

GI SPECIAL 2#C32

For Brian: In Memoriam



Fall 2004, The Veteran, Vietnam Veterans Against The War, Vol. 34. #2

The weight of grief is heavy on my shoulders.
I need no special day to bring memories to mind of all you said and did.

Your face, smiling or grave, is with me always, child of my heart's desire.
I see you small and wondering, "Mom, What makes the sun go down?" Then
thoughtfully, "I know, the wind blows it away."

So alive, biking, soccer, swimming, skiing, running, rollerblading, pumping iron.

You became so very strong, but always you were gentle and kind.

Your hands, light on the piano keys, brought out the sounds of harmony, like wind
rustling softly in the leaves, or rain, clear and sparkling on the grass.

Careful listening was your way.

Such a bright future you had planned, and you labored long and patiently to realize
your dream.

Then rolled the drums of war
and you were called

Your still small voice said, "No!"

But the rolling drums rolled on, and you were gone.
Into hatred loosed from the gates of hell, your winged bird was sent,
shot down, and fell.

Your bright future lay bloodied in the sand to rise no more.

And each day as I grow old, I miss you so.

A grave is such a solitary place
for a little boy who loved to play.

*Rosemarie Dietz Slavenas
For Brian*

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. Send requests to address up top.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

Two Marines Killed In Falluja, 3 Wounded; Resistance Statement Says Fighting Will Continue

26 November 2004 Aljazeera.Net & By Mariam Fam, Associated Press

Falluja fighters have killed two US marines and wounding three others who were conducting a house search in the war-ravaged town, US military sources said.

The fighters threw grenades at the marines, Lieutenant General John Sattler said on Friday. Three fighters were also killed in the incident which took place on Thursday.

The marines still face resistance in Falluja, where many buildings were reduced to piles of rubble.

"We will keep searching for weapons until we put a 'green X' on the last house in Falluja," Sattler said.

Marine officers have said they would inspect an estimated 50,000 houses in the city west of Baghdad, a tedious task that involves searching everything from ventilation systems to couches as snipers await opportunities to fire.

Meanwhile, fighters in Falluja have claimed in a statement that they had reorganized and resumed their attacks.

"After reorganising, the Mujahidin resumed their attacks on Wednesday with the aim of shattering the myth of the invincibility of the coalition forces, and the traitors and collaborators who are under the orders of Allawi and Naqib," they said.

The statement issued on Friday by the Mujahidin Council was referring to interim Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi and Interior Minister Falah Naqib, both staunch supporters of the vast operation launched on 8 November.

Green Zone Attack On Mercenaries Kills 4, Wounds 15 More

11/26/2004 The Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq - A British security firm said Friday that four of its employees were killed and 15 others injured in an attack in Baghdad's Green Zone.

Tim J. O'Brien, spokesman for the London-based Global Risk Strategies, said the employees were killed Thursday. Global Risk Strategies is a London-based firm.

Multiple explosions were heard Thursday and black smoke was seen rising from the fortified Green Zone, which houses the U.S. and Iraqi leadership.

Soldiers Firing On Mercenaries

[Miami Herald, November 24, 2004]

Nerves on Baghdad's streets are so frayed that U.S. troops and Iraqi police sometimes mistakenly trigger gunfights with private security workers.

U.S. and Iraqi troops patrolling Baghdad have fired on fast-moving vehicles, fearing that they might be suicide bombers, when they were actually private security forces transporting local and/or foreign officials to various destinations.

Welcome To Tan Son Nhut:

Pilots Land Vietnam Style

11/26/2004 OVER BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) -- "Traffic! Traffic!" blares the cockpit's automated collision warning system just as the pilots of Royal Jordanian Flight 814 pull their airliner from its steep corkscrew descent and begin the final approach to Baghdad International Airport.

"One thing you can say about these flights is that they're not dull," says Robert Brand, the South African pilot. "They're never uneventful. There's always something there to challenge your flying skills."

To lessen the threat of being shot at, pilots have adopted a "nonstandard approach" for landings: They arrive at 15,000 feet and then descend sharply in a stomach-churning series of tight, spiraling turns that pin passengers deep in their seats.

After landing, crew perform a quick walkaround to check fuselage and wings for bullet holes. **"We try to keep above the confines of the airport at all times when we're taking off or landing," Brand says during the landing.**

Marines In Harm's Way

ABANDON ALL HOPE, YE WHO ENTER HERE



US Marines at the entrance of Fallujah (AFP/Mehdi Fedouach)

November 21, 2004 By DEXTER FILKINS, New York Times

FALLUJA, Iraq, Nov. 18 - Eight days after the Americans entered the city on foot, a pair of marines wound their way up the darkened innards of a minaret, shot through with holes by an American tank.

As the marines inched upward, a burst of gunfire rang down, fired by an insurgent hiding in the top of the tower. The bullets hit the first marine in the face, his blood spattering the marine behind him. The marine in the rear tumbled backward down the stairwell, while Lance Cpl. William Miller, age 22, lay in silence halfway up, mortally wounded.

"Miller!" the marines called from below. "Miller!"

With that, the marines' near mystical commandment against leaving a comrade behind seized the group. One after another, the young marines dashed into the minaret, into darkness and into gunfire, and wound their way up the stairs.

After four attempts, Corporal Miller's lifeless body emerged from the tower, his comrades choking and covered with dust. With more insurgents closing in, the marines ran through volleys of machine-gun fire back to their base.

"I was trying to be careful, but I was trying to get him out, you know what I'm saying?" Lance Cpl. Michael Gogin, 19, said afterward.

So went eight days of combat for this Iraqi city, the most sustained period of street-to-street fighting that Americans have encountered since the Vietnam War. The proximity gave the fighting a hellish intensity, with soldiers often close enough to look their enemies in the eyes.

