

GI SPECIAL 2#51

Falluja Again? No way--



--NOW IT'S BAGHDAD!

Iraqi boys run past a burning US Army Humvee following clashes with Muslim Shiite Army of Mehdi militia in Baghdad's al-Sadr City district. (AFP/Ahmad Al-Rubaye)

Shia Troops Fight Occupation Forces

Seven U.S. Soldiers Killed, 24 Wounded

In Baghdad Battle Sunday:

Outbreaks In Kufa, Nasiriyah, Amarah, Intense Fighting In Najaf

4 April, 2004 BBC News & By KHALID MOHAMMED, Associated Press Writer & By Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, KUFA, Iraq (Reuters)

Seven U.S. soldiers were killed Sunday in fighting with Shiite militiamen in the Baghdad neighborhood of Sadr City, the U.S. military said. At least 24 other American troops were wounded, the military said in a written statement.

Najaf: Fighting broke out over Iraq today between soldiers of an anti-U.S. Shiite Muslim cleric and occupation forces in at least five Iraqi cities Sunday, punctuated by a gun battle at the Spanish garrison near this Shiite holy city that killed at least 20 people, including an American coalition soldier.

Shias also clashed with Italian and British forces in other cities in a broad, violent challenge to the U.S.-led coalition, raising questions about its ability to stabilize Iraq



A member of Shiite radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's Army of Mehdi fires with his Kalashnikov at Spanish-led troops outside the Iraqi Shiite holy city of Najaf. (AFP/Karim Sahib)

In Kufa, near Najaf, al-Sadr supporters took over a police station and seized guns inside. No police were in sight.

In the southern city of Nasiriyah, Italian troops traded fire with militiamen, said Lt. Col. Pierluigi Monteduro, chief of staff of Italian troops in the region. One Italian officer was wounded in the leg.

Also in the south, British troops clashed with protesters in Amarah, according to the Ministry of Defense in London. FOUR people were killed and eight others wounded in hospital sources said today.

The clashes occurred in four neighborhoods - Um Azayya, Al-Majidiya, Al-Husseini and Hutteen - in the centre of the town, 370 kilometres southeast of Baghdad.

The two sides traded fire with assault rifles and anti-tank rockets, a reporter on the scene said.

Two British army jeeps were left burned in Majidiya.

IMPOSSIBLE SITUATION; BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



American soldiers take cover as the Spanish base comes under attack outside **Kufa**, 15 kms north of Najaf, Iraq April 4 2004; (AP PHOTO/Gervasio Sanchez)



The crowd was protesting in support of firebrand cleric Moqtada Sadr.

The shooting broke out after five thousand of al-Sadr supporters gathered outside the Spanish garrison. **A spokesman for the Spanish headquarters in nearby Diwaniyah, Commander Carlos Herradon, said attackers opened fire about noon.**

The Spanish and Salvadoran soldiers fired back, and assailants later regrouped in three clusters outside the base. Shooting continued into the afternoon, he said.

Most of the fighting took place between the garrison, at the side of a road leading out of Najaf, and an industrial area of mechanics' workshops and junkyards across the street.

Witnesses said militiamen, some appearing as young as 17 or 18, would occasionally emerge from the area and unleash rounds from assault rifles before running for cover again.

The US administrator in Iraq, Paul Bremer, said protesters had “crossed the line and moved to violence”. **(1. The U.S. Occupation uses only Ghandian non-violence to impose their Imperial control of the Iraqi nation, as is well known. (2. London Times, April 4, 1776: King George today said American protesters had “crossed the line and moved to violence.”)**

The BBC’s Barbara Plett in Baghdad says the clashes marked the most serious confrontation between the occupation forces and members of Iraq’s Shia majority.

The protest took place outside the garrison of the Spanish military contingent, who lead the coalition forces in Najaf. Troops from El Salvador and other Spanish-speaking countries are also based at the camp.

One report said Spanish forces were pelted with stones, and responded by opening fire.

At least some of those on the march were armed members of Moqtada Sadr’s banned Mehdi Army militia.

The demonstrators joined the protest after hearing that one of his senior aides, Mustafa al-Yacoubi, had been arrested.

