

GI SPECIAL 2#76

"Dead Man Walking"



(AFP/File/Luke Frazza)

Enraged Senior Brass Frag Rumsfeld: Say Iraq Tactical Victories Leading To Strategic Defeat; "It's Dead Man Walking"

5.8.04 By Thomas E. Ricks, Washington Post

Deep divisions are emerging at the top of the U.S. military over the course of the occupation of Iraq, with some senior officers beginning to say that the United States faces the prospect of casualties for years without achieving its goal of establishing a free and democratic Iraq.

Their major worry is that the United States is prevailing militarily but failing to win the support of the Iraqi people. That view is far from universal, but it is spreading and being voiced publicly for the first time.

Army Maj. Gen. Charles H. Swannack Jr., the commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, who spent much of the year in western Iraq, said he believes that at the tactical level at which fighting occurs, the U.S. military is still winning. But when asked whether he believes the United States is losing, he said, "I think strategically, we are."

Army Col. Paul Hughes, who last year was the first director of strategic planning for the U.S. occupation authority in Baghdad, said he agrees with that view and noted that a pattern of winning battles while losing a war characterized the U.S. failure in Vietnam. "Unless we ensure that we have coherency in our policy, we will lose strategically," he said in an interview Friday.

"I lost my brother in Vietnam," added Hughes, a veteran Army strategist who is involved in formulating Iraq policy. "I promised myself, when I came on active duty, that I would do everything in my power to prevent that [sort of strategic loss] from happening again. **Here I am, 30 years later, thinking we will win every fight and lose the war, because we don't understand the war we're in.**"

The emergence of sharp differences over U.S. strategy has set off a debate.

Inside and outside the armed forces, experts generally argue that the U.S. military should remain there but should change its approach. Some argue for more troops, others for less, but they generally agree on revising the stated U.S. goals to make them less ambitious. **They are worried by evidence that the United States is losing ground with the Iraqi public. (Too late now. Game over.)**

Some officers say the place to begin restructuring U.S. policy is by ousting Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, whom they see as responsible for a series of strategic and tactical blunders over the past year.

Several of those interviewed said a profound anger is building within the Army at Rumsfeld and those around him.

A senior general at the Pentagon said he believes the United States is already on the road to defeat. "It is doubtful we can go on much longer like this," he said. "The American people may not stand for it -- and they should not."

Asked who was to blame, this general pointed directly at Rumsfeld and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul D. Wolfowitz. "I do not believe we had a clearly defined war strategy, end state and exit strategy before we commenced our invasion," he said. "Had someone like Colin Powell been the chairman [of the Joint Chiefs of Staff], he would not have agreed to send troops without a clear exit strategy. The current OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] refused to listen or adhere to military advice."

Like several other officers interviewed for this report, this general spoke only on the condition that his name not be used. One reason for this is that some of these officers deal frequently with the senior Pentagon civilian officials they are criticizing, and some remain dependent on top officials to approve their current efforts and future promotions.

Also, some say they believe that Rumsfeld and other top civilians punish public dissent. Senior officers frequently cite what they believe was the vindictive treatment of then-Army Chief of Staff Gen. Eric K. Shinseki after he said early in 2003 that the administration was underestimating the number of U.S. troops that would be required to occupy postwar Iraq.

Wolfowitz, the Pentagon's No. 2 official, said he does not think the United States is losing in Iraq, and said no senior officer has expressed that thought to him, either.
(Golly gee, why could that be?)

The top U.S. commander in the war also said he strongly disagrees with the view that the United States is heading toward defeat in Iraq. **"We are not losing, *militarily*,"** Army Gen. John Abizaid said in an interview Friday. He said that the U.S. military is winning tactically. **But he stopped short of being as positive about the overall trend. Rather, he said, "strategically, I think there are opportunities."**

"I am sure that the view from Washington is much worse than it appears on the ground here in Baqubah," said Army Col. Dana J.H. Pittard, commander of a 1st Infantry Division brigade based in that city about 40 miles north of Baghdad. **"I do not think that we are losing, but we will lose if we are not careful."** He said he is especially worried about maintaining political and economic progress in the provinces after the turnover of power.

Army Lt. Col. John Kem, a battalion commander in Baghdad, said that the events of the past two months -- first the eruption of a Shiite insurgency, followed by the detainee abuse scandal -- "certainly made things harder," but he said he doubted they would have much effect on the long-term future of Iraq.

But some say that behind those official positions lies deep concern.