For a correspondent who has covered a half dozen armed conflicts, including the war in Iraq since its start in March 2003, the fighting seen while traveling with a frontline unit in Falluja was a qualitatively different experience, a leap into a different kind of battle.

From the first rockets vaulting out of the city as the marines moved in, the noise and feel of the battle seemed altogether extraordinary; at other times, hardly real at all. **The intimacy of combat, this plunge into urban warfare, was new to this generation of American soldiers, but it is a kind of fighting they will probably see again: a grinding struggle to root out guerrillas entrenched in a city, on streets marked in a language few American soldiers could comprehend. [Hello? Najaf? Remember Najaf? No? What the fuck do you think that was? And as for seeing it again, don't hold your breath. This war is lost The Empire is fucked. You can let up on the heavy breathing.]**

The price for the Americans so far: 51 dead and 425 wounded, a number that may yet increase but that already exceeds the toll from any battle in the Iraq war.

Marines in Harm's Way

The 150 marines with whom I traveled, Bravo Company of the First Battalion, Eighth Marines, had it as tough as any unit in the fight. **They moved through the city almost entirely on foot, into the heart of the resistance, rarely protected by tanks or troop carriers, working their way through Falluja's narrow streets with 75-pound packs on their backs.**

In eight days of fighting, Bravo Company took 36 casualties, including 6 dead, meaning that the unit's men had about a one-in-four chance of being wounded or killed in little more than a week. [25% casualties is the kind of "victory" this army can't stand. These troops are done for a good long time.]

The sounds, sights and feel of the battle were as old as war itself, and as new as the Pentagon's latest weapons systems. The eerie pop from the cannon of the AC-130 gunship, prowling above the city at night, firing at guerrillas who were often only steps away from Americans on the ground. The weird buzz of the Dragon Eye pilotless airplane, hovering over the battlefield as its video cameras beamed real-time images back to the base.

The glow of the insurgents' flares, throwing daylight over a landscape to help them spot their targets: us.

The nervous shove of a marine scrambling for space along a brick wall as tracer rounds ricocheted above.

The silence between the ping of the shell leaving its mortar tube and the explosion when it strikes.

The screams of the marines when one of their comrades, Cpl. Jake Knospler, lost part of his jaw to a hand grenade.

"No, no, no!" the marines shouted as they dragged Corporal Knospler from the darkened house where the bomb went off. It was 2 a.m., the sky dark without a moon. "No, no, no!"

Nothing in the combat I saw even remotely resembled the scenes regularly flashed across movie screens; even so, they often seemed no more real.

Mortar shells and rocket-propelled grenades began raining down on Bravo Company the moment its men began piling out of their troop carriers just outside Falluja. The shells looked like Fourth of July bottle rockets, sailing over the ridge ahead as if fired by children, exploding in a whoosh of sparks.

Whole buildings, minarets and human beings were vaporized in barrages of exploding shells. A man dressed in a white dishdasha crawled across a desolate field, reaching behind a gnarled plant to hide, when he collapsed before a burst of fire from an American tank.

Sometimes the casualties came in volleys, like bursts of machine-gun fire. On the first morning of battle, during a ferocious struggle for the Muhammadia Mosque, about 45 marines with Bravo Company's Third Platoon dashed across 40th Street, right into interlocking streams of fire. By the time the platoon made it to the other side, five men lay bleeding in the street.

The marines rushed out to get them, as they would days later in the minaret, but it was too late for Sgt. Lonny Wells, who bled to death on the side of the road. One of the men

who braved gunfire to pull in Sergeant Wells was Cpl. Nathan Anderson, who died three days later in an ambush.

Sergeant Wells's death dealt the Third Platoon a heavy blow; as a leader of one of its squads, he had written letters to the parents of its younger members, assuring them he would look over them during the tour in Iraq.

"He loved playing cards," Cpl. Gentian Marku recalled. "He knew all the probabilities."



Cpl. Nicholas Ziolkowski: A sniper who was killed by a sniper. (Ashley Gilbertson for The New York Times)

More than once, death crept up and snatched a member of Bravo Company and quietly slipped away. Cpl. Nick Ziolkowski, nicknamed Ski, was a Bravo Company sniper. For hours at a stretch, Corporal Ziolkowski would sit on a rooftop, looking through the scope on his bolt-action M-40 rifle, waiting for guerrillas to step into his sights. The scope was big and wide, and Corporal Ziolkowski often took off his helmet to get a better look.

Tall, good-looking and gregarious, Corporal Ziolkowski was one of Bravo Company's most popular soldiers. Unlike most snipers, who learned to shoot growing up in the countryside, Corporal Ziolkowski grew up near Baltimore, unfamiliar with guns. Though Baltimore boasts no beach front, Corporal Ziolkowski's passion was surfing; at Camp Lejeune, N.C., Bravo Company's base, he would often organize his entire day around the tides.

"All I need now is a beach with some waves," Corporal Ziolkowski said, during a break from his sniper duties at Falluja's Grand Mosque, where he killed three men in a single day.

During that same break, Corporal Ziolkowski foretold his own death. The snipers, he said, were now among the most hunted of American soldiers.

In the first battle for Falluja, in April, American snipers had been especially lethal, Corporal Ziolkowski said, and intelligence officers had warned him that this time, the snipers would be targets.

"They are trying to take us out," Corporal Ziolkowski said.

The bullet knocked Corporal Ziolkowski backward and onto the roof. He had been sitting there on the outskirts of the Shuhada neighborhood, an area controlled by insurgents, peering through his wide scope. He had taken his helmet off to get a better view. The bullet hit him in the head.

For all the death about the place, one inescapable impression left by the marines was their youth. Everyone knows that soldiers are young; it is another thing to see men barely out of adolescence, many of whom were still in high school when this war began, shoot people dead.

