would commit suicide-

-officials gave her a date for an appointment. But when Josean arrived on December 3, there were no doctors waiting to see him.

Instead, military police handcuffed him, put him on a plane and returned him to his unit in Texas--where he faced disciplinary measures under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Josean's arrest caused anger among many in Puerto Rico, where more than 5,000 soldiers have been mobilized for the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Because of the pressure building in Puerto Rico, Josean and his family learned that he had the right to quit the army--as a soldier who had not completed 180 days of military service. In theory, all soldiers have this right. But many times, commanders don't inform them.

This traumatic experience for Josean shows that what the army promises is very different from what it offers in reality--and exposes the idea that the U.S. has a volunteer military. "Poverty and the restricted economic situation force many Puerto Ricans to stay in the armed forces under tricks and deception," said lawmaker Rubén Berríos of the Puerto Rican Independentist Party. "When a person doesn't have any true options, in truth, [military service] isn't free or voluntary."

U.S. Team Hunts Lethal Low-Tech Insurgency: Exploding Doorbells, Pagers Among Tools Used By Resistance

[Washington Post, February 5, 2004, Pg. 14]

A squad with the 307th Engineers Battalion has done little construction since arriving in Iraq last summer. Instead, the squad has cleared obstacles, provided the muscle for breaking down doors and, perhaps most importantly, uncovered roadside bombs and other low-tech weapons.

Odious Odierno Babbles Bullshit (Again)

[Baltimore Sun, February 5, 2004]

Maj. Gen. Raymond Odierno, commander of the Army's 4th Infantry Division, said recent attacks in Iraq are the work of groups **trying to sabotage, or gain leverage in, a future independent Iraqi government** that is to take power in July. **(Well, which is it?) He also predicted that coalition forces would be able to crush the insurgency within a year. (Odd. Last summer he said the resistance was already crushed.)**

Veterans Say Military Refusing To Keep Troops Medical Records

Wall St. Journal, By Robert Tomsho, 2.4.04

U.S. TROOPS on the battlefield face far more potential dangers than simply enemy weapons fire: Germ and biochemical weapons, environmental pollution—even bites from insects and animals native to the battle zone— can sicken a soldier with symptoms that linger long after he's gone home.

What the military hasn't been doing—at least not well, some veterans and officials say—is keeping good medical files on deployed troops to track the vaccines and treatments they receive and where or when they may have been exposed to a biological agent in the field.

Accurate records are more than just a bureaucratic issue: **Ailing veterans say the information is vital in helping them qualify for veterans benefits and to help doctors diagnose, treat and identify the cause of illnesses soldiers may develop years later.**

Veterans' Advocates doubt things will improve anytime soon. *Although Congress passed a law in 1997 requiring the Pentagon to better monitor the health of wartime troops, the lawmakers didn't set a deadline for implementing the new measures.* “We still haven't put it together,” says U.S. Rep. Steve Buyer, an Indiana Republican and Gulf War veteran, who helped to write the 1997 legislation and calls the Pentagon's progress toward its implementation “disheartening.”

The law mandates medical exams of troops before and after deployment, immunizations and blood tests. Records of all these medical tests are then supposed to be entered into a centralized data bank that can be easily accessed. **The law also requires creation of a system to track individual service members as they move through a theater of operations, so later the military can reconstruct what agents soldiers may have been exposed to.**

But the General Accounting Office, the investigative arm of Congress, estimates it will be 2007 or later before that tracking system is fully implemented.

The GAO also has found problems with the data the military already has gathered. In April 2003, the GAO said it couldn't obtain the medical records for 332 of 504 “early-deploying” Army reservists, that is soldiers standing by to be called up at a moment's notice. And in a September report, the GAO found similar gaps in the records of 1,100 Army and Air Force veterans of Kosovo or Afghanistan at four U.S. military bases.

The GAO also discovered widespread problems with dated blood samples, missing medical records and disparities between the data kept at military bases and *information* in the Pentagon's central database.

The military maintains that giving full-blown medical exams just before and after troops are deployed is logistically impossible. It argues that its routine schedule of physical exams, sometimes given months prior to deployment, coupled with veterans' own reports of their condition after deployment, satisfies the 1997 law. **But veterans' advocates say reservists eager to get home and full-time troops worried about jeopardizing their military careers often aren't likely to report medical problems.**

Michael Woods, an ex-Army mechanic from Kissimmee, Fla., says he didn't complain initially when he began to experience memory lapses a year or so after the Gulf War. Still in the Army, he eventually was disciplined for dangerous behavior such as forgetting to reconnect the brake lines on military vehicles. He left the Army in 1993 and, amid the onset of blackouts, seizures and numbness in his limbs, filed a VA disability claim in 1996.

