

GI SPECIAL 2#23

THIS IS HOW BUSH BRINGS THE TROOPS HOME.



PAYBACK IS OVERDUE

U.S. National Guard Spec. Robert Allen Wise is lowered at his gravesite, Arlington National Cemetery Nov. 24. (The Associated Press, Mark Wilson / Getty Images)

“Most Of Us Don’t Know What Day It Is Anymore”

Newsweek Feb. 9, 2004

In a recent letter home, a reservist with the 124th Infantry Regiment of the Florida National Guard told friends and family that violent days had become strangely ordinary. In the past week he and his buddies had faced RPG and mortar attacks, “even a car bomb in the area.” But that was unexceptional.

“It has been just another set of days going by. Most of us don’t know what day it is anymore, the concept of a ‘workweek’ and a ‘weekend’ are as foreign to us as the Moon.”

The soldier then proudly told how his unit had uncovered “a large weapons cache” in the town of Ar Ramadi, adding parenthetically “(still no WMD, sorry).”

Irony turned to cynicism: “On the subject of WMD, we once did a raid on a place where we heard they may have been storing ‘mustard gas,’ [and] *being the patriots that we are and always out to prove our Commander in Chief’s*

allegations, we geared up in our chemical suits and stormed the place. It turnout out to be a restaurant....but they did have mustard, and some guy there had gas.”

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

Bomb Wounds Two U.S. Soldiers in Baghdad

By CHRIS BRUMMITT, Associated Press Writer 2.6.06

A roadside bomb exploded in Baghdad, wounding two U.S. soldiers. The explosion that wounded the soldiers took place about 3 p.m., the U.S. command said, without providing further details.

Resistance Attack In Fallujah

By VIJAY JOSHI, The Associated Press February 7, 2004

BAGHDAD, Iraq - Insurgents fired a rocket propelled grenade Saturday at a bus carrying Iraqi soldiers west of Baghdad, wounding five of them and a civilian bystander, officials said.

The attack against the Iraqi army bus took place near the mayor's office in Fallujah, a hotbed of the insurgency in the Sunni Triangle west of the capital, said 1st Lt. Raad Mussab of Iraq's army. The attackers escaped.

In Baqouba, assailants tossed a bomb inside an empty Iraqi police car parked in front of a restaurant where the officers were having lunch, witness Ali Abed said. The bomb devastated the vehicle but caused no casualties.

TROOP NEWS

Pentagon Cheats Combat Soldiers Out Of Home-Leave Travel Money

Army Times Editorial, 2.2.04

Defense Department leaders tolerated no dissension when they pushed for authorization to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to rush troops into combat in Iraq.

Apparently, however, the resolve to bring them home for two weeks' rest and relaxation halfway through a year in the war is not quite so urgent.

The Pentagon's midtour R&R home leave program, which began Sept 30, is a terrific innovation. To date, more than 43,000 troops have taken advantage and gotten a midyear break from the dangers and doldrums of front line duty.

But it took an act of Congress to push the Pentagon to pay the freight to get troops all the way home, rather than only as far as Baltimore, Atlanta and Dallas-Fort Worth. And now that Congress has done so, the Pentagon is ponying up the extra- dough only for those who got the leave after Dec. 19.

That means more than 30,000 of the troops who endured the hardest combat and peacekeeping duty, including a summer of 150-degree heat and inadequate living conditions, not to mention the ever-present-risk of death and injury, **are stuck with the tabs for getting themselves all the way home and then back to the hub airports.**

For reasons that remain mysterious, reimbursement for travel between hub and home before Dec. 19 has not been specifically authorized.

Whoever is responsible, Pentagon leaders and lawmakers need to get together, figure it out and quickly rectify the situation. Clearly, no one intended to stiff some troops while rewarding others. But that's what's happening here, and it ought to be fixed. Now.

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/>

Protest Works:

Canadian Commander Loses Dispute With Canadian Troops

Army Times, Feb. 2, 2004

The Ottawa Citizen reports a controversy is brewing over whether foul air in Afghanistan is causing health problems for Canadian troops. **After soldiers complained that the**

air is filled with fecal dust, military officials dispatched a team to look into the situation

But Canada's top military commander on the ground in Kabul tried to block the move. The newspaper quoted the commander as saying that the complaints and subsequent rush to investigate amounted to nothing more than "touchy-feely crap."

