

GI SPECIAL 2#C49



Thanks to R, Soldier, Iraq, who sent this in 12.13.04.
(Get the message?)

One Million U.S. Troops Have Gone To War

WASHINGTON, Dec. 9 (UPI)

Nearly a million U.S. troops have been deployed for war in Iraq or Afghanistan since those conflicts began, according to Pentagon data.

The data also show that one out of every three of those service members has gone more than once.

The Pentagon confirmed to United Press International Wednesday that a cumulative total of 955,000 troops from all military services had been deployed for Operation Iraqi or

Enduring Freedom by the end of September. More than 300,000 of those troops have been deployed more than once, the Pentagon said. One government source said the total number of troops deployed has likely hit 1 million since then.

The Pentagon data shows that 708,000 of the troops who have served in war come from the active duty force.

That means that roughly half of the United States' 1.4 million active duty troops have gone to war. Slightly more than 245,000 troops from reserve and National Guard units have also been deployed.

Military experts said the new data show the American military is being stretched to its limits -- or beyond. "It shows that we are short of troops. I don't think there is any question about that," retired Marine Corps three-star general Bernard E. Trainor told UPI. **"Nobody, or almost nobody, anticipated specifically how this thing was going to turn out."**

Trainor said he believed the military has not struggled with these kinds of numbers since Vietnam. "The military is stretched entirely too thin," Trainor said.

The war in Iraq is less than two years old. There are 140,000 troops in Iraq now and 16,000 in Afghanistan, according to the Pentagon.

Trainor told UPI that when soldiers take the unusual step of bucking their leadership in public it is a sign of trouble. "It is a danger signal that there is eroding support in the ranks for the civilian leadership," Trainor said.

A Pentagon spokesman could not provide a breakdown of where the 955,000 troops have been deployed.

The data details the number of active duty and guard and reserve troops from the different services who have been deployed:

- Active duty Army: 280,000
- Army National Guard: 90,000
- Army reserve: 65,000
- Coast Guard: 1,500
- Coast Guard reserve: 200
- Air National Guard: 41,000
- Air Force 151,000
- Air reserve: 23,000
- Active duty Marines: 99,000
- Marine reserve 15,000
- Active duty Navy: 177,000
- Navy reserve: 11,000.

(the numbers don't add up due to rounding)

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

Seven More Marines Killed

Dec 13, 2004 By KATARINA KRATOVAC, Associated Press Writer & MNF #0412013a

Seven Marines died in combat in western Iraq.

Seven Marines assigned to the I Marine Expeditionary Force were killed in action Sunday, December 12 in two separate incidents while conducting security and stabilization operations in the Al Anbar Province.

The fighting in the western Anbar province, which includes Fallujah and Ramadi, was the deadliest for U.S. forces since eight Marines were killed Oct. 30 by a car bomb outside Fallujah. The deaths brought to nearly 1,300 the number of American troops killed in Iraq since the U.S.-led invasion in March 2003.

The *San Diego Union-Tribune* reported Monday that all of the casualties were from Camp Pendleton.

BALAD VEHICLE ACCIDENT KILLS ONE, INJURES ONE

Dec 13, 2004 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 04-12-16C

LSA ANACONDA, BALAD, Iraq – One 1st COSCOM Soldier is dead and one is injured as the result of a vehicle accident near Convoy Support Center Cedar 2 at approximately 4:30 p.m. on Dec. 13.

The injured Soldier was medically evacuated to a coalition military medical facility.

Tarmiyah Car Bomb Wounds Three U.S. Soldiers

Dec 13, 2004 By KATARINA KRATOVAC, Associated Press Writer

In Tarmiyah, north of Baghdad, a car bomb exploded and wrecked two U.S. Humvees, wounding three U.S. soldiers and an Iraqi civilian, Lt. Col. James Hutton said.

Jubilant Iraqi men were seen holding up pieces of the Humvees and dancing around their charred hulks, near a large crater in the road.

The War In Falluja Goes On And On

Dec 13, 2004 By KATARINA KRATOVAC, Associated Press Writer & "Kavkaz-Center" News Agency & Reuters

Clashes resumed in Fallujah, **a one-time insurgent stronghold that American forces believed they had conquered, casting doubts over earlier claims Iraqi groups battling foreign troops in the western Iraqi region were being defeated, Islam Online reported.**

After the latest campaign, U.S. commanders claimed they had broken the back of the insurgency in the mainly Sunni Muslim areas of western Iraq and that Iraqi security forces would start being phased in to take over, but fighting in the region has continued.

On Sunday, American jets dropped 10 precision-guided missiles on insurgents' positions in Fallujah after militants fought running battles with coalition forces. It was unclear if there were any insurgent casualties.

"Air strikes were called in during escalation of force for troops in contact," a marine spokesman told AFP Monday.

"We are still running into some of these die-hard insurgents that have either come back into the city or have been laying low," spokesman Lt. Lyle Gilbert said. "As we are bringing in contractors to help with the reconstruction of Fallujah, this (fighting) slows the process down."

US-led troops have continued to face resistance, often in parts of the city they had previously claimed to be have been "cleared."

"They hole themselves up in houses and they wait for the chance to kill an American," said Lieutenant Rex McIntosh of the 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines.

He added that many of those fighters still hiding in Fallujah's ruined neighborhoods had escaped previous sweeps by the marines.

"There's a fairly effective cordon around the city but not every unit has been doing a full clearing," McIntosh said, as his unit searched Sunday house-to-house for fighters or weapons caches.

Marines from the battalion found themselves in a running battle with fighters that began Friday and raged until Saturday.

"We had very, very heavy contact against a group -- you could call it a cell -- which was bypassed in previous sweeping operations," McIntosh said.

