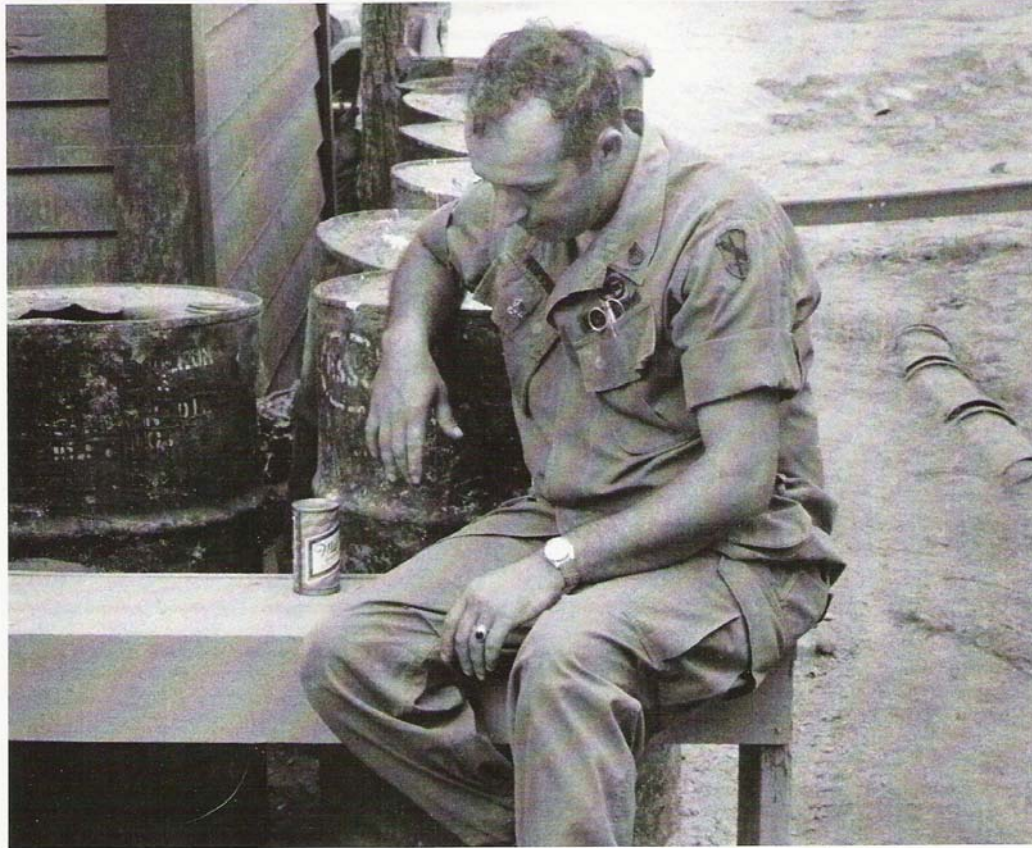


GI SPECIAL 3A66:



Mike Hastie Vietnam 1970

"The Last Field Dressing"

Above and beyond all things considered learn to forgive yourself. I don't care what you did or didn't do, try to forgive what you've considered the unforgivable. For there till simply come a day when you will finally understand that there is absolutely nothing else left to do. Bring loving people into your life because you cannot forgive yourself alone. If this was possible, you would have done so a long time ago. Expose the emotional silence so your wounds can finally be healed. Let the self-inflicted guilt die, instead of you.

**Mike Hastie
US. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71**

Photo and caption above from the I-R-A-Q (I Remember Another Quagmire) portfolio of Mike Hastie, US Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71. (Contact: hastiemike@earthlink.net) for more of this outstanding work. T)

Emotional Silence

From: Mike Hastie, March 06, 2005
To G.I. Special

I am including a quote, and a short piece I wrote two days ago.

I feel in my gut, that there are going to be a lot of suicides among Iraq Veterans as the years go by.

Day after day of urban warfare is going to catapult their adrenaline levels to another dimension. For starters, hypervigilance is going to be with them every time they step into a car when they get back to the States.

All these vets will probably want to buy heavy cars, like an SUV. I don't blame them. PTSD makes funny decisions for people, without them knowing why.

If the American people think this war is bad now, there is a lot more to come.

We will not win this war, because you cannot stop the resistance (notice I did not say insurgency) movement when it is embedded in the civilian population. Because, they are one in the same.

No doubt the Bush Administration will continue to try, and thousands of more Iraqi people will die, let alone American troops day after day.

It's all about Imperialist Ego, and the ego is a tireless hunter.

That was the final tragedy of the Vietnam War.

The U.S. government will not have a second chance to win a Guerrilla War. How many times do we have to beat this dead horse?

When resistance fighters or guerrillas are fighting for everything they believe in, that is a fierce opponent. This is not a football game, but excuse me for using an analogy:

The American End Zone has the statement, "You are now going home." The Iraqi resistance End Zone has the statement, "This is my home."

Which team is going to defend their goal the longest?

This is why we lost the Vietnam War. The Vietnamese had a very long history of defeating foreign invaders. Surrender was not a part of that history. They had tremendous patience, and staying power, which drove Johnson and Nixon crazy.

If your ancestors are buried on your land, how much is that land worth fighting for?

The Iraqi resistance will fight until death, and then they will be replaced by another generation who will do the exact same thing.

When I was in Vietnam, I saw the hatred on the faces of the Vietnamese people.

