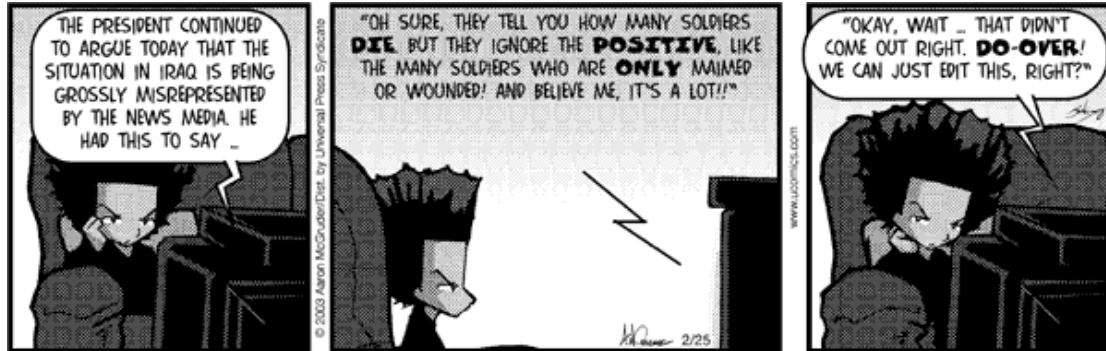


GI SPECIAL 3A57:



[Thanks to Phil G who sent this in.]

Bush Loses More Support On War

February 25, 2005 Associated Press

The poll found that President Bush's overall approval rate was 46 percent, compared with 50 percent in January.

Bush's approval rate on Iraq was 40 percent, compared with 45 percent in January.

The Pew poll of 1,502 adults was taken Feb. 16-21. It has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 2.5 percentage points.

Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward this E-MAIL along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, at home and inside the armed services. Send requests to address up top.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

Three U.S. Soldiers Dead, 9 Wounded By Tamiya IED

Feb 25 (AFP) & Reuters & AP & Aljazeera

A roadside bomb killed three American soldiers north of Baghdad on Friday.

Nine other US soldiers were wounded, five of them "very seriously," when the Task Force Baghdad troops were hit by a roadside bomb while on foot patrol near the town of Tamiya, 12 miles north of Baghdad.

The soldiers were from Task Force Baghdad, which is largely made up of 1st Cavalry Division troops.

Witnesses said the attack took place around midday in Tarmiyah, 20 miles northeast of Baghdad.

Residents saw about a dozen injured U.S. soldiers lying on blood-splattered ground after the attack.

"I was heading to our house ... there was a group of American soldiers walking in the road while around five Humvees were parking behind them," said Waleed Nahed, 35, who lives in the area. "I heard a very loud explosion and I saw bodies flying."

Nahed and Alaa Nagy, 22, who works as a guard at a nearby factory, said helicopters landed in the area 15 minutes after the explosion and took the injured soldiers away.

According to Nahid, who said he was about 200 metres away, "there were explosives hidden among the palm trees overlooking the street".

ANOTHER MARINE KILLED IN AL ANBAR PROVINCE OFFENSIVE

February 25, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 05-02-37C & (Reuters)

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq – A Soldier assigned to I Marine Expeditionary Force was killed in action February 24 in Al Anbar Province. U.S. and Iraqi forces began their offensive on Sunday in a bid to stamp out resistance in Iraq's vast western desert province of Anbar.

Since the offensive began at least three U.S. Marines have died.

TASK FORCE BAGHDAD SOLDIER DIES

February 25, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 05-02-39C

BAGHDAD, Iraq – **A Task Force Baghdad Soldier died today of non-battle injuries.**
The incident is currently under investigation.

Fort Bragg Soldier From Iowa Killed

February 25, 2005 NBC 17, WATERLOO, Iowa

A soldier stationed in North Carolina died in Iraq as he worked to clear a road of land mines, his father said.

Sgt. Eric Steffeny, 28, died Wednesday when an undetected roadside mine north of Baghdad exploded, Gary Steffeny of Waterloo, said Thursday. The father said his son was checking on another nearby mine that had been intentionally detonated when the second one exploded.

Eric Steffeny served in the Explosive Ordnance Disposal unit based at Fort Bragg.

"He was a dedicated kind of man," Gary Steffeny said. "He married his wife, who already had two kids he adopted and they had one of their own. You never would have known they weren't his kids."

Steffeny is the 22nd Iowan killed in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Gary Steffeny last saw his son more than a year ago when he came to Davenport on a security detail for a visit by President Bush.

Eric Steffeny attended West High School in Waterloo, where he played center for the football team. His father described him as a tall, stocky man who loved to hunt, fish, read and be with his friends.

He enlisted in the Army and became a paratrooper after graduating from high school early in 1996. He eventually wound up in the Army's bomb squad, his father said.

"He was a very sincere and cautious individual who wanted to learn as much as he could," said his father. "He was very concerned with his men. He had one that got hurt a while back and he would call to check on him periodically."

Eric Steffeny's second tour in Iraq would have ended in April, when he was scheduled to return to his family in North Carolina. He and his wife had recently bought a home just outside of Fort Bragg.

