

GI SPECIAL 3A36:

**THIS IS HOW BUSH BRINGS THE TROOPS HOME.
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE.**



US Army soldiers hold the coffin of Jesus Fonseca as villagers look on Feb. 1 2005, in Degollado, northwest of Mexico City. Jesus Fonseca, 19, of Marietta, Ga., died in a car bombing in Iraq along with two other soldiers. (AP Photo/Guillermo Arias)

The Two Most Deadly Phrases For Any War: "Died In Vain" And "Died For Nothing."

February 4, 2005 by Dr. Teresa Whitehurst, New York Times

"Death has a tendency to encourage a depressing view of war."
~ Donald Rumsfeld

In times of war, particularly when that war is starting to look meaningless and futile, its promoters must keep one highly influential group under control: the

families and friends of fallen soldiers. Whether by enemy or friendly fire, on the battlefield or off, military deaths send shockwaves through families and friends, shockwaves that can lead to changes of heart about the war.

The number of people affected by just one soldier's death is enormous. Even those with small nuclear families have larger extended family networks. Added to this group are the soldier's childhood pals, as well as a multitude of friends and acquaintances from military and civilian life.

News of one "anonymous" soldier's death rapidly ripples out to scores of Americans who interact daily with members of that large family/friend/acquaintance network. For all of us, "six degrees of separation" from deceased soldiers is an understatement.

When our men and women in uniform die, mainstream (i.e., administration-pleasing) newspaper writers and television anchors are obliged to refer to those deaths as "noble," "heroic," and "necessary."

But even with all the spin in the world, the parents, children, siblings, grandparents, friends, and coworkers who would gladly trade anything – including democracy in this or that country – to have those dead kids alive again, are prone to think and then speak the two most deadly phrases for any war: "died in vain" and "died for nothing."

To keep the public content with a war even when it's going poorly and sending kids home in boxes, these two phrases, above all others, must be silenced.

They have to be suppressed by whatever means necessary, for they are extremely contagious.

These six little words have the power to stop wars, impeach presidents, and change the course of history. They make war promoters everywhere start to sweat, particularly when they are spoken by people who've made the ultimate sacrifice – losing the ones they love.

Grief can get out of hand. It can make the blinders fall off. It can sink even your best propaganda. When you lose the military families, you've lost your war – and your power.

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.

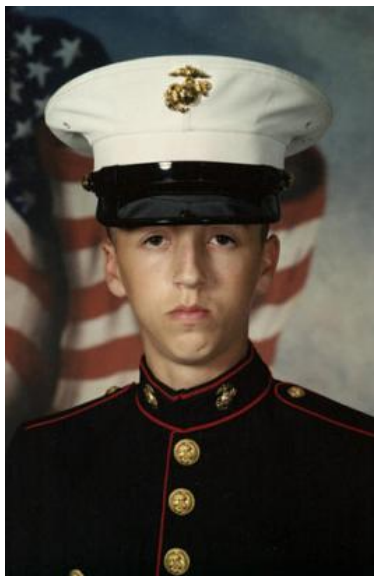
<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/> And join with Iraq War vets in the call to end the occupation and bring our troops home now! (www.ivaw.net)

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

One TF Danger Soldier Killed, Seven Wounded By Bayji IED

02/04/05 MNF Release #050204o TIKRIT, Iraq

One Task Force Danger Soldier was killed and seven wounded in an improvised explosive device attack on a Multi-National Forces combat patrol near Bayji at 4:25 p.m. on Feb. 4. The wounded are being transported to a Multi-National Forces medical facility for treatment.



Lance Cpl. Richard Chad Clifton, 19, of Milton Del., shown in this undated photo released by his family, was killed Feb. 2, 2005, in Anbar province. Clifton, a member of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, was stationed at Camp Pendleton, Calif., before being deployed to Iraq. **He was scheduled to return home next month.** (AP Photo/Courtesy of the family)

Neptune Soldier Killed Victim Survived Earlier Attack That Killed 20

02/4/05 Published in the Asbury Park Press

A former student at Manasquan and High Technology high schools known for his love of sports and the outdoors died on Thursday when insurgents attacked his Army unit near Mosul, Iraq.

Sgt. Stephen R. Sherman, 27, was the oldest of four children of a Willow Drive family. He had joined the Army in April 2003 and had been in Iraq since October.

Sherman was a passenger in an armored Stryker combat vehicle when it was hit by a homemade bomb in the early morning hours, said Henry Kearney, a spokesman for Fort Monmouth.

During his short time there, Sherman had survived an insurgent attack in December that killed more than 20 of his fellow soldiers inside a mess hall in Mosul, Kearney said.

After completing basic training, Sherman became a chemical operations specialist. As a noncommissioned officer, **Sherman oversaw other soldiers who looked for and decontaminated nuclear, biological and chemical weapons in Iraq.**

He also maintained and supervised chemical equipment and supplies for the Army.

Bruce Jeska, who coached Sherman on the wrestling team at Manasquan High School, remembered him as "a hard worker who always gave his all."

Manasquan High School Principal Cary D. McCormack remembered Sherman as "a very, very nice person" who was a friend of McCormack's son, Michael.

"When it's one of your own, it definitely does hit home," McCormack said Thursday.

Sherman's whole family was athletic, McCormack said. Edward Sherman, a younger brother, played basketball at Manasquan.

Sherman attended the University of Oregon, earning a degree in business administration in 2001. He spent a semester at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia.

He enjoyed outdoor sports and was interested in survival skills, which included an 80-day Outward Bound Excursion survival skills training course.

