

GI SPECIAL 2#C62

DIRE DISTRESS



“I Don’t Support This War”

December 17, 2004 JUSTIN AKERS and NICOLE COLSON report

THIRD CLASS Petty Officer Pablo Paredes stood on the pier of the 32nd Street naval base in San Diego, Calif., as his ship the *USS Bonhomme Richard* left for the Persian Gulf without him. “Like a cabinet member, I resign,” read his simple black T-shirt.

Paredes, who is publicly against the U.S. war in Iraq, sent shock waves up the military chain of command by refusing to board his ship.

“I don’t want to be a part of a ship that’s taking 3,000 Marines over there, knowing a hundred or more of them won’t come back,” he told the *San Diego Union Tribune*. “I can’t sleep at night knowing that’s what I do for a living. “I’d rather do military prison time than six months of dirty work for a war that I and many others do not support.”

You wouldn't know it from the still gung-ho rhetoric of the Bush administration, but a growing number of soldiers are beginning to voice their frustration and anger at the military--not only for shipping them off to an unjust, illegal war, but for gambling with their lives.

That's what led National Guard troops to confront Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld when he visited Kuwait last week. "Why do we soldiers have to dig through local landfills for pieces of scrap metal and compromised ballistic glass to up-armor our vehicles?" asked Army Spc. Thomas Wilson.

Rumsfeld's response? "You can have all the armor in the world on a tank, and a tank can be blown up," he lectured. In other words, shut up and don't complain. You couldn't ask for a better illustration of how little the concerns--and the lives--of soldiers like Wilson mean to the Bush administration.

More than 1,270 U.S. soldiers have died in Iraq. Another 9,000 have been wounded, many of them seriously maimed. But the Pentagon plans on sending more and more soldiers to kill and be killed in Iraq.

On the Iraqi side, the death toll grows at an even faster pace--with the British medical journal *The Lancet* estimating that more than 100,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed.

Washington's callous disregard for the lives it destroys--both Iraqi and American--explains why soldiers and sailors such as Pablo Paredes and Camilo Mejia have refused to fight, even if that means going to jail.

For many soldiers and reservists, the military was the only readily available job--or hope of being able to afford college. Paredes says he was just 17 years old when he joined up. "It was absolutely on a whim," he said. "I woke up one day and said I don't have many choices, and this military guy keeps calling me."

Now, however, Paredes has chosen to raise his voice as loudly as possible.

He will be speaking for more and more of the working-class men and women sent to Iraq. As the U.S. government's lies about "democracy" and "liberation" are further exposed, these soldiers are increasingly recognizing that they are being used as human shields for oil company profits and Washington's imperialist ambitions.

Like the members of the 343rd Quartermaster Company, which recently refused orders to travel in an unarmed convoy to deliver fuel. Or the more than 5,500 service members who--according to the Pentagon's own figures--have deserted since the war began.

Organizing among soldiers and military families has taken off, with more than 150 people joining the newly formed Iraq Veterans Against the War. The organization Military Families Speak Out, founded just two years ago, has more than 2,000 members.

People like Pablo are the voice of the growing discontent among soldiers and sailors--who together have the power to help end this horrible war and

occupation. “I know other people are feeling the same way I am,” Pablo told reporters, “and I’m hoping more people will stand up. They can’t throw us all in jail.”



IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

Mosul IED Wounds Three U.S. Soldiers



An Iraqi man throws a stone at a burning truck after a US convoy was caught in a road side bomb in the northern city of Mosul. (12.26.04 AFP/Mujahed Mohammed)

December 26, 2004 (CNN)

A roadside bomb hit a U.S. military convoy Sunday in the northern city of Mosul, injuring three American soldiers, a spokesman with U.S. Task Force Olympia said.

Iraqi national guard officials said a truck in the convoy, which was carrying food and medical supplies, was destroyed.

FALLUJA



A US marine (L) lying wounded after being hit by enemy fire while trying to pull a fatally wounded marine (R) to safety during battles earlier this week in Fallujah (AFP/USMC/File).

23 December, 2004 BBC News

Dr Saleh Hussein Isawi, the acting director of the Falluja general hospital:

“Fighting continues every night in the city. It's not heavy and I'm not sure whether the sounds of gunfire we hear are between American soldiers and insurgents. There continue to be occasional air strikes. The fighting has seemed to be heavier these last two nights.”

Insurgents Ramp Up Attacks On U.S. Troops In Samarra

[Two months ago the U.S. command was bragging about how Samarra had been pacified and the resistance defeated. They said it would be a model for all of Iraq. They were wrong on the first point, and absolutely right on the second.]

Dec 22, 2004 Josh White, The Washington Post & 12.23

SAMARRA, dec 22, 2004 — **Mortar rounds land outside Patrol Base Uvanni so often that soldiers inside barely lift their heads when another deafening thump disturbs the clear afternoon air.**

Anti-tank mines appear in the dust a few yards from the entrance to the U.S. base, a brick building that was once part of a college campus. Bullets from random machine-gun fire zip past, and a sunburst of shrapnel scars remain on the outer wall from a rocket-propelled grenade.

Most U.S. bases in Iraq are regular targets of enemy fire; magnets for insurgents. Most of the fire misses because the insurgents are not a highly trained military force. Sometimes the attacks hit hard.

In the past few days, attacks in Samarra have become more frequent, with most focused on U.S. forces in and around their base.

Explosions occur several times a day, and mortar rounds fall within a few hundred meters of the installation. Insurgents have targeted U.S. soldiers repairing schools and Army snipers hunkered atop a historic minaret, now scarred by grenade blasts.

Senior officials here said the insurgents could be building up to a series of bigger attacks as elections approach at the end of January, and said they were particularly concerned about a large attack on a patrol base such as Uvanni, ***where soldiers sleep and eat in large groups.***

The soldiers do what they can to protect their fortresses, using snipers and regular patrols to thwart such attacks.

