

## GI SPECIAL 3A35:

**BEEN ON THE JOB TOO LONG.  
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!**



The scene of a car bomb attack, Baghdad, 2 3. 2005. REUTERS/Stringer

## A NEW ERA?

**From:** "Tom Joad" [pen name] Soldier, Iraq.

**To:** GI Special

**Sent:** February 02, 2005

*hey thom,  
i just felt that something should be said.  
go with it.*

*from the shadows*

**Bullets make a very distinct sound when thrashing the air around your ears.**

**At first you notice a whizzing sound, more like a high pitched howl, then after your instincts process the sound of the passing bullet you feel a delayed reaction of panic and awareness as you feel a rush of air brush against your head. As bullets hit the ground and the armored truck from which I was firing my crew served**

**machine gun, the impact made a "ping"-like ring, as if in an action packed war movie.**

I scanned the palm groves and tall wetland reeds across the rubbish littered field in front of me.

**Somewhere in the two-hundred meters to my front an insurgent sniper was taking pop-shots at us from his well concealed position.** My team leader was taking position from behind the far side of his humvee's hood. His gunner was also scanning for the sniper, occasionally ducking inside of the truck to avoid the hostile fire. Myself and my driver positioned our truck at the team leader's three o'clock position in order to assist in locating the unknown gunman. The insurgent sniper, or perhaps two of them, were taking turns firing at our gun trucks, obviously aiming to kill one of the gunners in our crew.

With each shot, we would all return a volley of machine gun and rifle fire into the vast shadows of the palm grove from which we knew the gunman was hiding. We were not firing to kill the man, at least not yet. We needed to pin point his position, in order to send a flanking team out for him, or perhaps call in for mortar fire. However, first we needed to egg him on. We continued to fire five-round bursts in his general area, trying to piss him off as much as we already were.

As I scanned through my machine gun's magnified scope I began to realize that the sniper was too well concealed for us to ever find him, and with each passing bullet flying closer to my face, I finally decided that enough was enough. I called out to my team leader on the ground that we needed to lay down suppressive fire, before one of us ends up dead. This tough guy-pissing match was growing old.

The team leader yelled back inquisitively, "Suppressive fire? You think so?"

The situation was starting to get tediously nerve-racking, "Hell yeah I think so", I yelled back, "That bastard's coming way too close!"

"Okay, SUPPRESSIVE FIRE, SUPPRESSIVE FIRE!"

And with that, our two trucks opened fire on the sniper in the palm groves.

A constant barrage of machine gun fire then smashed into the palm groves and tall grasses infringing the sniper's position. In the distance I could see bark from the palm trees flying into the air. Some trees were being cut in half and falling on the spot. Dirt in front of the palm grove peppered up and began to make small dust clouds. Our suppressive fire only lasted for maybe a minute and a half. However, during this chaotic madness of roaring machine gun fire, the final assault seemed to have lasted for hours.

Finally my team leader yelled over and over, "CEASE FIRE, CEASE FIRE, CEASE FIRE!"

So we stopped firing. We watched the palm grove, and waited.

I began to think that we had finally killed the insurgent sniper by simply firing massive amounts of lead into vast forest of palm trees. For what seemed like forever, nothing

moved, and the only audible sound was the running engines of our trucks and the tweeting of a couple of birds on a telephone wire. Suddenly, an armored humvee scanning an alleyway to my right began to open fire. Instantly my attention perked and my nerves began to jump. What was going on here? Are there more than we had thought?

After a series of blasts from the truck to my right, the gunner shooting down the alleyway began shouting, "Got him, got him! I Got that son-of-a-bitch!"

Our suppressive fire had done the trick. By doing so, we had managed to flush the lone sniper from his concealed position in the palm groves and attempt an escape by crossing the end of the long alley in which a US gunner was carefully monitoring.

The sniper barely stepped foot into the alleyway before he was mowed down by a blast of bullets. I could only imagine that the insurgent was scared out of his wits and was desperately fleeing for escape, regardless to the fact that he was surrounded. As the lone gunman ran across the dusty alley road his life was taken with an instant flash of fury. I would be willing to bet that in his last fleeting second, he never saw it coming.

This was just one of many fire fights and guerrilla attacks happening all at the same time on this 30th day of January 2005.

**Today was unlike any other day in the (X) Province. Today was Iraq's election day. For those who have been here for almost a year, January 30th could be viewed as Judgment Day. This first Iraqi Election could be considered the culmination of a new era, or perhaps the climax of a harrowing tale of bloodshed and violence.**

**Some could say that the elections are a remarkable feat in this once tyrannical despotism, a promising event for a free country and a huge feat for an infant democracy.**

**Yet some could consider this country-in-shambles a society still oppressed by outside military influence and internal struggles, with the elections offering no true hope for a prosperous future.**

**Whatever it means in the long run, for both sides on the battlefield, this election day would prove to be the battle of the century.**

The insurgency's enormous opportunity to disrupt any kind of democratic progress and the coalition forces' jaded duty to prevent them from doing so. With our division's year-long mission in Iraq almost complete, this day of democratic progress was more like our last dance with the Jihadists.

The mission in Iraq has boiled down to this very special event. It has been a long two years of harsh conflict and brutal urban warfare, of vast amounts of unnecessary deaths and political haggling since the US military took root in this torn and tattered middle eastern country.

Every step that the Bush administration has taken to justify its occupancy of Iraq has been met at the hilt by a fierce Iraqi insurgency.

