

GI SPECIAL 3A34:



NO MORE. TIME TO COME HOME.

Duffle Bags

From: Soldier X, Iraq

Sent: Tuesday, February 01, 2005

Subject: Duffle Bags

As I leave my metal box, that I have called home for the last year, I carry two duffle bags.

The first is full of the gear and clothing that has offered me survival and protection.

The other bag is harder to see with the uncompassionate eye. I have filled the second with guilt. The shame for the part I have played in this campaign in Iraq. It is more useless then the first. However, it is a burden I must carry.

The ritual a soldier goes through to fill a duffle with the maximum amount of gear is a wrestling match. It took every trick in the book to fit all my soul debt into the long green bag.

First I rolled everything tight and squeezed it down pinching and tucking to wedge it in. As it filled I punched the sides. I held the edges and smashed my foot into the opening. I

dropped it again and again like packing cigarettes. After fitting all my bad karma inside I had to sit on it while pulling and straining to clip the top closed. Out of breath I finally collapsed on top of the bulging bundle.

The duffle will be dragged around with me perhaps for the rest of my life. From home to home. Town to town. Until I am too old to lift it. Then I will lay down beside the large duffle and crawl inside to die.

So when you see a soldier returning home with a duffle bag at a bus stop, an airport baggage claim, or being stuffed into a taxi, think about what is inside the bag. It might be rolled clothing of browns and tans. Or, it could be dark secrets that he will never reveal to his family.

The soldier will not put his burden upon you.

But if you feel any responsibility for the weight of it you may carry it for a while if it would make you feel more decent.

And if you forced him to open it perhaps every one can take a little with them to relieve the strain of those who served.

It might be a reminder that we are all at fault for America's role in the violence in the Middle-East.

However, a soldier is trained to sacrifice.

He will take the burden to the grave or make a grave out of it if he must.

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)

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

MARINE KILLED IN AL ANBAR PROVINCE

February 2, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 05-02-01C

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq -- A Marine assigned to I Marine Expeditionary Force was killed in action Feb. 2.

York Wounded

02-01-2005 Marilyn Herndon, The Rogersville Review

MOORESBERG—John York, of Mooresburg, received word this week that his son, William “Billy” York, was wounded in action in Samarra, northwest of Baghdad, Iraq on January 27.

York, who has attained the military rank of E-4, was wounded by a bullet from an insurgent in the Sunni Triangle, according to his father.

John York added that at the time of incident, his son only had 16 days left before he was scheduled to leave Iraq.

The young soldier was shot in the leg and is expected to make a full and complete recovery.

Occupation Official Killed

Feb 2, 2005 The Sun

Barbara Heald, 60, sister of Margaret Geis of Yuma, was one of two Americans killed in the bombing just prior to the Iraqi elections.

Heald was a defense contracts negotiator for the Iraq Project and Contracting Office.

Heald worked and lived in Saddam Hussein's former palace within the Green Zone, a heavily protected area in central Baghdad. Geis said this palace became the embassy after the handover of sovereignty in June.

The mission of the the Iraq Project and Contracting Office is contracting for and delivering services, supplies and infrastructure identified within the \$18.4 billion Iraqi Relief and Reconstruction Fund.

TROOP NEWS

“Well mr blair”

From: Rose Gentle
To: GI Special
Sent: February 02, 2005 5:45 PM
Subject: Re: GI Special 3A32: The Cold Numbers

[This is a message from a great Scotslady, Rose Gentle. Her son was killed in Iraq. She leads a campaign to bring all the Scots and other troops home from Iraq, now, and to make the politicians pay for what they have done. T]

well bush is at it agen iran is next,

well mr blair are you going to be bushes puppet agen,

i have your sons dun thare training yet, i hope so/

or, will dad not let them,

no son, you will cum home in a body bag, mum would go mad,

well how the hell do you think i feel.

so mr bush, dus iran have w.o.m.d too.

well mr blair i think you better think on this one.

or dus sume one do it for you,

if you love the troops so much, how dont you.

go to iraq and spend sum tiem with them,

not one day. **get the troops out,**

when will the troops in iraq get thare medels,

or will you get yours off mr bush before them,

T
god bless the troops and cum home soon.

Join The Air Force And Become A Prison Guard

(San Antonio Express-News, January 30, 2005)

Hundreds of airmen began helping the Army run Iraq's biggest POW camp earlier this month, marking what may be the first time the Air Force has guarded enemy prisoners. Cobbled together from Air Force bases around the country, troops from the 732nd Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron received their first briefings about two weeks ago at Camp Bucca, where 5,000 inmates are supervised by 1,200 MPs and airmen.

Top U.S. Marine General Says It Is "Fun To Shoot Some People"

[Thanks to Phil G. who sent this in.]

02/02/05 "NBC" -- SAN DIEGO

At a panel discussion in San Diego Tuesday, a top Marine general tells an audience that, among other things, it is "fun to shoot some people."

The comment, made by Lt. Gen. James Mattis, came in reference to fighting insurgents in Iraq. He went on to say, "Actually, its a lot of fun to fight. You know, it's a hell of a hoot. I like brawling."

"You go into Afghanistan, you got guys who slap women around for 5 years because they didn't wear a veil," Mattis continued. "You know, guys like that ain't got no manhood left anyway. So it's a hell of a lot of fun to shoot them."

About 200 people gathered for the discussion, held at the San Diego Convention Center. While many military members laughed at the comments, a military expert interviewed by NBC 7/39 called the comments "flippant."

"I was a little surprised," said Retired Vice Adm. Edward H. Martin. "I don't think any of us who have ever fought in wars liked to kill anybody."

