

GI SPECIAL 2#C43

Discouraging Chaos



From: H, Soldier, Iraq

To: GI Special

Sent: December 04, 2004 7:17 AM

Thanksgiving weekend was discouraging for the 2-63 Armor Battalion of 3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division.

On the 27th of November Khalis came under an organized insurgent attack. The fight was most intense near the Iraqi Police and Iraqi National Guard center, a square block which most of the government buildings are located. The insurgents occupied the large school complex across the street from the ING offices.

The mortar platoon (Hip Shot) was on patrol the morning the assault occurred. The Mortars have fallen into their infantry role and are tasked with combat operations, like counter mortar and road clearance. I was told by one soldier from Hip Shot that there was so much contact that his 50 caliber machine gun went black on ammo (ran out of ammunition) and he was hanging out of the turret shooting insurgents with the shotgun normally used to blow locks off during raids.

Shadow Platoon, the Scouts, were on Quick Reaction Force duty and responded. However, on their race to Khalis, five kilometers North of the Forward Operating Base Scunion, they had to evasively avoid improvised explosive devices that were laid along the main route.

A Specialist from the Shadow platoon said "I saw the white 155 rounds lying on both sides the of the road. The head scout was yelling "Left, Left!" then "Right, Right!" as they tried avoiding the artillery shells."

The Scouts found themselves stuck dealing with clearing the IEDs themselves. Shadow's gunners engaged the IEDs with Mark 19 and 50 cal fire and then some NCOs carefully placed C4 and detonated each round one at a time. One IED was pushed into a canal when fired upon. I was told that a Sergeant took of his gear and dropped into the knee high murky canal to retrieve the round.

Meanwhile another section was rolling to Khalis. The Military Intelligence Officer Major Downing had a meeting that morning with figure heads at the Khalis government compound.

Four trucks full of the Major's Personal Security Detachment took the back way into Khalis.

When they arrived the town was alive with small arms fire and movement. In various spots smoke streamed up over the flat topped skyline. The PSD section made it to the main traffic circle that the ING was using as a rally point. Iraqi Guard soldiers were detaining some insurgents there and had the circle secure when soldiers started yelling to Major Downing's crew that the Deputy Governor of the Diyala Province was under attack by men with RPGs.

The detachment mounted up in their trucks and rolled out towards the Deputy Governor's home, half way between Khalis and Habhib.

As the section approached the targeted area a white truck was spotted in the medium with Arab men piled in the bed. The men were dressed like civilians. Some wore black leather looking jackets. They were all armed with AK 47s and one held a RPG on his shoulder pointed in the direction of the Deputy Governor's home.

The PSD section stopped 100 meters away, and from what I am told, Major Downing gave a panicked, but direct, order to fire.

The gunner of his truck fumbled with the Mark 19, a fully automatic grenade launcher that throws fat bullet looking 40mm grenades over 1000 meters.

The men in the truck seemed to not react to the presence of the four humvees. The trailing three humvee crew members, still confused about the situation, charged their weapons and waited for a command over the communications radio.

None came.



Meanwhile the crew of the lead vehicle dismounted. The gunner in the lead truck brought up a SAW (squad automatic weapon) as the Major continued to yell at his crew to "light the truck up!"

The Iraqi men were surprised when the US Army soldiers, after what seemed like minutes parked behind them, opened up with a rain of bullets and grenades.

The men in the bed of the truck were chewed up with automatic fire and some of the soldiers fired grenades from their M203 launchers, mounted under their assault rifles. One grenade broke through the back window and wind shield and exploded in the air in front of the pickup. Men fell down and out of the truck trying to avoid the rain of bullets and explosions.

Just as the truck seemed to be subdued a car drove into the combat. "He must not have realized what was going on until he was in the kill sac." mentioned one of the PSD drivers. "He picked up speed and tried to drive through, past our vehicles. That is when we shot him up too." A 203 grenade busted into the compartment of the car and it billowed with a flash of grey smoke. The car went off the road and crashed into a pile of garbage and debris. They section continued firing at the car and truck as they saw movement near both. The men found out later that the car ran over a pedestrian lying on the side of the road hoping to not become part of the massacre.

Finally the firing ended and the victims that were still alive had a chance to surrender. The truck was on fire and one man tried moving the RPG out of the nearby blaze, which almost started the fight again as the soldiers nervously yelled for the man to leave the RPG on the ground.

As the Scout Platoon and the ING made it to the scene the remaining men were detained. That is when the PSD learned that the men in the pick up were the Deputy Governor's own body guards.

Two of the body guards, the driver of the car and the man that was run over were dead.

Four of the body guards were badly wounded. All over an identification error.

The chaos of a combat situation and the multiple factions involved in the battle that day caused four men to lose their life.

An ING soldier told me that one of the men that died was going to celebrate his son's eighth birthday the next day. I wonder what he will want for his birthday now?

It was the first engagement for most of the crew of the PSD section.

Afterwards there was mixed feelings, as some were eager to earn the bragging right of seeing combat, but under better circumstances.

Some soldiers were so disgusted they couldn't say anything.

They just shook their heads in disbelief.

One soldier commented "They didn't fire a single round at us." Another told me "This is what is going on. Rich men are making money off us shooting ourselves in the feet."

