GI SPECIAL 3A29:

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In Armored Vehicles, Troops Tell Iraqis to Vote:

"Let's Get Out Of Here. This Place Is No Good," Spike Said

"We hang posters around the city telling people how important it is for them to vote but they rip them up as soon as we turn our backs," said Staff Sgt. Russ Spike from Akron, Ohio.

No sooner had he finished talking than a rocket-propelled grenade, apparently aimed at the Humvee mounted with the loudspeakers, exploded nearby.

"Let's get out of here. This place is no good," Spike said as he jumped back into his vehicle.

Jan 28, 2005 By Ibon Villelabeitia, SAMARRA, Iraq (Reuters)

A rumbling column of U.S. Bradley fighting vehicles grinds to a stop in a rebellious Iraqi neighborhood of scarred houses and mud streets.

Heavily-armed troops jump out and begin searching homes as loudspeakers blast in Arabic: "On Sunday you should go out to out. Vote to give freedom to Iraq. Vote to save Iraq." A soldier hands out fliers to a group of untidy children.

Suddenly, the whistle of a grenade pierces the air and a loud explosion shakes the ground. The soldiers fire back before returning to their armored vehicles and the convoy speeds away.

Two days before the vote, Samarra, a city north of Baghdad, looks more like a war zone than a place getting ready for elections.

Apache helicopter gunships thunder over mosques and the city's ancient spiral minaret. Miles of barbed wire seal off garbage-strewn streets. A car bomb on Thursday killed an Iraqi soldier and two civilians near an Iraqi army patrol.

There are no campaign posters in this city of 200,000 people, and several election officials have resigned after receiving death threats. Only U.S. forces, venturing out of their frequently-mortared bases, make an attempt to get the vote out, putting up posters with general information about the polls, passing out leaflets and broadcasting messages.

"We hang posters around the city telling people how important it is for them to vote but they rip them up as soon as we turn our backs," said Staff Sgt. Russ Spike from Akron, Ohio.

He was among a group of soldiers who recently went on a patrol to encourage Samarra residents to vote.

As 30-tonBradley vehicles pointed their 25 mm cannons down alleyways, Spike cranked up the volume of the loudspeakers on his Humvee. He has a list of taped messages with titles such as "Election news," "Freedom to vote" and "Love and family."

The noise drew a handful of nervous Iraqis out of their homes. Children stared in awe at the Americans, many of whom wore wrap-around sunglasses and chewed tobacco.

Ibrahim, a 54-year-old teacher, said U.S. forces used heavy-handed tactics to put down the insurgency.

"We suffered with Saddam. Now we suffer with the Americans. They come to our neighborhoods with their Bradleys and they want us to love them. Just for standing here they can kill me."

No sooner had he finished talking than a rocket-propelled grenade, apparently aimed at the Humvee mounted with the loudspeakers, exploded nearby.

"Let's get out of here. This place is no good," Spike said as he jumped back into his vehicle. [Right. Out of there. All the way home. Right now. Not another day, not another dime, not another life. Iraqis will not have a foreign Imperial occupier ruling their country, especially an asshole like Bush. They will never stop fighting for their freedom. They are right to do so. Time for soldiers to come home. The enemy is running the government in Washington DC, not in Iraq.]

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

IED KILLS TASK FORCE BAGHDAD SOLDIER, 3 WOUNDED

January 28, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS RELEASE Number: 05-01-39C

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- An improvised explosive device detonated at about 2 p.m. on Jan. 28 in southern Baghdad, killing one Task Force Baghdad Soldier and wounding three others.

Two of the wounded Soldiers were evacuated to a military medical treatment facility. The third wounded Soldier was treated and returned to duty.

TASK FORCE BAGHDAD SOLDIER KILLED IN NORTHERN BAGHDAD

January 28, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS: Release Number: 05-01-40C

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- **A Task Force Baghdad Soldier was killed by small arms fire at approximately 2:15 p.m. on Jan. 28 in northern Baghdad.**

THREE TASK FORCE BAGHDAD SOLDIERS KILLED IN IED BLAST

January 28, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS RELEASE Number: 05-01-38C

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- **Three Task Force Baghdad Soldiers were killed when an improvised explosive device detonated on their patrol about 4:30 p.m. Jan. 28 in western Baghdad.** Another Soldier received minor injuries in the attack and was treated at the scene.

Italian Soldier Killed

1.29.05 Patrick Cockburn, The Independent

An Italian soldier was shot dead during a series of attacks that culminated in the deaths of three militiamen during an intensive exchange of fire with the British soldiers.

U.S. Army: Helicopter Crashes In Baghdad

1/28/2005 The Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) - **An Army helicopter crashed in southwest Baghdad on Friday night, and the fate of the crew was not immediately known, a U.S. military official said.**

The OH-58 Kiowa helicopter usually carries a crew of two pilots and is unlikely to carry large numbers of passengers.

Resistance Shells Camp Kalsu, Three U.S. Troops Wounded

2005/1/28 BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP)

Insurgents shelled a U.S. Marine base south of Baghdad on Friday, injuring three American troops and three civilians, the military said.

Mortar shells exploded inside Camp Kalsu, the main base of the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

One marine, two soldiers and three civilians were injured, the military said. There was no immediate word on any deaths in the attack.

Vehicle Damaged In Convoy Incident

January 28, 2005 By KILEY MILLER, The Hawk Eye

Soldiers of the 224th Engineer Battalion escaped unharmed Tuesday from an explosion in Iraq that destroyed one of their humvees, an Iowa National Guard spokesman said Thursday.

An improvised explosive device detonated next to a convoy of 224th soldiers in the Anbar province, a largely Sunni area of western Iraq, "critically damaging" the armored humvee, Lt. Col. Greg Hapgood said.

It is the first reported hostile action involving the southeast Iowa guard unit's soldiers since they arrived Jan. 16 in Iraq.

