

GI SPECIAL 2#88



N.C. Guard Stuck In Filthy Unprotected Tents: Asshole Officers Say “Only” Attacked Once A Week & Aren’t In “Extreme” Danger

May 26, 2004 The News & Observer,

Regular Army soldiers in Iraq sleep in fortified accommodations while National Guard troops are in unprotected tents and using filthy showers, according to e-mail messages from several North Carolina soldiers.

Staff Sgt. Roosevelt McPherson of Raeford said in a series of e-mail messages from Forward Operating Base McKenzie near Samarra that the National Guard soldiers have nowhere to seek shelter from almost daily mortar attacks, The News & Observer reported Wednesday.

McPherson serves in the Monroe-based B Battery of the 1-113th Field Artillery.

"The regular Army troops have bunkers, hangars or fortified connexes," he wrote. "It is only by the grace and mercy of God that no one has been injured or even worse."

Army officials said Tuesday that the base is not attacked as often as McPherson claims but that they are working to provide safer accommodations for the Guard troops.

"No *conscious decision* has been made in this unit to put the interests of Active Duty Soldiers ahead of National Guard soldiers' lives," said an e-mail message from Capt. Ian Palmer, public affairs officer for the 1st Squadron, 4th U.S. Cavalry, the unit to which B Battery is attached. **(Right. Just criminal negligence.)**

"We are as eager to get those soldiers out of tents as they are, and action is being taken every day towards that goal." (Incompetent reporter doesn't bother to challenge this pure bullshit: What "action" is being taken "every day"? The story reports below they have been there for two months. That's sixty days worth of "action" taken "every day." The amazing thing isn't that an asshole like Palmer spins this shit, it's that the dumbfuck reporter just takes it in and pukes it back out in the story.)

Palmer also challenged the idea that the base is attacked often, saying it had been shelled by mortars once and "rocket attacks are less than once a week." (Even if he's not lying, and he probably is, that means eight mortar attacks in the two months all this furious "action" is being taken "every day.")

Battery B is one unit of the N.C. Guard's 30th Heavy Separate Brigade. Most of the brigade's almost 5,000 soldiers are attached to the regular Army's 1st Infantry Division in the Diyala province northeast of Baghdad.

McPherson said his unit arrived at McKenzie about 70 miles north of Baghdad around March 15 and was told the unit would be out of tents in a month.

There are 25 tents, and when the unit first arrived, only four or five had board floors, McPherson said. The rest had small rocks as a flooring to help keep the dust down. McPherson said if a round hit inside a tent area, with rocks as a foundation throughout, the rocks would join the shrapnel from the explosion.

McPherson called living conditions "filthy" and said E. coli bacteria was discovered in one of the three showers in April.

John Grosvenor of Concord received an e-mail message last weekend from his brother, Sgt. 1st Class Ronald Grosvenor, who is also in B Battery. John Grosvenor said his brother noted "that the real Army were in better shelters and they were in tents."

"The military knows that they have more people over there than they thought they were going to have, so somebody has got to get the short end of the stick," John Grosvenor said.

Lt. Col. Mark Strong, the 1-113th's commander, said in an e-mail message that his soldiers "don't have it great, but **they also are not in *extreme* danger.**" **(Do you suppose Lt. Col. Mark Strong feels strongly enough about that to go live in one of the tents? If not, then somebody please stake him out overnight for the resistance. If he's alive in the morning, it may have improved his attitude. After all, he wouldn't be in "extreme" danger.)**

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

Three U.S. Marines Die In Western Iraq

May 26 (AP) BAGHDAD, Iraq & WOWT 6 News, 5.27.04

Three U.S. Marines were killed in action Wednesday west of the Iraqi capital, the U.S. military said.

A statement from the command said the deaths occurred in Anbar province.

Anbar province extends from the western suburbs of Baghdad and extends to the borders with Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. It includes such restive insurgency centers as Fallujah, Ramadi and Qaim. **(It also includes the area where the US Command cleverly massacred a wedding party. The survivors promised ten dead U.S. troops for every one of their dead.)**

A Marine from Nebraska was among three killed. Nineteen-year-old Kyle Codner graduated from Shelton High School last year.

Codner's death was confirmed Thursday by Terry Loschen, funeral director at Livingston-Sonermann Funeral Home in Grand Island.

Loschen says Codner was the son of his wife's cousin.

Loschen says funeral arrangements are pending. He says the military told him Codner's body would be returned to Nebraska in six to ten days.

U.S. Casualties In Fallujah, Ramadi Attacks

May 27, 2004 Associated Press, BAGHDAD

Three roadside bombs exploded near an American convoy south of Fallujah on Thursday, damaging at least one vehicle, witnesses said. American troops opened fire after the attack and sealed off the area, the witnesses said.