The men of 2-63 were left discouraged as they evaluated the situation over and over again. *They figured the only solution was if they weren't in Iraq in the first place.*

By Heretic, Baquaba, Iraq





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)

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

IED Kills Staff Sgt. In Habbaniyah

December 7, 2004 U.S. Department of Defense News Release No. 1261-04

The Department of Defense announced today the death of a soldier.

Staff Sgt. Kyle A. Eggers, 27, of Euless, Texas, died Dec. 5 in Habbaniyah, Iraq, when his vehicle was struck by an improvised explosive device. Eggers was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, 2d Infantry Division, Camp Greaves, Korea.

SOLDIER KILLED IN BAGHDAD INSURGENT ATTACK

December 7, 2004 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Release Number: 04-12-10C

BAGHDAD, Iraq – One Task Force Baghdad Soldier died of wounds received at about 11:30 a.m., Dec. 7. The Soldier was on patrol when the unit came under small arms fire.

MARINE DIES IN MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENT

December 7, 2004 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 04-12-09C

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq – A Marine assigned to I Marine Expeditionary Force was killed in a nonhostile motor vehicle accident today.

Baghdad District U.S. Military HQ Under Mortar Attack

07 December 2004 Aljazeera.Net

The US military headquarters in al-Kadhimiya district north of Baghdad came under mortar attack, Aljazeera said.

Columns of smoke were seen rising from the site. There were no immediate reports on casualties resulting from the attack.

Falluja Fighting Goes On And On An On

December 07, 2004 Associated Press & Aljazeera 12.6.04

FALLUJAH, Iraq — The mangled cables and trash that litter the power station's control room do not bother Adil Raffah. **But the bespectacled chief engineer begins to shake when he sees the desk he has worked behind for 25 years, now smashed.**

“Only animals could do this, no Iraqi, never,” he whispers, picking up a hammer left on the floor. “It must have been the Americans.”

To the Marines combing Fallujah, the appearance of these two men is a positive sign: Perhaps they can play a small role in getting the shattered city up and running again. Kasim is said to know the power grid in this part of Anbar province, which includes Fallujah, better than anyone.

But the two Iraqis may not be so willing to play the part.

“I’m doing my job for my country and my family, not for the Americans,” Kasim says. What hurts most, he adds, is that he still cannot go back into the city. “I don’t know what happened to my home,” he says.

Marines are still edgy — facing sporadic pockets of resistance and being highly suspicious of the few Fallujans who stayed behind.

Although the city has fallen, Marines daily fight scattered groups of rebels

Once known as the “city of the mosques,” Fallujah is now a landscape of pancaked multistory buildings, ruined homes and broken minarets that testify to the overwhelming firepower the U.S. military employed to retake the city.

Across town, in the eastern Askari neighborhood, some 70 young men huddled in the yard of the Red Crescent, sister organization to Geneva’s Red Cross. The office was set up in late November to assist those civilians who stayed behind during the fighting.

“Of course I am angry, my house is destroyed, my city is in ruins, everything is gone,” says Saad Mohammed Mansur, 23, one of the many young Sunni Arabs here who claim they are students, left behind by their families to guard homes and property. They deny having anything to do with the Mujahedeen.

Marines search the youths and test them for gunpowder residue on fingers. Those who test positive are arrested; the rest can either stay at the Red Crescent, be escorted back to their homes or out of the city, says Capt. Derek Wastila.

“Gunpowder residue is by no means an immediate recognition of guilt, but if they test positive, they get taken to a higher level of detention,” says Wastila, of San Diego. **[Who the fuck in Falluja doesn’t have “gunpowder residue” on their hands and on every other conceivable part of the human anatomy. The whole city is covered with gunpowder.]**

The next day, the Red Crescent says the U.S. military has ordered it to suspend operations temporarily. Its modest staff heads out, and American troops move in, arresting eight more of the young men inside.

The occupation has decided that personal vehicles will not be allowed into the city because of the threat of car bombs.

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

6% Casualties In Three Months: Vietnam-Style River Patrols Along The Euphrates; “Of The Insurgents There Was No Sign”



River wild: US Marines leave their patrol vessel to wade through the Euphrates and search fields near the water's edge for Iraqi insurgents and arms caches (AFP/GETTY IMAGES)

December 07, 2004 by Anthony Loyd, Times Newspapers Ltd. (uk)

THE ghosts of Vietnam drift through Iraq. Denied and dispelled by advocates of the war, they slink back in the “mission creep”, “quagmire” and “bodybag” accusations of the conflict’s critics.

On the north bank of the Euphrates on Sunday they gathered again, chattering through the rotorblade throb of two overhead Hueys; whispering through the tall rush beds dividing the paddy fields and irrigation ditches; lurking beneath the palm trees and shadows thrown by a fat orange sun; echoing the words of the young American soldier driving Bravo Company’s commander to the start line of the day’s sweep-and-search mission.

“My father was in the special forces in Vietnam,” Private Scott Carlisle, 25, said. “He did four tours there between 1969 and 1973. He was shot in the Mekong Delta, but survived, hiding beneath the body of one of his buddies after his platoon took 90 per cent casualties and the VC went through them, finishing off the survivors.

