

GI SPECIAL 3A41:

SATAN



"The marines that I have had wounded over the past five months have been attacked by a faceless enemy. But the enemy has got a face. He's called Satan."
US Marine Colonel Gareth Brandl

**Helicopter Pilots Who
Refused Combat Mission
Win:
Their Equipment Was Dangerous
To Fly**

February 10, 2005 Reuters

AN Italian military tribunal has thrown out cowardice charges against four pilots who had refused to fly in Iraq because of the poor state of their helicopters, the men's lawyer said today.

The ruling was a blow for the army and raised fresh doubts about the effectiveness of Italy's military hardware.

The four pilots served in Iraq last year, but after flying just one mission they refused to take to the air again, saying their helicopters did not have adequate anti-missile protection.

Army top brass said the helicopters were safe and accused the pilots of being cowards. But the tribunal said today that the men had no case to answer, indicating that their concerns were justified.

"We showed that they didn't act out of fear but out of a spirit of professionalism, having demonstrated that there were technical failings with their aircraft," said defence lawyer Franco Coppi.

The pilots had complained that their helicopters were only equipped with manual anti-missile systems, rather than faster automatic protection devices.

Today's ruling came exactly one month after an Italian soldier was shot dead by insurgents while he was flying in an open-sided helicopter on patrol over southern Iraq.

His death sparked fresh controversy over the aircraft being used in Iraq, with critics accusing the government of failing to send modern, attack helicopters because it wanted to portray the Iraq deployment as a peace-keeping mission.

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.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

ONE SOLDIER KILLED, ONE WOUNDED IN BALAD ATTACK

February 9, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 05-02-11C

TIKRIT, Iraq – A U.S. Soldier was killed and another wounded when anti-Iraqi forces attacked a convoy near Balad at about 12:30 p.m. Feb. 9.

Another North Texas Soldier Dead

2.9.05 The Dallas Morning News

Another North Texas soldier -- 22-year-old Army Specialist Jeremy O. Allmon of Cleburne -- died Sunday when a homemade bomb exploded near his vehicle in Taji, just north of Baghdad.

His stepfather, Preston Ray, says Allmon wanted to become a game warden. Allmon spoke often about returning home this summer, when his enlistment ended, and go to college.

SOLDIER FOUND DEAD FROM GUNSHOT WOUND AT ANACONDA

February 9, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
Release Number: 05-02-10C

LOGISTICS SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA, BALAD, Iraq – One 1st Corps Support Command Soldier is dead as the result of a gunshot wound around 1 p.m., Feb. 8.

The Soldier was pronounced dead on the scene and the body has been transferred to the local mortuary affairs detachment here.

TASK FORCE SOLDIER KILLED IN MOSUL

February 9, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
Release Number 05-02-09C.

MOSUL, Iraq – A Task Force Freedom Soldier was killed by small arms fire while on patrol in Mosul about 11 a.m., Feb.6.

“Many” Marines Suffer “Extensive Chemical Burns” From Resistance Attack Near Falluja

February 09, 2005 By John Pirro, THE NEWS-TIMES

A 21-year-old Marine from Brookfield who had been in Iraq for less than two weeks is in a Texas military hospital after being critically wounded in an explosion.

Lance Cpl. John T. Schmidt III, who grew up in Danbury, suffered severe burns to his face, esophagus and lungs when a rocket or mortar shell ruptured a tank of ammonia, spraying the caustic gas throughout the building his unit occupied.

Schmidt, along with several other members of his platoon, are being treated at the Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio.

"His condition has stabilized and he is improving each day, but it's going to be a long rehabilitation," Schmidt's grandmother, Jean Backlund, said Tuesday in a telephone interview from her home in St. Augustine Beach, Fla.

Schmidt is heavily sedated and is breathing with the help of a ventilator. His mother, Barbara, and his stepfather, Dr. Eric Jimenez of Brookfield, are at his bedside and he is aware of their presence, Jean Backlund said.

"He's holding his own. He tried to open his eyes (Monday) and he knows that his mother and stepfather are there," she said.

Schmidt, a member of Indian Company, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Division, was with fellow platoon members in an agricultural building near Fallujah when they came under attack on Jan. 30, said his grandfather, Richard Backlund.

The platoon members had taken shelter in the building, where they were awaiting orders to head toward the site where a British C-130 transport plane crashed earlier that day, he said.

After the explosion, many of the Marines inside were overcome by the gas and lost consciousness. All suffered extensive chemical burns. They were pulled to safety by other Marines who either escaped or were outside the building already, Richard Backlund said.

"They did a head count outside, and some people were missing, including John. So they went back in and got them," he said.

The wounded troops were rushed to Baghdad by Humvees and helicopter. From there, they were flown to a military hospital. All underwent tracheotomies – that

is, they had small holes cut in their windpipes and breathing tubes put in – before they were transported to Texas, Backlund said.

Families were contacted once the wounded Marines reached Germany. "It was pretty fast, considering," Jean Backlund said.

He grew up in Danbury and attended local schools, then moved to Florida with his mother and graduated from high school in Oviedo, a town just outside Orlando.

Schmidt's father, also named John, lives in Bunnell, Fla.