"They were unbelievably lucky," said Hapgood, who learned of the incident from 224th commander Lt. Col. Todd Jacobus. "The armoring on the humvee most likely saved their lives."

The explosion occurred north of Forward Operating Base Duke, a military outpost near the city of Najaf. One article published in an Army newspaper describes the area as a "flat, dry and dusty wasteland."

Hapgood was uncertain of the convoy's purpose, but said **one of the battalion's jobs is to identify and remove bombs and improvised explosive devices. [Does this count?] "It's part of their mobility mission," Hapgood said. "It keeps us moving and keeps the enemy from moving." [Not today.]**

Notes From A Lost War:

24th Marines EU: 20% Casualties, New Deaths, Chaos And No Joy Anywhere: “I’m Going Home In Six Days,” Moore Tells Himself Out Loud.

January 28, 2005 By Ellen Knickmeyer. Associated Press, ISKANDARIYAH, Iraq

Bombers had hit one polling place overnight. Iraqi police supposed to be guarding two polling places were nowhere in sight. And Iraqi contractors charged

with placing bomb barriers around the polls for Sunday's vote were likewise missing in action — too scared to work.

South of Baghdad in the area that's become known as the triangle of death, Marines confront semi-controlled chaos — a few bright spots, several moments of forehead-slapping aggravation, and, eventually, tragedy — as they pushed Iraqi officials toward what all here agree should be Iraqi-controlled national elections.

"Someday I'm going to laugh at all this over some beers," Maj. Billy Ray Moore of Newcastle, Ind., said Thursday as he climbed back into his Humvee after confirming that one poll-protecting police squad wasn't to be found, frustrating plans to have every poll here under round-the-clock guard up to Iraq's Sunday elections.

The U.S. military has hoped to be a hands-off back-up for an Iraqi-run election here — supplying the bomb barriers and concertina wire but not the labor to put them around polling sites. The Marines would equip security forces to do the job of guarding polling sites and back up Iraqi civilians to run the polls.

Iraqis' well-founded fear of insurgent attacks on the election has raised obstacles at every step. Even the simplest measures — like having contractors place the concrete barriers around polling sites — are difficult to pull off.

For the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, Sunday's elections come at a time when many of the Marines will be rotating out, and home.

The seven-month deployment has cost the infantry unit here at the MEU's Iskandariyah forward operating base the lives of eight of their Marines and about 200 casualties overall — nearly one out of every five Marines here has been hit by what are daily road and car bombs, sporadic mortars and occasional ambushes.

"Boom! Boom! Bomb-a!" Maj. Matt Sasse of Midland, Mich. yelled Thursday, as the day opened with Marine-set detonations to blow up a dirt road that could be used as an alternate route for attackers when traffic shuts down for Sunday's vote. He shooed away gathering crowds of Iraqi men and children.

"You mean explosives," an Iraqi man corrected him in English, before disappearing inside his front gate.

The crater blasts sent coffee-pot-size chunks of rocks and stinging multi-hundred-of-mile-per-hour chunks of mud down on the Marines. Marveling at the might of 40-plus pounds of C-4 is cut short by a series of Marine radio communiques — the news of the overnight poll bombing, tips of suspicious cars in front of a polling site.

Automatic-weapon fire chatters in the distance — often heard, never explained, generally disregarded when it ebbs.

A new warning comes from a cluster of kerchief-masked Iraqi security forces at the next stop: bomb-makers are at work in the neighborhood.

Moore starts to inquire. Sasse, monitoring Marine radio, interrupts.

“Hey, they’re mortaring Iskandariyah,” Sasse says.

Black smoke rises across flat brown fields next to the Iskandariyah base, home to the 1,000-plus Marines here.

Two mortars have opened fire on the base. Marine patrols and explosive teams racing toward the mortars roll down a road booby-trapped with four separate bomb sites, triggering one. An explosives expert defuses another only a split-second before the detonating cap explodes. He stands over it, shaking.

A Marine team elsewhere completes a pre-election gun run, handing out Glock pistols to police stations ahead of the vote. **Many of the police slated to receive the weapons don’t show up.**

Moore and Sasse go on to the central police station. They find the district police chief, Lt. Col. Salman Obaid Khadim, who promises to get police out to all 15 polling site in the area. Moore, eyes pink from exhaustion, forces back a yawn.

Loaey Yousif, a director for one of the polls, encounters the Marines in the station parking lot. **Poll workers don’t have the IDs they need, Yousif tells him. He doesn’t know how to get the workers to the poll, Yousif says. The district election chief isn’t showing up for election-planning meetings, Yousif says.**

Moore urges Iraqi security and election officials to get together on some of the problems. **“I’m not supposed to take over, because this is an Iraq-run election,” Moore says, on a morning where that’s looking ever-shakier.**

Inside the police station, with its sandbagged windows and meals-ready-to-eat boxes furniture, news comes over Marines’ radio that the mortar rounds landed inside the Marines’ base.

The unit’s Marine death count since deployment climbs to nine. Another seven or eight Marines have been wounded.

Moore takes the news, staring at the floor. Sasse, reading an update from the Marines’ online message board, gives him more.

“The contractors aren’t coming,” Sasse says.

Marines, as more-than half expected, will have to move the tons of bomb barriers themselves. By Sunday.

“I’m going home in six days,” Moore tells himself out loud.

Notes From A Lost War:

The Useless, Pointless, Senseless Death Of Nainoa K. Hoe

Soldiers from C Company's 1st Platoon with Stryker Rolling Coffin on the west side of Mosul's al-Whada neighborhood. (Steve Fainaru -- The Washington Post)

"We have a saying in the infantry: You have tab wearers and you have tab bearers," said Staff Sgt. Hank Moreno, 35, of Tempe, Ariz. "Lieutenant Hoe was a tab bearer. He was part of it, he was a part of us. He didn't just wear it."