Samples taken at Camp Julien in Afghanistan show that air quality is poor, in part because of open sewers and the lack of sanitation in Kabul. But just because something smells bad doesn't mean it's a health hazard. **For the moment, top Canadian military officials want troops to feel their complaints are being taken seriously which is why doctors continue to test air quality and brief troops on the results.**

War Study Details "Morass" Of Supply Shortages

(THANKS TO B WHO E-MAILED THIS IN: B WRITES: If you thought it was bad you were wrong. It was worse!)

By ERIC SCHMITT. February 3, 2004, New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 2 — **The first official Army history of the Iraq war reveals that American forces were plagued by a "morass" of supply shortages, radios that could not reach far-flung troops, disappointing psychological operations and virtually no reliable intelligence on how Saddam Hussein would defend Baghdad.**

Logistics problems, which senior Army officials played down at the time, were much worse than have previously been reported.

Tank engines sat on warehouse shelves in Kuwait with no truck drivers to take them north. Broken-down trucks were scavenged for usable parts. Artillery units cannibalized parts from captured Iraqi guns to keep their howitzers operating. Army medics foraged medical supplies from combat hospitals.

In most cases, soldiers improvised solutions to keep the offensive rolling. But the study found that the Third Infantry Division, **the Army's lead combat force, was within two weeks of being halted by a lack of spare parts**, and Army logisticians had no effective distribution system.

"The morass of problems that confounded delivering parts and supplies — running the gamut of paper clips to tank engines — stems from the lack of a means to assign responsibility clearly," the study said.

It also found that the Pentagon's decision to send mostly combat units in the weeks before the invasion had the "unintended consequence" of holding back support troops until much later, contributing greatly to the logistics problems.

The findings are contained in a 504-page internal Army history of the war written by the Army's Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

The study notes that the strategy of starting the war before all support troops were in place, in order to achieve an element of surprise, taxed the postwar resources of local commanders, who in many cases were shifting back and forth between combat operations and the task of restoring civil services.

"Local commanders were torn between their fights and providing resources — soldiers, time and logistics — to meet the civilian needs," the report concluded. "Partially due to the scarce resources as a result of the running start, there simply was not enough to do both missions."

Other problems cropped up. **While divisional commanders could communicate with one another, officers at lower levels often could not. Units separated by long distances in the fast-moving offensive found their radios suddenly out of range, leaving troops to improvise solutions using mobile phones or secure e-mail messaging.**

Commanders were relying on an extensive psychological operations campaign of leaflets and broadcasts to coax Iraqi soldiers into surrendering, as they did in large numbers in the 1991 gulf war, and to refrain from sabotaging Iraq's oil fields.

The study found that those messages either had failed to reach many of the intended Iraqi units or had baffled the Iraqi soldiers who got them.

Leaflets were prepared for the first 48 hours of combat, but the system to approve new written messages was so cumbersome that psychological operations teams on the ground were forced to rely solely on loudspeakers. "It is clear that on the whole, psyop produced much less than expected and perhaps less than claimed," the report found.

The study also found that future adversaries could draw several lessons from the war: that American forces' reliance on high-tech surveillance satellites and aircraft could be countered by decoys and the imaginative disguise of weaponry; that more powerful warheads for rocket-propelled grenades, already effective against helicopters and light vehicles like Humvees, could offset American armor; that American forces could be drawn into a protracted, costly urban war, more effectively than they were by the Iraqis; and that American forces are vulnerable to classic insurgency tactics, like car bombs. (Wow! What an amazing deduction!)

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/>

Lawsuit Stops Forced Anthrax Shots; Outcome Could Kill Whole Program

Army Times, Feb. 2, 2004

Six unidentified Defense Department employees suing the government won at least a temporary victory when a federal judge ruled the military cannot force them to take the anthrax vaccine while the case is ongoing, although the military can inoculate all other service members.

The six allege the department cannot legally use the anthrax vaccine to protect against inhalation anthrax without service members' informed consent, or unless President Bush formally waives their right to informed consent.

Attorneys for the six individuals and for the government are due in court March 15 to argue the issue of whether the court has authority to rule the lawsuit a class action, which would make it applicable to all service members and essentially shut down the anthrax vaccine program.

Then on May 18, arguments will be heard on whether the Food and Drug Administration followed proper procedures in issuing a final ruling that anthrax vaccine is approved to protect against all forms of the disease.

Soldiers In Tikrit: “Was That A Fuck You Or A Thank You?” “We’re The Live Bait”

"Did I honestly think doing this and coming over here was going to stop terrorism? No. That's the dumbest thing I ever heard," Lt. Michael Isbell said. "There are no weapons of mass destruction that we've seen. These people didn't even have an air force. ... I didn't even see an army."

