

GI SPECIAL 2:9



THIS IS HOW BUSH BRINGS THE TROOPS HOME

Graveside service for Sgt. Ernest Bucklew Nov. 8, 2003, in Beaver Falls, Pa. (AP Photo/Gene J. Puskar)

First Hand Report: The Unemployed Soldiers Demonstrations In Basra

Ewa Jasiewicz <http://www.occupationwatch.org/>
Occupation Watch report from Occupied Basra 1/11/04

January 6th

Today saw thousands of former soldiers riot in the streets of Basra over being denied three months worth of survival payments from the CPA.

Approximately 2000 ex-service men amassed in the streets of Ashaar, a crowded market, hawker-mafia district, with sellers and junk stalls flanking a filthy river, and the home of The Raffidian Bank aka as Soldier dole pay-out HQ.

Today was Iraqi Army Day - the annual celebration of over 80 years of soldiering and saluting to the beat of many a monarchy, authoritarian, General coup fought and dictatorship drum. **For the thousands of ex-service men laid off in May and demonstrating outside CPA South HQ on a weekly basis, today had a deeper significance. It was also the deadline for their 10-day pay-or-face-our-organised-wrath vow over 3 months of financial destitution courtesy of CPA indifference.**

The back payments amount to \$150 per person. The ex-soldiers are also demanding a permanent monthly payout of \$50 per month and not the \$15 I was quoted by demonstrators outside CPA HQ almost 2 weeks ago. A protestor beaten into a hospital bed by British troops told me tonight that maybe I was quoted that figure by an outsider and to take care from stuff like that, whilst his brother by his side chuckled ruefully and said \$15? What, so we can buy a pack of cigarettes? , followed by a more serious appraisal of, 'Remember that many people don't know the actual exchange rate of the dollar'.

Either way, the payment of such figures by the Occupation Administration represents a threat to its budget, currently following a military construction and entrenchment agenda (the only reconstruction that's taken place in the south has either been workers' own or Occupation entrenching military base and prison camp building). Benefits payments also threaten the control-at-the-lowest-costs basic principles of occupying, which the almost total absence of humanitarian/social reconstruction and extermination of almost all previous state survival benefits plus cheap gear for soldiers - worst machineguns on the market according to a former military Special Ops acquaintance here and shared bulletproof vests – all attest to.

Official figures put the population of the Iraqi army at 350,000 but compulsory conscription, CPA created unemployment downplaying, and the word of locals estimates its pre-war levels at 2 million. Islam on-Line quotes a figure of five million when the dissolution information, interior and defence ministries are taken into account.

Now, in Basra alone, some 60,000 members have been left unemployed. The trouble with former servicemen asking for payment is that 99% of the post-18 male population of Iraq had to serve in the army at some point. I spoke to a few today by the murky Shaat Al Arab waterway who had taken part. One wasn't ever in the army but had turned out in solidarity with his 'brothers', and two had only done their compulsory three years, a sharp contrast to career soldiers who ploughed in 15 or 20 years and don't know how to do anything else. But they all had one thing in common - total frustration and disillusionment in the British and desperate poverty.

With unemployment stagnating at a thievery/mafia/con-thy-neighbor promoting 70% (Occupied Palestine has a similar if not higher figure but social bonds, social care and UN relief are far more plentiful and class antagonisms a lot lower than battered post-sanctions, post-fascism, neo-Baathism battling Iraq).

The demonstration began at approximately 8am, on a muggy smoggy Basra morning and involved an assertive march down to Ashaar and up to the doors of Al Raffidian Bank where protestors were informed that there would be no money for them today, despite being promised it. Witnesses report that some demonstrators tried to storm the bank to reclaim their stipend, which prompted bank guards and Iraqi Police Special Forces, who all look like bankrobbers in army-print jackets and black acrylic balaclavas, to fire on them without warning.

British police officers, headed by CPA South Law and Order Chief Stephen White, former Northern Ireland plod, have been conducting training for Iraqi police and special forces in a specially formed academy in Az Zubiar. From the last CPA law and order report the word 'accountability' was mentioned more times than 'freedom' in a George Dubya speech. Despite British soldiers carrying body-length plastic riot shields and tear gas, their Iraqi counterparts do not have any less lethal weapons technology.

No tear gas, stun grenades, stun guns or rubber bullets. Just the live-ammo they've always been used to. According to the Head of Police in Basra, out of the 15,000 recruits now patrolling the streets (and shooting into crowds of unarmed protestors) 8,700 were police under the Baath regime. Less lethal technologies for cops under the Baath probably just meant an avalanche of rifle butts and boots in the head rather than a simple bullet, perhaps administered at the end of it all.

Hassan*, 36, was near the front of the demo when the firing began. A soldier since he was 14-years-old, I met him in Central Basra Hospital hooked up to a drip from a scuzzy hospital bed. Myself and two friends went in search of the demonstration's injured, after being told by a cardiologist in Talimi Hospital that 10 had been brought in with gunshot wounds that day and all had been transferred - with at least 4 to Basra Central - suffering from bullet blasted broken bones.

Doctors denied all knowledge of the injured and told us with shrugged shoulders that the Brits had already been around and they'd told them the same thing. It's unusual for the occupying forces to visit civilian hospitals unless they are looking for suspects or doing a pukesome photo call with Jack Straw and small hairy babies. We could only conclude that they'd come to either arrest 'riot leaders' or were trying to keep the story quiet, the riot coming just a day after Blair came and schmoozed the troops, touching down at 4.30am and evacuating Basra by 11 the same morning.