January 28, 2005 By Steve Fainaru, Washington Post Foreign Service

MOSUL, Iraq -- The 21-ton Stryker attack vehicles pulled into the neighborhood of al-Whada just after noon. Their rear ramps dropped simultaneously, disgorging dozens of American infantrymen into the cold rain.

The soldiers had multiple tasks on this day. In addition to hunting insurgents and searching houses, they were to help get out the vote for Sunday's national elections. For the next three hours, soldiers armed with assault rifles and election fliers moved warily through al-Whada's muddy streets.

The inherent danger of the mission was driven home at 3:30 p.m. A single shot rang out, and 1st Lt. Nainoa K. Hoe, 27, the popular leader of the 2nd Platoon, C Company, 3rd Battalion of the 21st Infantry Regiment, fell dead in the street.

"Treat him! Treat him!" screamed Staff Sgt. Steve Siglock, one of his closest friends. The shot that killed Hoe on Saturday was followed within seconds by a blizzard of gunfire aimed at his exposed platoon. It was already too late for Hoe, but his men stepped directly into the gunfire in a desperate attempt to save him while fending off the unseen insurgents.

On the campaign trail in Iraq, U.S. troops are almost alone.

Violence has kept away the election monitors, international peacekeepers and nongovernmental organizations.

With not even the candidates out on the streets, the role of getting out the vote has fallen to thousands of infantrymen like Hoe, soldiers who are menaced by the possibility of instant death.

"The one thing people got to understand here is you got to have two faces" in Iraq, said Sgt. 1st Class Corey Myers, who was Hoe's platoon sergeant. "One as a friend -- as a helper -- and one as a soldier. And you got to be able to switch faces in a second."

In this increasingly complex environment, infantrymen are called upon not only to fight a deadly insurgency but also to perform civil affairs missions and "information ops" normally the province of noncombat military units and nongovernmental organizations.

After a day of handing out election fliers in the driving rain, Hoe was cut down while escorting members of a military intelligence team to a medical clinic. The team wanted to know why the clinic had turned down free medical supplies. [And that was none of their fucking business. Military intelligence killed Hoe with their idiotic pretense to be doing something besides inflicting more U.S. tyranny on Iraqis in their own country. The shame is that Hoe is dead, and the MI assholes are still alive.]

"This is the mission at hand," said Lt. Col. Michael Gibler, the 3rd Battalion commander. The Army had lost one of its "future leaders," he said, adding: "I don't think I'm any more bitter about losing a young man for a CA [civil affairs] mission, or an election mission. **The bottom line is we have to get it done. And the sooner we can get it done, we can all go home." [Somebody please put a cork in this ass-kissing showboating idiot from central casting. This is nothing but an executioner in funny clothes. Don't you just love the "we" shit? Where was "we" when Hoe was getting killed? The good news: later Sgt. Myers shuts him down hard. The bad news: the occasion.]**

Hoe, a lanky Honolulu native, had taken command of the 41-man 2nd Platoon in April -- two months before he was married and five months before his battalion, which is based at Fort Lewis, Wash., deployed to Iraq. The command was the fulfillment of a dream for Hoe, who after several years as an enlisted soldier enrolled at the University of Hawaii so he could return as a commissioned infantry officer.

"We have a saying in the infantry: You have tab wearers and you have tab bearers," said Staff Sgt. Hank Moreno, 35, of Tempe, Ariz. "Lieutenant Hoe was a tab bearer. He was part of it, he was a part of us. He didn't just wear it."

Hoe quickly won over a skeptical platoon by mixing levelheaded decision-making with a playful sense of mischief, straddling the fine line between leader and friend, his soldiers said. He was an intellectual who one minute would debate the role of the Kurds in post-invasion Iraq and the next would launch surprise air pistol attacks on his men, who responded in kind. For a time, Hoe also served as the platoon barber.

A surfer and swimmer, Hoe was so proud of his Hawaiian heritage "you could say he was a nationalist," Siglock said. Hoe's father, Allen, is a Vietnam veteran, and Hoe

carried an American flag that his father had carried. His younger brother, Nakoa, is about to be deployed to Iraq as a member of 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry. Hoe was proud of his family's military history but joked that Hawaii had been better off without the mainland. "He would say, 'We don't have to be a state; we were fine without you, just fine,' " Siglock recalled.

The night before his death, Hoe stood by the campfire that the platoon lighted each night behind its barracks. He was especially happy, his men recalled. His driver, Spec. Enoch Thornton, had sold him a Black Hawk holster for $50. The holster matched Hoe's belt and resolved what he had called "a tactical fashion faux pas."

Hoe stood by the campfire with his men, a familiar grin on his face, quick-drawing his 9mm pistol from the holster like a gunslinger.

Before missions, the military raises its level of readiness to Red Con 1. Hoe would call to his platoon, using its nickname: "Hey, Outlaws, get ready for Red Con Fun!"

Saturday's mission began as it always did, with Hoe imploring Thornton to sing a song by Tenacious D, one of Hoe's favorite bands.

"C'mon, sing a song, Thornton," Hoe said as they sat inside the hulking Stryker.

Thornton complied. The words to "Kyle Quit the Band" came over the platoon's intercom as Hoe sang along:

One minute ago Kyle quit the band

Now we're back together again

Misunderstanding didn't understand

Now we're back together again, la la la . . .

The 1st and 2nd platoons of Charlie Company -- more than 80 men packed into seven armored vehicles -- then rolled out the gates of Camp Freedom. The platoons came to a stop at al-Whada in southeast Mosul, where since November insurgents have taken potshots at U.S. and Iraqi troops from mosques and vacant buildings.

The attacks have intensified with the approach of the elections, soldiers said.

The 1st Platoon worked the west side of the neighborhood, Hoe's 2nd Platoon the east.

The men bolted from their vehicles into the slanting rain, running and sweeping their black M-4 rifles from side to side. Behind them crept the dark green Strykers, their .50-caliber machine guns trained on the neighborhood.

On a cinder-block wall, graffiti read: "Long Live Saddam, Father of All Martyrs."

