

GI SPECIAL 3A56:



A local woman asks US soldiers “is this your liberation?” as they conduct a house to house weapons search in Baghdad. (AP Photo/Saurabh Das)

59% Want Troops Out In A Year, “Stable” Or Not

Feb 24 Katherine Stapp (IPS)

While polls show a fairly even split on whether the war was a good idea to begin with, more than a third of U.S. citizens say that the relative success of the recent elections in Iraq does not mean Bush's policy is working, and three-quarters believe that "most of the challenges in Iraq remain ahead", according to an NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll conducted last week.

Fifty-nine percent believe the U.S. should pull its troops out in the next year, compared to 39 percent who want to wait for a stable government in Iraq.

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.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

SOLDIER KILLED, TWO WOUNDED BY IEDS NEAR SAMARRA

February 24, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 05-02-36C

TIKRIT, Iraq – A Task Force Liberty Soldier was killed and two wounded by improvised explosive devices north of Samarra about 9 a.m., Feb. 24.

The wounded Soldiers were taken to a Coalition Forces medical treatment facility.

Qaryat IED Kills One Soldier

February 24, 2005 Associated Press

The first Task Force Liberty Soldier was killed when an improvised explosive device, or homemade bomb, went off early Thursday near Qaryat in Diyala province, the U.S. command said in a statement. Diyala stretches northeast of the capital to the border with Iran.

142 From Texas Dead In Iraq

February 24, 2005 Austin American-Statesman

AUSTIN, Texas Jewel Aston says her 32-year-old son was upbeat the last time he called her from Iraq -- just hours before he died in a vehicle accident.

The Pentagon says Marine Corporal Trevor D. Aston of Austin died Tuesday in Al Anbar Province

His mother says her only child moved to Austin from El Paso about nine years ago. Trevor Aston became a reservist after the September Eleventh terrorist attacks in 2001. He'd been in Iraq since August 2004.

He'll be buried in El Paso at Fort Bliss National Cemetery. Funeral arrangements are pending.

The Defense Department says at least 142 Texas service members have died in Iraq since the war began.

El Paso Soldier Ambushed

2/23/05 KDBC

A local Marine, just about two weeks away from returning home from Iraq, was ambushed and seriously injured.

Twenty-two-year-old Luis Aranda, a Franklin High School graduate and sergeant in the Marine Corps, is in serious but stable condition after he was ambushed on Tuesday.

His family feels helpless as they wait for updates on their son's condition.

Margie Aranda, Luis' mother, said, "Can you tell him that we love him?"

Margie just got word that her 22-year-old son would be coming home sooner than she expected.

She said, "The call came in that my son had been in a hostile situation and he was severely burned."

So she cries for her Marine, who is wounded thousands of miles away.

She says, "It's a call that no parent ever wants to receive. No parent, whether it's for this reason or any reason, wants to hear that his or her child's been hurt."

Gilbert Aranda, Luis' father, said, "You know you can't do nothing. They're over there, and you're over here."

Sergeant Aranda and four others were ambushed on Tuesday while driving through the Anbar Province, in Iraq.

Gilbert said, "You get that call and everything just rushes through your head, you don't know what to think. You're devastated."

Sergeant Aranda suffered second and third degree burns over forty percent of his body.

**Hit ---- Or Miss?
"I Guarantee You They'll Be Back
In Here When We Leave"**

2.24.05 Dan Murphy, Christian Science Monitor

After five hours of shivering quietly in the desert outside Hit, where sulphur seeps from the ground and almost nothing grows, Bravo Company marines got the word - "good to go" - and began to creep into the sleeping city.

They were primed for strong resistance.

But the marines of the First Battalion of the 23rd Regiment entered Hit (pronounced Heat) almost unopposed and filtered toward the neighborhood around the Mubarak mosque at 2 a.m., kicking down doors of homes in search of weapons and setting up a command post to coordinate operations to clear out the city's fighters.

Targeting hardscrabble cities like Hit, Ramadi, and Baghdadi, they are looking for foreign insurgent fighters and known insurgent hotbeds. But resistance has been light, far different from the November assault on Fallujah where dug-in mujahideen fought pitched battles with marines and died in the hundreds.

While that has been welcome news to the grunts of Bravo, a group of reservists primarily from Texas and Louisiana who have fought their way up and down the Euphrates since August, it appears to represent a shift in insurgent tactics.

Rather than standing and fighting, insurgents are melting away when troops move in. And they are focusing more intently on the emerging Iraqi government and its security forces. The hope, it seems, is that US forces won't stay long enough to develop the intelligence to root out insurgents systematically.

"There are some hard-core fighters in Hit but we can hold it easily for as long as we are here," says Maj. Mike Miller, the company commander and a policeman from San Antonio, Tex. "But we can't make any promises beyond when we leave. So I can understand that locals are reluctant to get involved."

"I guarantee you they'll be back in here when we leave," says Sgt. Shawn Hudman, who lives in Austin, Texas. [And that's exactly why the war is lost. The Iraqis are fighting to be free of occupation. And the Iraqis sure will still be there, in Iraq, after the Imperial occupation is gone. They won't stop fighting for their liberation from foreign control until that day comes. They're right to do so.]

"Maybe at least as we go on, there'll be fewer and fewer places for them to go." **[News flash: They don't have to "go" anywhere. They live there. It's their town and their country.]**

One of the first things the marines did was to round up and detain police officers. Hit's police force, as in most of the province's towns, appears to be completely compromised by the insurgents.