<p>One Pentagon consultant said that officials with whom he works on Iraq policy continue to put on a happy face publicly, but privately are grim about the situation in Baghdad. When it comes to discussions of the administration's Iraq policy, he said, "It's 'Dead Man Walking.' "</p>

The worried generals and colonels are simply beginning to say what experts outside the military have been saying for weeks.

In mid-April, even before the prison detainee scandal, Peter Galbraith, a former U.S. ambassador to Croatia, wrote in the New York Review of Books that "patience with foreign occupation is running out, and violent opposition is spreading. The New York Review of Books is not widely read in the U.S. military, but the article, titled "How to Get Out of Iraq," was carried online and began circulating among some military intellectuals.

Likewise, Rep. John P. Murtha (Pa.), a former Marine who is one of most hawkish Democrats in Congress, said last week: "We cannot prevail in this war as it is going today," and said that the Bush administration should either boost its troop numbers or withdraw.

In addition to trimming the U.S. troop presence, **a young Army general said, the United States also should curtail its ambitions in Iraq. "That strategic objective, of a free, democratic, de-Baathified Iraq, is grandiose and unattainable," he said. "It's just a matter of time before we revise downward . . . and abandon these ridiculous objectives."**

Instead, he predicted that if the Bush administration wins reelection, it simply will settle for a stable Iraq, probably run by former Iraqi generals. This is more or less, he said, what the Marines Corps did in Fallujah -- which he described as a glimpse of future U.S. policy.

Even if adjustments in troop presence and goals help the United States prevail, it will not happen soon, several of those interviewed said. **The United States is likely to be fighting in Iraq for at least another five years, said an Army officer who served there. "We'll be taking casualties," he warned, during that entire time.**

"Iraq might have been worth doing at some price," Vickers said. "But it isn't worth doing at any price. And the price has gone very high."

The other key factor in the war is Iraqi public opinion. A recent USA Today/CNN/Gallup Poll found that a majority of Iraqis want the United States to leave immediately. "In Iraq, we are rapidly losing the support of the middle, which will enable the insurgency to persist practically indefinitely until our national resolve is worn down," the senior U.S. military intelligence officer said.

Tolerance of the situation in Iraq also appears to be declining within the U.S. military. Especially among career Army officers, an extraordinary anger is building at Rumsfeld and his top advisers.

"Like a lot of senior Army guys, I'm quite angry" with Rumsfeld and the rest of the Bush administration, the young general said. He listed two reasons. "One is, I think they are going to break the Army." But what really incites him, he said, is, "I don't think they care."

Jeff Smith, a former general counsel of the CIA who has close ties to many senior officers, said, **"Some of my friends in the military are exceedingly angry." In the Army, he said, "It's pretty bitter."**

Retired Army Col. Robert Killebrew, a frequent Pentagon consultant, said, "The people in the military are mad as hell." He said the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Air Force Gen. Richard B. Myers, should be fired. A spokesman for Myers declined to comment.

A Special Forces officer aimed higher, saying that "Rumsfeld needs to go, as does Wolfowitz."

Asked about such antagonism, Wolfowitz said, "I wish they'd have the -- whatever it takes -- to come tell me to my face."

He said that by contrast, he had been "struck at how many fairly senior officers have come to me" to tell him that he and Rumsfeld have made the right decisions concerning the Army. **(Kiss kiss kiss.)**

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:

As US Presses Madhi Army Stronghold At Najaf, Madhis Launch Strong Counterattacks To The South At Basra And Amarah; U.S. Armor Seen Burning

May 9, 2004 By SCHEHEREZADE FARAMARZI, Associated Press Writer NAJAF, Iraq & CNN Baghdad & May 8 (DPA)

Shia resistance forces attacked British patrols in Basra and clashed with coalition troops Saturday in two other southern cities.

Saturday's clashes in the cities of Amarah and Basra were the strongest show of force in the area in days by the al-Mahdi Army — perhaps an attempt to raise a diversion while the U.S. military intensifies its crackdown on al-Sadr in the holy cities he controls, Najaf, Kufa and Karbala to the northwest.

U.S. forces have been gradually moving against al-Sadr stronghold in those cities.

The U.S. Army's 2nd Cavalry Sunday extended its territory about a mile beyond its base in Najaf, a stronghold of al-Sadr's Mehdi Army militia, military officials said.

They came under sporadic attacks from rocket-propelled grenades, mortars and small arms, officials said.

