

GI SPECIAL 3A21:



When the American affluent are required to serve in the U.S. military, I'll start believing in the land of the free and the home of the brave. The poor and working class carry the weapons, while the affluent write the slogans. If defending freedom and democracy is so important, why is there not equality in those that defend these principles? As Senator Bob La Follette from Wisconsin once wrote, "Wealth has never yet sacrificed itself on the altar of patriotism."

*Mike Hastie
Vietnam Veteran
December 14, 2004*

Photo and caption from the I-R-A-Q (I Remember Another Quagmire) portfolio of Mike Hastie, U.S. Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71. (Please contact at: hastiemike@earthlink.net) for examples of his outstanding work. T)

The War Comes Home: Paris, Illinois;

"This," He Says, "Is Going To Be Remembered For A Long Time."

Believing themselves to be defending their country, they've given the ultimate sacrifice for someone who despises them and their lives, damages the country they wish to protect, and makes a mockery of the morals they swore to uphold. God rest their souls

January 18, 2005 By SHARON COHEN, AP National Writer, Casa Grande Valley Newspapers Inc.

PARIS, Ill. - They lined the streets around the stately stone courthouse that winter day, waving tiny American flags, holding "Go! USA" signs and cheering the convoy of trucks filled with fresh-faced kids rumbling off to war.

It was just about a year ago when the people of Paris gathered for a rousing goodbye.

Nine months later, they filled the same streets once again.

That sad September day, hands were over hearts, tears rolled down cheeks and bagpipes wailed as the crowd bid a solemn goodbye to one of their own, Sgt. Shawna Morrison, as her funeral procession crawled through town.

The war in Iraq has bound this town together in pride and sorrow as it has followed the travails of its 1544th Transportation Company, an Army National Guard unit that has suffered enormous losses: Five deaths - two of them women - and about two dozen serious injuries.

"Sadness isn't really the proper word," says Mayor Craig Smith. "There has been this feeling of foreboding - wondering when the other shoe will drop."

That tension won't subside until the soldiers return - possibly as early as March - and even then, the mayor says, the legacy of loss will haunt this town.

"This," he says, "is going to be remembered for a long time."

No one knows that better than the soldiers of the 1544th.

Within 24 hours of arrival in Iraq last March, the 170-member company lost its first member when a mortar struck the group's compound.

Weeks later, the company's first commander broke both legs and a hip in a collision with another truck. One soldier nearly died in a mortar attack that left him with collapsed lungs and shrapnel ripping into his body - even his heart wall. One sergeant, Scott Johnson, needed a roadside tracheotomy after a bomb hit his convoy.

"It's something that no one anticipated even though it's a given - war is a dangerous thing," says Johnson, who is recovering back home. **"We're not a combat unit. Nothing like this has ever happened."**

But as a transportation unit, the 1544th came under repeated attack as it delivered supplies and mail in a treacherous, 50-kilometer circle around Baghdad. **After the fifth soldier was killed in October, the number of missions was reduced, but they have picked up since then.**

Those dangers are more than 6,500 miles away and yet the war is a constant, sobering presence here.

Paris is a place that cherishes its history (Abe Lincoln argued cases here as a lawyer) and pays homage to its veterans with a glass-encased honor roll on the courthouse lawn.

Though the 1544th is composed of soldiers from towns across east-central Illinois - along with a few from Missouri, Kentucky, Indiana and Florida - the company trains here and is part of the fabric of this community.

Tributes to the soldiers are all around: The light poles have signs with their names and yellow ribbons. The high school has a bulletin board with a white star for every graduate serving in the military. The football team this past season wore helmets emblazoned with 1544th decals. The local paper, the Paris Beacon-News, added a daily front-page banner saluting the company.

And five white crosses dot the lawn of the red-brick armory.

In a community of just 9,000, the men and women of the 1544th are not anonymous soldiers, but the factory worker who lives next door, the farmer down the road, the teens who donned orange and black uniforms for the Paris Tigers just a few years ago.

"They carried our newspapers, they played with our children. Everybody in town feels like they're our kids, our soldiers," says Jim Cooper, head of a family support group for the 1544th - a unit that includes his 21-year-old son, Mathew.

Over the past year, townspeople have raised tens of thousands of dollars to buy the unit everything from CB radios for their trucks and global positioning systems to baby wipes, toilet paper, pens and paper.

There were even plans to buy steel to reinforce the unit's trucks, but that idea was scrapped at the urging of government officials. [And those "government officials" should also be buried in Paris, Illinois, and soon, for their murderous "urging." Let justice be done, and be seen to be done.]

"If they (the soldiers) need five of anything, they will get 10," says Lt. Col. Robert Mayberry, peacetime commander of the 1544th. "I have never been to a town that gives so much support."

Many supporters have children in the 1544th. Though the soldiers range from their teens to their mid 50s, several are recent high school graduates **and about a third are college students, many of whom joined the Guard to pay for their education.**

That weighs heavily on high school football coach Mick Roberts who sometimes wonders if his well-intentioned advice landed his former players in the heart of a war zone.

"I probably talked some of the kids into joining the Guard," he says, pausing as if to defend his decision. "It was a pretty good deal going if you wanted to go to school (college.) ... Then they got sent to war."

Over the months, Roberts has been a phone and e-mail pal to several former players and the young woman who kept statistics for his team. He is both confidant and cheerleader.

"Glad you survived the mortar attacks last Monday," he wrote in a recent e-mail. "... You guys just have a couple more months and you can get the hell out of there. Take care of each other and come home safe."

Roberts also keeps a photo in his office of four young men lined up in desert fatigues, holding rifles above a sign, "1544th Football Tigers in Iraq" - all former members of a recent team, two of them co-captains.

"All of these kids have stayed the course, probably better than the people back here," Roberts says, smiling as he studies the photo. "You have to admire them."