Mattis leads Camp Pendleton's 1st Marine Division in Iraq. He is in charge of the Marine Corps combat development and is based in Quantico, Va.

IRR Unexpectedly Called To Duty; "Lawsuits Are Increasing And So Is The Number Of Soldiers Going Absent Without Leave"

Last year more than 30,000 phone calls inundated the GI Rights hotline run by the Military Law Task Force, a group of lawyers who defend members of the U.S. Armed Forces stationed both at home and abroad. Marti Hiken, a task force attorney, said the hotline currently receives about 3,000 calls a month.

“There are days when this phone is ringing off the hook,” Hiken said. “In terms of this war, I’ve been surprised with how many Marines have called. They’re usually gung ho.”

The troops call and tell Hiken that they want to come home, that they’re on their third term of deployment, that they don’t believe the administration’s reasons for why they are still there.

“It’s just a mess,” she said.

2005-01-23 Keri Mitchell, The Baytown Sun

Everything was falling into place for Michael La Coste.

He recently started a great job with a respected medical school. He was one semester away from completing a double master’s degree in health and business administration. He and his wife had waited nearly five years to start a family and hoped to have children after he graduated.

But plans for their future came to a screeching halt when La Coste opened a letter that reopened his past as a U.S. Army officer — a life he thought was over and done.

The words “report for duty” and “Operation Iraqi Freedom” jumped off the page and stunned the 29-year-old La Coste. He served three years in the Texas National Guard and three years in the Army before completing his active duty and entering the Individual Ready Reserve corps to finish up his eight-year contract.

La Coste moved to Baytown, started graduate school, and easily transitioned into civilian life. Unlike guardsmen or reservists, members of the IRR receive no compensation from the Army and are not required to undergo training.

La Coste tried to resign his commission last year when he thought his eight years were up, but the Army denied his request, stipulating that his three years as a guardsman did not count toward his contract.

Now, instead of graduation and children, he faces the prospect of a year and a half in Iraq, and maybe more if the Army requires it. La Coste said he is “frustrated” but remains upbeat despite the circumstances.

“Plans change,” La Coste said. “Your civilian life is basically placed on hold, and you’re conscripted to the military. I’m just another person who volunteered a long time ago, and now I’m being called up to Iraq.”

The Army assigns active status to members of the IRR, but for most of them, when they finish their active duty assignments, they don't plan to look back. La Coste said the IRR consists of "people who can be trained up a little quicker than draftees," and it's "pretty unlikely" to be called up.

"I didn't think they would dig that deep into the reserves, but I think that's where we're at," he said. "We've exhausted the active duty, the reserves, the National Guard, and now we're digging into the IRR. **Hopefully it stops there.**"

More than 110,000 former soldiers are members of the IRR. Since last August, the Army has mailed 3,800 letters similar to the one La Coste received, and Lt. Col. Pamela Hart, Army spokeswoman, said that number would eventually reach 5,600.

The military doesn't try to hide the fact that anyone who volunteers could be summoned for duty, said Charles Sheehan-Miles, executive director of watchdog group Veterans for Common Sense. Members of the IRR make this commitment when they enlist and know this possibility exists.

"But the expectation people have is the IRR is not going to get called up for any length of time except if there's a genuine national emergency," Sheehan-Miles said.

Whether Operation Iraqi Freedom falls into this category is a key question, he said, one that is currently being asked in lawsuits filed by the Military Law Task Force of the National Lawyers Guild.

Roughly 20,000 IRR members were deployed in 1991 during the Gulf War, but at that time there was much broader consensus in the country that the United States' actions made sense, Sheehan-Miles said.

"And it wasn't open-ended deployment. It was a very concrete military goal: go from point A to point B, destroy everything at point B, and go home," he said.

There also was a much larger Army during the Gulf War. The total number of soldiers in today's force, including reservists and guardsmen, is less than the number of active duty soldiers deployed in the Gulf War, Sheehan-Miles said.

This shortage of soldiers has created a situation where nearly 50 percent of ground forces in Iraq are acquired from the reserves, he said. And the leaders who committed the nation to war are acting inconsistently, Sheehan-Miles said, by cutting taxes and slashing the Department of Veteran Affairs budget.

"We're facing an unprecedented problem in terms of manpower right now, and it's aggravated by the fact that the administration is basically saying, sorry, we're not going to increase the size of the force," he said. "We need to either dramatically increase the size of the military or scale back our commitments overseas."

If not, Sheehan-Miles said, there will continue to be soldiers who sign up for a four-year enlistment and receive orders to deploy on the third year and 350th day. The number of officers denied over the past couple years when they have tried to resign their commissions has dramatically increased, he said.

“I know one guy who has been in for seven years on a four-year commitment,” Sheehan-Miles said. “This is not what people necessarily signed up for.”

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“There are days when this phone is ringing off the hook,” Hiken said. “In terms of this war, I’ve been surprised with how many Marines have called. They’re usually gung ho.”

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“It’s just a mess,” she said.

The high numbers of reservists and guardsmen being called up are making this war different from any before and giving rise to special problems, Hiken said. **At least 15 reservists and guardsmen are involved in lawsuits challenging the Pentagon’s “stop-loss” policy, which requires them to extend their enlistments in times of national emergency. This program has been widely criticized as a backdoor draft.**

Among other things, the lawsuits contend that the stop-loss policy, which was created three days after Sept. 11, 2001, no longer applies to the war in Iraq because the regime was overthrown and therefore does not present any threat of terrorism to the United States.

The lawsuits are increasing, Hiken said, and so is the number of soldiers going absent without leave.

“They put themselves into jeopardy, but they’re taking a stand,” she said. “Many of them feel that what’s happening to them is wrong.”