The past few days have seen a number of demonstrations by Moqtada Sadr’s followers, against the arrest of his aide and the closure of a pro-Sadr newspaper.

MORE:

Fighting Between Shias Militias And Occupation Troops Spreads to Baghdad; “Liberate Our Country Via The Armed Struggle”

4 April, 2004 BBC News & By KHALID MOHAMMED, Associated Press Writer & By Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, KUFA, Iraq (Reuters) & April 5, 2004 News.com.au, From correspondents in Baghdad

On Sunday fighting broke out between Shia militia and occupation forces in Baghdad.

This Is What A Winning Resistance Movement Looks Like



Shiite demonstrators cheer a sword-waving grandfather in downtown Baghdad, Iraq during an anti-American protest April 4, 2004. (AP Photo/Karim Kadim)



SHIA RESISTANCE SOLDIER FLASHES VICTORY SIGN NEXT TO BURNING U.S. ARMY VEHICLE. (AFP/Ahmad al-Rubaye)

The Mehdi Army earlier occupied three police stations in the Rafidain, Nasr and Al-Karama districts. They forced police out of the buildings, according to the photographer, in Sadr City, a slum stronghold of the cleric, and Television pictures showed gunmen driving through the area in captured police cars.

A Humvee vehicle was destroyed and set on fire, and US troops evacuated another from the Al-Dakhel neighborhood of Sadr City, the impoverished Shiite northeastern suburb of Baghdad.

Two loud explosions were heard in the area as US troops traded fire with militiamen from Sadr's Mehdi Army in the Souq Mreidi and Al-Dakhel neighborhoods of central Sadr City, a photographer said.

Witnesses said U.S. forces moved into the poor neighborhood and fired to disperse the crowd. Helicopter gunships flew overhead. **The U.S. military had no immediate comment. (How about, "Oh shit, there goes the ball game.")**

In Baghdad, a spokesman for Mr Sadr said he had called for an end to protests, asking his supporters instead to gather at his offices or in mosques.

"Terrorise your enemy, as we cannot remain silent over its violations," his statement said.

It is not clear from the translation of his statement whether the cleric was literally calling on his followers to resort to violence.

But there was no doubt about the militancy of some of his supporters.

"Sheikh Moqtada Sadr is our leader. He's going to lead Iraq. Today we fought the occupation troops and we will keep fighting them until we take over," said 23-year-old Mohammad Hanoun, a protester wielding a chain in Baghdad.

Sadr's followers said they felt invigorated by the fighting Sunday and would struggle on against the U.S. occupation.

"We don't have any option now but to liberate our country via armed struggle," said Arkan Hatab, a Sadr follower.

U.S. Helicopter Attacks Captured Baghdad Police Hq

Tehran, April 4, IRIB News & By KHALID MOHAMMED, Associated Press Writer

Two Iraq police were injured and a police car was destroyed in a rocket attack in Hayel Am district in southeast Baghdad Sunday morning, IRIB reported from Baghdad.

The rocket was fired from a US military helicopter, witnesses said.

The Iraqi police headquarters was captured as angry Shiitte protesters took to the streets Sunday.

In central Baghdad's Firdaus Square, hundreds of al-Sadr supporters rallied to protest al-Yacoubi's reported arrest. Police fired warning shots during the demonstration, and at least two protesters were injured, witnesses said.

Also, residents of Sadr City, a mainly Shiite district in eastern Baghdad where support for al-Sadr is strong, stormed several police stations and the local council building, witnesses said.

Photos:

Iraqi Shia soldiers, armed with Kalashnikov rifles and rocket propelled grenades, fighting U.S. forces in the Baghdad suburb of Al Sadr City April 4, 2004.
REUTERS/Ali Jasim





REUTERS/Ceerwan Aziz



Cigarette break: Shia fighter with RPG during Baghdad combat. April 4, 2004.
REUTERS/Ali Jasim

Falluja: Two More U.S. Marines Killed

BAGHDAD (Reuters) 4.4.04

Two U.S. Marines were killed in separate insurgent attacks two US marines had been killed in the province of Al-Anbar (Falluja) west of Baghdad, the U.S. military said in a statement on Sunday.