Do not underestimate the intelligence of revenge. THERE IS NOTHING WORSE THAN BEING TOLD WHAT TO DO IN YOUR OWN COUNTRY.

All the uninformed American people who support this war, where do they all come from?

This war is about corporate greed, and control of the Middle East.

American corporations are making a killing in Iraq off of the killing that American soldiers are forced to commit.

I did not serve in Vietnam for the cause of freedom, I served Big Business in America for the cause of war profiteering.

My daughter will put this statement on my tombstone.

It will not be an ego thing, it will be put there as a voice bearing witness.

The truth is the only thing worth living for--the only evidence of your humanity.

Well, as I said at the beginning, I will close with a quote, and something that was very difficult for me to write. Without honest, critical thinking news like G.I.Special, we are doomed as a society.

Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71

"The most revolutionary act is to name reality." Paulo Freire

"Emotional Silence"

**Countless American veterans self-destruct,
so they cannot squeal on the government.
Betrayal is ultimately the lethal injection.**

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

How The Blind Imperial Command Lost The War In Iraq

March 5, 2005 By Michael Schwartz, tomdispatch.com

The newest portrait of the resistance as a Zarqawi-Saddamist led amalgam will sooner or later die a lonely death -- in all likelihood to be replaced by yet another command-and-control portrait of the insurgency whose features are as yet unknown. As long as the U.S. continues to fight "with the army it has," it will also continue to generate -- and act on -- distorted (sometimes ludicrous) descriptions of the nature of the rebellion it faces.

Guerrilla wars violate the command-and-control portrait in two important ways: local units must, by and large, supply themselves (since an occupation army would be likely to interdict any regular shipments of supplies); and they are likely to have substantial autonomy (since hit-and-melt tactics do not lend themselves well to central decision making).

This lack of command and control is a curse and a blessing. On the negative side, lack of central coordination means that guerrilla armies are normally doomed to small, disconnected actions -- a severe limitation if the goal is to drive an enemy out of your country. On the positive side, they are less vulnerable to attacks on supply lines and to the targeting of commanding officers -- two key strategies of conventional warfare.

The resistance in Iraq reflects this dialectic of guerrilla war. The mujaheddin in Falluja, for example, seem to have been notoriously decentralized; even local clerical leadership reportedly achieved only a tenuous discipline over the troops. This same lack of discipline, however, made it impossible for the U.S. to identify and eliminate key leaders. During the second battle for the city in November, their hit-and-run tactics allowed them to hold out for over a month against a force with overwhelming technological and numerical superiority.

The command and control portrait is not a useful tool when it comes to analyzing a large component of the Iraqi resistance, and it is of little use if it is applied to the movement as a whole.

Nevertheless, the U.S. military has assumed such a structure at every juncture in the war.

In the Fall of 2003, when the resistance first began to trouble the occupation, U.S. military strategy was based on the conviction that the resistance was led by Saddam Hussein and the "deck of cards" leadership. Here we see command-and-control logic applied for the first time.

By mid-December 2003, the occupation forces had arrested or killed the vast majority of the men on that deck of cards, while Saddam's sons Uday and Qusay Hussein had died in a spectacular gun battle, and Saddam himself had just been captured in a dirt dugout. Occupation authorities confidently predicted that the Baathist "bitter enders" were done for and the resistance would subside, since without its leaders, local fighters were expected to be rudderless and ineffective.

Instead the disparate parts of the resistance became stronger, and in April 2004 emerged with a victory in Falluja -- after a siege of the city, the Marines pulled back without taking it -- and a bloody standoff in Najaf. By then, American intelligence had discovered Abu Massab al Zarqawi and declared that he was actually the linchpin of the resistance.

Once again, a command-and-control portrait of the enemy remained dominant, and the second battle of Falluja was fought in good part on the basis of that theory: to disrupt or destroy the Zarqawi leadership group. But despite the expulsion of the guerrillas (and just about the entire population of Fallujans) from the city, the rebellion quickly spread to other cities and intensified, refuting the claim that the decapitation of the movement would be incapacitating.

Even after these actions failed to quell the fighting, the occupation forces clung to command-and-control logic.

General Kamal, for example, told Newsweek, "Even if Zarqawi continues to elude capture, nailing al-Kurdi (one of Zarqawi's lieutenants) was a critical score. It might -- just might -- eventually help change the course of this war." Similar statements were made a month later when Saddam's half-brother, identified as a key leader and funder of the insurgency, was captured in Syria.

Evident in all of this is the faith that American military leaders have in a strategy of identifying and targeting the supposed leaders of the insurgency. Despite the direct evidence of an increasingly ferocious movement, the capture of a key leader, it has repeatedly been claimed, could "change the course of the war."

So why does the U.S. military relentlessly build its anti-insurgency strategy around the idea of decapitating the leadership of the Iraqi resistance? The answer lies just beneath the surface of Donald Rumsfeld's now infamous statement, "You go to war with the Army you have."

This is a comment pregnant with meaning for organizational sociologists, because it illustrates a familiar pattern of organizational problem-solving.

If a product is not selling well, for example, an engineering organization might conclude that better engineering of the product was in order; a manufacturing firm, that more efficient production technology was needed; and a marketing company, that better advertising would do the trick.

This sort of organizational idée fixe has led to some truly horrendous failures in business -- and military -- history.