One witness, Mohammed Jassim, 28, said he saw two U.S. helicopters land at the scene and evacuate casualties.

In Ramadi, west of Fallujah, a U.S. patrol was attacked by rocket-propelled grenade fire early Thursday, witnesses said. They said two U.S. troops were wounded.

American troops returned fire after the attack, and some Iraqis were also hit in the crossfire, the witnesses said.

Taji Mortar Attack Kills Ft. Hood Soldier

May 26, 2004 United States Department of Defense News Release No. 508-04

Spc. Beau R. Beaulieu, 20, of Lisbon, Maine, died May 24 in Taji, Iraq, during a mortar attack on Camp Cooke. Beaulieu was assigned to the 27th Main Support Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas.

Two Vermont Troops Dead, Six Wounded After Taking Iraqi To Prison

May 26, 2004 By Associated Press & WorldNow and WCAX

COLCHESTER, Vt. -- Two members of the Vermont Army National Guard were killed yesterday in Iraq.

An eight-man squad of Vermonters assigned to escort another American Army detail was hit by a mortar attack.

Sergeant Kevin Sheehan, 36, of Milton, and Specialist Alan Bean Jr., 22, of Bridport, were killed about 25 miles south of Baghdad, said Vermont National Guard spokeswoman Veronica Saffo.

Six other Vermont soldiers were injured in the mortar attack that killed Sheehan and Bean including two who were airlifted for further medical treatment in Germany.

The Guard identified them as Staff Sergeant Gary Jackson of C Battery, 1/86 Field Artillery based in Burlington, and Specialist Thomas Brooks of the 131st Engineers based in Colchester. Another who was scheduled to be airlifted to Germany was identified as Sgt. Matthew Bedia of Service Battery, 1/86 Field Artillery.

They were deployed in late January and arrived in Iraq in March **after a month of training** at Fort Dix, N.J. to help them serve as military policemen.

"Their mission was to provide the convoy security to this brigade tactical intelligence team that was escorting a detainee," Vt. National Guard Lt. Veronica Saffo explained. They were waiting to return with the intelligence team back to the Baghdad International Airport."

Reached at his home in Bridport, Bean's father, Alan Bean, declined to comment.

Sheehan and Bean were members of the Williston-based 1st Battalion of the 86th Field Artillery Regiment, a unit stationed with the Sixteenth Military Police Brigade. They had been mobilized in January and arrived in Iraq in March after a month of training at Fort Dix, N.J.

The 86th draws soldiers from armories in Berlin, Burlington, Vergennes, and Waterbury. The death of Sheehan and Bean brings to nine the number of soldiers with Vermont roots who have been killed in combat since the war began over a year ago.

4th Cav Pfc. Dead In Rollover

May 26, 2004 United States Department of Defense News Release No. 506-04

Pfc. Owen D. Witt, 20, of Sand Springs, Mont., died May 24 in Ad Dawr, Iraq, when his armored high-mobility-multipurpose-wheeled vehicle rolled over. Witt was assigned to the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, 1st Infantry Division, Schweinfurt, Germany.

One Of Twins Serving Together Killed

May 26, 2004 north west indiana times.com

MAROA (AP) -- The Ridlen twins seemed to always be together, at church, on the softball field, even in the recruiter's office when they enlisted with the Illinois National Guard.

The brothers were stationed with the same unit in Iraq when a truck rigged with explosives detonated Sunday next to a convoy, killing Army Spc. Jeremy L.

Ridlen, 23. Guard officials wouldn't say if his identical twin, Jason Ridlen, was with the convoy at the time.

He is now expected to accompany his brother's body home to Illinois. Friends said Tuesday they worry about how he will deal with the loss.

"They just clung to each other. You can't talk about one without talking about the other," said Diane Daggett, one of the brothers' teachers at Maroa-Forsyth High School, where the twins graduated in 1998.

The same year, they joined the Illinois National Guard and were assigned to the 1544th Transportation Company based in Paris. Jeremy Ridlen was part of a convoy traveling a supply route in the Fallujah area Sunday when a dump truck rigged with a bomb exploded, according to the Illinois National Guard.

Both were students at Illinois State University when their unit was activated last year.

POINTLESS EXERCISE: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



A US soldier guards a crater left by a car bomb that exploded, outside a hotel close to Australia's diplomatic mission in Baghdad May 25. (AFP/Ramzi Haidar)

Maine Soldier Killed

May 26, 2004 By Portland Press Herald staff

A 20-year-old soldier from Lisbon was killed in Iraq, officials said Tuesday.