The army said one Marine was killed in action on Saturday and the other died on Sunday from wounds received in a separate engagement on Saturday.

GET THE POINT?



An Iraqi Muslim Shiite, member of Shiite radical leader Moqtada al-Sadr's Army of Mehdi militia displays a poster of his leader near a burning US Army Humvee while looking at a US helicopter gunship flying over during clashes in Baghdad's al-Sadr City district.(AFP/Ahmad Al-Rubaye)

Two U.S. Soldiers Wounded In Kirkuk Protest

4.4.04 By Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, KUFA, Iraq (Reuters)

In the northern city of Kirkuk, a suicide car bomber wounded two U.S. soldiers keeping order at another pro-Sadr protest.

IED Gets Another Stryker

Yahoo news 4.4.04

U.S. Army troops secured a highway after a roadside bomb damaged a Stryker armored vehicle in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul April 4, 2004.

U.S. Convoy Attacked In Kirkuk

4 April, 2004 BBC News

And a car bomb exploded in the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk. **There were conflicting reports about casualties.** Iraqi police said the target appears to have been a US convoy.

Samara Checkpoint Wasted

4 April, 2004 BBC News

In Samarra, about 100km (60 miles) north of Baghdad, a bomb exploded near a checkpoint manned by Iraqi Civil Defence Corps personnel, killing three of them and wounding one, local hospital workers said.

TROOP NEWS

Wounded Soldier Kidnapped By Command After Military Doctors Say Unfit For Duty; Sent Back To Iraq

Is America sending battle-weary, clinically stressed soldiers back into the heat of Iraq?

By Andrew Gumbel in Los Angeles, 3 April 2004

Just ten days ago, Jason Gunn didn't think he was in any shape to be sent back to active duty in Iraq.

That's what the 24-year-old tank driver told his family, and what he told the commanders at his US military base in Germany.

It is also what he told a team of psychiatrists at Heidelberg Hospital, who not only agreed with his assessment but issued a formal recommendation that he be kept with them for further treatment.

Back in November, Specialist Gunn had suffered devastating injuries up and down the left side of his body when a roadside bomb obliterated the Humvee he was driving on the north side of Baghdad. Over and above his physical wounds, he

also had to deal with the trauma of the sergeant in the seat behind his being ripped to shreds in the explosion.

Soon he was displaying classic symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, (PTSD) - anxiety, insomnia interspersed with recurring nightmares, and extreme agitation. Army doctors put him on two different medications to lift his mood and suppress his bad dreams. But the gung-ho, happy-go-lucky, overtly fearless soldier who had existed before last November obstinately refused to resurface.

It used to be accepted practice in the US military not to return a soldier to active duty unless he was fully fit - not just out of consideration for his own needs, but also to protect other members of his unit. In Iraq, however, growing anecdotal evidence suggests that a new policy is emerging - to patch up the wounded as quickly as possible and ship them straight back, threatening them with disciplinary action or even court martial if they show the slightest reluctance.

That, according to the available evidence, is what happened to Jason Gunn. On 23 March, he telephoned his mother in Philadelphia and told her he would refuse to go back to Iraq even if they ordered him to. The very next day, however, he was on a plane to Kuwait, and from there was told to make his own way back to his unit with the 1st Armored Division in Baghdad.

Three days later, his family was shown a signed statement which seemed to contradict everything they knew about him. "It is my wish," the statement said, "to be redeployed with my unit to finish my tour of duty with my unit here in Iraq. I feel that I am able to complete my mission here as well as any other duties assigned to me while on current deployment."

The statement also said he had not been on prescribed medicines since early March - even though his mother believes he had been taking his two sets of pills right up to the time of his departure - and that he did not feel he was in need of "any type of counseling at this time".

It wasn't just his family who found that odd. It was also a flat contradiction of an earlier statement issued by his commanders in Landstuhl on the day of his departure, which acknowledged he was unwilling to return to Iraq and that he had been diagnosed with PTSD by the Heidelberg doctors.