**These free elections have been processed over time to develop a schematic of America's true and just intentions to instill democracy in a country that appears to be opposed to such. While some Iraqis find the elections to be proof of better times to come, most of Iraq's inhabitants see a forced Iraqi democracy as signs of a surrogate child to US corporate intentions.**

Our involvement here has never been welcomed and has proved time and again to be part of the problem. In hindsight of a two year struggle, one would have to admit that this has been a bumpy ride for democratic progress and a long road traveled indeed.

**Contrary to what most mainstream media outlets suggest, these Iraqi elections never went off without a hitch.**

Problems were met at every corner despite careful military strategic planning to fend off any disruptive attacks.

The night before the elections were to take place in the (X) Province, many polling sites were being attacked by aggressive bands of guerrilla fighters. Mortar and rocket strikes on polling sites terrorized the local communities from taking part in the elections the following day.

**Most of these sites were scantily guarded by Iraqi army or Iraqi police. These sites were soon abandoned by the ill prepared Iraqi forces and shut down. What started out as 250 election sites for the province dwindled down to 90 secured locations to cast a vote. After many of the sites were closed, an approximated five thousand civilian election workers failed to report to their designated polling sites. They later claimed that they were too frightened to work at the polls, and many of them quit their assignment on the spot.**

The insurgents' tactics seemed to be effective, and their battle cry into the morning continued as they repeated their tormenting rhetoric to the public: "You vote tomorrow, you die!"

Our US military went through great lengths to secure the province before the elections. National Guard units were brought in to provide force protection for the forward operating bases, while our division committed most of its forces to patrolling the area and establish the utmost security.

**However, these provisions seemed self defeating. As I rode behind the barrel of a truck mounted machine gun through the streets of A-town, I noticed how dreary and pathetic this city had become overnight. We call this a free sovereign country, but how ironic that on this day of democratic progress the Iraqi people are kept under the strict scrutiny of a bull-faced police state.**

The vastly populated city resembled a dusty ghost town out of an old western movie.

On any other day, the streets would be filled with market place activity. Street side vendors would be selling bread and farming tools. Young women in scarves and head dresses would be waiting patiently for a bus to take them to their college classes. Children would be flying kites or playing soccer. Elderly men would normally be

squatting in the shade of a mud brick building, smoking cigars and chatting openly back and forth.

However, on this free election day, most of the streets were blocked with massive concrete barriers shrouded in rolls of razor sharp barbed wire. Every major intersection was blocked by an Iraqi army checkpoint. Young men in uniform sat attentively behind loaded Soviet-era machine guns, surrounded by walls of sandbags and camouflage netting.

On the smooth concrete walls of the checkpoints one would notice pro-coalition propaganda urging the Iraqi populace to vote for democracy. All civilian motor traffic had been restricted on the major highways and roads during this day of democracy. The threat of car bombs was far too great to allow one automobile packed with explosives to intermingle with other civilian motorists.

The only traffic on the roads were that of Iraqi army and police forces, and of course the armored gun trucks of the US military. US tanks roamed through the streets, swiftly crawling back and forth on patrol, shaking the earth with its massive beastly roar.

Also creeping along the ground were the ominous shadow silhouettes of Apache and Kiowa attack helicopters, whose presence in the air assured instant termination of any hostile saboteur aimed at the important democratic process.

Far above and beyond the circling helicopters a pair of F-14 fighter planes slice through the stratospheric heavens; these malicious birds of prey harboring warheads of arbitrary slaughter.

All this military muscle flexed and geared to provide a safe and secure environment for the people of Iraq to come out of hiding and vote for their chosen leaders.

However, barely a soul was seen wandering the streets that day. The only civilian activity was that of curious children, peeking their heads outside of the gates of their front yards, while frightened and concerned parents grabbed them by the scruff of their necks and forced them back inside.

One could say that with an infant democracy, a Big Brother of sorts would have to take that indecisive nation by the hand and guide it into triumph.

The platoon I was with on that particular day was tasked to gather the election workers who had quit their assignments and load them onto buses. Once they were gathered, we were then instructed to escort them to their polls and deter any violent disturbances.

Other tasks included infiltrating insurgent-held territory to reach polling sites and gather boxes of unmarked ballots before the enemy could obtain them. In some neighborhoods Coalition forces had to cordon off whole city blocks and check each pedestrian's voting registration in order to screen out unwanted menaces. Collected ballots were also escorted to safe locations in our sector by US forces, despite that the responsibility of collecting ballots and transferring them rested in the hands of Iraqi army and police forces.

**Of course, these tactics were against all protocol concerning Coalition involvement in the elections.**

**However, to assure a safe overall environment for honest voters some rules had to be broken. In the end, some of these tactics proved to be successful, as throughout the day more and more Iraqi's took their chances and found their way to a ballot box. On the other hand, many Iraqis took heed to the threats on their lives and stayed in the safety of their homes. In one particular sector, the polls only accumulated around sixty votes out of the thousands of registered voters who did not show.**

**The mainstream media trumped and touted the success of Iraq's first free elections to the point of a fantasized complete success.**

**The results were reported as better than expected, as the voice of the Iraqi people had chosen freedom in their new democracy. One cannot deny the brave acts of the Iraqi people to take the initiative in shaping their own democratic future. However, one must suspect the Bush administration's declaration of a successful democracy forced at gun point.**

We may never know the true outcome of the elections, as many contingencies in the election results have to date been ignored.

Every result and tacit of this election have only been described as "estimated", and has been since the start.

No strictly detailed records were ever kept on the exact number of registered voters, nor the exact number of votes cast.