A convoy in the coalition offensive was being attacked by rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire, according to CNN's Jane Arraf, who was traveling with the convoy.

U.S. troops backed by tanks entered Karbala from two directions on Saturday, blocking roads leading to the Imam Hussein Shrine at the city center. Troops traded fire with al-Sadr gunmen, **and two armored vehicles were seen in flames.**

Coalition troops also arrested al-Sadr's main representative in the southern city of Nasiriyah, Sheik Moayad al-Asadi, coalition officials said. Gen. Francesco Paolo Spagnuolo, the commander of the Italian troops in Basra said Italian Carabinieri in Nasiriyah arrested three Iraqis suspected of links to al-Sadr and of planning attacks on the coalition.

Hundreds of black-garbed al-Mahdi Army militia massed in Basra's streets, attacking passing British patrols and sparking skirmishes in several neighborhoods. **At least two Iraqis were killed and three British soldiers wounded,** a British military spokesman said.

British troops repelled an attack by gunmen on the governor's building. British armored vehicles pursued large numbers of gunmen into Basra's impoverished Hanaya neighborhood. Unable to enter the district's small alleys, the British traded fire with militiamen firing from behind buildings.

British troops in some 50 vehicles surrounded al-Sadr's headquarters in an hours-long standoff with militiamen inside.

British military spokesman Capt. Hisham Halawi said a grenade or homemade explosive was thrown at a coalition vehicle, wounding three soldiers.

The British Ministry of Defense said troops had quelled the uprising. By the afternoon, the situation was "under control," a ministry spokesman said.

A fierce gunbattle broke out in front of the Iraqi Central Bank, and gunmen seized a key bridge on the main route from the city to points south. Al-Bahadli led a group of dozens of gunmen who took control of a main intersection on the southern side of Basra, witnesses said.

Resistance forces attacked a military convoy outside Amarah, lightly wounding two British soldiers and sparking shootouts in several parts of the city, as helicopter gunships hovered overhead to provide support. British troops swept **briefly** into al-Sadr's office in the city, witnesses said.

Witnesses reported nine militiamen killed in the fighting, and one child was killed when his house was struck by a projectile.

The witnesses said a U S force of eight tanks and four military vehicles entered the city.

The clashes are taking place a mere 600 metres from the shrine which holds the grave of Imam Hussein, one of the holiest Shiite sites.

U S helicopters were seen hovering over the city, the witnesses added.

Shia Resistance Takes Out Military SUV; Troops Repel Fierce Onslaught By Cheering Kids

May 9, 2004 By SCHEHEREZADE FARAMARZI, Associated Press Writer
NAJAF, Iraq

Saturday, a U.S. military convoy was attacked on the main highway near Abu Ghraib, destroying an SUV that burst into flames.

After the attack, children cheered around the burning car, shouting "Long live al-Sadr!" until U.S. troops opened fire nearby, scattering the children.

According to eyewitnesses, four westerners were carried away after the vehicles came under attack. The status of four westerners is not known.



Cheering kids were successfully driven off after the attack. Baghdad, May 8, 2004. (AP Photo/Khalid Mohammed)

One Stryker Brigade Soldier Died, One Task Force Olympia Soldier Wounded During Mortar Attack

5.9.04 Combined Joint Task Force Seven, Release #040509b

MOSUL, Iraq - One Stryker Brigade Soldier died and one Task Force Olympia Soldier was wounded during a mortar attack on a Coalition base in Mosul on May 8. The wounded Soldier was evacuated to the combat support hospital in Mosul. The deceased Soldier's name is withheld pending notification of next of kin.

Accident Kills Stryker Brigade Soldier

5.8.04 BAGHDAD, Iraq

A U.S. soldier from the Army's Stryker Brigade was killed Saturday in an "electrical accident," the U.S. command said.

The statement said the incident, which occurred in Mosul, was under investigation, and the Army released no further details. The Stryker Brigade, part of the 2nd Infantry Division, takes its name from an armored vehicle used by the command.

MORE:

And Now A Word From A General Dumber Than A Box Of Rocks

29 April, 2004 By Will Dunham, (Reuters)

General Larry Ellis, head of Army Forces Command, recently wrote a memo to the Army's top general saying the "Up-Armoured" Humvee, or High-Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle, was not sufficiently protecting troops in attacks. He urged that more of the Stryker, the Army's new armoured vehicle now being used by U.S. forces in parts of northern Iraq, be sent to Iraq.

