

GI SPECIAL 2#40

HOW MANY MORE FOR BUSH'S WAR?



Fernando Suarez Del Solar Navarro, of San Diego, Calif., at Dover AFB, Dover, Del. March 14. He holds a poster of his son Lance Cpl. Jesus A Suarez Del Solar, killed in Iraq. His father was among marchers urging an end to the Iraq war. (AP Photo/Gary Emeigh)

Sgt. Defies Bush: Won't Go Back To Iraq

First Iraqi Veteran To Refuse Further Iraq Duty Going Public Monday

3.15.04 From: Citizen Soldier, New York, NY, (212) 679-2250, Tod Ensign, (917) 374-1678 (day of event)

Monday, March 15, 2004, at 11:00 a.m.

The Peace Abbey: 2 N. Main Street, Sherborn, MA, near Natick. (See directions below).

The following people will speak:

Staff Sgt. Camilo Mejia, 28, of Miami, FL. Fought from March-October 2003 in Iraq with then activated Florida National Guard. After returning home on leave, he decided, for reasons he'll explain today, not to return to Iraq. He will surrender to the military in Boston today.

Maritza Castillo, mother, of Miami, FL.

Carlos Godoy Mejia, father, noted Nicaraguan songwriter and performer.

Detroit Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, will be present to express support.

Louis Font, Mejia's civilian defense attorney, of Brookline, MA

Fernando Suarez del Solar, his Marine son killed in Iraq.

Representatives of the following groups will also speak briefly in support of Sgt. Mejia and other Iraq war refusers: **Veterans for Peace, Military Families Speak Out, & The Peace Abbey.**

Directions: from Boston: Mass. Tpke (90W) to 95S, exit 16W to Sherborn. At T intersection, turn left onto 27S (still 16W). The Peace Abbey is ¼ mile down 27 on the left. From NY: I95N to 495N. Exit at 109E. Take 109E to 27N to stop sign when entering town of Sherborn. First right after stop sign.

Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward this E-MAIL along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, at home and in Iraq, and information about other social protest movements here in the USA. **Send requests to address up top. For copies on web site see:**<http://www.notinourname.net/gi-special/>

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

Bomb Attacks Kill Four U.S. Soldiers in Baghdad

Mar 14, 2004. By Andrew Marshall, BAGHDAD (Reuters)

Bomb attacks in Baghdad killed four U.S. soldiers, the Army said on Sunday, bringing to nine the number of troops killed in Iraq in the last four days by explosives planted by guerrillas to target American patrols.

A military spokesman said a roadside bomb blast in southern Baghdad around 10:45 p.m. (1945 GMT) on Saturday killed three U.S. soldiers and wounded one.

Another bomb attack at 6:30 a.m. on Sunday wounded an American soldier who later died in hospital, the spokesman said.

The U.S. military says most insurgents fighting occupying forces are still Iraqi.

Welcome To Iraq: Roadside Bomb Kills Two U.S. Replacement Soldiers, Wounds Four More In Tikrit

March 12, 2004 By Paul Garwood, ASSOCIATED PRESS

TIKRIT, Iraq – A roadside bomb in Tikrit killed two American soldiers and wounded four Saturday.

The soldiers killed Saturday were patrolling in downtown Tikrit, north of Baghdad, around 5 a.m. in an armored Humvee when a roadside bomb exploded, said Capt. Tim Crowe of the U.S. Army.

The blast destroyed the vehicle. Crowe said small arms fire erupted in the same area shortly before the explosion, possibly to distract the soldiers.

The four wounded soldiers were evacuated to a military hospital north of Tikrit. It was not immediately clear how serious their injuries were.

The soldiers were from the army's 1st Infantry Division's 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, which is taking over security in the Tikrit area on Saturday.

TROOP NEWS

Maine Commanders To Deploy Suicide Squads Called “Civic Action Platoons”

March 15, 2004 By Robert Hoderne, Army Times staff writer

RAMADI, Iraq — As the 82nd Airborne Division packed its gear and prepared to turn over the hostile Sunni Triangle west of Baghdad to U.S. Marines, its commander, Maj. Gen. Chuck Swannack, worked to play down a feud that certain leathernecks instigated in a leaked memo.

The Marines have said they plan to put Civil Action Platoons inside Iraqi towns, something the Army has not done. Army Civil Affairs Teams make visits to Fallujah, for example, in the company of heavily armed convoys, and they do not live in the town. (They frequently die in it, however.)

