

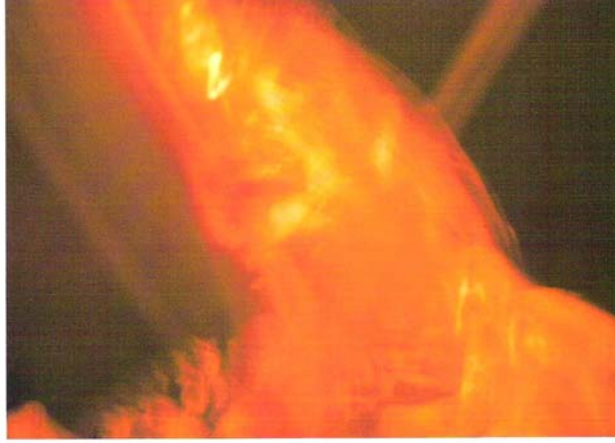
GI SPECIAL 2#C60

**GEORGE BUSH AND
THE U.S. EMPIRE SEND
HOLIDAY GREETING
AND GIFTS TO THE
PEOPLE OF IRAQ:**

FOR THE KIDS:



FOR THOSE SPECIAL GROWNUPS IN FALLUJA
(Some assembly required: gasoline + special gel ingredients included.)



(Mike Hastie photo)

AND HERE'S SANTA!!!



IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

**Falluja Fighting Goes On:
Returnees Enraged;
"Our Anger And Resistance Will
Increase"**



An Iraqi woman sits in the road in protest after authorities turned her away from a checkpoint for refugees returning to Falluja December 23, 2004. The woman was turned back because she was not carrying proper identification **and she was not traveling with a male member of her family.** REUTERS/Stringer

Dec 24 By Fadil al-Badrani, FALLUJA, Iraq (Reuters) & By ROBERT BURNS, AP Military Writer & 23 December BBC News & Dec 23 By NICK WADHAMS (AP)

Iraqis reacted with anger, frustration and resentment Friday after many returned to Falluja to discover their homes in rubble and their livelihoods ruined following last month's U.S. offensive.

Fighting continued in several districts. U.S. planes bombed a western neighborhood overnight, residents said.

Marine infantrymen fought with insurgents on Thursday as warplanes and tanks bombarded guerrilla positions in the heaviest fighting there in weeks.

Thursday's combat was the heaviest around Fallujah since a surge of fighting Dec. 10 that killed seven Marines, three Iraqi soldiers

An Iraqi Health Ministry official said his greatest concern was the resentment Falluja's people were likely to feel when they saw how much damage had been done to their homes.

That was certainly the case Friday. While those who fled were at pains to say they had nothing to do with the rebels who made Falluja their stronghold, many of them have since become angry and militant as a result of the offensive.

"Would Allah want us to return to a city that animals can't live in?" said Yasser Satar as he saw his destroyed home.

"Even animals who have no human sense and feelings can not live here," he said, crying.

"What do they want from Falluja? This is the crime of the century. They want to destroy Islam and Muslims. But our anger and resistance will increase."

A spokesman for the US marines said Falluja was not yet ready for what he called comfortable living.

Most of the people showed up on foot or shuttle buses, not having gotten word that authorities had changed their minds about allowing cars into the city. U.S. officials had wanted to keep vehicles out, to lessen the chances for car bombings, but Iraq's interim government insisted people be permitted to bring in their cars.

"This is all that's left of my property," one returnee said Thursday, waving a dusty blanket.

In footage by Associated Press Television News, the corpse of an elderly woman was visible in a destroyed house, lying face down in her black robe. It was not clear how long ago she was killed.

UGLY SHIT:

Improvised explosive devices made from artillery shells discovered on the road in Falluja December 20, 2004. (12.22.04 Shamil Zhumatov/Reuters)



**AND MORE WHERE THOSE CAME FROM:
AN INFINITE SUPPLY:
AN INFINITE NUMBER OF IRAQIS WILLING TO FIGHT TO FREE
THEIR COUNTRY:
NO MISSION EXCEPT EMPIRE.
NO HOPE OF SUCCESS.
TIME TO COME HOME**

TROOP NEWS

The Voice Of The Soldier Is That Great A Threat

“Be it silencing the worker in Central or South America or freeing up a little oil here in the Middle East, the powers that be have us busy serving their interests while providing ample distraction from the realities of the situation.”

[By a soldier, Iraq. Excerpt from ms. posted 12.12.04]

Interlude...I Hope

Several nights ago, I stood alone watching the waning moon rise wide and orange on the eastern horizon, attempting to find any shred of beauty in this less than attractive situation.

Still cold underneath my helmet and body armor, I leaned against the recently erected twelve foot cement barrier that now surrounds the building in which I reside.

A thin plume of smoke curled off my stale cigarette. I found no beauty.

Everyday someone asks me why I look so angry.

Everyday I shrug and choke back the flow of venom that sits boiling in my throat. How to explain to those who enjoy this type of thing that I see them as the true enemies to what America should be.

Of course, they see me the same way.

America is a nation that is infamous for protecting it's interests, no matter where in the world they fall.