Hassan was suffering from internal bruising to his kidneys after being kicked by 2 truckloads of Iraqi coppers (11 or so) and 6 British Soldiers. He recounts his version of the day s events:

When we arrived at the bank we immediately started to demand our payment. The Police responded by locking up the bank. There were no British troops present at this point. The Police then came forward and started to beat and push us. Some also started firing. The protest took place in the middle of a triangle of banks. Guards started firing in all directions. Then they called the British. I saw four people injured before me and one person was definitely killed. He was shot in the back of the head, in front of me. He was around my age 35, 36. I saw another injured in the calf, another just above the knee and another I don t know as the bullet came from the direction of another bank.

The crowd moved the injured into their own cars and took them to hospital.

When the Brits arrived, they came with 8 tanks and about 7 jeeps and surrounded the whole area. The police were still around at the time. We ran when we heard they were coming but we came back after ten minutes with sticks and rocks.

The British arrested two people but released them later after they pushed them back from the bank. A group of soldiers tried to arrest a group of us but we attacked them. One group managed to grab one British soldier and dragged him into the crowd which then beat him with rocks. Not throwing rocks at him but actually beating him with our rocks. Four more came running at us with sticks after this but we beat them all too with our own sticks and rocks. Even a soldier sitting in his tank put down his hatch and hid. We were throwing stones so hard that no one could even get close enough or shoot their guns. The British moved their tanks into the crowd to rescue the soldier kidnapped into the crowd and managed to carry him into the tank.

I saw three soldiers injured directly - one in the head, one in the leg his - knee was broken by a rock, and one in the back.

I remember one officer coming out of his tank and trying to calm us down, speaking to us like they were on our side and like they felt sorry for us. The translator came up and asked us for our demands. We told him all we wanted was our pay and that, 'Today is just a slight thing; if we don't get our wages then we'll become like Osama Bin Laden, and tomorrow we'll be back even stronger.'

When the Special Operations Police came up and told us to leave, we said, 'You are so young! We were out fighting before your mother even met your father. We are soldiers, we will show you what you're made of'.

'I did witness some people trying to sabotage the demonstration. When we were trying to negotiate with the Brits they threw stones on both of us and then they tried to enter the bank while we were negotiating. We said, we want our pay, that's all, we don't want to break into it and loot it. They tried to break into the market too. We soon grabbed them and threw them out'.

'Remember how much we did hate Saddam Hussein? He was dirty and selfish but the British came up with their sweet talks of freedom, democracy and human rights but where is it? Where is it?'

One of Basra's chiefs of police stated, straight-face, flanked by two Occupation jeeps that the riot had all been caused by 'Al Qaeda'. He said of the demonstrators, 'They are Al Qaeda, they are terrorists, they were armed with machineguns, they are fedayheen, and they are not from here'. A rumour engulfed the crowd that Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya (The most popular TV channels in the Middle East) had broadcast that the demo was being fuelled by terrorists.

The Occupation and the multi-motivated resistance to it have provided reactionary authorities with ideal ammunition to demonise any dissidents. In London, Mayday

demonstration organisers and activists have been loosely linked with the IRA and slandered in The Standard as preparing to mob up for the day with Samurai swords and machetes but here - you've got the tar-drenching of being labeled part of the most wanted terror organization in the world. Its the MCarthyite catch-all trump card of demonizations.

When myself and a friend walked into the demo at around midday, with British troops mobbing up with plastic foot length shields and shin pads and some eating what looked like fish and chips on the sidelines, the action was almost over. Tanks stood parked in the triangle of banks. Bricks and smashed up bits of pavement lay broken on the ground. Huddles of veterans were standing around, jaws clenched.

Upon spotting us they soon formed a tight circle around us and the only thing that saved me from potentially being stoned to a pulp, explained my friend, was the fact that some of the protestors recognized me from the previous demo and were able to vouch for me. This didn't stop exhausted wails of 'WE'RE NOT TERRORISTS !!! AL JAZEERA ARE LIARS, ALL JOURNALISTS ARE LIARS!' voiced in my direction. One of the unelected and much reviled negotiators surged up behind me and attempted to smash my head open with a large brick, whilst denouncing me for being with 'AL JAZEERAAAA!' I had to leave, fast, pursued by a confused crowd, with my friend when asked if he too was a foreigner, tersely replying he was 'A son of Iraq, 100%'. He's actually Palestinian and I never heard him deny it or try to hide it, ever.

Both the injured soldier plus three others told me that the negotiators advocating on their behalf were collaborators and have since been employed by the British. 'We suffered a lot from the people who negotiated with the people in the palace.' Basim tells me, who has sacrificed 20 years of his life to the army. 'The result was that they were employed by the British'. Hassan also confirmed that many regarded them as having been paid off and when this demonstration took place, the two were absent. 'If we see them again, we will kill them. We will tear them apart', swears Basim. Asked what process was undertaken to choose these negotiators, Hassan explained from his hospital bed, 'They weren't elected. We were searching for someone to come and talk to them who can speak English, so we saw him (one of the negotiators) trying to talk to the British in English so he then said he'd go in on our behalf. Even the people who went inside today were not elected. Our people are simple, not educated and we trust people fast, after all they are soldiers just like us'.

Negotiations at the riot eventually took place out in the open air on top of a tank. 'In public because we didn't trust anyone' said Hassan. 'The British said we are going to the palace and we'll bring you your money. Please form a queue. We waited one hour for them and they didn't return. At this point I was in so much pain from my injuries that I had to leave'.

Basim, Mazen and Ali, the three vets I spoke to on the river are adamant that if money isn't paid out to the thousands of unemployed servicemen soon, the British will be facing more than flying rocks, bottles and burning tires. Asked if the situation is reaching a point where most people will start wanting the British to leave Basim says, 'Yes, of course. When the British came to Iraq and saw people in this condition, what did they intend to do? From the moment they came they promised to make our lives better, compensate those harmed by the regime and we want them to fulfill this promise or to leave'.