Lee Umphrey, director of communications for Gov. John Baldacci, confirmed that the soldier, an enlisted man with a regular Army unit, died Monday or Tuesday, but said he had received little additional information.

As Three Maimed Guard Troops Get Purple Heart, More From Their Unit Just Reported Wounded

May. 27, 2004 Associated Press, MILWAUKEE

Three National Guard troops received Purple Heart awards for wounds suffered in Iraq, **as word arrived of more members of their unit injured in action.**

Sgt. Susan Sonnheim, 45, of Franklin, became the first woman in the Wisconsin Army National Guard to be awarded the medal, except for a fellow soldier who received it posthumously after being killed in Iraq last month.

Sonnheim was blinded in her left eye and suffered hearing loss and shrapnel wounds Sept. 23

Also receiving Purple Heart medals Wednesday from Gov. Jim Doyle were Sgt. Troy J. Tuschel, 35, of Hales Corners, and Sgt. Nicole J. Delvaux, 23, of Green Bay.

Wounded by an improvised explosive device on Oct. 15, Tuschel suffered a brain injury and damage to his left eye.

Delvaux was wounded Dec. 16 by shrapnel from a rocket-propelled grenade that went through the back of her left knee, resulting in nerve damage, she said.

Three other soldiers from the unit were wounded in Iraq Tuesday, military officials said.

U.S. Tank Column Advance Blocked By Medhi Army; Shia Resistance Fight In Sixth Week

BAGHDAD, May 26 (Xinhuanet) & By ROBERT H. REID, Associated Press Writer

Nine people were killed and over 50 injured in heavy fightings erupted overnight in the holy city of Najaf

US tanks headed towards the city centre early on Wednesday, but were unable to advance after coming under rocket-propelled grenades fired by Mehdi fighters loyal to Moqtada al-Sadr, al-Jazeera said. Some exchanges of fire were also reported around the city's Revolution of 1920 Square.

US helicopters were hovering over the city, the TV added.

Fury still prevailed in Najaf after a mortar bomb was fired at the shrine of Imam Ali, the first Imam of the Shiite, reported al-Jazeera and has led to calls for both the Americans and the militiamen to pull back from the shrines.

Sadr, *who has led a six-week-long insurgency against the US-led occupation*, is holed up in Najaf.

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/>

Top Oil Executive Killed By Rocket At Occupation Hq Entrance; (So Much For "Bullet-Proof" Vehicles)

May 26 2004 Jackie Bow and Anna Hammond, South Wales Echo & By Ben Fenton, The Telegraph uk

Britain's top representative in the effort to rebuild the Iraqi oil industry was named yesterday as one of two Britons killed in a terrorist attack in Baghdad.

Bob Morgan, 63, was a retired senior project director for BP working on a six-month contract for the Foreign Office and on secondment to the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) advising Ibrahim al-Uloom, the Iraqi oil minister.

Mr Morgan, who came from Buckinghamshire, spoke to Mr al-Uloom on an almost daily basis and was the senior British representative on the coalition unit attached to the oil ministry.

He was killed when the bullet-proof 4x4 vehicle in which he was travelling was hit just 50 yards from the entrance of the US-led coalition headquarters as it waited to enter the so-called Assassin's Gate of the Green Zone, the heart of the CPA's operation in Baghdad. The vehicle was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade and destroyed.

Mr Morgan, who had been living in Buckinghamshire, was a retired senior project director for BP working on a six-month contract for the Foreign Office.

He worked at Panteg Steelworks, later moved to Aberdeen then moved to London to work for British Petroleum.

He stayed with the oil giant for 30 years, becoming its chief production manager.

A source in the CPA said last night: ***"Bob will be very difficult to replace, not just because he was very good at this job, but because people will be even more concerned about their safety now."***

The rebuilding of Iraq's oil industry is considered a priority by the CPA and senior workers in British and American companies have been recruited to help.

His previous job was helping supervise the construction of a multi-billion-pound project drilling gas wells and constructing a pipeline off the coast of Vietnam.

Mark Carman, one of Mr Morgan's bodyguards, was the other man killed in the car and another British bodyguard was seriously injured.



Dead Mercenary

Mr Carman, 38, was a former member of the Royal Artillery who left the Army in 1996 and subsequently joined the security company Control Risks.

In a statement, Mr Carman's ex-wife, the mother of his daughter Stephanie, said "Although Mark and I were divorced eight and half years ago we remained good friends."

When he left the Army he became a close protection bodyguard serving in Iraq

Mr Carman was engaged to a woman who his family named only as Sarah.

The third Briton travelling in the car, who was seriously injured, was being treated in hospital and was not named.