So what happened? His mother, Pat Gunn, herself a military veteran, is in no doubt he was put under severe duress. "My fear," she said in an interview, "is that he was coerced or shamed into signing this statement, just as he was coerced or shamed into returning to Iraq.

"When I spoke to him the night before he left, he was adamant he was not going back. They did a lot to his psyche to get him on that plane."

The only contact Pat Gunn has had since his return to the Middle East was a single, very brief phone call from Kuwait to say he had arrived safely. Since then, there has been nothing, despite efforts by her and by the office of the powerful New York congressman Charles Rangel to find out what happened.

When a staffer for Mr Rangel called a military liaison officer this week, she was told that if Jason had not contacted his mother that was his choice and there was nothing they could do to force him.

According to Mrs Gunn, Jason was called a coward from the moment he returned to Landstuhl in early January - even though, just a few months earlier, he had been mentioned in dispatches when he rushed into the smoking ruins of the bombed United Nations headquarters in Baghdad to pull out the dead and wounded.

The statement issued by Jason's superiors in Germany, meanwhile, made clear that they had made a decision simply to ignore the medical advice from Heidelberg. They even said it "may be in his best interest mentally to overcome his fear by facing it".

That line of argument does not wash with most credible experts on PTSD, who say that sending a traumatised soldier back into combat is actually the very worst thing one can do. Steve Robinson, executive director of the Gulf War Veterans Resource Centre in Maryland who has worked extensively with PTSD victims, called the reasoning "patently false".

"The best cure for PTSD is to pull a soldier back to a safe place and deal with the traumatic event that occurred," he said. "I can figure out about 100 better ways of overcoming a psychological injury than re-exposing the victim to his trauma. Remember, they used to put electrodes on people's head and shock 'em. They found out that wasn't such a good idea either."

Despite the growing scientific understanding of PTSD, case histories collected by Mr Robinson and others suggest combat stress victims are being sent back with growing frequency, and in some cases being subjected to humiliation, abuse and intimidation.

Late last year, an army translator called Georg-Andreas Pogany who had a violent reaction to the sight of a mutilated corpse was briefly charged with cowardice, a military crime punishable by death, and paraded across the national media as a disgrace to his country. Both the cowardice charge, and a lesser one of dereliction of duty, have since been dropped, apparently for lack of evidence.

Mr Robinson said he knew of an injured soldier evacuated from Iraq who became so exasperated at the lack of medical care offered by the military that he decided to pay for his own private treatment. That led to a charge of being absent without leave, as a result of which the soldier had a psychological breakdown and tried to kill himself. Rather than show any sympathy, Mr Robinson said his superiors tracked him down and sent him back to Iraq.

Similar cases have been collected by the group Military Families Speak , (MFSO), which represents US soldiers and their families who oppose the invasion and occupation of Iraq. Nancy Lessin, MFSO's co-founder, said she knew of several traumatised soldiers who had attempted suicide, either while recuperating or after they had been sent back.

"Jason Gunn is not an isolated case. The only thing unique about him is that the family is willing to speak out publicly," she said. "We see this as the tip of the iceberg. We are seeing for the first time the military laying out their strategy in writing - to send victims of PTSD back into battle, back to the front. This is how they are dealing with a situation where they are in over their heads without a plan in a war that should never have happened. The attitude is: as long as you can breathe, you can be redeployed."

While the individual stories are necessarily anecdotal, the big picture - of plummeting morale and record numbers of soldiers taking their own lives - is not since it has been documented by the Pentagon.

GET SOME TRUTH: CHECK OUT NEW 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/>

As Death Toll Mounts, Americans Change Views On Bush, War

Apr. 01, 2004 BY LAURA KURTZMAN, Knight Ridder Newspapers

OCEANSIDE, Calif. - (KRT) - Leo Diaz, a young Marine from Texas based here at Camp Pendleton, went to Iraq full of faith in the president who sent him. Today, he is burdened by the horror of what he saw and shocked at Bush's "frat boy" mentality in starting the war.