Clashes erupted again Sunday **as marines battled fighters in northeast Fallujah, according to one marine, who told AFP the area was supposed to have been cleared of fighters.**

Marines had earlier told AFP that **fighters were creeping back into previously cleared city blocks, and the military was in a race to seize weapons caches before they could be used against them.**

It also was unclear whether the latest Marine deaths were connected with those clashes.

The US occupation forces are planning a set of police state measures to be strictly applied to any of the battle-scarred city's residents yearning to come back.

"(U.S.) forces have secured the city, but still have not deemed it 'completely safe,'" Marine Captain Brad Gordon told Reuters. [Oh.]

Basra British Consulate Mortared

12.13.04 "Kavkaz-Center" News Agency

In the southern city of Basra, mortars have been fired at the British consulate there, but details on damages were not immediately clear, a British embassy spokesperson said on Monday. [How about asking the people in the consulate? They might have a clue or two.]

The attack happened late on Sunday

Car Bomb Hits Green Zone Checkpoint: Seven Dead, 19 Wounded

12.13.04 "Kavkaz-Center" News Agency & Reuters

At least seven Iraqis were killed and 19 others wounded when a car bomb exploded at a checkpoint outside the highly-fortified Green Zone in Baghdad, according to hospital sources.

The bomber drove up to a National Guard checkpoint at an entrance used by contractors and Iraqis and blew up his car as he was waiting to be searched, an Iraqi National Guard told AFP.

All of the dead were Iraqi civilians, hospital and US military officials told AFP.

"A suicide bomber hit Checkpoint 12. It's pretty ugly," a U.S. officer told Reuters.

The checkpoint, close to the main airport highway, is on a main entrance to the sprawling complex which was Saddam's presidential palace. It now houses the U.S. and other embassies and the offices of the U.S.-backed Iraqi interim government.

More Fighting In Samarra & Ramadi



Two Iraqi police patrol cars burn after they were attacked by insurgents in Ramadi, Iraq Dec. 7, 2004. (AP Photo/Omar Aboud, File)

Dec 13, 2004 By KATARINA KRATOVAC, Associated Press Writer

In the central Iraqi city of Samarra, insurgents attacked patrolling U.S. soldiers with small arms fire and rocket-propelled grenades.

In nearby Ramadi, 30 miles west of Fallujah, at least 10 explosions were heard early Monday, but no details were immediately available on their source nor whether there were any casualties.

Insurgents had shelled U.S. forces in the city on Sunday resulting in retaliatory artillery fire by American troops.

TROOP NEWS

Iraq Death Rate For Guard Tops That Of Full-Time Soldiers:

'Weekend Warriors' Suffer 35% More Fatalities

December 13, 2004 USA TODAY

WASHINGTON - **In a reversal of trends from past wars, part-time soldiers in the Army National Guard are about one-third more likely to be killed in Iraq than full-time active-duty soldiers** serving there, a USA TODAY analysis of Pentagon statistics shows.

According to figures furnished by the military branches, the active Army has sent about 250,000 soldiers to Iraq and 622 have been killed. That works out to 1 death for every 402 soldiers who have deployed. Some 37,000 Army Guard soldiers have been sent to Iraq since the war began and 140 have died there - 1 fatality for every 264 soldiers who have served, or about a 35 percent higher death rate.

There are several reasons for the greater death rates among so-called part-time soldiers, who generally drill one weekend a month and two weeks during the summer when there's no war.

Some of the most dangerous missions, including driving convoys and guarding bases and other facilities, frequently are assigned to Guard and Reserve troops. Iraqi insurgents have attacked convoys with roadside bombs and rocket-propelled grenades, and a Tennessee Guardsman publicly complained to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld last week about the lack of armor on some vehicles.

Other branches with troops in harm's way in Iraq - the Army Reserves, the Marine Corps, the Air Force and the Navy - did not supply total numbers of their troops deployed to Iraq since the war began in March 2003, which would have made similar comparisons possible.

The elevated death rates among part-time soldiers are a significant shift from historical trends. During most wars in the last century, the full-time military, including the Air Force and Navy, took the vast majority of casualties, and their troops were much more likely to die in battle than Guardsmen and Reservists.

In the 1991 Persian Gulf War, for example, the Army Guard suffered no fatalities out of 382 U.S. deaths. A total of 94 Army National Guardsmen and no Reservists were killed out of 58,209 U.S. deaths in Vietnam.

"It's a changed paradigm," says Richard Stark, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. **"We have completely crossed the line in terms of what it is to be a citizen-soldier."**

“Everybody Has A Breaking Point”

12.13.04 Excerpts from article by Scott Peterson, Christian Science Monitor

But the edge of this front line is not for everybody. Another chief scout of a sister platoon, called Red, watched at close range on the first day as an insurgent fired a rocket from just 25 yards, narrowly missing his platoon leader.

"Everybody has a breaking point, and his was a lot earlier," says 1st Lt. Paul Webber, the Red platoon chief from Newcastle, Calif. "His eyes were huge. He stood up (after the exchange) and slumped over." Back in the vehicle, Lieutenant Webber recalls, the sergeant "curled up in the fetal position and was banging his head on the toolbox. The doc had to restrain him."

Corporal McClellan racked up 26 counts of grand-theft auto while still a juvenile. He had six ear studs on one side, seven on the other, and a tongue stud – which once got stuck in his lip ring. Joining the Marines has tempered such behavior, but it hasn't erased McClellan's independent streak.

If anything, McClellan says he blames God for what goes wrong – a key reason being the fate of his friend Lance Cpl. Kyle Burns, of Red platoon, who was going to be the best man at McClellan's wedding until he was killed in an ambush Nov. 11.

McClellan took the death hard. He stills clings to a photo of himself and the square-jawed marine in a cowboy hat from Laramie, Wyo., sitting together smoking a Middle Eastern water pipe.