7 Russian Techies Ambushed, Two Dead;

Russians Evacuating Iraq

May 26, 2004 BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP)

Masked resistance fighters opened fire on a convoy taking Russian technicians to work at a Baghdad power station Wednesday, killing two and wounding at least five, Iraqi and Russian officials said.

Police said the Russians were traveling in a bus when they were ambushed about a few hundred yards from the Dora power station in southwestern Baghdad. One Iraqi was also killed, police said.

In Moscow, the executive director of the company, Alexander Rybinsky, said Wednesday the firm would evacuate all its staff from Iraq.

The wounded were taken to Yarmouk Hospital, where Dr. Adham Saadoun said some were in serious condition.

It was the second fatal attack against employees of Interenergосervis this month.

In Moscow, the Russian Foreign Ministry said it had repeatedly warned Russians of the dangers of living in Iraq, where violence is on the rise ahead of the return of sovereignty June 30.

The ministry blamed the deteriorating situation on the failure of the U.S.-run occupation authority "to guarantee the necessary security."

Russian expertise has played an important role in reviving Iraq's electricity industry and other infrastructure.

Coalition authorities have still been unable to guarantee uninterrupted, 24-hour-a-day electric power to Baghdad's 5 million people, adding to the public's frustration with the American-run occupation.

British Mercenary Dies In Ambush

May 27 2004 Weekly News, icCheshireOnline™

A FORMER Runcorn man has been shot dead while working as a security guard in Iraq. Andrew Harries, 34, was killed in an ambush while driving between the cities of Mosul and Irbil in the north of the war-torn country.

A Foreign Office spokeswoman said ex-soldier Mr Harries was in Iraq working for a security firm when he was shot.

His father, Geoff, said he did not know his son was in Iraq and believed he was working in neighbouring Kuwait.

His half-brother was travelling with him in Iraq at the time of the shooting and has told Mr Harries, whose family live in Wales, that he was killed by a single shot.

Geoff Harries said: 'I found out he died and it was a complete shock because I had no idea he was there. 'It was apparently kept from me by Andrew and his brother David so that I wouldn't worry.'

Mr Harries added that he had reservations about his son's new career as a security guard. He explained: 'I was apprehensive, but what can you do when he is 34? 'I tried to persuade him not to go, but he went.'

He had been working as a security guard in Iraq for around eight weeks **and was due to return home to Hirwaun, near Aberdare, this week.**

Mr Harries served with the Royal Engineers for 10 years, and was posted to Bosnia, Northern Ireland and served in the first Gulf War. He then joined the Territorial Army.

The former soldier was working with London-based security firm ArmorGroup at the time of the shooting.

'He was providing security support for a valuable Iraqi infrastructure reconstruction project" ArmorGroup director Christopher Beese added.

'We don't advertise, they come to us. In many cases, like Andrew, they know what they want to contribute. They know what the risks are.'

Baby Not Shot

5.26.04 By ROBERT H. REID, Associated Press Writer

U.S. troops opened fire on a car in downtown Kirkuk, killing a man and injuring his wife, an Iraqi police official said Wednesday. The Tuesday night shooting broke out five minutes after the nighttime curfew went into effect at 11 p.m., said Police Gen. Sherko Shakir. **The couple's baby was also in the Fiat, but was not hurt, he said.**

Endlessly Bombed Oil Pipeline Blown Up, Burning Again; Totally Fucked Up This Time: Exports Cut Another 25%

25/05/2004 Ireland OnLine

An Iraqi oil pipeline was ablaze today after a bomb blast that stopped the flow to a key export terminal in Turkey.

The explosion cut Iraq's export capacity by 400,000 barrels a day.

The explosion damaged parts of a twin-pipeline running from Iraqi oil fields near the northern city of Kirkuk to the Turkish port of Ceyhan, a Turkish official said.

The oil pipeline recently has been shipping 400,000 barrels a day out of Iraq's total exports, which have recently averaged 1.65 million barrels per day.

The head of Iraq's North Oil Company, Adel Kazaz, confirmed that insurgents blew up part of the pipeline on Monday and said it was still on fire today.

A source at Ceyhan said the blast damage "looks serious and repairs could take some time."

Bulgarian Base Mortared

5.26.04 By ROBERT H. REID, Associated Press Writer

The Polish command said a coalition base outside of Karbala, 50 miles north of Najaf, came under mortar fire late Tuesday. Demolition teams also defused three roadside bombs in the area, a spokesman for the Polish-led multinational force said Wednesday.

The mortar rounds were fired at Camp Kilo, where mostly Bulgarian troops are based, Maj. Slawomir Walencykowski said. The attack resulted in no injuries or damage.