Mr. Woods is now president of the National Gulf War Resource Center, a veterans' group lobbying the military and Congress for stronger medical safeguards for deploying troops. He says results of blood tests and medical exams would have helped him get his VA disability rating and compensation more quickly. Had the Army been able to "tell you what I was exposed to," he says, "... there wouldn't be a question, there wouldn't be a mystery."

Frayed Paper Trail

Percentage of Veterans missing records:
Health assessment:

Fort Campbell, Ky. (Army)	68%
Fort Drum, N.Y. (Army)	54%
Hurlburt Field Fla. (Air Force)	48%
Travis Air Force Base Calif.	38%

Brig. Gen. Dempsey Kills R&R For Soldiers In Baghdad

By [Sandra Jontz](#), Stars and Stripes, European edition, Tuesday, February 3, 2004 — Staff writer Marni McEntee contributed to this report from Baghdad.

Brig. Gen. Martin Dempsey canceled the two-week Rest and Recuperation program for the next two months for the roughly 47,000 soldiers under his command in Baghdad.

Troops there had complained of getting mixed messages.

Army leaders in the States tasked with running and speaking for the R&R program said they were not aware of the 1st AD's decision to cancel leave for such a large population of U.S. forces in country, and had made emphatic statements recently that the program had not been canceled.

"The program, in general, has not been canceled," Gary Jones, a spokesman for Army Forces Central Command in Atlanta, said Monday. **However, he said, he hadn't been aware of the general's decision, which affects a large number of troops.**

Several soldiers and families have e-mailed Stars and Stripes seeking clarification between what they're being told and what they've read.

A story in the Jan. 23 editions of Stripes reported, “[t]he Army is not canceling the Rest and Recuperation program for troops in February and March — misinformation that seems to have made its way around the country, from commanding officers telling their troops to public affairs telling the media.”

“Your article is wrong and irresponsible,” one soldier wrote in response. “The R&R program has been canceled for our unit. Your article makes it hard for our families to believe us, as it is canceled for us.”

Though Central Command chartered planes specifically for R&R, units are facing difficulties getting troops in and out of country, **Dempsey said. “We also were beginning to bang into some transportation problems, challenges.”**



Nearly 10,000 Japanese protesters, holding candles and anti-war banner, shout their opposition during rally near Defense Agency in Tokyo Feb. 5. **The banner reads ' Stop the dispatch of Japanese troops to Iraq.'** (AP Photo/Shuji Kajiyama)

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

The Voice Of The Iraqi Resistance

(Interview with Abdel Yabar al-Kubaysi, director of the Iraqi Patriotic Alliance.
18TH OF DECEMBER, 2003

Translation: Committee Of Solidarity With The Arab Cause (C.S.C.A.)

Yabar al Kubysi is the director of the Iraqi patriotic alliance, a coalition which fights for the unification of all the resistance movements in a National Front of the Resistance and Liberation. Al Kubaysi was invited by the CSCA last February to intervene in a press conference and in a meeting with the CSCA in Madrid. During his stay in Madrid he did just that with the guidance of IU. This interview was made possible as well as broadcast by the Anti-Imperialist camp on December 18, 2003.)

Question (Q): What comments would you like to make in respect to the capture and detention of Saddam Hussein?

Response (R) :Kubaysi. . . It's obvious that Saddam was under the effects of some drugs administered in blatant violation of basic human rights. According to our information, Saddam was captured two weeks prior.

The occupiers utilized this time to prepare him and to calculate the media circus that has been broadcasted. Without the help of Iranian intelligence, the capture would not have been possible. It is with great frequency that members of the Iranian secret service are seen in Kurd uniforms.

Q.: The participation of the Kurds in the capture is surprising given that Tikrit is an entirely Arab city.

R: The Kurds are completely controlled by the U.S. occupiers who use them as cheap infantry. If one were to go out only a dozen kilometers or so north of Baghdad, you would see that the checkpoints are all manned by Kurd soldiers while the U.S. soldiers show off their power/control. This is nothing new although it was established since the occupation.

