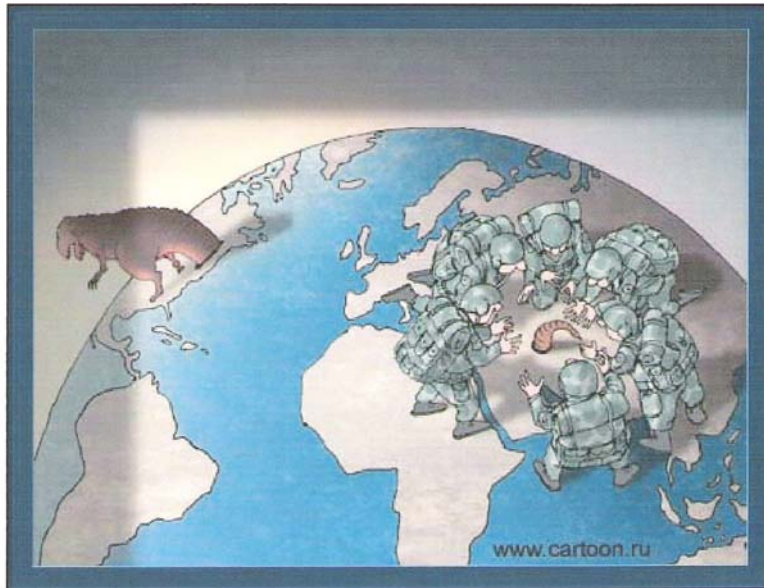


GI SPECIAL 2#C63

WHACK-A-MOLE



**"We're Not Doing Good
Out There. We're Just
Soldiers Dying Left And
Right."**

"There's a lot of people that don't think we should be there ... like my unit,"
Herrera says.

December 27, 2004 Reported by Andrea Conklin, KGBT4, World Now

DECEMBER 26, 2004 - He joined the U.S. army with hopes of serving others.
Brownsville native Private First Class Eric Herrera has fulfilled that mission while
in Iraq.

Now he's speaking out about the war as no other Valley serviceman has.

Herrera says he doesn't understand what all the fuss is about. After all, he survived the grenade attack.

"I heard the first one go off and then I saw the second one come in ... like actually hit the ground and explode."

That explosion on the streets Fallujah Thanksgiving weekend landed Eric home for the holidays - with a broken foot.

"Having him here that was the best. Just having my son home that was great," says his tearful mother Lupita Herrera.

While Eric may be back in the comforts of home, his mind is still with his unit in Iraq.

"I can't sleep. I still got dreams of Iraq."

Eric says he believes the situation overseas is a hopeless one.

"I say just put Saddam back in power, and just leave the whole Iraq, the country, it'd be better off like that."

That despair is a sentiment he tells us many soldiers share.

"There's a lot of people that don't think we should be there ... like my unit," Herrera says. "We're not doing good out there. We're just soldiers dying left and right."

And even as neighbors turn up to leave food and the military adds to his awards, a purple heart in particular, Eric says signs of appreciation have become something unfamiliar to him. "It's like when you help an Iraqi out. We walk off and they'll go around the block and start shooting at us. The same ones you were just talking to."

Hopeless or not, Eric says Iraq is exactly where he wants to be. "I'd rather go serve my country than be here in the states causing trouble." But with months with recovery ahead of him, Herrera will have to wait to return to Iraq. He is now on medical leave. He will be returning to San Antonio for more treatment in several weeks and, will remain enlisted through the coming year.

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.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

ONE TASK FORCE DANGER SOLDIER KILLED, ANOTHER WOUNDED IN SAMARRA

December 27, 2004 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND
NEWS Release Number: 04-12-26C & December 28, 2004 Reuters

TIKRIT, Iraq -- **A Task Force Danger Soldier died of his wounds, and another Soldier was wounded. The attack on their combat patrol used an improvised explosive device on Dec. 26 at about 9:20 p.m.**

The Soldiers were evacuated to a Multi-National Forces medical facility for treatment. The wounded Soldier was treated for minor injuries and returned to duty.

SOLDIER KILLED IN BAGHDAD BLAST, FOUR WOUNDED

December 27, 2004 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND
NEWS Release Number: 04-12-27C

BAGHDAD, Iraq — **An improvised explosive device detonated at approximately 7:45 a.m. Monday, killing one Soldier and wounding four others.**

3 Maine Soldiers Wounded In Mosul IED Attack

December 27, 2004 Bangor Daily News

Three Mainers were injured Sunday morning during an insurgent attack in Mosul, Iraq. **Few details were available, but Maine Army National Guard spokesman Maj. Pete Rogers confirmed that the three were part of a convoy "that was involved in an IED attack" Sunday morning.**

Two of the injured Mainers were treated, then released to return to duty. The third, who suffered more serious injuries, was taken by helicopter to an unknown location for treatment.

Marines Killed & Wounded In Falluja

Corps Hiding Facts From Families

December 27, 2004 WEEK-TV

Several Peoria area Marines are recovering from injuries received last week in Iraq.

The group from the Charlie Company was injured late last week. **The Department of Defense is releasing word of the casualties five days after the December 22 attack.**

The injuries come during the reserve group's second tour of duty in Iraq.

A military spokesperson says on Wednesday, December 22, a group from the Charlie Company came under attack in the Al Anbar Province.

He will not release the exact number of casualties. He will only say the injuries range from very serious to not-life threatening, and the attack resulted in no U-S fatalities.

Lieutenant Colonel T.V. Johnson says the military is providing as much information as possible to the families of the injured. [Bullshit.]