Aside from the troops, the streets were empty.

"The local population, they want to be hospitable, but a lot of times they're either nervous, just due to our very presence or due to the fact that as soon as we show up, several minutes later they're gonna start receiving mortar fire or RPG fire or small-arms fire near their homes" from the insurgents, said the Charlie Company commander, Capt. Rob Born, 30, of Burke, Va.

Born stopped to chat up a butcher hacking up a cow in his carport.

"Are you gonna vote?" Born asked cheerfully.

He handed the man a red-and-white leaflet that showed two Iraqis casting ballots. "One vote is more precious than gold," the leaflet said.

"If it's safe to go, I will. If it's not, I won't," the butcher told him.

"Fair enough," said Born.

Soldiers then surrounded a two-story house. The battalion had received reports that it was being used as a meeting place for insurgents.

A paunchy, middle-aged man invited the soldiers to search the house. As they did, the 1st Platoon leader, 2nd Lt. Jason Shick of Grand Rapids, Mich., questioned the man on the second floor.

"Ask him does he know any anti-American forces or anti-coalition forces at all in this area," Shick told the interpreter. [Unreal.] "Tell him we're searching all the homes in the area, so he's not going to get singled out."

"We don't have anything to tell you," the man's wife said plaintively in halting English.

The man shook his head no.

Shick checked the man's name against a list of suspects. Satisfied he was not a terrorist, Shick then tried to lock up his vote.

"Is he going to vote in the upcoming elections?" he asked the interpreter.

"Yes, they are going to go vote," the interpreter said after consulting with the couple.

"Good. Tell him thank you very much," said Shick, heading back down the stairs. "And make sure he votes. If he votes, we leave. Americans go home." [Wrong. Bush has no intention of bringing you home. Not unless you and the whole fucking occupation army engage in an armed insurrection and arrest your command. Ready for that yet? No? Of course not, the election isn't over for another three days. Then everybody gets to go home, right?.]

The two platoons then gathered for the final phase of the mission.

The 1st Platoon was to escort two members of a tactical human intelligence team, or THT, to the medical clinic. The 2nd Platoon was to hand off an encryption device to U.S. advisers working with Iraqi troops near a hospital.

At the last minute, however, the orders changed. Hoe was ordered to escort the THT to the clinic.

"Nobody had a problem with it. It was just easier for us to transport the THT guys, so we swapped missions," Siglock recalled. In interviews, he and 15 other soldiers described the events that followed.

Hoe decided to pull up several hundred yards short of the clinic and take only one squad of nine soldiers to avoid frightening the clinic staff. When the men dismounted from the rear of the Stryker, however, the platoon was still a city block away, farther than Hoe had intended.

"Everyone remount," Hoe started to say, according to Thornton, who was still in the vehicle. Then he decided against it. "Nah, [expletive] it, we'll walk."

Hoe joined the formation, the two-man intelligence team behind him. The soldiers began to walk toward the clinic on a street that ran along an open field. On the other side of the field, about 250 yards away, stood a mosque.

The shot rang out from a building near the mosque. Hoe was wearing a bulletproof vest, but the bullet hit him in the exposed crease behind his left shoulder. It traveled through both lungs and punctured his aorta before exiting his body through his right armpit. He died almost instantly, doctors later concluded.

"Ow," Hoe seemed to say as he fell.

"In my opinion, it was an ambush initiated by a sniper," Siglock said. **The sniper probably identified Hoe as the platoon leader by his proximity to his radio operator, Pfc. Jerome Roettgers, 23, of Cincinnati, who was trailing Hoe with a two-foot antenna.**

As Hoe lay in the street, Siglock relayed the unthinkable to Myers, the platoon sergeant: "2-7, this is 2-1, 2-6 is down."

Hoe's radio call sign was Tiger 2-6.

The message bludgeoned the platoon.

In the brief moment of shock, at least five insurgents opened up on them. The shots came from across the field; muzzle flashes were seen coming from the tall minaret of the mosque.

The platoon scrambled to return fire and rescue its leader. Roettgers was the first to reach Hoe, but the platoon leader "was waterlogged" from a day spent patrolling in the rain and standing in the Stryker's open hatch, he said. Roettgers could barely budge him.

Roettgers was joined by Pfc. Robert Layton, 23, of Buckley, Wash., and the two began to pull Hoe off the street. But they couldn't find cover. Both were bracing to be shot when Pfc. Darrin Gooding, 21, of Annapolis stepped directly between them and the insurgents and began firing back. Gooding had been just a few feet from the Stryker when the ambush occurred. He could have taken cover behind it, but instead he moved into the fusillade to protect the three men.

"That was probably one of the most comforting sights I've ever seen in my life, reaching down for Lieutenant Hoe and as I look up, I see Gooding backing down on us, shells flying," Layton said.

The men got Hoe into an alley, which the platoon then sealed off with a Stryker. Myers and the platoon medic, Spec. Rusty "Doc" Mauney, took over. Mauney gave Hoe two quick "rescue breaths" and took his pulse. Hoe had none. Mauney thought he might have missed it because of the noise from the gunfire, but the firing stopped and Hoe's condition was the same.

Hoe was dead, but his men refused to believe it.

They loaded him into the Stryker and drove to the combat support hospital about seven miles away. The 21-ton trucks raced 60 mph through the streets of Mosul, fishtailing around corners, air horns blasting.

Inside the lead vehicle, Mauney frantically performed chest compressions while Myers gave Hoe mouth-to-mouth. "I was covered in his blood," Myers recalled somberly. "We were doing the compressions, and every time there would be something coming out of something and hitting me in the face. There was swelling in his chest area; the blood was pooling up in his chest. We turned him on his side to get the fluid out of his lungs, like you'd do when somebody is drowning. A large volume of blood came out at that point."

"Don't give up!" Myers shouted at Hoe. "Don't you [expletive] quit on me!"

