

GI SPECIAL 2#46

REAL BAD PLACE TO BE: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!



U.S. Army Humvee vehicle blazing after resistance fighters captured and poured gasoline on it following combat between American and Iraqi forces, Falluja, March 25, 2004. REUTERS/Mohammed Khodor

Wounded Soldier Needs Your Help: Doctors Say Unfit For Duty But Getting Shipped Back To Iraq

To GI Special:

I received some very disturbing news today. **A local soldier with the 1st Armored Division by the name of Jason Gunn from Upper Darby, PA is being redeployed to Iraq after receiving burns to over 50% of his body and witnessing the soldier next to him in his Humvee literally blow in half.**

His doctors in Germany said that his physical wounds had been healed but he was suffering from severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and that he is unfit for duty.

His chain of command over ruled this and ordered that he be returned to duty. Jason's mother and father, Pat and Jerome Gunn, are of course incredibly distraught over this and want to see their son receive the care that he needs.

Please call your representatives and demand that Jason Gunn be removed from Iraq so that he can receive the medical care he needs and deserves.

Contact for this mission:

Michael Hoffman, Iraq war veteran (USMC-OIF): arti57@yahoo.com
Veterans for Peace, Chapter 31, Philadelphia, PA

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/>

Military Deliberately Deploying Unfit GIs To Iraq; “A High Risk Of Damaging People”

Mar. 25, 2004 BY DAVID GOLDSTEIN, Washington Bureau, twincities.com

WASHINGTON — To meet the demand for troops in Iraq, the military has been deploying some National Guard and Army Reserve soldiers who aren't fit for combat.

More than a dozen members of the Guard and reserves told Knight Ridder they were shipped off to battle with little attention paid to their medical histories.

Those histories included ailments such as asthma, diabetes, recent surgery and hearing loss. Once in Iraq, the soldiers faced severe conditions that aggravated their medical problems and the medical care available to them was limited.

David Lloyd, a 44-year-old mechanic with the Tennessee National Guard, died of a heart attack in Iraq in August. His wife, Pamela Lloyd, said her husband didn't know he'd had a problem, but his autopsy showed three blockages in his coronary arteries.

"He should have never been deployed," she said. "He was supposed to have been given a thorough physical. He had none. The only thing he had was the shots."

A high-ranking noncommissioned officer in the Army Reserve, who didn't want his name used for fear of reprisals by his superiors, has been assigned to the medical hold at Fort Knox, Ky., since last summer.

He had had surgery on his neck for a bulging disc two months before his unit was activated earlier last year. His doctors had told him to limit his activities for six months, and not to lift anything heavier than 30 pounds.

But the noncommissioned officer said that after looking at his medical records and asking him to raise his arms above his head, the medical screening officer at Fort Snelling in Minnesota, where his unit reported in January 2003, told him, "You seem to be good to go."

By last March, he was in Iraq carrying 75 pounds of equipment on his back daily. Constantly in pain, he was taking heavy doses of ibuprofen and acetaminophen.

By May, he'd been sent home and began an odyssey through military hospitals, ending with a metal plate in his neck to replace the surgically repaired disc that had fragmented during his deployment.

"It's a nightmare," the noncommissioned officer said. "I believe my neck would have healed up if I had time. The pain was leaving, and now I'm stuck with the pain again."

A memo from the European Regional Medical Command in Germany, where many injured soldiers were sent, criticized the predeployment medical screening and said soldiers who were unfit for Iraq were having to be sent home. Deploying them was a risk to their health and an added cost for the military, it said.

The memo expressed the concerns of Col. Holly Doyne, a physician based there at the time. Doyne has been deployed to Kuwait and couldn't be reached for this article. **Another Army medical officer, who didn't want his name used, confirmed that Doyne's memo was distributed to various stateside medical officials and commanders.**

How many soldiers are unfit is unclear.