Swannack said the Marines “have to establish the conditions for [the platoons] to be able to go out in the towns. **(Like cloaks of invisibility, for a start.)**”

Swannack and his paratroopers worked hard at building up the police and a newly created militia, the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps. But he hasn’t made the progress for which he had hoped.

“Probably the most distressing part of my job here is going and telling the police and the ICDC that I don’t have the trucks or the radios or ... the body armor for them,” he said.

Lt. Col. Russell Back Babbling Bullshit Again

March 12, 2004 By Paul Garwood, ASSOCIATED PRESS

On Monday, U.S. troops arrested one current and two former ICDC soldiers for selling weapons to insurgents and carrying out bomb attacks on the homes of Iraqis cooperating with American forces in Tikrit, north of Baghdad.

Lt. Col. Steve Russell, a battalion commander in Tikrit, said infiltration is "not a major problem."



Jane Bright, of West Hills, Calif., reads to a crowd gathered outside the north gate of Dover Air Force Base, March 14, 2004, in Dover, Del., **during a protest of the Iraq war. Bright attended to honor her son, Army Sgt. Evan Ashcraft, 24, who was killed in Iraq on July 24, 2003. Her husband, James Bright, is at right, holding his stepson's photograph.** (AP Photo/Gary Emeigh)

“Welcome Home Soldier, Now Get Your Ass Back To The Imperial Slaughterhouse”

3.12.04 By ROBERT BURNS, AP Military Writer

WASHINGTON - The Army is spread so thin around the globe that when it needs fresh combat troops for Iraq this fall it will have little choice but to call on the same soldiers who led the charge into Baghdad last spring.

Some of the same Marines who teamed up with the 3rd Infantry to topple Baghdad are already assembling again in Kuwait, only a matter of months after returning home, and more Marines will go next year.

Other Army units that recently returned to the United States or are preparing to come home this spring, including the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, Ky., and the 4th Infantry Division at Fort Hood, Texas, are candidates for a quick turnaround.

The Army has not announced which will join the 3rd Infantry in the next rotation, although it has notified three National Guard brigades and a National Guard division headquarters that they are likely to go in early 2005.

One 3rd Infantry soldier, Sgt. 1st Class Eric Wright, put it this way in Iraq last June: "What was told to us was that we would fight and win and go home."

"At some point we'll go back," said Maj. Gen. David Petraeus, commander of the 101st Airborne. **He said it also was possible his troops would be sent to Afghanistan next instead of Iraq. (Now there's some really cheery fucking news.)** The 101st played a major role in the initial invasion of Iraq and **has only just returned home.**

The Army also is relying more heavily on the National Guard and Reserve to maintain a combat force in Iraq. Brigades from North Carolina, Arkansas and Washington state are there or soon will be en route, as part of the 2004 rotation of forces.

Another three brigades, from Tennessee, Louisiana and Idaho — plus a division headquarters from the New York National Guard — have been alerted that they probably will be sent to Iraq in the next rotation, in early 2005.

(Obviously unless the troops act, this bullshit will go on forever. For some clues, see the chapter "The GI's Revolt" in Jonathan Neale's book about Vietnam, [The American War](#). It describes in some detail how the mass movement of soldiers against the last big Imperial war got organized, took action, and led directly to the U.S. defeat that brought the troops home. It is not necessary to re-invent the wheel.)

Mentally Ill Troops Sent To Iraq; Assistant SecDef Caught In Stupid Lie: Troops Not Warned About Suicide Drug Army Gave Them

3/12/2004 By Mark Benjamin, United Press International

WASHINGTON, March 12 (UPI) -- **The Army appears to have "inappropriately" deployed soldiers to Iraq who already were diagnosed with mental problems, according to documents obtained by United Press International.**

More than two dozen suicides by U.S. troops in Iraq, and hundreds of medical evacuations for psychiatric problems, have raised concerns about the mental health of soldiers in Operation Iraqi Freedom. **An Army Medical Department after-action**

report obtained by UPI suggests that the Army sent some soldiers to war who were mentally unfit in the first place.

"Variability in predeployment screening guidelines for mental health issues may have resulted in some soldiers with mental health diagnoses being inappropriately deployed," the report said.

"Perhaps stricter predeployment screening is required to keep at-risk soldier from deploying," the report said. That would help in "identifying soldiers that may become non-functional in theater due to mental health problems." ("Perhaps?")

A number of veterans' advocates say signs of widespread mental problems among soldiers from Iraq shock them -- one in 10 soldiers evacuated from the war on terror to an Army hospital in Germany were sent solely for mental problems.

