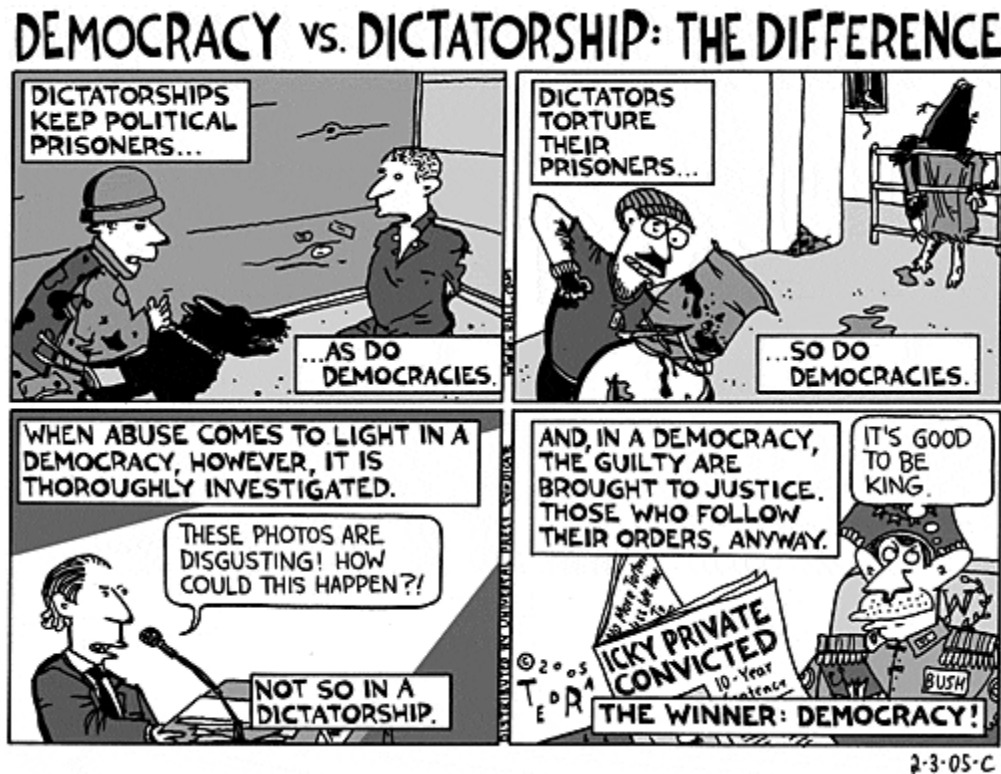


GI SPECIAL 3A43:



“He Confronted Our Unit Commander While Naked And Wielding A Cinderblock.

“He Stated That He Was Not Going On Any More Missions.”

2005-02-09 Jason Thelen, Veterans for Common Sense -- Guest Column
<http://www.veteransforcommonsense.org/>

Dear Senator Cornyn,

I have been a member of the U.S. military since I was 17 years old, both as an enlisted soldier and now as an officer. I deployed to Iraq with Army Civil Affairs from April 2003 to March 2004, where I served in the Sadr City.

Since my return to Dallas, I have concluded that the health care systems for the military and veterans are utterly broken. Additionally, our leadership is ignoring the psychological and physical problems faced by returning veterans.

The results of a study conducted by the VA Inspector General were recently released. ("Dallas VA Hospital is Nation's Worst," Dallas Morning News, January 18, 2005, Page 1.) The Dallas VA Hospital serves 38 counties in Texas, as well as 2 in Oklahoma. All veterans in the area must be routed through the Dallas management system to obtain care.

Even with a main infrastructure that was remodeled in 1998, the hospital scored last in the entire country.

Investigators found that most of the patient rooms they examined were unclean and had foul odors, walls had buildups of grime, and stretchers had dried residue of bodily fluids. The administration did not collect or analyze mortality data, and patient injuries such as falls were not recorded. Waiting times for an appointment can stretch up to a year.

There was no evidence of a plan for better management, and the director of the North Texas VA system quit several weeks ago (at virtually the same time the results of the study were released.)

To make matters worse, the VA system is struggling with the influx of mentally and physically injured soldiers returning from Iraq. **The VA has promised two years of health care coverage for combat veterans, but the soldiers are unable to obtain treatment due to long wait times, abhorrent hospital conditions, and incompetent doctors. The VA system and military doctors refuse to recognize the damage that the war in Iraq is causing.**

The problem is not abstract. Real people are involved:

Andrew V. was an Army officer that I served with in Sadr City. A police officer in civilian life, he was decorated with the Bronze Star for his acts in Iraq. Upon his return, he faced serious problems dealing with the readjustment to civilian life. Alcohol, PTSD, and family problems worsened, and nothing helped. **In the summer of 2004, he donned his formal Army uniform, placed a noose around his neck, and stepped from a bridge, killing himself. He left behind a wife and a legacy of faithful service to his country.**

William F. is another soldier that I served with in Iraq.

On December 17, 2003, we were riding beside each other in the open back of an unarmored humvee. As we passed, the enemy detonated 20 pounds of plastic explosive that had been buried in a puddle of sewage beside the road, followed by automatic weapons fire from both sides.

William's back was broken by the blast and shrapnel. Army doctors refused to believe him when he complained of back pain, and they completely missed the diagnosis for 6 weeks.

He is now confronted with the Texas VA health care system, which refused to send him to a specialist for his injury. A recipient of the Purple Heart, and he got to see a pediatrician. For psychological problems and PTSD, he was told by a military psychologist that he should "try a few spoonfuls of apple cider vinegar before bedtime."

Charlie M. is an enlisted soldier that was transferred from Fallujah to my team in Sadr City.

