

GI SPECIAL 3A51:

REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



A U.S. soldier covers the perimeter while others examine the body of one of two Iraqi Police officers killed on a busy intersection in central Mosul Feb. 19, 2005. (AP Photo/Jim MacMillan)

Leave Our Country Now!

February 18, 2005 By Hassan Juma'a Awad, The Guardian (uk). Hassan Juma'a Awad is general secretary of Iraq's Southern Oil Company Union and president of the Basra Oil Workers' Union

We lived through dark days under Saddam Hussein's dictatorship. When the regime fell, people wanted a new life: a life without shackles and terror; a life where we could rebuild our country and enjoy its natural wealth. Instead, our communities have been attacked with chemicals and cluster bombs, and our people tortured, raped and killed in our homes.

Saddam's secret police used to creep over the roofs into our homes at night; occupation troops now break down our doors in broad daylight. The media do not show even a fraction of the devastation that has engulfed Iraq. Journalists who dare to report the truth of what is happening have been kidnapped by terrorists. This serves the agenda of the occupation, which aims to eliminate witnesses to its crimes.

Workers in Iraq's southern oilfields began organising soon after British occupying forces invaded Basra. We founded our union, the Southern Oil Company Union, just 11 days after the fall of Baghdad in April 2003.

When the occupation troops stood back and allowed Basra's hospitals, universities and public services to be burned and looted, while they defended only the oil ministry and oilfields, we knew we were dealing with a brutal force prepared to impose its will without regard for human suffering. From the beginning, we were left in no doubt that the US and its allies had come to take control of our oil resources.

The occupation authorities have maintained many of Saddam's repressive laws, including the 1987 order which robbed us of basic union rights, including the right to strike. Today, we still have no official recognition as a trade union, despite having 23,000 members in 10 oil and gas companies in Basra, Amara, Nassiriya, and up to Anbar province.

However, we draw our legitimacy from the workers, not the government. We believe unions should operate regardless of the government's wishes, until the people are able finally to elect a genuinely accountable and independent Iraqi government, which represents our interests and not those of American imperialism.

Our union is independent of any political party.

Most trade unions in Britain only seem to be aware of one union federation in Iraq, the regime-authorised Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions, whose president, Rassim Awadi, is deputy leader of the US-imposed prime minister Ayad Allawi's party. The IFTU's leadership is carved up between the pro-government Communist party, Allawi's Iraqi National Accord, and their satellites. In fact, there are two other union federations, which are linked to political parties, as well as our own organisation.

Our union has already shown it is able to stand its ground against one of the most powerful US companies, Dick Cheney's KBR, which tried to take over our workplaces with the protection of occupation forces.

We forced them out and compelled their Kuwaiti subcontractor, Al Khourafi, to replace 1,000 of the 1,200 employees it brought with it with Iraqi workers, 70% of whom are unemployed today. We also fought US viceroy Paul Bremer's wage schedule, which dictated that Iraqi public sector workers must earn ID 69,000 (\$35) per month, while paying up to \$1,000 a day to thousands of foreign mercenaries. In August 2003 we took strike action and shut down all oil production for three days. As a result, the occupation authorities had to raise wages to a minimum of ID 150,000.

We see it as our duty to defend the country's resources. We reject and will oppose all moves to privatise our oil industry and national resources. We regard this privatisation as a form of neo-colonialism, an attempt to impose a permanent economic occupation to follow the military occupation.

The occupation has deliberately fomented a sectarian division of Sunni and Shia. We never knew this sort of division before.

Our families intermarried, we lived and worked together. And today we are resisting this brutal occupation together, from Falluja to Najaf to Sadr City. The resistance to the occupation forces is a God-given right of Iraqis, and we, as a union, see ourselves as a necessary part of this resistance - although we will fight using our industrial power, our collective strength as a union, and as a part of civil society which needs to grow in order to defeat both still-powerful Saddamist elites and the foreign occupation of our country.

Bush and Blair should remember that those who voted in last month's elections in Iraq are as hostile to the occupation as those who boycotted them. Those who claim to represent the Iraqi working class while calling for the occupation to stay a bit longer, due to "fears of civil war", are in fact speaking only for themselves and the minority of Iraqis whose interests are dependent on the occupation.

We as a union call for the withdrawal of foreign occupation forces and their military bases. We don't want a timetable - this is a stalling tactic. We will solve our own problems. We are Iraqis, we know our country and we can take care of ourselves. We have the means, the skills and resources to rebuild and create our own democratic society.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT THE NEW TRAVELING SOLDIER

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

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

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

Task Force Baghdad Soldier Dies During Attack In Kadhimiya

19 February, 2005 BBC & HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND
NEWS RELEASE Number: 05-02-28C

A Task Force Baghdad Soldier was killed in Kadhimiya when a bomber blew himself up after an exchange of fire with security forces.

U.S. Soldiers were responding to a request for help from Iraqi Security forces after an earlier explosion wounded several local nationals when the bomb detonated.

A local national was also killed and a U.S. Soldier and ING were wounded.

Missouri Soldier Killed

Feb. 18, 2005 Associated Press, MANSFIELD, Mo.

Army Spc. Justin B. Carter, 21, of Mansfield, died Wednesday from noncombat-related injuries at a military base north of Baghdad, the Defense Department said on its Web site.

WHAS-TV in Louisville reported Friday that Carter was killed in an accident at a storage depot when a rocket-propelled weapon in the facility exploded.

His father, William Carter, of Elizabethtown, Ky., told the news station he is struggling with the loss of his son.

"It's tough for me because I didn't get to do all the things that most dads get to do with him. I find myself blaming myself for some of that. And it's hard because that's time I'll never get back," he said.