Steve Robinson, executive director of the veterans' National Gulf War Resource Center said **"It is time to stop having congressional hearings on what needs to be done and have the Department of Defense step up to the plate and perform the screenings as required by law."**

Statistics show that a soldier who had mental health problems when he was deployed would be at much greater risk for suicide in Iraq. According to the American Association of Suicidology, the suicide risk among people with depression is 30 times that of the general population. About two-thirds of those who take their lives have a depressive disorder at the time of their death, the society says.

One drug used by the Pentagon to prevent malaria in Iraq, Lariam, is unsuitable for people with mental problems, according to the Food and Drug Administration.

Assistant Secretary of Defense William Winkenwerder Jr. told Congress Feb. 25 that soldiers are carefully "screened" for mental problems before taking Lariam.

"Now we follow all the FDA guidelines for using this medication," Winkenwerder said. "Every service member is screened and receives information about possible side effects before taking this product. That's our policy, and that's what should be done."

In a number of interviews by United Press International with soldiers who served there over the past year, none said they had been screened for mental problems before taking the drug or received any warning of possible side effects. While some soldiers still had leftover Lariam pills, none of their medical records reflected use of the drug.

The FDA warns that *Lariam can cause thoughts of suicide, depression, anxiety, paranoia, delusions and psychosis that can occur long after taking the drug.*

**Raped Soldier Condemns Command:
"They Acted Like They Didn't Even Care"**

The Associated Press 3/12/2004

SEATTLE (AP) — A soldier who said she was raped at a desert post in Kuwait said the Army initially denied her counseling and asked her to take a polygraph.

Sgt. Audra Wood said in an interview with Dateline NBC that after the alleged attack last November, **Army officials told her the best therapy was to get back in line with the rest of the unit, which was preparing for its mission in Iraq.**

"I felt abandoned. They acted like they didn't even care," Wood said in a portion of the interview broadcast Thursday night on Seattle's NBC affiliate, KING-5.

COMPLETELY FUTILE EXERCISE



BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE!

US troops frisk motorists at a mobile checkpoint in Baghdad, Iraq March 12, 2004. **US troops and Iraqis working for the Coalition forces are the target of almost daily attacks by insurgents.** (AP Photo/Hadi Mizban)

Fear Within The Ranks: Time To “Weed Out” Commanders

March 15, 2004 Editorial, Army Times

There's growing anger on Capitol Hill and in society about reports of American troops sexually assaulting fellow service members in Iraq.

Too bad service leaders don't seem to share that anger.

Instead, they seem more focused on damage control than on cracking down on sex crimes both in the war zone and at home.

In congressional testimony Feb. 25, military leaders admitted that sexual assaults — at least 112 at that point, across all four services — have been a problem in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The problem has gotten so bad that some women have resorted to using “battle buddies” on trips to the bathroom — both day and night — rather than risk being caught alone and off guard.

Soldiers should not have to fear their fellow soldiers. Marines should not have to fear their fellow Marines.

Yet, while the services' vice chiefs of staff, who testified at the hearing, may well be embarrassed by those facts, they do not appear to recognize the seriousness of the charge. They sounded defensive, stressing that the numbers are on the decline, rather than addressing what's being done now to ensure that women at forward operating bases need fear no one but the enemy.

Many sexual assault victims suffer in silence, too embarrassed or afraid to come forward. Blaming the victim is still common in this day and age, as evidenced by last year's sexual assault and rape scandal at the Air Force Academy.

Dozens of attacks went unreported over the years. And many of the women who did come forward were punished for more minor infractions while their assault allegations went uninvestigated.

Other victimized female service members have been stranded without ready access to medical care, such as tests for pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, or to counsel from a victim advocate, chaplain or attorney.

Strong and certain action needs to be taken immediately to end these sexual assaults, to put teeth behind the Pentagon's “zero tolerance” rhetoric.

Adding a new layer of bureaucracy to the Pentagon is not the answer. But the group's proposals for the small-unit level do make sense.

Senior leaders, meanwhile, must spearhead an aggressive effort to weed out commanders who turn a blind eye to sexual assaults in their units. (Lots of luck. “Senior leaders” are not about to go after their housebroken pets.)

Zero tolerance must be aggressively enforced for sexual assaults. The conditions in which they are allowed to go unreported, uninvestigated and unpunished must be eliminated.

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.

Command “Senior Leaders” Lying To Congress; Killing Unequipped Soldiers; But Have Money For Corporations Supplying Pretty New Uniforms

Letter To The Editor
Army Times 3.15.04

Why are we throwing money at solders who are forced to stay in a country to defend the rights of people who smile and wave one minute and fire rocket-propelled grenades at you the next?