Before joining the Army two years ago, Sherman managed a Budget Rent-A-Car franchise in the Cayman Islands.

Stephen Sherman is survived by his mother, Bernadette Sherman of Neptune; his father, Richard W. Sherman of Great Falls, Va.; his brothers, Eddie and Danny, and his sister, Caitlin; his grandmothers, Rose Wildeman of Point Pleasant and Beverly Marten of Dover, Del.; and several aunts, uncles and cousins.

No funeral arrangements had been announced as of Thursday night.

MARINE KILLED IN BABIL PROVINCE

February 4, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 05-02-03C

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq — **A soldier assigned to the 1 Marine Expeditionary Force was killed in action yesterday in the Northern Babil Province.**

TASK FORCE SOLDIER KILLED, ANOTHER WOUNDED BY IED SOUTH OF MOSUL

February 4, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 05-02-04C & The Associated Press

MOSUL, Iraq -- **One Task Force Freedom Soldier was killed and another wounded when their convoy was hit with a roadside bomb while on patrol south of Mosul on Feb. 3. The attack occurred at about 2:00 a.m.**

A U.S. military Stryker combat vehicle rolled over several anti-tank mines.

The wounded soldier was taken to a Multi-National Forces hospital to be treated.

Miss. Gulf Coast Member Of Guard's 150th Killed In Iraq

2/4/2005 JACKSON, Miss. (AP)

Sergeant First Class Sean Michael Cooley, a member of the Mississippi Guard's 155th Brigade Combat Team has been killed in Iraq.

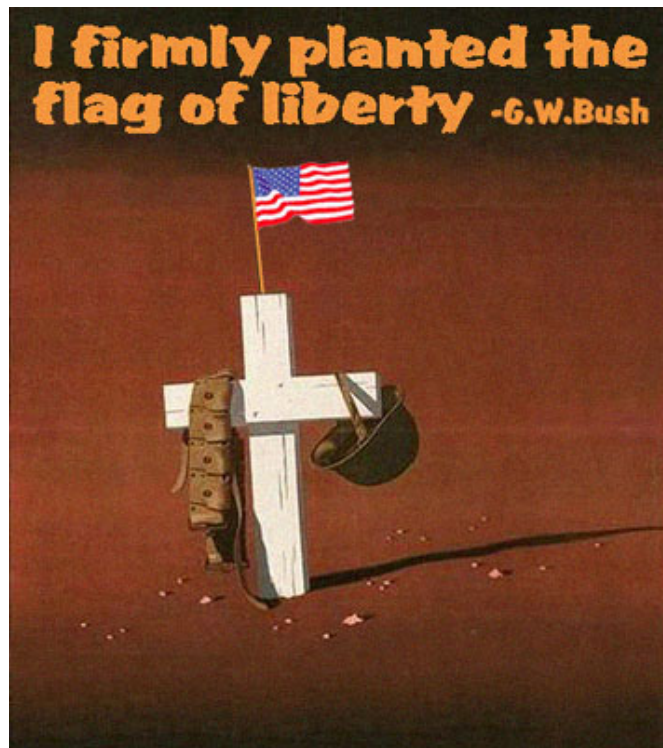
National Guard officials say the 35-year-old Cooley, of Ocean Springs, died yesterday when an explosive device exploded near his vehicle. The incident occurred south of Baghdad.

Cooley was a member of Company B, the 150th Combat Engineer Battalion located in Lucedale.

Cooley is the 21st soldier with Mississippi ties killed He is the fifth Mississippi National Guard soldier to die in Iraq.

Convoy Ambushed At Qaim, Humvee Damaged; No Casualty Report Yet

A roadside bomb exploded as a U.S. convoy passed on a highway near the city of Qaim, on the Syrian border. The blast damaged a Humvee, a witness said. The U.S. military had no immediate details.



TROOP NEWS

Does That Include Garbage Can Lids & Sandbags?

February 4, 2005 Associated Press

Gen. Peter Schoomaker, Army chief of staff, said there are currently more than 26,000 armored Humvees and other U.S. military vehicles in Iraq and Afghanistan *with some sort of armor*.

U.S. Would Commit Huge Force To Thwart N. Korean Offensive

[Thanks to PB who sent this in. He writes: HAHAHAAAAAAAAAAAA. ARE THEY SERIOUSLY BASING THEIR PLANNING ON THIS? DOES THEIR DEFENSE MINISTRY READ THE NEWSPAPER? HAVE THEY HEARD OF IRAQ?????]

February 04, 2005 By Sang-hun Choe, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — **The United States will dispatch 690,000 troops** and 2,000 warplanes if war breaks out on the Korean Peninsula, according to South Korea's new defense policy paper released Friday.

Recruiting Senior-Citizen Soldiers

1/29/2005 By Donnie Johnston, The Free Lance-Star

WE MAY SOON be seeing some old familiar posters going up in the recreation halls and dining areas of retirement villages and nursing homes.

"Uncle Sam Wants You!"

And he means it.

With the situation in Iraq only getting worse, our sights set on Iran and the military admittedly already stretched dangerously thin, recruiters are now reportedly trying to persuade retired soldiers to take their old uniforms out of mothballs and re-enlist.

The idea, of course, is to find men and women to fill the spots of those active soldiers and reservists whose terms are up but whom the Department of Defense has refused to muster out of the service.

After all, we can't keep them in Iraq and Afghanistan forever. Well, we probably could, but that wouldn't be good for morale. Not since Genghis Khan have soldiers enlisted for life.

So, replacements must come from somewhere. There is always the possibility of reinstating the Selective Service draft, but if conservative Christian Republican hawks woke up one day and discovered that their sons and daughters might be thrown into harm's way, well, the outcry for war might wane.

