

GI SPECIAL 2#39



(Photo thanks to Ewa Jasiewicz)

**“I'm Not Going To Go Over To
Another Country And Die To
Produce More Oil For Someone
To Make Profits Off Of”**

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/jan-june04/military_3-10.html

From PBS Newshour Interviews

JIM LEHRER: Now, two perspectives on the Iraq story. The first is that of American soldiers rotating between the U.S. and Iraq. Betty Ann Bowser reports.

COL. KURT FULLER: Well, it's certainly a dangerous environment. I don't think it's as dangerous as you would think if all you did was watch the national news. Are soldiers shot at? Yep, they sure are. Are they shot at all the time, every day? No. I think a lot of the threats have been reduced significantly. Is it worth it? I don't know. History will judge that. But I think anyone who lost one of their loved ones in this fight can be proud that it was a good cause.

BETTY ANN BOWSER: This Ft. Bragg soldier disagrees. He asked the NewsHour to mask his identity because he fears his military career will be ruined for speaking out. He is not a member of the 82nd Airborne.

ANONYMOUS SOLDIER: We didn't have a mission. Once we got there we accomplished what we did... what we set out to accomplish, and we were just guarding ourselves. **Well, if all we're doing over there is guarding ourselves, why don't we just leave?**

BETTY ANN BOWSER: And what do you think, should we have left?

ANONYMOUS SOLDIER: I believe that we should leave. We went there under false pretenses to begin with, which I didn't know at the time.

BETTY ANN BOWSER: What do you mean?

ANONYMOUS SOLDIER: Well, we were told that there were some weapons of mass destruction over there. Well, we didn't find any; still haven't found any. So we went over there to try and get rid of those. But when we got over there, we didn't find any. Okay, well, we got rid of Saddam.

All right, well, I think we did our job, more than our job as soldiers, and now it's time for us to leave. I mean, we're not the world's police force. I'm not a conscientious objector, I'm a patriot, and I will die to defend this country. But I'm not going to go over to another country and die to produce more oil for someone to make profits off of.

Demonstrators Mobilize For Ft. Bragg Anti-War Rally March 20

3.11.04 Fayetteville Press, By Greg Barnes, Staff writer

Anti-war demonstrators from throughout the Southeast plan to hold a rally in Fayetteville on March 20, the first anniversary of the start of the war in Iraq.

The rally - and a march beforehand - is being billed as the largest anti-war protest in Fayetteville since the Vietnam War. Organizers include activist groups from across the state.

They say they expect at least 2,000 people to attend the rally at Rowan Park, the site of a 1970 anti-war protest led by actress Jane Fonda. Three days after that rally, someone set fire to Fayetteville's Quaker House, a resource center for soldiers looking for ways to get out of the military.

The Quaker House helped sponsor that rally, as well as this one. Although the organization's director, Chuck Fager, expects a peaceful rally next week, he said he is concerned about the potential for violence.

A group called Free Republic may be planning a counter demonstration at the park on the same day. Free Republic has approached Fayetteville police for a permit. "They have rights just like we do, as long as everybody can keep it peaceful," Fager said.

The Free Republic Web site offers a chat room in which a few members talked about the Fayetteville rally in what Fager termed "distortions" and "blatant falsehoods."

Part of a conversation said: "They don't care what stage the war is in; They just want to humiliate the families of our troops and our Commander-in-Chief. It really is low of them to pick on the families when their spouses and parents are not here to protect them. They love scaring kids, too." **(Actually, the paper got it wrong. The name of the group is "The Freak Republic," and as for any intentions they have of getting violent---they really better not fuck with vets. Many veterans of the armed forces are known to have training in self-defense.)**

Police Capt. Bill Simons said he has spoken with a member of Free Republic, which he said may send a small contingent to the rally. **Simons said he did not have a telephone number for the group member or a way to contact him. The group's Web site lists only an e-mail address in Fresno, Calif., but no one responded to a reporter's request for an interview.**

"I think it will be a peaceful rally accommodating both sides," Simons said. "I don't look at this as adversarial at all." Still, Simons said, police plan to keep the two groups separated, as they have done during other anti-war protests. Simons said he does not yet know how many police officers will be deployed, "But it will be sufficient manpower to handle the event."

The proposal for an anti-war rally grew out of a Jan. 24 meeting in Greensboro attended by members of peace groups from across the state. Among them was Lou Plummer, a leader of Fayetteville Peace with Justice, Veterans for Peace and Military Families Speak Out. The groups have joined in anti-war demonstrations at the Market House since the war began.