Gerry Mosley, a retired first sergeant with a reserve unit from Mississippi, said the practice of sending medically unqualified troops was widespread in the Guard and reserves. "It wasn't about healthy troops," he said in an interview. "It was about the number of troops."

"Soldiers with medical conditions that would be adversely affected by deployment were 'rubber-stamped' as fit for duty," Mosley says in testimony prepared for a congressional hearing next week on military health care. "Medical profiles were ignored."

All the soldiers interviewed by Knight Ridder said their units and the medical officers who screened them, either after they were activated or at their mobilization sites, were aware of their medical conditions.

Doyne's memo said pre-deployment screening was "clearing individuals for movement to the combat zone without knowledge of the medical system limitation in the combat theater. ... OIF (Operation Iraqi Freedom) is NOT peacekeeping. It is combat. The medical support is austere."

It said the problem was a "KEY medical issue" and went on to say, "Frankly, we are burning out a lot of time and effort on shipping back folks who never should have come in the first place. Also runs a high risk of damaging folks."

The memo added: "Current practice of taking the theory of 'if they are on duty they are OK' is not working. Nor is the assumption that if they have been found fit for duty by a medical board in the past they are fit."

Nearly every one of the soldiers interviewed had to be medically evacuated out of Iraq because battlefield conditions exacerbated their health problems.

"That's a tremendous medical logistical burden," Kilpatrick said.

GET SOME TRUTH: CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation, the cuts to veterans benefits, or the dangers of depleted uranium - is the first reason Traveling Soldier is necessary. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces. Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces. If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers. <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/>

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

U.S. Marines Come Under Fire From Syria Near Border Of Iraq

[Wall Street Journal, March 26, 2004]

U.S. Marines and their helicopters have been regularly shot at in recent days from Syria's side of the border with Iraq. The fire sometimes appears to be coming from Syrian border guards. The incidents come at a tense time in U.S.-Syrian relations.

The Battle Of Falluja; Brass-Kissing Marine Officer Sends His Troops Into Death Trap



Textbook stance: Highly professional Iraqi resistance soldiers preparing mortar before firing at US forces March 26, 2004 in Falluja where they often carry out attacks against U.S. occupation. Witnesses said heavy gunfire and explosions were heard when Marines moved into the center of the city. (AP Photo/Abdel Kader Sahadi)

3.27.04 By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA, Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq - U.S. troops and guerrillas armed with mortars and rocket-propelled grenades battled for hours in the alleyways of Falluja on Friday, killing a Marine and at least five Iraqis, including an ABC News cameraman.

Footage from Associated Press Television News showed American troops in Falluja carrying a comrade in a stretcher shortly after an explosion during combat. The U.S. military in Baghdad said one Marine died and several were wounded in the fighting in a city that has resisted American efforts to pacify it since the ouster of Saddam Hussein a year ago.

This week, U.S. Marines took over authority in Falluja and surrounding areas.

Witnesses said heavy gunfire and explosions erupted when Marines moved into the center of the city. In recent months, **American troops have rarely ventured into downtown Falluja, one of the most dangerous areas in Iraq for the U.S. military.**

(Until some greedy, stupid, ass-kissing careerist Marine officer decided to make points with the Pentagon by sending his soldiers into a death trap. *Thanks to Vet TL for pointing this out.*)

An AP photographer saw two rebels in civilian clothes firing a mortar, and another preparing to fire a rocket-propelled grenade.

Throughout the day, the city was largely deserted with shops shuttered and residents staying indoors. U.S. troops blocked a city entrance.

In New York, ABC News President David Westin identified the slain cameraman as freelancer Burhan Mohammed Mazhour, who had been working for the network in Falluja for two months.

"He died of gunshot wounds while covering a firefight in Falluja," Westin said in a statement.

"We are trying to confirm all the details surrounding his death and have asked the U.S. military for an investigation." Iraqi doctors said Mazhour was shot in the head.