High school principal Dave Meister feels the same way as he scans a bulletin board titled "Hometown Heroes," pointing out the names of a recent homecoming king, a young woman who ran track and a favorite former student who worked on the school newspaper, Shawna Morrison.

"She always had a smile on her face, she always had a question to ask ... she always was a bright spot in the classroom," he recalls.

For the others killed, there also are personal, poignant memories.

Spc. Jessica Cawvey, a 21-year-old college student, was the devoted mother of a 6-year-old daughter. She died in an explosion near her convoy, traveling in Fallujah, Iraq.

Sgt. Ivory Phipps, detached from another unit, joined the military at age 18 to avoid the gang-ridden Chicago streets. The 44-year-old had recently re-enlisted to provide for his family, including a 5-month-old son. A mortar killed him on his first full day in Iraq.

Spc. Charles Lamb was a 23-year-old newlywed, easygoing with a quick joke and a presence that could light up a room. He, too, was killed by a mortar.

Spc. Jeremy Ridlen, 23, was inseparable from his twin brother, Jason. They both played on the church softball team and both headed to Iraq as members of the 1544th. A truck bomb killed Jeremy.

Each loss has a profound impact on the folks back home who depend on their support group to report the latest news, defuse the most recent rumor, or sometimes just offer a soothing word in the darkest moments.

Reader Opinions: Casa Grande Valley Newspapers Inc.

Jan, 19 2005 Joe Donnelly

Its so sad to read about the deaths of such fine young men and women, and the nobility of the town that supports them.

I only wish this was a just cause, and that the faith these heroes had in their leadership was justified.

Believing themselves to be defending their country, they've given the ultimate sacrifice for someone who despises them and their lives, damages the country they wish to protect, and makes a mockery of the morals they swore to uphold. God rest their souls

4% Of Americans Favor More Troops Going To Iraq; Support For War Hits New Low

1.19.05 By Doyle McManus, L.A. Times Staff Writer

The poll, conducted Saturday through Monday, found that the percentage of Americans who believed the situation in Iraq was "worth going to war over" had sunk to a new low of 39%. When the same question was asked in a similar poll in October, 44% said it had been worth going to war.

Public support for increasing U.S. troop strength in Iraq — a proposal Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and several other members of Congress have made — is negligible, the poll found. *Only 4% of respondents said they would favor increasing American forces after the Iraqi election.*

Americans are almost evenly divided over how long U.S. forces should stay in Iraq, the poll found: 47% said they would like to see most of the troops out within a year, while 49% say they could support a longer deployment — including 37% who say the troops should remain "as long as it takes" to secure and stabilize the country.

"Support for this war is now lower than support for the Vietnam War was at the Tet offensive," Mueller said, citing the 1968 battles that were a turning point in U.S. public opinion then. "But in Vietnam [after Tet], the war continued for several years, and many people continued to support it through enormous casualties."

Respondents to The Times poll were downbeat about the results of the war in Iraq on several counts.

Respondents were divided on whether the Jan. 30 election was likely to be a turning point leading to a significant improvement in Iraq's stability: 31% said they thought it would have a positive effect, 34% said they expected no significant effect, and 27% said they thought the election would actually lead to more violence.

Almost half, or 45%, said they believed the war had destabilized the Middle East; 24% said they thought it had a stabilizing effect. In April 2003, 52% thought that military action against Iraq would stabilize the situation in the Middle East.

And a large majority, 65%, said they believed the war in Iraq had harmed the United States' image around the world. Only 10% said the U.S. image had been helped.

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:

U.S. Troops Wounded At Maqdadiya

20 January 2005 Aljazeera

A number of Iraqi and US soldiers were injured during clashes between soldiers and fighters in al-Maqaadiya area northeast of Baquba on Wednesday night.

One Iraqi and two American vehicles were damaged in the clashes.

A leader from the Jihad in the Land of Two Rivers movement was killed during the clashes.

Nine British Soldiers Wounded In Basra Base Attack

January 20, 2005 (CNN) & (Reuters) & By David Stringer, Caroline Gammell and Karen Attwood, PA & BBC & Aljazeera

An explosion has injured nine British soldiers and several Iraqis at a British base near Basra, in southern Iraq, the Ministry of Defence says.

The explosion was near the entrance to a military logistics base Thursday afternoon.

The witness said a car careered towards the main gate of the base in Shaibah, when two British military vehicles tried to prevent it from entering and the car blew up.

"This was the time when many Iraqis working on the base were leaving and several were injured," the witness added.

The blast happened at the Shaibah Logistic Base, about 12 miles southwest of Basra, the spokesman said. "It is not yet clear what caused this explosion nor is it clear if it was a suicide device," a spokesman said.

Attacks on British bases in Basra are common, with insurgents frequently firing mortars at camps in the city.

Britain has around 9,000 troops based in southern Iraq, mostly in Basra, where many Iraqi civilians are employed at the British military's bases.

The five British soldiers were from the Second Battalion The Princess of Wales' Royal Regiment, a Ministry of Defence spokesman said.

"One is being evacuated to a US medical facility in Kuwait for further treatment."

As well as being the main logistics base for the British-controlled area of Iraq, the Shaibah site also has the main British field hospital, which has been visited by Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon.

Hundreds of British troops and other personnel are stationed at the base.

It was set up as the hub for British administration of south east Iraq and has served as a base for Marines and the Black Watch regiment.

There has been speculation that following the release of photographs allegedly showing abuse of Iraqi prisoners by British troops, UK forces could be the subject of more attacks.

