

GI SPECIAL 2#45



(Good news for gays: The Empire wants you right here. In that burning Humvee.) Falluja men celebrate death of U.S. soldier after a U.S. Army Humvee vehicle was set ablaze following a firefight between American forces and guerrillas in Falluja March 25. Story below. (Mohammed Khodor/Reuters)

Military Discharges Of Gays At Nine-Year Low; “When They Need People, They Keep Them”

March 24, 2004 By Nancy Zuckerbrod, Associated Press

The number of gays dismissed from the military under the Pentagon’s “don’t-ask, don’t tell” policy has dropped to its lowest level in nine years as U.S. forces fought in Afghanistan and Iraq, according to a report by an advocacy group.

The military discharged 787 gays and lesbians last year, according to the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, which attributed the decline to the importance of U.S. operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The figure marks a 17 percent decrease from 2002 and a 39 percent drop from 2001, just before the conflicts began in Afghanistan and Iraq.

“You have to ask yourself, and you have to ask the Pentagon, why are the discharges going down?” said C. Dixon Osburn, executive director of the advocacy group and one of the report’s authors. “When they need people, they keep them. When they don’t, they implement their policy of discrimination with greater force.”

The military has discharged nearly 10,000 people for violations of the policy.

The Army, the largest of the services, is so stretched by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and missions elsewhere that it is using its “stop-loss” authority to prevent soldiers from retiring or otherwise leaving when their service obligation ends.

Military officials have said that allowing openly gay people to serve in the armed forces could interfere with unit cohesion, but Osburn said the latest statistics contradict that.

“It just shows that the underlying rationale for ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ is completely irrational,” he said. “When do you need unit cohesion more than during war?”

Army Capt. Austin Rooke, a member of the Army reserves, was called to duty following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. He served at Fort Lewis, Washington, and in Qatar, returning home about a year ago.

He said he didn’t talk about the fact that he was gay while serving, but he said some officials probably suspected it since he works as a civilian for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, a gay-rights group in Washington.

He said in an interview Tuesday that he was not surprised military officials appear to be slower to dismiss gay troops during times of conflict, but he said he wasn’t happy about that.

“It’s offensive, I think,” Rooke said, adding that he hopes gays will someday be able to serve openly.

(And as far as Bush is concerned, the more dead gays the better. What better place to die in vain, or get maimed for life, than Iraq?)

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.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

The Battle Of Falluja: Day One

Marine Killed, Two Wounded In Falluja Ambush; Happy Crowd Throws Gas On Humvee



Iraqi men throw rocks at a U.S. military Humvee that burns after it came under attack during a shootout in Falluja, Iraq. *Khalid Mohammed / AP*

2004-03-25 BAGHDAD (AFX) & Reuters & By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA Associated Press Writer

One US Marine was killed and two wounded today when their convoy was attacked east of the town of Falluja, a military spokeswoman said.

He said insurgents exploded a bomb close to the convoy and then fired rocket propelled grenades and small arms.

The two wounded Marines were taken to a nearby hospital, the spokeswoman added.

TV footage showed an empty Humvee in flames. One Iraqi driver in a civilian car was killed in the crossfire.

The roadside bombs have increasingly been followed by small arms fire or grenade attacks.

The Battle Of Falluja: Day Two

Marine Killed, More Wounded As Battle Rages; “A Bloody Day In Falluja”



An Iraqi prepares to pour more fuel on a blazing U.S. Army Humvee, Falluja March 25, 2004. (Mohammed Khodor/Reuters)

26 Mar 2004 FALLUJA, Iraq (Reuters)

Running battles between U.S. troops and insurgents in the Iraqi flashpoint town of Falluja on Friday killed a U.S. Marine, an Iraqi cameraman and at least six other civilians.

Falluja, about 60 km west of Baghdad, is known for its fierce hostility to the U.S.-led occupation. **Insurgents fought U.S. troops in the town for several hours**, but it was unclear what sparked the violence.

Doctors at Falluja hospital said at least six civilians were killed. One said eight. Reuters Television footage showed a boy wounded in the head screaming in pain as doctors bandaged him.

"It was a bloody day in Falluja," doctor Mohammad Daham told Reuters Television. "We have been receiving casualties in great numbers."

The U.S. military said a Marine was also killed in the town and several wounded. The Marines have recently arrived in Falluja, replacing the 82nd Airborne division as part of a major U.S. troop rotation in Iraq.