Witnesses said Mazhour and other journalists were taking cover behind a wall, *with the Marines in front and the insurgents behind.* After rebels fired a barrage of grenades at the U.S. troops, *Mazhour peered around the wall and a bullet struck him in the forehead almost instantly.* It was unclear who killed him.

Diyaa al-Jumailee, a doctor at Falluja hospital, said four other Iraqis were killed and six wounded. Witnesses said the dead included a shopowner, a customer and two bystanders.

MORE:

Falluja For Beginners

3.29.04 By Robert Hodierno, Army Times staff

"A lot of the time we sit around, we lift weights, we talk," 1st Lt. Scott Shirk said. "The rest of the time you spend with your asshole puckered. Then you come back and chill for a couple of days. Then we do it all over again."

"It's surreal."

MORE:

“The Insurgents Had The Americans Surrounded”

WORST POSSIBLE PLACE TO BE: SURROUNDED & HOLED UP IN FALLUJA



BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE

Lynsey Addario/Corbis, for The New York Times

3.27.04 By Dexter Filkins, N.Y. Times

In the fighting on Friday, the attackers showed sophistication and ease of movement, despite the assertions of American officers that they are close to defeating the insurgency.

Falluja, long the epicenter of anti-American resistance, remains far from being under control. It seemed clear that the insurgents were popular enough to hide among the civilians with little fear of exposure.

"The insurgents had the Americans surrounded, and they had the advantage, because they knew the neighborhood and the Americans did not," said Omar Ali, an Iraqi cameraman for the APTN television network, who was standing next to the ABC cameraman when he was killed. "When the Americans called for the reinforcements, the insurgents withdrew."

The fighting followed a shift from the approach of the Army's 82nd Airborne Division, whose troops had largely pulled out of the city and turned it over to the Iraqi police and paramilitary forces. In the last several months, American soldiers maintained no permanent posts here and ventured into the urban center only on patrols.

Since marines took over here this month, they have sent platoons of troops into the heart of the city. The fighting gradually intensified, with the guerrillas' attacks marked by varied tactics and firepower.

"When the Americans came into the neighborhood, the guerrillas attacked them with mortars and R.P.G.'s," said Qasim Ubaid, an electrician who lives in the neighborhood. "The Americans were surrounded."

Lt. Ross Schellhaas, of the First Marine Expeditionary Force, said "Every one of us is waving to the Iraqis, even the guys who got shot at," the lieutenant said as his men moved through the neighborhood. "We're trying to let them know that we are here to help them."

"I don't know if they believe it or not," he said.

The renewed fighting seemed to generate anti-American antipathy here. At Falluja's main hospital, where the dead and wounded were taken, a group of angry Iraqis waved away an American reporter who tried to go inside.

"If you go inside, you'll be shot," said Abdul Nasir, a security guard. "I can't protect you. The families are crazy, and they are armed."

The American argument suggested that the insurgency, never very popular among ordinary Iraqis, was now smaller than ever. **There was a drop in the number of attacks against Americans evident in recent months**, and that seemed to justify reducing American troops, as well as the replacement of many of the active-duty troops with reservists.

But part of the reason for the drop in attacks was that American soldiers had stopped patrolling large swaths of Iraqi cities like Baghdad and Falluja. On the rare occasions that they returned to those areas, they were often greeted with enmity and gunfire.

While the Americans asserted that foreigners like Mr. Zarqawi had taken over the insurgency, they were rarely able to cite examples of foreign involvement in terrorist attacks. When pressed, American officials conceded that of the 8,500 suspected guerrillas and criminals they had detained, only about 150 — less than 2 percent — were from outside Iraq.

Marine “Non-Combat” Death At Al Asad

March 26, 2004, United States Department of Defense News Release No. 229-04

The Department of Defense announced today the death of a Marine.

