

GI SPECIAL 2#31



“George Bush Killed My Son” “What’s Being Done There Is Obscene”

14/02/2004 The Irish Times

Apart from campaigning groups such as Military Families Speak Out and Veterans Against the War, ordinary US citizens are questioning in greater and greater numbers the validity of being in Iraq.

Rosemarie Dietz Slavenas certainly is.

Her 30-year-old son, helicopter pilot Brian Slavenas, was shot down over Fallujah in November.

"George Bush killed my son," she says. "I believe my son died not for his country but because of our country's lack of a civilised foreign policy."

On November 2nd, Brian Slavenas was flying over a civilian area of Fallujah that had been searched by the US army the night before. There was anger in the area about the search and as Brian flew over the next morning his helicopter was hit by a missile fired from a shoulder-held weapon. The massive helicopter went into a spin. The rear propeller was damaged and the back of the helicopter was a fireball. The aircraft crashed and 16 people were killed. While 20 others survived, Brian died half an hour after being admitted to a hospital in Fallujah.

"I was coming home from church when I heard that a helicopter had crashed in Iraq and that there were injuries," says Rosemarie Dietz Slavenas. "Then when I came home there were two men in my yard. It was dark and they came towards my car. I could see one was a police officer and I asked him what happened. 'The worst, the worst,' he said. And I just began screaming 'no, no, no'."

Slavenas had been an active member of an anti-war group before her son went to Iraq. She still takes part in an anti-war/anti-occupation vigil every Friday in her small Illinois town. She says she cherishes the memories of her son, and cherishes too the letters she received from him only days after he died.

It is moving to hear her read from one of those letters. It is an ordinary letter, full of inquiries and hopes. He asks about the new home his mother has moved into and about their 17-year-old dog, Pepper.

"Pepper will have an 18th birthday in a few months," the letter says. "Maybe that old peppery pooh will make it to 20."

The letter is dated October 26th.

"Things are going well," it goes on. "Maybe we'll be home in April. I'm not sure."

A week later, Brian was dead, a year to the day before George W. Bush has to seek re-election.

Slavenas says her son tried and failed to get discharged from the military when he learned he was being deployed to Iraq. Her husband, from whom she is separated, contests this. **She says that if her son had gone AWOL he would have spent two years in prison and be alive today. It is with bitterness that she now reads of her president's military career.**

"It just came out in my local paper about the president and all the time he went missing from the military. I guess there's different rules for different folks," she says.

Her heart goes out to other families who have lost loved ones in Iraq, she says, a great number of whom have been killed since an end to hostilities was proclaimed on May 1st last. She thinks, too, of Iraqis who have lost their lives. **"They call it 'Iraqi Freedom'," she says. "But who knows how many Iraqis have been killed?"**

Up to 10,000 Iraqi civilians, according to the latest estimates from independent think-tanks. The nature of US television coverage means that most Americans are unaware of this. There's even a prohibition on showing US coffins coming home. But as more and more of those coffins do arrive, people are starting to utter the most feared word in the Pentagon: "Vietnam". As in that earlier conflict, Americans are starting to question the motives behind US involvement.

"They've been sent there because we have an economic interest in Iraq," says Slavenas. "I think the loss of life is obscene, what's being done is obscene. It's more than needless."

She says that while she marched against the war with thousands all over the world this time last year she had no idea that so many would be dead only months later. The fact that one of those is her son has changed her life forever.

"He was such a beautiful, healthy young man," she says. "He never even smoked or drank. He was always a very athletic, positive person. When I saw the pictures of his helicopter, here he was, his beautiful, beautiful body broken. I couldn't look at it. I would have lost my mind."

Next Friday, like every Friday, Rosemarie Dietz Slavenas will again be demonstrating.

HOW MANY MORE FOR BUSH'S WAR?



Casket of 2nd Lt. Luke S. James of Hooker, Okla., Arlington National Cemetery Feb. 10. James, 24, was killed last month in Iskandariyah, Iraq. (AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais)

***IS THERE ANYONE OUT THERE
WHO WANTS TO TRADE PLACES
WITH ME??????????***

**A Soldiers Mom from the 1st Armored
Division Writes:**

To: GI Special
From: P
Sent: February 17, 2004 9:38 AM

Good Morning Thomas,

Keep in mind "**MY SON**" is still over there. I don't want to cause any problems for him. You just never know who will have to pay the dues for my knowledge or opinions.

I still have not heard anything if it was him killed or not. I don't know if this is good or bad.

Most people who do not have a son or daughter in the Service would say "**NO NEWS IS GOOD NEWS**" BUT NOT IN THIS CASE WHEN IT INVOLVES A SOLDIER OVERSEAS.

One thing about me is **I don't live** in a **fantasy** World. I watch the news & I am on the Internet all the time trying to keep up with what is going on over in Iraq. Ever since it was announced that the "**WAR WAS OVER**" (someone should have told our Soldiers that one) the news only reports briefly what is going on over in Iraq.....

Someone once told me to quit watching TV so much & maybe I would not be worried!!! Yeah right, if any blood kin of mine especially my son is overseas fighting I will know everything about what is going on.