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)

Harsh Realities: War In Mosul

December 27, 2004 By M. Scott Mahaskey, Staff Photographer, Army Times

MOSUL — The soldiers of 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, had scoured a junkyard in search of enemy weapons caches. A sizable number of artillery shells, ammunition and grenades were piled neatly as explosives experts arrived to blow the enemy's stash in place.

Soldiers with the 1-24 were ordered to mount up and pull security along a busy stretch of roadway.

"I can't believe we haven't been attacked yet," some of them commented.

They spoke too soon.

Looking out our half-opened ramp, I wondered if what I was seeing was real: About 100 meters to our rear, a fireball and tremendous roar engulfed another Stryker vehicle, Hunter One.

A suicide bomber had steered an explosives-packed vehicle into the Army vehicle. Somewhere in the inferno of flames and flying metal was the red mist remains of a vaporized suicide bomber.

Hunter One was at a T intersection with all its crew and dismounts aboard.

The searing light of the explosion was blinding.

The confusion of the moment was reflected in the panicked radio traffic: A mortar? Did the Stryker explode? Was there anybody alive? A call for the medic went out.

The soldiers in our vehicle, who had survived running over a roadside bomb the day before, moved toward the burning Stryker. Looking at the wall of flames, doubts leapt to mind about the vehicle's crew: Could it be that the men inside were dead or now burning alive? Soldiers from several nearby vehicles grabbed fire extinguishers and raced to the burning Hunter One.

They began to fight the flames, which at one point became so intense that they had to pull back, even though there was a very real threat that the rounds inside would cook off and destroy the vehicle and anyone in it.

Staff Sgt. Shannon Kay forcefully directed the soldiers to make another effort to douse the flames, and they finally managed to extinguish the fire.

A search of the vehicle brought news that seemed beyond belief: Everybody had made it out. But the relief was only momentary.

Insurgents opened fire from multiple directions on the 1-24 troops in a surprisingly sophisticated attack. The enemy wanted the disabled vehicle.

Soldiers scrambled and began returning fire with both small arms and rockets. Enemy mortars pounded around us; bullets cracked overhead.

Air Force Senior Airman Grailin Blamer, the battalion's joint tactical air controller, called in for air support. Soon, attack jets made three gun runs, including at least one pass at a mere 500 feet above the deck. In dangerous proximity to the remaining Strykers, a 500-pound JDAM bomb nearly silenced the attack.

In the deafening noise of battle, a radio call was clearly overheard: Soldiers had restarted the Stryker just hit by a car bomb, a credit to the crew, who concentrated their efforts on that vehicle during even the heaviest fighting. Although some soldiers had been injured, none of the wounds was serious enough to require evacuation.

The crew of Hunter One jumped back into the vehicle and joined the patrol heading back to the base, fighting their way out.

Even soldiers looking through the scopes and down the barrels of their weapons allowed themselves a smile.

TROOP NEWS



12-12-04

Tom Toles

WHEN SOLDIERS STOPPED A WAR: THE QUASI-MUTINY

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

In July of 1970 at the pre-Vietnam jungle-operations training center in Fort Sherman, Canal Zone, forty combat officers sent a remarkable letter to their Commander-in-Chief.

The soon- to-be combat leaders were not seeking to degrade the service or join the growing peace movement. Their letter did not directly criticize the war, and no copies were sent to the press. Rather, they wished to inform the President of “the extent of disaffection among the American troops” and the grave threat this posed to the military.

The young commanders relayed the perception that “the military, the leadership of this country—are perceived by many soldiers to be almost as much our enemy as the VC and the NVA” and cautioned that if the war continued, “young Americans in the military will simply refuse en masse to cooperate.”

The warning came too late, though, for by the time it was sent, the Army was already in an advanced state of decay, with many grunts in virtually open rebellion.

The currents of unrest and dissension undermining American forces throughout the world surged together and were magnified in the crucible of Vietnam combat, effectively crippling U.S. military operations. Without resorting to outright insurrection, much of the American army in Vietnam refused to fight and staged a “quasi-mutiny.”

Subtly and without heroics, soldiers improvised means of shirking a despised mission and engaged in their own unofficial troop withdrawal.

The grunts’ rebellion seldom reached the stage of formal mutiny, assuming instead less-visible forms: “search and avoid” missions, with patrols intentionally skirting potential enemy clashes or halting a few yards beyond the defense perimeter for a three-day pot party; threats against commanders, often forcing officers and NCOs to worry more about their own men than the Vietnamese; defiance of authority, with GIs blatantly disregarding dress and hair regulations and military custom, and covert obstruction, ranging from intentional inefficiency on the job to major acts of sabotage.

The full story of the breakdown of the infantry has never been told, partly because its diffuse and anonymous nature defies precise definition and partly because reliable documentation is so difficult to obtain. Our examination will portray the world’s mightiest military force paralyzed by internal resistance.

[More coming.]

Injured GI Says "Some People Don't Want To Go On Missions"

12/26/2004 By Edie Gross, The Free Lance-Star Publishing Co.

The explosion in the mess tent in Mosul, Iraq, Tuesday left Spc. Richard Hursh with a broken shoulder and injuries to both legs.

Shrapnel had torn off his right thumb.

But the 20-year-old told his parents he felt fortunate.

"He said he was lucky," his father, William Hursh of Stafford County said yesterday. "He knew two of his friends were killed."

William Hursh said he and his wife, Leonida, waited anxiously for word about their son. About 8 p.m. Tuesday night, they learned he had been "seriously injured."

William Hursh said they intended to be at the hospital this morning as soon as employees would let them in the door.

Richard Hursh had just finished his first semester at Old Dominion University when his unit was told it would be heading for Iraq. The soldiers have been in Mosul since March.