Burhan Mohammed Mazhour, a freelance Iraqi cameraman working for U.S. television network ABC, was shot in the head covering Friday's clashes. Witnesses said he was fired on by U.S. troops.

Several explosions, apparently from mortar bombs fired by guerrillas, echoed through the streets, which were deserted apart from ambulances and U.S. military vehicles.

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/>

Lured To IED, 1st ID Soldier Killed, Another Wounded

3/25/2004 By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA Associated Press Writer & BAGHDAD (AFP)

On Thursday, a 1st Infantry Division soldier died and two were wounded when a roadside bomb exploded near Baqouba, 35 miles north of Baghdad, the military said. **The soldiers went to the area after Iraqi ICDC forces notified them that a homemade bomb had been found.**

"The wounded were taken to a local military facility and are in stable condition," the spokeswoman said.

Taji Coordinated Attack Kills One Soldier, Wounds Another

3.25.04 BAGHDAD (AFP)

Earlier, US Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt said that one US soldier had been killed and another wounded on Wednesday when their convoy came under attack north of the Iraqi town of Taji.

The convoy was hit by a roadside bomb and small arms fire. The US troops responded and killed three attackers, Kimmitt told AFP.

Patrol Attacked In Hamam al-Alil; One Casualty

March 25, 2004 By Daniel Cooney, Associated Press

On Tuesday, guerrillas attacked a patrol in the town of Hamam al-Alil, 210 miles north of Baghdad, wounding a soldier, Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt, the U.S. military's deputy director of operations Kimmitt said. Troops returned fire and killed one attackers.

Resistance Strikes Baghdad Railway Yards



In Baghdad, a series of night-time blasts wounded at least nine people. An Iraqi fireman battles a blaze at a railway yard March 26, 2004 after it was set alight in a series of blasts in the capital. 26 Mar 2004 (Reuters: Chris Helgren)

2 Guard Members Wounded In Iraq; New Hampshire Man In Explosion

March 25, 2004 (AP) MANCHESTER, N.H.

Two members of a Hillsboro-based Army National Guard unit have been reported injured in Iraq in an explosion.

Douglas Stone, 38, of Antrim, N.H., suffered a cut to his ear from shrapnel during an explosion as he drove a tractor-trailer. He was treated at a military hospital and is to be flown to Germany for further medical evaluation.

The report said another member of the 744th Transportation Company, Joshua S. Nadeau, of Vernon, Vt., was traveling with Stone and was being checked for a possible concussion.

Nadeau was able to provide immediate first aid to Stone, the New Hampshire National Guard said in a news release.

The 744th Transportation Company, which has detachments in Claremont and Somersworth, consists of 150 men and women. The unit was mobilized in December in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

TROOP NEWS

Army Charges 1st Iraqi War Vet To Refuse Service With Desertion

3.25.04 From Citizen Soldier

Staff Sgt. Camilo Mejia, 28, of Miami, Florida was charged by his commanders at Ft. Stewart, Georgia with desertion on Wednesday, March 24, 2004. **He will be tried by a Special Court Martial, which means that the maximum sentence he can receive is one year imprisonment and a Bad Conduct Discharge.**

Army officials have also restricted Sgt. Mejia to Ft. Stewart and have barred him from conducting face to face interviews on the base with the media. Louis Font, his civilian attorney, plans to challenge this "gag" order, arguing that Sgt. Mejia's rights to free speech are being abridged.

At present, members of the media who desire interviews should contact Tod Ensign at Citizen Soldier (212) 679-2250. He will then pass these requests along to Sgt. Mejia. He may then make contact by telephone.

Army Plans “Uplifting” New TV Show

3.25.04 Wall St. Journal, By Brian Steinberg

THE U.S. ARMY is launching an innovative new advertising vehicle that will make its debut next week.

The Army and its marketing team had commissioned a 22-minute show to air on the History Channel that would ‘preview’ the channel’s coming re-airing of the popular World War II miniseries “Band of Brothers,” which ran on HBO in 2001.

The Army show blends scenes from the miniseries with uplifting interviews with soldiers who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan. The show is part of a trend among

advertisers to devise “situational” ads that play off specific programs and are harder for consumers to dismiss as ho-hum advertising.