In addition to the normal attacks, he endured two roadside bombs in unarmored vehicles and an AK-47 round directly to the back of his body armor.

Understandably upset, he asked for psychological help. None was available. One morning, he confronted our unit commander while naked and wielding a cinderblock. He stated that he was not going on any more missions, then dropped the block on his foot.

She reduced him in rank, got him a prescription for medication (but no counseling), and sent him to Sadr City as punishment. (At the time, Sadr City was more dangerous than Fallujah.) **Charlie is now unemployed in Abilene, but the Army is looking at him to volunteer for another deployment to Iraq.**

Without help, what does a struggling veteran do? Ignore the problem and hope it goes away. Drink too much. Sleep too little. Fill the emptiness with some addiction. Watch personal relationships crumble.

The leadership of the military admits that 1 in 6 returning soldiers suffers from mental readjustment issues. In reality, the number is much higher, but everyone looks the other way.

While at a wedding recently, I had a discussion with a VA employee who evaluates disability claims. He stated that he does not believe that returning veterans have problems, and that they are simply looking for easy money. Because of this belief, he disapproves PTSD claims.

These are the problems we face.

How can you help? Simple:

Demand quality health care for returning soldiers and veterans.

Confront the military and VA with their refusal to recognize physical injuries and mental problems.

I thank you for your assistance and advocacy.

Sincerely,

Jason N. Thelen
Dallas, Texas

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

SOLDIER KILLED IN WESTERN BAGHDAD BLAST

February 11, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE 05-02-13C

BAGHDAD, Iraq – A Task Force Baghdad Soldier was killed by an improvised explosive device in western Baghdad today.

ANOTHER TASK FORCE BAGHDAD SOLDIER DEATH NOT BATTLE RELATED

February 11, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE 05-02-12C

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- A Task Force Baghdad Soldier died about 10 p.m., Feb. 10.

The Soldier's death was not battle related. The incident is under investigation.

Vehicle Accidents Kill 2 U.S. GIs

Feb 11 AP

BAGHDAD, Iraq - A U.S. Marine and an Army soldier were killed Friday in separate traffic accidents, the U.S. military said.

The Marine, assigned to the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, died in an accident in Anbar province west of Baghdad, the command said.

Separately, a U.S. Army soldier assigned to the 1st Marines was killed in an accident in the northern Babil province south of the capital.

Task Force Danger Soldier Wounded Near Hawija

02/11/05 MNF Release #A050211d

TIKRIT, Iraq -- A Task Force Danger Soldier was wounded by small-arms fire in Kirkuk Province near Hawija about 11 a.m., Feb. 11.

The Soldier was taken to a Multi-National Forces medical treatment facility.

U.S. Convoy Ambushed In Dhuluiya; Humvee Damaged

A car bomb detonated on Friday near a US military convoy in the town of Dhuluiya, killing one and wounding 11 Iraqi civilians, witnesses said.

"The attack took place at about 3:30 p.m. (1230 GMT), when a suicide bomber drove his car into the convoy," Umar al-Juboury, a local resident told Xinhua.

The blast also damaged a US Humvee, but it was not clear whether any of the US soldiers was hurt in the attack, he added. Five civilian cars were also damaged.

Nationalist Insurgent SAM Teams Set Up In 8 Cities

Feb. 9, 2005 Balaji Reddy, India Dailey

Iraqi government sources say that since November, the nationalist insurgents have organized SAM training based around a cadre of former Iraqi Air Defense Force officers, who lead small teams to combat zones to operate against coalition aircraft.

These nationalists have access to a cache of missiles that reportedly have been hidden since the coalition invasion in March 2003.

Stratfor has learned that such teams are operating in and around Baghdad, especially near BIA. Teams also reportedly work in Ar Ramadi, Al Fallujah, Al Qaim, Balad, Baqubah, Mosul, Tal Afar and the Triangle of Death south of Baghdad.

“It's Like The Wild West” At Patrol Base Uvanni, Attacks Never Cease

February 10, 2005 Daily News, L.P.

PATROL BASE UVANNI, Iraq - Lt. Daniel Lawton's Humvee hit a mine this week, blowing off a wheel and the hood.

It was the second time Lawton's vehicle has detonated a mine - and he has been at this base only five days.

"There's just a big boom and you blink real hard," said Lawton, of Savannah, Ga.

No one was hurt in the latest blast, one of several attacks the past few days on U.S. patrols and this tiny camp in the heart of Samarra, a Sunni Muslim city 75 miles north of Baghdad that has defied American attempts to stamp out deadly militants.

In an effort to quell this city of 200,000, the base was carved out of the heart of Samarra in October and named for Sgt. Michael Uvanni. He was the National Guard soldier from Rome, N.Y., killed during the offensive to establish the base.

Patrol Base Uvanni and its 350 troops from the 369th Armored Battalion are within easy range of enemy mortars, rocket-propelled grenades and sniper fire. On a recent morning, the shooting began at 8:30 with a rocket-propelled grenade and a handful of sniper shots directed at the base. U.S. guns stationed on the sandbagged roof immediately opened up on the telltale puff of white smoke from where the grenade was launched.

A few minutes later, a second grenade was fired from another direction, and the American guns unleashed a fresh barrage. Two floors below, no one stirred from his prepackaged breakfast rations or his sleeping bag.

"It's like the old Wild West out here," Sgt. William Taylor said with a smile when the shooting stopped.

