

GI SPECIAL 3A58:

**REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!**



Scene where insurgents detonated a bomb in the west of Baghdad Feb. 26, 2005. A U.S. tank was nearby at the time but was not damaged in the blast. (AP Photo Mohammed Uraibi)

The View From Cloquet:

**“What Would You Say If You Saw
Muslims From A Different Country Out
Patrolling Your Streets Every Day? I'd
Be Out There Fighting Them Too,”
Soldier Says**

[Thanks to Andrew J who sent this in. He writes: Minneapolis Star Tribune story about a student-made documentary about the impact of the war on a small town.]

February 26, 2005 Larry Oakes, Star Tribune

CLOQUET, MINN. -- About 800 high school students sat transfixed in an auditorium, listening to the former classmate on the screen talk about killing Iraqi insurgents.

"The first time I was kind of in shock," said Chris Roemhildt, 19, an Army private in the film, "When a Country Goes to War." You just took somebody's life, and you don't know if they have kids, a wife or what-not.

"But the thing was, there's so much adrenaline ... you almost have no remorse. ... It was kill or be killed."

Rarely do students sit so quietly, teachers said. More remarkable, they said, was that the documentary, which premiered at the northeastern Minnesota school this week, was made by students who had been among the school's most troublesome.

They're in the school's "Light at the End of the Tunnel Program," where Cloquet High sends students who are on the verge of dropping out, or being kicked out.

The 15 students nonetheless were intrigued when teachers Steve Fairbanks and Jason Richardson challenged them to produce a film about the war's impact on Cloquet, a paper mill town of about 11,000 people near Duluth.

The result is a look into the minds of soldiers who were home on furloughs, the loved ones awaiting their return, and the family of Marine Lance Cpl. Levi Angell, killed in Iraq last April.

Senior Susan Paulson, the film's director, said their goal was to "create a neutral video, to get as many sides of the story as we could."

Before three National Guard troops from southwestern Minnesota were killed this week, it was northeastern Minnesota that had been hit especially hard by war casualties.

In addition to Angell, two teenagers from nearby Moose Lake and another from Duluth died last year.

Patriotism and pride came through, such as when Army Sgt. Joe Seppa, a 2002 Cloquet graduate, spoke of the urgent need to unseat a brutal dictator:

"As far as freeing the Iraqi people and giving them a democracy, I believe it's important because they lived in such cruelty," he said, in uniform, standing before the Lumberjacks banner in the school gym.

But soldiers and townspeople also revealed their fears, misgivings, confusion and cynicism. [Wrong and insulting. The soldiers especially reveal their intelligence, common sense, and decency, like Spc. James Furnas, and he is definitely not afraid, confused or cynical. Another condescending asshole reporter. Fuck him and the horse he road in on.]

"I don't think we're being completely clean about the reasons that we're really over there and how we're really treating the people," said Army Spc. James Furnas, a

2002 graduate. "Those incidents of, say, prisoner abuse don't just go on in certain places; they're happening everywhere, all over the country."

Furnas described how he joined for adventure and because of Sept. 11, how he arrived in Iraq just days after Saddam's statue was toppled and how it became clear to him that he was in an intractable mess.

He said he'd do it all again if he could be guaranteed he'd survive, even though he doesn't sound comfortable with the occupation.

"It's not necessarily just the insurgents who are against us," he said. "I think it's the general population of people. They get tired of seeing armed soldiers. What would you say if you saw Muslims from a different country out patrolling your streets every day? I'd be out there fighting them too."

Some of the film's most poignant moments came from interviews with families.

"You wake up every single day, and you hope for 7:30 to roll around, because you know (on) that day ... there won't be two soldiers showing up at your door," Mike Roemhildt told the interviewers.

His son, Chris, enlisted at 17, looking for something he still can't put his finger on. "It wasn't for the college money," he said in the film. "I keep trying to find some bigger and better reason why I joined. I just joined."

His parents tried to talk him out of it but gave in. His teen years had been troubled, and they could see how the military could help him mature.

But they're anguished to think that they could lose a son to a war they oppose, said his mother, Regina.

"I cried every time his face was shown -- every time," she said. "I'm proud that the school reached out to us, that they're helping the community talk about this."



IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

Lincoln Soldier Killed

February 26, 2005 By Edith Brady-Lunny, Pantagraph Publishing Co

LINCOLN -- Army Staff Sgt. Daniel G. Gresham dreamed as a Lincoln teenager of being a veterinarian someday and believed he could earn money for his education by serving in the military.

Gresham, 23, was killed Thursday in Iraq when a bomb exploded while he was responding to an earlier blast, The Associated Press reported Friday night. He was one of two Central Illinois soldiers killed in the war Thursday.

"There are 150,000 kids over there," Gresham's father, Gene Gresham said. "Twelve hundred of them have died. Who would have guessed one of them would be mine?"

The other Central Illinois man killed was Army Spc. Jacob C. Palmatier, 29, of Springfield, who began his tour of duty in Iraq less than a month ago. The only child of a Springfield couple was killed by a roadside bomb outside Baghdad.

Carencro Native Killed

February 26, 2005 Beverly Corbell, The Daily Advertiser

CARENCRE - A man who was born and spent most of his childhood in Carencro, Staff Sgt. Nicholas J. Olivier, 26, died Wednesday, the victim of a roadside bomb in Baghdad.

Olivier was born in Carencro and lived there until the eighth grade, said his uncle, Charles Olivier. He attended Carencro Middle School, but his family moved to Destrehan after he finished eighth grade, and he graduated from Destrehan High School.