How about equipping soldiers for the fight?

Instead of giving them that extra \$1,000, we should give them body armor, not an old frag vest from the Vietnam War. Or how about the improved M16/M5 some hard-core units have but the average Joes never seem to get? Or some night-vision goggles so they can see where the bullets are coming from?

How about providing armor for vehicles instead of lying to Congress, saying we have the armor when we don't have it and probably never will.

We need to start focusing more on how we outfit our solders and less on throwing money at solders who never will see it.

The sad facts are that if a soldier wants to be equipped for the desert, he will have to go to Ranger Joe's and buy the necessary gear. That is where he will use the \$1,000 bonus — ordering a good vest, sand goggles and some real desert boots because the ones he was issued fell apart long before he saw that hot desert sun. It's like my old drill used to say: “It's investing in your future.” In this case, if you don't invest, you might not have a future.

There is too much red tape in our upper military management over simple stuff and not enough back-to-basics decisions.

It seems that every chief wants to make his contribution to the Army by changing the standard uniform; it's one bad decision after another. Now the next great decision is to change the Class As from green to blue. **I wonder why we have the money to change a uniform that is seldom worn by most soldiers, but when we need to buy body armor and armor for the trucks, we just don't have the money to get it done.**

Are we really making the right decisions that affect the sons and daughters of our great nation?

Staff Sgt. James A. Dawson
Fort Benning, Ga.

“Senior Leaders”? No, Just Disgusting Privilege- Grabbing Pigs

Letter To The Editor
Army Times, March 15, 2004

The Feb. 16 “Pvt. Murphy’s Law” cartoon brought to mind a nagging thought I’ve had in the back of my mind for the past few months: reserved parking for senior leaders.

I’ve been back in the United States after serving four years overseas — a year in South Korea and three years in Germany. I’ve been traveling to different installations for the past several months, and I’m noticing it here in the states a great deal more than I did overseas.

From the commissary to the post exchange, there are more parking spots reserved for general officers, command sergeants major, garrison commanders and other senior leaders than for disabled patrons or expectant and new mothers.

Although rank does indeed have its privileges, **these parking spaces often go unused as women in their third trimester of pregnancy walk from the rear of the parking lot, huffing and puffing the whole way. I’ve also seen soldiers walking to the PX from the rear of the parking lot, precariously balancing on one leg and a set of crutches.**

I would like to think post commanders, general officers and their sergeants major would be willing to relinquish their privilege to soldiers and family members who may need it more than they do. **(Get real Sgt. Scum like this don’t give a shit for anything but their own power, position and privileges. That’s how they get to be “senior leaders,” kissing ass while fucking over the ranks below.)**

Staff Sgt. Mike Lavigne
Burke, Va.

Guard Troops Hammered Again; Endless Deployments, Forced To Sell Homes, Lose Jobs; Shitbrain Maj. General Says Troops “Honored” To Get Fucked Over

March 15, 2004 By Laura Bailey, Army Times Staff Writer

A rotation to a combat zone is a big sacrifice for any soldier, but these days a deployment can mean forfeiting more if you're a National Guardsman . Sometimes much more: **Giving up a dream home, losing a job, time away from home, forfeiting time with family.**

Soldiers with the Guard's 39th Infantry Brigade (Separate) have spent the last four months away from their families and civilian jobs — yet their time in Iraq hasn't even started.

“A lot of them, myself included, are still kind of stunned,” said Staff Sgt. William Hardin of Prescott, Ark. “I was expecting to get a six-month rotation to the Sinai or something. I don't think the powers that be understand the effect that it's going to have.”

Hardin is referring to the 18 months the soldiers will be away from home. Since October, the brigade has been training at Fort Hood, Texas, and Fort Polk, La. In mid-March, it will deploy to Iraq for 12 months on the ground. *With a scheduled two-month stay at Fort Hood after that, that makes 18 months away from home.*

With little time allowed for family visits, the separation is roughly six months longer than for most active-duty troops, who spend most of their train-up and reset time at home posts.

Some of the brigade's 4,200 soldiers are on their third deployment since 1999, brigade commander Brig. Gen. Ronald Chastain said.

“Some of them are wondering ‘How often will I have to do this?’ but it's certainly an honor to be selected because they're going to select the ones they think can do the job well,” Brig. Gen. Chastain said. (This asshole gets the big bucks, so he can mouth this lying bullshit about “honor” and laugh all the way to the bank.)