Comment:

Here are some “uplifting” script ideas:

1. A soldier dies because the Pentagon didn't supply him with body armor.
2. Three soldiers riding in a Humvee get blown up. The Army made them use an un-armored Humvee, because all the armored ones had been commandeered by officers for a visit to Occupation HQ.
3. A female soldier in Kuwait gets raped. Command refuses to provide rape counseling, and tells her “never mind, suck it up and drive on.”
3. A military family in Kansas, living on unemployment because their jobs went offshore, go bankrupt and lose their home because they skip mortgage payments buying body armor and other supplies for their boy in Tikrit and covering the cost of his round trip airline ticket for home leave.
4. For a comedy break, there are lots of laughs when amputees get their artificial limbs mixed up, and President Bush comes to the military hospital to sort things out. Cameo appearances by Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney handing out medals and photos of Bush to wounded soldiers adds heartwarming contrast.
5. A activated reservist loses his business, car, home and life savings when his shift to military pay means an 80% cut in his income. His kids have to drop out of college and get jobs in the 7-11, and his wife files for divorce. Cameo appearance by Judge Judy presiding over divorce court.

Yes, it's Coalition Of The Killing, coming soon to a TV set near you.

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

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Collaborator Troops Killed In Tikrit

26 Mar 2004 (Reuters)

Four members of the Iraqi Civil Defence Corps (ICDC), a paramilitary force working alongside U.S. troops and police, were killed during a morning raid near Tikrit. A U.S. military spokeswoman said three armed suspects were also killed in the raid.

Resistance Blows Up Oil Well; Fire Out Of Control



Smoke billows from an explosion which set ablaze a main oil well that feeds exports through Turkey, west of the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk. (AFP/Marwan Ibrahim)

2004-03-25 BAGHDAD (AFX)

The director general of the Northern Iraqi Oil Co said an explosion set an oil well ablaze in northern Iraq.

"The explosion occurred at 3:30 pm (1230 GMT) because of an explosive charge planted by unknown individuals inside the well, located 75 kilometres west of Kirkuk," said Adel Qazzaz.

"It inflicted massive damage in the well, and firefighters are having a hard time extinguishing it because the explosion occurred inside the well and not in the pipelines," he said.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Subject: Improvised Humvee Armor

From: DH: Veterans For Peace, Mar 25, 2004 5:13 AM

To: GI Special

Where budgets and the supply procurement system fail, the resourcefulness of the GI will prevail.

It was not a field grade officer in the quartermaster corps that figured out how to cut up German beach obstacles and weld them to the front of "Rhino Tanks" to deal with the hedgerows of Normandy.

Nobody from higher headquarters came up with the idea to fill empty ammo boxes with dirt to reinforce bunker walls. It was not the engineer corps that corrected feeding problems on helicopter mounted M-60's by sticking a beer can under the feed tray inlet.

It sure would be nice if a certain Air National Guard deserter would stop misusing troops for political or oil stealing economic missions, rather than the National Defense mission they were trained for.

Kind of a costly way to identify equipment deficiencies though.

Rocking Ft. Bragg: History And Analysis Of The Anti-War Movement In Fayetteville

3.22.04, By Lou Plummer, Fayetteville, North Carolina

On the day after his nineteenth birthday in 1966, my father received his commission as an officer in the same North Carolina National Guard unit that took his father to Europe in World War Two. By 1969, having left the Guard, Dad was in Vietnam with the Fourth Infantry Division for the first of his two tours there. After he returned, our family moved into officer's quarters at Ft. Bragg, conveniently located near our hometown, Fayetteville, NC. I idolized my warrior father and told him that I wanted to be like him, camping out, eating C-rations and killing Viet Cong, not an uncommon feeling among seven-year-old military kids.

Fayetteville is the quintessential military town, then and now. In the early 70's, a bus affectionately named the Vomit Comet ferried soldiers from Ft. Bragg to Hay Street, a seedy strip of topless bars and pawnshops. Every effort was made by Hay Street merchants to separate basic infantry training graduates from the last paychecks they would receive before departing for Vietnam.

Not all of Fayetteville's citizens were predatory, however. In 1969, Dean Holland became the first soldier at Ft. Bragg to receive conscientious objector status after

receiving help from North Carolina's Quaker community. With Holland's leadership on the ground in Fayetteville, Quaker congregations from across the state raised money to open a GI counseling center in Fayetteville.