Be it silencing the worker in Central or South America or freeing up a little oil here in the Middle East, the powers that be have us busy serving their interests while providing ample distraction from the realities of the situation.

Shit's going down.

One less problem now that this voice of free thought has been stamped out under the jackboot.

What the fuck, you know?

I guess the voice of the soldier is that great a threat.

But now, do they really expect us to stop?

As long as we make it out, so do our stories..

I guess we'll be taking a break for a little while.

More soon.

I hope.

Stop this war.

joe public, The Statistics

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)

Rumsfeld Predicts U.S. Empire Will Be Defeated In Iraq

12.24.04 By ROBERT BURNS, AP Military Writer

But Rumsfeld reminded about 200 Marines *that repressive regimes in Germany and the former Soviet Union had been removed and said he was confident freedom would prevail in Iraq.*

"All I can say is, people basically want to be free," he said to cheers and applause in the refurbished brick and plaster Iraqi building.

Idiot General Batiste Uses Old Script

12.24.04 By ROBERT BURNS, AP Military Writer

At a stop in Tikrit, the hometown of deposed Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, Rumsfeld met with the commander of the 1st Infantry Division, Maj. Gen. John Batiste.

Batiste said that 90 percent of the threat in his area, which covers four provinces in northcentral and northeastern Iraq is from former Baathist regime elements.

[This is like meeting a real live dinosaur. The fool evidently is so clueless he doesn't know that everybody from the CIA to Military Intelligence said months ago that the resistance is mostly made up of Iraqi nationalists fighting against the occupation of their country, not "Baathist regime elements." But then, he's a general. Why expect him to have the slightest grip on reality, military or otherwise? That's not his job. His job is kissing Rumsfeld's ass, moving up the career ladder, and fuck reality and the troops. Their job is dying; his is getting his next promotion.]

Local Soldier Hurt In Mosul Base Attack

12/24/04 The Daily Star

A Milford family was waiting Thursday afternoon to talk to their son who was injured in the suicide bombing against the U.S. base in Mosul, Iraq, earlier this week.

Theodore and Colaine Johnson said they expected to be talking with their son U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Garth Adam Johnson later that day.

They were notified Wednesday by Johnson's wife that their son was injured in the attack on the mess tent.

Johnson is a 1990 graduate of Milford High School. His mother said he enlisted in the Army right out of school. He was stationed at Fort Lewis, Wash., for the past four years, she said.

The couple were told their son had a broken leg and shrapnel in his hand and leg, Colaine Johnson said.

"I Don't Want To Die This Young"

"I prefer to stay in my house and not do anything or see anybody," said Whittredge, 36. "I know soldiers want to go back, but I am definitely not one of those soldiers. I don't want to die this young."

December 22, 2004 By Ryan Lenz, Associated Press Writer

After coming home from a months-long tour in Iraq, Curtis Mills recalls driving his daughter to a recital and panicking when he saw a radio tower's blinking red lights.

"For a second, I almost yelled out 'Tracers at 11 o'clock!'" Mills said sheepishly during a break from shoveling snow from his driveway in Shapleigh, Maine. "Then I realized it was just an antenna."

For soldiers of the Army Reserve's 94th Military Police Company, which was mobilized for a grueling 20 months, returning to cozy hometowns across New England has been a struggle with the unexpected.

Everyday sounds such as backfiring cars and slammed doors send them into panicked alert. They react by scanning rooftops for snipers or scouring crowds for anything out of the ordinary.

"You don't get through a day without thinking about it. No matter what I do, there's always something," said Mills, a postal worker who was hospitalized for 11 months after surviving a roadside bomb that detonated beneath his Humvee near Ramadi.

Mobilized in December 2002, about 160 soldiers were sent to Iraq four months later for a planned 365-day tour. **Twice the soldiers were ready to leave when their deployment was extended; at Easter, they were hours away from boarding their flight home when the unexpected news they would stay was delivered.**

Heightened sensitivity, sleeplessness, and hair-trigger responsiveness to unexpected sounds and sights are all symptoms of combat stress, psychologists say.

Stephen Whittredge, a network administrator who grew up in New Hampshire but now lives in Gloucester, Mass., was in the active Army in Somalia and has dealt with the nightmares after combat and a fear of crowds before. He re-enlisted with the reserves and served for the duration of the 94th's deployment.

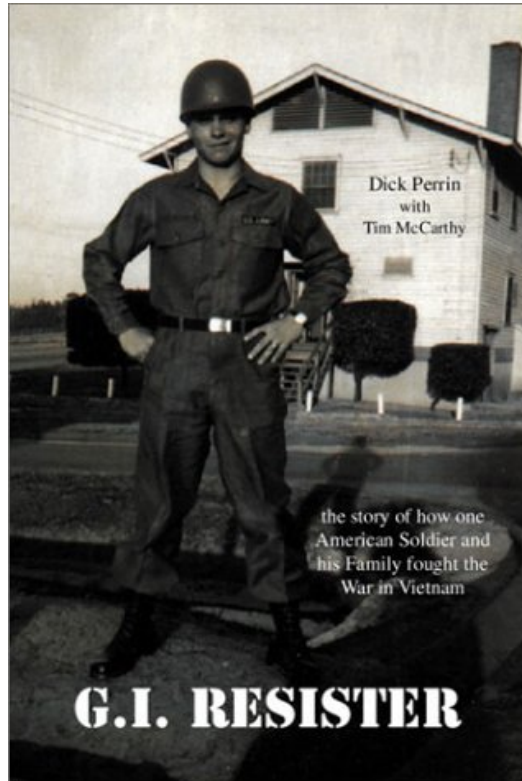
Even now he chooses to spend most of his time alone. He still can't help but flinch and duck at loud noises.