Many professionals within the unit will be giving up higher-paying jobs for the duration of the deployment. College students will have to wait longer to graduate. Business owners have had to shut up shop and others are taking a financial hit.

For 1st Lt. Michael Singer, 35, the mobilization meant giving up the place he and his wife made a home. Singer, a physician's assistant both in his civilian job and with the Guard, said he was forced to sell his home in Laredo, Texas, because he could no longer afford the mortgage on his first lieutenant's salary.

Pentagon Officials Attack Reservists Benefits; “We Are Fed Up With Leaders Whining”

March 15, 2004, By Rick Maze, Army Times staff writer

Senior Pentagon officials are making a concerted effort to dampen bipartisan fervor for improving military pay and benefits, especially for reservists and retirees.

“We discourage the expansion of entitlements and the creation of new ones,” said David S.C. Chu, undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, in March 2 testimony before a Senate subcommittee.

Steve Strobridge of The Military Officers Association of America, one of many military and veterans' groups pushing Congress to improve benefits, was critical of Chu's views.

“We are fed up with defense and budget leaders whining about the cost of doing the right thing,” Strobridge said. “It seems like they don't see retirees as anything other than a line on the debit sheet. The Department of Defense has been more than willing to extract ever-increasing sacrifices from military people for decades. Now, they want to act like they don't have an obligation to treat them fairly in retirement.”

Strobridge was equally upset with the Pentagon's opposition to improving reserve benefits. “Reservists are getting all of the penalties for being on active duty and none of the rewards,” he said.

That's Why They Made Him A Lt. Col.

March 15, 2004, By Vince Crawley, Army Times staff writer, KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

Army Lt. Col. Robert Duffy, a civil-affairs officer who until recently headed the team, said his people get constant feedback on their efforts due to their daily contact with the locals.

“You get to a village where they don't wave, or where they throw rocks, that tells us something,” Duffy said.

BUSH ALLY GETS ASS WHIPPING: SPANISH TROOPS PROMISED END OF IRAQ DUTY



Socialist Party supporters celebrate victory in Spain's general elections March 14, 2004. THEY OPPOSED INVASION OF IRAQ AND HAVE PROMISED TO BRING ALL SPANISH TROOPS HOME (AP Photo/Anja Niedringhaus)

Take This Eval And Shove It! How One Soldier Got The Shaft But Fought Back And Won

March 15, 2004, By Jane McHugh, Army Times staff writer

Master Sgt. Joseph Born had been a squared-away soldier for more than three decades. he had spent most of his life in the Army and was ready to sign up for another four years.

But a few quick strokes of a rater's pen nearly sank his career.

An unwarranted negative rating on an evaluation report, signed off on by an inattentive superior, set off four frustrating years in a struggle to set the record straight.

For soldiers who never have had the experience of being burned by an eval, Born's is a cautionary tale of the fragile nature of one's career fortunes. Those who have felt the sting of an unfair eval can take a measure of satisfaction from one soldier's hard-earned redemption.

“Master Sgt. Born could have just thrown up his hands and said, ‘That’s it!’ “ said John Wickham, the lawyer he eventually hired to help him fight for his career. “And he’d be out of the Army right now.”

But he didn’t quit. And he’s still in uniform, up for promotion, which could happen in the coming weeks.

Born’s ordeal began in Sept. 1999. A full-time Army Reserve soldier for more than 20 years, he was an operations noncommissioned officer at the I Corps NCO Academy, Fort Lewis, Wash. His responsibilities included qualifying academy instructors, administering the Army Physical Fitness Test and coordinating scheduling for ranges and training areas.

His performance in those and all other duties of a senior NCO — as well as his promotion potential — were up for annual review.

At 55 with a record of solid performance, he felt good about his odds for retiring as a sergeant major.

He was stunned, however, when, when his rater tarred him with an overall performance mark of “marginal.”

It was the first bureaucratic blunder of many more to come. Ultimately, these errors would drag Born to the brink of a discharge he didn’t want, and plunge him into personal despair and undeserved professional disgrace.

And they set the stage for a career-killing action: when Born’s evaluation went to the November 2000 sergeant major promotion selection board for the Active Guard and Reserve, it triggered a Qualitative Management Program review that resulted in a bar to re-enlistment.

Born said the rater harped on him for fraternizing with a sergeant E-5, a male who was not in Born’s command but who Born had known from a previous assignment; they were longtime friends and would occasionally get together for beers.

“Personal conduct on- and off-duty reflect [unfavorably] on NCO Corps due to current fraternization habits,” the rater wrote on Born’s NCO-ER.