Richard Backlund said his grandson "was a typical teenager" and basically drifted through his high school years, working at a series of fast food restaurants in Florida. Then he decided to move back to Brookfield to live with his mother and her husband, a pulmonologist at Danbury Hospital.

After about a year in Connecticut, John surprised his family by announcing he was going to enlist in the Marines, his grandparents said. "He told me he needed the discipline," Jean Backlund said.

There was another surprise waiting when they attended his Marine Corps graduation in January 2004.

"We couldn't believe how much he changed. When we saw him walk out on that field, I said, 'Oh my God, he's so military,'" Backlund said.

Jean Backlund said her daughter and her husband were getting lots of support from the families of the other wounded Marines, who are also at the hospital. "There's a lot of camaraderie there," she said.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT THE NEW TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces. Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces. If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers.

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

Smoke, Gunfire In Baghdad

February 9, 2005 The Associated Press, BAGHDAD, Iraq

Thick smoke is rising above central Baghdad after gunfire barked out in the area.

Iraqi residents say they heard automatic weapons fire and a series of blasts in the early afternoon.

The area on the western bank of the Tigris river is a hotbed of rebel activity in the capital.

N.W. Ohio GI Fatally Wounded

February 9, 2005 By Jack Baessler, BLADE STAFF WRITER, OTTAWA, Ohio

A 1998 graduate of Ottawa-Glandorf High School died Sunday in Iraq after he was wounded by insurgents in Mosul, family members said last night.

Staff Sgt. Zachary Ryan Wobler, 24, a member of the Army's 82nd Airborne Division in Fort Bragg, N.C., was shot several times after emerging from a warehouse in search of support troops, said his father, Anthony Wobler, who lives in Leipsic, Ohio.

Sergeant Wobler was a lead scout working with a small team of soldiers that had ducked into a warehouse. He ventured outside to try to alert support troops to his location.

"Zach came out of the warehouse, and apparently a car with six people riddled Zach," Mr. Wobler said. His son was shot in the chest. Sergeant Wobler continued to fight and was able to kill the driver of the vehicle, his father said.

"He was excellent," his father said. "He was a fantastic guy. I will tell you now, I miss him so bad."

He was the 10th soldier from the region to die in Iraq. The family learned of their son's death late Sunday, his father said.

His father said he has misgivings about how leaders in Washington have characterized the security climate in Iraq during the ongoing effort to bring democracy.

"It is sad you hear how they have everything under control," Mr. Wobler said.

"I listen to a guy like [Secretary of Defense Donald] Rumsfeld, and he says we have enough troops to do this and to do that. But I have heard my son say repeatedly that we don't have enough troops to do this and to do that.

"About three weeks ago, I got an e-mail from him," Mr. Wobler said. "He said he got a terrible premonition that something bad was going to happen to his men.

Sergeant Wobler and his wife, Corissa, now living in the Cleveland area, have been legally separated for two years, his father said. The couple have a 3-year old daughter.

Marilyn Pester, Anthony Wobler's fiancé, said the family plans to have visitation for a day at a funeral home in Paulding, where Sergeant Wobler lived as a youngster, and at Love Funeral Home in Ottawa another day. The funeral is to be held in Sts. Peter and Paul Church, Ottawa, with burial at Arlington National Cemetery.

"That's the tentative plan," she said, adding that it's a difficult time: "When you lose your parents or older persons, it's a natural thing. When you lose younger people, you just can't understand it."

Marine Captain From Redondo Killed In Ramadi: "It's So Quiet Here, It's Eerie. And That Concerns Me"

February 09, 2005 By Kristin S. Agostoni, Daily Breeze

Capt. Sean Lee Brock picked up the phone last week in the Iraqi city of Ramadi and told his mother about the strange silence surrounding him.

"This is what he said," recalled Anita Brock of Redondo Beach. "Mom, I can't talk long. It's so quiet here, it's eerie. And that concerns me, because when it gets quiet like that, something happens." "

Anita Brock asked if he was in a safe place. But someone interrupted, and he told her he had to go. It was the last conversation she'd have with her 29-year-old son.

Brock, a lifetime Redondo Beach resident and 1993 Mira Costa High School graduate, was killed in combat about six hours later in Iraq's Anbar Province, family members said. He suffered from a fatal shrapnel wound to the abdomen and was pronounced dead Feb. 2.

His wife of two years, Navy Lt. Heather Brock, 27, said her husband sent her an e-mail four hours earlier. She believes he wrote a second note before he died, but she never got to read it.

Heather Brock, a nurse who had been stationed aboard the USS Fort McHenry off the coast of Sumatra, Indonesia, was awakened the next morning to the sobering news. She left almost immediately to start the trip back to the United States.

"The most he would say was, 'Oh, I had a close call today,' " she said of her husband's messages. "He knew he was going to die. He was just so honorable."

With a photograph of the trim, dark-haired Marine smiling up at them Monday night from the kitchen table, the Marine's mother, wife and two siblings remembered Brock's love

for scuba diving and soccer and the close ties he kept to his hometown. Flower arrangements covered the counter tops, and the family's phone rang with offers of condolences and questions.

"Family was so important," Anita Brock said. "He was an excellent friend. And just loyal."