LCpl. James A. Casper, 20, of Coolidge, Texas, died March 25 due to a **non-combat related incident** at Al Asad, Iraq. He was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 11th Marines, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Coordinated Attack Gets Security Vehicle, Wounds at Least One

27 March, By Fiona O'Brien, MOSUL, Iraq (Reuters)

On Saturday, a roadside bomb exploded in central Baghdad, badly damaging a vehicle **and injuring at least one passenger**, witnesses said.

Gunfire rang out immediately after the blast, which was strong enough to smash windows in nearby houses.

There was blood on the front seats of the large four-wheel drive vehicle, similar to those used by the U.S. military and foreign security firms.

"Five Iraqis were wounded and one vehicle destroyed in an improvised explosive device **attack on a civilian convoy** in central Baghdad at around 9am," a US military spokesman said.

Shattered glass and a blood-stained cigarette packet could also be seen.

Japanese Supply Truck Attacked

TOKYO, March 27, Kyodo (Kyodo News) & March 28, 2004, The Weekend Australian, From correspondents in Tokyo

A trailer truck hired by a private company to carry goods for Japanese troops in Iraq appears to have been attacked, according to information received by the Defense Agency on Saturday.

AN unidentified assailant shot dead the Iraqi driver of the civilian truck carrying supplies to Japan's military in southern Iraq, Japanese media reported today.

The truck was travelling between the southern cities of Basra and Nasiriyah when it was attacked, the agency said. Japan's Defence Agency confirmed that a civilian truck hired to transport supplies to Japanese troops in Samawah was attacked,

TROOP NEWS

Killed In Action; Cheated In Death

3.29.04 By Rick Maze, Army Times Staff Writer

Rep. Ellen Tauscher, D-Calif., said she is concerned especially about complaints she has received regarding life insurance coverage.

Tauscher said she has learned that 15 service members who died in military operations had purchased life insurance from private companies, but the Defense Department never processed the payroll forms to have premiums paid through direct withdrawals.

Tauscher said the military is responsible for the families being denied insurance payments, as part of a dispute over access to military bases by private insurance companies and over the use of allotments to make premium payments.

Tauscher said she has been trying to get officials to talk about the problems, with no success.

The Imperial Well Has Run Dry

Connor Freff Cochran, AlterNet March 24, 2004

Twenty-one of the US Army's 33 regular combat brigades are now on active duty in the "hot" zones of Iraq, Afghanistan, South Korea, and the Balkans. That's 63 percent of the Army's fighting force ... all without factoring in additional troops stationed in Saudi Arabia, Germany, Britain, Italy, Japan, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and elsewhere around the globe.

This is a huge overextension. History has proven that long-term military operations can only be sustained if you have twice as many soldiers waiting in the pipeline as are stationed out in the field. By that rule of thumb, the regular military is now 125,000 soldiers short -- a gap the Bush administration has temporarily plugged by calling more than 150,000 Army Reserve and National Guard troops into active service.

There are 135,000 troops stationed in Iraq, just under half of them guardsmen and reservists. But to maintain that number another 22,000 have already been sent there and brought home dead, wounded, or medically unfit for service. Since the invasion of Iraq there have been more military casualties than in all the years since the end of the Viet Nam war combined.

The human well is drying up. **Enlistment rates in the regular armed forces and the National Guard have dropped precipitously, and according to a poll conducted by the military newspaper Stars and Stripes, a whopping 49 percent of soldiers stationed in Iraq say they don't intend to reenlist -- even with the Army offering a \$10,000 bonus.**

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

More Troops Want War Objector Discharges

March 29, 2004, Jane McHugh, Army Times staff writer

The number of soldiers who want out of the Army as conscientious objectors has nearly tripled since the start of the Iraq war, Army statistics show.

A total of 60 soldiers applied for conscientious-objector discharges in 2003, said Martha Rudd, an Army spokeswoman at the Pentagon. Thirty-one applications were granted, she said.

That compares to 23 such applications and 18 approved in 2002 and 23 applications with 17 approved in 2001.

However, J.E. McNeil, executive director of the Center on Consciousness and War, said the Pentagon's numbers are misleading.