Iraqi Bus Hits Military Vehicle, Killing Polish Soldier And Two Iraqis

Feb 25, SPA

A Polish soldier and two Iraqis were killed Friday when a civilian bus struck a Polish military vehicle in central Iraq, a spokesman said.

The Polish jeep was escorting an explosives disposal team when it was hit by the bus at around 8:30 a.m. local time (0530GMT) about 1.5 kilometers (one mile) south of Diwanayah, said Polish military spokesman Lt. Col. Zbigniew Staszko.

In addition to the people killed, four Polish soldiers and 15 Iraqi civilians were injured, Staszko said.

The Polish soldier killed was identified as Pfc. Roman Goralczyk

Rebels Block Road Connecting Baghdad To South; “Situation Has Worsened”

25 February 2005 Focus 1 News

Armed rebels have blocked the main road, connecting Baghdad to the Southern regions of Iraq with predominant Shia population, RIA Novosti reported.

According to information of the radio station Sava, the situation in the Southern regions has obviously worsened.

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)

TROOP NEWS

Marine Suicides Rise Dramatically; Commandant Blames Too Many Operations Too Fast

Feb. 25, 2005 NewsMax

The suicide rate for U.S. Marines rose a dramatic 29 percent in the past year, most likely because military operations are coming at too fast a pace, says the Corps' top dog.

Gen. Michael W. Hagee, the Marine Corps commandant, told The Washington Post that **31 Marines, all enlisted men, killed themselves in 2004, the highest percentage of suicides in 10 years.**

He attributed the deaths to "not only Iraq" but also "the (operational tempo) in general, that's what I think."

Of those who committed suicide, most were under 25 and took their lives by shooting themselves. **Eighty-three other Marines attempted suicide, said the Post.**

In 2003 there were only 24 suicides, but, said the paper, no more than 29 in any given year dating back to 1994.

Hagee's comments to the Post reflected similar thoughts he had laid out in a memo in December, urging all commands to pay more attention to suicide prevention.

"This problem is pervasive and is impacting Marines throughout the Corps, not just those who have been deployed in support of the global war on terrorism. **The increased operational tempo that our Corps is experiencing may be affecting the ability of our Marines to deal with perceived overwhelming stresses associated with relationship, financial, and disciplinary problems," the memo said.**

The Post said 70 percent of Marine suicides in the past four years have been blamed on personal problems – problems that were only made worse by a multitude of overseas deployments. "That is the biggest single stressor," Navy behavioral specialist Cmdr. Thomas Gaskin told the paper.

Slaughter Of Marines In Iraq Cuts Recruiting: “The Falluja Effect” General Has Stunning Insight; He Says Infantry Are Used “On The Ground”

[Thanks to Katherine G, PG and PB who sent this in.]

February 25, 2005 By ERIC SCHMITT, New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 24 - The Iraq war's dampening effect on recruiting has led to a plan by the Marine Corps to put hundreds of additional recruiters on the streets over the next several months and offer new re-enlistment bonuses of up to \$35,000, military officials said Thursday.

Recruiters and other military officials say the "Falluja effect" - a steady drumbeat of military casualties from Iraq, punctuated by graphic televised images of urban combat - is searing an image into the public eye that Marine officers say is difficult to overcome.

The Marines make up about 21 percent of the 150,000 military personnel in Iraq now but have suffered 31 percent of the military deaths there, according to Pentagon statistics.

For the Marines, steps of this magnitude, including the largest one-time increase in recruiters in recent memory, are unheard of in a service whose macho image has historically been a magnet for young people seeking adventure and danger in a military career.

At issue is the Marines' decision to rebuild its recruiting ranks, which had fallen recently to 2,410 full-time recruiters from 2,650 before the Iraq war, as **commanders siphoned off marines who had been scheduled for recruiting duty to perform combat duty in Iraq and Afghanistan.**

What is unusual about these incentives is that the Marines Corps for the first time is offering re-enlistment bonuses, averaging \$20,000, to its most junior infantrymen, rather than relying mainly on inexperienced troops fresh from boot camp to replenish the infantry.

About 75 percent of enlisted marines leave the service after their first tour, requiring a steady stream of recruits moving through training centers in San Diego and Parris Island, S.C.

"We need infantrymen," General Hagee said, explaining the shift in bonus priorities. "That's what we're using over there on the ground."

SCSU Antiwar Kicks Recruiters Off Campus!!

February 25, 2005, UIC Group

This is a report from a friend in New Haven CT

In less than 90 minutes, students at Southern CT. State Univ. successfully chased the recruiters from the Army National Guard from the student center on wed. Feb. 23, 2005. **There were about twenty students that took part in making sure that the recruiters had no chance in signing anyone up for an unjust war that has devastated soldiers by the thousands in this country while destroying the people of Iraq by the hundreds of thousands.**

The Army National Guard was scheduled to be on campus from 11am to 4pm on the 23rd via an "invitation from career services at Southern" according to a spokesperson in the student center office. The SCSU Antiwar Coalition decided to arrive early (pre-emptively) and set up our message of antiwar at around 10:30 am at their reserved table.

We made certain to have a ton of literature and information, such as, numerous CAN pamphlets like "The Growing Soldiers Discontent" and "Occupation is Not Liberation", as well as the Pablo Peredes Petition, and plenty of Traveling Soldier issues. Also the recent Socialist Worker issue was extremely effective due to the fact that three of the most outspoken resisters are front and center: Peredes, Kevin Benderman, and recently freed Camilo Mejia.