(Last GI Special carried an article from Army Times about the Pentagons' Chief Weapon Inspector condemning Strykers as unsafe at any speed. Now this fool wants to send more to Iraq.)

“The Worst Day (so far) For Poland”

May 9, 2004 By SCHEHEREZADE FARAMARZI, Associated Press Writer
NAJAF, Iraq

A Polish soldier was killed after walking into an "improvised booby trap with explosives" near the city of Imam, Polish Lt. Col. Robert Strzelecki said. Near Karbala, one Polish soldier was killed and two others injured in a road accident, when a civilian truck hit their vehicle in a convoy, sending it rolling down an embankment.

"This is basically the worst day (so far) for Poland," Strzelecki said.

On Friday, Poland's best-known war reporter, Waldemar Milewicz, was killed along with a colleague by gunmen who ambushed their TV crew on a road south of Baghdad.

Outnumbered. Surrounded. Get The Fuck Out Now!



U.S. Army soldiers stand guard on the highway leading from Baghdad to Fallujah May 8, 2004. (AP Photo/Muhammed Muheisen)

TROOP NEWS

Unknown Captain Supports Anti-War Protest

5.4.04 By Sue Vorenberg, The Albuquerque Tribune.

Bob Anderson adjusts the "Vietnam Veteran" logo hat he got from the V.A. hospital and waves at cars as they cruise past the Kirtland Air Force Base Truman gate.

Anderson, 59, set up camp with like-minded colleagues Saturday at the busy intersection of Gibson Boulevard and Truman Road Southeast for a protest on the one year anniversary of President George Bush's announcement the war was officially over.

Monday afternoon an active duty captain at Kirtland stopped by to show his support, but declined to give his name.

"I think sometimes we're perceived as warmongers in the armed forces, but we just take an oath to protect the country," the captain said. "Nobody here really wanted to go over to Iraq. I think a lot of people on base agree with me, but we just can't say it."

Iraq Soldiers React To Prison Photos: "The Crews Were Sickened By Them" "It Is So Sad To Be Betrayed Like This"

5/8/2004 Phillip Robertson, Salon

It was nearly a week later when I first heard American soldiers talking about the pictures coming out of the prison. I had flown with an air ambulance crew to the 421st Medevac Battalion from Baghdad in one of their helicopters, a Black Hawk with four stretchers inside. During the day, we flew two missions over the tan expanse north of Baghdad, which quickly turns into wide palm groves where fighters hide with their rocket launchers. When the crews weren't flying, they went back up to Taji, a base about eight minutes north of the Green Zone by Black Hawk.

The pilots and medics of the 421st were watching the news in Taji on Tuesday and the pictures everyone has seen by now were up on the screen, and the crews were sickened by them.

On a long couch, a row of six men watched the TV in silence until 1st Lt. Jerry Murphy said, **"It is so sad to be betrayed like this, because when someone's fundamental dignity is taken from them, there's nothing left."**

Lt. Murphy seemed to feel betrayed by the soldiers involved in the abuse at the prison, that they had betrayed the good things they were trying to do in Iraq.

The War's Lost Weekend

May 9, 2004 FRANK RICH, The New York Times

Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt went for broke. "This is not a withdrawal, it's not a retreat," he said, even as news video showed an American tank literally going in reverse while pulling away from Fallujah.

Support for War Collapsing, 58% Say Iraq “Not Worth It”

April 29, 2004 by RICHARD W. STEVENSON and JANET ELDER, New York Times

Support for the war in Iraq has eroded substantially over the past several months, and Americans are increasingly critical of the way President Bush is handling the conflict, according to the latest New York Times/CBS News Poll.

After initially expressing robust backing for the war, the public is now evenly divided over whether the United States military should stay for as long as it takes to stabilize Iraq or pull out as soon as possible, the poll showed.

Asked whether the United States had done the right thing in taking military action against Iraq, 47 percent of respondents said it had, down from 58 percent a month earlier and 63 percent in December, just after American forces captured Saddam Hussein. **Forty-six percent said the United States should have stayed out of Iraq, up from 37 percent last month and 31 percent in December.**

Just short of a year after Mr. Bush stood on the deck of the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln last May 1 and proclaimed the end to major combat operations under a banner reading "Mission Accomplished," his approval rating has slid from the high levels it reached during the war.

It now stands at 46 percent, the lowest level of his presidency in The Times/CBS News Poll, down from 71 percent last March and a high of 89 percent just after the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

Mr. Bush's approval rating for his handling of Iraq was 41 percent, down from 49 percent last month and 59 percent in December.