For example, when a flood of automobile buyers began to demand fuel-efficient cars during the first oil crisis in the early 1970s, the American automobile industry did not have the capacity to produce such vehicles. Instead of investing vast resources in developing that capacity, it tried to use its superior marketing skills to win Americans back to luxurious gas guzzlers. That is, the Big Three "went to war with the army they had" and convinced themselves that they were facing a marketing problem. The results: a permanent crisis at General Motors (during which it lost world leadership in the industry), a fundamental restructuring of Ford, and the demise of Chrysler.

Or take the French in World War II. They knew about the new German tanks that had made World War I trench warfare obsolete, but the French army was only equipped to fight in the trenches. So they "went to war with the army they had," devising a trench-war strategy that they managed to convince themselves would contain the German Panzer divisions. They lost the war in three weeks.

The American army is also fighting with the army it has.

This army is the best equipped in the world for advanced conventional warfare -- with tanks, artillery, air power, missile power, battlefield surveillance power, and satellite imaging to support highly mobile, well equipped, and superbly trained soldiers.

No supply route is safe from its firepower, and no conventional army would be likely to hold its ground long against an American assault.

But the most intractable part of the resistance in Iraq is fighting a guerrilla war: they do not have long supply lines and they rarely try to hold their ground.

Guerrilla armies hide by melting into the local population. (Everyone knows this, including, of course, American military men.)

To defeat them, an occupying force must have the intelligence to identify guerrillas who can disappear into the civilian world; and it must station troops throughout resistance strongholds in order to pounce upon guerrillas when they emerge from hiding to mount an attack. American military strategists know this, too. **But these lessons -- painfully drawn from Vietnam -- can't be implemented by the army that Donald Rumsfeld sent to war.**

The Americans, in fact, have neither of these resources.

Anti-guerrilla intelligence, after all, requires the cooperation of the local population, which, at least in the Sunni-dominated areas of Iraq, the U.S. has definitively alienated, largely through its use of blunt-edged conventional army attacks on communities that harbor guerrillas.

And it cannot station enough troops in key locations because too small an occupation force is spread far too thinly over contested parts of the country. Estimates for the size of an army needed to pacify Iraq range upward from General Eric Shinseki's prewar call for "several hundred thousand" troops.

The American military simply lacks the tools it needs to fight the guerrillas, just as in the 1970s the Big Three automakers lacked the production system needed to produce fuel-efficient automobiles, and the French army lacked the technology it needed to defeat German tanks in 1940.

In response, military leaders are doing exactly what their organizational forbears did:

They continue to develop theories about how to win the war "with the army they have."

This backward logic leads inevitably to imagining an enemy that might be far more susceptible to defeat with the tools at hand; that is, an opponent with long supply lines (from Syria, for example) and a command-and-control leadership (Zarqawi and his Saddamist allies, for example) capable of being "decapitated."

This portrait of the enemy then justifies a military strategy that seeks, above all, to kill or capture the theorized leaders. Such tactics almost always fail (even when leaders are captured); and in the process of failing, only alienates further the Iraqi population, producing an ever larger, more resourceful enemy.

The newest portrait of the resistance as a Zarqawi-Saddamist led amalgam will sooner or later die a lonely death -- in all likelihood to be replaced by yet another command-and-control portrait of the insurgency whose features are as yet unknown. As long as the U.S. continues to fight "with the army it has," it will also continue to generate -- and act on -- distorted (sometimes ludicrous) descriptions of the nature of the rebellion it faces.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT THE NEW TRAVELING SOLDIER

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

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

TROOP NEWS

Only 39% Of Americans Think Iraq Worth The Lives Lost

March 02, 2005 By Arianna Huffington, Arianna Online

The latest Zogby poll shows that even in the aftermath of the post-Iraq election euphoria, just 39 percent of Americans think the war has been worth the lives lost fighting it.

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.

"There's A Bottom Line To The Recruiting Debate. People Don't Want To Die"

Mar 6, 2005 By Will Dunham, WASHINGTON (Reuters)

Staff Sgt. Richard Guzman is on the front lines of one of the U.S. Army's toughest battles in years, and he's not in Iraq.

He's an Army recruiter trying to coax young men and women into volunteering to serve at a time when U.S. ground forces are engaged in a bloody guerrilla war halfway around the world.

"To me, recruiting used to be easy. Right now, you really have to hunt for those ones who really want to do it (Army service)," said Guzman, who recruits in New York City's Harlem section.

Defense analyst Loren Thompson of the Lexington Institute said there has been a migration of recruits away from the ground forces toward services less likely to be in harm's way in Iraq -- the Navy and Air Force.

"There's a bottom line to the recruiting debate. People don't want to die," Thompson said.

The problem is even more dire than it appears because the Army, through "stop-loss" orders, has forced thousands of soldiers designated for duty in Iraq and Afghanistan to remain in uniform when their volunteer service commitment ends, thus keeping recruiting needs artificially low, Pena said.

Some of these soldiers may remain in the Army involuntarily for up to 18 months beyond when they were scheduled to leave.

"The military can hold things together on a relatively short-term basis through some fairly extreme measures like 'stop-loss' and making much greater use of Reserve and Guard units to fill the requirements in Iraq," Pena said.

"But you cannot do this indefinitely. At some point, you break the force. And the question is: how close are we to that breaking point?"