We also made a concerted effort to let people know about the upcoming March 19 demonstration in Hartford, CT that marks the two year anniversary of the illegal U.S. invasion of Iraq and how everyone that is disgusted by the continued occupation has to get involved now!

We stressed the need for people to get involved in building the strongest possible antiwar coalition at Southern **and why it is such an urgent campaign for us to get the recruiters off this campus that has already seen 127 of our fellow students go off to fight in Afghanistan or Iraq.**

Passing students were very receptive in hearing the argument as to why the recruiters are here in the first place at a working class commuter school, why they have to lie to get students to sign up, and why they should leave and not come back.

Southern students like millions across the country face increased tuition (going on nine consecutive semesters at SCSU) and numerous budget cuts that has created increased anger and frustration and the last thing we need is the Army claiming that they have "an alternative".

As for the action itself, the Army set up around 11:15 am, next to us (after one of the vendors selling clothes gave up a table for them) and we immediately made their attempt to engage students impossible. **First, about four of us blocked their table and handed out counter-recruitment info while the students behind our table grilled the two recruiters with questions about why they were here, why do they openly discriminate against our gay, lesbian, and transgender brothers and sisters, and how quickly will those who sign up go off to war somewhere in the world that is based on lies.**

Needless to say they were not thrilled by any of this and like a couple of third graders "told on us" to the student center representative within twenty minutes. By this time we had at least 8-10 students facing the Army holding signs ranging from "Get off our campus" to "Money for School, not for War" and Recruiters out, Troops Home!

The student center rep wanted to meet with a couple of us and expressed that there was a problem to which we agreed by stating "yes there is a major problem, why is there an institution on this State campus that openly discriminates based on sexual orientation?" **The response was typical "oh well they were invited by career services, if they were here on their own accord WE would kick them off for you". Really, how comforting to know that.**

Thus, the Antiwar Coalition has a meeting with career services to discuss why they would ever invite the Army on campus and do they plan on it in the future.

Ultimately, we agreed to not to stand directly in front of the table, but it was at that time we started to get more confident and aggressive in our outreach and by 12:30 pm the Army needed reinforcements.

Along came the third recruiter who after only a few minutes was so angry and red in the face that he could have easily been in a cartoon where their head explodes.

By 12:45pm they decided to pack it up and call it a day after not getting one person to even make an appointment, let alone sign up for "duty". Interestingly enough the student center rep walked them out and was heard apologizing for the trouble, what a stunner!

More importantly, the three recruiters left while we began chants of "Money for school, not for war...money for healthcare, not for war" which then erupted into cheers when they were completely off of OUR campus.

It was actually shocking to almost all of us that they left so early, we really did not anticipate them giving in so quickly but when they saw that they were wasting their time they took off. We were extremely excited but were quick to say that this is just the first round; they will come back(just like they have at all the other schools in this country) and

with more experienced, aggressive, and most likely intimidating recruiters that will do everything in their power to sign up the next round of students for war.

That is why we wrapped up by explaining how crucial it is for those who took part to spread the word to everyone they know on campus and throughout the New Haven community that in the next round we will have to be even more organized, more aggressive, and more intimidating on our own by having increased forces taking part at Southern that demands loud and clear: WE KICKED YOU OFF ONCE, NOW STAY OUT!

Sorry this report was quite long but this initial victory was so damn inspiring and displayed to people that struggle is possible and necessary especially at a time when we in the antiwar movement are inundated with the myths that we cannot do anything, the country is so right-wing, and nobody will listen, let alone get involved.

Well, as what usually happens when people come together and fight, these types of myths are destroyed and you have new activists that are ready and willing to continue the fight. We saw the beginning of the re-emergence of the fightback in New Haven yesterday at SCSU, let the spirit of Seattle (and countless others) continue to spread!!!

The SCSU AntiWar Coalition

**WE WON'T GO:
End the Occupation Now!
RALLY AT FORT BRAGG
MARCH 19!
Youth And Student Contingent In
Fayetteville, North Carolina**

[Thanks to PB, who sent this in.]

February 25, 2005 Campus Anti-War Network
March 19, 2005

March 19, 2005 marks the second year anniversary of the United States' illegal invasion of Iraq. **In solidarity with military resisters and their families we will be marching in Fayetteville, North Carolina to "Bring the Troops Home, Now!"**

As youth and students we have seen tuition hikes, budget cuts, and the increased militarization of our schools. We have seen the belligerent and often racist repression of our classmates and our professors. **We have seen our loved ones and our friends' loved ones lied to and sent off to die--all so that Washington can wage an endless war on the world.**

We and many of our brothers, sisters, classmates and friends have considered joining the military for college money. But, no one should have to sign up to kill and be killed for an education.

We refuse to sit by as our lives are marred and denigrated by the military and their wars for conquest. We demand money for schools and job training not for war and occupation!

We won't be made cannon fodder for oil and empire!