U.S. Command Caught In Commission Of Criminal Act At Mosul

20 January 2005 By Mariam Fam, Associated Press & Aljazeera

Aljazeera also learned that US forces took over al-Salam hospital in the northern Iraqi province of Mosul to use as a military headquarters after driving out all patients and medical staff. [A criminal act under the rules of war and the Geneva Convention. And not the first by the crooks in command of the U.S. forces in Iraq. Of course, when caught, they will blame the enlisted ranks for the crime, as usual, as they did at Abu G. Assuming they live that long.]

The seven-storey building is the city's biggest hospital.

Later Thursday, insurgents shelled a hospital in Mosul where U.S. and Iraqi forces had taken up positions in an annex, hospital director Faris Hani said. (AP)

Access To Baghdad Cut Off

1.20.05 By Mariam Fam, Associated Press

Major highways leading into Baghdad from the south and west were sealed off by Iraqi forces following a string of car bombs Wednesday. Alaa Mahmoud, an Iraqi National Guard captain at one roadblock, said he was under orders to prevent all vehicles from entering the capital.

Connecticut Soldier Dies; 10th Killed In Ramadi From His Battalion

Jan 20, 2005 1010 WINS, HARTFORD

Conn. A 33-year-old soldier from New Haven has been killed in Iraq, the U.S. Defense Department announced Wednesday.

Army Staff Sgt. Thomas E. Vitagliano died Monday in Ar Ramadi, Iraq, when a bomb in a vehicle detonated near his position, the Defense Department said. Also killed was Pfc. George Geer, 27 of Cortez, Colo. They were assigned to the 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment at Camp Casey, Korea.

Vitagliano, who grew up in Orange and West Haven, was the 23rd person with Connecticut ties killed in Iraq or Afghanistan since March 2002, and the first this year.

John Hoffman, deacon at Holy Infant Church in Orange where Vitagliano's family worships, said Vitagliano enlisted in the military at age 17.

Stars and Stripes, which covers the military, ran a story on Tuesday that described what Vitagliano's unit has been doing for the past four months in Ar Ramadi.

The soldiers have suffered frequent attacks from insurgents in the city of 400,000, which is in the volatile region sometimes called the Sunni Triangle. **At least 10 soldiers in Vitagliano's battalion have been killed in Ar Ramadi since November.**

Vitagliano went to Notre Dame High School in West Haven until his sophomore year, then transferred to a military school. He went on to join the Marines.

Anthony DiBiase, commanding officer of the U.S. Marine Cadets Company A, 1st Battalion, said Vitagliano was one of his cadets and moved up the ranks to sergeant in June 1990. He fought in the first Iraq war, Desert Storm, in 1991, as part of the 25th Marine's Charlie Company.

He later left the Marines, worked briefly for American Express and returned to teach Marine cadets for a year. He then joined the Army.

Family members told WTNH-TV that Vitagliano planned to work for his father's real estate business in New Haven after the Army.

U.S. Sergeant Hit In Foot By Bullet Of Unknown Origin

Washington Post, January 19, 2005, Pg. 15

Sgt. Arthur Martinez was sitting on his bunk in Mosul, watching a movie, when a bullet came through a plywood sheet covering the window to his room and lodged in his right foot. No one has yet been able to determine where the bullet came from.

TROOP NEWS

MAKE SURE THEY GOT NO AMMO;

BUSH AIN'T SO POPULAR WITH THEM ANYMORE



Members of the U.S. Capitol Police team, CERT (Containment Emergency Response Team) check to see that troops' rifles are unloaded on Capitol Hill Jan. 20, 2005, before the start of the 55th Inaugural Parade. (AP Photo/Lauren Victoria Burke)

Reservist Fights Stop-Loss Order; Wins Discharge From The Army

[Washington Times, January 19, 2005, Pg. 4] The Army has decided to let Army Reserve doctor Maj. Todd P. Ginestra resign from the service, after first demanding that he stay in the reserves as part of a "stop-loss" wartime policy.

Homeless Vietnam Veteran Froze to Death

Jan 18 Tom Kenny Action News 36

A Vietnam veteran who froze to death alone beneath a railroad bridge on Christmas Eve is remembered in Covington.

Joe Young died in single-digit cold a few blocks from a shelter where he had previously stayed and a few days before he was to move into an apartment that had been arranged for him.

The Reverend Gregg Anderson of Highland Heights says friends and strangers contributed a total of \$2,100 to make sure Young had a decent burial. Joe Young was 57-years old.

Did Officers At Taji Set Up Murder Of Whistle Blower? Amazing Coincidence! He Alleged Stealing, Then Was Summoned To Taji Base And Killed; A U.S. Captain Caught Lying About What Happened

Stoffel, of Monongahela, Pa., made his allegations in a Dec. 3 letter to a senior Pentagon official and in a meeting with aides to Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.).

Soon after, Stoffel was summoned to the Taji military base in Iraq by coalition military officials to discuss his concerns about his contract.

As Stoffel, Wemple and an Iraqi interpreter left the Taji base in a car Dec. 8, another vehicle rammed theirs head-on. Two masked men jumped out and executed the two Americans in a fusillade of bullets, according to news accounts at the time. Their interpreter fled and is missing.

January 20, 2005 By Ken Silverstein, T. Christian Miller and Patrick J. McDonnell, Times Staff Writers

WASHINGTON — An American contractor gunned down last month in Iraq had accused Iraqi Defense Ministry officials of corruption days before his death, according to documents and U.S. officials.

Dale Stoffel, 43, was shot to death Dec. 8 shortly after leaving an Iraqi military base north of Baghdad, an attack attributed at the time to Iraqi insurgents. Also killed was a business associate, Joseph Wemple, 49.

The killings came after Stoffel alerted senior U.S. officials in Washington that he believed Iraqi Defense Ministry officials were part of a kickback scheme involving

a multimillion-dollar contract awarded to his company, Wye Oak Technology, to refurbish old Iraqi military equipment.