In the (X) Province, for example, there was and "estimated" 1.3 million registered voters.

**As the polls closed, US forces began to announce that seventy-five percent of that 1.3 million registered had turned out voted on election day. It was chalked up as a complete success and a job well done for our division. However, the following day, that overly-exceeding percentage didn't seem to add up to the actual numbers. Now the number stands at about 250 thousand votes for the entire province, less than half of what the original figures indicated.**

**Currently, our division refuses to believe this, and the top brass demands to obtain a more pleasing number from any alternative source, if possible.**

**With all the statistical discrepancies in our province alone, it makes one wonder who is counting these votes and where the results are being channeled to in the end.**

**Another fact to consider is that many of the marked ballots were never in safe hands either before or after the polls closed on the evening of January 30th.**

For instance, at one particular polling station, the marked ballots for an entire sector were abandoned on the streets by an Iraqi police unit. Details have not yet surfaced on

why that specific police unit abandoned the ballots, but it is quite clear that whoever was responsible did not favor the democratic process and wished to sabotage it somehow.

**In other areas of the province, Iraqi army forces were engaged in fierce fire-fights with Iraqi police units over disputes on who was responsible for transporting marked ballots.**

**It is true that this new sovereign country will no doubt face growing pains in its first years of infancy. However, one has to wonder about the security of this region when the insurgency commonly mixes into the ranks of the Iraqi military and the low standard of discipline in security forces allows not only petty squabbles but fierce battles waged between police and army units.**

Despite the fact that our division faced more attacks on Election Day than on any other day in this past year, the free Iraqi elections did progress with little trouble for the people of the (X) province. Much can be said for the brave Iraqi citizens who risked life and limb to cast their vote for a new tomorrow.

**I can only hope that their efforts to make a democratic change were not made in vain. It would be a shame if their future is plagued with even more violence and police state oppression than they have already seen in the last four decades.**

**If anyone in the world deserves a peaceful and prosperous future it is the people of Iraq who have suffered enough bloodshed for one lifetime.**

**It would be a grave misfortune to witness an Iraqi election for a democratic tomorrow only to see them succumb to the intense pressures of a US economic hegemony that is already beginning to take root in this new sovereign nation.**

**Despite some of the bureaucratic flaws that occurred during this first step in democratic progress, it is a milestone for a people who have only known brutal oppression. The only hope left is that the people of Iraq take the bull by the horns and use this experience to forge their own desired future for generations to come.**

***FIGHT TO SURVIVE!***

## **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](http://www.ivaw.net))**

## IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

### **U.S. KIA, Wounded In Al-Qaim Resistance Attack; HQ Destroyed**

2.3.05 Aljazeera & By Jason Keyser, The Associated Press

**Aljazeera has learned that an unknown number of US soldiers were killed and wounded when a house used as a US military headquarters was destroyed in al-Qaim city in western Baghdad by a car bomb. The house was used by U.S. military snipers.**

Witnesses reported other US troops firing back, hitting several civilian bystanders.

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### **Two Marines Killed In Anbar**

2.3.05 Aljazeera

**Two US marines were killed in action in Iraq's western province of Anbar, the US military said.**

"A marine assigned to 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Expeditionary Force was killed in action yesterday [Wednesday], bringing to two the number of marines who died in the Anbar province," the military said in a statement on Thursday.

Anbar is a huge, predominantly Sunni area which stretches westwards from the outskirts of Baghdad to the Saudi, Jordanian and Syrian borders, and includes the towns of Falluja and Ramadi.

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### **Airport Road Car Bomber Strikes Foreign Convoy; Casualties Not Reported**

Feb. 03, 2005 Associated Press

**A car bomber struck a foreign convoy on Baghdad's dangerous airport road Thursday, destroying several vehicles, Iraqi police said. No casualties were immediately reported.**



**Two sport utility vehicles in the three vehicle convoy were destroyed.** SUVs are commonly used by foreign contractors working in Iraq.

**Helicopters were seen evacuating some casualties, witnesses said.** The U.S. military had no immediate comment.

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## Mosul Car Bomb; Two U.S. Soldiers Wounded



A U.S. Army 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment soldier examines the wreckage after a car bomb targeting his Army convoy exploded, **wounded two soldiers in Mosul, Iraq** Feb. 3, 2005 . **Insurgents attacked U.S. and Iraqi troops throughout the day, also using small arms, mortars, rocket-propelled grenades and roadside bombs.** (AP Photo/Jim MacMillan)

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## Grayslake Marine Killed Two Days Before Leaving For Home

February 3, 2005 (Grayslake, Ill.) ABC Inc., WLS

February 3, 2005 (Grayslake, Ill.) — A 19-year-old Marine from the northern Illinois community of Grayslake is dead after a small arms attack in Iraq.

Lance Corporal Sean Maher was driving a Humvee when his unit was ambushed near Fallujah. His aunt, Peggy O'Keefe, says friends have been flocking to the family's home since this morning when the Marine's parents learned of his death.

Family members described Maher as kind, generous and athletic. They say he enlisted because he thought he could make a difference in Iraq.

**Maheer's death last night came just two days before he was scheduled to come home.**

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## **Army Investigates Non-Combat Death Of Oregon Guard Soldier**

February 3, 2005 By The Associated Press

PORTLAND — Army officials are investigating the non-combat death of an Oregon National Guard soldier serving in Iraq with his son, according to family members.