Mainer Injured In Iraq Improving

February 02, 2005 AIMEE DOLLOFF, Bangor Daily News

Prospects are improving for a Maine soldier who was critically injured last December in Iraq, Sgt. Harold Gray, 34, of Penobscot.

The soldier suffered serious injuries to both eyes and to his left arm and has shrapnel in his brain and chest.

"He's doing better every day," Gray's wife, Laurie Gray of Penobscot, said Tuesday from Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. "It's big steps for him, but it's little steps for everybody else."

Gray underwent six hours of neurosurgery in Iraq before being stabilized and flown to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany. After doctors concluded that he was stable enough to travel, the soldier was flown to Walter Reed.

Laurie Gray has been with her husband since he arrived back in the United States and said she plans to stay with him until he's ready to come home. Other family members have been visiting the soldier when possible, she said.

Gray's most recent improvements have been sitting and standing on his own, according to his wife.

"He's standing on his own and he's supporting himself, so it's very exciting," Laurie Gray said. "He's already done more than any of them thought he was going to."

The soldier also is breathing on his own and is no longer considered to be in a coma, his wife said.

Doctors are unsure if Gray can see, and the soldier still isn't talking. Surgery on his right eye has been scheduled for Thursday, and from there, the next step will be to head to a brain rehabilitation facility.

Gray's three daughters from a previous marriage still have not seen their father. He is out of intensive care and up on the seventh floor of the hospital, but children still aren't allowed, Laurie Gray said.

End Taxes On Military Pay

1.31.05

Letters To The Editor
Army Times

I am proposing that all military pay be made tax-free. The amount of tax that the government makes off the low pay of the military is a drop in the bucket.

I believe that if all military pay were tax-free, we would not have the strength problem that we have in all the services.

I have known many soldiers over the years who get more excited about having their pay tax-free than they do about the hazardous duty pay and other add-ons. They get excited about it even though they are risking their lives.

Imagine how happy they would be if the pay were tax-free even when they were back at home station or at their home base.

Many have said the military should be paid more. Here is a way without the Defense Department's budget needing to go up.

Imagine how much more these new enlistment and re-enlistment bonuses would mean.

1st Sgt. Troy Steward
Buffalo, N.Y.

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.

Arkansan Soldier Who Sued To Stay Home Calls Re-Enlistment Story Reports 'Completely Untrue'

(Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, Little Rock, January 27, 2005)

A soldier who sued the government for extending his yearlong military contract denied reports that he has volunteered to re-enlist. The soldier, Spc. David Qualls, Morrilton, Ark, and seven others filed suit in December challenging the military's stop-loss policy, which delays departures from service to bolster troops during wartime. **The case is pending.**

Pakistan Calls Col. Cardon B. Crawford A “Ludicrous” Liar

February 02, 2005 By Sadaqat Jan, Associated Press

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — **Pakistan's army on Wednesday denied that it helped direct U.S. artillery fire from Afghanistan against militants across the border in Pakistan, after a U.S. military official cited it as a new advance in cooperation in the fight against the Taliban and al-Qaida.**

Pakistan has been a key U.S. ally in the war on terrorism, including the hunt for militants who have found refuge in the border region with Afghanistan. But U.S. combat troops are not allowed to operate inside Pakistan, and military cooperation remains a politically sensitive issue here.

In Washington on Tuesday, Army Col. Cardon B. Crawford, the director of operations for the U.S. military command in Afghanistan, told reporters that Pakistani forces had “adjusted our artillery fire into the Pakistani side of the border to go after anti-coalition militia.”

A Pakistan army spokesman denied it.

“This report is baseless and ludicrous. There is no truth in it,” Brig. Shahjehan Ali Khan said.

Forgive Insurance Debt: Gouging Military Families For Payment “Is Absurd”

January 31, 2005 Editorial, Army Times

The Family Servicemembers’ Group Life Insurance program, launched in November 2001, provides automatic coverage to all married service members unless they decline it in writing.

This is a case of government officials erring on the side of caution in an attempt to ensure no service member is left bereft by a spouse’s death for failing to fill out a form.

But now, a little more than three years after the family version of SGLI was launched, Defense Finance and Accounting System officials have stumbled upon the fact that about 9,000 troops never declined the automatic coverage — and never paid monthly premiums, either. These individuals’ spouses were not properly registered in the Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System, the database that determines eligibility for military benefits.

Naturally, the government wants them to pay up. But that solution just doesn’t wash.

It’s possible some of these troops may have been gaming the system to get coverage without paying for it. But the bet here is that most didn’t realize they had the coverage.

Yes, they made a mistake by failing to opt out. But for three years, the government also erred by failing to collect monthly allotments to pay for the coverage. Had troops been charged, they might well have opted out of the coverage.

The problem here is a program begun in good faith but poorly executed. Now the government is telling troops, “We made a mistake, you made a mistake, but we think yours is bigger than ours, so the burden is on you.”

If a spouse dies without the service member paying Family SGLI premiums, certainly no one would begrudge the government deducting them retroactively from the insurance payout.

But to now come after those whose spouses are still alive, three years after this program started, demanding that they pay hundreds of dollars in retroactive life insurance premiums for coverage they may never have wanted — or even known they had — is absurd.

Soldier Blinded In Iraq Charged In Alleged Police Assault

Feb. 02, 2005 Associated Press, UNIONTOWN, Pa.

A soldier who was blinded by shrapnel while serving in Iraq allegedly punched one police officer and injured another officer's eye in an altercation outside a bar, officials said.

Sam Ross Jr., 22, of Dunbar, was charged with aggravated assault, criminal mischief, disorderly conduct and public drunkenness for scuffling with a woman, two men and two police officers early Saturday outside Uniontown's Highland House bar and restaurant.