But the shooting never completely stops at this modern version of Fort Apache, ringed by a wall of concrete slabs and insulated with sandbags stacked along the base of walls and stuffed in windows. Life is spartan with 16 men and their ever-present

computer games crammed in a room. **There is little water for washing, and only three hot meals a week that sometimes get delivered as late as 9 p.m.**

Leaving Uvanni for patrols invites even more gunfire. Over a two-day period this week, Bradley and Humvee vehicles struck mines, several mines were discovered, troops were twice fired upon with rocket-propelled grenades and AK-47 rifles, and an Iraqi Army patrol was hit with an ambush that left one dead and five wounded. There were no American casualties.

"Another day in the desert, sir," said Pfc. Jay Rogers, 20, of Greensboro, N.C., who was writing to his grandmother about running over a mine. "How's that for a way to start a letter?" he chuckled.

U.S. military officers believe they're fighting fewer than 100 rebels, but the militants have enough support to launch daily attacks on American and Iraqi forces and plant bombs on area roads each night. **It's tough to measure progress. [No it isn't. There is no "progress." Just a handful of troops surrounded by a nation full of people who don't want them occupying their country for George Bush, and who won't stop fighting till all the foreign troops have gone home.]**

Patrols block off small neighborhoods every day, put snipers on rooftops and string razor wire to secure the area, and then knock on doors to search houses, seek information on enemy fighters and ask what people need.

"Wherever we go, they tell us it's a good neighborhood and no bad people," said Capt. Ryan Wylie, who commands Bravo Company. [Absolutely true. The good people are patriots who want freedom for their country and support the resistance.]

Wylie's questions draw lots of shrugs, looks of incredulity when told that mortars are being fired from their neighborhood and conflicting descriptions of bad guys. **Sometimes the Americans are simply told to get lost.**

There are glimmers of cooperation. A tip about a mine on a street this week turned out to be true and led to the capture of several rocket-propelled grenade launchers, grenades, detonation cord and explosives.

"It was a good day," Lt. Nathan Adams said that night in Patrol Base Uvanni's command center. "Nobody got hurt and we took their stuff."

Local Guardsman Escapes Serious Injury: Dad Wants Troops To Come Home

02/11/05 CNC By Jennifer Pollack

At least he's alive. That's the thought that flooded Ann Amatucci's mind when she heard her son on the other end of the phone.

"When I heard his voice I knew something wasn't right and then when he told me -- it's the way he told me -- I stayed calm and was thanking God he was OK, but I realized it was really, really serious what had happened to him."

On Tuesday, Noah was driving an armored Humvee with two passengers in Tikrit, Iraq, when the vehicle hit a land mine. The three in the car were injured, but all survived the blast.

She said Noah is, "all banged up and bruised. He hit his knee, his ears -- they're not sure about the damage to the ear drum, and he has a mild concussion."

Noah is resting now, she said, and she does not know when he will return to duty.

Like Ann, Noah's dad Michael Amatucci said his faith is what gets him through.

I know my son is in a war, and I pray for him daily," he said.

Michael said all he is hoping for now is for Noah and the rest of the troops to return safely.

"I really hope our president has some type of a time line for our soldiers to come home," he said. "I think it's definitely time for that -- it would be nice."

TROOP NEWS

Soldiers Attack Training Abuse At Ft. Knox: Instructors, Unit Leaders Suspended From Duty

February 11, 2005 Associated Press

FORT KNOX, Ky. — **The Army is investigating allegations that some soldiers were mentally and physically abused while training at Fort Knox, military officials said Friday.**

Master Sgt. Jerry Merideth said the soldiers made the allegations during a recent open forum held to gauge training quality.

Merideth said he did not have specific information on how many soldiers alleged they were abused or what type of abuse allegedly occurred, but said none of the soldiers suffered serious injury and all have returned to training in a sister unit at the base.

“The investigation is early. We don’t have a lot of information to release,” he said.

Military instructors and unit leaders cited in the allegations were suspended from working with new soldiers pending the outcome of the investigation.

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.

Rumsfeld Says U.S. Troops Will Never Be Able To Go Home

February 11, 2005 By John J. Lumpkin The Associated Press

Rumsfeld emphasized the importance of handing over security to Iraqi forces so American troops can come home.

“Once they have that confidence, that capacity and capability, our forces, coalition forces, will be able to go home.”

Troops From Germany Off To Bush’s Imperial Slaughterhouse

February 11, 2005 U.S. Department of Defense News Release No. 148-05

The Department of Defense announced today that the Headquarters, V Corps, Heidelberg, Germany, and major subordinate units of the Corps will deploy to Iraq in support of the Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Headquarters, V Corps is scheduled to replace XVIII Airborne Corps as the headquarters for the Multi-national Corps-Iraq in early 2006.

Major subordinate units of V Corps scheduled to deploy include the 3rd Corps Support Command, V Corps Artillery, 205th Military Intelligence Brigade, 130th Engineer Brigade, 22nd Signal Brigade and 30th Medical Brigade, are all based in Germany.

Benicia Turns Against The War: First Street Protesters Mark 100th Gathering And Get Public Support Now



Cindy Sheehan of Vacaville - whose son Casey Sheehan, an Army specialist, was killed in Iraq on April 4, 2004 - gives a thumbs up to a motorist who honked during Thursday's vigil on First Street in Benicia. Photo: David Pacheco/Times-Herald

[Thanks to DG for sending this in.]

February 11, 2005 By Ian Thompson, Daily Republic & By GREG MOBERLY, Times-Herald staff writer

BENICIA - A hundred small candles, one for each peace vigil held since the beginning of the war in Iraq, glittered in the dusk at the Benicia City Park.

Behind them were signs with slogans such as "1,453 US troops dead in Iraq - for what?" mixed with inverted American flags.

Patricia Kneisler, who has attended the vigils since the beginning, hopes the conflict will end and the American troops come home before she has to light many more.

"I never believed in this war," Kneisler said. "I knew that if we went into this war, there would be so much bloodshed, and there is."