The contingent in Greensboro endorsed the Fayetteville rally and issued a statement saying it would concentrate on three themes: "We demand real support for the troops; money for jobs and education, not war and occupations; and the world still says no to war."

Organizers say the Fayetteville march and rally is part of an international Global Day of Action Against War and Occupation.

The group chose Fayetteville - home of Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base - by design.

"We're holding the march here in Fayetteville to show the world that there are military families and vets in solidarity with the millions of others who are negatively affected by war and occupation in Iraq and by its consequences at home," Plummer said in a statement.

The march is scheduled to begin at 11 a.m. at the Amtrak station downtown and proceed along Hay Street to Rowan Park. The rally begins at 1 p.m. and is expected to last about three hours.

Many of the speakers will be veterans against the war, including Plummer.

"There are a lot of vets and military family members who think this war is wrong," Plummer said. "We called Saddam evil for killing Iraqis, yet we are responsible for 8 to 10 thousand deaths ourselves, many of them innocent civilians. The 500-plus U.S. soldiers who have been killed and the thousands of wounded and disabled service members are victims of a government that does not care about them."

By having veterans speak, Plummer said, organizers hope to counter the mainstream thinking that the "peace movement is a bunch of left-wing people disconnected from reality."

"We are your neighbors," he said. "We are people who have served with you. This is our voice. This is what we want to say."

Other scheduled speakers include Elaine Johnson of Orangeburg, S.C., whose son was killed in Iraq, and Catherine Lutz, a University of North Carolina anthropology professor who has written a book about Fort Bragg's effect on Fayetteville.

Organizers say demonstrators will be coming by bus from major cities in North Carolina and the South.

They may not get a warm reception from many of Fayetteville's veterans.

Bob Bennett, president of Fayetteville's Retired Military Association, said people with the mind-set of the anti-war protesters are "not very good U.S. citizens." "This organization feels that the commander-in-chief is the commander-in-chief and is to be supported," Bennett said. **(Don't hold Bennett against Fayetteville. Every town has a town asshole.)**

Bennett and Jessie Johnson, president of the Fayetteville chapter of Disabled American Veterans, said they were not aware of the rally. Both said their members would not support it.

"They are going against our way of thinking," Johnson said. **(Good God, imagine that! Going against his "way of thinking." Next time he plans to try doing it, maybe he can sell tickets.)**

Fager and Plummer said they are aware of the opposition they face in Fayetteville, but they think Americans are beginning to believe that the war in Iraq is unjust and that soldiers should return home.

Fager supports his argument by pointing to the anti-war demonstrations around the Market House. Initially, he said, most passers-by objected to the protesters' views. Now, he said, their comments are largely favorable.

For more information: Lou Plummer, Fayetteville Peace with Justice and Military Families Speak Out, fayettevillepwj@nc.rr.com

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/>

"When I was in the military they gave me a medal for killing two men and a discharge for loving one."



US veteran Henry "Hank" Thomas sits besides the grave of Vietnam veteran Leonard P. Matlovich, whose head stone is adorned with two pink triangles and the inscription, "When I was in the military they gave me a medal for killing two men and a discharge for loving one," Congressional Cemetery in Washington, DC (AFP/Tim Sloan)

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

**Press Release No. 170-04:
To Friends & Family Known As**

Pfc. Bert E. Hoyer, Ellsworth, Wis., 23 Years Old

March 11, 2004 United States Department of Defense News Release No. 170-04

The Department of Defense announced today the death of a soldier who was supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Pfc. Bert E. Hoyer, 23, of Ellsworth, Wis., died March 10, in Baqubah, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device hit his convoy. Hoyer was assigned to the 652nd Engineer Company, U.S. Army Reserve, Ellsworth, Wis.

The incident is under investigation.

For further information related to this release, contact Army Public Affairs at (703) 692-2000.

(What “further information” do you suppose they have? His hopes, his dreams, who he dated in high school, where he hung out in Ellsworth, Wisconsin? Maybe what his room looks like, the one his folks kept just the same for him when he came home? How about his car? What do they do with it now?)

Another piece of “further information” would be useful: How many more dead for this Imperial war? And when is hard payback going to be collected from the Democrat and Republican politicians who pushed the war and sent Pfc. Bert E. Hoyer, 23, to his death? How about starting with Bush and Kerry, who want the troops to stay in Iraq and keep on dying?)