"I prefer to stay in my house and not do anything or see anybody," said Whittredge, 36. **"I know soldiers want to go back, but I am definitely not one of those soldiers. I don't want to die this young."**

A Soldier's Truth

G.I. Resister: The Story of How One American Soldier And His Family Fought the War in Vietnam;

By Dick Perrin, Tim McCarthy



(Review: T., GI Special)

With the news that 18 soldiers, including 14 officers, in Rochester, New York have refused to “voluntarily” deploy to Iraq, resistance in the army is real and alive.

Dick Perrin has written an account of his resistance to the Vietnam War that illuminates what that experience is like with rare and refreshing honesty.

From first doubts, to turmoil, to increasing certainty that the Vietnam War was simply wrong, and he could not participate in it, the story of his personal, political and geographical journey is a rich illustration of a simple fact: soldiers think, and can act, to resist an imperial war.

It's also a very moving personal account of how an extra-ordinary ordinary American struggled with issues of right and wrong. He describes his first horrified reactions to his brothers' radical views against the war in Vietnam, the journey that took him to a military base in Germany, his decision to desert and escape to France, the people who sheltered him from military authorities, his meeting in Paris with Stokely Carmichael, and, by another coincidence, his experiences during the great French general strike of 1968.

From there, his journey leads to Canada, a safe zone for soldiers who had decided to leave the War, where Perrin worked with others to help American war resisters escaping to Canada, where he lives to this day,

One thread running through his book are the sometimes very painful interactions with his mom and dad, who at first caught hell for what he did, and then, slowly, over time, came to believe he had been right and the war was wrong.

This is not the stuff of high drama and Hollywood movies. It's far better. This is a no-bullshit, ruthlessly honest look at how a boy quickly grew up in the pressure cooker of any Army engaged in one of the worst causes for which soldiers ever fought, and found in himself the courage to resist the war and come home, if not to the physical boundaries of the United States, at least to a life of care for himself and others.

Perrin does not spare himself for one second, either. With blunt honesty, he tells you what he believes are his own mistakes, as he found his way along a path that must have seemed so completely unlikely to any young man growing up in America in the 1960's.

Anybody contemplating helping soldiers organize against this war had better get a copy of this book ASAP because Perrin also describes how the assorted radicals who came around the anti-war soldiers impressed them, or disgusted them, and why, from a soldiers point of view. Some were pompous blowhards, some were disdainful and dismissive, some were arrogant assholes who thought soldiers were stupid, and some extended their hands in solidarity and friendship.

If you want to get with the program, you better check it out. It will help you avoid ending up in the wrong above-listed category.

\$15.00 (checks are fine) U.S. with no shipping charges from
Dick Perrin
Box 192
Lebret, Saskatchewan
S0G 2Y0 CANADA

US Families Of Dead Raise \$600,000 For Fallujah Refugees: “It’s Time To Stop The Killing”

Dec 23 LOS ANGELES (AFP)

Families of US troops killed in the offensive on the Iraqi city of Fallujah are to travel to Jordan next week with 600,000 dollars worth of humanitarian aid for refugees of the attack.

The November assault on Fallujah left 71 US military dead, according to the families, and the Iraqi government said more than 2,000 Iraqis were killed.

"This delegation is a way for me to express my sympathy and support for the Iraqi people," said Rosa Suarez of Escondido in California.

"The Iraq war took away my son's life, and it has taken away the lives of so many innocent Iraqis. It is time to stop the killing and to help the children of Iraq," she added in a statement released by the families.

The families are to fly to Amman on December 26 and hand over the supplies to humanitarian and medical workers there.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Gas Tanker Explodes In Baghdad

Dec. 24, 2004 Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq - **A gas tanker truck wired with explosives blew up in a west Baghdad neighborhood Friday**, wounding 20 people and lighting up the sky with a fireball, just hours after Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld left the capital, police said.

The butane tanker had been parked near the Libyan and Moroccan embassies in the capital's upscale Mansour district when it exploded, a police commander said.

It appeared that a bomb had been placed inside the tanker, the officer said, adding that parts of the destroyed tanker were found.

Residents of the area said they could hear small-arms fire immediately after the blast.

Two Collaborator Leaders Killed

BAQUBA, Iraq, Dec 24 (AFP)

A tribal sheikh was shot dead near the Iraqi capital, a US military spokesman said Friday, as insurgents shelled a police station with mortars in Baquba.

Gunmen killed Sheikh Zeid Khalifa Mohsen al-Beni-Waiys late Thursday as he drove through his hometown of Sadyah, 40 kilometres (30 miles) northeast of Baghdad, said Master Sergeant Robert Powell.