She was one of almost a dozen people who gathered to protest the ongoing war in Iraq hoping that their steadfast public opposition is changing minds.

The vigil started at 5 p.m. after the group gathered next to the gazebo in the Benicia City Park across the street from the Veteran's Hall.

In March 2003, four dozen people comprised the first vigil, counting how many passing drivers honked in support or yelled insults with the honks then outnumbering the insults by 2-1.

Now, the waves and honks make up the nearly all of the responses and the abuse has waned.

"I remember getting a lot of verbal abuse, but now the peace signs and waves far outnumber the abuse. Many of those who abused us now just drive by with rigid faces."

Gold Star Mothers for Peace co-founder Cindy Sheehan attended the hour-long event. Her son, Army Spec. Casey Sheehan, was killed in Baghdad on April 2004. Casey Sheehan is one of seven Solano County servicemembers who have lost their lives supporting operations in Iraq or Afghanistan.

"Most of the people don't know there's a war on," Sheehan said. "Those who do know are those who are fighting and their families. People need to bring the soldiers home and we are not going to get them home until America wakes up."

David Grumio sees the vigil as helping keep the thread of hope for peace alive and a sign that people can speak out.

"You are not crazy if you oppose the military policies and Iraq policies coming out of the Bush White House," Grumio said.

Grumio hopes the vigil's continued existence will help pressure the government to bring the troops home. **"I hope we won't have to be around here for the 200th vigil," Grumio said.**

Carolyn Jund, of Benicia, said the Iraq elections went well, but interprets that differently than the Bush administration.

"I take it as a demonstration that Iraqis want the occupiers out of the country," Jund said. The United States has shown a poor example of democracy, Jund said, because President Bush's election wins in 2000 and 2004 were questionable.

Jund held a weathered "Peace" sign she has brought to protests since last year.

Army Denies Donna Cote's Request For Exemption



[Thanks to Des, who sent this one in.]

February 9, 2005 NBC 10

A Warwick mother of two who thought that her military career was long behind her has gotten the surprise of her life -- she's being recalled to active duty.

Donna Cote, of Warwick, was honorably discharged from the Army in 1999. She has had two children since then, so she was very surprised when she got a letter telling her to report to active duty.

"I was shocked," said Cote. "I thought that something, maybe they had the wrong person. I couldn't imagine why, after so long, that they would be recalling me to go back."

Cote first joined the army in 1997 for a three-year enlistment. She was then married to her first husband, who was also a military man; she became pregnant two years into her duty. **Because she had no family care plan and no one to take care of her child, the Army granted her an honorable discharge. But as part of that, she was subject to recall duty through June 2005.**

Now, more than five years and another child later, the Army wants her back for an 18-month tour of duty in Iraq.

Poll Finds Antiwar Sentiment Strongest Among Working Class Latinos

Support for bringing home the troops was even more pronounced among foreign-born Latinos and those who lack a college education or have household incomes below \$50,000.

February 8, 2005 Tyche Hendricks, San Francisco Chronicle staff writer.

Latinos in the United States -- particularly immigrants -- are more likely to oppose the war in Iraq than are members of the general population, a national survey released Monday found.

Roberto Suro, director of the Pew Hispanic Center in Washington, D.C., which conducted the survey, says the opinions of Latinos need to be considered because -- at 14 percent of the nation's population -- they are a large and growing political constituency.

Latinos "clearly have a distinctive attitude on this issue; they are more skeptical than the general public," Suro said. "They are, presumably, one of the major political targets for the Republicans at this point, and it would seem that the war is a considerable obstacle" if the GOP is to win greater Latino support.

The telephone survey, conducted Jan. 11-27, found that 51 percent of Latinos thought the United States should withdraw its troops from Iraq as soon as possible, while 37 percent said the United States should keep troops in Iraq until the situation had stabilized.

Support for bringing home the troops was even more pronounced among foreign-born Latinos and those who lack a college education or have household incomes below \$50,000.

By contrast, a Pew Research Center survey -- conducted Jan. 5-9 among 1,503 adults representative of the entire population, including Latinos -- found that 41 percent of the general public favored bringing U.S. troops home as soon as possible, while 54 percent thought the troops should stay in Iraq until the situation was more stable.

Raquel Donoso, deputy director of the Latino Issues Forum in San Francisco, said she was not surprised by the findings.

"When you look at the troops in our armed services, they tend to be people of color and lower-income people," she said. "Most of us (Latinos) know someone who has been stationed in Iraq, so there is that feeling of, 'Why are we there?' and wanting to bring them home."

General Says 82nd Troops *May* Come Home Early: Families Don't Buy IT

February 11, 2005 Associated Press

"*My hope is* within, *perhaps*, a month *or so* that they will be flowing home," Lt. Gen. John Vines said Tuesday. Vines is commander of the 18th Airborne Corps, which includes the 82nd, and this week took over as commander of coalition forces for a year.

No return date has been set, said 82nd spokeswoman Maj. Amy Hannah.

Families of the soldiers were relieved to hear that the length of the deployment is not expected to be extended. **But most said they won't believe that their soldiers are coming home until they march off the transport planes.**

"It would be great to get our guys home sooner than we expected, but I also know that nothing is concrete in the Army," said Amanda Barlow, who is married to Capt. Adam Barlow, commander of 3rd Battalion's C Company. **[Wrong. What is concrete in the Army is the brains of the generals who let Bush push them into this disastrous, evil, losing war for oil and Empire.]**

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)

Cause And Effect:

Cause:

Air Force Troops Turned Into Prison Guards & Convoy Cannon Fodder

Air Force Considers Extending Iraq Tours

[Colorado Springs Gazette, February 10, 2005]

Air Force personnel may have to stay longer in Iraq, depending on what the multinational force commander decides. **The order for "extended deployments" comes at time when the Air Force is engaged in convoy security and prison guard duty, functions primarily handled by the Army and Marines.**

Effect: **Air Force Academy Applications In The Toilet**

[Colorado Springs Gazette, February 10, 2005]

The number of students seeking entry into the Air Force Academy dropped this year by about 3,000. A spokesman says quality of applicants, not quantity, counts. [Yeah, right. And there's light at the end of the tunnel, a better day tomorrow and the check is in the mail.]