Sgt. Mark Warren, 44, of La Grande, was a member of the Third Battalion, 116th Armored Cavalry. The unit, headquartered in La Grande, was mobilized last summer and shipped off to Iraq in November.

**Warren was found dead Monday in Kirkuk, Iraq, said Mike Cummings, a representative of the family. Cummings said he couldn't disclose further details.**

**Warren was serving alongside his son, Lt. Chris Warren, in the same unit, Cummings said.**

Warren enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1981 and joined the National Guard in 1990. **In 2002, he was assigned as the noncommissioned officer in charge of officer training at Eastern Oregon University in La Grande.**

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### **TROOP NEWS**

## **Widows Of KIA Tormented By Bureaucratic Bullshit: “Casualty Assistance Is Increasingly Failing Miserably And Disgracefully”**

February 03, 2005 By Rick Maze, Army Times staff writer

The Thursday congressional testimony of two military widows about problems with casualty assistance officers assigned to help them after the deaths of their husbands could lead to changes in the process.

Tiffany Petty, whose husband, Army Pfc. Jerrick Petty, was killed in a firefight in Iraq in December 2003, and Jennifer McCollum, whose husband, Marine Capt. Dan McCollum, was killed in a January 2002 plane crash in Pakistan, related similar complaints about their experiences.

**Petty said she had problems from the moment her husband was killed. First, the Army notified her husband's parents but not her; she learned about the death in a phone call from a sister-in-law who "called me to see if I was doing OK," she said.**

**Petty also said the information provided about how her husband died ended up being incorrect, although the casualty officer may have been trying to shield her from details.** The officers also were unable to help her with some issues.

"When I had questions about benefits, or simple things like moving my furniture from the base in Kentucky, they were not able to help me," she said.

**Nine months after her husband's burial, Petty also learned that the Army never paid any of the funeral expenses.** She learned this at a Veterans' Day event when she was introduced to the Army man who had personally paid the expenses.

"The Army should have been on top of this, even if the survivor has items they are responsible for," she said.

McCollum, who has moved from California to Florida since her husband's death in a KC-130 crash, said her difficulties came when the first casualty assistance officer assigned to her, a family friend and also a pilot at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar where her husband was assigned, was deployed to Afghanistan. A new officer was assigned who knew less and who was less interested in helping her, she said.

"My situation is not unique, and as a matter of fact, I am discovering that casualty assistance is increasingly failing miserably and disgracefully," McCollum said.

**McCollum related problems dealing with the military medical system for herself and her son, born about five months after her husband's death.**

**She said she ended up battling to keep the benefits she was told would be available for up to three years after her husband's death and now faces a temporary cutoff of coverage while she transfers between the active and retired health insurance programs.**

**She'll have to change doctors because she will no longer be allowed to use the military treatment facility in Jacksonville, Fla., which sees active-duty patients.**

# Good News: Injured Soldier Improves --- Bad News: Now Pentagon Won't Pay For Family's Plane Tickets To See Him

February 03, 2005 By Rayanne Schmid, The Daily Times

Becky and Kelly Crunk gladly accepted the news Wednesday that their son, Spc. Ryan Lamarr Crunk's condition had been upgraded from serious to just injured.

Ryan, 22, who is with the Army's 82nd Airborne Division, sustained injuries to his right leg, hand and forearm in a Sunday grenade blast in Mosul, Iraq. He was transferred to Kuwait and currently is in a base hospital in Germany.

**However, with the blessing, and word that he could be transferred stateside to Walter Reed Medical Center in Virginia as early as Sunday, came a new obstacle for the parents of the 2001 Tivy graduate injured in Iraq. The improvement in Ryan's condition meant that the military would no longer fly the parents, free of charge, to see their son, nor would it pay for their accommodations.**

Becky, director of the Children's Ark child care center, seemed to take the news of the pending expense in stride while continuing to focus on her son's condition.

"We are going to have to do it on our own," she said.

The family won't be alone, though, in gathering money for the trip. **The First United Methodist Church — Kerrville, began a fund to allow the Crunk's daughter, Jordan, to travel with them when the military still was offering to fly the parents for free.**

According to their minister, Pastor Warren Hornung, "So far, we've collected \$2,942.30."

As for Ryan, he underwent his third surgery on Wednesday, with at least a fourth possible in the very near future. This time, Becky said, doctors removed shrapnel and cleaned out the wound.

The next surgery, possibly after he arrives in Virginia, could involve putting plates in Ryan's leg and performing tissue and muscle reconstruction.

"Both major bones in the leg were broken in several places is what we understand," Becky said.

As for the injured hand and forearm, "(Ryan) said something about, 'When I come back they will address my hand.' I guess that is really not a top priority right now," Becky said.

That information came in the second phone call from Ryan to his parents since the incident occurred. "He sounded better," Becky said. "The two other guys (of the four others injured in the same attack) that were still in Germany were in his room and were hanging out with him. I am glad he has people he knows there."

After about a 10-minute conversation, Becky said that Ryan "indicated he was in pain."

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## **Pentagon Can't Extend Reservists' Deployment**

(Los Angeles Times, February 3, 2005)

**Facing political pressure from members of Congress [meaning pissed off people back home yelling at the Congressional scum] the Pentagon has dropped consideration of a plan to increase the time reservists can spend on active duty.**

Straining to meet upcoming troop needs in Iraq and Afghanistan, top Army generals had indicated recently that they would press the Defense Department's civilian leadership to lift a two-year limit on active duty deployments for reservists.

