

GI SPECIAL 3A63:



Times.online

U.S. Military Deaths In Iraq Rise To 1,500

3/3/2005 By Todd Pitman, Associated Press & By Philippe Naughton, Times Online

A grim milestone was passed in Iraq today when a US Marine was killed in action south of Baghdad - the 1,500th American soldier to lose his life since the invasion.

The US military said the soldier, assigned to the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, was killed "while conducting security and stability operations".

The soldier will not be named until his next of kin is informed.

U.S. troops are killed nearly every day in Iraq.

At least 1,140 died as a result of hostile action, according to the Defense Department. The figures include four military civilians.

A total of 86 UK soldiers have died in Iraq during the same period.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,362 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 1,030 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

Iraqbodycount.net, an independent website which relies on credible media reports of deaths, puts the number of Iraqi civilians killed since the invasion at up to 18,395 - although it says many other deaths may have gone unreported. A statistical study in the medical journal the Lancet estimated that Iraqi civilian deaths could be as high as 198,000.

Worryingly, the number of military deaths has shown no sign of falling since President Bush landed on USS Abraham Lincoln on May 1, 2003 with a banner saying "Mission Accomplished" and declared an end to major combat operations.

Ted Carpenter, a defence analyst at Washington's Cato Institute, said that a comparison might be made with Soviet losses in Afghanistan in the 1980s - another situation that pitted an invading superpower against a tenacious Muslim insurgency.

About 15,000 Soviet troops were killed during nine years of fighting after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, a monthly total about twice as high as that suffered by the more highly trained US forces in Iraq.

Mr Carpenter told Reuters: "Unless the US either can crush the insurgency or negotiate an end to the insurgency, then we're going to see casualty rates similar to those that the Soviets suffered in Afghanistan.

"Though it's not like the Battle of Verdun in World War One (260,000 dead, 450,000 wounded), it's a slow bleed of the occupation army."

MORE:

“When Informed”

March 03, 2005 By Maxwell Corydon Wheat, Jr. 333 Bedell St., Freeport, NY 11520
E-mail:Maxwell623@aol.com

American Service Men and Women Dead -1,500

"Intelligence gathered by this and other governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised.."

George W. Bush
President of the United States
State of the Union Address

January 28, 2003

30-year-old Marine Captain

St. Anne, Illinois.

**His CH-46E Sea Knight Helicopter
hits ground, skids forward, fireballs.**

**This young man's "bright red hair and big grin
and 'Hi, Aunt Pat!' . . . make you feel
like the coolest person in that moment."**

Little after 3 A. M

**his father, restlessly sleeping,
hears car stop.**

**At door in dress blues,
three United States Marines**

30-year old Marine Second Lieutenant

Saucier, Mississippi.

Hiker, mountain climber, triathlete.

1999, competes in Five-Mile-Run for Peace.

**Friday, March 23, leads infantry platoon
against oil pumping station in sweep toward burning Rumaila oil field.
Same day, U. S. Marines arrive at parents' door.**

U. S. Naval Lieutenant

La Mesa, California.

**His British Sea King helicopter
collides with helicopter in Persian Gulf.**

**". . . one of these amazingly clean-cut, all-American kids,"
says an aunt. "He's the kind of kid
that if you had a very special daughter,
you would hope that she could snag him.**

. . . just amazingly bright, funny and kind."

**Parents visiting daughter in Germany
when two U. S. Navy chaplains arrive at their home,
6:15 A. M, Pacific time.**

Neighbors phone

21-year-old Army Corporal

South Burlington, Vermont.

**In high school plays lacrosse, football, skiis,
plans to study languages,
plans career in international relations.**

Single mother watching "Friends," hears the knock.

"Is he wounded, missing or dead?"

Can I come in, ma'am?" asks one of the officers.

"I kept thinking, this is what it's like.

It's like a movie. . .

He was my only child."

29-year old Marine sergeant

Third Marine Aircraft Wing crew chief
raised among the row houses of Baltimore.
At Northern High excels in track, swimming.
"Cut-up," says his sister
". . . always making faces, making people laugh."
3 A. M. Marines, in dress blues, at the door.
Next day, his mother wanders neighborhood, distraught.
His father faces reporters, clutches son's photograph,
"President Bush, you took my only son away from me!"

©2004 "When Informed" appears in Wheat's paperback, "Iraq and Other Killing Fields, Poetry for Peace," published in 2004. Wheat is listed in A Directory of American Poets and Fiction Writers, Poets & Writers, Inc.

MORE:

Mother Of Slain Soldier Says His Life Wasted In Iraq

03/03/2005
Associated Press

The grieving mother of a Texas soldier who died in a shootout at a Baghdad checkpoint says the war in Iraq "wasted" his life.

Pfc. Danny Anderson, a 29-year-old native of Corpus Christi, Texas, died Sunday while serving with the 3rd Infantry Division based out of Fort Stewart, Ga.

"He was there two weeks and three days. I feel like his life was wasted," Patricia Brady said Wednesday. "A lot of people say he's a hero, but to me his life was wasted along with many others."

Brady said her son had visited her and other family in Cocke County, about 45 miles southeast of Knoxville, frequently over the past several years. She spoke at length with him about his decisions to join the Army and then to go to Iraq.

