

GI SPECIAL 2#41

**ANOTHER BAD PLACE TO BE, AND GETTING WORSE
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW**



“U.S. forces leading a 2,650-strong force have fought half a dozen battles with Aristide loyalists.” U.S. Marines from Camp Lejeune patrol Port-Au-Prince, Haiti March 15, 2004. (AP Photo/US Air Force, Tech. Sgt. Andy Dunaway)

AWOL Against War 600 And Growing: Miami Staff Sgt. Resists: “I Think We’re Fighting For Oil”

By Frank Davies, The Miami Herald, Mar. 15, 2004 & 16 March 2004 & Jane McHugh, Army Times staff writer & By Kirsten Scharnberg, Chicago Tribune & By PAM BELLUCK, NY Times

SHERBORN, Mass. - A Miami soldier who served six months in Iraq and then refused to return after a leave said Monday "I can no longer be an instrument of violence," and turned himself in to military authorities.

Staff Sgt. Camilo Mejia, a National Guard infantryman for five years after three years of active Army duty, explained his decision to seek conscientious objector status at an event organized by peace activists.

"I am not against the military. The military has been my family," said Mejia, 28. "My commanders are not evil but **this war is evil. I did not sign up for the military to go halfway around the world to be an instrument of oppression.**"

Then, joined by family, supporters and his lawyers, he walked to the gates of Hanscom Air Force Base outside Boston. Activists cheered him as heavily armed soldiers took Mejia inside.

Mejia arrived at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport just after 10 p.m. Monday and was immediately surrounded by several reporters and photojournalists.

Asked about his decision not to return to Iraq, Mejia responded "I don't think we're fighting terror in Iraq. I think we're fighting for oil." "The justification for this war is money and no soldier should go to Iraq and give his life for oil," Mejia told reporters Tuesday. He also criticized his superiors for "instances of abuse of power, bad leadership, and total disregard for the well-being of soldiers and civilians."

He was accompanied by his mother, an aunt and Spc. Oliver Perez, who served with him, when he reported to the Florida armory.

Perez said Mejia is "a brave leader" and should not be prosecuted.

"I fought next to him in many battles. He is not a coward," Perez said.

Flanked by his mother and aunt, Mejia said he would turn himself in to his unit in North Miami, Charlie Company of the 124th Battalion, at 10 a.m. today.

The soldier's lawyers are Louis Font and Tod Ensign, a lawyer who is the director of Citizen Soldier, a New York City-based anti-militarism group. According to its Web site, Citizen Soldier is comprised of retired and active-duty military people who are active in promoting Judeo-Christian values.

Ensign said Mejia could be a "test case" of Iraqi war policy, because they know of no other resisters who served in Iraq, refused to return and then turned themselves in. Font will seek an administrative discharge for Mejia, based on his applying for conscientious objector status.

600 More AWOL:

Font speculated that whatever happens to his client would serve as a precedent for the estimated 600 soldiers who have gone AWOL to avoid service in Iraq. Some, like Mejia, have failed to return to Iraq after being granted temporarily leaves home and others have deserted before deploying overseas.

A crowd of peace activists from the Peace Abbey, a pacifist organization in Boston founded after Mother Teresa visited that city in the late 1980s, shouted encouragement

as Mejia surrendered at the base's gate to two military police officers: "We love you!" "Be strong!" "Go with God!"

Mejia was a squad leader with Company C, 1st Battalion, 124th Infantry Regiment, 53rd Infantry Brigade. He was in the Regular Army for three years, and in the National Guard for five more.

He was supposed to report to Baltimore-Washington International Airport Oct. 16 to fly back to Iraq with his unit but never showed up, Ensign said.

Mejia said his decision was "a very personal one," after experiencing six months of guerrilla warfare in the Sunni triangle of Iraq, where resistance to U.S. occupation has been the most fierce.

"I made the decision to disagree with this war," Sergeant Mejia said in an interview, asserting that his commanders had unnecessarily put soldiers in harm's way and that his commanders were too quick to take the lives of Iraqis. "I think this war is particularly immoral."