“He was a great soldier,” he added, “but a lousy husband and an even worse father. He died when he was 48. He lived life hard.”

It was early morning. Private Carlisle and more than 100 other Bravo Company troops of the 44th Engineer Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division — backed by Abrams tanks, Bradley fighting vehicles and Humvees — were deploying on Operation Bear, a lengthy mission to search for the weapons caches of an otherwise invisible enemy. Across the oily brown, slow-moving expanse of the Euphrates sat the city of Ramadi, obscured by a line of palms and thick vegetation.

A hotbed of insurgent activity, the area has taken the lives of 41 soldiers and wounded 300 more of the 5,500 men in Private Carlisle’s brigade since they deployed to Ramadi in September. [That’s 6% casualties in 3 months. That’s a fucking disaster.]

Dismounting from their vehicles, the American sappers moved forward in lines across the paddy fields, some bearing mine detectors, all laden with up to 60lb of equipment, including their M16s, grenades, 9mm pistols and ammunition. The sun climbed and the heat bore down.

Of combat-age Iraqi men, there was no sign. Instead, as the American search lines converged on the few dismal farmsteads, they found only goats, chickens, women and children.

“Seen any suspicious activity in the area?” Captain Duncan Smith, a civil affairs officer whose father served twice in Vietnam, asked the women through an interpreter. The answers were identical: “No, nothing.”

“Where are your menfolk?”

Away at work.”

“It’s always the same,” Captain Smith said. “Ninety-nine per cent of the time they tell you nothing, and the men have all skidaddled at the first sign of the military.”

A child offered him an orange. He accepted it, smiled and turned away. “Better not suck it in case it explodes,” he quipped.

Four Small Unit Reconnaissance Craft, crewed by Marines and engineers, joined the operation. Bristling with mounted machineguns, the small boats careered across the river from bank to bank, their heavy wash slapping at the reed beds.

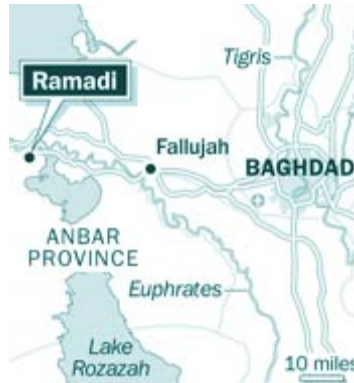
“Just like *Apocalypse Now*, except without the grass and acid,” a US Marine sergeant murmured as he watched the boats’ progress.

Soon one of the craft discovered a large weapons cache of mortar rounds and 130mm shells concealed on the bankside. They blew it up.

The blast reverberated up the river. A short discussion ensued between the craft's crew and the sappers' commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Tommy Mize.

"We usually sink all the Iraqi boats along the banks when we find a cache," a Marine said.

"Well you're not sinking all the boats today," Colonel Mize replied.



By late afternoon a brooding tiredness had settled on the soldiers. No longer were the search lines straight and true. They began to break, waver and lag. Up the dykes and across the ditches they continued, though, under the palms, through the overgrown orchards, past the abandoned farms and the women without men, their energy waning as the shadows lengthened.

Then contact. A sudden burst of gunfire, joined by another, then another, and the nought-to-ninety-in-a-second rip and roar of the adrenaline rush that momentarily leaves the mind cartwheeling in its wake.

Fire in front, then gunshots across one flank, joined momentarily by another; soldiers piling into ditches, a Huey overhead, its machinegun blazing away.

Concealed insurgents, lying on both banks, had ambushed one of the craft and turned their fire on to Bravo Company. In the boat, a sapper was hit in the neck and killed, another wounded.

The craft fired back and in the turrets of two Bravo Company Humvees machine-gunners joined the fray. Beside his commander's vehicle, Private Carlisle dropped to the ground and raised his M16. He saw two men in the undergrowth ahead of him and opened fire.

An hour later, long after the gunfire had finished, confusion reigned still. As news of the casualties spread, the men's mood sank palpably, except for Private Carlisle.

"I got one," he exclaimed.

Beside him an Iraqi interpreter muttered: "Cool it, cool it."

"I didn't even have to think about it," the private continued. "We took fire, I dropped down, took aim, saw two guys running, opened up and one fell. I don't just think I got him — I know it. Man, was that exciting."

Of the insurgents there was no sign. And the murmur of the Mekong whispered again.

TROOP NEWS

8 Soldiers Sue Over Army's Stop-Loss Policy: "The Whole Morale In His Unit Is On The Floor"

December 6, 2004 By MONICA DAVEY, New York Times & By Sue Fleming, Reuters & By SAM HANANEL, Associated Press Writer & BBC 12.7.04



Army National Guard Spc. David Qualls, at podium, with one of his attorneys, Staughton Lynd, answers questions during a news conference to announce a lawsuit challenging the military's 'stop loss' policy of involuntarily extending service in Iraq (AP Photo/Kevin Wolf)

"My son," she said, "is not someone afraid to follow orders and fulfill his obligation. He's a very compliant soldier, but he feels like he's being stabbed in the back."