**Join us on March 19 in Fayetteville, North Carolina to say:
"We Won't Go: End the Occupation, Now!"**

Catherine Geary
Student Outreach Coordinator for the Fayetteville March 19 demonstration
University of North Carolina, Greensboro- Campus Antiwar Coalition
catgeary@peoplepc.com
336-202-5038

Desmond Gardfrey
Georgia State University- Students for Peace and Justice
Campus Antiwar Network Coordinating Committee Member
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Big Surprise! Returning Guardsmen Not Reenlisting

(Los Angeles Times, February 25, 2005)
As thousands of troops across the country return from the first extended National Guard overseas combat role since the Korean War, **officials are watching reenlistments drop despite bonuses and other incentives recently authorized by Congress.**

Retired General Says Iraq War "Bullshit"

24 February 2005 The Australian Associated Press

Australia's involvement in Iraq would end in disaster just like Vietnam, a retired general said today.

Major General Alan Stretton said the Government would eventually bow to public pressure and withdraw the troops, leaving behind a bloody mess. Prime Minister John Howard has rejected comparisons with Vietnam, saying such analogies are misplaced.

I really believe it will go the same way as Vietnam," he told the John Laws radio program on 2UE.

"It will get no better – (only) worse – and eventually public opinion in both the US and Australia and elsewhere will demand our troops come back and when they do they will be pretending that the locals can handle it all themselves, and we will just leave a bloody mess."

Maj Gen Stretton said Iraq was already going the way of Vietnam.

"This talk about fighting for democracy, that is absolute, to use a phrase, bullshit," he said.

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.

40% Of British Soldiers Believe Army Has A Problem With Bullying, Sexual Discrimination And Harassment.

[Thanks to Joan M who sent this in:]

February 26, 2005 Joanna Bourke, The Guardian

The evidence of abuse on British army premises in Iraq that was revealed during the trial indicates that something is seriously wrong with our armed forces.

Rituals involving physical and psychological humiliation, as well as sexual abuse, are not confined to overseas operations, but are also present "at home".

A survey carried out by the Ministry of Defence in 2002 found that more than 40% of British soldiers believed the army had a problem with bullying, sexual discrimination and harassment.

More recently, an official study claims that almost half the women serving in the RAF have been sexually harassed at some point in their career. And only

yesterday, the Sun published photographs of members of the Queen's Guard apparently ritually humiliating a new recruit by tying him naked to a fence and pouring what appears to be manure over his head.

In addition, the claims of ritual humiliation and sexual abuse at Deepcut training camp, in Surrey, are profoundly disturbing. A police report into the barracks contained more than 100 allegations of serious abuse.

The fact that the army was aware of the repeated violent, predatory behaviour of men such as Lance Corporal Leslie Skinner (convicted in 2004 of a series of sexual attacks on young recruits) and Lance Corporal David Atkinson (who murdered Cambridge student Sally Geeson on New Year's Day), is another indictment of the institution.

The army insists that these are aberrations - a few "bad apples". But it is plausible to assume that bullying and abuse are more widespread than senior officers wish to admit.

Within the barracks, a culture of silence prevails. Leslie Skinner's victims, for instance, said nothing for years. The reason for their reticence was that Skinner was "rank" and in the army "you do what you are told".

The "macho" culture in training barracks is shared by female soldiers too, many of whom become obsessed with the need to trounce the boys. And despite their enthusiasm, "GI Janes" often become targets of abuse.

In the Falklands war of 1982, for instance, British soldiers on troop ships were shown violent pornographic films as a way of stimulating their aggression prior to battle. Young male recruits in particular were terrified of being derided as "queer" and "chicken". Those who refused to participate in "raggings" or group abuse were regarded as lacking loyalty.

Ban On Gays In Military Ripped

(Los Angeles Times, February 25, 2005)

Congressional lawmakers called for an end to the Pentagon's ban on gays in the military, citing findings in a government report that the prohibition hurts recruiting and retention even as the war in Iraq strains the military's ability to maintain its troop strength.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

“The Government Of The United States...Is Not In Any Sense

Founded On The Christian Religion”

February 3, 2005 by Brooke Allen, The Nation

In 1797 our government concluded a "Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the United States of America and the Bey and Subjects of Tripoli, or Barbary," now known simply as the Treaty of Tripoli. Article 11 of the treaty contains these words:

“As the Government of the United States...is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion--as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquillity of Musselmen--and as the said States never have entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mehomitan nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries.”

This document was endorsed by Secretary of State Timothy Pickering and President John Adams.

It was then sent to the Senate for ratification; the vote was unanimous. It is worth pointing out that although this was the 339th time a recorded vote had been required by the Senate, it was only the third unanimous vote in the Senate's history.

There is no record of debate or dissent. The text of the treaty was printed in full in the *Philadelphia Gazette* and in two New York papers, but there were no screams of outrage, as one might expect today.

Madison believed that "religious bondage shackles and debilitates the mind and unfits it for every noble enterprize."

He spoke of the "almost fifteen centuries" during which Christianity had been on trial: "What have been its fruits? More or less in all places, pride and indolence in the Clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, in both, superstition, bigotry, and persecution."

If Washington mentioned the Almighty in a public address, as he occasionally did, he was careful to refer to Him not as "God" but with some nondenominational moniker like "Great Author" or "Almighty Being." It is interesting to note that the Father of our Country spoke no words of a religious nature on his deathbed, although fully aware that he was dying, and did not ask for a man of God to be present; his last act was to take his own pulse, the consummate gesture of a creature of the age of scientific rationalism.