By Matthew B. Stannard, San Francisco Chronicle, February 1st, 2004

Tikrit, Iraq -- An Iraqi man shouted out after the squad of American soldiers, two garbled English words as they echoed through a narrow concrete alleyway.

Pfc. Matthew Bledsoe paused and swiveled his head to catch the words, the burlap strips dangling from his helmet swaying with the motion.

"Was that a 'f -- you?' " he asked. "Or a 'thank you?' "

It was a familiar moment in Iraq, a place where, as an American soldier, you often can't tell the difference between people who want to kiss you and people who want to kill you.

The soldiers who patrol Tikrit -- the 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry of the U.S. Army's 4th Infantry Division, known familiarly as the 1-22 -- have been in Iraq for more than nine months and they are tired. Bone tired.

But there are smiles on their faces these days as they catch glimpses of new troops, their shoulders bearing the big red 1 of the 1st Infantry Division, whose soldiers are getting ready to take over in Tikrit.

"June changed all of that," said Lt. Col. Steve Russell, commanding officer of the 1-22, a 40-year-old officer from Del City, Okla. "That's really when the guerrilla war started for us."

Rumored departure dates in August -- and on Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas -- came and went. Each time, the soldiers of 1-22 thought they were going home,

Tempers flared. Fistfights erupted in the barracks.

About 70 percent of the time is now down time, the soldiers say. But the remaining 30 percent can kill you.

One recent night, the movie -- "A Fish Called Wanda" -- was just getting rolling. Wanda had double-crossed her partner in crime, and was preparing to seduce Archie into telling her which safe-deposit box matched the key she had found in Ken's fish tank. **Then the first mortar hit.**

"Goddammit!" snapped Sgt. Mark Dornbusch, 24, of Austin, Texas, as the first thunderous explosion echoed outside. "Let's go!"

The men of Gator Company jumped off the ornate couches and chairs and sprinted outside, strapping on body armor and helmets as a second round burst just outside their walled compound.

For the next hour , they stopped and searched Iraqi cars throughout the city of Al-Awja, using pidgin Arabic to try to find witnesses to the attack. No one would admit even hearing the thunderous explosion.

Eventually, Gator returned to its compound to track the mortars using the crater patterns outside their walls -- **and to wait for the next attack.**

It is a threat that never ends and can rarely be anticipated.

"A couple of months ago, my dad asked me, 'Are you scared when you go outside the gate?' " Evans said. "I said, 'No, I'm not scared. I'm terrified.' "

Leaving the relative security of the palaces for any reason requires gearing up with an armored vest, Kevlar helmet and loaded weapon -- about 50 pounds of equipment, just to walk the 100 yards to the shower.

"I always thought cooks and females were behind the lines," said Spc. Felissa Maddox, 22, a cook who survived a roadside bomb attack on her convoy in December. "The infantry guys do more patrols than we do ... (but we're) the same." **On the outer wall of the building where she lives, an unexploded rocket-propelled grenade can still be seen protruding from the marble.**

"Every time you walk out of the gate, you take a risk," said Spc. John Ott, who fuels military vehicles. "We wear 'American soldier' on our chest, just like they do."

The constant tension has led some soldiers close to a breakdown, Capt. Tran said. The rest maintain a state of hyper-vigilance for anybody who looks like one of their attackers.

That means almost anybody in Tikrit.

Sgt. John Garza tucked a fresh plug of Copenhagen behind his lip and spat out the back of his Bradley, which was positioned to observe the convoys beginning to haul the battalion's gear from Tikrit to Kuwait in preparation for their long-awaited withdrawal.

"Where (insurgents) have the advantage is we're looking for the bad guys in a crowd of civilians," said Garza, 23. "They look for the guys with the burlap on their heads."

Some say the burlap strips, intended as camouflage, make their helmets more intimidating; some say they look like Sideshow Bob from "The Simpsons" television show. In any case, the look, which they often use on patrol, sets the 1-22 apart, which can be a good thing or a bad thing.

On one hand, they feel a certain respect from the Tikritis, who see the helmets and know they are the soldiers most directly involved in securing the streets. **On the other hand, they fear it makes them targets. Russell himself has been attacked more than a dozen times. One roadside bomb exploded prematurely, killing two bombers about half a block from his convoy. His soldiers are certain the attackers knew exactly who they were targeting.**

Still, members of the 1-22 continue their patrols, hoping their visibility will either intimidate attackers into staying home -- or draw them into the open by offering a target.

"It's kind of like hunting with live bait," said Staff Sgt. Scott Feucht. "We're the live bait."

Feucht spoke in the middle of a patrol through Tikrit's streets, which were filled with Iraqis going about their daily business.