Mauney and Myers helped carry Hoe into the emergency room. A doctor walked over to Myers to see if he too had been wounded. When the doctor learned that Myers was covered in Hoe's blood, he took out a white rag and tenderly wiped off his face, "like I was some kid who had candy all over him," Myers said

The rest of the platoon gathered in a dirt parking lot that had turned into a swamp. The men were soaked. It was still raining, but no one sat inside the Strykers. Nearly everyone was smoking; they burned the cigarettes to the butt and then used them to light more.

Mauney was still in the operating room when the chief surgeon shook his head and announced, "Time of death: 1602."

Mauney walked outside and smoked. A doctor came out and handed him Hoe's soaked pistol belt. The medic kept thinking about the previous summer. Hoe had been hit by a car while jogging, and Mauney went to his house every day to change his dressing.

"Hey, Doc, I never saw a medic who makes house calls," Hoe's new wife, Emily, teased him. Then she said: "Well, I don't have to worry about him over there with you looking out for him, do I?"

"I was just sitting out there in the rain, holding his pistol belt, and that was going over and over in my mind," Mauney said.

By then, Gibler, the battalion commander, had arrived. He wanted to break the news to the platoon, but Sgt. Myers insisted that he be the one to do it.

Gibler, Myers and Born, the company commander, walked out into the rain. The platoon was gathered around the Strykers. Some of the soldiers already knew. Some knew but didn't want to believe it.

"Nainoa didn't make it," Myers told them.

The men were crying now, all 40 of them. Born started to speak. "I know how close you all are. . . ." He broke down and turned away.

Myers announced that anyone who wanted to could come inside the hospital and pay their last respects. At first, no one moved. Then slowly the soldiers shuffled forward.

Hoe rested on a gurney in a remote hallway. He was covered by a blanket except for his face.

His men walked slowly around the gurney until they had nearly formed a circle. Then the entire platoon, all 40 men, knelt beside their platoon leader and prayed.

The men rose and moved on. Some reached out and stroked Hoe's cheek. Some leaned over and whispered into his ear.

"Vaya con Dios," said Moreno.

Siglock recalled that Hoe had once told him that if he could surf every day for the rest of his life, he would. Now, sobbing, Siglock told Hoe: "You caught your wave."

Roettgers, who slept on the bunk above Hoe's and was with him more than anyone, looked at the platoon leader and smiled. Hoe's eyes were halfway open.

"That's the way he sleeps," Roettgers said.

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)

ROLL CALL

Crash In Iraq Killed 4 Ohioans: Some Told Parents They Soon Would Be On Their Way Home; "He Just Said, 'I Want To Get Out Of Here' "

January 28, 2005 Terry Oblander and Angela D. Chatman, Plain Dealer Reporters

The single deadliest day for American troops in Iraq hit home hard Thursday in Ohio.

Across the state, families and friends mourned four young men who were among 30 U.S. Marines and one Navy medic killed when their helicopter crashed in a sandstorm in the Iraqi desert.

Among the Marines killed were Cpl. Timothy A. Knight, 22, of Brooklyn; Lance Cpl. Jonathan Edward Etterling, 22, of Wheelersburg; Sgt. Michael Finke Jr., 28, of Wadsworth; and Cpl. Richard Gilbert, 28, of Dayton, family members said.

At Brooklyn High School, the flag was at half-staff Thursday in honor of Knight, who graduated from the school in 2001.

He died never having seen his 3-month-old daughter, Chloe.

In Medina County, Mike Finke of Sharon Township recalled that his son had told him in a telephone call Tuesday that he was due to be pulled out of Iraq on Feb. 5.

Finke's mother, Sally Rapp of Westlake, said she received a letter from her son the same day. He said he was eager to leave despite the pride he took in the work Marines were doing in Fallujah.

"He just said, 'I want to get out of here,' " Rapp said. "He said, 'I can't wait to get out of this country in one piece, alive.' "

In Wheelersburg, the Etterling family spent their day talking to reporters about their son, Jonathan, and receiving friends.

He had called his parents Saturday and told them that he expected to be pulled out of the country within a few weeks.

Knight married his high school sweetheart, the former Gina Delligatti, not long after they graduated from high school together.

"He was coming home in three months," Derethik said. "He was finished."

Finke grew up in Medina and Huron. He attended schools in Medina. He served as an altar boy and attended religion classes at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church.

He joined the Corps before his graduation from Huron High School and served nine years. He planned to return to the States and start married life with his wife, Heather, whom he wed in 2002 in Las Vegas. His father said the two lived apart for most of their short marriage because of their careers.

"They were going to start a family when he came back," his father said.

Iowa Marine Killed In Helicopter Crash; Was To Come Home Feb. 4

A Marine from Cherokee was killed in the crash of a helicopter in Iraq a day before his 23rd birthday, relatives said.

Cpl. Nathan Schubert had received orders to leave Iraq on Feb. 4, his brother, Matt Schubert said as he gathered with relatives in Sioux Falls, S.D.

Nathan Schubert was a carefree man who "lived a day for what it was worth," his older brother said as he gathered with relatives at his mother's home in Sioux Falls.

Cherokee Mayor Dennis Henrich said flags in Cherokee in northwestern Iowa were lowered to half staff. **The mayor said Schubert's death is the first military casualty for the city of 5,300 since the Vietnam War.**

Matt Schubert talked with his younger brother last Friday. Nathan said in that conversation he had received his orders to leave Iraq on Feb. 4. He was excited to leave and come home, Matt Schubert said.

Nathan Schubert was a 2001 graduate of Washington High School in Cherokee. His brother said memorial services will be held at the school. A date has not been set.

In November Nathan Schubert had plans to return to Iowa. The two brothers were going to spend time working on an old Jeep Nathan had bought.

"He was just the kind of person that would be everybody's best friend," Matt Schubert said.