He recalled several ambushes in which other soldiers were wounded, the "bad guys" got away and "innocent Iraqis" were killed in crossfires.

"When I saw with my own eyes what war can do to people, a real change began to take place within me. **I have witnessed the suffering of a people whose country is in ruins and who are further humiliated by the raids, patrols, and curfews of an occupying army. My experience of this war has changed me forever,**" Mejia was quoted as saying in the news release.

"At the time, you are doing your job and you go with the flow," Mejia said. "But you see people dying every day. I can't tell you there was one day I woke up and said I am against the war."

In Iraq, where he was a squad leader, he became increasingly disillusioned, he said. At first it was the sense that his unit was not given adequate supplies. Then, Sergeant Mejia said, he started to question tactical maneuvers out of concern that his commanders were intentionally courting combat so that they could be awarded medals. "They were trying to draw the enemy onto us for medals and Purple Hearts," he said.

According to his conscientious objector application, Sergeant Mejia was particularly upset when a young Iraqi boy was shot and, because of confusion at the medical unit, died.

Sergeant Mejia was also angered when his unit was reprimanded for celebrating their escape from an ambush; he said his commander told them their job was to kill the enemy, not run away.

"When you join, you have no idea what war is like," Sergeant Mejia said. "The people who are paying for it with their blood are in the wrong place at the wrong time."

During a two-week leave in October, Mejia decided not to return to Iraq. In the next few months he spent most of his time in New York, "living like a criminal," wondering if military police would come for him. He avoided his home and family in Miami, even his 3-year-old daughter, instead holing up with friends in Boston and New York City. He paid cash everywhere he went and traveled mostly by bus so as not to risk being stopped by a state trooper.

Mejia also criticized the Iraq invasion as "a war for oil, based on lies - lies about weapons of mass destruction, and connections between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaida."

Lt. Col. Ron Tittle, Florida National Guard spokesman, noted the timing of Mejia's surrender--his unit returned to the United States only nine days earlier so Mejia could not be forced to rejoin them in Iraq. **Further, his former commander has told the Tribune that Mejia was a poorly performing soldier who "lost his nerve."**

But Mejia, who went into hiding after failing to report for duty on Oct. 16 after a two-week home furlough, disputed that. He challenged the morality of the war, alleging that it was a conflict waged solely for oil. The staff sergeant further asserted that he and his comrades were often used "as bait" to lure armed insurgents.

Tittle bristled when asked whether Mejia had been formally designated by the Army as AWOL, a legal distinction that requires the processing of official paperwork.

A group called Military Families Speak Out, which opposes the war and claims 1,300 participants, helped organize the event and staged vigils Monday outside the White House and Walter Reed Army Medical Center, where hundreds of those wounded in Iraq have been treated.

Pacifists from across the country have taken up Mejia's cause. On Monday, dozens of them rode with him to Hanscom Air Force Base, singing songs along the way and comparing notes about who had been arrested for participating in recent anti-war demonstrations.

David Cline, the president of Veterans for Peace who was wounded in the Vietnam War, said stories Mejia told him about the carnage he witnessed in Iraq reminded Cline of his experiences decades before.

"It takes courage to stand up under fire," Cline said, "but it takes even more courage to be able to stand up and say no to the military when you've decided they're wrong."

"This is an oil-driven war, and I don't think any soldier signs up to fight for oil," Mejia said Monday after arriving at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport.

Two Iraq GIs Want Objector Status

3.16.04, By PAUL GARWOOD, Associated Press Writer

TIKRIT, Iraq - Two U.S. Army medics in Iraq have applied for conscientious objector status and want to be honorably discharged from the military because the idea of killing is "revolting" to them, their company commander said Tuesday.

The two soldiers, both privates first class, notified the Army of their request on Feb. 9, the day before their Germany-based 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment deployed to Iraq, Capt. Todd Grissom said.

Grissom would not identify the two soldiers, saying only that they come from California and Illinois.