TROOP NEWS

Soldier Nearly Beaten To Death During Training Exercise Playing Role Of Prisoner; "I Feel Betrayed"

May 24, 2004 LEXINGTON CHANNEL 18 & AP

In an exclusive interview with 's Leigh Searcy, a central Kentucky soldier says he was told to pose as the enemy for a training exercise at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba in January 2003 - and it nearly cost him his life.

Sean Baker was a member of the Kentucky National Guard from 1989 to 1997. During that time, he served in the Gulf War. In the late 90's, he got out of the Guard, but re-enlisted after September 11th.

In January 2003, Baker was a member of the 438th Military Police company in Operation Enduring Freedom at Guantanamo Bay, where he says **he was "given a direct order by an officer in the U.S. Army" to play the role of a detainee for a training exercise.**

"I was on duty as an MP in an internal camp where the detainees were housed," said Baker.

Baker said that he was ordered to put on one of the orange jumpsuits worn by the detainees. "At first I was reluctant, but he said 'you'll be fine...put this on.' And I did," said Baker.

Baker says what took place next happened at the hands of four U.S. soldiers - soldiers he believes didn't know he was one of them - has changed his life forever.

"They grabbed my arms, my legs, twisted me up and unfortunately one of the individuals got up on my back from behind and put pressure down on me while I was face down," said Baker. "Then he - the same individual - reached around and began to choke me and press my head down against the steel floor. After several seconds, 20 to 30 seconds, it seemed like an eternity because I couldn't breath. When I couldn't breath, I began to panic and I gave the code word I was supposed to give to stop the exercise, which was 'red.'"

But, Baker says, the beating didn't stop. "That individual slammed my head against the floor and continued to choke me," he said. "Somehow I got enough air, I muttered out, 'I'm a U.S. soldier, I'm a U.S. soldier.'"

Baker says it wasn't until one of the soldiers noticed what Baker was wearing did the exercise stop. "He saw that I had BDU's and boots on."

Nearly 15 months after that day, and countless medical treatments at Walter Reed Hospital, **Baker is now medically retired from the military, but still suffers.**

"I sustained an injury to my brain a traumatic brain injury which has caused me to have a seizure disorder I deal with daily," said Baker.

Baker's traumatic brain injury is outlined in a military document in his possession, which says the injury "was due to soldier playing role as a detainee who was uncooperative."

In light of recent revelations of prisoner abuse in Iraq, Baker felt the need to come forward with his story.

"I feel like I've been betrayed by my own troops because I would never have done to any detainee what had been transpired in my life what happened to me," said Baker. "I don't want this to happen to anyone else, what I'm living with daily."

The Kentucky National Guard confirmed Baker was a member of the 438th Military Police company, but would not comment on the investigation of the incident other than to say it was a "tragic, tragic accident." "There was a training accident, after which he was medically discharged." Lt. Cmdr. Chris Loundemon at Southern Command also confirmed that Baker had a medical discharge from the guard, but had no further comment.

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/>

Brain Damage Takes Heavy Toll On Soldiers

May. 26, 2004 By JOHN SIMERMAN, Contra Costa Times

PALO ALTO - Alec Giess clicked off an episode of "M*A*S*H" and rose gingerly from his hospital bed, carrying nothing but the dull, merciless pain on the right side of his head.

"Punch drunk," is how the Oregon National Guardsman describes the muddle in his brain.

Rigoberto Ocegüera feels that way, too. Sometimes, the 22-year-old Army specialist cries for no reason, just blurts out tears. He's also found God, though he can't quite explain how or why.

It's been five months and counting since 1st. Sgt. Giess, 44, was ejected from the passenger seat of a 5-ton Army truck that swerved to avoid what might have been a roadside bomb and flipped on an oil slicked road in southern Iraq.

Ocegüera, from Chico, was headed for a short leave aboard an Army Chinook helicopter on Nov. 2 when insurgents near Fallujah struck it down, killing 16 soldiers and wounding 26 others.

Their new duty station, in military parlance, is here at the Veterans Administration hospital, in one of four VA traumatic brain injury sites nationwide.

Here come the invisibly damaged, those with brains that, as Ocegüera puts it, "get confused and start wobbling around." Their numbers are growing.

The swelling toll of dead and wounded U.S. soldiers has the Palo Alto center bracing for more with traumatic brain injuries. Last week, the center was directed to add beds to meet the demand.

Traumatic brain injuries are nothing new in war zones. But Iraq is producing a higher rate of returning wounded than previous wars, military medical officials say. **At Walter Reed Army Medical Center alone, doctors have identified more than 280 cases of traumatic brain injury in the past year, most from Iraq.**

Medical officials credit better body armor for keeping brain-injured patients alive, and better screening. But they also cite the impact of the weapons of choice among Iraqi insurgents - roadside bombs and rocket-propelled grenades.