He intends to return to Old Dominion, where he made the dean's list, and get a degree in engineering.

But Richard Hursh told his father that he had bonded with his fellow National Guardsmen.

"He said: '**Some people don't want to go on missions, but you go because your guys are going and you want to be with them. You want to back them up,**'" William Hursh said.

Wounded Soldier Visits Students; Describes Occupation Guards Refusing Night Duty

12/27/2004 By Susan Greenspon, STAFF WRITER, News of Delaware County

Eight years and a lifetime ago, Jason Simms was just like the students he was addressing Monday at Haverford High School.

But the 1996 Haverford High graduate, who joined the Marines and was wounded July 1 in Iraq, has experienced more than most Americans do in a lifetime.

"There are certain things I'd like to forget, but I can't," says Simms as he stands at the podium of a lecture room in his dress blues, a Purple Heart among the combat ribbons and medals pinned to his chest.

Trained as a gunner on an LAV - light armored vehicle - Simms arrived in Iraq in February and was stationed in Fallujah when his vehicle hit a landmine.

"I was talking to my sergeant when I heard a bang, then saw a flash," says Simms, a corporal. "I woke up and my hands were in flames, my face was in flames."

Simms says when he reached down to detangle his leg from a wire in the LAV, the flames quickly shot up his arms to engulf his head, hair and ears.

He was dragged to the side of the road by his buddies and he put his face in the sand to douse the flames while his fellow soldiers did the same to his hands by stomping on them.

"The Navy doctor with us couldn't tend to me right away because my buddy had caught a piece of shrapnel that went right through him, taking his kidney out," says Simms, seemingly composed as he recalls the horror.

"My other buddy didn't make it," he adds.

With both hands wrapped in black gloves to protect skin grafts, Simms props his right leg on a chair and pulls up his pants cuff to reveal zipper-like scars from his knee to his ankle. "I have scars up and down my right leg - the other leg is scarred, too, but not as bad," he says of being gashed and peppered by shrapnel that he says the Iraqi insurgents have gotten adept at using in explosives.

"The muscles, bones, tendons of my leg were all visible," says Simms of his bloodied legs.

"I woke up about 10 days later and my mom and dad were there in the hospital," says Simms of James and Mary Jean, who still live in Havertown. While unconscious, he'd gone from hospitals in Baghdad to Germany to Texas.

As for his recovery, he says, "At first, my legs weren't listening to my brain. I had to learn to walk all over again."

Now stationed in Camp Lejeune, N.C., where he receives physical therapy daily, he's healing from extensive medical treatments that included grafting skin from his thighs to his hands. As for his face, it is virtually unscarred.

Not a public speaker, according to Haverford High Principal Nicholas Rotoli who had introduced him, Simms had been nervous with the prospect of visiting his former high school but has been encouraged to talk about his experiences.

He talks of how half the Iraqis want our help, half don't, and how difficult it is to know whom to trust. "The guy who waves at you and gives you the thumbs up in the daytime, that's the guy who aims at you at night."

And he spoke of the frustrations of training Iraqis to run their country, like giving Iraqi police U.S. vehicles and orders to guard stand guard, only to see them driving off.

Simms admits he's had trouble sleeping, and has struggled with the images of the war and the loss of friends, but that part of his recovery is talking about it. "You can't keep it all in," he says, "you'll get messed up in your head."

From Maytag to Baghdad: While He Fights In Iraq, His Job Goes To Mexico; "There's A War Going On Right Here At Home."



SSgt. Jim McGovern, left, stands in a roadside bomb crater near Baghdad, Iraq.

2004 Fall Issue, Go IAM

U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Jim McGovern's job as a squad leader patrolling battle-scarred roadways around Baghdad is a far cry from the production job he held until last April at Maytag's refrigerator plant in Galesburg, Illinois.

"It's not as hot as some other sectors in Iraq, but this is a very dangerous place. We take fire and we return fire," says McGovern of the area he patrols with fellow members of the Illinois National Guard, F Battery, now attached to the Army's 1st Cavalry Division.

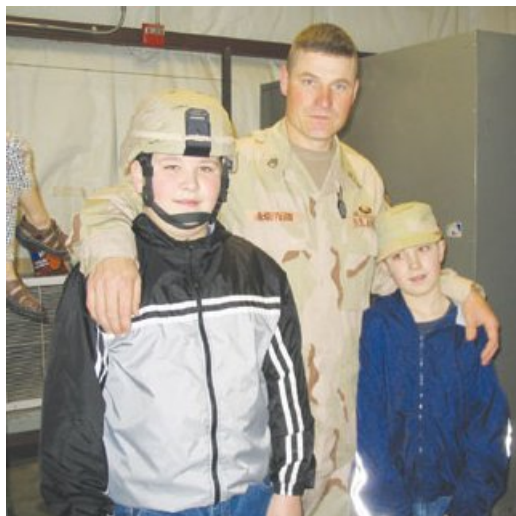
As a 15-year employee at Maytag, McGovern arrived in Iraq a veteran of another battle: one to save the livelihoods of more than 1,600 co-workers at the legendary appliance maker.

Despite record sales and millions in taxpayer incentives, Maytag announced in October 2002 it would close the Galesburg facility and move to Mexico where its workers would be paid as little as \$4.50 per day.

"I understand what's happening," said McGovern of companies like Maytag that leave the U.S. in search of low-cost locations. "But I think it's unpatriotic and it's absolutely devastating for a small town like Galesburg."

McGovern and his squad members are among several thousand Illinois Army National Guard troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many are college students who joined the Guard to help pay for tuition. Others, like 37-year old McGovern, joined the Guard after serving a hitch in the regular Army.

