

GI SPECIAL 2#62

ENOUGH



A soldier of the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Regiment, First ID, after memorial service on a military base near Najaf for Staff Sergeant Victor Rosales and Specialist Allen Vantayburg, killed in action in the last two weeks. April 15, 2004. (Laszlo Balogh/Reuters)

A Bright Burst Of Truth

From: M
To: GI Special
Sent: April 16, 2004

Subject: Request for "GI" publication...

After my first day in the Army I quickly realized what a huge mistake I had made by enlisting for a mandatory five years.

After the events on September 11th, the Army voided my contract and kept me in their service for another year (against my will of course and despite the original contract agreement-because the Army can do whatever it wants as you know).

Thankfully I am now free and clear of the Army but my husband is not so lucky. We are currently stationed in [xxxxxx] where so much of our life is controlled by the U.S. military, everything from television programming, to what movies are shown at the mini-theatre on post to the newspaper publications (Stars & Stripes affectionately referred to by soldiers as "Stars & Lies").

We would love to receive your publication at this e-mail address or at the following mailing address. Thank you so much for pulling the wool OFF our eyes and providing accurate articles. **I can not take the propaganda they shove down our throat here one...more...day!** Thank you!

Sincerely,
Ms. S
APO X

Reply:

In your letter, you wrote:

"Thank you so much for pulling the wool OFF our eyes and providing accurate articles. I can not take the propaganda they shove down our throat here one...more...day! Thank you!"

Truth is, most of the credit doesn't go to GI Special.

First and foremost, it's mostly letters like yours, and accounts of what men and women in the armed services are facing in Iraq, and seeing there, and thinking about it, that makes GI Special useful.

People who think service members have no brains and will buy the lies peddled in DC are in for a rude surprise.

People join the armed services for a variety of reasons, including economic desperation, but a great proportion also want to do some good in the world, and see armed services as an honorable profession, which it should be.

Instead, they are betrayed: treated like Wall-Mart employees, and sent off to loot somebody else's country by the corporate crooks who really run things in DC, regardless of who sits in the White House.

There is nothing dishonorable about wanting to get rid of Saddam Hussein. Millions of Iraqis hated his guts, for the right reasons. But for those who own and operate the U.S. Empire to use his behavior as an excuse to grab a whole country and its oil makes a lie out of the promise of "democracy" and turns the armed forces into part of a Imperial criminal enterprise. And for too many a fatal one.

Your letter is more important and has more home truth than all the speeches given by all the politicians in Washington.

Respect to you and your husband.

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What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Send to the E-mail address up top. Name, I.D., withheld on request. Replies confidential.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

The Imperial Dream In Ruins: U.S. Occupation Machine Collapses, Abandoned By Collaborators; U.S. Personnel In Hiding While Soldiers Go On Dying; Resistance Using Anti-Aircraft

By Rajiv Chandrasekaran and Karl Vick, Washington Post Foreign Service, April 18, 2004 & Jim Krane Associated Press Writer, April 18

BAGHDAD, April 17 -- In the space of two weeks, a fierce insurgency in Iraq has isolated the U.S.-appointed civilian government and stopped the American-financed reconstruction effort, as contractors hunker down against waves of ambushes and kidnappings, according to U.S. and Iraqi officials.

The events have also pressured U.S. forces to vastly expand their area of operations within Iraq, while triggering a partial collapse of the new Iraqi security services designed to gradually replace them. The crisis, which has stirred support for

the insurgents across both Sunni and Shiite communities, has also inflamed tensions between Arabs and Kurds.

U.S. officials said they are reconsidering initial assessments that the uprisings might be contained as essentially military confrontations in Fallujah, where Marines continue their siege of a chronically volatile city, and Najaf, where the militant Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr has taken refuge in the shadow of a shrine.

In Baghdad and Washington, officials had initially concluded that addressing those problems would not engender much anger among ordinary Iraqis.

"Sadr's people and the people of Fallujah were seen as isolated and lacking broad support among Iraqis," the official added. Instead, the official said, "The effect has been profound."

(Falluja, Najaf, and Karbala are now free liberated territory, held by resistance armed forces against the Occupation forces. Evidently this is just beginning to penetrate the wooden skulls in Washington.)