And if they do, what's instead? 'An Iraqi government. Even though we know the Governing Council is instructed by the occupation, if the occupation leaves they will be forced to listen to us'. Asked what next and they all look grim. **Ali, father of seven with 24-years experience in the army squints in the midday brightness and says, 'See Tikrit, Ramadi, Falluga, Baghdad? Basra will be the leading example. It will be teaching the others how to fight'.**

Following Wednesday's riot, despite unemployed ex-service men turning up at Ashaar with a stack of tires under the bridge and alleged hidden kalashnikovs, all was placid and the veterans queued in the pouring rain and read soggy DHSS style Coalition leaflets informing them that they had to go to the bank they were originally registered with and check if their names were written down. If not, then they had to re-apply. All those with their names scribed in the lists received \$150 - 3 months back payment.

The story doesn't end there or in Basra. Yesterday British troops and Iraqi special forces allegedly fired on a crowd of 500 unemployed veterans and killed five. 11 were also wounded in the incident. Islam on-line quotes demonstrator **Saadun Ahmed Sarai, 49, saying, 'Amara was neglected under Saddam Hussein. Today, we suffer at the hands of his sons [the U.S.-led occupation forces]'**. A highly placed corporate source in Basra said that a group of protestors were shot trying to storm the KBR training base in Amara today.

Troops opened fire on them and killed at least three. No back-up information is available but it will be searched for. All that's known for sure is that there was a demonstration today avenging the deaths of the six demonstrators yesterday. Only one report from Amara out of 20 or so seen on the net stated that protestors were armed. Now that the blood has been spilled however, investigations must be conducted.

Despite demonstrations today, yesterday, last week and six months ago all qualifying as riots, the use of live ammunition as crowd-control can't be justified unless an immediate and usually armed threat is presented. The immediate and indiscriminate resort to lethal force, as demonstrated in Basra and Amara can also seen as a violation of the UN's Basic Principles of the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials. The Basic Principles, seen as the gold-standard in international policing but holding no legal weight in terms of prosecution in the event of derogation, provide that the intentional lethal use of firearms may only be made:

"when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life" (Principle 9), and that law enforcement officers should as far as possible apply non-violent means before resorting to the use of force and firearms (Principle 4).¹ Exceptional circumstances such as internal instability or other public emergency may not be invoked to justify a departure from these basic principles.

The next few weeks will reveal the level of commitment the Occupation Administration has towards its obligation under the Geneva and European conventions on the protection of civilians. **For Iraqi people, its just repression as usual, cheapened life, bullets tearing flesh and fear of the military smashing down your door as usual.**

* not his real name

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 WAR REPORTS:

Resistance Shoots Down Another U.S. Chopper West of Baghdad

January 13, 2004 BAGHDAD (Reuters) & By Sarah El Deeb, Associated Press January 13, 2004

A U.S. AH-64 Apache helicopter crashed west of Baghdad Tuesday, the third helicopter to come down in the area in two weeks, but both crew members survived, a U.S. military spokesman said.

Witnesses in the area said the Apache, an attack helicopter, appeared to have been hit by ground fire. Col. William Darley said. "It was apparently downed by enemy fire," he said.

Reuters Television footage showed the helicopter in a field near the town of Habbaniya, about 50 miles west of the capital. It appeared to be more or less intact.

A military spokesman in Baghdad said both crew members were alive, but he did not know if they were injured.

TROOP NEWS

**Reservists Wife Says:
"Don't Believe Your Soldier Is Coming Home
Until You See Them"**

January 12, 2004 By John Yaukey, Gannett News Service

The families of the citizen soldiers in Iraq have had to endure stresses many never anticipated, such as a breadwinner being gone far longer than expected. The families of the newly deployed troops potentially face the same if the insurgency in Iraq continues unabated.

Indianapolis resident Jari Sheese has had to endure two extensions for her husband, an Army reservist serving in the volatile town of Ramadi.

“Every time they extend this, I think I can’t take it anymore,” she said. “But I have two children, so I have to go on. **I don’t want to sound cynical, but my advice would be don’t believe your soldier is coming home until you see them.**”



STUCK IN TRAFFIC—STUCK IN IRAQ

US soldiers stuck in traffic in Baghdad. 1.12.04 (AFP/Ahmad al-Rubaye)

BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!

Troops From Japan Forbidden To Help Coalition Partners Under Fire

(London Times, January 12, 2004)

Japanese soldiers being sent to southern Iraq will be prohibited from helping coalition comrades under attack from insurgents, the country’s defense minister said. Under Japan’s pacifist constitution, the country’s Self-Defense Forces are not allowed to use their weapons except in defense of themselves or of civilians under their protection.

Pentagon Officials Caught Faking Records; 47 Days' Worth Of Criminal Fraud Done In Advance Of Review

LARRY MARGASAK Associated Press Jan. 11, 2004

WASHINGTON - Pentagon auditors spent 1,139 hours altering their own files in order to pass an internal review, say investigators who found that the accounting sleuths engaged in just the kind of wasteful activity they are supposed to expose.

When the auditors in the New York City office learned well in advance which files a review team would check, they spent the equivalent of more than 47 days doctoring the papers and updating records from several audits, the Defense Department's inspector general concluded. Administrative staff, audit supervisors and other employees also participated in the process.

Falsifying official reports is a crime

The revisions were so pervasive that the work continued even after the review team arrived to inspect the auditors' files. The New York branch manager directed a senior auditor to delete electronic backup files of original documents, the inspector general said.

The inspector general uncovered the file deletions following a tip to a fraud, waste and abuse hot line.

This is not the first time that Pentagon anti-waste investigators were found to have altered documents.

The AP reported in 2001 that the inspector general's office itself destroyed documents and replaced them with fakes to avoid embarrassment in a review of its work.

