

GI SPECIAL 2#77



“We are living in an American Democracy”
By Abdul-Karim Khalil
(Sculpture on exhibition in Baghdad, March 2004)

Declining Expulsions: Heightened Combat Keeps Gay Troops In Iraq

May 6 - 12, 2004 By DAVID THURSTON, Gay City News

In 1993, Bill Clinton retreated from his campaign promise to end the ban on gays and lesbians serving openly in the military. The “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” policy that emerged was portrayed as a compromise by the administration. Men and women in the armed

forces would not be asked about their sexual orientation, but could not serve openly, or engage in “homosexual conduct.”

Yet far from decreasing bigotry against gays, the policy led to a surge in anti-gay harassment. Expulsions of gays skyrocketed from 617 in 1994 to 1,273 by 2001. The policy created a dense web of hypocrisy, inconsistency, and recrimination. Enforcement was left to the discretion of individual commanders.

Now, as the United States military faces ongoing combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, expulsions of gays and lesbians in service have plummeted by 39 percent. From a high of 1,273 expulsions in 2001, the number fell to 906 in 2002, and to 787 in 2003, the most recent year for which statistics are available.

This fits a historical pattern. “Gay discharge numbers have dropped every time America has entered a war,” according to a recent report by the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN), an advocacy group for gay and lesbian troops. “This happened during the first Gulf War, and can be traced as far back as Vietnam, Korea, and World War II,” said Steve Ralls, director of communication for SLDN.

Aaron Belkin, director of the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military, a think tank based at the University of California at Santa Barbara that has studied the effects of out gay troops on combat units’ morale, suggested that the declining expulsions are sometimes produced by “changes in regulation and sometimes changes in practice.”

While expulsions may be down, however, incidents of homophobic abuse are still occurring. Mike Hoffman, a Marine who just returned from service in Iraq, spoke about the issue after coming to a New York conference of the Campus Antiwar Network (CAN) at Hunter College on April 3. Hoffman, who is straight, is now a civilian and is a member of an anti-war group.

“The military itself is a very dangerous place to be gay,” said Hoffman. He recalled how he identified a disturbing pattern during his basic training. “There was someone who was rumored to be gay. I just remember how everyone was treating him. He was treated as a leper—people kept their distance.”

Recently, activists from the Columbia Antiwar Coalition, a part of CAN, confronted military recruiters on campus, both to show opposition to the occupation, and to highlight the military’s discrimination against gays.

Ralls pointed out that even as expulsions decrease, requests for assistance from active duty gay and lesbian soldiers, sailors and Marines, including reservists, have increased from 649 in the year before the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, to 913 in 2002 and 1,000 in 2003.

The uneven and ambiguous enforcement of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell—with the military maintaining a culture of homophobia while gay and lesbian troops are deployed into combat—has wide ranging effects. Most immediately, the partners of gays and lesbians deployed overseas also face discrimination while having to maintain secrecy about their relationships. **“The partner does not have the right to go to the military shopping**

center to buy groceries, or the ability to communicate honestly,” said Ralls. “Service members suspected of being gay have had their e-mails and phone calls monitored,” he added.

There are competing explanations for the recent decline in expulsions. In a recent op-ed in the Army Times, Jeff Cleghorn argued that more gays are choosing to remain in the service to “do their patriotic duty.” Belkin said that, “gay soldiers are very loyal to their peers, loyal to their buddies.”

Yet morale in the military has declined in the face of a committed Iraqi resistance, extensions of soldiers’ tours of duty, and a range of Pentagon cuts to benefits for soldiers and their families. In light of the ongoing combat, the military also faces a stark shortage of manpower.

“When they need the bodies, they’re willing to overlook a lot of things,” said Mike Hoffman. “I’ve heard a lot of stories about people saying they’re gay, and commanders ignoring it. He also noted that the military is now “keeping people who pop on drug tests.”

Thomas Barton, a mental health professional at Bellevue Hospital, who circulates an online anti-war newsletter called G.I. Special, made a useful historical observation. “When there are labor shortages during wartime, oppressed groups will be allowed in, but afterwards discrimination can skyrocket,” said Barton, who was also active in the movement against the Vietnam War. “There were reports from the Vietnam War of soldiers who were lovers in the field, without challenge,” Barton added.

While the military claims that allowing gays to serve openly would disrupt morale and troop cohesion, many see this as a smokescreen. The military does rely on strict discipline, but the ban on gays serving openly plays a role in upholding institutionalized homophobia more broadly. **The policy is maintained even though a recent Gallup poll showed that 79 percent of Americans favor allowing gays to serve openly, an all-time high.**

Belkin called the policy “a line in the sand” that in fact furthers prejudice against gays throughout society. He argued that “people who support discrimination know that if the ban is lifted all sorts of other antigay policies would be that much more difficult to defend.”