"They both think it's wrong to bear arms and don't want to be involved with the war," Grissom, from Houston, Texas, told The Associated Press. "To them, the thought of having a gun or having to kill someone is revolting."

Both men have been assigned to duties at a military aid station at a U.S. base on the outskirts of Tikrit Grissom said.

Army chaplains have interviewed both men to hear the reasons behind their requests, and their cases are being investigated by a battalion officer.

"As commanders, you don't hope for such things because if everyone in the Army was like that we would have no one to defend us," Grissom said.

Deployed Troops' Family Members Protest; Scuffle At White House Gate

By Karen Jowers, Army Times staff writer, March 16, 2004

Parents of troops who have been or are deployed to Iraq, military veterans, and family members of those killed in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks were among more than 100 war protestors who marched six miles from Walter Reed Army Medical Center to the White House Monday.

It was the second leg of a two-day "Trail of Mourning and Truth" journey that began at Dover Air Force Base, Del.

"My son is over in Iraq, and he shouldn't be there," said Alycia Barr of Pine Grove, Pa. **"Military families should have the courage to speak out."**

Barr, who carried a sign that read: "Antiwar protestors are the guardian angels of peace," declined to name her son for fear of causing him problems.

A plywood coffin brought up the rear, rolled on a luggage-type cart. A group of about 200 gathered at Lafayette Park in front of the White House, where the names of the dead were read aloud and cards bearing the names were placed in the coffin.



Uniformed Secret Service Police struggle to keep a crowd of antiwar demonstrators from marching down the sidewalk to the White House on Monday. — *Gerald Herbert / AP*

Chanting, "Honor the Dead; End the War," they ceremonially carried the coffin to one of the White House entrance gates and tried to push their way in to deliver the coffin to President Bush, but were stopped by Secret Service police. Some protestors said they believe the Bush is trying to hide the human cost of the war.

The protests were not universally supported. **Betsy Deming, of Takoma Park, Md., was upset that the protestors held a rally in front of Walter Reed, where many troops wounded in Iraq are recovering. She took the day off from work to "counter-protest" at the antiwar rallies.**

Sharon Jumper, of Cornelius, N.C., got into a shouting match with Deming outside Walter Reed. She and her husband, both Army veterans, have a son serving in Iraq.

"As a veteran and a parent of a child in Iraq, I'm deeply offended when those who support the war challenge our patriotism," Jumper said. "Many who support the war never served and frankly, I don't think they have the right to challenge my patriotism."

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:

Wounded Soldier Dies; Resistance Adapts To US Anti-Bomb Techniques

3.15.04 Agence France Presse

BAGHDAD : Seven US soldiers were killed in Iraq over the weekend as insurgents demonstrated they can still bleed US troops with their favoured technique, the roadside bomb.

After a lull in US military deaths, the guerrilla groups have shown in the last week they can still effectively kill US troops with bombs despite improved American technology for combating the improvised explosive devices (IED).

In a worrying development for the Americans, the seven deaths over the weekend proved once more the insurgents' ability to adapt to US tactics despite the military's conviction it had cut off much of their leadership and access to weaponry.

Three US troops from the 1st Armored Division were killed when a bomb exploded Saturday night as they patrolled southeast Baghdad and **a fourth who was wounded died at a combat hospital Sunday, the Pentagon said.**

The rise in deaths comes despite the introduction of new anti-mining equipment in the field, including South African-made armoured tractors.

The army has been stepping up its patrols and demining operations with these machines which, boasting hi-tech infra-red radar and electronics, are valued at millions of dollars.

The bombs are hidden in coke cans, empty army food bags, purses and animal carcasses among other disguises. They are responsible more than any other weapon for the deaths or wounding of US soldiers.

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

U.S. Officer Stabbed Inside Occupation Headquarters

Mar 15, 2004, BAGHDAD (Reuters)

An assailant stabbed and badly wounded an American army officer inside the Baghdad compound of Iraq's U.S.-led administration, a U.S. spokesman said Monday.