Beni-Waiys served on the local city council set up by US forces, Powell said, adding that the Americans considered him a "moderate".

It was the latest assassination of a local leader after a tribal chief, Hazem Daraa, was gunned down by assailants in Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit on Wednesday night.

The attacks could be linked to tribal leaders' ties to the Americans.

Kurd Water Workers Captured By Insurgents In National Guard Uniforms

BAQUBA, Iraq, Dec 24 (AFP) & Aljazeera

Three Kurds working for the Kirkuk water and sewerage authority were captured and a fourth wounded while they were traveling back to the city from Baghdad, said an official from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) party.

They were ambushed by insurgents posing as Iraqi national guardsmen at a checkpoint they set up near Suleiman Bek, 80 kilometres south of Kirkuk, said Ramadan Rashid.

Anwar Amin, commander of the national guard in Kirkuk, also said insurgents fired at a car bearing a license plate from the main Kurdish town of Arbil, wounding some of the car's occupants, who were from the same family.

Meanwhile, a police station and the governor's mansion in Bahruz, just south of Baquba, were hit by small arms and mortar fire early Friday, without causing casualties

**IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE
END THE OCCUPATION**

INSURGENTS STORM, BLOW UP MAYORS OFFICE IN RAMADI

December 24, 2004 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND
NEWS RELEASE Number: 04-12-52

Dec. 22, a group of masked insurgents set and detonated at least two boxes of explosives after storming into the mayor's office at approximately 2:15 p.m. The

explosion destroyed the entire first floor of the building, which caused most of the structure to crumble.

There were no known casualties.

Anbar Police Chief Quits

December 23, 2004 Reuters

THE police chief in the volatile Anbar province of western Iraq has resigned two months into his job after gunmen tried to kill him, the province's governor said today.

Insurgents surrounded Fawaz al-Duleimi's house in Anbar, which includes the rebellious Sunni Muslim cities of Fallujah and Ramadi, for two hours last week and badly wounded his brother, witnesses said. Duleimi lives in Ramadi.

Occupation Guards Colonel Captured

December 24, 2004 (AP)

Insurgents captured Iraqi National Guards Col. Saadi Aftan Hammoud while on his way from Baghdad to western city of Ramadi, the police said. **Four other guard members who were with Hammoud, a commander in Ramadi, were allowed to continue on their way, the officer said. [Getting smarter.]**

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

MOSUL: SOW THE WIND AND REAP THE WHIRLWIND

Wednesday December 22, 2004 Stan Goff, Bring Them Home Now
<http://www.bringthemhomenow.org/what/news.html> This will be the sole news story for the BRING THEM HOME NOW site for December 22.

It's time for us to say something again. This attack can not simply be laid at the feet of some shadowy group that the prostrated press calls Ansar al-Sunna. If such a group exists, it is a secondary symptom.

The disease is in Washington DC. It is called empire building, and it is an activity that requires bodies – lots of bodies. Dead bodies, dead grown people's bodies, and children's bodies. The bodies of the tortured and imprisoned. The bodies full of radioactive toxins. The bodies without arms and legs and genitals and eyes. The bodies of those who are racked with sobbing in uncontrollable grief. The bodies of the humiliated. The bodies of the terrified. The bodies that are burning with their unanswered pain and rage. And the bodies that ambulate normally and conceal the madness growing within.

So yesterday the Bush administration collected a few more dead bodies – 19 of them American soldiers' bodies, but a few other dead ones as well – and a lot more broken ones.

They collected thousands of bodies in Fallujah, and they have collected hundreds of thousands of them in Iraq and elsewhere.

Today, I will appeal again to George W. Bush and Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld and Colin Powell and Karl Rove and Condi Rice and every cheap careerist chickenshit member of Congress that authorized this war... you all go on over there.

Go on. Take that puppet-thug Allawi with you, and strap on your body armor, and walk out into the streets.

Lock and load, and walk right out into the streets of Baghdad and show everyone what a bunch of bad-asses you all are.

Go out there yourselves and face the rage you have engendered in this broken nation with your lies and your bombs and your bullets and your round-ups and your prisons.

Get out of your limos and posh offices and see the world. Please

Go enter the world that you have made. I beg you. Go.

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE IS THE ULTIMATE OXYMORON

From: David Honish

Sent: Friday, December 24, 2004

The acronym SNAFU stands for **Situation Normal, All Fouled Up**, or at least that is the polite version.

An outstanding example of this would be recent events in Mosul. Mosul is northern Iraq, Kurdish country, supposedly one of the more secure areas where foreign troops are slightly less hated than the rest of the country?

As we have seen, security is a relative term, with no application to anyplace in Iraq at present.

I was surprised to see it only took 24 hrs for the lies from pentagon public relations folks to evolve towards the obvious truth in regard to the Mosul bombing. Initial reports were that "more than 20 were killed...by a mortar attack...with a single explosion reported."

You have to wonder what desk jockey issued that statement? Even the greenest trainee only half way through basic training knows that the resistance mortar rounds are about the size of a grenade, and grenades DO NOT kill 20 or more people with a single explosion.