Burns's death has become a point of debate within the unit. **The marine shared McClellan's animosity toward religion until just days before the ambush, when he "gave his life to Christ" at a church service, according to some who were there.**

"God has a perfect plan," says Cpl. Christopher DeBlanc, a team leader and one of the Wise Men. He keeps a red leather Bible in his rucksack, part of a pile of personal gear deposited upstairs in the Iraqi house. "For example, Red (platoon) got hit by a (mine), and after that they had a church service. They accepted God; Kyle accepted it. Kyle is in heaven now."

"That was God's gift to Kyle?" asks McClellan incredulously. "Great. You accept God, and the next day you get killed. That's some advertisement. You are done at 20 years and three months, unmarried."

"Doc" Nick Navarrette, the US Navy medical corpsman from Omaha, Neb., who serves as Raider's ambulance chief during casualty evacuation, had a nightmare too in Fallujah. "There are 50 Iraqis coming at us, I had an M-16 [rifle] and all it

shot is dust," says the slightly built corpsman. "I reach for my [pistol], and it's only crunching sand."

Days later, wrapped in McClellan's thick blanket to ward off a morning chill in the occupied house, Navarrette elaborated while eating potato chips and French onion dip from a care package.

During the call to his mother, he also learned that a close friend, Shane, was killed the same night. The news also reached Shane's wife, April, just hours after she gave birth to the couple's first child. The emotional ride gave the corpsman pause. He pulls out the video camera he used to film part of the ambush.

The rattle of bullets and pounding high-caliber rounds dominate the soundtrack. Then the footage goes calm, and Navarrette is speaking from the back of the Raider vehicle after delivering the casualties to the combat hospital.

"Yeah, well, we lost two guys. I'm here by myself," he records, clearly shaken. "I got blood all over my hands; I got blood all over my pants, and my flak [vest]. It was not a good day. I never want to go through a day like that again."

"But we're going right back out there. No breaks," Navarrette says, his voice threadbare. "I'll turn you back on, when the (bullets) start flying again. All right – peace."

Disillusioned Soldiers Questioning Mission

Dec.11, 2004, Tim Harper, Washington Bureau, Toronto Star

"More and more we are hearing from military families that their sons or daughters are coming home on leave and saying, 'Mom, I don't know what I'm doing over there.' The soldiers on the front lines there understand U.S. policy is not working."

More soldiers in Iraq are questioning the rationale for their mission, the way in which they have been equipped and how long they've been deployed.

In so doing, they are shining new light on the price being paid for what is widely seen as inadequate war planning and piecemeal responses as U.S. troops battle an insurgency better armed and more determined than any scenario drawn up.

Some say they saw no link between the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and the Iraq war, others lost faith when it became clear there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

Many who remain are clearly becoming disillusioned.

Erik Leaver, of the liberal Institute for Policy Studies, said this week's confrontation in Kuwait show many soldiers believe Washington is not being straight with them.

"This is not a well-articulated mission," Leaver said.

"More and more we are hearing from military families that their sons or daughters are coming home on leave and saying, 'Mom, I don't know what I'm doing over there.' The soldiers on the front lines there understand U.S. policy is not working."

Republican Senator John McCain of Arizona, who appears to be mulling another presidential run in 2008, this week called the stop-loss program the single most damaging morale issue for the military and pointed the finger of blame at an ill-prepared Pentagon.

"It just adds another layer of stress to families left at home who are not able to plan moves, or enroll kids in school," says Michelle Joyner of the National Military Families Association, a support group for those with loved ones in Iraq.

Joyner, whose brother, Adam Smith, is serving in Iraq, said her group has fielded calls from families who lost college tuition deposits or are having difficulty getting straight answers from units as to when their family members could be expected to return.

"It forces some families to live day to day without being able to plan for the future," she said. "If you can't get clear answers, it just feeds gossip and increases stress. So when we get some calls from families, we simply have to tell them there are some questions for which we have no answer."

Meanwhile, the death toll mounts.

Death dropped in this reporter's in-box three times during the writing of this story.

The Pentagon confirmed the deaths of Sgt. Arthur C. Williams, IV, 31, of Edgewater, Fla.; Capt. Mark N. Stubenhofer, 30, of Springfield, Va.; and Sgt. 1st Class Todd C. Gibbs, 37, of Angelina, Texas.

They came by way of separate e-mails that drop with such numbing regularity, they are often treated as spam — unless you remind yourself that three more families have paid the ultimate price.

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)

THE PERFECT PHOTO: TROOPS IN THE DARK, NO MISSION



During a blackout, U.S. Marines communications officers use a laptop to help manage the deployment of troops within and around the Governorate building for Al Anbar Province, in Ramadi Dec. 13, 2004. (AP Photo/Brennan Linsley)

Results of AP-Ipsos Poll: 51% Don't Like Bush's Handling Of War

Dec 09, 2004 By The Associated Press

When it comes to handling the situation in Iraq, do you approve or disapprove or have mixed feelings about the way George W. Bush is handling that issue?

- _Approve, 48 percent (48)
- _Disapprove, 50 percent (51)**
- _Mixed feelings, 2 percent (1)

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 inside the armed services. Send requests to address up top.

Australians Happy They Don't Use Humvees: Their Vehicles First Class; Why Won't The Pentagon Get Some?

December 12, 2004 By Luke Mclveen, The Sunday Telegraph

The Australians are universally regarded as the best equipped troops in Iraq and the Australian light armoured vehicle (ASLAV) is considered the safest form of transport.

The Humvee vehicles used by US forces were exposed last week when a junior soldier asked US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld why he was forced to pin scrap metal - which he called "hillbilly armour" - to the panels for extra protection.

Air Commodore Evans said he was relieved his troops were not put at risk by sub-standard equipment.

"There are many soldiers who are out there in quite lightly armoured vehicles. I'm glad my diggers don't have to do that," he said.

[If the U.S. government gave a shit whether the troops in Iraq live or die, obviously they would buy some of these yesterday morning. They haven't and they don't. The enemy is in Washington D.C. running the government, not in Iraq.]