Even when Brock left Redondo Beach in August 1993 to launch his military career, he couldn't distance himself from his fraternal twin brother, Rayme, who made the same decision to enlist with the Marines.

Both teenagers -- by chance, Rayme Brock believes -- got assigned to boot camp at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego. Military officials usually separate twins, he said, but a typo on the registration documents fooled officials into believing the two were unrelated.

Rayme's last name was misspelled Brockr, while his brother's remained intact.

So, the pair shipped off together that August, learning the ropes, missing home and, later, figuring out how to pull off a few pranks.

Because visitation rules were stringent, the brothers became regulars at Sunday Mass and religious ceremonies at the chapel. Once the services began, they'd look around the pews and take turns walking outside.

Tucked inside a bathroom they'd find their mother and father, the late Maury Espelin, and younger sister, Kelly, who made the trip south so the family could spend just a few minutes together.

"I was inside the men's room. We were all there," Anita Brock said. "We planned it."

Heather Brock entered her husband's life several years later, and the couple married quietly after a few months of dating.

They met at the Marine Corps ball at the La Jolla Marriott on Nov. 9, 2002, and talked for about "three minutes," she said. Not long, but enough time for him to learn her name and that she was a nurse.

The following Monday, he showed up at Camp Pendleton Naval Hospital.

They started dating and entered marriage counseling Jan. 8, 2003.

But it didn't last.

A day and a half later, the couple got dressed in their military blues and picked up a bouquet of multicolored tulips. They eloped and were married at a courthouse in San Marcos. A separate wedding ceremony for family and friends took place the following October at Wayfarers Chapel in Rancho Palos Verdes.

The newlyweds bought a house in Oceanside in January 2003, but Heather Brock said her husband called it home for just a short time. He left days later to start what would be the first of two assignments in Iraq.

Sean Brock, who held bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of California at Santa Barbara and Central Michigan University, had been pursuing a doctorate in public policy and administration from Walden University, as well as a master's degree in international relations from Troy University.

"Sean's family was blessed to know him for 29 years," Heather Brock said.

"I was blessed to know him for 27 months. ... We had our whole lives to look forward to."

Sean Brock is the fifth South Bay soldier killed in Iraq. The others were Army Spc. Sergio Diaz Varela of Lomita; Army Spc. Edgar P. Daclan Jr., who lived near Carson; Army Sgt. Brian Wood of Torrance; and Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Jose Gutierrez of Lomita.

A memorial service will be held at 10 a.m. Friday at The Neighborhood Church in Palos Verdes Estates, followed by a military funeral service at the Korean Friendship Bell in San Pedro. A reception will follow at Fort MacArthur Community Center.

In addition to his wife, mother and two siblings, Brock is survived by his paternal grandmother, Margaret Espelin of Santa Maria; maternal grandparents, Joe and Phyllis Russo of Granbury, Texas; a half-sister, Ivy Blesser of Santa Monica; a brother-in-law, Dean Morishige of Redondo Beach; and a nephew, Brock Morishige.

Keene Marine Critically Wounded

February 9, 2005 AP, KEENE, N.H.

A Marine from Keene is recovering after being critically wounded in a sniper attack in Iraq.

Family members said Lance Cpl. Isaac Croteau was shot three times in the face.

After treatment in Germany, Croteau was flown to military hospital in Bethesda, Md., this week. Family members said doctors put Croteau in a coma, and he's listed in critical but stable condition.

TROOP NEWS

Portuguese Government Bringing Troops Home Feb. 10; Forced To Act By Opposition To War

02/09/05 By AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, LISBON

Portugal's 127-strong contingent of national guards will return home from southern Iraq on Feb 10, two days ahead of schedule, after completing a 15-month tour of duty in the war-ravaged country, officials said Feb. 9.

Lisbon will, however, keep four guards in Iraq to help provide training to Iraqi security forces, a spokesman for the force told national news agency Lusa.

Portugal's center-right government, which vocally supported the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, faces a snap election Feb. 20.

Polls show the main opposition Socialist Party which opposed the war and the deployment of Portuguese troops to Iraq enjoy a wide lead over the Social Democrats.

Polls show the vast majority of Portuguese opposed the Iraq deployment.

Kin Of KIA Struggle With Finances

[USA Today, February 8, 2005, Pg. 3]

The surviving families of troops killed in combat face substantial economic problems, which aren't nearly addressed by the current death benefit paid them.

War Is Affecting Small State In A Big Way; Vermont Has the Most Deaths Per Capita

[Washington Post, February 9, 2005, Pg. 1]

Vermont's National Guard and reserve units have the second-highest mobilization rate per capita, behind only Hawaii. With seven active-duty service members and four Guard members killed in Iraq, Vermont has lost more residents per capita than any other state.

Workers March To Denounce Pentagon Union-Busting

[Washington Post, February 9, 2005, Pg. 21]

Hundreds of federal employees marched on Capitol Hill to protest new DoD personnel rules that union leaders claim would weaken civilian workers' rights and diminish the quality of their jobs without enhancing national security.