"In my office, I've got 30 files" on service members, mostly soldiers, who want to become conscientious objectors, McNeil said. "A significant number of them have been to Afghanistan and Iraq."

Parents, Vets Hit The Streets To Protest Iraq War; (And The Anonymous Soldier Has It Right)

March 29, 2004, Karen Jowers, Army Times staff writer

More than 100 people opposed to the war in Iraq walked six miles from Walter Reed Army Medical Center to the White House on March 15.

Those leading the symbolic funeral procession carried black plastic wreaths. A plywood coffin brought up the rear.

The marchers on the "Trail of Mourning and Truth" marking the anniversary of the war in Iraq included parents of troops in the combat zone, veterans, family members who lost loved ones Sept. 11 and others, representing about 20 different anti-war groups.

Their message: They believe President Bush is trying to hide the human cost of the war.

After the last protesters departed Walter Reed for the White House, a soldier walking to work who did not give his name stopped long enough to say, “We protect them so they have a right to protest.”

A Survivors’ Story; Soldier Sexually Assaulted By Halliburton Contractor Never Asked To Testify

March 29, 2004, By Gina Cavallaro, Army Times staff writer

Capt. Tonya Estell felt a hand on her back and spun around to see who was touching her. When she saw him, she froze.

She was caught off guard, inside the confines of a housing container with only one way out.

As the man groped her, the thought of drawing her sidearm, an unloaded 9mm pistol, even as a deterrent, never occurred to her.

“At that moment, I was just in shock at what was going on,” said Estell, 33, of the June 26 assault in Baghdad, Iraq. “It wasn’t even like he was attacking me as a soldier. He was attacking me as a female. [Drawing my weapon] didn’t even enter my mind.”

The man who fondled Estell was a local worker, one of thousands of third-country nationals hired by Defense Department contractors — in this case, Kellogg Brown & Root — to work construction and food services and to perform other tasks for the military overseas. (KBR is a subsidiary of Bush Buddy Halliburton Corp.)

Estell doesn’t know the man’s name and could only guess his nationality. **She knew he worked for KBR because it was a KBR supervisor who eventually took charge of him and two other men who had assaulted two female soldiers about 30 minutes earlier.**

Estell, whose surname at the time of the incident was Arnold — she was married on midtour leave in November — doesn’t know what became of the worker, even though she gave a statement to a JAG officer after the incident.

In her case, the man was detailed with about 30 other men to stand up a colony of residential containers at the Army’s Camp Slayer, inside the Baghdad International Airport complex.

Estell was the commander of a security convoy whose mission to escort a couple of KBR trucks from Baghdad to Tikrit had been delayed for two consecutive days. She and

her crew of five soldiers were at Slayer temporarily, and the KBR worker motioned for her to enter the trailer they would occupy for the night.

"I turn around, and he's right in my face, trying to kiss me," said Estell, whose driver, Spc. Maryanne Ajoku, had tagged along into the trailer.

The man's moves were fast and aggressive. "He grabbed me by the arm and pulled me up to him. I was pushed into him, and he moved his hands over my body, feeling me up and down, trying to kiss me," she recalled emotionally.

Ajoku grabbed Estell by the arm and, as she led her out of the trailer, the man hit his hand on the bed, shouting after the women a slang word in Arabic for vagina.

"Come on, ma'am," Estell recalls Ajoku saying to her as she led her away from the trailer to the rest of their convoy crew a couple of trailers down.

"I never faced them," said Estell. "I sat [with my back to the group] and tried to get myself together so I wouldn't cry."

A chemical officer by profession, Estell worked in the 4th Infantry Division's 4th Brigade Combat Team when the division deployed to Kuwait in April 2003.

In June, she was tapped to command humanitarian assistance convoys and convoys escorting fuel trucks between Turkey and Baghdad. Between June and August, she traveled more than 7,000 miles in 63 convoys that escorted 4,300 fuelers and transported 23 Iraqi VIPs.