Resourcefulness A Crime In Rumsfelds' Army: Scrounging' For Survival Lands GIs In Jail

12 December 2004 By Aamer Madhani, The Chicago Tribune & By JOHN McCARTHY, (AP)

COLUMBUS, Ohio - Six reservists, including two veteran officers who had received Bronze Stars, were court-martialed for what soldiers have been doing as long as there have been wars - scrounging to get what their outfit needed to do its job in Iraq.

Darrell Birt, one of those court-martialed for theft, destruction of Army property and conspiracy to cover up the crimes, had been decorated for his "initiative and courage" for leading his unit's delivery of fuel over the perilous roads of Iraq in the war's first months.

Now, Birt, 45, who was a chief warrant officer with 656th Transportation Company, based in Springfield, Ohio, and his commanding officer find themselves felons, dishonorably discharged and stripped of all military benefits.

The 656th played a crucial role in maintaining the gasoline supply that fueled everything from Black Hawk helicopters to Bradley Fighting Vehicles between Balad Airfield and Tikrit. The reservists in the company proudly boast that their fuel was in the vehicles driven by the 4th Infantry Division soldiers who found Saddam Hussein hiding in a hole last year.

But when Birt's unit was ordered to head into Iraq in the heat of battle in April 2003 from its base in Kuwait, Birt said the company didn't have enough vehicles to haul the equipment it would need to do the job.

So, Birt explained, he and other reservists grabbed two tractors and two trailers left in Kuwait by other U.S. units that had already moved into Iraq.

Several weeks later, Birt and other reservists scrounged a third vehicle, an abandoned 5-ton cargo truck, and stripped it for parts they needed for repair of their trucks.

"We could have gone with what we had, but we would not have been able to complete our mission," said Birt, who was released from the brig on Oct. 17 and is petitioning for clemency in hope that he can return to the reserves.

"I admit that what we did was technically against the rules, but it wasn't for our own personal gain. It was so we could do our jobs."

"Nobody ever reported these trucks stolen. The deal was, when you are moving, if it was going to take more than 30 minutes to fix it, you left it," said Birt, who was released in November.

The thefts mirror countless stories of shifty appropriation that has been memorialized in books and films as a wartime skill. Birt and other reservists in the unit said that what the prosecutors called theft was simply resourcefulness, a quality they say is abundant among soldiers in Iraq.

While in confinement, Birt had a chat with a military police officer who was puzzled by why Birt was in the brig. The MP, a guard, told Birt that his unit had "acquired" a Humvee in a similar fashion.

In addition to the six in the 656th who were court-martialed, eight others in the unit were given non-judicial punishment, including fines, pay reduction and loss in rank.

The commanding officer of the company, Maj. Cathy Kaus, 46, was sentenced to 6 months in jail and fined \$5,000 for her part in the thefts. She is scheduled to be released

from the Naval Consolidated Brig Miramar in San Diego on Christmas Day after serving most of her sentence.

Kaus and Birt chose to be tried by a military judge rather than a panel that would have included fellow soldiers, and they waived the formal investigation. [Lesson learned.]

The severity of the punishments was surprising to many members of the company, who regularly saw off-the-books trading and thefts of military property in Iraq by troops in other units.

Even Lt. Col. Christopher Wicker, the former commanding officer of the battalion overseeing the 656th who ordered the investigation of the thefts, said he was shocked by the hefty penalties.

"Circumstances at (the) time, however, made these acts less serious than if done in a peacetime garrison environment," Wicker said in a letter supporting clemency for Birt. **"The sentences . . . are too harsh given the situation during the initial drive north of Baghdad in April 2003, and the limited flow of repair parts that existed April-September 2003."**

The reservists in the 656th Transportation Company had to move their equipment along with the fuel and likely did not have enough vehicles to do so in one trip, Wicker said in a telephone interview Sunday.

"That would have required multiple trips back. They do not have many cargo trucks. They are fuel haulers," he told The Associated Press.

Theft of military equipment is legendary among American war veterans, and the act has its own lexicon. In past wars some called it "scrounging," while others called it "midnight requisitions" and "liberating supplies," said writer and Vietnam War veteran Robert Vaughan.

Military bureaucracy combined with the reality of warfare has long made "scrounging" a necessity for soldiers trying to get a job done, Vaughan said. Stealing is justified, he said, because everything being taken is U.S. government property and is being used toward the war effort.

He recalled that while his unit was serving in a remote area in Vietnam, headquarters in Saigon repeatedly denied his unit's request for high-power generators because it said there were none in stock. But on previous trips to Saigon, Vaughan had seen dozens of generators stacked in a holding area at headquarters.

Frustrated, he drove to Saigon one afternoon, posed as a captain from another unit and gave a guard a forged requisition to get the generators.

"I was the greatest scrounger in the Vietnam War," said Vaughan, who has a war novel to be published in January in which the protagonist is an expert at stealing equipment for

his unit. "If you did something that is not for your own personal gain, your higher-ups tended to protect you from getting into any trouble for it."

The problems for the 656th started days before the company was to move into Iraq. The company had only two cargo trucks to haul six containers filled with tools, spare parts, ammunition, biological-chemical protective wear and other supplies.

Kaus, the commander of the 656th, said that officers with the 544th Maintenance Battalion, whose command her company fell under, informed her the day before their scheduled push into Iraq that they could not provide her company support in moving the company's six containers. She said she discussed the problem with Birt and her other chief warrant officer, and the two told her they could solve it.

Kaus said in a telephone interview that she told the men "to do what they had to do" to move their supplies, but she did not tell them to steal equipment.

Birt said he inferred that they had her permission to take the vehicles. The other chief warrant officer, Christopher Parriman, was not charged in the thefts and left Iraq because of a medical disability before the investigation began. Parriman declined to comment.

