


GI SPECIAL 3A64:

CENTER OF PROTESTS

Anti-war activists say that Fayetteville will be one of the key spots for rallies on the second anniversary of the Iraq war. Three groups working to end the war are combining participation in the Fayetteville rally March 19 with their national conventions. The groups are:

- **Military Families Speak Out**
The organization is made up of people who have family members in the service and want them brought home.
- **Iraq Veterans Against the War:** Formed from men and women who have served in the military since Sept. 11, 2001, the group is advocating immediate withdrawal from Iraq.
- **Gold Star Families for Peace:** The group is affiliated with Military Families Speak Out. Gold Star Families is made up of people who have lost a loved one in the war on terrorism.



Staff photo

BRING THEM HOME NOW! Ft. Bragg Rally Gets Hot

March 2, 2005 By Allison Williams, Staff writer, The Fayetteville (NC) Observer

Three anti-war groups with military ties plan to hold national meetings here this month. Another group of activists from across the South will gather downtown.

And about two weeks from now, on the second anniversary of the war, thousands of protesters will rally again in Fayetteville.

March 19 promises a showdown on a subject that's particularly touchy in a military town. Activists are using Fayetteville as a national stage for promoting peace in what they call an effort to support the troops, yet much of their audience here may not see it that way.

The largest anti-war coalition in the nation, United for Peace and Justice, plugs the March 19 rally on the front page of its Web site: "Fayetteville is home to Fort Bragg - ground zero for the 82nd Airborne Division and many of the Army's elite units. It is also home to a growing base of anti-war activists and organizations: military folks, veterans, families of active-duty soldiers and veterans, students, workers, housewives, clergy, educators, all are part of a vibrant, and growing, statewide network."

The Web site for Military Families Speak Out, a group with more than 2,000 members, is more blunt: "Many from the 82nd Airborne Division and the Army Special Forces Command realize that those who really support them are their families and their community."

The appeal of the empty slogans and the yellow ribbon magnets of the right-wing pro-war zealots faded long ago. In 2005, real support for the troops means Bring Them Home Now!"

It began with a small but vocal group of people in Fayetteville, including Chuck Fager, director of the Quaker House, and Lou Plummer, a computer technician with a son in the Navy.

The two of them began talking to people across the country about Fayetteville. They traveled to national conventions and invited activists to attend a rally on the first anniversary of the war in 2004. On March 20, hundreds of anti-war protesters gathered at Rowan Park. A group of counter-demonstrators set up across the street. More than 100 police officers kept a watchful eye. Though demonstrators shouted at one another and motorcyclists revved their engines to drown out speakers in the park, both groups were peaceful. **["Hundreds" my ass. It was a good thousand. I know. I was there. T.]**

This year, when other activist groups foundered after the presidential election and the second anniversary neared, Fager and Plummer were ready.

"We had a plan, a date and a track record," Fager said.

Organizers soon had confirmation from national groups such as Military Families Speak Out, Iraq Veterans Against the War and Gold Star Families for Peace. They lined up well-known speakers, including Lila Lipscomb, the military mother featured in the film "Fahrenheit 9/11." **And it seemed as if Fayetteville's peace movement had arrived when Fager appeared last Wednesday night on the "The O'Reilly Factor," the Fox News Channel program.**

Last year's one-day rally has grown into a three-day event that will include a hip-hop concert March 18, the rally on March 19 and the national meetings March 20.

Like last year, the Old North State chapter of the national group Free Republic is planning a counter-demonstration. The group will be joined by veterans, military families

and members of Carolina Troop Supporters, a group of students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Lynn Huber is a chairwoman of the Old North State chapter. It hurts military families, she said, when people rally to oppose the war.

"It hurts their feelings because they are making tremendous sacrifices," Huber said. **"The anti-war people see them as evil, yet they are not. They (support the war) because they believe in the cause." [When Huber says the movement sees military families and troops as evil, she lies in her teeth. Unlike Huber, those opposed to the war don't want to see more dead and maimed troops in Iraq. If she thinks the war is so great, let her buy a ticket to Baghdad and go fight it herself. There are plenty of other non-military types over there. There is no excuse for the kind of filth that spews out of her mouth. None. Or for sitting safely at home letting others do the dying. That's behavior is simple cowardice.]**

But Fager says the protest is about supporting soldiers and military families. He believes Fayetteville is reaching a threshold, a time when the city will begin to see more soldiers speaking out against the war.

He isn't the only one who thinks so. Nancy Lessin, co-founder of Military Families Speak Out, says the idea for a national meeting in Fayetteville came from Fort Bragg families.

"Fayetteville is where we're going to have our national presence," Lessin said. "This is where we should all be. These are our loved ones; these are our members."

Military Families Speak Out is the mother group to Gold Star Families for Peace. It was founded by Cindy Sheehan in December after her son, Army Spc. Casey Sheehan, was killed in Iraq.

"I really believe that his death in this war was so needless, so senseless," she said. "He died for peace; he didn't die for violence.

"Our goal is to end the war before any more families have to suffer the way we suffered."

Veterans speak out:

While Military Families Speak Out and Gold Star Families hold their national meetings here, so will Iraq Veterans Against the War.

Mike Hoffman is a co-founder of the group and a former Marine who now lives near Philadelphia. When he got home from Iraq in 2003, people congratulated him on a job well done.

"I didn't feel like I did a great job," he said. "I didn't know where to turn."

He found support from Veterans for Peace and Vietnam Veterans Against the War. With the encouragement of both groups, Hoffman and other Iraq war veterans formed their

own group last summer. Hoffman said Vietnam Veterans Against the War inspired him and other Iraq war veterans.