“He said, ‘You can’t associate with an E-5,’” Born recalled. “I said, ‘Since when? The regulation doesn’t say anything about that.’”

Army Regulation 600-20 prohibits relationships that have “the potential for creating an appearance of partiality or preferential treatment” but adds that “a close, unofficial relationship between soldiers of different rank normally should not result in an unfavorable evaluation.”

Born first decided to handle the appeals process himself, and he almost immediately began to suffer rejection.

First, the Enlisted Special Review Board refused to hear his case, telling him he had insufficient evidence to prove anything was fundamentally wrong with his evaluation.

Then a Standby Advisory Board declined to hear his QMP appeal — citing the other board's rejection of his other appeal.

By this time, two agonizing years had passed since Born's NCO-ER had been signed.

“That’s when he said, ‘The system has failed me,’” Wickham recalled. “He did everything he was supposed to do. Unfortunately, he had to hire an attorney, and I had to make the system work.”

Although it took many months, Wickham vindicated Born.

Throughout, Born “was on pins and needles,” Wickham said, “he thought his career was over. To finish your career with an unfavorable duty performance that says, you’re a poor leader and unprofessional, is a gross injustice that would have affected him for the rest of his life.”

MORE:

How To Challenge Your Eval

Army Times, March 15, 2004 By Jane McHugh

Getting slammed in a noncommissioned officer evaluation report doesn't mean your career is over. You have the power to challenge your evaluation.

The Enlisted Records and Evaluation Center Web site, www.erec.army.mil/ncoer explains how to put your papers together to get started.

As you do this, remember that you're the one in the best position to know the truth — the truth about yourself, your career and what your raters did wrong.

Lawyers, personnel consultants, other soldiers with expertise, friends and family may be in positions to help you during this time, but you are the only person qualified to put together a neat, to-the-point packet of written evidence to refute the inaccurate or offending assertions that you're a lousy soldier.

Here's a summary based on the Web site, of how to gather the right paperwork and organize it for an inquiry or an appeal:

- Gather evidence to back up your case that you're not a bad soldier. Make a list of people you've worked with, people who are willing to challenge the alleged shortcomings for which you were faulted. Also make a list of records or reports you know exist and that refute portions of the offending NCO-ER.
- As a first step to appealing, get a commander's inquiry going. Technically, this is not an appeal. Its purpose is to involve the command in correcting errors before they become a

permanent part of the record. The inquiry must be completed — not initiated — within 120 days after the month of the NCO-ER. Sometimes a commander's inquiry is all that's needed.

- If you think an appeal is in order, visit the local Staff Judge Advocate office and Personnel Services Battalion for guidance.
- Take your list of people and locate them on the Internet, the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis and the World Wide Locator. Make another list of people and places who have your supporting documents, get the proper addresses, whether e-mail or snail mail, and ask for these documents. When asking in writing, be sure to say it's for official use only. Dig up records you may have in your home or office.
- Prepare a memorandum summarizing your problems and why you're appealing. See the letter examples on the Web site. Be specific and keep it short; facts only.
- When you receive supporting statements back from people you've located, take them and your memo and any other documents and have them reviewed by a third party who is disinterested in the case. As an objective outsider, that person will give you pointers to improve your appeal package. Don't be afraid to change your appeals package on this person's advice, but don't make changes that go against your gut instinct.

Visit the above mentioned Web site for further details about appeals boards and their mailing addresses.

Combat Ready Tank For Sale; Care For A Road Test?

Army Times 3.15.04

WHAT'S UP: Two men attempting to sell a surplus military tank in an Internet auction were arrested by German police when it was discovered the tank never had been modified for civilian use. According to the online news site Ananova, the tank was purchased from Greece by a 36-year-old Greek citizen, who enlisted the aid of a German friend to try to sell it. Both are charged with weapons violations.

WHAT'S NEXT: While anyone who has driven on the German autobahn or the New Jersey Turnpike might see benefits in cruising in a tank, **the fact that the vehicle could fire shells left no doubt authorities had to step in to stop the sale.**

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Relative Of Governing Council Member Killed, Several Wounded; Baghdad Blast In “Upmarket” Area

Mar 13, 2004 BAGHDAD (Reuters)

A bomb exploded at a shop in a busy commercial district of central Baghdad on Saturday, killing the store owner and wounding several others, police and witnesses said.

The clothing and accessories store was completely destroyed, its windows blown out and the ceiling fallen in. The windows of nearby shops were also shattered and pools of blood were visible on the pavement alongside torn and bloodied clothing.