Military Lawyers Challenge Bush; President Claiming “Monarchial” Powers

By Jess Bravin and ROBERT S. GREENBERGER Wall St. Journal 1.13.03

In a direct challenge to President Bush, five military lawyers assigned to defend Guantanamo Bay prisoners plan to tell the U.S. Supreme Court that military-tribunal rules blocking access to civilian courts are unconstitutional.

The lawyers intend to join a case brought by relatives of foreigners captured overseas and held at the U.S. Naval Base in Cuba, said Neal Katyal, a Georgetown University law professor representing the officers.

In a friend of the court brief they plan to file Wednesday, **they argue that the president is claiming “monarchical” powers to create laws and then serve as the accused’s judge, jury and executioner.** “What President Bush has done here is similar to what King George did prior to the Declaration of Independence,” said Mr. Katyal, who has been advising tribunal defense lawyers since May.

“The person who makes the laws, the person who enforces the laws and the person who ultimately decides guilt or innocence have to be different branches of government.”

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Fallujah, Heart Of The Fight For National Independence: Increasingly Determined Resistance Meets “Increasingly Plummeting Soldier Morale;” “There Are No Areas Where The Threat Is Low”

Peter Beaumont Sunday January 11, 2004, The Observer

Then he [the resistance leader] made an extraordinary confession: 'Last week I was driving in my car with my smallest child when a soldier came up and started playing with him. I saw a tear in his eye. I thought: "He does not have a choice about being here". And I wished him no evil. I swear to God,' he tells me, 'it hurts me to see an American bleed. I admire them, but in their own country.'

In the dining hall at Camp Volturno on the outskirts of Falluja, the newcomers to Taskforce 1 Panther of the US 82nd Airborne Division sit quietly as they listen to their welcome brief. They are big men, barrel-chested from pushing weights, heads shaved to stubble or tiny Tintin fins.

Lieutenant-Colonel Brian Drinkwine, the battalion commander, begins the briefing that will colour these young soldiers' perceptions of the town two miles beyond their compound's walls. The senior non-commissioned officers will tell these boys Falluja is the most 'dangerous place on earth'.

'Falluja is the centrepiece of the war,' says Drinkwine, a solid man in his late thirties. 'You got to be steely-eyed out there,' he said. **'There are a good people down there and in the midst of them are a handful of evildoers.'**

'We have told the local leaders we know that there are evildoers. But we are not here to spray up the town. We say: "You shoot an RPG, you can expect some steely-eyed killers who will kill or capture you".'

(What a raving asshole. Does he really expect anybody to take this chest thumping infantile bullshit seriously? The Iraqis must be cracking up telling Drinkwine stories about the idiot barbarian and his silly babbling about "evildoers.")

Then the new boys see Falluja for the first time, projected on the mess hall screen, an aerial map of a small, ugly city nestling in a bend of the Euphrates, **and bisected neatly by the line of Highway 10, which the soldiers call the 'highway of death'.**

It is this road that defines the American war in Falluja, and two locations in particular. The first is just to the east, where Highway 10 loops in a large four-spiralled interchange that the 82nd call the 'Cloverleaf'.

The second is on the other side of the city, where Highway 10 crosses the Euphrates by what Iraqis call the 'new' bridge, **but what Taskforce 1 Panther has dubbed 'George Washington Bridge' and the 'triangle of death'.**

At these two locations the Iraqi resistance has waged most fiercely its war against the United States with ambushes and improvised landmines.

Drinkwine leaves it to his battalion intelligence officer, Captain Gary Love, to fill in the picture. **Love brings up a second map in which the city is sectored into areas of colour. Predominant is red. 'The red,' says Captain Love, 'is high threat. That is two-thirds of the city. I want you to notice that there is no green,' he says. 'There are no areas where the threat is low.'**

And in the last 10 days the resistance has produced a series of spectacular attacks, bringing down two helicopters near the city in two separate incidents, killing nine US personnel inside, and also killing two French contractors working for the Coalition Provisional Authority.

But if the trigger-happy reputation of the 82nd has pushed many from what Drinkwine concedes was a 'sullen resentment' towards the invasion to active support of the resistance, it is still not quite enough to explain what is happening here.

It is explained by a 'cell leader' in Falluja's resistance - a bearded and prosperous-looking man in his mid-fifties, who has lost five cousins in the 'fight'. **'We are resisters by nature,' he tells me. 'America has invaded us and insulted us and so it is legitimate for us to fight. It is our honour and our duty and we know that it will be a long fight.'**

Asked how the resistance works, he explains: 'There is a joint leadership but we work as individual groups. It is better that the attacks are organised randomly, although we are capable of co-ordinating when we need to.'

He describes how foreign volunteers coming to fight the Americans in Iraq are vetted, and how only those prepared to fight on the terms of the resistance in the city are welcomed.

'The big suicide bombing operations,' he says, 'are nothing to do with us. We are only against the American forces.'

Then he made an extraordinary confession: 'Last week I was driving in my car with my smallest child when a soldier came up and started playing with him. I saw a tear in his eye. I thought: "He does not have a choice about being here". And I wished him no evil. I swear to God,' he tells me, 'it hurts me to see an American bleed. I admire them, but in their own country.'

My translator later explains the importance of the al-Buessa tribe in Falluja; its harsh, simple notions of honour, a hallmark of Al Anbar province. Falluja's resistance is.... marked by the fiercely proud credo of its tribes - in particular the al-Buessa, which claims responsibility for the downing of the Chinook.

'The al-Buessa tribe are the biggest pain in the butt and the biggest problem,' says Captain Love. 'When we first came to Falluja, the al-Buessa leader in the area by the bridge, Sheikh Ghazi [Sami al-Abed], was all over the previous guys here, giving barbecues and introducing us to "this great guy". Our reaction was: "Whoa. Who is this man and what does he want"?'