"They were one of the major forces in ending the Vietnam War," Hoffman said. "That's what we all envision as the end game, when we are powerful enough to mobilize in front of the White House and demand withdrawal of the troops. We're not there yet, but Fayetteville is a huge step."

Iraq Veterans is still small, but it has members all over the country, Hoffman said, including soldiers from Fort Bragg. "This war affects Fayetteville more than most cities, probably more than any other in the nation right now," he said.

More than 10,000 soldiers from Fort Bragg are deployed in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Since early 2002, about 80 service members with ties to local military installations or from the Cape Fear region have been killed.

Iraq Veterans still keeps a close relationship with its parent group, Veterans for Peace. The group is headquartered in St. Louis and is led by Michael McPhearson, who grew up in Fayetteville and graduated from Seventy-First High School.

McPhearson said he attended last year's rally and plans to come here again. "It's not to come and say: People of Fayetteville - which are my people - you're wrong, you shouldn't be doing this. We - veterans, military families - we stand in solidarity with you. We want you to understand where we're coming from. Your children, our children, should not be there."

McPhearson said he felt strange, at first, returning to Fayetteville for the protest. "It felt like a homecoming, from my perspective, to talk to my people about the truth as I see it," he said. "Where did I get these ideals from? I got them from my mom, yes, but I still got it from the soil of my home."

Plummer and Fager go to great pains to tell people that the protesters who attend the March 19 rally will not all be outsiders. Many of them are people with close military connections.

Plummer cites himself as an example. He grew up in Fayetteville. He graduated from Westover High School and joined the National Guard in Raeford. His father served two tours in Vietnam.

Plummer didn't set out to become a peace activist, but he said the events after the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, propelled him to act. Plummer, Fager and others say they oppose the war, not only because they believe it has done more harm than good in Iraq, but also because they see the way soldiers are stretched thin.

"This war in Iraq is so horribly wrong, that it has mobilized people who wouldn't ordinarily speak out" Plummer said.

Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward this E-MAIL along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service

friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, at home and inside the armed services. Send requests to address up top.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

FOUR MARINES KILLED IN AL ANBAR PROVINCE

PATRICK QUINN, Associated Press

Friday, four U.S. soldiers were killed west of the capital in sprawling Anbar province, where American troops launched a massive sweep two weeks ago to root out insurgents, the military said. The soldiers were assigned to the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force

SOLDIER KILLED, ONE INJURED IN VEHICLE ACCIDENT NEAR TIKRIT

March 4, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 05-03-04C

TIKRIT, Iraq – **One Task Force Liberty Soldier was killed and another injured in a vehicle accident near Tikrit at about 10:00 p.m. March 4.** The injured Soldier was taken to a Coalition Forces medical treatment facility.

Bulgarian Soldier Killed

4 March 2005 Novinite Ltd

A Bulgarian soldier was killed near the Iraqi town of Diwaniya when unknown militants attacked Bulgarian patrol at 18.45, Bulgarian time, on Friday.

Private Gurdi Hristov Gurdev, 20, a machine gunner on an armored vehicle, was gravely injured in the attack which occurred on the Tampa road, some 40-45 km away from the Echo base, Defense Ministry announced in a press release.

He was immediately rushed to hospital, but doctors could not save him and Private Gurdev died before reaching it, the statement also said.

Second Woman Soldier From Colony Of Puerto Rico Dies In Iraq

Mar 3 (Prensa Latina)

Sergeant Lizbeth Robles, aged 31, became early Tuesday morning the second Puerto Rican military woman to die as a result of the US occupation of Iraq, sources revealed Thursday.

The soldier's death, when the US army truck on which she was traveling overturned near Tikrit town, increased to 25 the number of dead Puerto Ricans in Iraq.

The number of wounded soldiers from that Caribbean nation during the military occupation of Iraq by the foreign troops is still unknown.

Robles' corpse is expected to arrive on the Island between Sunday and Monday, her relatives confirmed.

She was a resident of the northern Vega Baja municipality, some 16 miles from San Juan.

Carlos Javier Gil, another Puerto Rican sergeant who died February 18 in the Iraqi city of Humaniyuh was buried Saturday in the military cemetery of Orlando, Florida.

Puerto Ricans, US citizens by virtue of a law passed by Congress 88 years ago, have participated in the armed conflicts in which Washington has taken part since World War I. [But of course they can't vote for President of the United States, which is only right, since Puerto Rico is an occupied colony, denied the right to self-determination for over 100 years.]

Iowa Soldier Injured In Iraq Dies

March 4, 2005 By Erin Jordan, REGISTER STAFF WRITER

An Iowa National Guardsman injured last weekend in a roadside bomb explosion in Iraq died this morning.

Spc. Seth Garceau, 22, of Oelwein, lost an eye, had a crushed trachea and broke his leg and jaw in the explosion early Sunday. He was at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany when he was taken off life support at 5:15 a.m. today, his grand-father, Ron Garceau, said.

Seth Garceau died at 8:30 a.m.

“Our son, his ex-wife and daughter are there now,” Ron Garceau said. “They kept him on life support until they got there.”

Greenburgh Marine Injured; “You See These Kids With No Hands, No Legs.”

March 4, 2005 By JOSEPH AX, THE JOURNAL NEWS

GREENBURGH — Lance Cpl. Cesar Sanchez, his eyes intently searching the side of the road through the scope of his rifle, suddenly halted the company of fellow Marines following him along the main highway between Baghdad and Fallujah that crosses the desert of Iraq.

They were patrolling on foot Feb. 8, looking for what the military calls IEDs — improvised explosive devices — and Sanchez, a 20-year-old from Greenburgh, had spotted one, half buried in the dirt.

The platoon set up a perimeter around the bomb for four hours, until the sun had set and experts arrived to defuse the device. Sanchez and the 20 to 30 Marines headed toward their base, the infamous prison known as Abu Ghraib.

