

GI SPECIAL 2#99

GET THE PICTURE? DO THE MATH!



Iraqis demonstrate their support for the Shiite armed resistance leader Muqtada al-Sadr in the Sadr City district of Baghdad June 11. (AP Photo/Hussein Malla)

Poll: 40 Million In U.S. Want All Troops Out Of Iraq By June 30!

Jun 11 AP

LOS ANGELES - A majority of American registered voters now say conditions in Iraq did not merit war, but most are reluctant to abandon efforts there, according to a new Los Angeles Times poll.

Fifty-three percent of respondents said the situation in Iraq did not merit war.

18% percent said America should withdraw its troops after the "transfer" of power June 30, and 25 percent said the U.S. should set a deadline for pulling out. (18% comes to 53 million, but let's subtract babies and toddlers.)

Voters' mounting worries about the war have damaged their confidence in President Bush, the poll showed. Forty-four percent said they approved of Bush's handling of the war, compared to 51 percent in March.

The poll found that 34 percent said Kerry has not offered a clear plan to handle the war, while 15 percent said he has. The other voters said they didn't know.

(Thanks to D, who emailed the following supplement: "In the LA Times' in-depth poll excerpts, support for 'setting a date' is virtually the same across liberal, moderate, and conservative lines, respectively 25%, 25%, and 21%. "The 18% who said the US should withdraw 'all troops' after the transfer of power showed a stronger political difference. That was supported by 27% of liberals, 21% of moderates and 10% of conservatives.")

More: <http://images.latimes.com/media/acrobat/2004-06/12991393.pdf>

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/gi-special/>

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

TASK FORCE BAGHDAD SOLDIER DIES, FOUR WOUNDED

June 10, 2004 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND Release
Number: 04-06-13C

BAGHDAD, Iraq -A Task Force Baghdad Soldier died of wounds as a result of a coordinated attack on Coalition forces in eastern Baghdad that took place around 10:30 p.m. June 9. Four other soldiers were also wounded in the attack.

Three US Troops Wounded In Saydiya Bombing

2004/06/11 IRIB News

Baghdad - **Three US soldiers were wounded in a car bomb attack on a military convoy in southern Baghdad on Friday, a military spokesman said.**

"Right now we have got three wounded, no deaths. Two of the wounded returned to duty," the spokesman said.

The convoy was traveling down a road in the Saydiya district in the south of the capital when it passed a stationary car, which exploded, the spokesman said, adding that the device was probably detonated remotely.

The attack occurred at 12:20 pm (0820 GMT).



Mahdi militants prepare to fire their weapons at American positions in the Sadr City neighborhood of Baghdad June 10. (AP Photo/APTN)

(Thanks to Mike Hoffman, anti-war Iraq USMC vet who sent the following explanation of this photo: "What they're holding is an ammo belt for a machine gun. What you can see over the one guys shoulder is the barrel of the gun and the attached bipod for support of the gun.")

War In Baghdad: US Troops Fighting With Shiite Militiamen

2004-06-11 middle-east-online.com & By Robert H. Reid, Associated Press

BAGHDAD - Two Iraqi children were killed and 23 people injured in overnight clashes between US soldiers and militiamen in the Baghdad Shiite neighbourhood of Sadr City, medics and the US military said Friday.

Gunfire and explosions were heard late Thursday in central Baghdad, and red tracers were seen soaring into the night sky. The U.S. command had no comment, but residents said a U.S. Army Humvee was attacked by a rocket-propelled grenade.

A US military spokesman said assailants, believed to be militiamen loyal to Shiite radical leader Moqtada Sadr, targeted US troops with rocket-propelled grenades as they conducted regular patrols in the battlezone neighbourhood on Thursday night.

The crackle of gunfire rattled through the streets as knots of young, black-clad militiamen fired machine guns, small arms and rocket-propelled grenades at American positions, while U.S. Army Apache helicopters roamed the skies seeking targets. A flock of terrified sheep scampered down one street past Shiite gunmen.

Near sunset, Shiite fighters called on a mosque loudspeaker for residents to close shops because they feared a U.S. counterattack.

ENOUGH OF THIS SHIT. BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!