Carter attended Mansfield High School and was involved with the Future Farmers of America, school counselor Kelly Brazeal said. He enlisted in the Army after graduating from high school and had served for two years.

"He was just a good, typical kid," Brazeal told the Springfield News-Leader.

A memorial service for Carter will be held at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday at Colesburg Baptist Church in Elizabethtown, Ky.

“We Lose A Soldier Every 11 Hours.”

February 21, 2005 By Patrician Kime, Special To The Army Times

“Every 30 hours, we lose a soldier to an accident,” The Combat Readiness Center spokesman J.T. Coleman said. “If you include combat, we lose a soldier every 11 hours. “That’s a brigade a year. If we’re not careful, we’ll have our worst year in more than 10.”

Killing Hearts And Minds

[As you read this, don't forget who is responsible for everything you read: the politicians right here in the good old USA who sent these troops into an impossible situation for no reason except corporate greed and lust for Empire. And also remember that some of the fiercest fighters against the officers in command and the politicians during the Vietnam War were the very same soldiers who had committed atrocities against civilians, and later turned against the war, killing their officers by the hundreds. Their rebellion finally stopped the war.]

Feb 18 By Ken Dilanian, Knight Ridder Newspapers, BAGHDAD, Iraq

American soldiers barged into the house at midnight. A bomb had exploded on the highway out front earlier that day, killing an Iraqi national guardsman.

"I want some answers," Sgt. 1st Class Glenn Aldrich demanded through an interpreter as he shoved the homeowner out his front door. The man's wife and children watched, sobbing, from a side room.

Hadn't this guy seen something? The Iraqi swore to God he hadn't.

As two soldiers with rifles stood by, Aldrich yelled into the man's face and whacked the ground with a metal baton that the Americans called a "haji-be-good stick."

"If I'm out here, and I get shot at, I'm shooting every house near me!" Aldrich, 35, yelled in his booming former drill sergeant's voice. "Because you aren't helping me catch the bad guys, and if you're not helping me, you are the bad guy."

The man stared back blankly, and Aldrich let him walk back into his house. The Americans stormed into four other homes on the block, with similar results.

After nearly 11 months in Iraq, the soldiers of Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, still couldn't tell friend from foe. Frustrated by a culture they didn't understand, and tired of having friends blown up, they often felt compelled to play bad cop, even though they knew that harsh measures risked creating more enemies.

"Every time we kill one of them, we breed more that want to fight us," Aldrich said. "We end up turning neutral people against us. *It's not really our fault, though, because I have to defend myself.*" [Exactly right Sgt. The fault lies with the politicians in DC who wanted the oil, lied to you about why they were sending you, and were so stupid they didn't know they had no chance of winning. Now you're fucked. When soldiers in Vietnam figured out they were dying for Empire in a hopeless war, they rebelled wholesale and stopped it. They had the courage to resist what was being done to them.]

His men weren't always rough. Sometimes Charlie Company soldiers were pictures of restraint, and when the need arose, they improvised, taking up the role of negotiator, social worker or neighborhood fixer.

Even Aldrich, who often played the "big mean guy," as he put it, would take time to play basketball with a resident or laugh with some children.

"What's really hard is the fine line between the bad guys and the good guys," said Staff Sgt. Riley Flaherty, a lanky, fast-talking character from Ohio. "Because if you piss off the wrong good guys, you're really in trouble. So you've really got to watch what you do and how you treat the people."

On another day, however, Flaherty saw it differently. "These people don't understand nice," he said. "You've got to be a hard-ass."

Such contradictions are understandable.

The troopers of Charlie 1-8 Cav arrived in Iraq with almost no training in Arab culture or guerrilla war. In January they had just two interpreters, one of whom barely spoke English. Patrols without interpreters were disasters waiting to happen. One such patrol began randomly searching houses on a whim after midnight one night. The residents turned out to be Christians- more likely to be the targets of terrorist attacks than the perpetrators.

"Why, mister, why?" one woman in a nightgown asked. The soldiers could only shrug and leave.

Aldrich recounted how a group of soldiers used fists and an electric stun gun to punish an Iraqi teenager who'd flashed his middle finger.

"I've got 200,000 Iraqis I've got to control with 18 people," Aldrich said, referring to his platoon's patrol sector. "So I've got to command respect. And unfortunately, all that hearts and minds stuff, I can't even think about that." [Think about your own words. You have no hope whatever of controlling 200,000 pissed off Iraqis with "18 people." Think about who put you in that impossible situation. Think about why they put you there. Who is the enemy? Where is the war?]

At another point he added: "There are things I have to do out here that I can't explain to my chain of command, and that the American people would never understand."

The hundred or so troops of Charlie 1-8 Cav spent their days patrolling their sector in groups of two or three armored Humvees. Occasionally a tank or two would come along.

All day long, the soldiers pointed their guns at Iraqi civilians, whom they called "hajis," the Iraq war's version of "gooks" in Vietnam and "skinnies" in Somalia.

Wary of ambushes, they rammed cars that got in the way of their Humvees. Always on the lookout for car bombs, they stopped, screamed at, shoved to the

ground and searched people driving down the road after curfew - or during the day if they looked suspicious.

Iraqis who didn't stop at warning shots when they approached a Humvee in the middle of the night were met with a hail of gunfire. Sometimes the dead were clearly civilians, and sometimes they were clearly insurgents. Often there was no way to tell.

The soldiers had concluded that most Iraqis lacked the courage to stand up to the insurgents, and it angered them.