He is the son of Linda and William Olivier of Picayune, Miss., and is also survived by a brother, Stephen Olivier, 20. He was the grandson of the late Kearny and Dorothy Olivier of Carencro. He is also survived by his maternal grandmother, Vivian Pomier of Scott, said Charles Olivier. His paternal grandfather was the late John Pomier.

Nick Olivier had only been married a few weeks to his wife, Angelle, who only has been living in Shreveport since her husband was deployed, said his aunt, Lonnie Bourg. She said the couple were building a house in Shreveport and that Olivier was planning to go back to college to get his master's degree at Louisiana Tech University, where he had previously received a Bachelor of Science degree.

"He was working for Wells Fargo before this hitch," Bourg said. "He had already served a hitch in Afghanistan, and this was his second hitch in Iraq."

Angelle Olivier is being comforted by her mother and sister in Shreveport, and is expected to come to Carencro this weekend, Bourg said.

Nicholas Olivier had been counting the days until he could come home on leave, Bourg said, which would have been in about two weeks. His tour of duty was due to be over in May, she said.

Olivier also is survived by many aunts and uncles in Acadiana, said Charles Olivier, since both his parents came from big families in the north Lafayette area.

Charles Olivier said the family hasn't learned yet when their son's body will be returned, but they are meeting with Melancon Funeral Home in Carencro on Monday to plan funeral arrangements.

Nicholas Olivier is the eighth Acadiana serviceman to die in Iraq. The others are Sgt. Seth Trahan, 20, of Crowley; Army Staff Sgt. Craig Davis, 37 of Opelousas; Army Staff Sgt. Toby Mallet, 26, of Kaplan; Spc. Joseph C. Thibodeaux, 24, and Marine Pvt. David Paul Burrige, 19, both of Lafayette; Army Pfc. Lionel Ayro, 22, of Jeanerette; and Staff Sgt. Jonathan Reed, 25, of Krotz Springs.

Notes From A Lost War:

Marines' Sweep Can't Find Resistance Fighters: "The Fact Is That There Was Nothing Here"

Feb 26 By Alister Bull, HADITHA, Iraq (Reuters)

U.S. Marines hunted insurgents along the Euphrates river valley in western Iraq on Saturday but their enemy remained elusive as they overran the suspected rebel hideout of Haditha.

"The fact is that there was nothing here," Lieutenant Colonel Greg Stevens of the 1st Marines Expeditionary Force told reporters.

It was thought that militants previously holed up in Falluja might have fled there.

There was even some intelligence to suggest that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian who is al Qaeda's leader in Iraq and has been behind some of the deadliest attacks in Iraq, might have moved there with followers. **[Wrong. That's not "intelligence." That's more silly occupation bullshit propaganda.]**

In one raid, the Freedom Guard, an Iraqi militia fighting alongside the Marines, seized just one suspect and seven AK-47s.

But Stevens was not discouraged that the guerrillas had failed to appear and take on his tanks.

"The fact that we are just sitting here is a good thing. It means that they don't have the free rein of the place." [Oh right. They can't go where the tanks are sitting. That just leaves 99.9% of the territory where they can go. Hopeless.]

Marines occupied a school in the town, massing their tanks and armored vehicles in the heart of what had been seen as insurgent territory but was quiet hours after the assault. **[Wow. The resistance must be devastated. What will they do without the school?]**

Army Says Resistance Has Destroyed "Only" Half-Billion \$ In Equipment This Year: 18 Helicopters Taken Out

Feb 25 WASHINGTON (AFP)

Replacing military hardware lost in battle in Iraq and Afghanistan, including 18 combat helicopters, will cost the US Army 570 million dollars this year, senior army officials said.

The officials estimated it will cost another four billion dollars to repair, rebuild and refurbish other gear such as tanks and trucks worn down by the punishing pace of operations there.

"It's *only* 570 million (dollars) in terms of battle losses," the army official said.

That includes 372 million dollars to replace 13 AH-64 Apache attack helicopters and five UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters that were lost in the course of operations, the officials said.

TROOP NEWS

Army Reserve Company With Courage To Defy Stupid Orders Returns Home With No Regrets

[Thanks to Desmond who sent this in.]

February 25, 2005 WSOCTV

ROCK HILL, S.C. -- Members of the 343rd Quartermaster Company have reason to cheer. **After a year in Iraq they are back in the arms of loved ones -- not one man or woman missing.**

The company drew national attention on October 13, 2004 when 18 members refused orders to deliver fuel. They said the fuel was contaminated, and their trucks lacked armor to protect them from attack.

Specialist Reeves Williams was one of those soldiers.

"You hear everyday about trucks being blown up, and everything. We needed the protection," he said.

Several soldiers were reprimanded, but their trucks were quickly outfitted with armor. Williams said speaking out was a risk he had to take.

"We were all fully prepared to take those consequences to make sure the job got done and got done right," Reeves.

The soldiers believe that decision saved lives and so do family members who stood by their sons and daughters during the fallout.

"I'm just wondering if they hadn't said anything, would all these men and women be coming back today. You don't know," said parent Genia White.

The Army decided in December that members of the 343rd quartermaster company would not be court-martialed, but some members would face non-judicial punishment such as a reduction of rank.

No specifics were released because of privacy.

Since then, the Army did order a safety and maintenance review and has made changes to improve armor on its vehicles.

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.

“You Want To Send My Son To Iraq To Defend Enron? No, I Don't Think So.”