The marines of Bravo Company often fought over the packets of M&M's that came with their rations. Sitting in their barracks, they sang along with the Garth Brooks paean to chewing tobacco, "Copenhagen," named for the brand they bought almost to a man:

*Copenhagen, what a wad of flavor
Copenhagen, you can see it in my smile
Copenhagen, hey do yourself a favor, dip
Copenhagen, it drives the cowgirls wild*

One of Bravo Company's more youthful members was Cpl. Romulo Jimenez II, age 21 from Bellington, W.Va.. Cpl. Jimenez spent much of his time showing off his tattoos - he had flames climbing up one of his arms - and talking about his 1992 Ford Mustang. He was a popular member of Bravo Company's Second Platoon, not least because he introduced his sister to a fellow marine, Lance Cpl. Sean Evans, and the couple married.

In the days before the battle started, Corporal Jimenez called his sister, Katherine, to ask that she fix up the interior of his Mustang before he got home.

"Make it look real nice," he told her.

On Wednesday, Nov. 10, around 2 p.m., Corporal Jimenez was shot in the neck by a sniper as he advanced with his platoon through the northern end of Falluja, just near the green-domed Muhammadia Mosque. He died instantly.

Despite their youth, the marines seemed to tower over their peers outside the military in maturity and guts. Many of Bravo Company's best marines, its most proficient killers, were 19 and 20 years old; some directed their comrades in maneuvers and assaults. Bravo Company's three lieutenants, each responsible for the lives of about 50 men, were 23 and 24 years old.

They are a strangely anonymous bunch. The men who fight America's wars seem invariably to come from little towns and medium-size cities far away from the nation's arteries along the coast. Line up a group of marines and ask them where they are from, and they will give you a list of places like Pearland, Tex.; Lodi, Ohio; Osawatomie, Kan.

Typical of the marines who fought in Falluja was Chad Ritchie, a 22-year-old corporal from Keezletown, Va. Corporal Ritchie, a soft-spoken, bespectacled intelligence officer, said he was happy to be out of the tiny place where he grew up, though he admitted that he sometimes missed the good times on Friday nights in the fields.

"We'd have a bonfire, and back the trucks up on it, and open up the backs, and someone would always have some speakers," Corporal Ritchie said. "We'd drink beer, tell stories."

Like many of the young men in Bravo Company, Corporal Ritchie said he had joined the Marines because he yearned for an adventure greater than his small town could offer.

"The guys who stayed, they're all living with their parents, making \$7 an hour," Corporal Ritchie said. "I'm not going to be one of those people who gets old and says, 'I wish I had done this. I wish I had done that.' Every once in a while, you've got to do something hard, do something you're not comfortable with. A person needs a gut check."

Marines like Corporal Ritchie proved themselves time and again in Falluja, but they were not without fear. While camped out one night in the Iraqi National Guard building in the middle of city, Bravo Company came under mortar fire that grew closer with each shot. The insurgents were "bracketing" the building, firing shots to the left and right of the target and adjusting their fire each time.

In the hallways, where the men had camped for the night, the murmured sounds of prayers rose between the explosions. After 20 tries, the shelling inexplicably stopped.

On one particularly grim night, a group of marines from Bravo Company's First Platoon turned a corner in the darkness and headed up an alley. As they did so, they came across men dressed in uniforms worn by the Iraqi National Guard. **The uniforms were so perfect that they even carried pieces of red tape and white, the signal agreed upon to assure American soldiers that any Iraqis dressed that way would be friendly; the others could be killed.**

The marines, spotting the red and white tape, waved, and the men in Iraqi uniforms opened fire. One American, Corporal Anderson, died instantly. One of the wounded men, Pfc. Andrew Russell, lay in the road, screaming from a nearly severed leg.



Cpl. Nathan R. Anderson was killed in an ambush. (Ashley Gilbertson for The New York Times)

A group of marines ran forward into the gunfire to pull their comrades out. But the ambush, and the enemy flares and gunfire that followed, rattled the men of Bravo Company more than any event. In the darkness, the men began to argue. Others stood around in the road. As the platoon's leader, Lt. Andy Eckert, struggled to take charge, the Third Platoon seemed on the brink of panic.

"Everybody was scared," Lieutenant Eckert said afterward. "If the leader can't hold, then the unit can't hold together."

The unit did hold, but only after the intervention of Bravo Company's commanding officer, Capt. Read Omohundro.

Time and again through the week, Captain Omohundro kept his men from folding, if not by his resolute manner then by his calmness under fire. In the first 16 hours of battle, when the combat was continuous and the threat of death ever present, Captain Omohundro never flinched, moving his men through the warrens and back alleys of Falluja with an uncanny sense of space and time, sensing the enemy, sensing the location of his men, even in the darkness, entirely self-possessed.

"Damn it, get moving," Captain Omohundro said, and his men, looking relieved that they had been given direction amid the anarchy, were only too happy to oblige.

A little later, Captain Omohundro, a 34-year-old Texan, allowed that the strain of the battle had weighed on him, but he said that he had long ago trained himself to keep any self-doubt hidden from view.

"It's not like I don't feel it," Captain Omohundro said. "But if I were to show it, the whole thing would come apart."

When the heavy fighting was finally over, a dog began to follow Bravo Company through Falluja's broken streets. First it lay down in the road outside one of the buildings the company had occupied, between troop carriers. Then, as the troops moved on, the mangy dog slinked behind them, first on a series of house searches, then on a foot patrol, always keeping its distance, but never letting the marines out of its sight.

Bravo Company, looking a bit ragged itself as it moved up through Falluja, momentarily fell out of its single-file line.

"Keep a sharp eye," Captain Omohundro told his men. "We ain't done with this war yet."