Steve Ralls made a related point. “The military ban is one of the last federal laws that not only permit, but authorize discrimination against gay and lesbian people,” he said.

With the far right clamoring for a ban on gay marriage, it seems unlikely that military leaders would openly reconsider the ban. As Barton points out “the issue is near and dear to Bush’s base.” And with John Kerry cuddling up to the military establishing, declaring his commitment to the occupation of Iraq and calling his past criticisms of the Vietnam War “excessive,” even a Clinton-style promise to end discrimination in the armed services might be too much to expect.

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:

Two Dakota Soldiers Dead, Another Injured

5/9/2004 The Associated Press & By Stephen J. Lee, Grand Forks Herald Staff Writer

A spokesman for the North Dakota National Guard says 28-year-old Specialist James Holmes died early Saturday at a German hospital.

Holmes suffered shrapnel wounds Monday when a roadside bomb exploded while he was on vehicle patrol.

The Guard said Holmes graduated from high school in Peoria, Arizona, and earned a bachelor's degree from Arizona State University.

A family spokeswoman says Holmes moved to the Grand Forks area to attend the University of North Dakota flight school and volunteered to serve in Iraq with the 141st Engineer Combat Battalion.

Holmes was working for Valley Petroleum in Grand Forks, North Dakota, when he was deployed.

A family spokeswoman says members of his family were able to travel to Germany to see him before he died. They plan to bury him in Arizona.

He will receive the Bronze Star as well as a Purple Heart.

Also early Saturday, another member of the 141st, Pvt. Philip Brown, 21, of Jamestown, N.D., was wounded mortally while on a walking patrol. He suffered a chest wound, and both his legs were amputated from the knee down in efforts to save him, but he died, according to family members who said military officials told them, AP reported.

Brown was a graduate of Jamestown (N.D.) High School and was majoring in business at Jamestown College. His sister, Tara, is a freshman at UND. **Five Guard soldiers from the state have died in combat in Iraq.**

Another East Grand Forks soldier is recovering after being wounded in Iraq.

Private First Class Scott Anderson was wounded Tuesday while on guard duty.

His uncle says Anderson was shot in the hips and suffered several broken bones.

He is listed in critical but stable condition. He's being transferred from a Baghdad hospital to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany.

U.S. Soldier Dead In Mosul Base Attack

10-5-2004 Syria Times

The US military reported Sunday that one of its soldiers was killed and another wounded Saturday in a mortar attack on the coalition base in the main northern city of Mosul.

U.S. Soldier Dead In Mosul Patrol Attack

May 10, 2004 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND Release Number: 04-05-20C

MOSUL, Iraq - One Task Force Olympia Soldier died May 10 from injuries following a small-arms-fire attack on a patrol in western Mosul.

The Soldier was evacuated but later died of wounds at the combat support hospital in Mosul.

Dutch Soldier Killed In Samawah

May 11, 2004 (Kyodo News)

SAMAWAH — A Dutch soldier was killed and another injured in a grenade attack Monday night in the southern Iraq city of Samawah where Japanese troops have also been deployed, local security officials said.

They were the first casualties among the Dutch troops deployed in the city for Iraq's reconstruction.

FIRST INFANTRY DIVISION SOLDIER KILLED BY IED

May 10, 2004 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND Release Number: 04-05-19C

TIKRIT, Iraq - One 1st Infantry Division Soldier was killed and another Soldier was wounded when an improvised explosive device exploded during a patrol near Samarra on May 8 at about 9:30 a.m.

The Soldiers were conducting an IED sweep when the attack occurred.

The Soldiers were evacuated to the 67th Combat Support Hospital.

Fourth Day Of Street Fighting In Baghdad

10-5-2004 Syria Times

Nineteen Iraqis were killed in four separate clashes with US-led forces in Baghdad on Sunday, US Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt told reporters.

"There were about four different incidents going on in Baghdad today, resulting in a total of three Iraqi police killed, six civilians killed, eight police wounded and nine civilians wounded," he said.

He also said a "total of 19 enemy" were killed in clashes involving US forces and Iraqi resistance men.

Eighteen of those were killed at the cleric's stronghold in the Shiite slum district of Sadr city when US forces moved to break up checkpoints put up by his forces there.

Welcome To Baghdad--



Now Get The Fuck Out And Go Home

And in central Baghdad, four men wearing the black of Sadr's Mehdi Army fired at police from the top of a building.

The clashes followed an operation hours earlier when US forces seized two key players in Sadr's Mehdi army, including a financier and a man responsible for eastern Baghdad operations, according to Kimmitt.