The answer, believes Love, reveals a snapshot not just of Falluja, but of Iraq's resistance; **how local political, tribal and financial struggles are finding their expression in the fight against the Coalition in a country that is increasingly hostile to the occupation.**

The map drawn by Love of Falluja's fighters describes a battle for supremacy within the al-Buessa tribe between Sheikh Ghazi Sami al-Abed, who has the money but no power, and his cousin Saradran Barakat, who has the power but no money. It has forced the two rivals into an unhappy partnership to protect their positions within the tribe with Ghazi - according to the 82nd - supplying the money, either voluntarily or under pressure, to fund the resistance, and the now arrested Barakat the muscle and the know-how.

If the resistance is driven by often barely visible dynamics, the 82nd's sometimes messy presence in and around the city has its own hidden narrative. Critics of the division, including soldiers attached to it, describe them as 'ruffians who get the job done'.

Stern critics claim that the 82nd, a body of troops designed for rapid shock assaults and not for peacekeeping, are the 'wrong soldiers, in the wrong city at the wrong time'.

But it is the soldiers themselves who privately express a deeper problem - of increasingly plummeting morale across the US forces here.

Deployed here straight from serving in Afghanistan, some have barely seen friends and families in two years, and while none will say that they should not be there, there is an edgy bitterness reflected in the sometimes racist graffiti around Volturno.

A few days later, sitting in the back of an open Humvee pick-up with soldiers from the brigade's Alpha Company at 3am on a bitterly cold night, I notice how the paratroopers' vehicles are nerve-rackingly exposed: their armour, in most cases, is improvised by the soldiers. Some have placed steel plates against the sides, while others have constructed sandwiches of plywood and sandbags. A lucky few have Kevlar blankets.

When I meet Sheikh Ghazi in his Falluja office, it is to find it has been vandalised during a raid by men under Drinkwine's command, who have carved 'Fuck You' into his office door, and slashed and smashed sofas, pictures and windows.

Ghazi denies involvement with the resistance, and when I ask him what advice he gives to young men wishing to fight, he tells me that he is largely ignored by them. Love claims that Ghazi's interest is not simply political. **The intelligence cell in the 82nd has noticed how he has been buying up blocks of land amid the chaos.**

Ghazi is still at large because Drinkwine and his senior officers believe that the ambitious and equivocal businessman can be 'leveraged' into assisting US forces to pacify the city.

In the darkness, Falluja is a different city. Through the soldiers' night-vision goggles it is a green oceanscape of flattened perspectives where each individual streetlight appears as a startling blizzard. In the dark - and without any goggles - all I can see is narrow streets and looming buildings and the first shadowy bunches of paratroops who are dismounting from their vehicles ahead of me.

As locks are scythed through, and two CIA officials in Arab headscarves root through a mechanic's workshop for bomb-making equipment, a message comes from Charlie Company, which is raiding the suspect's home, that it has come under attack from some rocket-propelled grenades.

In an instant the atmosphere thickens into something more sickly and tense: the thought that the intelligence is not only wrong, but may be a set-up. There is nothing to do but wait for the order to pull out.

It is a pointless and frightening few minutes - standing in the middle of an alien landscape, waiting for an unseen enemy to attack. It is the very nature of Iraq's war.

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

The War In Fallujah

Jan. 10, 2004 By Hannah Allam, Philadelphia INQUIRER FOREIGN STAFF

FALLUJAH, Iraq - The explosion yesterday rocked the dusty blue bus, sending tattooed tribeswomen to the floor in a swirl of fringed scarves and screams.

They were leaving town for a shopping trip to Baghdad, about 35 miles northeast, when insurgents apparently bombed a nearby American military checkpoint.

American soldiers twice came under attack while sweeping a main street for hidden explosives.

At noon prayers in a green-domed mosque in the heart of the city, scores of young men sat rapt as the voice of an unidentified imam crackled over a loudspeaker.

"We are losing a lot of believers, but don't beat your chests or tear your clothes in grief," he said. "God will deal with the Americans, and you can help by joining the *mujaheddin*. Kill the Americans. Destroy them. Don't leave a single one alive." The mosque is guarded by gun-toting men in scarves that reveal only their eyes.

Yesterday, members of the Army's 82d Airborne Division recovered pieces of a Black Hawk helicopter that crashed Thursday.

U.S. Army Capt. T. Franken surveyed the scene from inside an area cordoned off by armored vehicles.

Franken paused as gunfire rippled from the trees around his team.

"Do you hear that? Small-arms fire," he said. "And guess what? It's not from us."

Demonstrations Demand Release Of Prisoners

BBC Monitoring Middle East. London: Jan 9, 2004

Text of announcer-read report over video by Qatari Al-Jazeera satellite TV on 9 January

Demonstrations were staged following Friday prayers at several mosques in Baghdad to demand the release of Iraqi detainees in the occupation's prisons. Some Friday preachers linked the escalation of resistance operations against the occupation with the increase in the number of detainees.

[Al-Jazeera TV correspondent Muhammad Baba Ould Fagha - recording]

The demonstrations that followed Friday prayers at a number of mosques in Baghdad were a strong indication of the return of the detainees issue to the forefront of the

political and security controversy. **The demonstrators raised placards denouncing the United States and demanding that the occupation leave and release the prisoners.**

[Unidentified demonstrator] The reason for this demonstration is to demand the release of prisoners including mosque preachers and imams and to demand that mosques not be desecrated again.

[Ould Fagha] **Using Friday prayers as an occasion to tear up an invitation to dialogue that the occupation authority sent to some mosques was a vivid indication of the depth of the crisis between the Islamic forces and the occupation authority.** The issue of the detainees is a basic component of this crisis.