The FBI has launched an investigation into the killings and whether they might have been retaliation for Stoffel's whistle-blowing activities, according to people familiar with the inquiry. The FBI declined to comment.

Stoffel, of Monongahela, Pa., made his allegations in a Dec. 3 letter to a senior Pentagon official and in a meeting with aides to Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.).

Soon after, Stoffel was summoned to the Taji military base in Iraq by coalition military officials to discuss his concerns about his contract.

He complained about payment problems with a mysterious Lebanese businessman designated by the Iraqis as a middleman, sources said.

As Stoffel, Wemple and an Iraqi interpreter left the Taji base in a car Dec. 8, another vehicle rammed theirs head-on. Two masked men jumped out and executed the two Americans in a fusillade of bullets, according to news accounts at the time. Their interpreter fled and is missing.

Stoffel's death has prompted new worries about the integrity of the reconstruction effort in Iraq, which has been plagued by accusations of corruption and cronyism almost from the start.

One U.S. official said that corruption problems involving middlemen and kickbacks were become increasingly widespread as the Iraqis began to exercise more control over the contracting process.

Stoffel's killing drew scrutiny from investigators not only because of his whistle-blowing activities but also because of his mysterious and controversial past. Stoffel worked on a top secret U.S. program in the 1990s to buy Russian, Chinese and other foreign-made weapons for testing by the U.S. military, according to documents and interviews.

Stoffel's Iraq deal was the first large-scale contract issued and funded directly by the Iraqi government for military purposes, and was crucial for training and equipping the Iraqi army, considered a key component of the U.S. strategy for exiting Iraq.

Failing to stop the alleged corruption "will set a very negative precedent for subsequent dealings with the Iraqi military, harm U.S. companies seeking to do business according to U.S. law, and be the source of embarrassment and political tension to the Bush administration with respect to the effort in Iraq," said Stoffel's letter to the Pentagon, which was obtained by The Times.

According to the letter, Stoffel's Pennsylvania-based firm was awarded a contract last year by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense to help overhaul its aging Soviet-era military equipment, mostly T-55 tanks and artillery. Wye Oak Technology delivered some refurbished tanks in November to Iraq's 1st Mechanized Brigade.

As part of the contract, senior Defense Ministry officials required Stoffel's payments to be processed through a Lebanese middleman appointed by the ministry, according to the Dec. 3 letter.

By November, Stoffel was seeking a payment of \$24.7 million, submitting invoices directly to the Defense Ministry. The ministry, in turn, cut three separate checks, sending each of them to the Lebanese businessman for "processing," people familiar with the contract said.

The middleman's role was to act as a sort of escrow account for the financial transactions, reconciling invoices and dispensing the payments, sources said.

But after the businessman failed to send him the money, Stoffel complained to U.S. officials in Washington that he suspected that the middleman's true role was to route payments back to Iraqi officials in the form of kickbacks, people familiar with the contract said.

He also told the Pentagon in his letter that the middleman was withholding payments in an attempt to force him to use subcontractors linked to the middleman and to Defense Ministry officials.

Stoffel spoke about his concerns with representatives from Santorum's office. Santorum, in turn, wrote Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld on Dec. 3 asking him to raise the issue with Iraqi Defense Minister Hazem Shaalan.

"I would appreciate comment on how the Department of Defense can assist" Wye Oak Technology in recovering payment for services provided, Santorum wrote.

Stoffel also met with John A. "Jack" Shaw, deputy undersecretary of Defense for international technology security, whose office monitored weapons sales to Iraq. In a later letter, Stoffel urged Shaw to require that a known accounting firm be hired to oversee the contract. **He warned in his letter that the weapons contract "has fallen prey to ... corruption and self-dealing."**

Shaw was profiled in Times stories last year after coming under investigation in an unrelated matter. He was subsequently removed from his job. His office forwarded Stoffel's complaint to the Department of the Army.

"We are looking into the issue," said Army Lt. Col. Joseph Yoswa, a Pentagon spokesman.

One source said that Stoffel's complaints trickled down to British Brig. Gen. David Clements, the deputy commander of the mission to train Iraqi troops. Clements called together Stoffel, Wemple and the Lebanese businessman to sort out the problem.

Clements summoned Stoffel from the U.S. to Iraq meet at the Taji military base in early December, several sources said.

After several days of discussions, Clements told the businessman to release the money, sources said. On Dec. 8, Stoffel and Wemple were returning to Baghdad with their Iraqi interpreter when they were attacked.

The attackers stole Stoffel's computer from the scene. About a week later, a video showing photographs and identity documents of Stoffel and Wemple was posted on a website frequently used by insurgent groups. A group calling itself the Brigades of the Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the killings. The group was not previously known to terrorism experts.

The timing and the unusual details of the killings have raised suspicions in the U.S. and Iraq that the video was a ruse to disguise an assassination.

"The video was very unusual," said Evan Kohlman, a terrorism consultant who examined the video.

"It didn't show bodies or the killing, but only photos, documents and materials taken from the bodies. It is certainly possible that someone (other than insurgents) manufactured the video."

Army Capt. Steve Alvarez, a U.S. spokesman, acknowledged that Clements had spoken with Stoffel, but denied that Stoffel had mentioned "any corruption" during their conversations. [The good Capt. has just been caught in a really stupid lie. Follow the liar to the murderers, assuming the liar is not himself one of the murderers.]

Instead, he said that Stoffel had complained about the "difficulties he was experiencing in getting the start-up funds" for equipping the mechanized brigade. **Clements refused a request for an interview.**

"There really isn't much more to our involvement," Alvarez wrote in response to a query from The Times. *He referred further questions to the Iraqi Ministry of Defense.* [Do what this guy wants, you better have paid up life insurance.]

Nick Hutchinson, the U.S. senior advisor to the Ministry of Defense who also met with Stoffel, did not respond to requests for comment.