Soldier From Nebraska Dies Of Infections

Nov 26, 2004 The Associated Press

FALLS CITY, Neb. -- A U.S. Marine from Nebraska has died of injuries he received in Iraq on Nov. 8, his family reported.

Sgt. Nick Nolte, a native of Falls City, died Wednesday at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., according to his aunt, Cindy Santo of Falls City.

Nolte, 25, was being treated for injuries received when a roadside bomb hit his vehicle near Baghdad. Four other soldiers also were injured.

Nolte is survived by his wife, Melina, and 3-year-old daughter, Alanna, of Cherry Point, N.C. He also is survived by his mother, Anita Nolte of Falls City.

Nolte suffered breaks to both legs and one arm, as well as shrapnel wounds from the blast, his uncle, Matt Santo, told the Omaha World-Herald. He died shortly after doctors discovered Nolte's arm and a leg had become infected.

Nolte was a 1998 graduate of Falls City Sacred Heart and enlisted in the Marines after high school.

TROOP NEWS

“Stay Away From The Military,” He Wrote. “I Mean It.” Soldier, Expecting To Die, Writes His Son

Nov 26, 2004 By T.A. BADGER, Associated Press Writer

SAN ANTONIO, Texas - Gary Qualls worried a lot after his son went off to war, so he went hunting last week to get his mind off it. When he got home, a letter from Louis was waiting. The young Marine wrote about the Fallujah offensive: "I fear it's a fight for my life. Dad, I need your prayers and advice more than ever." About an hour later, there was a knock on the door.

Louis Qualls, of Temple, was killed on Nov. 16 — the latest of 12 soldiers and Marines from Texas killed in combat this month, 10 in fighting in and around Fallujah. **It was an unusually high toll for one state, even in this deadly month of warfare.**

Shortly before he was killed on Nov. 9, Marine Staff Sgt. Russell Slay wrote a letter to his family. In it the 28-year-old Humble resident, anticipating death, said his goodbyes to his young children. He told his 9-year-old daughter Kinlee that he'll miss her, but that she'll always be his little girl and he'll always watch out for her.

To 5-year-old Walker, he offered advice that he hoped would put the boy on a less risky career path. "Be studious, stay in school and stay away from the military," he wrote. "I mean it."

Marine Staff Sgt. Gene Ramirez, who grew up in San Antonio, could have opted to not return to the war zone because he had already served there and was his family's only surviving son.

His parents — his father Pedro also served in the Marines — urged him to use that option, but his cousin and fellow Marine Ruben Hernandez Sr. says Ramirez, 28, never would have.

"Gene was a hard charger, man, let me tell you," said Hernandez. "There's nothing I could have told him, or his dad or his mom."

For Hernandez, whose son Ruben Jr. is a Marine sergeant scheduled to be sent to Iraq early next year, Ramirez's death reverberated on several levels. Not only were they related by blood and uniform, Hernandez was also the recruiter who signed up Ramirez for the Marines back in the mid '90s.

"I felt guilty at first — 'Maybe if I didn't put him in and had him do something else...' he said. "Well, he would have gone somewhere else and joined. That's the only thing that I say to myself right now."

Iraq? No Thanks! Army National Guard Recruiting 30% Short Of Goal

November 24, 2004 By Dave Moniz, USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — The Army National Guard has fallen significantly behind its recruiting goal one month into the military's new fiscal year, continuing a downward slide that began in 2003 and could make it harder for the Pentagon to find enough troops for the war in Iraq.

In October, the Army Guard recruited 2,546 enlistees, more than 30% below its target of 3,675.

Sacramento Soldier Can Pursue His Case Against Stop Loss --- From Iraq!

November 23, 2004 Claire Cooper , Sacramento Bee (California)

SAN FRANCISCO - A federal appeals court Monday refused to block a Sacramento-area soldier's deployment to Iraq while he pursues a case against the military's use of laws allowing it to extend enlistments during wars or national emergencies.

The soldier, identified in court papers as John Doe to prevent retaliation, contends the extensions are illegal because Congress hasn't declared war and the military action in Iraq isn't a U.S. emergency. **The government argues the program is justified by the post-Sept. 11, 2001, national emergency.**

This month U.S. District Judge Frank C. Damrell Jr. in Sacramento refused to issue a preliminary injunction that would have kept the soldier in the country while his case is decided. The soldier filed an emergency appeal.

But in Monday's brief decision a three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said Damrell didn't abuse his discretion.

The appellate judges said the soldier could pursue his case from Iraq or, if the 9th Circuit ordered it later, he could be brought back from Iraq.

The soldier signed up to serve until April 30 with the California National Guard. His company recently was sent to Fort Lewis in Washington state for training before deployment to Iraq. Its mobilization order and a second order directed personally to the soldier both extended his service by at least 11 months.

Court papers describe him as a married father of two, a decorated combat veteran who enlisted with the Guard for two one-year terms.

“I'd Go To Jail Before I'd Go Back There," He Said: Resistance To Iraq Call-Ups Grows

11/25/2004 WILLIAM BUNCH , Philadelphia Daily News (Pennsylvania)

"Last week when he was home, he said he's not going to Iraq," Sears said. "He really hates the war - he's always been against it."

Officials estimated that some 40,000 National Guard members have had their tours extended involuntarily, most for hazardous duty in Iraq or Afghanistan.

In recent weeks, the Pentagon has been digging deeper, calling on an additional 4,000 ex-soldiers - many of whom left the military years ago to start jobs or raise families - who are part of a pool called the Individual Ready Reserve, or IRR, to resume active duty because troops are stretched so thin.

Still, with no end to the insurgency in Iraq in sight, the call-ups are starting to exhibit increasing resistance in ways that - like some other aspects of the fighting in Gulf region - may remind some people of the Vietnam era.