[Unidentified mosque preacher] **When we see our sons getting killed and our women arrested what do you expect the Iraqi citizen to do? We cannot blame him. He is merely reacting [to events].**

[Ould Fagha] **The occupation forces have not been successful in calming the agitation over the issue of the detainees after it released a limited number of them. The issue became hotter and the calls demanding the release of thousands of prisoners rose again.**

[Ould Fagha] **The reintroduction of the prisoners issue with such intensity represents a tough test for the occupation authority's ability to reconcile its political address in which it preaches care and respect for the human rights of the Iraqi citizen and the repression it practices against him on the ground. [Video shows demonstrators raising placards, tearing up a document]**

Unemployed Shiites Fight Ukrainian Soldiers

By Sarah El Deeb, Associated Press January 13, 2004

Clashes resumed Tuesday in Kut between protesters and Ukrainian troops, with sporadic gunfire heard at the western edge of the city, a day after the Ukrainians fired bullets in the air to control a riot by hundreds of people demanding food and jobs.

The violence in Kut, 90 miles southeast of Baghdad, followed a similar demonstration in another southern city, Amarah, on Sunday.

Unrest among the Shiites has grown as their spiritual leader, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani, has spoken out against a U.S.-backed formula for transferring power to the Iraqis.

Imam Condemns Occupation Forces In Karbala

BBC Monitoring Middle East. London: Jan 10, 2004

Text of report by Iraqi Shi'i group's Iran-based radio station Voice of the Mujahidin on 10 January

In his Friday [9 January] sermon at the Imam al-Husayn Mosque, Shaykh Abd-al-Mahdi al-Karbala'i told hundreds of worshippers that the city of Karbala started to suffocate because the apostate occupation forces isolated houses and closed roads, thus further aggravating the situation in the city and increasing the suffering of its people.

He added that in the past the occupiers criticized the former regime because it placed military barracks inside residential areas, and now they are doing the same thing. Al-Karbala'i called on intellectuals, figures and tribal leaders in Karbala to play an effective role in helping the people overcome these problems.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

As Dean Hits the Demagoguery Pedal...Hard, Time For A New Party?

By LENNI BRENNER

Lenni Brenner, editor of 51 Documents: Zionist Collaboration with the Nazis, can be reached at BrennerL21@aol.com

The old saying is that Jesus doesn't vote in American elections, but that's wrong. He's a registered Democrat. True, he's too modest to run for President, but he just endorsed his favorite disciple, Howard Dean. Or maybe its the other way around?

Dean was born into an Episcopalian family, and even went to a Christian boarding school, but he ended up marrying a Jew. His kids were raised Jewish. He left the Episcopalians, in Vermont, over a subtle theological point: His pastor wouldn't give some land for bike trail that Dean favored. So he joined the Congregationalists but got pissed off at too many sermons denouncing folks who only attend once a year, and stopped going to services altogether. Now he's running for President of the land of the freak, home of the knave, so he's doing what other politicians have done before him: nonstop pandering to any and all religions.

In an interview a few months back, he declared that "I don't think that religion ought to be part of American policy." But in fact he had already shown that it was part of his. **In November 2002 he went to Israel and announced that his "view" of the Israel/Palestine issue "is closer to AIPAC's view," uncritical support for whoever runs that country, than that of Peace Now, Labor Zionism's in-house anti-war**

group. If elected, he solemnly swears that he will not meet with Arafat. He supports targeted assassinations of Hamas leaders. He's for the Zionist security fence, and hailed the bombing of Syria by Sharon: "If Israel has to defend itself by striking terrorists elsewhere, it's going to have to do that." In October he told the faithful at a New York synagogue that he opposes giving East Jerusalem back to the Palestinians. He started showing up in Synagogues on high holidays. He recited the prayers, in Hebrew, over Hanukkah candles, in New Hampshire.

That may help him with the minority of Jews still believing in Judaism, but Jews make up only 2% of the population. As far as his party's strategists are concerned, the name of the game is combining Zionist campaign funds with Black votes, and then fighting tooth and nail against Bush for every blessed Southern white Protestant voter. The New Republic called him "one of the most secular candidates to run for President in modern history." **So now he's an out of the closet Jesus freak. Turns out that he, like Bush, prays daily.**

Last week he told the Boston Globe that talking about God and Jesus are going to be key to his Southern strategy. After all, Christ was "his model." Don't we all know that "Christ was someone who sought out people who were disenfranchised, people who were left behind. He fought against self-righteous of people who had everything.... He was a person who set an extraordinary example that has lasted 2,000 years."

America being as full of religions as a pomegranate is of seeds, he has loudly muttered "inshallah," God willing, while discussing foreign policy. But, with a bunch of Midwestern and Southern primaries coming up, Jesus is in his heart. "Don't you think Jerry Falwell reminds you a lot more of the Pharisees than he does of the teachings of Jesus? And don't you think this campaign ought to be about evicting the moneychangers from the temple?"

His sudden pious public proclamations naturally intrigued the reporters who accompany him while campaigning and he was asked which was his favorite New Testament book. Without hesitating he named "Job." Except that, as everyone knows, Job is in the Old Testament, and he returned an hour later to the reporters to say he had misspoken. Now, what does he like? "Anything in the Gospels."

Perhaps readers may remember, with fondness, his monkey chatter about winning over those kind hearts and gentle people who fly the Confederate flag on their pick up trucks? His present babble about Job and Jesus comes out of the same kit. Modern 'mainstream' politics can no longer officially pander to racism, so the 'consultants' of both parties have fallen back on religion.