She became adept at coordinating delicate tactical missions with Iraqi and Turkish men. They respected her, she said, and she never encountered any problems.

"I'm still in shock. I'm nervous. I'm angry. I'm a soldier. This isn't supposed to happen to me," Estell said in an interview from her office at Fort Hood, Texas, where she returned March 6 after a year downrange in Kuwait and Iraq.

Fool In Command Devises Amazing New Way To Kill His Own Soldiers

Letter To The Editor
Army Times
3.29.04

Recently, Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker issued an order to have all soldiers wear the U.S. flag on all utility uniforms. This order includes all soldiers throughout the force, regardless of deployment status.

Our comrades in arms serving in the Persian Gulf have a tan-and-brown, subdued version displayed on the right sleeve of the desert battle dress uniform.

Being a loyal soldier and professional noncommissioned officer, my U.S. flag insignia has been added to my woodland BDUs, following the recent order. In your latest issue, a reader commented in his letter that this should give soldiers pride in our nation, similar to our allies who also display their nations' flags on their uniforms.

He stated our flag should be placed above wartime service insignias. I agree with him on both points. **But as patriotic as it is, doesn't anyone see the tactical disadvantage to this? A red, white, blue and gold emblem takes away from the elements of camouflage and concealment and, in a sense, makes our soldiers targets.**

It's called a battle dress uniform for a reason. The insignia should be a black and green subdued U.S. flag for the woodland pattern BDU, for instance.

I would hate to be the leader who has to write a letter to the family of a deceased soldier, explaining that their son or daughter was killed because of a uniform patch.

Staff Sgt. Karl A. Hanson
Manchester, N.H.

MORE:

Letter To The Editor
Army Times
3.29.04

Placing the U.S. flag on the BDU is a good idea, but common sense dictates it be subdued. **It is a combat uniform, and placing a brightly colored bull's-eye on each soldier is a strange move.**

Now I know what the high command will say: "In combat situations, remove the patch." But if it were subdued to begin with, that would not be necessary.

And what about your everyday soldier who comes back from two weeks in the field with his brightly colored patches soiled beyond all known cleaning techniques and is told by the first sergeant to rip them off and get new ones, which will happen seven to eight times a year?

And before you say it, I will: "The U.S. flag should be displayed only in full color." Tell that to the troops already wearing subdued desert flags in Afghanistan and Iraq.

William D. Maldonado
Lowell, Mass.

(Since it is unlikely the idiot who ordered this, one Gen. Schoomaker, will listen to reason, perhaps an educational tour of an actual combat area would help advance his understanding.

(In a just world, this would be the plan: Track him down. Place the Gen. in restraints for immediate transport to Falluja. Chain said asshole to the Falluja city hall after painting large full color U.S. flag insignia described in above letters-to-editor on individuals' front and back. Return to base. Return next day. If said asshole is alive, education completed. If not, net gain: one less stupid soldier-killing piece of shit in command.

(But then in a just world there would be no U.S. army in Iraq to begin with.)

Bush Regime Announces New Plan To Trash Morale

March 29, 2004, Karen Jowers, Army Times staff writer

Proposed cuts next year in Army and Navy morale, welfare and recreation programs total \$140 million.

Charles Abell, principal undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, said his office "worked hard" to lessen the impact of those budget decisions, he said, "**but in the end they were the decisions of the service secretaries and service chiefs.**"

Due to the Army's budgetary requirements for the war in Iraq, taxpayer funding for Army MWR programs this year also was reduced initially to \$400 million from the 2003 level of \$494 million, said Pete Isaacs, chief operating officer of the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Rocket Attack Hits Mosul City Hall

27 March, By Fiona O'Brien, MOSUL, Iraq (Reuters), VOA News, & Dow Jones Newswires

Insurgents have fired two rockets at the office of the U.S. chosen provisional governor, killing two civilians and injuring 13 other people including two police officers, police in the northern Iraqi city say.