There will be NO doubt or questions in my mind about what is going on over there should something happen to them.

For instance the most common statement made by people today is,

"I DID NOT KNOW THERE WAS ANYTHING STILL GOING ON IN IRAQ"...

Do you know how many people think this?????????????

LOT'S OF THEM!!

If this is not "LIVING HELL" then I don't want to know what it is.

Anyone who knows me & my son knows **I DID NOT** raise my son to be a Mommas boy. I raised him knowing that one day he would be a man & have his own family with his own responsibilities as a man. I just hope he lives thru this war to do just that.

I know the **reality** of things over there. Most people I talk to looks at me with shock that we are still have problems or killing over in Iraq.

The first thing they say is,

"I THOUGHT THE IRAQ WAR WAS OVER WITH".

I am very quick to tell them **the war is but not the killings** & what is going on there!!!

I do realize & never ever do I let myself forget that my son went there to do a job, **AN HONEST JOB** for the people of the **USA, THE FAMILIES & THE DECEASED OF 911** & only for that reason & **NO OTHER reason.**

It kills me to think my son is over there & the damn Iraq's are killing their own by the 100's. Hell, let them do what they want.

If they want to kill each other **SEND MY SON HOME NOW!!!!**

He did his **JOB & HIS PART WITH ALL HONESTY!!!**

You know Thomas my son did his part & WILL NEVER EVER FORGET THIS WAR. He has more scars from this war than he cares to remember. His wife E-mailed him & told him they were officially separated. It is killing him & he cannot do anything about it because he is losing his family & is in Iraq. He does have a child involved.

It makes me wonder how many wives or husbands have done this to soldiers over there??? I know he is not the only one but he is mine, I laid down to have him **NO ONE ELSE!!!**

He is my blood. He said he is doing everything he can just to survive to come home safely.

He is helpless in this situation. My heart bleeds for him.

He said Mom, "I can protect people in Iraq but I cannot go to my own family to protect & correct what is wrong at my own home....."

I am very proud of my son & worried about him even more so now. My heart bleeds for him. He told me "He has had enough of Iraq & all he wants is to go home." He also said he will NOT reenlist when the time comes. My sons time spent in the service is 7 years & all he wants is to go home.

I have told him believe in the one & only thing that is honest & that is **God & to keep praying because God will never let him down!!!!!!!!!!**

The "R & R" of those few days that Bush did let them go home will not go unnoticed or unappreciated, but in my opinion he should have let them **STAY** home. There is not a moment or a day that goes by that I don't pray for my son & all soldiers safe return.

I know there were thousands of people who fought in past wars but ask them if they want to go back????? My Dad was one of them (WWII) & if he were alive he would say HELL NO!!!

Not that he was not proud to have served his country but would never want to go back.....

My son told me he was also nominated for the Bronze Star. I hope he gets it. He is a good soldier.

He always tells me "Mom I am good at what I do."

To go thru such hell & still have confidence in yourself speaks for itself.

I suppose I had better stop writing because I could right for the next decade of how I feel. I just wanted people to know that we, the Moms, Dads & families of our soldier's live in HELL every day until our Soldiers come home safely,

ALL OF THEM!!!!!!!

This is just another day in the life of a soldiers Mom.....

IS THERE ANYONE OUT THERE WHO WANTS TO TRADE PLACES WITH ME?????????

A Soldiers Mom from the 1st Armored Division

TIME TO ACT:

HELP MAKE HISTORY AT FT. BRAGG

From: www.Ncpeacehub.org National: www.unitedforpeace.org

Here in North Carolina, on March 20, a march and rally is planned in Fayetteville. Nearby is the home of Ft. Bragg, one of the largest military bases in the U.S., and home of the 18th Airborne Corp, the 1st Corps Support Command, the JFK Special Warfare School, and the Joint Special Operations Command. It is also adjacent to Pope Air Force Base, which includes the 43rd Airlift Wing, and the 23rd Fighter Group, and the 18th Support Operations Group.

(See the end for complete details, contacts, and more.)

Momentum is building around the world for the next Global Day of Action Against War and Occupation, on March 20, the one-year anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. On that day millions around the globe will take to the streets and say Yes to Peace and No to Pre-emptive War and Occupation.

International, national and local organizations building for March 20 actions include: the World Social Forum, United for Peace and Justice, Military Families Speak Out, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Black Solidarity Against War, U.S. Labor Against the War, N.C. Council of Churches, Veterans for Peace, Bring Them Home Now coalition, American Friends Service Committee, People of Color Against the War, International Socialist Organization, and September 11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows.

We join with our sponsoring organizations - Military Families Speak Out, Bring Them Home Now coalition, Quaker House of Fayetteville, September 11th Families of Peaceful Tomorrows, and the Fayetteville Peace with Justice Coalition, and Veterans for Peace on March 20 under the banners:

WE DEMAND REAL SUPPORT FOR THE TROOPS: BRING THEM HOME NOW!

MONEY FOR JOBS AND EDUCATION, NOT WAR AND OCCUPATIONS.

THE WORLD STILL SAYS NO TO WAR!