U.S. soldiers investigate the remains of a car bomb which exploded on a highway in the Sayediya district of Baghdad as a U.S. patrol passed nearby June 11, 2004. Two U.S. Humvees were damaged. there was no U.S. report on casualties. (AP Photo/Jim MacMillan)

Casualties In IED Attack

June 11, 2004 By Robert H. Reid, Associated Press

A roadside bomb exploded Thursday evening near a convoy of sport utility vehicles favored by Westerners in Iraq. **There was no official conformation of casualties, but pools of blood could be seen around a wrecked vehicle.**

Attack On Baghdad Airport

7 June 2004 by Muhammad Abu Nasr, member editorial board The Free Arab Voice

Iraqi Resistance pounds US forces at Saddam International Airport with protracted nighttime rocket and mortar barrage:

Saddam International Airport near Baghdad, currently occupied by US invaders who have turned it into one of their major military bases, came under an extremely fierce attack by the Iraqi Resistance after midnight in the early hours of Monday.

The Resistance pounded the American base at the airport with rockets and mortars. According to the correspondent for Mafkarat al-Islam, the sound of explosions continued during the night, coming from al-'Amiriyah district.

The correspondent reported that the Resistance bombardment reached its peak at around 5:00am local time when an intense series of explosions went off continually for more than a quarter of an hour without letup. The reverberation of the blasts could also be heard from within the airport, but as usual, the US aggressors provided no information regarding the extent or nature of their casualties.

Baghdad: Al-Madhi Army Guard Duty



An Iraqi Al-Madhi Army soldier loyal to Shiite resistance cleric Muqtada al-Sadr stands guard on a rooftop during Friday prayers in the Sadr City district of Baghdad June 11,. (AP Photo/Hussein Malla)

TROOP NEWS

Troops Defy Wolfowitz DoD Directive

June 14, 2004 By Vince Crawley and Gina Cavallaro, Army Times staff writers

A directive signed April 14 by Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, DoD Directive 8100.1, says that any device connected to the Defense Department network must be treated as a part of the official network and therefore used only in a secure fashion. It also says cell phones and other personal communications devices or infrared wireless devices "shall not be allowed into an area where classified information is discussed or processed without written approval."

The reality, however, is that the digital revolution makes it almost impossible to limit 21st-century communications devices.

"You can't completely control it unless you take the phones away, which we have chosen not to do," said Army Maj. Scott Sossaman, operations officer of the 1st Armored Division's 2nd Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery Regiment, in Iraq.

Anyone visiting Iraq could easily verify that the nearly 140,000 U.S. troops there use these communications devices as vital links to home.

<p>Restricting or eliminating them would be almost impossible, experts say. And troops suggest that any attempt to do so would not be viewed kindly.</p>

Today's troops are part of the wired generation, and they expect to be plugged in.

Troops say they feel entitled to some form of regular, electronic communication with loved ones.

"Instead of going to the movies, this is what we do," said Spc. Ernesto Hernandez, 25, a 1st Armored Division cannoneer who chats with his wife on Yahoo! Messenger.

But Sgt. James Johnson, an ammunition team chief who was using his own laptop, said that while he doesn't mind paying for access, "they should at least set it up for us."

Internet security expert John Morris, staff counsel for the Center for Democracy and Technology in Washington, said it is unlikely the military would be able to stifle Web use even if it wanted to. The only real option would be to eliminate access to the Internet, and even that could be worked around using cellular phones and local providers, he said.

Any security people trying to restrict e-mail access to popular accounts such as Microsoft, Hotmail and Yahoo! Mail would have to block a specific Internet site. **Tech-savvy troops would quickly find their way to other sites or so-called proxy servers, which mask specific online addresses.**

"It's certainly possible to cut off simple access to e-mail," Morris said. "It gets a lot harder to do it really thoroughly."

Looney Abu Ghraib Colonel Killed His Own Troops---

Wall St. Journal 6.1.04

Col. [Thomas M.] Pappas constantly sought ways to speed up the assembly line, even instituting a quota system in late November for the five interrogation teams, said several interrogators. Depending on the workload, interrogation teams were required to conduct as many as half a dozen interrogations and file a similar number of reports each day.

"If an interrogation isn't going well you might cut it short after 30 minutes, but if it is going well you might want to go eight hours," said one interrogator. "We kept having to cut interrogations short so we could meet our numbers."

Col. Pappas also imposed the round-the-clock shifts. **The 24-hour schedule created a perception among some interrogators that Col. Pappas wasn't concerned about their safety. Facing mortar attacks, which almost always took place between midnight and 4 a.m., several soldiers said they felt uncomfortable conducting interviews in canvas tents during those hours.**

On Sept. 20, an insurgent's mortar struck an interrogation tent in the middle of the night with deadly consequences. In a statement made to Army investigators examining prisoner abuse, one soldier, Spc. Paul Son, went out of his way to criticize Col. Pappas for the mortar incident.

