

GI SPECIAL 3A25:



Steve Bell 2004

Planes For Baghdad Turned Back: Heavy Fighting At Airport; Allawi's "Defense Minister" Can't Land

1/24/2005 By Jamal Halaby, Associated Press

Heavy fighting outside Baghdad International Airport prevented two Jordanian passenger planes from landing Monday, the airline spokesman said.

Royal Jordanian's planes made quick turns over Baghdad, where the airport's control tower denied the aircraft permission to land because of heavy fighting nearby, a spokesman said on condition of anonymity.

The two flights in the morning and at noon returned to Amman safely, he said. **The second flight carried Iraqi Defense Minister Hazem Shaalan, the minister told reporters in Amman afterward. Shaalan was trying to return to Iraq after visiting Jordan.**

Mortar shells slammed into an Iraqi National Guard camp near the airport. There was no report of casualties in the attack, one of several that occurred six days before Iraq's crucial national elections, the first since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003.

The passengers scheduled to take the second plane back to Jordan included eight Chinese construction workers freed by their Iraqi kidnappers this weekend.

Royal Jordanian's spokesman said the airline planned to send two flights to Baghdad as scheduled Tuesday unless the security situation in Iraq deteriorates further. [Welcome to Phnom Penh.]

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

US Soldier Falls Dead In Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24 (AFP)

A US soldier stationed in Kuwait as part of the ongoing operation in Iraq died after he collapsed while running outdoors, the US military said Monday.

Three Soldiers Wounded In Mortar Attack Near Samarra

01/24/05 CJTF7 Release #050124b, Tikrit, Iraq

Three 1st Infantry Division Soldiers were wounded when anti-Iraqi forces fired mortars into their patrol base near Samarra about 1:15 p.m. on Jan. 23.

The Soldiers were evacuated to Multi-National Forces medical facilities. Two are in stable condition. **The third is in serious condition and is being evacuated to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany.**

Terre Haute Soldier Killed

January 24, 2005 Tribune-Star

TERRE HAUTE, Ind. A 29-year-old soldier from Terre Haute, Indiana, has been killed while serving in Iraq -- according to his family.

The family of Army Sergeant Kyle William Childress says the soldier died Friday while serving with the First Cavalry Division from Fort Hood, Texas.

Childress was the 38th person from Indiana to have died after being sent to the Mideast since the buildup for the invasion of Iraq began in early 2003.

Two Galva Guardsmen Wounded As Unit Begins Preparations For Long Trip Home

01/24/05 By TAMMY WILKINSON and DAVE CLARK Of The Star Courier

CAMP COOK, Taji, Iraq -- **As the families and friends of the Galva National Guard unit serving in Iraq count the weeks and days until they'll be heading home, word was received this week of two members who were wounded in attacks earlier this week.**

SPC Joshua Simpson, of Toulon, and SSG Derrick Glisan each sustained injuries in separate attacks while on patrol.

Family spokespersons of SPC Joshua Simpson, 22, of Toulon, confirmed that he received a concussion after his helmet was struck by a piece of shrapnel after a bomb exploded near his location.

Simpson received the injury while on patrol as a gunner with 1st Platoon of the Galva National Guard unit. At the time of the attack, Simpson was reportedly seated in the gunners chair of an armored humvee which struck an undetected roadside bomb and caused it to detonate.

The Toulon soldier was checked over by medical personnel before being returned to active duty a few hours later.

In addition to the concussion, Simpson reportedly suffered other minor cuts and bruises. He is a 2000 graduate of Stark County High School.

SSG Glisan was on routine patrol with 2nd Platoon on Tuesday when the Galva soldiers were ambushed by machinegun fire, according to word from the unit commander, Maj. Mike Kessel received by Glisan's parents, Wayne and Cheryl, of Galva.

A bullet went through calf of Glisan's left leg in what was described as a "clean" wound and damaged no bones. A medic from another unit was injured in the forearm in the attack, according to Kessel. The commander said, in an e-mail to his parents, that Glisan, 27, was treated at the Army hospital in Baghdad and is now recuperating in his room at the unit barracks and that "his spirits are very good."

According to the e-mail, no other members of Battery F were injured, although two vehicles were heavily damaged but Kessel estimated that their maintenance team would have them up and running in a few days.

Families here have received word that the Galva unit will tentatively be leaving Iraq around March 1 and should be returning home by the end of the month.

The public has been advised to not send any mail to members of the unit at their current address after Tuesday (Jan. 25). The last day to mail packages was last Saturday.

Shane Salter Suffers Partial Loss Of Hand During Friday Raid

January 24, 2005 By Annie Charnley Eveland of the Union-Bulletin

A native Walla Wallan was injured Friday morning in a raid near Ad Duluiyah, Iraq, according to his mother, Kathie Salter of College Place.

U.S. Army Spec. 4 Shane Salter suffered the partial loss of his left hand, including two fingers, along with several lesser injuries, she said.

Airlifted to a military hospital in Germany, he has undergone two operations and faces at least one more.

Shane could be released sometime within the next few weeks and will head to his parent's College Place home to complete part of his recovery, according to his mother.

Kathie, husband Morris Salter and daughter Mari-June Salter of Walla Walla are ``just happy he's alive. Please pray for the other boys and girls that are over there,' she said.

Shane Salter graduated in 2001 from Walla Walla High School. **He had completed all but 32 days of a one-year combat deployment with the 1st Infantry Division stationed at Camp MacKenzie, Iraq, outside the city of Samarra.**

He was a member of the Wa-Hi JROTC program and enlisted in the National Guard during his junior year. He changed his enlistment to regular Army after high school graduation.