Arcata, California (Pop. 16,000) Debates The War And Sheltering Soldiers Who Refuse To Go

2/05 By Rebecca S. Bender, Arcata Eye Editor

[Thanks to Max Watts, who sent this in. The City of Arcata is located 250 miles north of San Francisco on the northeastern shore of Humboldt Bay.]

CITY HALL - Should Arcata support military personnel who refuse to serve in Iraq - even providing them protection from prosecution?

Last Wednesday, Feb. 16, the City Council took a broad look at that possibility.

It was a discussion-only agenda item, and with the exception of Councilmember Dave Meserve, who introduced the resolution at the request of Veterans for Peace, council members remained largely noncommittal, agreeing only to hold a Town Hall meeting on the subject.

Describing herself as a "major anti-war protestor for this war," Councilmember Harmony Groves nevertheless questioned the value of such a resolution. "The community needs healing and not a wedge," she said.

The council has considered a similar scenario before, in the last U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, and the heated uproar that accompanied its initial approval of a sanctuary resolution captured national attention. The resolution was ultimately rescinded, but many feel that the political division it revealed within the community has had long-lasting effects. The huge flag that waves on the west side of U.S. Highway 101, near the Mad River Bridge south of McKinleyville, was hoisted by citizens who protested Arcata's stand.

Councilmember Dave Meserve vehemently denied any comparisons with the 1991 conflict. "That was a different war," taking place in a different political and moral atmosphere, he said. "We're not doing that again."

Several residents cited the divisive nature of the resolution in declaring their opposition, however. **None defended the war itself**, but argued instead that the need to focus on local issues and strengthen the community should take first priority for the City Council.

"There is no question in my mind that the war is immoral," said Rick Green, a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion.

But he didn't buy the legal arguments leveled against it, either. Passing resolutions might "provide a moment of moral superiority," he said, but did little to affect anything on a large, tangible scale.

"Stop dragging our city into your private agenda," he urged. "The City Council needs to refocus on City business."

Maureen Walsh observed, "These things have a sense of grandiosity about them" that isn't reaching "regular people." Though she described herself as a liberal Democrat with a son is serving in Iraq, she told the council, "I wish you would stop."

"Consider the effects," Arcata Exchange owner Gene Joyce urged. Every time the City Council takes a stand on a broad political issue, he said, local businesses take a hit from consumers who choose not to spend their money in the City.

Arcata Auto owner Dennis McDonald echoed this assessment. "I have customers that will not drive into Arcata to shop," he stated. "We need to deal with the local stuff first."

Dave Ross countered that an equal number of people choose to shop in Arcata specifically because of its progressive policies.

And as for the argument that the council should keep its attention on local matters, Brian Willson of Veterans for Peace observed, the impacts of the fighting in Iraq are local - in their psychical no less than their financial effects. "I'm mystified at the lack of outrage," he said. With no accountability at the federal level, he asked, "Where else can we go?"

The resolution argues that the attack on Iraq violates the U.N. Charter, the Nuremberg Principles and the U.S. Constitution, and is therefore illegal and a "crime against peace."

Under the Uniform Code of Military Justice and the Army Field Manual, it continues, military personnel are required only to obey "lawful orders."

Therefore, it concludes, any orders to participate in the Iraq conflict or any other illegal war are themselves unlawful - and military personnel have a duty to disobey.

<p>It declares City support for U.S. troops who refuse to participate in the Iraq war and poses the possibility of forming a sanctuary to protect protestors from prosecution.</p>

A full page of references documents the legal support for the resolutions' findings.

But, argued Rick Green, the same documents could be used to prove that the fighting in Iraq is legal. "There is a clear difference between law and morality," he said.

Resident Forbes E. Forbes pointed out that, following the logic of the resolution, Meserve should also bring another resolution demanding immediate courts martial for U.S. troops who continue to serve.

Though only about 40 people turned out to the council meeting, residents are watching the issue carefully.

Former Northern Humboldt Union High School District boardmember Louis DeMartin remembered the chaos that followed the 1991 resolution, and predicted similar consequences from this attempt. "What it does - it leads to people that will boycott stores and it will affect the people that are just working, trying to make a living," he said.

"Everyone has the perfect right to do this; that's not the question," he clarified. But an ordinance protecting deserters is simply not within City jurisdiction: "Mike Thompson is the representative to do that," he observed.

Following nearly an hour of public comment, councilmembers declared themselves willing to consider more discussion in a Town Hall meeting.

"I feel fairly convinced; perhaps I need a little more convincing," Councilmember Paul Pitino said.

In addition to a continuing conversation, he suggested bringing an advisory initiative forward for residents to vote on the matter.

Mayor Michael Machi found the idea of a vote the most appealing aspect of the debate. "That gives us permission," he said. Without that, he explained, he could not justify pretending to speak for Arcata residents - and putting the entire town at risk for taking a stand that many do not support. "This is very nearly identical to what he [Bush] is doing," he charged. "I cannot support putting people at risk who do not do so voluntarily."

Previous resolutions have gone without effect, he said. "As far as I can tell, we have gotten no acknowledgment that we even exist," he assessed. "To boil all of those voices down, stick them in one piece of paper that no one in Washington acknowledges - It diminishes your voices."

He urged residents to call, write and visit their state and federal representatives, making statements directly and with full knowledge and acceptance of the consequences. "I want to be able to do something effective," he said.

Meserve took exception to Machi's and others' criticism.