Lt. Nick Kron, 25, of Richmond, Va., a tank platoon leader in Samarra, said he once discovered what appeared to be a sand-and-rock mock-up of Forward Operating Base Brassfield-Mora, north of Samarra, while on patrol nearby. Kron said the apparent reproduction included buildings and a berm built to protect against rocket attacks. Brassfield-Mora is regularly targeted by insurgent mortar fire, he said.

"It shows they're organized and have the means to launch an attack," Kron said.

Soldiers in sunni town run into a wall of silence. Samarra is a virtual intelligence meltdown. The townspeople won't cooperate with U.S. and Iraqi forces trying to pry the insurgents out of their rat holes.

TROOP NEWS

Soldiers In Revolt: Vietnam

“Moreover, as Robert Jay Lifton has argued in *Home from the War*, many soldiers returned from Vietnam with a bitterness and rage at the deception to which they had been subjected and were in some cases motivated to resist military authority. At many bases, combat veterans sparked the development of overt resistance and political organizing. The Vietnam War and the veterans who fought it were like a cancer gnawing at the U.S. military apparatus.”

From: SOLDIERS IN REVOLT: DAVID CORTRIGHT, Anchor Press/Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1975:

The Machine Breaks Down

Recounting this seemingly endless tale of woes, we tend to lose sight of what was actually happening within the ranks.

Underlying the various statistics and measures of unrest was an Army on the verge of collapse, crippled by a virtual “general strike” among a sizable minority of enlisted people.

For example, if we look at the Army during fiscal 1971, its worst year of decline, we find seven acts of desertion, seventeen incidents of unauthorized absence, two disciplinary discharges, twelve complaints to congressmen and eighteen non-judicial punishments for every one hundred soldiers; at the same time, 20 per cent of the men smoked marijuana frequently, while 10 per cent used narcotics on a regular basis.

The same kind of problems existed within the other services, but with declining severity in the Marine Corps, the Navy, and the Air Force.

Such figures suggest that as many as one fourth of all Army enlisted men engaged in some form of rebellion against military authority. In an organizational environment requiring intense interpersonal loyalty and a high degree of cooperation, defiance of this magnitude necessarily exerted a profound influence on operational effectiveness. No armed force can function properly when faced with such internal disruption and resistance.

Division In The Ranks

The division within the enlisted ranks is perhaps most evident in what, for lack of a better term, may be called a GI counterculture—a community of shared values and expressions antithetical to military standards.

As within civilian society, a new consciousness emerged within the services, expressed in cultural idioms and an anarchic indifference to authority. Black and white GIs, searching for an identity apart from their role in the military, formed buddy groups of “brothers” and “freaks.”

In the totalitarian environment of the military, solidarity was expressed symbolically through long hair and afros, rock and soul music, beads and black bracelets, peace signs and clenched fists.

The consequences of open defiance could be extremely harsh, and most GIs thus normally expressed their loathing for the military through more subtle means. Vast numbers of Vietnam-era servicemen participated in countless minor acts of sabotage and obstruction designed to clog the gears of the “Green Machine.”

Every unit had its examples of intentionally bungled repair or paperwork, of unexplained minor damage to equipment, of constant squabbling between certain GIs and the “lifers,” of mysteriously appearing peace signs, etc. The cumulative effect of thousands of such acts constituted the reality of the morale crisis.

In my own Army experience, I saw many examples of this covert resistance.

My favorite involved a band performance at the Federal Building, in the heart of Manhattan’s financial district, before a huge crowd of businessmen and military dignitaries.

During a rendition of Sousa’s *The Klaxon* march, our first clarinetist played the melody an octave and one half- step higher than written. The effect was both embarrassing to the military and extremely hilarious, as a shrill, oriental-sounding dissonance echoed through the canyons of Wall Street.

Afterward, our enraged first sergeant attempted to find the culprit but unfortunately was not a capable enough musician to identify where the eerie sounds had originated and of course none of us were about to give him any aid.

Another, more serious example involved the antics of my friends Paul Fuhs and Dennis Oney at the Defense Language Institute in Fort Bliss.

When Sp/4 Fuhs was assigned to Fort Bliss, he was tapped by the command for important positions of authority. He was named section leader of his class at the Vietnamese language training center **and was assigned as military intelligence agent to spy on the area GI political group, GIs for Peace. Paul and his roommate, Dennis, soon experienced a change of heart, however, and instead of aiding the Army, worked together to wreak havoc on the military.**

While supposedly an Army agent, Paul became a leading organizer of GIs for Peace, consistently sending the Army false reports and using government money to bolster the group’s treasury.

Meanwhile, back on post, the fabulous furry freak brothers (as they were sometimes known) exhorted fellow classmates, all Army security trainees with top-secret clearances, to resist orders to Vietnam.

By the time Fuhs was removed as class leader (the Army finally realized something was wrong when he submitted an application as a conscientious objector), twelve out of the

twenty-one original members of the class had deserted, obtained discharges, or filed for conscientious objector status.

Paul and Dennis themselves were later discharged, fourteen and twenty-six months early respectively, Paul by federal court order **and Dennis through what must have been one of the most bizarre medical discharges in Army history.**

When the government refused to approve his C.O. application, Oney concocted the following wildly incredulous tale (excerpted from his official discharge papers):

Chief Complaint: "Someone injected LSD in my brain."

History of Present Illness: ". . . he became increasingly convinced that war was evil, the Army was run by psychotics and that he would be unable to live with his conscience if he stayed in the Army. . . . His friend advised him to take LSD and then the Army wouldn't matter. On the following day patient was told that LSD would be injected into his brain. . . Patient since has felt he has been on a continual trip. . . Patient describes specifically that whenever he sees something that is evil he can close his eyes and he will hear such things as voices sounding like the multitude of the heavenly hosts. He can also see and hear such things as nursery rhymes."

Another far more dramatic example of this underground struggle within the ranks occurred among clerks at Ft. Devens, Massachusetts.

It is often said, with some justification, that the ordinary clerk, not the general, really runs the military bureaucracy, an irony immortalized in Joseph Heller's World War II character ex-Pfc Wintergreen.