Sixty-one percent of voters said Mr. Kerry says what he thinks people want to hear, versus 29 percent who said he says what he believes.

"The only thing I think was good was when they got Saddam," said Anna Bartlow, 67, of Tulsa, Okla., a poll respondent who identified herself as a Republican. "That's the only thing that I think they did right, but if they were going to go over there just for him, they should have gotten him and then got out."

Of the Iraqis, Ms. Bartlow said, "Let them fight it out among themselves."

Asked whether the results of the war with Iraq were worth the loss of American lives and other costs, 33 percent of respondents said it was worth it. That was down from 37 percent at the beginning of April and 44 percent in December. **Fifty-eight percent said it was not worth it,** up from 54 percent at the start of the month and 49 percent in December.

At a time when American troops are engaged in fierce battles in Najaf and Falluja, two centers of the Iraqi insurgency, the poll found that **46 percent of Americans thought the United States military should remain in Iraq for as long as it takes to create a stable democracy, even if it takes a long time, and 46 percent said the United States should withdraw as soon as possible.**

Follow-up interviews with people who took part in the poll suggested that the surge in violence in the past few months had led some Americans who supported the general goal of bringing democracy to Iraq to become more skeptical. "It appears to me that we're not welcome there, and I don't know if I would have been able to support the invasion of Iraq if I had felt that the Iraqi people didn't welcome us there," said Michael Ryan, 54, of Ashland, Ore., who identified himself as a Democrat.

"I'm under the impression now that Dick Cheney came into office with an agenda for war in Iraq, and that George Bush had the same agenda, and that they were twisting the facts to justify the invasion," he said. "And I feel angry about it because I supported the U.S. invasion."

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.

“It’s Not Right”

May 8, 2004 COLUMBUS, Miss. (AP)

Former hostage Thomas Hamill returned to American soil early Saturday, stepping off a private jet to see a banner proclaiming “Welcome Home TOMMY” and to hear family and friends cheering and clapping wildly.

After meeting with his family, one of the first things Hamill will have to deal with are letters and calls offering him movie and book deals.

“He’s got mail about movie deals and all sorts of things,” Phyllis Hamill said.

The Hamill family has hired the same public relations team hired by former POW Jessica Lynch - Stephen Goodwin and his daughter, Aly Goodwin-Gregg.

Macon Alderman Willie Dixon, 52, said the excitement generated by Hamill's return was never matched for local soldiers who returned from Iraq, many of them wounded.

“It’s not right,” he said. “I’m glad he got away, but we need to think about those people who are over there now,” and the soldiers who served, he said.

Security Firms Flash Big Bucks To Recruit Spec-Ops Troops

May 10, 2004 By Megan Scully and Gina Cavallaro, Army Times staff writers

AMMAN, Jordan — Private security firms are wooing U.S. commandos and troops from special-operations forces of other nations with lucrative jobs in Iraq, forcing the leaders of these elite units to find new ways to keep their highly trained warriors.

Armed with multimillion-dollar contracts to protect people and installations, the private security industry can dangle salaries of up to \$200,000 — four times the annual pay of a senior U.S. noncommissioned officer, one senior U.S. military official said.

“We have always had very capable, experienced, well-trained soldiers,” the official said. “Guess what industry likes?”

The private security industry has become white-hot in the past year, thanks to the torrent of money flowing to rebuild Iraq and the escalating violence that followed the U.S.-led invasion in March 2003.

Meanwhile, high operating tempos for U.S. and coalition special forces may be contributing to the exodus. Special operators did most of the heavy lifting in the post-Sept. 11 war in Afghanistan, where they rooted out the Taliban government and established an allied army. Since then, they have maintained an almost nonstop operational tempo there and in Iraq.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

IED Hits Baghdad Cops

5.9.04 BAGHDAD, Iraq (CNN) -- At least five people were killed Sunday in an explosion at a crowded Baghdad market, police said.

Thirteen people, including six police officers, were wounded, according to police. One of the wounded police officers was in critical condition, police said.

Police said the blast occurred in western Baghdad and was caused by an improvised explosive device.

<p>OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME <u>NOW!</u></p>

Whose Streets?



Tires are set on fire as Iraqis block the entrance to the mostly Shiite populated 'Sadr city' district of Baghdad May 9, 2004, after U.S. Army forces arrested several Iraqis in this district. (AP Photo/Khalid Mohammed)

Our Streets!