The center, Quaker House, was a catalyst for the growing GI resistance developing in the military at the time. With the help of angry young war veterans, the Quaker House staff helped organize a rally in a nearby park featuring Jane Fonda and Donald Sutherland. The rally drew 4000 protesters, including over a 1000 GIs, many of whom attended wearing hats and wigs in an attempt to avoid detection by military police. Four days later the rally, Quaker House was fire bombed in a case that was never solved.

Undeterred, Quaker House reopened. It remains open to this day, a part of the GI Rights Network. Over 50,000 members of the military have received counseling on discharge and other issues from its tireless workers. In recent years, Quaker House has also been at the hub of an anti-war movement in Fayetteville driven by vets and members of military families.

The impact of anti-war organizing in a military town is hard to measure. Ft. Bragg is home of the 82nd Airborne and the Army's Special Operations Command. Those institutions have loud voices and impact the community in many ways, economically and socially. In Fayetteville, a small grassroots group formed soon after September 11th. Rarely are more than a dozen organizers present at business meetings, although occasionally 50 to 100 people attend its various events. When the group conducted a series of vigils during the opening weeks of the invasion of Iraq, counter-demonstrators routinely outnumbered and outshouted the peaceniks.

As time passed and the body count from Iraq grew steadily higher, the counter-demonstrations ceased. More and more passers by, including troops in uniform began offering honks of support. More thumbs up signs were seen. The wives and parents of service members began to appear. Several veterans made and held their own signs for the weekly one-hour vigils.

My son, an active duty sailor assigned to the USS Dwight D, Eisenhower, was prosecuted for disloyalty by the Navy for speaking to a reporter at one of the demonstrations he attended while home on leave, a development that received national and international attention.

SP4 Jeremy Hinzman, a paratrooper assigned to the 82nd Airborne attended meetings regularly both before and after deploying to Afghanistan. In January, Hinzman left Fayetteville with his wife and son to apply for refugee status in Canada after his application for conscientious objector status was denied and his unit received orders for Iraq. Chuck Fager, the director of Quaker House, recently visited the Hinzman family in Toronto.

Connections were made with a broader network of peace activists, most significantly Military Families Speak Out and the Bring Them Home Now campaign. The support from these two groups was notable for their ability to redirect requests for help (usually in the form of email messages) from Ft. Bragg families back to activists on the ground in Fayetteville. Newcomers to Ft. Bragg, and there is a steady stream of them, are often at a loss on how to make connections with local people. It is easier for them to find the web site of a national organization than it is for them to know

how to contact smaller groups. One can't exactly look up the listings for "Peace and Justice" in the yellow pages.

Few military family members have any experience in organizing. Fortunately, a few of the civilian members of Fayetteville Peace With Justice are veterans of the civil rights, anti-nuke and women's rights movements. Their experience and connections with members of other grass roots groups helped develop relationships with a loose network of like-minded people across the state.

As happened during the Vietnam War, Quakers and other peace activists partnered with vets and military families in Fayetteville and elsewhere to plan a rally in the same park where Fonda and Sutherland appeared 34 years ago.

The March 20 rally drew over 1000 people.

The crowd marched from an assembly point on Hay Street to the rally site. The marchers passed the Airborne And Special Operations Museum and Freedom Park, where memorials to the local war dead stand. While once Hay Street was lined with topless bars and pawnshops, it is today much more gentrified. Still, soldiers who may one day be memorialized at the park regularly travel the street.

Veterans from several states led the march, including former Marine Michael Hoffman, who last year was marching through Iraq during the invasion.

Members of military families, including the wives and parents of soldiers from Ft. Bragg also helped guide the procession. Because of threats made on the archconservative website FreeRepublic.com, there was a significant police presence, especially as the crowd passed a small area where approximately 50 counter-demonstrators stood.

It took the crowd nearly 30 minutes to pass through a security checkpoint where handbags and coolers were searched.

The temperatures were in the high sixties, the sun was shining and a festival atmosphere quickly developed. Some were attracted to the peace truck, a project of the group Public Assembly. Much work had been done to have the truck present and presentable since earlier in the week the truck was heavily vandalized and its peace murals covered in red paint.

The crowd settled in for a variety of speakers and cultural performers. People of color, women and immigrants all serve in the military. They all also served the peace movement as they told their deeply personal stories on Saturday.