"I'm really insulted," he replied to the charges that the council is ignoring local matters. Running down a list of issues the council has addressed in the past year, he declared, "This is what we do every day." When a matter with serious local effects comes to the council's attention, such as the conflict in Iraq, he continued, "then we have the right to bring this forward."

If anything, the resolution isn't strong enough for him. "I want teeth in this because I want to chew up this culture of war and I want to spit it out," he railed.

Groves questioned the practicality of offering sanctuary to those protesting war. "In action it would be very difficult for us," she said, pointing out that the City is struggling just to fund its police department. She supported further discussion, however.

Machi backed the Town Hall meeting only if the format is different than those followed in others. "I want to see what we can learn from each other," he said. He wanted a discussion, sitting around a table - not people "making statements to a camera."

A date for the Town Hall meeting will be brought back for approval at the next council meeting, along with the City Attorney's findings on putting forth an advisory initiative.

A Different Kind Of "Route Irish"



WAR-RESISTERS - 12 Feb 2005

In 2004 more than 158,000 US Troops flew through Shannon Airport, most on their way to Iraq. During much of that same period of time approximately 5,500 US Troops have deserted, gone into hiding, sent to jail and some have escaped to Canada.

What if the funnel to Iraq, called Shannon Airport, were to be transformed into a sanctuary for US Troops resisting the Iraq War by requesting asylum in Ireland?

This is the new effort by the Dublin Catholic Worker and other anti-war activists and politicians announced in Dublin on Feb 3rd.

More at: <http://www.freewebs.com/routeirish/>

MORE:

Route Irish

From: Max Watts

To: GI Special
Sent: March 06, 2005

IN VIETNAM DAYS IT TURNED OUT THAT ANYBODY WHO HAD AT LEAST ONE IRISH GRAND-PARENT COULD GET IRISH CITIZENSHIP, AN IRISH PASSPORT...

QUITE A FEW GI'S DID..

ACCORDING TO ROUTE IRISH - SEE BELOW - THIS IS STILL POSSIBLE.

ANYONE WHO MAY BE INTERESTED SHOULD GET IN TOUCH WITH DAMIAN AT ROUTE IRISH

TEL: 00353 879638398
EM : routeirish@gmail.com

'Route Irish' to Irish Sanctuary

Press Inquires:
routeirish@gmail.com
call: 00353 879638398

US Military Soldier inquiries:
routeirishtosanctuary@hushmail.com

If you get a **free** [HushMail.com](http://www.hushmail.com) account, communications with the 'Route Irish' to Irish Sanctuary' project will be with **2,048-bit encryption**.

More information about the possibilities of obtaining Asylum in the Republic of Ireland will at <http://www.freewebs.com/routeirish/> in the days ahead.

Thank you & stay safe.

Scots Soldier Wins First Award For Depleted Uranium Poisoning Claim

"For all those veterans who have been going to the doctor with these ailments and are being told there is nothing wrong with them, this is for them, and I hope it will help them.

"I doubt that I will benefit much financially from this, but it wasn't about the money, it was about the principle of the thing."

1 Mar 2005 By Martin Williams, denniskyne.com

A Scots ex-soldier has become the first veteran to win a pension appeal after being diagnosed with depleted uranium (DU) poisoning during the 1991 Gulf war. A Pension Appeal Tribunal Service hearing in Edinburgh accepted medical evidence provided by Kenny Duncan, of Clackmannan, previously dismissed by the MoD, which revealed he had become ill after service in the Middle East.

Mr Duncan, 35, a driver with 7 Tank Transporter Regiment, helped move tanks destroyed by shells containing the poisonous dust.

He says he has evidence that his children's health problems are linked to his service. Kenneth, 10, Andrew, eight, and six-year-old Heather, have symptoms similar to those suffered by some Iraqi children, including deformed toes, and low immune systems making them susceptible to asthma, hay fever and eczema.

Mr Duncan has suffered increasing breathlessness and aching joints which he has linked to DU. During the conflict, US and British troops fired an estimated 350 tonnes of DU weapons at Iraqi tanks. **Doctors in southern Iraq have reported a marked increase in cancers and birth defects, and suspicion has grown that they were caused by DU contamination from tank battles.**

DU has been linked to a leukaemia cluster around the MoD range at Dundrennan, near the Solway Firth. Communities close to the range show the highest rate of childhood leukaemia in the UK.

Mr Duncan's appeal was launched after he was awarded only about £40 a week, half the full pension, when he retired from the Army through ill health in 1993 after nine years' service. His pension will now be reassessed.

The National Gulf Veterans and Families Association (NGVFA) said the tribunal decision added weight to its call for a full independent inquiry into Gulf war illnesses and supported its view that the government should do more financially to help the victims.

Mr Duncan's case relied on blood tests carried out by Dr Albrecht Schott, a German biochemist, which revealed chromosome aberrations caused by ionising radiation.

Dr Schott's research formed part of a study of 16 British veterans of conflicts in the Gulf, Bosnia, and Kosovo, which found that they had 14 times the usual level of chromosome abnormalities in their genes, raising fears that they will pass cancers and genetic illnesses to their offspring.

Mr Duncan said yesterday: "It is just a huge relief to have someone in authority say that you have been poisoned by this stuff and that you are not telling lies. It is now time for the MoD to tell us what went wrong.

"For all those veterans who have been going to the doctor with these ailments and are being told there is nothing wrong with them, this is for them, and I hope it will help them.

"I doubt that I will benefit much financially from this, but it wasn't about the money, it was about the principle of the thing."