Military families have seen a steady erosion of their benefits to include the transfer of the military health care system to the for-profit HMO, cuts in Veterans Administration spending and the closing of VA hospitals nationwide. Some government sources estimate that over 20% of Iraq war vets will suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. The US government has stalled at every turn to acknowledge any responsibility for the variety of mysterious ailments affecting over 200,000 veterans of the 1991 invasion of Iraq. Called Gulf War Syndrome, veterans suffer from multiple effects of exposure to depleted uranium, experimental vaccines, and poisonous smoke from the burning oilfields.

The Government's institution of the STOP LOSS program is a new form of the draft, forcing conscription after soldiers have served their terms, with an operational tempo so extreme that many young children no longer know at least one of their parents. Stop Loss has resulted in Troop Strength that now exceeds that authorized by congress- as President Bush's executive order in September of 2001 is still being used by Donald Rumsfeld to usurp congressional power.

This war is wrong. Well over 500 US soldiers have been killed so far, and over 3000 wounded and disabled in Iraq since March 20, 2003. Most sources cite between 8-10,000 deaths of innocent Iraqi men, women and children (civilians). Our government continues to hold to the lies that sent our troops unprepared into battle, to supposedly protect us against weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons that have not been found.

As our government pours untold billions of our tax dollars into unjust wars, here on the home front, we cannot afford to care for the 12,000,000 children in the U.S. who live in poverty, and the 13 million children who go hungry every day. While 75 million Americans do not have health care insurance, and over 10 million and growing are jobless, we've heard stories of our seniors being forced to give blood to pay for their medications.

On March 20, we call on all people of conscience to show their solidarity with military families, and vets, as well as the untold millions of others who are disproportionately affected by war and occupation, and the war at home, to join us in Fayetteville. The N.C. March 20 Planning Committee, representing over 100 peace and justice groups from across North Carolina, will join with others from South Carolina, Richmond Virginia, Knoxville, Tennessee, and Atlanta, Georgia to wage peace during this historical gathering in the South!

March 20th: THE WORLD STILL SAYS NO TO WAR: ORGANIZING INFORMATION

Fayetteville, North Carolina- 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

RALLY AND MARCH PLANS - SO FAR INCLUDE:

11:00 am- Park and Gather at Amtrak Station on Hay St. March along Hay Street.

1:00 pm- Rally at Rowan Street Park-Speakers, Music, Poetry, and Song

(Note: This park is the site of the Vietnam Vets against the War rally in 1970 featuring Jane Fonda and Donald Sutherland.)

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP:

To assure broad support and participation, we are seeking your organization's endorsement and contributions. Send endorsements asap to: Lou.Plummer@mac.com

Please tax-deductible donations to: "TSEC" with "Peace 1st" (in memo line). Mail checks to: Twin Streams Educational Center, 243 Flemington Road, Chapel Hill, 27517-5637. Phone: 919-929-3346. Online Contributions can be made at www.NCpeacehub.org

Distribute fliers in your town. Download fliers from www.Ncpeacehub.org

Help organize transportation. Organize buses, vans or carpools from your town, and list this information on www.NCpeacehub.org

We need 100 peacekeepers at the rally: contact ncpeacejustice@riseup.net

Speaker's Bureau-Bring a guest speaker to your town: Contact Lou Plummer at lou.plummer@mac.com and Tim Pluta at timpluta@hotmail.com

WAYS TO CONTACT US:

Fayetteville Local Coordinators:

Lou Plumer, Fayetteville Peace with Justice- fayettevillepwj@nc.rr.com- Phone (910)-433-9053 or 910- 678-9698

Chuck Fager, Quaker House CHUCKFAGER@aol.com Phone (910) 323-3912

N.C. March 20 Statewide facilitators:

Theresa El-Amin at TheresaElAmin@aol.com (919) 682-9175

Kathe Latham at kblatham@aol.com (336) 852-1489

Andrew Pearson at kangaroo@email.unc.edu (919) 960-5217

South Carolina organizer: Mike Berg michaethanberg@hotmail.com

Working Committees:

Logistics and Plans in Fayetteville- Chuck Fager, CHUCKFAGER@aol.com or Lou Plummer, fayettevillepwj@nc.rr.com

Program, Speakers, Performers etc.- Ajamu Dillahunt, ardillahunt@igc.org and Kristen Robinson, Ginger1182@aol.com

Publicity- Andrew Pearson, kangaroo@email.unc.edu

Finances- Wes Hare, jhhare@earthlink.net

Media- Liz Seymour, Hobblidhoy@aol.com

Community Outreach- Kathe Latham, kblatham@aol.com

Labor Outreach- Ray Eurquhart, r.eur@verizon.net

Campus Outreach- Matt Ivey, clashofideas@yahoo.com

Please join us on March 20 in Fayetteville, to continue the movement that brought millions to the streets on Feb 15, 2003, when the world said no to war. On March 20th, we will show real support for the troops: Bring them home now! We demand an end to the erosion of our economy, health care, jobs, and education here at home. Come to Fayetteville to show the breadth of public support for politics based on justice, fairness and full equality: Money for Jobs and Education, not War and Occupation!