"I show up. I'm proud. I'm looking forward to do my part," said Diaz, 22, whose father, uncle and grandfather served in the military. "Turns out we find no weapons of mass destruction. People hurt, killed."

Interviews with a dozen people, not all of them voters, in the communities near Camp Pendleton found opinion was still in favor of the war, two-to-one. But many, like Diaz, express deep doubts about the reason Bush waged it and about the president himself.

At a tattoo shop on Oceanside Boulevard, owner **Jason Betz remains a steadfast supporter of the war.**

"Who cares if they didn't find weapons of mass destruction?" Betz said. "He" -- Saddam Hussein-- "killed people massively. " But Betz is not optimistic about helping the Iraqis.

"They don't want us there," he said. "How are we going to change a country?"

For Diaz, the Marine, the war most assuredly is Bush's fault - not that he thinks it was all bad.

"I feel we did some good being over there," he said, waiting to get the finishing touches on a new tattoo.

But the memories also burn of what he could not do. Diaz was part of a security unit that followed the invading forces to An-Nasiriyah in southern Iraq. He remembered how old Iraqi men pressed close to the barbed wire of his camp to pray for the Americans, only to find Marines pointing weapons at them under orders from their commanders.

He recalled the shame of eating a hot meal, while hungry Iraqis watched.

"We couldn't give away water; we couldn't give them our MRE's," he said, referring to the packaged meals known as meals ready to eat. "It hurt me, because I saw the children - beautiful children - running around, no clothes."

What he remembers most, though, is the horror of picking up dead bodies and body parts.

"I can honestly say, my little workshop, we came back, none of us were the same."

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/>

US Contractor Recruits Iraq Guards For \$1000 A Day; Soldiers Ask "Where Is The Money?"

March 5, 2004 Jonathan Franklin in Santiago, The Guardian (UK)

The US is hiring mercenaries in Chile to replace its soldiers on security duty in Iraq.

Many soldiers are said to be leaving the army to join the private companies.

The private sector paid experienced special forces personnel far more than the armed services.

"The US military has the same problems," he said. "If they are going to outsource tasks that were once held by active-duty military and are now using private contractors, those guys [on active duty] are looking and asking, 'Where is the money?'"

Squads of Bosnians, Filipinos and Americans with special forces experience have been hired for tasks ranging from airport security to protecting Paul Bremer, the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority.

Their salaries can be as high as \$1,000 a day, the news agency AFP recently reported. Erwin, a 28-year-old former US army sergeant working in Iraq, told AFP: "This place is a goldmine. All you need is five years in the military and you come here and make a good bundle." **(If you live long enough.)**

MORE:

Secret Mercenary Wars

By BARRY YEOMAN, 04/02/04 New York Times

Substituting contactors for soldiers offers the government a way to avoid unpopular military forays. According to Myles Frechette, who was President Bill Clinton's ambassador to Colombia, private companies performed jobs in Latin America that would have been politically unpalatable for the armed forces. **After all, if the government were shipping home soldiers' corpses from the coca fields, the public outcry would be tremendous.**

However, more than 20 private contractors have been killed in Colombia alone since 1998, and their deaths have barely registered.

BREMERS' MERCENARIES IN ACTION



(Bremer, left) (Ceerwan Aziz -- Reuters)

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Hotbed of Resistance: An Iraqi Discusses Fallujah

Ghazwan Al-Mukhtar, a retired Iraqi engineer speaking from Baghdad.

AMY GOODMAN: Today we turn to Ghazwan Al-Mukhtar, a retired Iraqi engineer in Baghdad right now, recently in Fallujah. Welcome to Democracy Now!, Ghazwan.

GHAZWAN AL-MUKHTAR: Thank you, Amy.

AMY GOODMAN: It's good to have you with us. Can you describe the reaction in the streets to what took place in Fallujah?

GHAZWAN AL-MUKHTAR: **This incident happened in Fallujah where two days before that, the American army shot many many people, women and children, on the streets, and --- in a bizarre shooting incident that was unjustified, killing many people.** Fallujah has been a place where the US Army has actually used brutal force to suppress the people there, including using the F-15s, and F-16s to attack villages and place where they think the resistances are, which is unjustified to use high explosives against individuals.