"I mean, everybody in this country has a weapon. Somebody is setting up a mortar tube in your front lawn - do something! Call somebody! Shoot `em!" said Charlie Company's commander, Capt. Rodney Schmucker, 30, a West Point graduate from Latrobe, Pa., near Pittsburgh. **[West Point only partly explains why he's a world class idiot. He doesn't understand anything whatsoever about the real world he's in, including the simple fact that he's the enemy, who invaded and occupied their country, and every Iraqi patriot wants him dead. And listen to him whine about why they won't turn traitor and give him a phone call! Even the Redcoat officers didn't bellyache about Americans not dropping a dime on George Washington.]**

Early in their tour, someone from Charlie Company thought he saw gunshots from a roof while he was manning a defensive position along one of the base walls. The troopers poured heavy weapons fire into the house.

The next morning, soldiers arrived to find several female members of a family dead - and one little girl alive, clinging to her dead mother. Some of the men broke down in tears, the soldiers said.

"I will never forget that girl raising her head up," said Staff Sgt. Victor Gutierrez of Los Angeles. [And the silly Capt. thinks after that action people are going to tell him about the resistance? They are the resistance. And rightly so. And you, Capt., are a Redcoat officer. Simple as that.]

The girl was flown to a hospital, where doctors saved her life.

Aldrich recounted the story matter-of-factly. Asked if the unintentional killing of innocent civilians bothered him, he replied:

"The one thing you learn over here is that there are no innocent civilians, except the kids. And even them - the ones that are all, `Hey mister, mister, chocolate?' - I'll be killing them someday."

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.

TROOP NEWS

URGENT: These Veterans Need Backup Now

From: Marcie Hascall Clark jungle@yahoo.com

To: GI Special

Sent: February 18, 2005

Subject: Leishmaniasis

I just came across your site while doing a google search for soldiers dying of infection.

My husband came back from Iraq July 2003 after being blown up and he has leishmaniasis.

I have been fighting and fighting to expose this. We are civilians and can say whatever we want.

I am getting a site up to help those with it to find out the truth.

Please contact me if we can help each other.

I have a friend from the first gulf war dying from it as we speak.

Web site: www.acinetobacter.org

[This month, some quack army doctor at Walter Reed said if the skin lesion healed up you got nothing to worry about. Lie. The parasite has to be killed completely, internally as well, or it can enter the visceral organs. These vets and their families need help! If you're willing to step up and join the fight, contact Marcie Hascall Clark.]

A Letter To Mr. Blair

From: Rose Gentle

To: GI Special

Sent: Saturday, February 19, 2005 10:23 AM

Subject: Re: GI Special 3A49: Rumsfeld Tells The Truth!

[From Rose Gentle in Scotland. Her son was killed in Iraq. She leads a campaign to bring all the Scots and other troops home from Iraq, now. T]

i have sent mr blair a letter to meet with me,
i will let you no, if he will. [the man's a coward, it will be no.]
he can hear me so how not see me,
well he got my boy killed

Dutch Soldiers Union Threatened Strike In Iraq Over Low Pay; Opposed Continued Deployment!

[Thanks to Max Watts, who sent this message in. There were reports last month that Dutch soldiers in Iraq had threatened to go on strike because with the fall in value of the U.S. dollar, they were getting paid less than they would have if safely stationed back in Europe.

[What's new here is that they were also campaigning against having to stay longer in Iraq because they are opposed to the war.]

From: Fred Lardenoye.

To: Max Watts

Sent: Tuesday, February 08, 2005

Subject: Dutch Troops In Iraq Threaten To Go On Strike

The AFMP-FNV is a trade union for military professional (time) soldiers, officers and nco's (as you know, conscription is abolished in The Netherlands).

AFMP is also member of the FNV, the big left-wing trade union (1.2 million members).

AFMP is a completely legalized and recognized trade union who negotiates directly with the ministry of Defense about working conditions etc.

As you may know I've worked for the AFMP as a journalist, so I still have contacts inside.

The so called 'revolt' was more a threat coming from some soldiers who were pretty emotional. It's indeed caused by a pure material reason (which of course - as you also put it rightly - the start of every movement in the direction of more consciousness).

AFMP supported the demands of these soldiers.

The fact is that they would earn more money (compensation) during exercise in Germany than they do on duty in Irak.

Of course their duty in Irak is much more dangerous (although 'only' two Dutch soldiers were killed so far).

The second point about the withdrawal.

There were politicians who wanted to let the Dutch soldiers stay longer in Iraq, but the government decided that they will leave in March as planned.

AFMP strongly demanded that that the mandate would not be continued, because they have no 'solidarity' with the foreign policy of the US.

***Support The Armed Forces
Resistance:
Come To Ft. Bragg March 19:
“You Never Think Your County
Would Be This Evil Plaguing The
Earth”
“We Were Going To Be Sent To Be
Meat Shields For Generals.”***

1.19.05 BY MICHELLE ROBIDOUX, Socialist Worker, Canada

With each passing week, the crisis in the US military is growing.

On January 10, reports emerged from Fort Stewart, Georgia that 17 servicemen had gone AWOL, two had attempted suicide and one Sergeant had applied for conscientious objector status.

Kevin Benderman, 40 is a combat veteran, having served one tour in Iraq in 2003. He stated “I am ashamed to be associated with this mess, and I certainly did not join the Army to kill women, children and old men. I just don’t see how these innocent people could be a threat to the Constitution of the United States.”

Last week he failed to leave with his unit in the Army’s 3rd Infantry Division, saying he became morally opposed to war after seeing it first hand during his first tour of duty. The 19,000 strong division is the first in the Army tapped for a second tour in Iraq since the 2003 invasion.

One of the soldiers, AWOL from Fort Stewart who is now seeking refuge in Canada stated, “We were going to be sent to be meat shields for generals.”

