

GI SPECIAL 2#58

THIS IS HOW BUSH BRINGS THE TROOPS HOME



www.veteransforcommonsense.org

New Organization For Iraq Veterans To Oppose War

My name is Michael Hoffman and I am a veteran of the recent war in Iraq. I returned to the States in May of last year and have been speaking out against the war as a member of Vets For Peace since November. I am emailing all of you to inform you that I am now going to start organizing the returning veterans of the war in Iraq. Please feel free to give my contact info to any returning vets you have contact with. I hope to have an official name and mission statement made up by early next week. I will keep you up to date with more info as it comes.

Michael Hoffman, member VFP, chap. 31, Philadelphia, PA arti57@yahoo.com

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 WAR REPORTS:

U.S. Military Helicopter Shot Down Three Injured; Marine Rescue Team Ambushed; One Marine Killed, Seven Wounded

BBC News, 13 April, 2004 & By LOURDES NAVARRO, Associated Press Writer

A US Apache helicopter crashed between Falluja and Abu Ghraib after being hit by a rocket, witnesses said.

The incident came after US helicopters reportedly fired missiles at targets in the nearby town of al-Karma.

The helicopter was hit by ground fire Tuesday and forced to land, and three crew members were wounded. **The military said rebels attacked a rescue team with mortars, small arms and rocket-propelled grenades.**

Insurgents said they downed the craft with a rocket-propelled grenade.

Lt. Col. Brennan Byrne, the Marine commander in the area, said the H-53 Sikorsky helicopter went down before dawn.

“This morning a helicopter made an emergency landing due to ground fire. The attack resulted in three wounded and a quick reaction force secured the crew and the helicopter was later destroyed to prevent it from falling into enemy hands,” said Kimmitt, deputy chief of U.S. military operations in Iraq.

The team that extracted the Marine crew came under mortar fire and was ambushed as it pulled back by gunmen using small weapons and rocket-propelled grenades.

A Marine was killed by mortar fire, Kimmitt said. Marine spokesman 1st. Lt. Eric Knapp said seven Marines were wounded in Fallujah during the day. It was not clear if those casualties came from the battle around the helicopter.

An Associated Press reporter later saw the craft burning in a field 12 miles east of Fallujah. Photos of the wreckage showed no sign of bodies.

About a dozen masked gunmen were near the wreckage, with at least one carrying an RPG launcher.

"The helicopter was passing overhead, and we happened to be hiding here. We fired an RPG at it and it fell," one of the gunmen said.

M113 Convoy Attacked, Burned In Latifiya

April 12, 2004 By ABDUL-QADER SAADI and LOURDES NAVARRO, Associated Press Writers

On Monday, a convoy of flatbed trucks carrying M113 armored personnel carriers was attacked and burned on a road in Latifiya, 20 miles south of Baghdad. Witnesses said three people were killed.

The military has been trying to regain control of supply routes after several convoys were ambushed.

A supply truck was also ambushed and set ablaze Monday on the road from Baghdad's airport. Looters moved in to carry away goods from the truck as Iraqi police looked on without intervening.

An attack on a convoy Sunday killed a Romanian working for a security company, Romania's ambassador to Iraq said.

One U.S. Soldier Killed, Four Wounded Near Samarra

4.12.04 BAGHDAD (Reuters)

One U.S. soldier was killed and four were wounded when their patrol was attacked near Samarra, north of the capital, Baghdad, the U.S. military said in a statement Monday.

The statement said the soldiers from the 1st Infantry Division came under attack at 4.35 p.m. local time Sunday. The wounded were in stable condition.

Military Transport Attacked Near Baghdad Airport



A U.S. Army Bradley armoured vehicle passes a burning military transport truck, after it was attacked on Baghdad's airport highway April 12, 2004. REUTERS

Three U.S. Marines Killed In Fighting

April 12, 2004 BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) & April 14, 2004 Hi Pakistan

Three U.S. Marines were killed in fighting in western Iraq, the military said Monday in a statement.

The three, members of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, were killed "as a result of enemy action" on Sunday in Anbar province, which stretches from west of Baghdad to the Jordanian and Syrian borders. **(Big secret. Falluja is in western Iraq.)**

'Two of the Marines were killed in action; one Marine died of wounds received in action on the same day,' it said.

Task Force Danger Soldier, ICDC Killed Near Buhritz

4.12.04 Release #040412d, Combined Joint Task Force 7

TIKRIT, Iraq – One Task Force Danger Soldier and an Iraqi Civil Defense Corps soldier were killed in separate attacks April 9.

The U.S. Soldier was killed when a rocket-propelled grenade was fired at his M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicle near Buhritz at 7:45 p.m.

The ICDC soldier was killed in a rocket-propelled grenade attack on the ICDC Headquarters in Samarra at 4:30 p.m.

Baghdad Task Force First Armored Division Soldier Dies

4.12.04 Release #040412e, Combined Joint Task Force 7

BAGHDAD, Iraq - A Task Force 1st Armored Division Soldier died April 11 as a result of wounds sustained during an improvised device attack in Baghdad around 11:45 p.m. the previous day.