Q.: Does Saddam Hussein's capture signify a large obstacle to the resistance?

R.: No, just the opposite. In a few weeks we will witness a major strengthening of the resistance movement. For those from Ba'thas it may signify temporary disorientation. Although Saddam did not exercise the slightest degree of real power or control, he still meant a lot to his own Party as a figurehead. Many members of his party who have up till now remained pretty passive will begin to unite themselves with the resistance. As we speak the last steps in the fragmentation of the Ba'thas Party occur, each part adhering to their own command, without contact to the chain of power which is inoperative since the collapse of the regime.

In relation to the Islamic currents, an important pretext to not cooperate with other forces of the resistance has been nullified. Most remember the reign of Saddam and were less than willing to collaborate with suspected followers of their old enemy. The Islamic leaders could continue to employ this argument but it seems definitively lost to them. Therefore the different branches of the resistance will become closer and will win more support because of his capture.

Q.: Is it possible that Saddam will collapse the same way that Abdulla Ocaln did? (leader of the Kurdish Workers Party in Turkey)?

R.: Generally, no. The photographs published by the U. S. portray him to be their private puppet devoid of free will as a result of his being drugged. But when he seems to be in control of his own faculties he has resisted cooperating with his tormentors.

Q.: What is your opinion regarding the “justice” the U.S. will impose on Saddam

R.: It's pure propaganda. Absolutely, there does not exist a judicial system in Iraq. The occupation is illegal, as are the judges appointed by Paul Bremer. The people do not respect any of it. How can a convicted criminal the likes of U.S. puppet Abmed Chalabi, who has robbed millions of dollars, possibly pretend to exercise his jurisdiction? It's ridiculous. In what way? They would not dare risk following through with a judicial farce without preparations and falsifications that would require at least a year or so. They fear that Saddam will reveal a ton of secrets that will contradict their lying propaganda.

Regarding the proclamation of the Resistance Front

Q.: How have the ideas to form a resistance front evolved?

R.: Through months of intense conversations, we will be able proclaim a Resistance Front in but a few short weeks. We are at the point of concluding the programmatic declaration. The basic principles will be:

- 1) The liberation of Iraq from the occupation, and the complete removal of all troops from the region inclusive, whatever may be mandated by the United Nations.
- 2) Whatever authority is established by the occupiers, that is to say, the so-called Governing Council of Bremer, is illegitimate, rejected and will be fought against.
- 3) Collaboration with the occupiers is strictly forbidden. Anyone in their service like the police, or anybody else, will be instructed to abandon their commitments.
- 4) The American-British aggressors must pay reparations for the invasion and occupation.
- 5) The Resistance Front will fight to construct a democratic government.

Q.: Will the resistance call a democratic constitutional and anti-imperialistic assembly?

R.: That is still under open discussion

Q.: How many currents come together to form the Front?

R.: In addition to our Iraqi Patriotic Alliance (API) there exist different national democratic forces, for example the Nasserists, led by Omar Nadmi and Subi Abdul Hamid; Iraq our Home by Abdel Latif al-Mailmahay; or the Union For Independent Iraq, by Khaled al-Maini. Also there is the Islamic Committee, led by Hatith al-Aldari.

The negotiations with a dissident group from the Iraqi Communist Party (PCI) from the 60's called PCI-Commando Central and led by Thrahim Allawi are at the point of producing positive results.

Q.: What of the group of Muqtada as-Sader? Has it surrendered?

R.: No. Surrender is too strong a word. The tremendous pressure from Iran makes them disoriented. Not only am I referring to the political pressure exerted by Tehran but also the direct presence of thousands and thousands of Irani agents principally in the east and south of the country.

We have had two meetings with Muqtada and he affirms that he will resist the occupation peacefully.

He maintains that he is opposed to the military resistance.

But nobody can believe that the U.S. will be convinced without military self-defense resistance. What's the point of legality in a situation of illegal occupation?

Our resistance army is eternally legal according to the International Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations, and also in accordance to the law of Islam and our national values.

We will never consent to disarming ourselves and limiting ourselves to inefficient pacifist action like Muqtada pretends.. We won't stop trying to convince them.

Q.: Are there any religious Shi'i groups within the Front?