02/17/2005 By MIKE BILLINGTON, The News Journal

Wayne Flenniken's father, Eric, a former Army Reservist, went to the draft resistance training with his son because, while he doesn't have a problem defending the country from enemies, he has a problem sending his son to fight in Iraq.

"I used to be gung-ho when I was younger but this war in Iraq, it all boils down to oil and oil interests. You want to send my son to Iraq to defend Enron? No," he said, "I don't think so."

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.

“Look At All The People Who Are Never Coming Home To Hug Their Mothers.”

From: Cindy Sheehan

Sent: Saturday, February 26, 2005 2:38 AM

The Eyes Wide Open Exhibit put on by the American Friends Service Committee is being protested by some Gold Star Marine Moms who don't want their children's boots to be tagged with their child's name, which is fine, but they are planning a protest for Monday, Feb. 28th at the exhibit in Dallas. I will be going there to support the Friends and the exhibit, but here is a letter I also wrote in support of the exhibit.

Thanks

Cindy

To Whom it May Concern:

My son, Spc. Casey Austin Sheehan, was KIA in Iraq on 04/04/04. It is appalling to me that so many Americans are offended by the sight of a true American hero coming home in his/her coffin? Are we so ashamed of our children that they have to sneak back into America in the cover of darkness?

Exhibits like Eyes Wide Open from the American Friends Service Committee (ASFC) and Arlington West from Veterans for Peace serve two important purposes, as I see it.

The first purpose is to honor our children who have made the supreme sacrifice for their country. After the 21-gun salute and after our children are cremated or lowered into their permanent, premature graves, they are forgotten about by almost everybody. Except by their families who mourn them every second of every day. Where is the war memorial for our honored dead? Such memorials are simply that: remembering our loved ones sacrifice and the sacrifices we as families are forced to make everyday.

The second purpose of memorials like EWO and Arlington West are to show the American public what a number looks like. One sees the number: 1492 (official DoD number as of today) and it's hard to process that number.

Out of millions of Americans it almost seems insignificant. But when one sees 1492 pairs of empty boots that will never be filled again by living, vibrant human beings, one begins to understand that 1492 is not just a number.

It is so hard not to look at the empty boots of EWO and the white crosses of Arlington West and not be hit with the magnitude of the loss. **Look at all the people who are never coming home to hug their mothers. Each pair of empty boots, or each white cross, represents a mother who will never see her child, or hear the sound of their precious baby's voice again.** Each boot must conservatively represent dozens of negatively altered lives.

We as Americans haven't experienced the horrors of war since the American Civil War. We don't experience street battles or indiscriminate deaths of thousands of innocent people. We are waging an unjust war in Iraq, and the average American citizen doesn't even want to know about the horrors of this war.

I, as the mother of a dead soldier whose boots are in the Eyes Wide Open Exhibit, fully support what the American Friends Service Committee is doing to enlighten the citizens of our country to the true horrors of war. We families of fallen soldiers don't need the visual to comprehend the tragedy and the trauma but America does.

When I was in Washington, DC for the Inauguration protests, I went to the EWO exhibit. I was one of the speakers for the opening event. I found Casey's boots and I sat by them sobbing. I caressed his boots, because I can't caress him anymore. I know they are not even his boots, but it was very meaningful to me and I was honored that the Friends would do this for my son and my family.

I fully support any family's rights to not have their child's name tagged on a pair of boots. To me, Gold Star Families need to have the final say on this. I wouldn't want to cause one of them an even infinitesimal amount of pain: they have been through enough

already. I wish that those same people would support the ASFC in its right to demonstrate the organizations position on war. After all, why did our children die if Americans can't exercise their Constitutional rights? Gold Star Families for Peace (GSFP) and Casey Sheehan's family fully support the ASFC's right to do what they are doing in the name of Peace.

Please visit <http://www.afsc.org/> to see if the exhibit will be near your town in the future. I am going to Dallas on Monday, Feb 28th to support the Friends and the organizers of the event. If any of you are in the area, check out the website to see where the exhibit is; the protest is planned for 11 AM.

Love and Peace!!!

Cindy Sheehan

Mother of Hero: Spc Casey Austin Sheehan KIA 04/04/04

[Casey's Peace Page](#)

Co-Founder of Gold Star Families For Peace

<http://www.gsfp.org/>

They Refused To Fight Bush's War For Oil



“Were the guys who fought in the Confederate army cowards when they deserted?” Webb told a reporter from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. “Were the guys who fought in the Nazi army cowards when they deserted? I’m not a pacifist. There are times I would fight in a war. I won’t kill if I feel I’m on the wrong side. This is a war about oil and profits. It’s not about bringing democracy to anybody.”

February 25, 2005 Alan Maass, Socialist Worker

CAMILO MEJIA is free after going to jail for the “crime” of resisting the U.S. war for oil and empire in Iraq. Mejia was freed February 15 from a military prison where he was serving a one-year sentence following his conviction for desertion.

As a staff sergeant in the Florida National Guard, Mejia was part of the invasion of Iraq. After a two-week furlough in October 2003, he refused to go back to his unit in Iraq because he believed the war was unjust.

“The justification for this war is money, and no soldier should go to Iraq and give his life for oil,” Mejia said before his trial last May. “I have witnessed the suffering of a people whose country is in ruins and who are further humiliated by the raids, patrols and curfews of an occupying army”.

Camilo’s stand inspired antiwar activists and won him supporters around the world. Now, he is free--and determined to continue speaking out for peace and justice. “I want to thank all the people and all the organizations who have supported my family and me throughout this most difficult time in our lives,” he said in a statement.

