

GI SPECIAL 3A68:

**REAL BAD PLACE TO BE,
GETTING WORSE EVERY DAY:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW**



An US soldier is seen patrolling through a field looking for ordnance and other weaponry during Operation Casablanca, in the Dora district of southern Baghdad. (AFP/Ahmad al-Rubaye)

“Can This Possibly Get Any Worse?”

From: J

To: GI Special

Sent: March 04, 2005 1:10 AM

Subject: Cpl. Christopher Zimny, 1st Bat. 2nd Marine Reg Killed 1-31-05

Hey T,

Thanks for all of your help. I've received several helpful emails, and I truly appreciate them.

I just wanted to let you know that the young man that I've referenced above [Cpl. Chris Zimny] was not someone that I knew personally, but I know that he was a special person.

My next door neighbor here in XXXX is just like my little sister and she will be getting married in 9 days (March 12). Mike, her fiancé, is just like my Stan's little brother.

Chris was in Mike's regiment and Mike had to pull him out of a burning vehicle. Chris was to have been a groomsman in their wedding next week. Mike told Jen that he was able to save his name tag from his uniform and his hat and both will be placed at the head table at the wedding. Can this possibly get any worse?

Stupid question I guess. Anyway, while I didn't know this young man personally, I do know that Mike (whom I love) thought the world of him. He was his best friend in the regiment. I haven't seen Mike since he's been stateside, he'll be home this Sunday, but I just know that he will be a changed man now. How can he not be?

Usually, when Mike comes home, my son Andy and he have huge water gun fights or just horse around, and now, Jen and I are trying to get across to Andy that he needs to tread lightly with Mike. We just don't know how to make this ok for him. We can't.

Thanks T for listening. I don't know how you do it. This just hit so close to home for me, you know?

J

REPLY:

Healing

From: Mike Hastie, U.S. Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71

To: GI Special

Sent: March 07, 2005 12:34 AM

Subject: For J

So many people in this family system will need help.

It's available, but so few people seek it out. Most people wait until they have a crisis.

Mike is going to need a lot of help. I will repeat that, Mike is going to need a lot of help.

When your best friend is killed right in front of you, life as you know it, changes forever.

Very few men have had this kind of experience.

Most young men do not start processing their feelings until much later in life. Mike will have to do that much earlier.

As you know, most men that age do not have the tools to do that. So, he will need a mentor. The military will help a little bit. The Vet Centers can help a lot.

Getting Matt into a Vet Center is not going to be easy. Most young men will try to solo through it, most of the time with alcohol. (Alcohol gave me wings to fly, and then it took away my sky.)

I could write a book on this alone.

Why does every generation have to re-invent the wheel? But, when the history of the Vietnam War has been removed from them, people have to start from scratch.

We know so much more about PTSD, but so few people take advantage of it. Why, because it always involves feelings. Most men will do anything to cover that up-- anything! I guess it is our nature.

And that in a sense still scares me. I will keep it simple here; there are three things you have to do to get well: 1. Let it out. 2. Let it bleed. 3. Let it heal.

But, the most important thing to remember is that you cannot do this alone. I will repeat this. The most important thing to remember is that you cannot do this alone.

Cemeteries are full of veterans who attempt to do this.

The human mind will do everything it can to conceal its woundedness.

Example:" How are you doing? I'm fine."

I did that for so many years, I wound up in a padded cell of a psychiatric hospital.

There are no tough guys in recovery. Cemeteries are full of people like that. I could name quite a few. Every male in my family who served in a war had PTSD.

Without exception!

PTSD is really a fifty dollar phrase for Emotional Silence. Plain and simple. The body physiology changes so much, that you think you have become another person. If you do not understand these changes, which are normal, you will think you are going crazy.

Knowledge is power.

What you do not know, will kill you. I will repeat that. What you do not know, will kill you.

In order to get well from this illness, you have to go to the phone and call for help. If you want to really help someone, buy a phone and dangle it from the ceiling.

People who have experienced severe trauma will take acting lessons to keep you from knowing it.

I could write a second book on just that subject.

I don't care if you can bench press 500 pounds, or walk into a bar and kick the shit out of a dozen people; the bottom line is that we are afraid to feel.

Marines don't cry, and graveyards across America are packed full with men who never did, and they died long before their time.

Behind every warrior who desperately wants to be a man, is a boy who wants to cry his heart out.