US Soldier Dies In Bomb Attack, Two More Wounded

3.11.04 BAGHDAD (Reuters) & CENTCOM Release Number: 04-03-05C

A U.S. soldier died from wounds suffered in a bomb attack northeast of the capital Baghdad, a senior U.S. military official said Thursday.

Brigadier-General Mark Kimmitt said three soldiers had been wounded by a homemade bomb west of the city of Baquba on Wednesday, and one had later died of those injuries.

The second Soldier is in stable condition and will be further evacuated to Walter Reed Army Medical Center, in Washington D.C. The third Soldier was treated for minor wounds and returned to duty.

Two U.S. Soldiers Killed In Convoy Attack Near Habbaniyah

Mar 11, 2004 BAGHDAD, Iraq (Reuters)

Two U.S. soldiers were killed when their vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb in Iraq on Thursday, the U.S. military said.

A statement by U.S. Central Command said another soldier was wounded in the attack on a convoy, near Habbaniyah, west of Baghdad. The soldiers were from the First Brigade Combat Team of Task Force All American.

The wounded soldier was medically evacuated to the 31st Combat Support Hospital and is in stable condition.

Ft. Bragg Airborne Soldier Dead: Another "Non-Hostile" Casualty

March 11, 2004 United States Department of Defense News Release No. 168-04

The Department of Defense announced today the death of a soldier who was supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Spc. Edward W. Brabazon, 20, of Philadelphia, Pa., died March 9 in Baghdad, Iraq, of a non-hostile gunshot wound. Brabazon was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C.

The incident is under investigation.

Two US Occupation Officials & Iraqi Translator Killed

3.10.04 HILLA, Iraq (AFP) - Two US government employees and their Iraqi interpreter were shot dead in central Iraq.

Attackers wearing Iraqi police uniforms shot the three after holding them up at a false checkpoint near Hilla, 100 kilometres (60 miles) south of Baghdad, on Tuesday, Polish military official Zdzislaw Gnatowski told AFP in Warsaw. "They stopped the car in which the two US civilian workers and their Iraqi interpreter were travelling at 8:00 pm (1700 GMT)," he said.

"They shot them on the spot. In their car, the soldiers discovered three bodies ... They also found arms."

Checkpoints manned by Iraqis or coalition forces are common on Iraq's main roads, and this appeared to be the first time resistance fighters wearing police uniforms have been involved.

In nearby Mosul, a police chief narrowly avoided an attempt on his life.

"Three unknown persons in a car opened fire on chief Abdel Azal Haffudi in the city centre. In the ensuing exchange of fire, one assailant was killed and two others injured," police Colonel Mohammad Abdallah Obeidi told AFP.

MORE:

Iraqi Police Suspected Of Killing U.S. Occupation Officials

Mar 12, 2004 BAGHDAD (Reuters)

Four Iraqi police were being held on suspicion of killing two American civilians and an Iraqi translator, all of whom worked for the U.S.-led administration, in an attack this week, a military spokesman said Friday.

"Six persons were detained as part of the incident. Four of those persons were carrying current and we believe valid Iraqi police service identification," Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt, deputy director of operations for the U.S. Army in Iraq, told a news conference.

U.S. occupation troops have been hiring and training Iraqi police in the hope that they could eventually take over the security of Iraq. **(Since the "security of Iraq" means stamping out the U.S. invasion and occupation, it would appear the cops were doing their jobs.)**

Asked about the U.S. military's screening process for Iraqi police, Dan Senior, chief spokesman for the American administration in Iraq, told the news conference:

"We have a very robust vetting process for all Iraqis that are hired or rehired into security services and while it is robust it is also not perfect." (Coffee can be "robust." People who work out at the gym can be "robust." Security procedures are either effective or ineffective. And when a foreign army occupies somebody else's country, there is no security process on earth that can stop the resistance from infiltrating the collaborators' army or police. The Iraqi public supports the resistance or it would have been wiped out long ago. End of discussion.)

Three US Soldiers Wounded In Kirkuk

(Kirkuk, Iraq-AP) March 10, 2004

The military says gunmen injured three soldiers near a stadium in the northern town of Kirkuk. The resistance soldiers escaped, and the wounded Americans were flown to Baghdad for treatment.

Iraq Firefight Kills Four Police; Italian Soldier Wounded

3.10.04 BAGHDAD (Reuters)

Four Iraqi policemen were killed in a midnight firefight which ended when Italian Carabinieri paratroopers stormed the offices of a security militia in Nassiriya, a coalition official said Wednesday.