MORRILTON, Ark., Dec. 3 - The eight soldiers come from places scattered across the country, from this small town an hour northwest of Little Rock to cities in Arizona, New Jersey and New York. In Iraq and Kuwait, where they all work now, most of them hold different jobs in different units, miles apart. Most have never met. Six of the eight plaintiffs are currently stationed in Iraq, while two others are in Kuwait en route to the country.

But the eight share a bond of anger: each says he has been prevented from coming home for good by an Army policy that has barred thousands of soldiers from leaving Iraq this year even though the terms of enlistment they signed up for have run out.

And each of these eight soldiers has separately taken the extraordinary step of seeking legal help, through late-night Internet searches and e-mail inquiries from their camps in the conflict zone, or through rounds of phone calls by an equally frustrated wife or mother back home.

With legal support from the Center for Constitutional Rights, a liberal-leaning public interest group, lawyers for the eight men say they will file a lawsuit on Monday in federal court in Washington challenging the Army policy known as stop-loss.

Lawyers for the active duty soldiers sued Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and other senior military officials **and asked to be immediately released from military service, saying they had served out their contracts.**

Qualls and two other plaintiffs enlisted under one-year "Try One" contracts that have expired. Four others are serving under multiyear contracts that also have run out. The remaining soldier's contract doesn't expire until spring, but he has been told to expect to serve in Iraq beyond the expiration date.

Last spring, the Army instituted the policy for all troops headed to Iraq and Afghanistan, called it a way to promote continuity within deployed units and to avoid bringing new soldiers in to fill gaps left in units by those who would otherwise have gone home when their enlistments ran out.

If a soldier's unit is still in Iraq or Afghanistan, that soldier cannot leave even when his or her enlistment time runs out.

Some soldiers like Mr. Qualls say they wonder if the rule is not just another way to keep troop numbers high, particularly at a time when the military has been stretched thin and the number of troops in Iraq is expected to rise still more, to 150,000, in the coming weeks.

Since then, a handful of National Guardsmen who received orders to report for duty in California and Oregon have taken the policy to court, but the newest lawsuit is the first such challenge by a group of soldiers.

And these soldiers are already overseas - transporting supplies, working radio communications and handling military contracts, somewhere in the desert.

"You should know I'm not against the war," said David W. Qualls, one of the plaintiffs and a former full-time soldier **who signed up in July 2003 for a one-year stint in the Arkansas National Guard but now expects to be in Iraq until next year.**

"This just isn't about that. This is a matter of fairness. My job was to go over and perform my duties under the contract I signed. But my year is up and it's been up. Now I believe that they should honor their end of the contract."

"I served five months past my one-year obligation and I feel that it's time to let me go back to my wife."

"I spent the last nine months in that combat zone. I think I fulfilled my duty."

Qualls said he enlisted with the Arkansas National Guard on July 7, 2003, under a program that allows a veteran to serve for one year before committing to full enlistment, but when he wanted to quit a year later, he was told he could not return home from Iraq to his wife and daughter in Arkansas.

A recent pay stub for Qualls, who is on home leave from Iraq, indicated his last day of service would now be Dec. 24, 2031.

Qualls, who said he supported the war in Iraq, took an 80 percent wage cut to serve his country and said he was falling behind on his car and house mortgage payments.

"I wanted people to understand we are not John Does out there. We are real people," said Qualls of his decision to be named.

Some military experts described the soldiers' challenge as both surprising and telling, given the tenor of military life, where soldiers are trained throughout their careers to follow their commanders' orders.

Mr. Qualls, 35, who says he sometimes speaks his mind even to his superiors, is the only one among the eight whose real name will appear on the lawsuit against the Army's military leaders. The rest, who fear retribution from the Army - including more dangerous assignments in Iraq - are described only as John Does 1 through 7.

Aside from the shared expectation that they would have gone home by now, these soldiers' situations could not be more varied, as interviews with their families made clear.

One is a member of an Army band, ordered to travel Iraq this year performing music. Another is an Army reservist in a New Jersey transportation company with 18 years of service behind him. Another is an Arizona National Guardsman in his 20's, whose wife

says he sounded subdued, even tearful, when she spoke to him in recent days on a phone line from Kuwait.

"The whole morale in his unit is on the floor," she said on the condition that she not be named, to avoid revealing her husband's identity.

In recent months, at any given moment, the stop-loss policy has affected about 7,000 soldiers who had been planning to retire, leave the military or move to a different military job.

The rule affects soldiers whose enlistments are scheduled to end within 90 days before their unit is deployed, those already deployed, and those whose term would end up to 90 days after their unit returns.

On Friday, Army officials said they did not know the total number who had been affected so far. No date has been announced to end the policy.

Jules Lobel, a lawyer for one of the eight soldiers, described the central complaint this way: ***They were fraudulently induced to sign up in what he said was a classic "bait and switch" operation, Mr. Lobel said, because nothing in their enlistment contract mentioned that they might be involuntarily kept on.***

"The courts have traditionally ceded to the military," said Gary D. Solis, who teaches law at the United States Military Academy at West Point. **"Even if the gents win at the trial level, the government is not going to quit. They cannot afford to. There is a potential cascade effect here."**

Phillip Carter, a former Army captain and an expert in military and legal issues, said: "Rarely have we seen people win such cases. At best, this is symbolic protest."