In 1970, an elaborate network of some seventy personnel workers at Fort Devens and other East Coast bases sprung up for the purpose of keeping GIs out of Vietnam. Four men in the proper offices at Fort Devens reportedly could delete the name of any soldier wanting to escape a levy to Vietnam. Individual orders were a bit more difficult, requiring the fixing of four men at Fort Devens and two at the Pentagon. According to reports in the *Boston Phoenix* and the *GI Press Service*, the operation was able to successfully prevent dozens of GIs from being sent to Vietnam.

The Army's most serious morale problem at home was the impact of veterans returning from the combat zone.

After a twelve-month tour of Vietnam, dehumanized by the senselessness and indiscriminate destructiveness of American policy and increasingly drug-ridden and defiant of authority, veterans assigned to garrison bases were often unwilling or unable to comply with normal military standards of discipline.

Having risked death, many combat veterans were simply incapable of being moved by the petty awards and punishments of military justice.

Moreover, as Robert Jay Lifton has argued in *Home from the War*, many soldiers returned from Vietnam with a bitterness and rage at the deception to which they

had been subjected and were in some cases motivated to resist military authority. At many bases, combat veterans sparked the development of overt resistance and political organizing. The Vietnam War and the veterans who fought it were like a cancer gnawing at the U.S. military apparatus.

Betrayal

Forwarded from VVAW National Staffperson Lisa Boucher

By Dan Frosch SF Bay Guardian----no date

According to V.A. psychiatrist Shay, the issue with the most potential for psychological torment is whether soldiers feel they've been led into battle for a noble cause.

Shay, who compared the Vietnam veterans' battle experience to that of Achilles in his book *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*, wrote how the Greek hero felt betrayed by his arrogant general, Agamemnon, whose disrespect of a priest of Apollo brought down a plague on the Greeks.

"If a soldier has experienced a betrayal of what's right by those in charge, their capacity for social trust can be impaired for the rest of their lives," Shay says.

Indeed, Sergeant Durman says he first began feeling uncomfortable in Iraq when it became clear there were no weapons of mass destruction.

He says his unit was furious when Gen. Tommy Franks retired mid-war, while the rest of the National Guard and reservists were subject to the Army's "stop-loss" policy, which has extended soldiers' deployments.

Sergeant Padilla and Specialist Luker were outraged when they saw Iraqi children playing in human sewage gurgling through the streets while the Army did nothing. "I thought we were here to help these people," Padilla says.

[Vietnam Veterans who came back to go to fight the politicians responsible for the war found a healthy way to channel the rage at betrayal into constructive activity, and tended to have less severe PTSD. Lesson learned.]

The New Military Life: Endless War, Worse Odds On Death

Her husband, Robert Jr., was a lance corporal in the Marines. He was killed in Falluja this spring, a few weeks before their son was born. He was on his second tour to Iraq.

"I never wanted him to go a second time," she said. "I just started having the feeling that we were pushing our luck too far, and he thought so, too."

"I should have broken his arm to keep him here," she said. "I knew it was too much to go again."

Her son, Ms. Zurheide said, looks just like his father.

December 20, 2004 By MONICA DAVEY, New York Times

MANHATTAN, Kan., Dec. 15 - Earlier this year, as Sgt. Alexander Garcia's plane took off for home after his tense year of duty in Iraq, he remembered watching the receding desert sand and thinking, I will never see this place again.

Never lasted about 10 months for Sergeant Garcia, a cavalry scout with the First Armored Division who finished his first stint in Iraq in March and is now preparing to return.

He and the rest of his combat brigade at Fort Riley, the Army base a few miles from this town, have been working for weeks, late into the frigid prairie nights, cleaning and packing gear and vehicles for the trip back to Baghdad after the New Year.

"I figured that the Army was big enough that one unit would not have to go back again before this thing was over," said Sergeant Garcia, 20. "It's my job and it's my country, and I don't have any regrets. But I kind of feel like I did my part. Just as I was readjusting to life back home, just as I was starting to feel normal again, this kind of throws me back into the waves."

No one is feeling normal anymore at Fort Riley and other bases across the country, where military life is undergoing a radical change. They are stoic here, and many point out, as Sergeant Garcia does, that they signed up for this.

Still, in decades past, troops had gotten used to a predictable rhythm to their deployments. Even during Desert Storm and Vietnam, most soldiers could expect to take just one trip into harm's way.

But with the military stretched thin in Iraq and in Afghanistan, some soldiers and marines are being sent to war zones repeatedly, for longer stretches in some cases, and with far less time at home between deployments than they say they have ever experienced before.

Here in Kansas, the base and the small towns nearby have begun to resemble an enormous machine in an endless cycle: bringing soldiers home with late-night celebrations in gymnasiums and screaming roadside banners, and then sending them off again, with fresh uniforms, new DVD players and snapshots, and formal farewells.

The motion is constant, whirring along, even as the world beyond Fort Riley's churning slows down for the holidays. **Next month, a brigade of 3,500 Fort Riley soldiers will begin returning to Iraq for a second time; a few days ago, 3,500 others, many of whom arrived home to their quiet Midwestern post this fall, learned they would be headed back to Iraq as early as the middle of next year.**

This frenzied pace is swiftly becoming the norm.

Nearly a third of the 950,000 people from all branches of the armed forces who have been sent to Iraq or Afghanistan since those conflicts began have already been sent a second time.

Part-time soldiers - **Army national guardsmen and reservists - who often have handled support roles, not frontline combat roles, are slightly more likely to have served more than one deployment to the conflict zones than regular Army members.**

And, of the nearly 1,300 troops who have died in Iraq since the war began, more than 100 of them were on second tours.

The change is leaving its emotional mark on thousands of military families.

Some family members say the repeated separations have been like some awful waking dream, holding their breath for their soldiers to make it home safely, only to watch them leave once more. Some families who have lost loved ones on repeat tours of duty said they felt a particular ache - a sense that the second trip pushed fate too hard.