A visibly nervous Beth Pratt, whose husband is serving as a truck driver with a unit from Ft. Bragg stationed in Iraq brought many in the crowd to tears as she eloquently explained how she never watches the news or reads the newspaper for fear of reports on military casualties. "It's hard living without your best friend" Pratt said as she explained that after returning from Iraq, her husband was certain to be redeployed soon afterwards.

Other well know activists such as Nancy Lessin, co-founder of Military Families Speak Out and David Potorti of September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows appeared throughout the afternoon. Cultural performers such as Fruit of Labor, Hip Hop Against Racist War, and Vietnam Veteran singer songwriter Ralph Baldwin offered entertaining respites from the heavy emotion conveyed by the speakers.

Staff Sgt. Camilo Mejia, a Florida National Guardsman who served in Iraq, refused to return, and turned himself in to the military on Monday, March 15 along with a 40 page Conscientious Objector application, was invited to speak. Major General William G. Webster Jr. did not allow Staff Sgt. Mejia to leave Ft. Stewart to address the Fayetteville gathering, so his family came and read a statement on his behalf that reiterated his position opposing the war and thanked everyone for their support.

Elaine Johnson, from Cordova, SC, whose son Darius was killed in Iraq on November 2 gave an especially riveting description of her anguish near the end of the nearly three hour program.

Veteran activist Dennis O'Neil, a member of the national coordinating committee of the Bring Them Home now campaign traveled from New York for the event. O' Neil said, "I've been doing this a long time and I've been to more marches than I can count, but today is one of the best and most inspiring events I've ever attended."

As the crowd left the park, organizers were overheard making plans for continued support of the movement in Fayetteville. It took a long time and a lot of senseless killing during Vietnam for elements of the left, members of the faith community, vets and military families to combine their strengths. Today, only a year after the invasion of Iraq, those groups are already working together. They are making an impact. Their voices are being heard.

(For more on the March 20 demonstration at Fayetteville, see the centerfold at www.socialistworker.org.)

OCCUPATION REPORT

Do You Believe This Shit? Well, Nobody In Iraq Does Either!

March 25, 2004 By Daniel Cooney, Associated Press

L. Paul Bremer, the top administrator in Iraq, said Wednesday that significant steps had been taken to rebuild the country since a U.S.-led invasion toppled Saddam Hussein a year ago.

“One hundred days from now, Iraqis will be sovereign in their own land and responsible for their own future,” Bremer said in an outdoor speech in the Green Zone, the heavily protected area housing the coalition headquarters in the center of Baghdad.

Bremer announced that *he would set up* an Iraqi Defense Ministry and a national security Cabinet later this week.

He said *he was in the midst of appointing* inspectors general to each of Iraq’s 25 government ministries while creating a government auditing board and an anti-corruption commission. Bremer said work was under way to establish a public broadcasting service and an independent panel to regulate it.

Bremer already has appointed most Iraqi ministers, many of whom are expected to keep their jobs after the handover. He is currently sorting through the ministers’ choices for deputies.

Enormous tasks remain before the handover. The biggest involves anointing an Iraqi transitional government that will take power on June 30 — **but the Governing Council and U.S.-led occupation figures have yet to agree upon a scheme to name those who will govern. (What, Bremer didn’t get the list yet from Bush and Rumsfeld?)**

MORE:



(March 23.AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld showing reporters his mastery of S. Hussein-style finger-gesturing. In preparation for picking the members of the new Iraqi government, Rumsfeld engaged in an extensive study of that troubled nation’s customs.

The gesture shown here means “Kill that one over there.”

Rumsfeld denied that he plans to encourage the new sovereign, independent Iraqi government to be chosen soon by U.S. official Paul Bremer, who works for him, to chose him as the new supreme ruler of Iraq, despite reports from the U.S. Occupation Headquarters in Baghdad that hundreds of thousands of Iraqis have

taken to the streets, throwing flowers at posters of Rumsfeld, and chanting “Send Rumsfeld Here Please To Rule Over Us.”

Occupation press officers denied that the coalition headquarters had printed up the posters of Rumsfeld wearing traditional Shia apparel and portrayed as having a beard.

In Falluja, the resistance distributed handbills inviting Rumsfeld to visit their city soon. Similar flyers were seen in Samarra, Baquba, Tikrit, Mosul, and Basra.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

(Lest We Forget): Kerry’s Call For “Muslim Speaking” Troops

Muslim Wake Up: July 15, 2003

Americans are blessed to have a highly intelligent crop of candidates to choose from in the upcoming presidential race.