Fighting has gone on for days between Sadr's men and the US-led coalition in Baghdad

NOT GOOD: SOLDIER KILLED IN COLLISION WITH TANK

May 10, 2004 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND Release Number: 04-05-18C

BAGHDAD, Iraq - A 16th Military Police Brigade Soldier was killed in an accidental collision between the Soldier's Humvee and a U.S. tank southwest of Baghdad around 10:15 p.m. May 9.

The Soldier was transported to the 31st Combat Support Hospital in Baghdad, where he later died of his injuries.

The Humvee's gunner was transported to a nearby field hospital for a precautionary medical check and was returned to duty.

ONE SOLDIER ASSIGNED TO FIRST MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE KILLED

May 11, 2004 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND, Release Number: 04-05-21C

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq -- One soldier assigned to I Marine Expeditionary Force was killed today as a result of enemy action in the Al Anbar Province while conducting security and stability operations.

Nine British Soldiers Wounded; Widespread Fighting In Amara And Basra

10-5-2004 Syria Times & By Alissa J. Rubin, Los Angeles Times

BAGHDAD, Iraq - Urban street fighting took over the southern Iraqi city of Basra on Saturday after black-clad militia members loyal to an anti-American cleric stormed through the streets skirmishing with British troops.

Four civilians were killed and a fifth wounded when British troops responded to mortar fire from Mehdi Army militiamen in the town of Amara early Sunday, police and medical sources said.

The turbulence in the south was a barometer of the depth of the discontent with the U.S.-led occupation, especially among young and impoverished Iraqis who feel that in firebrand cleric Muqtada al-Sadr they have found someone who will stand up for them against the Americans.

On Friday, a Basra cleric connected to al-Sadr offered rewards of up to \$300 for the capture or killing of soldiers in the U.S.-led coalition.

In Saturday's fighting in Basra, groups of Mahdi Army fighters set up makeshift blockades of rocks and burning tires.

A group of resistance soldiers assaulted the governor's building, and British troops moved in to reinforce the guards and take control of the building.

A police officer said mortar bombs had landed around the governor's office and the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) headquarters in the city.

Earlier, there were reports that members of the Mehdi Army had been "rampaging through the streets" of Amara, and British said troops had acted "throughout the city" Saturday to remove "unauthorised armed elements."

Five British soldiers were reported wounded in Amara on Saturday and three militiamen killed, while four soldiers were wounded and two Sadr supporters killed in fighting in the main southern city of Basra.

Kentucky Soldier Badly Shot Up

5.10.04 WorldNow, WKYT, and WYMT

A Winchester soldier continues to recover in Germany from injuries suffered in an attack in Iraq.

22-year-old Corporal Adam Tapp was on patrol when he and a fellow soldier were shot last week.

One bullet entered Tapp's lung, another hit his arm and a third bullet lodged in the flak jacket he was wearing.

Tapp is a 2000 graduate of George Rogers Clark High School, where he was in the band four years.

Grenade Fire At Bulgarian Patrol; Situation “Tense And Unpredictable”

5.11.04 Focus 1 News, Bulgaria

A Bulgarian patrol of the contingent in Iraq was fired at with a grenadier launcher at 1:30 am today, bTV reported. There are no casualties or damages. The situation in the zone of responsibility of the contingent remains tense and unpredictable.

Mercenaries Blown Up In Their Baghdad Bar

May. 09, 2004 Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq - A bomb went off Sunday night at a Baghdad hotel used by foreign contractors, ripping through the bar and wounding six people, including British and Nepalese, a hotel employee and police said.

The bomb struck the Four Seasons Hotel in central Baghdad and tore apart chairs and part of the ceiling in the bar, where the six injured were sitting, the employee said. He said the bomb was placed outside the hotel.

Police Lt. Col. Ahmad Al-Alawi told al-Arabiya television that two Britons, two Nepalese and two Iraqi guards were slightly wounded.

Many Nepalese in Iraq serve as security guards for private companies.

Three Construction Corporation Staff Shot

May 10, 2004 The Australian, From correspondents in Kirkuk

"A New Zealander, a South African and an Iraqi were shot dead at 7:30 am (1230 AEST) by several armed men in front of their home in Kirkuk," Police officer Hazem Mohammed Amin said.

More than five armed men ambushed the men, who worked for an Iraqi construction company, Amin said.

Mercenary Ex-Cop With Secret Job Dead In Iraq

May. 09, 2004 Associated Press

CHARLESTON, S.C. - A former instructor at the U.S. Border Patrol Academy here has become the area's first civilian casualty in Iraq.

Halliburton Corp. employee Daniel Parker, 56, of Summerville died Friday in Iraq after a bomb exploded near his military convoy as he was traveling to Baghdad International Airport, according to information on the Houston-based contractor's Web site.

He worked for Halliburton subsidiary KBR.