“Running Out Of People” Middle-Aged GIs Sent To Iraq

[New York Daily News, February 10, 2005]

An increasing number of troops being sent to Iraq are middle-aged reservists.

Looking For A Few---Well, Anyone: Military Recruiters At Law School Find Prospects MIA.

[Los Angeles Times, February 11, 2005]

Military recruiters who visited the USC law school found little interest in what they had to offer potential enlistees. **Some who do show up protest the federal ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy.**

Brother Of Military Resister Pablo Paredes Speaks Out: “Human Life Is Worth More Than This War”

February 11, 2005 Socialist Worker

In taking a stand against the war, Pablo joined a growing number of military resisters--including Staff Sgt. Camilo Mejia, who is serving one year of hard labor for refusing to

return to his unit in Iraq after a furlough, and Sgt. Kevin Benderman, who refused deployment to Iraq in January.

Now, a defense campaign is being organized to help Pablo. Here, his brother, VICTOR PAREDES, talks to Socialist Worker's GEOFF BAILEY about the case.

TELL US about Pablo's case.

PABLO'S SHIP received orders to transport 3,000 Marines and equipment to the Persian Gulf on December 6. At that point, my brother had a significant objection to those orders because he knew he was contributing to an act of aggression.

He knew there were a lot of lives being lost, and there was a lot of questioning about the justification for the war. So he decided to disobey the order to board. He was very public about it and invited a lot of media there when he did so. He explained his reasoning and has been explaining it ever since. He began to search out legal assistance and counseling.

On December 18, he felt confident that he had gotten some coverage, had his counsel in place and was prepared to submit his conscientious objector (CO) status. At that time, he turned himself in to the naval authorities.

Up to that point, the Navy had been declaring him a deserter. When he turned himself in, he was put in legal holding while his CO status was being reviewed. It's kind of like being on parole. He has orders to go to the base from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., and he has weekends off.

We're waiting to hear whether they accept his CO application, or whether they are going to charge him.

IF PABLO'S application is denied, what charges might he face?

WE EXPECT that most likely, he will be charged with "unauthorized absence" and "disobeying an order," and possibly "missing ship's movement." None of those are terrible offenses: he could receive a few months in military confinement and would be discharged in some way--probably less than honorably, but not dishonorably.

But the military has a range of ways of dealing with this. They can keep it disciplinary, which would carry very few repercussions, or it can go all the way up a special court-martial. It can be as bad as a year and as bad as dishonorable discharge. But we don't think that will be the case.

WHY DID Pablo join the Navy, and what led up to Pablo's decision to refuse to ship out?

HE'S GOTTEN to the point where he's opposed to war, period. We grew up in an inner-city setting, a tough setting. You learn to survive.

We had a Catholic upbringing, and there were certain values that we had growing up. But you made sure that you survived--you made sure you got out. When the military

came around, he saw an opportunity to go to school and find some ways to make some money while he was doing it.

Slowly but surely, he began maturing and questioning things--questioning what he believed and what he had seen.

The most pivotal point was when he was assigned in Japan aboard the USS O'Brien. He spent two years in Japan, and in Japan, he was able to see a society that goes a different route--community service, a police force that doesn't need weapons--a whole different philosophy.

He started reading, exploring everything from philosophy to politics to theology, and he came to the conclusion that he felt that we should understand that we are part of a bigger community--that we're human. War is counterproductive, because you're causing mass damage to yourself.

THERE ARE some who argue that since Pablo volunteered for the military, he has no right to question his orders. How do you respond to that?

WE SAY that our largest responsibility is citizenship, and our largest responsibility is to humanity. Just because you become a soldier doesn't mean you become a robot. That's why things like conscientious objector status exist.

When you take your (military service) oath, you're told that when an order you receive is illegal and immoral, you not only have the right, but the obligation, to disobey it. This was the outcome of Nuremberg Trials at the end of World War Two--the reason German officers found themselves in so much trouble. They could have made the same argument: "Hitler was giving us some order, so we just obeyed them." But nobody absolved them of that, and the reverse is true as well.

HOW IS Pablo's case connected to other recent cases of resistance within the military? And how is it related to the wider effort to end the war?

I THINK that while the motives may be different in each case, the connectedness comes from overall resistance to war.

In Kevin Benderman's case, he actually saw combat in Iraq and decided that it was wrong. In Camilo Mejia's case, he saw the abuses that were taking place. In my brother's case, he didn't believe that we should be harming ourselves. So there is connectedness that on some level, they are all making a connection that human life is worth a lot more than this war.

With respect to Iraq specifically, there have been close to 6,000 cases of desertion since the beginning of the war. We can either assume that there are 6,000 people who are crazy, or we can assume that there is something wrong.

Even the most conservative opinion show that 51 percent of the country is against the war. Again, you can choose to believe that either 51 percent of the country is crazy, or that there is something to question.

People need to understand that massive loss of life is a disaster, which we should also question. I'm not necessarily advocating that you should be for or against it, but make sure that we question it.

Because if 9/11 made us move heaven and earth to find out what went wrong and why we lost close to 3,000 lives on that day, wouldn't we call into question why we purposely put more than 3,000 lives in harm's way every day in Iraq?