The last time Bravo company was here, in October, the "muj" had taken over the town council and the local police station without resistance. They killed locals whom they accused of supporting the new government and the US.

After the marines fought for two days around a key bridge and nearby palm groves, the town was secured. Some fighters were found in stolen police uniforms. The marines stayed four days more and then headed for Fallujah.

They felt they'd accomplished something with the "six days of Hit," as they call it. But when they left, despite repeated assurances from local sheikhs that there would be no more problems, the insurgents reasserted themselves.

In Hit, marines are planning to fight all three blocks of what military doctrine calls the three-block war. The third block is the straight-out fighting of Fallujah. The second is security operations, like those carried out in Hit so far. And the third is humanitarian assistance and community outreach.

That means that in addition to their regular complement of tanks, mortars, and grenades, the marines have headed in with a marine lawyer, \$20,000 to pay for any damage, and dozens of soccer balls. **[Would you betray your country for \$20,000 and "dozens of soccer balls"? Who dreams up this silly bullshit?]**

Ramadi Residents Flee City After Latest US Attacks; Marine Lt. Col. Babbles Incoherent Bullshit

"They want to destroy the whole area and build a New York City there, and for that they are tearing down everything.

24 Feb 2005 RAMADI, 24 February (IRIN)

Residents of Ramadi, the capital of Anbar province some 100 km east of Baghdad, have started to flee the city following the latest offensive launched by US Marines and the Iraqi army.

A number of checkpoints have been set up around the city of 400,000 and a curfew has been established. It runs from 2000 to 0600. Vehicles are being inspected carefully and any suspect is being taken for further interrogation, Marines' spokesman Lt-Col Paul Brathen told IRIN.

"Many insurgents have escaped Fallujah to this area but they won't have time to take the city and our early operation will prevent that. People have started to flee the city but it's too early for that," Brathen added. [Whatever the fuck that's supposed to mean. "Won't have time to take the city is" is pure lunacy. They

“took” Ramadi long ago, confining occupation troops to a few isolated outposts. So there is nothing left to prevent: the “early operation” is about a year late for “preventing.” And what kind of nonsense is a statement that it’s “too early” to “flee the city?” What, he has a timetable with a day and hour set up for the Iraqis to start “fleeing the city?” And he’s whining because they won’t wait?]

But citizens, exhausted by ongoing violence, are afraid and are choosing to leave before the situation worsens.

"They want to destroy the whole area and build a New York City there, and for that they are tearing down everything. We want to live in peace. We are tired of fighting and bombs. God, please protect us," Muhammad Farhan, a father of five, who was fleeing the city with his family, told IRIN.

Firdous al-Abadi, a spokeswoman for the Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS), told IRIN that many people had been trapped in the university and inside mosques for over 48 hours as fighting raged outside.

"The government should take responsibility and provide those people with everything that is required for their survival," al-Abadi added. "People are tired of running from place to place."

Al-Abadi also said that the IRCS had sent a supply convoy last weekend to Fallujah, as nearly 100 families were still homeless inside the city after their homes were destroyed.

"This fighting should stop to prevent more displaced people in our country. If those already displaced are not receiving any help from the government, what will happen if more people become homeless?" al-Abadi asked.

Imperial Arrogance Hard At Work: Silly Lt. Col. Thinks The War Is About The Size Of His Dick

Feb 24 By Alister Bull, HAQLANIYA, Iraq (Reuters)

"If there are no Mujahideen here, then who the hell is shooting at us?" asked Marine Major Richard Seagrist, referring to insurgents.

U.S. marines punched into this town in restive Anbar province on Wednesday and have stayed on, aiming to confront the guerrillas they think use it to smuggle weapons and fighters in from Syria, 60 miles to the west.

Haqlaniya townsfolk plead innocence as troops search houses for suspected militants, **either because they are afraid or because they actively support the insurgency**

against the U.S.-backed Iraqi government. [Three guesses which, first two don't count.]

"They said they were going to use them for fishing," said Staff Sergeant Larry Long, after a search yielded four blasting caps wired together to form a makeshift bomb like the one that killed four marines near here last month.

Straddling the Euphrates River, Haqlaniya and the larger city of Haditha, 3 miles to its north, are key targets **in the U.S. push to root out foreign militants** they think went to ground here after escaping an assault on Falluja in November. **[Nobody - including the CIA and the Pentagon - has been pushing that line of crap for months. Has this reporter been in a coma?]**

The river, blue and pale green in the sun, flows besides the town and forms an attractive, sandy island of palm groves and dwellings in this town, 149 miles west of Baghdad.

Marines now call it Muj Island since someone used the palm groves to launch a barrage of mortars at them on Wednesday. Muj is U.S. military slang for mujahideen, or holy warriors.

An F-18 jet dropped two 500 lb bombs on Muj Island in response, but the marines bedded down on Wednesday expecting a counter-attack on their temporary base, in a school on the edge of town.

In the end they slept in peace, although the night was not without incident.

"They've cut the water off. That really isn't playing fair," said First Sergeant Erl Fortson, inspecting the school's by now very clogged toilet. **[OK. Next time it's their turn to drop a few 500 lb bombs. Would you prefer that?]**

Four Abrams tanks lurk on the town's outskirts, a powerful deterrent as the troops round up suspected militants. [Bad Hollywood script writing. The Iraqis will just wait for the tanks to leave and take their town back, of course. That's what a guerrilla war against foreign occupation is all about.]