One Italian and two Iraqi policemen were wounded in the incident in the southern town about 235 miles southeast of Baghdad.

The shootout in front of the offices of an authorized security organization, the Citizens Security Group (CSG), which protects political parties, began at around 10:30 p.m. Tuesday.

"The shootout, that lasted more than an hour, involved local police who allegedly tried to rescue two Iraqi citizens held illegally by the CSG," said Andrea Angeli, the coalition spokesman in Nassiriya.

He said Italian forces based nearby responded and were caught up in the firefight.

"The situation was brought under control at around 1:00 a.m. when Carabinieri special paratroopers stormed the CSG building, rescued the two alleged hostages and arrested eight members of the CSG," Angeli said.

TROOP NEWS

Imperial Army Runs Out Of Imperial Troops: 3rd ID Gets OIF III Orders: “Who’s Left?”

March 15, 2004 Army Times, Staff and wire reports

The 3rd Infantry Division, which spearheaded the assault on Baghdad, has been ordered to get ready to return to Iraq as early as November.

The March 4 announcement comes just six months after the last of the 3rd ID's soldiers returned to Fort Stewart, Ga., from the war. The announcement also came just three days after another alerting 18,000 National Guard soldiers that they, too, are likely to be deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom III.

The 3rd ID's next deployment is expected to fall in the November-February time frame.

"We already know that they're going [somewhere], especially here at Fort Stewart," said Kim James, whose husband, Sgt. 1st Class Joseph James, returned from Iraq in July. "You're lucky if they're here about a year without going anywhere."

The Army has few other options for future Iraq rotations than the 3rd Infantry Division, said Lt. Col. Chris Rodney, an Army spokesman at the Pentagon. "It's kind of simple math right now. Who's left?" he said. "There's no other division that is not moving right now or fully engaged."

(It was the 3rd ID that exploded in anger last summer when they got stuck in Iraq after being promised a quick trip home after the fall of Baghdad. It was the 3rd ID that came up with their own deck of cards, featuring Rumsfeld, Cheney and Bush Hats off to Rumsfeld for once again doing everything possible to promote an Army rebellion against this shit-eating Imperial war. The 3rd ID are not to be fucked with.)

Surprise, Surprise; You're Going To Iraq!

March 15, 2004 Army Times, Staff and wire reports

The Pentagon announced that 18,000 National Guard soldiers are likely to be deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom III.

The March 1 alert to the Guard units did come as a surprise to some. Several hundred soldiers who make up the 42nd Infantry Division's headquarters thought they were bound for the Bosnia/Kosovo Theater of operations.

The small National Guard unit, based in Troy, N.Y., plus three much larger National Guard enhanced brigades — the 256th Infantry Brigade from Louisiana, the 116th Cavalry Brigade from Idaho and Oregon, and the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment from Tennessee — will head to Iraq late this year or early next year. They will be part of about 100,000 active-duty and reserve troops expected to take over for the contingent just beginning a one-year tour in Iraq.

The Guard soldiers will be mobilized and trained over the next several months.

Gen. Tommy Franks Says 50,000 Dead American Soldiers Would Be "OK"

By Stan Cox, Reprinted from the Feb. 16-28 print edition of Counterpunch.

Retired General Tommy Franks (Ret'd) spoke at the annual Chamber of Commerce banquet here in Salina, Kansas, last Thursday night. Not being a Chamber-of-Commerce kind of guy, I wasn't in the audience. So I eagerly checked Friday's Salina Journal to learn whether General Franks, who led the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, had reflected on the human costs of those wars and weighed those costs against the results.

He described how he answers reporters who want to know whether the number of American lives lost in Iraq has been too high: "If it costs 500, that's OK, or 5000, OK, or 50,000, that's OK with me."

(Perhaps he would care to be the first of the 50,000? That's OK, that's OK with me.)

"Average" Officer Pockets \$115,000 A Year

March 8, 2004 By Bradley Graham, washingtonpost.com

"A lot of the extra money that the president is giving us is being soaked up not in hardware or structure, but in compensation," said Lt. Gen. Jerry Sinn, the Army's top budget officer.

Sinn cited figures showing that, on average, officer compensation has nearly doubled since 1990, from \$68,000 to \$115,000. (So, the less likely you are to have to fire a weapon or get killed or maimed in combat, the more money you pocket. That's capitalism at work: the shittier the job, the less you earn.)