"I am very much a pacifist," Brady said. "Danny knew this, but it was his decision."

Brady said a casualty assistance officer said her son was manning the checkpoint when a car with five occupants tried to speed through. Gunfire erupted, and Anderson was killed.

Anderson leaves behind a wife, a 6-year-old stepson and a 6-month-old son, Noah.

"She isn't taking it very well," Brady said of her daughter-in-law. "I've only talked to her once, but I know it's been very difficult for her."

Brady said her son's body is being returned from the Middle East for a funeral in Corpus Christi.

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Send to contact@militaryproject.org. Name, I.D., withheld on request. Replies confidential.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

TWO TASK FORCE BAGHDAD SOLDIERS DIE

March 3, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 05-03-02C

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Two Task Force Baghdad Soldiers died late March 2 at a combat support hospital after being injured in an improvised explosive device attack.

The Soldiers were on patrol in central Baghdad when their vehicle struck the IED around 9 p.m.

Another Member Of The 155th Killed

03/03/05 WorldNow and WLBT

As violence escalates in Iraq, another Mississippi soldier is killed. Twenty-five year old Shane Pugh of Meridian, was a member of headquarters company, 1st battalion, 155th infantry, headquartered in Mccomb.

Joe Gullick, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Stonewall says Pugh's mother, Wilma Allen, was notified Wednesday of her son's death.

Pugh is the fifth soldier from this particular brigade to die in Iraq.

2 Ft. Carson GIs Killed In Iraq Humvee Crash

March 03, 2005 By The Associated Press

Two soldiers stationed at Fort Carson were killed when the Humvee they were riding in crashed in Iraq, military officials said.

Army Sgt. Julio E. Negron, 28, of Pompano Beach, Fla., died Monday in Bayji, Iraq, the Department of Defense said Wednesday, while Spc. Lizbeth Robles, 31, of Vega Baja, Puerto Rico, died Tuesday in an Army hospital in Tikrit.

Both soldiers were part of the 360th Transportation Company, which sent 180 soldiers to Iraq in late December to transport bulk fuel. They were among 1,800 soldiers in the 43rd Area Support Group serving in Iraq.

Negron, a native of San German, Puerto Rico, joined the Army in April 1997 after moving to Pompano Beach from Maryland to live with a brother, Edward, the family said. He was the youngest of three brothers, all of whom were soldiers .

Negron's first stint in Iraq ended in April, and he returned with the 360th in December.

The Humvee that Julio Negron was riding in Monday was part of a convoy, and he was serving as a mounted gunner, said Jose Negron, who joined the Army in 1982. An Army chaplain and several soldiers informed Jose Negron of his brother's death late Monday.

Jonesboro Soldier Injured By Bomber

March 03, 2005 By Curt Hodges, Jonesboro Sun

JONESBORO -- A Jonesboro soldier serving with the Army in Iraq has been wounded in an explosion caused by a suicide bomber near Iskanariya, Iraq, family members said.

SPC Kevin Cooper suffered a perforated eardrum, shrapnel wounds to his left hand and flash burns and was hospitalized at Baghdad, his mother, Pat Cooper of Jonesboro, said.

"He's still undergoing treatment and will be all right," Pat Cooper said. He'd only been in Iraq three and a half weeks.

His father, Don Cooper, said his son was released from the hospital and is staying in an outpatient treatment facility where he is watched over 24 hours a day.

The explosion occurred Saturday as Cooper and others were on a patrol in a truck and on their way to a small village.

"He looked him (the bomber) eye-to-eye" when the explosion occurred, Pat Cooper related. The next thing he recalled, the soldier told his mother, he passed out while getting out of the truck and woke up in a helicopter on his way to the hospital.

One soldier was killed in the ambush.

After Useless Exercise; Marines Withdraw From Iraqi Cities

(Christian Science Monitor, March 3, 2005)

In the recent Marine Corps "River Blitz" operation, troops took over trouble-spots like Hit, Haditha, Baghdadi and Ramadi with hardly any shots being fired. **But from the upper ranks to the most junior boots on the ground, few believe the relative ease of the operation means the insurgency in Anbar province is over. Instead, the militants are fleeing before the Marines arrive, only to return when they withdraw.**

Turkey Sends 1,357 Troops Into Northern Iraq To Fight Kurds

March 3 (Xinhuanet)

Turkey has deployed 1,357 military personnel in northern Iraq to fight against members of the outlawed Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), said Turkish National Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul on Thursday.

Gonul was quoted by semi-official Anatolia News Agency as saying, "Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) have deployed 1,357 personnel in northern Iraq to fight against the PKK, gather information regarding the developments in the region and work as liaison officers under US forces in Kirkuk, Mosul and Tal Afar."

TROOP NEWS

Lying Scum In Command: N.Y. National Guard Troops Reveal Body Armor Bullshit

(New York Daily News, March 3, 2005)

The Army pledged to act on complaints from New York National Guard troops in Iraq that they lack proper vehicle and body armor, despite repeated Pentagon promises to fix the problem. [Here is the enemy, not in Iraq.]