"This guy over here might be Mr. Nice Guy who wants to invite you in the house for some tea, while the guy across the street might want to shoot you in the back with a friggin' RPG," Lt. Jason Lojka said.

Sometimes, the same person plays both roles.

"You might go by a house and the guy is smiling and waving, 'Hey, mister, mister, I love Americans,' " he said. "And then you go around the house ... and find him flipping off the last guy in the column."

The soldiers' experiences have led them to have decidedly mixed emotions about the people they came to liberate.

"They'll shoot you in the back or use IED's," said Spc. Rodrigo Vargas, 23, of Houston. "They're not going to fight you head on." (No shit, just like Americans did when fighting the British in 1776. That's what you do when invaded and occupied by an Imperial Army under the command of greedy, murderous assholes.)

They bristle at the failure of some Iraqis to cooperate, their insistence that they know nothing of any insurgents, even in areas from which attacks have emanated. (Iraqis call that "patriotism.")

Some soldiers privately admit that in the worst times, when soldiers die at Iraqi hands, they feel like taking a .50-caliber machine gun into downtown Tikrit and mowing down every Iraqi they see. In those times, sergeants and officers try hard to temper their soldiers' anger without dulling their edge.

"They had an awful regime under Saddam," Spc. Stewart Tignor said. "They don't understand democracy, they don't understand us. So really they're just trading one regime for another." (The Iraqis "understand" perfectly. Dictator Hussein gone, Dictator Bremer now.)

They see the children as barometers: If children wave at a soldier while their parents are watching, they figure the parents probably like the Americans, too, even if they don't show it. **If a child scowls or throws a rock, it suggests the parents are less fond of the Americans -- and their house might be due for a quick search. (Brilliant. A kid scowls and you get your door kicked in and your house seached. It does help recruit for the resistance.)**

"Did I honestly think doing this and coming over here was going to stop terrorism? No. That's the dumbest thing I ever heard," Lt. Michael Isbell said. "There are no weapons of mass destruction that we've seen. These people didn't even have an air force. ... I didn't even see an army."

"We can spend millions of dollars in fixing up schools, fixing up roads, they're still going to hate us," Sgt. Curtis Keltner said.

Lifers say they expect to rotate back to Iraq some day; some newer recruits say they will not re-enlist to avoid that fate.

Rather than claiming to have saved the world from terror or chemical weapons, the soldiers say they see in the streets of Tikrit a new life, new businesses, new possibilities, **even if the people walking those streets still complain bitterly that their lives were better under Hussein.**

As the sun set over the Tigris River behind the House of Saladin, Sgt. Ricky Hines threw another letter from home onto the garbage fire. He has five chests filled with correspondence, he said. They sustained him during the war; now he is done hauling them around. "It's time to go home." The soldiers will go home changed. Many had never fired a shot in combat before they came to Iraq. Now, they have killed and seen their friends killed.

Some have already seen the changes in themselves when they went home on leave. Some woke up dreaming of combat or pulled their car over to check a box by the side of the road for explosives. Others felt naked as they walked unarmed through crowds of strangers in the airport or the mall.

Spc. Percell Philips will take home a scar by his right eye and the bullet that lodged in his helmet after grazing his skull. He considers himself the luckiest man in the 4th Infantry Division.

He shot his attacker dead. Later, he saw the man's corpse in a hospital and considered taking a photo but decided he didn't want to take that memory home with him.

"I see my little nephews when I go home. They ask me how many people I killed," he said. "I tell them, 'None.' "

Guard Lives Destroyed By “Abominable” Pay System

By Jane McHugh, Army Times staff writer, February 09, 2004

Individual Guard soldiers, as well as entire units, have suffered from the Byzantine pay system. GAO recently studied the pay system for mobilized soldiers from six Guard units from different states and found problems in every case, including:

- **Injured Special Forces soldiers from the Virginia National Guard denied active-duty pay and medical benefits because their demobilization orders from Afghanistan weren't processed.**

- **A West Virginia National Guard Special Forces sergeant coming under enemy fire during a four-day trip to deliver pay records and correct errors in Afghanistan.**

Maj. Kenneth Chavez, a member of a Colorado National Guard Special Forces unit that experienced heavy combat in Afghanistan, told the committee about a noncommissioned officer who was embroiled in pay problems right up until he was killed in action.

“Are they really fixing pay issues [or] are they putting them off until we return?” Sgt. 1st Class Dan Romero wrote less than a month before his death. “If they are waiting, then what happens to those who, God forbid, don’t make it back?”