"These are men and women whose service and sacrifice frequently doesn't get the recognition it deserves," said IAM President Tom Buffenbarger. **"Now they're half a world away fighting to rebuild a foreign country while their home towns are being reduced to economic rubble by companies like Maytag. It's time we recognized there's a war going on right here at home."**



McGovern with sons Jimmy, age 11 and Jesse, age nine, before leaving for Iraq

On The Home Front

With active duty looming for his Guard unit and Maytag preparing to move to Mexico, McGovern and his wife Sandy were living on borrowed time in Galesburg. After her job as a nurse at Maytag was eliminated, Sandy found new work in Michigan and moved in with family members.

Several months of long distance commuting followed as Jim put in his final days at Maytag. "The separation was good practice for what we knew was coming," joked Sandy. Soon after the move, Jim's unit deployed to Iraq.

When he's not patrolling Iraq's mean streets, McGovern and his squad are based at Camp Victory, the sprawling U.S. military complex on the outskirts of Baghdad where soldiers can relax and contact family members via the Internet.

"It's certainly different from the old days," said McGovern, who logs on regularly from a laptop computer. "I could be out on a mission in the morning and exchanging emails with my family that afternoon."

Sandy McGovern is proud of her husband and believes he's a good man doing a difficult job in a very dangerous situation. "But," she adds, "for all those families still in Galesburg, the situation is just as serious. I wonder why no one's coming to our rescue?"

MORE:

Now This From The Lying Scum Who Own Maytag

**Some Firms Make Concerted Effort To Hire Soldiers
Maytag recruits military personnel for repair jobs**

[Houston Chronicle, December 21, 2004, Pg. 12]

Civilian companies like Maytag are aggressively pursuing former soldiers, including those wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan, as potential workers. The ex-GIs are seen as high-quality workers because of their discipline, technical skills and they know how to take orders and follow procedures. **[Tell that to SSgt. Jim McGovern.]**

Another Wisconsin Soldier Killed

December 27, 2004 EAU CLAIRE, Wis. (AP)

A soldier from western Wisconsin has been killed in Iraq.

Loyal Mayor Arthur Olsen says 36-year-old Staff Sergeant Todd Olson, of Loyal, has died.

Olson served with the Wisconsin National Guard unit based in Neillsville.

His uncle Dennis Olson says he was his nephew's house last night.

He says the family had been told early yesterday that Todd had been injured. But later that evening they were informed he had died from the injuries.

Olson and his wife have four children. He was a member of the Loyal school board before resigning when his unit was activated.

Olson is the 32nd soldier from Wisconsin to be killed during fighting in Iraq.

Soldier Recalls Pain Of Being Shot; Says He Learned How "Important Peaceful Resolution Is To Conflict"

27 December, 2004 By Michelle Tan, St. Cloud Times Online

All Matt Olson remembers was the pain.

"All I wanted to do was scream," the soldier said. "It felt like your skeleton was a big belt. I was struck in my ankle, but it reverberated through all my bones."

Olson, 28, of Waite Park is a specialist with the Minnesota National Guard's Delta 216th Air Defense Artillery in Monticello. He was shot in the leg Dec. 1 while on patrol in Baghdad, Iraq. He arrived home Thursday after recovering at Fort Lewis, Wash.

Olson and his platoon were on patrol in a Baghdad residential area when they came under fire. They had been walking the streets of Baghdad with military vehicles close by when the gunman started shooting.

"I knew that it wasn't the sound of an M-16. I knew it was an AK-47," Olson said. "There were probably five to 10 rounds, and then I was hit in the leg. I felt it immediately."

Olson hit the ground and tried to find the shooter. He lunged toward an Iraqi taxi parked nearby using his good leg -- his right leg --and crawled up against it to protect himself. The Iraqi in the car tried to drive away, but Olson grabbed and held on to the door handle from the outside, forcing the Iraqi to stop.

Olson forced himself not to scream because he didn't want to attract the shooter's attention. He didn't fire his weapon because he never saw the shooter, he said.

He can't remember much after he was shot, but the bullet had pierced a hole between his knee and his ankle. "Wherever the guy was, he was very close," Olson said. "There was an entrance wound and an exit wound."

The bullet broke the tibia and fibula in Olson's left leg.

"I got the feeling the gunman just started shooting when he saw us," Olson said. "He probably figured he was bound to hit one of us if he just pulled the trigger."

The soldiers didn't know Olson had been shot until the shooting stopped. The attack lasted no more than a minute, but with each gunshot, Olson said, he thought he was the target because the shooter saw him fall.

"A large part of me thought I was going to get hit again," Olson said.

When the shooting stopped, Olson screamed.

"Once I was able to yell out I was hit, I put a lot of energy into that scream because all I wanted to do was scream," he said.

A combat lifesaver stuffed Olson's wound with gauze. Two soldiers then helped Olson up. "They walked me about 30 feet, but the pain was too intense," Olson said.

The soldiers then dragged him by his flak vest into an alleyway, where he was picked up and driven to the Green Zone, the heavily fortified area in central Baghdad where key U.S. and Iraqi authorities live and work.

Olson was given a cell phone to call Carrie, his wife of almost two years. The couple had ended its last conversation on a bad note because Olson was having a bad day, he said.

"I was very happy that I was able to make that phone call," Olson said. "I was glad to hear her voice. I can only imagine what she would be thinking if a strange voice would have called her and given her vague information."

It was 6 a.m. Dec. 1 in Minnesota. "She was obviously shocked by the news, but her reaction was staying very calm and asking many questions to get the information," said Olson, who cried when he talked to his wife.