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)

Sgt. Benderman Denied C.O. Status

(Savannah Morning News, March 3, 2005)

Sgt. Kevin Benderman faces a tougher battle in his bid for discharge as a conscientious objector, as the officer considering the request at Fort Stewart, Ga., recommended that the application be turned down.

[This Is A Message From The Benderman Defense Committee:]

From: [Carl Douglas Rogers](#)

Sent: March 03, 2005

Subject: Army officer opposes CO status for Kevin

Sgt. Kevin Benderman faces a tougher battle in his bid for discharge as a conscientious objector.

But thanks to the donations that have come in to The Kevin Benderman Defense Committee, he and Monica are off today meeting with a civilian attorney to plan his defense. Thanks to all of you who have helped.

We have a wonderful statement of support, written by a young woman in Florida, that we want to run as a full-page ad in "Stars and Stripes."

More on that soon.

Onward

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.

“Hell No, We Won’t Go” Huge Drop In Army Recruiting; 27% Off Goal

(USA Today, March 3, 2005, Pg. 9)

In what could be a troubling sign for the military, the active-duty Army missed its February recruiting goal by more than 27 percent. It was the first time in almost five years that the service has failed to meet a monthly target.

The Army signed up 5,114 recruits in February, 1,936 fewer than its goal of 7,050. **The last time the Army missed a monthly target was in May 2000.**

As Black Recruits Vanish, Military Starts New “Marketing Efforts”

March 3, 2005 Democracy Now

The publication Advertising Age is reporting the military is adjusting its marketing pitches in order to recruit more African-American and Latinos into the services.

The military has found that the war in Iraq has especially hurt recruiting in African-American communities.

Clueless Navy Brass Didn't Realize Big Ships Can Sink Small Ones

(Bloomberg.com, March 2, 2005)

The Navy's plans to build small, stealth vessels for coastal waters did not take into consideration possible threats to the craft from larger ships, the Government Accountability Office said.

Neil Chacker, Presente

Once, when his daughter, Sasha, was making a family tree in grade school, Neil told her that the best thing he had ever done was "Organize GIs against the war in Vietnam."

[Thanks to Tom Condit, California Peace And Freedom Party, for sending this in.]

Dear comrades,

I don't know how many of you knew Neil Chacker, a lifelong fighter for peace, justice and socialism.

Tom Condit

Neil Chacker, 1942-2004

by David Finkel (from <http://www.solidarity-us.org>)

DURING THE VIETNAM war, one Colonel Reberry at Fort Lewis, Washington, posted a threatening notice forbidding the distribution of material that would promote "disloyalty and discontent."

A response shortly appeared on the same bulletin board, written by GI Neil Chacker, an American Servicemen's Union organizer:

"Let's tell it like it is, Colonel. We are not discontented by what we read and hear. We are discontented because of the way we live. Discontent is not caused by newspapers but by harassment and lack of freedom.

"We could take the low pay, lousy food and rotten living conditions if we thought that what we were doing was worthwhile or beneficial to the country. But we don't think so.

"Our dissension will end when the conditions that cause it end. You may succeeded in driving dissension underground but you can never stop it. You may be able to extract sullen obedience as long as MPs are in range, but you will never get loyalty.

"We are citizens, covered by the Bill of Rights. Your warning violates the Bill of Rights." (Quoted in Andy Stapp, *Up Against the Brass*, 141)

{A SIDENOTE FROM TOM CONDIT: I may be remembering wrong, but my memory is that Neil, who had a strong sense of language, actually wrote "discontent", rather than "discontented." It was the first time I had ever seen or heard the word used that way, so it stuck in my memory.}

Once, when his daughter, Sasha, was making a family tree in grade school, Neil told her that the best thing he had ever done was "Organize GIs against the war in Vietnam." (The worst thing was "shot a doe.")

An activist in the socialist movement for four decades, he first joined the Young People's Socialist League (YPSL), then the International Socialists, and finally Solidarity.

To readers of *Against the Current*, Neil appeared as R.F. Kampfer ("rank-and-file fighter") author of the "Random Shots" humor column that appeared in every issue and in a predecessor publication called *Changes*, all the way back to 1983. During this time he had the responsibility of editing and (to Neil's dismay) censoring the items he submitted.

Neil was much more, however, than an offbeat humorist or reteller of strange and ironic tales from political and military history. In life and in the socialist movement, there are those people whom you know will always "be there," solid and reliable, to do what is needed.

Neil died in Detroit on September 15, 2004 following a, six-year battle with non-Hodgkins lymphoma, a still incur-able form of cancer. After several remissions and relapses, the cancer could not be controlled, but never claimed his spirit.

Neil emailed "medical bulletins" to his family and close friends, often mixing gruesome medical details with his own brand of humor. On July 3 he wrote: "The MRI was a waste of time. After a procedure that should be outlawed under the Geneva Convention, they tell me, 'You've got a mass on your chest.' 'A mass of what?' I ask, reasonably enough. They have no idea. Anybody from six feet away can tell that I either have a mass on my chest or a small turtle under my shirt." That was pure Neil.

Years in the Struggle

Neil's life was remembered by family members, comrades and friends at a memorial meeting in October. The stories they told were accompanied by some remarkable photographs of Neil in action.