Chavez also told of another sergeant in his unit whose self- defense/fitness business “disintegrated,” and who lost his house and went bankrupt because of ongoing snafus with the unit’s pay.

That sergeant, Chavez said, had no choice but to re-up and is on active duty because he needs the money.

Twenty-five soldiers have left his unit because of pay problems and 15 more are asking to be transferred to the inactive Guard so they can accept contract work overseas “in order to heal their financial wounds,” Chavez said.

“It will take nearly two years and \$250,000 to train each replacement,” he said.

Schrock questioned who would want to re-enlist under such conditions.

“This stuff never happened to me or anybody I knew. We’re in a different situation today. We have to make sure the system is fixed or we’re going to lose them,” he said.

Other reserve components aren’t having “anywhere near” the level of problems the Army National Guard is, Shine said, citing a separate GAO report:

Stop Loss To Stay “Three Or Four Years!”

“Scant Relief” For Overworked Reserves

February 09, 2004,

By Rick Maze, Army Times staff writer

Increasing the Regular Army’s end strength will give scant relief to the overworked reserves, one expert said. Stop-loss already has pushed Regular Army end strength over the top by about 30,000, yet the reserves still are stressed out, said Charles Pena, director of defense policy studies at the Cato Institute.

“The problem is, how long can the Army keep stop-loss orders in effect? As soon as they rescind stop-loss, a fair number of [reservists] unhappy with the situation will leave at the earliest possibility. People don’t go into the reserves to be on active duty, and you can’t force people who are on reserve duty to become active duty,” Pena said.

Stop-loss. This program, with separate elements for active and mobilized Reserve soldiers, ***is expected to remain in effect until the service’s unit stabilization system and increased manning initiatives are fully realized in three to four years.***

These rules essentially bar voluntary separations, retirements and reassignments for active-component soldiers deployed to the Middle East, and for 90 days after re-deployment to home station.



Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld gestures before the start of the 40th Conference on Security Policy in Munich February 7 to illustrate his stop-loss orders. He told reporters, “We got ‘em by the balls now.” (Kai Pfaffenbach/Reuters)

3,000 Arkansas Soldiers Off To Bush’s Imperial Slaughterhouse

Fort Polk, La. Army Times 2.9.04

About 3,000 soldiers from Arkansas are wrapping up training at Fort Hood, Texas, and are bound for the Joint Readiness Training Center in Louisiana for exercises that will precede their departure for Iraq.

The 39th Infantry Brigade will train in urban fighting for three more weeks at Fort Polk after three months of work at Fort Hood.

The members of the 39th Enhanced Separate Brigade are to spend a year in and around Baghdad. The group totals 4,200, with soldiers from other states assigned to the brigade.

The unit is to leave in early March. The brigade is attached to the 1st Cavalry Division; its soldiers will patrol northern Baghdad and areas north of the city.

108,979 Fight Closing Canandaigua V.A. Hospital! Deluge Of Letters And Petitions

By Jack Jones Staff Writer (January 26, 2004) — CANANDAIGUA

They're still sorting through an avalanche of letters, e-mails and faxes protesting the closure of the historic, 70-year-old Canandaigua V.A. Canandaigua — with a combined town and city census of about 19,000 — generated 108,979 letters of protest written by veterans and their supporters statewide and from around the country.

"I've still got letters and signed petitions coming in, and I'm still forwarding them to the CARES Commission," said Dan Verstrete, president of Service Employees International Union Local 200 at the Canandaigua V.A. and one of several people who coordinated the massive letter-writing campaign. "The public response to this issue has been beyond our wildest dreams. The number of letters that have come in from all over the state and from Pennsylvania, as well as some other states, has just been amazing."

A late-December announcement by CARES Commissioner Charles Battaglia said that the 172-acre Canandaigua V.A. campus would likely be removed from the closure list.

The massive letter-writing campaign, in addition to petitions signed by more than 100,000 Rochester-area residents, made clear to members of the CARES Commission a regional veteran-community symbiosis that apparently wasn't considered by senior V.A. administrators in Albany and Washington who added Canandaigua to the closure list.

Local community leaders, V.A. employees and veterans say that as soon as the closure plan was announced, they began meeting with the region's political representatives to draw up a plan to save the hospital. They also began a massive mail, fax, e-mail and door-to-door distribution of form letters and petitions. In downtown Canandaigua, many V.A. workers handed out "V.A. dollars," specially printed pieces of paper they gave merchants along with cash purchases to illustrate how much the hospital contributes to the local economy.