Ross was yelling at a woman and holding her against a wall in an alley when two men came to her aid, the criminal complaint said. Ross punched one man and bit another before tumbling with one of the men on the roof of a car, according to the complaint.

After police arrived, Ross hit one of the officers in the face and used his thumb to break the eyeglasses of the other officer, injuring his eye, the complaint said.

Ross did not return a phone message left at his home by The Associated Press on Tuesday night. A preliminary hearing was scheduled for Monday.

Ross was a combat engineer with the 82nd Airborne Division when he was wounded on May 18, 2003, while disposing of munitions near Baghdad. On his way to a disposal pit, he was cradling a mine in a sand-filled shovel when it exploded.

The accident left him with no sight and a prosthetic leg that starts 6 inches below his left knee.

They All Want Branch Insignia

1.31.05

Letters To The Editor

Army Times

On the Program Executive Office Soldier Web site, peosoldier.army.mil, in the “frequently asked questions” section regarding the new Army Combat Uniform, there is the following statement:

“Q: For officers, where do we affix our branch affiliation?”

A: Branch has been eliminated from the Army Combat Uniform.”

I am an officer serving in Iraq and have yet to hear any officer, warrant officer or noncommissioned officer here in Baghdad who agrees with this policy.

Officers have earned the right to wear branches on the uniform. It is a tradition as old as the Army itself.

Maj. Danny W. Sample Jr.
Camp Liberty, Iraq

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Occupation Cops Set Up “Search And Evade” Checkpoints: Resistance? Hey, Go That Way, No Problem

January 30, 2005 By Khalid Jarrar, SecretsinBaghdad.blogspot

Today, was full of explosions.

I didn't leave the house, and the same goes for so many families.

There is a very funny thing that I noticed in Baghdad, when you face a police check point, you find a small street to the right, right before the check point!

Well, its in the manual, if you don't know, that check point should be put in a place where you cant neither turn back nor go anywhere once you see the checkpoint, so once you see it its over, you cant avoid it, but the Iraqi police understand that

so many people carry personal weapons, and maybe some of the resistance people would be going from that road loaded with RPGs, if that's the case, they are willing usually to attack any check point to go through, so the police just want to go home safe, why go through all the trouble?

Put the check point after a turn to the right! So then anyone with weapons goes to the right, anyone without weapons goes through the check point, and everyone is happy and satisfied!

The way the voting happened, is that you go to the voting center, and you go to the man that is your ration dealer, the one that you take the ration from him every month, so you tell him that you are gonna vote, he marks your name on his list, and then you vote!!!

That way the government will know exactly who voted and who didn't, two dealers said that the next years' card won't be given to those who didn't vote..

Pipeline Blown Up For 348,024th Time



2005-02-02 Middle East Online, SAMARRA, Iraq

An oil pipeline linking two of Iraq's major refineries was attacked Wednesday near Samarra, police and oil sources said.

The pipeline linking the Baiji refinery north of Baghdad to the Dura refinery in the capital was hit by two bombs which exploded and caused a fire, police lieutenant colonel Mahmud Mohammed said.

An official at the Baiji refinery said the pipeline was one of eight conveying oil to Baghdad.

"The sabotaged pipeline has a capacity of 7,000 barrels per day," Majid Mamnul said, without specifying the extent of damage or how long repairs would take.

The cluster of pipelines, a crucial source of power for the capital, has been targeted by relentless attacks, which are an important part of the insurgency's activities.

7 Allawi Cops, Guards Killed

February 2 AFP & Aljazeera

One soldier was killed and another wounded when an Iraqi Army patrol was the target of a bomb attack around dawn near Dhuluiya, about 70 kilometres north of Baghdad, the army said.

Two Iraqi policemen and a soldier were ambushed and killed in two attacks in the city of Baquba, local police said on Wednesday.

The two policemen were killed in a drive-by shooting while shopping, and died instantly. The soldier was killed near a city hospital, police said of the incidents which occurred on Tuesday.

South of Baghdad in Hilla, capital of Babil province, a police major and his driver were shot dead and one policeman was shot north of Baghdad in Tamiya, the source said.

Judge Says Iraqi Resistance Fighters Not Terrorists; Guerilla Activity OK

January 26 (IslamOnline.net & News Agencies)

An Italian judge has dropped charges of terrorism against five Arab citizens accused of sending fighters to Iraq to resist the US occupation forces, a ruling that drew fire from the pro-US Italian government of Silvio Berlusconi.

Judge Clementina Forleo said Monday, January 24, in documents seen by Reuters that there was no concrete evidence the four Tunisians and one Moroccan were involved in anything beyond what might be considered as "guerrilla" activities.

"Historically, the activity of the cells in question coincided with the United States' attack on Iraq," Reuters quoted a statement explaining Forleo's judgment.

“Numerous intercepted conversations refer to that event, and to the need to stem as much as possible its foreseeable negative impact by helping the ‘brothers’ in the conflict zone, either economically or by sending combatants to strengthen their armed groups.

“It has not been proven that these paramilitary structures provided for concrete programs with targets exceeding guerrilla activity,” the missive added.

The five Arab citizens were arrested last year under a law introduced after the September 11 attacks on charges of sending fighters to war-torn Iraq and planning attacks in Europe.

But the judge said there was no evidence of planning attacks in Europe and that sending fighters or funds to Iraq did not amount to terrorism.

A cohort of prominent Saudi scholars have further defended resistance against the occupation forces in Iraq as a legitimate right, prohibiting cooperation with the occupiers and collaboration against resistance groups.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

"The light at the end of the tunnel is a man with a flashlight yelling, "Go back! Go back!" Sol Stein

The Death Of Empires

January 30, 2005 By ANNA BERNASEK, NYTimes

When great powers have been threatened with decline, they have tended to increase their spending on security; as a result, they starved their economies of needed investment. Such a short-term strategy ultimately cannot be sustained, and the fall can be abrupt.