An Iraqi Defense Ministry spokesman arranged an interview with a senior defense official, but then forbade a reporter to ask questions about the contract, calling it too "dangerous." [Well, there it is, isn't it. Case closed.]

The Lebanese businessman could not be reached for comment.

Stoffel had long been active in the arms business. Since at least the mid-1990s, he worked with U.S. intelligence officials to obtain enemy weaponry to allow the U.S. military to examine and test the items, according to contract documents obtained by The Times.

In this work, Stoffel developed contacts across Eastern Europe, particularly in Ukraine and Bulgaria. He purchased weapons including surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft systems, the documents show.

After the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, Stoffel went to Baghdad to pursue business opportunities afforded by the Pentagon's multibillion-dollar Iraqi reconstruction program.

He became concerned about possible corruption in the U.S. contracting process, and reported his suspicions to U.S. investigators in spring 2004. A U.S. official said the investigation into those charges was ongoing.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT THE NEW 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)

“BRING THE TROOPS HOME NOW!” Iraq Vet Speaks At DC Anti-Bush Rally



Protesters yell as President Bush's Inaugural Parade passes along Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., Jan. 20, 2005. (AP Photo/Chris Gardner)

Jan 20, 2005 By JEANNINE AVERSA, Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON - Anti-war protesters, including some who carried coffin-like cardboard boxes to signify the death of U.S. troops in Iraq, descended on the capital Thursday.

Aidan Delgado, 23, of Sarasota, Fla., returned to the United States last April after his military service. He said he was a mechanic at Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad, which gained notoriety as a place of torture during Saddam Hussein's rule and was the scene of alleged prisoner abuse by U.S. troops.

"What I experienced in Iraq fills me with remorse," Delgado told the crowd of protesters. "If we are going to preserve our nation at all, we need to criticize what we did wrong and we have to criticize ourselves," he said.

HELL NO, WE WON'T GO



Sgt. 1st Class Jeff Due, right, a U.S. Army recruiter, is surrounded by protesters at Seattle Central Community College, Jan. 20, 2005, in Seattle.

After about a 10-minute standoff during which protesters tore up U.S. Army literature, the protesters were successful in getting Due and another recruiter to leave their table under escort by campus security officers. Several hundred students walked out of classes at several Seattle colleges and universities to protest the inauguration of President Bush. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren)

Toledo Anti-War Activists Reach Out To Toledo Marines

"Vietnam was a war that was not possible to win. You will find that Iraq is the same. Winning is not measured by who can cause the most death and pain. And winning is not measured by tactical victories over locations you have no intention of holding. The ultimate outcome of any war is political, and that war has already been lost. So your commander-in-chief is now sending you out to kill others, to wound others, to destroy the homes and livelihoods of others, or to be killed or wounded by others, to pursue a goal that was never just and is now lost."

January 20, 2005 by Mike Ferner, Anti-War.com

When a U.S. Marine company used downtown Toledo for "urban warfare" training Jan. 7-8, it provided an opportunity for activists to think and act beyond normal limits.

With barely a week's notice, an article in the local paper announced that a weapons company of the 1st Battalion, 24th Marine Reserves would spend a weekend running around our downtown, honing combat skills by firing blanks at imaginary enemies.

The Northwest Ohio Peace Coalition (NWOPC) and local Veterans for Peace (VFP) designed a response, different from what many in the peace movement had seen or were even comfortable with:

A message written for the Toledo Marines by VFP member and retired Special Forces Master Sergeant Stan Goff. He compared the lies leading up to his first combat assignment in Vietnam with Iraq, urging the soldiers to "reflect on what you are doing and what you are about to do ... you yourselves must carry the burden of the memories.... If you decide that you have to chart a different course with your life, we have contact information for those who can help.... We have a whole community of veterans and military families who will welcome you with open arms and our support."

"Cadence" chants written by VFP members around the country.

Banners and picket signs with messages like, "We love you. Stay home," "Support the troops, keep them home," and "Bush and Cheney lied; soldiers died."

Oversized portraits of Iraqi civilians and war casualties.

A sound truck playing Edwin Starr's rock classic, "War."

For two hours late Friday night, as the Marines set up their weekend command post in (believe it or not) an abandoned center for selling plasma, 30 peace activists stood with banners, signs, photos, and "War," Goff's message and cadence chants alternating over the P.A.

Negotiations with the Toledo police got us only as close as the opposite side of the street, so an artificial gulf kept us from reading soldiers' expressions or hearing their responses, which could have only been whispered under likely orders against "fraternizing" with us.

One of our band, chafed by the order not to use a public sidewalk on a public street, crossed the thoroughfare to make a point and was promptly arrested.

The next day, a dozen activists returned with signs, photos, banners, "War," and a bullhorn for Goff's letter, ready to peacefully engage squads of Marines who had come to engage "enemies" in parking garages and alleys.

With the mobile "War" unit circling the blocks, broadcasting the song to the Marines, the activists on foot followed one detachment past the main library, singing out a whole list of VFP cadences.

The most familiar chant was: "Hey, hey Uncle Sam/We remember Vietnam/We don't want your I-raq war/Peace is what we're marchin' for. Am I right or wrong (You're right!). Am I right or wrong? (You're right!)" But the most popular was: "Dubya's lies should make him choke/He must still be snortin' coke/Saddam's secret poison gas/Must be something Rumsfeld passed." **[FYI The East Coast Vets For Peace Chant ends up "Must Be Stuck Up Rumsfelds Ass.]**

In front of the Family Courts building, the Marines regrouped and rested momentarily, presenting a perfect opportunity to read Goff's message again. As the Reserves began to move out in pairs, guns pointed in all directions, the words of the Special Forces veteran echoed off the court building, clear as a bell:

"Vietnam was a war that was not possible to win. You will find that Iraq is the same. Winning is not measured by who can cause the most death and pain. **And winning is not measured by tactical victories over locations you have no intention of holding. The ultimate outcome of any war is political, and that war has already been lost. So your commander-in-chief is now sending you out to kill others, to wound others, to destroy the homes and livelihoods of others, or to be killed or wounded by others, to pursue a goal that was never just and is now lost.**"

The next day, two e-mail messages stood out against the usual inbox clutter.