HARD RAIN GONNA FALL



A poster of Russian tennis player Anna Kournikova put up on a roof on board a Stryker vehicle during a patrol in Mosul. **[One minor problem. Kournikova best tennis swing won't keep away RPGs fired from above at this under-armored overweight unstable rolling coffin. But hey, the Strykers make tens of millions for the war profiteers who sold it to the army, and the stockholders don't have to ride it.]**
(AFP/Mauricio Lima)

Pilot Used Copter To Deliver Pizza

[New York Times, February 9, 2005]

A British pilot who used an army helicopter to deliver pizza to his girlfriend last month has been disciplined.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

4 Occupation Cops Killed By Samarra IED; Allawi Troops Killed In Dhuluiyah

02/09/05 irib.ir & Middle East Online & Al Bawaba

Four police were killed and two others wounded when a roadside bomb blew up near their convoy in the city of Samarra, north of Baghdad.

"The blast destroyed two of their vehicles," Lieutenant Colonel Nayef Hammid said of the attack.

Two Iraqi soldiers and an armed man were killed overnight during a raid on the town of Dhuluiyah, north of Baghdad.

Occupation Propagandist Killed In Basra

02/09/05 irib.ir & Middle East Online & Al Bawaba

Abdel Hussein Khazaal, a Correspondent with US-funded pan-Arab television station al-Hurra was killed by unknown attackers in the southern city of Basra.

The U.S.-funded television station Alhurra, which launched about a year ago. The name Alhurra means "the free ones," and the Virginia-based channel was designed to compete with other Arab satellite channels, including Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya.

Abdul Hussein Khazaal, who headed the press services for the local Basra authorities, was shot dead as he was leaving his house, a local official said.

Four insurgents were waiting in a car outside the home of Khazaal, who also worked for the governor's press service and was a member of the Shiite political party Dawa, the official said.

<p>IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATION</p>

Important Collaborator Captured

02/09/05 irib.ir & Reuters & Middle East Online

The oil ministry's representative to the interior ministry Colonel Riad Allawi was captured in Baghdad.

Guerillas abducted the senior Iraqi Interior Ministry official on Wednesday, dragging him from his car in southern Baghdad, police said. "Colonel Riad Allawi was kidnapped on the Dora motorway, in south Baghdad," said an official, without giving further details.

Rocket Attacks Takes Out Gas Kirkuk-Baiji Pipeline

02/09/05 irib.ir & AP

A source at the North Oil Company said, in the north of the country, a gas pipeline linking the oil hub of Kirkuk to the Baiji refinery was damaged.

Saboteurs set off explosives Wednesday, setting it on fire, officials said.

The blast occurred in Fatha district, 25 kilometers (15 miles) north of Baiji, on a pipeline that runs to the northern city of Kirkuk. Baiji is 250 kilometers (155 miles) north of Baghdad.

One policeman was injured as workers put out the blaze, which was expected to affect the production of electricity, police said.

Officials did not say how long it would take to repair the pipeline.

Senior Collaborator Official Killed

Feb 9, 2005 (Reuters)

A senior official in Iraq's Ministry of Housing and Construction was assassinated in Baghdad on Wednesday by gunmen who attacked his car, police said.

Police said the official was a director at the ministry.

Resistance Cripples Occupation Industrial Plan

[International Herald Tribune, February 9, 2005]

Iraq's Minister of Industry, Hajim al-Hasani, has little work to do. The country's economic development is virtually at a standstill because of the insurgency. Even repairing the ministry, itself, is on hold.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

When the rich wage war it's the poor who die. Jean-Paul Sartre (1905 - 1980), *The Devil and the Good Lord* (1951) act 1 [Thanks to John Gingerich who sent this in.]

OCCUPATION REPORT

RECRUITING FOR THE RESISTANCE, LESSON #6: HUMILIATE PEOPLE IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY



A US soldier from the 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment searches a car as his comrade makes the driver kneel down during a patrol looking for car bombs and insurgents activities, in Mosul. (2.9.05 AFP/Mauricio Lima)

Notes From A Lost War:

Green Zone: The Last Days Of The US Occupation Of Iraq

The truth is that however vicious or even sadistic the insurgents may be, they are acutely aware of their popular base, and are responsible for fewer unintentional "collateral" casualties than are the clumsy and overarmed American forces.

Rhetoric aside, this is not a war on terror but a running fight with a large part of the Iraqi people.

It is a classic struggle between the legions of a great power and the resistance of a native population. It is infinitely wider and deeper than officials can admit. And the United States is on the way to losing it.

People have different thresholds for crossing over into the resistance, and different capacities for violent action, but even some of my old friends, once so welcoming to me as an American, are telling me that they are approaching those lines. The question is no longer who is against the United States in Iraq but who is not.

By William Langewiesche, Jan/Feb Atlantic Monthly.

Now that the roads into Iraq have effectively been closed to Westerners by banditry and insurgent attacks, the best way into Baghdad for ordinary civilians is by air from Jordan, aboard a decrepit airliner, an old Fokker that shuttles two or three times a day between Amman and Baghdad—that is, as long as the airport is open.

The airplane is operated by Royal Jordanian, and is flown by a South African crew—people who for whatever reasons are willing day in and day out to risk ground fire and surface-to-air missiles in a thin-skinned machine with limited maneuverability and no active defenses. For passengers willing to share briefly in the same risk, the ticket price is stiff—about \$1,500 round-trip, for a one-hour flight each way.