A Shia soldier loyal to Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, regulates traffic holding hand grenades in the center of the mostly Shiite populated 'Sadr city' district of Baghdad May 9, 2004.(AP Photo/Karim Kadim)

Our Streets!!



Iraqi resistance fighters loyal to Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr lift up their weapons as they block the entrance to the mostly Shiite populated 'Sadr city' district of Baghdad May 9, 2004, after U.S. Army forces arrested several Iraqis in this district, late Saturday. (AP Photo/Karim Kadim)

Cop Commanders' House Blown Up

May 9, 2004 By SCHEHEREZADE FARAMARZI, Associated Press Writer
NAJAF, Iraq

Saturday attackers set off a bomb outside the house of a police official in the town of Habhab, 35 miles north of Baghdad. **The blast killed two women and a man from the official's family, doctors said.**

The home of the mayor of a town about 20 miles north of Baqouba came under fire by three gunmen who battled the mayor's security guards. One policeman was wounded.

Judge Assassinated

Hilla, Iraq, May 8 (DPA)

A local judge was assassinated today by unknown assailants in the town of Hilla, 80 kilometres south of Baghdad, according to local police sources.

Officer Ali Hussein said that investigative judge Haitham al-Tatlawi was shot dead by unknown assailants as he was having lunch in a downtown neighbourhood.

Hussein said al-Tatlawi has previously received several death threats for investigating crimes committed by a few town residents.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

“We Would Shoot Them And Kill Them Until They Left”

May 5, 2004 Mark Weisbrot's Column, Knight-Ridder/Tribune Information Services

What would we heavily-armed Americans do if foreigners invaded our country, and announced that they would remain in control until a suitable "democracy" could be established?

We would shoot at them and kill them until they left. We would learn to make roadside bombs, too. We might not carry pictures of bearded clerics, or call the invaders infidels. But we would try to drive them out by any available means.

Mr. Bush: If “This Is Not Who We Are,” Who Are You Then?

8, May, 2004 Moodhy Al-Khalaf, Arab News

Moreover, even as he {Bush} promised that the perpetrators would be punished, he managed to fit in yet another patronizing remark about how “In America a person is innocent until proven guilty.” **I wonder what the prisoners in the pictures were doing then — posing for the latest issue of Vogue? It does seem fashionable these days to beat, shackle and murder Arabs.**

The US president had said in a prior press conference that he was “deeply offended,” and that “this is not who we are.” Who are you then, Mr. Bush?

Starving a nation for over 15 years, is that who you are? Bombing innocent people because of one man’s actions, is that who you are?

You, too, kill innocent people for selfish reasons. Al-Qaeda in Arabic means, “Base”. How many bases do you have around the world?

How many people do you train and pay to bomb and torture innocent people?

In Wednesday night's interview, Bush did not forget to "reassure" the Iraqi people that America would not leave until it has finished its job. I am sure the Iraqis were thrilled to hear that. The president also mentions that "haters of freedom" will not scare America away.

Haters of freedom?

According to my limited knowledge of politics, what is happening in Iraq today is occupation — at its ugliest. And hence these "haters of freedom" are simply trying to free their lands from the clutches of a monstrous and terrorizing force. A force that has killed their brothers, imprisoned their fathers and robbed them of every basic human right and dignity.

After Sept. 11, the whole world mourned the death of innocent civilians along with the American people. Who is mourning our people today? **I applaud your media for portraying the lives and deaths of the victims of Sept. 11 in a way that made all of us weep with sorrow.**

I wonder how your media would portray what is happening in Iraq today if the roles were reversed. If an occupying force invaded your country, with the claim of freeing the world from your oppressive leadership, how would your media portray it? Wouldn't the men and women trying to free your country from this invading force be heroes? Wouldn't the soldiers of this invading force be murderers? I think we know exactly how it would be portrayed.

We all saw "Pearl Harbor"; didn't we all cheer Mel Gibson on in "Braveheart"?

Mr. Bush, the soldiers in the pictures may not represent America, but you represent the American government. Enough said.

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

Conservative Says Get Out Now

By Christopher Layne, **The American Conservative**. May 10, 2004 issue

Regardless of what happens in Iraq in the next several weeks, a watershed has been reached. Iraq's population is seething and hostile, and if the United States stays on in Iraq, henceforth it will face broad-based political, and armed, resistance to the

occupation. In that setting, the U.S. will confront the asymmetry in motivation that causes big states to lose small wars; the Iraqis are fighting for their country, but the United States is fighting for goals that are ephemeral.