Kaus said Birt and Parriman initially told her they had permission to take the vehicles from another unit. She said she learned in late May or early June of 2003 that the vehicles were stolen, but at that point the trucks had become an integral part of the unit's regular fuel convoys.

"These were vehicles that were not going to be used by the unit that originally owned them, and they had become an important part in allowing us to deliver 40,000 to 50,000 gallons of fuel a day," said Kaus, who was awarded a Bronze Star for effectively leading the unit.

Kaus also said she could not determine which unit the trucks belonged to, so she could not return them. ***In fact, the vehicles and trailers in question were never reported stolen, according to transcripts of court-martial proceedings.***

Wicker, who had heard stories from relatives about scrounging in Vietnam, said he was more bothered that the officers did not admit having the equipment when asked and that they dismantled the 5-ton cargo truck. He said he understood the rationale for stealing the equipment, but he did not agree with it.

In the first several months of the Iraq war, the supply line moved at a glacial pace. Obtaining even basic parts to repair vehicles took as long as six weeks, said Robert Chalmers, who had been a sergeant with the 656th. He received a court-martial for stripping the cargo truck for spare parts and disposing of its frame.

Sitting in his kitchen in Greenville, Ohio, Chalmers recalled the rocket attacks, bomb explosions and small-arms fire his company faced on the road between Tikrit and Balad.

He laughed about his eagerness to head to Iraq. Anticipating that his company was going to be called up, he took two weeks off from work as an electrician to get gear ready before the unit's soldiers received official word that they would be going.

Chalmers said their actions were technically wrong, but he felt the importance of the company's mission justified the thefts. During the company's year in Iraq, members of the 656th drove more than 1.2 million miles and delivered about 33 million gallons of fuel.

Chalmers was reduced to a specialist as part of his sentence. Of the other two reservists who were court-martialed, one received a jail sentence, and the second was punished but not jailed.

The situation has left Chalmers in debt and bitter. His wife, Tina, said she had to borrow against her retirement savings to pay his \$20,000 in legal fees.

"We were sent to Iraq without what we needed," said Chalmers, who has spent 15 years on active or reserve duty.. "If they don't make that decision to get the vehicles we needed, we are worse off and can't do our mission. If we don't do our mission, those tanks at the front stand still."

Birt and Kaus were dishonorably discharged, and unless they receive clemency, they lose all military benefits, including the right to have the U.S. flag draped on their coffins.

This month, Birt received a certified letter from the trucking company he worked for as a shop foreman, telling him that it could no longer employ him because of his felony conviction. Kaus said her employer, sporting goods manufacturer Huffy Corp., has informed her that it is unlikely she will be allowed to come back to work because of her conviction.

[Halliburton and other military contractors cheat and steal millions as part of grabbing the greatest profits they can, and nothing is done. These soldiers take what they needed for their mission, not a cent went in their pockets, and they get sent to prison. Fuck the war in Iraq, just another corporate mission. Time for some class war here at home, where the real enemies live.]

Reservists Forced To Use “Broken Down Vehicles” To Escort Convoys Of New Up-Armored Humvees

12/12/2004 RICHARD LARDNER , Tampa Tribune (Florida)

TAMPA - Sgt. Justin Myers was angry at first. Then he could only laugh as his unit, the 810th Military Police Company, escorted flatbed trucks loaded with new, up-armored Humvees from U.S. camps in Kuwait to Baghdad and other hostile areas in Iraq.

The 810th, an Army Reserve unit based in Tampa, badly needed improved vehicles to replace the older, less-capable fleet of Humvees it took to the Middle East in May 2003.

But the new models were intended for active-duty troops, a point driven home every time the 810th was assigned the escort mission.

“It got to the point where the audacity of it amused me,” said Myers, 28. “It essentially was a slap in the face. They’re going to make us escort the top-of-the-line stuff in our broken-down vehicles.”

Myers has 18 months left on his eight-year commitment to the reserves, and he won't be re-enlisting. He'll miss the work and the camaraderie. **However, he won't miss a system that he says treats reservists like second-class citizens.**

Myers is not alone.

“I'm very angry,” said Staff Sgt. Keith Cotton, who has been with the 810th since 1997. “You don't treat soldiers like that. They want to do the job, but they want to be safe.”

The 810th was deployed overseas for 15 months, returning in August.

Spc. Corey Campbell, 22, said if the 810th is deployed again, he expects it will be stocked with second-hand equipment.

“From my experience, that's just the way it is,” said Campbell, a three-year veteran of the 810th.

The 810th left Tampa for Fort Stewart, Ga., in March 2003. Eight weeks later, the unit was in Kuwait, expecting to be home in 12 months or less.

Initially, the soldiers handled customs work and border security in Kuwait. But in April of this year, the unit's stay was extended by several months, and it began handling convoy escort missions taking it through Baghdad, Fallujah, Tikrit and elsewhere in Iraq.

On those missions, the company encountered “direct enemy contact” 25 times.

All the while, the 810th made do with a fleet of aging military vehicles that were prone to breakdowns and offered minimal protection against roadside bombs and enemy fire. Those equipment shortcomings were reported in July by The Tampa Tribune.

In an Oct. 1 letter to U.S. Rep. Jim Davis, D-Tampa, the U.S. Army Reserve Command in Atlanta downplayed the equipment concerns, saying the 810th “deployed with over 90 percent of their required equipment at better than 90 percent readiness.”

On the subject of more capable Humvees, the letter says the entire Army Reserve had only five of the "up-armored" models before the start of the war in Iraq and none of those was assigned to the 810th.

The unit was given bolt-on armor kits and hardened windshields for its vehicles in April and June, almost a year after it arrived. However, they were able to modify only 30 of their 44 vehicles, and only 13 vehicles received both the armor and the bullet-proof windshield, according to the letter.

Davis said one soldier described the disparity between the active and reserve components by calling it "An Army of Two," a play on the ground service's official slogan, "An Army Of One."