A second war resister who has come to Canada, who has completed a 7- month Stint in Iraq, stated, "I joined the military to go to college. I went to Iraq ready to defend my country. But all we were doing was killing innocent civilians.

"You never think your county would be this evil plaguing the earth," he said.

Bush's policies of unilateral extension of military service, known as "stop loss", and the growing use of reservists and National Guard in the Iraq war spells more problems for the US occupation of Iraq.

Nearly half of the new rotation of more than 135,000 American troops will be Reserve or National Guard forces, the highest share since the war in Iraq started in March 2003.

All of this points to the special importance of organizing among military families and active duty personnel.

On March 19th there will be global protests against the continued occupation of Iraq. Significantly, a mass protest will take place in Fayetteville, North Carolina, home to Fort Bragg and the 82nd Airborne division.

Lou Plummer, a member of Military Families Speak Out, explains the significance of this mobilization:

"My family has a long history in the military. My grandfather served in World War II, my father served in Vietnam, and I served from 1983 to 1989.

"I've been active in Military Families Speak Out since the summer of 2003. I helped to organize the Bring Them Home Now campaign and have worked with military families opposed to the war in the area around Fort Bragg.

"Fort Bragg is one of the largest military bases in the US, with 40,000 active duty soldiers along with their families. In this community it's difficult to go anywhere without encountering someone with a connection to the military.

"It's important to come to Fayetteville in March because those of us who are veterans and members of military families can hardly be accused of being unpatriotic or out of touch with reality when we speak about this war. As a matter of fact, we are probably more in touch with reality than the majority of the people who support the war.

"March 19 and 20 are the anniversaries of the invasion of Iraq. The dates are significant. Also the location is significant. The place where this rally is going to be held is in a park which in 1970 hosted a demo by over 4,000 people, 1,000 of whom were active duty GIs, the majority of whom were Vietnam veterans.

"So this community, even though it is a military community, has a long and proud history of GI resistance and community support for those people."

The March 19th rally in Fayetteville is endorsed by Iraq Veterans Against the War, the North Carolina Council of Churches, Fayetteville Peace with Justice, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Veterans for Peace, the North Carolina Coalition for Peace and Justice, and United for Peace and Justice, the US' largest peace and justice group.

For info, contact lou.plummer@mac.com.

MORE:

REGIONAL MOBILIZATION AT CAMP PENDLETON MARCH 18

February 19, 2005, CODEPINK

Camp Pendleton Marine base, one of the largest bases in the country, has suffered a tragic number of casualties in the ongoing war and occupation of Iraq. CODEPINK will honor the devastating loss of these troops with a peaceful 30 mile, two day procession. Join us on March 18th and 19th as we walk from Oceanside, home of Camp Pendleton, to the massive rally at Balboa Park where we will unite with the San Diego Coalition for Peace and Justice to mark the second anniversary of the war in Iraq: The World Says End the War! Bring the Troops Home Now! Rebuild our Communities!

For details and information about the peace procession and rally, check out the CODEPINK [San Diego](#) page.

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.

Soldiers Coming To Defense Of Sgt. Kevin Benderman

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

February 18, 2005, By MICKEY Z., counterpunch.org

Sgt. Benderman, a man who believes "War robs you of your humanity. It makes people do terrible things they would otherwise never do," filed for Conscientious Objector status in December 2004.

"We have heard from many soldiers who support Kevin's position," says Monica.

Hey General, Best Not Fuck With These Troops; From The Looks, They Just Might Not Be Buying What You're Selling.



Marines from the first Battalion 23rd Marines gather in the Haditha's dam deck, 250 kms northwest from Baghdad, to listen to Brigadier General James L Williams, Commanding 1st Marine Expeditionary Force. (AFP/Jaime Razuri)

Iraq Veterans Against The War

February 17, 2005 by Amadee Braxton and Derrick O'Keefe, Seven Oakes Magazine. Derrick O'Keefe is an anti-war activist, writer and founding editor of Seven Oaks Magazine (www.SevenOaksMag.com).

Amadee Braxton is the Administrative Coordinator with Iraq Veterans Against War, a new organization, but one with huge potential to impact the anti-war movement in the United States. Braxton spoke with Derrick O'Keefe about the organization's upcoming plans, which include a March 19 demonstration at the Fort Bragg military base in North Carolina.

Derrick O'Keefe: At least from the perception of those of us outside of the United States, it sort of looked as though the presidential race swallowed the anti-war movement – with the exception of the big rallies in August against the Republican National Convention. Is it your estimation that the anti-war movement will return to greater visibility this year?

Amadee Braxton: I think that the anti-war movement in the U.S. is going to become more visible. It seemed to be at a high point maybe last spring, 2004, and

then of course the election sucked up everybody's energy and focus. And I think in particular the increasing involvement of military families and Iraq war veterans is going to give a big boost to the anti-war movement in the United States.

O'Keefe: When did your organization come together, and what are some of the main kinds of work that you do?

Braxton: Iraq Veterans Against the War was founded in August of 2004 at a national annual meeting of Veterans for Peace, which is a large and longstanding peace organization made up of veterans. It was founded by several Iraq war veterans who came to see that the war was a mistake. The organization has been growing by leaps and bounds. Anytime one of our members speaks publicly we get a lot of emails and phone calls from veterans as well as active duty servicemen and women who are interested in joining.

We're finding that many people who aren't actively serving in Iraq right now see that the war was a mistake and feel like there's really no purpose in them being there, they feel like there's no mission really for them to achieve over there, and they feel very resentful that the government has put them in harms way basically for nothing, for the wealth of a few corporations here in the U.S.