Neil was the oldest of three children. The family was often on the move—from the Bronx (Neil showed an early love for animals including urban snakes), to upstate New York where his father operated a dairy farm, and to his maternal grandmother's native Puerto Rico. Neil left home at 17 and joined the Merchant Marines. With his family background, Neil spoke excellent Spanish and could step in when translation at bilingual political meetings got shaky.

In 1971 Neil moved to Detroit with other members of the International Socialists to get jobs in industry and build a new revolutionary movement. **As a steward at the turbulent Jefferson Assembly, Neil was known for timing the line with a stop watch to monitor speedup.**

In 1973 he was a leader of a wildcat strike, which was overshadowed four months later by a truly historic event: to protest a racist foreman, two workers, Ike Shorter and Larry Carter, cut the power to the line and locked themselves in a fenced area to keep the power off.

At a time when unity between Black and white workers could not be taken for granted, Neil was one of the first to sit down outside the fence to block security from ousting Shorter and Carter.

As a trade unionist, Neil was a front-line fighter, as witnessed by his activism during the Detroit newspaper strike in the early battles to stop the trucks at Sterling Heights and his arrest for sit-down civil disobedience at the papers' office building.

Neil credited the U.S. Army for instilling in him a love of firearms, and he was ready and willing to train anyone who was interested. He was a dedicated annual deer hunter and often able to contribute a 'Bambi and Babe' chili to the annual Detroit Solidarity fundraiser.

Neil and his companion of more than 30 years, Elissa, raised two daughters, Sasha and Nina, and delighted in their grand-daughter Alisha.

His friends recall him as sensitive, caring and even-tempered-in a movement where arguments often boil over the top-but he was also a tough-minded revolutionary, whose broad knowledge of history guided his actions. Speaking at the memorial, Bill Parker, president of UAW Local 1700 said "I always knew Neil had my back; a rock-solid ally, unshakeable in his beliefs, dedicated to the struggle, and absolutely reliable to live up to his word."

Neil's humor, working-class loyalty and contempt for capital could be summed up in one his classic "Random Shots," which I reproduce here (from *Against the Current* Jan.-Feb. 2000):

KAMPFER'S FACTORY RECENTLY held a poetry contest. Submissions had to contain the word "quality" twice, plus the phrase "going for the gold." The entry below somehow failed to win any prizes.

I think that I shall never see
A Chrysler built with quality.
A car that's made of parts we hit
With hammers so that they will fit.
A car whose bolts will surely fail
But that's what K-Mart had on sale.
A car whose paint runs down in gobs
The work of rusty robot slobs.
For quality is fine, you know
Unless it costs a little dough.
For they are going for the gold,
The profits on the junk that's sold.

David Finkel is an editor of Against the Current and member of Solidarity in Detroit. Thanks to our friend Gay Semel for tracking down Neil's leaflet from the out-of-print book Up Against the Brass.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Car Bomb Hits Interior Ministry Checkpoint

March 3 BAGHDAD By Elizabeth Piper (Reuters) & By TODD PITMAN (AP)

Two car bombs exploded near Iraq's Interior Ministry in Baghdad on Thursday, killing at least five policemen and wounding several others.

A police source said the car bombs exploded at a checkpoint just outside the heavily guarded ministry in central Baghdad,

Police Maj. Jabar Hassan said the car bombers had been trailing a police convoy that was trying to enter the ministry.

Resistance Attacks On Oil Industry Cost Occupation \$6 Billion In 2004

March 4, 2005 By James Glanz, The New York Times

Iraq is facing enormous pressure to convert its rich oil inheritance into a measure of comfort and prosperity. Despite having 100 billion to 200 billion barrels of oil reserves, the third largest in the world by some estimates, Iraq still must import half its gasoline and thousands of tons of heating oil, cooking gas, and other refined products.

Losses due to sabotage exceeded \$6 billion last year, cutting revenue by nearly a third, Ghadhban said. The pace of attacks has dropped recently in the south, but continues unabated in the north.

Washington has set aside \$1.7 billion for Iraq's oil industry, although as much as 40 percent of that money is projected to go to overhead costs, including security, said Julian O'Connell, a manager at the Project and Contracting Office, a Pentagon agency that is administering the program.

Twenty-three months after the invasion and the looting that followed, for example, the damaged heating-fuel plant managed by Ibraheem has still achieved only about a third of its production level during the last days of Saddam's rule, when the plant put out 3,000 tons a day of liquified petroleum gas

Guerrilla Attack Cripples Baiji Power Station

March 3 BAGHDAD By Elizabeth Piper (Reuters)

Guerrillas targeted energy infrastructure, blowing up a gas pipeline feeding Iraq's main power station on Thursday. **The blast near Kirkuk forced two out of four turbines at the Baiji power station to shut, engineer Khaled al-Lami said.**

Resistance Action:

March 3 BAGHDAD By Elizabeth Piper (Reuters)

In Tikrit, one Iraqi national guard was killed and six wounded by gunmen and in Baquba a suicide bomber blew himself up near the local headquarters of the guard killing one and wounding 14 people.