R.: No, not at this time, although the group under the late sheik al-Madani has consented to unification. But their leaders, the two brothers of the sheik, have been captured by the American invaders, and their troops hesitate. Besides them, we have many individual religious authorities. They have considerable influence. Nevertheless it would be an error to label them as political religious groups of the Shi'a. Their slots are empty and we will continue our struggles without waiting on them.

Q.: Is the Ba'thas party part of the Front?

R.: There is no official party representation because they are busy hiding. But many of the members have united with the Front or support it.

Q.: What about Kurd forces?

R.: What is happening on Kurd territory is incredible. The collaboration with the U.S. not only affects the direction of the movement, but in addition large sections of the public at large. That is why we cannot find a specific Kurd force to unite to the Resistance Front although it is our intention. Our doors continue to be open to them.

Resistance and Solidarity

Q.: Many activists against the war, much like the many Arabs, put their hopes on France and Germany. What do they figure into your calculations?

R.: We have to base our battle for national liberation upon the shoulders of our *own* people and in the solidarity of the popular movements of the Arab world, and everywhere in the world.

The European governments can be against the unilateral aggression of the U.S. but at the same time equally disinterested in supporting our struggles of resistance.

Look at Chirac: he has officially received Yalal Talaban and al-Hakim, these traitors who cooperate with the invaders. We will never forget that. Schroder is no better. He has congratulated the president of the U.S. for the capture of another president. Why does he not protest against this criminal and illegal act? Because we are a third world country whose rights of self determination and government are denied us.

Q.: What message would you like to send to the Movement against the war?

R.: A few days ago in Cairo the conference against the occupation took place. (1)

Nevertheless the Iraqi rep (2) who attended did not call for support for the resistance. The same man had a meeting with the prime minister of Japan who is about to send troops to Iraq.

In his meeting with the Japanese prime minister he confirmed that those who assassinated the two Japanese diplomats are to be thought of as criminals. This is unacceptable. All occupation forces and all those who assist them are legitimate targets of war for the resistance. They must abandon our country. If they don't they will be subject to armed attacks.

In general, the Cairo meeting limited itself to calling to leave the past behind and work on a new period.

But, how can we forget the aggression, the invasion and occupation? All of our politics are based on those acts.

We ask that the movement against the war remain in solidarity permanently by our sides. Neutrality is not possible. We will continue to fight until our nation is free. It is our right, our obligation.

Those who truly fight on the side of justice and peace must to accept our right to self-determination and support the resistance. Otherwise they are helping the imperialist enemies in one way or another.

Q.: And the Arab population?

R: We know that the great majority of the Arab people support the resistance in Iraq as well as in Palestine because we are all sons and daughters of the same nation. The resistance will continue to grow and unite our people... We will fight together until the invaders are gone.

Q.: Would it be possible to send a delegation of international solidarity in support of the resistance?

R.: Sure why not? We invite all honest activists against the war to express their solidarity. For those who come to the occupied Iraq there is only one choice: between the occupiers or the resistance. There is no other choice.

Notes from the CSCA

1) This refers to the Second International Conference in Cairo "For The Resistance In Iraq And Palestine, Against Capitalist Globalization & American Hegemony," Dec. 13-14, 2003.

2) The Iraqi to which the interview refers is Abdel Amir ar-Rekabi, who participated as the only rep in the Cairo Conference to the surprise of many of the Arab attendees.. He lived in France for the last two years and only made his presence known one month prior to the conference in the European social forum, where alongside other Iraqi citizens in exile, he presented himself as the recently appointed creator of National Democracy in Iraq, an organization without any base in Iraq.

Iraqi Resistance Stronger Since Hussein's Capture

[Los Angeles Times, February 4, 2004, Pg. 1]

It's been almost two months since Saddam Hussein was captured, and the casualty rate among U.S. troops and Iraqis in insurgent attacks has accelerated.

A Port Workers Meeting In Umm Qasr "Bremer And Saddam, They're Both Thieves"

(This is an extremely rare account of an actual meeting of Iraqi workers to discuss the occupation, their conditions of work, and whether they can organize a union.)

Yeah it's long, but very fresh and nothing else like this being written.)

January 27th 2004 By Ewa Jasiewicz.

(Ewa Jasiewicz is an independent human rights activist and has been working with Iraqi trade unionists and workers in Occupied Basra and active in Baghdad the past 7 months.)

It's a grey blank day and the Highway of Death is sending us to Umm Qasr, Iraq' most significant trade and passenger port, currently under the operation of Stevedoring Services of America or, in tune with the corporate trend here of spinning new aliases and name-changes – SSA Marine.