"Two soldiers died and 13 were injured as a direct result of obeying orders given by the chain of command to continue with night operations in tents," Spc. Son wrote on an interview sheet reviewed by The Wall Street Journal. *This, he wrote, occurred "despite the known history of mortar attacks at specific hours of the night."*

Despite the endless interrogation sessions the insurgency seemed to be growing more and more deadly. In November, 82 U.S. soldiers were killed in Iraq, almost twice the 44 killed a month earlier.

This only added to the pressure on the interrogators to produce. **Interrogators complained that the need for more and better intelligence drove them to disseminate intelligence reports to field units that were half-baked and of dubious worth.**

"We'd get information that wasn't corroborated or that we thought probably wasn't true. But [Col. Pappas] was so desperate for numbers that we sent out the report anyway," says Spc. Monath, an intelligence analyst who was responsible for drafting the final reports.

The bad intelligence gave way to raids on innocent people, he said. In one case, he said, an entire Iraqi family was arrested while eating dinner because an interrogator's raw notes containing bad coordinates were sent to a field unit.

Col. Pappas, who had been in charge of the intelligence analysts at Abu Ghraib, on Nov. 19 was given the job of running the entire prison.

Soldiers remember him scaling watch towers day and night and spending hours at the front gate in an effort to make sure a car or truck bomb couldn't sneak through the gates.

---And Gets Off With Reprimand

2. (U) That COL Thomas M. Pappas, Commander, 205th MI Brigade, be given a General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand and Investigated UP Procedure 15, AR 381-10, US Army Intelligence Activities for the following acts which have been previously referred to in the aforementioned findings:

Failing to ensure that Soldiers under his direct command were properly trained in and followed the IROE.

Failing to ensure that Soldiers under his direct command knew, understood, and followed the protections afforded to detainees in the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War.

Failing to properly supervise his soldiers working and "visiting" Tier 1 of the Hard-Site at Abu Ghraib (BCCF)...

(How about butchering the soldiers in the tent? Nothing. Hey, that was OK.)

Colonel Says Abu Ghraib Is "This Generations My Lai"

June 14, 2004 By Jim Tice, Army Times staff writer

"I am a Vietnam veteran and I see many disturbing similarities between what I experienced as a 19-year-old infantryman, and what our 19-year-old infantrymen are experiencing today in Iraq — particularly with mines and booby traps," said Col. Larry Saul.

"Mines and booby traps were one of our biggest threats, particularly after the invasion of Cambodia in the summer of 1970, and they usually were used to initiate an ambush, similar to what we see in Iraq with IEDs."

Everybody rushes to forget Vietnam, but I have told our team here that Abu Ghraib could very well be this generation's My Lai," Saul said, referring to the 1968 massacre of several hundred unarmed civilians by a small force of U.S. infantrymen.

"The strategic impact of Abu Ghraib probably will reverberate for years, as we have lost a lot of goodwill in that region."

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.

U.S. Commanders Figure Out "The Insurgency Is Gaining Popularity" & Drop The Silly Lies About Resistance

6.9.04 By Greg Jaffe, Wall St. Journal

A new understanding of the Iraqi insurgency has spurred the shift in strategy.

Until recently, U.S. military officials had insisted the insurgency consisted of a mix of former Baathists, intent on seeing Saddam Hussein return to power, and foreign jihadis.

But the recent fighting in the Sunni stronghold of Fallujah and in southern Iraq, where U.S. troops are battling fighters loyal to radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al Sadr, has convinced some U.S. commanders that the insurgency is gaining popularity among some lower-middle class Iraqis—the bulk of the population.

In both Fallujah and southern Iraq, the U. S. sought to avoid large-scale combat operations, aimed at disarming militants, and cut a deal that would end the fighting.

(For more see the front page article "Get Out Of Iraq Now" at www.socialistworker.org.)

While Occupation Staggers Around Blindly, Resistance Offers U.S. Soldiers Asylum

A flier Lt. Moore found May 19 offered unhappy Marines a way home. “If anyone wants to go out of Iraq and return to his country and to his children,” it read, “we’ll help him and he will be in security if he wants that, he must to visit any house in this region and he’ll find the helping.”