OCCUPATION REPORT

RECRUITING FOR THE RESISTANCE



Ziad Mohammed Jassim stands next to the wreck of his car that was smashed by a U.S. armoured vehicle in Ramadi, March 2, 2005. (AP Photo/Bilal Hussein)

“Sovereignty?” What “Sovereignty?” US To Build & Run Biggest Prison In Iraq

03 Mar 2005 khilafah.com

Baghdad, Feb 23 - US forces has planned to build the biggest prison in Iraqi Province of Naseriah.

Iraqi newspaper, al-Sharq al-Awsat quoted an Iraqi engineer working in the project as saying that the prison will be built near a US military camp in Naseriah Province.

"US forces will move prisoners of Basra, Naseriah, Amarah and Samawah to this prison. [So much for all that “sovereignty” bullshit.] Six local contractors will build the prison" the newspaper added.

Iraqi people living in Basra and southern provinces destroyed prisons in those provinces after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime.

<p>OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME <u>NOW!</u></p>

Saddam? “We’re Sorry He’s Gone”

03 March 2005 By Jeffrey Young, VOICE OF AMERICA

In Iraq, a combination of limited refining capacity attacks by insurgents, and alleged profiteering has created gas shortages. There are lines of cars at fuel stations that stretch sometimes for kilometers.

Iraq has massive amounts of crude oil, but not enough operating refineries. So in the north, crude oil is trucked to Turkey for refining into gasoline and then taken back to Iraq for sale. Crossing the border between the two countries takes time. Sometimes truck drivers wait for days.

On the Iraqi side of the border, the trucks then have to take winding roads through the mountains, or risk attacks by going through the troubled area around the city of Mosul.

There are also inequalities in how the fuel is allocated.

If one works for the Iraqi government there are special fuel stations where gas is half the price and there are usually no lines. This government employee says he has enough coupons to last him and his family for six months and he never runs out of gas for his car.

One taxi driver agrees and blames the 2003 Iraq war for his problems.

"Kerosene that we use in our homes was 100 Dinars in Saddam's time now it's up to 600 Dinars," he said.

"We're sorry he's gone. Americans promised to help us."

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Crooked War Profiteer Scooping Up More \$

(Los Angeles Times, March 3, 2005)

One day after settling federal bribery charges, Titan Corporation said that its fourth-quarter profit surged as conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan increased demand by the U.S. military for its language translation services.

Hey George, Guess What? Iran Has Missiles That Can Stop Gulf Oil Flow, Abizaid Says

(Bloomberg.com, March 2, 2005)

Iran's military has new anti-ship cruise missiles that give it the capability to stop the flow of oil in the Persian Gulf, the top U.S. military commander in the Middle East said. Iran's forces include a navy of small attack boats carrying torpedoes and missiles "that are well-suited for the restricted confines of the Strait of Hormuz," the waterway through which at least 35 percent of the world's oil is shipped, Gen. John Abizaid told the House Armed Services Committee.

TROUBLETOWN

BY LLOYD DANGLE



SPECIAL REPORT:

A History Of U.S. Armed Forces Rebellions

Since the lower enlisted fought on the ground, these troops would search out the enemy, acting as "bait."

Appy's class analysis of "search and destroy" missions are given further credence by the fact that of the more than 58,000 U.S. personnel killed during the war, only one general and eight colonels died from enemy fire.¹

By Martin Smith (Sgt. USMC ret'd)

Soldiers saw their enlistment or draft status in the military as employment, and they discussed their tour in Vietnam as a “job” and their role within a mission as “work” that depended on their buddies. One infantry member, George Olsen, for example, wrote a letter to “Red” in 1969, “It’s all right to be afraid, but you can’t allow that fear to interfere with the job because other people are depending on you and you’ve got responsibility to them and for them.”¹ Likewise veteran Gene Holiday, interviewed by Christian Appy in 1984, explained the interdependence of their roles:

You start to get real good at it. And you can see it happening to the other guys in your unit. After you’ve been together for awhile, it’s amazing how well people do their jobs. You walk into an ambush and everybody knows just what to do. When you first get to Vietnam you fall down, shit your pants, and freeze up. Some guys are so scared they can’t even return fire. But after awhile you’ll be out in the bush and a firefight starts and right away people are getting into good positions, putting out rounds, covering for their buddies, tossing extra ammo to the machine-gunners; nobody’s screaming or crying, it’s just working together, doing what has to be done.¹

Yet rather than discipline and respect for military authority being the force that motivated troops to act in concert, soldiers developed other networks of friendship that countered the official military structure of rank. Soldiers cultivated bonds of intimacy built on their mutual dependence that challenges stereotypes of masculinity.

Veteran Larry Holguin, who served in the infantry from June 1968 to September 1969, exposed his feelings, “I used to go out of my way to help those rookie guys who were more tired than I was...The guys I was with meant a lot to me. Everybody was real close to each other.”¹ Veteran Ralph Brown explained in an interview in 1983, “The biggest turn-on in Nam was having other men depend on me. In my whole life, no one had ever depended on me for nothing. In ‘Nam they depended on me for their lives.”¹

Brown’s language subverts the perceived image of the military warrior into a relation of intimacy that troops often felt for each other and that inspired a means for survival. The death of a buddy caused many to reflect on their close-knit communities. In a letter published in a German underground newspaper, *Up Against the Wall*, in August 1970, a GI in Vietnam reflects:

Then the worst of all, a dead companion. The man you pull guard with; who you swap chow with; who saved your life; who is so close to you that you even read each other’s mail, know his girl’s name, how many are in his family, where he lives, what kind of car he drives, etc. There he is, his soul gone. Just a lifeless mutilated corpse. Then help put him into a body bag and ask yourself, who is really responsible for all this waste.¹

These bonds of friendship provided emotional support to troops who were young and that experienced death for the first time.