Among some of the soldiers themselves, the thought of returning to Iraq carries one puzzling quality:

Unlike so many parts of life, in which the second try at anything feels easier than the first, these soldiers say that heading to Iraq is actually more overwhelming the second time around.

"The first time, I didn't know anything," Sergeant Garcia said. "But this time I know what I'm getting into, so it's harder. You know what you're going to do. You know how bad you're going to be feeling."

During peacetime, marines have usually been deployed for six months, then stationed at home for 18 months, said Capt. Dan McSweeney, a Marine Corps spokesman. For now, Captain McSweeney said, the pace for some is closer to seven months away and seven months home. **About half of the 32,000 marines now stationed in Iraq are serving second tours, he said.**

The Army's goal is that fulltime soldiers can expect deployments one year of every three, and reservists expect to go away far less, one year of every six, said Lt. Col. Christopher Rodney, an Army spokesman. **At the moment, though, Colonel Rodney said, some**

soldiers are leaving for a year and coming home for a year, though some tours have stretched longer, some stays at home shorter.

"This is a completely new and completely different kind of animal," said Sgt. First Class Tom Ogden, a member of an Army aviation unit from Fort Carson, Colo., who has spent nearly 20 years in the military.

"I've never seen anything like it," he said. "And what everybody is starting to know now is that this is going to be what's going on for the foreseeable future."

Sergeant Ogden, 37, returned home to his wife, Rene, and their 7-year-old twins in April. His unit is to leave again, he said, in March. **"For me, this one will be harder," he said. "The last time, we thought there was an off-chance we would see some stuff. But things have escalated, and now we know we will."**

At Fort Riley, soldiers and their families said they had wrestled with the new, faster pace. Some spouses said they worried about managing so much of life alone - children, bills, cars and home repairs.

"I think this is the new norm," said Sandra Horton, whose husband, Staff Sgt. T. J. Horton, is to leave Fort Riley for Iraq, once again, in January.

The Hortons have been through the stresses and loneliness of deployments many times in Sergeant Horton's 17 years in the service, and they said they would manage just fine this time, too. Again and again, they both said that this was simply his job, even if it meant that Ta'Von, 6, grew many more inches before his father saw him again.

Still, in a quiet moment, Ms. Horton acknowledged: "It feels never-ending now. We feel like he's always gone. But what can we do?"

In Tucson, Elena Zurheide is preparing Christmas for her 7-and-a-half-month-old son, Robert III. "I hate Christmas," Ms. Zurheide said. "I hate holidays. I hate everything right now."

Her husband, Robert Jr., was a lance corporal in the Marines. He was killed in Falluja this spring, a few weeks before their son was born. He was on his second tour to Iraq.

"I never wanted him to go a second time," she said. "I just started having the feeling that we were pushing our luck too far, and he thought so, too."

She said she wrote to Corporal Zurheide's commander before he left, asking that her husband be permitted to stay behind - or that he at least be allowed to wait for the birth of their son. She said she never heard back.

"I should have broken his arm to keep him here," she said. "I knew it was too much to go again."

Her son, Ms. Zurheide said, looks just like his father.

"I'm Tired And I Don't Want To Be Here"

2004-11-28 Tom Lasseter, Knight Ridder Newspapers

Falluja: Resting against his SAW machine gun - a large gun with a tripod that weighs more than 16 pounds - Spc. Sheldon Howard, 20, listened as his platoon commander gave orders to move out in a few minutes. Dark rings formed below his eyes. Dirt showed in thick bands across his forehead when he took off his helmet.

Howard, who wore glasses and had a round face, grew up near a Navajo reservation outside of Farmington, N.M., and usually didn't speak much.

"I'm tired and I don't want to be here," Howard said. "I don't want to take all of this back with me, but I probably will."

Some Military Families Must Get Food From Charities

[USA Today, December 23, 2004, Pg. 5]

Some families of reservists serving in Iraq find it necessary to depend on various food-banks to help make ends meet.

Wounded In Blast, Chief Medic Puts Other Lives First

December 23, 2004 COLUMN: Bill Nemitz, Portland Press Herald/Maine

MOSUL, Iraq - A feature on senior soldiers in the latest AARP Bulletin shows Maj. John "Doc" Nelson, in full uniform at Forward Operating Base Marez, beneath the headline "What Are You Doing in the War, Grandpa?"

Here's what:

Just after noon Tuesday, ignoring the four pieces of shrapnel lodged in his back and neck, the 51-year-old chief medical officer for the Maine Army National Guard's 133rd Engineer Battalion saved an untold number of lives.

Then he collapsed.

"It knocked me for a loop," said Nelson, who was sitting about 15 feet from the explosion that decimated the base's huge dining hall, killing 22 people and wounding 69.

"It was smoky. It was dark. I picked myself up and looked around and didn't see anything moving," Nelson said. "And I thought, 'Oh (expletive), I've got my work cut out for me now.'"

Stretched out across his bunk Wednesday, his right arm out of its sling but still pressed gingerly against his chest, the certified physician's assistant from Bangor relived the horror that began as a normal lunch and ended in the worst MASCAL - military shorthand for mass casualty - that even he could imagine.

"My MASCAL plan for an attack on the DFAC (dining facility) during a peak meal hour assumed 24 dead," Nelson said.

His projection, tragically, was only off by two.

Nelson and Chaplain David Sivret had just loaded their trays and sat down for one of their frequent lunches together when the blast - apparently caused by a suicide bomber - sent tables, chairs and bodies flying.

"We both landed about 10 feet from where we'd been sitting," Nelson said. "It knocked both of us out."

Nelson came to first. "I didn't feel like I had been hit at all. I didn't feel anything," he said. Nelson looked over at Sivret, who was still unconscious, and confirmed that he was still breathing and not bleeding. He looked to the other side at a soldier from the Virginia-based 276th Engineer Battalion who had been sitting next to them at the table. The young man was dead.

Rising to his feet, Nelson saw bodies scattered across the floor. Able-bodied soldiers, many in shock, moved around them - some rendering aid, others not knowing what to do.