In the end, Britain's enormous borrowing to pay for two world wars was simply too much for its economy. At the close of World War II, British foreign debt stood at \$40 billion, roughly the same size as its entire economy in 1948.

"The British lost their empire because they went bust," Professor Ferguson said. "With a potential fiscal crisis looming in the United States, it should be a lesson to us all."

The Future Of The Antiwar Movement

By MEREDITH KOLODNER. Excerpt from: January - February 2005 International Socialist Review Issue 39, Meredith Kolodner is a member of the International Socialist Organization in New York City.

Resistance

In their haste to disassociate themselves from the Iraqi resistance, some in the antiwar movement are in danger of forgetting a basic lesson of history: Occupation breeds legitimate resistance. Writer Arundhati Roy explains:

An illegal invasion. A brutal occupation in the name of liberation. The rewriting of laws that allow the shameless appropriation of the country's wealth and resources by corporations allied to the occupation, and now the charade of a local "Iraqi government."

For these reasons, it is absurd to condemn the resistance to the U.S. occupation in Iraq, as being masterminded by terrorists or insurgents or supporters of Saddam Hussein. **After all if the United States were invaded and occupied, would everybody who fought to liberate it be a terrorist or an insurgent or a Bushite? The Iraqi resistance is fighting on the frontlines of the battle against Empire. And therefore that battle is our battle.**

Like most resistance movements, it combines a motley range of assorted factions. Former Baathists, liberals, Islamists, fed-up collaborationists, communists, etc. Of course, it is riddled with opportunism, local rivalry, demagoguery, and criminality.

But if we are only going to support pristine movements, then no resistance will be worthy of our purity.

This is not to say that we shouldn't ever criticize resistance movements. Many of them suffer from a lack of democracy, from the iconization of their "leaders," a lack of transparency, a lack of vision and direction.

But most of all they suffer from vilification, repression, and lack of resources. Before we prescribe how a pristine Iraqi resistance must conduct their secular, feminist, democratic, nonviolent battle, we should shore up our end of the resistance by forcing the U.S. and its allies to withdraw from Iraq.

The primary responsibility of the antiwar movement is to remove the occupation so that the people of Iraq have the same rights any other people should to determine what their lives, their society, and their government look like, free of bombs, bullets and American dictates. This may not always be the easiest argument to make, especially in the U.S., where the tradition of supporting "the right to self-determination" has been so weakened that even the phrase itself sounds arcane.

But regardless of the political tenor of the Iraqi resistance, or our understanding of it, it is currently this resistance that is standing between Iraq and its would-be conquerors. "It is the Iraqi resistance that will determine the future of the country," writes author and activist Tariq Ali,

It is their actions targeting both foreign soldiers and corporate mercenaries that has made the occupation untenable.

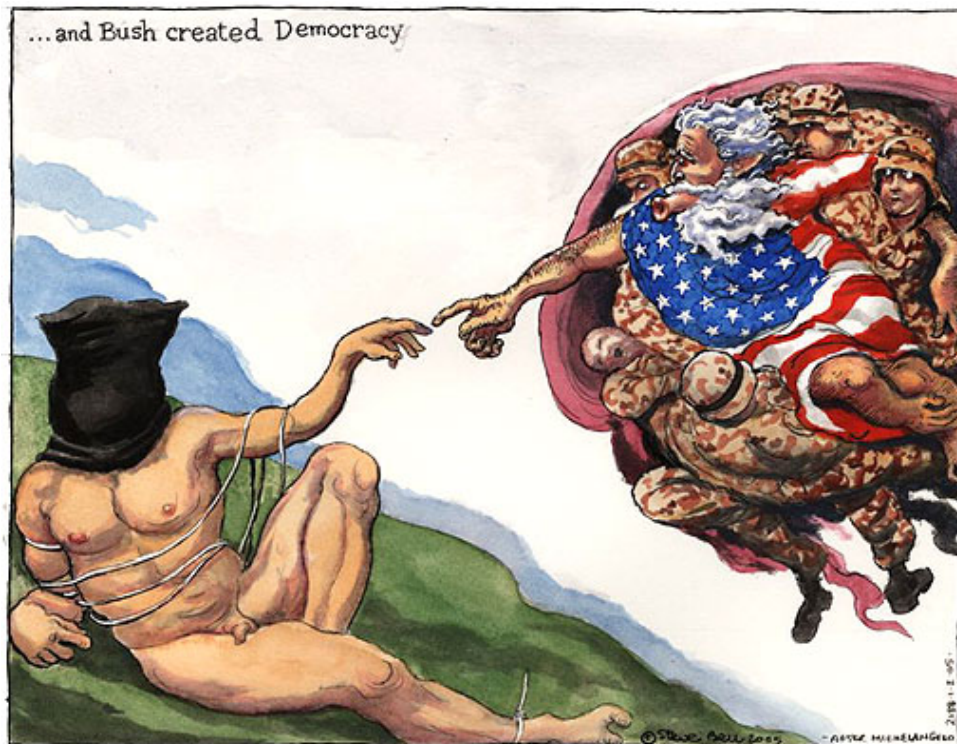
It is their presence that has prevented Iraq from being relegated to the inside pages of the print media and forgotten by TV.

It is the courage of the poor of Baghdad, Basra and Falluja that has exposed the political leaders of the West who supported this enterprise.

What direction the resistance takes will be determined by the people of Iraq.

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.