One was from a local VFP member who, as a 15-year-old, was drafted into the German Army in the closing days of WWII, then emigrated to the U.S. just in time to be drafted into the U.S. Army and sent to Korea. He wrote: "Our troops are in Iraq engaged in an illegal war and they are there to kill Iraqis.... At the Nuremberg war-crimes trial, the Nazi war criminals who perpetrated the kind of illegal aggression that we are now guilty of against Iraq were found guilty and hanged. The soldiers who carried out these crimes against the civilian population were also found guilty. The fact that they followed orders was not then an admissible defense, nor should it be now.... **Some of us think if we just pay lip service to the idea of supporting our troops in time of war, we will be less severely criticized by the super patriots as being unpatriotic. It won't work, and it distorts our purpose of calling an end to an illegal, murderous invasion of another country.**"

Walking downtown the day after the protest, a city streets worker dashed across the road to shake my hand and say, "Thanks for what you're doing to get our troops home."

That comment represented the kind of response I had hoped our message would elicit from the "persuadable middle" of public opinion.

The response I hoped for from young soldiers was based on what I remembered as a teenager during the Vietnam war.

In those volatile days, I alternated between being a conscientious objector and following John Wayne's example of serving my country – joining the Marines to fight the commies.

Remembering those days, it was easy to put myself in the place of young reservists, quite possibly bound for Iraq, and wonder if any of them were similarly conflicted. My hope was that a compassionate message, delivered in familiar language, might be heard by one of the Marines beginning to ask "what the hell am I doing here?"

Falling on fertile ground, the message might grow into a decision by one of the reservists, or a local GI who saw us on the 6 o'clock news last weekend, to join the growing number of soldiers refusing to fight in Iraq.

This leads to the larger question of whether the peace movement can ethically construct a message – and deliver it at appropriate times – that is not about how we feel about the war, but how soldiers and our neighbors in the persuadable middle feel about it? It's high time we undertook this discussion.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Five Allawi Soldiers Killed

1.20.05 Aljazeera

Five Iraqi soldiers and a civilian have been killed in attacks north of Baghdad.

Four of the soldiers were killed on Thursday by a roadside bomb in Samarra.

"The attack targeted a military convoy in central Samarra. Four soldiers were killed and four wounded," a lieutenant colonel, Mahmud Muhammed, said.

Also on Thursday, an Iraqi soldier was killed and another wounded in a mortar attack on a military position in Siniya, west of the town of Baiji, Captain Ali Yusuf said.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Resistance Growing On The Home Front

Plus, on the second anniversary of the beginning of the war in Iraq, as part of the March 19 international day of action, thousands of veterans, soldiers, military family members and antiwar activists will converge on Fayetteville, N.C.--home to Fort Bragg and the Army's 82nd Airborne Division--for what promises to be the largest antiwar demonstration there since the Vietnam War.

January 21, 2005 By Eric Ruder, Socialist Worker

SOLDIERS, VETERANS and their families across the U.S. have been placed under enormous strain by the U.S. wars on Iraq and Afghanistan. Even if soldiers manage to avoid serious injury or worse while stationed abroad, the mental scars live on long after they leave the war zone--from watching their friends die, to being forced to follow orders that lead to the deaths of innocent Iraqis, and more.

But some U.S. soldiers and their families are finding ways to resist.

When Bush called up some 5,000 members of the Individual Ready Reserve--former soldiers who can be recalled on an "emergency" basis--more than a third simply didn't report for duty. Troops in the U.S. have refused to conduct training exercises, and some soldiers in Iraq have refused combat missions.

The number of such incidents is small, but they are taking place more quickly than in the Vietnam War, when the rebellion of soldiers was decisive in stopping the U.S. war machine.

In the U.S., the growing participation of military families in antiwar organizing has exposed the Bush administration--by undermining the argument that "supporting the troops" requires dropping any criticism of the war effort.

Fernando Suarez del Solar, whose son Jesús was an early casualty of the war in Iraq, has become a leading figure in the antiwar movement with his tireless campaigning. Last week, he spoke at a panel discussion in a Latino neighborhood in Chicago, organized by the Committee Against the Militarization of Youth.

Other speakers included Juan Torres, whose son died in Afghanistan, and Brian Roa, a teacher at Senn High School, who was involved in the struggle to stop the military from taking over a wing of Senn to start a Navy academy.

Nearly 200 people attended the meeting, which was conducted in Spanish and translated into English, in the basement of the St. Pius Church. Fernando moved

the crowd to applause several times, and he urged listeners to put aside their fears and raise their voices against the war.

In Burlington, Vt., Paul Fleckenstein is part of a grassroots chapter of Military Families Speak Out that is organizing a statewide speaking tour to spread their message and reach out to other military families. **The chapter formed in just the last six weeks, but it already has a core of six or seven families who come to meetings, plus contact with a much larger network of military families across the state.**

Most families have loved ones in the Vermont Army National Guard, which has suffered the highest per capita fatality rate in the country. Last week, Colleen McLaughlin, a member of the group whose son is currently in Iraq, spoke on an "End the Occupation, Troops Out Now" panel at Burlington City Hall, along with antiwar activist and author Anthony Arnove and U.S. Labor Against War member Gerry Colby.

Fleckenstein--whose nephew is in the Army and will likely be deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan sometime soon--explains that the group has gotten off to a good start, but has a lot of work to do.