I immediately thought that the public relations folks were trying to cover up the obvious. When a single explosion does that much damage it is apparent that the insurgents are either organized well enough to have large bore artillery or rockets; or else base security was so poor that someone could slip in to plant a bomb, or carry a suicide bomb.

I guess some Pfc must have pointed out the stupidity of the released statement to the public relations officer? After several hours the information was changed to indicate that the explosion was "the result of a large caliber artillery round or rocket."

The only problem was, such projectiles are quite audible as they rip through the air, and no sound of incoming fire was reported by any witnesses. Perhaps this was pointed out to the desk jockeys by some thoughtful Pfc as well? Eventually, a day after the blast, it was admitted to be the work of a suicide bomber. Duh, no foolin?

Without any finger pointing at clearly inept commanding officers, there is now an investigation to see how security can be improved.

I ask what the reason is that after 21 months of combat while being shot at, shelled, and subjected to IED's & suicide bombers that such occurrences escaped the commander's notice and were not planned for? Specifically, WHY ARE TROOPS IN A COMBAT ZONE BUNCHED UP IN A MESS HALL INSTEAD OF TACTICALLY DISPERSED?

Heck, even in TX National Guard annual training in the early 1980's we had a tactical chow line that kept a minimum of 5 meters between each soldier and did not permit more than two soldiers to eat in any particular location once they had passed through the chow line. Nobody was even shooting at us. Our only real enemies were the heat, ticks, inept leaders, and the occasional rattlesnake or scorpion.

The self evident circumstances of the Iraq fiasco are such that the only reasonable course of action is immediate withdrawal of all military forces.

The top of the chain of command at the Whitehouse lied about non-existent WMD's as an excuse to try to control Iraqi oil. The result is less oil, and a doubling of gasoline prices.

The Secretary of Defense has been caught flat footed lying about doing everything possible to field the best Army possible.

Families having to purchase and send body armor, hand held radios, and other military essentials indicates otherwise, as does contractor claims of ability to double humvee armor kit production.

Commanders that should know better follow orders to issue rosy assessments, while all is chaos and destruction around them.

Journalists who should be doing their job to keep the government honest are instead the willing pawns distributing Whitehouse propaganda.

STOP THE LIES! STOP THE WAR CRIMES! BRING THE TROOPS HOME ALIVE NOW!

David Honish
<http://www.veteransforpeace.org>
Denton, Texas

MORE:

***Having Read That, Now Check This;* Proof The Resistance Controls The U.S. Military Chain-Of- Command In Iraq!**

12.24.04 By ROBERT BURNS, AP Military Writer

Military officials discussed ways to increase security for troops in Iraq but announced no major shifts Thursday.

Security experts said improved screening of visitors and gatherings would help counter insurgents' tactics. **Some individual bases have taken steps such as posting guards outside mess tents.**

[The tales of infiltration by the Iraqi resistance are only the tip of the iceberg. Obviously, they have infiltrated the U.S. command. What other possible explanation could there be for refusing to take the elementary safety precautions described by Honish above, and, instead, continuing to have troops assemble in

large concentrations to be slaughtered? Surely that must be the explanation. Surely it can't be that the commanding officers are either too stupid to get it, or are utterly indifferent to the lives of the troops under their command, and either way unfit for command? Perish the thought!]

MORE:

Soldiers Saw Giant Tent As Target For Insurgents; Obviously The General Didn't Do The Obvious

December 22, 2004 By C. Mark Brinkley, Army Times staff writer

It was only a week ago that Christmas trees and holiday decorations were going up in the massive chow hall at Forward Operating Base Marez, one of a few spots on the base where troops can relax with their friends, catch "Monday Night Football" during Tuesday morning breakfast, eat a cheeseburger and fries.

It was just a matter of time before insurgents launched a successful attack there — the chow hall was the obvious target, and everyone knew it — as insurgents spent weeks firing seemingly random shots across the area, hoping to get lucky.

Across the base, concrete bunkers reinforced with sandbags border every building, tent and sleeping trailer, giving troops a place to dive for cover. Usually these sporadic attacks land harmlessly away from where the troops live and work.

Other times, they've destroyed cargo containers and peppered parked vehicles, the shrapnel tearing chunks of fiberglass away from the unarmored portions of the trucks.

Most believe there are insurgent agents, posing as friends of the military, working inside the base, alerting the mortar men later to the placement of their shots. The theory is that enough misses will tell you where to hit, like playing a deadly game of "Battleship."

"They're looking for a success," said Army Brig. Gen. Carter Ham back on Dec. 1. Ham is commander of Task Force Olympia, the U.S. force in northern Iraq. "They want a victory. And they're looking for something that will be a big headline and a big victory." [And thanks to this dumbshit, they got it.]

That was nearly a month ago. **But Ham said the mortar attacks were likely part of the insurgents' larger plan for a "catastrophic event," planned by hardcore leaders of the insurgency and carried out by paid troops.**

“I don’t think it’s random at all,” Ham said. “I think these are pretty dedicated guys. **Our guess is that the attacks are planned by someone in this core group and executed by former soldiers – probably former mortarmen – who are actually pretty good.**” **[And knowing all this, he did *nothing* to disperse the force at mealtimes.]**

A nearby road — miles away from the base, but still close enough to hit the area with mortars and rockets — provides the perfect launching pad.