The attack was on the provincial governor's office, but he wasn't there at the time, the report said.

Colonel Shamil Ahmad, head of the city hall police department, said the rockets hit walls outside the hall at around 11:20 a.m. (8:20 a.m. British time).

He said at least three unidentified individuals launched two Katyusha rockets from a locally made rocket launcher. Police found the launcher nearby. No one was arrested.

The rocket launcher was hidden inside a wooden cart that was wheeled up to a wall surrounding the three-story main government building, police Sgt. Jassim Mohammed said, according to The Associated Press.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Iraqi Resistance Cripples U.S. Imperial Dreams

Green Left Weekly, March 24, 2004.

Tariq Ali told 950 people who filled the University of New South Wales Clancy Auditorium on March 14 for a meeting was organised by Green Left Weekly "Even in anti-Hussein strongholds, US troops were not welcomed as 'liberators', which amazed Western journalists,"

'But why were they amazed?', Ali asked. Iraqis of all religions and ethnic identification fought the British for more than 30 years to drive them and their puppets out, before they succeeded in 1958, he explained. 'We are on the verge of seeing a similar development', Ali predicted.

The resistance of the Iraqi people has already had a positive impact, Ali said. 'It has made future US military adventures in Syria and Iran virtually impossible'.

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.

Bring Our Troops Home Now

March 20th Fayetteville N.C./Ft. Bragg rally
Speech Of Michael McPhearson, Veteran Gulf War 1

First, I would like to show love and respect for my hometown. Growing up in Fayetteville helped me understand the meaning of patriotism long ago. People here know about sacrifice, honor and duty. Thank you, Fayetteville.

Second, I want to be clear that I am proud of my son, who has chosen to serve his nation, and I support all our service members. In fact, that support is why I stand here today.

In a true democracy, the sacred trust between a soldier and those he or she protects demands that the civilian leaders send soldiers into harm's way for nothing less than moral and just reasons. The soldier is then prepared to die in defense and/or pursuit of that cause.

This sacred trust is based on truth. George Bush, you have broken the sacred trust! First you insinuate that Saddam Hussein was somehow responsible for 9/11. Then you tell us he has weapons of mass destruction. One year later--no weapons and the only solid al-Qaeda connection to Iraq is the current resistance you created.

Now you tell us Saddam is a monster and the world is better off without him. You tell us the war on terror must be taken to the terrorist. Yet for some reason you attack a country that did not and could not attack us. You use smoke and mirrors to mislead us and change your story to fit the political moment. Then you wave my Flag and command us to follow.

You have placed our soldiers in a no-win situation. You call on them to be police, something they are not trained to be; and force them to be occupiers, something they do not want to be. If they live to be veterans, you will ignore their ailments and cut their benefits like you are doing to current veterans now.

Yes. I agree we liberated Iraq from the tyranny of Saddam and have a responsibility to help rebuild. But the heart of liberation is self-determination. **Imperialism, be it imposed from London in 1776 or from Washington D.C. in 2004, is arrogant and unjust. We cannot decide the future of Iraq. The Iraqi people must determine that for themselves.**

Pulling out of Iraq now would not be the act of a defeated United States. It would be an act of choice. A choice that shows we believe in the Iraqi people. It would prove we believe in liberty.

Instead, President Bush, you choose to dishonor our soldiers with deception and misinformation. You dishonor their blood by casting them as occupiers to further imperialist ambitions.

Finally, I say to President Bush, Senator Kerry and all of Congress, our message is clear and our demand is simple. Support Our Troops. Bring Them Home Now!

(You can view photo's of the Ft. Bragg/Fayetteville rally at:
http://www.bringthemhomenow.org/what/campaign_news/040320_NCfayetteville.html The link at end will give you the speech and other archived articles. Also check out the pages with letters from troops and military families.)

(For interviews with veterans and military family members at Fayetteville, see also the centerfold article by Eric Ruder at www.socialistworker.org.)

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