"At first I was just trying to get people started, get them focused," Nelson said. "It's what we do - bring order out of chaos."

Moving from casualty to casualty, Nelson assessed injuries and instructed soldiers on how and where to hold wounds to stop the bleeding. He emptied napkins from their holders and stuffed them in a young soldier's hand, then took the soldier's palm and pressed it against a comrade's severed neck artery.

At one point, confronted with a gravely wounded soldier bleeding from multiple pieces of shrapnel in his chest, Nelson tore a sheet of clear plastic from a roll used for meals-to-go and wrapped it tightly around the young man's chest.

"You use whatever you have," he said.

At times, it wasn't enough.

"I saw one guy, he was about ready to die," Nelson said quietly. "So I turned him on his side so at least he wouldn't choke to death. There wasn't anything else I could do."

Nelson also came across Spc. Thomas Dostie, 20, of Somerville, one of two members of the 133rd killed in the attack.

"All I could do was close his eyes," Nelson said. "I can tell you he didn't suffer."

A mass casualty plan for the dining facility, developed last spring by Nelson, called for a temporary morgue in a corner of the building. Sivret instinctively headed there, praying over one body and then another as they arrived on litters borne by their stricken comrades.

Sitting in his chapel office Wednesday, a wad of white cotton stuffed into his right ear, Chaplain Sivret said he eventually moved back into the middle of the dining hall to help the living. That's where he finally found Nelson.

"I'll tell you," he said, "Doc was all over the place."

Sivret came up behind Nelson, saw the blood on the back of his uniform and told him, "Doc, you're bleeding."

"I am?" Nelson replied, without stopping.

A short time later, however, Nelson's knees began to buckle. A sergeant major, ignoring the chain of command, summoned a litter and ordered the major out of the dining hall and into an ambulance.

"I just got weak all of a sudden," Nelson said. "I think the adrenaline started to wear off."

Sivret walked alongside his friend all the way to the ambulance and then returned to the morgue. Together with Chaplain Eddie Barnett of the 276th, he continued his prayers over the bodies. By now, there were two rows.

"The carnage was awful," Sivret said. But, he added, the response was inspiring - particularly from members of the 133rd who sprinted up the hill from their encampment within seconds of the explosion.

"Everywhere I looked, there was that Maine patch," Sivret said. "Just helping in any way they could."

For months, Nelson had drilled his squad of eight medics - and, by extension, the entire battalion - on the need to be ready for a catastrophe just like this.

He brought them to the dining facility repeatedly and ordered them to install litters here, first aid bags there, and run through what they'd do if a bomb hit. And once they thought they had it down, he ordered them to do it again.

At times, some of the younger medics would roll their eyes at the often irascible senior officer and wonder, sometimes aloud, if all of this wasn't a tad melodramatic.

No longer.

Spc. Angel Waters, 25, of Gorham rushed from the 133rd's medical aid station to the dining hall the moment the first call came in. She saw Nelson doing what they'd all trained so hard to do, and followed his lead.

"There were so many people who needed help," Waters said. With tears in her eyes, she added, "And there were other people who were so bad they didn't need help anymore."

Did watching Nelson in action change her opinion of the 51-year-old major? "It greatly did," Waters said. "I realize now he was trying to prepare us for the worst-case scenario - and then the worst-case scenario happened."

After he was treated at the 67th Combat Support Hospital at nearby Camp Diamondback and returned early Tuesday evening to Marez, Nelson headed straight for the medical aid station. One by one, his medics stepped forward and hugged him.

"I'm really proud of my medics," Nelson said. "They did great. They took the plan and they made it work."

And after Tuesday, they will never be quite the same. "Nobody will," said Nelson. "Nobody will."

RUMSFELD KEEPS HIS WORD: BODY ARMOR FOR ALL!



In this photo released by the USO, comedian and radio talk-show host Al Franken presents his new 'armor' while entertaining troops at the base in Balad, Iraq Dec. 20, 2004. (AP Photo/photo released by USO, Owen Franken)

Rumsfeld Stalls On Armored Trucks; Manufacturer Says Faster Production Possible

Textron Unit Gets Pact For 212 Armored Trucks. Deal spurs concerns Army isn't pushing faster for GI safety [Boston Globe, December 23, 2004]

Textron Systems received a contract to supply 212 armored combat trucks for soldiers in Iraq by 2006, but said it could build them even faster if the Army wished.

Rumsfeld, Gen. Geoffrey D. Miller Caught: Stupidly Blamed Enlisted For Their Crimes

December 23, 2004 The Washington Post, Editorial

Thanks to a lawsuit by the American Civil Liberties Union and other human rights groups, thousands of pages of government documents released this month have confirmed some of the painful truths about the abuse of foreign detainees by the U.S. military and the CIA - truths the Bush administration implacably has refused to acknowledge.

Since the publication of photographs of abuse at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison in the spring the administration's whitewashers - led by Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld - have contended that the crimes were carried out by a few low-ranking reservists, that they were limited to the night shift during a few chaotic months at Abu Ghraib in 2003, that they were unrelated to the interrogation of prisoners and that no torture occurred at the Guantanamo Bay prison where hundreds of terrorism suspects are held.

The new documents establish beyond any doubt that every part of this cover story is false.

The documents also confirm that interrogators at Guantanamo believed they were following orders from Mr. Rumsfeld.

<p>One F.B.I. agent reported on May 10 about a conversation he had with Guantanamo commander, Maj. Gen. Geoffrey D. Miller, who defended the use of interrogation techniques the F.B.I. regarded as illegal on the grounds that the military "has their marching orders from the Sec Def."</p>

Gen. Miller has testified under oath that dogs were never used to intimidate prisoners at Guantanamo, as authorized by Mr. Rumsfeld in December 2002; the F.B.I. papers show otherwise.