He served two tours of duty in the Vietnam War and was a second lieutenant and artillery officer. After the war, he went to college and joined the Border Patrol. He came to South Carolina to teach at the Border Patrol Academy in Charleston. He retired in June and got an offer from KBR to work in Iraq.

Jaimie Parker thinks his brother was attracted by the challenge of a difficult job, but he wouldn't say what that was and the company did not specify Dan Parker's job.

Dan Parker is survived by his wife and two daughters.

Explosion Trashes Key Oil Pipeline; Coalition Halfwit Doesn't Think Resistance Knew Where They Blew It Up

May 10 By LOUIS MEIXLER, Associated Press Writer & AFP

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) -- Insurgents bombed an oil pipeline in southern Iraq, setting off a huge blaze and slashing daily Iraqi oil exports.

Oil exports from the southern port of Basra have been halved by the pipeline blast, Iraqi oil officials told AFP Monday.

"We have dropped from an average of 80,000 barrels per hour to 40,000 barrels per hour," said engineer Ali Nasr al-Rubaie, director of the main port terminal.

Hamad al-Assadi, an executive director at the terminal, also confirmed the figure.

Columns of flame and smoke were seen coming from the pipeline in an area 40 kilometres (25 miles) south of the southern city of Basra.

Attacks against Iraq's southern oil facilities, which account for almost 90 percent of the country's exports, have been rare.

Militants set off the bomb Saturday under the Faw oil pipeline, some 35 miles south of the main southern city of Basra, said an engineer at Iraq's Southern Oil Company, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Firefighters have been fighting the blaze since it began, said Jabber Luyaibi, director general of Iraq's Southern Oil Company.

Luyaibi said the blast damaged a 18-foot section of one of two pipelines that run from Basra to the Faw peninsula on the Gulf. The pipelines have a capacity of 2 million barrels per day - larger than Iraq's current exports.

Luyaibi said that engineers were able to move oil from the damaged pipeline to the second pipeline.

But an official for the State Oil Marketing Pipeline later told Dow Jones that the damage was still considerable and that the second pipeline's capacity was too small to carry all of the additional exports. He told Dow Jones that exports had fallen to 1.2 million barrels a day following the blast.

Dan Senior, a spokesman for the coalition, confirmed that there was a bombing but gave no details, saying that to do so might help the insurgents.

"Any information we provide about success or failure of those attacks, particular the details, can be used as a basis for information in future attacks," Senior said at a press conference.

Paul Horsnell, head of energy research at Barclays Capital in London, said the significance of the attack is that "quite clearly, now the southern infrastructure is a target."

Baghdad Power Plant Burning

May 11, 2004 smh.com.au

Smoke and flames rose from a Baghdad electricity plant on Monday.

Thick tongues of flame and plumes of black smoke rose from the plant in the western district of Ameriya as fire engines arrived to attempt to extinguish the blaze which officials said had caused significant damage.

Police at the scene said without elaborating the plant had been sabotaged, but employees said the fire had broken out after a power cable apparently snapped and fell on the station.

Faris al-Bayati, a senior official of the security division of Iraq's electricity facilities, said an explosion had been heard just before the fire erupted and that the blaze had damaged cables and coils.

An adjacent sub-station was shut down after the fire erupted.

Supply Convoy Hit Close To Rutba; Trucks Destroyed, People Missing

11 May 2004 (Reuters)

BAGHDAD - Guerrillas attacked a 21-vehicle civilian supply convoy on its way to Baghdad from Jordan on Tuesday and several people are unaccounted for, a senior US military official said.

Several vehicles in the convoy were destroyed in the attack close to Rutba, near the Jordanian border, he told reporters without indicating the nationalities of those missing.

"A number of people are, as of a couple of hours ago, still unaccounted for," the official said.

The convoy may have belonged to a sub-contractor to Kellogg, Brown & Root, which supplies US troops in Iraq, and did not appear to have had any military escort, he said.

Pa. Family IDs Dead Contractor

May 11, 2004 The Associated Press

WEST CHESTER, Pa. - An American civilian found dead in Iraq is a man from suburban Philadelphia, the man's family said Tuesday.

The family of Nick Berg, 26, a self-employed civilian contractor from West Chester, said they were informed by the State Department on Monday that Berg was found dead near a highway overpass in Baghdad.

The military said there were signs of trauma to the body, which was found on Saturday.

Russian Oil Corporation Worker Killed, Two Taken Prisoner

The Telegraph May 11, 2004

On Monday a Russian worker was killed and two others taken hostage when their car was ambushed near Baghdad.

Russia's foreign ministry said the workers, from the engineering company Interenergосervis, had been travelling between Baghdad and Latifiya when the attack occurred.

The company had eight workers briefly kidnapped in Baghdad last month and said it is now considering withdrawing all of its staff from Iraq.