The ministry said yesterday: "Once we have seen the decision, we will consider the implications it might have on the MoD."

Gay Warriors: "Come On, Rummy, What Are You Afraid Of?"

And with gays subject to the same rules governing appropriate behaviour as heterosexuals, the showers need hold no fears for happily-married men.

Come on, Rummy, what are you afraid of? [And why won't you tell America where you were and what you were doing the night of April 14, 1954?]

Feb 24th 2005

From The Economist print edition

America should learn from its allies and let gays serve openly

IN THE armies of ancient Greece, homosexuals were prized as soldiers, though sent to fight in separate units. In Britain's armed forces no such distinction is made. Gays may serve openly, without fear of prejudice—and they seem to fight and fit in perfectly well when they do. The same happens in most NATO countries. But in America, self-declared gay warriors are not allowed. As a piece of discrimination of no practical benefit, this is wrong.

Bill Clinton tried to introduce what might be called "open service" in 1993, but ended up bringing forth a backlash both against the idea and his own administration. Since then, by law, America's policy has been "don't ask, don't tell"—its troops neither should be asked nor need volunteer information about their sexuality.

That has not stopped plenty of people being ousted and outed. Since 1993, more than 10,000 gay Americans have been booted back onto Civvy Street. Not a large number, perhaps, when America has nearly 2.5m people in uniform. But many of those ousted possessed valuable skills: between 1998 and 2004, 20 relatively rare Arabic speakers and six Farsi speakers were forcibly discharged after they were found to be gay.

So why ban self-confessed gay GIs?

Three reasons are usually offered.

First, the Pentagon fears that gay soldiers would undermine teamwork and morale. On the battlefield, soldiers do not fight for King and Country; they fight for each other—for love of their “band of brothers”, as Shakespeare put it. Some fear that soldiers would be wary of loving their gay comrades in this way.

Second, allowing gays to serve openly could actually be bad for recruitment: the extra homosexuals would be outnumbered by the homophobic Americans thus deterred.

The third reason is more abstract. Successful armies reflect the mores of the societies from which they are drawn, and America, it is said, is unwilling to allow its heroes to be gay.

None of these complaints really stands up.

Begin with the fact that there are already plenty of gays in America's armed forces. One recent estimate put their number at 65,000. Anecdotal evidence suggests lesbians may be more prevalent than is normal, and gay men slightly less prevalent. Many of these people will be “out”, at least to their close comrades—after all, military banter is excruciatingly personal.

According to a recent poll of enlisted men, more than half thought gays should be allowed in the armed forces.

In the current time of overstretch, even the older, more conservative, officer class seems to be changing heart. The number of gay discharges rose steadily till 2001, when America went to war in Afghanistan; since then the annual figure has halved. **As for the idea that the ban reflects American mores, polls suggest that at least 64% of Americans would allow gay soldiers.**

Congress should look at the British example. In 2000, when the queen's army jumped out of its closet (so to speak), many senior officers were aghast. Their arguments then were similar to American fears now: sooner or later, showers and bars of soap were mentioned.

Four years later, recruitment has not suffered; most new recruits are unfazed about meeting gay comrades.

And with gays subject to the same rules governing appropriate behaviour as heterosexuals, the showers need hold no fears for happily-married men.

Come on, Rummy, what are you afraid of?

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Firefights:

March 7, 2005 AFP

One Iraqi soldier was killed and five wounded when their patrol was attacked by guerrillas overnight east of Samarra, said Captain Ahmed Sadad of the Iraqi army.

Four other soldiers were wounded in a roadside bomb in the Al-Duluiyah area, south of Samarra, said police and medical sources.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Soldiers Join A Revolution To Overthrow A Hated Government

From: LEFT FACE, Soldier Unions and Resistance Movements in Modern Armies, By DAVID CORTRIGHT AND MAX WATTS; Contributions in Military Studies, Number 107; GREENWOOD PRESS, New York • Westport, Connecticut • London

The democratic revolution that transformed East German politics also took hold in the army. Individual soldiers participated openly in the massive demonstrations in October and November 1989 that forced the overthrow of the old system.

In fact, it was the unwillingness of soldiers and their commanders to use the army to defend the Communist regime that led to the government's rapid demise.

In the critical days immediately after October 7, when the GDR's fortieth anniversary celebration (and a visit from Gorbachev) sparked prodemocracy street protests, Communist Party leader Eric Honecker called upon regular army units (as well as the notorious "Stasi," Staatssicherheit, state security police) to suppress the demonstrations.

The troops of 1989, however, were not the same as those of 1968.

The soldiers wanted democracy and a better way of life just he their civilian counterparts.

When the government ordered them to repress the peaceful candlelight marches then beginning in Leipzig, they refused.

While the Stasi units were willing to club people in the streets, the army was not. When the government called for troops to go out into the streets with live ammunition, they balked.

Instead, many soldiers joined the marchers.

For the Honecker regime this was the end. Deprived of [Russian] Red Army backing and now lacking even the support of his "own" troops, Honecker resigned on October 18, and the system quickly collapsed.

The overthrow of the government did nothing to improve conditions in the NVA, however, and the soldiers soon launched their own democratic reform movement.

During the brief existence of the democratic GDR prior to German reunification, an active soldiers movement appeared. The GIs were demanding more free time, fewer training exercises, shorter terms of service, the freedom to wear civilian clothes, and the right to bring their cars on base.