What we've been doing is reaching out, trying to get more veterans involved, letting the country know where some veterans are standing when it comes to the war.

I think our organization is unique, because we're calling for immediate withdrawal of troops. We don't think any slow, prolonged withdrawal is going to solve the problems in Iraq. We think that the U.S. military is an occupying force in Iraq, and the longer we stay there, the more resentment and destruction and death will occur there. And we feel that if you really want to support the troops, you need to demand that they come home now.

A lot of people take the view that, 'oh, we can't pull out every troop right away because, you know, Iraq will fall into chaos.' And our position is that Iraq is already in chaos, and the reason is because we are there.

O'Keefe: I'm wondering if Iraq Veterans Against the War is also consciously looking at the example of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War and the big impact that they had?

Braxton: As I said, our organization was founded at a meeting of Veterans for Peace, which has a lot of Vietnam veterans in it. And Vietnam veterans have played a big role in helping nurture our organization and sharing their parallel experiences of Vietnam with us.

And we're seeing a lot of parallels and similar tactics that were used by the Johnson administration, in terms of having an election in Vietnam and thinking that that was going to change everything. This is similar to the situation we just had with the elections in Iraq. And the Bush administration was hailing that that was going to signal a change in Iraq, a kind of turning a corner in Iraq. **We know that in 1967 they had elections in Vietnam, and U.S. troops continued to occupy Vietnam and fight there and die there for another eight years. And we don't want the same thing to happen in Iraq.**

O'Keefe: I understand that you have a major action planned for the March 19-20 weekend of global action, with a rally at a military base in North Carolina?

Braxton: We're going to be joining with members of Military Families Speak Out, a lot of students, a lot of other veterans, to go to Fayetteville, North Carolina, which is the home of Fort Bragg, one of the largest military bases in the country, to demand an end to the occupation of Iraq, and to call for bringing the troops home now. And we're hoping to have tens of thousands of people in Fayetteville on the 19th.

And then on the 20th, Iraq Veterans Against the War will be having our first national meeting of our members. And we're trying to get members from all over the country to come and meet each other, and network and learn some skills, including how to organize a local chapter. And there are going to be workshops on counter recruitment, conscientious objector status, and things like that, and we're really excited to get as many people there as possible. And we also need money to support our members that don't have the means to get there.

O'Keefe: Finally, and you touched on it by mentioning that your organization needs financial contributions, what can people outside of the United States do – aside from those of us in Canada obviously supporting the war resisters – to support the important work that your organization does?

Braxton: Well, we're hoping that people in other countries can put pressure on their governments to not follow the path of the Bush administration in its Empire-building approach to the world. There are many people in the United States who do not support George Bush, even some of us who feel like a second rigged election occurred in the United States. So continuing to put pressure on governments that are going along with his plans is a really positive thing that people can do.

Also, you know, we can always use financial support and if people want to host one of our members to speak about the work we're doing, we're happy to send our members out anywhere to let the world know that there are many U.S. soldiers who think that what's happening over there in Iraq is wrong.

And if people want to make a donation, they can write a cheque made out to Iraq Veterans Against the War, or IVAW, and send it to P.O. Box 8296 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19101.

More Wounded Abuse Horror Stories; "You Feel They Don't Give A Damn Whether You Get Well Or Not"

February 18, 2005 By Ann Scott Tyson, Washington Post Staff Writer

Hundreds and perhaps thousands of injured Army National Guard and Reserve soldiers -- including many severely wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan -- have either lost or risked losing medical care and thousands of dollars in pay for months because a "convoluted" personnel system dropped them from active-duty status, according to a Government Accountability Office report released yesterday.

The report found that over a two-month period early last year, almost 34 percent of the 867 soldiers whose records it examined were removed from active duty while their requests for medical extensions were snarled in bureaucracy, leading many soldiers and their families to lose pay and benefits.

The Army does not track the numbers of injured and ill reservists suffering such gaps in pay and benefits, but with 16,000 reservists having passed through the military's "medical holdover" system since November 2003, and 3,400 there now, the total is "very possibly [in the] thousands," said Gregory D. Kutz, director of financial management and assurance at the GAO and author of the report.

Sgt. 1st Class John Allen, a weapons sergeant on a Special Forces A team, suffered brain trauma and injuries to his legs, torso and vision from a helicopter accident and grenade blast outside Kandahar, Afghanistan, in summer 2002. But it was not until Allen applied for an extension of his active-duty status in November that his "real troubles started," he testified before the House Government Reform Committee yesterday.

While coping with his injuries, Allen was dropped repeatedly from active duty, losing a total of three months of benefits and \$11,924 in pay. "I was essentially forced to 'go off orders' every three months," said the former police officer from Blairstown, N.J. "(I had) no pay, no access to base, no medical coverage for my family," and his medical appointments with military doctors were repeatedly canceled.

In July 2003, Allen said he had to borrow \$10,000 from his brother to pay bills. The following month, his wife went into labor prematurely but was refused treatment at the hospital in Fort Bragg, N.C., until a senior Army commander intervened.

The "broken, dysfunctional system," Allen said, "placed my family under intense and indescribable stress. In short, this by far caused the most burden on my family, my financial situation and my life in general." Allen, who wears an eye patch and walks with a cane, plans to retire this month from his reserve unit, Bravo Company of the 20th Special Forces Group.