Blindfolded, bound with their hands behind their backs, the young men are interrogated in a small school room by bilingual officers from the marines' Human Exploitation Team. Most are quickly freed but a few look like more promising catches. They are detained longer in the hope of weeding out the militants the marines believe have got the free run of the town.

The process is long and difficult, partly because of the nature of Anbar province itself.

"This is an old smugglers pipeline and they're independent people. But **they are also susceptible to the appeal of the powerful. Right now they think the Muj are the most powerful and we're fixing to set them a lesson,**" said Lt Col Greg Stevens. **[This is truly grotesque ignorance. He thinks the Iraqis are some kind of primitive savages who care nothing for their country, only about Who Got Biggest Dick. Me powerful Bush man from across water, me make you scared. Ugh. The Lt Col is the primitive in this little scene. He underestimates what the other side is**

determined to win, or the intelligence of the Iraqis, who certainly know that the only way you get rid of foreign invaders is to fight them. A lesson is going to be "set" all right. Col., do you know what V-I-E-T-N-A-M spells? Fools back then babbled the same kind of nonsense. Guess who got "set the lesson."]

**ISN'T LIBERATION WONDERFUL?
(NEW RECRUITING DRIVE FOR RESISTANCE UNDER WAY IN
HAKLANYAH.)**



A raid in Haklanyah. (AFP/Jaime Razuri)

TROOP NEWS

**Ft. Bragg Rally Plans Moving
Ahead:
Fayetteville Gearing Up Major
Protest On War Anniversary**

The Fayetteville rally is being conceived and planned by veterans and relatives of soldiers, with delegations coming from as far away as the Pacific island state of Hawaii.

Feb 24 Katherine Stapp (IPS)

At Fort Bragg, the largest U.S. army installation in the world and home to the famed 82nd Airborne Division, the mood is not exactly buoyant.

"There are people here who are being deployed for the third time," said Lou Plummer, a veteran with a son on active duty. "At least 50 people from the base

have been killed in Iraq." In a sign of mounting discontent, the military also concedes that about 5,500 servicemen have deserted, although Plummer believes the real number is probably much higher.

This picture is somewhat bleaker than the one painted a year ago by Army Maj. Gen. Charles H. Swannack, Jr., commander of the 82nd Airborne -- also known as "America's Guard of Honour" -- who brightly told reporters in Baghdad that "we're on a glide-path toward success." "We have turned the corner, and now we can accelerate down the straightaway," he said in a Jan. 6, 2004 briefing. "There's still a long way to go before the finish line, but the final outcome is known."

Not so fast, say anti-war activists like Plummer, who is helping to organize a mass protest rally near the base in Fayetteville, North Carolina on Mar. 19 to coincide with the second anniversary of the U.S. invasion.

"The message is not 'bring them home after they fix stuff', it's 'bring them home now'," said Plummer, an active member of the national peace group Military Families Speak Out.

"Organizing in Fayetteville requires sensitivity that you wouldn't need to have in a non-military town," he added. "You have to respect people who oppose the war but are afraid to go public because they have a spouse in the military and could lose their benefits."

Even so, he says that interest in his group -- which represents 2,000 military families -- and in the March anti-war events has been "overwhelming".

The Fayetteville rally is being conceived and planned by veterans and relatives of soldiers, with delegations coming from as far away as the Pacific island state of Hawaii.

Speakers will include Daniel Berg, the father of Nick Berg, a U.S. civilian beheaded in Iraq; Lila Lipscomb, the grief-stricken mother of a U.S. soldier featured in the Michael Moore film "Fahrenheit 9/11"; and David Potorti, a peace activist whose brother died in the Sep. 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York. **One novel initiative, already started in the state of Vermont, would campaign against the use of the National Guard in Iraq.**

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.

"Before He Left, He Loved The Army" "After He Came Back, He Hated It."

02/22/2005 By Ron Harris, St. Louis Post-Dispatch

PARIS, Ill. - It was a day for high school bands and red, white and blue balloons, for cheers and tears and a sea of jubilant family and friends in every imaginable form of patriotic attire.

"The 1544th" finally had come home.

For 14 months while stationed in Iraq, the battered Illinois National Guard 1544th Transportation Company had endured more than 100 mortar attacks and had driven more than 580,000 hostile miles transporting supplies and ammunition.

During that time, the unit of about 160 members had suffered more deaths and injuries than any other National Guard company in the nation, military officials said.

But while the 1544th's battles in Iraq are done, the war is still not over for them and this community. Over the next few weeks and even months, in scores of individual homes here and in neighboring towns, returning veterans and their families will be quietly struggling try to deal with the hidden scars of the war.

Lisset Greene of Spring Hill, Fla., believes it was post-traumatic stress disorder that took her husband from her. Greene said when her husband, Sgt. Curtis Greene, returned from Iraq in 2003, he was a changed man.

"Before he left, he loved the Army," said Greene, 31. "After he came back, he hated it."

Greene had nightmares, his wife said. He would awake covered in sweat. He was irritable and short-tempered.

The Curtis Greene she knew before Iraq was mild-mannered. This one was violent. "There were times that I felt unsafe in the house with him," she said.

Twice the police had to be called to the couple's home. Once, he was taken away in handcuffs.