Contrary to what Mr. Bush has said, the growing numbers of Iraqis supporting the insurgency do not “hate freedom.” It is just that they define “freedom” as freedom from American rule.

Sooner or later the U.S. is going to end up leaving Iraq without having attained its goals. Washington’s real choice is akin to that posed in an old oil-filter commercial that used to run on television: America can pay now, or it can pay later when the costs will be even higher.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Ex-Iraq Interrogator Says Innocent Prisoners Tortured For Refusing To Confess



An Iraqi prisoner looks through the bars of her cell in the Abu Ghraib Prison May 8, 2004. The woman said she was a high school teacher and wife of prominent Ba'ath Party member, and that American forces arrested her several months ago while they were looking for her husband. (AP Photo/John Moore)

7 May, 2004 LONDON (Reuters)

A former U.S. interrogator at Baghdad's Abu Ghraib jail says that many of its prisoners are innocent Iraqis, picked up at random by U.S. troops and questioned by underqualified intelligence officers.

Former military intelligence officer Torin Nelson said in an interview with the Guardian newspaper on Friday many of the detainees at Abu Ghraib were "innocent of any acts against the coalition".

"I've read reports from capturing units where the capturing unit wrote, 'the target was not at home. The neighbour came out to see what was going on and we grabbed him'," Nelson said.

Nelson, who served as a contractor at Abu Ghraib last year, said abuses were partly a result of an over-reliance on private firms so eager to meet demand for their services that they sent staff ill-prepared to deal with intelligence work.

"They're under so much pressure to fill slots quickly... if you're in such a hurry to get bodies, you end up with cooks and truck drivers doing intelligence work," Nelson told the paper.

The innocence of some detainees made them more likely to be abused because interrogators refused to believe they had been rounded up arbitrarily and regarded them as "tough targets" to be broken, he said.

Reservist Soldier: Unit's Role Was to Break Down Prisoners On Orders From Intelligence Officers; Mom Says "They're Putting It All On The Little Kids"

May 8, 2004 By Jackie Spinner, Washington Post Staff Writer

There were no rules, by her account, and there was little training. But the mission was clear. Spec. Sabrina D. Harman, a military police officer who has been charged with abusing detainees at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, said she was assigned to break down prisoners for interrogation.

"They would bring in one to several prisoners at a time already hooded and cuffed," Harman said by e-mail this week from Baghdad. "The job of the MP was to keep them awake, make it hell so they would talk."

Harman, a 26-year-old Army reservist from Alexandria, said members of her military police unit took direction from Army military intelligence officers, from CIA operatives and from civilian contractors who conducted interrogations.

"The person who brought them in would set the standards on whether or not to 'be nice,'" she said. **"If the prisoner was cooperating, then the prisoner was able to keep his jumpsuit, mattress, and was allowed cigarettes on request or even hot food. But if the prisoner didn't give what they wanted, it was all taken away until [military intelligence] decided. Sleep, food, clothes, mattresses, cigarettes were all privileges and were granted with information received."**

She said the prison had no standard operating procedures and on Tier 1A, where suspected insurgents were held, Army and other intelligence officers "made the rules as they went."

Harman, an assistant manager at a Papa John's Pizza in Fairfax County before being sent to Iraq, said the company received additional training at Fort Lee, but it was for "combat support, not I/R," the military term for internment and resettlement. She said she was never schooled in the Geneva Conventions' rules on prisoner treatment.

Harman is charged with conspiracy, dereliction of duty, cruelty and maltreatment, making a false statement, and assault. She faces an Article 32 hearing tentatively set in June, the military equivalent of a preliminary hearing to determine whether there is enough evidence to convene a court-martial.

Harman's mother, Robin Harman, said "She has this . . . attitude that she is going to save the world," said Robin Harman, who lives in Northern Virginia. **"She got over there and got an eye-opener. You don't put unqualified kids in that situation."**

<p>Yesterday, as Robin Harman watched Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld testify, she called her daughter a "scapegoat." "They're passing the buck, putting it all on the little kids," she said. "That's what makes me so mad."</p>

Shortly after Harman got to Abu Ghraib in October, her mother said, she began to take and collect pictures as evidence of the improper conditions.

Robin Harman said when her daughter told her what she was doing, she ordered her to stop. "We got into an argument about it at 4 a.m.," Robin Harman said. "Sabrina said she had to prove this. I told her to bring the pictures home, hide them and stay out of it."