“We’ve had some successes against them,” Ham said a month ago. “Mostly what we see is a couple of mortars in a couple of pickup trucks. They’ll drive someplace, stop quick — either from the bed of the truck or right beside the truck — shoot two, three, four, five rounds, then pack up and leave again. They know if they stay, with the counterfire radars and the other capabilities that we have, that their chances of survival are not great. So they move out pretty quickly. **Very dangerous, very lethal.**” **[And knowing all this, he did *nothing* to disperse the force at mealtimes.]**

The U.S. troops responded, increasing patrols along the highway and setting up their own mortar teams to return fire and support other combat missions, **but such attacks are hard to stop.** Patrols and searches turn up small stores of such weapons and ammunition but there’s plenty out there, most of it looted from a huge Iraqi military ammo storage center in Mosul before the start of the war.

So the insurgents strike at will, often aiming for the big chow hall at the top of the hill where thousands of troops, contractors and Iraqi troops head off for meals four times a day. [And knowing all this, he did *nothing* to disperse the force at mealtimes.]

Several U.S. infantry and engineering battalions call the base home, along with units from the Iraqi regular army and national guard.

Situated on a hill, the base is cut in half by a mile-long dirt road, and units and housing are located on both sides. The road is generally muddy, either from the frequent rains or the water contractors spray on it to keep the dust down. Going to eat for most troops is often an unpleasant uphill slug to the top. But the troops catch rides when they can, and the contract workers have a shuttle bus that ferries them along the route.

Along the way, they pass a partially finished concrete dining facility, which was supposed to be open by Thanksgiving but has since been delayed.

The troops know the chow hall is an obvious target, one that affords little protection from mortars and rockets, but it doesn’t stop them from taking time to enjoy a good meal. Televisions on tall stands line one wall of the tent, where sports and movies are often piped in for the diners.

The chow hall is a huge, white tent, about 30 feet high at its tallest point, hoisted above a concrete slab. There is only one at the base, open for the three traditional meals — as well as midnight rations of leftovers for troops coming off late shifts or still hungry after a long day of patrolling and operations.

“I think they look at the timing of that,” Ham said. “They probably know about when meal times are and there is concentration of people, where the rest of the

day, folks are scattered. We look at all that, and try actively to disrupt these guys and kill them or capture them. [And knowing all this, he did *nothing* to disperse the force at mealtimes.]

Operation Iraqi Fuckup

By Bob Witanek, December 24, 2004

Very funny headline – on the AP page of the Washington Post:

Rumsfeld to Troops: Mission Is Achievable (AP, Dec. 24, 2004; 10:39 AM)

It's a funny sequel to the infamous great leader ship-landing with the banner:

"Mission Accomplished"

I invite folks to offer their suggestion for future such headlines or slogans:

Mission Is Possible

Mission Is Remotely Possible

Mission Is Fleetingly Possible

And of course finally:

Mission: Impossible

Another slogan to go down in history with "Bring Em On! - please offer your suggestions.

...

[Comment from raja chemayel:]

Does this liberator dare to take a 5 minutes walk, even in the green zone !! ?? if not , then mission aborted !!

What A Choice

[Sent in by CZ:]

Because, really, what a choice there was; what a prodigy of things to be afraid of!

The moment that you understood this, really understood it, you lost your anxiety instantly. Anxiety was a luxury, a joke you had no room for once you knew the variety of deaths and mutilations the war offered.

Some feared head wounds, some dreaded chest wounds or stomach wounds, everyone feared the wound of wounds, the Wound. Guys would pray and pray -- Just you and me, God. Right? -- offer anything, if only they could be spared that: Take my legs, take my hands, take my eyes, take my fucking *life*, You Bastard, but please, please, please, don't take *those*.

Whenever a shell landed in a group, everyone forgot about the next rounds and skipped back to rip their pants away, to check, laughing hysterically with relief even though their legs might be shattered, their kneecaps torn away, kept upright by their relief and shock, gratitude and adrenaline.

There were choices everywhere, but they were never choices that you could hope to make.

There was even some small chance for personal style in your recognition of the one thing you feared more than any other.

You could die in a sudden bloodburning crunch as your chopper hit the ground like dead weight, you could fly apart so that your pieces would never be gathered, you could take one neat round in the lung and go out hearing only the bubble of the last few breaths, you could die in the last stage of malaria with that faint tapping in your ears, and that could happen to you after months of firefights and rockets and machine guns.

Enough, too many, were saved for that, and you always hoped that no irony would attend your passing.

You could end in a pit somewhere with a spike through you, everything stopped forever except for the one or two motions, purely involuntary, as though you could kick it all away and come back.

You could fall down dead so that the medics would have to spend half an hour looking for the hole that killed you, getting more and more spooked as the search went on.

You could be shot, mined, grenaded, rocketed, mortared, sniped at, blown up and away so that your leavings had to be dropped into a sagging poncho and carried to Graves Registration, that's all she wrote.

It was almost marvelous.

And at night, all of it seemed more possible.