Tom Paine, a polemicist rather than a politician, could afford to be perfectly honest about his religious beliefs, which were baldly deist in the tradition of Voltaire: "I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life.... I do not believe in the

creed professed by the Jewish church, by the Roman church, by the Greek church, by the Turkish church, by the Protestant church, nor by any church that I know of. My own mind is my own church."

This is how he opened *The Age of Reason*, his virulent attack on Christianity. **In it he railed against the "obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness" of the Old Testament, "a history of wickedness, that has served to corrupt and brutalize mankind."**

The New Testament is less brutalizing but more absurd, the story of Christ's divine genesis a "fable, which for absurdity and extravagance is not exceeded by any thing that is to be found in the mythology of the ancients."

He held the idea of the Resurrection in especial ridicule: Indeed, "the wretched contrivance with which this latter part is told, exceeds every thing that went before it."

Paine was careful to contrast the tortuous twists of theology with the pure clarity of deism. "The true deist has but one Deity; and his religion consists in contemplating the power, wisdom, and benignity of the Deity in his works, and in endeavoring to imitate him in every thing moral, scientific, and mechanical."

Divine revelation, Franklin freely admitted, had "no weight with me," and the covenant of grace seemed "unintelligible" and "not beneficial."

As for the pious hypocrites who have ever controlled nations, "A man compounded of law and gospel is able to cheat a whole country with his religion and then destroy them under color of law"

Jefferson thoroughly agreed with Franklin on the corruptions the teachings of Jesus had undergone.

"The metaphysical abstractions of Athanasius, and the maniacal ravings of Calvin, tintured plentifully with the foggy dreams of Plato, have so loaded (Christianity) with absurdities and incomprehensibilities" that it was almost impossible to recapture "its native simplicity and purity."

Like Paine, Jefferson felt that the miracles claimed by the New Testament put an intolerable strain on credulity.

"The day will come," he predicted (wrongly, so far), "when the mystical generation of Jesus, by the supreme being as his father in the womb of a virgin, will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter." The Revelation of St. John he dismissed as "the ravings of a maniac."

The three accomplishments Jefferson was proudest of--those that he requested be put on his tombstone--were the founding of the University of Virginia and the authorship of the Declaration of Independence and the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom. **The latter was a truly radical document that would eventually influence the separation of church and state in the US Constitution; when it was passed by the Virginia**

legislature in 1786, Jefferson rejoiced that there was finally "freedom for the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and the Mohammeden, the Hindu and infidel of every denomination"--note his respect, still unusual today, for the sensibilities of the "infidel."

The University of Virginia was notable among early-American seats of higher education in that it had no religious affiliation whatever. Jefferson even banned the teaching of theology at the school.

"It does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg."

John Adams as an old man observed, "Twenty times in the course of my late reading have I been upon the point of breaking out, 'This would be the best of all possible worlds, if there were no religion in it!'"

Behold The Whited Sepulcher



Feb. 21, 2005. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

Enraptured

The Bush 'roll-back' is due largely to the public opting out of the political process, a process that both the Republicans and the Democrats can be blamed for.

Hence the 'right-wing takeover' is one largely achieved by default. As to the apocalyptic nature of the Christian fundamentalist (or at least a percentage), it seems to me that Moyers is all too ready (along with many others) to shift the onus from corporate capitalism onto those in the throes of enrapturement.

7 February 2005 by William Bowles <http://www.williambowles.info/ini/ini-0305.html>

In an essay by Bill Moyers ('There is no tomorrow'), 'doyen' of what passes for the 'liberal' media in the US, we read the following

"In this past election several million good and decent citizens went to the polls believing in the rapture index.

"That's right – the rapture index. Google it and you will find that the best-selling books in America today are the 12 volumes of the "Left Behind" series written by the Christian fundamentalist and religious-right warrior Timothy LaHaye. These true believers subscribe to a fantastical theology concocted in the 19th century by a couple of immigrant preachers who took disparate passages from the Bible and wove them into a narrative that has captivated the imagination of millions of Americans."

The essay goes on to tell us that effectively, the US is now run not only by a right-wing 'cabal' but an apocalyptic one, who wait, enraptured for 'Der tag' the day the Earth will be destroyed.

But of course, any reading (and hope fully, understanding) of history reveals that in times of massive social, political and economic upheaval, the apocalyptic always magically appear with warnings of dire consequences because we've wandered too far from 'God's path of righteousness' or whatever.

The punishment normally involves extreme flagellation, followed by burning at the stake and a horrible death and finally banishment to the lowest depths of hell and eternal damnation, depending of course on your particular religious persuasion, but it seems Christianity has copyrighted the idea. And indeed, descriptions of the total destruction of Fallujah would seem to confirm this.

"A 2002 Time-CNN poll found that 59 percent of Americans believe that the prophecies found in the book of Revelations are going to come true. Nearly one-quarter think the Bible predicted the 9/11 attacks. Drive across the country with your radio tuned to the more than 1,600 Christian radio stations, or in the motel turn on some of the 250 Christian TV stations, and you can hear some of this end-time gospel. And you will come to understand why people under the spell of such potent prophecies cannot be expected, as Grist puts it, "to worry about the environment. Why care about the earth, when the droughts, floods, famine and pestilence brought by ecological collapse are signs of the apocalypse foretold in the Bible? Why care about global climate change when you and yours will be rescued in the rapture?"