Nonetheless, dozens of takers show up at Amman's airport every day, many lugging duffels heavy with booze and body armor. They filter silently through the dim, dingy terminal, and collect at the gate in an elongated waiting room that seems to have been chosen for its isolation. There they eye one another with a single paradoxical question in mind: What sort of fool would travel voluntarily to Iraq these days?

The answer varies.

A few are elite Iraqis, heavysset men in old three-piece suits, sometimes with their wives, returning home as people strangely insist on doing, out of habit or perceived necessity, and quite possibly to die.

Some are Western war correspondents, the real thing, young-looking and scruffy in their street beards and their rumpled shirts without epaulets, who are less concerned about missiles than about the daily challenge that awaits on the far side, of doing their work while somehow preserving their necks.

Others seem to be engineers or technical consultants, and first-timers in war; they are middle-aged men with wedding rings, carrying briefcases and appearing unsure, as if they took a wrong turn somewhere and are surprised.

Still others are returning Green Zone hands, trading certainties among themselves with a familiarity bred in the relative safety and isolation of their fortress lives within the sprawling American compound at the center of Baghdad.

But most of the passengers on most of the flights are different again, visibly tough and muscular men, British, South African, and American, often tattooed and clean-shaven, with close-cropped hair—contract warriors among the thousands who have signed on to ride shotgun for the Iraqi infrastructure projects where so much American and Iraqi money has been ploughed into the ground.

All these people are acutely aware of their destination. The trip lies ahead with the inevitability of a sentence that has been pronounced on them. The mood in the waiting room is not fearful, but it is decidedly fatalistic.

During the short bus ride across the tarmac the passengers stand for the most part silent. But then there is the flight itself, at the start of which a couple of pretty South African attendants maintain the pretense of normalcy, performing an ordinary airline welcome ("Thank you for flying Royal Jordanian") and advising the passengers on the standard safety rules—to fasten their seat belts, for instance, despite a sentiment in the cabin of "Why bother?" and the unavoidable contemplation of the effect of a missile strike.

In a war like this one the battlefield takes so many innocent-looking forms.

The airplane climbs over Amman and heads east at high altitude across a desert of tans and blacks. The desert is scarred by military works. At some point it becomes Iraq. The attendants serve coffee with smiles. There is a boxed snack that it is wise to avoid. The captain comes on with the weather ahead, which for most of the year is simply hot. Then the Euphrates appears below, and the irrigated fields of Mesopotamia, and finally the Tigris, and Baghdad itself—a sprawl of a city, hazy with dust.

The airplane holds overhead the Baghdad airport at 15,000 feet, above the range of the insurgency. When cleared for the approach it descends rapidly, with the landing gear and spoilers out, in an aggressive left spiral that is intended to reduce exposure to ground fire but, given the proximity of insurgents, offers no guarantees. After a final left turn it immediately touches down. During the taxi to the terminal a flight attendant says, "Welcome to Baghdad," but has the grace at least not to wish the passengers a pleasant stay.

It is a strange sensation to be delivered alone and so quickly into the radical world of a shapeless war. **The Baghdad terminal is a grandiose, nearly deserted edifice,**

roamed by heavily armed guards, and sometimes shaken by the distant thumps of outgoing artillery or incoming mortars—at first it is hard to tell which.

The new Iraqi government provides a visa on the spot, and stamps the passengers through amid confusion and delay. They get their bags and go to the curbside, where U.S. government employees and contractors are picked up in armored convoys for the drive to the Green Zone. Those who do not qualify for such treatment—which now means mostly Iraqis and Western journalists—catch a minibus that takes them several miles to a heavily defended checkpoint at the airport perimeter, where presumably they have arranged for someone trusted to pick them up. If that person does not appear (a common problem in a place where telephone communication is inadequate at best), there is no choice but to return to the terminal and try somehow to get a message through from there.

The alternative of taking a taxi, of which there are many in Baghdad, has become impossibly dangerous as criminality and the insurgency have intertwined and spread, and the street price for a captive American has risen to \$25,000, or so it is said.

Beyond the checkpoint the war is immediately all around.

Indeed, the divided highway into town, though merely five miles long, is notorious for the frequency of lethal attacks. Western journalists generally negotiate it in ordinary Iraqi sedans, which are less likely than the American-style armored SUVs to draw the insurgents' fire, but by the same token cannot easily be distinguished as innocuous by the U.S. troops who have been given the tricky job of patrolling the road in their Bradley fighting vehicles and armored Humvees.

It is prudent for people in the sedans, including the drivers, to raise their hands when passing one of those patrols, to show that they are empty. Of course the floors of the sedans these days are probably littered with loaded weapons—Kalashnikovs, pistols, and even grenades at the ready—and the soldiers know that, too.

The soldiers are increasingly nervous and ready to fire. Almost imperceptibly their discipline is fraying. One of the ironies for Westerners trying to reduce the dangers in Iraq by blending in, however partially, is that as the war worsens, they run an increased risk of attack from both sides. This is the danger that Iraqis face as well. If there is any relief in leaving the airport road and entering the deadly slow-moving traffic within the city, it is that at least the American patrols are less present.