The *New York Times* reported last week that roughly half of the 4,000 IRR call-ups are trying to avoid their service either through official channels or by simply not showing up.

Among the larger pool of National Guard call-ups - the category that Pellegrini belongs to -- there are some looking to win conscientious objector status, and several have gone to court seeking legal protection.

An ad hoc network of military families and anti-war activists has been working closely with soldiers looking for ways to contest their recent call-ups. Officials here say they're getting increasing calls for aid as the situation on the ground in Iraq seems to deteriorate.

"We get calls every day from people who are in the military reserves who are getting orders to go and who are saying, 'This is something that I don't want to do,' " said Bill Galvin, of the Center for Conscience and War, based in Washington, D.C.

Galvin said some of the most dire calls are from reservists who have already served one tour in Iraq and are getting orders to go back.

"Some of them have said, 'I'd go to jail before I'd go back there,' " he said.

"They say they've witnessed things or participated in things that have caused them terrible trouble sleeping at night, and they don't want to put themselves back in the middle of it."

Meanwhile, many soldiers who could be called up - and their families - wait and worry that they'll get a phone call.

"It's just like a back-door draft," said Ben Sears, a just-retired West Philadelphia High history teacher whose 28-year-old son is finishing a five-year Army enlistment in San Antonio. He said that Zachary Sears, a graduate of Philly's Masterman High and of American University, will be placed on the IRR if he doesn't re-enlist.

"Last week when he was home, he said he's not going to Iraq," Sears said. "He really hates the war - he's always been against it."

NEED 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/> And join with Iraq War vets in the call to end the occupation and bring our troops home now! (www.ivaw.net)

3rd I.D. Or 82nd At Risk; Rumsfeld Planning Fresh Ambush

Nov. 22, 2004 By Bradley Graham, MSNBC

Senior U.S. military commanders in Iraq say it is increasingly likely they will need a further increase in combat forces to put down remaining areas of resistance in the country.

Over the past week, a closer assessment of the forces needed for the Fallujah recovery effort and future offensive operations revealed a gap in desired troop strength, at least over the next two or three months, according to several officers familiar with the issue.

The officers said the exact number of extra troops needed is still being reviewed but estimated it at the equivalent of several battalions, or about 3,000 to 5,000 soldiers. The number of U.S. troops in Iraq fell to nearly 100,000 last spring before rising to 138,000, where it has stayed since the summer.

To boost the current level, military commanders have considered extending the stay of more troops due to rotate out shortly, or *accelerating the deployment of the 3rd Infantry Division*, which is scheduled to start in January.

But a third option - drawing all or part of a brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division on emergency standby in the United States - has emerged as increasingly likely.

Troops Without Rifles Sent To Die In Iraq: Marine General Makes Stunning Discovery

November 29, 2004 By Rick Maze, Army Times staff writer

Rep. Ike Skelton of Missouri, the armed services committee's ranking Democrat, said **he is worried that some units being deployed to Iraq are missing basic pieces of equipment, including rifles.**

"The needs of our service men and women are not being met," Skelton said. **"We have units preparing to deploy into combat without weapons and equipment they will need. I know of one active-duty Army brigade currently training to deploy that lacks 542 of the rifles needed to meet its troop requirements."**

Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Michael Hagee said Iraq deployments have run up a bill of \$8 billion to \$10 billion for operations, maintenance and sustainability. He said Marines in virtually all operational units find themselves either deployed or preparing to deploy, a situation they and their families seem to be tolerating.

But there is probably a limit to what Marines and their families will take, Hagee added. [No shit? That's why they made him a general, figuring that stuff out.]

Marines Fucked Over Again; Pentagon Defies Law, Screws Up Their Health Assessments

November 29, 2004 By Rick Maze, Army Times staff writer

The services have made progress in keeping better track of the health of service members who have deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, but **there are still gaps in medical records that make it difficult to assess the risk of service in a combat zone, congressional investigators say.**

In a report released Nov. 15, the Government Accountability Office said fewer than 10 percent of Army and Air Force records of people who had returned from deployment were missing key documents.

However, the GAO found that 24 percent of Navy records and, at one base, 63 percent of Marine Corps records that were reviewed lacked either the pre- or post-deployment health assessments required under a 1997 law.

Congress ordered the services to keep records of pre- and post-deployment medical exams, blood samples, mental health assessments and immunization and treatment records linked to deployments as a way of avoiding some of the difficulties U.S. military officials have faced in investigating health complaints of veterans of the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

Lawmakers believed keeping better records would make it easier to determine what health care problems could be related to deployment. Long-term plans also call for the services to keep track of the movement of individuals within a combat

zone so it will be possible to reconstruct who may have been exposed to a specific health threat.

The 1997 law requires a pre-deployment medical examination, no more than 12 months old, to be part of the medical records of all deploying service members and for a post-deployment medical assessment to be made within 30 days of return. In most cases, the GAO found that records were available, but noted continued problems with some pre-deployment exams being more than a year old and post-deployment exams not being made within 30 days.

Immunization records are missing from the medical files of some troops, and the required blood samples also are missing in some cases, the report says.

61% Of Japanese Want Troops Home From Iraq Now: Koizumi Dictatorship Doesn't Care

25 November 2004 Aljazeera

Most people in Japan want their troops to leave Iraq, according to a poll carried out by a leading business newspaper.

The Nihon Keizai Shimbun poll found on Thursday that some 61% of Japanese want troops home now.

The majority of those who took part voiced growing opposition to Japan's first deployment to an active combat zone since the second world war.

The business daily also revealed that nearly three-quarters of ruling Liberal Democratic Party supporters were extremely concerned about the growing instability in Iraq.

The same paper carried out a poll last April in which only 42% called on the government to withdraw forces from Iraq.