Dean has two kinds of liberal supporters. Naive college kids are the foot soldiers of his campaign. They lack the experience to grasp what he is doing with all his crap about the Dixie flag and Jesus. **But the editorial hacks at the New York Times and The Nation know exactly what it means: President Dean won't change anything important when it comes to race relations, and he won't be found in the trenches when it comes to resisting right-wing assaults on Jefferson's "wall of separation between Church and State."** This troubles them. But what choice do these do nothings have? They don't have a party of their own. Wool sellers know wool buyers. The Democratic hustlers understand that, as long as Dean stays an inch to the left of Bush on Iraq, he doesn't have to give liberals a damned thing. He

can get caught in bed with an underage, unconsenting lamb and they will vote for him, some even voting for him because of the little beast.

The peace vote also divides into two camps. Some liberals show up at anti-war demos. But most do nothing beyond that to build the movement, except to publicly worry about how ANSWER and other coalitions are too extreme, especially about Palestine/Israel. It doesn't occur to these mental powerhouses that there is something a wee bit wrong about telling people to vote for a 'peace candidate' who has never in his life showed up at even one anti-war march or civil rights demo.

The other grouping consists of serious doers who organize rallies and marches. They have been inspired by the wave of anti-Iraq war demos, here and world wide. But now they, like the liberals, are confronted with the fact that this year is an election year. Who is their candidate?

The truth is that they have none and too many. Nader is an iffy-maybe possibility. But he isn't looking for the Green Party nomination, he isn't clear on Palestine/Israel, and is hardly building demos re Iraq. The Greens will probably run a candidate, especially if Nader doesn't run as an independent. ANSWER's leaders are in the Workers World Party. They will run a candidate. So will the Socialist Workers Party, who were the prime leaders of the Vietnam anti-war movement, but who haven't done a thing to distinguish themselves since. The Peace and Freedom Party is on the ballot in California, but it did miserably in the gubernatorial race there, and it doesn't exist anywhere else. The Socialist Party is running a candidate, but the party is minuscule and invisible to the public.

So what do we do? Boycott the election? Vote for one of the above? If so, which one? Or does it matter?

It is impossible to see a left candidate winning. But Dean's gallop into unblushing demagoguery opens up serious possibilities of educating the youth and other healthy elements, in the anti-war movement and beyond. Ossified liberals will denounce us if we tell people that a vote for Dean is unprincipled, even if he were to win, and there is no assurance of that. But so what? We will go on building the anti-war movement. And we remind people, now, that the Vietnam era movement did get us out of the war, even though the Democrats lost the 1968 and 1972 elections.

Now is the time to start organizing public panels on what the left should do re the elections. Don't wait for someone else to do it. All groups with credibility on either the local or national level should invite the above mentioned candidates, including Nader, to give us the reasons why we should vote for them. ***And maybe, just maybe, they could also begin to discuss building a serious party, opposed to the bipartisan demagogues and imperialists.***

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.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Iraqi Detainee Gets To Go Home— With Tale of Ordeal; Grocer Nabbed From Home Tells of Harsh Questioning; Burned With A Cigarette

By Farnaz Fassihi Wall St. Journal 1.13.03

BAGHDAD, Iraq—As Najim Abdulhusein huddled with his 17-year-old son during their first night of detention by U.S. forces last August, he was confident the Americans would soon realize they had made a mistake and free them.

Then, he says, a soldier pinned a sign that said “bombmaker” on his clothes and shipped the pair to the Abu Ghraib detention center, a once-dreaded prison of Saddam Hussein’s regime now used by the U.S. occupation forces.

“At first I kept telling my son there has been a misunderstanding, we haven’t done anything wrong, we will be released soon,” says the 52-year-old grocer. “But after we were taken to Abu Ghraib I thought I would never see my family again or be back inside my home.”

Mr. Abdulhusein did make it home, although his son is still being detained. He was released last weekend in a group of detainees who were either arrested by mistake or are now believed to present no security threat, U.S. officials say.

Now that he is out, his account of detention provides a rare inside look at how the U.S. deals with Iraqis suspected of being insurgents. It also shows how the detention system, overwhelmed as it has grown to hold 9,500 Iraqis, can have trouble determining who is truly dangerous.

U.S. forces found materials in the small grocery adjacent to Mr. Abdulhusein’s house that could be used to make explosives. The grocer, his family and neighbors say they were used to make helium balloons for children during Muslim holidays.

At Abu Ghraib, Mr. Abdulhusein says he was subjected to harsh interrogation. He says he was ordered to stand upright until he collapsed after 13 hours. U.S.

interrogators accusing him of being a terrorist who had trained in Afghanistan, once spat in his face and another time burned his arm with a cigarette, he says.

Shortly after midnight on the night he arrived, Mr. Abdulhussien says he was escorted into a circular outdoor area for his first interrogation. Three Americans and an Arabic translator sat on chairs before him. Mr. Abdulhussien was forced to kneel in the sand, his hands tightly bound with plastic cuffs. He says he was asked his name, address, education, profession and religion.

When he said he was a Sunni Muslim, they asked which mosque he attended and whether he was a follower of the Wahabi sect or had links to Osama Bin Laden.

One interrogator, he says, asked him why he looked like “an Afghan or an Iranian,” with his long, bushy beard. The interrogators would often stand in front of him and shout questions. They sometimes shoved their fingers in Mr. Abdulhussien’s face and threatened to beat him if he didn’t look them in the eye. One interrogator insisted he had seen Mr. Abdulhussien in Afghanistan. “I told him I don’t even have a passport, how did you see me in Afghanistan?” he says he replied.

He was often threatened he would be shipped to Guantanamo Bay, where Al Qaeda prisoners are being kept, and promised he would never see his wife and children again if he didn’t admit to being a terrorist. Once, in what he calls the worst interrogation session of all, he says the American soldier told him he was sending soldiers to his house to rape his wife. “I broke down and started crying like a child and begged him to stop,” says Mr. Abdulhussien.