Dan Senor, chief spokesman of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), said the officer had been stabbed Saturday evening while walking in the "Green Zone," a sprawling, heavily guarded area on the west bank of the Tigris River.

"To my knowledge this was the first attack of its kind inside the Green Zone. We do not know at this point whether or not the attacker was Iraqi or an American," Senor said.

"The victim suffered serious stab wounds to his torso, head and neck," Senor said, adding that the officer, unconscious immediately after the attack, had been flown Sunday to a U.S. medical facility in Germany, where he was in stable condition.

Senor did not name the wounded officer or suggest a motive for the attack, saying an investigation was under way.

Sixteen U.S. Troops Wounded In Ramadi; Command Hiding Details

3.15.04 Agence France Presse

Sixteen US troops, including 12 marines, were injured during a raid on Saturday, when five home made bombs were found and seven insurgents captured, the US Army said.

An army spokeswoman declined to give details on how four Task Force All American soldiers and 12 marines were hurt during the operation on Saturday in Ramadi 100 kilometres (65 miles) west of Baghdad.

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/>

4 U.S. Baptist Missionaries Killed In Mosul

March 16, 2004 Associated Press & By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA, Associated Press Writer, March 16, 2004

BAGHDAD, Iraq - Four American Baptist missionaries were killed and one was wounded in a drive by shooting Monday in the northern city of Mosul, the U.S. military said. Hospital officials said at least two of the dead were women.

The fifth American was being treated at a U.S. military hospital in Mosul.

The five were traveling in one car on the eastern side of the city when they were attacked, Lt. Col. Joseph Piek, a spokesman for American forces in Mosul, said in an e-mail. Witnesses said they saw victims lying on the street and inside the car, including a man in the front passenger's side with his seat belt fastened.

An off-duty Iraqi policeman found the car shortly after the late afternoon shooting. Three of the Americans were dead and the two wounded were taken to an Iraqi hospital. U.S. Army air medevac helicopters later transported them to a combat support hospital in Mosul.

One of the two was then flown to a U.S. hospital in Baghdad, but died en route, Piek said.

The five all worked for the Richmond, Va.-based Southern Baptist International Mission Board. The board identified the dead as Larry T. Elliott, 60, and Jean Dover Elliott, 58, of Cary, N.C. and Karen Denise Watson, 38, of Bakersfield Calif.

Christian missionaries in predominantly Muslim Iraq are viewed with suspicion by many residents who believe the foreigners are trying to convert them to their faith. **(Golly gee, what on earth could have given them that idea?)**

The victims were attacked by two or three men in a car, witnesses said.

US Base Shelled In Kirkuk

By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA, Associated Press Writer, March 16, 2004

In the northern city of Kirkuk, three mortar shells on Tuesday hit the airport compound, where U.S. troops are based. Smoke billowed and sirens blared. There were no reported injuries.

U.S. Marine Wounded In Haiti;

16 March 2004 By Kirk Semple and Lydia Polgreen, The New York Times

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, March 15 — **A United States marine was shot and wounded by snipers during a patrol on Sunday night in a poor neighborhood of this teeming city, becoming the first American military casualty here since the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide,** a military spokesman said Monday.

The wounded marine, who was hit in the arm, was among a detachment of soldiers patrolling a neighborhood near the presidential palace on Sunday night, said the military spokesman, Lt. Col. David A. Lapan. The marine, Pfc. Howard W. Hamilton, 20, from Murfreesboro, Tenn., was evacuated to a hospital in Miami, where he was in stable condition, Colonel Lapan said. The soldiers returned fire but did not know if they had inflicted any casualties, the spokesman said.

Members of the American military deployment, which with about 1,700 troops is the largest division of a four-nation military task force, have been fired at many times since arriving after Mr. Aristide's flight into exile under pressure from Haitian rebels and the French and American governments.

Five Haitians have died in firefights with the Americans, the American military said.

American officials say that disarming militants from all factions is a cornerstone of their mission in Haiti. **Some experts estimate that there are many thousands of illegal weapons, with a majority in Port-au-Prince and other cities.**

So far, however, American troops have confiscated only four weapons, and they have conducted only one deliberate disarmament mission — a raid on a suspected arms cache — but found nothing.