The violence has brought the U.S.-funded reconstruction of Iraq to a near-halt, according to U.S. officials and private contractors.

Thousands of workers for private contractors have been confined to their quarters in the highly fortified Green Zone in Baghdad that also houses the headquarters of the U.S. occupation authority. Routine trips outside the compound to repair power plants, water-treatment facilities and other parts of Iraq's crumbling infrastructure have been deemed too dangerous, even with armed escorts.

Compounding the problem is a growing fear that insurgents will seek retribution against Iraqis working for private contractors and the occupation authority. ***Scores of Iraqis have stopped showing up for their jobs as translators, support staff and maintenance personnel in the Green Zone, even though there is a lack of lucrative employment elsewhere.***

The security situation "has dramatically affected reconstruction," said another U.S. official in Baghdad. **"How can you rebuild (occupy and loot) the country when you're confined to quarters, when only small portions of your Iraqi staff are showing up for work on any given day?"**

Occupation Personnel Evacuated:

Among the firms that have restricted the movements of their employees are the two of the largest private contractors in Iraq: Bechtel Corp. and Kellogg Brown & Root, a subsidiary of Halliburton Co. **The Research Triangle Institute, a North Carolina-based firm that has been helping set up city councils across Iraq, has sent 80 staffers -- about 40 percent of its non-Iraqi workforce -- to Kuwait as a precautionary measure.**

More than 1,500 foreign engineers and contractors have fled Iraq for fear of being abducted or killed, Iraqi Housing Minister Bayan Baqer said Sunday.

Security concerns also have hindered the implementation of a \$6 billion, U.S.-funded wave of construction projects intended to help improve security by putting legions of unemployed young men to work.

"We want to offer people opportunities that compete with the financial incentives they get" from insurgent leaders, an American official said. "But it's a Catch-22. We can't start the work that's supposed to help improve security until security improves."

The insurgency also appears to be generating new alliances – and tensions -- among the major sectarian and ethnic groups in Iraq.

The most visible leader of the resistance is Sadr, a firebrand whose appeal long appeared to be limited to the young, unemployed Shiites who made up his militia, the Mahdi Army. However, in a surprising development, his poster began appearing this month at Sunni mosques that previously showed little interest in his activities.

Such displays of unity have dampened fears of a clash between the Sunni minority and Shiite majority communities. (More good news like that as they'll be pulling Bremer off the occupation hq roof with a helicopter.) But worries about a different kind of civil war have been generated by reports that Iraq's ethnic Kurds are fighting alongside U.S. Marines and against the insurgency.

Guerrillas coming out of Fallujah have complained bitterly that Kurdish militiamen known as pesh merga are deployed against them. The Kurds are members of the 36th Battalion of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps, built from several exile-based militias that supported the U.S.-led campaign against Saddam Hussein. Commanders of another, overwhelmingly Arab Iraqi army battalion refused to fight alongside the Marines.

"When the fighting is over in Fallujah, I will sell everything I have, even my home," said a resistance fighter who gave his name as Abu Taif Mashhadani. He wept as he recalled his 8-year-old daughter, who he said was killed by a U.S. sniper in Fallujah a week ago. "I will send my brothers north to kill the Kurds, and I will go to America and target the civilians. Only the civilians. Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth. And the one who started it will be the one to be blamed."

The American confrontations with Sadr and in Fallujah also have roiled the political landscape by further isolating members of Iraq's U.S.-appointed Governing Council from the Iraqi population.

Commanders were surprised by the sophistication and coordination displayed by insurgents massing for attacks on armored columns on highways. On Friday, a coalition aircraft reported coming under fire from an anti-aircraft gun, which was highly unusual.

No less sobering, commanders said, were new reports of children playing roles in guerrilla attacks. In Baghdad Tuesday, a girl about 6 or 7 years old dropped an explosive from a highway overpass onto a convoy. A commander was killed in a

similar incident outside Fallujah, when a convoy was ambushed after slowing for a girl leading cattle across a highway.