When this is done, men are healed.

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

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

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Elk Grove Village Army Specialist Killed

March 8, 2005 The Associated Press & CLEAR CHANNEL COMMUNICATIONS

KENOSHA — Wisconsin relatives said Monday they are mourning the death of a 17-year Army veteran in Iraq last week.

Diane Eacho, who lives in Racine, said she was informed Friday that her son, Staff Sgt. Donald Eacho, 38, died that day when the vehicle he was in hit a roadside bomb near Ramadi.

Her son, who grew up in Kenosha before attending high school in Seymour, lived in Watertown, N.Y., with his wife and two sons, she said.

She said he was stationed in Iraq since August, and she last saw him in the fall when he was home at Thanksgiving.

Before going to Iraq, Eacho was awarded the Soldier's Medal, one of the Army's highest honors for heroism outside of combat, for his 2003 rescue of a 4-year-old

girl and her grandfather who were trapped in an overturned car on a Pennsylvania road.

Sgt. Eacho's mother told NewsWatch50 that her son met his wife while assigned to Fort Drum.

She said he had been scheduled to be reassigned to Fort Drum when he returned from Iraq.

Car Bomb Hits U.S. Checkpoint In Ramadi; Casualties Not Reported

3/8/2005 AFP and Turkish Press

A car bomb was detonated near a US-Iraqi security checkpoint Monday in eastern Ramadi, said another statement without giving further details or saying if there were any casualties.

Fighting In Ramadi

March 8, 2005 By Todd Pittman, AP

Clashes erupted between US troops and insurgents today in the troubled city of Ramadi, leaving at least two people dead, officials said.

The clashes in Ramadi, 115 kilometers west of Baghdad, lasted for more than an hour. City shops were closed and streets were deserted as US troops took up sniper positions on rooftops. At least one dead body could be seen in the street, witnesses said.

Italian Foreign Minister Says U.S. Command Lying

Mar. 08, 2005 PATRICK QUINN, Associated Press & AFP

Italian Foreign Minister Gianfranco Fini told parliament Tuesday that U.S. troops killed Calipari by accident, but disputed Washington's version of events.

Fini said the car carrying Calipari and Sgrena was not speeding and U.S. troops did not order it to stop, contrary to what U.S. officials say.

The U.S. 3rd Infantry Division, which controls Baghdad, said the vehicle was "traveling at high speeds" and "refused to stop at a checkpoint."

However, Fini said the car was "traveling at a speed that couldn't have been more than 40 kilometers (25 miles) per hour." A light, he said, was flashed at the car after a curve and gunfire started immediately afterward. It lasted 15 to 20 seconds, he said.

The shooting Friday that killed intelligence officer Nicola Calipari and wounded Giuliana Sgrena, a 56-year-old journalist for the left-wing Il Manifesto newspaper, angered Italians and rekindled questions about the country's involvement in Iraq.

"We ask for truth and justice," Fini said. [Don't hold your breath.]

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)



Flames burn after a large explosion hit central Baghdad at dawn Wednesday, shaking buildings and covering the area in a large plume of black smoke March 9, 2005. The

explosion rocked buildings for several blocks around from Firdous Square. (AP Photo/Ben Curtis)

U.S. May Close Abu Ghraib Prison: Too Many Resistance Attacks

March 08, 2005 By Rawya Rageh, Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Incessant attacks against Baghdad's notorious Abu Ghraib prison may force the U.S. military to return the facility to Iraq's government and take their own high-security inmates to a safer place, a U.S. military official said.

"The reason we would like to move our operations from Abu Ghraib is that it has been regularly targeted with attacks from insurgents. The new facility would be within the larger Baghdad International Airport complex, making it less susceptible to attacks," Lt. Col. Barry Johnson, a spokesman for Iraq Detention Operations, told The Associated Press.

TROOP NEWS

"The Price You Pay For It Is Pretty Costly"

March 08, 2005 By Erin Emery, The Denver Post

Fort Carson - Pvt. Aaron Meier remembers that the Humvee pulled into the westbound lane, the dangerous side, to make sure it was safe for a convoy.

Mercifully, he can't recall what happened next on Dec. 5 - not the blast, the bloodshed or the death of an Army brother on the highway near Khaldyia, Iraq.

When Meier regained consciousness, he said, he heard a medic pleading with him to stay awake.

"I couldn't feel my arms and legs, and I told him I couldn't move, and I blacked out again," Meier said.