**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.**

## **Hunt Down The Criminals In Command; Vaccinations Were Given Despite Judge's Order**

(Washington Post, February 3, 2005, 2004, Pg. 4)

**More than 900 soldiers were given anthrax vaccinations during the past three months despite a federal judge's order in October to stop the program because the vaccine had not been properly tested and approved. Col. Steven P. Jones, director of the military vaccine agency, said in a statement to the judge that the shots were given even though Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld sent out a**

directive in late October ordering that the vaccinations be stopped until further notice.

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## **Few Reserves Left For Iraq; Next Rotation, If Any, In Deep Trouble; *January Recruiting Collapsed***

February 3, 2005, 2004 By Liz Sidoti, Associated Press

**Massing enough troops for another rotation in Iraq will be "painful," a senior Army leader told Congress. "Right now we have 650,000 soldiers on active duty executing missions worldwide, and many of them have met their 24-month cumulative time, so we'll have to address this,"** Gen. Richard A. Cody testified before the House Armed Services Committee.

Lt. Gen. Roger C. Schultz, chief of the Army National Guard, said that while retention goals are being met, "our recruiting is the area where we are falling short."

**The Army National Guard is 15,000 soldiers below its normal strength and is trying to make up the difference by autumn. But Schultz said his outfit met only 56 percent of its January recruiting goal.**

## **Marines Miss January Goal For Recruits**

(New York Times, February 3, 2005)

**For the first time in nearly a decade, the Marine Corps in January missed its monthly recruiting goal, in what military officials said was the latest troubling indicator of the Iraq war's impact on the armed services. Senior officers acknowledge that the drop in January, and close calls in November and December, could be linked to the widely publicized risks in Iraq.**

**Richard Kohn, a military historian at the University of North Carolina, said, "It's most troubling because the Marines tend to attract people who are the most macho, seek the most danger and are attracted by the service most likely to put them into combat."**

Senior officers acknowledge that the drop in January -- and close calls in November and December -- could be linked to the widely publicized risks in Iraq.

**In a reflection of the difficult market for Marine recruiters, the service is offering bonuses of up to \$30,000 to retain combat veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan rather than relying on replenishing its ranks with troops fresh from boot camp.**

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## **BIG SURPRISE! National Guard Falls Short In Hitting Troop Level Goals**

(Los Angeles Times, January 26, 2005)

Strained by ongoing military action in Iraq and Afghanistan, the National Guard has fallen nearly 15,000 troops short of its authorized level of 350,000, Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum, chief of the guard, said. **The guard, which had met its authorized numbers annually since 1989, has suffered shortfalls in recruitment since last fall,**

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## **Panel Investigates Military Family TRICARE Complaints**

(National Journal's CongressDailyAM, January 25, 2005)

**The House Armed Services Committee is investigating complaints from military families who claim the Pentagon's revamped TRICARE healthcare system is failing to adequately cover families with special-needs children.** Early this month, several committee members visited troops at Camp Lejeune, N.C., where one family told the lawmakers that recent changes in TRICARE contractors "has made it difficult for large numbers of special needs children to get through."

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## **Army Suicide Rate Plummets After Deadly Larium Discontinued**

Jan. 28 (UPI)

The number of suicides by soldiers serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom dropped last year by at least half -- a decline that helped lower significantly the Army's overall suicide rate.

Asked why the suicide rate fell so much, spokeswoman Martha Rudd said: "It's really not possible to tell. We think some of the efforts we've made over there are paying off, but

also that the news coverage of the issue last year really elevated the level of attention paid to this."

**Others point to a different possibility. Last year the Army largely quit using an anti-malaria drug called Lariam in Iraq that has been linked to depression, hallucinations, psychosis and rare reports of suicide. It was widely prescribed in Iraq in 2003.**

**An advocacy group, Lariam Action USA, said the suicide statistics implicate Lariam.**

**"The obvious external factor was the administration of Lariam in 2003 and the withdrawal of the drug in 2004," said Susan G. Rose, the group's legal adviser. "Lariam clearly played a role in the increased rate of suicides in 2003.**

**Unfortunately, due to the Department of Defense policy of not recording anti-malarial medication in troops' medical records, the extent of Lariam's role cannot be established."**

The number of soldiers who have taken Lariam in Iraq is unclear, but the U.S. military dispensed about 45,000 prescriptions worldwide in the year that ended in October 2003. **The Pentagon said its policy is to record all prescribed drugs on a soldier's record, but UPI found widespread instances where that did not happen with Lariam.**

Since 2002 the **Food and Drug Administration has strengthened the drug's official product label to warn about suicide reports and added a statement that mental problems have been reported to last "long after" someone stops taking it.**

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## **Colombian Soldiers Go Crazy**

26.01.2005 [Maria Engqvist, ANNCOL]

**On a December night in Bogota, an officer of the special unit assigned to protect President Uribe threw an acid liquid over the faces of two sleeping soldiers under his command. When interrogated about the reason for the attack, the officer of the Presidential Guard was unable to explain, but said it was all a mistake.**

**Only last week a soldier of the Boyaca Battalion based in the city of Pasto took an assault rifle and gunned down a group of his fellow soldiers, killing five and wounding five more.**

Government-friendly weekly magazine *Semana* asks if these acts are part of an "epidemia" of mental sickness among the government troops who have suffered significant losses against guerilla forces since the Army last year in a campaign led by US military advisors launched a campaign to take the war to the guerillas' turf.



The campaign known as the “Patriot Plan” consists of deploying tens of thousands of troops in traditionally rebel held territory, mainly in the southern and eastern departments of Meta, Caqueta and Guaviare. Operating with the US and regular government troops are large number of death squads, targeting civilians in the area.