Back On The Home Front War Support Drops Again

Wall St. Journal 3.12.04

29% of the public says Iraq war has gone "worse than expected"—nearly three times more than last year, just before Baghdad's fall.

Support for keeping troops in Iraq "as long as necessary" is at 48%, down from January's 56%.

Military Families Vs. The War: Organized Opposition Is Small, But Some See It As Historic

March 11, 2004 By Paula Span, Washington Post Staff Writer

EAST BRUNSWICK, N.J. -- On the night last month he learned that his son had died in Iraq, Richard Dvorin couldn't sleep. He lay in bed, "thinking and thinking and thinking," got up at 4 a.m., made a pot of coffee. Then he sat down at the kitchen table and wrote a letter to the president.

"Where are all the weapons of Mass Destruction?" Richard Dvorin demanded in his letter. "Where are the stockpiles of Chemical and Biological weapons?" His son's life, he wrote, "has been snuffed out in a meaningless war."

His is not the only military family to think so.

In Fullerton, Calif., paralegal student Kimberly Huff, whose Army reservist husband recently returned from Iraq, makes a similar point with a wardrobe of homemade protest T-shirts that say things like "Support Our Troops, Impeach Bush."

The number of military families that oppose Operation Iraqi Freedom, though never measured, is probably small. But a nascent antiwar movement has begun to find a toehold among parents, spouses and other relatives of active-duty, reserve and National Guard troops.

A group called Military Families Speak Out -- which will figure prominently in marches and vigils at Dover Air Force Base, Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the White House next week -- says more than 1,000 families have signed up online and notes that new members join daily. Other outspoken family members -- Dvorin, for example -- have never heard of the group but, for a variety of reasons, share its founders' conviction that the war is a "reckless military misadventure."

Most frequently cited, when military families explain their antiwar sentiments, is the absence to date of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. "They'd have these inspections and they'd find nothing," says Jenifer Moss, 29, of Lawton, Okla. **Her husband, Army Sgt. Keelan L. Moss, died in November when a missile downed his Chinook**

helicopter, leaving her with three children and the belief that "he was sent out there on a pretense."

They are also angry at the Bush administration's insistence that its policies are nonetheless justified. **Cherice Johnson's husband, Navy Corpsman Michael Vann Johnson Jr., was killed by a rocket-propelled grenade last March. "I'd love to say I back [the president] 100 percent, but I can't," she says, weeping during a telephone interview. "How many more people are going to die because he can't say, 'I'm sorry, I made a terrible mistake'?"**

In South Haven, Mich., Marianne Brown, 52, has joined the weekly peace vigil in front of the closest thing her small town has to a federal building: the post office. Most of the vigil-keepers -- who number 10 or 15 at most, shrinking to three or four stalwarts on the bitterest winter days -- hold a memorial photo of the faces of service members killed in Iraq. But Brown holds a photo of her stepson, Army Reserve Pvt. Michael Shepard, 21, an MP stationed west of Baghdad.

South Haven has not been uniformly receptive. Brown has had her Jeep scratched with a key. She's been shouted at when she goes to the bank. **She's been called a traitor. "It's kind of scary, but it's changing," she says. "We used to get a lot more attitude. Now we're getting more thumbs-ups. I think it's slowly seeping in that this [war] was based on something other than what we were told."**

When Seth Dvorin died, sympathetic Web sites picked up local newspaper stories about his divorced parents' outspoken responses. A few days after his funeral, his mother, Sue Niederer, was startled to get a call from a stranger in Columbus, Ohio. Jackie Donoghue has a son serving in the same region of Iraq and had looked up Niederer's phone number online. "I just wanted to console her," Donoghue says. "I wanted to tell her she wasn't alone, that other people with sons and daughters in the service feel the same way."

Even if the opponents represent only a sliver of military families, the emergence of organized antiwar opinion among this traditionally conservative group is something the country hasn't seen before, several historians and political scientists believe.

During the Vietnam War, a handful of Gold Star Mothers who had lost sons in the war marched with Vietnam Vets Against the War and other antiwar groups, says David Cline, now president of Veterans for Peace and an early member of Vietnam Vets. But there were only at most a couple of dozen such mothers, by his recollection, and they never created a nationwide network.

And those activists, like Vietnam Vets Against the War as a national group, arose years after the first American losses in Vietnam, by which point a considerable part of the public had already lost faith in the war. **For military families to organize against the Iraq war beforehand and during its first year, Cline observes, is like "Vietnam on speed."**

"This is unprecedented," says Ronald H. Spector, a military historian at George Washington University. "If military families are having serious doubts about the

war and don't see a reason for their relatives to go over there, that's quite significant."