"The nature of the explosive devices are different than some of the past conflicts," said Dr. Laurie Ryan, assistant director of research for the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center at Walter Reed. "We're seeing a lot of blasts."

Traditionally, closed brain injuries have been overlooked as doctors tend to more visible wounds, said Dr. Henry Lew, medical director of the traumatic brain injury center at the Palo Alto VA.

"They really need to be helped more, because they look normal from the outside, but if you pay attention, you know they're slow," he said.

Giess spoke in languid, distant tones as he sat on a bed in the center's physical therapy room. He feels "cloudy," he said. Like Ocegüera, he searches the air for words as he recounts the punishment his head took on the road.

"They found me underneath a truck. I remember a little bit because it hurt," he said. His Kevlar helmet saved his life, he said. Giess, a contractor in civilian life, broke his collarbone and crushed a vertebra. He walks like he talks, slowly, with a drooping shoulder.

After returning from Iraq, strapped down on a Christmas Eve flight with wounded soldiers stacked four rows high, Giess was sent home to Seaside, Ore. Only then did anyone -- his wife and two children -- notice the memory loss and other signs of brain injury.

"He kept saying his ears were constantly ringing. Sometimes he'd say things that were out of character," said his wife, Shana Giess. "I thought, 'OK, he just lived almost a year in conditions you couldn't imagine, with all these guys smoking and cussing. Has the personality changed?'"

But her husband would often forget things, and the diagnosis, when it finally came, made sense, she said.

"He's definitely slower than he was. He has a hard time finding words now. He'll know what he wants to say, but he just can't get the right word."

Dr. Lew said the center is trying to avoid the mistake of sending brain-injured patients home to face the "hidden consequences" of their injuries. The analogy to drunkenness is apt, he said. Brain injury patients often show a loss of inhibitions.

"The next time you hear about them, they're in prison, or getting into fights in bars, getting into confrontations."

Oceguera, a second-degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do, had heavy bleeding in his head and doctors removed his spleen. He also suffered what doctors call an "open-book" hip fracture: His hips split outward. A metal rod now runs through them.

"If I walk out a lot, maybe in a full moon, I can feel the metal ... I have really good reception on my cell phone."

The brain static remains. He said he can't recall anything two weeks before the accident, nothing during it, and nothing a few weeks after. Someone had to tell him that he re-enlisted just before the crash.

"I don't remember the accident and stuff," he said. "But I feel it. I still get feelings, like death. I feel like I came back to life."

Among the war wounded, the injuries range from moderate concussions to more severe damage. For the severe, overlapping symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder often complicate diagnoses.

Brain injury patients tend to make their most dramatic strides in the first six months, and Oceguera and Giess said they have come a long way. But the damage endures in many cases, Lew cautioned.

"The way I explain it to the families," he said, "is from the day he was injured, he will not become the same person as before. It's a miracle he's still alive. You have to treat it like a new birth date."

Giess hopes to go home this summer. Maybe he'll launch a fish packing business, if he can. "I'll have to start real slow."

Oceguera hopes maybe to coach Tae Kwon Do. He recently received a Purple Heart for his combat wounds.

"It's something to remember it."

Even if he can't.

“She Was Nine Days From Coming Home”

5.27.04 The Washington Post

EL PASO, Texas -- When Sgt. Isela Rubalcava's body arrived at the airport from Iraq, her mother wailed like a child. "I don't want to see her like this," Maria Isela Rubalcava cried out in Spanish, a priest at the scene said. "Why, Isela, why? Get up, get up! Let's go home."

By the time a funeral Mass was celebrated last week at St. Patrick's Church in nearby Canutillo, the Rev. Manny Marrufo said, Maria Rubalcava had accepted the reality that her daughter was gone, dead of shrapnel wounds she suffered when a mortar round exploded during an attack in Mosul on May 8. It was three days before her 26th birthday.

Spc. Tyanna Avery-Felder had been afraid to go to Iraq, but she toughed it out, said her father, Ray Avery. She seemed safe behind the front lines, working as a cook and a helper in the mess hall. But her convoy was hit by an improvised explosive device on April 7, the Army said, and she died at 22.

"I couldn't really believe it," Avery said. "She was nine days from coming home" he said in a breaking voice. "People who haven't been put in this situation don't know how really painful it is to lose someone, whether it's a son or daughter."

Wounded Marine Returning To Iraq; A Mothers' Fantasy That War Is Ending

May 26, 2004 By LENORE RUTHERFORD, The Union Democrat Online

Just 19 years old and already the owner of two Purple Hearts, U.S. Marine Michael Jones is recuperating at his Cedar Ridge home after being wounded in Iraq.