6.7.04 By Michael M. Phillips, Wall St. Journal

Husaybah, Iraq: The English was odd, but **the meaning of the flier posted on the building just off the busy market street was clear. It warned the US Marines who occupy this city that, from “every house, every street and district” Iraqi insurgents are “coming to end your existence.”**

Spotting the note during a patrol May 19, Marine First Lt. Isaac Moore tore it down and wrote a message of his own on notebook paper: “U.S. Marines want peace for the innocent civilians of Husaybah. But to those who wish to attack Marines and hurt innocent civilians, we will not stop until you are all destroyed.” He taped his note up on the same wall.

It was another week of handbill-to-handbill combat in the battle for Iraq’s hearts and minds. Here on the Syrian border, Iraqi insurgents use fliers, mosque loudspeakers and threats in an effort to convince locals that U.S. occupiers are evil and the occupation doomed. The Marines use handbills, public-works projects and soccer balls to try to convince them other wise.

The Marines have limited goals for their public-relations effort. They don’t expect the locals to embrace the occupation, especially with America’s reputation sullied by images of U.S. soldiers abusing Iraqi prisoners.

But the Marines would like the Iraqis to stop attacking bases, patrols and convoys, and perhaps even to turn in those who do.

“All you can hope to achieve—and it’s an achievable goal—is let them know the Marines aren’t belligerent and have no ill will towards the Iraqi people,” said U. Moore, a 27-year-old Alaskan who serves as a platoon leader in Weapons Company, Third Battalion, Seventh Marine Regiment.

There are some signs of success. When Marines patrol these days, they see waves as well as the usual frosty stares. But roadside bombs still hit U.S. troops here almost daily.

Marines have even received reports that insurgent propaganda posters may be booby-trapped, so the grunts check for explosives before pulling them down.

The names of collaborators with the occupation appear written on walls in Husaybah, and rumors of beheadings by the insurgents have troubled the area for months. Five unidentified bodies—apparently tortured—turned up on May 22 and 23. The Marines are trying to figure out whether they were informants.

Lt. Col. Ahmad Aziz, chief of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps in the city, says an unidentified person recently handed his 4-year-old son a note in the street. "If you do business with the Marines and the U.S., I'll kill this son," the note said, according to Col. Aziz. He explained his refusal to quit this way: "I like Iraq, this is my job."

Another notice appearing on the walls of Husaybah shows a photocopied Internet picture of U.S. soldiers holding two camel spiders, each appearing to be about a foot long. The Marines live in mortal dread of the spiders and their venom, the caption reads in Arabic. Under the photo is a quotation from the Quran, implying that camel spiders are God's soldiers in the fight against the Americans. "Oh, Allah, we need your help to command your soldiers to hurt the Americans," the note said.

A flier Lt. Moore found May 19 offered unhappy Marines a way home. "If anyone wants to go out of Iraq and return to his country and to his children," it read, "we'll help him and he will be in security if he wants that, he must to visit any house in this region and he'll find the helping."

The insurgents aren't the only ones who have trouble communicating in a language not their own.

During a recent sweep through villages north of the nearby Euphrates River, the Marines distributed handbills that were supposed to tout the coalition's good intentions and to invite tipsters to anonymously call a hot-line to report anticoalition plotters. **But before printing them, the Marines enlarged the font size of the flowing Arabic script, inadvertently separating all of the letters. Recipients looked at the handbill in confusion and politely tried to hand it back. A translator informed the Marines that it was gibberish.**

In the wee hours of the morning May 27, Lt. Moore's men gave it another try. They had a translator write Arabic notices by hand praising the Americans and the occupation. Then Marine Humvees cruised slowly through the city's commercial district, and Pfc. Ernest Phillips, 20, of San Bernardino, Calif., hopped out and surreptitiously glued the notices to buildings.

The hope, the Marines said, was that people would think the notices were written by one of their neighbors.

That would give the message more credibility than propaganda known to be from U.S. sources. By afternoon the notices had been ripped down.

The Marines also hope that civil-works projects and jobs programs will persuade Iraqis to help them out. The battalion is spending about \$150,000 to hire 600 locals to clean garbage off the streets of Husaybah and neighboring towns. The effort achieves a double goal: It provides employment in a city where there is very little, and it removes potential hiding places for street-side bombs. The Marines promote their reconstruction projects on radio and television.