Of course, we don't want that to happen.

Where better to turn than retirees? They have experience, which, as we all know, is the best teacher. Oh, they may have lost a step in their march, but they have the invaluable wisdom that comes with age.

Gulf War veterans, I would assume, would be the government's first choice, but I know plenty of Vietnam War vets who are still kicking butt and might be willing to sign up for another tour of duty.

If enough Vietnam-era folks don't volunteer to fill the quotas, then the Defense Department's next logical recruitment targets would be Korean War and World War II vets.

The only Korea veteran I know has bad knees and is about 100 pounds overweight, but I think some basic training at Parris Island would eventually get him back into shape. I would say that in two--possibly three--years, this guy would be down to his fighting weight and ready to strap on a backpack and shoulder a rifle.

It might take a little longer for World War II vets, many of whom undoubtedly would now have a hard time passing the re-enlistment eye test.

Compounding World War II veteran re-enlistment woes would be the fact that many of these men and women, rightly referred to as America's greatest generation, have surrendered their driver's licenses and couldn't legally drive convoys down U.S. highways. But then I don't suppose you need a license to drive a Humvee through the Iraqi desert.

To combat this problem, it is rumored that Washington is working on an idea to outfit electric wheelchairs with machine guns. Elderly GIs could just wheel and shoot.

Older recruits would be easier to handle, too. They would be far less apt to go out every Saturday night raising hell all over town, and I certainly don't think the military would have to spend tax dollars spiking the mess-hall food with saltpeter.

World War II vet recruits would have no problem answering reveille, but the army might have to set up mock fast-food restaurants where these old-timers could sit around for a spell each morning and drink mock senior-citizen coffee. After a couple of hours of shooting the bull, these guys would be revved up and ready for action.

After the World War II volunteer pool has been exhausted, the Defense Department might be in some real trouble. Although there are probably some World War I vets still alive, I could find no listing for them on the Internet. After all, any World War I vet would now have to be approaching or past 100 years old.

And the last Confederate widow died about a year ago, so she is probably not eligible for re-enlistment.

Once Washington gets past the old-age homes, it is uncertain where recruiters will turn next. We could return to the Vietnam War practice of giving young convicted felons the choice of either going to jail or going to Iraq.

Soviet Russia, of course, took this strategy one step further than we did and simply arrested men of draft age for whatever trumped-up reasons and sentenced them to the military. We could do that.

Another option would be to release current prisoners on condition they join the military.

If we are going to invade Iran--as many now speculate--it is certain that the manpower will have to come from somewhere.

No matter how much technology we have, if we keep going to war we are going to need more fighting men. If there are not enough volunteers, we will see the draft reinstated, so get used to the idea.

Our retired soldiers have done their part, and they should not be asked to contribute more.

But don't be surprised if you see military recruiters hanging around every local McDonald's early in the morning or "hiking" with the old folks at the mall before it opens.

And warn the attendants not to let your senile grandpa sign anything put before him by a uniformed man in the nursing-home social hall.

The Gray Panthers may become more than a political activist organization; it may soon be a combat-ready military group.

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.

National Guard, Reserve Troops Not Told Of Access To VA Medical Care; Base Commanders Won't Let Them Find Out

January 24, 2005 By Mrasha Austin and Nancy Lofholm, Denver Post

When Darin Overstreet returned from Iraq in June, no one told him he was eligible for medical care and other veterans benefits.

Overstreet, a technical sergeant in the Colorado Air National Guard, wasn't injured during his tour but said he worries about the long-term effects of vaccines and other medications he took before and during deployment. Knowing he has the option of seeking treatment at the Denver VA Medical Center would be reassuring, he said.

"I wouldn't mind having it," said the 34-year-old, who works in public affairs for the Guard. "Then if something came up ..."

Overstreet is among thousands of members of the Colorado National Guard and Reserve returning from Iraq and Afghanistan who are not seeking health care and other benefits they've earned and might need later, according to Department of Veterans Affairs officials, lawmakers and veterans' advocates.

Staff from Sen. Wayne Allard's office held a meeting with veterans and VA officials in Grand Junction this month after **the VA complained it wasn't getting post-deployment access to Guard and Reserve troops.**

One problem is a huge backlog of claims at a time when the VA has had to cut claims processors, critics said.

Another is lack of access for veterans groups and VA counselors who want to help soldiers, said Stephen Robinson, executive director of the National Gulf War Resource Center.

"We can't get the (military) commanders to let us on the base to give the soldiers information," he said.

VA's Ban On Recruiting Vets Angers Activists; Henry's Health Fair At Hospital Blocked

"It's unfair to the veterans ... not being able to put out the word," Dickerson said from the Robert E. Newman VFW Post last week. "The veterans go and give their lives for this country, and the country should give them something back."

Jan. 10, 2005 By Laura Ungar, The Louisville Courier-Journal

Former Miss America Heather French Henry's idea seemed simple: Hold a health fair at the VA hospital in Louisville.

But her plan was derailed by a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs ban on any marketing that attempts to recruit veterans into its medical system.

Some veterans say the ban flouts the government's promise to care for those who served and prevents many of them -- including older ones with expensive health problems -- from getting the medical attention they need.

"They're conniving to keep the old ones and their families out," said John Sterner, a disabled Vietnam vet and activist. "The latest generation is denying the greatest generation."

The issue arose after Henry had posters printed for her event. They included the phrases: "New Resolution? Try the VA Solution," "Enroll for VA Healthcare" and "Learn about other Veterans Benefits."