Jones was in the war-torn country just six weeks and was injured twice. His last injury was on April 26.

He was the lead person in a convoy of Humvees headed for Syria. The convoy had just left camp in Ar Ramadi when a roadside bomb exploded, peppering him and two other Marines with shrapnel. Jones was in the gunner's position in a turret on top of the Humvee when the bomb exploded.

Two fellow Marines in the passenger seats of the Humvee were also hurt.

The damaged Humvee went about 100 yards, then rolled to a stop and wouldn't restart.

"I had so much adrenaline running in me that I didn't feel any pain or fear," he said. "I was too busy providing security until another vehicle came up a minute or so later."

His injuries included a deep cut on his left leg, a deep cut on his left hand that limits the use of his thumb, at least temporarily, and losing the fingertips of his left pinky and ring finger. His body was also peppered with small pieces of shrapnel.

All three Marines were taken to a field hospital in Ar Ramadi. One of the passengers was treated and sent back to active duty. Jones and the other passenger were taken to a Baghdad hospital for surgery.

They were then flown by helicopter from Baghdad to the main European military hospital at Lundstuhl, Germany, where Jones spent five days. That was the last he saw of the other passenger.

Additional surgery was performed on Jones at Balboa Naval Hospital in San Diego, where he spent 2-1/2 more weeks before coming home last Thursday. He is doing physical therapy now and expects to fully recover.

As far as shrapnel is concerned, the small pieces either work themselves out through the skin or become part of the body, he said.

"Several pieces have already worked themselves out," he added.

Shrapnel also hit him on April 11 just south of Baghdad when the Humvee he was in was ambushed by enemy small-arms fire.

A bullet hit the right passenger side of the Humvee, shattered the windshield and propelled metal and glass all over it. Some fragments hit his right leg.

He was treated for a cut and stayed on active duty.

His military orders are to report Sunday, June 20, to his primary base at Twentynine Palms in the Southern California desert.

"As soon as my leg heals more, I'll start running and getting back in shape," he said. "I can hardly wait to get back to my unit."

His unit is still in Iraq.

Jones is the son of Dick and Kathy Jones of Cedar Ridge, who say their son is following his own dreams.

"At least time is on our side now. Even if he has to go back, we will worry less because his unit should be coming home soon, and most of the worst of it should be over by the time they go back again," his mother said. (Not a chance.)

Both parents say they are not thinking about the fact that their son will return to active duty in a few weeks. "We just ignore it," his mother said, "and enjoy his being home. We won't think about him leaving until we have to."

Jones graduated from Sonora High School in June 2003, from the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego in September 2003, and from field artillery training at Fort Sill, Okla., in December 2003.

He plans to attend a four-year college after finishing his four-year commitment to the Marine Corps.

Silly Rumsfeld Launches “Operation Camera Shy”

May 23 AFP

LONDON (AFP) - Cellphones fitted with digital cameras have been banned in US army installations in Iraq on orders from Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, a business newspaper reported.

Quoting a Pentagon source, The Business newspaper said the US Defense Department believes that some of the damning photos of US soldiers abusing Iraqis at Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad were taken with camera phones.

"Digital cameras, camcorders and cellphones with cameras have been prohibited in military compounds in Iraq," it said, adding that a "total ban throughout the US military" is in the works.

MORE:

U.S. TO COURT-MARTIAL DISPOSABLE CAMERA Kodak Fun Saver 35 Snapped Abuse Pictures

May 11, 2004 The Borowitz Report

A disposable camera that allegedly took humiliating photos at Abu Ghraib prison will be court-martialed in Baghdad next week, the Pentagon confirmed today.

“The camera that took these humiliating photos must be brought to justice,” Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld told reporters. “If, in fact, it is determined that the Kodak Fun Saver 35 did this heinous deed, then it must pay the ultimate price.”

By putting the camera on trial in Baghdad and broadcasting the proceedings around the globe, the White House hopes to show the Arab world that the U.S. is serious about bringing the Abu Ghraib wrongdoers to justice.

But in the tiny hamlet of Patoutville, Louisiana where the camera was first purchased, residents expressed shock and disbelief that the Kodak Fun Saver 35 could be responsible for such abhorrent photos.

Frank Toolin, a lifelong Patoutville resident who recalls seeing the Kodak Fun Saver 35 in the local 7-Eleven, told reporters, “The camera I knew was not capable of taking those pictures.”

In a related story, the Republican National Committee announced today that their August nominating convention would now take place in Abu Ghraib prison instead of Madison Square Garden.