But countering angry rhetoric emanating from the loudspeakers atop Husaybah's mosques is tough.

On May 20, an unidentified mosque speaker called for a holy war on the Americans.

The speaker mentioned separate congressional appropriations of \$87 billion and \$25 billion largely to rebuild and secure Iraq, and protested that little of the money had made its way to Husaybah. **Still, “we don’t want their money, we don’t want their help,” the speaker insisted, according to a military translator who heard the broadcast. “We can help ourselves.”**

The next day, about 20 Marines set out in Humvees armed with machine guns and grenade launchers and parked on a side street near the city’s main mosque. They waited for the midday Friday prayers and sermon to finish. “We aren’t going to shoot anybody today— hearts and minds,” Pfc. Phillips reminded his platoon mates.

When the minaret fell silent, the vehicles rolled onto the street in front of the mosque, and the Marines began handing out powdered milk, toothbrushes, toothpaste and soccer balls. They smiled and spoke a few simple Arabic words of greeting. **But they quit after 15 minutes.** Only men were out on the street at that time, and they showed no interest in milk or oral hygiene—just soccer balls.

Soccer-ball patrols have turned out to be by far the most popular U.S. public-relations program. Marines use them frequently to try to soothe relations and get information. Early Sunday, May 23, three tanks and a squad of Marines rolled north from Husaybah toward the Euphrates, through nectarine and pomegranate orchards, passing surprised farm families along the dirt lane.

As the convoy rumbled slowly from farm to farm, Gunnery Sgt. Sandor Vegh, 35, of Baltimore, Ohio, wrote, “USMC” in black marker on dozens of soccer balls. Then the grunts tossed them to eager children, who held their hands up to pantomime a ball and called out, “Mister, football.”

A military translator casually asked the residents whether they had seen anything suspicious—strangers in the neighborhood, people digging holes for roadside bombs. The farmers chatted amiably but provided no useful information.

1st ID Soldier Jailed, Discharged For Refusing To Deploy To Iraq

June 10, 2004 By Gina Cavallaro and Jane McHugh, Army Times staff writers

A 1st Infantry Division soldier in Germany who refused to deploy to Iraq, citing his Muslim beliefs against fighting fellow Muslims, was sentenced to 14 months confinement and given a bad conduct discharge, according to a published report.

Sgt. 1st Class Abdullah Webster, 38 and with 18 years of Army service, pleaded guilty to two counts of disobeying a lawful order and one count of missing movement June 3 at a court-martial hearing, the military-owned newspaper Stars and Stripes

reported June 7. He had applied to be a conscientious objector but was turned down at the unit level. His appeal process is continuing, the newspaper said.

Webster told his commanders he would not deploy based on guidance he received from Muslim clerics, one of whom, Air Force Capt. Hamza Al-Mubarak, testified for the defense that Webster had done the right thing, Stars and Stripes said.

But it was pointed out at the court-martial by Webster's former commander in a Kosovo peace keeping deployment, Lt. Col. Thomas Quigley, that Webster did not qualify as a conscientious objector because he was not opposed to all wars, just wars in Muslim countries, Quigley said.

"I sincerely believe he was a devoted Muslim, and because of his devout faith he chose to put that before his Army duty and values," said Lt. Col. Courtney Paul, executive officer of the 1st Infantry Division's Engineer Brigade, who was commander of the 82nd Engineer Battalion when Webster submitted his conscientious objector packet.

The division deployed to Iraq from its home base in Wuerzburg, Germany through the month of February

"We knew this was going to happen," Paul told Army Times.

"He had made comments up to the last minute. But I wasn't sure which way he would go until it came time for the call forward," said Paul, at his brigade headquarters in Tikrit. Webster, he said, had made all the preparations to go and even loaded his duffel with all the other soldiers' duffels just days before they left.

"He said he would rather spend seven years in jail than fight Muslims. He said it was wrong for Muslims."