He was seeing a psychiatrist, but Lisset said it didn't seem to help. On Dec. 6, soldiers found Greene hanging in his barracks. He was 25.

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)

Hell No, We Won't Go

February 2005 Feature Article by Andrew Stone and Simon Assaf, Socialist Review

Carl Webb from the US and George Solomou from Britain explain to Andrew Stone and Simon Assaf why they refuse to go and fight in Iraq.

Socialist Review: Why are you accusing the US army of drafting you?

Carl Webb: I'm refusing to go to war because I do not believe the US is on the right track. I think this war is not about liberating people, it's about oppressing them. It's a war that's being fought for profit.

So what's your history with the army?

That goes way back. In 1982 I was 16 when I dropped out of high school and my mother said, 'Well, you have to find a job.' But it was very difficult to find one in those days. During that time I had been contacted by an army recruiter, who convinced me to join the army reserves.

In 2001 you re-enlisted in the National Guard. What was the reason for that?

Well, the situation in 2001 was similar to that in 1982. I didn't have a job, I was facing eviction from my home and I needed some extra cash. This was in August 2001 and I thought, 'We've invaded everyone we possibly can invade,' and it was relatively peaceful for the US. And there was a local medical unit close to my neighbourhood.

So with the agreement that I would get an enlistment bonus - which wasn't much - I signed on for three years. The very next month 9/11 happened.

In July 2004 my draft came through. I was getting ready to get out, because I only had one more month left to serve on my contract. That's when I got a phone call from my sergeant. She said she had bad news - I had been one of the soldiers selected to serve in Iraq. I was stunned and shocked. I had missed so many wars

and I was thinking, 'Wow, I've done it again.' I thought I'd made it through a three-year contract without seeing any action.

So you're 38 years old. Isn't that a little bit old to be sent into combat?

I think when the US started to run out of regular army troops and started to use more of its reserves and National Guard the average age jumped up - particularly in Iraq. In the regular army most of the soldiers are around 21 or 22. In the reserves and the National Guard the force is a bit older because most of us are army veterans in our late twenties and early thirties.

Can you explain what the stop-loss programme is? It seems quite a lot of the reserves and National Guard are unhappy about it?

The stop-loss programme has been around since the year before the First Persian Gulf War. But this is the first time they've implemented it to such an extent across the services. It prevents any serviceman from leaving the service, even once their contract has finished. So it automatically extends your service beyond the contract which you enlisted for.

So they're getting you under this rule?

Yes. When they called me I only had one month left in the service, and they handed me some orders saying I'm going to Iraq for approximately 18 to 24 months.

I'm a licensed practical nurse, I'm in a medical unit - now they're telling me my time is extended and I'm going to be assigned to a combat unit.

They're running out of combat soldiers in Iraq so they're forcing soldiers who have support jobs - such as cooks, medics and mechanics - into combat positions.

People are definitely unhappy about it. Last time I heard there were approximately 5,000 soldiers who have deserted the army. This isn't a whole lot considering we have 750,000 soldiers. But even those who are complying with these orders aren't happy.

What did you say when you received your orders?

The first day I was still in shock and denial. I said to myself, 'This is a mistake. I'll go into drill with my unit this weekend and I'll go to the administrative clerk and clear up this mistake.' But even before then I had sent an email message out to an email list that I belonged to in my home town of Austin, Texas. **There's an organisation called Austin Against War that has a discussion online about protesting against the war. So I sent an email to the list, which has a few hundred people on it - and immediately I got a call from one of my friends who happens to be one of the most active anti-war protesters in Texas, and we had a long discussion as to what my options would be.**

There were basically three options. I could just comply, which was what some people thought I should do, since I was a medic. Another option was to flee the country. Since Mexico is so close to Texas, it was the most likely option. But neither of those appealed to me. My friend asked if I'd thought about obtaining conscientious objector status, but I'd ruled it out because I'm an atheist.

I spoke to one of my sergeants and asked her about getting this status. She said that you could be an atheist. So I decided to explore that option.

I surfed around on the internet and called organisations that I found online. There was one in my home town that I found called Non-Military Options For You. Some of the members were Quakers, who have a long history of being anti-war. So I went and got some material from them.

According to the rules you don't have to be religious. It specifically says that any objection you have cannot be political. But you don't necessarily have to be a pacifist. The rules just say that you have to have a strong conviction against organised violence.

The way they define 'organised violence' is that if someone is threatening you or your family you can defend yourself. You don't have to be a strict pacifist. But if you join a group and organise some sort of dissent or aggression then they call that 'organised violence'. Previously my friend had suggested that I talk to other people who applied for such status, to see what kind of questions they would ask. They would give examples like, 'If you were living during the Second World War would you fight with the Jewish underground?' or, 'If you were a slave during slavery, would you have run away and fought with the Union army against the Confederacy?' Most people would say, 'Yes - if I was a slave I would fight against slavery. If I was persecuted by the Nazis I would join the Jewish underground.' And in that case they would say that you were denied CO status because that's organised violence.

As soon as that option evaporated I began to think again about fleeing the country.

They're threatening you now about being a deserter, is that right?

Yes. Once you leave your unit, after 24 hours you are listed as AWOL - absent without leave. Then after a certain amount of time (with me it was a week) the National Guard personnel would assume that you had no intention of coming back and they would list you as a deserter.

If you were to hand yourself in what would the result be? Would you be imprisoned?