1st Infantry Division Soldier Killed Near Khalis

4.12.04 Release #040412c, Combined Joint Task Force 7

TIKRIT, Iraq – One First Infantry Division Soldier was killed and one was wounded when 15 anti-Coalition insurgents attacked a reconnaissance patrol near Khalis at about 3 a.m. April 10.

The wounded soldier was evacuated to a Coalition medical facility near Baqubah and was reported in stable condition.

Two U.S. Soldiers Missing After Convoy Attack

4.13.04 By HAMZA HENDAWI, Associated Press Writer;

The U.S. military said two American soldiers were missing after their convoy was ambushed Friday near Abu Ghraib, west of Baghdad.

The Defense Department identified the two missing soldiers as Sgt. Elmer C. Krause, 40, of Greensboro, N.C., and Pfc. Keith M. Maupin, 20, of Batavia, Ohio. Both were assigned to the Army Reserves 724th Transportation Company, Bartonville, Ill.

Two Romanian Mercenaries Killed In Attack On Occupation Politician

April 14, 2004 Hi Pakistan

A Romanian security guard has been killed and another injured in an ambush in Hilla, south of Baghdad, the Romanian private security company Bidepa said in Bucharest on Monday.

'The two guards were traveling in a vehicle assuring the safety of the leader of the interim government in Hilla when an Iraqi group opened fire on their convoy,' Bidepa director Viorel Dumitru told AFP.

U.S. Brig. General Concedes Resistance Holds Abu Gharaib, Iskandariyah, Mahmoudiya And Youssifiya; Babbles Incoherently About Militia Groups "Forming Everywhere"-- Says Baghdad "Not Fully Secure," But "Stable"

April 12, 2004 HAMZA HENDAWI, Associated Press Writer

The military must still fully secure Abu Ghraib and the towns of Iskandariyah, Mahmoudiya and Youssifiya to the south of Baghdad, Brig. Gen. Mark Hertling said. said.

Hertling said it would take "some additional effort to clean it up. We are continuing to fight at Abu Ghraib."

"There are elements of these militia groups that are forming everywhere and attempting to take advantage of the situation. We are not going to let them do that," Hertling told The Associated Press. (They are "forming everywhere" but "we're not going to let them do that"?)

"Full security has not been established yet in Baghdad, but it will be. It's stable now," he said.

Fighting was most intense Saturday and Sunday when, according to Hertling, an average of 42 engagements took place on each day.

"There was a lot of RPG firing and a lot of ambush activities," he said. **At one point late last week, he added, soldiers fought insurgents continuously for 72 hours in Abu Ghraib, a neighborhood near the airport on Baghdad's western outskirts. (Obviously without much joy, as he admits above.)**

Details of the fighting have been sketchy, but most areas of the capital have over the past week been frequently rocked by the sound of explosions.

U.S. Command Does Deal With Madhi Resistance Army; Won't Enter Najaf

BBC News, 13 April, 2004 & April 12, 2004 By ABDUL-QADER SAADI and LOURDES NAVARRO, Associated Press Writers & April 14, 2004 Hi Pakistan

Police deployed in the central Shiite Muslim holy city of Najaf Monday following an agreement, involving the US-led coalition, for the pullout of armed militiamen from the streets, police said.

'An agreement has been reached between the coalition and the office of (Shiite leader Moqtada) Sadr,' said Najaf police chief Ali al-Yaseri.

Under the terms of the agreement, coalition troops will not enter the city, which will be under Iraqi security control, said Yaseri.

Yaseri said the agreement was reached after mediation by the Dawa party, a mainstream Shia religious faction, and Abdel Karim al-Mohamadawi, a former member of the coalition-installed interim Governing Council who resigned last week.

The whereabouts of Mr Sadr, who has refused to dissolve his Mehdi Army militia, are unclear.

The senior US military commander in Iraq, Lt Gen Ricardo Sanchez, has said it is an American objective to kill or capture him.

In Najaf, a lawyer representing cleric Muqtada al-Sadr said police were back on the streets and in their stations for the first time since the al-Mahdi Army militia took control last week. Witnesses and police in Karbala and Kufa said the militiamen had pulled back there as well.

"Al-Sayed al-Sadr issued instructions for his followers to leave the sites of police and the government," said lawyer Murtada al-Janabi, one of al-Sadr's representatives in negotiations with Iraqi Shiite political parties on ending the U.S. standoff.

The military said it had the cities of Kut, Nasiriyah and Hillah under control.

U.S. Forces Pulled Back In Faluja

April 12, 2004 By ABDUL-QADER SAADI and LOURDES NAVARRO, Associated Press Writers & April 14, 2004 Hi Pakistan (which uses the term "Freedom Fighters.)

US forces made a partial troop pullback in Fallujah on Monday, a mediator told AFP.

'There has been a partial pullback of troops, coalition troops, from the city as a goodwill gesture,' Fuad Rawi, senior member of the Iraqi Islamic Party, which was leading negotiations, told AFP.

Questioned about the announcement, Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt, deputy coalition director of military operations, told AFP: 'I am not aware of any partial pullback.'

Rawi said: 'I cannot give more details about when or where the partial pullback happened, or how many troops it involved.'