OCCUPATION REPORT



[Thanks to Ashley S. who sent this in.]

Breaking Down Doors To Find Voters

My favorite quote from today's coverage of the election comes from the Post . It's the story of a U.S. Army company in Mosul, in a Sunni area where no one bothered to vote:

Instead of protecting voters on the periphery of the polling sites, as occurred in most areas, the company's platoons spent much of the day on raids in which they would burst into homes in search of insurgents, only to wind up urging the occupants to vote. January 31, 2005 Bob Dreyfuss , TomPaine.com

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

Torture In Iraq Still Routine, Report Says Detainees Beaten, Hung by Wrists, Shocked By Security Forces

(Washington Post, January 25, 2005, 2004, Pg. 10)

Twenty months after Saddam Hussein's government was toppled and its torture chambers unlocked, **Iraqis are again being routinely beaten, hung by their wrists and shocked with electrical wires, according to a report by a human rights organization.**

Iraqi police, jailers and intelligence agents, many of them holding the same jobs they had under Hussein, are "committing systematic torture and other abuses" of detainees, Human Rights Watch said in a report to be released today.

Election Reporters Got "Handled"

January 29, 2005, 21:00:00 ET) "Media Coverage of Iraq," International Correspondents, CNN International,

MANYON: . . . You know, I have been out in the last couple of days a couple of times, but one goes out fearfully in the knowledge that one might either be shot at or in the extreme worst case -- one prays it will never happen -- actually kidnapped.

Beyond that, it must be said, there is also another wide range of factors which are actually preventing journalists from covering this election properly, and one of those factors, for example, is the way in which the American handlers who are actually running the Ministry of Information's affairs here in real terms, have designed the whole thing. I would say that along with the violence, it is just as serious an impediment for journalists.

Why, for example, we've been limited to filming at only five polling stations, and we discovered when the list of the five polling stations was published that four of those five polling stations are actually in Shia areas, and therefore by definition will shed very little light on whether Sunnis vote or not.

Four Out Of 10 Desert New Local Occupation Forces

February 2, 2005 By Jack Fairweather, London Daily Telegraph

Coalition commanders admit that, among the 125,000 Iraqi policemen and soldiers trained so far, the rate of desertion is as high as 40 per cent.

Col Ahmed Ibrahim, an officer in the new Iraqi army, should be taking the fight to insurgents in the northern town of Mosul.

Instead he sits in an almost empty barracks at a United States Army base, mourning the desertion of most of his men.

The future of Iraq's security rests upon the shoulders of men such as Col Ibrahim, but so far the country's security forces have performed disastrously whenever confronted with determined insurgent activity.

Defense Expert Says U.S. Command Lies About Number Of Trained Pro-Occupation Local Forces

February 2, 2005 By Tom Bowman

Anthony H. Cordesman, a respected defense analyst with the Center for Strategic and International Studies who has traveled to Iraq, told a Senate committee yesterday that there were between 7,000 and 11,000 Iraqi forces who are "beginning" to have the necessary training and equipment.

Cordesman, in his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said: "We need to stop lying to the Iraqis, the American people and the world about our efforts to create Iraqi forces.

"We do not have 127,000 useful or meaningful men in these forces of the kind needed to fight an aggressive, experienced and well-armed threat."

Cordesman said "everything we do in Iraq will fail" unless the United States can increase its training efforts and provide Iraqis with the necessary equipment and facilities. There

is "no more devastating critique" of the ongoing failures in U.S. policy than "the lack of such a plan in public form," he said.

When Prime Minister Ayad Allawi assumed power in July there was one deployable Iraqi army battalion, **Army Lt. Gen. David Petraeus, who now heads the Iraqi training effort, said. There now are more than 40 deployable army and special forces battalions, he said, along with 42 national guard battalions that operate throughout Iraq. [Must be the liar Cordesman is talking about. Who else?]**

While the Pentagon claims it has 130,000 Iraqi security forces trained, it has set a goal of 271,041. **Officials have not explained how they set that figure or what their timetable is for reaching it. [Ask Petraeus.]**

The Great Iraq “Reconstruction” Racket: How The Suits In The Green Zone Ran Off With Billions While U.S. Soldiers Died To Provide Cover For The Thieves

And there are many accusations of corruption. A handful of US corporations swallowed up huge sums of Iraqi funds that had been set aside for reconstruction projects. NGOs say Iraq's oil revenues, the mainstay of the country's economy, have been mismanaged and sometimes misused.

31 January 2005 By Christian Henderson, Aljazeera

Both George Bush and Tony Blair have said the new Iraq is going to be a prosperous country with an improved standard of living for all.

A series of reports over the last six months indicate that Washington's reconstruction plan for Iraq has been ineffectual and the sum spent on projects amounts to much less than what US officials claim.

And there are many accusations of corruption. A handful of US corporations swallowed up huge sums of Iraqi funds that had been set aside for reconstruction projects. NGOs say Iraq's oil revenues, the mainstay of the country's economy, have been mismanaged and sometimes misused.

US officials say that some of the \$18.4 billion that was allocated by the US Congress for Iraqi reconstruction is being put to use in projects rebuilding civilian infrastructure.

"Of the \$18.4 billion, \$13 billion has been apportioned, of that \$10 billion has been committed. The amount of money that has been obligated to companies, and that's the indicator of progress, is \$7.6 billion," a US defence spokesman told Aljazeera.net.

But an examination of these figures suggests less has actually been spent.

Reinoud Leenders, Middle East analyst with the Brussels-based think-tank, International Crisis Group (ICG), and an author of the ICG's September report on reconstruction in Iraq, says, **"It's a number game. Basically the only thing that matters is what has been spent and at the end of the day they have spent very little."**

He says the most accurate figure representing the amount spent by Washington in Iraq is \$1.5 billion, a figure that was given by the US State Department.