Russia airlifted more than 300 of its workers and those from other ex-Soviet countries out of Iraq last month following a spate of kidnappings.

TROOP NEWS

Honduran Troops Begin Iraq Pull Out

May 11, 2004 (AEST)

Honduras has begun its troop withdrawal from Iraq with the first of its 369 soldiers arriving in Kuwait, President Ricardo Maduro says.

"I'm pleased to officially announce to the Honduran people that we have begun withdrawing our soldiers from Iraq and that some of them are already in Kuwait," Mr Maduro said.

Honduras and the Dominican Republic decided to pull their troops out of Iraq last month, following Spain's decision to do the same.

The Honduran soldiers and 300 Dominican troops were attached to the 1,400-strong Spanish-led brigade in Najaf, 160 kilometres south of Baghdad.

Mr Maduro did not specify how many troops have left Iraq, but says preparations for a full withdrawal are well under way and that all the troops would soon return to Tegucigalpa.

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/>

War Comes To North Dakota

May. 11, 2004 Grand Forks (N.D.) Herald, By Elisa L. Rineheart, Herald Staff Writer

Army Pfc. Scott G. Anderson, 25, of East Grand Forks, who was injured in a roadside bomb attack Tuesday while on guard duty in south-central Iraq, is back in the United States, family members said.

He was transferred from Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany to his home base in Fort Polk, La., Saturday, said Anderson's father, Gregory Jenson.

Anderson underwent surgery to remove bullet fragments in his lower abdomen and hip area Tuesday.

The scout from the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment has been deployed in Iraq since April 2003.

But this is not the first time he survived a life-threatening experience, Jenson said. In 2003, Anderson received a Commendation Medal for saving two wounded soldiers from heavy enemy fire in central Baghdad.

Additional surgery

Marine Lance Cpl. Lee Tate, 20, of Crookston, who was injured in Al Anbar Province, Iraq, on Sunday, will undergo a fourth surgery today.

"He is very anxious to come home," said his mother, Julie Tate.

She and Tate's father, Greg Tate, and his older sister, Tracy Tate, will fly to Balboa Naval Hospital in San Diego on Monday.

Services planned

A funeral service for National Guard Spc. James Holmes, 28, of the 141st Engineer Combat Battalion, tentatively has been scheduled for 2 p.m. Monday in National Memorial Cemetery in Phoenix, said Patty Fusco, a close friend and a spokesperson for the family.

Holmes died Saturday in Landstuhl Regional Medical Center.

Cards can be sent in care of Fusco at 8414 W. Larkspur Drive, Peoria, AZ 85381. The family is expected to return from Germany on Wednesday. Holmes will receive the Bronze Star as well as a Purple Heart.

Still waiting

Pvt. Philip Brown, 21, a Jamestown, N.D., soldier from the same battalion, also died Saturday in Germany. He was on foot patrol when a bomb hit. Brown suffered a chest wound, and his legs were amputated at the knees.

Funeral services are pending. "We don't know when the funeral is going to be," said Brown's mother, Deidra Brown. "The military has been in our house every day, but we have no updates."

President George W. Bush promised today to rid Iraq of himself.



Foreign Killer
(AFP/Paul Richards)

Quote for the day, thanks to Brigid K

5.8.04 **Mr. Bush observed** with no irony to Al Arabiya TV: "**Iraqis are sick of foreign people coming in their country and trying to destabilize their country, and we will help them rid Iraq of these killers.**" (Courtesy of Maureen Dowd)

McComb Soldier Not Recovering From Injuries

05/10/04 The Associated Press

A soldier from McComb is hospitalized in Washington with head trauma and broken bones he suffered May 1 after the Humvee he was riding in clipped a heavy truck in Baghdad, Iraq.

Sgt. Timothy Garner, a 30-year-old Army Ranger, was one of three soldiers injured in the wreck. **Garner is in Walter Reed Army Medical Center and has developed pneumonia, hospital officials confirmed.**

The Rev. Brett Campbell, pastor of Mars Hill Baptist Church where Garner and his wife Andrea and third-grade daughter Nykki used to attend, said he talked with Garner's family over the weekend.

"As best we know from what his wife tells us, his Humvee collided with one of our ambulances as they were trying to avoid live bombs," Campbell said. "They were in a dangerous area going through very quickly following the ambulance. The ambulance turned and the two vehicles collided."

Campbell said Garner had head trauma and broken bones in his jaw, wrist, hand, thigh and ankle. Garner was transferred to Walter Reed last week and has been on life support, Campbell said.

Campbell said Andrea Garner, manager of Ruby Tuesday restaurant in McComb, is handling the situation with her husband "about as well as anybody could."