My friend is recalling what he saw in 1990, after the US Central Command agreed to let their arch foes, the Republican Guard, fly over the strip of returning soldiers from the

Kuwait front and massacre them into the asphalt for over 130 kilometers. 130 kilometers, from within Kuwait up to the mouth of Basra, a highway of corpses - The Highway of Death. Clearest in his mind is the sight of officers shooting the injured, lying on the road. Bang after Bang as un-rescueable soldiers were finished off by their comrades, staggering sights of strewn bodies for as far as the eye could see. Nowhere to run, nowhere to hide, just a computer game killing juggernaut and the only hope Iraq had for an end to 35 years of Baath fascism, swept away in blood. Respective dictators shook hands, closed the deal, and went back to business-with-the-Baath-as-usual, each side sharpening the long-knives for an attack another day, another bloodbath another day.

Inside Umm Qasr it's the boss first - always. We met him before, a man on the side of the Iraqi Port Authority's Abdel Razzaq. Razzaq, a man once admired but now reviled by most of the 18,000 IPA employees in Basra, has withstood a number of attacks against him and his administration by wildcat striking workers.

I tried no less than five times to see him to obtain his permission to speak to workers. Why? The end of October saw Razzaq issue a notice to all IPA staff informing them that any unsolicited communication with journalists or NGOs would be punished by dismissal.

Not wanting to get anyone sacked, we returned time and time again to get his open-sesame word. But he was never there (despite our friends telling us he was). This time a friend of a friend of a friend has sorted us out. Workers were expecting us. The Manager will let us see the port, see whatever we like, ahlan wa sahan. The first thing he wants us to be convinced of is the top-class security at the port, the very first thing.

We nod politely, we've heard about the smuggling and the complicity of the US military, currently still running customs at the port, controlling everything coming in and out, signing along the dotted line for any contraband coming in. We've heard via an off the record well-placed source working within the CPA itself. It's an old old story, it's the same old story, post-war chaos, little market regulation, no government. Open borders mean free booty, controlling the borders means controlling the trade, and turning a blind eye or slipping a tip means a pocket full of cash, day in day out. The black market is soaring. And the pressure and intimidation against Umm Qasr workers is gnawing.

Formalities out of the way we finally meet a group of workers, 6 or so are sitting around the port's Clerk's Office, some are sat outside munching oranges, others are drinking tea, smoking. Some in overalls, some in home knit jumpers, they glance over, dwell a little and look away, they're not interested in another "journalist." There are no ships unloading today otherwise the docks would be full of people unloading explains our guide/guard, a handlebar mustached former crude oil tanker sailor and currently responsible for security at Umm Qasr.

6-7 passenger ships pass through Umm Qasr weekly. There port contains four container cranes: two in the new docks, two in the old. Part of the old dock is a US military base. Following The Fall everything including office chairs and desks was stripped from the port by looters.

We walk in and settle ourselves into the worn-out, Spartan clerk's office. Workers gather round. We start the talk on how their lives are, what's going on, what do they need.

Wages, as usual, are the first topic of discussion:

“We get 100,000, all of us, everybody apart from maybe 5 people out of 50 who get 200,000 or 300,000” tells us one of the clerks, a stout, chirpy, mustached man in his mid thirties who everybody listens to. “100,000 – I’ll tell you now that this doesn’t last me and my family or any family, more than 10 days. My rent alone is 40,000 per month and then it’s 9000 transportation to and from work every month. With clothes and medicines and school - it should be 300,000 at least.”

I ask him how he survives. He smiles, looks away, and explains, frankly, “I find another job, I get tips from lorry drivers, extra payments from trade members/buyers, and we share, we here share our wages too.” **A round of nods and “Aiywahs” (Yeses) animates the room when he says, “There’s no difference between Bremer and Saddam - they’re both thieves, two faces of the same coin.”**

Another starts to talk about transportation. “We used to have six buses before the war, three were destroyed by looters, two are for the personal use of the administration and that just leaves one, and it’s not enough. Two days ago one of our friends was killed by looters on his way home from work. We really need buses.”