Iraqis view a destroyed clothing and accessories shop after a bomb exploded in the upmarket Baghdad neighborhood of Karrada March 13, 2004. Photo by Ammar Awad/Reuters

"The shop-owner was killed and three people were injured," police officer Abbas Abid said at the scene.

Witnesses said a young man entered the shop carrying a parcel and a plastic bag. He left and moments later the blast occurred, they said.

It was not immediately clear why the shop-owner might have been targeted. **Some witnesses who knew the man said he was related to a member of Iraq's Governing Council and may have been attacked for political reasons.**

Said Tariq Hashem, a local resident, "The Iraqi police and the Americans cannot protect us."

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Soldier Says “I Am Vehemently Against This War”

From: <http://www.mcsweeneys.net/links/anonymous/> Undated
From: “Anonymous Military Coward” In Iraq

To the reader:

I'll tell you a few things right off the bat:

One, I keep a very healthy sense of humor about what goes on over here, which explains most of what I write. Laughter is a defense mechanism. If you can't sit back and laugh at the sheer ridiculousness (yes, that's a real word) of what transpires here, you go nuts-I've seen it happen.

Two, I'm a coward. That's why I'm not using my real name, and that's why I'm not in the field.

Three, I'm not and never will be a combatant type. I never see actual violence with my own eyes, but only in after-action reports. However, I can assure you that everything I write about has happened to someone I personally know. I hope this has the desired effect of making all this a little more close and personal to invade your comfort zone.

Four, I am vehemently against this war. As for the reason that I take part in this lunacy, see point number two. I am a coward, and I simply don't have the gumption to trade an honorable discharge for what I believe in. Hate me if you must, pity me if you do.

I happen to be among the lucky few who are actually safe over here. I spend part of my day working in a VERY secure area and afterwards I go directly to another VERY secure area (barracks) to sleep and relax. I don't ever get to personally see anything interesting, which may very well be a good thing. However, I hear about everything, especially from my acquaintances who go out into "the field."

I will continue by stating that in all the events I write about, I will be taking the perspective of the person who originally told me the story and actually experienced the events. This is for several reasons, the most important being that if I write about a buddy that did thus and so, it's not nearly as hard-hitting psychologically as if I write about what happened to "me." Next on the list is that it allows me to apply the metaphor and sarcasm that may not otherwise be in the story if I just parrot a friend. Finally, it allows me narrative control, as I can describe how "I feel" much more eloquently than how another person feels.

If you're of the opinion that what I jot down is not funny, you're damn right. What's happening over here is deathly serious. If all you do is laugh at a piece, then you're missing the truly horrifying context that I intend between the lines: the fact that no matter what trappings you dress it in, what dry wit you apply to it, what hyperboles and understatement you mix it with, this war is happening-as you read these very words, it is happening.

In the last hour, I can guarantee you that someone over here has died-likely an innocent civilian who only wished to live in peace with his or her family and friends. The entity or person by whose hands they died is not important, as no one can claim the first stone over here. There are no heroes in this war except the children of Iraq, who must go on living, and will.

Regards,
Anonymous Military Coward

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/>

OCCUPATION REPORT

Al Jazeera Goes to Jail; A Look Inside Bremers' Prison

By CHRISTIAN PARENTI, The Nation, March 29, 2004

For the full article, go to: <http://www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=20040329&s=parenti>

Salah Hassan looks sad and very tired. The Al Jazeera cameraman, a 33-year-old father of two, is recounting his tale of incarceration in a soft and matter-of-fact tone. Sipping tea in the lobby of the hotel that serves as Al Jazeera's Baghdad bureau, he explains how on November 3 of last year he raced to the site of a roadside bomb attack on a US military convoy in Dialah, near the eastern Iraqi city of Baquba. While he was interviewing people at the scene, **US troops who had previously taken photographs of Hassan at other events arrested him, took him to a police station, interrogated**

him and repeatedly accused the cameraman of knowing in advance about the bomb attack and of lying in wait to get footage. "I told them to review my tapes, that it was clear I had arrived thirty or forty minutes after the blast. They told me I was a liar," says Hassan.

From Baquba, Hassan says he was taken to the military base at Baghdad International Airport, held in a bathroom for two days, then flown hooded and bound to Tikrit. After two more days in another bathroom, he was loaded onto a five-truck convoy of de-tainees and shipped south to Abu Ghraib, a Saddam-built prison that now serves as the American military's main detention center and holds about 13,000 captives.