Staff writer Thomas E. Ricks in Baghdad contributed to this report

GET MORE 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/>

U.S. Soldier Killed, 2 Injured In Tank Roll Over

April 18, 2004 (AP)

Saturday, a U.S. Army soldier was killed and two others were injured when their Abrams tank rolled over in northern Baghdad. **The military did not say whether the rollover occurred during combat, and did not specify the soldiers' unit.**

TROOP NEWS

A Letter Home To Break Your Heart

(From a 1st Armored Division soldier, who arrived in Kuwait on his way home at the end of a year-long tour - only to be suddenly ordered back to Baghdad last week along with 20,000 other soldiers.)

"Hey Mom and Dad, as you know I am back in this shit hole," Sergeant XXXX wrote from Baghdad, as his unit prepared to head south towards Najaf.

"It is going to be very dangerous for us when we go down there. I have more rounds than I can carry and I know that I will be using a whole damn lot of them. They gave me Fragmentation Grenades, AT-4 Rocket launcher, High Explosive Grenades for a Grenade Launcher and a shit load of rifle rounds. **Sounds like there will be some**

shootouts with the bad guys," he said, adding, "I just hope that we are the good guys."

"Please do not go nuts because I am back over here. Just remember that you still have a life to live and a house to pay for so that I can stay there during my leave! What I am saying is PLEASE don't get arrested for something stupid. But tell all of the [anti-war] marchers that I said Hi and thanks for the support. I was so fucking close that I could taste the German Beer on my lips again!

"I am sorry that this has happened to us and the pain that I know that it is causing on you and mom. I only wish that I will be able to make it out of here with everything that I came here with, And no modifications what so ever."

FUCK BUSH AND HIS WAR: TIME TO COME HOME



U.S. Marine Sgt. Gerald Hooee Jr. from Zuni, NM resting at camp in Fallujah after he and his section of Marines from the 1st Battalion 5th Marine Regiment were attacked south of Fallujah April 13, 2004. The troops had been guarding the site of a downed military helicopter when they came under intense mortar and RPG fire. (AP Photo/John Moore)

Spanish Leader Pulls Troops From Iraq

April 18, 2004 (AP) & AP

MADRID, Spain - Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero said Sunday he had ordered Spanish troops withdrawn from Iraq as soon as possible.

While Zapatero had run for office on a promise to withdraw Spanish forces from the U.S.-led coalition, the timing of the announcement was unexpected.

In an announcement from the Moncloa Palace, Zapatero said he had ordered the defense minister to "do what is necessary for the Spanish troops stationed in Iraq return home in the shortest time possible."

Zapatero spoke just hours after the new Socialist government was sworn in.

The latest poll showed 72 percent of Spaniards wanted the troops withdrawn.

Zapatero indicated nothing argued for keeping the troops in Iraq under the current situation.

"These circumstances have led me to take the decision to order the return of our troops with the maximum safety and thus in the shortest time possible," Zapatero said.

The Spanish troops were stationed in south-central Iraq with responsibility for Diwaniya and the flashpoint Shiite holy city of Najaf. Eleven of the Spanish troops have died since August, including seven intelligence agents in a highway ambush in November.

Deadliest Week In Iraq Ends In Nationwide Funerals; "This Should Have Never Happened To Michelle"

By MONICA DAVEY, April 15, 2004, New York Times

BROOKFIELD, Wis., April 14 — In a small town near Dallas, people lined the streets and waved flags for a funeral procession for Sgt. Gerardo Moreno of the Army. In Bradenton, Fla., Bach and Brahms were played in honor of Pfc. Christopher R. Cobb of the Marines, who had played the violin in high school.

And here in the Milwaukee suburbs, family, friends and even strangers grieved over the death of Specialist Michelle M. Witmer, and some expressed anger at the prolonged sacrifice that had been demanded of her National Guard unit.

"At this point, I want to just go over and bring her home myself," an anguished Marie Galonski said of her own daughter, Specialist Juliana Bruening, who is in Specialist Witmer's unit and trained alongside her. "They said Juliana would be home in a year, and every time you turn around, it's another delay. Now I'm terrified and angry. The way I'm looking at this, this should have never happened to Michelle."

<p>Although President Bush declared major combat over almost a year ago, last week was the deadliest yet for Americans in uniform. The Department of Defense</p>

identified 64 service members who died in the week that ended on Saturday. Until then, the highest toll had come many months ago, not long after the start of the war last March, in a week when 50 Americans died.