The soldiers and their families, however, say they do not see it that way. Their hopes are far more practical. They want to go home.

Mr. Qualls was one of the first soldiers to find Mr. Lobel and Staughton Lynd, another lawyer now working with the Center for Constitutional Rights on the case and whose antiwar activities date to the Vietnam era. As Mr. Qualls wandered the Internet one day in Iraq, he said, he came across news reports of a National Guardsman in California who this summer had become the first to challenge stop-loss in court.

Mr. Qualls said he immediately began sending e-mail messages that guardsman's lawyer, Michael S. Sorgen, and was eventually referred to Mr. Lynd and Mr. Lobel, who were separately beginning to hear from other soldiers who had found them in recent weeks in a variety of ways.

Some of the soldiers e-mailed or called the National Lawyers Guild Military Law Task Force or the G. I. Rights hot line and were referred to the lawyers, Mr. Lynd said. The wife of one soldier said she handled all the research for his case herself, studying his enlistment contract and newspaper clippings and finally coming across Mr. Lynd's name. And a 54-year-old mother from Long Island said she began making calls on her son's behalf, first to her representatives in Congress and later to anyone she could find.

"My son," she said, "is not someone afraid to follow orders and fulfill his obligation. He's a very compliant soldier, but he feels like he's being stabbed in the back."

One soldier's wife, from New York City, said she received an e-mail message from Military Families Speak Out, an antiwar group, about the possibility of a lawsuit, and urged her husband to be part of it.

Asked whether antiwar forces were instigating this lawsuit, Mr. Lobel, who like his co-counsel describes himself as openly opposed to the war in Iraq, laughed and said no. The soldiers and their families came on their own, he said.

"They were desperately looking for some way to solve their situations, and it looks like most of the people they found who were trying to counsel or represent people in their situation were antiwar people," Mr. Lobel said. "But to me, the most interesting aspect of this whole thing is that it's not a question of antiwar or pro-war. It's not a question of red states or blue states. This stop-loss question is just about fairness."

As part of a rest-and-relaxation leave allowed some soldiers, Mr. Qualls arrived at his modest Morrilton home just in time for Thanksgiving supper with his wife, Cheryl, and their daughter, Kelly.

Seated at his computer on Friday, he fiddled with a pen as he pondered whether he might face retribution for taking legal action, something he says he told his unit commanders nothing about before he left. He said his family had struggled financially and emotionally with him gone, and he has to put them first now.

"The other thing," Mr. Qualls said, "is you've got thousands of people over there in the same situation as me and somebody's got to do something. Why not have it be me? I can't worry about what people will say."

Mr. Qualls is due back at his radio post on a base north of Baghdad this coming weekend. He said he hoped a judge would issue a temporary restraining order and allow him to stay home. But if he loses, he said, he will get on that plane.

MORE:

Guardsman Sues Over Stop-Loss Policy

12.13.04 Army Times

An Oregon National Guardsman is challenging a program that involuntarily extends his enlistment.

Emiliano Santiago, who is scheduled for deployment to Afghanistan in January, sued Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and other military officials in federal

court Nov. 30, accusing them of improperly activating him under the stop-loss program.

Santiago is asking to be released from his military obligation after serving a full, eight-year term that was scheduled to expire in June this year. Santiago believes he should be honorably discharged, said his attorney, Steve Goldberg of Portland.

MORE:

AOL Poll Majority Thinks Stop Loss Unfair; Sides With Soldiers Fighting It

12.6.04 AOL Online Poll

Is the Army's stop-loss policy fair?

No 72%

Yes 28%

How much do you sympathize with the soldiers filing suit?

A lot 67%

Not at all 19%

A little 14%

How much do you sympathize with the Army in this case?

Not at all 55%

A lot 23%

A little 22%

Total Votes: 85,650

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.

San Diego Navy Petty Officer Refuses War Duty;

Hopes To Inspire Others To Do The Same

December 6, 2004 By Chet Barfield, STAFF WRITER, Union-Tribune Publishing Co.

"I don't want to be a part of a ship that's taking 3,000 Marines over there, knowing a hundred or more of them won't come back," he said. "I can't sleep at night knowing that's what I do for a living."

Acknowledging that he could face a court martial and possible imprisonment, a Navy petty officer yesterday said he will refuse to board his transport ship when it departs for the Persian Gulf this morning because he wants to make a public stand against the Iraq war.

"I'm going to throw my ID in the water and say that I'm no longer part of the military," said Petty Officer Third Class Pablo Paredes, 23. "I want to make a statement, and I want it to be heard."

Paredes, a weapons-control technician from the Bronx, N.Y., said he joined the Navy in 2000 and has 20 months left on his six-year enlistment.

About two weeks ago, he was involuntarily transferred to the amphibious transport Bonhomme Richard, which ferries Marines to Iraq.

"I don't want to be a part of a ship that's taking 3,000 Marines over there, knowing a hundred or more of them won't come back," he said. "I can't sleep at night knowing that's what I do for a living."

He said he unplugged his phone yesterday at his Imperial Beach apartment in case officials from the base tried to call him.

Paredes said his stance has nothing to do with fear for his personal safety.