Japan's deployment is meant to end on 14 December unless Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi extends it, as he has indicated he will.

Just 25% of those who took part favoured extending the deployment – with some of those voters not stressing the necessity to rebuild Iraq but to maintain Japan's close alliance with the US.

Pentagon Advisory Board Says U.S. Policies Seen As “Self-Serving Hypocrisy”

25 November, 2004 BBC

The US is losing "the war of ideas" in the Islamic world, a Pentagon advisory panel has warned.

A report by the Defence Science Board says official US talk of bringing democracy to Muslim nations is seen as "self-serving hypocrisy".

It says if the US wants Muslims to move towards its understanding of tolerance, it must reassure them this does not mean submitting to "the American way".

The report urges Washington to change its approach urgently.

"Muslims do not hate our freedom, but rather they hate our policies," the report says.

"The overwhelming majority voice their objections to what they see as one-sided support in favour of Israel and against Palestinian rights, and the long-standing, even increasing, support for what Muslims collectively see as tyrannies, most notably Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Pakistan and the Gulf states.

"Thus, when American public diplomacy talks about bringing democracy to Islamic societies, this is seen as no more than self-serving hypocrisy," the report says.

It adds that the US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq has actually raised the stature of radical enemies of America.

"US actions appear... to be motivated by ulterior motives, and deliberately controlled in order to best serve American national interests at the expense of truly Muslim self-determination," the report says.

The Defence Science Board is made of civilian experts appointed by the Pentagon, and offers the department advice on scientific, technical and other issues.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Resistance Attacks Rashad Cop Station

26 November 2004 Aljazeera.Net & (AFX)

Armed fighters attacked a police station near the northern city of Kirkuk, killing one policeman and injuring three, police said on Friday.

Fighters used machine-guns and rocket-propelled grenades in their assault on a police station in Rashad, 50km southwest of Kirkuk on Thursday night, according to police Brigadier Sarhat Qadir.

The attackers also torched three police positions in the area, which has been plagued by relentless attacks and ambushes against police forces.

Samarra Collaborator Politician Killed

26 November 2004 Aljazeera.Net & (AFX)

In Samarra, which was recently occupied by US forces after remaining a no-go zone for months, a member of a political party accused of ties to the US military was killed in Samara, police said.

"Nabil Said Darwish, a member of the National Salvation Movement, was assassinated this morning by armed men in Samarra," police Lieutenant-Colonel Mahmud Muhammad said on Friday.

The party is led by Wafiq al-Samarrai, a former general under Saddam Hussein who broke away from the regime shortly before the US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003.

"Darwish had survived several assassination attempts over the past two months, which had left two of his bodyguards dead," the police officer said.

Fighters in Samarra, some 128km north of Baghdad, accuse the party of having links to the US military.

Two Oil Wells Attacked

Energy Security November 25

Attack on two oil wells near the Himreen Mountains, 75 miles (120 km) south of Kirkuk.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

The Struggle Continues



Fall 2004, The Veteran, Vol. 34. #2

The election is now over and the Bush regime has been given four more years to carry out its openly antidemocratic and pro-imperialist policies. People are looking to see how we in Vietnam Veterans Against The War are going to respond to the situation that results from this quadrennial event. But there should be no surprises for anyone who has followed our history.

VVAW was first established in 1967, in the midst of “our” war and during the Democratic administration of Lyndon Johnson. We have continued our struggle for peace, social justice and better treatment for veterans of all eras during every political administration since then. **No political party gets a free pass from us, Democrat or Republican. A Republican win does not demoralize us, and a Democratic win would not have lulled us into complacency.**

We fought our way through the repressive years of the Nixon administration, and we survived. We have continued our struggles through every successive administration, no matter what they threw at us. Our victories in helping to end the Vietnam war and in bringing about the recognition of Agent Orange effects and PTSD cannot be denied.

VVAW was at the forefront in all of these efforts, when the so-called “Swift Boat Veterans for Truth” were *doing* nothing whatsoever to help veterans. **And remember, Nixon won by a landslide in 1972 and was out of office in two years.**

With every new war, VVAW is joined by new generations of veterans who have decided to work for an end to the injustices that produce war.

We have made a conscious decision to stick around and continue the fight for you, the veterans of all eras. With this in mind, we actively support the newly-formed Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW).

We in VVAW have always taken the long view. We recognize that the fight for peace and real social justice does not end with this or that political administration. All you need to do is take a trip through Howard Zinn’s “People’s History of the United States” and you will see veterans and GIs from every era, Revolutionary War to the present, in the forefront of struggle.

This is our tradition, and politicians of whatever stripe in whatever office should be on notice that we are not going to fade away.

The end of the election is only the beginning of the next stage in this continuing struggle. Join us!

Every Victory A Defeat; Powell Says U.S. Losing War

11.27.04 Alex Callinicos, Socialist Worker, UK

FALLUJAH FINALLY fell to US Marines last week. Few can have doubted that, with its overwhelming firepower and highly trained and mobile troops, the Pentagon would be able to capture the city if it so chose.

The real question is whether the fall of Fallujah represents a decisive tilt of the balance in favour of the US and its puppet regime. A television interview from Fallujah with Michael Ware, Time magazine's bureau chief in Baghdad, suggests not.

Ware calls the capture of Fallujah "a sweeping victory" for the US but says, "I wouldn't say that we're losing this war at this stage, but I'm certainly not of the view that we're winning..."

"As a journalist, I was free until March this year to travel the breadth of this country. Then, after [the first Fallujah crisis in] April, I was much more restricted to the confines of the metropolis of Baghdad. Well, we've lost Baghdad.

"Sitting in my own compound in the city, I'm prone to mortar fire. They have kidnap teams circling our block. A journalist was kidnapped 300 metres outside our gate. "Zarqawi controls central nodes of the city, including the most infamous Haifa Street, the scene of bloody engagements for months now."