How much influence they may have is another question. Small minorities can have political impact, says Duke University political scientist Peter Feaver, a former National Security Council staffer. **They can gain public and media attention because "they can presume to speak with greater moral authority. . . . The picture of an angry father can resonate in a way it doesn't when it's somebody else."**

Feaver doesn't expect antiwar military families to make much of a difference yet on their own. For one thing, they don't all share the same goal. Military Families Speak Out has called for a full troop withdrawal, but some non-member families believe the best tribute to their lost soldiers is to ensure that Iraq gets stabilized and rebuilt. But "if what we're seeing is the beginnings of a cancer of doubt," Feaver adds, "that could have serious consequences."

That loved ones risked their lives -- or lost them -- for an unjust cause, as some family members contend, is a difficult view for anyone with a military connection to express.

The military culture strongly discourages questioning a war while troops are in the field. Several relatives interviewed for this story asked that the names of their service members not be published, lest they suffer repercussions.

Jose Caldas, 44, a systems analyst in Atlanta, lost his nephew, Army Capt. Ernesto Blanco, 28, in December; a homemade bomb detonated as his Humvee passed. Caldas's son, Alec, 22, is in the Army Signal Corps at Fort Bragg and expects to be deployed to Iraq as well. Jose Caldas, a Navy veteran, has been writing his U.S. senators and representative to urge that the country's leaders be held accountable for what he deems a dreadful miscalculation.

Kimberly Huff, of the antiwar T-shirts, no longer attends meetings of the Family Readiness Group in Riverside, Calif., which supports relatives of her husband's Army Reserve unit. She was an active member for 10 months, until her shirts, and the interviews she gave at an antiwar rally in Los Angeles, made her "kind of a black sheep," Huff says. "They stopped calling to see how I was. . . . I was kind of ignored at meetings." Now she feels more alone, though unrepentant.

And hurt feelings may increase as the presidential election nears. Many of these family members, even those with no history of political involvement, say they'll work to defeat Bush in November.

John Bugay Jr., 44, a suburban Pittsburgh marketing writer and self-described conservative who hasn't voted for a Democratic presidential candidate since 1980, is sufficiently disillusioned by the war that he spent eight bucks to register the domain name republicansforkerry.org. "I felt betrayed by this president's administration," Bugay says. "He didn't count the costs."

Such sentiments have caused a stir at his evangelical Christian church; they also caused a public argument with his wife, an Army reservist who spent five months in Iraq, at a neighborhood birthday party. Now they don't discuss the war either.

Richard Dvorin has not received a reply to the letter he sent the president about his son, Seth. He doesn't expect to. But Sue Niederer, Seth Dvorin's mother, eventually learned about Military Families Speak Out and will join its march at Dover Air Force Base on Sunday.

It's one of the few places where she can say of her son, "He died a hero, but he died in vain" -- and people will understand how she feels.

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.

Getting Priorities Right: Troops Short Body Armor? Humvees Unarmored Turkeys? Marine Corps Improving Death Notice System!

By Tony Perry Times Staff Writer Los Angeles Times, 3.12.04

In anticipation of casualties as U.S. Marines return to Iraq this month, Marine Corps officials have streamlined their process for notifying the families of troops who are killed or injured.

Lt. Gen. James T. Conway, commander of the Camp Pendleton-based 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, said an updated computer software program will send information from the field to the Marine's home base before the news is released to reporters in Baghdad or at the Pentagon.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

An Amazing Coincidence: Aide To Shiite Anti-Occupation Cleric Shot;

He Condemns U.S., Israel & Baath Regime And Had Been Demanding Immediate Elections

March 12, 2004 BAGHDAD, Iraq (CNN)

Gunmen shot and wounded an aide of an influential Shiite Muslim cleric heading to Friday prayers in the holy city of Najaf, sources said.

Sheikh Fuad al-Turafi, a spokesman for followers of cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, was shot in the head on the way to the Kufa mosque in the south-central Iraqi city, where al-Sadr was leading services.

Al-Sadr is a strong critic of the U.S. presence in Iraq. He has a huge following in Sadr City, an impoverished Baghdad neighborhood formerly known as Saddam City.

Another man traveling with al-Turafi also was wounded, sources said.