Approximately 300 yards from the gate, the company was ordered to halt briefly and turn around. As Sanchez turned his head, he saw a flash through his night-vision goggles about two or three feet away and tried to twist away instinctively — an effort that may have saved his life.

The explosion from the undetected IED threw Sanchez to the ground, his leg in severe pain and blood seeping from wounds to his head and left eye. After treatment in Iraq, he was flown to a military base in Germany, where he learned the extent of the injuries.

His skull was fractured, and the nerves behind his left knee had been damaged. Shrapnel wounds pockmarked his left leg.

The doctor in Germany told him he would lose his left eye, hit by a piece of metal, but a second doctor at Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland, where he went for the first of two eye surgeries, told him he would eventually regain much of his sight.

“I knew I was pretty badly hurt, but I knew I was alive,” Sanchez said yesterday from his mother’s home in Reykjavik, Iceland, where he will spend four weeks before returning to the United States for a second eye surgery at the end of the month. “I had pain, so pain kind of tells you’re still alive.”

Sanchez’s eye, which is sensitive to light and wind, stays mostly shut, he said.

"I can't really see much out of it," he said. "I feel like I'm watching the world through a fogged-up window."

"He's one of the luckiest ones," his 49-year-old father, also named Cesar and a native of Peru, said in an interview at his Greenburgh home Wednesday. Sanchez's mother, Iceland native Arna Arnarsdottir, and his father are divorced.

"What depressed me most was the number of people injured in these hospitals," the elder Cesar Sanchez said. "You see these kids with no hands, no legs. Some of them have no eyes. It really makes me sad."

Endless daily media reports provide the rising number of U.S. military personnel killed in combat, but the number injured draws far less attention, Sanchez pointed out.

Sanchez was the only member of his platoon to suffer injuries from the blast

Two Mercenary Cops Killed Near Ashraf

March 03, 2005 The Associated Press

Two former U.S. servicemen, including one from North Carolina, were killed Thursday in an attack on a convoy near Ashraf while working for a private security company based in Nevada, a company spokesman said.

Jimmy A. Riddle, 53, of The Colony, Texas, and Brian J. Wagoner, 30, of Fayetteville, N.C., were together in a vehicle escorting a convoy of contractors to an ammunition storage point in Ashraf when an explosive device was detonated, destroying the vehicle and killing both men, spokesman Anthony Casas said in a statement.

They worked for Special Operations Consulting-Security Management Group Inc., or SOC-SMG, based in Minden, Casas said.

They were providing security to Tetra Tech FW Inc., which is under contract with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to destroy and capture enemy munitions in Iraq, he said. The attack occurred about 7:20 a.m. Iraq time on Thursday, he said.

Riddle, who served in the Marines, also had worked for the Texas Probation Department and several law enforcement agencies before SOC-SMG hired him in November 2003.

Wagoner served in the Army at Fort Bragg, N.C. and had law enforcement experience, Casas said.

Owners of SOC-SMG Inc. describe their firm headquartered 45 miles south of Reno near the Douglas County Airport as an "International Force Protection" security company.

U.S. Convoy Bombed In Mosul

03/04/2005 AFP and Turkish Press

In Mosul, a car bomb parked on the side of a freeway was detonated when a US military convoy passed by at about noon, said witnesses.

"I saw people come and park the car and then they got into an Opel that was waiting and sped away," said Mohammed Jassim Abdullah, a guard at a nearby riverside park.

There was no immediate comment from the US military on any casualties among its forces.

The explosion left a big hole on the road's shoulder, and remains of the vehicle were strewn everywhere, an AFP correspondent at the scene reported.

Freed Italian Hostage Wounded, Negotiator Killed, By US Fire: "Another Victim Of An Absurd War"

3/4/2005 AFP and Turkish Press & AFP & PATRICK QUINN, Associated Press & Reuters & By ROLAND FLAMINI (UPI)

ROME - Freed Italian journalist Giuliana Sgrena was wounded when US troops opened fire on a convoy carrying her to safety, and an Italian negotiator who helped secure her release was killed, her newspaper Il Manifesto said here Friday.

The intelligence agent was killed when he threw himself over Sgrena to protect her from U.S. fire, Apcom quoted Gabriele Polo, the editor of the leftist Italian newspaper Il Manifesto, as saying. Sgrena works for Il Manifesto.

Italy's Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi confirmed that Sgrena had been wounded and an Italian secret service agent killed by US troops at a coalition checkpoint in Iraq.

The journalist was taken to a US-run hospital for treatment for wounds to her shoulder after her vehicle was fired on by US troops at a coalition checkpoint, her newspaper said, adding that the 54-year-old journalist's life was not in danger.

The negotiator, an Italian secret service agent, was shot dead in the incident as he tried to protect Sgrena, the paper said.

The ANSA news agency said two other Italian secret service agents were wounded. It is not known if they returned fire.

The incident occurred at Camp Victory, the US military headquarters adjacent to Baghdad International Airport.

Gabriele Polo, the editor of Il Manifesto newspaper, said Sgrena's car was fired on as it made its way to Baghdad airport.

"This news which should have been a moment of celebration, has been ruined by this fire fight," Polo told Sky Italia television.

"An Italian agent has been killed by an American bullet. A tragic demonstration which we never wanted that everything that's happening in Iraq is completely senseless and mad," he added, struggling to fight back his tears.

Only shortly before, the Italian government had confirmed Sgrena's release, exactly a month after she was kidnapped near a Baghdad mosque while on assignment in Iraq.

In Rome, the immense joy and relief at the news of her release quickly turned to concern and anger.

Sgrena's brother Ivan confirmed on Italian state television RAI that she had been wounded.