The latest set-back for the government troops came on January 12 and 13, when a guerrilla force consisting of 12 companies of fighters from the FARC’s Eastern Bloc attacked units of the government’s paramilitaries based in and around the villages of Puerto Lleras and Puerto Rico in Caqueta department. 70 paramilitaries were killed and 42 were wounded, rebel sources say. Five guerrillas were also killed during the fighting.

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## **IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP**

# **Insurgents Ambush 50-Strong Iraqi Police Convoy**

Feb 3 By Gideon Long, BAGHDAD (Reuters)

**Iraqi insurgents staged a major ambush on a road near Baghdad Thursday, killing two policemen, wounding 14 and leaving at least 16 missing on the worst day of violence since last Sunday's election.**

Police said insurgents attacked a police convoy Thursday while they were on their way to Baghdad from southern Iraq between Diwaniya, 180 km (112 miles) south of Baghdad, and the capital. Police initially feared 36 were missing but reduced the number as some began returning to Diwaniya.

U.S. forces sealed off the site of the ambush, near the Abu Ghraib area on Baghdad's western fringes. Police said some of the wounded were treated in hospital in Diwaniya.

**They said the policemen had been traveling from Diwaniya, 180 km (112 miles) south of Baghdad, to the capital to collect new vehicles when they were ambushed.**

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# **12 Occupation Cops Killed Near Kirkuk**

Feb 3 By Gideon Long, BAGHDAD (Reuters) & Robert H. Reid, AP & By Jason Keyser, The Associated Press

Militants pulled 14 police officers off their bus and killed 12 of them with a bullet to the head. **The rebels allowed two of the soldiers to go free and ordered them to warn others against joining Iraq's U.S.-backed security forces.**

They were killed as they returned to northern city of Kirkuk, where they guard oil facilities.

The assailants identified themselves as members of Takfir wa Hijra, an Islamic group that emerged in the 1960s in Egypt, rejecting society as corrupt and seeking to establish a utopian Islamic community.

Wednesday's bus attack near the northern oil city of Kirkuk suggests the country's 22-month-long insurgency is far from over.

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## **Yathrib Bomb Kills Three Allawi Troops, 3 Wounded**

2.3.05 Aljazeera

**Three Iraqi soldiers were killed and three wounded in a bomb attack on Thursday morning in Yathrib, 75km north of Baghdad.**

**"A man was arrested at the scene of the attack but was freed due to lack of evidence," Captain Amjad Saad said.**

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## **Two Collaborators Killed, 4 Wounded Near Baquba**

02 February 2005

**Two Iraqi employees of a US military base were shot dead and four of his colleagues wounded while on their way to work in Baquba, northeast of Baghdad, a medical source said.**

One of the wounded men, Raid Rizuqi, said he and his friends were driving to work when fighters opened fire from another car. Baquba's general hospital confirmed they received one corpse riddled with bullets.

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## **Occupation Cop Killed, Another Injured In Samawah**

BASRA, Feb 3 (KUNA) & By Jason Keyser, The Associated Press

**In the south, anti-U.S. forces overran a police station in the city of Samawah, killing one Iraqi policeman and injuring two others Wednesday night, Japan's Kyodo news agency reported. Japanese troops are based outside Samawah.**

Other sources told KUNA that unidentified armed men opened fire on one of the check points set by the police earlier today.

The attackers escaped the scene, the sources said.

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## **Assorted Resistance Attacks**

2.3.05 Aljazeera & By Gideon Long, BAGHDAD (Reuters) & AP

**An Iraqi soldier was killed as assailants opened fire as he was leaving his home in Baghdad, officials said.**

**A Turkish truck driver was killed on a road between the northern cities of Baiji and Mosul.**

**South of Baghdad, near the largely Shi'ite town of Hilla, militants drew up alongside the car of a local government official and shot him dead before escaping.**

**In another incident west of the capital, residents of the insurgent stronghold of Ramadi discovered the bodies of two men who appear to have died of gunshot wounds and who were dressed in blood-soaked civilian clothes. The bodies were dumped on a commercial street in Ramadi's city center, witnesses said.**

**A handwritten note tucked into the shirt of one of the men claimed the two were Iraqi National Guardsmen.**

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## **Five Occupation Cops & Allawi Officer Killed On Airport Road**

2.3.05 By Jason Keyser, The Associated Press

**On Baghdad's dangerous airport road Thursday Insurgents ambushed another convoy in the area, killing five Iraqi policemen and an Iraqi National Guard major, police said.**

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# Resistance Donkey Captured Near Green Zone

[Thanks to Des for sending in this one.]

February 02, 2005 The Angry Arab News Service



Guess who is behind the Iraqi insurgency this week?

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## FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

### “The Survivor”

From: MH  
To: GI Special  
Sent: February 03, 2005  
Subject: Iceberg

Mike here from the land of Lewis and Clark, the original imperialists who started the western movement.

**Thought I would check in and let you know that I am alive and still yelling "Iceberg."**

**That's kind of a private joke between me and some of the people in my vet group.**

I think some of them believe I'm a bit of a loose cannon. I have a tendency to express some of my feelings when ever I talk. A lot of good old fashion therapy has allowed me that freedom. I'm simply not afraid of my feelings anymore. For everything gained, there is a price.

So, with that little disclaimer, I'm ready to come out of the shoot.

That's why I like G.I. Special, because it has an edge; most of the time, a razor's edge.

I like that, because someone HAS to yell " Iceberg."