This resulted in many, many casualties in the province.

Added to it, they have detained, for 50 or 60 days, hundreds of people on and off, which alienated the people against the American forces and the American contractors or the American security contractors, which are really a private army, uncontrollable by the US. This is part of the privatization of the war.

Two days ago, three days ago, there was a similar incident in Mosul, where two contractors were killed, under electricity. They were going to the electricity generating plant.

The important -- the thing that I know is in the media says that the contractors were involved in protecting the food supply. This is the food supply for the US Army, not to be confused with providing help to the local population or anything. It's just a routine US convoy that may have food and may have on other occasions, armaments or anything.

So, the resentments of the people of Fallujah are justified. What happens to them is -- it's a sad thing, but you know, brutality breeds brutality, and violence breeds violence, and he who started first should take the responsibility, and I think the US army has used

an unjustified force against the people of Fallujah, and **they have brutalized the people of Fallujah to the point where they had to respond with the same brutality.**

JUAN GONZALEZ: Well, some of the commercial media here in the United States are claiming that Fallujah is a hotbed of resistance, that up to 70% of the people are supporting attacks or have voiced in opinion polls support for attacks on the US forces.

Is there a continuing large presence of US military within -- within the city itself, or have they largely pulled out to the outskirts of Fallujah?

GHAZWAN AL-MUKHTAR: They pulled out to the outskirts, but they keep intruding into the city. Ten days ago, I was passing through Fallujah, and in the middle of the city, they brought the main highway, and we saw inside the city a convoy of US military vehicles. So, they keep coming in and out.

If they keep out, I don't think they would have that many attacks on them, but don't forget, those are an occupying force, and the people believe they have the right to resist an occupying force - a foreign occupying force.

We-- the closest we come to you is eight hours difference. That's 8,000, 9,000 miles. That's between us. **You people have--you came to the east 8,000 miles to run a country you have no business in occupying.**

MORE:

Apr. 2, 2004 News/World

"The Americans may think it is unusual but this is what they should expect. They show up in places and shoot civilians, so why can't they be killed?" a Falluja store worker, who gave his name as Amir, said yesterday.

"It is understandable. We are glad this happened," said Amir, his friends nodding agreement.

Violent incidents have increased in regularity and intensity in recent weeks. **Some suggest that is a result of the U.S. Marines taking over responsibility for Falluja from the 82nd Airborne Division and sharply increasing raids and patrols.**

Falluja Prepares For More War

30 Mar 2004, By Carol Rosenberg, Philadelphia Inquirer

FALLUJAH, Iraq: Marine civil officers are scouting the city on how to spend a special \$540 million outlay for rebuilding projects in Anbar province, which includes Fallujah.

But in Fallujah, strung with black mourning banners for Friday's dead, the residents were having none of it.

"For each one who is killed, we will get 10 American soldiers," said Abu Mujahid, 35, taunting the fresh Marine forces as "cartoon characters." "If they want Fallujah to be a battlefield, they are welcome here," said

Abu Mujahid, who would be identified only by his nickname, which means fighter's father, said "Fallujah city will become a mass grave for Bush and all the soldiers of the American military."

Iraqis claiming to be witnesses said the violence began about 4 p.m. Thursday when insurgents fired a rocket-propelled grenade on Marines escorting supply trucks, shattering the humvee. As if to prove it, they produced a pair of unfired 40mm American gun rounds they said they found.

By Friday at 7 a.m., the Marines returned and battled gunmen throughout an adjacent neighborhood, near the spot where Thursday's rocket round was fired.

"They were behaving very badly," said a nearby shopkeeper, Hakim Hashem, 28, who claimed to witness both Thursday's attack and Friday's search-and-destroy mission. "They went through the neighborhoods shooting, to frighten the people."

Resistance Attacks Southern Iraq Oil Pipeline Again; Occupation Develops Secret Oil Levitation Technology

4.4.04 BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP)

Rebels attacked an oil pipeline in southern Iraq, rupturing it and setting the oil on fire Sunday, officials said.