U.S. Occupation Troops Hunt For Resistance Fighters In Haiti

16 March 2004 By Reuters

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (Reuters) - **U.S. Marines raided one of Port-au-Prince's most dangerous slums in a crackdown on Haitians firing at U.S. forces** in troubled Haiti, where the interim prime minister was set to pick a new Cabinet on Tuesday.

One day after suffering their first casualty in Haiti, a column of 120 U.S. Marines swept through the Belair slum, an Aristide stronghold, on foot and in armored vehicles mounted with machine guns.

U.S. forces leading a 2,650-strong force have fought half a dozen battles with Aristide loyalists -- killing six people -- since they landed hours after Aristide left the country, driven by U.S. pressure to resign.

Lt. Col. Dave Lapan said Marines and members of the Haitian police raided buildings from where gunmen fired at the Marines, but made no arrests.

The War Comes Home: Soldier Originally From Adrian In Coma

March 16, 2004 **ADRIAN, Mich.** (AP)

A 35-year-old soldier originally from Adrian was wounded in Iraq after a bomb exploded under his patrol vehicle, killing three fellow members of the 1st Armored Division.

Spc. 1st Class Bradley C. Fox was in a coma at a Baghdad hospital following the Saturday night attack, The Daily Telegram reported Tuesday. The attack in southeastern Baghdad followed a similar attack in Tikrit.

"He was riding in a Humvee with his men and was hit by a bomb," said his mother, Pat Dartt, of Adrian. "He was hit by shrapnel in the head and back. He was rushed to the hospital and put in an induced coma."

Fox attended Adrian schools until 11th grade and graduated a year later from high school in Florida. He enlisted in the Army at the age of 19 and was working his way up the ladder with a goal of making master sergeant.

Two Europeans, Two Iraqis, Working For Occupation Killed South Of Baghdad

03/16/04 Associated Press & By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA, Associated Press Writer,

Baghdad, Iraq-AP -- European and Iraqi casualties are being reported in the latest attack in Iraq.

Iraqi officials say two European civilians working on a water supply project were killed in a drive-by shooting south of Baghdad. Two Iraqis -- a driver and a police officer -- were also killed and two more police officers wounded.

Iraqi officials say the two Europeans were German. But a German official says he thinks one was German and the other was Dutch. The Tuesday killings were near the town of Mussayab, 45 miles south of Baghdad, officials said.

Col. A'ayed Omran, police chief in Mussayab, said the two were water engineers working on a project at Al-Razzaza, a lake near the southern city of Karbala. **He said they were carrying weapons** because they had been attacked in the same area before.

TROOP NEWS

New Spanish Leader Condemns Bush & War; Troops To Come Home July 1

Mar 15, 2004 By Andrew Cawthorne, MADRID (Reuters) & By Giles Tremlett, 16 March 2004, The Guardian UK

Election winner Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero said Monday he would probably withdraw Spain's 1,300 troops from the "disaster" in Iraq and attacked U.S. and British leaders George W. Bush and Tony Blair.

"The war has been a disaster, the occupation continues to be a disaster. It has only caused violence," Zapatero said in his first interview after a surprise triumph Sunday.

"There must be consequences. There has been one already -- the election result. The second will be that the Spanish troops will come back," he said.

His stinging comments caused political shockwaves across Europe and in the US.

"Mr Blair and Mr Bush must do some reflection and self-criticism. You can't bomb a people, you can't organize a war with lies," he added in a lengthy chat with Spain's Cadena SER radio.

"If there is no new developments, the soldiers will return on July 1," he said, adding he did not expect any new developments on a U.N. takeover.

The outgoing Spanish government of Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar firmly backed last year's U.S.-led war in Iraq despite huge domestic opposition.

The Socialist leader's election victory was attributed in large part to a voter backlash against the government over Iraq.

At least 10 Spaniards have been killed in Iraq since last August, including seven intelligence agents.