Another talks about the axing of all profit sharing, “Before the war we got a cut of all the profits here. We’re supposed to get 2% and the annual profit for the docks here in Basra is \$50m John Walsh (SSA’s Operations Manager at the port) himself told us this and that it was held in a bank in Kuwait. That share must be distributed amongst all the dock workers. With 52 weeks per year, two ships per week, transporting 250 containers per ship, and the \$150 tax per container, you can imagine how much we’re not getting.” Another cuts in, **“A foreigner comes here and earns \$7000 per month, and we are Iraqi, we make everything happen here and we get next to nothing. I can’t afford to save; I can’t afford to buy anything new, not even chocolate for my children.** After the fall of the regime we were expecting results, changes, but nothings different.” Our security guide cuts in too, “What is this 100,000 Dinar gap between wages?? 120,000 yes, 150,000 ok, but a jump straight up to 200,000?? What, someone has to work 15 years before they can get 200,000, and we’re the country of oil, what is this?”

The men in this small, decrepit clerk’s office are gnarled with frustration, “They came here to loot our country, Saddam was looting us, and so is the occupation. They never came here for the weapons of mass destruction or for Saddam - now they say he’s not even a war criminal! He’s a prisoner of war - will they release him next!!?”

“Here take a look at this,” says one, he heaves in a dusty cardboard box and plonks it down in front of me. “Go on, open it.” I open up the cardboard flaps. It’s filled with something soft sealed in plastic. I smell it. It smells like fermented vinegar, pangs my nose, “What is it?” “It’s bread mix” he says. “The British gave it to us. Look, look at the date!. It’s out by four months. We’ve been starving, we’ve been eating this. The British have been giving us old off food and we’ve been eating it.” “Didn’t anything bad happen to you, you didn’t get sick?” I ask. “Ask him,” they say, pointing to a quiet dark skinned guy standing by the wall, who looks a bit startled, mumbles what? Then responds, “No, no it was fine, it was ok.” The shame is burning though.

The clerk, irate, throws out an example of what's to come if things don't get better: **"You know the 1920 revolution? When Nasiriyah people went against the British army with swords and sticks - swords and sticks against cannons, and won?! We promise to give life again to the 1920 revolution!"** The room is gathering energy, the guys are moving around more, tuning in more. He goes on, **"One of the most insulting things is that I am a son of this country and when I leave my workplace, I find a foreigner standing there pointing a gun at me."**

Another younger worker picks up the talk, "The last demo we had here was something for the media, the next actions we take will be serious. Falluja? Falluja is simple, basic stuff." I've heard from people here many a time, **"In the north they are fighting for their own interests, for the privileges they lost, here when we fight we will fight for our honour and we will lead."** And from the talks I've heard with workers and trade union leaders, their honour and rage compounded by their struggle under the regime will set them in good stead for the fight ahead.

People are all prepared, there's no surrender to the occupation in the south despite the "our boys winning hearts and minds in the stable south" mantra of theatrical press officers and eager BBC Government line-tow'ers. The stable south, the grateful south.

People are watching, waiting, some biding their time, some making plans, re-grouping, working towards making sure the Baath, their interests and their power sources are broken, and the Baath themselves too, are reconfiguring their identities and positions into new businesses, organizations, representations. Everybody's getting on with reconstructing their own lives and working towards as well as openly fighting for their own interests.

Nobody I have met in 3 months of being here is in agreement or acceptance of the CPA, its institutions, its representatives, its Iraqi collaborators, or its economy restructuring role.

Back to Umm Qasr, an older, worn looking man explains at pains, "We are followers of Sistani. If he says 'Jihad' you will see what happens. This is why the British are following Sistani - he has the first and the last word."

On the matter of their working conditions, "We expect everything to go from Bad to Worse," says one. "At first the British and the CPA took down our names for unloading the first ships and told us we'd get special payments. We got nothing. There's no electricity (blackouts are constant, seeping Basra daily, sometimes four times a day), no pure drinking water. The British managed to bring in cable but they only lit the streets, not the houses."

A clerk cuts in as I scribble frenetically, "And we have no hope in what you're writing by the way, because we've had five visits from journalists with no results." "Two things have improved in our lives since the Occupation began," begins our guide, "Satellites and bananas - both became cheap," "And the dish is only there to distract us from what's really going on, distract us from the reality of our misery" comments a younger worker. He looks knackered out beyond belief. Looks like he hasn't smiled since Eid. Not that there would have been anything to smile about because Umm Qasr workers got

Zero Eid bonuses from the IPA - compared to the recommended public sector worker amount of 100,000 ID.