Several days before the U.S. elections in November, American officials revised their count of hard-core insurgents upward to as many as 12,000—or 20,000 if active sympathizers were included.

Leaving aside the question of how isolated bureaucracies can derive such numbers in the midst of a genuine and popular insurrection, the cap at 20,000 elicited grim disbelief among ordinary Iraqis, frontline soldiers, and others with a sense of a struggle on the streets that has spun out of control.

There are six million people in Baghdad alone, and another 10 million in the angriest areas of central Iraq, and many are young men with a taste for war.

Meanwhile, foreign fighters continue to arrive from throughout the Middle East, across borders that are unpolicable not merely because they are long and wild but, more significant, because of the support these travelers receive once they cross the line and mix into the local populations.

For the most part.....the insurgents' attacks are less nihilistic than they are logical and precisely focused, whether against the American coalition and its camp followers or their Iraqi agents and collaborators.

The truth is that however vicious or even sadistic the insurgents may be, they are acutely aware of their popular base, and are responsible for fewer unintentional "collateral" casualties than are the clumsy and overarmed American forces.

Rhetoric aside, this is not a war on terror but a running fight with a large part of the Iraqi people. It is a classic struggle between the legions of a great power and the resistance of a native population. It is infinitely wider and deeper than officials can admit. And the United States is on the way to losing it.

Even short of the killing we have done, we have broken down their doors, run them off the roads, swiveled our guns at them, shouted profanities at them, and disrespected their women—all this hundreds or thousands of times every day. We have dishonored them publicly, and within a society that places public honor above life itself. These are the roots of the fight we are in. Now Saddam himself is re-emerging as a symbol of national potency.

The mere presence of American troops may help prevent the outbreak of factional fighting, but the U.S. military is not a police force, and at no level of strength can it serve as one on Iraqi soil.

Their mission amounts to driving around in armored vehicles from which visibility is poor, trying to protect themselves, and occasionally engaging in politically disastrous assaults on neighborhoods and towns.

Across large swaths of central Iraq the insurgents exploit the troops adroitly.

They fire on passing patrols from ordinary houses and slip away, counting on the Americans perhaps to pull back at first, but then to return in force to shoot, make arrests, and generally retaliate.

The residents of the targeted neighborhoods understand the insurgents' trick, but it is the Americans they blame, as they blame them for drawing the insurgents' fire in the first place. Then, of course, there are all the collateral dead: officially their numbers are not known, but they amount to a lot nonetheless, every one with family and friends.

On the carrot side of the American intervention are the infrastructure projects—fixing the electrical grid, for instance, and providing for clean water and sewage treatment, and

upgrading the hospitals (into which the growing numbers of casualties are now carried). These projects were supposed to promote stability and provide Iraqis with better lives.

Billions of dollars have been poured into them through the device of open-ended "cost plus" contracts, by which companies (almost all of them large and American) are reimbursed for the cost of the work, however they define that work, with an additional fee on top.

There is no incentive to run efficient or discreet operations—to tread lightly on Iraqi soil. Indeed, quite the opposite. The main contractors base themselves in the Green Zone in grandly redundant style, with an abundance of people, equipment, and backup. Because of the danger that exists on the outside, they have retreated from many of the reconstruction projects, but they remain in the country fully staffed, and continue to drink from public funds.

In truth, the fact that the large contractors are sitting inefficiently in the Green Zone is of little direct consequence to the war outside. What is of consequence, paradoxically, is that they are not entirely inactive: despite the hazards, they continue to pursue some reconstruction projects in the city and beyond, and these projects—intermittent, inconclusive, and unconvincing to the intended beneficiaries, ordinary Iraqis overwhelmed by anarchy—require visits by the contractors' expatriate technicians and construction managers.

The visits, in turn, require the expatriates to travel to and from the sites, and this is done in the heaviest possible manner (where again one can see the cost-plus dynamic at play), in convoys of aggressively driven armored SUVs, typically three, with a team of as many as ten ostentatiously armed drivers and bodyguards.

These are the personal-security details, made up of the private contract warriors who have been such a visible part of the American presence, and who operate outside any effective control, often in a hostile and undisciplined manner, sowing hatred wherever they move. With every trip to or from a reconstruction site they threaten and anger untold numbers of Iraqis on the streets. If the purpose of the infrastructure projects was to win the sympathy of Iraq, then this is one important reason why we have sunk into war instead.

In any case, the war has degenerated to the extent that the construction sites have become nothing more than symbols of the despised American presence.

For the resistance they also serve as convenient collection points for identifiable collaborators—usually laborers—who can easily be hunted down and killed as a lesson for others. There is a lot of that sort of teaching going on these days.

At just one sewage project in Baghdad, for example, as many as thirty Iraqi workers were shot in only three months late last year. It is an unusual record only because someone kept count. The assassination campaign is systematic. It is decimating American projects throughout central Iraq, and has taken a particularly heavy toll among Green Zone workers.

So pervasive is the threat that Iraqis still working with the occupation do not dare speak English on the phone, even at home in front of only their children, lest word leak out.