President Bush's mental prowess is well known and needs no further examination here (at least for today). But Democrats are ready to give him a run for their money.

Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts, another Yale alum, is often regarded as the brightest of this season's crop.



Not only is he smart, he is inclusive. Appearing on CNN's Late Edition **last weekend, he called on the President to bring in more international troops to help in the military occupation of Iraq, "particularly Muslim-speaking and Arab-speaking Muslim troops."**

Kerry thus became the first among the presidential contenders to call specifically for Muslim-speaking troops, showing a keen sense of discernment. Unlike most people in the world, who view Islam as merely a spiritual path, Kerry understands the linguistic implications of the faith. As Muslim Wake Up contributor Irfan Yusuf has shown in his [Islaam of Double Vowels](#), there is a distinct method to Muslim-speak.

Muslim Wake Up supports Senator Kerry's call. The Iraq occupation will certainly go much smoother with more soldiers responding to Iraqi guerilla fighters with "Assalamu alaykum, insh'Allah, masha'Allah, bruzzerrz!"

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Incursion Into Pakistan: U.S. Special Ops Troops Have Crossed Border

March 24, 2004 By Noor Khan, Associated Press. Associated Press writer Munir Ahmad contributed to this report from Islamabad, Pakistan.

ON THE AFGHAN BORDER — Using bulldozers to slice bunkers and a helicopter landing pad out of a mountainside, U.S. special operations forces dug in Tuesday on a peak overlooking Pakistan — fortifying the area for the intensifying battle against al-Qaida and Taliban forces.

Special operations forces — who include Green Berets, Navy SEALs, and CIA operatives — are playing a secretive but leading role in the battle against al-Qaida and Taliban suspects believed to be hiding out in the mountains of Pakistan's tribal areas.

An Associated Press writer on Tuesday became the first to report from the special operations' observation post since the start of Operation Mountain Storm, a 2-week-old American offensive designed to capture Osama bin Laden and his top lieutenants.

The camp is home to 60 Americans, working with 200 Afghan militia, the Afghan militiamen say. **The Westerners wear T-shirts and sunglasses, and most sport beards and mustaches, with pistols strapped to their legs. Rank and file U.S. soldiers must remain in uniform and are banned from growing beards, but special operations forces are not subject to the same regulations.**

On Tuesday, the Americans were erecting 100 yards of wire fence along the border beside their base. They also dug holes, which will become bunkers, to live in while their Afghan allies put up tents.

Workers used construction equipment to level a helipad.

Americans around the camp refused to speak to AP. Relaying their request through Afghan militiamen, they eventually asked the reporter to leave, saying no journalists were allowed in the area.

On the Pakistan side, President Gen. Pervez Musharraf has said about a dozen U.S. “technical experts” are in his country. Some are located across the border from the special operations post in Miran Shah, Pakistani intelligence officials told AP.

Last week, a Pakistani army spokesman, Gen. Shaukat Sultan, said a dozen or so U.S. intelligence agents were in the country “assisting Pakistan in technical intelligence and surveillance.” The CIA declined to comment.

Both sides of the border around Miran Shah have come under repeated rocket attacks by militants hoping to hit U.S. or Afghan military posts.

No uniformed American forces have been seen in recent days along one of the front lines in the U.S. campaign against terror suspects based in Pakistan’s North and South Waziristan, locals say.

Village leaders say Taliban and al-Qaida attackers cross the border at will. Asked for proof, they laughed, as if there could be no doubt.

“Everyone can come easily into Afghanistan. Everyone can go easily into Pakistan,” said Mohammed Khan, another shopkeeper in Sisandi. “There are no Afghan checkpoints.”

Since the Americans’ arrival, villagers have stayed inside after dark, saying the U.S. security outweighed the inconvenience of the curfew. **(Also, they prefer not to be dead.)**

The U.S. and Afghan forces have closed this part of the border, at least, to any attacks, Mohammed Khan said.

“Right now, from this area, it’s impossible that anyone can come,” the villager said. “But it’s a huge border.”

“Accident” Kills Four Afghans, Wounds Four U.S. Soldiers

March 24, 2004 By Stephen Graham, Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Four soldiers from the U.S.-trained Afghan National Army were killed by an accidental explosion during a training exercise, the American military said, in the deadliest incident yet involving the fledging force.