If we don't yell insane things, people will think everything is OK.

**It all comes down to Catch 22. You Cannot Save Your Ass And Your Face At The Same Time.**

**I see too many people trying to do that. A lot of academics are very good at it.**

**Eventually, we are all going to have to hit the streets. After hearing King George's State of Decline Speech last night, I'm convinced of that. These people are serious about destruction. It's the bully on the block, with an I.Q. of 22, and that is not a winning combination.**

**I will leave you with a powerful quote.**

Mike

**"The survivor, then, is a disturber of the peace. He is a runner of the blockade men erect against knowledge of unspeakable things. About these he aims to speak, and in so doing he undermines, without intending to, the validity of existing norms. He is a genuine transgressor, and here he is made to feel real guilt.**

**"The world to which he appeals does not admit him, and since he has looked to this world as a source of moral order, he begins to doubt himself.**

**"And that is not the end, for now his guilt is doubled by betrayal--of himself, of his task, of his vow to the dead.**

**"The final guilt is not to bear witness.**

**"The survivor's worst torment is not to be able to speak."**

**Terrence DesPres  
The Survivor**

## **The Spin**

By Molly Ivins, AUSTIN, Texas

I really don't like accentuating the negative, but I also don't like spin, especially after what we've been through with this administration and the truth about Iraq.

**It isn't helpful to write off 175 terrorist attacks on the day of the election as "relative calm."**

**It isn't helpful to claim there was a 72 percent turnout rate and then have it fall overnight to 57 percent. It isn't helpful to set low expectations, then boast about doing "better than expected."**

**And we also still don't know what we've got here.**

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**SEND BUSH AND ALL THOSE ASSHOLES IN CONGRESS IF YOU WANT IRAQ SO BAD.**



**AND PACK YOUR OWN BAG TOO.**

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**“And The Election Doesn't Change That.”**

By Arianna Huffington

**Let's not forget that despite the hoopla, this was a legitimate democratic election in name only.**

Actually, not even in name since most of the candidates on Sunday's ballot had less name recognition than your average candidate for dogcatcher. That's because they were too afraid to hold rallies or give speeches. Too terrorized to engage in debates. In fact, many were so anxious about being killed that they fought to keep their names from being made public.

**Some didn't even know their names had been placed on the ballot. On top of that, this vote was merely to elect a transitional national assembly that will then draft a new constitution that the people of Iraq will then vote to approve or reject, followed by yet another vote -- this time to elect a permanent national assembly.**

*And the election doesn't change that.*

**Let's not forget that many Iraqi voters turned out to send a defiant message not just to the insurgents but to President Bush as well. Many of those purple fingers were raised in our direction. According to a poll taken by our own government, a jaw-dropping 92 percent of Iraqis view the U.S.-led forces in Iraq as "occupiers" while only 2 percent see them as "liberators."**

Let's not forget the woeful lack of progress we've made in the reconstruction of Iraq. The people there still lack such basics as gas and kerosene. Indeed, Iraqis often wait in miles-long lines just to buy gas. The country is producing less electricity than before the war -- roughly half of current demand.

There are food shortages, the cost of staple items such as rice and bread is soaring, and the number of Iraqi children suffering from malnutrition has nearly doubled. **According to UNICEF, nearly 1 in 10 Iraqi children is suffering the effects of chronic diarrhea caused by unsafe water -- a situation responsible for 70 percent of children's deaths in Iraq.**

*And the election doesn't change that.*

Let's not forget the blistering new report from the special inspector general for Iraq reconstruction, which finds that the U.S. occupation government that ruled Iraq before last June's transfer of sovereignty has been unable to account for nearly \$9 billion, overseeing a reconstruction process "open to fraud, kickbacks and misappropriation of funds."

*And the election doesn't change that.*

**Let's not forget that we still don't have an exit strategy for Iraq. The closest the president has come is saying that we'll be able to bring our troops home when, as he put it on Sunday, "this rising democracy can eventually take responsibility for its own security" -- "eventually" being the operative word.**

Although the administration claims over 120,000 Iraqi security forces have been trained, other estimates put the number closer to 14,000, with less than 5,000 of them ready for battle. And we keep losing those we've already trained: some 10,000 Iraqi National Guardsmen have quit or been dropped from the rolls in the last six months. Last summer, the White House predicted Iraqi forces would be fully trained by spring 2005; their latest estimate has moved that timetable to summer 2006.

***And the election doesn't change that.***

**And let's never forget this administration's real goal in Iraq, as laid out by Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and their fellow neocon members of the Project for the New American Century back in 1998 when they urged President Clinton and members of Congress to take down Saddam "to protect our vital interests in the Gulf."**

These vital interests were cloaked in mushroom clouds, WMD that turned into "weapons of mass destruction-related program activities," and a Saddam/al-Qaida link that turned into, well, nothing.

**Long before the Bushies landed on freedom and democracy as their 2005 buzzwords, they already had their eyes on the Iraqi prize: the second-largest oil reserves in the world, and a permanent home for U.S. bases in the Middle East.**

**This is still the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time.**

***And the election, as heart-warming as it was, doesn't change any of that.***

<p><b>OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME <u>NOW!</u></b></p>
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## **Iraq And Its Resistance Vs. The Moralists**

Jan. 27, 2005 By Stephen Gowans

**The question of whether Iraqis have a right to resist the occupation of their country by US-led forces is clear: they do. The question of whether they have a right to resist occupation by *any* means is academic.**

**The fact of the matter is that occupied people will, and always have, resisted occupations. And since poor people do not have access to helicopter gunships, tanks and bombers -- the tools of the occupiers -- they resort to the means at their disposal.**

**Those means are often gruesome. Some say they're barbaric and uncivilized.**



**The US government calls them terrorist, as it does any violent or armed challenge to exploitation by US corporations, the US military and its proxies.**

(Not surprisingly, Washington has a far more relaxed attitude toward armed challenges to exploitation by its rivals, evidenced recently in members of the US foreign policy establishment importuning Russia to hold talks with Chechen guerillas.)