When I call the Iraqis who work for me, a driver and a guard, my first question is whether they can talk. As often as not they answer by hanging up. This is new. It has gotten to the point where collaborators feel lucky if they are not killed at once but instead given a chance to mend their ways. That chance comes in the form of one of several standard letters.

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

To the brothers of the monkey and pig. Show your regret, or your destiny will be like that of your brother spies. You shall follow your brothers. You will not succeed before God's anger, and our own. **You are the enemy of God and Country.**

Signed,
Self-Sacrificers

Or

BY GOD MOST GRACIOUS, MOST MERCIFUL.

You, the Afterbirth, DO NOT sell your soul to the enemy. Because you are our brother in religion, we give you this one last warning before death.

Whichever note he receives, a collaborator generally has forty-eight hours to stop working with the occupation, and somehow to make this very clear. If he does not stop, he will certainly die. As a result, almost everyone hastens to comply. A few of the most stubborn do not. They move with their families to new neighborhoods and houses. They change their names, and grow beards or shave beards off. They come up with new fictions to explain their days. They avoid at any cost traveling directly from home to work, and especially traveling directly back. For all this, though, they cannot escape an aura of doom; they are people who at best seem to have slowed the clock.

Outside the Green Zone there is really no hiding from the insurgency anymore.

Nonetheless, some Westerners still live in the wilds of the city.

The armed forces who sometimes pass by, whether Iraqi or American, will not or cannot protect them, and indeed pose significant threats of their own.

Furthermore, there are no safe refuges in which to hunker down.

Out of inertia the network-television crews, clumsy with bodyguards and equipment, remain nearly prisoners in the large hotels at the center of the city. The hotels have become famous even beyond Iraq—the Palestine, the Sheraton, and across the Tigris the Mansour. They are grim concrete structures—stale with tobacco smoke, bad food, and dust—that, though heavily protected and surrounded by blast walls and concertina wire, present obvious targets for the insurgents' attacks. They have been rocketed already, and it seems just a matter of time until one or another gets badly bombed.

The television crews know it, too. They rotate through a few months at a time, and send out their Iraqi stringers to gather stories and video footage on the streets (a bomb here or there, the wounded and the crying), and do their "standups" with live backdrops of the city, and for their personal safety trust in luck.

Most of the print reporters rotate through as well.

During the golden times of the summer and fall of 2003, before the insurgency gathered force, those who worked for the large newspapers and wire services left the big establishments and installed their "bureaus" in private houses, which were both more comfortable and less obvious than the hotels. Some had gardens and pools.

Gradually, then, as the war deepened, they fortified those places with higher walls, steel doors, sandbags, iron grilles, wire mesh, and even safe rooms into which, in theory (if they moved impossibly fast), they could escape in the event of an assault. They hired guards with AK-47s, and then hired more. They hooked up TV cameras to watch the roofs, and the streets outside. They put a halt to the sort of partying that had gone on in the early days, after Baghdad's fall. And they tried very hard to maintain low profiles. There were scares now and then, when one group or another would flee a house believed to have come under surveillance, but **the security seemed to work fairly well—until the insurgents simply ignored it and began to invade houses, last fall.**

It became clear then that the defenses had been an illusion all along.

And so the reporters migrated again, or most of them did, this time into some of the small hotels, where they remain today, on the theory of the middle ground—the idea that such establishments may offer stiffer resistance to incursions than can private households, but nonetheless may appear too insignificant to waste rockets and car bombs on. These are wishful thoughts, of course, and they have already been proved wrong, but what else are people to do? The reporters spend much of their time now in earnest conversation over such fine-tunings, knowing full well, as they readily admit, that by any normal standards, even those of an ordinary war zone, in Baghdad there are no acceptable solutions.

The greater danger anyway is in driving through the city or beyond.

The basics are clear. Discreet sedans, again, are the vehicles of choice. The armored versions of them, which some news organizations now have, might get you through a short gunfight, but they can kill you, too, particularly through the overpressure that results from the explosion of a rocket-propelled grenade that penetrates to the inside.

A thin-skinned car won't stop rifle rounds, but it may allow a rocket grenade to pass right through.

So pick your poison. It may help to wear body armor if it does not have a visible neck guard and can be hidden under a loose shirt.

Conversely, helmets and ballistic sunglasses are far too showy.

Of course, the goal is to avoid being attacked in the first place. There is no sure way to do this and still get around. If you are staying in a hotel, you have to assume that you are being watched on the street both coming and going, and probably by the desk clerks as well.

It is essential therefore to avoid set schedules and routines, to vary routes, and if possible occasionally to change cars. It is also important to have a skillful driver, who knows when to move fast and when not to, and who is aware of what is happening around him on the streets. The same goes for the guard, who needs to be good with a gun but, more important, to be smart. And, of course, it is important to have people you can trust.

Sadly, as the insurgency grows, trust is fading away. This is one of the most sensitive and dangerous aspects of life for reporters in Baghdad today: nearly every news organization is facing troubles with its Iraqi staff, and to various but increasing degrees is being held in some way hostage, out of fear of the consequences of disagreement or disciplinary action.

You don't just go around laying off people in Iraq these days.