"I think it's clear that there is a lot of reservation and concern about the war and the Vermont Guard deployment," Fleckenstein told Socialist Worker. **"Many family members will speak about this privately, but they're not at the point where they will publicly criticize the Guard leadership. They're scared for their family members who are deployed--and that they might face repercussions from the military. We need to shift this, so that more and more military family members are comfortable speaking out about the need to bring the troops home now in order to end the war and stop the killing of both Iraqis and U.S. troops."**

In the Boston area, antiwar activists are organizing an 18-stop speaking tour between January 29 and February 6--featuring Michael Hoffman, who was a Marine artilleryman and helped to found Iraq Veterans Against the War, and Kelly Dougherty, who served in the 220th Military Police Company.

The tour will touch down at high schools, colleges and community forums, where these soldiers will share the experiences and horrors they witnessed in Iraq in order to inspire more people to oppose the war.

Plus, on the second anniversary of the beginning of the war in Iraq, as part of the March 19 international day of action, thousands of veterans, soldiers, military family members and antiwar activists will converge on Fayetteville, N.C.--home to Fort Bragg and the Army's 82nd Airborne Division--for what promises to be the largest antiwar demonstration there since the Vietnam War.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Ministers Of "Sovereign" Iraqi Farce Beaten And Treated Like Shit Generally By Occupation Forces: "We Don't Have To Be Terrorists To Be Against The Americans"

Jan. 20, 2005 By Rod Nordland, Newsweek

Jan. 20 - Checkpoints in and around Baghdad are probably the height of the form. They have chicanes to slow the traffic down, blast barriers to protect against rocket attacks, and isolation bays—sandbagged drive-in areas for searching individual cars, so that any explosion is contained.

Coils of concertina wire surround the checkpoints, in case of a "complex attack," the military's term for a bomb followed by small-arms fire and rocket attacks. On the road surface, there are metal spikes, rolled out of the way or recessed into the surface when it's OK to pass; plus heavy metal gates or cross bars.

Letting others in with courtesy and efficiency is way down on the list of checkpoint priorities, as one cabinet member of the Iraqi government found out last week. **Minister of State Adnan al-Janabi, an intimate of Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, tells NEWSWEEK that he was so incensed by his treatment by American soldiers as he tried to enter the Green Zone to go to a cabinet meeting that he resigned in protest.**

An angry Al-Janabi not only resigned from the government, but is now denouncing the American military as an anti-Iraqi occupation army. [Wow! He just figured that out!! Must be why the Bush people made him a minister!!!]

He is hardly a raving anti-American. An insider since the days of the former Coalition Provisional Authority and one of the country's most prominent Sunnis as leader of the huge Janabi tribe, he was given the minister of state portfolio in Allawi's government. For a while he served as justice minister. And he remains the campaign chairman for Allawi's slate in the elections, the Iraqi List.

On Jan. 12, Al-Janabi was on his way to a cabinet meeting when he came to checkpoint 18 of the Green Zone, one of several that Iraqi VIPs use to vary their routes as they try to avoid assassination.

He says he properly identified himself as a minister and showed his ID badges, but got into a dispute with the soldiers at the checkpoint.

A lieutenant called over to adjudicate decided, Al-Janabi says, to place him under arrest and bound his hands in plasticuffs. "My hands were tied in the way they do

it to terrorists. The lieutenant, he knew who I was. We are all under threat, any minister, we live every hour under the threat of being assassinated, and this is how they treat us."

Al-Janabi refused to say what led to the incident. "I don't care what the circumstances are," he says. **"I'm a minister of a state that is supposed to be sovereign** under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1546 (which formally ended the occupation of Iraq and created the Iraqi Interim Government). **The forces of occupation have no respect for me."**

The minister's experience is hardly an isolated incident—nor even the worst example of it.

Hachim al-Hassani, another minister, of industry and minerals, who was a long-time exile in the United States, has suffered two humiliating incidents.

While in the Governing Council, he was denied entry on his way to an important meeting (Iraqi government offices, especially at the cabinet level, are nearly all in the American-controlled Green Zone).

When he protested, a soldier lost his temper and punched him in the face, according to Al-Janabi. Al-Hassani confirmed the story, saying, "Yes, I was punched by a soldier. I was very calm with him. I just kept talking to him. He kept punching me, and I kept talking to him. The situation was very dangerous. We handled it very wisely at that time.

"I kept thinking I still have major things to do for my country. I was thinking about the [Iraqi Islamic] party. I was thinking about my country. It could have been much worse."

As someone who lived for many years in Detroit, Al-Hassani is hardly someone who doesn't understand or communicate well with Americans.

It's even harder for the many Iraqis who show up at checkpoints with no English, no badges and no clear idea of what's going on.

"The problem is probably that the soldier wanted to go home. I think he wanted to create some situation where he would be sent home," Al-Hassani said. "I asked that he should get court-martialed but I never followed up. I forgot about it. I hope he's back in his country."

Al-Hassani is a lot more forgiving than many would be.

A month ago, as an interim government minister, he had a similar problem. He entered by checkpoint 2, one of three favorite Green Zone entrances for suicide bombers to attack, so traffic is channeled with one lane for VIPs, military, embassy traffic—to prevent congestion and tailback into the Baghdad streets where vehicles are especially vulnerable—and the other lane for everyone else.

As a minister, he's entitled to the VIP lane, but a young soldier told him to go back. When he tried to tell them who he was, says an aide, "They just laughed at

him. Go back in line Mr. F----- Minister." Al-Hassani, who served as a government negotiator in Fallujah, and who is now in charge of rebuilding that city, has escaped numerous assassination attempts, so his place in line isn't just a matter of insisting on perks.

"Every single minister has been treated in an unacceptable way by soldiers," Al-Janabi says. At every cabinet meeting, he says, there would be at least one minister who arrived late, and hopping mad at his treatment outside.