Once inside the sprawling prison, Hassan says, he was greeted by US soldiers who sang "Happy Birthday" to him through his tight plastic hood, stripped him naked and addressed him only as "Al Jazeera," "boy" or "bitch." He was forced to stand hooded, bound and naked for eleven hours in the bitter autumn night air; when he fell, soldiers kicked his legs to get him up again. In the morning, Hassan says, he was made to wear a dirty red jumpsuit that was covered with someone else's fresh vomit and interrogated by two Americans in civilian clothes. They made the usual accusations that Hassan and Al Jazeera were in cahoots with "terrorists."

While most Abu Ghraib prisoners are held in large barracks-like tents in open-air compounds surrounded by razor wire, Hassan says he was locked in a high-security isolation unit of tiny cells. Down the tier from him was an old woman who sobbed incessantly and a mentally deranged 13-year-old girl who would scream and shriek until the American guards released her into the hall, where she would run up and down; exhausted, she would eventually return to her cell voluntarily. Hassan says that all other prisoners in the unit, mostly men, were ordered to remain silent or risk being punished with denial of food, water and light.

Elsewhere in Abu Ghraib, Hassan's colleague Suheib Badr Darwish was also in lockup. He had been arrested in Samarra on November 18 and, **according to a colleague of his at Al Jazeera, Darwish was badly beaten by US troops.**

Meanwhile, on the outside, the network hired a top-flight lawyer named Hider Nur Al Mulha to start working Hassan's case through Iraq's largely wrecked court system. Eventually Hassan was brought before a panel of the Iraqi Governing Council's freshly minted Federal Supreme Court, which was set up alongside its war crimes tribunal for trying the likes of Saddam Hussein and his henchmen. Salah Hassan, journalist, was the subject of the Court's first hearing. He was released for lack of evidence. **After three more days in Abu Ghraib, this time in one of the prison's open-air camps, Hassan, still in his vomit-stained red jumpsuit, was dumped on a street just outside Baghdad on December 18. Darwish was released more than a month later, on January 25,**

Military officials did not respond to my requests for a tour of Abu Ghraib, nor were most of my numerous calls and e-mails about the cases of Hassan and Darwish returned. The one military spokesperson who did address relations with Al Jazeera on the record was Lieut. Col. Daniel Williams of the Coalition Joint Task Force 7; his comment was, "Al Jazeera is a welcome guest and professional news organization." As one source at the civilian Coalition Provisional Authority explained, "Anything about Al

Jazeera is very sensitive, so any on-the-record comment would have to come from pretty far up in the hierarchy. Only a very senior person can deal with this." **But repeated calls to the CPA's senior spokesperson, Dan Senior, produced no response.**

So far, Al Jazeera's management has kept rather quiet about the cases of Hassan and Darwish. When I interviewed Ceddah Abdelhak, the channel's general manager in Baghdad, he insisted that the channel had publicized the cases, and he was clearly upset about the bad treatment of his staff. **But other journalists in Baghdad say that Al Jazeera is under so much pressure from the Americans that its owners in Qatar are afraid the channel could be expelled from Iraq if they push too hard on any issue that upsets the CPA.**

This is not an unfounded fear. According to sources that insisted on anonymity, the coalition called the network's managers in Iraq to the Republican Palace in Baghdad for a meeting in late January, at which **the CPA's head counsel threatened Al Jazeera with expulsion if the network did not stop "destabilizing the occupation"** with its tough reporting and intense editorial criticism. **Allegedly, the CPA attorney explained that the coalition needed no legal justification to expel Al Jazeera** and implied that US authorities were even pressuring the Emir of Qatar, Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, to rein in Al Jazeera, which, though run independently, is owned by the government of Qatar.

(About Christian Parenti: Christian Parenti is the author, most recently, of *The Soft Cage: Surveillance in America From Slavery to the War on Terror* (Basic) and a fellow at City University of New York's Center for Place, Culture, and Politics. He is a visiting fellow at CUNY's Center for Place, Culture, and Politics. His book *The Freedom: Shadows and Hallucinations in Occupied Iraq* is due out from the New Press this fall.)

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Your Yacht Or Mine?

THANKS TO B WHO E-MAILED THIS IN: B WRITES: "MAYBE?????"

Maybe George Bush and I won't travel on the same boat or the same airplane, but we can give this country a campaign that genuinely addresses our real issues and treats voters with respect," Kerry said. (Reuters) 3.14.04 John Whitesides, Political Correspondent

(For more see the article "Wall Street Likes Kerry" at www.isreview.org.)

OCCUPATION PALESTINE



(To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation by a foreign power, go to: www.rafaq.vze.com. The foreign army is Israeli; the occupied nation is Palestine.)

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