The dead came from cities and small towns across the continental United States, as well as from Puerto Rico and the Mariana Islands. They came from all the major service branches — the Air Force, Navy, Army, Marines, as well as the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve.

They were as young as 18, as old as 45. At least two were women.

And this week their remains were returned home.

The death of Specialist Witmer, who was killed when her Humvee was attacked in Baghdad, attracted considerable attention after her father, John, urged his other daughters, who are also serving in the Guard in Iraq, to stay home after the funeral instead of returning to the units that they consider their other families. The sisters have not said what they will do.

But in the crowd that filled the church here Wednesday night to honor Specialist Witmer, relatives of other Wisconsin National Guard members were torn by the question. The death of Specialist Witmer, 20, brought the mounting dangers on the streets of Baghdad into clear focus for these military families of the 32nd Military Police Company. **And then came the news that their own soldiers — Specialist Witmer's colleagues — would have to stay in Iraq even longer than planned, their tours extended by as much as four months.**

Some families of the 32nd said they would accept the delay, just as they had the war. Others, though, were weighing whether to fight it. Some signed petitions. Others announced a rally to oppose it. And on a Web site for the unit's families, worries came tumbling forth. "It's been over a year, and she needs to be home," one man wrote of his soldier. "She is tired and can only handle so much. She is losing hope, and I need her too."

As chilling scenes of deadly skirmishes and hostage-taking played out in Iraq, funerals, one after the next, began filling long days in places like this. In different corners of the country, as the total American death toll climbed above 670, the eulogies, the salutes, the coffins came faster than ever.

Friends here said Michelle Witmer and her two sisters had joined the Guard to help pay for college. Michelle Witmer signed on in January of 2002.

Because of her death, Michelle Witmer's sisters, Specialist Rachel Witmer and Sgt. Charity Witmer, get to decide whether to finish their time in Iraq, said Lt. Col. Tim Donovan of the Wisconsin National Guard. **But other members of the Guard, who expected to return home in early May, learned on Sunday that they were being ordered to stay as long as 120 more days.**

"We're disappointed in this development too," Colonel Donovan said on Wednesday. "We had been looking forward to welcoming them home, and we certainly understand the concern of the family members."

Elsewhere, there were other scattered signs of protest.

In Washington on Wednesday, two dozen military families, most members of Military Families Speak Out and Veterans For Peace, carried hundreds of carnations — one for each dead service member — to the White House gates, saying they wanted President Bush to halt what they consider an unjustified war. **"It is our loved ones who are being used as cannon fodder," said one organizer, Nancy Lessin, the mother of a marine who served in Iraq.**

But at many of the funerals and wakes around the country on Wednesday, there was little talk of politics or policy. There was only room for memories.

As church bells tolled in Terrell, Tex., people stood silently along the streets as a hearse drove by. Some held flags. Others saluted Sergeant Moreno, 23, who died on April 6 in Ashula, Iraq, when fighters attacked his unit with a rocket-propelled grenade.

"We're out here because of what that boy did for all of us," said Laura Dodson of Terrell. "He made the ultimate sacrifice. How could we not be out here to show our support? I wanted to show the family that we back them and we appreciate what he did."

Businesses in Terrell let their employees leave work to watch the 10-minute procession through town.

Before he left for Iraq, Sergeant Moreno told his wife, Teresa, and his mother, Sandra Iracheta, that he had a feeling he would not be coming back.

"And yet he went with the courage that only the Holy Spirit can give and he went with pride and love for his career and vocation in the Army," said the Rev. Michael Forge. "He died so the Iraqi people could share in the possibility of freedom."

Private Cobb, the violin player from Florida, found himself in Iraq because he had deep passion for being a marine, his mourners said at his funeral Wednesday, and because he wanted to help his mother. He went to Iraq a few months ago, his friends said, and died from hostile fire in Al Anbar Province on April 6.

Private Cobb, 19, signed up for the Marines last September, in part because he wanted to earn enough to buy his mother a home of her own, said Louis Blumenberg Jr., a relative. The family had always lived in an apartment, Mr. Blumenberg said.

In high school, he had loved music.

"He was good," said Richard Jorgensen, the director of orchestras at Bayshore High School. "He was not one of my flashy front row players, but he was a kid who knew that there is more to music than playing. He would stay after a performance and help put all the equipment away."