But just how true is this picture of America and if it is true, how did it come to pass?

Whilst it is true that Christian fundamentalism plays a disproportionate role in US politics, it is by no means the cause, rather it's an effect. For missing from Moyers' essay (aside from a couple of mentions almost in passing) is any analysis of the fundamental role of big business in determining the policies of the Bush administration.

Moreover, the election results give a distorted image of the role of the Christian right as only little over the 50% of registered voters actually voted and out of this only a little over 50% voted for Bush. Hence at best, Bush got only 25% of the registered vote and there are no figures to indicate what percentage represent the Christian right.

So in real terms, the Bush administration is one based on a minority and in no way reflects the opinions of Americans as a whole, not that you'd know this from the way the media has reported things, but then the role of the media in projecting the illusion of a right-wing cabal is yet another aspect of the manipulation of reality taking place.

So what has brought about the palpable fear Moyers' essay displays?

Largely it's Moyers' concern over the all-out assault of the Bush administration on the environment. But just how different is this from earlier US administrations who have been conducting an all-out war on the environment since the founding of the Republic in 1776, starting with the total eradication of the indigenous population and the ecology of which they were a part?

And whilst there have been 'blips' in the track record largely due to public pressure to regulate the ravages of the corporations, overall, big business has gotten its way, for surely the changes to the climate didn't occur overnight, they are the result of an accumulated assault that goes back at least 150 years even if it's only fifty years ago that we started to become aware of this (Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring' was published in 1954, exactly fifty years ago this year).

The Bush 'roll-back' is due largely to the public opting out of the political process, a process that both the Republicans and the Democrats can be blamed for.

Hence the 'right-wing takeover' is one largely achieved by default. As to the apocalyptic nature of the Christian fundamentalist (or at least a percentage), it seems to me that Moyers is all too ready (along with many others) to shift the onus from corporate capitalism onto those in the throes of enrapturement.

There is also the issue of whether in reality there is a 'cabalistic' takeover of the US government, that is after all the subtext of the Moyers piece. But any reading of US policy since WWII points to the fact that regardless of the public pronouncements by either Republican or Democratic administrations, the 'right-wing' have always been in power. Any reversals in the strategy of the imperium have come about because they have been defeated, not in the US but by those on the sharp end. This is surely the hallmark of 'democracy' in America, namely that there isn't any.

Perhaps more than anything else, Moyers' reaction points to the failure of the 'liberal' voice over the past fifty years to face up to the fact that racism, anti-communism, the abolition of civil rights and the assault on the environment are merely different facets of the same thing – corporate capitalism.

If we look back and unpack the position of the Christian right, whether of the Klu Klux Klan variety or the Reverend Sun Yung Moon's Unification Church or Billy Graham, we

find that they have always been in bed with capital as advocates not only of unrestrained capital but of the most virulent attacks on any progressive voices, from abortion to preaching nuclear annihilation of the 'Red Menace'. Has Moyers only just woken up to this fact? In fact, where has Moyers been for the past fifty years?

The danger of shifting the focus from capitalism itself to some kind of 'lunatic fringe' should surely be obvious for rather than challenging the fundamental premise of capital's 'God-given right to rule', it assumes that by removing the influence of the 'enraptured' would in any way change things.

There is also yet another, even more fundamental issue to consider, namely that the 'powers behind the throne', the managers of the large corporate entities that run America, are hardly likely to let a bunch of lunatics of the enraptured (or any other) kind, screw things up for their investors.

And whilst it's true that they may be largely clueless about the future of capitalism and incapable of looking beyond the immediate, short-term gain, this doesn't mean that they are oblivious to the dangers of allowing the running of America to fall into the hands of people so obviously unbalanced.

This is after all, the same argument that was advanced to disconnect the rise of Hitler's Fascism from his backers, big capital, that Fascism was the result of a 'cabal' of anti-Semitic fanatics, when the reality was that the threat of socialism was the real enemy as any reading of history shows.

For those of us on the left, it is vitally important to distinguish between the appearance of things and the underlying reality.

And whilst it can be argued that those who are waiting for the Day of Judgement may well be used as part of a larger project, the larger project is the preservation of capitalism. The Christian fundamentalists are merely part of a much larger rationale used to justify the assault by capital on the planet that fits into the plan to demonise Islam in order to justify the US takeover of the Middle East.

By encouraging and giving voice to the enraptured through the mass media, we get the totally misleading image that Bush and co are in thrall of them.

It is within this context that the role of Israel becomes abundantly clear, for by connecting the fascist right represented by Sharon and the 'Greater Israel' posse (yet another 'cabal' that has been around since the beginning of the 20th century) with Christian fundamentalism, the ruling class can tap into the fears, prejudice and just plain ignorance of people in order to further its plans for world domination.

If there is a lesson to be learned from all this, it's 'keep your eye on the ball'

OCCUPATION REPORT

Iraqi Businesswoman And Her Kids Beaten, Robbed & Arrested: (Isn't Liberation Wonderful?)