Area merchants readily agreed to place copies of form letters and petitions in their shops, said Colleen Combs, president of the American Federation of Government Employees Local 3306, which represents more than 200 doctors, nurses and other professional members of the local V.A. staff. "We printed up stacks of letters and

petitions and handed them out in bunches to our employees, who passed them on to family members, neighbors and relatives around the country,” Combs said.

“It brings tears to my eyes when I realize how this community has supported us,” said Combs. **“When we started out, I figured if maybe people sent the commission a couple or 300 letters that would be a feat — let alone over 100,000.**

“Never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined support that we got from this community and surrounding communities and people all over the country. Nothing even close to this happened at any other V.A. in the country. People I talk to at the other hospitals are just amazed.”

Said Canandaigua Mayor Ellen Polimeni “The sustained interest is what’s amazing to me. It’s not something that’s here and gone, but a subject that the community continues to talk about and write letters about. And you can’t talk about what has happened without talking about Ralph Calabrese.”

Calabrese, 74, an Ontario County native wounded in Korea, is widely regarded as the driving force behind Canandaigua’s apparently successful effort to rescue the local V.A. from the government chopping block. On a recent frigid morning, Calabrese shook the snow from his 2nd Infantry baseball cap and folded his coat across his arms before descending into the milelong tunnel that provides a covered walkway connecting each of the nearly two dozen hospital wards and buildings on the rambling V.A. grounds. Calabrese said he began visiting the hospital several days a week as a volunteer shortly after retiring from his job as a construction foreman about 12 years ago.

He said he became alarmed over the years by the elimination of various medical and mental health programs and reduction of inpatient beds from about 1,000 to fewer than 250.

“I didn’t know the numbers to expect, but when I found out that so many letters had been written by people against shutting down our hospital, it didn’t surprise,” Calabrese said. “When this thing hit, the telephone calls were endless and every place I went, the first thing people said was, ‘What can I do to help?’. The feeling I got on Aug. 6, when we had our first big rally at the V.A. auditorium, was of Americans saying, ‘**This is wrong. We can’t let this happen to our veterans.**’ I get chills every time I think about it. **This is what this country is all about, doing what is right and taking care of our veterans, no matter what kind of things they come up with in Washington and Albany.**

“That’s how it started back in the 1700s. And now it’s up to us to keep on fighting for what’s right.”

MURDER CASE TURNS UP E-BAY BODY-BAG SEARCH

Army Times 2.2.04

Lawyers for a woman charged with killing her Air Force officer husband have asked a judge to keep information taken from her computers out of her trial.

The evidence purportedly includes records of 40 E-Bay searches for body bags; the records allegedly were found on computers belonging to Michelle Theer, who is charged with killing Capt. Michelle Theer.

She also is accused of planning the murder with her lover, former Army Staff Sgt. John Diamond.

(If she gets off, send her to the Pentagon. This kind of forward planning brilliance would fit in Rumsfeld's office.)

Troops Mount Rescue; Ten Ton Beer Truck Saved

Army Times 2.9.04

When a 10-ton truck fully loaded with beer recently sank under the ice covering a river in Siberia, Russian troops volunteered to mount a rescue mission, according to the ITAR-Tass news service. The soldiers moved in after a week of work by emergency crews failed to lift the truck out of the Irtysh River, which normally is solid in the winter because temperatures average minus-17 degrees Fahrenheit.

Whether the Russian soldiers will be rewarded with some of the salvaged beer was not mentioned in the report.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Armed Resistance Succeeding

Condensed from an editorial that appeared in Jan. 20 issues of the Nacogdoches (Texas) Daily Sentinel.

Army Times, February 09, 2004

The news is that last time there was an "upsurge" in casualties, the AP story says, the Bush administration decided to speed up the timetable for ending the occupation of Iraq and establishing a sovereign government.

Resistance Actions Hit Fallujah And Khaldiya;

Demonstrators Demand Prisoners Be Freed

By CHRIS BRUMMITT, Associated Press Writer 2.6.06

In Fallujah, residents said Friday that two men suspected of having been informants for the Americans were slain by insurgents. The killings, which occurred late Thursday and early Friday, came after pamphlets were circulated in the area west of Baghdad warning Iraqis against cooperating with the occupation force.

Also Friday, about 800 Iraqis demonstrated in Khaldiya, west of Baghdad in the Sunni Triangle, to demand that a dusk-to-dawn curfew be lifted and Iraqis detained by U.S. forces be released. The curfew was imposed late last month after a roadside bomb killed three American soldiers.