“I am now free from prison, but it was because of all of you that I remained a free man during my incarceration.”

Mejia was one of the first U.S. soldiers to go public with his refusal to fight in the U.S. war, but he certainly wasn’t the last. Currently, Pablo Paredes, a Naval petty officer third class who refused to ship out on the USS Bonhomme Richard for the Persian Gulf in December, is waiting to hear if he will be given conscientious objector status--or face military charges.

Sgt. Kevin Benderman, a 10-year veteran of the Army, refused in January to deploy to Iraq for a second combat tour of duty.

Benderman has faced abuse for the stand he took. A military chaplain who was supposed to discuss his application for conscientious objector status wrote to Benderman that he “should be ashamed of the way you have conducted yourself.” The first sergeant of Benderman’s unit denounced him as a coward.

But cowardice has nothing to do with it, says another military resister--Carl Webb, of the Texas National Guard, who also refused to deploy to Iraq.

“Were the guys who fought in the Confederate army cowards when they deserted?” Webb told a reporter from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. “Were the guys who fought in the Nazi army cowards when they deserted? I’m not a pacifist. There are times I would fight in a war. I won’t kill if I feel I’m on the wrong side. This is a war about oil and profits. It’s not about bringing democracy to anybody.”

For every Camilo or Pablo or Kevin, there are many more service members opposed to the U.S. war and occupation who stay silent because they “don’t want to risk going public,” Paredes told Socialist Worker in an interview. “This is mainly because they won’t get a voice if they do. The mainstream media won’t give them a voice.

Between 5,000 and 6,000 military personnel are officially listed as deserters, meaning they have been “absent without leave” from their unit for more than 30 days. That’s twice as many deserters as the Pentagon’s estimate in 2003. The GI Rights Hotline, a nonprofit organization that advises service members, says its annual number of phone calls was up to 32,000 last year--twice as many as in 2001.

Bitterness with the military runs deep among personnel who did deploy to Iraq--as the crisis of the U.S. occupation has grown deeper. As one soldier with just a week left on his tour wrote to the newsletter GI Special: “I can still see the sparkle in my recruiter’s teeth when he lied straight to my face. Soon, I will be on stage speaking out against this sick war. Until then, I think you guys are doing a fantabulous job.”

On March 19, the second anniversary of the invasion, antiwar veterans, military families and other activists will travel from around the country to Fayetteville, N.C.--the home of Fort Bragg--for another demonstration. Building the biggest possible turnout for this protest--and the many others planned for cities around the country--is the way to stand behind the soldiers and resisters who have said “no.”

Our message to Washington is simple: Bring all U.S. troops home now!

SUPPORT THE RESISTERS

FIND OUT how you can support the resisters featured in this article by going to these sites:

Kevin Benderman Defense Committee: <http://www.bendermandefense.org/>

Free Camilo Mejia: <http://www.freecamilo.org/>

Citizens for Pablo Paredes: <http://www.swiftsmartveterans.com/>

Pablo Paredes Explains Why He’s Resisting: “I Want To Be A Voice For Truth”

February 25, 2005 Socialist Worker

PABLO PAREDES made his bold protest against the U.S. occupation of Iraq when he refused to ship out for the Persian Gulf in December on board the USS Bonhomme Richard. Socialist Worker’s JUSTIN AKERS talked to Pablo about why he decided to become a military resister.

WHY DID you decide to refuse to go to Iraq?

THE REASON is twofold. First of all, I'm opposed to war in general.

Secondly, this illegal war in Iraq was a wakeup call.

Before the war, I was in Japan, so far removed from the idea of war. Once it began, and I found out that my ship would be transporting Marines to their possible death, I decided I had to take a stand and refuse to board.

WHY DID you join the military?

WHEN I turned 18, I started to attend community college in the Bronx. Fortunately, I was able to get a scholarship to help pay for it. Unfortunately, my tuition increased, and my scholarship didn't. I couldn't afford to continue and dropped out.

It was at this point that I remember getting constantly hounded by military recruiters, who promised that I could get money for college and pursue my education later. I was "happy go lucky" and ignorant of the policies of this country, and thinking only about educational opportunities. Since my parents had served in the military, I figured I would go the same route.

HOW DO you respond when people say you "signed an oath" and "shouldn't question orders?"

I REMIND them that part of that oath is that if we receive illegal orders, we should disobey them. This is according to Geneva Conventions. **In fact, those of us who disobey orders to participate in an illegal war are staying more true to that oath than our leaders who participate.**

Let's say that I'm making the wrong decision. If the Nuremburg trials show us anything, it is that it's better to make this kind of mistake opposing a war than risk repeating these kind of atrocities by "following orders." But I don't think I'm making a mistake.

More GIs are coming out against this war. Some, like Camilo Mejia, decided to take a public stand.

Most who are opposed don't want to risk going public. This is mainly because they won't get a voice if they do. The mainstream media won't give them a voice.

<p>The media chooses to work within the established parameters of what the government is promoting. The people who own the media also own the government. They're on the same page, whether Democrat or Republican.</p>
--

That's why people choose other means--such as the nearly 6,000 who have deserted and the increasing number that aren't showing up to report for duty. The general population really has no idea, because the media doesn't talk about it.

HOW WOULD you describe the response to what you've done?

THERE HAS been an overwhelming response of support from the public. Greg Palast, a progressive journalist, came to speak recently to a crowd of several hundred. The moderator mentioned my presence, and the crowd responded with a loud standing ovation. I thought few people knew of me, I was amazed.