Indeed, the very air of Baghdad seems thick with suspicions of betrayal. Even within the Green Zone, which is largely self-sufficient, many Americans now automatically distrust any Iraqi employee who has been there for longer than about two months. Why has this person not been assassinated, people wonder—or at least frightened off with a letter? The question is legitimate. Americans have awakened and found that the enemy is closer even than dreamed of before.

It is a new day in Iraq, yes.

In the space of just a few months the interim government of Ayad Allawi has gutted many of the earlier reforms and has lost any hope of legitimacy in the eyes of the Iraqi people, who see it as a flimsy construct propped up by the United States, and powerless in the face of their own disdain.

Corruption is rife on every level, and with it cynicism.

The courts are bowing to political pressure. The Iraqi security forces are riddled with insurgents, not because the vetting is poor, or because agents have been planted, but because hatred of America has grown within the ranks just as it has in Iraqi society at large.

People have different thresholds for crossing over into the resistance, and different capacities for violent action, but even some of my old friends, once so welcoming to me as an American, are telling me that they are approaching those lines. The question is no longer who is against the United States in Iraq but who is not.



Members of the Iraqi Collaborators Army practice the Funky Chicken, January 2005. Central Command estimates that by April 2326 they will be able to defeat the resistance without depending on U.S. troops.

(Feb 9, AFP/POOL/File/Mohamed Messara)

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

BUSH: HOLDING THREE JOBS 'UNIQUELY AMERICAN' -- HA HA HA: BIG LAUGH

Feb 8 2005 Filed By Matt Drudge...

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

Last Friday when promoting social security reform with 'regular' citizens in Omaha, Nebraska, President Bush walked into an awkward unscripted moment in which he stated that carrying three jobs at a time is 'uniquely American.'

While talking with audience participants, the president met Mary Mornin, a woman in her late fifties who told the president she was a divorced mother of three, including a 'mentally challenged' son.

The President comforted Mornin on the security of social security stating that 'the promises made will be kept by the government.'

But without prompting Mornin began to elaborate on her life circumstances.

Begin transcript:

MS. MORNIN: That's good, because I work three jobs and I feel like I contribute.

THE PRESIDENT: You work three jobs?

MS. MORNIN: Three jobs, yes.

THE PRESIDENT: Uniquely American, isn't it? I mean, that is fantastic that you're doing that. (Applause.) Get any sleep? (Laughter.)

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

Flintstones Are 'Way Too Gay' Group Seeks Ban On Cartoon, Cereal, Vitamins

February 8, 2005 The Borowitz Report

The ongoing campaign against alleged gay icons in animated cartoons continued today as a newly formed conservative group demanded that television stations stop broadcasting "The Flintstones" at once.

Harland Devane, leader of the group Focus on the Flintstones, said at a press conference in Washington, D.C. today that his organization was issuing the demand because, "Quite simply, everything about 'The Flintstones' is way too gay."

The conservative activist distributed a memo itemizing over fifty ways in which the self-styled "modern Stone Age family" series promotes homosexuality, but left little doubt that most of his concerns centered on the relationship between the two main characters, Fred Flintstone and Barney Rubble.

"Their relationship is more flagrantly homosexual than anything in Oliver Stone's 'Alexander,'" Mr. Devane said.

He pointed out that Fred and Barney are virtually inseparable, are never seen wearing pants, and live together in the suggestively named town of Bedrock.

Noting that the show's theme song exhorts viewers to have "a gay old time," he added that the two men wear hard hats and construction garb while at work, an oblique reference to the construction worker in the classic disco band "The Village People."

"Do I believe they are gay icons?" Mr. Devane said. "I abba-dabba-do."

He added that Focus on the Flintstones' efforts will not stop at banning the cartoon series from TV, telling reporters that the group is also "taking a close look" at Flintstone-related consumer products such as Flintstone vitamins and cereal.

"We are very uncomfortable with Fruity Pebbles," he said.

Elsewhere, President Bush announced a budget of \$2.57 trillion, most of which will go to paying for last month's inauguration.

CLASS WAR NEWS

They Got The Loot But We Got The Numbers

February 21, 2005 By Gar Alperovitz, The Nation

The top 1 percent now claim more income each year than the bottom 100 million Americans taken together.

An only slightly larger elite group, the top 5 percent, own just under 70 percent of financial wealth and more than 80 percent of unincorporated business assets.

The economist and Nobel laureate Paul Samuelson has regularly dramatized what the general patterns mean. In the 1948 version of his widely used textbook, Samuelson wrote, "If we made...an income pyramid out of a child's play blocks with each layer portraying \$1,000 of income, the peak would be far higher than the Eiffel Tower, but almost all of us would be within a yard of the ground."

By the end of the century, Samuelson found that although there would be some modest alterations at the bottom, the world had changed so much the peak would be as high as Mount Everest.

Received:

Reader In Brazil

From: RG
To: GI Special
Sent: February 09, 2005
Subject: Reader in Brazil

I thought you'd be interested to know that I ran into a regular GI Special reader at the World Social Forum.

His name's Alvaro, he's a longtime PSTU member, and he had a very high opinion of your work.

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/qi-special/> ; www.qifightback.org ;

<http://www.albasrah.net/magalat/english/qi-special.htm>,

www.williambowles.info/qispecial

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