I spoke to a lawyer and she said that as of now they really weren't cracking down too hard on soldiers who went AWOL. I speculate that they fear the backlash that it would cause. They would have to spend resources in rounding up these 5,000 - either forcing them to go to Iraq or throwing them in prison - which I would assume would cause bad publicity for the military. So I can only assume that this is what they are trying to avoid.

I know normally they shoot deserters. I assume they're not going to shoot you. But if they were to put you in prison, what kind of sentence could you expect?

Believe it or not, the US military still has the death penalty on the books, for what they call 'desertion in time of war'. I think Jeremy Hinzman, who is in Canada, has filed his case for asylum and has used that as part of his argument. But as you say, even though they still have that law on their books, it hasn't been used since the Second World War. I think the war is so unpopular that if they were to take some extreme measure like that it would only make people protest all the more.

So what next for you?

I've already decided that fleeing is not my best option. I don't think they're going to stand me up against a wall and shoot me. The case that has got the most publicity recently was that of Sergeant Mejia. He'd done one tour in Iraq, was home on leave, refused to go back and decided to go public. He went on 60 Minutes, one of the most popular shows on television here. He got 12 months in jail. So I think that at worst I'm looking at a similar sentence, if and when I do turn myself in - which to me is better than one and a half or two years in a combat zone and better than permanent exile.

As you pointed out, I'm much older than the average soldier. And my mother's 75 years old. If I decided to go in exile, it might be ten or 15 years that I was gone. That's how long it was for the generation that fled to Canada in the 1960s. They weren't granted amnesty until 1978. That was more than a decade for some of them.

From your general military experience how do you feel about the torture at Abu Ghraib and that recently exposed involving British troops? Is this really, as the US and British governments insist, the work of a few bad apples?

(Laughs) Definitely it was the result of more than a few bad apples. They are using these young enlisted people as scapegoats to hide a policy that was part and parcel of their military strategy. They tried to do the same thing during the Vietnam War, when they tried Lieutenant Calley for the Mai Lai massacre. Such violence against civilians was commonplace. It was unspoken, undeclared policy. Unfortunately for them, with this new technology that we have, this got out to the media.

Is the stand you're taking a political stand, or is it more specifically about the way the army is treating reservists and veterans like yourself?

For me it is very much political. My case is different from some of the other soldiers who have deserted, either because they just don't want to go, or because they think these 'stop-loss' orders are illegal. I tell people that even if there was no stop-loss policy, even if the government wasn't illegally using the reserves and National Guard and retirees as they are, I would still be opposed to this war. I don't think it matters what category of service you're in - whether you're in the reserves, National Guard or the regular army - I think all military personnel should oppose fighting in this war of imperialism.

Socialist Review: Tell us about yourself.

George Solomou: I come from an émigré family. My father left Cyprus due to the conflict there. This was early in the 1960s when ethnic tension between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots was very high. He was a Greek Cypriot, and he had a very good friend - a Turkish Cypriot - who got murdered. So he came to England and started a business, and I was born here. I grew up in a very Cypriot family, but with a broad outlook on life. I was educated here and went to hotel management school, then I travelled the world.

I've always supported the Labour Party. I come from a family where all five of us voted for the Labour Party - but not now. We feel we've been disenfranchised by Blair's attitude to everything.

How did you come to join the Territorial Army?

I joined in 1999. When I was at school we had a very enlightened history teacher - Mrs Williams - who taught us Irish history. I learnt about the Black and Tans and the Battle of the Boyne. I didn't want to join the British army when I was younger because of the belief that we were wrong in what we were doing in Northern Ireland. Five years ago that came to an end, and I thought, 'Here's an opportunity to join the British army.'

In the first two years I had a nagging doubt that maybe I would get called up one day, and actually have to take part in a conflict that maybe I didn't believe in. But I was aware of history, because history's been my first love all my life. I was inspired by the great medical personnel of the First World War who exposed the genocide against the Armenian people.

I told my muckers in the army that I went on the march of 2 million against the war. I never hid my political views from them. And they just got on with it, and I got on with my life.

On 15 February 2003 I marched with five other soldiers in the total belief that there was no possibility that Blair could have ever taken us to war.

It was the biggest march ever - even bigger than the Chartists' march. And we all felt there was no way that they were going to take us to war. Being a member of the Labour Party all my life, I could never contemplate that they would take us to a war like this because so many of us within the party were adamant that we didn't believe in this war. And we had vocally sent that message up to Blair.

We've had a history of not being involved in Vietnam and most of the other idiotic conflicts that America enjoys getting itself into. So we thought this would be another scenario where the US gets in there and does its thing, and we just stand on the sidelines thinking, 'What a bunch of... unscrupulous individuals.' But no, Blair took us in, and we were all shocked.

From that moment on I kept thinking about the reality. Should I get out, or should I remain in to act as a witness to the barbarity of the war itself? If I had to go to the war at least I could tell the truth, I could document it.

I think that this war is a turning point - as much if not more than the Vietnam War was - for the history of the world. Because this war is the final crutch of the US philosophy that

it can go anywhere and take over another nation to secure resources - primarily petroleum. Everything in the US is petroleum based. It being 4 percent of the world's population and controlling 45 percent of the world's energy and resources, it is certain within itself that it has to control anything that has petroleum.

Did you know a lot of people who went to Iraq?