He was a sniper with the 4th Cavalry 1st Division, Kathie Salter said. **When he was wounded he told his mother he had been securing buildings and taking prisoners.**

``Hearing his voice was a relief, but knowing that he was wounded wasn't very helpful.' However, ``He's a lot luckier than a lot of others. '

Combating Insurgents Ramadi Style; *“A Population That’s Usually Either Neutral Or Supports His Cause”*

“One day we’re out there on a PR mission handing out soccer balls. The next day we get a new piece of intel and we’re at the same place breaking their doors down,” Lance Cpl. Daniel Robinson said. “They try to explain to us that they’re friendly. But we just can’t take the chance.”

January 24, 2005 By Gordon Trowbridge, Army Times staff writer

Marines say they’re learning to spot where insurgents might hide improvised explosive devices that blow up when a foot patrol or a convoy passes.

But the insurgents are adapting, too.

As the Marines set up observation posts along the main east-west highway that passes through Ramadi, the insurgents figure out the view from the posts and then place explosives in blind spots.

The result is a never-ending suspicion of the most seemingly benign objects.

“We have to treat every garbage bag, every pile of rocks or dirt mound, as a threat, because it is,” said 1st Lt. Zachary Buitenhuys.

Staying alive in Ramadi also requires a little luck.

A lot in the case of Oxenrider.

Oxenrider’s Kevlar helmet sports a dent near his right cheek, where an insurgent’s AK-47 round had lodged.

In late December, an enemy mortar round landed about 20 feet from him, but failed to explode.

The Marines occasionally long for the kind of traditional shootout they saw in Fallujah.

“This insurgency fight is against an element you can’t see, an enemy that knows the ground, he’s worked out his exact routes,” Capt. Ed Rapisarda said. “He has

logistics support you can't see, and a population that's usually either neutral or supports his cause.

"It's frustrating at times that you can't stand toe to toe with him. Because you know, every time, that you'll win."

So do the insurgents.

Three rifle companies from the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment recently launched a series of patrols in Ramadi aimed at further suppressing the Sunni insurgency. During the weeklong mission, the Marines experienced what has made the war in Iraq so difficult, dangerous and frustrating for the troops who fight it. Here are some moments from one week in the fight against insurgents:

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The 20-year-old Navy corpsman spoke for all three young men in the Humvee's open back.

"Man, I hate driving through the souk (market)," said Thomas McPherson as he and two Marines scanned the moonlit rooflines above the narrow streets of the market district — a neighborhood infamous for its roadside bombs and sniper attacks.

A jarring left and the Marines were on the target street, and their convoy unexpectedly was bathed in the fluorescent glow of streetlights and the outdoor lamps of homes. The advantage of night-vision equipment was gone, replaced by the worrisome question of why, in the middle of a blacked-out city, this street — that of the car-bomb maker they were hoping to surprise — was so well lit.

After a quick word on the radio, McPherson, Marine Lance Cpl. Kaine Marzola and Pfc. Michael Florez were sprinting down the sidewalk, desperately hoping the target house was not wired to explode.

Among the first dozen troops in the house, they ran up the stairs, helping other Marines rouse three Iraqi men from their beds, move them downstairs, ask some rapid, heated questions, blindfold them and then move them to the waiting vehicles for the trip back to Camp Hurricane Point a few miles away.

But it was hard to know if the mission succeeded.

"We know he was here," Capt. Ed Rapisarda said of the car-bomb maker as Marines questioned the men kneeling in their living room. "This guy," he said pointing to the middle of the three, "fits the description. It's just a matter of whether we got the right guy."

Still, in one sense, it was a good night: Nothing blew up, no one was shot, everybody was back to camp and in bed by 4 a.m.

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The Marines know Ramadi's residents are often frustrated by their sweeps through the city, but the Marines are frustrated, too.

"One day we're out there on a PR mission handing out soccer balls. The next day we get a new piece of intel and we're at the same place breaking their doors down," Lance Cpl. Daniel Robinson said. "They try to explain to us that they're friendly. But we just can't take the chance."

Green Zone Under Attack

24 January 2005 Baghdad

"Green Zone" in Baghdad, where a number of Government and Diplomatic buildings are located, is under attack with mortars, ITAR-TASS announced.

TROOP NEWS

Mothers Mourn As The Elite Party On

[Thanks to Cindy Sheehan, who sent this in.]

Casey, 24, who wanted to be an elementary school teacher, was cut down in an ambush April 4 last year while trying to rescue fallen comrades. He had arrived in Baghdad only two weeks earlier. Sheehan said her son's unit was using Vietnam-era flak jackets because of a shortage of newer armor.

January 21, 2005 Steve Lopez, Los Angeles Times

The first mom I spoke to by phone Thursday morning was Celeste Zappala, whose sons used to hang around with my boys now and then in Philadelphia. Zappala was in Washington for President Bush's inaugural, demonstrating against the war that took her eldest boy.

"I'm at Foundry United Methodist Church, where I just spoke about the cost of war," said Zappala, who carried a poster-size photo of her son, Sherwood Baker.

Baker, a 30-year-old National Guardsman, was killed April 26 last year while searching for weapons of mass destruction.

Baker, a husband and father, had gone to Iraq with a walkie-talkie and navigational device his family bought for him because they were not provided by the military.

And now his mother was in Washington on the day of a grand inaugural celebration that would cost more than \$40 million, most of it paid for by American corporations.

When I asked Zappala what she meant by the cost of war, she answered: "I mean that there are 1,370 American soldiers dead, 10,000 soldiers injured and at least 100,000 Iraqi people dead. A country has been destroyed, and we make new enemies every day, but we never see the coffins coming back because there has been a deliberate effort to sanitize the war," Zappala said.

"We're here as witnesses to what the real costs are. You know our family's been demolished by this, and my grandson grows up without a father. That's what the war means.... Is this the time to spend \$40 million for flowing champagne and caviar? While they're partying in fur coats at balls, blood will be shed in Iraq."

Zappala and a few dozen others who have lost loved ones in Iraq, including Cindy Sheehan of Vacaville in the San Francisco Bay Area, had tried to visit the Pentagon on Wednesday but were turned away by armed guards. When I spoke to Sheehan early Thursday, she was at the intersection of Constitution and Pennsylvania, waiting for President Bush's inaugural parade to come by.