Thus as civilian demonstrations declined after November, the conscripts became more active and increasingly militant. Soldier committees began forming throughout the army, and for a brief time strikes and demonstrations became commonplace.

Desertion skyrocketed, as many conscripts simply walked off their bases and returned home. Many joined the exodus to the West, and some even applied to join the West German Bundeswehr (jumping the gun, so to speak, on reunification).

One protest incident in the GDR observed by a reporter from the *New York Times* in early 1990 involved the supposedly elite 8th Motorized Rifle Division in Schwerin. When troops of a communications unit were roused at 4 A.M. to go on an exercise, they refused. After negotiating with their commanders for seven hours, the troops finally agreed to move out.

Two soldiers were arrested for the incident, but an officer interviewed by the *Times* admitted that nothing was likely to happen to those arrested.

With soldier resistance spreading and the NVA rapidly disintegrating, the new reform government in East Berlin was forced to respond.

The turning point came after an incident during the Christmas season in the city of Beelitz. A seemingly minor dispute over holiday cheer led to a sudden burst of conscript resistance. When soldiers were denied the champagne they had requested to celebrate the holidays, they simply refused to follow orders any longer and went out into the streets.

As word of this strike by local soldiers spread, conscripts all over the country quickly joined in a wave of protest actions and demonstrations.

In early January a group of conscripts appeared in uniform on primetime television to air their grievances. The next day the Ministry of Defense met with the soldiers and agreed to accept nearly all their demands.

The government announced that the term of military service would be reduced from eighteen to twelve months, conscientious objection and alternative civilian service would now be permitted, and the previous barriers between military and civilian life would be reduced.

And yes, the soldiers could now even wear civilian clothes and bring their cars and radios on base.

As had occurred in many Western European armies fifteen years before, a GI resistance movement had emerged in the GDR and forced major changes in the conditions of service.

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.

Draft Refusal: Pro And Con - GI Special March 1

From: JM
To: GI Special
Sent: March 06, 2005

To be a conscientious objector takes courage in time of war. What better examples than Camilo Majia and Kevin Benderman in the US or Yoni Ben Artzi, nephew of leading Israeli politician - Netanahu. He went straight, from a top private school, to prison for his stand against the Israeli war on Palestine. He has a strong following amongst young Israelis and I look forward to the day he enters politics.

England, in world war two, had a simple solution - a person refusing military service, as a conscientious objector, had a choice. They could go to the front line as a stretcher bearer, where they would probably be killed, or go to prison.

They refused the army medical because it might get them released as unfit. They were making a moral stand and didn't want an easy way out. At least one man died in prison because of this. In a war, that was classed as necessary, these were brave men.

Under international law conscientious objectors are accepted but many countries still send them to prison, sometimes with solitary confinement and abusive treatment. Such people should be admired.

It's much easier to follow the leaders than make a stand.

The Empire Has No Clothes

Mar 03, 2005 Walden Bello

The reality is that the old game of domination and occupation continues, and the US is not winning.

The US: Losing in Iraq

The triumphalism that accompanied George W. Bush's tour of "Old Europe," with his brand new Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, at his side, was a public relations effort to counter the reality of the spread of a wide and deep resistance in Iraq.

There is not only the military resistance that we witness day-to-day on television. There is also a political resistance that is broader than the military resistance. There is, as well, massive civil resistance, which encompasses not only trade union opposition but all those acts ordinary citizens engage in day-to-day to deny legitimacy to the occupation that James C. Scott calls the "weapons of the weak."

The truth is that the US is losing the war in Iraq, both politically and militarily.

The number of governments in the so-called "Coalition of the Willing" is now so reduced that the Pentagon has dropped the term and started using "multinational forces" instead.

The 135,000 US troops are stretched thin, their numbers unable to stop the wildfire rise of a guerrilla insurgency. Estimates of many military experts of the minimum necessary number to fight the guerrillas to a stalemate range from 200,000 to a million. It is impossible to attain these numbers without provoking massive civil unrest in the US, where the majority of the population now sees the military intervention as unjustified.

The US Army, one must recall, fell apart internally at the last stages of the Vietnam War owing to demoralization, which took the form of, among other things, the "fragging" of officers, or throwing grenades at them.

With about 40 per cent of the Army troops in Iraq being non-regular forces with the National Guard, who are not fulltime soldiers, the steady erosion of morale among US units must not be underestimated.

But the US is not only overextended in Iraq. Iraq has in fact worsened the crisis of overextension of the US globally. The key manifestations of the imperial dilemma stand out starkly:

Despite the recent US-sponsored elections in Afghanistan, the Karzai government effectively controls only parts of Kabul and two or three other cities. As UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has said, despite the elections, "without functional state institutions able to serve the basic needs of the population throughout the country, the authority and legitimacy of the new government will be short-lived." And so long as this is the case, Afghanistan will tie down 13,500 US troops within the country and 35,000 support personnel outside.

Speaking of the turn towards the left and away from the empire, one of the US' friends, former Mexican Foreign Minister Jorge Castaneda, assesses the situation accurately: "America's friends are feeling the fire of this anti-American wrath. They are finding themselves forced to shift their own rhetoric and attitude in order to dampen their defense of policies viewed as pro-American or US-inspired, and to stiffen their resistance to Washington's demands and desires."

What we are witnessing is the third major PR effort to convince the world that Iraq has been pacified.