25 February 2005 By Firas Al-Atraqchi, Aljazeera.Net

Amnesty International (AI) has expressed concern for the whereabouts of an Iraqi woman allegedly arrested by US and Iraqi military personnel.

In an Urgent Action report issued on 18 February, AI USA is demanding the safe treatment of Huda Hafiz Ahmad al-Azawi, a businesswoman, seized at 4am on 17 February.

She was reportedly handcuffed, blindfolded, and beaten as were her two daughters, Nura, 15, and Sara, 20.

The AI report says that jewellery, cash, three computers and a mobile phone were confiscated as part of an investigation into accusations that she had been "supporting the resistance".

Al-Azawi and her sister had been previously arrested in December 2003 along with their brother Iyad on suspicion of supporting armed anti-US groups. Al-Azawi had earlier claimed that Iyad had died while in US custody.

According to Alistair Hodgett, AI's media director at the Washington, DC office, every Urgent Action report regarding Iraq is sent to AI offices around the world and the US Department of Defence.

"We have not yet seen any response from the US military," he told Aljazeera.net.

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

Bush Buddies Suck Up More Billions From Iraq War

2.25.05 Aljazeera

The US Army has awarded defence contractor Halliburton more than \$9 million in bonuses for some of its work supporting the military in Kuwait and Afghanistan.

But the Army said performance-based bonuses had not been paid yet to Halliburton's Kellogg Brown and Root (KBR) unit for dining services for US troops in those countries.

The Pentagon has also been criticised for extending undue favours to the firm, once headed by US Vice-President Dick Cheney.

Overall, KBR has earned \$7.2 billion under a massive 2001 logistics contract with the US military and is set to earn more than \$10 billion under that deal. It has separate deals with the government for reconstruction work in Iraq.

The bulk of money paid out so far under the logistics deal - about \$6.6 billion - is for work in Iraq which still must be assessed for bonuses that could amount to hundreds of millions of dollars.

Priorities, Priorities: Iraq Oil Most Heavily Guarded

(Los Angeles Times, February 25, 2005)

Sailors Guarding Oil Live On 'Target No. 1': Two rusting offshore oil terminals in the Persian Gulf, from which 90 percent of Iraq's oil is exported, are possibly the most heavily guarded pieces of economic infrastructure owned by the Iraqi government.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Cowardice In Action: Bush Runs Away From Town Hall Meeting with Germans

February 23, 2005 SPIEGELnet GmbH, With reporting by Matthias Gebauer in Berlin and Georg Mascolo in Washington.

During his trip to Germany on Wednesday, the main highlight of George W. Bush's trip was meant to be a "town hall"-style meeting with average Germans. But with the German government unwilling to permit a scripted event with questions approved in advance, the White House has quietly put the event on ice.

Was Bush afraid the event might focus on prickly questions about Iraq and Iran rather than the rosy future he's been touting in Europe this week?

The much-touted American-style "town hall" meeting the White House has been planning with "normal Germans" of everyday walks of life will be missing during his visit to the Rhine River hamlet of Mainz this afternoon.

A few weeks ago, the Bush administration had declared that the chat -- which could have brought together tradesmen, butchers, bank employees, students and all other types to discuss trans-Atlantic relations -- would be the cornerstone of President George W. Bush's brief trip to Germany.

State Department diplomats said the meeting would help the president get in touch with the people who he most needs to convince of his policies. Bush's invasion of Iraq and his diplomatic handling of the nuclear dispute with Iran has drawn widespread concern and criticism among the German public. All the more reason, it would seem, for him to be pleased about talking to people here.

But on Wednesday, that town hall meeting will be nowhere on the agenda -- it's been cancelled.

Neither the White House nor the German Foreign Ministry has offered any official explanation, but Foreign Ministry sources say the town hall meeting has been nixed for scheduling reasons -- a typical development for a visit like this with many ideas but very little time. That, at least, is the diplomats' line. **Behind the scenes, there appears to be another explanation: the White House got cold feet.**

Bush's strategists felt an uncontrolled encounter with the German public would be too unpredictable.

To avoid that messy scenario, the White House requested that rules similar to those applied during Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's visit two weeks ago also be used in Mainz.

Before meeting with students at Paris's Institute of Political Sciences, which preens the country's elite youth for future roles in government, Rice's staff insisted on screening and approving any questions to be asked by students.

One question rejected was that of Benjamin Barnier, the 24-year-old son of France's foreign minister, who wanted to ask: "George Bush is not particularly well perceived in the world, particularly in the Middle East. Can you do something to change that?" Instead, the only question of Barnier's that got approval was the question of whether Iraq's Shiite Muslim majority might create a theocratic government based on the Iranian model?

The Germans, though, insisted that a free forum should be exactly that. Wolfgang Ischinger, Germany's Ambassador to the United States, explained to the New York Times last week: "We told them, don't get upset with us if they ask angry questions."

As an ersatz for the town hall meeting on Wednesday, Bush will now meet with a well-heeled group of so-called "young leaders."