Since he was shot, Olson has had multiple surgeries. His first came less than two hours after he was shot. Olson also took various flights to get back to Fort Lewis. He arrived there Dec. 6. Carrie Olson, 22, was by his side two days later.

Olson, who didn't lose his leg, can look forward to more surgery because of the severity of his wound.

A soldier told him the entrance wound in his left leg was about 4 inches long and half an inch wide, Olson said. The exit wound had about the same surface area as a dollar bill or larger.

"It really blew my leg wide open," Olson said. "I wouldn't look at it. I didn't want to go into shock. I never saw it until after I got to Fort Lewis."

Olson said he's glad he joined the National Guard.

"I was glad I was able to take what I've experienced in Iraq," he said. "I've got a first-hand knowledge of what's going on over there. I place even more emphasis on how important peace is, how important peaceful resolution is to conflict."

Being wounded has helped him understand what so many more soldiers before him have experienced.

"My heart really goes out to those who have worse injuries than I do, and especially those who didn't come home," Olson said.

Olson still thinks about the shooting a lot.

"I used to get very emotional," he said. "Now I can think about it as if it's behind me, and I can think about it that way. I really hope and pray that I'm part of no other conflict."

Got That Right

5.3.03 Chalmers Johnson, Zmag.

Most young Americans who enlist in our all-volunteer armed forces -- roughly four out of five -- specifically choose non-combat jobs, becoming computer technicians, personnel managers, shipping clerks, truck mechanics, weather forecasters, intelligence analysts, cooks, or forklift drivers, among the many other duties that carry a low risk of contact with an enemy.

They often enlist because they have failed to find similar work in the civilian economy and thus take refuge in the military's long-established system of state socialism -- steady paychecks, decent housing, medical and dental benefits, job training, and the possibility of a college education.

The mother of one such recruit recently commented on her 19-year-old daughter, who will soon become an Army intelligence analyst.

She was proud but also cynical: "Wealthy people don't go into the military or take risks because why should they? They already got everything handed to them."

Mosul: "We Feel Like We Live In A Prison." Distrust Deepens Between U.S. Forces And Their Iraqi Occupation Guards

27 December 2004 By Christine Hauser, The New York Times

Less than a week after the worst attack on American soldiers since the transfer of sovereignty in June, the forces at this base are defensive, grieving and on edge, but determined to carry on with a job.

The linchpin of that job for American forces here is to work closely with the Iraqi Army and National Guard to put an Iraqi face on the American mission and to train Iraqis to provide their own security in time for national elections next month.

But soldiers here said the bomb attack on Tuesday took a toll on their trust in the Iraqis who live and eat in their midst on the base, and who might have to provide the Americans with first aid or life-saving protection during patrols and operations.

"When something like this happens, it tends to be viewed as a breach of trust," Captain Uthlaut said. "You have to take extra precautions that could be intrusive on their lives but may be necessary to save ours."

Before the attack, Iraqi soldiers of the 11th Iraqi Regular Army Battalion ate in the dining hall, passing into the tentlike structure without being searched. They moved from their living quarters compound with an American escort.

Now, the Iraqi soldiers are searched more thoroughly and more often, and there is "stricter accountability" with head counts. Their vehicles are thoroughly inspected when they return from leave or a patrol.

Security has been tightened around the Iraqi compound as it was around the American living quarters next to it, where fresh spools of razor wire were uncoiled, making it more difficult to walk around at will, and sometimes confusing soldiers driving Humvees who now have to learn the mazelike layout of new routes.

"They now suspect everyone here," said Lt. Col. Ahmed Ibrahim Ali, the commander of the Iraqi Army battalion. "We feel like we live in a prison."

Separately, Captain Capt. David A. Uthlaut said, "We are a little more careful with searching these guys. **The fine line is treating them as partners, while not treating them like prisoners.**" [Just struck out on that one.]

For their part, Iraqi soldiers grumble about poor food, prison like conditions, insufficient salaries, outdated weapons, lack of access to medical care and lack of contact with their families. Their sleeping quarters are cots on a concrete floor, not much worse than those for some American soldiers here.

On a joint patrol here on Sunday, the Iraqis set off in uncovered vehicles that resembled small Jeeps, with only a few metal plates fastened to the back with plastic-coated wires or canvas straps but no armor. The vehicles would afford no protection from a roadside bomb, one of the biggest dangers on Mosul's streets.

Their American counterparts on the patrol, on the other hand, were in hardened Stryker vehicles. When one of the Strykers was hit by a bomb recently, an officer said, it still managed to recover to move 50 miles an hour on the rest of its seven wheels.

The Iraqis in the army battalion lost three men in the blast on Tuesday. Witnesses said Iraqi forces administered first aid to American soldiers after the explosion.

Nevertheless, some Americans say they do not trust the Iraqis. "A lot of times I would catch them stealing food," said Maj. John Nelson, a 51-year old American battalion surgeon. "If they are willing to break the rules and steal food, why wouldn't they do something else? I have never trusted anybody but fellow Americans in a combat zone." [What a classic asshole.]

The Iraqis, for their part, complain bitterly about the preserved, ready-to-eat rations that come in sealed bags, saying the meat inside is not slaughtered according to Islamic practices.

"We throw everything away but the biscuits," said Tahsin Ghanim, a 22-year-old Shiite Muslim soldier from Baghdad. "Can you imagine a soldier operating just on biscuits?"

Dhia Qathim, also from Baghdad, said some of the rations contained pork. "The Americans are Christian; they would not understand," he said. [The Sepoy Mutiny in India was set off by rumors that the British Imperial Army was giving its local Muslim troops cartridges greased with pork fat. The British imperial rulers were never stupid enough to hand them food with pork in it.]