While \$1.5 billion is far less than the figures quoted by the US spokesman, what makes this figure seem more paltry is the estimate of Leenders and others that 40% or more of the \$1.5 billion figure was spent by foreign companies contracted to do the work on insurance and security.

By this estimate a mere \$900 million of the Congress fund has been spent on actual reconstruction in Iraq so far.

Other reconstruction funds have fared little better.

The UN and World Bank's fund for Iraqi reconstruction is around \$1 billion, but Leenders said around \$200 million had actually been spent.

In a report last summer Christian Aid accused the CPA of lacking any transparency in its use of Iraq's oil revenues, a figure the group say amounts to around \$20 billion.

"For the entire year that the CPA has been in power in Iraq, it has been impossible to tell with any accuracy what the CPA has been doing with Iraq's money," Helen Collinson, head of policy at Christian Aid in an article published on the charity's website, said.

For the majority of Iraqis life appears to have worsened since the invasion.

A recent UN World Food Programme report concluded that 27% of all children under five are chronically malnourished.

According to interim Iraqi government officials, 90% of Iraq's cities have no decent sewerage system, and one-third of Iraqis have no access to clean water. In June the US General Accounting Office estimated electricity was available fewer hours per day on average last month than before the invasion.

Critics of the reconstruction plan say the exclusion that many Iraqis felt from the process exacerbated security problems. Iraqi firms were awarded few contracts, and foreign companies preferred to employ foreign workers rather than locals.

The Open Society Institute report issued in September said Iraqi firms received just 2% of the \$1.5 billion contracts that were paid with using Iraqi oil revenues that were managed by the occupation authorities.

"As far as I can see, the Iraqis just got peanuts," ICG's Leenders said in reference to the amount of reconstruction money that found its way to Iraqi pockets.

Iraqis and observers say this exclusion was the cause of much anger in Iraq, left huge numbers unemployed and reinforced Iraqi fears of a foreign takeover of their country.

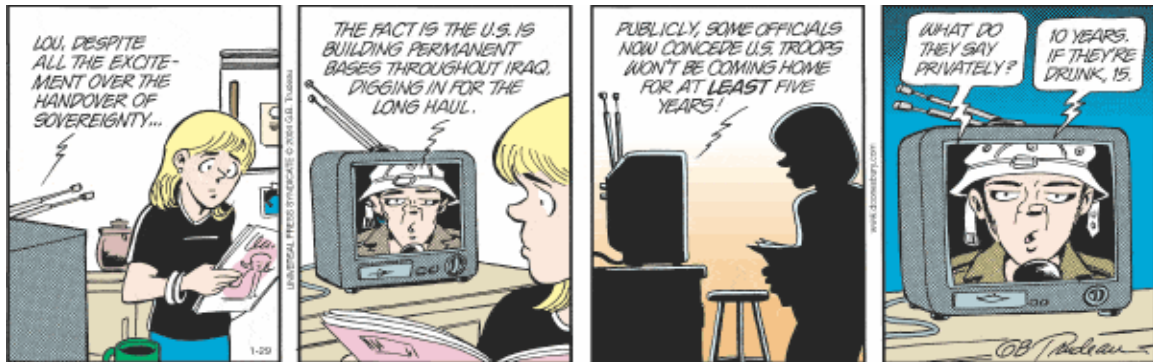
"All this subcontracting is simply window dressing to show the world that they are working with Iraqis. In reality, the reconstruction is left to US companies. Iraqis can just do the petty, dirty jobs, like painting schools, while US companies are making millions," the ICG quotes one Iraqi entrepreneur as saying.

Accusations of corruption are strengthened by the way the CPA awarded contracts

The Open Society Institute said in its September report that of the \$1.5 billion in contracts that was paid with Iraqi funds, US and British companies received 85%, and Halliburton subsidiary Kellogg, Brown and Root received 60% of these contracts.

"The CPA did not do its job regarding the oversight of reconstruction funds," Svetlana Tsalik, director of the Open Society institute's Revenue Watch project, said in an article published on the institute's website.

"It failed to stop the misuse and waste of money that belonged to the Iraqi people and American taxpayers."



[Thanks to Phil G. who sent this in.]

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Halliburton The Big Winner From Iraq Invasion; War Profiteer Cheney Still Getting Pay Offs

28th January, 2005 Big News Network.com

Halliburton has rocketed to becoming the sixth largest defense contractor in 2004.

The company, formerly headed by U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney, was not even in the top 100 contractors prior to the invasion of Iraq.

Halliburton was the seventh largest contractor in 2003 but edged out United Technologies last year to take sixth position.

Despite numerous scandals involving allegations of being awarded tenders on a non-compete basis, over-charging, and kick-backs, Halliburton's fortunes continue to rise.

Last year it more than doubled its defense contracts from \$3.9 billion to \$8 billion. In the last quarter alone revenue topped \$3 billion, or \$1 billion a month, considerably more than the company amassed in the five years prior to the Iraq war.

Halliburton's influence does not stop with the Pentagon. Close U.S. ally Britain this week awarded Kellogg Brown & Root, Halliburton's defense subsidiary, a contract to manage the construction of two new aircraft carriers for the Royal Navy, expected to cost \$7.5 billion.

Dick Cheney was Chairman of the Board and CEO of Halliburton for the six years from 1995 until he resigned to run for office in 2000.

His financial disclosure statements for 2001, 2002, and 2003 show that since becoming vice president-elect, he has received \$2 million from the company, \$1,451,398 in a bonus deferred from 1999, and the rest in deferred salary. He also holds options to buy Halliburton stock.