Yes. They talk about endless queues of petroleum tankers going out of the country, and them having to guard every single one of them. They say their greatest fear is coming across American soldiers, because they have no restriction on what they will do with their firepower. If you drive too close to them at night and they do not recognise you they'll fire on you. They say they are like a bunch of trigger-happy lunatics.

I've met other soldiers from medical units who were quite traumatised by it. The Americans dropped an astronomical tonnage of bombs during the war. Robert McNamara was one of the pioneering forces in US military strategy. He reckoned that if you dropped a certain amount of tonnage on a town or village you could estimate the amount of damage, injury and death. It's an old science. The Americans knew what the result would be of dropping so much tonnage of napalm, cluster bombs, etc on Iraq.

I've met soldiers who were in the field hospitals and were turning away people who were dying. The effect on them was quite horrific. The Americans, in a way, did this on purpose. They allowed hundreds of thousands to die. It's genocidal, in my opinion.

So were the army medics under orders to turn people away?

The supplies had to be kept for the troops, and there was a shortage of supplies, so they kept them for the troops. A lot of the medical units - 50 to 70 percent - are NHS employees who are in the reserve forces. Their instinct is to care regardless. But they're under orders not to care. They found it very difficult not to be able to care for the thousands of wounded who were turning up, queuing to be looked after.

So when did you make your decision that you needed to make the break?

About nine months ago two of my colleagues came back maimed. One of them had been blown up by a roadside bomb. The other had an accident that crippled him for life. I was thinking, 'This is getting insane. What do I do? Leave my comrades?'

The comradeship within any army unit is so intense that your political views, however strong, can be put aside. When you're cold, hungry and tired, at the lowest ebb you can possibly be, if your mate cracks a joke and you can both smile - you can very rarely find that kind of comradeship in civilian life. It's unique and something to be treasured. Napoleon used to call it esprit de corps. He understood that whole concept. Caesar did as well. He marched with his men. He didn't ride a horse like most of the generals at the time. But politically I was dying within the army, and I had to make a break.

It took a lot of soul searching. But finally, a couple of months ago, I went to another anti-war demo. I'd been thinking about leaving - maybe resign the easy way, just leave. Being at university had given me some leeway, but I was coming to the end of my course. I stood up at an anti-war movement meeting and said, 'What can I do? I'm a

soldier and I don't believe in what I'm doing.' They gave me some information and some people to contact.

There's a lot of soldiers in the TA at the moment - I'd say 25 percent - who don't believe in the war. Another 25 percent probably are not really sure, hoping they don't get called up.

I discussed it with the movement, with Military Families Against the War, and we decided to go public. The main reason I did so was so other people would know that you can do it.

The army works on an atmosphere of fear, and implied fear. There's an order for everything, a way of doing everything, and you do things as you're told. There's no room for personal reflection - you just have to do it. It's very hard for soldiers to break out of that yoke, to develop any individuality.

That's what will destroy this war in the end. Soldiers are pumped up to see the war in this homogenous way - they go out to Iraq and see that it's not how they've been told, and they'll come back and reflect. In the peace movement we can bridge that gap between what the military say it will be and what their actual experience is, and make the links. Maybe we can't convert the first soldier we see, but we can put the first grain of doubt in his mind that his experience will show him is true.

How has the TA responded to your public resignation?

They've been auspicious in their absolute silence.

You'd have thought they would have contacted me, but they haven't. I think they're hoping that it'll blow over - that I'll be just one individual who's stuck his head above the parapet, said something and went away.

They're weighing up how many people with their own doubts may try to emulate me. That's where we in the anti-war movement come in. The fact that an individual soldier stands up and says he has the right to free speech, to voice these opinions, is important. I have the duty as a soldier to question the legitimacy of a war. If this war must take place it must be democratic - legally, morally and ethically right. When the Labour Party came in they promised an 'ethical foreign policy'. This was soon thrown out through the back door, never to be seen again.

(Military Families Against the War (MFAW) is an organisation of people directly affected by the war in Iraq. If you would like to contact MFAW, or if you know someone in the armed services who would like to contact them, go to www.mfaw.org.uk.)

**OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION
BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME NOW!**

Dazey Soldier Recovering After Injury In Iraq

Feb. 23, 2005 Associated Press, DAZEY, N.D.

An Army soldier from this Barnes County town who was injured in Iraq after a homemade bomb blew up in his face is recovering in Fort Carson, Colo.

Billy Quick was on patrol when he was hit in the face last November. He said his head was turned away, but he still lost the vision in his right eye.

"My flack vest was solid shrapnel," he said. He is still finding pieces of shrapnel under his skin months later.

Quick has a year left to serve in the Army, though he will not be going back to Iraq. Later, he plans to return to North Dakota and attend Bismarck State College and the University of North Dakota.

"He's a pretty brave kid," said his mother, Ruth Quick. "But he's gone through a lot."

Billy Quick is scheduled to receive a Purple Heart on March 9.

Rumsfeld: The Union Buster Gets Sued

(Philadelphia Inquirer, February 24, 2005)

Ten labor unions representing 300,000 civilian employees of the Defense Department filed a federal lawsuit against Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, saying the department violated the law by refusing to negotiate changes in its labor-management system. The suit comes after months of protests by the unions over proposals for a new National Security Personnel System.

Kicking Out Gays Cost Military \$200 Million

(New York Times, February 24, 2005)

The military has spent more than \$200 million to recruit and train personnel to replace troops discharged in the last decade for being openly gay, a new Congressional study has found.