FED UP WITH OCCUPATION BULLSHIT #1

As a U.S. military vehicle passes, Iraqis demonstrate in Khaldiya, west of Baghdad Feb. 6 to demand that a dusk-to-dawn curfew be lifted and Iraqis detained by U.S. forces be released. (AP Photo/Khalid Mohammed)

Laid-Off Workers Protest At Coalition Hq

By VIJAY JOSHI, The Associated Press February 7, 2004

Also Saturday, about 200 former employees of the Ministry of Information gathered near the coalition headquarters in Baghdad to demand salaries. The employees were fired in May 2003 after occupation authorities dissolved the ministry, a mouthpiece of Saddam's regime.

"We are in the new Iraq and this is an injustice, unfair and we want our salaries because we are not criminals," shouted Yasmin Adnan, a former translator at the ministry. The Information Ministry, which monitored journalists during Saddam's regime, gained notoriety when its chief, Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf, denied that American troops were

in Baghdad even as American tanks could be seen on the grounds of Saddam's Republican Palace.

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

FED UP WITH OCCUPATION BULLSHIT #2



Iraqis shout anti-American slogans as they demonstrate after Friday prayers in Baghdad February 6. **The protestors demanded the release of all Iraqi women detained by U.S.-led coalition forces.** (Faleh Kheiber/Reuters)

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Latest From The \$600,000,000 Ketchup Corporation

David W. Staub 2.6.04 Interpax@yahoo.com

"I'm a capitalist, and I believe in creating wealth. You can't be a Democrat who loves jobs and hates the people who create them.

What we have to do is recognize that there is an enlightened, good capitalism, and there's a robber-baron capitalism. What George Bush has unleashed is a creed of greed that does a disservice to all people in business."

-- John Kerry quoted in L.A. Times

So what "disservice" is Kerry talking about that Bush has done to "all people in business" (while leaving out disservice to people like you and me)?

Simply this: That Bush has put the (antiquated, penurious) profit system at increased risk from the more than 6 billion people it increasingly denies, assaults and oppresses – including more and more Americans. In 20 years, no one in public life (even Bush) has received more campaign contributions from Big Corporate Business than John Kerry.

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.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Bush Support Down Big In One Month: “Any Chimpanzee But Bush”

Feb. 7, 2004

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Bush's public support dropped sharply over the past month, especially among older voters, political independents and people in the Midwest, an Associated Press poll found.

And for the first time, more voters in this poll's two years of tracking the question said they would definitely vote against Bush than said they would definitely vote for him.

Bush's approval rating stood at 47 percent in the AP-Ipsos poll taken in early February, down from 56 percent approval just a month ago. Half, or 50 percent, said they disapproved in the latest poll.

Just under four in 10, 37 percent, said they would definitely vote to re-elect Bush as president, while 43 percent said they would definitely vote for someone else, according to the poll conducted for the AP by Ipsos-Public Affairs. Another 18 percent said they would consider voting for someone else.

CORNERED RAT LOOKING LIKE CORNERED RAT



Under pressure, Bush announces bipartisan commission to investigate why he said there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq when the story was total bullshit. (Feb 6: Larry Downing/Reuters)

A month ago, voters were more inclined to say they would re-elect Bush rather than definitely vote against him by a 41-33 margin.

Public approval of Bush's handling of the economy dipped to 44 percent, down from 53 percent in early January.

“I think he's run the country into the ground economically, and he comes out with these crazy ideas like going to Mars and going to the moon,” said Richard Bidlack, a 78-year-old retiree from Boonton, N.J., who says he voted for Bush in 2000. “I'm so upset at Bush, I'll vote for a chimpanzee before I vote for him.”

Bush saw a drop in support among most demographic and regional groups, but those were most pronounced among voters with a high school education or less, voters over age 65, political independents and voters in the Midwest.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

“What Amateurs We Americans Are When It Comes To Imperialism” U.S. Official Says

By Andrew Higgins, Wall St. Journal 2.6.04

GHAZNI, Afghanistan—On a drive through the turbulent badlands of southern Afghanistan, American road engineer Jim Myers glanced nonchalantly at a crater left a few days earlier by a remote-controlled bomb that narrowly missed a colleague's car. Farther down the road, he pointed to where a rocket landed next to one of his construction camps

A project freighted with symbolism. the road extends from Kabul, seat of the fragile pro-American government to Kandahar, former bastion of Taliban leader Mullah Omar and his ally Osama bin Laden.