Firefighters were battling the blaze and expected to have it out within a few hours, said Jamal Khalid, an official with the Southern Oil Company.

The fire will not affect oil exports, he said. The pipeline links the southern city of Basra with Faw port, on the Persian Gulf.

Rebels have repeatedly attacked oil pipelines in Iraq.

(Comment: During the first stage of the war, the resistance regularly blew up pipelines linking the Northern Iraq oil fields to Turkey faster than the Occupation could repair them.

In the past month, resistance forces have opened a series of attacks on the pipelines linking the Southern fields, near Basra, to Arabian gulf export stations. This is only the most recent.

Perhaps some reporter soon will break the story of how the Occupation has developed a way to levitate oil and float it from the fields to the export terminal, which would explain the otherwise preposterous assertion reported above that attacks closing pipelines "will not affect oil exports.")

Northern Iraqi Students Demonstrate Against "Occupation Authorities"

BBC Monitoring Middle East. London: Mar 31, 2004

Text of report by Qatari Al-Jazeera satellite TV on 31 March

Students of Al-Kufah University demonstrated today in front of the Al-Najaf governorate building demanding the trial of five Iraqi police members.

The demonstrators accused the police of beating two students and demanded an official apology. They also called on the occupation authorities to evacuate the university's building. The demonstrators gave a two-day period for their demands to be fulfilled and threatened a violent reply if their demands were not met. [video shows Al-Kufah University students demonstrating]

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Differences Between Iraq & Viet Nam?

By David Honish, <http://www.veteransforpeace.org> 4.3.04

Viet Nam was an attempt to secure commercial rights to rubber, tin, tungsten, and oil masked behind support for "a democratic government."

Iraq is an attempt to secure the 2nd largest oil producer in the world masked behind a search for non-existent WMD's and links to Al Qaeda.

In Viet Nam the poor and minorities were drafted to fight for the benefit of the global corporations.

In Iraq the poor and minorities are bribed with promises of educational funding to fight for the benefit of the global corporations.

In Viet Nam the United States bore the brunt of the casualties, with a couple allies like Australia and South Korea bullied and bribed by the State Department into sending military contingents.

In Iraq the United States bore the brunt of the casualties, with a couple allies like Britain, Spain, and Poland bullied and bribed by the State Department into sending military contingents.

In Viet Nam rather than a large military engagement, the smaller enemy wore down the United States with a war of booby traps and a never ending flow of casualties.

In Iraq rather than a large military engagement, the smaller enemy is using a war of improvised explosive devices and a never ending flow of casualties.

In Viet Nam the press was openly questioning the government's decision to wage war and showing the American public the daily cost in dead and wounded of that war.

In Iraq the press is a propaganda organization for the government and accepts censorship of coverage of the returning dead and wounded.

In Viet Nam heavy vegetation that hid the enemy also allowed US mine detonation patrols ordered by some ticket punching officer to hunker down 200 meters beyond the perimeter so as not to provoke the local residents into armed resistance.

In Iraq there is no place to hide in the desert for troops still lacking body armor after one year, sent out in humvees with canvas doors to make reputations for ticket punching officers.

In Viet Nam friendly and hostile personnel alike were poisoned for generations to come by Agent Orange. The Defense Dept then denied responsibility for the resulting medical treatment of related illnesses and said it had to "study the problem."

In Iraq friendly and hostile personnel alike were poisoned for generations to come by Depleted Uranium. The Defense Dept then denied responsibility for the resulting medical treatment of related illnesses and said it had to "study the problem."

During Viet Nam many anti-war protestors mistakenly blamed troops for the mistakes of government policy. The troops returned home to economic depression and a lack of jobs caused by diversion of resources to military use.

Before Iraq even started the protestors were focused against the Bush/Cheney/Ashcroft regime and never blamed the troops for the intelligence failures / stupidity successes of government policy. The troops are returning home to economic depression and a lack of jobs caused by GW's tax cuts for zillionaires that turned the record surplus he inherited into a record deficit of debt that our great-great-grandchildren will still be paying.

During Viet Nam it was debated as to whether or not to change the voting age from 21 to 18, so as to permit those drafted and ordered to carry a weapon for the USA to be able to vote.