Most conservative estimates put Iraqi casualties at around 30,000, and more realistic estimates put it above 100,000. What makes that okay? **What makes people run to the aid of those devastated by the tsunamis--which they should--but we turn our heads when it comes to this?**

When I went to school, we learned that when you killed this many people of a particular race or nationality, it was called genocide. I'm not very good at math, but I don't know how genocide and greed can equal "Enduring Freedom." Life is a lot more valuable than that.

HOW CAN people help in Pablo's case?

ONE OF the biggest things is to understand that you yourself can make a difference. Send letters to your representatives. Let them know how you think--in favor or against. Make it known how you feel.

For my brother specifically, we are in the process of raising funds, so any donations are very appreciated. Statements of support and petitions like the ones that we've been using will help.

SUPPORT PABLO PAREDES

Download a pdf file of a petition defending Pablo, and get friends, fellow students and coworkers to sign: <http://www.socialistworker.org/Featured/PabloPetition.pdf>

Finished petitions can be sent to c/o Socialist Worker, P.O. Box 16085, Chicago, IL 60616. For more information on the case and future updates on the defense campaign, visit Citizens for Pablo on the Web: <http://www.swiftsmartveterans.com/>

Family Had To Beg For Money To See Wounded Soldier: Government Wouldn't Cover Costs Of Visiting Man Who Lost Leg

February 11, 2005 By Sheri McWhirter, Record-Eagle staff writer

JOHANNESBURG - A local soldier wounded in Iraq is no longer in critical condition, while donations for his family continue to arrive at their church.

Pfc. Derrick Harden was critically injured Jan. 17 when the Humvee he was in drove over a land mine while responding to an explosion in Ramadi, a city west of Baghdad. All of his limbs and some facial bones were broken and his right leg was later amputated below the knee.

"He improves every day," said the Rev. Don Cleveland of the Johannesburg Christian Church, where Harden's family worships.

Harden, 19, enlisted in the Army after graduating from Gaylord High School in 2003 and was first stationed in South Korea. As the war escalated in Iraq, he was deployed there with thousands of other American soldiers and served as a Humvee gunner.

Harden underwent several operations since his arrival at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., including the removal of shrapnel from his body and reconstructive surgery.

Harden's mother, Deb Murray, has been at his bedside for more than two weeks and intends to remain for several months while he recovers and goes through physical rehabilitation.

Cleveland said the church collected more than \$8,000 to help cover travel and hotel costs for Harden's family to stay near him for two weeks in the nation's capital. The money raised will cover that trip plus Deb Murray's extended stay with her son, Cleveland said.

[Below there are two articles about crooked corporations getting hundreds of millions of dollars in war contracts. So, war profiteers can have all the money they can haul away. And relatives of severely wounded troops have to beg. And that means the government has its priorities absolutely straight: money for the rich, and fuck the poor and the troops. The enemy is in Washington DC running the government, not in Iraq. There is no enemy in Iraq, just lots of oil for the same assholes that run the government and sent this man to fight so they can have more millions. The weapons are pointing in the wrong direction in the wrong country. Time for the troops to come home and do the right thing. T]

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.

**OOPS:
Air Force Grounds Lockheed C-130s;**

Big Cracks Found In Wings

[Thanks to PB who sent this in.]

Feb 11, 2005 WASHINGTON (Reuters) & (AP)

Thirty U.S. Air Force C-130E cargo aircraft, a workhorse turboprop built by Lockheed Martin Corp, have been grounded because of cracks in their wing structure, the service's Air Mobility Command said on Friday.

The moves include about a dozen C-130s that have been hauling supplies in Iraq.

In addition to those grounded, another 60 C-130s, including more recent models, were put on "restricted flight status" to minimize wing stress and increase the safety margin, the command said.

Among the aircraft grounded Thursday were ones assigned to Pacific Air Forces, US Air Forces in Europe, the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve Command as well as to the Air Mobility Command at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, a statement said.

The 30 C-130E aircraft were grounded after inspections showed cracks to a "center wing box structure" were greater in number and severity than originally expected, the command said.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Welcome To Liberated Salman Pak; Resistance Cuts Road To Baghdad

2005-02-11 By Jean-Marc Mojon, Middle East Online

Salman Pak is a town by the Tigris river which commands access from the capital to one of the two main roads leading to southern Iraq, including the country's second city of Basra.

According to witnesses and residents, rebels scan the flow of traffic leaving Baghdad and radio in to their accomplices further down the road the description of any car or convoy representing an interesting target.

Salman Pak means Salman "the Pure" in Farsi, in reference to one of the prophet Mohammed's followers, who became the first Persian to convert to Islam.

Families who own several of the large farms flanking the river in the Suwairah area are related to Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, Saddam Hussein's fugitive former right-hand man, suspected of playing a role in organising the post-war resistance of former regime elements.

Four months ago, police in the city of Kut prepared a massive raid, but the information was leaked and the commandos were met with tough resistance, sparking battles which left dozens dead.

The deadly stretch of road is off-limits to any foreigner as rebels can cut it at any time to snatch their prey.

This makes any travel south of the capital extremely perilous as the only other southbound road passes through insurgent held towns such Mahmudiyah and Latifiyah, in an area which has been dubbed the "triangle of death".

Salman Pak itself is a larger city than Latifiyah and could pose a more serious challenge to Iraqi forces.

According to the head of Iraqi intelligence, General Mohammed Abdallah Shahwani, Salman Pak is "a guerrillas' fiefdom". "To reclaim the city would take a real battle," he said.