Earlier, a delegation of mediators brokering a truce between US forces and freedom fighters was allowed into Fallujah on Monday, just before a temporary truce was due to expire, a US officer said.

An AFP correspondent on the scene saw two cars and an ambulance enter the city after crossing a US military police checkpoint at the eastern entrance of Fallujah.

A tenuous calm prevailed in the bloodied city of Fallujah as a ceasefire was extended.

Only a brief volley of artillery and machine-gun fire from US marines and two mortar rounds lobbed by Iraqi insurgents punctuated the quiet, but both sides threatened to resume full-scale fighting if mediation failed.

Fallujah freedom fighters threatened on Monday to launch an all-out offensive against the marines unless US snipers withdrew from the city and surrounding areas. An AFP correspondent who toured areas of Fallujah on Sunday said the anti-coalition forces controlled the city centre and the western sector.

A tenuous cease-fire was holding in Fallujah, **but more U.S. forces maneuvered into place around the city, and commanders said they were not yet ready to negotiate with the insurgents.**

Despite the truce in Fallujah, guerrillas overnight made sporadic attacks, said Byrne. Marines killed two insurgents setting up a machine gun near a patrol and others were fired on by gunmen hiding in a school, he said.

Fallujah residents took advantage of the lull in fighting to bury their dead in two soccer fields. One of the fields, seen by an AP reporter had rows of freshly dug graves, some marked on headstones as children or with the names of women. A gravedigger at the site said more than 300 people were buried there.

Soldier Killed In Attack On U.S. Convoy Moving To Reinforce Troops At Najaf

News.com.au 13 April, 2004

Resistance forces have attacked a large convoy of US troops heading towards Najaf, killing one soldier and wounding two others and an American civilian contractor, officers in the convoy said today.

The 80-vehicle convoy was attacked late yesterday, when a volley of fire erupted north of the city. A roadside bomb hit a truck.

The convoy accelerated through the ambush and continued on its way towards Najaf, 180km south of Baghdad.

The large US force was coming from the north to deploy at Najaf.

More Marines Killed In Faluja

(CNN) April 13, 2004

On Monday night, at least two U.S. Marines were killed and at least eight others wounded in an intense exchange with Iraqi insurgents in Fallujah, according to pool reporters embedded with the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force.

Ukrainian Soldiers Killed, Wounded In “Incident”

BBC News, 13 April, 2004

One Ukrainian soldier was killed and several others wounded in an incident in Iraq, said the Russian Itar-Tass news agency, which gave no further details.

Explosions In U.S. Headquarters Compound

April 12, 2004 BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP)

Three loud explosions occurred Monday in a large compound in central Baghdad that houses the headquarters of the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq. White smoke came from the area and a siren was sounded.

He's Back Again; Idiot General Kimmitt Says Iraq "Not Completely Calm"

(CNN) April 13, 2004

"We still have some tough fighting ahead of us," Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt said. **"It is not completely calm throughout this country."**

**BACK FROM "NOT COMPLETELY CALM" IRAQ:
TOO BAD IT'S NOT KIMMITT---
BETTER LUCK NEXT TIME**



An unidentified injured U.S. soldier is carried on a stretcher at Ramstein Air Base on Thursday. Eight U.S. soldiers injured in combat in Iraq were flown out of Iraq to get medical treatment at the U.S. hospital in Landstuhl.

TROOP NEWS

“The Threats To Troops Are Constant”

Apr. 11, 2004 Lynda Hurst, The Toronto Star

Like Vietnam, Iraq has become a quagmire, Steve Robinson, executive director of the National Gulf War Resource Center in Washington, says, where the threats to troops are constant, there is no front line and the foes are camouflaged amidst civilians.

"The enemy is 360 degrees — above you, below you, around you. The fighting is up close and personal. People you see every day suddenly are planting a bomb, trying to kill you."

Strategy In Tatters: The Trap Closes; Command Wants More Troops To Die For Oil And Empire

4.13.04 6 pm: BREAKING NEWS: CNN REPORTS US COMMAND IN IRAQ ‘SUSPENDING’ ‘SOME’ CONVOYS. See following story about the convoy crisis:

April 13, 2004 Wall St. Journal & BBC News.

One increasingly worrisome scenario for military officials is that determined, fanatical fighters continue to mount successful attacks on civilian contractors and aid workers throughout the country. **Such attacks might force commanders to divert troops now focused on battling radicals to play a greater role providing security for convoys along Iraq’s highways.**

The kidnappings of aid workers, along with the increasingly sophisticated attacks on U.S. contractors, pose a daunting challenge for the military. If the attacks continue at their current pace, the military could be forced to shift combat power permanently from offensive operations against the insurgents to defensive operations protecting supply lines.

Under its massive logistics contract with KBR, the U.S. military is obligated to protect KBR employees. Senior Pentagon officials have said that contracting such services out allows the military to free up more soldiers for combat. The manpower benefits, however, melt away during periods of intense combat when soldiers must be diverted to protect the unarmed civilian contractors.

Though the Pentagon has used contractors in past conflicts, defense officials say the Iraq war represents uncharted territory for military contractors because the scope of their work has greatly expanded.

It isn't clear where the badly stretched U.S. Army will find the additional two brigades of combat soldiers requested by military commanders in Iraq.