"There's little to say. The Americans nearly killed her," Sgrena's companion Pier Scolari was quoted as saying by the ANSA news agency.

Sources at the newspaper said the US troops had opened fire when the convoy in which Sgrena was travelling reached a coalition road-block as it was speeding towards Baghdad airport.

The newspaper named the dead man as Nicola Calipari, saying he was hit while trying to protect Sgrena.

Il Manifesto's editor Gabriele Polo paid tribute to the Italian agent, crediting him with Sgrena's release.

"Nicola Calipari is the person we must thank most for Giuliani's release. Unfortunately, he was killed by American bullets," said Polo.

Italy's Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi said his government had summoned Washington's ambassador to Rome to explain the wounding of Ms Sgrena and the killing of a member of her Italian escort.

Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, an ally of the United States who has kept Italian troops in Iraq despite public opposition at home, demanded an explanation "for such a serious incident, for which someone must take the responsibility."

Berlusconi said he had been celebrating Sgrena's release with the editor of Il Manifesto, and with Sgrena's boyfriend, Pier Scolari, when he took a phone call from an agent who informed them of the shooting.

"It's a shame that the joy we all felt was turned into tragedy," Berlusconi said.

The shooting came as a blow to Berlusconi, who has kept 3,000 troops in Iraq despite strong opposition in Italy.

The shooting was likely to set off new protests in Italy, where tens of thousands have regularly turned out on the streets to protest the Iraq war. Sgrena's newspaper was a loud opponent of the war.

"Another victim of an absurd war," Alfonso Pecoraro Scanio, leader of the Green Party, told Apcom.

Iraqis have reported numerous incidents where confusion at U.S. checkpoints has led to U.S. soldiers killing innocent civilians.

The shooting is also likely to deepen anti-American sentiment in Italy: if President Bush was not popular before, he is likely to be less so now.

Italian media quoted a military spokesman in Baghdad, U.S. Army Sgt. Don Dees, as saying that the car "was approaching a roadblock manned by coalition forces at high speed" and the soldiers had opened fire from an armored vehicle.

"U.S. troops always have the right to defend themselves when they feel threatened," Dees said, according to the Milan newspaper Corriere della Sera's website. [If so, then true also for Iraqis "when they feel threatened" by Bush's occupation of their country. Works both ways.]

TROOP NEWS

Marine Vet Reports Recruiters Infesting NY City Subways

From: AR: (USMC ret'd) & Iraq Veterans Against The War

To: GI Special

Sent: March 04, 2005

Subject: Desperate Recruiters Try Subway

Hey T, how's it going?

I've got something for GI Special.

Seems like college students' info isn't safe from recruiters either.

I was recently contacted (twice) by an army recruiter who had gotten my contact info from my college.

I've heard of the 'No child left behind act', but didn't think it applied to institutions of higher education.

Luckily, there is the Solomon Amendment, which states military recruiters shall have:

(2) access by military recruiters for purposes of military recruiting to the following information pertaining to students (who are 17 years of age or older) enrolled at that institution (or any subelement of that institution):

(A) Names, addresses, and telephone listings.

(B) Date and place of birth, levels of education, academic majors, degrees received, and the most recent educational institution enrolled in by the student.

And like the 'No child... act', schools that do not comply have their federal funding revoked.

I also want to point out that this recruiter was given my info, but had no idea that I had served 4 years in the Marines and that I am an Iraq Veteran.

If you would like to read this amendment, here is the link:

<http://www.yalerotc.org/Solomon.html>

Oh, and speaking of desperate recruiting measures, a friend of mine saw recruiters going through subway cars and talking to people about the Army.

Up to this point, I only knew that they did this in subway stations.

Gee, I wonder why nobody wants to join...

Keep up the good work. Ttyl.

[Check out Iraq Veterans Against The War: <http://www.ivaw.net/index.php?id=17>]

The IVAW Mission

Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) is a group of veterans who have served since September 11th, 2001 including Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation

Iraqi Freedom. We are committed to saving lives and ending the violence in Iraq by an immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces.

We also believe that the governments that sponsored these wars are indebted to the men and women who were forced to fight them and must give their Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, and Airmen the benefits that are owed to them upon their return home.

We welcome all active duty, national guard, reservists, and recent veterans into our ranks.

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)

“What Are We Doing Here?” “We Didn’t Train For This”

March 4, 2005 Rory Carroll, The Guardian

The city was quiet but the soldiers sitting and swaying inside the Stryker were animated by their favorite debate: was it better to be five meters or 20 meters from an explosion?

The front gunner belonged to the 20-meter school, figuring the greater distance reduced your chances of losing limbs to the blast. The two rear gunners scoffed and said that would increase the odds of being hit by shrapnel, which fanned upwards and outwards.

Five months of patrolling Mosul had furnished evidence for both views and the discussion was as well-worn as the Stryker’s tires.

Sergeant David Phillips, 23, sighed and patted his flak jacket. “I just want to stay alive and go home with all my body parts.” He spoke for 150,000 American soldiers in Iraq.

“I don’t tell my mom or my wife that we drive up and down streets getting blown up every day. They’d just worry all the time. I tell them we sit in the base and do the odd mission,” said Sgt Nathan Purdy, who is 23.

A week embedded with Bravo company, midway through a year-long stint in an insurgent stronghold, showed a group of men with good morale and determination to catch “bad guys” but divided over the war and frustrated by an elusive enemy.

A tip about weapons caches this week led to a midnight mission to dig up a lawn. It yielded nothing.

“Fucking gardeners – what are we doing here?” asked one private. “And tomorrow we’re giving out candy to kids again,” replied his friend. “We didn’t train for this.”