"There's two standards - one for active military and one for them at a time when they are being asked to do virtually the same thing, if not exactly the same thing," Davis said.

G.I.S' PAYCHECKS TO FUND TRUCK ARMOR

12.13.04 From Josh Karpoff, RIT Anti War Campus Antiwar Network, Coordinating Committee (Northeast Rep.)

To: Campus Anti War Network

Subject: \$\$\$ for armor comes from soldiers paychecks

Josh Karpoff writes:

THIS IS FUCKING RIDICULOUS.

So the Pentagon, in its ever present unceasing STUPIDITY realized that they had under budgeted for armoring military vehicles by 2200 PERCENT!!!!.

In order to make up this difference, rather than say siphoning some cash from the blackholes of tax dollars, such as the missile defense program or the F/A-22 boondoggle of a fighter jet, the Pentagon decided to "reprogram" the money it already had budgeted, specifically the money set aside to PAY soldiers.

Pretty much the Pentagon has decided to blackmail congress for more cash rather than cut any of their unnecessary pet projects, leaving the soldiers stuck in the middle.

If congress doesn't let the Pentagon reprogram the money soldiers will die from the Iraqi resistance attacks, if they don't allocate more money by May for soldiers paychecks, the soldiers will be pretty much slaves with guns sent to die for lies oil and profits. This totally shows where THEIR priorities are.

It is interesting to note that the article was carried on "Defense Tech" not exactly a leftwing publication.

[The article:]

G.I.S' PAYCHECKS FUND TRUCK ARMOR

2004 Military Advantage, Inc., Defensetech.org

So the Pentagon leadership has finally recognized that they need to armor up their trucks. But they've settled on a damn peculiar way of paying for the work. They're dipping into soldiers' paychecks to do it.

Let me explain. For this fiscal year, 2005, Rummy & Co. asked for \$25.7 million to secure its fleet of trucks. And Congress granted the request, when it passed the Pentagon's budget in July.

But by November 19th, the Pentagon brass realized they had screwed up, Defense Department documents show. There was no way \$25.7 million could pay for armoring the M915 trucks, Medium Tactical Vehicles, and other vehicles hauling supplies through Iraq; to do the job right, more like \$580 million would be needed. The chiefs had under budgeted, more than twenty-fold.

The problem was, the Defense Department's budget for the year was already passed. And it was too early, yet, for a second, "supplemental" funding bill.

So, instead, the Pentagon's eyeshades decided to "reprogram" money, from one military project into another.

Now, the accountants could have taken money from hulking, multi-billion dollar items, like the F-22 fighter or the creaky missile defense program. But no. Instead, the cash – along with about a billion dollars in other funds -- was taken from the Army's payroll. From the accounts to pay soldiers in the field.

With that money gone, there's now only enough cash left in the register to keep paying soldiers until May or so. If a "supplemental" budget bill – rumored to be \$75 billion or more -- isn't passed by then, there will be no paychecks for G.I.s.

Congress will never let that happen, of course. No politician in his right mind is going to keep soldiers from getting paid. So, in the end, G.I.s will get the money they've been promised.

But, still, wouldn't it have been better to get this armor money together in the first place? The war has been going on since last March. Planning for it started in 2002. And only on November 19th did the Pentagon realize it needed more money to armor up its trucks?

250 From U.S. Colony Being Sent To Iraq

12 December 2004 By Terry Tavita, Samoa Observer Newspaper

Some 56 American Samoan army reservists will depart Hawai'i for Iraq before Christmas.

A church service was being held during the weekend at Waipahu's Kanana Fou Congregational Church to farewell them. Governor Togiola Tulafono, who is in Hawai'i, was expected to attend.

His daughter, Olita Tulafono, is part of this deployment.

The Samoan engineers will be part of the 793rd Engineering Detachment that will be assisting in reconstruction work in the war-torn country.

Meanwhile, more than 200 American Samoan reservists of Bravo and Charlie Company are undergoing combat training in Texas to get them ready for front-line duties early in the new year.

Uncle Sam Wants Your Kids ... Now!

December 7, 2004 By David H. Hackworth www.hackworth.com

We'll soon have 150,000 U.S. troops stuck in the ever-expanding Iraqi quagmire, a number that will probably grow even larger before Iraq holds elections presently scheduled for the end of January '05.

Maintaining such a force is a logistical and personnel nightmare for every grunt in Iraq. And according to several Pentagon number crunchers, it's also driving the top brass bonkers.

Meanwhile the insurgents continue cutting our supply lines and whacking our fighting platoons and supporters, who attrit daily as soldiers and Marines fall to enemy shots, sickness or accidents. Empty platoons lose fights, so these casualties have to be replaced ASAP.

Since this tragic war kicked off in March 2003, the United States has evacuated an estimated 50,000 KIA, WIA and non-battle casualties from Iraq back to the States – leaving 50,000 slots that have had to be filled.

The job of finding fresh bodies to keep our units topped off falls mainly to the Army Recruiting Command. **But the "making-quota" jazz put out by the Recruiting**

Command and the Pentagon to hype their billion-dollar recruiting effort, with its huge TV expenditure and big expansion of recruiters during the past year, is pure unadulterated spin.

Not that this is anything new. The Command has a sorry reputation for using smoke and mirrors to cover up poor performance.

"Hack, here's a snapshot of how little of our first-quarter mission has been achieved," says an Army recruiter. "Look at it from a perspective of a business releasing quarterly earnings information. To keep unit manning levels up out in the field, especially in Iraq, there's no question our recruiting mission is in serious trouble.

"These are totals for the 41 USAREC (Recruiting Command) Battalions, so these stats represent the USAREC mission accomplishment:

"Regular Army Volume (all RA contracts):

"Mission: 25,322

"Achieved: 12,703 (50.17 percent)

"Army Reserve Volume:

"Mission: 7,373

"Achieved: 3,206 (43.48 percent)."