Dispatches, Michael Herr, pp. 133-134

PS:

Believe it or not, this line too line was uttered by **Myers**: "So **it's not General Ham that attacked his dining hall.**" **Have truer and more perceptive words ever been spoken?**

OCCUPATION REPORT

Occupation Kills Prominent Shaikh On Way To Prayers

12.24.04 Aljazeera

Aljazeera learned that Shaikh Muwafaq al-Duri, a member of the influential Muslim group Association of Muslim Scholars (AMS) was shot dead by US soldiers during a raid they carried out on his house in al-Ameriya neighbourhood, west of Baghdad.

The incident occurred on Friday afternoon while al-Duri was heading to perform Friday prayers at the Abu Bakr al-Sidiq mosque in al-Radhvaniya suburb, south of Baghdad.

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

OCCUPATION PALESTINE



The Staff of Uruknet

[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.]

CLASS WAR NEWS

You Think You Got It Rough In Iraq? New Luxury Goods Set Super- Wealthy Apart From Pack: Rising Riches Stir Rivalry For Ever- Bigger Yachts

[Families beg for money to go visit wounded soldiers. Kids beg for money to buy phone cards for soldiers. But hey, don't whine. You're dying for the capitalist free enterprise system, so shut the fuck up. These really important people need to do what they do best: run the Empire, scoop up the money, and spend the wealth your combat pays for. But then you already knew that, didn't you?

[Whatever you tell the reporter or the TV interviewer, you know you're in Iraq so they can have more and more and more, don't you? And you know all the bullshit about "democracy" and "fighting terrorism" is just the cover story, don't you? Yeah, you do. And as courageous as you are over there, you let these assholes run the show and when they tell you to jump, you just ask "How high?" Used, betrayed, and thrown away. Being well armed security guards for people who think their yachts and their Empire are more important than your life, and ours, is an odd way of protecting us back home against "all enemies domestic." Tired of it yet? You talk about how loyal you are to those you serve with. These are the people who own the government and killed your brothers and sisters-in-arms to grab Iraq for themselves and their business associates. See how they live while you die, this .007 of the American population. What are you going to do about that? T]

12.14.04 By ROBERT FRANK, Wall St. Journal

[Thanks to Joel G. for this.]

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. —Don Weston used to feel special cruising the world in his 100-foot yacht. Yet on a recent morning at the International Boat Show here, the retired Cincinnati businessman stood on his upper deck, overshadowed by giants.

Next door was the Corrie Lynn, a 130-foot cruiser with a king-sized Jacuzzi, five cabins, retractable plasma TV screens and twin jet skis. Down the dock was the 197-foot Alfa Four, with an indoor gym, swimming pool and helicopter pad.

The talk of the show was billionaire Paul Allen's new pleasure boat, Octopus, which extends over 400 feet and has a basketball court, music studio and personal submarine. That's about to be topped by a yacht under construction in Dubai for a Saudi client. It's expected to exceed 500 feet, the size of a small cruise ship.

"I used to think I had a good-sized boat," sighs Mr. Weston. "Now it's like a dinghy compared to these others. How big are they going to get?"

The yacht business reflects a new arms race breaking out among the wealthy.

With the population of millionaires soaring to more than two million in the U.S., the rich are finding it harder to set themselves apart. [Two million is .007 of the U.S. population.]

Many are turning to supersized luxury consumer products to rise above the pack. Today's super-wealthy, and the companies that serve them, are creating a whole new category of high-end products that are priced beyond the reach of mere millionaires.

Megayachts have grown in size from a typical length of 80 feet to 110 feet in the mid-1990s to well over 150 feet today. **The market for luxury yachts has more than tripled since 1997, with some boats costing well over \$100 million.** Dozens of boats longer than 200 feet are now under construction.

The most expensive Mercedes used to be the CL600, which cost about \$100,000 in the late 1990s. Last year, the Mercedes group, part of DaimlerChrysler AG, introduced the Maybach 62, which sells for more than \$350,000. This year, it started selling the SLR, which is priced at over \$450,000 and has a long waiting list. Not to be outdone, Volkswagen AG's Bugatti unit is about to introduce a sports car priced at more than \$1 million.

Watch makers Patek Philippe, Rolex and Breguet are selling watches priced at more than \$200,000, and limited-edition watches can now run in the millions.

The real rise isn't in trinkets for the mass affluent such as handbags, clothes and shoes. It's in the big-ticket items for the wealthy.

Vacation-home prices in Aspen, Martha's Vineyard, Northern California and other elite spots have doubled in recent years, real-estate agents say. Palm Beach has become an island of billionaires, with financier Ron Perelman recently selling his oceanfront estate there for more than \$70 million.

Sotheby's and Christie's both topped \$90 million in sales at their postwar and contemporary art auctions this month, with only a handful of works selling for less than \$1 million. **Racehorses are hitting prices not seen since the mid-1980s, with one yearling recently selling at auction for more than \$8 million.**

The luxury boom stems from a huge increase in personal fortunes.

The wealth held by millionaires world-wide rose to \$28.8 trillion as of the end of 2003, according to a separate Capgemini-Merrill study, up 11% from \$26 trillion in 2001. That's more than the annual gross domestic products of the U.S., Japan, Germany, France and the United Kingdom combined.