Clear And Decisive Command Leadership

February 16 By Will Dunham (Reuters)

"I'd say the insurgents' future is absolutely bleak." -- Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Feb 25, 2005 (Reuters)

The insurgency in Iraq is not likely to be put down in a year or even two since history shows such uprisings can last a decade or more, the United States' top military commander Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said on Friday.

Saving Paredes

March 4, 2005 by Elizabeth Weill-Greenberg. CommonDreams. Elizabeth Weill-Greenberg's work has appeared in The Nation, Truth Out, In These Times, mtv.com and The Amsterdam News. Her email address is elizabethwg@gmail.com

When Pablo Paredes, then an 18-year old from the South Bronx, joined the Navy he was only concerned with survival. Little did he know that a few years later he would make national news when he refused to board a ship ferrying soldiers to fight in Iraq.

"I came from that survival nature where you're more worried about putting bread on the table than you are about getting A's on your tests," Paredes said in a telephone interview with the Amsterdam News. "If it paid for my bills then it was important to me at that time."

On December 6, 2004 Paredes reported to the 32nd Street Naval Station in San Diego and told reporters his decision not to board, which could result in military prison time, court martial and a dishonorable discharge.

"Here you are carrying people to their death, and to criminal actions and to murder," Paredes said of his orders that day. "I knew I wasn't going to do it Rather than do it in a way that compromises my integrity, I'd rather just be honest about it."

Paredes began preparing a conscientious objector application and turned himself in to Naval authorities on December 18th.

Like many anti-war soldiers who have come before him, his opposition developed during his time in the military.

In 2000, Paredes was working two jobs and attending college but he still couldn't afford his tuition. He considered getting a third job but, on his military recruiters' promises of educational opportunities, he opted to join the Navy instead.

Two years later, he went to Japan where he met people outside the military who spoke critically about US military interventions. Paredes had not given much thought to political issues before; the Navy was simply a job for him.

"It pushed me to get very educated as far as political ramifications of the military, especially as a Latino," Paredes said. "It was a birth of a different identity for me."

By the time he returned to the United States in 2004, Paredes was wrestling with his participation in the military and his moral opposition to all war. To avoid any involvement with the Iraq war, he unsuccessfully tried to switch jobs to work as a military police officer, checking Identifications stateside.

Paredes' new convictions were eventually tested when he was ordered to board a ship that would bring soldiers to Iraq.

"I don't want to be a part of a ship that's taking 3,000 Marines over there, knowing a hundred or more of them won't come back," he told reporters on December 6th. **"I can't sleep at night knowing that's what I do for a living."**

Paredes and his brother, Victor, are speaking out, telling Pablo's story wherever they can. Victor said he hopes that New York politicians - from city council members to senators - will issue statements of support for his brother. Senator Hillary Clinton's office has expressed interest, he said. **Clinton's office was not available for comment.**

Senator Chuck Schumer and Congressman Jose E. Serrano did not return requests for comment. Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrion declined to comment.

Paredes is joining a growing number of soldiers who are protesting the Iraq war, by refusing orders, going AWOL, fleeing to Canada or speaking out. There are not as many deserters and anti-war soldiers as during the peak of the anti-Vietnam war

movement. However, soldiers and their families are organizing against this war earlier on than their counterparts during Vietnam.

Iraq Veterans Against the War was founded in July 2004, a little over a year after the war began. Vietnam Veterans Against the War was created in April 1967, about five years after the Vietnam war started. And unlike the Vietnam war, military families have been at the forefront of demonstrations against the Iraq war. More than 2000 families belong to Military Families Speak Out which was formed before the US even attacked Iraq.

Some of the most outspoken anti-war soldiers and military families are Latinos, Paredes said. One resister who has attracted international attention is Camilo Mejia, a 28-year old soldier who was recently released from military prison for refusing to return to Iraq. Fernando Suarez del Solar, whose son was killed in Iraq, travels the world, talking about his opposition to the war.

"I think it's by no accident that some of the people who have come out more vocal have been Latinos," said Paredes, who is Puerto Rican. "There's this conflict inside of us just because of the history of what the US military has done in our countries that makes us question things."

Despite soldiers' rising voices, many in the defense department dismiss the notion that there is significant resistance in the military, pointing to numbers which show desertion rates dropping from about 8300 in 2001 to about 5100 in 2004.

Military data show desertion rates decreasing but Steve Morse of the GI Rights Hotline says that the calls they receive illustrate a different trend - from 17,000 in 2001 to more than 32,000 in 2004. Thirty percent are from service members who are AWOL or are thinking about deserting, he said. One website, www.tomjoad.org/WarHeroes.htm, lists (and applauds) the names of soldiers who publicly refuse.

While Paredes says he's received overwhelming support, there are some who call him a coward even though his job on the ship was far removed from danger.

"You drop somebody off to do dirty work and you sit around in the back in air conditioning, online chatting, getting hero status," he said. "What am I afraid of? A paper cut? It has nothing to do with fear."

How You Can Help Pablo:

For contributions to Pablo's cause kindly send check payable to: Victor Paredes/San Diego Military Counseling Project Pablo Paredes Cause/P.O. Box 15307/San Diego, CA 92175

Army Reserve Misses February Recruitment Goals

March 4, 2005 By Lisa Burgess, Stars and Stripes

The Army Reserve missed its goals in February, for the second month in a row.

“People are watching the news,” said Doug Smith, a spokesman for U.S. Army Recruiting Command at Fort Knox in Kentucky. “They know the risks of military service in today’s environment.”

In the Army Reserve, the recruiting goal for the month was 1,320, but only 990 new reservists joined the service.

January’s recruiting goal for the Army Reserve was also missed, marking the first monthly shortfall for the component since September 2003, Smith said.

For the Army and Army Reserve, the February shortfalls leave both components short for the fiscal year, as well.