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)

BAD NEWS: SOLDIER LOOSES FOOT: BROTHER-IN-LAW SAYS GOOD NEWS: NO MORE IRAQ

12-25-2004 27 News Headlines

A Marine Sergeant from Reedsburg lost his ability to walk while fighting overseas, but he has gained a priceless gift from his ordeal. That gift is time.

Marine Sergeant B.J. Ganem thought this year, he'd only hear his family's voice over the phone while stationed in Iraq. But an unexpected twist of fate has reunited the Sergeant with his loved ones for the holidays.

'It's been a blast. I haven't missed a Christmas with the kids yet and we thought I was this year,' he says.

Ganem was severely injured Thanksgiving Day during an explosion in Iraq. He lost his foot, and sustained serious injuries that required multiple surgeries. But his ordeal has turned into a blessing.

'If you look on the brighter side of things I got to spend Christmas with the kids and my wife and all my family,' Ganem says.

'It's unfortunate that he had to get hurt and come back but it's really great that he's back and we don't have to worry about that anymore,' says Joe Prchal, Ganem's brother-in-law, 'We were all scared everyday because we'd watch the news and hope that it wasn't him on there. It's great having things back the way it should.'

'Me coming home, and being with my family this Christmas is the greatest gift,' says Ganem.

"One New Arrival Had Lost Both Arms And Both Legs. He Was Begging The Doctors To Let Him Die."

Dec 25, 2004 By Jaine Treadwell, The Messenger

On Thursday, Sept. 2, 2004, the world that Jean Wynn Hare viewed through rose-colored glasses suddenly changed.

This story is about Jean and Bill Hare's grandson. U. S. Marine Cpl. Corey Webb, 22, is the son of their daughter, Valle and her husband, Don Webb, of Springville.

"Corey's unit was assigned to escort duty for convoys going into Fallujah," Hare said. "Nine days after his arrival, while on a briefing run, the driver of the Humvee in which he was riding swerved to avoid a collision with an Army tank that had stopped in the middle of the road with its lights off. The tail end of the Humvee hit the tank, flipped and rolled down an embankment.

"One Marine was killed and Corey was pinned under the vehicle. The other Marines lifted the vehicle enough to slide Corey out." Webb had a broken collarbone and compound fractures of both bones of the lower left leg.

Hopes were that Webb's leg could be saved. However, that hope was not realized. On Sept. 2, the young Marine's leg was amputated at the knee. The Hares and their daughter Vicki, were there to support him.

"I really didn't know the numbers or the severity of the injured, mainly because the news media gives little space to the injured, and certainly not the extent of the injuries," she said.

"When we met the surgeon who was to operate on Corey, he told us that for each death there are five to six wounded. At that time there had been almost 1,000 killed. That meant about 6,000 severely wounded."

Hare said she was told that most of the injuries that result in amputation are caused by IEDs, Innovative Explosive Devices.

"Corey had flown back to the states with two Marines, Ryan, 19, and Mitch, 20, who were in the hospital in Germany with him. A shell severed Ryan's left arm as he fired from the window of a Humvee. Mitch was injured in combat and his left leg was amputated at the knee."

At the Naval Medical Center , the Hares spoke with the parents of a young man, age 26, who had lost both eyes.

"His doctor told him that in eight to 10 years there will be a procedure that will enable him to see again."

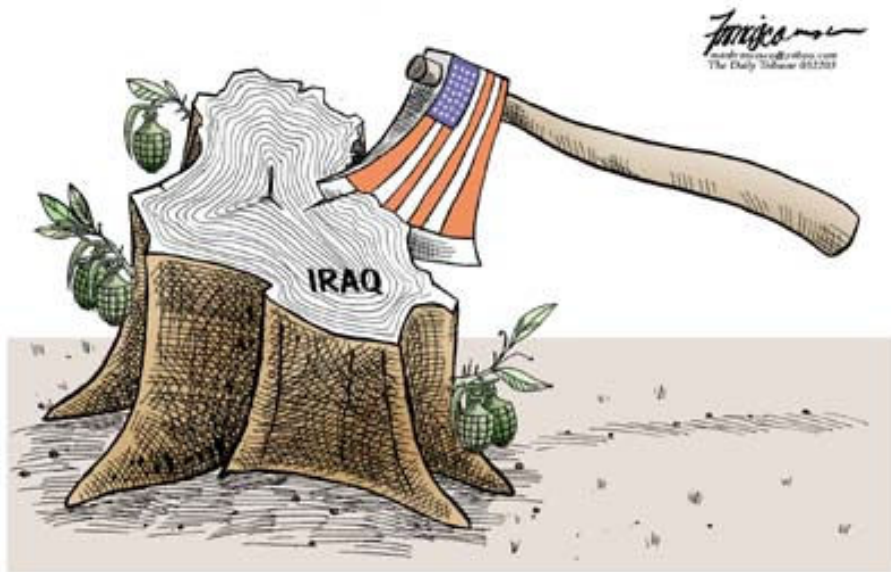
Hare said there were many cases that were so much more serious and complicated than her grandson's that she had to be thankful.

"There were many who had lost an arm or a leg, but a few had lost both arms or both legs or an arm and a leg or two legs and an arm," she said.

"One new arrival had lost both arms and both legs. He was begging the doctors to let him die.

A 19-year-old had received a head injury on Sept. 4 and had not regained consciousness when he was transferred to a nursing home in mid-October."

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP



(Graphic: London Financial Times)

Assorted Collaborators Killed, Captured

12-26-2004 BAGHDAD (AFP) & AlJazeera

Abdel Hussein from the Democratic Party of the Iraqi Nation died instantly when three masked gunmen opened fire as he left home, said the organization's leader Mithal Alussi.

Alussi and his party were recently expelled from a wider political coalition after he made a trip to Israel.

North of the capital, an Iraqi National Guard member was killed and a civilian wounded when a makeshift bomb exploded as a convoy passed on the road between Samarra and Dhuluiya, security sources said.

In other incidents, a senior administrator was seized overnight in the town of Shorgat near Mosul, police said. "Muhsin al-Sabhan was kidnapped in the night by gunmen with two of his bodyguards, who were released two hours later," Col Abd Allah Jeburi said.