On the military side, I expected a lot of antagonism, and at first, there was a lot of that from the families of my shipmates. This is likely because they were resentful of seeing their loved ones shipped out. But since then, people have been willing to talk, to hear me out.

The sergeant at arms on the ship--the person in charge of taking me into custody when I turned myself in--is an interesting story. I saw him on the base another time, and we ended up having a 30-minute debate about this war and my actions. While we disagreed, it ended on a positive note, and he said he respected my point of view. Many other military personnel have sent me letters of support.

I have grown very close with the family of Camilo Mejia. In fact, it is no surprise that so many Latinos GIs are coming out against the war. If you think about it, the history of U.S. imperialism in Latin America stays with us. It reflects on the way we understand U.S. military action in places like Iraq.

WHAT'S NEXT for you?

I'VE LEARNED a lot in the last few years and opened my eyes to what's going on. I used to not know, not care. I just went through life not thinking about anything happening in the world around me.

Now, I've started to learn how to learn--to dissect truth. You have to, since information is presented in such a distorted way.

Because of this, many people in society don't really know what's happening in the Middle East. People have no idea that Palestinians have had their lands taken away from them, for instance.

At this very moment I am waiting to see how my case goes. My (conscientious objector) package has been filed, and now it's in the military's hands. In the future, I want to become more active. I want to be a voice that helps people find truth.

SUPPORT PABLO PAREDES

Download a pdf file of a petition defending Pablo <http://www.socialistworker.org/Featured/PabloPetition.pdf>, and get friends, fellow students and coworkers to sign. Finished petitions can be sent to: Citizens for Pablo, c/o Geoff Bailey, P.O. Box 952, New York, NY 10013. For more information on the case and future updates on the defense campaign, visit Citizens for Pablo <http://www.swiftsmartveterans.com/> on the Web.

18 Iraq Soldiers Suffer From Dangerous Pulmonary Disease

26 February 2005 FOCUS News (Bulgaria) & National Institute Of Health

Eighteen soldiers from the US-led coalitional forces in Iraq have fallen ill of a dangerous pulmonary disease.

No Bulgarian soldiers have been affected yet, said the leadership of the Military Medical Academy for Nova Television.

Measures are being undertaken to protect the Bulgarian soldiers. The disease is known as pulmonary eosinophilic syndrome. It affects the lungs and is transmitted by sand.

NIH: A common cause is the migration of the parasitic worm *Ascaris lumbricoides* through the respiratory tract. Proteins on the surface of the worm probably incite this allergic reaction.

Minimizing exposure to possible risk factors (certain medicines, **some metals**) may reduce risk. **[Could depleted uranium be included in the “some metals” category?]**

Wounded Soldier Returns Home Tonight; “If It Takes Getting Injured To Get A Purple Heart, They Can Just Keep Their Purple Heart.”

February 25th, 2005 By David Heitz, Quad City Times

ERIE, Ill. — The military has awarded an Erie man serving with the Army National Guard a Purple Heart for injuries he suffered when an improvised explosive device went off near him in Iraq.

Spc. Jeffrey Duncan of the 202nd Air Defense artillery unit based out of Galva, had shrapnel blown into his back Feb. 11 as his Humvee passed a makeshift bomb along the side of the road. Duncan, a gunner who rides atop the military vehicle, took most of the explosion's impact.

“Jeff, unfortunately, was right there,” his wife said. “I was later told by another soldier (who) was there that when they went to get Jeff that they thought for sure he would be dead or paralyzed.”

She said her husband saw the bomb lying in a hole, “but as soon as they saw it, it exploded.”

Duncan received the Purple Heart during his stay at the Baghdad hospital. "He is very proud of it," his wife said, "but I remember a conversation we had at Christmas where he said, 'If it takes getting injured to get a Purple Heart, they can just keep their Purple Heart.' "

He almost made it home uninjured. His unit will be packing up to return to the United States on Tuesday.

Soldier Shocked By Kids Letters Opposing The War

February 24, 2005 Gary Younge in New York, The Guardian

A teacher has apologised for letters sent by his sixth-grade students to an American soldier, accusing the US military of killing civilians and destroying Iraqi mosques in a futile war on terror.

Alex Kunhardt sent the letters to Private Rob Jacobs for a social studies assignment. Pte Jacobs, who is serving 10 miles from the North Korean border, said his excitement at getting the letters from the Brooklyn schoolchildren turned to shock as he read them.

One of the letters from the 11- to 12-year-old pupils, stamped with a smiley face, said the soldier might have been risking his life for his country, but then asked: "Have you seen how many civilians you or some other soldier killed?"

Another read: "I feel that you are being forced to kill innocent people. Iraq never attacked us, if Bush cared so much about this country then we would be out there trying to find Osama bin Laden. Bush calls this war the war on terrorism. What terrorism? Name one terrorist from Iraq ... I know I can't."

Most letters did include support for the troops, but few were completely uncritical. A Muslim boy wrote: "I know your [sic] trying to save our country and kill the terrorists but you are also destroying holy places like mosques."

Another stated: "Bush thinks he's brave ... in his safe little white house with as many guards as he thinks he needs." He concluded with: "By the way, when you shoot someone, is it great or horrible?"