"It's not about my own life," he said. "I'm just totally against it."

He said he was young and naive when he joined the Navy and "never imagined, in a million years, we would go to war with somebody who had done nothing to us."

Paredes said he discussed his plans with his wife of two years in New York, "and she supports my decision 1,000 percent," even though he might get a dishonorable discharge and lose pay and benefits.

He said he thought of smoking marijuana or breaking his leg with a heavy metal rod to try to get a discharge but decided instead to go public with his protest.

He said he hopes doing so might inspire other sailors, soldiers and Marines to refuse to take part in the war.

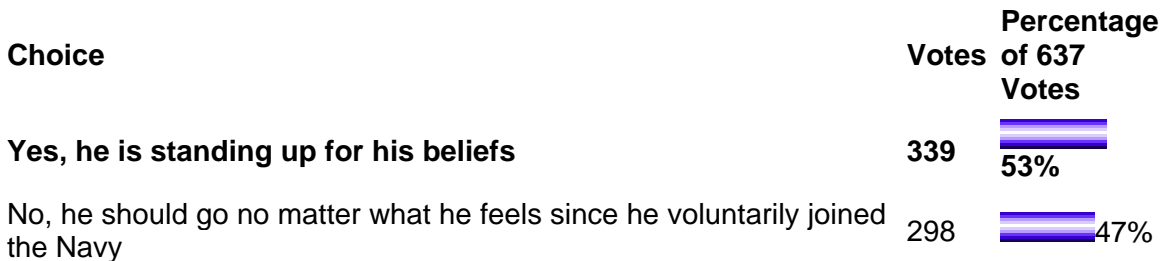
MORE:

San Diego Poll Supports Sailor Who Refused To Take Marines To Die In Iraq

From: Tim Goodrich Iraq Veterans Against The War, Co-founder/Western Region
Contact:
To: GI Special
Sent: Tuesday, December 07, 2004 1:08 AM

T! Look at this from the news10 website here in San Diego.

Do you agree with Paredes' actions?



Maybe there is still hope!

[Check out Iraq Veterans Against The War At: www.ivaw.net]

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.

Army COC Won't Say Military Will Win In Iraq (!)

Dec 7 (AFP)

General Peter Schoomaker, army chief of staff, seen here 25 June 2004, refused to guarantee that the US military would successfully defeat the ongoing insurgency and pave the way for a democratic Iraqi government to take power.

Soldier From Elkhart Killed Planned Own Funeral Last Trip Home

(Elkhart-December 6, 2004) Associated Press

An Army sergeant from Elkhart who was on his third tour of duty in Iraq was killed in a rocket-propelled grenade attack Saturday.

The family of 28-year-old Marvin Lee Trost the Third says he was just back home for Thanksgiving.

He was married and had three children, including a son Gabriel, who will be three months old tomorrow. He and his wife Sherry also have a six-year-old daughter and an three-year-old son.

Trost's grandmother says he was worried about returning to Iraq after Thanksgiving, even talking to his wife about what he wanted for his funeral.

Trost enlisted in the Army after graduating from Concord High School in Elkhart.

200 More For Bush's War

12/06/04 Leader:

FORT POLK -- **Fort Polk's Warrior Brigade will hold a deployment ceremony for over 200 Soldiers of the 603rd Transportation Company, 488th Quartermaster Company and the 585th Movement Control Team at 11 a.m., Tuesday, Dec. 7, 2004 at the Warrior Brigade Gym.**

These Soldiers, all a part of the 142nd Corps Support Battalion, Warrior Brigade, will depart in the next few weeks

The 585th Transportation Detachment is the second smallest unit at Fort Polk and the only unit lead by a non-commissioned officer.

South Jersey Soldier Killed



December 6, 2004 Internet Broadcasting Systems, Inc., MAPLE SHADE, N.J.

Another surge in violence in Iraq hits close to home as a young father from South Jersey dies.

Spc. David Mahlenbrock, 20, of Maple Shade, N.J. Mahlenbrock leaves behind a wife -- 19-year-old Melissa -- and a 10-week-old girl.

"He promised me that he was going to come home. It just doesn't make sense that he's not going to, because he would never break his promise," Melissa Mahlenbrock said.

Melissa said that the military told her that David Mahlenbrock, who was part of the Army's 65th combat engineering battalion, was killed in the northern city of Kirkuk after his convoy came in contact with a roadside bomb.

"You got to say, 'Yeah, he's going to come home, he'll be here.' Now, I got to deal with the fact that he didn't make it," said Russell Mahlenbrock, the soldier's father.

Dave and Melissa Mahlenbrock met in middle school. They were high school sweethearts and got married in August 2003.

Melissa found out she was pregnant with little Kadence three days after her husband went to Iraq.

"It doesn't make it any easier but it helps me smile to look at her, cause I know he helped make her," Melissa Mahlenbrock said.

Funeral services not yet been set.

Reserves Nearing 2 Year Cap On Deployment

(Philadelphia Inquirer, December 7, 2004, Pg. 1)

As the U.S. military continues to rely on the National Guard and Reserves for 40 percent of its troops in Iraq, the Pentagon risks bumping up against a two-year cap on such mobilizations set by President Bush after the 2001 terrorist attacks.