**That the methods of the occupiers are equally, if not more, barbaric, is granted, including by those who deplore the methods of the resistance, and wish a pox on both houses.**

**This is a position regularly taken by moralists in the West, whose purpose in washing their hands of both sides, other than to make a show of their piety, is never clear.**

Uncivilized and barbaric things happen, in a regular, ineluctable, law-like, fashion, and deploring them doesn't change the conditions that give rise to them or make them any less likely to happen tomorrow.

It is also ineluctable that the Iraqi government formed after the elections on Sunday will be an agent of US policy.

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

## **OCCUPATION REPORT**

### **“Thieves Squabble Over The Loot”**

03 February 2005 Aljazeera

**[Sent by Ahmed Al-Habbabi to the Anti-Allawi group. He writes: When thieves squabble over the loot.. Please bear in mind that this Shahrستاني character is the patriot inviting the invasion of his country with the lie on 60 Minutes of the nonexistent WMD's hidden in the nonexistent tunnels of the Baghdad subway system that wasn't built.]**

**A top Shia leader tipped to become Iraq's next prime minister has branded Iyad Allawi's interim government as the most corrupt in the country's history.**

A close confidant of Grand Ayat Allah Ali al-Sistani, Husain Shahrستاني lashed out at the Allawi government and singled out defence minister Hazim Shaalan as the main offender.

**"It is very well known in the country that the corruption is very widespread from the police to the judicial systems...as a matter of fact Iraq has never known the level of corruption prevailing now," Shahrستاني said.**

"A lot of public funds have gone missing under the Coalition Provisional Authority...and even now," he said, of the disbanded US occupation authority.

Shahrستاني took Shaalan to task for the defence ministry's transfer of \$300 million to Lebanon as part of an arms deal last month.

**"The fact that the minister of defence, on the day there were four suicide bombings in the capital, spends all his day at the airport trying to take a few hundred million dollars in cash out of the country before the elections doesn't speak very well for the government's performance**

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## **AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS**

### ***Capitalism At Work:* Operation Afghan Heroin Production; After Bush "Liberation" Now World's Top Market Supplier**

Robert D. Novak (Washington Post, February 3, 2005, 2004)

**"Afghanistan, portrayed as a victory in the U.S. war against terrorism, is a disaster in the war against drugs. Its production of heroin has soared over the past year, with the country becoming the world's top supplier. Faced with this looming catastrophe, the Bush administration is deeply divided." [What, on whether to get into the business or not?]**

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## **OCCUPATION PALESTINE**

# Palestine Resistance Wounds 4 Occupation Troops



An injured Israeli soldier arrives for treatment at the hospital in the occupied southern Palestine town of Beersheva, Feb 3, 2005. **Palestinian militants shot and wounded four Israeli soldiers** guarding the Zionist settlement of Eshkolot in a drive-by shooting near the southern West Bank city of Hebron, according to the army. (AP Photo/Yehuda Lahiani)

[To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation by a foreign power, to: [www.rafahtoday.org](http://www.rafahtoday.org) The foreign army is Israeli; the occupied nation is Palestine.]

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## Received:

### **SOUND OFF! VOICES OF VETERANS On WBAI- NY 99.5FM**

Wednesday, February 9, from 7 to 10PM EST, WBAI/Pacifica Radio will feature the voices of veterans, service members and their families in a special fundraising broadcast.

Veterans and their families must be heard, as we raise our voices with the demand "bring the troops home now!" We invite you to participate in this historic broadcast.

CALL THE 'SOUND OFF' COMMENT-LINE. (212) 252-2342.

Let your voice be heard!

**Tell us about your experiences. Where have you served? What would you like the American public to know?**

**Tell us your name and rank if you like, or leave an anonymous message.**

**Excerpts from comment-line messages will be featured on "Vets' Voices: Bring Them Home Now" -- a special broadcast (February 9, 7-10PM) dedicated to veterans on listener-sponsored radio WBAI-NY 99.5FM, and streaming live on [www.wbai.org](http://www.wbai.org)**

The program will also feature Stan Goff speaking at the historic December 2004 forum, 'Military Speak Out Against the War'. Stan Goff, a U.S. military veteran and author of "Full Spectrum Disorder: The Military in the New American Century", is currently active in the 'Bring Them Home Now' campaign led by 'Military Families Speak Out' and 'Veterans For Peace'.

For more information visit [www.wbai.org](http://www.wbai.org) or write [riseup@mindspring.com](mailto:riseup@mindspring.com)

The comment-line will remain open until 7PM, Monday, February 7.

#### **Web Copies**

**For back issues see: GI Special web site at <http://www.militaryproject.org/>**

**The following that we know of have also posted issues:**

**<http://www.notinourname.net/gi-special/> ; [www.qifightback.org](http://www.qifightback.org) ;**

**<http://www.albasrah.net/maqalat/english/gi-special.htm>,**

**[www.williambowles.info/gispecial](http://www.williambowles.info/gispecial)**

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