MORE:

Gays' Ouster Seen Leaving Gap In Military

(Boston Globe, February 24, 2005, Pg. 1)

More than 300 foreign language specialists considered critical in the war on terrorism have been forced out of the military in the past decade because of their sexual orientation, according to the first government study to assess both the warfighting and financial impact of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy that prohibits openly gay servicemen.

Fobbits

February 22nd, 2005 by David Axe, Village Voice

DIYALA PROVINCE, IRAQ

Flying east over Iraq from Saddam Hussein's birthplace, Tikrit, toward the Jabal Hamrin, a mountain range that bisects the country like a shoulder sash draped southeast from Turkey, the landscape changes dramatically.

Tikrit's flat, green riversides—and the towering palaces Hussein built there—give way, first, to squat, smoky villages where women in full hijab and children in sweatshirts huddle behind earthen walls and packs of snarling dogs roam the muddy streets, then to geometric fields dotted with young men driving sheep. It's typical Sunni Iraq until the land begins to ripple and rise and shed its green, climbing and jutting into the Jabal Hamrin, then dropping and smoothing out just as quickly into parched orange desert.

This is eastern Diyala Province, a sandbox the size of Connecticut that's currently patrolled by Tennessee National Guard soldiers. They're boxed in by Kurds on the north, Shiites on the south, minefields and Iranian soldiers on the east, and mountains on the west.

A chopper swoops down in a blast of dust and lands in the gravel fringe of the U.S. Army's Forward Operating Base Caldwell, near the town of Mandali, population 25,000 (120,000 before the Iran-Iraq War). Out hop a handful of soldiers and a reporter.

The base—or "fob," as soldiers call it—is bustling. There are soldiers in Kevlar helmets and body armor carrying tricked-out rifles, walking to chow or gathering for briefings. Rows of Humvees bristle with radio antennae and machine guns. There are helicopters, a few tanks, artillery pieces.

And there's a small army of Halliburton contractors—Bangladeshis and Iraqis, mostly—who cook, clean, and build everything. From Caldwell, just 3,500 soldiers of the Tennessee National Guard's 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment patrol the sandy wastes of eastern Diyala—fewer than one soldier per square mile.

Actually, only about half of the troops here patrol anything.

They're a grab bag of old-school National Guard types—white, male, middle-aged, and Southern, like Sergeant First Class William Rader, 44, of Tennessee—with some

tough-as-nails active-duty soldiers like Californian second lieutenant Rick Ferrell, 33, thrown in to bring the unit up to full strength.

The rest of the soldiers at Caldwell are what the combat types call "fobbits."

"If they take one step further off the fob, it's the furthest they've ever gone," Ferrell says. For fobbits, deployment is a lot like life in the States, only they wear uniforms and occasionally carry weapons—and the food, courtesy of Halliburton, is actually better.

But even for the combat types, duty in eastern Diyala is long on driving and short on actual fighting. Just across the mountains, active-duty soldiers of the First Infantry Division endure daily firefights and roadside bombings and die at a rate of a dozen per month. But here, bombings are rare and gunfights even rarer, and not a single 278th soldier has died. Some of the Tennessee guardsmen estimate that, for them, being on deployment is actually safer than being at home. Statistically speaking, they may be right.

That's not to say there's no action. On February 6, soldiers from the 278th's Deacon Battery—Rader and Ferrell's unit—arrest three men in the town of As Shuriya after the men lobbed three mortar rounds at a local government building, where the battery keeps a contingent of soldiers and a three-legged guard dog named Tripod. Bombers have targeted the same building. Parked outside is a mangled Iraqi police cruiser—evidence of a recent attack that wounded three local cops.

On February 10, Deacon passes out pencils and candy in As Shuriya to make amends for the arrests—"hearts and minds" stuff. [Gee, why didn't they think of that in Vietnam. Pencils and candy! That's the way to make people love a foreign Imperial government that invades their country to steal their oil and kill them wholesale. Right, pencils and candy! Shit, if King George had thought of that, Jefferson, Franklin and George Washington wouldn't have had a chance!]

The tension in the town is palpable, and the mother of two of the suspects hobbles out to curse at the soldiers.

On a February 9 nighttime patrol, Deacon stops and searches several cars and trucks. One soldier holds an Iraqi trucker at gunpoint while another sniffs the metal drums he's hauling. "Gasoline!" the soldier reports.

"The question is whether he's bootlegging," Ferrell says. "But how can you tell?"

The gasoline black market is a major source of income for many in Diyala, where a handful of brick factories passes as "industry."

Ferrell lets the Iraqi go, and says later, "I don't care about some guy trying to make a buck. I'm looking for anything dangerous." **[Looking in the wrong place. If you want some really dangerous terrorists, check out the White House, Congress and the Pentagon. They're crawling with enemy combatants.]**

"Dangerous" means illegal weapons or bomb components. But Ferrell admits that his unit's real mission isn't catching insurgents, gunrunners, or bootleggers—it's keeping the Kurds and the Iranians from moving in.

"Without us, the Kurds would have their own country by now," Rick Ferrell says, making him one of only a handful of U.S. Army officers to acknowledge the Kurds' true aim: independence.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Resistance Action:



An Iraqi civilian looks at a destroyed police car after a bomb exploded in Kirkuk. (AFP/Marwan Ibrahim)

2.24.05 AFP & Focus I News & By SAMEER N. YACOUB BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP)

In Iskandariyah, a bomber blew himself up in front of an office that serves as the local headquarters of the Shiite Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. **Two policemen and civilians were killed and another eight civilians were injured.**

Insurgents ambushed a police patrol in the northern city of Kirkuk with a roadside bomb, killing two policemen and injuring three.