"My son was regular Army, enlisted," said Sheehan, a full-time mom married to a hardware salesman. "We didn't want him to enlist, but he was 21 and it was something he wanted to do — to serve his country. He was always into service as an Eagle Scout, an altar boy."

And yet Casey, her son, was against this war.

"He didn't think it was a just war.... He didn't see Iraq as an imminent threat to the United States ... but he felt he had a duty and a loyalty to his buddies. He told me he had to support his buddies by doing this job, and he told me, 'Mom, the sooner I go, the sooner I'll be home.' "

Casey, 24, who wanted to be an elementary school teacher, was cut down in an ambush April 4 last year while trying to rescue fallen comrades. He had arrived in Baghdad only two weeks earlier. Sheehan said her son's unit was using Vietnam-era flak jackets because of a shortage of newer armor.

"I had seen a TV news report about eight soldiers being killed that day in Sadr City and I saw a Humvee burning, and thought my son was one of the dead soldiers," Sheehan says. "I just had a terrible feeling."

That evening, she returned from walking the dogs and found three military officers standing in her living room.

"I just collapsed on the floor screaming, and I think it's the closest I could have come to death without dying. You just want to get away from yourself. The pain is so intense; not just physical but emotional and psychic pain, and you want to escape it."

Over layers of clothing on a freezing day, Sheehan wore a T-shirt bearing her son's image.

"I came to protest the inauguration, because I think the opulence of it is inappropriate for a country at war. I can't believe these people are excited about party dresses ... when there are probably people dying in Iraq while they're partying."

Sheehan said she doesn't know how to fix Iraq now, given the chaos and simmering ethnic division. She thinks that the U.S. should provide money and supplies for rebuilding, but that a continued American military presence will rally insurgents and continue diverting resources from a true war on terror.

In his inaugural speech, President Bush gave no indication of any immediate change of course. In fact, he issued what sounded like a recruiting call.

"Some have shown their devotion to our country in deaths that honored their whole lives ... and we will always honor their sacrifice," Bush said. "I ask our youngest citizens to believe the evidence of your eyes.... Make the choice to serve in a cause larger than your wants."

There was no indication whether the 23-year-old Bush twins, who were in attendance, had decided to enlist.

After his speech, the president dined on lobster, scalloped crab and roasted quail. At midday, this item appeared on the newswire:

"Lana Marks, renowned designer to A-list Hollywood, society and royalty, has been selected by First Lady Laura Bush to design several custom couture LANA MARKS handbags for the second inauguration of her husband.... "

The last I heard from Celeste Zappala, she was on the run with the photo of her dead son, taking cover as police used pepper spray to repel surging demonstrators.

A Heavy Toll On Military Families

January 24, 2005 By John Yaukey, Gannett News Service

Mary Cozort has lost 16 pounds since her son, Edward, deployed to Iraq more than four months ago.

"Every time I e-mailed him I'd write that he has the armor of God around him and he's going to be safe and he's coming home," the Glen Fork, W.Va., resident said. "I have to keep his morale up because he's already been hit by (shrapnel from an improvised bomb)."

It's especially taxing for the military families, eager for an answer to the question that has come to shape the discussion of Iraq now: When and how will the 150,000 American troops there get out?

“I Don't Believe They Want Us There”

January 24, 2005 By Leslie Hoffman, Associated Press, ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.

Time magazine's special report on Iraq's upcoming elections brings the war closer to home for Carol and Samuel Lujan. The cover captures a stoic image of a young New Mexico soldier — the first glimpse of their son since his deployment to the Middle East last January.

The photo, featured on a special Jan. 31 issue, shows a helmet-clad Pfc. Christopher Lujan and his fellow troops on foot patrol in the streets of Mosul.

“It just brings me to tears every time the topic (of the war) comes up for more than five minutes,” Carol Lujan said.

“I don't believe they want us there... I am fearful. I can barely stand to watch the television.”

The Empire Hits The Wall: Few Guard, Reserve Troops Left To Send To Iraq

January 24, 2005 By ROBERT BURNS, AP Military Writer

WASHINGTON -- The strain of fighting a longer, bloodier war in Iraq than U.S. commanders originally foresaw brings forth a question that most would have dismissed only a year ago: Is the military in danger of running out of reserve troops?

At first glance the answer would appear to be a clear no. There are nearly 1.2 million men and women on the reserve rolls, and only about 70,000 are now in Iraq to supplement the regulars.

But a deeper look inside the Army National Guard, Army Reserve and Marine Corps Reserve suggests a grimmer picture: At the current pace and size of American troop deployments to Iraq, the availability of suitable reserve combat troops could become a problem as early as next year.

The National Guard says it has about 86,000 citizen soldiers available for future deployments to Iraq, fewer than it has sent there over the past two years. And it has used up virtually all of its most readily deployable combat brigades.

Similarly, the Army Reserve has about 37,500 deployable soldiers left -- about 18 percent of its total troop strength.

The Marine Corps Reserve appears to be in a comparable position, because most of its 40,000 troops have been mobilized at least once already. Officials said they have no figures available on how many are available for future deployments to Iraq. ["Officials" lie. They know exactly; therefore one must conclude the answer is: none.]

Both the Army and the Marines are soliciting reservists to volunteer for duty in Iraq.

"The reserves are pretty well shot" after the Pentagon makes the next troop rotation, starting this summer, said Robert Goldich, a defense analyst at the Congressional Research Service.

Among the evidence:

* Of the National Guard's 15 best-trained, best-equipped and most ready-to-deploy combat brigades, all but one are either in Iraq now, have demobilized after returning from a one-year tour there or have been alerted for duty in 2005-2006.