The most likely scenario is that troops from the Army's First Armored Division, which had been scheduled to return home this spring, will stay in Iraq. Some of those troops, who had been based in Baghdad, already have been sent down to cities in southern Iraq. If Gen. Abizaid gets the additional troops, the U.S. military would retain about 13,000 soldiers in Iraq, up from about 125,000 earlier this year, for the next 90 days or so, said military officials.

US military commanders in Iraq asked for two more brigades of mobile combat troops to deal with the volatile situation on the ground.

"In terms of capability, what I have asked for is essentially to have a strong mobile combat arms capability," the head of US Central Command, Gen John Abizaid, said.

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.

“They Weren’t Giving Us Nearly Enough Ammunition,” Wounded Marine Says

April 09, 2004 By Preston Mendenhall, Correspondent, NBC News

Cpl. Richard Stayskal, a 22-year-old Marine from San Jose, Calif., arrived in Landstuhl Tuesday after being wounded by automatic weapon fire in Ramadi, west of Baghdad. "I just kind of froze, my body clenched in the fetal position. I fell to the ground," Stayskal said.

Stayskal, a sniper, had been deployed to Ramadi to hunt down a "mad bomber," the unit's name for a man who had been seen planting roadside bombs targeted at U.S. and coalition forces.

With little warning, a group of 15 armed Iraqis descended on the lightly armed unit. The bullet that hit Stayskal ricocheted off his shoulder, through his lung and exited from his back. It came within inches of his heart and major arteries.

Countering the insurgency, Stayskal said, has been difficult for Marines on the ground. In his case, **his unit was chronically short of ammunition**, and his support unit got pinned down at the same time across town. The two units couldn't help each other.

"They weren't giving us nearly enough ammunition for the situations out there. Everyone was running out. Everyone was grabbing each other's ammunition."

The Marines and soldiers interviewed agreed that the organization of the insurgency was impressive.

"We thought we would be up against guys, maybe one or two in a group,"
Garriman Woods said.

Lance Cpl. Miguel Martinez said the precision of the enemy clearly showed the insurgency was not launched by "civilians or anything like that."

"We don't really know who our enemy is," the 21-year-old from Simi Valley, Calif., said. **"The only way we know to shoot them is they have an AK-47 and they pretty much point it at us."**

GET SOME TRUTH: CHECK OUT THE 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/>

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Sistani Threatens Shiite Resistance If U.S. Invades Najaf

The Iranian newspaper Baztab is reporting that Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani has sent a strongly-worded message to the Coalition forces, in which he warned them against attacking the Shiite shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala after the end of Arba'in.

According to this report, in this letter Sistani warned the US that were the Occupation forces to wage a campaign against Karbala and Najaf, the religious leadership of the Shiites would fight to its last breath for the rights of the Shiites.

Since the fall of the Saddam regime, Sistani has called upon Shiites to be cautious about opposing the US troops, despite his clear distaste for their presence. He has instead attempted to hasten elections for a popularly elected, legitimate Iraqi government.
(posted by Juan Cole at 4/13/2004 06:33:57 AM)

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

Two Collaborator Cops Killed, Two Wounded In Baquba

April 12, 2004 AFP

Two policemen were killed and two others wounded by a roadside bomb in Baquba, north of Baghdad.

"The explosion occurred at 10:30am (local time) in the Mafrak headquarters as the policemen were heading toward the general hospital to donate blood to the besieged residents of Fallujah," police officer Karim Salman said.

Captain Hatem Sultan and policeman Hassan Ali were killed and two other policemen were wounded.

Three Kurds Killed By Iraqi Police In Mosul

MOSUL, Iraq, April 11 (AFP) - 20h33 - Three Kurds were killed on Sunday during an exchange of fire with an Iraqi police patrol in the northern city of Mosul, according to the police.

The men who were in a white Volkswagen opened fire first with machineguns at police patrolling the central Zerai neighbourhood at about 6:30 pm, according to First Lieutenant Ahmed Jabr Abdullah

He identified the men as Kurds from Mosul and Arbil.

A policeman was wounded in the thigh in the exchange.

On Saturday five policemen, two assailants and a civilian were killed in two separate attacks in Mosul.

40 Foreigners Taken Prisoner By Resistance; Seven From Halliburton; Russians Released With Apology

4.13.04 By HAMZA HENDAWI, Associated Press Writer & April 12, 2004 The Associated Press & BBC News, 4.13.04

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) - About 40 foreign prisoners from 12 countries are being held by Iraqi insurgents, **and the FBI is investigating, a coalition spokesman said Tuesday. (How many FBI agents do you think will be taken prisoner while "investigating?" Betting is now open. And what, exactly, is there to "investigate?")**

Later Tuesday, the French Foreign Ministry said a French television journalist has been taken.

Alexandre Jordanov, a journalist who works for Capa Television in Paris, disappeared on Sunday, a colleague said. Franck Duprat, a videotape editor who worked with Jordanov on an investigative television show called "The Real News," said Jordanov disappeared on the road between Baghdad and Karbala.

The capture came just hours after France urged its citizens Tuesday to leave Iraq.