Explaining the choice of Abu Ghraib, a Republican spokesman said that it would send a strong message of support for President Bush's Iraq policies and that it was safer than New York.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Got That Right

"If he [Bush] demolishes this prison and builds another, what's the purpose behind that? It will be the same, he will still torture our sons in it" Makiya Rashid, Iraqi Al Jazeera 5.25.04

Air Conditioning, Resistance Style



Iraqi police carry away a home made rocket launcher from an apartment block in Baghdad. **The launcher was found in an air conditioning unit, after it was fired toward a police station.** (AFP/Ramzi Haidar)

Balad Ruz Resistance Nails Senior Collaborator

26-05-2004 Al Bawaba

Three Iraqis were killed and 18 others injured, including a senior police officer, when a car bomb detonated at Balad Ruz, 75 kilometres northeast of Baghdad.

"A car bomb exploded at 7:45 am as Colonel Ali Ismail, head of the Baqubah police investigation department, was driving by in a convoy," local police chief General Mohammed Dawd told AFP Wednesday.

Ismail and three of his aides were among those hurt in the blast.

IN YOUR FACE:
Hey Assholes, Get this Message: THIS is OUR flag.



Refusing to use the new U.S. collaborator "Governing Council" flag, Iraqis demanding the release of friends and family members jailed by US forces during a three day sit-in draped during a three day sit-in **draped a huge resistance flag on a tent set-up just outside the Abu Ghraib prison.** (AFP/Sabah Arar)



Iraqi men demand release of the relatives from a protest camp set up opposite the Abu Ghraib prison. (AFP/Marwan Naamani)



An Iraqi father reaches over barbed wire taking his son from a relative who brought the boy for a brief visit during a three day sit-in by families of prisoners outside the Abu Ghraib prison. (AFP/Awad Awad)

Collaborator “Governing” Council Member Ambushed

5/27/2004 By HAMZA HENDAWI, The Associated Press, BAGHDAD, Iraq & 28may04 Queensland Newspapers From correspondents in Doha, Qatar

Gunmen ambushed a convoy carrying a member of the Iraqi Governing Council as she was returning Thursday to Baghdad from mediation efforts in Najaf. The council member survived but at least one bodyguard was killed aides said.

Her son was killed Qatar's Al-Jazeera TV reported, saying he drowned after his car crashed in a river.

"Members of Khufaji's protection unit told our correspondent in Baghdad that her son, Ahmad, drowned when the car in which he was travelling fell in a river," the TV said.

Salama al-Khafaji was in a three-vehicle convoy that came under fire in the town of Yusufiyah. **A bodyguard was killed and another was critically wounded, according to chief aide Fateh Kashef al-Ghataa.**

He said the car carrying al-Khafaji's 18-year-old son, Ahmed Fadel, plunged into an irrigation canal.

He said U.S. troops sealed off the area while search parties looked for the missing son.

It was unclear whether al-Khafaji was wounded in the attack. Kashef al-Ghataa said only that she was taken to a "secret location" for security reasons.

The attack against al-Khafaji took place in an area notorious for ambushes.

Vehicle convoys are especially vulnerable to such attacks because Iraqis associate them with civilian contractors and security agents working for the occupation.

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

Received:

Request For Interviews

From: "Mick Meenan" <meenan@gaycitynews.com>
To: GI Special
Sent: May 17, 2004
Subject: Press query

Thanks for your newsletter. I am a regular reader and find the information to be a good alternative source for news stories. **I am looking for any information on gay and lesbian service members wounded in Iraq or Afghanistan whom I could write about for a feature.**

Due to the sensitive nature of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, I would also appreciate any information off the record that ANYONE might have about this topic. Please forward any leads. **ALL REPLIES WILL BE KEPT IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE.**

Regards,
Mick Meenan
Deputy Editor
Gay City News
646-452-2471

Re: Appeal To Ralph Nader

From: R
To: GI Special "Thomas F. Barton"
Sent: May 24, 2004
Subject: Re: **An Appeal To Ralph Nader** in GI Special 2#86:

I'm not sure we have met but I REALLY loved what you sent me and I'd love any other activist materials you have. Also, just to make sure this street goes two ways, I'll give you the heads up about an amazing conference.

Socialism 2004 - Ideas that can Change the World:
<http://www.socialismconference.org/info.html>

R

From: M
To: GI Special (by way of Tom Condit <tomcondit@igc.org>)
Sent: May 24, 2004

Subject: Re: **An Appeal To Ralph Nader** in GI Special 2#86

Couldn't agree with you more. I've forwarded your appeal to Nader to every Green list I am on. I am also a delegate to the Green Party Presidential Nominating Convention in Milwaukee on June 23, and I plan to fight like hell for this there, as well.

M
The Greens/Green Party USA

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