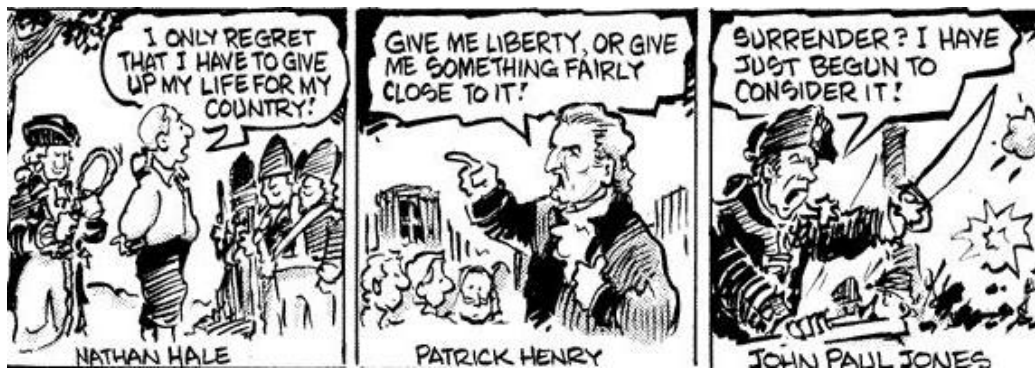
The chat is being held under the slogan: "A new chapter for trans-Atlantic relations." The aim of the meeting is to give these "young leaders" a totally different impression of George W. Bush. **In order to guarantee an open exchange, the round has been closed to journalists -- ensuring that any embarrassments will be confined to a small group.**

The guest list for the Wednesday afternoon gathering has been handpicked by several US organizations with offices in Germany.

In recent days, the Aspen Institute and the German Marshall Fund have sent lists of possible guests to the German Foreign Ministry. The requirement was that all of the nominees had to be in their twenties or thirties and they must already have been in a leadership position at a young age.

In other words: there won't be any butchers or handymen on the elite guest list, but rather young co-workers from blue chip companies like automaker DaimlerChrysler, Deutsche Bank or the consultancy McKinsey. The fact that two American organizations are the ones managing the guest list suggests that the chat won't be overly critical of Bush.

MORE COWARDICE IN ACTION



Here's what the Democrats would have said had they been around at the time of our founding fathers! February 25, 2005 By John A. Murphy, [UICNoWarIraq]

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

**Resistance Offensive Wounds U.S.
Soldier;
Many Collaborator Troops Dead**

February 25, 2005 By Mirwais Afghan (Reuters) (Additional reporting by Sayed Salahuddin) & By Stephen Graham, Associated Press

Insurgents launched three separate attacks in southeastern Afghanistan on Thursday, wounding an American soldier.

At least 22 rebels and troops have been killed in a renewed surge in violence in Afghanistan, U.S. and Afghan officials said on Friday.

Gunmen killed nine Afghan troops in southern Helmand province near the border with Pakistan, a provincial government official said on Friday, in one of the bloodiest attacks against Afghan forces for months.

The soldiers were killed while on a night patrol in the Chakool Ghar area of the province.

"Two of those killed were officers and the other seven were soldiers," said Haji Mohammad Wali, spokesman for the provincial governor. **"The car they were traveling and their weapons have gone missing, too."**

Our mujahideen (holy warriors) killed the soldiers in an ambush," Taliban spokesman Abdul Latif Hakimi said by telephone from an undisclosed location.

The U.S. military said seven Taliban rebels also died on Thursday during a U.S. helicopter raid in the southeastern province of Khost after five Afghan soldiers were wounded in an ambush.

Wali said the Taliban also killed an Afghan soldier and wounded three others in an attack on their post in a mountainous area near the eastern city of Jalalabad on Friday.

Two Aid Workers Slain, Left In The Ditch

(Chicago Tribune, February 24, 2005)

Two Afghan occupation workers were found shot to death on the side of a southern desert road, officials said, in a reminder of the dangers facing reconstruction efforts three years after the fall of the Taliban.

MORE:

Why They Get Killed

Sept. – Oct. 2004 International Socialist Review, By Katherine Dwyer

Much humanitarian administered by the government is given only in exchange for military intelligence.

As Lieutenant Reid Finn explained, “It’s simple. The more they help us find the bad guys, the more good stuff they get.” As a result, aid workers are increasingly seen as political and military targets by anyone hostile to the U.S. intervention.

Because so many aid workers have been assassinated or held hostage, many independent agencies are simply pulling out of Afghanistan. Explaining their decision to leave Afghanistan after twenty-four years, a spokeswoman for the international group Doctors Without Borders cited the fact that thirty aid workers have been killed this year alone.

While most aid goes directly to military projects, there is also a substantial flow of international money into investment in projects that only benefit the tiny, parasitic ruling class. While most of Kabul and the surrounding countryside continue to degenerate, aid flows in to finance boutique hotels, restaurants; and to finance the cushy lifestyles of UN and other international workers.

As author Christina Lamb describes after visiting Afghanistan, Kabul has become a city with two sides. With as many as 1,000 nongovernmental organizations in residence, rents are higher here than in much of Manhattan.... An agent from the Marco Polo agency who drove me around last month told me his company leases 10 houses to the World Food Program at rents of \$9,000 to \$15,000 a month per house.

The total comes to more than \$1.5 million a year. “Most Afghans feel angry that this is our money, money meant for the Afghan people, which aid agencies are spending on beautiful houses, carpets and drinking” while schools and hospitals still need to be built, the agent said.

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