During the recent presidential campaign he refused to respond to a request from Democrats in Congress that he provide an accounting of any communications he and his staff have had with Halliburton, or actions they took on Halliburton contracts.

War Profiteers At Halliburton Want Billions More From DoD;

(Wall Street Journal, February 1, 2005, Pg. 1)

With military costs rising in Iraq, the top U.S. commander in Baghdad is facing what he calls an "unaffordable" budget gap of at least \$4 billion between what Halliburton says it will cost to provide food, housing and other services for U.S. troops for a year and what the government has budgeted. The difference dramatizes the cost crunch facing the Pentagon as the bill for the U.S. involvement in Iraq continues to escalate well beyond initial White House estimates.

BUSH WANTS \$9 MILLION AN HOUR MORE FOR WAR

January 26, 2005 By Chuck Zlatkin

When you hear that Bush is asking for \$80 billion in additional money to prosecute the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq it is too much to comprehend in real terms. But when you realize the money he is talking about is \$9 million an hour, 24 hours a day for 365 days, you can grasp the depths of the madness.

I live in New York City. There was a subway fire that damaged a switching station knocking out an entire line that serves hundreds of thousands of people. It was estimated that it would take 3-5 years to get it back to full service. In this city home care attendants, who serve elderly and homebound people, are not paid a living wage. Politicians say that there is just not enough money to raise their wages.

The majority of the people in this country realize that the war in Iraq is an enormous mistake. Thousands of Americans have been maimed and killed, that alone should be too high a price to pay for an immoral and illegal war. But when you factor in that it has already cost \$280 billion, it staggers the mind and deadens the spirit.

Most Americans are struggling just to make it from paycheck to paycheck. The cost of a college education is off the charts. More and more Americans are going without health insurance because they can't afford. It is a reality that seniors are choosing between life saving medication and food.

But where are our elected officials. Neither Republicans nor Democrats have distinguished themselves in serving the needs of the vast majority of Americans. What a travesty!

Millions of Americans work for less than \$9 an hour, while George W. Bush and his cronies on both sides of the aisle will vote for you to support this insanity to the tune of \$9 million an hour.

Stop The War! End The Occupation! Bring The Troops Home!

Politicians Use Anti-Terrorist Law To Go After New York City Street Gang

Earlier this month, Morales's attorney, Lewis Alperin, argued in a Bronx courtroom that the definition of terrorism was too expansive. "You put the key in the door and you know what happens: Any protester who takes a position (against the government) will be prosecuted under the terrorism law."

[Thanks to Phil G. who sent this in.]

February 1, 2005 By Michelle Garcia, The Washington Post

The newest face of an alleged terrorist wears a goatee, stands about five feet tall, dresses in baggy clothes and resides in the Bronx. Gang member Edgar Morales, aka "Puebla," has the distinction of becoming one of the first people ever charged under New York's state terrorism laws.

The Bronx district attorney has accused members of the St. James Boys street gang of shootings "committed with the intent to intimidate or coerce a civilian population." The other charges include murder, attempted murder, various weapons charges and assault. But prosecutors have not alleged that the gang is connected to any terrorist network.

Some terrorism experts say the case -- now underway in New York State Supreme Court -- is a misuse of state laws and should raise concern about what they consider is an ever-expanding definition of the term "terrorism."

After the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, 36 states added terrorism-related laws to their criminal codes, using them to enhance sentences that, in some cases, will now include the death penalty, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Most of the new laws focus on heinous crimes such as murder and kidnapping.

"Probably most of the crimes could have been prosecuted before," said Blake Harrison, a lawyer with the legislatures group. "Enacting these laws makes it a little easier to effect the same goal."

But the new laws also provide prosecutors with new opportunities. Once on the books, the laws can be applied to various crimes if prosecutors believe they can make them stick.

Earlier this month, Morales's attorney, Lewis Alperin, argued in a Bronx courtroom that the definition of terrorism was too expansive. "You put the key in the door and you know what happens: Any protester who takes a position (against the government) will be prosecuted under the terrorism law."

The judge is scheduled to listen to further arguments March 9 before deciding whether to permit the terrorism charges in the case.

New York's anti-terrorism law was born as a response to the 2001 attacks and a public clamor for action. Within a week of the attacks, the state legislature and Gov. George E. Pataki (R) approved terrorism legislation that they hailed as the toughest in the country. **Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver (D-Manhattan) characterized the bill as "overkill," even as he voted for it.**

Silver predicted at the time that the law would be a purely symbolic gesture. "Will there be a prosecution under the state terrorist act?" he asked. "I don't think so."

But terrorism expert Jessica Stern said New York and other states adopted terrorism laws that contained vague and open-ended language that allows the term to easily slip from its original meaning.

"Now we are seeing the possibility that it can be used by the government to go after people we wouldn't think of as terrorists," said Stern, a lecturer at Harvard University. "It's so often an epithet for the person we want to incarcerate [or] extradite."

<p>"Sometimes I wonder when people see us walking down the street," said Morales's stepfather, Inocencio Hernandez. "Do they say, 'There goes the parents of Edgar' or 'the parents of a terrorist'?"</p>
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CLASS WAR NEWS

Hell On Earth: Venezuela Prisons Worst In Western Hemisphere

January 2005 Prison Legal News

Venezuela:

This nation continues to have the deadliest prisons in the Western hemisphere.

As of November 12, 2004, at least 247 prisoners had been murdered and 536 seriously injured in the country's 32 overcrowded, understaffed and crumbling prisons.

This is in a prisoner population of 15,000, half of whom are awaiting trial.

Most of the deaths occurred during riots, with 120 being killed by gunshots and 59 being stabbed to death.

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