Four Italians working as private security guards for a U.S. company in Iraq were reported missing Tuesday, and an Arab satellite TV broadcaster said they were prisoners.

Seven civilian employees of a subsidiary of the Halliburton Co., an American firm, also were missing.. Halliburton would not say if the six others were U.S. citizens or from a third country.

The Italian foreign ministry said its civilians worked for the U.S.-based DTS Security company and were first reported missing Monday. The Italian news agency AGI and other reports said the four were taken hostage in Fallujah, 35 miles west of Baghdad. **(These are mercenaries. Let's not whine about "civilians.")**

Al-Jazeera broadcast a video showing four Italians sitting on the floor holding their passports. Behind them were men with machine guns.

The kidnappers demanded the Italian government - and specifically Premier Silvio Berlusconi - issue an apology for Italy's insult to Islam and Muslims, Al-Jazeera said. They also want Italy, which has 3,000 troops in Iraq, to withdraw according to a specific timetable.

There was no immediate reaction from Berlusconi. European Affairs Minister Rocco Buttiglione told the ANSA news agency that there would be no negotiations with "terrorists," although he added that Italy will do "everything possible to guarantee the safety of the kidnapped Italian citizens."

Italy has been a strong supporter of the U.S.-led war in Iraq. A contingent of Italian troops is based in the southern town of Nasiriyah.

The abduction of the five Ukrainians and three Russians at their residence Monday appeared to be a new tactic.. All the past seizures have come on the roads, with civilians whisked away after their vehicles come under attack. All have now been released. There are reports that two Iraqi guards may have been killed.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Yakovenko said no one had claimed responsibility and no demands were known to have been made prior to the release. The men work for an energy company restoring a power plant near Baghdad.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said the captives had returned to their residence in Baghdad and none was hurt.

An official from their company, Interenergосervis, told Russia's Ria news agency that the engineers were freed once their kidnappers realised their nationalities.

The official said the abductors apologised to their hostages, who were then put in a taxi and driven home. Russia has no troops in Iraq and opposed the U.S.-led war.

Ukraine has 1,600 troops helping keep security in southern Iraq.

In Tokyo, optimism faded Monday that three Japanese civilians abducted last week would be released quickly after a top government spokesman suggested authorities were no longer confident of their safety.

Earlier, Islamic Clerics Committee spokesman Muthanna Harith said insurgents had released nine hostages of various nationalities, including Turks and Pakistanis.

The nine were truck drivers for military supply convoys, which have come under heavy attack in recent days by gunmen on the western and southern outskirts of Baghdad.

Three Czech television journalists on assignment in Iraq have been missing since Monday morning and are believed to have been taken prisoner, a spokesman for their network said.

He said that unconfirmed reports indicated the two were captured as they were traveling from Baghdad to Amman, Jordan.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Seeing Through The Fog Of War

(Long, but worth it. Escobar puts it together.)

April 9, 2004, By Pepe Escobar, Asia Times

One year after the "fall" of Baghdad, the old colonial maxim "divide and rule" does not apply anymore. For the occupiers, this is the ultimate nightmare: Sunni and Shi'ite, united (almost) as one.

From Kirkuk in the north to Karbala in the south, from Fallujah to Nasiriyah, from Ramadi to Baghdad, Iraq is in turmoil - and this is not the work of "Saddam Fedayeen", "remnants of the Ba'ath Party" or "foreign terrorists". This is the beginning of the end: the serious possibility that the Shi'ites - 60 percent or so of the invaded and "liberated" Iraqi population - will be tempted actively to lead the multifaceted Iraqi resistance.

In the Shi'ite belt, the holy city of Kufa, the power base of the clerical al-Sadr family, in whose mosque "outlaw" Muqtada al-Sadr took refuge, became the first Iraqi city to spin completely out of US control.

Muqtada is now in the holy city of Najaf, in his office in an alley near the Imam Ali shrine, protected by hundreds of armed members of his Mahdi Army. The Iraqi police have totally vanished. The Spanish garrison outside of town describes the situation as "high tension". The Mahdi Army now in effect controls the shrine, as well as central Najaf. A constant stream of Muqtada's followers comes from Baghdad.

Proconsul L Paul Bremer's Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) has already amplified Muqtada's cult-hero status, and may soon create a martyr by having a warrant for his arrest issued. Muqtada well appreciates the benefits of becoming a martyr to the US occupation.

<p>Muqtada's black-clad Mahdi Army may have only several thousand members, but he commands support of at least 30 percent of an estimated 15 million Iraqi Shi'ites: some serious Arab analysts even talk of 50 percent.</p>

For all purposes, an intifada is now going on. Local sources tell Asia Times Online there are pro-Muqtada posters all over Anbar - the richest, predominantly Sunni, Iraqi province. Ramadi - where marines have been under fierce attack - is in Anbar. Only a war of national liberation is the motive capable of explaining these posters. The concept - penned by the Pentagon - of a Shi'ite Mahdi Army fighting the marines in Sunni Anbar is positively ludicrous. This regional resistance is conducted by former officers of the Iraqi army, as tribal sheikhs in the Sunni triangle told this correspondent last year.