HOME FRONT

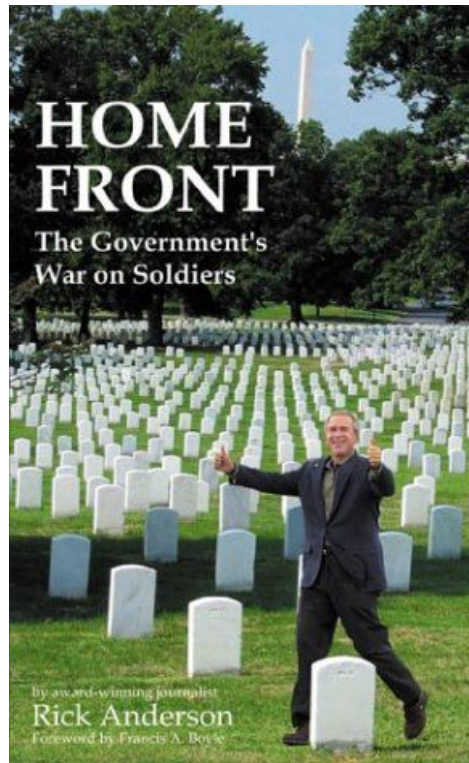
The Government's War on Soldiers

"I don't know why the government, if it cares so much about its troops, isn't saying 'My God, 200,000 disabled in that war, 11,000 dead! What did we do?'"

--Former Army flight nurse and veterans' advocate Joyce Riley

Rick Anderson's new book, inspired by the untold story of Sgt. Joe Hooper, Vietnam's most decorated soldier and a home-front casualty, chronicles how – in the midst of his war - George Bush has cut benefits of both veterans and front-line troops. It reveals how the Pentagon has ordered soldiers to take experimental medicines that sometimes prove fatal, how defense contractors deliver faulty weapons to troops, and how the true casualty measure of war is the subsequent body count – the medical failures, psychological toll and the uninvestigated suicides – on the home front. The book recounts the widespread effects of the government's weapons, medicines and bureaucracies of mass destruction.

Due out June 1. Publisher: Clarity Press, www.claritypress.com
Contact: Annette Gordon, clarity@islandnet.com



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/>

Charlie Battery's Deaths By Stop-Loss: The Bloody Reality Of War In Iraq

June 14, 2004 By Gina Cavallaro, Army Times staff writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq — The soldiers of Charlie Battery don't have a name for what happened April 29. For a while, they could hardly talk about it. They would stare down and shake their heads when the subject of that day's devastating car bombing came up.

And then there is the “what if” question: What if their tour in Iraq hadn't been extended? Would this have happened at all? Would eight of their fellow soldiers have been killed in a single incident?

The fight began for the 4-27 almost as soon as its guns rolled out of camp into unfamiliar territory.

On April 21, during the first leaders' reconnaissance mission for Charlie Battery's 2nd Platoon, three soldiers were seriously wounded when shrapnel from a roadside bomb tore open the howitzer they were in.

The bomb “ripped it to shreds,” said Charlie Battery commander Capt. Jim Hickman, 37, of Atlanta. “The next day, we modified the guns [with sandbags and extra armor] so that wouldn't happen again.”

Four days later, while on patrol with the battalion's scout platoon, there was another roadside explosion next to the scouts' uparmored Humvee, wounding two soldiers and an interpreter, who got so spooked he jumped out of the vehicle and was seriously injured when he was run over by an approaching Humvee.

After the two attacks — and the discovery of 11 unexploded road bombs consisting of more than 100 artillery shells, including four 350-pound aerial bombs strung together — the battalion resolved to carry out dismounted sweeps of two roads leading into the farming town of Yusufiyah, 15 miles southwest of Baghdad.

The area had been largely underpatrolled by coalition troops, Hickman said, and many of the town's residents had worked in a bomb factory there and were knowledgeable about handling munitions.

The darkest day

The battalion's batteries began taking turns conducting foot patrols on and near the roads.

Patrolling on April 29 in a wedge formation about 200 meters into the brush, the soldiers of Charlie Battery stopped on both sides of a farm road when the lead man identified what appeared to be an improvised explosive device. The artillerymen-turned-riflemen lowered themselves into culverts and irrigation ditches and took a security halt position so the engineer company trailing by about 400 meters could catch up.

Hunkered down over a 400-by-400 meter area, the soldiers waited and teased one another on their two-way radios.

“We were saying things to each other like, ‘I can see you, but you can't see me,’” recalled Staff Sgt. Raymond Young, 26, of Georgetown, S.C., a section chief in 1st

Platoon. The radio calls darted among the men with the kind of tongue-in-cheek expressions born of having spent a year together.

“I love you.” “I love you, too.” “I love you guys,” they remembered saying to one another in a mocking, high-pitch voice.

Danger was on its way to them in the form of a suicide bomber in a brown Opel station wagon that battalion commander Lt. Col. Brian McKiernan estimates was carrying up to 500 pounds of explosives and artillery rounds.