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2 Area Men Among Crash Victims: Spring Resident, Houston Native Sounded Upbeat In Their Last Calls Home, Kin Say

Jan. 28, 2005 By ROSANNA RUIZ, Copyright 2005 Houston Chronicle

Two Houston-area men were among the 31 troops killed in Wednesday's helicopter crash in an Iraqi desert sandstorm.

Spring resident Lance Cpl. Fred Lee Maciel, 20, and Houston native Staff Sgt. Dexter Kimble, 30, died in the crash, family members said.

The pair were among at least six Marines from Texas, including two from the San Antonio area, who died in the crash.

Maciel, who was engaged to be married, graduated from Spring High School in 2003 and became a Marine that September, said Richard Garza, his stepfather.

Maciel spoke with his mother, Patsy Maciel, and Garza on Sunday.

"He spoke to his mom at length Sunday for about an hour. She was giggling a lot — he was probably making her laugh. He always made her laugh," Garza said. "They were very, very close. In fact, they had never been apart till he went to the Marines."

His stepson sounded upbeat, maybe because he was almost finished with his tour in Iraq, Garza said. He was to head to Japan on Jan. 30 before returning to Hawaii, where he was stationed, and then home.

He and his fiancée, Jamie Hommel, were going to make wedding plans when he got back, Garza said.

Kimble had been a Marine for 13 years and was on his second tour in Iraq, said Andrea Kimble, a sister.

Kimble, a 1992 M.B. Smiley High School graduate, lived with his wife, Dewana, and their two sons and two daughters in Marietta, Calif., she said.

The helicopter mechanic spoke with his family in Houston recently and he sounded in good spirits, Andrea Kimble said.

“We Regret To Inform You”

January 28, 2005 By Janis L. Magin, Associated Press

Cpl. James Lee Moore’s family heard of the 24-year-old Roseburg, Ore.-native’s death Wednesday night, when several Marines came to their door, said his stepmother, Suzanne Moore.

“It still hasn’t sunk in,” she said. “We can’t get past ‘We regret to inform you...”’

TROOP NEWS

We Here In Benicia, CA Have Just Suffered The Loss Of One Of Our Own

From: David Grumio
To: GI Special
Sent: Friday, January 28, 2005 3:25 AM
Subject: AP story

We here in Benicia, CA have just suffered the loss of one of our own: Dustin Shumney.

We found out about it while standing at our weekly peace vigil in the park across from the Veterans' Hall. A TV van pulled up and shot a teaser with a reporter announcing the story in front of the hall. They had no interest in us.

I found this tidbit (from Janis L. Magin, AP): Some families reacted to the news with anger, others with sad acceptance.

Nadine Finke, stepmother of Michael Finke, said she doesn't believe there is any justification for the war that claimed his life.

"I'm sure there are many other parents out there that don't think there is either," Finke, of Wadsworth, Ohio, told WKYC-TV of Cleveland.

The father of Spc. Gael Saintvil, 24, of Orlando, Fla., said he feared the worst as soon as he heard about the crash.

"It happened for a good cause, for the country. ... Don't like it, but what's happened has happened," Belga Saintvil told WESH-TV in Orlando.

3rd ID Soldier Tries Bomb Threat To Stop Deployment To Iraq

CHICAGO, Jan 26 (Reuters) - **A U.S. Army infantryman whose unit was about to be sent to Iraq for a second time was taken into custody after making bomb threats aimed at disrupting the deployment, officials at Fort Campbell in Kentucky said on Wednesday.**

Specialist Rodney Whitacre, 26, of Decatur, Illinois, was detained on Sunday while "he was on the phone making the alleged threats to an Army-wide counseling service," the post said in a news release.

The threats, it said, were "in reference to his unit's deployment to Iraq." No other details were divulged.

No explosives were found during a search of his room and the aircraft being used in the deployment, the announcement said. The Third Infantry Division of which he was a member continued the move to Iraq.

A spokesman said Whitacre had served a tour of duty in Iraq last year. He described the threat and arrest as an "isolated incident."

Whitacre was being held at the post pending an investigation, the announcement said.

Vietnam Vet, Iraq Soldiers' Mother Kick Ass On Nightline

1.28.05 By Clay Claiborne, Anti-Allawi Group

Did you see last night's Nightline on ABC? I think Ted Koppel's 90 minute special town meeting "Iraq: Why Stay?" may well prove to mark a sort of turning point in U.S. public opinion on the war.

First there is the fact that they felt compelled to have such a show in the first place and fore go all those commercials!

Then there is the way it turned out!

From the audience, a Congresswoman put out there, unchallenged, that over 100,000 Iraqi civilian have been killed.

A Vietnam vet that is opposed to this war, stated, on ABC Nightline, that over 3,000,000 Vietnamese and "God knows how many Laotians and Cambodians " died in that war and was not challenged!

He also tore into Richard Pearl and the pro-war Senator to he wild cheers from the audience.

When Ted Koppel thought he was calling on a pro-war military mother for a rebuttal , he got a military mom that opposed the war instead.

When he did find the military mom he was looking for it was so obvious that she was reading from a prepared statement.

Did ABC lose control?

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.

Your Blood For Their Oil Profits

Iraqis Wrestle With How To Exploit Oil
(Los Angeles Times, January 28, 2005, Pg. 7)
Amid the broader debate on Iraq's future ahead of its elections this weekend, **a number of prominent candidates friendly to the U.S. occupation are expressing support for wide-ranging foreign participation in Iraq's fields, a prospect likely to hearten big international oil companies even as the idea faces stiff resistance among many Iraqis.**

Halliburton Oilfield Services Rising Among Biggest U.S. Defense Contractors
(Bloomberg.com, January 27, 2005)
Halliburton, the world's second-biggest oilfield services company, became the sixth-largest U.S. military contractor last year on the strength of its work to help rebuild Iraq [translation: get into the oil fields] and care for U.S. troops [translation: overcharge for food they never provided], the Pentagon said.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Unexploded Bomb: Huge Majority Of Iraqis Want U.S. Out January 30

1.28.05 WASHINGTON (AFP)

Zogby polled 805 Iraqi adults from January 19-23 throughout Iraq, including the cities of Baghdad, Hilla, Karbala and Kirkuk, as well as the provinces of Diala and Anbar. The survey has a 3.6 plus or minus percentage-point margin of error.