The trauma of war brought troops to depend on each other, and it was a camaraderie that reached beyond the unquestioning obedience to any and all orders. In a study of World War II soldiers, Samuel Stouffer found that protecting their fellow soldiers was a greater motivation during combat and that “leadership and discipline” was least

important. Interestingly in the same study, officers chose “discipline” as most important.¹

Soldiers depend on the work of their fellow teammates for their protection. In contrast, an officer’s security depends on the sacred military code, the obedience to all orders by the lower enlisted. This study reveals the hierarchical relationship embedded within the military rank structure.

Many soldiers gained a new found respect for the hard physical work and labor of the GI. Sergeant Allen Paul, for example, revealed in a letter to his girlfriend written in 1968, “I try and take great pride in my unit and the men I work with. A lot of the men have been in a lot of trouble and have no education or money. But I feel honored to have them call me a friend. In my heart I know these are the men that build America, not the rich or the well educated.”¹

In a letter to his mom, infantry member Phillip Arterbury echoes a similar feeling of praise for the common soldier. On May 10, 1968, Arterbury rebuked his Silver Star award for bravery and suggested that his fellow co-workers in the field are the real heroes: “You can tell anyone, I mean anyone who asks, exactly how I feel about the hero bit. They are only in comic books and television and movies. The so-called heroes over here are the guys trying to do their jobs and get home from this useless war.”¹ Finally, in a letter by Private First Class George Robinson, written to his “Mom” in 1966, the soldier remarks on the transformation that occurred in his view of the grunt:

I’ve seen some things happen here lately that have moved me so much that I’ve changed my whole outlook on life...I never had much respect for GIs even after I was in for a while, but since I’ve seen what his real job is, I have more respect for him than any man on earth. To shoot and kill somebody, turn your head and walk away isn’t hard, it’s watching him die that’s hard, harder than you could imagine and even harder when it’s one of your own men.¹

From these letters, one can see how soldiers developed mutual respect for the hard, physical labor they endured together. The actual work process forged these networks of solidarity, as troops came to depend on each other for survival, for emotional support, and for courage.

The teamwork of grunts provided the scaffolding that cemented the company’s cohesion. The work process depended on the technical skill of soldiers that performed interdependent roles. It was also the unity of combat, forged by their daily grind, which moved soldiers to establish close-knit communities that shared bonds of intimacy and that countered the military system of discipline.

Soldiers developed an admiration and respect for each other, and their mutuality cultivated a means of survival through the brutal conditions of war. Soldiers discussed their experience in the language of collectivity and developed bonds of friendship, viewing the common soldier and teammate as everyday hero.

Collective action was imbedded within the very nature of the work process, and it expressed itself in a wide range of responses, including both revenge and resistance.

The soldiers' rebellion can be more fully understood by examining the contradictory emotions of war that transformed their missions from "search and destroy" to "search and evade."

From Search And Destroy To Search And Evade

*What profit hath man of all his labour wherein he laboureth under the sun?
Ecclesiastes 1:3*

Due to the conditions of counterinsurgency warfare in Vietnam, there was neither a traditional "front" nor grand epic battles as in World War II.

Instead, grunts participated in "search and destroy" missions, the main tactic employed throughout the war by all fighting units.¹ Search and destroy missions, as designed by General Westmoreland, meant to "find, fix, and finish" enemy forces and their base and supply areas, not acquiring territory as in previous wars.¹ "Search, destroy, count the bodies, move on," as Marilyn B. Young described in *The Vietnam Wars*.¹

Search and destroy missions, later renamed "reconnaissance in force operations," remain a controversial aspect of the war.

In *Self-Destruction, The Disintegration and Decay of the United States Army During the Vietnam War*, Cincinnatus argues that "search and destroy" reduced the war to no more than a killing spree, as "body counts" and a battle of death statistics became the primary means to tally military progress.

The pressure for high body counts, including weekend passes in some units and opportunities for promotional advancement, often led to fraudulent death counts by officers and troops. Beyond the inflation of numbers, "search and destroy" missions also exposed the brutality of the war. Civilians often became targets, and My Lai and the recent expose of the war crimes committed by Tiger Force are blatant examples of how the war bred savagery within the troops.¹

Christian Appy suggests another controversial aspect to "search and destroy."

Since the lower enlisted fought on the ground, these troops would search out the enemy, acting as "bait."

These soldiers would then call in for air support, bombs and napalm fired from helicopters and planes, which often put their own working-class lives at risk from both enemy and friendly fire.