"You have to form a union" I say to them, "This will really really help you, help you get organized, get better wages.."-- they cut me off. **"We've never even thought of setting up a union Four months ago we had a riot over our wages - we hadn't had them for two months - we rioted against the administration. Abdel Razzaq was beaten and as a result they had to get in police and security. " And just two weeks ago, they say, 50 workers attacked Abdel Razzaq in front of the Minister of Transport.** Grimaces and laughs light the room all-round, a mixture of pride and slightly delirious frustration as nothings really changed since.

Umm Qasr workers have managed to change two general directors of the Iraqi Crude Oil Tanker Company. Saying of one, the Clerk begins "We talked to him politely, we said, 'sir, you are not serving our purposes directly,' and he left. But Abdel Razzaq is STICKING to his position!! He has a special authorization from the ministry, a special budget to spread around his closest people, and he managed to assign the Badr troops (Armed militias of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution) as a result of this."

The workers tell me that his nephew, who used to work as bodyguard for the head of the Basra Baath Party branch, is now his own personal bodyguard. Looks like he needs one, the rage against him runs deep. "He's a big liar, he promised a lot, special payments to help us but we got nothing." The clerk points to the barred window next to him with sunlight glaring through it, and then to a bag of material on the floor. "He's a millionaire and we bought the curtains for this office with our own money!!."

Two weeks ago six gate guards managed to shut down the Port of Umm Qasr for six hours. The lockout was over low wages and long hours. Turns out our friend was one of the organizers. "We had worked constantly for eight months, with no holiday, 14-hour days, we need a break, we need a holiday. We locked out Abdel Razzaq, the British, everyone. The British were just standing there, watching. In the end the strike ended with a lie - we were told we'd be paid more, something would definitely be worked out. But nothings changed."

The clerk quips up, exasperated, exhausted, "The police on the gate get 400,000, I have a certificate, I am educated, and I get 100,000 ID per month. And the British boss here never even comes to shake our hands. He comes here, driving through the gate, and he looks at me as if IM working for HIM, and in fact, I AM!!"

Resentment against the Occupation profiteers for their very presence catches fire when those profiteers disrespect Iraqi workers. Under duress, cajoling, and repeated requests, one of the workers opens up about his experience with a Mr. Mike, a company rep from British security firm Olive, who allegedly got drunk and damaged an employee's car. "I was totally insulted by him. He told me 'fuck you', and he called me names. In Iraq the appropriate response for him is a punch in the face, but, because he is a foreigner, I couldn't do anything." He's not comfortable with the story, can't recount it with ease, it serves as yet another testament to the daily humiliation and cheapening of Iraqi life by the Occupation administration and its business allies, taking up the gauntlet from where the fascist Baath left off.

“So, you should really form a union”, I say, trying to reintroduce the subject, they all look at a loss, some dismiss the idea flat, brush it aside with a wave of their hands. I run to the car and gather up the stacks of Arabic ILO conventions I'd been saving for them.

The International Labour Organisation, set up in 1919 and incorporated into the UN, is responsible for the creation, facilitation and advocacy of the Geneva Conventions of workers' rights - the ILO Conventions). I lug up Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise (Iraq is not a signatory to this), Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention 98, Workers Representatives Convention 135, Dockworkers Convention 137, Occupational Safety and Health - Dockworkers Convention 152, Workmen's Compensation (Occupational Diseases) Convention 42, plus a list of all 185 ILO conventions with those signed by neighbouring Arab states and of which 66 of which were ratified by Iraq. Also in the bundles is the chapter, detailing the boss and labour history of Stevedoring Services of America. in Arabic, from US Labour Against The War's 'The Corporate Invasion of Iraq'.

I give them out; they're met with a mixture of skepticism and curiosity and a ripple of 'What's this? What's this for?' The room falls quiet, people are reading, and then our clerk friend starts to well up with anger “Why should we kid ourselves?” he says slapping convention 35 on the table, “ What's the purpose of forming a union? How can it serve us?,”

“It'll be just like the old one,” joins another, “And how can we organize when there is no 'labour'? Why? We lived in fear for 35 years, you think we can accept this? With all respect, this is useless, we can't do anything. We have tried, to start a union - but, it, it can't happen.” “Is it your management, will they sack you? Are you afraid? Are you afraid from violence from them”, I ask tentatively, the responses are a 'Yes', 'Yes', 'Yes', with a closed-eyed nod, for each “We are afraid of the management, we are afraid of the response”. “What do you mean kid ourselves?” challenges another, “If we want to strike and shut down this port tomorrow we could do it, we're ready, we can do it,”

Clerk volleys back – “No we can't! We can't even agree on one word; 25 of us met, tried to organize a strike and what happened? Yes or No - we couldn't even agree on one word, to do it or not. What is that??”