Henry said that before she could distribute those posters, she was told that the language was problematic.

A directive issued last year for the VA MidSouth Healthcare Network, which includes the Louisville hospital, said "facilities may not aggressively take steps to recruit new enrollees or new workload."

That directive followed a national VA memo issued in July 2002 that said recruiting veterans is "inappropriate" because of a tight budget and growing demand for services.

"We're not allowed to go after them," said Amanda Hedlund, acting public affairs officer for the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Louisville. Henry's health fair "was a great idea. But just because of regulations and policies, we couldn't accommodate her."

National VA officials this week declined to discuss repercussions of the 2002 memo. **Jo Schuda, spokeswoman for the VA in Washington, said yesterday that officials were preparing a statement for The Courier-Journal, but it did not arrive.**

Henry canceled the health fair at the hospital and instead will hold a symposium Saturday at the UAW Hall on Fern Valley Road from 6 to 9 p.m. It will kick off a tour called Operation Veterans' Health, sponsored by the Heather French Foundation for Veterans.

"It puts the power in my hands and not the government's hands," said Henry, daughter of a disabled Vietnam vet.

All veterans are potentially eligible for VA care, but they must enroll in the program.

Charles Cordova, a 59-year-old Vietnam veteran, said he and many others don't know what services they have coming and could benefit from VA outreach.

Rick Dickerson, a former truck driver who served in Vietnam, said scores of veterans might not know how to get help.

"It's unfair to the veterans ... not being able to put out the word," Dickerson said from the Robert E. Newman VFW Post last week. "The veterans go and give their lives for this country, and the country should give them something back."

The 2002 memo banning recruitment of new veterans drew sharp criticism when it was issued by Laura J. Miller, a Louisville native who is the U.S. Deputy Undersecretary for Health for Operations and Management.

The memo said demand for health services "exceeds our resources" and has resulted in waiting lists at clinics. "Therefore, I am directing each Network Director to ensure that no marketing activities to enroll new veterans occur within your networks," Miller wrote.

David Autry, deputy national director of communications for the Disabled American Veterans, said the memo reflects the VA's "appalling lack of resources." Its health-care budget for fiscal 2004 was \$26.9 billion, a 4 percent increase from the previous year.

Henry said the memo is counterproductive. "If you don't increase the enrollment," she said, "you don't increase the budget."

Autry also said his group was assured after the 2002 memo came out that it wouldn't become policy. But there is evidence the ban on marketing to recruit enrollees has taken hold.

Last July, the VA's MidSouth Healthcare Network issued an "outreach activities policy" that elaborated on issues mentioned in the memo.

It noted that veterans may enroll for VA care and that hospitals may hold health fairs and open houses, but the directive said hospitals cannot collect names of veterans who want to enroll; distribute enrollment applications en masse; make public-service announcements about enrollment; or send general mailings to veterans.

Henry said she is not angry with Louisville officials over the issue. "It's really a problem from the top down," she said.

Federal statistics indicate that the marketing restrictions might have slowed enrollment growth. It rose 13 percent between the end of fiscal 2001 and 2002, but less than 5 percent each of the two following years.

But without marketing, even those who are eligible might not know which services are available.

"A lot of veterans are shell-shocked. A lot of them lost limbs and what have you. They need all the help they can get," said Jack Hargadon, a 59-year-old Vietnam veteran. "There's a tremendous amount of people who don't know what's available, and they should be informed."

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Police Convoy Ambushed Near Baghdad

Feb. 04, 2005 By TOM LASSETER, Knight Ridder Newspapers

A police convoy leaving Baghdad for southern Iraq was ambushed and at least one policeman was killed and five wounded.

Abu G Attack Kills One Occupation Cop, Five Wounded

2005-02-04 China Daily

Rebels attacked Iraqi police Thursday in the Baghdad suburb of Abu Ghraib, killing one policeman and wounding five, the Interior Ministry said.

Military Collaborator Killed West Of Baghdad

2/4/2005 BAGHDAD (AP)

An Iraqi contractor was killed by assailants who pulled up next to his car on the dangerous desert highway running out to Baghdad International Airport.

The man was in charge of a road construction project inside the airport complex that was contracted by the American military, said Iraqi police Lt. Akram al-Zoubaie.

Attack In Samawah Kills Occupation Cop Officer; Resistance Takes Cop Cars

BAGHDAD, Feb 4 (KUNA)

Unidentified gunmen killed Friday an Iraqi officer and injured a policemen in Samawah city, south of here.

Eyewitnesses told KUNA that unidentified gunmen opened fire at a barricade erected by the police in Samawah today.

They added that the assailants sped away with their cars without being chased by any one.

Exploding Ghazalia Canister Blows Up Police Patrol

BAGHDAD, Feb 4 (KUNA)

An Iraqi policeman was killed Friday morning when an explosive canister blew up a police patrol in Ghazalia.

An Iraqi police source told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that one policeman was killed in patrol bombing, adding that the patrol was on its regular round of the area.

Fighting At Dhuluiya

2005-02-04 Middle East Online

An Iraqi soldier and a rebel died in a clash at Dhuluiya, which erupted after an insurgent attack on an Iraqi army patrol, the military said.

"The Other One Was Exploded By Cooking Gas Tubes".

1.27.05 Eman Ahmad Khammas, BRussells Tribunal

One of the buildings in Haswa was flattened to the ground; a new neighboring building was thickly surrounded by 2 meter high sand barriers."

This is the new police station "Abu Hussein, our driver said "the other one was exploded by cooking gas tubes".