Sunnis and Shi'ites are united in Baghdad, under the same nationalist impulse. Sheikh Raed al-Kazami, Muqtada's man in the Shi'ite-majority Kazimiya neighborhood, is not very far from the truth when he says: "All of Iraq is behind Muqtada al-Sadr; we are

but one body, one people." **On the other side of the Tigris, Sunni-majority Adhamiya is now aligned with Kazimiya, as well as Fallujah, Ramadi and even Mosul, against the "American invaders". The popular justification is always the same: this is now a jihad, regardless of whether one is Sunni or Shi'ite. People will fight in their neighborhoods, even if they don't join the Mahdi Army.**

Asia Times Online has learned that in an unprecedented move, 150 powerful Sunni tribal leaders and emissaries personally delivered a support message to Muqtada's key aides in the 2-million-plus slum of Sadr City, the former Saddam City: "We are all behind Muqtada al-Sadr, we are by his side because he awakened the Iraqi people to liberate the country from the infidel invaders." The message also said: "We are but one Muslim nation - no one can separate us, be it in Iraq or Palestine."

Washington was busy predicting a civil war among Sunnis, Shi'ites and Kurds. The White House, the Pentagon and the CPA even had the perfectly manufactured culprit: Jordanian Mussab al-Zarqawi, the new Osama bin Laden. What they bought themselves instead is the ultimate occupier nightmare: Sunni and Shi'ite united.

Muqtada may be a cross between two-thirds Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini of Iran and one-third Che Guevara (without the romantic charisma). But he finds enormous echo in Iraq when he compares Bremer to Saddam (in Sadr City, US-trained Iraqi soldiers first fired on peaceful demonstrators, followed by the US Army with tanks, Apaches and jets firing at random on homes, shops and even ambulances; according to local hospitals, dozens of civilians were killed and many more were injured). Muqtada also finds enormous echo in the Arab world when he aligns himself with Hamas - predominantly Sunni - and Hezbollah - predominantly Shi'ite.

US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld swears Washington has nothing to do with the arrest warrant against Muqtada: this is "Iraqi justice" in action. Wrong. The Iraqi Jurists Association published a statement on Wednesday saying that the arrest warrant is "illegal and based on a lie ... The arrest warrant is illegal and incorrect, as the occupation forces issued it in disregard for sovereignty of Iraq's justice system." The Iraqi minister of justice, Abdel-Rahim Al-Shibly, also says he had not been aware of the arrest warrant.

After this performance, the CPA's credibility, already low, is now less than zero: the average Iraqi portrays it as a dictatorship exactly like Saddam's - intolerant of a critical press and fully repressing peaceful protests.

Former counter-terrorism expert Bremer may have been foolish to use such tactics. Or he may have been very clever - employing a typical Sharon move: a provocation leading to anger and protests, which cries for a crackdown to restore "order". He may have wanted to trigger a move to cripple the growing influence of the army of Sadrists. Muqtada and his followers would have every chance of getting a great number of seats if elections for an Iraqi parliament are really held next January.

Muqtada is indeed a radical upstart compared with the religious Shi'ite first among equals, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. But Sistani prefers to carefully mold the United Nations to his wishes, rather than confronting the CPA - which he loathes in silence and seclusion. But as many Shi'ite religious leaders have told this correspondent, Sistani just has to say the word (or issue a fatwa). If he says the word, the occupation is finished.

One thing is absolutely certain: there is no possible US military solution to smash the resistance. Harith al-Dari, secretary general of the Iraqi Islamic Scholars Association - one of the country's highest religious authorities - goes straight to the point: "They insist on enforcing a military solution as if they are facing an enemy in a battleground, not isolated civilians."

If Bremer behaved like a fool, he only has one card left to play. He badly needs Sistani's help to reign in Muqtada. But Sistani does not even admit receiving a deferential visit from Bremer in person. Supposing this would happen, there would be a heavy political price to pay: plenty of US concessions and a total review of the US-imposed Iraqi constitution. For the moment, Sistani has voiced "solidarity" with Muqtada, and is still preaching "negotiations", while Dawa - the oldest Shi'ite political party - has distanced itself from the Muqtada uprising.

As far as the Iraqi resistance is concerned, "security" contractors, Seals, Delta Force or CIA are not civilians but legitimate military-related targets.

Anybody who has traveled in the Sunni triangle knows how the US occupation is universally loathed. **Fallujah residents told this correspondent last year that the Americans themselves triggered the birth of the resistance only two weeks after the fall of Baghdad, when their troops entrenched in a Fallujah school opened indiscriminate fire against an angry crowd, killing at least 17 people, including women and children.**

The Pentagon and the White House could not possibly admit there's a war of national resistance going on - but that's what it is: the spirit of the resistance is a mix of Iraqi nationalism and Arab pride, and has absolutely nothing to do with Saddam. Even before the crackdown on Fallujah and against Muqtada's followers, different groups had united under an official denomination: the Patriotic Front for the Liberation of Iraq.

The US response in Fallujah - "deliberate, precise and overwhelming", according to General Mark Kimmitt - won't deter the resistance. In Fallujah, they call themselves the Resistance Brigades of Fallujah, and have even issued a communique taking credit for the killing of the American contractors. The Brigades include the Brigades of the Martyr Ahmad Yasin, the Brigades of Ali ibn Abi Talib the Lion of God and Conqueror, and the Brigades of the 1920 Revolution.