* **The Army Reserve, with about 205,000 citizen soldiers on its rolls for support rather than combat duty, has been so heavily used since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks that, for practical purposes, it has only about 37,500 troops available to perform the kinds of missions required in Iraq, according to an internal briefing chart entitled, "What's Left in the Army Reserve?"**

The mix of troops in the U.S. force rotation now under way in Iraq is about 50 percent active duty and 50 percent reserves.

But that is set to change to 70 percent active and 30 percent reserve for the rotation after that, beginning this summer, because combat-ready Guard units have been tapped out.

Thus, two active-duty Army divisions that have already served one-year tours in Iraq -- the 101st Airborne and the 4th Infantry -- have been selected to return in the coming rotation. The 1st Marine Expeditionary Force already is on its second tour in Iraq.

A portion of the best-trained reservists are approaching the 24-month limit.

The Guard and Reserve are hurting in other ways, too. Their casualties in Iraq have been mounting (16 deaths in October, 28 in November, 20 in December and at least 15 in the first 13 days of January), and the National Guard and Army Reserve have been missing their recruiting goals.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT THE NEW TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. 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)

Vet Amputees & Their Families Face “Financial Devastation” And The Government Doesn’t Really Give A Shit

01/24/05 N. Y. Daily News

After losing a limb, mobility or eyesight to bullets or bombs in Iraq, some of the most gravely wounded U.S. soldiers face financial devastation.

After Ryan Kelly's lower right leg was blown off in an ambush near Baghdad 18 months ago, he joined the steady stream of maimed soldiers going through Walter Reed Army Medical Center's eminent Ward 57 in Washington.

Kelly said he and his wounded comrades received excellent medical care, state-of-the-art prosthetic devices and extensive rehabilitation. He ran a 5-mile race in Central Park last summer on his artificial leg.

Some 200 soldiers have lost at least one limb in the Iraq war, veterans' advocates said.

Many of them left the hospital in dire financial straits.

In many cases, family members had to quit jobs to be with the disabled soldier, and overextended their credit cards to pay for airfare to Walter Reed and other expenses. Houses were lost, cars repossessed.

"I saw many buddies trying to deal with amputation, and they're on the border of social subsidies," said Kelly, 24, a bantam, boyish-looking man with the drawl of his native Texas, who lives in Arizona.

Newly disabled veterans "really need to get the money within the first week to two weeks," Kelly said. "It would go a long way to relieve the stress."

Now a soldier with a grave injury stays on the military payroll but gets less money because he no longer receives combat pay. Those forced to retire because of injury do not get their veterans benefits for a month to six weeks. [And sometimes a whole lot longer than that, but hey, they can't fight for the Empire any more, so tough shit.]

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Baghdad Bombing Injures Seven Iraq Policemen

Jan 24 (Bloomberg) & By Terence Neilan, New York Times & Aljazeera

A car bomb exploded today in Baghdad, wounding seven Iraqi police officers and killing the bomber, the U.S. military said. Two people were killed and 10 wounded, Agence France-Presse reported.

The attack near the offices of interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's Iraqi National Accord party, AFP reported, citing a statement on the Internet.

The blast occurred at about 9 a.m. local time in a traffic circle north of the so-called Green Zone that houses the interim government and the U.S. Embassy, Major Philip Smith, a U.S. Army spokesman, said by telephone from Baghdad.

Iraqi journalist Ziyad al-Samarrai told Aljazeera that the car bomber attempted to enter the headquarters of the Iraqi National Accord (al-Wifaq) party headed by Allawi, but he was stopped at an Iraqi police checkpoint.

The bomber detonated his vehicle at the checkpoint as he could not pass through them, he added.

He added that Iraqi security forces opened heavy gunfire after the explosion took place.

More injured people, including civilians and policemen, are still arriving at al-Yarmuk hospital, a medical source at the hospital told al-Samarrai.

Another explosion on Monday rocked an electoral centre at a school in the new Baghdad area in southern Baghdad city, destroying the outer fence of the centre and the front of the building, al-Samarrai said.

“Never Civil War”

1.24.05 By Kelebdooni, anti-allawi group

Iraq whether as modern "state" since the 1920s or as recognized singular "entity" since 600 A.D. never knew civil war. It knew many invasions and subsequent liberations, but never civil war. Will anyone challenge?

Baathists will not fight Shiia for the simple reason that they are mainly Shiia themselves.

Surprising? Baathist ranks reflected the population distribution almost precisely. Never mind that. **There is far more common interests, national identity, and deep-rooted social integration in Iraq than can be smudged by bogus propaganda.**

Sistani is hardly inconsequential but definitely overblown.

Cole [**a U.S. academic opposed to ending the occupation now**] joins in trumpeting the influence of Sistani as any faithful empire advocate would. Bremer did too.

To imagine Iraq as religious factions and tribes is an image being projected for the empire agenda.

To imagine that influential figures are solely clerics and tribal chiefs is to believe the reality of a movie set.

Iraq is a modern well-developed third-world country. This is how it should be viewed, and only then you may be able to draw reasonable inferences. I will stick my neck out to suggest that we wait till about a couple of months after the election to see exactly how much of the Shiia are Sistani's sheep.

"Ethnically based politics is so entrenched in Iraq at the moment"? Who "entrenched" it? The puppet collaborator parties.

Do they have a popular base? Will they stay on after the US army is gone?

I do not need to divine. I only wish the Coles of this world mind their own business, and if they feel they must help the Iraqis (and his own), the only honest way is to refrain from patronizing people and just let them be.

Election Campaign Being Pushed In Nationalist Direction

24 January 2005 By Nicolas Rothwell, The Australian News

Tension, as much as anticipation, marks the run-up to Iraq's first democratic elections on Sunday, with political contenders making their last-minute pitches and insurgents pressing their violent campaign of intimidation.

On the campaign trail, a defiant appeal to nationalist sentiment was the key theme, and the prospect of a moderate Shia-dominated government determined to stress Iraqi control of national affairs solidified.