Resistance Stages Open Armed Funeral

12 Feb 2005 KUNA

20 bodies of insurgents who were killed during clashes with the Iraqi police yesterday were buried today, said the source adding that the funeral was surrounded by scores of gunmen who carried machineguns escorting the bodies to their resting places.

Occupation Guards Ambushed By Car Bomb

02/11/05 AP

A car bomb exploded outside a Shiite mosque northeast of Baghdad on Friday, killing 13 and injuring more than 40.

Iraqi National Guard troops were among the dead and wounded, police Col. Tahseen Mohammed said.

Mohammed said local residents reported that a pickup truck loaded with vegetables and parked in front of the mosque looked suspicious. **When the Iraqi troops approached the truck, it exploded, he said.**

Kirkuk “On The Edge Of A Flaming Pit”

KIRKUK, Iraq, Feb 11 (AFP)

Hundreds of Arab and Turkmen protestors took to the streets of Iraq's disputed northern oil city of Kirkuk Friday, charging that last month's election had been riddled with fraud and demanding a re-run.

"No, no to federalism! No, no to fraud!" chanted the demonstrators, who gathered in the city centre before heading south to march past the offices of the two main Kurdish parties.

"There are documents and plenty of evidence showing that fraud took place during the elections in Kirkuk," said a statement which was distributed to protestors and signed by 16 Arab and Turkmen groups.

Among the signatories were the Ankara-funded Iraqi Turkmen Front, the Shiite religious party Dawa, and the movement of Shiite radical leader Moqtada Sadr.

"We ask for new elections to be held in Kirkuk to guarantee they are transparent, because Kirkuk is on the edge of a flaming pit," the document said.

Flaming Pits, Continued: More Pipelines Attacked

February 11, 2005 Energy Security

February 6 - attack on pipeline carrying crude oil from Kirkuk to Bayji.

February 9 - attack on a gas pipeline before dawn in Fatha, about 15 miles north of Bayji.

Resistance Attacking Haditha Dam.

[Los Angeles Times, February 11, 2005]

U.S. military strategists made plans to quickly protect the vital Haditha Dam when the invasion of Iraq took place in 2003. **Now, almost two years later, U.S.-led forces battle insurgents who have targeted much Iraq's infrastructure, including the 10-story dam that supplies electricity for a third of the country.** The dam's security is split between U.S. Marines and a company of soldiers from Azerbaijan.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Buried Meat

From Working Class War, by Christian G. Appy, U. Of North Carolina Press, 1984]

Having experienced World War I, Freder Henry, the hero of Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, could no long tolerate words such as *sacred*, *glory*, and *sacrifice*.

"I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it."

For Henry, abstract conceptions of war had become obscene.

The only words that retained meaning and dignity were "the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates."

Vietnam: Soldiers In Revolt: Troops Cheer On The Anti-War Demonstrators Back Home

From: SOLDIERS IN REVOLT: DAVID CORTRIGHT, Anchor Press/Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1975

For soldiers already in the combat zone, there was little point in anti-war protest action.

Opposition to the war was not a matter of politics but of survival; signing petitions or attending rallies was less important than simply avoiding personal injury.

Moreover, the lack of security within most American units and the nearly total isolation of bases in Vietnam further hindered the development of political activities.

Thus it is not surprising that no known GI newspaper appeared at any time during the war, or that very few anti-war protests of any kind took place.

New York *Times* correspondent R. Drummond Ayers, reporting on conversations with infantrymen in the summer of 1969, quoted a young private who aptly summed up the common GI attitude: “I just work hard at surviving so I can go home and protest all the killing.”

One of the few occasions when peace actions were noted in Vietnam was during the 1969 Moratorium mobilizations.

Hal Wingo of *Life* magazine interviewed nearly one hundred GIs in the combat zone and found “unexpected cheers” and “open and outspoken sympathy” for the Moratorium demonstrations.

Other journalists in Vietnam at the time reported a number of small anti-war protests from the troops themselves, including a seminar attended by soldiers in Quang Tre and an incident near Da Nang where approximately fifteen members of a combat unit wore black armbands while on patrol.

A more formal action took place in November, when Captain Alan Goldstein and others at Long Binh collected 136 names on a petition supporting the aims of the Moratorium demonstrations.

A few weeks later, on Thanksgiving Day, over one hundred servicemen from the 71st Evacuation 1-Hospital and the 44th Medical Detachment at Pleiku abstained from the traditional turkey dinner as a protest against the war.

One of the boldest anti-war protests in Vietnam occurred several weeks later, on Christmas Eve, in downtown Saigon. Approximately fifty soldiers, many of them in uniform, gathered in JFK Square and distributed leaflets urging fellow GIs to stop all fighting and declare a cease-fire during the Tet holiday on February 6. MPs quickly broke up the assembly, however.

The only other known incidents of anti-war protest in Vietnam occurred during 1971, at Chu Lai and in the Saigon area.

As the July 4 holiday approached, GIs in Chu Lai issued a call for a mass GI rally and picnic at local beaches on the afternoon of the Fourth.

The action apparently was not very well organized, however, and although a crowd of over one thousand soldiers showed up, the supposed “Independence Day Peace Rally” quickly turned into a huge picnic, and became not a political demonstration but the largest pot party in the history of the Army.

A much more serious and effective action was that organized by Vietnam Veterans Against the War in the fall. In September, a group of servicemen in the Saigon area began circulating a petition to Congress expressing “opposition to further United States Military involvement by air, sea, or land forces in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia or other countries of South East Asia.”

Through the work of James Mohler, James Carlson, and other sailors in the Saigon area and with support from the VVAW national office in New York, the

petition drive quickly spread to soldiers and airmen at Pleiku, Cam Ranh, and other locations.