Honduras Pulling Troops Out Of Iraq

By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA, Associated Press Writer, March 16, 2004

Honduras, following the lead of Spain, said it would withdraw its 370 troops from the Spanish-led humanitarian and peacekeeping brigade by the end of June, Defense Secretary Federico Breve said Tuesday.

Troops Mental-Health Survey Briefing Canceled; Officials Say They “Don’t Want Bad News To Come Out”

March 16, 2004 By Rick Maze, Army Times staff writer

A briefing on the results of a mental health survey of troops in Iraq was abruptly canceled Monday because military officials said they did not want bad news to come out on the eve of the anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom, congressional sources said.

Defense Department officials did not respond to questions about the status of the survey.

Congressional staffers had been led to believe the survey results were mostly positive.

“Why they scheduled a briefing and then canceled is something that has left us scratching our heads,” said one aide. “The fact they said they didn’t want negative news to tarnish the anniversary has made us wonder if there is something about the survey we don’t know.”

Halliburton Incompetence Fucks Up Iraq Redeployment Scheme; 2000 Soldiers Could Lose Daily Food

By GREG JAFFE & and NEIL KING JR. Wall St. Journal 3.15.04

WASHINGTON-The top U.S. military officer in Iraq has criticized Halliburton Co. as stumbling in one of its most pressing assignments: the construction of new bases for troops in Iraq.

The critique by Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, laid out in a draft letter to senior Army officers, marks the Army's first open criticism of Halliburton's conduct on the ground in Iraq and Kuwait. Until now, the Houston-based contractor has insisted the Army has been satisfied with its performance despite continuing fights with Pentagon auditors over alleged overbillings and shoddy record-keeping.

Gen. Sanchez's letter, which made the rounds in Washington last week, addresses efforts by Halliburton's Kellogg Brown & Root subsidiary to help the Army consolidate to 'fewer, but larger, bases around Iraq without interrupting military operations. **In Baghdad, Iraq, 'for example, U.S. troops are moving from 26 bases to as few as six. But in the letter, Gen. Sanchez says KBR hasn't said precisely when it will have these consolidated bases ready for new troops.** Army' officials say KBR's shortcomings on the base construction have complicated the largest troop rotation since World War II.

The letter also criticizes KBR for late payments to food subcontractors, said Army officials, who gave details of the letter but declined to provide a copy.

<p>At least one subcontractor has threatened to withhold food service to about 2,000 U.S. soldiers in Iraq, leading' the Pentagon's inspector general to investigate KBR food-subcontractor complaints that KBR isn't paying its bills on time.</p>
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MORE:

War Profiteers Fraud Costing Billions; "What A Huge Mess This Is"

By Neil King Jr., Wall St. Journal, 3.12.04

In an often-partisan hearing on Iraq contracting before the House Government Reform Committee, Pentagon Comptroller Dov Zakheim offered a litany of

problems with Halliburton's two Iraq contracts, which have so far cost more than \$5 billion.

As an example, Mr. Zakheim described how Pentagon auditors recently rejected three [Halliburton subsidiary] KBR bills totaling more than \$3 billion, saying that costs weren't adequately documented. **KBR later came back with a follow-up bill that was \$700 million lower**, but then withdrew that bill "due to continuing pricing issues." The company has been so slow in completing its paperwork that the Pentagon might have to withhold payment of about \$200 million from future bills, Mr. Zakheim said.

Other U.S. contractors in Iraq are also under Pentagon scrutiny.

Fluor Corp., Perini Corp. and Washington Group International Inc. are doing more than \$1 billion in electricity work in Iraq. All three, Mr. Zakheim said, have had "substantial subcontract pricing issues," **including an apparent lack of competitive bidding on many high-ticket items.** Like Halliburton, the three saw their shares decline in New York Stock Exchange composite trading yesterday.