Ware continues, "I try to shy away from analogies or comparisons to Vietnam. But sometimes it can be chilling. It was once said that the only ground the US soldier could control is that beneath his feet. Well, in many regards, so it is in Iraq. We do not control this country..."

"Something that resonates with me to this day is interviews I've done with senior insurgent leaders, the upper echelons. And they talk to me about reading Vo Nguyen Giap, the Vietnamese general. They talk to me about reading Che Guevara, Mao Zedong."

As in Vietnam, the US is trying to deny the insurgents support by winning the "hearts and minds" of the Iraqi people. But, according to Ware, "We're not winning them. Day by day, there's a steady drip feed of hearts and minds slipping away from us.

The result is that when the US forces try to break through on one front, a new front opens up elsewhere. As the Marines began to storm Fallujah, fighting broke out in Samarra and Mosul.

Samarra was the target of a carefully prepared operation by US and Iraqi puppet forces back in the summer that was intended as a model for the assault on Fallujah.

Mosul is even more significant. Capital of the northern oil industry, the city is on the edge of the Kurdish region—the only part of Iraq where the US can count on local allies with a real political base.

But on 10-11 November insurgents overran nine police stations in Mosul. More than three quarters of the 4,000 Iraqi police in the city deserted.

A remarkable report in last Saturday's Financial Times described how the same offensive "swept away all vestiges of government in the smaller towns in the Tigris valley to the south, forcing the US military to go in and rebuild Iraq interim government control virtually from scratch".

Most US troops had been pulled out of the area to concentrate on Fallujah. Now new task forces have had to be assembled to retake lost ground.

The FT headline says it all: "Iraq's Hit And Run Insurgents Outsmart Under-Strength Troops". The US lacks the troops to deny the insurgents territory.

Before he was effectively sacked last week as US Secretary of State, Colin Powell privately told friends that they are losing in Iraq. His military career began with one great defeat for US imperialism in Vietnam. It looks like, in his last government job, Powell has helped to engineer another.

ONE MORE BETRAYAL; No End For A War With No Mission

November 21, 2004 By MARK DANNER, New York Times

"Our senior officers knew the war was going badly. Yet they bowed to groupthink pressure and kept up pretenses. ...Many of my generation, the career captains, majors, and lieutenant colonels seasoned in that war, vowed that when our turn came to call the shots, we would not quietly acquiesce in halfhearted warfare for half-baked reasons that the American people could not understand." Colin Powell

When I arrived in Iraq 13 months ago, the insurgents were mounting 17 attacks a day; last week there were 150 a day.

If the old rule of thumb about counterinsurgency warfare holds true - that the guerrilla wins by not losing and the government loses by not winning - then America is losing the Iraq war.

Begun as an ideological crusade, the war has now settled into something bloody, murderous and crude, with no "exit strategy" in sight.

The war's beginning, built on the threat of weapons that did not exist, and its ending, which flickered to life so temptingly on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier Lincoln 18 months ago, have disappeared, leaving American troops fighting and dying in a kind of lost, existential desert of the present.

OCCUPATION REPORT

"Who To Trust?" Ask U.S. Officers After Resistance Takes Mosul; A Years Work Gone In One Day

22 Nov 2004 By Luke Baker, (Reuters)

Besides destroying police stations and killing Iraqi soldiers, insurgents in Mosul have also managed to strike at a more intangible target in the last 10 days -- the hard-earned trust between U.S. **troops** and Iraqis.

After 19 months of trying to build relationships in Iraq's third-largest city, two days of violent unrest and their aftermath have left U.S. **troops** wondering who their allies really are and many Iraqis warier than ever of the Americans. **[Lie #1: Reporter says "troops" but quotes nobody but officers.]**

"It's impossible to tell who's on our side, particularly when it comes to the police," said Captain Robert Lackey, a company commander with the U.S. Stryker Brigade, which patrols Mosul and a large portion of northern Iraq.

Many Iraqi police dropped their weapons and ran when hundreds of insurgents stormed Mosul police stations and then burned or blew them up in a two-day rampage on Nov. 10-11. **[Lie #2: "rampage" In war, it's called an offensive. If this reporter wrote about the U.S. "rampage" in Falluja, he'd be fired in a heartbeat. So what we have here is not a reporter, but a propagandist for the occupation. Nevertheless, some truth keeps leaking through.]**

In the past two weeks, more than 50 Iraqis employed at one U.S. base in the centre of Mosul, where they do everything from cleaning and washing to running a shop and translating, have quit, too intimidated by insurgent threats to return to work.

Translators at another U.S. base are still on the job, but privately say they will have to quit if the threats continue.

"I like the Americans, but there's only so much they can do to protect me," said a translator who calls himself Steve to hide his Iraqi name and wears mirrored sunglasses to conceal his face. **"I'm worried. It's got much worse in recent days."**

U.S. military commanders say it could take months, and perhaps much longer, to rebuild Mosul's police force. That is time U.S. and Iraqi authorities don't have.

U.S. forces have pledged to retake all insurgent areas by the end of the year and hand more security over to the Iraqi police and National Guard for elections, due at the end of January.

Surveying the rubble of six demolished police stations on Monday, one U.S. officer said it would probably be months before any new police stations were standing, let alone filled with reliable, competent police officers. **[Lie #3: by omission. Where is the reporters' comment on the U.S. generals who spent last week proclaiming that no police stations in Mosul had been destroyed?]**

"We're just hoping that the next bunch of guys are better than the last, otherwise we really are wasting our time," said Lieutenant Noel Rodriguez, a Stryker Brigade platoon leader. **[Right, he's almost got it. Invading and occupying somebody else's country is indeed a waste of time, and human life, since the resistance will continue, and grow, until all Bush's foreign fighters go home.]**

U.S. authorities spent millions of dollars and many man hours setting up, training and supplying Mosul's 4,000-strong police force over the past year, only to have 80 percent of it desert the moment insurgents threatened.