The U.S. has invested so much prestige and money in this road, but it is one of the least safe places in the country, says Andrew Wilder, the American director of the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, which advises the Afghan government and aid groups. *“It’s a good metaphor for what amateurs we Americans are when it comes to imperialism.”*

When the U.S. Agency for International Development asked contractors working on the \$250 million road project to display the U.S. flag, all declined. “Put up flags and you get shot at,” says Mr. Myers. Turkish subcontractors plaster their vehicles with Turkish flags, which feature a Muslim crescent moon. Even so, they’ve suffered rocket attacks and a kidnapping. **A weekly USAID progress report carries a tally of asphalt laid, mines removed and “workers injured/killed in hostile action.”**

“Nobody Wants To Go To The Dangerous Parts”

At the same time, while NATO welcomed the German decision to send a team to relatively stable northern Afghanistan, some alliance officials complain about a lack of enthusiasm to send soldiers to the more volatile south.

“Nobody wants to go to the most dangerous parts of the country,” says a NATO official.

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Chickens & Eggs

Raja Chemayel, Feb 4th, 2004

"First was the chicken"
that has laid an egg,
out of which came another chicken
that laid another egg.....

This story is older than bread!!

But what about,
the Terrorism and the Occupation.....?
which one did come first ?

Did "*they*" occupy Palestine
because
Palestine was (already) "Terroristic"??
or,
Palestinians did become "*terrorists*"
because they were occupied ?

What came first, the Injustice or the Revolt against it?
What came first the Crime or its Victim ?
What came first the *Polish immigrants*
or the Palestinians ?

What came first King Louis XVI or the French Revolution ?
What came first the Tsar of Russia or Vladimir Illich Lenin ?
What came first the Headache or the Aspirin ?
What came first Gen. Batista..... or Fidel Castro ?

Take away the Terrorism,
and you will see
that the Occupation will remain.

But if you take away
the Occupation ,
Terrorism will stop!!

The Zionists will say:
"one should not reward Terrorism"
I say :
Occupation is Theft
and theft should not be rewarded ,neither !

More so,
I say Zionism is the ideology that legalises
"the theft of Palestine"....
therefore Zionism should not be rewarded neither ,

nor even be allowed !!

Back to the chicken & the Egg .

I finally say:

if "*this chicken*" will always provoke/produce

or invite the *Terrorism*

then let us slaughter that Chicken.....

and forget about the eggs !!

(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

Alcan Workers Seize Quebec Smelter, Boost Output

ALLAN SWIFT Canadian Press, February 03, 2004

MONTREAL (CP) - Labour relations have taken a strange twist for multinational Alcan Inc. after a militant union in the heart of its massive operations in Quebec seized control of a large smelter the company had just decided to close.

The workers claim that operations at the aluminum plant 250 kilometres north of Quebec City have improved since they took charge a week ago. The union issued a release Tuesday claiming production at the Arvida refinery in Saguenay is higher than it was before workers took control, a few days after Alcan announced Jan. 22 that the smelter would close, ending 550 jobs.

The union, recently affiliated with the Canadian Auto Workers, crowed that the smelter has turned out 1,500 tonnes of aluminum since then, providing Alcan with some \$2.25 million in sales.

"All this was done despite the manoeuvres of deliberate sabotage and non-collaboration by management," union president Claude Patry said.

"Go figure. The unionized workers want to run their factory and the bosses want to block production."

Alcan has said it will take back the plant and proceed with the closure, while the Quebec government has appointed a mediator, but **so far it's clear the workers are in control.**

The Quebec Labour Relations Board issued an ordinance to say some of the workers' actions are illegal and ordered them to give Alcan back control of its plant. **The union, at its meeting Tuesday, defied the order and said it was considering suing Alcan.**

Alcan says it decided to close Arvida immediately because it could take advantage of a slew of pending retirements and wouldn't have to make any layoffs.

That reason didn't sit well with the union, which claims Alcan has reneged on long-term pledges to maintain employment levels and install a new smelter.

Chief executive Travis Engen revealed the closure to Quebec Premier Jean Charest at last month's world economic forum in Davos, Switzerland, and Charest had to break the news, raising a furor back home.

"Alcan's strategic error was perhaps underestimating the reaction of the local population," said Paul-Andre Lapointe, who used to work at the Arvida smelter. "It has mobilized the whole population. Political leaders at all levels and all parties have come together to denounce the company, which has not keep its moral promises with regards to maintaining jobs.

"There is a history of strong union militancy at Arvida. They won't give in easily."

Alcan spokesman Joseph Singerman said the company wants to resolve the issue through dialogue. **"But there is a point in time that they're going to run out of materials."**

If printed out, this newsletter is your personal property and cannot legally be confiscated from you. "Possession of unauthorized material may not be prohibited." DoD Directive 1325.6 Section 3.5.1.2.