The goal for the Army Reserve is 22,175. By the end of February, the component was supposed to have recruited 5,587 of those soldiers. But the Army Reserve missed that goal by 643 soldiers.

“We knew it was going to be a difficult year,” Smith said.

OOPS



IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Iraq Resistance Seizes Initiative: “Foreign Armies Are A Problem, Not A Solution.”

4 March, 2005 By Jim Muir, BBC News, Baghdad

A spate of recent attacks in Iraq has underlined the determination of the insurgents to regain the initiative.

One security analysis showed 727 insurgent attacks of one sort or another in February, with 627 people killed, including 42 members of the Multi-National Force, 213 Iraqi security personnel, and 329 civilians.

“Having foreigners around is the wrong way to approach a disgruntled population,” said one senior official. “Foreign armies are a problem, not a solution.”

Police Chief Killed

03/04/2005 AFP and Turkish Press

BAGHDAD – A police chief was killed near his home in south-central Iraq Friday, said the Polish military, which is deployed in the region.

“Today in the morning hours, Al-Budair police chief Colonel Ghaib Hadab Zarib was killed,” a military statement said. “His body was found near his house. The unknown attackers shot at him using an AK-rifle.”

Al-Budair is 35 miles east of Diwaniyah.

<p>IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATION</p>

More Resistance Action:

03/04/2005 AFP and Turkish Press & Khaleej Times

In Baghdad, a series of explosions that appeared to be a mortar attack rocked the northern side of the city at around midday and the bridge connecting the Sunni

Adhamiyah district with Shiite Khadimiyah on the east bank was blocked with rocks.

North of Samarra, a police colonel was captured along the highway between Bayji and Mosul, police said.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

The People Back Home Don't Know Shit

From: Mike Hastie, U.S. Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71
To: GI Special
Sent: Wednesday, March 02, 2005 3:28 AM
Subject: Falluja

I read G.I. Special for March 1st.

The narrative for the Fallujah piece was very powerful.

I must share that with some high school kids. It would make John Wayne's dick look pretty tiny.

God, where do we get all of these fools? All the paper tigers, where do they all come from?

I am going to leave you with a little poem I wrote tonight after I read the Fallujah piece. It is creative writing that came out of my collective memory from so many people I have met, and have not met.

Mike

The People Back Home Don't Know Shit

**In war, sometimes you kill everything, including the insects.
That's because you have to kill your fear.
And when it's over, and everything is dead,
you can then take a break.
Heroes?
The people back home don't know shit.
Anonymous**

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.

“Tyrants” Who Love The U.S. Empire Are Just Fine

Mar 3, 2005 By F William Engdahl, Asia Times Online Ltd.

Historically Washington has had no problem befriending some of the world's all-time tyrants, as long as they were "pro-Washington" tyrants, such as the military dictatorship of President General Pervez Musharraf in Pakistan, a paragon of oppression.

We might name other befriended tyrants - Ilham Aliyev's Azerbaijan, or Islam Karimov's Uzbekistan, or the al-Sabahs' Kuwait, or Oman. Maybe Morocco, or Alvaro Uribe's Colombia.

There is a long list of pro-Washington tyrants.

For obvious reasons, Washington is unlikely to turn against its "friends". The new anti-tyranny crusade would seem, then, to be directed against "anti-American" tyrants.

OCCUPATION REPORT

US Prisons In “Sovereign” Iraq Holding “More People Than Ever”

“Reporter” Refuses To Report Guards’ Complaints

March 5, 2005 By Edward Wong, The New York Times

Abu Ghraib: The U.S. military's major detention centers in Iraq have swelled to capacity and are holding more people than ever, senior military officials say.

The military swept up many Iraqis before the Jan. 30 elections in an attempt to curb violence and halted all releases before the vote. Other detainees have been captured in ambitious recent offensives across the Sunni Triangle, from Samarrato to Falluja to the Euphrates River Valley south of Baghdad.

As of this week, the military was holding at least 8,900 detainees in the three major prisons, 1,000 more than in late January.

In Abu Ghraib, where eight U.S. soldiers were charged last year with abusing detainees, 3,160 people were being kept, considerably more than the 2,500 considered ideal, said Lieutenant Colonel Barry Johnson, a spokesman for the detainee system. **[Wrong. "Zero" would be ideal, and after the Iraqis win their war for independence from the Bush Occupation dictatorship, that's how it will be.]**

The largest center, Camp Bucca in the south, had at least 5,640 detainees.

One hundred so-called high-value detainees, including Saddam Hussein and his aides, were being held at Camp Cropper, near the Baghdad airport.

"We're very close to capacity now," Johnson said.

The military must hire enough effective interrogators and military intelligence officers to process detainees quickly, said Bruce Hoffman, an analyst at the RAND Corporation who has worked in Iraq with U.S. policymakers.

Otherwise, innocent people languishing in the prisons, a fertile recruiting ground for the insurgents, could take up arms when they were freed. ["Could?"]

On a recent morning at Abu Ghraib, military policemen marched 50 handcuffed men from a convoy that had just arrived from Tikrit, Saddam's hometown. Old and young, the detainees wore thin shirts or robes.

A sign on a concrete blast wall read, "No Parking: Detainee Drop Off Zone." Guards stood watch in towers along walls laced with razor wire. The detainees huddled quietly on the ground outside a squat building where they would be processed. **Soon they would be asked to put on orange jumpsuits. [This reporter really is a hack for the occupation. Check the wording: "asked." We're supposed to think somebody politely inquires if the prisoner would like a nice orange jump suit instead of his or her own clothes?]**

At the main gate, minibuses took families in for visits. Many of the visitors were solemn young children and unsmiling women in black robes.