The Army National Guard is faring no better. A Guard retention NCO says: "The word is out on the streets of Washington, D.C. 'Do not join the Guard.' I see these words echoing right across the U.S.A."

"The bottom line is that Recruiting Command is in trouble," says another recruiter with almost 30 years of service. "The Army has re-instituted 'stop loss,' which is basically a backdoor draft. **They're stopping people from retiring or completing their enlistment and leaving the Army. They do this fairly often, mostly in August and September, depending upon how far behind they believe they'll be at the end of September.**

"I believe the Army will have to drastically change what they offer to enlistees to overcome what's happening in Iraq. **The war is ugly, and not many kids want to enlist to be blown up.**"

Moms and dads are outraged about desperate Army recruiters on a relentless campaign to sign up their teenagers. High-school kids are actually running away from recruiters like they were George Romero's living dead.

"Recruiters have called my son a minimum of 20 times in the two years since he finished high school," a dad reports.

"The phone calls usually come in clusters. I answered five calls in a two- or three-week span. Each time a recruiter calls, he receives the same polite, respectful response from me or my son ... no interest, and please take the name off the list. When asked why the name hasn't been removed, excuses are made. While recruiters are brief with me, when my son is on the phone, the sales tactics are clever, prolonged and very high-pressure.

"I took the latest recruiting call. This time I also called the supervisor at the local Army recruiting office, who's promised to take his name off the list. She made excuses for the repeated calls despite the fact that five calls were on her watch."

Unless a miracle happens and the new Iraqi security force decides to stop running and start fighting, **we'll be in Iraq for a long time.** Most likely with a draftee force. **[No long time. Never happen. This army will rebel against this bullshit Imperial war a whole lot quicker than that the troops did in Vietnam. The clock is already ticking.]**

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.

Civilian Employees Facing Compulsory Deployment To Iraq; Silly Liar Tells Them They Will Be Safe There

December 12, 2004 WorldNow

When you see helicopters in action in Iraq or Afghanistan, you can be sure, those helicopters are supported by civilians from Redstone Arsenal. Civilians who are on the ground, over there.

"Sure, if the mission requires it, any federal employee, for that matter, can be assigned to go and support any organization's mission," says Tim Grey, the Director of the Human Resource Department at Redstone's U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Command.

Most of the support work for the army aviation and missile systems managed at Redstone, is done on the base, but more than 150 civilian volunteers have been deployed during the past year. **And now, AMCOM is designating 111-jobs as emergency essential, which means the holders of those jobs, might face deployment in the next two years.**

It's a concern to Don Eierman of the American Federation of Government Employees, Local 1858. "Southwest Asia for instance, is not a traditional war zone, there is no front line where the enemy is located. There have been attacks, sporadic attacks throughout the area. There's not really a safe zone, so the jeopardy to civilian lives is much higher throughout this type of campaign," says Eierman.

Tim Grey recognizes the danger in Iraq and Afghanistan, but says great care is taken to keep civilian workers safe. [Maybe he will clue in everybody else in Iraq on how exactly that is done, since there isn't one U.S. base free of resistance warfare.]

Wounded Marine Returns Home

December 13, 2004 Gita Pullapilly, Grand Rapids Metro

Marine Corporal Joseph Grimaldi from Whitehall came home Saturday after his second tour of duty in Iraq.

He recently received a purple heart for his valor but must now cope with the emotional and physical scars of battle.

In November, on a routine mission, as Joe and his patrol walked down the street, a roadside bomb exploded. "I just saw everybody go down when the bomb went off. Everybody started rogering up..hey I'm here, hey I'm hit...you know," said Grimaldi.

Two members of his group died, Joe and two others were wounded. "I said help, we need help."

Joe had holes in his legs and side and most of the bones in his arm were destroyed. "Under here is all the grafts, they grafted skin from my thigh and put it on my arm," said Grimaldi.

Joe may never regain full movement in his arm. "I'm trying to make a fist right now."

But the physical pain is just the start of the healing process. He still has to say goodbye to his brothers he lost in battle. "It's really hard, I got a good family, they help me...it's not easy...to cope with it or talk about it. You know when they're gone..(pause) I'd of taken their place. I loved them."

Odius Odierno's Famous Last Words

13 December 2004 By Patrick Cockburn in Baghdad, Independent Digital (UK) Ltd

Major General Ray Odierno, whose 4th Infantry Division was credited with arresting Saddam, declared a month later that the insurgency was "on its knees" and only "a sporadic threat". He went on to assure the press in Washington that "in six months you are going to see some normalcy".

A year later, American casualties showed how little the war was affected by the imprisonment of Saddam. Of the 1,283 US soldiers who have died in Iraq since the invasion in March 2003, 821 of them were killed since his capture.

Six months on, the US fully controlled only islands of territory in Iraq. All the main roads leading out of Baghdad were unsafe. The resistance felt strong enough to openly establish checkpoints around the capital.

At the heart of the US miscalculation of the impact of Saddam's capture was ignorance about the simple reason for the rising strength of the Iraqi resistance: outside Kurdistan the great majority of Iraqis, whatever they thought of Saddam, were against the US occupation.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

December 12, 2004 Agence France-Presse & Dec 13, 2004 By KATARINA KRATOVAC, Associated Press Writer

In Baghdad two police officers were wounded when unknown assailants opened fire on them.

A police officer was killed and another wounded overnight when fighters ambushed their patrol in Yethreb, north of Baghdad, police said.

In Rashid, about 20 partisans attacked a police station with mortars and small arms fire, witnesses said.

In Al-Azab, west of Kirkuk, a voter registration centre in a school was badly damaged in a bomb attack, police said.

In the far south of Iraq, a policeman was killed and another wounded in a firefight, police said.