The most likely prime minister after Sunday's vote, Shia Muslim cleric Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, gave a strong signal that his electoral grouping, the United Iraqi Alliance - known simply as the "Shia House" - would push for U.S. forces to leave the country.

Mr. al-Hakim, in comments to London's The Sunday Times, spelled out his broad position and stressed that the government he hoped to form would ask for U.S. troops to withdraw as soon as possible.

"No people in the world accept occupation and nor do we accept the continuation of American troops in Iraq," he said.

"We regard these forces to have committed many mistakes in the handling of various issues, the first and foremost being that of security, which in turn has contributed to the massacres, crimes and calamities that have taken place in Iraq against the Iraqis."

The inevitable drift of the political campaign has been in this direction.

The Iraqi mainstream is increasingly being courted by a rhetoric of national unity and rebirth, which has the inevitable effect of painting the U.S. occupiers as extraneous forces.

After almost a year of intense political activity, under the cloak of constant insurgency and violence, a new political flavour is beginning to emerge in post-Saddam Iraq.

The nationalist message now predominating in a bid to knit together the country's fractured communities bears a distinct resemblance to the language deployed by the old dictator's Ba'ath Party.

Sadr Dances Down The Middle; Playing The Waiting Game

[Thanks to PB who sent this. He writes: Al-Sadr's stand is extremely contradictory. On the one hand, millions of Iraqis will view the elections as a sham with no legitimacy and will continue to resist the U.S. and the gov't that comes out of Jan 30th insofar as it attempts to collaborate with the task of smashing the resistance. On the other hand, he doesn't want to be completely left out of the political process and sidelined by al-Sistani either, especially since

millions of Shias (who form the backbone of his following) will vote in the election.]

On the outside looking in, unsullied by a role in that government, Sadr's men say they will capitalize on the disenchantment, turning their numbers "from hundreds of thousands into millions," as one official put it. They are fashioning themselves as a street-level protest movement, as nationalist as it is religious, with the threat of force to back its demands.

January 24, 2005 By Anthony Shadid, Washington Post

BAGHDAD -- Around the corner from a five-mile line stretching toward a gas station, past election posters calling voting a religious duty, hundreds of bleary-eyed protesters threw down what goes for prayer carpets among followers of the Shiite Muslim cleric Moqtada Sadr. They put down black-checked kaffiyehs, the sweaters they wore, sacks of flour distributed as government rations and, most commonly, scraps of cardboard.

It was noon, the time for Muslims to pray. It was time, too, for them to make their demands heard at the Iraqi Oil Ministry as part of a four-day protest last week over Iraq's months-long fuel crisis.

"They must hear that the Iraqi people will always demand their rights, even if we give our lives!" the preacher declared. Behind him, slogans put up on a concrete blast wall echoed the protesters' pleas. "We don't want elections," one read. "We want electricity."

The protest in Baghdad and others in towns across southern Iraq, including Kut, Amarah and Karbala, marked the latest campaign by Sadr's group, a grass-roots movement led by Shiite clergy that claims to speak on behalf of the Shiite downtrodden.

Sadr's militia fought U.S. forces twice last year, in Baghdad and southern Iraq, and the movement has emerged as a persistent wild card.

Sadr's men have stopped short of calling for a boycott but insist they are not supporting the election. In coded language, they have ridiculed Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, the country's most influential religious leader, whose perceived backing of the top Shiite coalition has made it the favorite in the vote. Loath to provoke the U.S. military, which killed hundreds of its followers in last year's fighting, the Sadr movement has relegated its militia to a lower profile while keeping up its strident rhetoric.

The movement is gambling that the deep disenchantment in the capital over epidemic kidnappings, shortfalls in food rations, the threat of insurgent attacks and, most visibly, the fuel crisis will persist under a new government. [That isn't gambling, except to a reporter deluded by occupation lies. That's a 100% sure thing.]

On the outside looking in, unsullied by a role in that government, Sadr's men say they will capitalize on the disenchantment, turning their numbers "from hundreds of thousands into millions," as one official put it. They are fashioning themselves

as a street-level protest movement, as nationalist as it is religious, with the threat of force to back its demands.

"The government has given nothing to the Iraqi people, and all the political parties say yes to the Americans. The elections are useless. They will do nothing for us," said Nizar Khanjar, 27, a participant in last week's protest, where hardly any of the men had gray hair and some were too young to shave. "Only the Sadr office is defending the rights of the people."

"He's purposely laying low," a Western diplomat in Baghdad said. "Today, he seems to be choosing neither" political participation nor armed revolt, the diplomat said.

For their part, officials with Sadr's movement say they see little room for engagement with the Americans, perceiving provocation in almost every action by the U.S. military.

One official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, complained that 345 Sadr followers had been arrested since a truce brokered by Sistani ended fighting in the Shiite holy city of Najaf in August, although he acknowledged the Americans' "excellent intelligence."

They have been rebuffed in attempts to win the release of senior leaders who guided the movement after Sadr's revered father was assassinated by agents of former president Saddam Hussein's government in 1999.

"It's like we're talking to corpses and the deaf," the official said.

Like other officials in the movement, he rejected a role in the elections, quoting a statement by Sadr this month: "I personally will stay away (from the elections) until the occupiers stay away from them, and until our beloved Sunnis participate in them," the statement read. "Otherwise they will lack legitimacy and democracy."

More is at stake for Sadr than the fate of an American nemesis in Iraq. The course he chooses holds broad implications for the country itself. His movement offers a vision that contrasts -- often very strikingly -- with that of Sistani, who has deemed elections the way to ensure power for Iraq's Shiite majority. **By backing elections, Sistani has tacitly aligned himself with the U.S. vision for Iraq.**

Sadr's movement, almost obsessive in its opposition to occupation, rejects the premise of that vision. Infusing the worldly with the sacred, his followers celebrate what might best be termed embattled righteousness.