In New Castle, Del., a school bus joined the procession that rolled through steady drizzle toward the Delaware Memorial Veterans Cemetery. The bus driver, Dawn Boyce, carried a young crew of R.O.T.C. members to the burial of Lance Cpl. Anthony P. Roberts, 18, of the Marines. For three years, Ms. Boyce drove him on field trips with this R.O.T.C. crew, before he left for Iraq.

"He was too young to go," Ms. Boyce said. "He was a good kid. The best example of a good kid I can offer you."

Timothy James, his cousin, had a different name for him: "the dean of bravery." Corporal Roberts's father died when his son was young, Mr. James said. His funeral drew an eclectic crowd: young girls from his high school and Vietnam veterans on Harley-Davidsons.

By Wednesday, more funerals had already happened, and others would come in the days ahead.

Among the dead: Lance Cpl. Christopher Ramos, 26, of Albuquerque, an avid baseball player with an 18-month-old daughter; Specialist Jonathan R. Kephart, 21, of Oil City, Pa., who joined the military after the Sept. 11 attacks; Specialist Isaac Michael Nieves, 20, of Unadilla, N.Y., whose wife, Amy, said he decided the military was where he needed to be; Lance Cpl. Elias Torrez III, 21, of Veribest, Tex., who was known to his friends as E. T. and had hoped to be home in a few months; and Specialist Robert R. Arsiaga, 25, of San Antonio, who joined the Army to become a man, his mother said.

On Tuesday night, in Vacaville, Calif., more than 800 mourners filled a Catholic Church to remember Specialist Casey Sheehan of the Army, who died just two weeks after he arrived in Iraq. His convoy was ambushed during a rescue mission outside Baghdad. Friends at his funeral Tuesday said he had volunteered for the dangerous rescue mission — a typical choice, they said, for someone who had always volunteered in the church, in the Boy Scouts, everywhere.

But here, in this crowd of friends and family and neighbors, many wrestled with their own feelings about Iraq now. Not all agreed even on what to wrestle with. Some said they had grown impatient with the war, but felt a deep need to support the troops.

"Most people here know enough to separate the issues," said Charles Albidress, a longtime family friend. "Should we be there, versus now that we are there we must respect and support the troops."

Paul Pagarigan, a family friend and Eucharistic minister at St. Mary's Catholic Church, said Specialist Sheehan, 24, had followed the right course, doing the work he loved and helping others. "We need to combat these terrorists. They are holding the country and the world hostage. We have to root them out. This is a war between good and evil."

But others at the funeral had doubts. Bob Vollmer, Specialist Sheehan's Boy Scout leader, said: "I support the troops. But I don't understand why we are still over there."

And Specialist Sheehan's, aunt, Dede Miller, said the death had made her think it was time for the United States to leave.

"The insanity needs to stop," Ms. Miller said.

At the Vacaville-Elmira Cemetery, a brisk wind forced three honor guards, instead of the usual two, to fold the flag. Then three volleys of gunfire, in Specialist Sheehan's honor, filled the air.

Reporting for this article was contributed by Sara Kennedy in Florida, Carolyn Marshall in California, Elisabeth Olson in Washington, Laura Griffin in Texas, John Branston in Tennessee and Charles Cohen in Delaware.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

THE RECRUITING OFFICE IS OPEN



Iraqi Shias line up outside the house of cleric Moqtada al-Sadr to join the Mahdi Resistance forces in Najaf, Iraq April 18, 2004. (AP Photo/Hadi Mizban)

(For a crisp, in depth look at reality in Iraq see the article :**"Sunnis And Shiites Are United: The Roots Of The Resistance,"** by Lee Sustar, at www.socialistworker.org.)

Iraqi Troops Turned Against Occupation;

Opened Fire On U.S. Troops

April 17, 2004 By Sarmad S. Ali and Melinda Liu, Newsweek

As fierce fighting erupted in parts of Iraq in early April, the U.S.-led coalition tried to deploy U.S.-trained Iraqi units to quell the fighting. The results were disastrous: During the violence, many Iraqi police and civil defense personnel abandoned their posts, or joined Shiite militants loyal to renegade cleric Moqtada al-Sadr. What's more, some soldiers of the first U.S.-trained battalion of the New Iraqi Army (NIA) deserted their unit or refused to follow orders.