The poll showed that 82 percent of Sunnis and 69 percent of Shiites want US forces to withdraw "either immediately or after an elected government is in place." [Election is January 30.]

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

Car Bomb Kills 4 Power Station Occupation Cops

Photo Copyright Getty Images

January 28, 2005 Agence France-Presse & UPI & By Sameer N. Yacoub, Associated Press

Four police were killed in a car bomb attack at a power station in the southern Baghdad neighbourhood of Dura, police and medical sources said.

"At around 9:00 am (1700 AEDT), a black GMC approached the checkpoint at the entrance of the power plant," a policeman who witnessed the attack said. "There was only a driver inside the car, his face was masked.

Medical sources at the emergency department of Baghdad's Yarmuk hospital confirmed the death toll and added that three others policemen and a civilian were wounded in the attack.

Police opened fire on the speeding car in an attempt to stop it just as it burst into flames.

Hours later, another car bomb exploded on the neighborhood's main road, causing some damage to a school where voters are to cast ballots Sunday.

Bodies Of Six Allawi Soldiers Dumped In Ramadi

Jan 28 (AFP)

The bullet-riddled bodies of six Iraqi soldiers were found Friday in the western city of Ramadi, where two more people were killed and eight wounded in fighting between Iraqi forces and insurgents.

"The bodies of six soldiers, with their dog-tags, were found in central Ramadi," a police officer told AFP on condition of anonymity.

Iraqi troops traded fire with the Sunni Arab insurgents Friday, in a gunfight in which a soldier and a civilian were killed, Lieutenant Colonel Mahmud Mohammed said.

IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE
END THE OCCUPATION

Assorted Resistance Attacks Kill Assorted Collaborators

28 January 2005 Aljazeera & By Sameer N. Yacoub, Associated Press

Near Kirkuk, 250km north of Baghdad, an Iraqi police officer was killed and two civilians were wounded in a host of attacks on buildings to be used as voting stations.

The officer was shot dead by attackers as he stood guard at one voting station in the east of the city, said the police.

According to the Iraqi police force's General Sarhad Qadir on Thursday, the first bomb exploded at 8.10am near the police academy as a US military convoy was passing. He said there were no casualties or serious damage.

A polling station was also bombed about 10km north of Kirkuk and two more in the east of the city were damaged.

In Samarra, several people were killed by a car bomb. While AFP, quoting an Iraqi police official, said seven had died in the attack, Reuters, quoting a US military officer, said three had been killed.

The bomber blew up the car as an army patrol passed near a polling station in the centre of Samarra, north of Baghdad, Lieutenant Colonel Mahmoud Muhammad of the Iraqi police told AFP.

The car bomb killed an Iraqi soldier and two civilians, a US officer told Reuters.

Doctors at the local hospital said four Iraqi soldiers and two civilians were wounded in the blast.

An Iraqi soldier was killed and another wounded when their patrol vehicle went over a mine near Samarra, north of Baghdad, police said.

Just hours later, a car bomb exploded next to the governor's offices in Baquba, killing one person.

According to photojournalist Nikola Solic, the explosion set several cars on fire and threw a body into the middle of the street.

One man was wounded in an attack on another polling station at al-Dur and another civilian was injured in a mortar attack on a voting centre in Tikrit.

Bombs blasted three more schools designated as polling sites in the city of Beiji, 155 miles north of Baghdad.

In southern Iraq, a roadside bomb hit an Iraqi police vehicle, killing one officer and wounding three others, said police Lt. Col. Karim al-Zaydi. The attack occurred in the town of Zubair, south of the port city of Basra.

A bomb was set off near an Iraqi military convoy in Mahmudiya, killing five people and wounding 15,hospital sources said.

A doctor added that four soldiers were among the dead and that three of the wounded were in critical condition.

Resistance Group Denounces Killing Voters; “The True Struggle With The Enemy Occupiers”

BAGHDAD, January 27 By Samir Haddad, IOL Correspondent (IslamOnline.net)

Three days ahead of the controversial vote, a leading Iraqi resistance group vowed not to target polling stations or attack innocent Iraqis, saying the real battle is against the occupiers.

In a statement, a copy of which obtained by IslamOnline.net, the Salah Al-Dine Brigades, the military wing of the Islamic Front for Resistance, said they would not be dragged into a battle against their own people.

The group pledged to avoid targeting polling stations or being involved in spilling the blood of innocent civilians.

“We are keen not to harm the lives of all Iraqis regardless of their sects and races -- that is an order for the armed wing of the group to follow,” said the two-page statement.

“We should not be dragged into side battles which do not affect the true struggle with the enemy occupiers,” it added.

In its statement, the Iraqi resistance group dismissed the elections as a purely American demand that would help resolve the Iraqi dilemma.

“It is meant to legitimize the occupation and turn it into a fact on the ground,” it added.

The Islamic Front for Resistance warned that the National Assembly would be used to rubberstamp all security and economic agreements with the occupation forces.

Iraqis In U.S. Slam Fake Elections, “It Is All Staged To Serve The Purpose Of The Occupation.”

28 January 2005, By Indlieb Farazi, Aljazeera

Less than 25% of eligible Iraqi expatriates living in 14 countries selected as polling centres outside Iraq have registered to vote in Sunday's elections.

Mais Karim, a 27-year-old statistician in London, said: "I didn't register to vote because as Iraqis living abroad I don't think we have been exposed to enough information regarding the different parties and candidates, so I don't feel I can make an informed decision.

"Also, as I no longer live in Iraq I don't think I have a right to vote for change in the country. I think Iraqis living in the country have a far greater right to choose what is best for them and how the country is run. I don't want to vote and swing the results possibly away from what may be best for Iraqis still living there."