If too many personnel use up their two years of active-duty eligibility under the partial mobilization order, **the military could be forced to look elsewhere for occupation troops.**

Federal Vehicles Torched In Va., Md. Cars Were Near Recruitment Offices

(Washington Post, December 7, 2004, Pg. B1)

Fire officials in Montgomery and Fairfax counties bordering Washington, D.C., were investigating several fires that damaged or destroyed federal government vehicles outside military recruitment offices during the past week.

Newspaper Headline: (!) “Green Beret Unit Secretly Slips Back Into Iraq”

(Colorado Springs Gazette, December 7, 2004, Pg. 1)

In a secret deployment, Fort Carson's 10th Special Forces group has deployed to Iraq, the Army confirmed. Unlike other units that have left the Colorado post and returned with fanfare, the Green Berets have been deployed repeatedly to Iraq and Afghanistan in secret. **[Ok, everybody out there got that; it's a s-e-c-r-e-t.]**

Local's Son Injured In Iraq "He's Living 24/7 Under Constant Fear"

December 06 2004 Eastern Arizona Courier

It's every mother's nightmare to receive a call saying her child's been injured, said Sandra Foote of Safford, who experienced this Tuesday afternoon.

"You think you're going to be strong and steady," she said, "then the call actually comes and you turn to mush. Your legs go out from under you."

Foote answered the phone at 3:15 p.m. on Tuesday. Her daughter-in-law, Lisa Gilliam, was on the other end.

"She asked me if I was sitting down," Foote said. "Then she told me my son was injured in Iraq."

Captain Phillip Scott Gilliam, 38, was part of a convoy traveling from Kuwait to Baghdad. He was with three other soldiers on their way back to the hospital in Baghdad where they are stationed when another vehicle came out of nowhere and drove right into them, Foote said.

Gilliam is a doctor, and he was in the back of the truck when a suicide bomber caused the convoy to erupt into flames. The two soldiers in the front seats took most of the explosion, but Gilliam suffered burns, and shrapnel from the bomb hit his left hand, breaking all the bones.

"I am too far away to do anything," Foote said. "I know he won't tell me how bad it is, but I am so grateful he is alive."

Foote still hasn't spoken to her son, but she is assured that he is receiving the best medical attention.

Gilliam enlisted in the Army two weeks after his high school graduation, and he has made a career out of the military. He met his wife in the military, and the two are parents to two sons -- Tyler, 12, and Jacob, 7.

Gilliam was sent to Iraq in March, and he returned home to Kansas in November for a two-week break. **He arrived back in Iraq on Nov. 27. Two days later, he was a patient in his own hospital.**

"He's living 24/7 under constant fear," Foote said of her son. "As a doctor, he's saved more lives than he's lost, but it must make him realize that his injuries are minute compared to what he deals with."

Lt. Col. Tells Marines How To Disobey Orders

Letters To The Editor
12.6.04 Wall St. Journal

I read with utter disbelief and revulsion the statement by Harvey Volzer, lawyer for Spc. Megan Ambuhl, that "the bottom line is this is the military, and you listen to your [noncommissioned officer] and you listen to your officers" ("Hard Time: Inside Abu Ghraib," Nov. 23).

Mr. Volzer can't have ever served in the military. I have served in the Marine Corps for 22 years, including being deployed for two years following 9/11 for Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

At every level of command I've held and at every place I've been, I have always instructed my Marines in "The Three Rs": Repeat, Refuse, Report. Every Marine I know does the same.

If any Marine is given an order he or she believes to be unlawful, he or she has the legal and moral obligation to repeat the order to insure that it was heard correctly; refuse to obey the order; and then report the unlawful order to higher headquarters.

It doesn't take an advanced degree for a member of the military to know intuitively that some orders are just plain wrong and unlawful and that those orders shouldn't be followed, and that those who issued those orders be held accountable.

David M. McCarthy
Lt. Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps, Special Operations Command Central
Torrance, Calif.

273 Sex Assaults Reported In Iraq Theater

Washington, DC, Dec. 7 (UPI) -- U.S. service members reported 273 cases of sexual assault in Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan and Bahrain between August 2002 and December 2004.

Officer Uses Ketchup To Fake Battle Photos

12.13.04 Army Times

The "Ketchup Colonel" has been thrown out of the Indian military for faking a claim for valor awards.

Col. H.S. Kohli was with an artillery regiment in northeastern India when he applied for military honors by claiming to have been involved in a raging firefight with rebels in 2003.

The "rebels" were local villagers who agreed to be splashed with ketchup, play dead and be photographed as proof of the "battle." The awards were being processed when officials got a tip that the whole thing was a fake, which was then confirmed in an investigation.

In the wake of the incident, the Indian army's policy of rating officers' performance on the basis of "kills" and "captures" of militants has drawn increasing criticism, and other claims by officers for gallantry awards are under review.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Majority Of Sunni Now Approve Attacks On Occupation Forces; Support For Resistance Growing

December 06, 2004 By Washington Post

Polling data collected by the U.S. military show public confidence remains fragile, and many Iraqis have yet to commit decisively to legitimate government, according to officers familiar with the surveys.