Rep. Henry Waxman a California Democrat and a persistent critic of U.S. postwar contracting in Iraq, called the process "profoundly flawed" and **said few members of Congress understand "what a huge mess this is.**

Australian Pilots Refused To Bomb 40 Times

By Frank Walker March 14, 2004 smh.com.au

Australia's F/A-18 pilots defied the orders of American commanders and refused to drop their bombs on up to 40 missions during the invasion of Iraq, it can now be revealed.

In a remarkable account of how our airmen applied Australian rules of engagement, an RAAF pilot has told *The Sun-Herald* each of the 14 RAAF Hornet pilots aborted three to four bombing runs because intelligence given at pre-flight briefings did not concur with what they found at the target.

Last night, *The Sun-Herald* could not confirm whether or not American field commanders raised objections about the Australian pilots' actions, nor if US pilots later carried out the bombing runs themselves.

But Australia's Defence Force chief, General Peter Cosgrove backed the pilots' action, and said there were no recriminations.

Squadron Leader Daryl Pudney last week described how he and other Australian F/A-18 pilots were forced to weigh up the risk of civilian casualties in a split second before dropping their bombs.

He said pilots broke off many missions after they saw the target and decided there was not a valid military reason to drop their bombs.

During the war, which began a year ago on March 19, the Defence Department acknowledged just one RAAF Hornet pilot had aborted a mission set by Allied headquarters.

It appears there were fundamental differences between the US dominated headquarters and Australian pilots over what constituted a valid military target.

Squadron Leader Pudney said under Australia's rules of engagement pilots had to ask themselves on each mission whether it was right to drop their bombs.

"Each guy would have made that decision once to half a dozen times in the conflict. It was presented as being just one pilot in one incident, but it was all of us several times," he said.

"We were providing an identification of targets in conjunction with ground forces, and if we were not 100 per cent sure we were taking out a valid military target in accordance with our specifications we just did not drop."

Squadron Leader Pudney said he could not comment on the reasons they aborted specific missions. But it seems that it was often to avoid the unnecessary killing of civilians.

"As we approached the target area we confirmed we had the right place. Then we'd run a check provided through our training that we were doing the right thing by our rules of engagement.

"We exercise those all the time. In Iraq it was a matter of the briefings we received prior in regards to our rules of engagement, as to whether we thought this was a target we should be destroying. "If it was not, then we decided not to deploy."

"When I decided not to attack it was because there were some small doubts in the back of my mind saying 'Is this really what I need to be doing, is this going to help win the war right now or is it going to stop our boys on the ground getting targeted?'

"If the answer was no, then you ask what is the likelihood of it being the wrong decision. You start looking deeper into what you have been trained to do and the briefings you have had, and make a decision from there.

"Often it was a little niggle in the back of your brain that it was not the right thing to do, and then you back up and assess your training and briefing."

General Cosgrove told *The Sun-Herald* yesterday there had been no recriminations against the Australian pilots.

But he would not comment on whether the US subsequently carried out any of the missions that had been aborted by the Australians.

One British RAF pilot exploded a missile his plane had already launched after he looked at the target through binoculars and saw it was a workman's hut in a quarry. Intelligence had told them it was a tank.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Resistance Kills Mosul Cops

By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA, Associated Press Writer, March 16, 2004

In Mosul on Tuesday, assailants in a car fired on a police vehicle, killing two officers and wounding two others, police said. The gunmen fled. In another shooting in Mosul, gunmen killed an Iraqi woman working as a translator for the U.S. military, the U.S.-led coalition said. Two of her family members were wounded in the attack on their vehicle.

Dead Cop Found In Falluja

3.15.04 Agence France Presse & By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA, Associated Press Writer

The body of a policeman from Fallujah, west of Baghdad, who disappeared two days ago, was discovered riddled with bullet holes, a police officer said.

In Mosul, assailants fired several mortar shells at a police station early Monday. The shells failed to hit any buildings, but lightly injured a civilian and damaged some cars outside the station.

City Politician Killed In Kirkuk

March 15, 2004, By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA, Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) - Gunmen killed a member of the city council and a bodyguard in the northern city of Kirkuk on Monday, Iraqi police said.