NC March 20 Planning Committee

FOR LATEST UPDATES PLEASE CHECK OUT

www.NCpeacehub.org

www.unitedforpeace.org

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/>

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

Four U.S. Troops Wounded, Iraqi Killed In Ambush

Feb. 21, 2004 BAGHDAD (Reuters)

Four U.S. soldiers were wounded and their Iraqi translator was killed on Saturday when gunmen ambushed their convoy south of Baghdad, the U.S. army said.

"Four U.S. soldiers were wounded and their Iraqi translator was killed in a small arms fire ambush 22 km (14 miles) south of Iskandariya (near Baghdad). Two civilian type SUVs were destroyed in the attack," a U.S. military spokeswoman said.

Convoy Attack South Of Fallujah; Injuries Reported

02/22/2004, By CHRIS BRUMMITT, The Associated Press

A bomb went off Sunday near a U.S. convoy on a road south of Fallujah, causing some injuries, according to Ismail Fakhri, a 41-year-old farmer who said he witnessed the blast. U.S. troops blocked the road leading to the area of the attack. The U.S. command in Baghdad had no report on the incident.



Iraqi men celebrate resistance attack, climbing on a Ford Explorer used by US civil affairs officers after it was attacked on the highway near the village of Haswa. The attack killed an Iraqi translator and wounded four US soldiers. (AFP/Marwan Naamani)

Southern Iraqi Pipeline Attacked For First Time

02/22/04 Novinite News Agency, Bulgaria

For the first time since the fall of Saddam Hussein, the resistance struck at and blew up the Southern Iraq pipeline, which until now had been the only pipeline open to export Iraq's oil.

2 Mortar Rounds Land Near UK Military Camp

22 Feb 2004 Dow Jones Newswires

BAGHDAD (AP)--Two mortar rounds landed near a U.K. camp on the outskirts of Iraq's second-largest city, Basra, a spokesman for the U.K. troops in the area said Sunday.

According to the spokesman, the mortars landed in the area at about 5 a.m. Sunday. There were no immediate reports on damage or casualties.

TROOP NEWS

The Bushites' Betrayal Of Our Troops And Vets

The Hightower Lowdown, Feb. 2004, By Jim Hightower and Phillip Frazer

If hypocrisy were a drug, Washington would be the crack capital of the world. Congressional and White House leaders these days seem to get up every morning and inject, smoke, snort, and otherwise mainline a doozy of a dose of hypocrisy to get them through their day.

On no issue is this addiction more obvious than in their treatment of America's soldiers and veterans. Led by BushCheneyRumsfeld&Gang, politicians constantly bellow: "Support our troops!" They're particularly quick to hurl this red, white, and blue shout at any of us who dare to question the motives and rationale behind their bloody war in Iraq.

Most recently, Bush positioned himself as the soldier's president during his State of the Union speech, declaring: "Many of our troops are listening tonight. And I want you and your families to know., my administration, and this Congress, will give you the resources you need to fight and win the war on terror."

'What a hypocrite!

If you want to know how the Bushites "Support our troops," check with any of the thousands of stunned military families who have learned that Bush's Pentagon has failed to provide essential equipment needed by our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan—everything from life-saving body armor to warm gloves, from rifles that work to flashlights. The families, having received desperate calls, emails and letters from the front lines, literally have had to go to their local stores, buy equipment, and ship it to their loved ones!

Yes, the same Pentagon that sops up \$400 billion of our tax dollars every year (plus the \$87 billion add-on it was given last year to pay for Bush's Iraqi occupation) is shamelessly short-changing the grunts who are putting their lives on the line every day.

Kevlar vests

One important innovation for ground troops is a simple, relatively lightweight vest that contains ceramic plates of boron carbide capable of stopping powerful AK-47 bullets and

flying shrapnel. **Simply put, these vests are life-savers in a firefight or a bomb blast—and they were readily available to the Pentagon from U.S. manufacturers.**

This is why Joe Werfelman was dismayed to hear from his son that he and other soldiers in Iraq didn't have the vests. "He called us frantically three or four times on this," Werfelman told *The Washington Post*. Instead, the troops had been issued Vietnam- era flak jackets that, as one soldier put it, "couldn't stop a rock." So Werfelman scrambled, found a New Jersey company that makes the ceramic gear, paid \$660 of his own money, and shipped it off to Iraq.

Enraged military families later learned that even the small contingent of troops that Mongolia sent to Iraq came with the lifesaving vests. Hauled before a House committee, General John Abizaid, the head of U.S. forces in Iraq, said he couldn't "answer for the record why we started this war with protective vests that were in short supply."

Thanks to the howl and heat from the grass-roots, Congress added money to the Pentagon's already bloated budget last fall, requiring body armor for all soldiers in Iraq. Finally, nearly a year after Bush started his war— and after an untold number of unnecessary deaths—our troops are receiving the vests.

Pentagon budgeteers are quietly skimping on even the small stuff for our soldiers. A Houston father visited his Marine son at Camp Pendleton a year ago, just before the son shipped out to Iraq. "I was shocked and outraged to hear the list of items the Marine Corps was NOT going to provide," he reported. The father rushed to a surplus store and bought his son \$250 worth of essentials—mosquito netting, a flashlight, a canteen, undershirts, assorted hitches and straps, and so on.