In Baghdad, Sunni support for "armed national opposition" was 40 percent in a November poll taken for the U.S. military, up from 35 percent in September. More Sunnis expressed support for the insurgents than confidence in the Iraqi government, which drew only 35 percent support in November. Approval of attacks on U.S. forces was also up, from 46 percent in September to 51 percent in November.

Under the circumstances, the internal assessment done for **Army Gen. George W. Casey Jr.**, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, has recommended changing one of the U.S. military's original aims, which was to bring Iraqis around to a more "positive" perception of U.S. troops.

With hindsight, that objective now appears too ambitious, the assessment concluded, adding that "popular tolerance" would be a more "realistic aim."

A total of 338 Iraqis associated with the new governing structures or with the Americans have been assassinated since Oct. 1, according to U.S. military figures. This includes 35 police chiefs, mayors and middle-ranking officials. In Mosul, where 136 bodies have been found in the past month.

Some U.S. officers worry about Mosul, or sections of it, possibly becoming a new insurgent stronghold. ["Some U.S. officers" suffer from head-up-the-ass disease. Mosul is gone. The resistance has checkpoints set up in the streets.]

Officers described Iraq's reconstituted intelligence service as poorly organized and short of resources. Its capabilities remain immature and will take time to develop, the officers said.

IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATION

Refugees Rallying For Falluja Return

06 December 2004 Aljazeera.Net

More than a thousand Falluja residents displaced by the US-led attack on their city have rallied to demand they should be allowed to return home.

The fierce military campaign in Falluja, launched last month to wipe out the resistance, forced most of the city's 300,000 people to leave their homes for Baghdad or nearby cities like Habaniya, about 20km south of Falluja.

About 1500 displaced Falluja residents demonstrated in Habaniya demanding to return to their city, parts of which sustained heavy damage during the military operation last month.

Road Bomb Near Baghdad Kills 3 Iraqi Occupation Guards, 11 Wounded

12-07 Dow Jones & Company, Inc

BAGHDAD (AP)—A roadside bomb exploded near an Iraqi National Guard patrol south of Baghdad, killing three guardsmen and wounding 11, an official said Tuesday.

The guardsmen were patrolling an area near Jebala, 60 kilometers south of Baghdad, when the attack occurred, an Iraqi National Guard official said on condition of anonymity.

Occupation Cops Ambushed In Ramadi, Guns Taken

December 8, 2004 RAMADI, Iraq, Dec 7 (Reuters)

Guerrillas ambushed an Iraqi police patrol in the western city of Ramadi today, robbing them of their weapons and burning their vehicles but letting the officers go, Ramadi's police chief said.

The attack occurred in the centre of the city, 110 km west of Baghdad shortly after midday, police chief Brigadier Jassim al-Dulaimi said.

A reporter working for Reuters in the city said there was a heavy presence of U.S. troops on Tuesday in northern sections of Ramadi, where palm groves and extensive farmlands have in the past been used to launch attacks on U.S. forces.

Kirkuk Area Pipeline Hit

Energy Security December 6 – attack on a pipeline that runs inside an underground oil storage tank 50 miles (80 km) southwest of Kirkuk.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

"No matter how great your armies are, you will always need the favor of the inhabitants to take possession of a province." Anonymous General, Mexico.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Occupation Idiots Fucking With Sistani Again: His Poll Official In 'US Custody'

06 December 2004 Aljazeera.Net

The man in charge of drawing up an Iraqi electoral list backed by Grand Ayat Allah Ali al-Sistani, the influential Shia Muslim leader, has been arrested by the US military, an aide says.

"American forces on Saturday arrested Muhammad Hashim al-Yahya, coordinator of the six-person committee set up by the Marjaiya (Iraq's highest Shia authority) to supervise the drawing up of an electoral list with the backing of the ayat Allah," an al-Sistani representative in Najaf said.

"If he is not released, there will be serious consequences," the source added, giving no reason for al-Yahya's arrest in Baghdad.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Afghan Resistance Attacks In Force; “The Americans Didn’t Come To Help Us”

December 07, 2004 KABUL, Afghanistan, Associated Press

Militants attacked an Afghan border post and an American patrol near the Pakistani frontier, sparking battles in which at least eight rebels and four Afghan soldiers were killed, officials said Tuesday.

One rocket was fired near Kabul on Monday evening, but landed far from the former royal palace where Karzai was sworn in.

In the bloodiest overnight incident, insurgents armed with assault rifles and rockets attacked the base of Afghan government troops near Tana, a town in southeastern Khost province, the commander said.

An hour-long firefight destroyed part of the base and left four Afghan soldiers and at least six militants dead, Gen. Khial Baz said.

“The Americans didn’t come to help us,” Baz said. “They only came this morning to ask questions.”

The Afghan general, speaking from his headquarters in Khost city, said some 250 insurgents had attacked his men near the border.

The American patrol was attacked by a group of about 10 insurgents with rockets and guns elsewhere in Khost province. “We returned fire, and two anti-coalition militants were killed in that incident,” McCann said. He said no American soldiers were hurt, but provided no further details.

The U.S. base near Khost city also came under fire from three rockets, all of which landed outside the perimeter, causing neither damage nor injury, he said.

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