In exclusive interviews with NEWSWEEK, Iraqi soldiers and civilian witnesses described what happened.

When bloodshed erupted during the first week in April, the U.S. military command scrambled to put down local uprisings led by Shiite militants in the south and by Sunni extremists in and around Fallujah. U.S. authorities wanted to give Iraqi troops a pivotal role in maintaining security in Fallujah and in the largely Shiite community of Shulla on the northwest edge of Baghdad. The idea was to show Iraqis taking responsibility for security matters, and to help U.S. personnel lower their profile in preparation for the Coalition Provisional Authority's transfer of sovereignty to Iraqi institutions on June 30.

The job fell to the 2nd Battalion of the New Iraqi Army, deployed at the Taji Military Complex northwest of Baghdad. Its 620 men had graduated from the Kirkush boot camp in January, and were the first Iraqi army soldiers to be deployed in a field military operation since the U.S. began reconstituting the post-war army.

One of the first signs of trouble was a terse U.S. statement, issued on April 11, confirming that an Iraqi army unit had refused to deploy to the conflict in Fallujah after being shot at in a Shiite neighborhood of Baghdad. But battalion members, some of whom were fired, and other eyewitnesses from Taji, paint a much more complicated and dramatic portrait of the incident.

Fighting between coalition troops and pro-Sadr Shiite militiamen had already broken out April 4 in southern Shiite cities and in Baghdad's sprawling slums Sadr City and Shulla when the battalion received news of its mission. "We were first informed that we would have a task the next day," recalls army recruit Khadhim al-Zubaidy who has left his unit and returned home in the southern city of Kut. "The American officers did not reveal anything about the nature of the task they wanted us to accomplish, and we didn't even know where we were going," says Zubaidy, a Shiite. (Despite requests from NEWSWEEK to interview U.S. officers at the Taji base about the incident, they declined to comment.)

The Iraqi soldiers were brought to Shulla, an impoverished community where adrenaline-charged Shiite militants were angry about the detention of one of Sadr's top aides. Zubaidy said that his U.S. officers ordered Iraqi soldiers to open fire on the angry crowd in Shulla. "The American officers hysterically ordered us to shoot the 'traitors'," he recalls, "We were not asked beforehand to go fight our

people in Shulla. If we had been....we would have resigned at the camp right away."

Many Iraqi soldiers refused to fire, abandoned their weapons and fled from the scene, says Zubaidy. Another soldier from the battalion, Hamid Tamimi from Dijeil district in Salahuddin province, says some Iraqi troops even turned against the Americans and opened fire on U.S. personnel while chanting slogans and songs glorifying Sadr and his late father.

A number of Iraqi soldiers did stay by the side of the Americans, Tamimi says, mostly from Kurdish militias. But most soldiers from Iraq's predominately Shiite southern cities fought against the Americans, he alleges.

A number of residents in Shulla, some of whom took up arms against U.S. troops, have similar accounts. Hayder al-Maliki, 26, received minor wounds in the leg and the scalp from U.S. gunfire. **He alleges that he witnessed American personnel open fire on Iraqi soldiers they refused to fight alongside the U.S. and sided with pro-Sadr forces. "In the beginning the Americans tried to push the Iraqi army into the fight. But when many of them declined, the Americans started to shoot at them"--and even incited other Iraqi soldiers to "shoot their friends in the army," he says.**

Iraqi officers and soldiers assigned as guards at the Taji military complex reported that members of the 2nd Battalion who'd been deployed on the mission returned later that day in two groups. Some came back in cars with American personnel, weapons hanging on their shoulders. A second group arrived on foot, without weapons, according to Ra'ad Ahmed, a recruit who guards one of the gates of the camp.