Mr. Abdulhussien says that during the hours-long interrogations which took place every other day during the first few weeks, he had to hold his arms above his head and sit on the ground in an open field, in the summer heat while he was being questioned. **Once an American interrogator asked if he was thirsty. When he nodded yes, the man poured a bottle of water on his face without letting him drink. He says on several occasions an interrogator pushed him to the ground, rubbed his face on sand and pulled at his beard.**

Mr. Abdulhussien says that every time he answered a question, the interrogator would yell at him and accuse him of lying. “I would say, ‘I’m a Muslim, I don’t lie,’ and he would yell, ‘you are all liars.’

Obtaining clean water was difficult, says Mr. Abdulhussien. **A truck brought a container of tap water to the camp and the younger detainees always rushed to fill plastic jars. But the water was muddy and tasted foul, says Mr. Abdulhussien. He did his best to purify it by filtering it through one of his socks.**

One day in October, a few weeks after the Journal’s story about his family was published, Mr. Abdulhussien was summoned again. This time, though, the interrogators were unfamiliar to him.

They smiled at him sometimes and offered him a chair and spoke to him in a cordial manner. That had never happened before. They told him they were trying to determine why he was being detained and said it wouldn’t be long before he saw his family again, he says.

Within a week, Mr. Abdulhussein was transferred to Camp 6, an area designated for the low-risk detainees. He was reunited with Qutaibah. When the father and son hugged each other inside the tent, he says everyone around them was crying.

Mr. Abdulhussein first made contact with his family in mid-November when he was taken to the camp's field hospital operated by Iraqi doctors. He was hospitalized for 35 days and asked the Iraqi doctor who treated him to go to his home and deliver a note to his wife.

After the capture of Saddam Hussein, which the detainees learned about from their American guards, Mr. Abdulhussein says the Americans began releasing more detainees. Three times a week—on Saturdays, Tuesdays and Thursdays—a U.S. soldier read out the capture tag numbers of those who were set free. Last month, rarely were more than four or five men freed, Said Mr. Abdulhussein. In recent weeks, the number skyrocketed to 30-50 names at a time. U.S. military police who work inside the camp confirm that more detainees have been released after the capture of Saddam Hussein.

With no warning, Mr. Abdulhussein's number was called last Saturday night. It's unclear when or if his son Qutaibah will be released, but the family is hopeful that it will be any day.

Mr. Abdulhussein and 90 of his fellow detainees were piled into the back of three trucks driven by American soldiers. They were released beside the highway to Baghdad. With no money in their pockets and no means of transportation home, the group waited several hours until one by one they hitch-hiked rides to the city.

When he returned home, his wife cried uncontrollably, and his 4-year-old twins clung to his knees. A family member went to school to fetch Mr. Abdulhussein's 14-year-old son, Mohammad, who had done his best to mind the family's small grocery in his father's absence.

Mohammad ran home so fast that he lost his shoes and his schoolbooks on the way. By the time he arrived, his shirt was soaked with tears.

Iraqi Threat To Kill US Broadcasting Deal

By Nicolas Pelham in Amman and Joshua Chaffin in Washington FT.com site; Jan 09, 2004

Iraq's communications minister on Friday threatened to overturn a politically sensitive contract awarded to an American company to run Iraq's national broadcasting service.

The Harris Corporation, a US manufacturer, was selected on Friday with the Lebanese Broadcasting Company and a Kuwaiti-Iraq group, Al-Fawares, to carry out a \$100m one-year contract to rebuild and operate a newspaper and a group of Iraqi television and radio stations used by Saddam Hussein's regime.

But Haider Abadi, communications minister, said he was not consulted about the contract and threatened to overturn it when the US-led administration hands power to a sovereign Iraqi government in July. "We very much welcome the help of others to reshape our media, but to relinquish our responsibilities and to give control to foreign media is politically and socially wrong," said Mr Abadi. He called the contract "temporary".

Iraqi Minister Threatens To Quit If Money For Electricity Network Not Paid

BBC Monitoring Middle East. London: Jan 10, 2004

Text of report in English by Kuwaiti news agency Kuna web site

Baghdad, 10 January: Iraqi Electricity Minister Ayham Al- Samarra'i renewed his threats on Saturday [10 January] to resign **unless the Iraq Governing Council (IGC) and the US Civil Administrator, Paul Bremer, pay the amounts allocated for reconstructing the power sector** in the war-torn country. Basil al-Khatib, media official at the ministry, told Kuwait News Agency KUNA) the minister had requested payment of the necessary amounts.

Al-Samarra'i has said earlier he would not become a scapegoat in case the electric network has not been reconstructed due to the lack of necessary funds. He had also said the country's electric network was completely out of service and needed to be rebuilt. A delegation of the ministry, Al-Khatib added, is expected to visit Kuwait soon to discuss with Kuwaiti officials the possibility of importing electricity from Kuwait.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Resistance Attacks Police Checkpoint

January 12, 2004, By Stephen Graham, Associated Press

In the southwestern province of Nimroz on Monday, dozens of suspected Taliban fighters attacked a police checkpoint and killed four policemen, a provincial governor said.

<p>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</p>
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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/>

CLASS WAR NEWS



A young man places a poster calling President Bush a terrorist on a fence in front of the U.S. embassy in Mexico City Jan. 12, 2004. People protested Bush's visit to the Special Summit of the Americas in the city of Monterrey. (AP Photo/Eduardo Verdugo)

Received:

J writes:

War Weary isn't a Strong Enough Word!!!

A friend, here in Charlotte, and her husband, just sent me an yesterday to let me know their Son was shipping out to Iraq Today, this after just returning from Afghanistan about 2 Months Ago!!! Because of this Shipout, he got Married Last Friday to his longtime girlfriend.

These Military Personal could be serving 'Multiple' War Theater Duty, welcome to the Neo-Con World of 'World Domination', act first think later or not at all!!!!!!

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