Five more Afghan soldiers and four U.S. soldiers were injured in Tuesday's blast near Gardez, 60 miles south of the capital, Kabul, in eastern Paktia province, spokesman Lt. Col. Bryan Hilferty said.

The casualties were the result of an “accidental detonation during demolitions training,” Hilferty said. He didn't elaborate.

Two of the wounded Americans and one of the Afghans were taken to the main American base at Bagram, north of Kabul, for treatment.

None of the victims was identified. But Hilferty said the injured Americans were from Camp Phoenix in Kabul. The camp is the base for Oklahoma National Guard troops involved in training the new Afghan National Army.

Afghan Defense Ministry spokesman Gen. Zahed Azimi confirmed that the Gardez incident was the deadliest yet for the new force.

An Afghan army soldier also died March 18 in an operation in the central Afghan province of Uruzgan, Hilferty said. **Two U.S. soldiers, eight Afghans that the military said were enemy fighters and a civilian also were killed in that fighting near the village of Miam Do.**

More than 100 coalition soldiers were still in the area Wednesday but were “pulling out,” Hilferty said.

Fantasy Meets Reality: You Decide Which Is Which

CHAPMAN FIREBASE, Afghanistan, March 25, 2004, By Stephen Graham, Associated Press

Commanders claim that Taliban and al-Qaida holdouts are now so weakened that they can be finished off by bringing long-delayed relief and reconstruction aid to their former strongholds in the south and east.

Yet attacks on aid workers and military targets continue, and the number of mainly U.S. soldiers here has risen some 2,000 — to 13,500 in all — in recent months as the military seeks to capture al-Qaida chief Osama bin Laden and Taliban leader Mullah Omar.

Top U.S. commanders at Wednesday's ceremony were not available to speak to reporters covering the event, embellished with national anthems and flags and a bout of traditional Afghan music and dance.

Instead, it was left to a reservist physician at a small clinic in the barren, rock-strewn base to defend the reconstruction effort in what is still a combat zone.

“There is a ‘hearts-and-minds’ aspect and you can't overestimate that,” said Capt. Steve Travis, a native of Guthrie, Okla.

The team is based inside Chapman Firebase, the home of an undisclosed number of American special forces and their Afghan helpers, just off a packed dirt runway littered with the wrecks of old military planes.

Bearded American soldiers in civilian clothes moved in and out of the heavily guarded base in dust-caked Humvees and pickup trucks, betraying how the war continues.

Officials acknowledge that aid workers spooked by the deadly shootings of mine clearers and well-diggers still don't believe the border areas are safe.

Khost juts into Pakistan, from where weapons and guns flowed in over the mountains during the war against the Soviet Union in the 1980s — and where U.S. and Afghan officials say insurgents continue to find safe havens.

Khial Baz, the Afghan military commander of the province acknowledged that his foes were at best dormant.

"There are some people trying to work against us," Baz said. "But they're lying low at the moment."

Bush Sending 2,000 More Marines To Afghan Goat Fuck

3.25.04 By Will Dunham, WASHINGTON (Reuters)

The United States has placed about 2,000 Marines with special operations training aboard Navy ships in the Gulf, poised for use in Afghanistan defense officials said on Thursday.

The Marines are from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

The Wasp strike group, carrying 2,000 to 2,200 Marines from the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit, left North Carolina on Feb. 19 for a scheduled six-month deployment in the Gulf region and arrived in recent days, officials said.

"Some of the those Marines will participate in and support operations in Afghanistan," said a defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The United States, beefing up its forces in the region, already has 2,000 other Marines inside Afghanistan as part of the 11,000-strong U.S. military contingent there.

A Navy official said four of the seven ships in the group are positioned in the Gulf: the Wasp, the guided missile cruiser USS Yorktown, the dock landing ship USS Whidbey Island, and the amphibious transport ship USS Shreveport. The official said two others are in the north Arabian Sea: the guided missile cruiser USS Leyte Gulf and the guided missile destroyer USS McFaul. The official declined to identify the location of the final vessel in the group, the attack submarine USS Connecticut.

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Palestinian Terrorists, Cleverly Disguised As Children, Launching Fanatical Attack On Israeli Freedom Tank



Israeli Freedom Tank, Although Hopelessly Surrounded By Evildoers, Beats Back Terrorist Attack



Photos from: <http://rafah.virtualactivism.net/newsphotos/04/march/20/marchimages.htm>

(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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