Pte Jacobs, 20, told the New York Post: "It's hard enough for soldiers to deal with being away from their families, they don't need to be getting letters like this. If they don't have anything nice to say, they might as well not say anything at all." Pte Jacobs added that the letters were demoralising. **[Pte. Jacobs has a right to his opinion. Anti-war soldiers will find them very encouraging indeed. Soldiers in Vietnam cheered on the mass anti-war marches and demonstrations. They were 100% right to do so. And these kids are not stupid. They know what the truth is about the war better than lots of asshole adults.]**

Two Murders And A Lie: Command, Not Troops, Responsible For Killing Journalists At Palestine Hotel

At the bottom level, Capt. Wolford and Sgt. Gibson reacted as soldiers in a battle situation. They directly caused the death of the journalists and wounded three others, but should not really be held responsible because they did not have information that would have made them aware of the consequences of firing at the hotel.

From: "Regime Changer"

To: GI Special

Sent: February 26, 2005

Subject: Two murders and a lie. An investigation of the US Army's firing at the Palestine Hotel in Baghdad on 8 April 2003

An investigation of the US Army's firing at the Palestine Hotel in Baghdad on 8 April 2003

Reporters Without Borders called today for the reopening of the enquiry into who was really responsible for the US Army's "criminal negligence" in shooting at the Palestine Hotel in Baghdad on 8 April 2003 and causing the death of two journalists - Ukrainian cameraman Taras Protsyuk (of Reuters news agency) and Spaniard José Couso (of the Spanish TV station Telecinco).

The call came in a report of the press freedom organisation's own in-depth investigation of the incident, which gathered evidence from journalists in the hotel at the time, from others "embedded" with US Army units and from the US military soldiers and officers directly involved.

The report said US officials at first lied about what happened and then, in an official statement four months later, exonerated the US Army from any mistake or error of judgment. The report provides only some of the truth about the incident, which needs to be further investigated to establish exactly who was responsible.

Pentagon spokespersons said right from the start that an M1 Abrams tank opened fire on the hotel in legitimate self-defence in response to "enemy fire" coming from the hotel or the area around it. This line was maintained and emphasised at the highest official level in the days that followed.

Sgt. Shawn Gibson, the 3rd Infantry Division (3ID) tank gunner who fired the fatal shot, and his immediate superior, Capt. Philip Wolford, who authorised it, denied they had fired because of shooting from the hotel.

They said the 4-64 Armor Company of the 3ID's 2nd Brigade, which was stationed on the Al-Jumhuriya Bridge soon after US troops entered Baghdad, was in fact seeking to neutralise an Iraqi "spotter" monitoring and reporting on US military activity.

Some of this data caused the US Army to change its line slightly in its official report released on 12 August 2003. It did not speak of direct shooting but of an "enemy hunter/killer team" which required a response in legitimate self-defence. This too was a lie - by omission.

By focusing only on the rules of combat, the US authorities have remained silent about the real cause of the tragedy.

The Reporters Without Borders investigation found that the soldiers in the field were never told the hotel was full of journalists.

The US shelling of the hotel was not a deliberate attack on journalists and the media. It was the result of criminal negligence.

At the bottom level, Capt. Wolford and Sgt. Gibson reacted as soldiers in a battle situation. They directly caused the death of the journalists and wounded three others, but should not really be held responsible because they did not have information that would have made them aware of the consequences of firing at the hotel.

Their immediate superiors - battalion commander Lt. Col. Philip DeCamp and brigade commander Col. David Perkins - also appear not to blame. Their reactions and the accounts of embedded journalists indicate they too had not been properly informed by their own superiors.

At a higher level, the headquarters of 3ID commander Gen. Buford Blount bears a heavy responsibility. The Division's command had access to information from the Pentagon, from the US Central Command Doha base (in Qatar) and from the media.

It is inconceivable that the massive presence of journalists at the hotel for three weeks prior to the shelling, which was known by any TV viewer and by the Pentagon itself, could have passed unnoticed. *Yet this presence was never mentioned to the troops in the field or marked on the maps used by artillery support soldiers. The question is whether this information was withheld deliberately, out of contempt or through negligence.*

At the top level, the US government must bear some of the responsibility. Not just because it is the government and has supreme authority over its army in the field, but also because its top leaders several times made false statements about the incident.

They also talked regularly about the dangers journalists faced in Iraq. White House spokesman Ari Fleischer stressed on 28 February the Pentagon's advice to the media to pull their journalists out of Baghdad before the war began. Asked whether this was a veiled threat to "non-embedded" reporters, he said : "If the military says something, I strongly urge all journalists to heed it. It is in your own interests, and your family's interests. And I mean that."

The argument that journalists had been warned of the danger reappeared in the Army's 12 August report. This amounted to creating two kinds of journalists - those who were "embedded" and so able to report on the fighting while under the protection of US forces and those who were advised to leave the war zone or face being ignored.

The Pentagon thereby refused to accept any responsibility for the death of the two journalists.

The Reporters Without Borders investigation was carried out by French journalist Jean-Paul Mari, with help from the French weekly magazine Le Nouvel Observateur, which Reporters Without Borders warmly thanks.

Lucrative Security Job Draws Officer To Iraq; "My Wife Says I'm An Idiot"

February 26, 2005 By Glenda Anderson, THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

Leaving the security of his routine on the North Coast for unknown dangers in the desert, a veteran Mendocino County law enforcement officer is heading to Iraq this weekend to join a well-paid private army that is increasingly used to carry out military duties for the United States.

"I want to help people. I would love to see a Middle East in which everyone is free," said Bob Nishiyama, commander of the multiagency Mendocino Major Crimes Task Force.

Nishiyama will be missed during his two-month absence, said Ukiah Police Capt. Dan Walker.

He admits his wife, Sally, and many of his friends think going to Iraq is hardly a wise move. "My wife says I'm an idiot," Nishiyama said.