The first was the famous declaration of victory on board the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln in May 2003. We all know what happened afterwards. The second was the transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqi people last June. A sharp escalation of the resistance followed that forgettable episode.

Now, this effort to convince the world, relying on television images, that elections carried out under military occupation and amidst widespread resistance -- which were boycotted by millions of Iraqi voters were an exercise in "freedom" and "democracy."

Bush's diplomacy is, in fact, running against the long-term currents. The Atlantic Alliance is dead. Iraq was merely the coup de grace to a relationship that had been savaged by escalating conflicts with the US on trade, environmental, and security issues. Indeed, not only is the basis of common action disappearing but, as American expert Ivo Daalder contends, "not a few [Europeans] now fear the United States more than what, objectively, constitute the principal threat to their security."

\$4,000 Per Iraqi Per Year

March 1, 2005 By Pierre Tristam. Tristam is a News-Journal editorial writer

A war costing \$2 billion a week -- or \$4,000 per Iraqi per year -- had better yield some results worth cheering about other than the Fallujah-style flattening of cities, the surrender of much of the country to anarchy, or a hemorrhage of American tax-dollars that will eventually make the United Nations' \$67 billion oil-for-food scandal look quaint in comparison.

True, there's a lack of honest reporting. **But the unreported scandal from this end is that the investment in deficit-digging tax-dollars is yielding so little return except for the contractors and mercenaries in on the loot.**

The unreported tragedy from the Iraqi perspective is that the investment in lives is yielding still nothing more than finger-paint parodies of democracy.

We'd be better off going home and sending every Iraqi man, woman and child a \$4,000 annual check.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Hostage Says Captors Warned Her That Occupation Wanted Her Dead

06 March 2005 ROME (AP) & CATV 7 Aljazeera

The freed Italian hostage wounded by American troops at a checkpoint in Baghdad shortly after her release said in an article Sunday that her Iraqi captors had warned her U.S. forces "might intervene."

The shooting Friday has fueled anti-American sentiment in a country where people are deeply opposed to U.S. policy in Iraq.

"I remember only fire," she said in her article. "At that point a rain of fire and bullets came at us, forever silencing the happy voices from a few minutes earlier."

Sgrena said the driver began shouting that they were Italian, then "Nicola Calipari dove on top of me to protect me and immediately, and I mean immediately, I felt his last breath as he died on me."

Suddenly, she said, she remembered her captors' warning her "to be careful because the Americans don't want you to return."

"The fact that the Americans don't want negotiations to free the hostages is known," Sgrena told Sky TG24 television by telephone.

"The fact that they do everything to prevent the adoption of this practice to save the lives of people held hostages, everybody knows that. So I don't see why I should rule out that I could have been the target."

Italy's minister for parliamentary relations, Carlo Giovanardi, has also said he did not believe the US version of events.

Berlusconi summoned the US ambassador immediately after the event and will need to present some answers from Washington when he addresses parliament on Wednesday.

With Friends Like This.....

3.2.05 By Raed Jarra, Raedinthemiddle

Found this interesting piece of news on one of the mainstream media sites. The most interesting part of the news is that I actually agree with it! Well, partially at least.

The news is about the following picture with the comment underneath:

The only part I don't agree with is that the US should "pin its hopes for a speedy withdrawal" on the guys like the one in this picture. Other men still shooting down fighters and destroying tanks will probably have a bigger role in the "speedy withdrawal."



General Mohamed Faik Raouf holds his Kalashnikov rifle on patrol in Baghdad's Haifa street district. **Raouf likes to boast that he shot down an American fighter jet over Baghdad in the 1991 Gulf War. It is on men like him that the United States is now pinning its hopes for a speedy withdrawal of its troops from Iraq.** (AFP/Karim Sahib)

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Bush Sets Up Social Security 'War Room'

[THANKS TO B WHO E-MAILED THIS IN. B WRITES: HE'S ADMITTING THAT HE'S DECLARING WAR ON SOCIAL SECURITY]

Mar 05, 2005 By LAURA MECKLER, Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON - **A new Social Security war room inside the Treasury Department is pumping out information to sell President Bush's plan**, much like any political campaign might do. It's part of a coordinated effort by the Bush administration.

The internal, taxpayer-funded campaigning is backed up by television advertisements, grass-roots organizing and lobbying from business and other groups that support the Bush plan.

RECEIVED:

The Scam

From: AH
To: GI Special
Sent: March 06, 2005

Check out this article:

Syria Vows Swift Lebanon Pullout in 'Historic' Move, Mar 6, 2005 BEIRUT (Reuters)

Yesterday, this exact same news was bad but, now it's good. Can't these people get their story straight?

Anyway, most Muslims hate these puppet leaders almost as much as their western puppeteers but, I'm sorry to report that there is nothing changing in the mid-east.

This is all a scam to make it look like america actually accomplished something by invading Iraq.

It's actually all the more insulting to Iraqis and Muslims in general.

It's like, "It's okay we burned 100,000+ people to death so that Lebanese people (mostly western-style christians) can live without some Syrian soldiers around"???

And so that Egypt and Saudi can pacify their growing internal dissent with a little sensitivity, that is due to expire sometime in the near future; after their crony bush has been pushed back into his old supporting role.

Yes, a time is coming for all tyrants to face the music but, don't expect most of the mid-east to start being anymore hospitable to american capitalists anytime soon.

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/maqalat/english/qi-special.htm>

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