In Mishahda, 25 miles north of Baghdad, gunmen attacked an Iraqi National Guard patrol, killing three soldiers and wounding three others. The attackers fled, witnesses said.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Occupation Lunacy In High Gear

river @ 8:37 PM Sunday, December 12, 2004 Girl Blog From Baghdad

The borders are in an interesting state.

Now this is something even Saddam didn't do: Iraqi men under the age of 50 aren't being let into the country. A friend of ours who was coming to visit was turned back at the Iraqi border. It was useless for him to try to explain that he had been outside of the country for 10 years and was coming back to visit his family.

He was 47 and that meant he, in his expensive business suit, shining leather shoes, and impressive Samsonite baggage, might be a 'Jihadist'.

Silly Iraqis-Iraqi men under 50 are a sure threat to the security of their country. American men with guns and tanks are, on the other hand, necessary to the welfare of the country. Lebanese, Kuwaitis and men of other nationalities being hired as mercenaries are vital to the security of said country. Iranian men coming to visit the shrines in the south are all welcome... but Iraqi men? Maybe they should head for Afghanistan.

<p style="text-align: center;">OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME <u>NOW!</u></p>

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Man Who Helped Troops Resisting Vietnam War Attacked By Israel

From: Max Watts
Sent: December 13, 2004
Subject: ZIEGLER JJ GOOD PEOPLE

[Re The Newspaper story mentioning J Ziegler which follows, see comments below the story about him:]

UN rights expert charges Israel killed peace map
Reuters 29/x/2004

The Jewish state attacked a U.N. rights expert's findings.

Wednesday's target was Jean Ziegler of Switzerland, a U.N. expert on the right to food whom Israel wants dismissed.

Relieving Ziegler of his duties would require the vote of a majority of the 53 nations on the Commission on Human Rights.

"Since his appointment in 2000, Mr. Ziegler has been conducting a public relations assault against Israel, and recently he has escalated his efforts into a trade war," Israeli told the same assembly committee.

Ziegler in June wrote U.S. heavy-equipment maker Caterpillar to say that a sale of its bulldozers to the Israeli military could violate Palestinians' human rights.

Max Watts writes about Ziegler:

ZIEGLER, JEAN: - 1967 !

SWITZERLAND'S FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WAS DEPORTING AMERICAN ANTI-VIETNAM WAR SOLDIERS BACK TO GERMANY AND US ARMY STOCKADES.

THIS WAS - AFTER ALL - A WELL-ESTABLISHED TRADITION - THE SWISS GOVERNMENT OFTEN DID THIS WITH JEWS AND ANTI-FASCISTS DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR, AT LEAST UNTIL AFTER STALINGRAD, WHEN THEY FIGURED HITLER MIGHT LOSE.

WE, FRITAS (friends of the Resisters inside the (US) Army) - knew..but didn't know how we could stop it.. **THE SWISS GOVERNMENT, WHICH HAD BEEN ACCEPTING EASTERN EUROPEAN DESERTERS "FROM COMMUNISM" WITH OPEN ARMS, HAD DENIED EVER TURNING AMERICANS OVER TO THE GERMANS/AMERICAN ARMY.**

THEN JEAN-JACQUES Ziegler, A MEMBER OF THE SWISS FEDERAL PARLIAMENT, HELPED.

A YOUNG (MALE) AMERICAN TRAVELED AROUND SWITZERLAND: "I AM AN ANTI-WAR SOLDIER"...

WHEN ARRESTED - AND JUST BEFORE BEING TURNED OVER TO THE US ARMY - HE PULLED OUT HIS PASSPORT. "NAH NAH, YOU IDIOTS, I'M A CIVILIAN TOURIST, NOT IN THE ARMY AT ALL" - ZIEGLER AND A TRIBUNE DE GENEVE JOURNALIST WERE RIGHT THERE...ZIEGLER BROUGHT THIS EXAMPLE OF SWISS "NEUTRALITY" UP IN PARLIAMENT:

THE SWISS GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE WAS A GEM: **"WE NEVER DONE THIS, AND NOW WE WON'T DO IT ANY MORE".**

SOME US ANTI-VIETNAM WAR US SOLDIERS DID, THEREAFTER, SETTLE IN SWITZERLAND.

HATS OFF TO JEAN ZIEGLER! THE HONEST MEMBER OF THE SWISS PARLIAMENT!

[To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation by a foreign power, go to: www.rafahtoday.org. The foreign army is Israeli; the occupied nation is Palestine.]

Received:

Close To Home

From: Lou P
To: GI Special + Vets, Military Families
Sent: Monday, December 13, 2004 6:18 AM
Subject: Close to Home

Peace People,

Sometimes this is personal. I found out just last night that my friend and neighbor, B was shot three times Thursday in Iraq. He is being flown from Germany to Womack Army Medical center at Ft. Bragg today. Bill is Special Forces, a former Ranger and the new husband of one of my oldest and closest friends. He has two young sons.

This is one of those times that I've read about. My feelings of impotence and powerlessness are not real though. It is through our continued hard work, unrelenting dedication and the absolute knowledge that we, the people, will find a way to end this war. There are thousands of women, men and children whose lives are deeply affected and sometimes ended or scarred forever by the criminals who pretend to represent us in Washington, London and elsewhere.

So today, as my friend, I ask you to keep B and his wife and the boys in your thoughts.

I appreciate the work you do for this movement and thought you'd like to know how it can help real people in real places.

Neither the children in Fayetteville nor the children in Falluja deserve what is happening to their parents, neighbors and to their countries.

Peace,
Lou

Received:

From: Z C
To: GI Special
Sent: December 13, 2004 7:08 PM

And an attempt at a little song where we win...
In solidarity, Z

Killer Dubya

Killer Dubya launched a war
Pounding a poor nation
Wasting women, men, and kids
For oil and domination.

Killer Dubya can be stopped
By soldiers organizing
To blow this rich man's war to hell
And start something surprising!

(Yankee Doodle works for the music.)

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