Some military policemen complain of understaffing and of being overworked. ["Some?" How many? What specific complaints? What did they say? Maybe they hoped this reporter would get the truth out? They didn't know they were dealing with a shill for the Pentagon. So, of course, there isn't one lousy quote

from the guards, is there? Oh no, then the command wouldn't love this reporter any more. Boo hoo.]

A senior U.S. commander said there was little danger of "serious overcrowding" in the system.

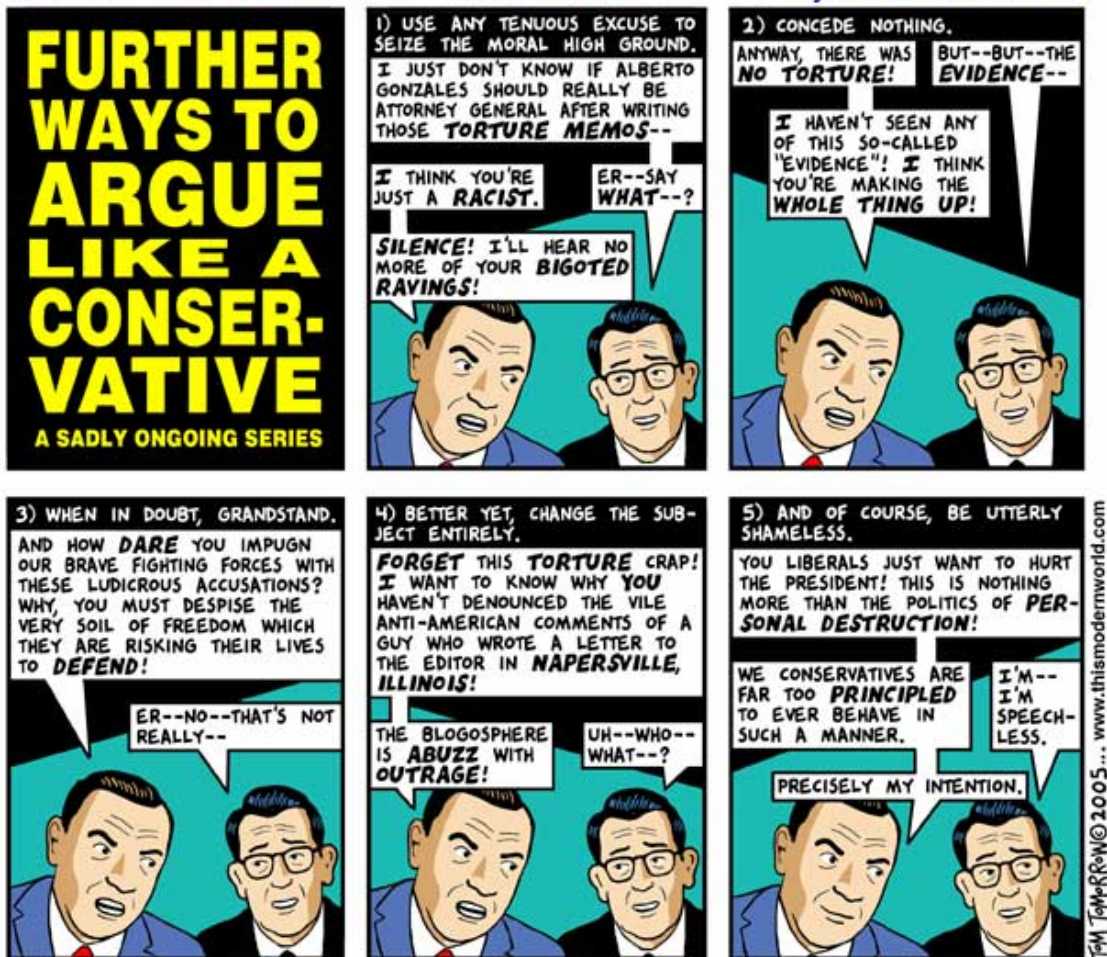
Although this reporter arrived at Abu Ghraib on the military police convoy from Tikrit, soldiers at the prison did not allow the reporter to look inside any of the compounds. [Gee, why could that be? Well, nobody trusts an ass-kisser.]

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



Bush Says Elections Can't Be Fair With Occupation Troops Present

[THANKS TO B WHO E-MAILED THIS IN: B WRITES: BUSH'S LATEST HYPOCRISY: "I don't think you can have fair elections with Syrian troops there."

SO SYRIAN TROOPS HAVE TO LEAVE BEFORE ELECTIONS ARE FAIR BUT U.S. TROOPS HAVE TO STAY BEFORE ELECTIONS ARE FAIR.]

Mar 4, WASHINGTON (Reuters) - President Bush said in an interview published on Friday that Syria should pull all of its troops out of Lebanon by May to clear the way for fair elections.

"I don't think you can have fair elections with Syrian troops there," the president said.

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Donate Money To Israel

March 04, 2005 Adrian Cornea, elkorg 3

A man arrives to the Ben Gurion International Airport in Tel Aviv with two large bags.

The customs agent opens the first bag and finds it full with money in different currencies.

The agent asks the passenger, "How did you get this money?"

The man says, "You will not believe it, but I traveled all over Europe, went into public restrooms, each time I saw a man pee, I grabbed his penis and said, "donate money to Israel or I will cut your balls off."

The customs agent said, "well... it's very interesting story... what do you have in the other bag?"

The man said, "You would not believe how many people in Europe do not support Israel"

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

CLASS WAR NEWS

Capitalism At Work: Big Corporations Rip Off State Health Plan For Poor

03 March 2005 The Associated Press

Hartford, Conn. - Retail giant Wal-Mart, Stop & Shop supermarkets and Dunkin' Donuts top the list of Connecticut employers whose workers use the state's health insurance program for poor children and some parents, according to a new report.