There are 18 Falluja families living in the ABH pilgrims' rooms. The majority of them were from Jolan district in Falluja, which was heavily bombed last October. As expected, there is no electricity, no clean water, to bathrooms in the pilgrim's rooms. Mohammad who owns a hotel in Karbala'a offered his hotel free to these families, but they preferred to stay near the shrine.

Ten other hotel owners in Karbala'a did the same. These relatively wealthy people and others formed a group called the Karbala'i Group to collect and donate aid to the Falluja refugees here and in other places. It is another example of the Iraqi people unity between Shiite and Sunnis.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Abu Ghraib, Tiger Cages And Flying Viet Cong; “Don't Get Caught”

January 28, 2005 By Robert Gaiek, Dissidentvoice.org. **Robert Gaiek left the military a Captain and is the recipient of a Purple Heart, Air Medal and Bronze Star with clusters and now owns a small business.**

Abu Ghraib and the torture of our enemies no longer light up cable news with that mind numbing repetition of perp walks and stacked nude bodies. **The military, we are assured, is taking care of the problem and the slate will be wiped clean once again for a little while.**

The enlisted kids being punished now and in the future will take the rap for "getting caught." The career officers will escape accountability, just as they did in Vietnam over 30 years ago.

The military had to be reborn after Vietnam, but the job was only partially done. We never came to terms with the Tiger Cages we ran where over 9,000 prisoners were tortured by the South Vietnamese police.

The military needed then and still needs today, a genuine code of honor without winks and nods. After all these years I still wonder what became of the practice of taking Viet Cong prisoners up in helicopters for "interrogation." Do we still do it today with the enemy of choice?

What would Alberto Gonzales or Condi Rice think of threatening to throw VC out of helicopters for not spilling their guts? Would that be covered by the Geneva Convention; could the VC be considered illegal combatants, not playing by the rules of war and not dressing in a properly identifiable military garb? The ruling might be that the Geneva Convention does not apply to air born torture. **It is not far fetched to suggest that the Abu Ghraib syndrome was, perhaps, born in Viet Nam.**

But what if the drop was only 5-10 feet? Would that be torture if you were blind folded?

(All I remember is being on the bed of a Huey Helicopter with guys with U.S. insignia Brass on their shirts. The VC had a bag over his head. The interpreter kept threatening to throw the bastard over the side if he didn't talk. The guy really started to stink. He wasn't going to talk. The guy in charge said to head back to base.) **[Plenty of prisoners got thrown out the door before "heading back to base." The idea was take two, kill one, and see if the survivor talks or goes out the door next. It wasn't so nice and friendly as this account suggests.]**

The nice thing about wearing U.S. brass insignia is that they replace rank and branch--you're a spook. You could be taken for a private but with the possibility of being a colonel. I was the II Corps Project Officer for "Duffelbag" in 1970, the Army version of Igloo White.

One of the important rules at Ft. Benning's school to train young boys to be infantry officers used to be, "get the task done and don't quibble if you fail." You are sternly warned about breaking the rules then given an assignment that can only be accomplished by breaking some rule, particularly, do not leave the base to procure some item that can only be found off base. Translation: "Don't get caught."

When the Commander gets on the phone and says, "Do whatever it takes", it will get done. "Do it but don't get caught" (no cameras allowed). Maybe that has all changed, but I don't think so. The evidence suggests it has not. In fact, all the evidence lies in the other direction

After 9/11/01 there was endless banter about the lack of intelligence. The Bush administration left no doubt that the goal was to take out the enemy before they could attack us. Was there doubt in anyone's mind that gathering human intelligence was the number one priority throughout government? And there were not any limiting conditions placed on this quest. The American people would not suffer one hangnail from the bogeymen terrorists. They were to be tortured and killed before they could harm any American

What this led to was the ongoing torture of an entire country, Iraq.

We were reviled when we returned from Vietnam, not because of war crimes but because of the loss of a war for the first time in our history. America despises losers and would rather not know about war crimes. **[Wrong. The huge majority of Americans came to hate and oppose the Vietnam War. Check the facts, in any poll, for public opinion at the end of the war.]**

In reality, only losers resort to war crimes. We lost in Vietnam and we have lost the war in Iraq. You can't spin it any other way. ["We" didn't lose in Vietnam. They lost in Vietnam, meaning the murderous assholes who love and promote the U.S. Empire, and today bring you Iraq, Democrat and Republican politicians together hand in hand both times. Same old same old.]

The Message Is The Message

26 January 2005 William Bowles, excerpt from www.williambowles.info/ini/ini-0301.html

On yesterday's BBC1 lunchtime news, diplomatic correspondent James Robbins declared that US relations with Iran were "looking very murky because of the nuclear threat". (BBC1, 13:00 News, January 20, 2005)

On the BBC's 18:00 news, Robbins again spoke of Iran "where the President is confronting the nuclear threat". (BBC1, 18:00 News, January 25, 2005)

Perhaps it's my working class background with the accompanying ingrained sense of inferiority to my 'betters' that has produced such a deep dislike and distrust of the intelligentsia and their smug know-it-all attitudes, virtually all of which is simply based on a superficial command of language harnessed to an ideological mindset supplied to them by their superiors, like fleas on a fleas back, but ultimately, it's not rocket science it's all down to the manipulation of language and an unstated but implicit acceptance of the status quo.

A subtle manipulation typified by the two examples above. After all, what could be more 'objective' or innocent than the word "threat"?

The problem for the Left comes in dealing with such an incessant onslaught, with each salvo finely tuned to be received by a specific constituency.

So we have our Noam Chomskys, who having been through the same academic mill have their own ears finely tuned to the nuances, but who reads Noam Chomsky? How many people have even heard of him?