Hundreds of signatures were collected within a few weeks in the Saigon area alone, and with VVAW members throughout Vietnam involved, it appeared the drive might obtain thousands of names.

Military authorities quickly stepped in, however, and through arrests, **discharges**, and the usual forms of intimidation, managed to crush the effort.

Carlson was arrested on October 10 at Ton Son Nhut; **Jim Mohler was discharged** for “substandard personal behavior” (despite an unblemished record); and Army Sergeant Bob Stanfill was physically assaulted by an NCO for circulating petitions in Saigon’s 90th MP Company.

Other activists encountered similar repression, and in the process many signed petitions were confiscated.

The actual number of signatures collected during the short-lived effort was never accurately determined. David Addlestone, attorney for most of the men involved, personally saw over one thousand names and estimated that the total number throughout the country was near two thousand.

The effort demonstrated substantial anti-imperialist sentiment among troops in Vietnam.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

**While Troops Die,
Crooks Grab Billions In War
Contracts:
Fraud? Bid Rigging? Faulty
Military Equipment? No
Problem!:
Have Some More Money!**



(You Sung-Ho/Reuters)

How many more tax dollars have to be skimmed off before Americans face the fact that we have a major war profiteering problem on our hands, with our president leading the team?

February 10, 2005 Evelyn Pringle, "Information Clearing House"

The main companies that were awarded billions of dollars worth of contracts in Iraq have paid more than \$300 million in fines since 2000, to resolve allegations of fraud, bid rigging, delivery of faulty military equipment, and environmental damage.

For example, according to a review of documents conducted by the Associated Press, American tax payers are paying more than \$780 million to one British firm that was convicted of fraud on 3 separate federal construction projects and was banned from US government work as recently as 2002.

A company in Virginia that was convicted of bid rigging on Federally funded projects has also been awarded hundreds of millions of dollars worth of contracts in Iraq, and a 3rd company, found guilty of bid rigging and environmental violations, was approved as a subcontractor to clean up an Iraqi harbor.

Seven other companies with reconstruction contracts have agreed to pay large fines without admitting wrongdoing. All total, these 10 companies have paid fines to resolve 30 violations in the past four years and 6 were fined more than once. Yet these same companies have been awarded reconstruction contracts in Iraq worth more than \$7 billion.

Federal contracting regulations require contractors to have a "satisfactory record of integrity and business ethics." The government can ban unethical companies from getting new contracts through a process called debarment. However,

companies too often escape debarment by agreeing to settle cases of misconduct by paying large fines without admitting guilt.

The contracts with these unethical companies are only legal because the Bush administration canceled regulations put in place by the Clinton administration which barred new government contracts for companies convicted or penalized during the previous three years.

The Clinton administration tightened contracting rules shortly before leaving office in 2001, and instructed officials to make companies with repeated violations of federal laws ineligible for new contracts. **In its first 3 months in office, the Bush administration first suspended the rules, and then abolished them altogether in December 2001.**

The largest government contractors in Iraq (other than Halliburton) have paid numerous penalties in the last four years.

Bechtel paid more than \$110,000 to the EPA and the Energy Department in 2000 and 2001 to settle safety and environmental violations. Bechtel has prime construction contracts in Iraq worth more than \$2 billion. The company also hired 3 subcontractors for work in Iraq that have been fined more than \$86 million in the past 4 years.

American International Contractors Inc., paid \$4.7 million in fines in 2000 after pleading guilty to bid rigging on a US funded project. AICI has part of a \$325 million contract to rebuild Iraq's transportation systems, and has a share of a \$500 million contract for emergency construction needs, and is also a partner in a company with a \$70 million construction contract.

Fluor Corporation paid \$8.5 million in 2001 to settle charges that it improperly billed the government for work benefiting its other commercial clients. Fluor and AMEC created a joint venture and was awarded contracts to rebuild Iraq's electricity, water, sewer and trash removal infrastructure, worth \$1.7 billion.

Great Lakes Dredge & Dock paid a \$969,000 fine in 2002 for environmental damage in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. Yet, Bechtel awarded the firm a subcontract to clear the Iraqi port of Umm Qasr. Great Lakes also pleaded guilty to price fixing on contracts with Army Corps of Engineers in 1988. According to Bechtel, it told the Army Corps of Engineers it planned to hire Great Lakes when it was awarded the contract.

Northrop Grumman Corporation's Vinnell subsidiary was awarded a \$48 million contract to train the new Iraqi Army, even though it has been fined \$191.7 million in the past 4 years, including \$750,000 in 2000 for a case involving providing faulty replacement parts for the JSTARS airborne surveillance system.

For good reason, Bush has gone out of his way to stall congressional investigations into war profiteering. Requests for the most basic information have been virtually ignored, even as the companies continue to bilk taxpayers.

Now he's asking for another \$80 billion for Iraq. **How many more tax dollars have to be skimmed off before Americans face the fact that we have a major war profiteering problem on our hands, with our president leading the team?**

MORE:

Bush Buddies Already Got Their Money, Win Or Lose

February 11, 2005 Chris Floyd, The Moscow Times

Even if the grand objective of oil control slips away somehow -- through a falling-out with Sistani, say, or civil war -- Bush has already won the game.

The war has transferred billions of dollars from the public treasuries of the United States and Iraq into the coffers of an elite clique of oilmen, arms dealers, investment firms, construction giants and political operatives associated with the Bush family.

And this goes beyond the official, guaranteed-profit contracts to favored firms; Bush's own inspector general reported this month that \$8.8 billion in unaccounted "reconstruction" funds have simply vanished -- much of it in bribes for Bush officials and corporate kickbacks, the BBC reported.

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/maqalat/english/qi-special.htm>,

www.williambowles.info/gispecial

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