In the refinery town of Baiji a Turkish truck driver was also killed by armed men as he passed through the town.

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

Cop Colonel Killed

December 26, 2004 By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Masked gunmen assassinated a high-ranking Iraqi police officer on Sunday in southwestern Baghdad and wounded his bodyguards, police said.

Col. Yassin Ibrahim Jawad was heading to his work at 8 a.m. when the assailants, driving a white Opel sedan, attacked his car in Baghdad's neighborhood of Al-Baya, police Col. Sa'ad Abdul Razaq said.

Nadiyah Khalid, a doctor at the capital's al-Yarmouk hospital, said that one of the injured was in critical situation.

``We received three patients," she said. ``One was dead, one is critical and one is semi-stable."

Sheikh Says Occupation "Constitution" Meaningless

12-26-2004 BAGHDAD (AFP)

The head of the influential Committee of Muslim Scholars, Sheikh Hareth al-Dhari, said his fellow Sunnis had nothing to lose by acting on threats to boycott the elections.

"Iraq's Sunni Muslims would lose nothing by not taking part in the drafting of the country's constitution," he told AFP late Saturday.

"Once liberated the people have the right to reassess a constitution that came into being in the shadow of occupation."

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

The Butcher's Bill: We Have Made A Disaster In Iraq

Asked for the hundredth time why we were in Vietnam, Lyndon Johnson, according to Arthur Goldberg, his U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, "unzipped his fly, drew out his substantial organ, and declared, 'This is why!'" In Iraq as in Vietnam, at risk is not America's prestige but the President's. No one should have to die to save George W. Bush's face.

23 December 2004 By Jack Beatty, The Atlantic Monthly

"I don't want to be a daddy because daddies die," said Jack Shanaberger, age four, following the death in Iraq of his father, Staff Sergeant Wentz "Baron" Shanaberger, a military policeman from Louisiana.

With his four brothers and sisters, Jack is among the nearly 900 American children who have lost a parent in Iraq. According to experts cited by Lisa Hoffman and Annette Rainville in a moving story for the Scripps Howard News Service, "The proportionally higher number of American children left bereaved by the Iraq war is unprecedented."

Past U.S. wars were mainly fought by single men, but 40 percent of the 1,256 GIs killed in Iraq as of November were married, and 459, including six women, had children.

The children of the war dead are not the only "hidden casualties" of George W. Bush's war. "People see the figure 1,200 dead," Dr. Evan Kanter, a psychiatrist at a Seattle veterans hospital, told Scott Shane of The New York Times. "Much more rarely do they see the number of wounded. And almost never do they hear anything at all about the psychiatric casualties."

Given the bloodshed they have seen and inflicted in intense urban combat, and the fear they experienced from the moment they arrive to the moment they leave Iraq-including, as the rocket attack on the Army mess hall in Mosul horrifically dramatized, when they are "off-duty"-the number of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans who will suffer symptoms of serious mental illness may exceed 100,000. They "are going to need help for the next thirty-five years," according to Stephen L. Robinson, the executive director of the National Gulf War Resource Center. To use Cordesman's scale, if the war lasts four more years it may inflict several hundred thousand psychiatric casualties.

Already 31,000 U.S. veterans have applied for "disability benefits" for physical and psychological injuries.

Nine thousand have been "wounded." A combat wound is a rifle grenade hitting you on the jaw and driving your bottom teeth into the roof of your mouth. It is a rain of hot metal pulping your eyes. It is all the booted feet in the world concentrated in one piece of shrapnel crushing your groin. It is never walking again, never making love again, losing your sense of taste forever because Donald Rumsfeld did not care enough about you to armor your vehicle.

Will 5,000 U.S. dead bring "victory" in Iraq?

The record of counter-insurgency campaigns since World War II-that is, in the age of post-colonial nationalism-suggests their sacrifice will not bring victory if victory means a unitary democratic Iraqi state.

The French spent six years losing the first Indochina war. And they spent eight years, 1954-1962, and more than a million French lives trying to keep Algeria part of France. We intervened in force in Vietnam in 1965, and left, defeated, a decade later. It took the Soviets eight years to lose in Afghanistan.

The Israelis occupied southern Lebanon for nearly twenty years before they withdrew.

Only the British counter-insurgency in Malaya, beginning in the late 1940s, succeeded. Experts cite it as a hopeful model for the U.S. in Iraq, since the communist guerrillas in Malaya were divided by ethnicity from the majority population as the Sunni insurgents are by religion in Iraq. Yet success took the British and their Malay allies nine, by some calculations twelve, years. Can we last that long in the ring against the Iraqi insurgents?

The stakes are so much higher for them than for us. The Sunni insurgents are fighting against the extinction of their power as the dominant force in Iraq. **The Americans are fighting on George W. Bush's misinformed whim. For them, everything is at stake; for us, only pride.**

Counter-insurgencies led by foreign forces on the insurgent's soil lose because military victories beget political defeats.

You destroy Fallujah and kill many insurgents only to create more insurgents by the publicized ferocity of your attack. You lose by winning. And in Iraq we lose on two fronts. We not only create more insurgents to fight us there but jihadis throughout the Muslim world to attack us here.

We have made a disaster in Iraq.

We cannot escape from all of its consequences.

But the human consequences of staying-the Iraqi civilians we will kill, the young American men and women alive this minute who will die or be maimed in body or mind-are worse than the political consequences of withdrawing.

In any case, the political consequences are notional, as weighed against the certainty of death, suffering, and grief.

In our own eyes, our prestige diminished after we withdrew from Vietnam, but our international position was not weakened.

Asked for the hundredth time why we were in Vietnam, Lyndon Johnson, according to Arthur Goldberg, his U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, "unzipped his fly, drew out his substantial organ, and declared, 'This is why!'" In Iraq as in Vietnam, at risk is not America's prestige but the President's. No one should have to die to save George W. Bush's face.