Bassam Aldhahir left Iraq in 1992 because of the hardships involved with living in the country under sanctions.

He said: "Before the 1991 war, things were much better, after the sanctions things got more difficult in Iraq. But still Iraq under sanctions was better than Iraq occupied by US forces. OK, we lacked human rights, but in terms of security and services to the people, the system worked."

The 27-year-old pharmacist from London echoed some of Karim's sentiments. He said: "I haven't registered to vote as I feel all the names on the list have had no correspondence with the real world.

"They are literally just 200 odd names on a list. How can I vote blindly? I have heard nothing of these people, who they are or what their policies are."

Aldhahir said he would vote if the elections had UN observers present.

"I want a visible UN presence. How do we know that the elections are free and fair? **Personally I think it is just a scam to appease the Iraqi people. They are not democratic elections.**

"Could you see a hardcore Islamic leader winning the elections? That would never happen because the US wants a Western government.

"I would like to see someone win the elections who has lived in Iraq, lived through the crisis, and who actually represents the Iraqi people. Not someone who has disappeared for 15 years, who has no idea what the people have been through and comes back using Western principles.

"Iraq is not a Western country, it is a Muslim country and should be governed so. You can't push Western ideas of democracy on to a Muslim country," he said.

Ali Khalil, a 28-year-old journalist from Amman, Jordan, is reluctant to vote for similar reasons.

He said: "I haven't registered to vote as I don't believe in these elections. I think it is all staged to serve the purpose of the occupation.

"I am pro-democracy, I want the Iraqi people to be able to vote for who they would like to see in power, but not like this, not under a military power controlling the country.

"Although the IOM puts the number of eligible Iraqis at 180,000, I think there are many more, perhaps close to 300,000 and out of this there are only 20,166 Iraqis registered to vote. That shows how many people have faith in these elections."

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

'Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number –
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you –
Ye are many - they are few."
-Percy Bysshe Shelley

OCCUPATION REPORT

"Shame" "How Could You Ask That Here?"

Jan. 28, 2005 By Hannah Allam, KNIGHT RIDDER & 1.29.05 Patrick Cockburn, The Independent

Baghdad kicked into panic mode three days before the election, with terrified Iraqis stockpiling food and evacuating homes near polling places on Thursday for fear that insurgents would make good on threats to disrupt Sunday's vote with violence.

The remnants of campaign posters for interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi flapped in the wind at bus stops in Adhemiya. Allawi's face was burned off of one; his eyes were gouged out on another.

Walls in the area were covered with graffiti supporting fighters in the western city of Fallujah, now controlled by American forces after a bloody battle with insurgents.

A 29-year-old man from Adhemiya who gave his name only as Ehab was asked the location of the nearest polling center.

"Shame," he hissed in response. "How could you ask that here?"

The capital's notorious traffic snarls were gone Thursday, and residents locked themselves inside at dusk, even though the interim government's strict curfew and ban on civilian cars don't begin until Saturday.

Local newspapers announced Internet-only editions because printing-press employees won't leave their homes starting Friday.

Shops sold out of large burlap bags of rice, potatoes, lentils and other Iraqi staples. Men lugged home huge canisters of fuel and kerosene. Women stripped duct tape over their windows to prevent the glass from shattering in explosions.

Travel agencies were packed all week with families desperate to make it to Jordan or Syria before the borders are completely sealed Saturday.

Iraqi bus drivers who dropped passengers at checkpoints along the border said they found no one waiting for rides back into Iraq. The airport also will be closed until after the election.

Azhar Khalil, 32, said the customers streaming into his agency, which runs a shuttle service to neighboring countries, bought return tickets dated a week or 10 days after the election.

"It's crazy, like nothing I've ever witnessed," he said.

"I was running out of cars and drivers. A car cost $150 in the morning. By noon it was $220, and by evening it was $340."

Several Iraqis interviewed yesterday said that they saw the election as a movie directed by the Americans to impress the outside world. "It is like a film," said Abu Draid, an unemployed carpenter. "It is the Americans who will control the next government whatever happens."

I Vote For Electricity...

January 27, 2005, By Sheek Abbas, Anti-Allawi Group

Ayham al-Samarrai, the Minister of Electricity, said yesterday "the vote all over Iraq might be only 25 per cent. I asked 18 senior managers in my ministry if they were going to vote; only one said he would."
http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle_east/story.jsp?story=604591

I wonder how 1 out of 18 makes 25%!!!!!!!!

(and we pray for electricity?)

One More Clueless Major; "It Has Not Gone To Plan"

1/28/2005 By THOM SHANKER & CHRISTINE HAUSER, The Day Publishing Co

"Mosul is a hot spot," said Salem Isa, the head of security for Nineveh province. "We have special security plans and will try to take all the possible steps to get them to the boxes peacefully."

It will not be easy. **For example, even handling election materials is considered so dangerous that ballots and ballot boxes will be distributed to the 80 polling centers under escort by armored U.S. military convoys. "The military has to do it because of the security situation," said Khaled Kazar, the head of the elections commission here. "No one would ever volunteer to move this stuff."**

Much damage had been done here, and elections officials were left scrambling to catch up. Mosul's 700 election workers, threatened by insurgents, walked off the job. A warehouse full of ballot papers was attacked and burned in December.

"It has not gone to plan," said Maj. Anthony Cruz, who works as the liaison officer between the Iraqi elections commission in Mosul and the U.S. military. **[Yes, it has gone according to plan. The resistance plan. Which is the only plan working in Iraq these days. Or ever will.]**

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Soldier Shoots Dead Afghan Occupation Troops In Base Attack

(Los Angeles Times, January 28, 2005)
An Afghan soldier opened fire inside a U.S. military base and killed five Afghan occupation troops before another soldier gunned him down, authorities said. Six other Afghan soldiers were wounded.

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