Those three companies employ more than 2,600 adults who are parents or caretakers of children on the state's HUSKY A program. Most of those adults are also receiving state health coverage, the nonpartisan Office of Legislative Research determined.

The news comes as state legislators consider whether to continue providing coverage for the thousands of parents and caregivers of children on the HUSKY program. **The coverage costs taxpayers \$54 million to \$72 million annually.**

At least one top Democratic lawmaker suggested Thursday that big employers such as Wal-Mart should pick up more of that tab. House Majority Leader Christopher Donovan, D-Meriden, said large and successful corporations should provide health insurance coverage to more of their workers, or possibly pay a special tax to the state.

<p>"I was stunned to see that we are subsidizing the health care of some of the richest companies in the United States of America," he said. "These are companies who can afford health care for their employees."</p>

But As Long As The Rich Are Happy, It's Ok, Isn't It?

02/03/05 by Michael Ventura "ICH"

The World Health Organization "ranked the countries of the world in terms of overall health performance, and the U.S. [was]...37th." In the fairness of health care, we're 54th. "The irony is that the United States spends more per capita for health care than any other nation in the world" (*The European Dream*, pp.79-80). Pay more, get lots, lots less.

"The U.S. and South Africa are the only two developed countries in the world that do not provide health care for all their citizens"

Lack of health insurance coverage causes 18,000 unnecessary American deaths a year. (That's six times the number of people killed on 9/11.) (NYT, Jan. 12, 2005.)

"U.S. childhood poverty now ranks 22nd, or second to last, among the developed nations. Only Mexico scores lower"

The United States is 41st in the world in infant mortality. Cuba scores higher (NYT, Jan. 12, 2005).

Women are 70 percent more likely to die in childbirth in America than in Europe (NYT, Jan. 12, 2005).

"Of the 20 most developed countries in the world, the U.S. was dead last in the growth rate of total compensation to its workforce in the 1980s.... In the 1990s, the U.S. average compensation growth rate grew only slightly, at an annual rate of about 0.1 percent" (*The European Dream*, p.39). **Yet Americans work longer hours per year than any other industrialized country, and get less vacation time.**

Three million six hundred thousand Americans ran out of unemployment insurance last year; 1.8 million--one in five--unemployed workers are jobless for more than six months (NYT, Jan. 9, 2005).

The United States is 49th in the world in literacy (the New York Times, Dec. 12, 2004).

MARTHA'S PRISON REPORTS 12-MONTH WAITING LIST: Beats Out Harvard Business School As Top CEO Destination

March 3, 2005 The Borowitz Report

Domestic diva Martha Stewart, who saw the value of her stock soar since she began serving a five-month sentence at Alderson Federal Prison, has apparently now worked her magic on Alderson itself, which today reported a twelve-month waiting list of CEOs eager to do time there.

"Our phone has been ringing off the hook, and a lot of these CEO's haven't even committed a crime yet," said Alderson spokesperson Lucinda Colwin. "I'm like, rob a liquor store and then we'll talk."

Randall Trestman of the University of Minnesota's Graduate School of Business said that Ms. Stewart's stunning comeback has turned Alderson into "the place to be" for America's top corporate leaders.

"What Harvard Business School was in the eighties and the Internet sector was in the nineties, Alderson is today," he said.

CEOs whose companies' stocks have sagged in recent months may face increasing pressure from shareholders to commit crimes in order to snag a precious one-way ticket to Alderson, Mr. Trestman said.

"Becoming a convicted felon is no longer a stigma for CEOs," he said. "It's their fiduciary responsibility."

Across the country, crimes involving CEOs, from accounting fraud to car theft, have surged over nine thousand percent in the past two months - a trend that does not surprise Mr. Trestman.

"If, instead of buying Compaq Computer, (former HP CEO) Carly Fiorina had stolen a Compaq computer from a Circuit City store, she might still have her job today," he added.

Received:

A Call For Solidarity:

From: "kick och agneta leijnse"
To: GI Special
Sent: March 04, 2005 12:51 PM
Subject: NATO meeting

In our area in the north of Sweden there will be hold a very big NATO meeting.

Foreign ministers from about 50 countries will come to the meeting.

Among them Condolleezza Rice, USA and Jack Straw UK.

We are preparing for protest meetings and should be grateful for international support in this important matter. Please join us by mailing your support and sending this mail to organizations in your country that can be interested to oppose the aggressive military forces represented by these countries.

If you want more information about our actions please inform us.

Many greetings

Network for Global Peace and Democracy

Östersund Sweden
by Kick Leijnse

Help Protest Against An International NATO Conference In Sweden

An international NATO conference with all its members and its partners will be held in the north of Sweden on May the 24-25. Among other participants we can see the USA foreign minister Condoleezza Rice and UKs Jack Straw.

It will be held in the part of the country where we act and we and a big number of organisations in Sweden will cooperate to protest loudly against any participation of Sweden in this partnership.

We are living in a democratic country and can't accept an organisation that is oppressing such a big part of the world with its military force. We know that we have a world opinion backing us up and we will hand a list of opposing Swedish organisations as well as Swedish individuals to our minister of foreign affairs, who will be the host of this meeting.

To strengthen our protest it should be of big help if we could leave a list of protesting organisations from other countries, specially those countries that will be represented at this meeting, about 50.

I hope your organisation will send us a mail that confirms your protest to the oppressive politics represented by the NATO, and even send this mail to organisations in your country that could do the same.

All peace loving people in the world will thank you for your cooperation . After the anti NATO demonstrations we will send you a report with a list of the organisations that supported this protest.

We hope to hear from you,
Network for Global Peace and Democracy
Östersund Sweden
Kick Leijnse tel nr +46 63 51 97 60
ak_leijnse@hotmail.com

Web Copies

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