In contrast, the higher ranking officers, largely middle and upper-class men, manning the air support vehicles could fly away easily, far away from harms' way.¹

Appy's class analysis of "search and destroy" missions are given further credence by the fact that of the more than 58,000 U.S. personnel killed during the war, only one general and eight colonels died from enemy fire.¹

Yet the debates around "search and destroy" missions center on portraying the soldier as victim. By instead focusing on the grunt's vantage and by locating the footing of these missions on the terrain of the soldier, the narrative of search and destroy missions, and their later cessation during the final years of the war, takes on a new light.

In fact, soldiers interpreted the war from the perspective of the harsh nature of their work and their consciousness reflected the same complexity that is the human experience. To understand the life of a grunt, one must understand the conflicting emotions of the experience of combat that led soldiers to move from "search and destroy" to "search and evade," from savagery to mutiny.

To begin with, search and destroy depended on the backbreaking labor of forced marching across the plains, mountains, and deltas of Vietnam, known in the explicit and gendered language by troops as "humping the boonies," that shaped the experience and the consciousness of the troops who served. John Lawrence, war correspondent for CBS News, described the harrowing detail of this work in 1970:

"Vietnam is twelve months of physical torture, endless hours of forced marching, sweating under the tropical Asian sun, grunting and groaning in the harness of a ninety pound pack, soaking in the rains of the monsoon, fighting off insects and crawling lizards, swallowing tasteless food crammed into cans, nursing the infected skin sores called jungle rot, collapsing every day with blistered feet and cramped muscles, and enduring the very private agony of memories of back in the world and each man's separation from his friends and folks—this for one year is their world."¹

Soldiers also portrayed the brutal nature of their work in letters they wrote home. In 1969, Michael Romano wrote to "Honey," "The whole company goes out looking for VC [Viet Cong]. Today we went through the rice paddies, and I never saw so much mud in all my life. I was covered with it."¹

In a series of letters to "Connie," written in 1969 as well, Salvador Gonzalez described, "First it rained for six days solid, I got muddy and wet. The jungles have thousands of leeches and mosquitoes of which I think I have gotten bitten almost all over my body...I'll tell you, the worst part of it all is that you walk all day with a 70-lb. pack on your back, up and down the hills."¹ A letter by George Olsen in 1969 captures a similar portrayal of the life of a soldier, "I've just come in from one mission that started out terrible. [We had] to hump three clicks [kilometers] over the most abominable terrain I've ever had the misfortune of encountering. It has become my opinion that the national flower of Vietnam should be an immense thorn."¹ These letters portray a unique perspective of how "search and destroy" depended on the hard physical labor of the rank and file soldier.

Poetry was another means to express the life of the soldier, also revealing the conflicting emotions at the heart of the soldiers' consciousness. Bob Jackson composed a poem describing the world of "search and destroy" missions that he read in a national

television broadcast by CBS news in 1970, providing a glimpse of the wide range of emotions felt by soldiers:

***The heat and the stench of the air;
The sick feeling in your stomach day after day;
The smell of body odor and the choking dust in your throat;
Eyes that burn from sweat and are tired and painful from squinting;
The ache in your back and neck while you stand waiting to move;
And a pause, for a minute, and a quick cigarette.***

That deserted second from reality, when your whole body reeks with tension, and an unknown sound or a shadow in the bamboo.

Each day that goes by, and the disappointment you feel every time you look at a calendar in a hypocritical way and the time seems to disappear.

***When mail comes and there's a letter for you, which you embrace mentally and find it hard not to do physically.
That anticipation whiles you read, trying not to read it too fast for fear you'll miss something or it will all be over too soon.***

***A buddy who means the world to you,
Or who you sometimes despise and is a pain in the ass to have around.
Even here, even here there's natural beauty—the small flower on a patchy ground,
a bird's call, the grace of a butterfly.***

***But frustration and disappointment becomes a laughable thing,
But always there's the conflicting emotion—
The smile of saying "at home" and a cry.¹***

Jackson's poem, simple yet emotive, is an example of how soldiers viewed the daily grind of their work. Yet his poem reveals the complexity of feelings that also produced contradictory responses to the war. Jackson is ecstatic for mail call yet finds it challenging both mentally and physically; he cares for his buddies yet finds them "a pain in the ass"; he appreciates the physical beauty of Vietnam yet finds it a difficult place; and he smiles and yet cries at the saying of "at home." Such were the contradictions at the heart of the grunt's world.

Thus an understanding of the soldiers' lives in Vietnam must encompass the broad range of mixed emotions and contradictory responses to the war. To view the soldiers as static and unchanging simpletons is to not grasp how grunts may at one time engage in the utter barbarism of "search and destroy" and then on another day may also resist an order that puts their lives in harm's way. The story of the soldiers' rebellion in Vietnam therefore must include the complexity of human experience that on the one hand produced barbarism and cruelty, but on the other, also demanded the light at the end of the tunnel that was promised.¹

Veteran Stan Goff, author of *Hideous Dream* and *Full Spectrum Disorder: The Military in the New American Century*, began his military service in the U.S. army in January 1970 and served one tour in Vietnam in a light infantry unit and explained the dark transformation that took place within him.¹ Stan revealed how he arrived in Vietnam and truly believed in the Ozzie and Harriet American Dream and the John Wayne “Green Berets” movie stereotype, an experience common to white troops:

A lot of people really believed that we were going to Vietnam to defend the United States. You have to understand the climate back then. It was a post-McCarthy era, and we really did believe in the domino theory and the world communist conspiracy and all that and the beliefs that drive males to seek to actualize their masculinity in the context of the military.¹

Yet when Goff had been in Vietnam for only a few weeks, his unit murdered an older peasant woman who was simply hoeing her potato patch. The murder was revenge for a soldier in his platoon that had been killed by a booby trap a couple weeks earlier. Goff explains:

It's like we're going to go 'kill a nig for jo-jo.' We went out and found somebody that was out there doing something with no witnesses and they just shot her down. They cooked up a story and said she threw a grenade at them. This old woman couldn't have thrown a grenade five feet.¹

This incident was monumental in changing Goff's perception of the American Dream.

His belief system “shattered,” and he reconstructed his worldview “from the ground up, in the situation that I was in, surrounded by the people I was surrounded by.”¹

His choice of language also reveals the particular racist conditions that likely associated this action with white troops at a time when tensions between blacks and whites were at their peak, as discussed in a latter chapter.

One must also recognize the brutality towards women inherent in the soldiers' action at targeting an elderly peasant female. Since only men composed the combat troops, gender specific and male patterns of action tainted the responses of the troops and bred hostility towards the female population in Vietnam, including the frequenting of prostitutes, employing domestic servants at poverty wages, and even committing rape. In Vietnam, according to Jonathan Neale in *The American War*, there were hundreds of thousands of rapes. All wars breed terror, and soldiers took out their anger at the conditions of war and the world of death on women.¹

Stan began to take part in the atrocities that are a component of all wars but that made Vietnam infamous as the “bad war,” largely because a large and vocal anti-war movement opened a public space that allowed the exposure of war crimes, such as My Lai.

In addition, the Winter Soldier Investigation, held in Detroit in 1971 by the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, included the testimony of over one hundred veterans who testified about war crimes they either witnessed or committed.¹ Yet in my interview with Goff, he contended that rather than seeing U.S. soldiers as “Jeffrey

Dahmers,” a brutal serial murderer convicted in 1992 of crimes that included cannibalism and necrophilia, one must understand that any human in the same conditions would likely take part in similar brutal activities common to an occupying force. Stan revealed the conditions of the grunts’ world, the abyss of humanity, which he found himself in:

Three months in country I wasn’t different from anyone else. I was the same way. I had dehumanized the Vietnamese. That was my world then. Combat is about being exposed to all the possibilities of human action. It happened to all of us. It happens to everyone. You put any human being in the same circumstances and chances are something similar will happen to them. So it’s not atypical. This is what happens to people. What was shocking about it was the simplicity of it. The most shocking thing I think about taking human life is the banality of it because nothing really happens. You’re lead to believe that this is something like the ultimate taboo and then you transgress that taboo and nothing happens, the clouds don’t gather, the lightning don’t strike—nothing happens...and a lot of people go there and don’t want to go back and they like it there...they develop a thirst for that stuff.¹

Stan’s explanation of how the conditions of war bred savagery is echoed in similar oral histories of the war. For example in a Frontline expose, “The Bloods of ‘Nam,” aired in 1986 and based on interviews by Wallace Terry, one veteran states, “You start to be conditioned to it...I got to the point where I started to enjoy killing. I started to get a psychological high over it when I walked over a body, especially an enemy body. I would get a psychological lift from it.”¹ To the civilian who did not serve in Vietnam, such descriptions are stark reminders of the horror of war and the difficult existence that was the everyday life and world of the grunt.

[To be continued.]

Received:

Reporter Looking For Military Family Members Going To Ft. Bragg March 19

To: GI Special
From: Desmond
Subject: Atlanta Journal Constitution Looking for Military Families

Thought I'd put the word out through GI Special. The Atlanta Journal Constitution is looking for military families who plan to attend the March 19, rally in Fayetteville, NC.

If anyone from Georgia is able to interview, just send a message to me at gsuantiwar@yahoo.com, and I'll forward your contact info to the reporter.

"I got your contact info from Lou Plummer, who said you might be able to help me find Georgia folks who plan to take part in the March 19 march at Ft. Bragg. I'm especially interested in talking to families of people in the National Guard currently serving in Iraq, or relatives of Georgia National Guard who are about to deploy to Iraq."

"Do you know of any folks who fit this description who would be willing to talk to me?"

XXXXXX

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Received:

“I Wish You Luck On The Fort Bragg Demo”

From: L

To: GI Special

Sent: March 02, 2005 3:49 PM

Thank you so much for sending me your GI Special's for the past year. As a British reporter who's spent almost two years in Iraq, before, during and after the war, I've found it most interesting. So much of it chimes with what I know, while keeping me abreast of what you Americans are up to.

I wish you luck on the Fort Bragg demo.

Web Copies

For back issues see: GI Special web site at <http://www.militaryproject.org/> .
The following that we know of have also posted issues: www.gifightback.org,
<http://www.notinourname.net/gi-special/>, www.williambowles.info/gispecial,
<http://www.albasrah.net/magalat/english/gi-special.htm>

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