During Friday prayers, al-Sadr criticized the U.S.-backed interim constitution signed Monday. Al-Sadr called the constitution the "sale of Iraq" and "a stamp of shame" for those who signed it. He demanded all parties veto the document and endorse a new one.

Al-Sadr said the Baghdad and Karbala attacks have "left a big impact on our hearts" and said he wants revenge for the killings.

He said Iraq's main enemies are the United States, Israel and the Baathists, the ruling party under Saddam Hussein's regime.

In Baghdad, more than 1,000 Shiite worshippers prayed and listened to speakers who protested recent events.

"Islam is threatened by the time bomb that is the interim constitution," read one banner. **Another said, "The democracy of the Governing Council is a new one; it adopts the view of the minority and rejects the view of the majority."**

The crowd also chanted against Israel and the United States.

The worshippers were mostly followers of Ayatollah Sheikh Mohammed Yaqoobi, an independent cleric based in Najaf who was raised on the principles of al-Sadr's father, Mohammed Al-Sadr, whom Saddam killed.

A sheik read out some demands from Yaqoobi. He said that the transitional law should not form the basis of a permanent constitution, that the permanent constitution should not oppose Islamic law **and that elections need to be prepared immediately.**

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/>

Two Iraqi Cops Gunned Down In Al-Qayim

March 11, 2004 news.com.au, From correspondents in Baghdad

TWO Iraqi police officers were shot dead today by armed gunmen in a restaurant in the town of Al-Qayim near the Syrian border, the local police chief said.

Armed men with masks shot dead the two officers as they were seated at a table in a town restaurant at 1.20pm (2120 AEDT)," Ahmed Hussein said from Fallujah, west of Baghdad.

He said the six attackers fled and had not been caught.

Iraqi Employee of VOA Killed in Baghdad

By Associated Press, March 10, 2004

WASHINGTON -- **Selwan Abdelghani Medhi al-Niemi, an Iraqi who worked as a freelance translator in Baghdad for the Voice of America**, was shot to death last Friday by unknown assailants while driving home from a relative's house, the VOA said.

A motive for the killings has not been determined, a VOA statement said. (Anybody care to take a wild guess?)

Two Iraqi Occupation Employees Shot Dead

11/03/2004. ABC News Online Reuters

Two Iraqi women working for contractors employed by the US-led forces occupying Iraq were killed as they were returning to their homes in the southern city of Basra, a military official said.

A spokesman for British forces in the city said the two women were working with a contracting firm that handles a range of logistics and support services for US-led forces in Iraq, without elaborating on the circumstances of their deaths.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Got That Right

B writes: "Iraq is another Vietnam and Haiti is another Iraq."

ANOTHER REAL BAD PLACE TO BE



BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW

US Marines occupy entrance to Port-Au-Prince's industrial park. (AFP/Yuri Cortez)

How To Walk And Chew Gum At The Same Time

Insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation fights the oppressor, we are always, in every case, and more strongly than anyone else, in favour, for we are the staunchest and most consistent enemies of oppression. But insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation stands for its own bourgeois nationalism, we stand against. We fight against the privileges and violence of the oppressor nation, and do not in any way condone the strivings for privileges on the part of the oppressed nation. V. Lenin, The Right Of Nations To Self-Determination, April 1914

OCCUPATION REPORT

The Better Things Are The Worse They Get, As History Is Made In Iraq

By Robert Fisk, - Baghdad: 03/10/04: "The Independent"

They used King Feisel's old table to sign the document, the desk upon which Winston Churchill's choice as monarch once tried - not very successfully, it has to be said - to rule Iraq.

It was supposed to be a special day in Iraqi history. Twenty-five local leaders - most television reports spared viewers the uncomfortable "American-appointed" qualification - dutifully signed their new and temporary constitution. Veiled ladies and tribal sheikhs, some good men and true but also a convicted fraudster, Ahmed Chalabi, scribbled their signatures in front of the US proconsul Paul Bremer on Monday.

You could almost hear him sighing in relief. For the constitution - it is only temporary and contains plenty of unanswered questions - is supposed to be America's get-out clause. As long as the 25 men and women signed their names, Washington could hand over "sovereignty" to them on June 30, well before US presidential elections in November. That, at least, is the plan.

On Monday we were spared the string quartet and the children's choir of last week's aborted ceremony - but not the violence.

For many Baghdadis, the day began as it did for me, instinctively ducking as a tremendous explosion clattered over the city. I was trying to make a phone call when the first rocket exploded on the police station near Andalos Square. I heard the firing of the weapon, a dull thump, and then the swish of the missile overhead.