The vehicle was spotted just before 11:30 a.m., approaching slowly from the west on a road perpendicular to the one the soldiers were on. When the driver reached the farm road, he turned left toward the 2nd Platoon and the soldiers stood up from their covered positions.

The car passed one soldier and the rest moved in to surround it. Platoon leader 1st Lt. Jared Vineyard, stepped forward to stop the vehicle.

“Which is exactly what he was supposed to do,” McKiernan said. The bomber “was in a position to either use his bomb or lose it.”

What ordinarily would have been a routine vehicle stop-and-search instead became an unspeakable scene of carnage.

The driver detonated his deadly cargo, killing himself and taking eight soldiers with him: Staff Sgt. Esau Patterson, Staff Sgt. Jeff Dayton, Sgt. Ryan Campbell, Spc. James Beckstrand, Spc. Justin Schmidt, Pfc. Ryan Reed, Pfc. Norman Darling and Pvt. Jeremy Ewing. Three others were wounded — Vineyard, Staff Sgt. Bradley Smelly and Spc. Ernesto Victor.

“I doubt the soldiers were the target. It was not a tactic we had seen the enemy use, attacking a dismount with a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device,” McKiernan said. “These soldiers died accomplishing their mission, which was to prevent an attack against the clearing force. But that doesn’t make it any easier.”

The consequences of the explosion were “horrific,” McKiernan said.

The surviving soldiers were stunned.

“It shocked the hell out of me. At first we all kind of hit the ground and looked around,” said Spc. Stephen Ates, 23 of Jackson, Miss., a member of the 1st Platoon who was across the road at the time of the blast. “I saw Staff Sergeant Dayton. He was still alive, but there was nothing we could do for him. He said, ‘Help me up,’ but that was it.”

Running to the scene to give medical aid, 1st Platoon medic Pfc. David Haugh looked around for 2nd Platoon medic Darling.

“I got there and I was looking for a medic. There was no medic and it was strange,” said Haugh, 21, of Houston. “Later we found Darling lying face down in a field.”

In the aftermath of what some described as “a huge fireball,” the numbed soldiers of Charlie Battery set about recovering their buddies’ remains and equipment. As difficult as it was, McKiernan said, the battery finished the day’s mission.

“I always wanted to be a section chief, but not like this,” said Staff Sgt. Jermaine Brown, 31, of Columbus, S.C., who replaced Dayton as a section chief in 2nd Platoon.

The Charlie Battery soldiers say they can’t ignore the fact that being extended in Iraq may have given that bomber an opportunity. But they don’t dwell on it.

Soldier-Reporters’ Boss Kills Story: Says Troops Blown Up By IEDs Don’t “Qualify As News”

6.9.04 By Yochi J. Dreazen, Wall St. Journal

CAMP FALCON , Iraq—On a cool Iraqi night recently, Cpl. Bill Putnam checked his gear and stepped into a waiting Humvee.

A uniformed soldier and a journalist, Cpl. Putnam was carrying tools of both of his trades.

On April 15, a roadside bomb wounded a soldier from the unit during a patrol in a rural area of southern Baghdad that the army has nicknamed “the Badlands.”

Fearing that the militants responsible still were operating in the area, senior commanders ordered First Lt. Brian Slaughter to lead his men on a nighttime counterambush the following night. Cpl. Putnam rode along to cover the mission.

A few minutes later, the radio crackled again, and a soldier at the scene of the attack said there were several injuries, at least one serious.

Cpl. Putnam, who has basic combat life- support training, faced a difficult choice.

He knew he was close enough to the attack to be able to capture vivid details about the bombing and write a gripping article.

He also knew that covering the attack— instead of trying to help treat the wounded— could mean soldiers died. As the vehicles screeched to a halt, Cpl. Putnam made his choice.

He jammed the digital tape recorder back into his pocket, stashed his camera next to his seat in the Humvee and grabbed his first-aid kit. He knew his reporting would suffer because he would be focused on treating the injured, but says he felt obligated to help.

“I remember clearly realizing that I had to leave the camera there so I could help the guys,” he says. “I had to put the journalism on hold.”

When they arrived at the scene of the attack, the soldiers saw that the damaged Humvee had come to a rest in a ditch nearly 10 feet below road level. One of the injured soldiers shrieked in pain as he tried to pull himself out of the ditch.