The second group got a different reception. Eyewitnesses at the Taji base report seeing the startling sight of soldiers from the 2nd battalion clad only in their underwear. "I was surprised to see more than 30 soldiers barefoot with only their underclothes on," says Qais Al-Dulaimi, a contractor for the Baghdad Tower Contracting Company involved in U.S.-supervised reconstruction work in the camp. **When Dulaimi asked an Iraqi officer about the nearly naked soldiers, the officer replied that they were being punished for disobeying military orders. "I served in the army for more than ten years without experiencing anything like this," says Dulaimi.**

In all, "about 70 Iraqi troops were left barefoot and without clothing outside the camp," says Sabah Majeed, a resident of Al-Mizrffa village in the al-Taji river district. (The estimated figure of 70 was confirmed by Wissam al-Majmaa'i, the first lieutenant guarding the camp's gate.) **"They were told that they were sacked for non-compliance with military orders, and had no hope of returning to military service. I helped about 18 of them, with assistance from local tribes and families," says the villager, who offered his own clothes to a soldier and drove off in his BMW wearing just his underwear.**

Dulaimi said he organized civilians to provide clothes, money and food for some of the troops, as well as transport to Baghdad.



An Iraqi Sunni Muslim insurgent flashes V-for-Victory sign in front of a burning US tanker after it was attacked with rocket-propelled grenade (RPG)..(AFP/File/Antonio Scorza)

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Fundamental Errors Of Inflexible Army Managed By Complete Incompetents

Rory McCarthy, The Guardian, April 13 2004

George Lopez, international security expert at the University of Notre Dame in the US, told the Associated Press: "We have taken a low-level cleric and made him into a national symbol of resistance against the Americans, just before an Islamic holy day. And we have backed al-Sistani, our one major hope for preaching calm and patience among the Shi'ites, into a corner."

In the fighting of the past week, America's "enemy" has widened to include two fronts: Shia militias from the south, once dismissed as no more than minor irritants, and huge numbers of young male villagers from tribes across the Sunni belt who have taken up arms in support of fighters under attack in Falluja, an icon of resistance.

Yet still the US military's definitions are narrow. Gen Sanchez continued to portray the violence as emanating from "a small group of criminals and thugs".

Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt, US deputy director of operations, promised an "overwhelming" response to the killing and mutilation on March 31 of four US contractors. There is little doubt the operation - Vigilant Resolve - has been overwhelming.

But as a result, many more Iraqis appear to have taken up arms around Falluja and on the western outskirts of Baghdad, where westerners have been kidnapped or killed.

And Now, Here He Is; The Complete Incompetent In Command

By PAUL KRUGMAN, April 13, 2004, The New York Times

In his Saturday radio address, George Bush described Iraqi insurgents as a "small faction." Meanwhile, people actually on the scene described a rebellion with widespread support.

Isn't it amazing? A year after the occupation of Iraq began, Mr. Bush and his inner circle seem more divorced from reality than ever.

According to The Washington Post: "One U.S. official said there was not even a fully developed backup plan for military action in case Sadr opted to react violently. The official noted that when the decision [to close Sadr's newspaper] was made, there were very few U.S. troops in Sadr's strongholds south of Baghdad."

Meanwhile, Mr. Bush, who once challenged his own father to go mano a mano, is still addicted to tough talk, and **still personalizes everything.**

Again and again, administration officials have insisted that **some particular evildoer is causing all our problems.** Last July they confidently predicted an end to the insurgency after Saddam's sons were killed. In December, they predicted an end to the insurgency after capturing Saddam himself. Six weeks ago — was it only six weeks? — Al Qaeda was orchestrating the insurgency, and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was the root of all evil.

The situation in Falluja seems to have been greatly exacerbated by tough-guy posturing and wishful thinking. According to The Jerusalem Post, after the murder and mutilation of American contractors, Mr. Bush told officials that "I want heads to roll." Didn't someone warn him of the likely consequences of attempting to carry out a manhunt in a hostile, densely populated urban area?

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/>

Powell Says Cheney Wrong



Secretary of State Colin Powell told reporters today that revelations in Bob Woodward's new book about the bitter political war between Powell and Vice President Cheney shocked him deeply. In one private conversation between Cheney and President George W. Bush, Woodward reports that Cheney ridiculed Powell for insisting on taking the attack on Iraq to the United Nations for support, telling Bush, "Powell doesn't know his dick from his ear."

Today, Powell offered the press convincing evidence that Cheney was wrong.

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Unconquerable

A Palestinian wearing a Hamas flag and headband throws bottles at an Israeli army guardpost in Bethlehem April 18 following a demonstration protesting the previous day's targeted killing of Gaza Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi by Israel. (AP Photo/Brennan Linsley)



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

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