During Iraq there is a dangerous trend to using electronic voting machines without a verifiable paper trail and built by GOP campaign contributors that have "promised to deliver Ohio to the GOP in the 2004 election." In spite of polls showing the majority of troops in Iraq feel lied to by the president and that they were sent there to steal oil for the president's oil business pals, the GOP mysteriously predicts that electronic voting will give them a majority of absentee ballots from troops stationed overseas.

During Viet Nam professional NCO's, "the backbone of the Army," left the service in droves in disgust over the military being misused for a political rather than military mission.

During Iraq professional NCO's & officers alike are leaving the service in droves in disgust over being lied to by the president and sent to steal oil.

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.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Israeli Terrorist Regime Profits From Iraq War

Shraga Elam, 4.3.04

70-100 Israeli companies are already active in Iraq, according to the Israeli daily Ma'ariv from Friday. The Israeli firms are allowed by the US to act as sub-contractors. E.g. 15 Israeli companies are believed to work for the giant Bechtel.

The Ha'aretz internet service "Wallah" reported similarly on Thursday and claimed that old buses of the Tel Aviv bus company Dan are sold to Iraq.

Iraq Mercenaries Get \$4000 A Month

The Guardian March 24, 2004

The US is hiring mercenaries in Chile to replace its soldiers on security duty in Iraq.

A Pentagon contractor has begun recruiting former commandos, other soldiers and seamen, paying them up to US\$4000 a month to guard oil wells.

Last month Blackwater USA flew about 60 former commandos from Santiago to a training camp in North Carolina. **Many of them had trained under the military government of Augusto Pinochet.**

Watch it, Paul---



There's an IED in your burger.

L. Paul Bremer, very nervous top U.S. administrator in Iraq April 2, 2004. (AP Photo/Stefan Zaklin, Pool)

Most Of The People Dying In Iraq Are Iraqis; “Things Here Are Getting Worse”

Robert Fisk, March 31st, 2004, democracynow

ROBERT FISK: Look, things are getting worse here. All Iraqis think so. Most of the journalists on the ground fear it is getting worse. The violence is getting worse. The trust in the Coalition Authority is getting worse. There's little trust in the governing council appointed by the U.S. Consul Paul Bremer.

What does worry people is that Americans are replacing their troops at the Baghdad International Airport with Chilean forces which we know have been trained in the army there at the time of Pinochet. The real problem is we don't know what their rules of engagement are. We don't know where they stand vis-à-vis the war. If they are ambushed, do they fire back? If they kill innocent people are they responsible? Can they be made amenable to the law if they're guilty?

There are thousands of them, and it appears to be correct, there are now more British Mercenary Security Service men here than there are British soldiers in Iraq.

The question many Iraqis were asking, is this the new face of the occupation? The Americans disappear, the British disappear, and this army of mercenaries wearing flak jackets and an assortment of weapons with little badges, some South African, some clearly British and some Americans are now supposed to be the security services?

Last week, I made friends with a Lebanese American working for one security company who led me in his car to an undefended villa in a Baghdad suburb where I met an American. He talked at great length about the expertise of his people, most of whom were American, some British. **He said they worked in three tiers with close escort support; some of them did convoy support.**

<p>At night the U.S. troops there are protected by ample security men. In other words, mercenaries are now paid to protect American troops.</p>
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Outside of these mercenary forces are Iraqis who are armed and paid by the Americans. So, what you have is a kind of double sandbag. You have first of all Iraqis with weapons defending the Americans. Then security service men or mercenaries, if you like, and then after that, the Americans.

The most -- most of the people dying in Iraq are Iraqis. It's very interesting that about a month ago, four women, two men and a baby were shot dead in a house in northern Iraq. Their bodies were discovered three days ago. The discovery got one paragraph in the A.P., the Associated Press News Agency. When Westerners are killed, as they were today, it's the lead story in the television news it's the front page of the newspaper. We have a very odd way of showing our concern for the Iraqis we allegedly came to liberate. It's a very pronounced way of pointing out the horrors of death when our own people are brutally murdered.

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