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Cpl. Putnam grabbed the injured soldier by his flak vest and dragged him away from the vehicle, fearing an explosion. He took the soldier's hand and felt it desperately clenching and unclenching.

The unit medic, furiously treating a more seriously injured soldier, told Cpl. Putnam to set up an infrared beacon in a nearby field for an approaching helicopter.

Cpl. Putnam later heard that the badly injured soldier had his leg amputated that night.

Back at Camp Falcon, Cpl. Putnam began writing up his article about the attack, hoping to get the details down on paper while they still were fresh in his head.

He wrestled with how to cover his own role in the bombing. Omitting all that he did to help treat the injured soldiers would leave gaping holes in the narrative. Writing about it directly might raise questions about the objectivity and veracity of his account.

Cpl. Putnam ultimately decided to mention his own role, but obliquely. He referred to himself in the article generically as a "soldier" or a "combat life saver-qualified soldier."

He says he tried to capture the actual atmosphere of a bombing, instead of merely conveying the simple facts of what happened.

In the end, it didn't matter.

After reading the 1,400-word article, Cpl. Putnam's boss, a public-affairs sergeant, decided not to make the piece available to military publications to run.

With roadside bombs killing and maiming an average of five soldiers a day, she decided the ambush Cpl. Putnam witnessed didn't qualify as news, Cpl. Putnam said.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Kill Iraqi Foreign Ministry Official

Jun 12 BAGHDAD (Reuters)

An attack fatally wounded a senior official of Iraq's foreign ministry in Baghdad Saturday, a foreign ministry official said.

Attackers fired at the car of Bassam Qubba, the director-general of the ministry, as he was on his way to work from his home in the Adhamiya district, said the official, who asked not to be identified.

Qubba, appointed director-general of the ministry two months ago, died in hospital at about 8:30 a.m.

Qubba, a Shi'ite Muslim from Najaf, was **the first senior official to be assassinated in Iraq since a new interim government took office on June 1 with a pledge to make security its top priority.**

Qubba was a career diplomat who had served as Iraq's ambassador to China during Saddam Hussein's rule.

Resistance Raids Two Najaf Police Stations

June 11, 2004 By Robert H. Reid, Associated Press

Shiite soldiers loyal to radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr ransacked an Iraqi police station Thursday in the holy city of Najaf,

Fighting later moved to the second station, which was overrun after police ran out of ammunition.

After police fled the station, witnesses said hundreds of civilians swarmed around it, joining al-Mahdi Army fighters in stripping the compound of fans, furniture and other valuables. Outside, they looted tires, headlights and seats from police vehicles and set them on fire.

Two Spies Executed By Resistance In Baghdad.

7 June 2004 by Muhammad Abu Nasr, member editorial board The Free Arab Voice

Iraqi Resistance fighters executed two spies in the al-Hurriyah neighborhood of Baghdad on Monday, shooting and killing them instantly. The correspondent for Mafkarat al-Islam reported that the local people believed the two were collaborators who worked for the US aggressor forces as spies.

WHOSE STREETS?



(AP Photo/Karim Kadim)

STILL OUR STREETS!



Al-Madhi Army soldiers loyal to Shiite resistance cleric Muqtada al-Sadr hold armed demonstration in Baghdad, June 11, 2004. (AP Photo/Hussein Malla)

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

OCCUPATION REPORT



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Next



Surrounded by friends and supporters from all over the world, Iraq's new President Ghazi al-Yawer waits for the start of funeral for former President Ronald Reagan at the National Cathedral in Washington June 11 (AP Photo/Ron Edmonds)

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

**Kerry & Dean:
The "Blue-Bloods Have Bonded"**

6.7.04 Wall St. Journal

No single Individual, other than Mr. Kerry's future running mate, may be more important to the success of the Democratic ticket against President Bush [than John Dean].

After all the bitterness of last winter, a Dean ally jokes that the two "blue-bloods have bonded." In some respects they resemble two senior vice presidents, who vied for the same chief executive job and now find common interest in staying as a team-not breaking apart,

CLASS WAR NEWS

How To Do It:



Supporters of Nigeria Labour Congress march in favor of the fuel strike in Lagos, June 11, 2004. **Unions representing millions of workers launched the strike Wednesday to demand that the government roll back state-controlled gas, diesel and kerosene prices.** The protest has closed schools, shops and businesses across Nigeria, **paralyzing business.** (AP Photo/Saurabh Das)

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