Timothy Garner was an Army recruiter in McComb from June 2000 until June 2003 before entering the service himself.

Majority Want UK Troops Out by June 30

10 May 2004 By Nigel Morris, The Independent

Should British troops pull out of Iraq by 30th June?

55 per cent: **YES**

28 per cent: **NO**

17 per cent: **DON'T KNOW**

Voters support the withdrawal of all British troops from Iraq by the end of next month by a majority of two to one, a poll for *The Independent* reveals today.

With ministers considering sending more soldiers to Iraq to quell the insurrection against Allied forces, the survey reflects growing public discontent about government policy on the war and occupation.

Fifty-five per cent of respondents called for British troops to be pulled out by 30 June, the planned date for the transfer of sovereignty to an interim Iraqi administration. Sixteen per cent supported an immediate withdrawal and 39 per cent thought the 8,000 soldiers in Iraq should be brought back to coincide with next month's handover of power.

Twenty-eight per cent supported an open-ended British military commitment to Iraq, and 17 per cent said they did not have a firm view.

Edina Bullet Maker Can't Meet Army Demand

May 7, 2004 Staff and wire reports, Starr Tribune.com

Here's a new measure of the intensity of the fighting by the U.S. military.

Alliant Techsystems Inc., the Edina-based munitions maker that is the U.S. Army's sole supplier of bullets, said Thursday it can't keep up with demand from the Army, which is rising to its highest level since the Vietnam War.

Alliant made 1 billion rounds of small-caliber ammunition last year for the Army and will make 1.2 billion rounds this year. But the Army intends to set its annual requirement significantly higher, possibly as high as 2 billion rounds a year, and plans to look for a second supplier, Alliant Chief Executive Officer Daniel Murphy said.

Alliant's ammunition group "last year achieved the largest sales in its history," Murphy said in an earnings conference call with stock analysts. "At our Lake City, Mo., facility, we executed the greatest ramp-up in small-caliber ammunition since the Vietnam War." The higher bullet sales helped boost Alliant's fourth-quarter earnings, which increased 44 percent, the company said.

Boosting bullet production won't be easy, however.

The streamlining of military contractors not only has left Alliant as the sole small-caliber ammo producer, it has also left General Dynamics Corp. as the sole gunpowder supplier for making those bullets.

Gail Wilson, spokeswoman for General Dynamics, said the Falls Church, Va.-based company lacks production lines to make small-caliber ammunition and couldn't build a plant quickly enough to meet immediate demand.

There are few producers outside of Alliant or General Dynamics still capable of producing military ammunition on the scale required, said Loren Thompson, an analyst at the Arlington, Va.-based Lexington Institute, which studies national security issues.

"The Army's industrial base is busted," Thompson said. "A wide range of consumables from ammunition to armor simply can't be produced at an adequate rate during wartime. There is almost no surge capacity."

The Army tries to make up for the limited production capability by stockpiling material during peacetime, Thompson said. The strategy works when the nation enters into conflicts that turn out to be of short duration, but is becoming a problem as the war in Iraq enters its second year, he said.

Army spokesman Major Gary Tallman didn't return calls seeking comment.

Alliant could be the Army's best hope for replenishing its small-caliber firepower.

The company said it is in talks to expand its capacity by another 300 million rounds and will submit a proposal to the Army to become the supplier of the other 500 million the Army needs to reach 2 billion a year.

The Army has committed about \$31 million to expand the Missouri plant and increase capacity, Murphy said.

Alliant also is evaluating the possibility of adding small-caliber ammunition production capacity to its Federal Cartridge plant in Anoka, according to company spokesman Bryce Hollowell. The plant employs about 750 people and mostly makes ammunition for hunting and other sports shooting, Hollowell said.

Alliant, which also makes a variety of larger military munitions and rocket boosters for NASA, said that for its fiscal fourth quarter ended March 31, it posted net profit of \$50.9 million, or \$1.31 per share, compared with \$35.2 million, or 90 cents per share, a year earlier. The results included 43 cents from a tax benefit and a 13-cent restructuring charge.

Alliant said it expects to earn between \$3.85 and \$3.95 a share in fiscal 2005.

Stolen Packages, Lost Letters Take Toll On War-Zone Morale

May 10, 2004 By Karen Jowers, Army Times staff writer

Troops, families, lawmakers and congressional investigators have a special-delivery message for defense officials: Fix problems with the military mail system.

A mounting wave of anecdotal evidence, bolstered by a General Accounting Office report, shows that problems with delays, disappearances and thefts within the system take a toll on the morale of troops in Iraq and their families at home.

“The mail is taking way too much time to get to its destinations — if it makes it there at all,” Dayon Dillihunt, a soldier deployed to Kirkuk, Iraq, wrote in an e-mail. He is with the 2nd Brigade of the Hawaii-based 25th Infantry Division.