And in any case, he deals with the 'intellectuals' who populate the pages of the NYT and their ilk, he even talks their language! Ultimately, he's one of 'them'.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Occupation Cops: "There Was Nothing Left Of Them, Not A Fragment."

February 4, 2005 Rory Carroll in Baghdad, The Guardian

In the last three months of 2004 around 1,300 cadets and police officers were killed or seriously injured, according to academy officials.

"Every day we are being killed, slaughtered, bombed," said Kalid Eataya, 48, a senior instructor. "A checkpoint with four guys was blown up not far from here and there was nothing left of them, not a fragment."

Earlier this week Abid Asmae'el and 11 other cadets travelling to the capital from the south had a narrow escape when insurgents stopped and searched their bus. "I stuffed my insignias and ID into the seat pocket, others threw theirs out the window."

The cadets live in the academy and during visits home wear civilian clothes. "You don't want anyone knowing your job," said Shaima'a Mosa, 25, drawing a finger across her throat.

Blinding Flash Of The Obvious Strikes Showboat General: Petraeus: Insurgents Hurt Iraqi Security Forces; Media Hound Suddenly Turns Shy About Providing Facts

February 04, 2005 By Robert Burns, Associated Press

Insurgent intimidation of Iraqi soldiers has hampered U.S. efforts to build a reliable security force, the U.S. general in charge of training Iraqi troops said Friday.

Army Lt. Gen. David Petraeus, speaking from Baghdad to reporters at the Pentagon, said the Iraqi units had suffered "losses due to severe intimidation," but he **offered no specifics**.

He did not cite an absentee or desertion rate.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Bush-Cheney Buddies At Halliburton To Get More Billions

February 04, 2005 By Larry Margasak, Associated Press

The Army said Thursday it will not withhold any of the payments due Halliburton in a contract providing services to U.S. troops in Iraq and elsewhere.

The Army flip-flopped several times last year on whether it would withhold 15 percent of the payments, which could have cost Vice President Dick Cheney's former company \$60 million a month.

KBR won the contract in 2001 and has been paid \$6.4 billion so far. **Work requirements could bump the figure to \$9.3 billion in the fiscal year ending Sept. 30, but the number would continue to grow beyond that, since the services are expected to continue.**

Bush Foreign Policy Bursts Into Flame



A huge mountain of cow manure is seen smoldering at a feedlot near Milford, Neb., Tuesday, Jan. 18, 2005. The estimated 2,000-ton pile of burning cow manure spontaneously combusted about two months ago and continues to smolder despite attempts to douse it. AP Photo Nati Harnik (Truthout 1.28.05)

CLASS WAR NEWS

Bankrupt Empire

January 24 2005 By Chris Giles, Financial Times

Central banks are shifting reserves away from the US and towards the eurozone in a move that looks set to deepen the Bush administration's difficulties in financing its ballooning current account deficit.

In actions likely to undermine the dollar's value on currency markets, 70 per cent of central bank reserve managers said they had increased their exposure to the euro over the past two years. The majority thought eurozone money and debt markets were as attractive a destination for investment as the US.

The findings emerge from a survey of central bank reserve managers published today.

Any rebalancing of central bank reserve portfolios has serious implications for the global financial system as the US has become increasingly dependent on official flows of funds to finance its current account deficit, estimated at \$650bn in 2004.

At the end of 2003, central banks held 70 per cent of their official reserves in dollar-denominated assets and central bank purchases of US securities had financed more than 80 per cent of the US current account deficit in 2003.

Any reluctance to increase exposure to dollar assets further could cause the greenback to plunge on currency markets.

"The US cannot take support for the dollar for granted," said Nick Carver, one of the authors of the study conducted by Central Banking Publications, a company that specialises in reporting on central banks.

"Central banks' enthusiasm for the dollar seem to be cooling off."

In a further worrying sign for the greenback, 47 per cent of reserve managers surveyed said they expected the growth of official reserves to slow to less than 20 per cent over the next four years. Between the end of 2000 and mid-2004, official reserves had increased by 66 per cent.

Slower reserve accumulation growth implies the supply of official finance is likely to become more limited but few expect the demand from the US for finance to slow. The consensus among economists is that the US current account deficit will increase to \$694bn in 2005.

In the two years since a similar survey was conducted, reserve managers had begun to seek higher returns for the money under management.

For these managers, dollar assets have become less attractive because the fall in the dollar since 2002 has reduced the yield they received and, in some cases, has led to negative real returns.

Alan Greenspan, the chairman of the Federal Reserve, warned in November that there was a limit to the willingness of foreign governments to finance the US current account deficit.

The survey was conducted on the guarantee of anonymity for the banks involved.

MORE:

Doom For The Dollar

01.10.05 Dan Ackman, Forbes, NEW YORK

An increasing number of economists are seeing serious storms build on the horizon. They point to ever-growing federal budget deficits, a record current-account deficit, increased consumer debt, a real estate market that looks like a bubble ready to burst, a surge in personal bankruptcies and the prospect of inflation.

Meanwhile, interest rates are on the rise, and if they increase much more, many of these problems could get dramatically worse.

Doomsayers tend to be ignored--until it's too late.

This week, we give voice to five prophets of doom, starting with Peter Schiff, CEO and chief global strategist of Euro Pacific Capital.

Could the falling dollar mean we're in for a major financial disaster? He thinks so.

He has been warning about the currency's fall for a while now. Even though it lost a third of its value in the last two years against the euro, he believes it will decline even further. But, the dollar's fall is more a symptom than a cause. The real problem is that the U.S. is producing too little--and spending too much--and the result is likely to be far worse than the happy-talkers on Wall Street will ever let on.