In its most peaceful incarnation, the movement represents a critic that will push the demands of what it sees as its constituency -- the mustadafin and mahrumin, the oppressed and deprived, resonant terms in Shiite politics. In its more militant form, it presents itself as a force outside the system, challenging, perhaps violently, the status quo.

Along a four-lane street with a packed-dirt median, vendors sold bananas and pastries to worshipers, and a municipal truck with pictures of Sadr's father on the windshield

pumped water for ritual washing. Boys hawked the movement's newspaper, Sadr, whose editorial asked: "Why is it the fate of Iraqis to bear either a dictator or destruction and death?" The men of the neighborhood gathered in a festive mood for a weekly sermon that, since Hussein's fall in 2003, has been one part street theater, one part political rally.

"We will all sacrifice our souls for Sadr and his son Moqtada!" the crowd chanted.

Saadi, the prayer leader, yelled back: "I can't hear you!" [Trained at Paris Island?]

The chants grew louder and more sustained, with men jabbing their fists in the air.

"God's blessings on you," Saadi answered approvingly.

In the hour-long sermon, Saadi reiterated the movement's stance on the election: no boycott, but no participation. More than a dozen independent candidates loyal to Sadr are thought to be running for assembly seats, and Saadi said followers could vote if they liked -- in vain, in his words.

"The elections are like air passing through a net," he said. "You can wait for the results, but I'm not waiting with you."

"Do you accept the occupation?" he shouted. "Go and demand your rights!"

An earlier protest outside the Oil Ministry had fizzled, and on this day Saadi wanted a bigger turnout. Corrupt officials and insurgents were looting oil supplies, he declared, and the price of kerosene for cooking had skyrocketed. Cars had to wait hours in line for gasoline, he said, while the Americans were filling the tanks of their Bradley Fighting Vehicles and "fouling the air." Shifting from formal Arabic to slang, he chided the men for their lack of enthusiasm: They should do better this week.

"It seems that the birds have eaten your tongues," Saadi said, playing on an Iraqi proverb. "This is not what I expected from you. This is not what I know about your courage."

Hundreds turned out the following week, sleeping in tents outside the ministry, lining up behind pickup trucks serving lentils, rice, bread and dates and hanging banners on anything upright.

"No rights are lost if they are demanded," said one slogan. "Long live the Sadrist resistance," read another.

Some of the protesters wore green placards on their chests, bearing Sadr's slogans in large letters: "Christians are your brothers in this country," and "Beloved Iraqi people, remain as brothers, as God's messenger commanded."

"There is no country in the world that suffers crisis after crisis like this," said Haider Farhan, 23, one of the protesters. "We're a country blessed with oil, and we have nothing."

Near the group's office in Sadr City stood 38-year-old Hassan Katib, one of the worshipers.

"The elections are very important for Sistani, but what about the other things?" he asked. "What about food, kerosene, food? People are starving now." He looked out at the street and quoted a line from Mutanabi, a medieval Arab poet: "The sword is more reliable than the book."

"The armed struggle should continue," Katib said, by way of explanation. "It's necessary."

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Resistance Tactics

20 January by Scott Ritter, aljazeera

While it is difficult at times to understand and comprehend, let alone justify, the tactics used by the Iraqi resistance, history has shown that the tools of remote ambush, instead of a direct assassination, have always been used by freedom fighters when confronting an illegitimate foreign occupier who possesses overwhelming conventional military superiority.

As such, history celebrates the resistance of the French and the Russians when occupied by the Germans during the second world war, the Chinese resistance to Japanese occupation during that same time, or even the decades-long national liberation movement in Vietnam which defeated not only the French and the Americans, but also the illegitimate government these two occupiers attempted to impose on the people of South Vietnam.

History will eventually depict as legitimate the efforts of the Iraqi resistance to destabilise and defeat the American occupation forces and their imposed Iraqi collaborationist government.

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.

MAKING DEAD FRIENDS ?

24-01-2005 by Henk Ruysenaars, FPF

In Vietnam it was the same discussion: how to make friends, and win the minds and hearts of the people which the US wanted to conquer.

As in all history, it was shown that it was impossible to make friends by invading, intimidating, shooting, bombing, jailing, torturing, killing, maiming, napalming or other deadly actions.

It showed every time that the only people the US could call their friends were the dead, because they couldn't protest anymore.

Flying aboard a US bomber plane up north in Vietnam in 1971, and looking at the huge amount of money represented by all the bombs in the holds, the crew and we journalists aboard agreed: if this had been the equivalent in crispy dollar notes to be dropped, the US would have had the best friends in the world among many local populations. Be it in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia or other by the US invaded and bombed countries like Iraq or Afghanistan.

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

**It's Officially An "Insurgency"
"Americans Will Be Facing A
Debacle That Easily Rivals
Vietnam."**

History has shown insurgencies cannot be defeated by force alone because they inherently carry a level of popular support that must be won over.

The support Iraq's insurgents get, if only from Iraqis who merely don't report them, is immeasurable.

January 24, 2005 By John Yaukey, Gannett News Service

Marine Cpl. Daniel Villalobos spent seven weeks in Afghanistan during the height of that conflict in 2001 before ending up in Iraq's infamous Sunni triangle, the heart of the nation's raging insurgency.

"My combat action ribbon from Afghanistan came from one firefight in 48 days," said the 24-year-old from Santa Maria, Calif. "Over here, things are blowing up every day. It's a completely different story."

It's what many Pentagon officials only recently have conceded is a full-blown "insurgency."

This admission was meaningful, especially to Americans trying to understand Iraq and the importance of the upcoming elections there Jan. 30, because military commanders do not use the term "insurgency" indiscriminately or interchangeably.

Insurgencies are more than rebellions by "dead-enders" or final gasps by defeated foes. They are a special type of conflict with deeply rooted military and political characteristics that make them excruciatingly difficult to defeat.

Modern insurgents attack military, economic, social, political and religious targets to convince the enemy's decision-makers their cause is ultimately too costly in blood, money and political capital to pursue.