The whole room is in uproar, a-blast with strained voices, embattled positions, declarations, refutations, argument, anger, flux and frustration. They start to read the conventions, Number 135 on the protection of worker representatives from harassment and intimidation is intriguing them. “Well, you work hard”, says one, “And this is something that deserves to be read”. A spontaneous negotiation ignites over whether they should go to the Federation or to form one themselves? Where would the office of their union be?

My friend tells us we better get going, if the management come and see all this the guys might get sacked. What we're doing is dangerous. Some of our new friends are reading, others considering the possibilities.

I say, in leaving, that they should visit the Federation of Iraq Trade Unions in Basra, that they will help them form a union. We give them names and the address. I tell them that they have mass international support and solidarity, especially from the International

Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), the workers from which have the same employer as y'all - SSA. I tell them that ILWU workers refused to ship arms for the war last year, and that they shut down their docks for a day in solidarity with jailed Black Panther supporting radical journalist Mumia Abu Jamal. "They're a very strong union, very, Abtaal!", (Heroes) I say putting my hand into a big fist., "They are with you, they will support you". They look surprised and interested and "really??"

In truth is too short a meeting, the documents need more explanation, and back up, there should be Bremer's Orders number 30 on Employment Conditions of State Employees, Order 39 on Foreign Investment, the goal of the war and occupation in writing, transforming the whole of Iraq into one massive free trade zone, and the Public Notice on Organisation in the Workplace (being implemented like an order) which revives Baath dictatorship anti-worker law - all in Arabic. But we can't stay, is getting too hot and management suspicion will be gathering. Our clerk friend asks us again where the Federation of Trade Unions is, he's going to go, they're going to go. I tell them they can succeed, they just have to get organized, that they have the power, they're survivors, people will help them, they're not alone, all I can do to encourage them.

With the victory of Basra's Southern Oil Company workers winning higher wages from the Occupation Administration/CPA, this month, and the Electricity sector workers still in negotiations with the Ministry of Energy and the GC on raising theirs, bolstered and empowered, they say, by SOC's win, the road is open for workers struggling not just Occupied Basra but Iraq as a whole to reclaim their revolutionary history and finally fight the fight for justice they've been murdered into refusing, intimidated into denying and divided into desisting.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

True Then, True Now

Vietnam GI: May 1968

"If peace is to come, it will be ordinary men and women who bring it about. If we cast ourselves (and our votes) at the feet of the first politician who sounds good, we'll pay for it in spades. Our job is to tell the truth about what is going on, to organize others and to work with them to keep the heat on, to use every tactic we can think of to force those who run things in this country to come across."

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.

Internationale: The Soldiers' Verse

The *Internationale* has been the anthem of rebels since the human mind runneth not to the contrary, but a verse dedicated to soldiers has been omitted as sung today.

So, here it is, thanks again to Max Watts in Australia.

Created: June 1871, Paris (Source Les Bouefs Voient Rouge, Journal Du Comite Des Soldats De Landau, No. 6, Avril 1975, [page 3])

*No more deluded by reaction
On Tyrants only we'll make war
Soldiers too can take strike action
We'll break our ranks and fight no more*

*The rich oppressors keep on trying
To sacrifice us for their pride
They soon will feel the bullets flying
We'll shoot the generals on our side*

*It's the final conflict
Let each stand in their place
The international working class
Shall free the human race*

OCCUPATION REPORT

Abuse Of Iraqi Prisoners Common, Marine Says

[San Diego Union-Tribune, February 3, 2004]

A former Marine guard, Lance Cpl. William S. Roy, testified before a preliminary hearing that guards often abused Iraqi prisoners at the Camp White Horse detention center. The preliminary hearing into the death of Nagem Sadoon Hatab, an Iraqi POW, is to determine if charges will be brought against two Marines: Maj. Clarke Paulus and Lance Cpl. Christian Hernandez.

<p>OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME <u>NOW!</u></p>

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