Two roadside bombs in Qaim, near the Syrian border, also killed four Iraqi National Guardsmen, Iraqi Lt. Col. Abid Ajab Al-Salmani said.

Tikrit Car Bomb Attack Kills 15 Occupation Cops;

22 Wounded

February 24, 2005 By SAMEER N. YACOUB BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP)

A man wearing a police uniform drove a car bomb inside the main police compound in Tikrit north of Baghdad on Thursday, setting off a massive explosion that killed 15 police and wounded 22, officials and witnesses said.

The blast occurred at one of the station's busiest times, when dozens of policemen were arriving to relieve colleagues who'd been working all night, police Col. Saad Daham said.

``He waited until the shift change, then he exploded the car," Daham said, adding the aim was ``to kill as many as possible."

Daham said the attacker was able to slip into the station undetected because he was wearing a police lieutenant's uniform. He blamed guards at the station's gates for allowing the bomber to enter without checking his papers or searching his vehicle.

Twenty cars were set ablaze after the massive blast, sending clouds of smoke into the sky. An Associated Press photographer on the scene saw at least 10 charred bodies laying on the ground, which was splattered with pools of blood and bits of human flesh.

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

Again



February 24, 2005 Associated Press

Local residents look on at an oil pipeline fire they say was caused by an early morning bomb blast, which injured six people, in Yousifiya south of Baghdad in Iraq, Wednesday.

We Do Resurrect

2.12.05 From: Ahmed At-Habbabi, Anti-Allawi Group
Photos from Iraqpatrol.com

Despite all the carnage, destruction and insecurity that were unleashed by the illegal occupation of Iraq, we throb with life.

"Amid the sand barriers, the cement fronts and the barbed wire that surround the Iraqi capital Baghdad, a new spectrum of bright colors are springing.

In front of every government building or foreign news agency headquarters, four meters (12 feet) high cement barriers are erected in an attempt to protect the building from bomb attacks.

These gray cement surfaces have become the drawing boards for Iraqi artists.

Outside the French Embassy, wild horses, flying carpets and fancy castles next to an Iraqi farmer returning home to his family adorn the cement surfaces.

Flowers and the Iraqi flag adorn Reuters head office, next to an attempt at Picasso's style.

The BBC's cement painting mural deserves special mention. It is claimed that a teacher at the Iraqi Art Academy was asked, and spent, several weeks to paint that mural which exalts Iraq's ancient history.

These murals, a testimony to our indefectible spirit, are scattered around Baghdad."

Below are just three such murals.





FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

The Lie Girls

[Back by popular demand for a second engagement.

<http://www.liegirls.com/flash.html>]

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Germans Forbidden To Look At Bush

February 21 2005 22:28 Financial Times of London, By Bertrand Benoit in Berlin, George Parker in Brussels and Robert Anderson in Prague

For residents of Mainz, George W. Bush's seven-hour visit to Germany on Wednesday and his short meeting with Gerhard Schröder, chancellor, will mean one of two things: a headache or a holiday.

Between the US president's 9.45am landing at Frankfurt airport and his afternoon departure, the sleepy Rhineland town and birthplace of Gutenberg will turn into a steel fortress.

In a contemporary echo of the Lady Godiva legend, anyone living on the route of the presidential motorcade is being discouraged from taking a peek at the 60- to 80-strong column of vehicles conveying the US president. In police leaflets, residents have been asked to keep their windows shut and stay clear of balconies "to avoid misunderstandings".

Stores and restaurants in the "red zone", the high-security area centred on Mainz's electoral palace, have been advised to close for the day as part of the biggest security operation in the country's postwar history. **"They told us we could stay open if we liked but that nobody would be allowed in the area.** It did not seem to make much business sense," said Bozo Vukoja, owner of the Am-Fischtor Croatian restaurant in the red zone.

Neither driving nor parking will be allowed in the zone, where garages have been emptied, **mailboxes unbolted and 1,300 manhole covers sealed.**

To keep all travel options open for the president, four highway sections east of the city will be blocked to traffic. Schools will be shut and many workers will be taking a "Bush day". The nearby Opel and Nescafé plants decided to move their shifts or suspend production.

"Up to 3m commuters in the Rhine-Main triangle will be affected," Hartmut Mehdorn, head of Deutsche Bahn, the railway group, told Financial Times Deutschland, the FT's sister newspaper in Germany. "This is not the best way to make friends in Germany."

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: www.qifightback.org,
<http://www.notinourname.net/qi-special/>, www.williambowles.info/qispecial,
<http://www.albasrah.net/magalat/english/qi-special.htm>

GI Special distributes and posts to our website copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available in an effort to advance understanding of the invasion and occupation of Iraq. We believe this constitutes a "fair use" of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law since it is being distributed **without charge or profit** for purely educational purposes to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for educational purposes, in accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107. Go to: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml> for more information. If you wish to use copyrighted material from this site for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use', you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

If printed out, this newsletter is your personal property and cannot legally be confiscated from you. "Possession of unauthorized material may not be prohibited." DoD Directive 1325.6 Section 3.5.1.2.