The Shiite councilor, Aggar Al-Taweel, was shot several times in the head as he drove to the weekly meeting of the city council, said police chief Torhan Yussif. The gunmen fired from a red car and fled.

Al-Taweel, who founded an Arab political party that later splintered, was known for frank opinions and he often outspoken in council debates.

More Occupation Police Shot

By Jim Krane, Associated Press, March 16, 2004

Two Iraqi police were wounded in the attack near the town of Mussayab, 70 kilometers (45 miles) south of Baghdad, said Dr. Jamal Kadhim, head of the emergency department at Mussayab General Hospital.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Bush's War is a Financial Disaster

By Eric Margolis, The Toronto Star CA , 14 March 2004

The famous words of King Pyrrhus of Epirus after the bloody battle of Heraclea in 280 BC are as appropriate for America's conquest of Iraq: "One more such victory and we are ruined."

For the United States, Iraq was at best a pyrrhic victory. Invading and occupying Iraq has proven to be a financial disaster. The invasion cost \$105 billion US in direct expenses - the price of five complete carrier battle groups, or one million low-cost apartments.

Occupying Iraq costs \$9 billion monthly.

Pre-war neo-con plans to finance the occupation by plundering Iraq's oil have been frustrated by sabotage. Congress estimates the overall cost of "pacifying" and "rebuilding" Iraq for fiscal 2003 and 2004 at a staggering \$200 billion.

<p>This money will have to be borrowed by the empty treasury, which, thanks to Bush's reckless "war" spending, is running huge deficits heading toward \$400 billion, risking an explosion of inflation that threatens to undermine the long-term bond market and further weaken the dollar.</p>

U.S. forces will continue to face a simmering, low-grade guerrilla war that will kill or wound more American troops, and increasingly brutalize and corrupt occupation forces - the inevitable result of all colonial wars. In short, America now has its own West Bank, or Lebanon.

Half of all U.S. ground combat forces are tied down in and around Iraq. Reserves are being mobilized for long tours. Wear and tear on overstretched U.S. forces and their heavy equipment is a grave, though little discussed, problem.

President Bush has stuck his head into a hornet's nest. The U.S. will bleed men, money and reputation for a long time before it figures out how to get out of the first colonial misadventure of the 21st century.

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.

CLASS WAR NEWS

Wage Rise Slowest In At Least 40 Years; “They Take Away My Pension And Send \$87 Billion To Iraq”

Over the past year, average wages have risen just 1.6%, the slowest rate in the four decades for which data are available, according to the left-leaning Economic Policy Institute.

At the same time, many families have seen the fraying of conventional safety nets, such as health insurance, pensions and government services that are especially important in just such times of instability.

The share of Americans lacking health insurance of any kind rose to 15.2% in 2002 from 14.6% the year before. And while overall inflation is down, the bills for some major household expenses—including gasoline and prescription drugs—are leaping upward.

Public college tuition rose 13% during the current school year.

John Bodonski, who retired three years ago after 31 years as a clerical worker at Weirton Steel, has been living on a pension of \$1,122 a month, plus full health care. As the company works its way through bankruptcy proceedings and a sale, both are being cut.

Mr. Bodonski, 56, works nights cleaning up the local union hall and says he's looking for other cleaning jobs.

“What upsets me is I did everything I was supposed to--worked hard and educated my two daughters,” he says. “And what do they do? They take my pension and send \$87 billion to Iraq.”

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

The Israeli Army removes a “Palestinian” terrorist.



Cleverly disguised as an old woman, this terrorist sub-human dared to oppose the use of “her” land to build a gigantic wall across land that was occupied by clannish, scheming “Palestinians” after the establishment of the racially pure Zionist State of Israel in 1948 on formerly completely empty land in the Middle East.

Fortunately, everyone knows that the State of Israel is completely justified in taking whatever land it needs, in order to provide more livingroom for the Israeli population.

Under the benevolent guidance of the Israeli state, who have only the best interest of the “Palestinian” sub-human species at heart, these savages may someday become civilized, if their racial impurities can be overcome through selective breeding and other forms of genetic science.

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

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