Dillihunt, who did not give his rank, said mail “is a big morale factor. It’s a shame that ... our most secure, cheapest and convenient form of communication [is] failing.”

In late February, Marine 1st Sgt. Drew Benson still was getting mail forwarded to him at home in Minnesota that was sent to him a year earlier in Iraq.

“The single biggest thing that increases troop welfare is receiving mail!” he wrote in an e-mail. **“I think a more serious investigation should be given, and someone should come clean and be held accountable for the simply atrocious way the mail was handled out there.”**

In 20 years of service and duty in “several wars,” Benson said he can’t recall the military mail system being “this screwed up.”

An April 14 report by the GAO detailed problems with the military’s mail service for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The GAO cited the military’s continued inability to devise and execute a plan for efficient joint-service mail operations in wartime settings. Auditors also said some postal personnel were trained inadequately and the initial postal force designed for early phases of Iraqi Freedom was too small.

Postal facilities, equipment and transportation assets also were inadequate, the GAO said.

Officials with the Army’s 3rd Personnel Command, which oversees mail operations in the Iraq war zone, insist average transit times for both letters and packages is about 12 to 13 days. But the GAO said the military lacks a “reliable, accurate” way to measure timeliness.

As such, auditors resorted to interviewing 127 soldiers and Marines who served in theater. Almost 60 percent were not happy with the mail. **Nearly half waited four weeks or more to get mail after arriving in theater, and many said mail took up to four months to get through to them.**

Nearly 80 percent said they knew of mail that was sent to them but was never received while they were deployed. In many cases, the mail finally caught up with them — after they returned home.

The military’s claim of an average delivery time of 12 or 13 days is a “significant understating” of reality, the GAO concluded.

That is a growing concern in this election year, evoking memories of the absentee-ballot mess in 2000. With up to 250,000 troops deployed in the Persian Gulf and Central Asia regions, the fear is that this year may be worse.

Problems run deeper than logistical shortfalls.

Anecdotal reports of mail theft — a federal offense — continue to surface. The GAO did not address this issue, but troops and families say it happens.

“We as a country need to do better by our soldiers,” said Mary Kay Salomone, wife of a retired soldier and mother of two soldiers, including one deployed to Iraq. “I’m scared to death that if you can take things out of a box, you can put dangerous things in.”

Untold numbers of items have been pilfered from boxes sent to Iraq by Operation Support Our Troops, a group founded by Salomone made up of military family members who send letters and care packages to individual troops.

Items worth about \$500 were stolen from insured boxes Salomone sent to a unit whose members lost most of their possessions in a December fire.

“The thieves are so good at breaking into the boxes, slitting the bottom seam, taking out what they want, and then resealing the box with wide, clear packing tape,” she said.

In two recent incidents, DVDs were stolen from uninsured boxes she sent to her son. In each case, she tucked the DVDs into magazines and didn't list them on the outside of the boxes. Her son told her he never realized the boxes had been opened, she said.

Many troops don't realize items were stolen unless a family member e-mailed them a list of items or included a list in the box.

MORE:

Mail Returned To Sender All Too Often After Troops Get Home!

May 10, 2004 By Karen Jowers, Army Times staff writer

Army 1st Lt. Spence Burnett returned with the 3rd Infantry Division to Fort Stewart, Ga., from Iraq on Aug. 25.

But some of his mail endured a much longer deployment.

In early February, he received a letter his wife mailed to Iraq on June 5. “A lot of soldiers have been getting mail recently,” he said. “It's like they found a stack of mail all at once.”

Burnett didn't realize how close to the truth he was.

On Jan. 1, a 20-foot container stuffed with 3rd Infantry Division mail that somehow fell off everyone's radar was found at Camp Virginia, Kuwait, with letters and packages dating as far back as the previous March.

“The circumstances of how this container became unaccounted for are still unknown,” Military Postal Service Agency officials said in a written statement.

Postal-operations officials with the 3rd Personnel Command in Iraq found that the container was dispatched from the Kuwait Mail Terminal on June 18 and arrived at Camp New York in Kuwait that day, properly signed for.

From there, it went to Camp New Jersey, then to Camp Virginia, also both in Kuwait, and apparently was parked and forgotten for six months. When it was rediscovered, it went back to the Kuwait Mail Terminal, where its contents finally were processed — with most pieces stamped “Return to Sender.”

But this hardly is the only case of mail being returned to senders long after delivery.

Frankie Mayo, who runs Operation Air Conditioner, an effort to send cooling units to troops in Iraq — along with boots, goodies and other items — said she accumulated enough returned mail to fill a 12-foot-by-12-foot storage shed at her Delaware home.

“I’m really shocked at the amount of boots I’ve gotten back,” she said. “I know these [service members] are out there.”