Sgt. Joseph Perez, a military policeman with the Nevada National Guard, was wounded in the knee during a riot in a Baghdad prison compound in June 2003. Perez also saw fellow soldiers killed in mortar attacks, leading him to suffer flashbacks and nightmares. Flown back to Fort Lewis for care, **he said he spent months "languishing" in a World War 1 barracks with insufficient heat and moldy walls.**

"You feel they don't give a damn whether you get well or not," he told the committee. In February 2004, his unit was demobilized and he was removed from active-duty status, leaving his family without medical care or access to the local

base. Missing a total of \$3,886 in pay, he at one point had to move with his wife and three daughters into his father-in-law's basement.

"All this made me feel worthless," he said. He ended up in a mental health unit suffering with post-traumatic stress and suicidal thoughts.



Veteran At The Wall

The survivor voice has no rules. It is a burst of truth that is often horrifying. The survivor's ultimate mission is to bear witness. Those who cannot take the truth, run for the rules, because their belief system can only survive if the survivor's voice is no longer allowed to speak.

**Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71**

Photo and caption from the I-R-A-Q (I Remember Another Quagmire) portfolio of Mike Hastie, U.S. Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71. (Please contact at: hastiemike@earthlink.net) for more of his outstanding work. T)

Marines Investigate Boot Camp Drowning:

Drill Instructor Caught On Tape Striking 19-Year-Old



In this image taken from WIS-TV, video, taken Feb. 7, 2005, on Parris Island, S.C., an unidentified Marine Corps drill instructor, far-left, back to camera, grabs Jason Tharp, far left, facing camera, by the collar, near a swimming pool. Tharp of Sutton, W.Va., drowned the next day, Feb. 8. at Parris Island while participating in a 25-meter swim that was part of a water-survival course. His family wants answers from the Marine Corps on the circumstances surrounding their son's drowning death, which came a day after a TV station videotaped a drill instructor striking the recruit at the same training pool. (AP Photo)

[Thanks to PB, who sent this in.]

Feb. 17, 2005 By Jim Miklaszewski, Correspondent, NBC News

An autopsy revealed 19-year-old Jason Tharp drowned last week during water survival training at the Marine Corps boot camp at Parris Island, S.C.

Video shot on Feb. 7, the day before Tharp's death, by NBC affiliate WIS-TV in Columbia, S.C., shows Tharp, visibly shaken and almost terrified, taking a forearm shot from a Marine drill instructor.

In the Marines only five weeks, Tharp had written seven letters home telling his family he wanted out. His father, John Tharp, claims Jason had been singled out by drill instructors because he couldn't keep up with the rigorous basic training.

"I don't know how they could treat my son the way we saw on that video," says Tharp. "He never hurt nobody. He'd do anything anybody asked him."

During last week's training, Tharp, seen on the WIS-TV video, at first refused to get into the water.

"He's just afraid because he is not able to do the swim correctly right now, and he just wants to leave and go home," said Staff Sgt. Anthony Davis on the Feb. 7 videotape.

After 20 minutes of trying to coax Tharp into the pool, the drill instructor turned physical in apparent violation of Marine Corps regulations - striking Tharp across the chest.

"That right there, where this Marine grabs the recruit, this is not how you treat recruits," said Eugene Fidell, the president of the National Institute of Military Justice, when NBC News showed him the video. "I mean, this is a wrongful touching. Basically, it's an assault."

Marine Corps officials say Tharp voluntarily entered the pool the next day, where he drowned during a 25-meter swim. Officials also say there's no early evidence of any misconduct by Marine instructors at the time Jason drowned, but the conduct caught on camera the day before raises questions about exactly what happened in that pool.

Jason's father is considering a wrongful-death lawsuit against the Marines.

"We just want justice for Jason," says Tharp. "To get some kind of bill passed to where this won't happen to another family."

The Navy and Marines are investigating Jason's death and the conduct of the drill instructors who were supposed to protect him.

Military Serial Rapists Unpunished: Rape Survivor Says The Army "Has Done Nothing But Lie To Me And Treat Me Like A Criminal"

2.19.05 CORKY SIEMASZKO, New York Daily News

NEW YORK - Ten serial rapists are serving in the U.S. military and have sexually assaulted dozens of fellow soldiers in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, a watchdog group has charged.

And more than a year after Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld declared "zero tolerance" for rape, the number of troops who claim to have been violated has nearly tripled, the Miles Foundation reported.

"This indicates to us that rape in the ranks continues to be a problem in the military," said Anita Sanchez, spokeswoman for the Connecticut-based foundation. The nonprofit group assists service members who have been sexually assaulted.

Based on victim interviews, the group has identified 10 servicemen and a military contractor who allegedly each sexually assaulted anywhere from two to two dozen soldiers.

Sanchez said six suspects are in the Army, two are Marines, one each are in the Navy and Air Force -- and their superiors have been alerted. So has the contractor's boss.

"The Pentagon should know about all of them," she said.

But female victims also face roadblocks -- both in the United States and abroad -- when they report a rape.

The Associated Press has reported that a former National Guard lieutenant said in a TV interview that the Army treated her "like a criminal" after she accused a fellow soldier of rape.

Jennifer Dyer, 26, of Mays Landing, N.J., said in the interview to be broadcast Sunday on "60 Minutes" that Army investigators sequestered her in a hotel after the incident and threatened her with arrest when she didn't return to the base following a two-week convalescent leave.

The Army "has done nothing but lie to me and treat me like a criminal," Dyer said. [Of course. Why be surprised? The entire armed forces were raped by Bush when you got sent to die for lies and Empire in Iraq. Why should the Pentagon give a shit about a few hundred more?]

Her alleged attacker, Michael Hall, 35, also a National Guard lieutenant, is scheduled for trial on rape charges next month in a military court in Alabama. He has said the sex was consensual.