A multi-million-dollar police academy full of computers, weapons, first aid equipment and other supplies was attacked and looted during the rampage and is now smashed up and deserted. **[Lie #4: "looted": In war, it's called captured. If this reporter wrote that U.S. troops in Falluja "looted" resistance arms supply depots, he'll not only be fired, he'd probably end up on the no-fly list for suspicious persons.]**

A few days before it was attacked, several of the U.S. military's top generals in Iraq had visited the centre to praise the effectiveness of the recruiting and training. [Of course. Generals have nothing to do with reality, in any form.]

The U.S. suspicion of the Iraqi police is now so deep that even those that remain on the job are considered a risk.

Before driving past the one station in his area that is still occupied by police, one U.S. officer explained that if police were not wearing flak jackets and did not wave when he waved, then they were probably on the side of the insurgents.

Not wearing flak jackets shows they are on the rebel side because they evidently know they are not going to get shot or attacked by guerrillas, the officer explained.

None of them had flak jackets and none of them waved.

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

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Blast Kills 2 Soldiers, Injures 1 On Patrol In Afghanistan

[Chicago Tribune, November 25, 2004]

A bomb exploded near a U.S. patrol in southern Afghanistan, killing two U.S. soldiers and wounding another.

CLASS WAR NEWS

USA: The Bankrupt Empire Lurches Towards Economic "Armageddon"

11/23/04 By Brett Arends, Boston Herald

Stephen Roach, the chief economist at investment banking giant Morgan Stanley, has a public reputation for being bearish.

But you should hear what he's saying in private.

Roach met select groups of fund managers downtown last week, including a group at Fidelity.

His prediction: America has no better than a 10 percent chance of avoiding economic "armageddon."

Press were not allowed into the meetings. But the Herald has obtained a copy of Roach's presentation. **A stunned source who was at one meeting said, "it struck me how extreme he was - much more, it seemed to me, than in public."**

Roach sees a 30 percent chance of a slump soon and a 60 percent chance that "we'll muddle through for a while and delay the eventual armageddon." The chance we'll get through OK: one in 10. Maybe.

In a nutshell, Roach's argument is that America's record trade deficit means the dollar will keep falling. To keep foreigners buying T-bills and prevent a resulting rise in inflation, Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan will be forced to raise interest rates further and faster than he wants.

The result: U.S. consumers, who are in debt up to their eyeballs, will get pounded. Less a case of ``Armageddon," maybe, than of a ``Perfect Storm."

Roach marshaled alarming facts to support his argument.

To finance its current account deficit with the rest of the world, he said, America has to import \$2.6 billion in cash. Every working day.

That is an amazing 80 percent of the entire world's net savings.

Sustainable? Hardly.

Meanwhile, he notes that household debt is at record levels.

Twenty years ago the total debt of U.S. households was equal to half the size of the economy. Today the figure is 85 percent.

Nearly half of new mortgage borrowing is at flexible interest rates, leaving borrowers much more vulnerable to rate hikes.

Americans are already spending a record share of disposable income paying their interest bills. And interest rates haven't even risen much yet.

You don't have to ask a Wall Street economist to know this, of course. Watch people wielding their credit cards this Christmas.

Roach's analysis isn't entirely new. But recent events give it extra force.

The dollar is hitting fresh lows against currencies from the yen to the euro.

Its parachute failed to open over the weekend, when a meeting of the world's top finance ministers produced no promise of concerted intervention.

It has farther to fall, especially against Asian currencies, analysts agree.

The Fed chairman was drawn to warn on the dollar, and interest rates, on Friday.

Roach could not be reached for comment yesterday. A source who heard the presentation concluded that a ``spectacular wave of bankruptcies" is possible.

Received:

Draft Hysteria Bullshit

Comment from networker Rick Jahnkow to all on VVAWNET

Subject: Re: Government Looking at Military Draft Lists

Date: Sun, 21 Nov 2004 22:58:17 EST

This draft list matter is a non-issue.

The story headline is nonsensical (SSS looking at military draft lists--what does that mean? SSS is the agency that KEEPS the list, so what's so special about it looking at its own list?)

And as the text explains in the last half, SSS has been almost continuously looking at Dept. of Ed. records and it has no new sinister meaning.

The real issue that people should be focusing on is the militarization of schools and the poverty draft. It's not a speculative threat--it's a real one that exists right now.

-Rick Jahnkow

Committee Opposed to Militarism and the Draft

Broken Finger Pointers

From: J

To: GI Special

Sent: Friday, November 26, 2004

Subject: Broken Finger Pointers

Dear Thomas,

If you are in contact with the soldier who wrote this please tell him his letter is terrific.

I also believe the electorate is responsible for the actions of their government. Too much ignorance, apathy, and gullibility, cannot be excused by blaming others. As an Australian voter I feel great shame, at the actions of my government, but although many people think like me, and are very active, we are in the minority. The same applies in the U.S., the UK, and Israel. I know of, at least, one U.S. group telling its members to withhold tax payments. Some Americans have already gone to prison, or are awaiting trial, for being too actively opposed to the government policy. These are the strong ones. The world needs more like them.

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Send to contact@militaryproject.org. Name, I.D., withheld on request. Replies confidential.

Web Copies

For back issues see: GI Special web site at <http://www.militaryproject.org/>

The following that we know of have also posted issues:

<http://www.notinourname.net/qi-special/> ; www.qifightback.org ;

<http://www.albasrah.net/magalat/english/qi-special.htm>,

www.williambowles.info/qispecial

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