Iraqi commanders appear to speak their views frankly in front of the Americans, who sat in but did not interfere in one interview.

"This situation is only temporary," said Colonel Ali, the Iraqi Army commander. "We deal with it because we know in the future it will change. But right now we can't work without the Americans."

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

Bush Authorized Iraq Torture; Low Ranking Soldiers Took The Rap

December 20, 2004, Press Release, American Civil Liberties UNION REFORM

NEW YORK -- A document released for the first time today by the American Civil Liberties Union suggests that President Bush issued an Executive Order authorizing the use of inhumane interrogation methods against detainees in Iraq.

"These documents raise grave questions about where the blame for widespread detainee abuse ultimately rests," said ACLU Executive Director Anthony D. Romero.

"Top government officials can no longer hide from public scrutiny by pointing the finger at a few low-ranking soldiers."

The two-page e-mail that references an Executive Order states that the President directly authorized interrogation techniques including sleep deprivation, stress positions, the use of military dogs, and "sensory deprivation through the use of hoods, etc."

The release of these documents follows a federal court order that directed government agencies to comply with a year-old request under the Freedom of Information Act filed by the ACLU, the Center for Constitutional Rights, Physicians for Human Rights, **Veterans for Common Sense and Veterans for Peace**. The New York Civil Liberties Union is co-counsel in the case.

Troops A Fat New Profit Center For Phone Companies

Dec 27 By KEN MAGUIRE, BOSTON (AP)

Army Lt. Col. Joe Yoswa, a Pentagon spokesman, said soldiers can use military-run phone banks and Internet cafes, **but they have to pay the costs out of their own pockets. And using a cell phone in Iraq can cost a soldier up to \$3 a minute in roaming charges. [The Pentagon today denied troops will be charged for ammunition, weapons and vehicle fuel starting Jan. 1, 2005]**

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Two Dozen Occupation Guards Captured

December 27, 2004 Reuters

Nearly two dozen troopers from the Iraqi National Guard may have been abducted by insurgents in the west of the country, according to an account by a Guard officer today.

The officer, speaking to Reuters on condition of anonymity, said **21 men were seized as they returned by bus across the desert to their base at Qaim, close to the Syrian border, from Haditha, northwest of Ramadi and Falluja.** Insurgents in several cars stopped the bus on the highway yesterday afternoon.

Five Occupation Cops Killed In Ramadi

December 27, 2004 Reuters

INSURGENTS shot dead five men in the restive Iraqi city of Ramadi overnight and left their corpses in the street with a handwritten note identifying them as police, witnesses said.

Residents said they found the bodies this morning. Reuters television footage showed them lying in jeans and sweaters in the centre of the western city that is a hotbed of insurgent activity against the US-backed government.

"This is a group of infidel police officers who came from Diyala province to pursue and capture mujahideen," read a lined piece of paper, secured to one of the bodies with a brick.

"We were able with God's help to hunt them down."

At least one of the dead men had his hands tied behind his back. Residents said they heard them being shot during the night. **The note named each of the dead men.**

(HERE'S A BIG SURPRISE!) REBELS BLOW UP IRAQ PIPELINE

Dec 27, 2004 (Reuters)

Saboteurs have blown up a pipeline running from Iraq's northern Kirkuk oil fields to a refinery at Baiji, causing a large fire that sent thick black smoke into the sky, witnesses say.

The attack occurred near the town of al Fatha, just northeast of Baiji, near where the pipeline runs into the refinery complex. "There was a huge blast and flames are shooting into the air," one witness said.

Baiji is the location of one of Iraq's largest refineries, from where exports are pumped north to the port of Ceyhan in Turkey. *However, the northern export line is currently out of commission following a series of sabotage attacks in past weeks.*

Car Bomber Attacks Home Of Prominent Collaborator; Leading Sunni Party Quits Election

December 27, 2004 By SLOBODAN LEKIC, Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq - A car bomber killed 15 people Monday in trying to assassinate the head of Iraq 's strongest Shiite party.

The bomber tried to drive his car through the gate at the home of Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, but detonated his explosives when guards blocked the way.

The residence where al-Hakim has his home and office was previously the house of Tariq Aziz, one of Saddam's senior aides who has been in prison since shortly after the U.S.-led invasion last year.

Fifteen people died and at least 50 were wounded in the explosion, which shook Baghdad's Jadiriya district and sent a cloud of smoke billowing into the sky, police Capt. Ahmed Ismail said. Thirty-two cars on the street were destroyed or damaged. Al-Hakim, who was inside, was not hurt.

After Monday's blast, al-Hakim denounced the interim government's security apparatus, claiming it had been infiltrated by Saddam loyalists.

"We hold the Iraqi government responsible for such criminal acts. This government has adopted the same wrong policies that were adopted by the occupation forces in dealing with security," he told Iraq's Al-Furat Television.

Just hours after the blast, the leader of a moderate Sunni bloc, the Iraqi Islamic Party, announced that the group had reversed its earlier decision to take part in the Jan. 30 elections.

"The security situation keeps going from bad to worse and has to be dealt with," Mohsen Abdel-Hamid said.

Party Secretary General Tarek al-Hashemi acknowledged the withdrawal would leave minority Sunnis underrepresented in the assembly elected Jan. 30, but added: **"We believe when a house is on fire, you should first put out the fire before working on decorating and arranging it."**

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

"Wars Have Always Been Waged For Plunder"

DURING THE First World War, Socialist Party leader Eugene V. Debs gave a powerful antiwar speech on June 16, 1918, in Canton, Ohio. Unlike many leading socialists in Europe and the U.S., who fell in line behind their governments, Debs joined a handful of revolutionaries, including the Bolsheviks of Russia, in taking an antiwar stand.