"We are going to go through one of the most trying financial times in U.S. history, including the Great Depression," Schiff says.

"The basic problem," Schiff states, "is that Americans don't produce enough, and don't save enough." **As a result, the goods that we are consuming are being supplied to us by foreigners. Not only are they producing the goods, but they are lending us the money to buy them, and, in doing so, are driving the U.S. deeper and deeper into debt to the rest of the world, Schiff says.**

As American industry has lost productive capacity, it has become increasingly difficult for the U.S. to produce enough--and sell enough--to reduce that debt. The massive U.S. trade and current-account deficits, now at around 6% of the gross domestic product, mean that non-Americans are exchanging consumer goods today for consumer goods they will obtain in the future.

The U.S. doesn't have the ability to supply those goods, Schiff says. "We are using dollars that we print to exchange for goods that we don't produce. We have to borrow from abroad as there are no domestic sources of savings, so the value of those dollars will continue to fall."

How Bad Will It Get?

"Very bad," Schiff says.

The dollar will fall a lot lower than it already has--dropping by perhaps 50% against the Japanese and Chinese currencies. How will the government respond? Could efforts to forestall the currency decline have a perverse--and ultimately negative--effect? No matter what the outcome, Americans will have to consume a lot less and save a lot more. Spending on cars, clothing and electronics will all drop dramatically--perhaps right out of the economy.

What Caused It?

"We are a society that has lived beyond its means for a long time," Schiff says, adding that while the trend has been evident for two or three decades, "in the last five years, it has gone off the deep end."

What Will The Results Be?

Americans will have to restrict future consumption or default on debt, whether directly or indirectly.

"I think something in the near future--maybe early this year--will make us realize the error of our ways," Schiff says. "Our creditors are going to stop. They are going to bite the bullet," which means realizing we can't repay them in the way they want and expect.

They will take a huge loss, but it will be necessary to check an unsustainable process. At that point, the people of Japan and other Asian nations will be able to consume a lot more, because they will send less of what they produce to the U.S.

"They will not be producing for us; they will be producing for themselves."

Meanwhile, to attract savings from abroad, the U.S. will have to increase interest rates into the double digits. This will cause a serious wave of defaults in the real estate market and elsewhere.

"The further into the future this starts, the worse it will be for Americans," Schiff says.

When And Why Will It Bottom Out?

"I don't know. A lot will depend on the government," Schiff says. The debt to Japan, China and others has been building for a long time. The process will also take some time to reverse. But, the analysts on Wall Street don't want to say this.

"They pull their punches, because they don't want to be marginalized. But, the fact is we owe Japan a fortune; it's not the other way around." And that, Schiff says, means the dollar will be heading south for a while.

Received:

US Labor Against The War Official Defends Open Collaborator With Bush Iraq Occupation Dictatorship

From: Michael Eisenscher, US Labor Against The War
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2005 9:44 PM

Michael: **[Letwin, New York City Labor Against The War]**

I'm sorry that Salih's assassins were so inconsiderate as to torture and kill him the night before the SC call. Our objective in getting the statement out ASAP was to put USLAW clearly on record condemning assassination of trade unionists as a legitimate means of opposing the U.S. occupation. Notice of the assassination was sent to the Steering Committee at 9:45 a.m. PST on January 5, with announcement that draft of a statement would be forthcoming prior to the call. The statement was sent to the SC at 12:53 p.m., more than three hours prior to the start of the call in hopes that everyone would have a chance to review it and raise any issues they might have during the call. When no one did, we issued the statement in order that it would be timely in light of the nature of the crime.

The IFTU is on record calling for an end to the occupation. (For example, see the statement by Abdullah Muhsin on November 4, 2004 at <http://www.uslaboragainstawar.org/article.php?id=7173>.) Hadi Salih said just that during his presentation to the ICFTU conference in Japan only weeks ago. In his remarks, he said, "War does not serve the people of Iraq. Occupation doesn't help democracy."

You are allowing your ideological view to color your perception of the situation. There is no justification for assassinating union leaders no matter what their politics. The FCWUI recognized that instantly and issued a statement immediately condemning the torture and murder.

I have yet to hear from you one word of condemnation of the torture and assassination of Hadi Salih. Would you prefer that USLAW remain silent in the face of this crime? If so, your view is a distinctly minority one in the Steering Committee and in the larger labor antiwar movement. Hadi Salih, whatever your criticisms of his political views, suffered prison and torture, then exile at the hands of Saddam Hussein. He put his life on the line and lost it in the struggle to rebuild the Iraqi labor movement. I figure that earns him respect on the part of all those who claim to champion labor's cause, whatever their politics.

The fact that the capitalist media chooses to lump all opponents of the U.S. occupation into the category "Resistance" should not hide the fact that there are a wide range of groups involved in resisting the occupation - some with arms and others without arms. That Ba'athist elements and religious fascists do so with arms does not mean that we ought to embrace them as legitimate fighters for the autonomy, self-determination and national integrity of the Iraqi people. Those who embrace these elements and their "by any means necessary" posture, in my view, are as opportunistic and irresponsible as

they claim the IFTU is by participating in the political process in play in Iraq. It costs them little hurling their charges from the safe and secure borders of the U.S., England, or other parts of the imperialist world, while those who struggle within the borders of Iraq have everything at risk.