In February, the Army moved Harman to Camp Victory, a base of trailers and tents near Baghdad's airport. Her weapon was confiscated, but she is not in confinement. She spends her days sweeping streets and planting flowers, her family said.

Robin Harman said her daughter had dreamed of following her father into a career as a homicide detective. Now she does not want to have anything to do with law enforcement, Robin Harman said.

(For more see the front page "Tortured By The Liberators" at www.socialistworker.org.)

BBC commentators and British politicians have been reminding us that the soldiers' activities "do not compare with Saddam Hussein's systematic tortures and executions". Hussein is now the moral compass of the west. Ahdaf Soueif May 5, 2004 The Guardian

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

U.S. TO HAND OVER BLAME ON JUNE 30 Rumsfeld 'Delighted' by News

The Borowitz Report 5.8.04

In a nationally televised address, President George W. Bush revealed that the blame for the Iraqi prison abuse scandal would be transferred from the U.S. to the new Iraqi government on June 30.

"Accepting blame for the prison abuse scandal is an important step in Iraq's evolution towards democracy," Mr. Bush said, adding that accountability for the scandal must go to the highest levels of Iraq's yet-to-be-appointed government.

"It is my hope that Iraq's new leaders will accept full responsibility for these abuses," Mr. Bush told his television audience. "There's an old saying: in a democracy, the dinar stops here."

While diplomatic experts had questioned what exactly the sovereignty handed over to Iraq on June 30 would consist of, the president made it clear that it would consist solely of blame for the prison abuse scandal.

"As of June 30, we fully expect to put an Iraqi face on this fiasco," Mr. Bush said.

At the Pentagon, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said that he was "delighted" by news of the decision to blame the prison scandal on the new Iraqi government.

"This is a solution that should satisfy even our toughest critics, because now those critics will be transferred to the new Iraqi government," Mr. Rumsfeld said.

Prior to the president's announcement, Mr. Rumsfeld had been bracing himself for the release of the Abu Ghraib Golden Edition DVD, including never-before-seen footage and special tormenters' narration.

"This DVD is full of extremely radioactive stuff," Mr. Rumsfeld. "Come June 30, the new government of Iraq will have a lot to answer for."

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Prisoner Hunger Strike Wins: 434 Leave Infamous Afghan Prison

5.7.04 By Burt Herman, The Associated Press

SHIBERGHAN, Afghanistan · **Shackled and under guard, 434 alleged Taliban and al-Qaida fighters shuffled out of Afghanistan's most notorious prison Thursday, winning transfer to a Kabul jail after a weeklong hunger strike to protest being held without charges for nearly 2 1/2 years.**

The U.S.-backed government promised they would get speedy trials and said those cleared of major offenses were expected to be freed soon.

Long before the uproar over allegations of Iraqi detainees being abused by American troops, Shiberghan's prison gained a reputation for brutality under the control of northern warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum.

International human reports groups depicted the jail as an abysmal place, pointing to severe overcrowding and recounting reports of torture and starvation of prisoners.

Jawed Ludin, a spokesman for President Hamid Karzai, said the transfer was prompted by "general problems" at the prison, as well as the hunger strike.

One of the inmates being transferred, Hazrat Mohammed, pointed inside the cramped confines of Cell No. 18, his home for the last two years. **He said he had been beaten with a rubber hose for complaining to the Red Cross about the lack of food.**

"For four months we didn't see the sun; we didn't see anything," said Mohammed, an Afghan who appeared far older than his 30 years.

"Finally, after more than two years and all the oppression, we all said this is enough and went on a hunger strike," said Mohammed, who appeared to be a leader among the detainees.

The hunger strike began April 29.

Martin Minder, head of the Red Cross delegation in the northern city of Mazar-e Sharif, criticized the lack of trials.

Detainees "have to be judged in a reasonable time frame," he said. "From 2001, it's not reasonable anymore."

Most of prisoners were brought to Shiberghan after being captured in late 2001 as the Taliban regime collapsed under U.S. bombing and ground attacks by the Northern Alliance. **They were transported like cargo in metal shipping containers in sweltering heat, and many did not survive.**

CLASS WAR NEWS

Bush Winning More Hearts And Minds



A Turkish demonstrator sets fire to a U.S. Dollar banknote during a protest in Istanbul, May 9, 2004. Thousands of Turks gathered in an Istanbul square to protest U.S. policy in the region and the abuse of Iraqi prisoners by U.S. and British soldiers in Iraq. (AP Photo/Osman Orsal)

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