Insurgency is the only form of warfare that has ever defeated a superpower, most notably the United States in Vietnam and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

American and Iraqi forces already are struggling with the military side of the conflict. If the elections go badly and the political side collapses into chaos, Americans will be facing a debacle that easily rivals Vietnam.

Despite its experience with insurgencies, the U.S. military has tended to minimize their importance in its collective institutional memory.

Now a new generation of warriors must learn the lessons of insurgency warfare — on the fly in Iraq.

Perhaps the most daunting characteristic about insurgencies is their staying power.

It typically takes a decade or longer to defeat one.

Americans fought for 11 years in Vietnam before leaving. The French gave up an eight-year campaign in Algeria in 1962. The Soviets ended their futile decade in Afghanistan in 1989.

A century ago, American troops in the Philippines succeeded in putting down an insurgency there, but the war and the subsequent "pacification" campaign took 15 years.

While weapons have changed since then, tactics haven't. **Insurgency warfare remains a test of will, not weapons.**

But the costs of the 22-monthlong Iraq campaign already are starting to wear on Americans.

The price tag is approaching \$200 billion, while the number of Americans killed recently passed 1,350, and shows no signs of slowing. Escalating violence recently prompted the

Pentagon to raise the number of troops to 150,000 — the highest number since the fall of Baghdad in April 2003.

Support for the war among Americans appears tenuous at best. A recent USA Today-CNN-Gallup Poll showed that almost 60 percent of Americans are unhappy with the way the campaign is being handled.

"It's some of the most difficult, dangerous and physically intense kind of warfare," said Marine Capt. Lee Johnson of Clintonville, Wis. Johnson commanded Alpha Co., 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines, through the bloody streets of Fallujah.

Experts say they try to develop a cycle of futility that ultimately convinces the locals that the visiting troops cause more trouble than they prevent, and should leave.

Some experts believe that's already happened in Iraq.

"We're way past the antagonism phase of this thing," said Pat Lang, a Vietnam Green Beret who trained foreign troops in counterinsurgency.

History has shown insurgencies cannot be defeated by force alone because they inherently carry a level of popular support that must be won over.

The support Iraq's insurgents get, if only from Iraqis who merely don't report them, is immeasurable.

In Vietnam, the U.S.-backed South Vietnamese governments could never gain any real legitimacy among the masses. Consequently, that war was lost politically long before the U.S. troops were ordered to leave.

The French suffered the same fate in Algeria despite the infusion of almost 400,000 troops.

OCCUPATION REPORT

The Election Farce Rolls On: The Bus Driver Has It Right; "They're All Put Up By Thieves Who Know How To Steal Very Well"

January 19, 2005 By Anthony Shadid, Washington Post Foreign Service

The United Iraqi Alliance, the group fielding the most prominent Shiite list, has blanketed parts of Baghdad with messages that lean toward the moralistic. "For the sake of assuring social virtue," says one leaflet. "To guarantee the identity of Islamic Iraq," says another, graced with a portrait of Sistani, whose authority among the most religious Shiites is unquestioned.

This avowedly Shiite list draws on the history of the long-repressed community, which suffered centuries of dispossession at the hands of Sunni rulers, ousted President Saddam Hussein the last in a long line. "Our way is to revive what the criminal Baath regime destroyed," one poster declares over a map of Iraq pictured as cracked mud with red flowers atop. Nearly all the posters cite a Koranic verse. Among the most popular: "God will never change the condition of people until they change it themselves."

"Vote for security, distribution of social services and the struggle against unemployment," intones the poster of another coalition, the People's Union, backed by Iraq's venerable Communist Party. The party's posters, often bearing the most eclectic messages in Baghdad, promise "a safe childhood," "national brotherhood" or "the rights of motherhood and childhood."

As they talked, Qais Ubaidi, a minibus driver, walked through the restaurant, his impatient gait matching his attitude.

"They're all lies," he insisted, when asked what he thought of the posters. "It's a deceitful process."

Ubaidi, the bus driver, scoffed at them without exception.

"They're all put up by thieves who know how to steal very well," he said.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Land Mine In Afghanistan Kills Four; Resistance Takes Credit

(Philadelphia Inquirer, January 24, 2005)

A land mine killed an Afghan district police chief and three others in the southern province of Oruzgan, and the Taliban claimed credit, the provincial governor said.

Received:

The Future

From: AH
To: GI Special
Sent: January 19, 2005 6:42 PM

One thing I have noticed in the papers lately is that there's been a rash of suicides by soldiers lately. I wanted to tell you that I think this may be an entirely avoidable tragedy.

I have close family members with PTSD so I know first hand how that can affect people. There is no doubt that being exposed to such extreme conditions, such as war, isn't going to physically alter a person's brain. That's just a fact. There is another side to the coin though, and that is what I'd like to address here.

I think a lot of the Vietnam veterans are now suffering from a lot more than just PTSD.

What I'm going to suggest here is a subject matter that licensed psychologists or psychiatrists are not going to touch on much but, I really feel is the bases for a lot of veteran's post war trouble. That subject is called the 'conscience'.

After WWII was over, veterans certainly had issues but, not anything like the Vietnam vets. After the WWII vets came home, they were obviously feeling well enough to settle back into domestic life and produce a baby boom generation.

When I talk to WWII vets today, they really don't brag about what they did in the war but, they don't have any problems discussing the sheer carnage of the conflict either. For some reason, their minds work very well in recounting events that occurred nearly 60 years ago. For some reason, most of them sleep well at night and pass away at a ripe old age; leaving generations of descendents behind.

A lot of the Vietnam vets I see are far different. I don't go to a lot of shelters but, I see a lot of guys around my parent's age sleeping on park benches, curbs, and hanging out in bus depots a lot. It gets really sad when I see this in the cold Minnesota winters. These guys will say they're Vietnam vets but, they'll never talk to you about their experiences.