Debs was tried and sentenced to 10 years in prison for speaking out in Canton. Yet in 1920, he ran for president on the Socialist Party ticket for a fifth time--and got 1 million votes.

Here, we reproduce excerpts from Debs' Canton speech.

"Wars Have Always Been Waged For Plunder"



Canton, Ohio June 16, 1918

June 16, 1918 By Eugene Debs, Speech at Canton, Ohio.

I HAVE just returned from a visit over yonder [the Canton prison], where three of our most loyal comrades are paying the penalty for their devotion to the cause of the working class. **They have come to realize, as many of us have, that it is extremely dangerous to exercise the constitutional right of free speech in a country fighting to make democracy safe in the world...**

[T]he gentry who are today wrapped up in the American flag, who shout their claim from the housetops that they are the only patriots, and who have their magnifying glasses in hand, [are] scanning the country for evidence of disloyalty, eager to apply the brand of treason to the men who dare to even whisper their opposition to Junker rule in the United States.

No wonder Sam Johnson declared that "patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel." He must have had this Wall Street gentry in mind, or at least their prototypes--for in every age it has been the tyrant, the oppressor and the exploiter who has wrapped himself in the cloak of patriotism or religion or both, to deceive and overawe the people...

Wars throughout history have been waged for conquest and plunder. In the Middle Ages, when the feudal lords who inhabited the castles whose towers may still be seen along the Rhine concluded to enlarge their domains, to increase their power, their prestige and their wealth, they declared war upon one another.

But they themselves did not go to war any more than the modern feudal lords, the barons of Wall Street, go to war. The feudal barons of the Middle Ages--the economic predecessors of the capitalists of our day--declared all wars. And their miserable serfs fought all the battles.

The poor, ignorant serfs had been taught to revere their masters--to believe that when their masters declared war upon one another, it was their patriotic duty to fall upon one another and to cut one another's throats for the profit and glory of the lords and barons, who held them in contempt.

And that is war in a nutshell. The master class has always declared the wars; the subject class has always fought the battles. The master class has had all to gain and nothing to lose, while the subject class has had nothing to gain and all to lose--especially their lives.

They have always taught and trained you to believe it to be your patriotic duty to go to war and to have yourselves slaughtered at their command. But in all the history of the world, you, the people, have never had a voice in declaring war, and strange as it certainly appears, no war by any nation in any age has ever been declared by the people.

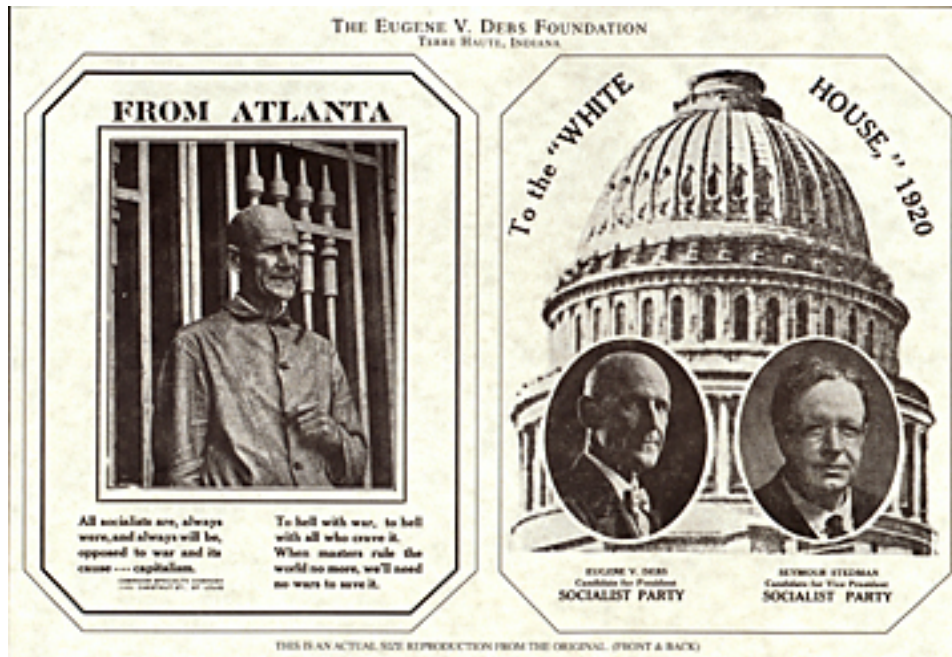
And here let me emphasize the fact--and it cannot be repeated too often--that the working class that fights all the battles, the working class that makes the supreme sacrifices, the working class that freely sheds its blood and furnishes the corpses, has never yet had a voice in either declaring war or making peace.

It is the ruling class that invariably does both. They alone declare war and they alone make peace. "Yours not to reason why; Yours but to do and die." That is their motto, and we object on the part of the awakening workers of this nation.

If war is right, let it be declared by the people. You who have your lives to lose--you certainly above all others have the right to decide the momentous issue of war or peace...

You need at this time especially to know that you are fit for something better than slavery and cannon fodder. You need to know that you were not created to work and produce and impoverish yourself to enrich an idle exploiter...

And now for all of us to do our duty! The clarion call is ringing in our ears and we cannot falter without being convicted of treason to ourselves and to our great cause. Do not worry over the charge of treason to your masters, but be concerned about the treason that involves yourselves. Be true to yourself and you cannot be a traitor to any good cause on earth.