"I Don't See A Reason To Return To Iraq"

National Guard's \$15,000 Bait Flops In New Mexico; Only 2 Of 57 Sign Up

February 19, 2005 By SIMON ROMERO, New York Times

After missing recruiting goals, the National Guard is offering a re-enlistment bonus of \$15,000 in an effort to bolster its ranks.

PRINGER, N.M. - Lisa Marez could not manage a smile as this town cheered the return of her husband's National Guard unit with a parade of pickups and police cars, followed by a celebratory calling of names in the high school gym. Just days earlier, she had learned that her husband, Sgt. Jesse Guillermo Marez, had accepted a bonus to re-enlist for six more years, virtually guaranteeing another tour in Iraq.

Sergeant Marez, who in civilian life in Albuquerque works as a machine operator at a weapons laboratory, stoically explained that he supported the war in Iraq and was not afraid to return. He also said he would soon receive a re-enlistment bonus of \$15,000, part of the National Guard's effort to bolster its ranks after missing its recruiting goals for the first time in a decade last year.

Sergeant Marez is one of two soldiers in his 57-member unit, about 90 percent Hispanic and mostly men from northern New Mexico, to re-enlist for six years while still stationed in Iraq.

"The Guard is looking for an economic solution to a socio-political problem," said David Segal, a military sociologist at the University of Maryland. "Fifteen thousand dollars is half a muscle car. I'd be surprised to see this policy have more than a marginal effect on the Guard's numbers."

Particularly in relatively poor areas of the country like Springer, a town of 1,200 people surrounded by small ranching communities, the Guard will be recruiting in coming months as its roster of recruiters swells to 4,100, from 2,700. A low-ranking Guard member can make about \$35,000 a year in a combat tour in Iraq, or about \$5,000 more than a young schoolteacher can earn here in a year.

Though \$15,000 may stretch further here, the pay and the bonuses failed to sway many of the 515th who returned home with Sergeant Marez.

Sgt. Dennis Trujillo explained why a couple weeks ago as he sat down for barbecue after the welcome-home ceremony concluded with a show of digital photographs of the unit in Iraq to a medley of hard-rock and heavy-metal classics.

No one in the 515th was killed in Iraq, Sergeant Trujillo said, but the unit had suffered about 40 indirect mortar attacks and its duties, which included supplying Army troops with gasoline and water, were sometimes grueling.

The money the Guard was offering was "good but not enough," said Sergeant Trujillo, 29, who grew up in Roy, a ranching community of 400 people not far from Springer, and whose term with the Guard expires this summer.

"I'm happy to be back here," said Sergeant Trujillo, explaining how his main goal now was to secure a stable state job in the forestry service. "I don't see a reason to return to Iraq."

Ms. Marez, a 30-year-old teacher's assistant who stood by her husband's side throughout the ceremony celebrating the return of the 515th, did not look so favorably on the re-enlistment bonus either.

"This time of war has been so difficult," she said, holding back tears. "I don't care much for the Guard. It's taking my husband away."

Quack Doc Objects To Banning Deadly Painkillers; Grubb Says Command Needs Them To Keep Soldiers "Functioning On The Battlefield."

[Miami Herald, February 18, 2005]

An Army doctor pleaded with an FDA advisory committee to keep popular pain drugs on the market because the military depends on them. A whistle-blower warned about dangers.

Army Dr. Christopher Grubb urged that some popular pain relievers "are essential to the global war on terrorism" and should be kept on the market despite their potentially dangerous side effects. **He added that without the painkillers, the military cannot keep as many soldiers functioning on the battlefield. [Not to relieve the pain for wounded soldiers. Oh hell no. To "keep them functioning." This doctor was born 50 years too late. Mengele could have used his help at Auschwitz.]**

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Why We Resist

February 19, 2005 By Abu Assur, Al Moharer

Iraqis who are resisting the US invasion of their country are defending their homes, their soil, their culture, and their natural wealth against looters who crossed far away land and oceans to come to kill and loot like wolves while wearing the lamb skins and talking about bringing democracy.

When some foreigners come to your place and impose their jungle law, it is normal that honest and responsible persons would fight them and resist their aggression. You can't possibly call these resisters terrorists, rebels, insurgents, fanatics or diehards.

Resisting against outside aggressors is a natural human behavior.

The world over knows that the US came to Iraq for oil.

The US doesn't care a damn about democracy, freedom, human rights, and political reforms, Etc.

If they came for democracy why aren't they interested to talk about democracy to their friends the Saudi rulers who oppress minorities and women (women are oppressed, petty thieves see their hands severed etc.)?

There are no elections whatsoever in the US protectorate of Saudi Kingdom, the Saudi family is the most corrupt ruling family in the World. This family is hated by its citizens and yet the US calls the ruling family allies and friends etc. Surely, they are the friends of Shell Exxon and Chevron and not at all friends with US values of freedom, democracy and respects for human right.

What the Bushies call a war against terrorism is a war about money and petrol, period!

This would've been another ugly and insipid episode about human cupidity and greed, if innocent lives both Iraqis and US were not daily lost to pay for these lies.

<p style="text-align: center;">OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME <u>NOW!</u></p>

Samarra Resistance Still Rules

[Washington Post, February 18, 2005, Pg. 16]

Four months after the American forces "freed" the city of Samarra from the clutches of anti-occupation forces, insurgents continue to attack U.S. and collaborator forces.

Resistance Action:

February 19, 2005 AP & (KUNA) & By Mariam Karouny (Reuters)

A bomber blew up his car at an Iraqi army checkpoint in Latifiya, 20 miles south of the capital, killing nine Iraqi soldiers.