Burnett said troops understand mail delivery is more difficult in a war zone than in peacetime.

“But it’s a different story when we receive mail ... that was sent eight months ago,” he said.

GET SOME TRUTH: CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

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

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Three Collaborator Cops Dead

9 May, 2004 BBC News

Three Iraqi police officers died when a coalition patrol was attacked, US military spokesman Brig Gen Mark Kimmit told reporters during a news conference in Baghdad. Two civilians were also killed in that skirmish.

(For news of another, less well- publicized occupation, see the article “U.S. Troops Occupy Haiti---Again,” by Ashley Smith at www.isreview.org.)

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Fallujah!

5.10.04 By Dana Milbank and Jonathan Weisman, Washington Post Staff Writers

"It's the exhaustion of power," said a veteran of conservative think tanks who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"Ideology has confronted reality, and ideology has bent. On the domestic side, it has bent in terms of the expansion of the government embodied in the Medicare prescription-drug law.

On the foreign policy side, it has been because of what has transpired in the last few weeks in Fallujah."

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Marine Killed, Two "Foreign Men" Beaten To Death In Kabul

Wall St. Journal 5.10.05

A Marine was killed fighting in a southeast Afghan stronghold. Two foreign men, one of them Swiss, were beaten to death in Kabul.

Received:

From: Mark Shapiro

To: GI Special

Sent: May 10

Subject:

1968: Vietnam Soldiers From The American Deserters Committee Raid The U.S. Ambassadors Garden Party

You'll find 'A Time to Live' an interesting high-energy little political video.

Another wonderful little stunt the American Deserters Committee pulled off with great success was on July 4th of 1968.

Eight of us held a sit-down protest at the US Embassy in Stockholm. This was long before the days of high fences and gates and security checks to enter the grounds.

About 500 guests were munching hot dogs and apple pie on the lawn, the Ambassador was speaking and (looking back I wonder how we had the bottle to really do it) we started to hand out our anti-war material. We held a sit-down demo in the middle of the garden party.

Naturally it didn't last long. If looks could kill the partygoers would have killed us all. Marine guards and plain clothes Swedish police goons nearly tore us to pieces. We got pretty roughed up. Paddy wagons arrived and off to the Stockholm City Prison for the night. We continued protesting in jail, making a hell of a racket. Banging tin cups on the cells and making a general nuisance of ourselves.

That night the Swedish 'FNL Group' (a very large and successful anti-war organisation) held a massive protest march demanding our release. We were released the next day with orders to appear in Court at a later date. We feared deportation but in the end got off Scott free.

I believe we were the first and only Deserters to ever successfully pull off a demo inside the grounds of an American Embassy.

Those were the days!! I've got some photos somewhere taken from the nightly news. These smiling creeps manhandling us and nearly ripping our cloths off. I'll see if I can dig em'out and post them to you.

Some interesting books about the ADC days. (Rev) Tom Hayes (unfortunately he died recently) wrote a very good book called 'American Deserters in Sweden' (1971 I believe) you can find it on www.abe.com He worked with 'Clergy and Laymen Concerned'. Martin Luther King's wife was instrumental in his coming over to Stockholm. Great guy.

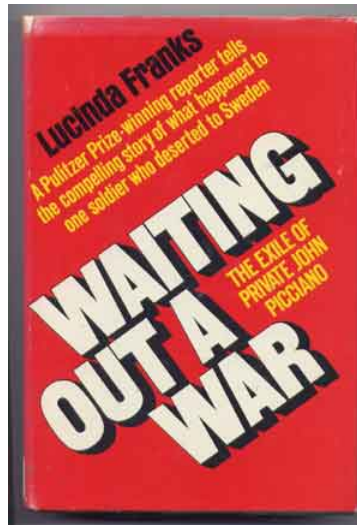
Another (cover photo below) was 'Waiting out a War', The Exile of Private John Picciano written by a woman named Lucinda Franks. **Lucinda won a Pulitzer (not for this book I'm afraid) and married the District Attorney of NYC. A guy named 'Morganthau' or some such.**

John and I were and are close friends. He's still in Sweden.

Then there's the 'famous' book by Terry Whitmore, which you may have come across. I was in the 'group' that Japanese Peace Group by the name of 'Beherien' got out of Japan in a small fishing boat in the middle of the night.

The boat was detained by a Soviet Ship for breech of territorial waters (it was all set up with the Captain) and while the crew was being questioned we jumped (could never do that again) from the tiny fishing boat to the (huge) Soviet ship as the waves brought one higher than the other.

Soviet sailors caught us on a mattress they were holding. By the way I got it wrong. I checked a previous e-mail to you and I mentioned I deserted in 1967. It was 1968 a few weeks after Tet.



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