The Pentagon, the White House, and Congress should have known that our ground troops would be ill-equipped, because the infantry they sent into Afghanistan in 2002 in search of Al Qaeda and Taliban forces was likewise short on supplies.

Families of these GIs were forced to buy gloves, cushioned socks, cargo belts, flashlights, padded rucksack straps, hydration systems, satellite position-finders, and other basics to send to the troops—things the Pentagon chose not to provide, even though it spent some \$690 million that same year just on the cost-overrun charged by Lockheed- Martin for the unnecessary F-22 jet fighter it is developing.

Washington lavishes billions on fat-cat weapons-makers (whose sons and daughters mostly don't go to war), while it tells our troops on the ground to send their military-shopping lists home to their families.

Stuff happens

Speaking of weapons-makers, our troops have also found that many of their weapons don't work. In the Pentagon's hype of the Jessica Lynch story, for example, the drama was placed on her rescue, but the real drama happened just prior to her capture. Here's an excerpt from her recent ABC interview with Diane Sawyer:

SAWYER: "How did you find out your gun was jammed?"

LYNCH: "When we were told to lock and load, that's when my weapon jammed. I mean, all the bullets and stuff just jammed up inside."

The M-16 rifle that "jammed up" on Lynch was infamous for having the exact same problem in the Vietnam War, 35 years before. *Back then, the complaints from the field were so many and so angry that Congress held hearings, concluding that the gun had "serious and excessive malfunctions" and that the Army's behavior in sending soldiers into combat with a weapon that had such known defects "bordered on criminal negligence."*

Isn't the same true now?

Guns aren't the only danger posed to our troops by their leaders in the Pentagon. Last November 2, 16 American soldiers were killed and 20 wounded when a missile hit their Chinook helicopter. Missing from that Chinook, and many other helicopters under fire in this war, was an "aircraft survivability" package that includes an infrared jammer and flare dispenser to decoy heat-seeking missiles.

Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Illinois) learned that copter crews had been beseeching higher-ups for months to get these packages, to no avail.

<p>In an email to Durbin, one of the copter pilots said: "So we were essentially flying around for five months with no anti-missile equipment. For the life of me, I cannot understand what goes through the head of commanders that would load 30 soldiers into an aircraft with no protection against a credible threat."</p>
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Wouldn't it be interesting to ask the Commander in Chief that question?

A Pentagon spokesman says it doesn't require manufacturers to provide the systems as standard equipment, instead leaving it up to unit commanders to install them....if the commanders can find any.

The wounded

It's been fairly widely reported that the White House won't allow the media to cover the arrival at a Delaware Air Force base of coffins from Iraq and Afghanistan, and that Bush's handlers have insisted that he not attend the funeral of even a single one of the 500-plus soldiers who've come home in those coffins. Bad political image, they say, preferring to push an upbeat message of the "progress" being made in both countries. **Their attitude is best summed up by Rep. George Nethercutt (R-Washington), who made a four-day jaunt to Iraq and concluded: "The story of what we've done in Iraq is remarkable. It is a better and more important story than losing a couple of soldiers every day."**

Less coverage, however, has been given to the nearly 3,000 soldiers who've been wounded by gunfire, mortars, car bombs, crashes, and other accidents. Initially, the wounded are taken to the 28th Combat Support Hospital in Baghdad.

The doctors and nurses there are excellent— but, again, they are shorthanded and often short on supplies. CSH Commander Beverly Pritchett says; “It’s very frustrating when a physician or surgeon comes to me and says, ‘I need this,’ and eight weeks later I still can’t give him that. I know if I got on the phone and used my own credit card, I could get it here.”

In the best can-do spirit of the U.S. military, the CSH staff is creative: For example, after soldiers go through surgery, their bodies can become dangerously cold, sometimes resulting in death. Having been issued no equipment to deal with this, a nurse set up a cardboard box big enough to hold a person (like the homeless use on the streets), went out and bought a hair dryer, and rigged it to blow warm air on the patient. Dubbed the “Chief Cuddler,” it has saved more than 50 lives. While proud of such innovations, Commander Pritchett is angry that her staff has to resort to them.

Then the wounded are sent back to the U.S., supposedly for the expert care they so obviously deserve. They arrive, however, to no fanfare, no greetings by the politicians who sent them to war. The White House has decreed that the huge transport planes bringing the wounded home must arrive at Andrews Air Force Base in the dark of night, off-limits to the media as the wounded are offloaded into ambulances.

Then they are handed off from the Pentagon to the Department of Veterans Affairs, where they are often wounded anew by dismal treatment. Last fall, Bill Moyers’ *Now* program reported on the case of Billy Bisel.

Under mortar fire in Afghanistan, Billy dove for cover and broke his neck. He required two surgeries to install a metal plate, and was left so debilitated that he couldn’t return to his carpentry and welding work. Seeking rehab and the disability benefits he was due, Billy started calling up the VA’s bureaucracy. He says they told him to “shut up.” Here’s an excerpt from his *Now* interview:

NOW: “They didn’t say, ‘Shut up.’”

BISEL: “Yes, they did.”

NOW: “They said, ‘Shut up’?”