Dispatches: Vietnam

[Thanks to CZ, who sent this in.]

1. Vultures Of '68

The tables are crowded with American civilian construction engineers, men getting \$30,000 a year from their jobs on government contracts and matching that easily on the black market.

Their faces have the look of aerial photos of silicone pits, all hung with loose flesh and visible veins. Their mistresses were among the prettiest, saddest girls in Vietnam.

I always wondered what they had looked like before they'd made their arrangements with the engineers. You'd see them at the tables there, smiling their hard, empty smiles into those rangy, brutal, scared faces.

No wonder those men all looked alike to the Vietnamese. After a while they all looked alike to me.

Out on the Bien Hoa Highway, north of Saigon, there is a monument to the Vietnamese war dead, and it is one of the few graceful things left in the country. It is a modest pagoda set above the road and approached by long flights of gently rising steps. One Sunday, I saw a bunch of these engineers gunning their Harleys up those steps, laughing and shouting in the afternoon sun.

The Vietnamese had a special name for them to distinguish them from all other Americans; it translated out to something like "The Terrible Ones," although I'm told that this doesn't even approximate the odium carried in the original.

Dispatches, Michael Herr, 170-171

2. Brothers

"I been here mor'n eight months now," he said. "I bet I been in mor'n twenty firefights. An' I ain' hardly fired back once."

"How come?"

"Shee-it, I go firin' back, I might kill one a th' Brothers, you dig it?"

I nodded, no Viet Cong ever called *me* honky, and **he told me that in his company alone there were more than a dozen Black Panthers and that he was one of them. I didn't say anything, and then he said that he wasn't just a Panther; he was an agent for the Panthers, sent over here to recruit. I asked him what kind of luck he'd been having, and he said fine, real fine.** There was a fierce wind blowing across the LZ, and the joint didn't last very long.

"Hey, baby," he said, "that was just some shit I tol' you. Shit, I ain' no Panther. I was just fuckin' with you, see what you'd say."

"But the Panthers have guys over here. I've met some."

"That could be," he said, and he laughed.

A Huey came in, and he jogged out to see where it was headed. It was going to Dak To, and he came back to get his gear. "Later, baby," he said. "An' luck." **He jumped into the chopper, and as it rose from the strip he leaned out and laughed, bringing his arm up and bending it back toward him, palm out and the fist clenched tightly in the Sign.**

Dispatches, Michael Herr, 180-181

"Colonel, Since When Is A Wounded Trooper 'Dirty Laundry'?"

The sergeant had lain out near the clearing for almost two hours with a wounded medic.

He had called over and over for a medevac, but none had come.

Finally, a chopper from another outfit, a LOH, appeared, and he was able to reach it by radio.

The pilot told him that he'd have to wait for one of his own ships, they weren't coming down, and the sergeant told the pilot that if he did not land for them he was going to open fire from the ground and fucking well *bring* him down. So they were picked up that way, but there were repercussions.

The commander's code name was Mal Hombre, and he reached the sergeant later that afternoon from a place with the call signal Violent Meals.

"God *damn* it, Sergeant," he said through the static, "I thought you were a professional soldier."

"I waited as long as I could, Sir. Any longer, I was gonna lose my man."

"This outfit is perfectly capable of taking care of its own dirty laundry. Is that clear, Sergeant?"

"Colonel, since when is a wounded trooper 'dirty laundry'?"

"At ease, Sergeant," Mal Hombre said, and radio contact was broken.

Dispatches, Michael Herr, 182-183

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.

OCCUPATION REPORT

How Bad Is It? Foreign Team Will Watch Vote In Iraq From Jordan!

December 23, 2004 By JOEL BRINKLEY, New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 22 - **Representatives of seven nations met in Ottawa this week to recruit international observers for the Iraqi elections and agreed to watch the vote, but from the safety of Amman, Jordan.**

They said it was too dangerous to monitor the voting in Iraq, meaning international observers are unlikely for the elections on Jan. 30 - making them the first significant vote of this sort recently with no foreign presence, United Nations officials say.

"We are not calling this an observation mission," Jean-Pierre Kingsley, Canada's chief electoral officer said. "It is an assessment mission."

Carina Perelli, leader of the U.N.'s electoral assistance division, said she could not recall another significant case when important elections had no international observers.

Mobile Phone Group Threatens To Quit Baghdad

[London Financial Times, December 23, 2004] Iraqna, **the company providing Baghdad with mobile phone service, warned that it may pull out of Iraq because of the country's dangerous atmosphere.**

Amid Rationing, Iraqis Face More Shortages

[Boston Globe, December 23, 2004]

Iraq is suffering a shortage of state-supplied wheat, sugar and rice because of logistics **and security problems.**

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

OOPS, Sorry, We Thought We Were Only Killing Palestinians

December 02, 2004 From: "Mos O"

Tanks rolled onto the streets of Cairo, Egypt, last Monday after student protests erupted across the country.

Over 10,000 students took part in the biggest protests since the invasion of Iraq. The demonstrations were organised by left wing and Islamic student organisations.

From Ain al-Shams University in Cairo to Tanta University in the north and Alexandria University on the Mediterranean coast, students rallied to protest at the killing of three Egyptian policemen by Israeli troops on the border with the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli government apologised for killing the policemen, but added fuel to the fire by saying they thought they were killing Palestinians.

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

Received:

New Orleans Counter-Inaugural

From: "Ward Reilly"
TO GI Special
December 26, 2004

Could you help us spread the word about our "Jazz Funeral For Democracy" that we are having in New Orleans on Inauguration Day, as part of the counter inaugural campaign nationwide?

Here's the link: <http://www.jazzfuneralfordemocracy.com/index.asp>

Peace and thanks from Ward

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

Web Copies

For back issues see: GI Special web site at <http://www.militaryproject.org/>
The following that we know of have also posted issues:
<http://www.notinourname.net/qi-special/> ; www.qifightback.org ;
<http://www.albasrah.net/magalat/english/qi-special.htm>,
www.williambowles.info/qispecial

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