By the time I reached the cops' headquarters, the road was packed with angry young men and screaming ambulances. There was another thump and another powerful impact as a second rocket hit a civilian home in a cloud of grey smoke.

At the Ibn el-Nafis Hospital, the little boy wounded in the house was writhing in agony, next to Sergeant Abbas Jalil Hussein of the Iraqi police force.

"I was just washing my hands in order to say my morning prayers," he said. "I heard this tremendous noise, and then I felt the blood on my leg and realised I was wounded." **At this point, a member of the hospital's management - under the standing instructions of the American-appointed health minister - interrupted to say I had no business to be in the ward. This wasn't the day to be reporting on suffering Iraqis, certainly not a day for dangerous folk like journalists to be counting the statistics of violence.**

So I set off to the home of an Iraqi businessman, a Christian, to watch America's dreams come true, praying he would have electricity to power his television set. His generator

thumped out just enough juice to run it. The screen dipped and waved and shimmered, but there they were, one by one, stepping up to King Feisel's chair, applauded and beaming, unelected men and women of the Governing Council signing a temporary constitution which, in theory at least, guarantees freedom of speech and assembly: a flurry of brown robes, sparkling pens, blue suits and veils.

Most Iraqis are more interested in electricity than constitutions which may be one reason why the details of this particular document have not exactly been discussed in the street.

Iraqis have been puzzled by the clause allowing Iraqis two passports and the right of restitution of property if they have been exiled. Did this refer to opponents of Saddam or the tens of thousands of Jewish Iraqis driven from Baghdad more than four decades ago? **Were Israelis born in Baghdad to be given Iraqi passports and return? Why shouldn't they, I asked my Christian friend? Fair enough, he said. But would the Americans then support the return of Palestinians driven from their homes in what is now Israel in 1948?**

In the end, the signing ceremony was pomp without much circumstance. Bremer - the man who was supposed to be an expert in "counter-terrorism" when he was appointed by President Bush and is reported as saying that he will retire on June 30 - sent a letter of congratulations to the 25 men and women.

Then came the usual off-the-record briefings from his spokespersons. We could expect more violence now the document had been signed. There would be an increase in attacks up to June 30. It was the same old story: the better things are, the worse they get.

(For more see the article "Is Iraq Headed For A Civil War?" at www.socialistworker.org.)

US Holding 10,000 Iraqis Prisoner, Age 11 And Up; "Iraq Has Turned Into One Big Guantanamo"

07 March 2004 Aljazeera.Net

More than 10,000 Iraqi men and boys are being kept in jail by their US occupiers, with the youngest captive being just 11 years old.

According to the New York Times on Sunday, one village north of Baghdad is now completely devoid of men – even grandfathers as old as 75 make it to the detention centres.

In Abu Sifa, it is only women who till the fields, care for children, guard their homes and carry the heavy sacks of grapefruit to market.

Few know where their relatives are being held.

A US move to post some names on the internet has proved largely useless, with few having access to a computer.

One villager, Fadil Abd Al-Hamid told the newspaper: "It took the Americans five minutes to take my son. It has taken me more than three weeks to find him."

Adil Allami, a lawyer with the Human Rights Organisation of Iraq, said security detainees had essentially no rights.

None have lawyers, and most are denied visits.

"Iraq has turned into one big Guantanamo," Allami said, referring to the United States military prison in Cuba where hundreds of suspects are being held, mostly without charges.

Military officials said some of the detainees had been accused of serious offenses, including shooting down helicopters and planting roadside bombs.

However, these same officials acknowledge that most of the people captured are probably not dangerous.

Of a recent batch of cases reviewed by military judges, they recommended that 963 of 1166 detainees be released.

Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt, the deputy director of operations from occupation forces, said "We don't want to arrest an entire village and come out with one rifle", **but with 10,000 arrested this is exactly what has happened in some regions.**

Under international law, the US occupation authorities have the right to detain anyone who poses a security threat, even without enough evidence to prosecute.

But because the security threat did not end on 1 May, when major combat was declared over, detentions have continued long after the Iraqi army was routed.

Now the occupation is scheduled to end on 30 June, when sovereignty is to be handed to a US-sanctioned Iraqi government.

Officials say it is unclear how that will affect the status of detainees. (Unfortunately, it appears unlikely they will be freed and replaced by Bremer, Abizaid, and the rest of the Bush Occupation scum.)

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

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