BISEL.: “Literally, yes. I needed to quit bitchin’; I needed to quit complainin’, I needed to just go home and wait until the paperwork comes in.”

Now went on to report:

“Nineteen months after he got back from Afghanistan, Billy Bisel was still waiting.”

Indeed, the average wait that a vet endures to get a medical appointment at a VA hospital is seven months.

Welcome home, soldier.

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/>

Army Humvees Won't Have Armor Protection Till May; Desperate Soldiers Try Plywood, Flak Vests, Dying Anyway

*(Newhouse.com, February 18, 2004)*The Army has been slow to acknowledge the vulnerability of its thin-skinned Humvees in Iraq, according to critics in Congress and elsewhere. Now, Army officials acknowledge the problem will not be fixed for another three months. **Meantime, soldiers in Iraq are hanging flak vests and even plywood on their Humvees in desperate attempts at protection. And the casualties mount week by week.**

“Soldiers Are Fighting---To Get Out Of The Service”

By Jonathan Franklin, The Guardian February 21, 2004

Volunteers at the GI Rights Hotline, a legal aid centre for soldiers, are receiving about 3,500 calls a month from military personnel looking to leave the armed forces.

With a growing number of dead and wounded, the Pentagon is struggling to maintain troop levels in Iraq. Nearly 40% of those now deployed are national guard or reserve troops. **"These guys are not going to re-enlist, that is for sure," said Giorgio DeShaun Ra'Shadd, a lawyer in Centennial, Colorado, who represents several military families. "Soldiers are fighting to get out of the service."**

In late January the Pentagon cancelled retirement dates for an estimated 40,000 soldiers. This unilateral move postpones soldiers' return to civilian life.

Military families erupted in protest at the decision and immediately launched websites and demonstrations.

"Can the US president with the signature of a pen indenture tens of thousands of US citizens? That is the question we are now investigating," said Luke Hiken, a lawyer in

San Francisco. "This is a tremendous militarisation of civilian families. Soldiers are now being asked to stay for two more years. This takes civilian families and turns them into military families."

Based on his work with US military personnel in Germany, Mr Hiken estimates that there are "thousands" of soldiers who want to escape from Iraq. "When they brought them home for vacation in the US, about 15%-20% simply never went back. They stayed with their families."

Soldier's Mom Condemns Bush; Tells War-Lover: Go Join The Army

(THANKS TO J. J WRITES:

2.18.03 Their Son is now doing Duty in Iraq, just going over a few weeks back. He had just Returned from Afghanistan only a few months before Deploying to Iraq, and was hoping to get a school he wanted, for a Year Tour in that War Theater!! Just before going over, to Iraq, he Married his Longtime Girlfriend.

Her feelings describe are 'Very True', as she Expresses them to All while both Her Husband and Her, and Their Sons New Bride Worry and Wait as Thousands of Families are now Once Again Doing!!!!!!)

BY AMY KEITH http://charlotte.creativeloafing.com/news_feature.html

Several weeks ago, a guest columnist wrote in the *Observer* that she loved George Bush and supported the war. She appears, from her picture, to be young enough to join the army, and I (naturally) e-mailed her and told her so.

So far (naturally) there has been no response to my simple assertion: if you support the war in Iraq, you're young enough to join, and are able-bodied, the only ethical and logical course of action is to join the armed forces and go fight. It puts a different spin on the concept of war if one is on the front lines. It's called integrity, otherwise known as putting your money where your mouth is, instead of hiding behind rhetoric and empty phrases.

I am attempting to show integrity in my own way. I, along with others opposed to the Iraq war, have been labeled as unpatriotic, and as a traitor by our own president and some of his supporters. I can handle it -- they're only words. And there are growing numbers of us who can handle it and will continue to handle it. We demand answers, and we won't rest or go away until we get them.

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

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Fallujah Factions Agree On One Thing; Attack U.S. Troops On Sight

(On Feb. 14, the Iraqi Resistance launched an attack in force on Fallujah, overrunning the police station, after setting up checkpoints to take control of the city. This report repeats that account, but ends with an interesting interview with an Iraqi police officer. He says whatever residents thought of the attack, all agree that if US troops had appeared, the population would have united to fight them.)

16 February 2004 By Remy Ourdan, Le Monde FR

The police had no opportunity to resist. "They were more numerous and better armed than we," Ibrahim, a policeman, relates. "They had rocket-launchers, grenades, and assault rifles, while we have Kalashnikovs, pistols and very little ammunition. We were immediately overcome." "The Americans only authorize us 14 bullets per Kalashnikov, not even a full cartridge," his friend, Hamid, continues from his hospital bed, where he finds himself with a leg wound. "It's a scandal.

Having rapidly emptied their half-full magazines, the policemen hardly fought back by the time the rebels penetrated the police station to cries of "Allah Akbar!"

Falluja is the city where rebels had attacked a convoy carrying General John Abizaid, Head of the American Army's Central Command (Centcom), with anti-tank rockets, two days before. American soldiers haven't been back since and did not intervene during the guerilla assault. "They should have come to our aid," believes Hamid. "They don't take any risks. It's shameful."