The attacks then shifted to the northern districts of Baghdad, where **another bomber killed two Iraqi National Guardsmen.**

Police officer Rashid Haroun said a bomber blew himself up close to the Nada Mosque in Kadhimiya, killing seven Shiites, including three National Guardsmen, and injuring 55 people.

A bomber blew up a car outside an Iraqi National Guard base in Baqouba, 35 miles northeast of Baghdad, killing six Iraqi Guardsmen and wounding another.

Six Guardsmen were killed in a mortar attack on the main highway between Baghdad and Hillah.

Two policemen were killed when a hand grenade exploded near Samarra' city, north of Baghdad.

**WELCOME TO RAMADI:
HAVE A NICE DAY**



A resistance guerrilla carries a rocket propelled grenade launcher on the streets of Ramadi, west of Baghdad, February 19, 2005. Insurgents attacked a security headquarters in Ramadi on Saturday. REUTERS/Ali Al-Mashadani

**IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE
END THE OCCUPATION**

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Shoeless Charles Goes After Richard Pearle

From: **Mike Hastie U.S. Army Medic Vietnam 1970-71**
To: GI Special
Sent: February 18, 2005
Subject: Shoeless Charles

Thursday night a friend of mine went and heard Howard Dean and Richard Pearle have a debate on the Iraq War, foreign policy in general, and domestic issues.

The debate took place at a rather expensive concert hall in downtown Portland. My friend (Bruce Charles), has been a peace activist for most of his adult life, going back to the Vietnam War.

During the time that Pearle was speaking, my friend got very upset at what he was saying, so he took both of his shoes off, and proceeded to charge the stage and was able to throw both shoes at Pearle.

Both shoes missed, but who cares.

About six security guards finally got to him, but he was still able to call Pearle a fucking liar. He said this several times.

He set off a little chain reaction in the crowd, because several other people made some caustic remarks to Pearle.

Bruce was arrested, and was later released. I went down to the police station and took him home.

The episode was shown on the news two hours later. So, baseball may have its "Shoeless Joe," but Portland has its "Shoeless Charles."

What a tremendous lift for the anti-war movement.

I have been involved in many peaceful demonstrations with Bruce, but what this man did tonight was above and beyond the call of duty. I only wish his name would become a household word. BRUCE CHARLES--blessed are the peacemakers.

He was feeling somewhat despondent a couple of hours after the incident, but I told him I was very proud of him.

As a medic in Vietnam, I knew exactly what this man did.

It is actions like this that may keep future Americans out of funeral homes from this dog and phony war in Iraq. If more progressive people do not join the anti-war movement, the Bush Administration will bury everything they hold sacred in their lives.

American soldiers and the Iraqi people are dying for the biggest lie in American history. If we are going to stop this war, we will have to experience the greatest effort of our lives. The price of sanity is not free!

When I was in Vietnam, I gave a hundred percent of my being toward the preservation of life. I would have done anything to save a soldiers life.

In the past twenty years, I have given that same effort in bearing witness to the lies of the Vietnam War, and how those lies are now destroying this country and Iraq.

My greatest effort now, is to keep the Richard Pearle's from sending more Americans to Iraq.

One piece of truth can save a life. The next time you reach for your shoes, think of Bruce Charles.

You don't have to throw them, just put them on, and go help stop the madness, because sanity is not free.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Iraqi Collaborator Soldiers Useless

[Baltimore Sun, February 18, 2005]

U.S. defense officials said nearly all of Iraq's new Army and National Guard units are lightly armed and have limited mobility, raising new questions about the effectiveness of those troops and their ability to relieve U.S. forces now providing security in Iraq.

OCCUPATION HAITI

Haitian Resistance Attacks In Force: Liberates Political Prisoners



A dead prison guard outside the National Penitentiary, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on February 19, 2005, only a few hours after scores of armed men broke into the institution and freed around 480 prisoners, including former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune.

Witnesses said the armed men were guerrillas claiming allegiance to former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was overthrown by the Bush regime on Feb. 29, 2004. Neptune was his prime minister. (Daniel Morel/Reuters)

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Nominee For Stupidity Award: 2004 **Hiding In Green Zone, Hillary Clinton** **Says Resistance Fails To Destabilize Iraq**

[Thanks to PB and Des who sent this in. PB writes: She must've raided Rumsfelds crack stash.]

Feb 19, 2005 By TODD PITMAN, Associated Press Writer & By Michael Georgy, BAGHDAD (Reuters)

BAGHDAD, Iraq - Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton said Saturday a string of attacks killing more than 50 Iraqis in two days were failed attempts to destabilize the country.

Clinton, a New York Democrat, and Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., were part of a five-member congressional delegation that met with U.S. officials and members of Iraq's interim government.

The threat of attack prevented the senators from leaving Baghdad's fortified Green Zone, a walled complex that is home to the U.S. and British embassies and the Iraqi government.

When some of the senators last visited Iraq many months ago, they were able to move around the country. But security, always unsteady, has deteriorated sharply over the past year.

"When I was here last summer it was much easier for us to move around. We visited several cities around Baghdad. We were able to move more freely through Baghdad," said Senator Susan Collins, a Republican from Maine.

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

“Apparently, Abu Jazar Didn't Hear The Shots Fast Enough.”

Rafah Today 2/17/2005 [with photos]

Despite all the optimistic media reports and the omnipresent photos of Sharon and Abbas shaking hands, the killing continues in Rafah.

The latest victim was Ibrahim Abu Jazar, killed by Israeli soldiers while he stood near a childrens' playground in Rafah.

He was wearing earphones and listening to local news on a small portable radio when he was shot. One of the children who was there said, "While we were playing football, the soldiers started shooting at us, so we all ran away." Apparently, Abu Jazar didn't hear the shots fast enough.

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

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