Debs was tried and sentenced to 10 years in prison for speaking out in Canton. Yet in 1920, he ran for president on the Socialist Party ticket for a fifth time--and got 1 million votes.

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.

The Unbearable Brilliance Of Brass

[Thanks to CZ who sent this in.]

Colonels

I told him about the colonel who had threatened to court-martial a spec 4 for refusing to cut the heart out of a dead Viet Cong and feed it to a dog, and Flynn told me about a colonel in the Americal Division (which Flynn always said was sponsored by General Foods) who believed that every man under his command needed combat experience; he made the cooks and the clerks and the supply men and the drivers all take M-16's and go out on night patrol, and one time all of his cooks got wiped out in an ambush.

Dispatches, Michael Herr, 204-205

The Command Gets Together With The Troops

"Where are you from, son?"

"Macon, Georgia, Sir."

"Real fine. Are you getting your mail okay, plenty of hot meals?"

"Yes, Sir."

"That's fine, where you from, son?"

"Oh, I don't know, God, I don't know, I don't know!"

"That's fine, real fine, where you from son?"

Dispatches, 216

Official Optimism

What did anybody ever expect those people to say?

No matter how highly placed they were, they were still officials, their views were well established and well known, famous.

It could have rained frogs over Tan Son Nhut and they wouldn't have been upset; Cam Ranh Bay could have dropped into the South China Sea and they would have found some way to make it sound good for you; the Bo Doi Division (Ho's own) could have marched by the American embassy and they would have characterized it as "desperate" -- what did even the reporters closest to the Mission Council ever find to write about when they'd finished their interviews?

Dispatches, 216-217

Not Afraid Any More



Former Iraqi Army soldiers demonstrate in Baghdad (AP Photo/Murad Sezer)

12/27/04 Robert Fisk, The Independent

Who would have believed, in 2003, as US forces drove into Baghdad, that within two years they would be mired in their biggest guerrilla war since Vietnam?

Those few of us who predicted just that — and The Independent was among them — were derided as naysayers, doom-mongers, pessimists.

Iraq is now proving all over again what we should have learned in Lebanon and Palestine/Israel: Arabs have lost their fear.

It has been a slow process.

But a quarter of a century ago, they were a submissive society and they did as they were told. The Israelis even used a “Palestinian police force” to help them in their occupation.

Not any more. The biggest development in the Middle East over the past 30 years has been this shaking off of fear. **Fear — of the occupier, of the dictator — is something that you cannot re-inject into people.** And this, I suspect, is what has happened in Iraq.

Iraqis are just not prepared to live in fear any more. They know they must depend on themselves — our betrayal of the 1991 rising against Saddam proved that — and they refuse to be frightened by their occupiers.

It was we who warned them of the dangers of civil war, even though there never has been a civil war in Iraq.

As a people, they watched Westerners turn up by the thousand to make money out of a country that had been beaten down by a corrupt dictatorship and UN sanctions. Is it any surprised that Iraqis are angry?

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

**EPA Tests Find Deadly Military
Rocket Fuel in Nation's Milk, Lettuce**

[Thanks to Joan Molnar, who sent this in.]

December 01, 2004 Bush Greenwatch

Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) tests released this week have confirmed the presence of perchlorate - an explosive additive in solid rocket fuel - in almost every sample of lettuce and milk taken in a nationwide investigation.

Perchlorate, leaking from military bases and defense contractor's facilities, is known to cause regional water pollution, resulting in serious health effects.

The FDA investigation found the toxic additive in 217 of 232 samples of lettuce and milk from 15 states, including areas not previously known for perchlorate contamination.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency's perchlorate coordinator for the southwest and Pacific region, Kevin Mayer, **the FDA results show that this regional pollution problem is now exposing people across the entire U.S. to the toxin.** [1]

"This is surprising new evidence that rocket fuel is getting into the food supply in places we never would have suspected. It means that perchlorate exposure is not just a problem in areas where the drinking water is contaminated, but a concern for everyone, every time we visit the grocery store," Bill Walker, West coast vice president of Environmental Working Group told Bush Greenwatch.

Problems associated with perchlorate include impaired thyroid function, tumors, cancer, and decreased learning capacity and developmental problems --such as loss of hearing and speech -- in children. [2]

The EPA's preliminary risk assessment found that perchlorate should not exceed 1 part per billion (ppb) in drinking water for protecting developing fetuses, but industry and Defense Department scientists claim that as much as 200 ppb is safe for human consumption. [3]

The EPA's suggested safe level of 1 ppb is below levels found in several drinking water sources, including the Colorado River. **Since perchlorate pollution stems largely from military sites, costs for clean-up would be the responsibility of the Defense Department.**

"With these results, it's time for health officials, perchlorate polluters and food producers to stop stalling by saying we need more studies," said Renee Sharp, a senior analyst at EWG. **"Rocket fuel is in our water, in vegetables, in milk. How much more evidence do we need?"**

SOURCES:

[1] "[Chemical Problems Widen](#)," Press-Enterprise, Nov. 30, 2004.

[2] [Environmental Protection Agency fact sheet](#).

[3] Press-Enterprise, op. cit.

Received:

Subject: War Crimes?

From: Jonas O
To: GI Special
Sent: Monday, December 27, 2004 4:49 AM

Thanks once again to you and everyone else making an effort to stop the war in Iraq.

I was surprised to see this in a news item about Samarra in GI Special 2#C62: "I Don't Support This War"

"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."

As gungho generals from the attacks on Falluja were keen to say when leveling its many mosques, using a minaret as firing position is a war crime (as is bombing a mosque). I guess war crimes are only really crimes when committed by Arabs.

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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