"Their arrival would only have poisoned the situation further," an officer deems, to the contrary, "all the more so as after the rebels' departure, the population took up arms and invested the streets."

"The idea was to give the police a hand in case of another attack, but these citizens would have fired their weapons against American soldiers. Here, everyone hates them. People criticize those who attack the police, those who attack other Iraqis, but everyone approves attacks against the occupiers, against the Americans."

The police still have cartridges with only fourteen bullets, but the heavily armed militia has made an appearance around official buildings.

"This is war. This type of operation could be repeated," says police officer Ibrahim. *"The only solution is for the Americans to leave Iraq."*

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

Resistance Attacks Police In Northern Iraqi Cities

22 Feb 2004 Dow Jones Newswires

BAGHDAD (AP)--Gunmen attacked Iraqi police in two northern Iraqi cities, sparking battles that killed two attackers, police said Sunday.

Gunmen opened fire on the house of the Mosul police chief Saturday, police Col. Abdul-Azal Hazim said. The police returned fire and killed one attacker and injured another, he said Sunday

In Kirkuk, insurgents opened fire with machine guns on the headquarters of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps on Saturday. Security officers returned fire, killing one of the attackers, said the corps' regional commander, Col. Anwar Amin.

Two Iraqi Cops Hurt In Blast

February 22, 2004 news.com.au, From correspondents in Baghdad & By MARIAM FAM, Associated Press Writer

TWO Iraqi policemen were wounded Sunday when the explosion of a roadside bomb rocked their vehicle in west Baghdad, a police source said.

"Two policemen were wounded by the explosion of a device in the Washash neighbourhood," a police officer said on condition of anonymity. **The officers were responding to a report of a "strange body" found in the area, police said.**

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Bush? Kerry?

No Thanks!

“I’m not going to cast a vote for Imperialist A or Imperialist B.”

Brenda Stokely, District Council 1707, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Workers, in Socialist Worker, 1.23.04

(For more, check out www.socialistworker.org.)

Iraq Will Be At Peace “When The Last Foreign Soldier Leaves”

M. J. Akbar, February 18, 2004 Gulf News

Bush is wrong to fear either a sudden Islamic theocracy, or indeed a democratic government that would be unable to accommodate Kurdish aspirations. **What Bush and the neo-cons of Washington should be worried about is Iraqi nationalism.**

As the British found out in 1920, Shias and Sunnis can unite seamlessly if they are convinced that their common enemy is a foreign power.

The American plan at the moment seems to be to install a civilian government with authority over civic life, including law and order. The American (or Nato?) presence would be established through a series of well-protected fortresses from which troops would swoop down on targets of their choosing.

On paper, Iraqis, Sunni or Shia, want the same thing as Washington: democracy. **But democracy is incompatible with occupation, and a mere change in nomenclature will not change reality. Iraq is relieved that Saddam is trapped. It will be at peace only when the last foreign soldier leaves.**

The Failure Of A Dream

Fred Feldman 2.21.02 (Excerpts)

I think the Pentagon is experiencing a substantial morale crisis of its own. While the US has not been forced out of Iraq yet --we have a ways to go on that -- the outcome has been a huge blow to the prospects of a "New American Century," a "Pax Americana," a world order imposed by US arms (and cash).

The Pentagon, which knows the facts on the ground about Iraq, better than any other sector of the government (and cannot even tell the President all that it knows, for fear of losing their posts), is mired deeply in this failure of US hegemony.

And I doubt that jollyng or squeezing the UN and France and Germany into the mire will bring order and stability much closer.

Saudi Arabia, which was supposed to be stabilized by the war, continues to drift toward a political upheaval. Iran appears to be getting stronger in the region, not weaker. Turkey is less reliable as an ally, and has become more part of the Middle East and less part of "Europe." Afghanistan's turmoil is pretty complete. Pakistan is wobbling.

The long-term tendency for the US to lose ground in the world economically -- temporarily overcome in the '90s -- seems to have resumed, including in relation to Europe and Japan.

Remember, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz claimed to have the solution to this problem. US military will and determination, the new model, high-tech, volunteer Vietnam-syndrome-free US military would do the job. Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz are very subdued now, and Perle has gone into opposition. Their solution has failed, which means the crisis of perspectives in the officer corps (including the generals) is likely to get worse rather than better.

I sense what used to be called, in reference to the socialist movement, "the failure of a dream."

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

A Mayor With A Vision: Turning Schools Into Concentration Camps

"If I have to put a police officer next to every kid, we'll do it." NY City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, The Chief, Jan. 16, 2004

“Free The Kerry Maid”

(THANKS TO B WHO E-MAILED THIS IN: B WRITES: This is from the new Newsweek comparing Bush and Kerry during Vietnam.)

"[Kerry] grew his hair and joined Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Some of the vets, most of whom were working class, resented the patrician Kerry. A VVAW leader named Scott Camil told The Boston Globe that a vet tried to reach Kerry at home and was told by someone, presumably a maid, 'Master Kerry is not at home.'

At the next meeting, someone hung a sign on Kerry's chair that read, FREE THE KERRY MAID."