Bremer has declared war on local populations: this is an enormous mistake.

The administration of President George W Bush is busy selling the concept of a June 30 handover of "sovereignty" to an Iraqi administration. Even before the current Operation Bloodshed, Iraqis - avid consumers of political intrigue - knew full well what's behind it.

Iraqis also know that 14 US military bases are already under construction, enough to accommodate the (for the moment) 110,000 American soldiers who will stay in Iraq until at least 2007.

Iraqis also know about another Bremer executive order - according to which even with an interim Iraqi government the Iraqi army will be controlled by top US commander Lieutenant-General Ricardo Sanchez. And they know they will also have to live with an Iraqi version of Condoleezza Rice – a Bremer-appointed national security adviser with a five-year mandate.

Muqtada may be an Islamic fundamentalist. But his intifada is popular because the base consists of legions of Iraq's urban poor and unemployed - roughly 70 percent of the total working-age population. **And the motive is plain and simple: this is part of a national resistance against a colonial enterprise.**

No institution created by the US invasion - especially the CPA - has any political legitimacy, any moral legitimacy, or any kind of popular support.

So this is the Bush administration-sponsored "free Iraq" people identify not only in the Sunni triangle but in the Shi'ite south: an occupying power maybe not formally occupying the country any more, but installed in 14 military bases and able to exercise full control on security, the economy and the whole infrastructure. In plain English: a US colony.

This is the reason the mob in Fallujah rejoiced in the burning of those American bodies. This is the reason Sunnis and Shi'ites have for now united in anger. And this is the reason the "liberation" has finally turned into a jihad.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Iraq's Enemy Within

April 10, 2004 By Haifa Zangana The Guardian (UK)

The governing council is as responsible as the US-led occupation forces for Iraq's rapid slide into chaos and bloodshed. They stood aside last Sunday when the Sadr City demonstration against the closure of a newspaper was machine-gunned from helicopters - 32 people were killed and hundreds injured. They stood aside when rockets were fired into the Shulla neighbourhood further north in Baghdad, with more casualties. They have been watching in silence while Iraqis have been killed in Basra, Nassiriya, Kirkuk, Amara, Baquba, Kut, Kerbala and Najaf.

Corruption is widespread. To get a job, one needs a tazkia (letter of recommendation) from one of the IGC parties. Allocation of subcontracts only follows a payment of 5%-10% of the value of the contract to the American contractors. Nepotism starts at the very top (eight ministers are close relatives of the IGC members). **(Of course they're**

stealing everything they can grab. They don't have much time left. The smart ones will get out with their money before the end. The stupid ones will hang from bridges.)

The CPA also ignores the violent activities of the four militias in Iraq, which have taken the law into their own hands: the peshmergas of the two Kurdish parties; the Badr brigade of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq; Ahmed Chalabi's troops; and the ex- Ba'athist Mukhabarats under Iyad Alawi's national accord. these militias are run by members of the IGC and no one can touch them.

In Baghdad, on January 12, I met Abdullatif Ali al- Mayah, professor of politics and director of Baghdad's Centre for Human Rights. He was concerned about women's and young people's rights. A believer in human dignity and justice, he spoke with anger about the plight of Iraqi people under occupation. We arranged to work together. On January 18, on al-Jazeera television, he denounced IGC corruption and demanded elections as soon as possible. Twelve hours later, he was killed. Al- Mayah, a former prisoner of Saddam's regime, was no Saddamist or Bin Ladenist. The CPA and IGC met his murder with silence - as they did the murder of at least 17 other Iraqi academics.

The IGC has allied itself with the occupation administration. its role is to shield occupation forces, not its own people. he gulf between it and the majority of Iraqis has widened. Away from the vulnerable majority, they stand well-protected by bodyguards driving special cars and carrying free mobile phones courtesy of the US.

Russians, Danes Pulling Workers Out

BBC News, 13 April, 2004 & April 12, 2004 By ABDUL-QADER SAADI and LOURDES NAVARRO, Associated Press Writers

Russia's biggest contractor in Iraq, Tekhpromexport, is pulling out its 370 staff from Iraq because of the spate of kidnappings of foreigners

Two relief groups, the Danish Refugee Council and the Dan Church Aid, pulled their workers out of Iraq because of the increasing violence.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Searching For Bin Laden; The U.S. Army In Afghanistan Stumbles Through The Dark

By David S. Cloud, Wall St. Journal, 3.4.04

The intensified search faces big obstacles. **In the border towns where militants and their supporters are thought to be hiding, U.S. troops are treated with suspicion and sometimes hostility. The Taliban is sowing fear and intimidation. Attacks against aid workers, supply convoys and local officials working with the U.S. have increased sharply in recent months. The violence has stunted reconstruction efforts and forced Afghan officials to delay national elections scheduled for this summer.**

A recent three-day mission by Capt. Gibbs's Alpha company into the snowy mountains nearby shows the complexities of making the US. plan work.

The day before setting out, Capt. Gibbs gathered 10 of his top men around him on wooden crates in a tent. The captain, 29 years old, hails from Davisville, Mo., and was an engineering student at the University of Missouri before joining the Army nearly seven years ago.