Walker said he can think of better places to spend that time.

"I've got two words for him: Lake Tahoe. If he likes the sand and heat: Las Vegas."

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT THE NEW TRAVELING SOLDIER

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

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

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Car Bomb Hits Collaborator Troops

2.26.05 Aljazeera

An Iraqi soldier was killed and five others injured on Saturday when a car bomb exploded as an Iraqi military convoy passed through al-Musayib area in southern Baghdad, Aljazeera learned.

Three Guesses



A firefighter shields his face from the heat of a blazing oil pipeline in Dibis. (Photo: Yahya Ahmed; AP Photo)

Feb 26, 2005 By PATRICK QUINN Associated Press Writer

An oil pipeline in northern Iraq was ablaze Saturday after saboteurs blew it up, officials said.

The attack late Friday destroyed the pipeline, which connects oil fields in Dibis with Kirkuk, about 20 miles to the southeast, an official of the state-run North Oil Co. said on condition of anonymity.

The official said it would take at least four days to repair the line.

Acts of sabotage have blocked exports to Turkey's Mediterranean port of Ceyhan, a major outlet for Iraqi crude, for nearly two weeks.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

"The sinews of war are endless profits."
Cicero, *Orationes Philippicæ*, v (c. 60 B.C.)

"To understand the Iraqi resistance, I suggest reading the Scottish poet Sir Walter Scott. He wrote: "Breathes there a man with soul so dead who never to himself has said, this is mine own my native land." Helen Thomas, column, 11.12.04

"Chaos is a great risk, and occupiers through the ages have pointed to that risk as their reason for staying put. But the chaos is already here, and the power that is in large part responsible for it must start preparing now to step aside and let the Iraqis try to emerge from it." September 10, 2004 Financial Times editorial

OCCUPATION REPORT

Falluja

[Thanks to Joan M, who sent this in.]

18 February 2005 (IRIN)

FALLUJAH: With a few winter clothes and blankets, Abu Mussab and his family remain encamped outside Fallujah waiting for a decision from the government in relation to their

home, which was destroyed during fierce battles between US troops and insurgents in the city some 60 km from the capital, Baghdad.

Mussab is just one of hundreds of families displaced after the fighting, which started in November and lasted nearly three months. His home and those of thousands of others were flattened and the city still does not have basic facilities, according to aid agencies.

Ahmed Rawi, a spokesman for the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC), told IRIN that the situation of internally displaced people (IDPs) from Fallujah was critical, requiring a huge quantity of supplies.

He explained that there were also problems in distributing the monthly food ration.

Rawi added that they had stopped their work inside Iraq since 14 January, after one of their staff members was killed by insurgents. [Can't imagine why they would be pissed off about a Red Cross.]

Medical staff from the city complain that only the main hospital in Fallujah and two small medical centres were working properly, but that access was difficult due to its location near the entrance to the city. They said the most common cases reported were of child malnutrition and water-borne diseases.

According to Col Peter Smith of the US Marines 1st Division, nearly 8,000 people are now living in the city, but he added that some 100,000 had passed through the checkpoints into the city, which used to have a total population of 280,000. Before and during the battles, two-thirds of the city's population was said to have fled, according to aid agencies.

Some children can be seen running after the armed Marines who are offering footballs and sweets to them, showing some signs of normality. But families can be seen in the doors of their homes watching the silence of the city, where the only sound heard now is of US tanks rolling past making daily security checks.

Very few shops are open and some fruit and vegetables sellers can be seen at street corners. Electricity and water is still not running adequately and families are reliant on support from some NGOs who are filling water tanks distributed throughout the city.

The last convoy sent by the Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS) was three weeks ago to Habaniya, Amiriya and Saklawiya carrying blankets, potable water and food supplies.

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

Heavy Breathing Journalistic Drama

Vs.

Reality On The Ground

FIRST, THE DRAMA!

BAGHDAD, Feb 24 By Luke Baker (Reuters)

Sometimes just buying bread in Baghdad can be deadly.

Two weeks ago, masked gunmen stormed into the Saada (Happiness) bakery in the east of the city and unleashed a hail of gunfire, killing nine people and wounding a dozen.

On Thursday they struck Happiness again.

Two armed men jumped out of a passing car and showered the bakery with bullets, killing one person and wounding two others.

Pools of blood formed on the pavement outside.

"We tried to run but they chased after us and opened fire. We were working. We did nothing," said one of the bakery's employees, his hands still white with flour.

Saada is a Shi'ite-owned bakery and the two hits appear to be a result of deepening tensions between Iraq's Muslim communities, the majority Shi'ites and minority Sunnis, who form the backbone of the insurgency.

The bakery is plastered with posters of Iraq's foremost Shi'ite scholar, the grey-bearded Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, and of Moqtada al-Sadr, a young, rebellious Shi'ite preacher.

Since the first attack occurred during the build-up to Ashura, a major Shi'ite ritual, it seemed to fit the sectarian pattern.

And there have been attacks similar to the one on Saada at other Shi'ite bakeries elsewhere in the capital during Ashura.

But it appears Saada may also have been targeted for political as well as sectarian reasons, highlighting another facet of Iraq's multiple dangers.

Residents said the bakery had sold bread to the Iraqi army.

Militants regard any form of cooperation with U.S.-backed authorities as siding with the enemy. Iraqis working as translators for U.S. forces are frequently killed and U.S.-trained Iraqi police are a constant target.

Workers at Saada denied they had sold bread to the Iraqi security forces, even though locals said policemen, like many other nearby residents, regularly dropped by the bakery.