U.S. Presidential Politics Rule Bush War Moves

(New York Times, February 19, 2004)

Diplomats and even some Bush administration officials have begun to worry that the June 30 deadline for turning over sovereignty in Iraq reflects more concern for the president's re-election campaign than Iraqi democracy. Their fear is that an untested government may not be strong enough to withstand the pressures bearing down on it.

Kerry Lobbied For Crooked War Contractor Who Made Illegal Contributions

(Los Angeles Times, February 19, 2004)

Sen. John Kerry sent 28 letters in behalf of a San Diego defense contractor who pleaded guilty last week to illegally funneling campaign contributions to the Massachusetts senator and four other congressmen. As the Democratic presidential front-runner, Kerry has promoted himself as a candidate who has never been beholden to campaign contributors and special interests.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

U.S. Quisling President Of Afghanistan A U.S. Citizen And Oil Company Man

Feb. 19, 2004, Asia Times, By Pepe Escobar

The Bush administration is now "suggesting" that the elections scheduled for June in Afghanistan - for which the administration itself pushed - may have to be postponed because of "security problems". There's much more to this than a huge understatement.

Not only a third of the country - as Washington says - is unstable, but practically everywhere outside of the capital Kabul. Security advisers for international aid agencies reveal every week what's really happening. Except for the Kabul-Jalalabad road, to travel overland in Afghanistan is still a very dangerous undertaking. Even the recently rebuilt and repaved Kabul-Kandahar road is considered dangerous.

At the moment, Afghan registration workers are not even capable of fulfilling their mission in most parts of the country.

According to Kabul sources, Karzai himself seems reasonably sure to win a presidential election. Wishful thinking in Washington rules that Karzai will be "re-elected" - he was in fact imposed as president by the Bush administration - with broad support among average Afghans. **No evidence suggests that most Afghans even know what Hamid Karzai stands for - apart from the fact that he is widely referred to as "the kebab seller".**

Parliamentary elections - supposing that they are free and fair - will pose a tremendous problem to the Bushites. **Former mujahideen are all masters of new political forces in Afghanistan - and none of them are aligned with Karzai.**

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, head of the Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan, former mujahideen and now branded a terrorist by Washington, was in control of 25 percent of the members of last December's *loya jirga* (grand council), as well as four local governors. The *loya jirga* ratified a new constitution for the country that gives future presidents wide-reaching powers. Hekmatyar also commands loads of weapons and thousands of warriors and is effectively leading the Afghan resistance.

Karzai's weapon of choice has been to distinguish between "good Taliban" - who accounted for at least 40 percent of the members of the *loya jirga* - and "bad Taliban" - who are responsible for the relentless anti-government and anti-American guerrilla war raging in the south and southeast.

The timetable for any sort of election by the end of June favors only one player: the Bush administration, so that they can exit the country as quickly and quietly as possible before presidential elections in November.

The guerrillas - or jihadis - know this very well, and that's why Hekmatyar won't accept any deal to lay down his arms and join the government.

Attacks conducted by the Taliban, al-Qaeda and Hekmatyar's forces in eastern and southern Afghanistan, alongside Pakistan's tribal areas, happen almost daily. The arc extends from Zabol, in the Afghan south, and runs north through the provinces of Paktika, Nangarhar and Kunar (a possible hideout of Osama bin Laden and his deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri). **The Taliban are infiltrating all over these areas, non-stop.**

UN and US diplomats maintain that the poppy fields benefit the Taliban, al-Qaeda and Afghan warlords and their private armies. They conveniently forget to mention that the trade also benefits former Northern Alliance commanders reconstructed into Kabul bureaucrats.

<p>Karzai, as it is well known, is also a US citizen. He was once a manager at US oil giant Unocal, and he failed to convince the Taliban when they ruled Afghanistan to build the TAP.</p>
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After being imposed as Afghan president by the White House and Pentagon-connected Zalmay Khalilzad - today the US ambassador in Kabul - Karzai signed a treaty with Musharraf and Turkmenistan's Saparmurat Niyazov in late 2001, pledging their common support to TAP.

Received:

From: R
Sent: February 18, 2004 2:49 PM
Subject: Re: GI Special 2#28 Some Home Truth

Dear GI Special,

In reply to the mother of Lt. Dvorin saying her son died for nothing and I have to sadly agree with her.

The problem with intelligence in the United States is our "leader" who had no foreign relation knowledge of his own. Bush ran for the office of presidency and misled the American public. But with all of his political ties, he just didn't seem to need any. During political debates he always had that stupid grin on his face and never knew any answers. I guess he showed us. Somehow he still managed to get elected president and ruin the entire United States with this stupidity.

**Sincerely,
R**

PS: BE MY GUEST AND USE IT. I BELIEVE PEOPLE ARE FINALLY STARTING TO GET THE PICTURE. IT SURE TOOK A LOT OF CONVINCING FOR SOME.

From: F
To: GI Special
Sent: Saturday, February 21, 2004 3:31 PM
Subject: Re: GI Special 2#30: Iraq Armed Election Protest

This is a critical piece of information.

I bought into the UN's position that elections could not be held that early, and as the general media down played the feelings of the opposition, I accepted the UN's report as reasonable, without any evaluation.

Many thanks for the update.

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