Even with the Vietnam vets I've talked to who have homes and families, they won't talk in much detail about their experiences either. I've gotten a little out of them before but, they start getting hairy if I ask too many questions so, I usually stop.

I'm not saying WWII was a pure war but, it was 'more' righteous than Vietnam. I don't think there are too many people who will argue with me about that.

So, to bring up that under the table word again, I will say that I believe 'conscience' has a huge role to play in how veteran 'come back' from the war. **If a vet feels like he collapsed under peer pressure or physical threat himself, by inflicting horrendous atrocities on women and children, I can only imagine how that would affect his life long thinking.**

I want to mention something here quickly about my personal belief system. I am not trying to evangelize anyone per say but, by telling you this but, I believe it is helpful in understanding where I'm coming from and why I think the concept is important.

As you know, I am a Muslim and this is where the idea comes from. One important thing to know about Islam is, even though we may be fundamentalists of a sort, we are NOT motivated by the same things which motivate the fundamentalist Christians; who so influence American policy.

As Muslims, we do not believe that the only way into heaven is through accepting one person as a personal savior. Therefore, we are not out on a mission to convert everyone to our interpretation of life because we are told that they will go to hell otherwise. **In Islam, there is one God and he will decide on the Day of Judgment who will go to hell and who will not. As Muslims, we simply try to do our best to please God, in hopes that we may be counted among the fortunate who do go to heaven.**

The information is regarding a concept that Muslims call 'Tobah'. I personally find this to be an interesting concept, that is almost completely foreign to western thought. Some forms of Christianity come close to broaching this concept but, most dominant forms of Christianity in America are completely devoid of it. **Tobah is a belief among the Muslims that a person can actually 'make up' for at least some of, if not all of, his wrong doings - by doing good things.**

American Christianity maintains that the only way of purging one's sins come from having accepted Jesus Christ as a personal savior. This Christian view of salvation can obviously be twisted in some very perverted ways, if the idea is not perverted to start with.

There is no doubt for me anyway, that this whole idea of deferred salvation is not very gratifying. Outside of the fact that this way of deferred accountability can lead to many abuses, it also never made me feel real good about coming to terms with my past sins...

In Islam, when you do something wrong, it is highly encouraged that you then do something good, to make up for the wrongdoing. God in the end, will judge whether our attempts at correcting or compensating for our wrongs was worthy of acceptance or not but it is/has been very gratifying for me at least, to try and make up for my shortcomings.

After I've done something tremendously good, the bad things that had lingered in my mind somehow feel smaller. The good then sort of snowballs, and I want to just keep doing more and more good - like there's actually some real value in doing good.

I never felt that when I was an American Christian, just trying to push my bad deeds off on some innocent guy who was abused thousands of years ago.

The reason I'm mentioning this is because, whether you will ever believe in the religious ramifications of this concept or not, I believe the practical effect of this philosophy can have a profound influence in people's lives.

If a soldier is having a difficult time resolving the fact that he did something awful in Iraq, no \$500/hour shrink is going be able to remove that from his mind; no matter if the soldier has health insurance or not; and regardless if the shrink is able to keep the soldier coming in for counseling or not.

I believe there's obviously a needed place for trained professionals in the mental health industry but, I'm fairly certain their ability to remedy this particular type of disturbance, is rather limited.

If a soldier was having severe and acute war related issues, I would definitely refer him to a professional but, if the soldier is also coping with disturbances that were more chronic and regular, I would also suggest some 'personal' therapy.

What I mean by that is - that I believe soldiers or veterans, who are having trouble, can do a lot for themselves to heal their own minds. This healing process is not precise like a prescription drug, and would probably vary a lot between individuals. The principle is the same for everybody though - and that is to 'do something good for the world'.

Since you are dealing with soldiers a lot - and since we are both aware that a lot of soldiers are finding little choice other than to put all the stress of war on themselves, I urge you to be as proactive as you can in reaching out to these young people; who could be helped.

We both know that the 'bush' America already views these soldiers as throwaway people but - I don't believe that. I believe that these people who have experienced these awful events can still triumph over the grim realities of their minds.

No one can force anyone to do anything truly good, if they don't want to do it but, I strongly suspect you could help provide needed outlets for young soldiers to do good things, and live with their consciences. Maybe they could help with the G.I. Rights Hotline, or maybe with your periodical, or maybe in some totally new and undiscovered thing. I don't know exactly but, the universe is huge with possibilities.

As I've alluded to before, I'm in a much different place in life than you so, my ability to do much here is not as open as I would like it to be. So, thank you for listening to me again, and I'm sure that the more you can 'reach out' and have lasting impact on the young people, the better their lives will be; and brighter will be the future for all of us.

Sincerely,
H

REPLY:

Some of the most effective fighters against the Vietnam war were soldiers who, by their own admission, had committed atrocities against the Vietnamese, turned against the war, and devoted themselves to organizing to stop it.

As many people have pointed out, they tended to keep sane much more than those who did nothing.

Your point is confirmed by reality.

Thank you for making it.

T

Received:

"Peace To The Cottages, War On The Castles."

From: DP
To: GI Special
Sent: Monday, January 24, 2005 7:31 PM
Subject: GI Special

Thank you for your efforts. I think it's a very important site and have forwarded the link to many people.

I have a constructive criticism that I wanted to add, regarding the repeated labeling of Administration officials as hating soldiers. I believe this assertion to be inaccurate.

People with wealth and power in the US don't care enough about working class people (in or out of uniform) to afford them hate, which requires thought and effort. To elites in the US, servicemembers are disposable units of deployment who aren't deserving of such personal attention. Except for the various anti-war and pro-GI efforts, those in uniform would be invisible, which is how elites prefer them - seen and not heard, which is also how sociopaths view children.

Of course those same officials are deserving of almost everyone else's hostility - those 80% of the US population who are the tools and toys of the rich.

As some have said, "Peace to the cottages, war on the castles."

DP
Taunton, MA

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

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