He told his men they'd be revisiting villages off the Khost-Gardez highway where they'd been two weeks earlier. Their main objective: capture Jalaluddin Haqqani, a former senior Taliban military commander and ally of Mr. bin Laden. He and Mr. bin Laden had met while fighting the Soviets in the 1980s, when Mr. Haqqani was a major recipient of covert assistance from the CIA. The two men remained friends, according to U.S. and British press reports.

Khost is Mr. Haqqani's stronghold. A blue-domed mosque he helped pay for looms over the towns narrow streets and vegetable stands. Before the U.S. invasion, al Qaeda fighters mingled on the streets with the local Pashtuns and trained at a nearby camp, later destroyed by U.S. missiles.

Mr. Haqqani has gone underground and is believed to be orchestrating the insurgency from mountain hideouts—an effort he vowed to undertake before the U.S. invasion. He used the same tactics nearly 20 years ago when the Soviets sent 20,000 troops to Khost to fight him and his followers.

The last time Capt. Gibbs's unit ventured into these mountains, villagers said little about Mr. Haqqani. **'We've got a pretty good idea he's still moving through this area, possibly veiled in a burka,' Capt. Gibbs told his men, referring to the head-to-toe garment worn by Afghan women. But Mr. Haqqani also may be hiding in Pakistan, the captain said.**

He urged the soldiers to be selective about whom they arrested. Any detainees (referred to as PUCs, for "persons under control") would be traveling with them for the remainder of the three-day mission in the cramped Army Humvees.

Later, the captain mused about how hard it is to distinguish between Taliban supporters and Afghans hoarding weapons in a place where tribal skirmishing is common. "I feel more like a detective around here than anything else," he said. Like a good cop, he wants to be well-known in his territory. "Before, they could count on us only coming up here every few months, and then it would be different people each time.

I'm hoping, if we come here a couple times, they will get to know our faces and become more cooperative."

The Taliban is doing what it can to prevent that. Khost's deputy intelligence chief, Maj. Mohammed Isa Khan, was killed last month by a bomber.

In a statement to the Associated Press, a Taliban spokesman claimed Maj. Khan was killed for helping U.S. troops. In December, four resistance partisans fatally ambushed a local prosecutor.

Detecting any sign of al Qaeda's presence has been frustrating, the troops say. Every PUC brought back to Salerno for questioning is asked about Mr. bin Laden's whereabouts. "They all say, 'If I knew where he was, I'd bring him to you,'" says Capt. Ed Kilgore, an intelligence officer in the 501st.

Soldiers also complain about a lack of helicopters—vital for chasing enemies in the mountains. And high-tech attempts haven't yielded much, either. Specially equipped Humvees are deployed along the border to intercept wireless communications. Manned by three intelligence analysts and a translator, the vehicles park in the mountains for several days at a time and listen for suspicious conversations.

But a shortage of translators with the necessary security clearances means the vehicles sit idle for days. And when they're in the field, analysts rarely hear anything suggesting al Qaeda leaders are nearby, says a military officer involved in the operation.

One time the eavesdroppers heard a Pashto speaker saying, "Bin Laden's not here," but they decided it was a prank. "They know we're listening, so they use other ways of communicating," the officer said.

Before returning to base, Capt. Gibbs and his men drove to the village where Mr. Haqqani's brother once lived. A cold drizzle fell as the soldiers pulled in. The crumbled bricks of the Haqqani house—destroyed in a U.S. air strike two years ago—sat high above the village.

In front of one house, Capt. Gibbs noticed a leafless tree with cassette tape wound through the branches. Afghans have told U.S. forces that putting tape in trees is sometimes a sign of allegiance to the Taliban, which banned the playing of music in homes.

The captain asked a young man named Jehan how it got there. Jehan said kids broke open the cassettes and the wind blew the tape into the trees.

"Everywhere we go we see this stuff," Capt. Gibbs told Jehan. "And everywhere we find cassette tapes in trees, we find Taliban."

But no one in the village would admit to having seen Mr. Haqqani for years. As Alpha Company departed, one of the soldiers asked to play music over his Humvee loudspeaker as a parting jab at their unseen enemy. Led Zeppelin blared as the convoy passed the Haqqani house:

*It's been a long time since I rock and rolled
It's been a long time since I did the Stroll...*

CLASS WAR NEWS

New Prescription Law Lets Corporations Cut Employee Health Benefits And Get Federal Money For Making Their Workers Pay More!

By Theo Francis, Wall St. Journal, 3.2.04

The Medicare prescription-drug law passed late last year is having a healthy effect on the outlook for corporate finances.

Within the past few weeks, a handful of large companies have reported they expect to collectively save more than \$2 billion over time, thanks to the new government subsidy for employers that offer prescription-drug benefits to retirees.

The subsidy has become controversial because although it was intended to encourage employers to continue to provide retiree health coverage, it doesn't discourage them from cutting benefits and shifting more costs to retirees. What's more, the language of the legislation indicates that employers can be reimbursed even for amounts retirees pay.

(For more, see the article "Deforming Medicare," by Helen Redmond at www.isreview.org.)

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