USLAW's statement makes it quite clear that we demand an immediate end to the occupation. We said: "The ultimate source of violence in Iraq is the US occupation. The Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions calls for the end of the occupation and the US war. Salih's murder does not bring this end one step closer. Instead, it seeks to terrorize Iraq's labor movement, and other parts of its civil society, to keep them from seeking any peaceful means of gaining political power in the interest of its working people."

Nothing I've heard from you or others who share your view causes me to want to change one word of that. No one but you on the Steering Committee raised a word of objection. Rather than impune our motives, you ought to be asking yourself why you stand so much alone.

Yours in solidarity, Michael Eisenscher

REPLY:

From: Michael Letwin NYCLAW Co-Convener & Member of USLAW Steering Committee
Sent: Wednesday, January 19, 2005 12:19 AM
To: Michael Eisenscher, USLAW Steering Committee

My criticism of USLAW's statement on Hadi Salih was not motivated by "ideological" prejudice; in fact, NYCLAW cosponsored (and I co-chaired) the main USLAW Iraq labor tour forum in New York City, at which 250 people donated \$800, some of it for the IFTU (see below*)

I would certainly have not have objected to USLAW's statement on Hadi Salih, had it simply condemned his assassination, pointed out that "[t]he ultimate source of violence in Iraq is the US occupation," and demanded "Bring the troops home now."

What I did object to was the attempt to whitewash the IFTU's collaboration with the very war and occupation that USLAW was created to oppose.

This was reflected in the statement's misleading assertions that, "[t]he Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions calls for the end of the occupation and the US war," that "US Labor Against the War shares [Salih's] vision of a peaceful and progressive Iraq," that "Hadi Salih was killed because of his commitment and dedication to making Iraq a democratic and progressive country," and that the Iraqi resistance assassinated Salih in order "to terrorize Iraq's labor movement, and other parts of its civil society, to keep them from seeking any peaceful means of gaining political power in the interest of its working people."

In reality, the IFTU reflects the views of the "[t]he Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) [which] totally supports the client regime of Iyad Alawi and has one senior and two junior ministers in his cabinet.

The ICP equates the armed resistance with fundamentalist terrorism, and thereby approves the suppression of the resistance." [1] Both the ICP and IFTU remained silent as the U.S. obliterated Falluja. [2]

As reported to the USLAW conference in December, the IFTU blocked an "Out Now" resolution at the British Labor Party conference in October, where it "was not merely supportive of the continued military occupation of his country, but could also be read as supportive of the original invasion of Iraq." [3]

Just a few days ago, "[i]n collaboration with the [Iraqi Petrochemical and Plastic Manufactures Company] administration, [the IFTU] threatened workers with sacking, jailing and killing to force them call off a strike organized early this month. They justified these oppressive actions by referring to resolutions passed by Alawi's government, which ban union activity and install IFTU as the only legal union." [4]

As one commentator recently observed, "[t]he giving over of some executive positions to the leaders of the Communist party of Iraq, or the recognition of the trade union linked to this party (IFTU) is a price the Pentagon and CIA are prepared to pay for their support in repressing the resistance. . . . By signing into this policy, groups such as the [Iraqi Communist Party] show either ignorance or treachery." [5]

Ewa Jasiewicz, who helped facilitate USLAW's 2003 delegation to Iraq, reports "that more and more people, both within and outside Iraq, are viewing the IFTU, as it stands now, as an obstacle to genuine worker empowerment and direct, participatory democracy in Iraq and will oppose it, angrily and uncompromisingly." [6]

Thus, Jasiewicz questions whether Salih's assassination (which she too condemns), "is related to his activities as a Union organiser." **Rather, she believes that Salih may have been killed because "there is no neutrality or security for a trade union federation which is so enmeshed with a political party [the Iraqi Communist Party] which is collaborating heavily with the occupation in Iraq and remaining silent on the massacres being perpetrated daily against the civilian population there."**

Contrary to your claims, many SC members had neither seen USLAW's statement on Salih before it was publicly issued, nor were we informed that it would whitewash the IFTU. That portion of the statement may have reflected the views of its drafters. But it did not reflect an above-board, democratic process.

I also disagree with the attitude that, "[r]ather than impune [sic] our motives, you ought to be asking yourself why you stand so much alone."

First, in raising the issues above, I criticized politics and process, not your motives.

Second, NYCLAW does not always stand alone within USLAW. For example, USLAW's founding meeting on January 11, 2003 adopted NYCLAW proposals for the organization's name and points of unity, while the national conference on October 25-26, 2003 adopted its proposals to retain that name and to demand "Bring the Troops Home Now."

In any case, standing alone is certainly no disgrace. And minority views should not be met with personal attack or demonization.

NOTES

1. Ardeshir Mehrdad, Between Iraq's Colonialist and Islamist Quagmire the "Third Way" Is Hard But Possible, Iran Bulletin Middle East Forum, November 2004
<http://www.payvand.com/news/05/jan/1171.html>.
2. Sami Ramadani, Britain's Trade Unions, Iraq's Occupation, the IFTU and the ESF, October 23, 2004 <http://www.labournet.net/ukunion/0410/iraqtu1.html>.
3. The Stop the War Coalition and the IFTU, October 11, 2004
<http://www.stopwar.org.uk/article.asp?id=111004>.
4. Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions-IFTU Helps Alawi's Government to Crack Down on Workers' Protests in Petrochemical and Plastic Company in Baghdad, January 10, 2004
<http://www.uuiraq.org/english/130.htm>.
5. Mehrdad, note 1, above.
6. Ewa J., History Repeating Itself - the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions, ICP and Iraqi Workers, October 31, 2004
<http://www.infoshop.org/inews/article.php?story=04/10/31/3091915>

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