Those at the very top appear to be doing especially well recently. The wealth controlled by individuals in North America with more than \$30 million in financial assets—such as stocks and bonds, but not including real estate—jumped 45% to \$3.04 trillion in 2003 from \$2.1 trillion in 2002, according to Capgemini-Merrill.

A generally rising stock market over the past decade, soaring executive compensation, higher real-estate values **and lower taxes on the wealthy are all cited as explanations for the rising wealth.**

Also, more and more entrepreneurs who started family businesses after World War II are cashing out because of industry consolidation, creating what private bankers like to call “major liquidity events.” **Today's instant multimillionaires tend to be younger than the rich of the past, and more likely to splurge on lifestyle goods to differentiate themselves from hoi polloi affluent people.**

Edward N. Wolff, a professor of economics at New York University who studies wealth, likens modern-day big spenders to nobles at the court of France's Louis XIV, who reigned from 1643 to 1715. To ensure the nobles' loyalty, Louis continually raised the “entry price” of being in his court, requiring them to wear increasingly expensive clothes and keep larger and larger homes. The nobles' need for greater wealth made them even more dependent on the King's good graces, and left them less money to spend on arms. **[The King and the Nobles ended up getting their heads chopped off after a revolution by ordinary people, who finally had enough.]**

Today, Mr. Wolff says, it's the wealthy themselves who are bidding up the price of being on top. “For the wealthy to keep their status, they have to compete in terms of luxury consumption,” Mr. Wolff says. “The mere fact that this group can pay these prices becomes an indicator of social standing.”

Of all the unnecessary purchases, yachts are among the hardest to justify. Owners of a yacht—generally defined as a vessel longer than 85 feet registered for private use—rarely use their boats more than a month or two a year. Upkeep can cost millions of dollars a year, and yachts typically fall in value after three or four years.

Yachts do give their owners one important value: exclusivity. Norberto Ferretti, chairman of the Ferretti Group, one the world's top yacht builders, says his customers like the privacy and freedom that comes with cruising on a yacht. **Entertaining guests on a yacht is “much more special than just bringing them to your villa,” he says.** Best of all, yachts separate the seriously rich from the merely well-off.

“Rich people can go to a beautiful hotel and pay \$3,000 a night for a suite,” he says. “The trouble is, when you go down the elevator, you’re in the lobby with people who paid twenty times less. My clients don’t like that.”

Today’s biggest yachts are loaded with new technology and toys. Computer controlled stabilizers -- which anticipate the rocking movements of a boat and offset them with underwater fins or gyroscopes —make megayachts perfectly still even when anchored.

High-tech security systems, stereos, theaters and Swimming pools have become standard. Most come with garages, to house jet skis, motorcycles, small motorboats and other vehicles.

In the U.S., the yacht wars started when Leslie Wexner, chairman and chief executive of Limited Brands Inc., built the 315-foot Limitless in 1997. The ship has 3,000 feet of teak wood along with a gym.

Shortly after, Microsoft Corp. cofounder Paul Allen bought the 354-foot Le Grand Bleu, **which has its own 72-foot sailboat on board.** Then he commissioned Lurssen, the German builder of the world’s largest yachts, to produce the 414-foot Octopus. It was planned to be the biggest yacht in the world.

Delivered last year, Octopus has a 59-foot speedboat, personal submarine, swimming pool and music studio, according to builders. The helicopter pad on the main aft deck doubles as a basketball court. People familiar with the boat say it cost more than \$250 million to build and will cost more than \$10 million a year to run.

While Octopus was under construction, Larry Ellison, the hypercompetitive Oracle Corp. chief who’s also an avid boater, was building his own superboat. It was originally slated to be 393 feet. As the building of Octopus proceeded, Mr. Ellison expanded the size of his boat. **The result, a 452-foot colossus called Rising Sun, was launched this fall, making Mr. Ellison king of the heap at least temporarily. The price tag was more than \$200 million, people familiar with the project say.**

Paolo Vitelli, Azimut-Benetti’s chairman, says one of his clients ordered a yacht and saw one of his business competitors with a larger boat. “He asked us to make his one meter larger than his competitor’s,” Mr. Vitelli says.

On a recent morning at the Fort Lauderdale boat show, Don Davis stepped aboard Regency, his new 142-foot, three-deck motor yacht. With a touch of a button, two giant sliding glass doors sprang open to the sprawling living room. **The carpet is hand-knotted from wool and silk in China, according to crew members. The bathrooms are fitted with Italian marble and the walls paneled with African Makore wood.**

The grand stairway, sculpted from wrought iron and wood, spans three flights. Retractable plasma television screens adorn almost every room, along with surround-sound speakers, audio players and amplifiers. Mr. Davis designed the boat’s X-shaped logo, which adorns the dining-room carpet and the formal China. **Just filling the gas tank costs more than \$12,000. [How much does the survivor of a troop killed in**

Iraq get for a death benefit? How many of Davis' gas tank fill-ups would that life buy? Isn't it neat to know what your life is worth, measured in gas for a yacht?]

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.

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