But the shop may have been targeted for a third reason, as part of a business feud, underlining another element of Iraq's fraught security situation -- rampant crime.

In the lawlessness that has infected the country, gangs have often carried out criminal acts under the guise of politics or religion.

Police do not know what the motive for the Saada attacks was. But whatever the cause, Baghdad residents now know that another seemingly innocent act -- buying bread -- can be lethal.

NEXT, REALITY ON THE GROUND:

Sent: Friday, February 25, 2005 From: Kelebdooni, Anti-Allawi Group

As for the pitiful lie "And there have been attacks similar to the one on Saada at other Shi'ite bakeries elsewhere in the capital during Ashura," I wish someone could challenge Luke Baker of Reuters to name just one other bakery, just one, because we hadn't heard of any before or after.

A more reasonable explanation was provided (in Arabic) by a Rana Al-Jibouri, and posted on Al-Kader site on Feb. 15th. She wrote as a resident of the Al-Amin district in Baghdad where the incident took place.

She wrote that there are actually two bakery shops of the same name almost opposite each other on the same street.

Each is run by one of two brothers who inherited them from their father. There is apparently a deep feud between the two over the inheritance and who should take which. Earlier, a plastic explosive was rigged to the locks of one of the shops, and exploded on unlocking the door one day. The later incident apparently was an act of revenge reciprocated at the other shop.

In other words, there is no political or sectarian motive as far as the plausible explanation goes. It is purely criminal, so we must again thank the occupation for liberating criminal tendencies in an induced lawless situation.

And I wish Luke Baker and the like could leave their hotel lobbies and go round to ask the people on the spot. He could've got that explanation, providing he actually wanted the truth. But I doubt if that's his real motive.

OCCUPATION HAITI

Three Occupation Troops Wounded



Three Brazilian occupation troops were wounded the last two days as they try to maintain control in the city leading up to the one year anniversary of Aristide's ouster. (AP Photo/Kent Gilbert)

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Powell Faults Post-War US Planning

February 26, 2005, Comments by Ahmed Al-Habbabi, Anti-Allawi-group

[A song to memorize for coming exams!]

Former US secretary of state Colin Powell has criticised US planning for post-invasion Iraq, saying more soldiers should have been on the ground in the aftermath of the war.

**[We've heard the song before!
It's not a matter of numbers!
It's the occupation, stupid!
Some just don't get it!]**

In an interview with Britain's Daily Telegraph newspaper published on Saturday, Powell said the war had been "brilliantly fought" with a limited number of soldiers but the steps taken towards "nation building" were insufficient.

[Nation building is for the nationals!]

There were "enough troops for war but not for peace, for establishing order", he told the paper, which said the comments demonstrated a rift between Powell and US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

[Same old song again and again.]

Powell said: "My own preference would have been for more forces after the conflict."

[Yeah. More forces means more casualties!]

The number of US troops in Iraq was boosted to around 150,000 in advance of last month's election, up from 123,000 a year ago. They are supported by about 26,000 foreign troops.

After the 2003 invasion, Rumsfeld said US military commanders thought there were enough troops to contain anti-US fighters and establish peace. However, amid escalating violence and to boost security for January's Iraq elections, the troop levels were later increased.

Powell, who resigned from his post in November, said he had warned President George Bush in August 2002 about the problems of a post-war scenario.

"My caution was that you need to understand the difficult bit will come afterwards - the military piece will be easy," he said he had told the president.

"This place (Iraq) will crack like a crystal goblet, and it'll be a problem to pick up the bits."

[Not true. It didn't crack by itself.

It was cracked!

And deliberate cracking continues!]

Powell said it was for this reason that Bush gave him the go-ahead to embark on the ultimately unsuccessful effort to win a second United Nations resolution backing the war amid opposition from traditional US allies such as France.

It was an attempt to heal the bitter differences the war had caused that prompted Bush to embark this week on a fence-mending trip to Europe. Powell said the United States needed to do more to improve its European relations.

"We've got a lot more work to do with European public opinion," he said, adding US policies and the language used to express them had grated with many Europeans.

He also distanced himself from the now famous remarks uttered by Rumsfeld in June 2003 when he described France and Germany as "old Europe" compared with a "new Europe" of US allies.

[Yeah, old Europe: You're probably not that old now!]

"I never used that phrase. It just wasn't a useful construct," he said. "It was just something that Don used one day and became chiselled in time."

Meanwhile, the United States' top military commander has said the fighting in Iraq is not likely to be put down in a year or two, since history shows such uprisings can last a decade or more. **[And usually end how?]**

Air Force General Richard Myers said on Friday that in the past century, uprisings around the world have lasted anywhere from seven to 12 years, making a quick fix to the problem in Iraq unlikely.

"This is not the kind of business that can be done in one year, two years probably," Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in a speech to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council.

Myers was filling in for Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, who was scheduled to address the group but became ill after a long trip to Europe.

Myers said that recent elections in Iraq were a sign that resistance groups were not succeeding in their efforts to strike fear in Iraqis.

US television was full of images in January of Iraqis whose fingers were stained with indelible ink after casting their ballots. **[Yeah. We saw the show too!]**

"They were sticking that ink-stained finger in the eye of the insurgents," Myers said. **[Time will tell...]**

In Iraq, negotiations continued on Friday over who would lead the country's new government, talks made more complicated by delicate ethnic and sectarian issues.

The new government is expected to make security an immediate focus. **[The resistance continues to have the matter in focus too.]**

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