While Al-Janabi may have resigned from office, he has no intention of not running for the National Assembly and continuing to chair Allawi's campaign.

One of his key platform planks will be a timetable for U.S. withdrawal, something the Americans have so far refused to provide.

It's a strange demand, coming from an associate of Allawi, who has said timetables play into the insurgents' hands.

"We don't have to be terrorists to be against the Americans," Al-Janabi explains. "It's just representing how Iraqis feel."

Five Kids Got No Parents Now; Sorry About That



As the children get out of the car one of them screams, her hands covered in blood...

1.19.05 Aljazeera

The US military said soldiers on Tuesday opened fire on a car as it approached a checkpoint in northern Iraq, killing two civilians in the vehicle's front seats. Six children were in the backseat.



(Driver's shattered head obscured.)

US troops trying to stop the car used hand signals and fired warning shots before firing at the car, killing the driver and front seat passenger, a military statement said on Wednesday.

The shooting occurred in the city of Tal Afar, about 60km west of Mosul.

The two victims were the children's parents.



"Military officials extend their condolences for this unfortunate incident," the statement added.

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Inauguration: Lifestyles Of The Rich And Heartless

January 20, 2005 by Christy Harvey, Judd Legum and Jonathan Baskin, with Nico Pitney and Mipe Okunseinde

A look at this week's festivities by the numbers:

\$40 million: Cost of Bush inaugural ball festivities, not counting security costs.

200: Number of Humvees outfitted with top-of-the-line armor for troops in Iraq that could have been purchased with the amount of money blown on the inauguration.

2,500: Number of U.S. troops used to stand guard as President Bush takes his oath of office

26,000: Number of Kevlar vests for U.S. soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan that could be purchased for \$40 million.

\$290: Bonus that could go to each American soldier serving in Iraq, if inauguration funds were used for that purpose.

\$6.3 million: Amount contributed by the finance and investment industry, which works out to be 25 percent of all the money collected.

66: Percentage of Americans who think this over-the-top inauguration should have been scaled back.

"It's Just Not Right With Our Boys Dying"

"How dare he," said Dorine Kenney, of Bay Shore. Her son, Spc. Jacob S. Fletcher, was killed in Iraq Nov. 13, 2003, when a bomb detonated near a bus he was riding in.

"He's paying so much for his safety, but what about the troops?" Kenney said.
"What about the steel for the trucks, for the security?"

January 19, 2005 BY MARTIN C. EVANS, STAFF WRITER, Newsday

In November, Jeanette Urbina's soldier son telephoned from Iraq with a simple request. It was cold there, Army Spc. Wilfredo F. Urbina told her. Could she send him a sweater?

Three days later he was dead. An explosive device had sliced into the Humvee he was in while he was patrolling in Baghdad.

Wednesday, parents of several Iraq veterans said they are angry that more than \$17 million will be spent on security for Thursday's inaugural festivities for President George W. Bush, while troops he sent to war still lack sufficient armor to keep them alive.

"What is the life of a soldier worth?" asked Jeanette Urbina, of Baldwin, whose son was killed Nov. 29. "Is one or two thousand dollars too much to ask? They are fighting for democracy and freedom. They need more protection."

Washington, D.C., Mayor Anthony A. Williams has told the Department of Homeland Security that his city faces \$17.3 million in security costs related to the inauguration -- a figure that does not include military and other federal security measures.

"How dare he," said Dorine Kenney, of Bay Shore. Her son, Spc. Jacob S. Fletcher, was killed in Iraq Nov. 13, 2003, when a bomb detonated near a bus he was riding in.

"He's paying so much for his safety, but what about the troops?" Kenney said. "What about the steel for the trucks, for the security?"

Kenney said she decided to speak out when she and Jeanette Urbina encountered each other by chance while visiting their son's graves, which lie within steps of each other at Long Island National Cemetery in Pinelawn.

Last month, a soldier in Iraq complained of the lack of armor to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who replied, "As you know, you go to war with the Army you have, not the Army you might want or wish to have at a later time." After Rumsfeld's answer sparked a torrent of criticism, the military asked Florida-based Armor Holdings to speed production of more heavily armored Humvees from its rate of 450 per month per month to 550 per month, a target the company expects to reach in March.

"It's just not right with our boys dying," said Dorothy Oxendine, past national president of the Gold Star Mothers, an organization that represents women whose soldier children have been killed in U.S. wars.

Cathy Heigher, whose son, Cpl. Raheen Tyson Heigher was Long Island's first war casualty in Iraq, said, "I think soldiers and their families are really being taken for granted. I don't remember any president in history who has needed to have so many inaugural balls."

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.

Bush Predicts God Will Soon Send Him To Prison

"The rulers of outlaw regimes can know that we still believe as Abraham Lincoln did: 'Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves; and, under the rule of a just God, cannot long retain it.'" Bush inaugural address 1.20.05

Received:

Letter On Pictures Of Abuse And Current Court Martial Of British Soldiers

From: Artisan (uk)
To: GI Special
Sent: January 20, 2005

(I sent the letter below to The Independent today. The judge presiding the case has now called for a refrain on public comments and the near Basra attack might be the resistance trying to tell us what they think of the published pictures)

Lt-Colonel Nicholas Mercer (legal adviser to the British armed forces) claims that he had to issue specific orders to stop the abuse of Iraqi prisoners by British soldiers. The question we must now surely ask is: Why did the army not carry out an internal investigation back then and subsequently court martialled those responsible?

It would be extremely naive to think that low rank soldiers could have committed the abuse they are now accused of, without their superiors' knowledge if not active encouragement (ie otherwise known as orders).

If the Blair/Hoon/Straw gang really want the rest of the world to take them seriously then the role of those in command has to be fully and honestly addressed.

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