On Monday, Meier and 45 other soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division received the Purple Heart - the military medal for injuries received in

combat - at a ceremony before about 150 onlookers at Fort Carson's Special Events Center.

One soldier lost an eye, another two fingers. Most were injured by suicide bombs, small-arms fire and homemade bombs.

"It's an impressive award to receive, but the price you pay for it is pretty costly," said Meier, 19, of Newburgh, N.Y.

"I have holes all over my legs. I looked like Swiss cheese. ... I felt pain all over. My chest hurt too because the blast hit my vest," Meier said.

He learned to walk again at Evans Army Community Hospital at Fort Carson but still wears a brace on his left wrist.

"I think he looks beautiful," said his sister, Alyssa Meier, 17.

The 2nd Brigade Combat Team officially relocates to Fort Carson in the fall. More than 3,700 soldiers are expected when they complete their tours in Iraq. So far, 44 soldiers from the brigade have died in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Sgt. Francis Garren, 31, of New Haven, Mo., hobbled to Monday's ceremony on crutches. On Nov. 28, also near Khaldyia, he drove over an improvised bomb.

"A quarter of the vehicle was destroyed. A lot of smoke, a lot of dust, confusion momentarily," Garren said.

Fragments ripped through his foot and ankle, and during the pain, Garren said, he thought only of his wife and three children.

"Just glad I survived," Garren said.

He spent three weeks in the hospital and still has nerve damage in his foot and hearing loss. He needs reconstructive knee surgery. In between his medical appointments, his wife said she plans to buy a shadowbox so she can prominently display her husband's Purple Heart.

**US Officer: "Why I Disagree With
Bush's War For Oil" ---
"The British Did Not Really Like
George Washington's Upstart
Colonial Militiamen Either."**

But one really needs look only as far as Moqtada al Sadr's uniformed "Mahdi Army" militia to see that the Shiites are just as capable of organisation. We may not particularly like how they are organised, but I'm sure the British did not really like George Washington's upstart colonial militiamen either. Suffice to say, the nascent United States did fine once left to its own devices, and so too would the Iraqi people.

Green Left Weekly #618, March 9, 2005

*Brayden joined the US army not thinking he'd ever be sent to war. **He certainly hadn't entertained the idea that he would turn against a war.***

He served as a commissioned officer, rising to the rank of captain, from June 2000 to November 2004. Originally part of an Air Defence Artillery combat unit based in Germany, Brayden was sent to Iraq in May 2003 and spent 14 months there.

His company of 125 soldiers, one of six that made up the 1st Armored Division's Main Support Battalion, led re-supply convoy missions all over the city from its base at the Baghdad International Airport.

Brayden was in charge of planning and supervising the supply needs, which included water, food, packaged petroleum products, uniforms, weapons and medical equipment to more than 30,000 soldiers.

But soon after arriving in Iraq, Brayden began to have his doubts about the reasons for being there. Below, he talks to Green Left Weekly's Pip Hinman about his time in Iraq.

What was your impression of how ordinary Iraqis viewed the US military?

The only Iraqis I was able to talk to were those who worked for the US-led coalition, who are admittedly not a representative sample. However, after the fall of Saddam's government I witnessed hundreds, if not thousands, of locals lined up for work with the US army and coalition forces. These men and women came looking for work as interpreters and manual laborers for tasks such as cooking, waste disposal and laundry services. My own battalion employed a few dozen Iraqis to work sorting parts and goods in our warehouses, and we contracted through a local sheik for a "platoon" of 25 Iraqi truck drivers to drive 40-foot trailers to augment our transportation capabilities.

All of the Iraqis I met rejoiced in the fall of Saddam and his regime; they each had a personal story about how Saddam's government had murdered, tortured or abused someone close to them.

Was there a specific episode which made you doubt your participation in this war?

The specific moment came in April 2004, with the start of the Shiite uprising led by Moqtada al Sadr. Lieutenant Paul Bremer, the American viceroy and director of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq, ordered the closure of al Sadr's printing press. This provided a rallying point and battle cry for al Sadr's forces, and began the Shiite uprising that the US forces had been fearing since we arrived in Iraq.

Moqtada al Sadr had been calling for Iraqis to expel the infidels since the fall of Saddam; his newspaper had published polemics calling for death to US and coalition forces until we had left his country. It was because of these repeated messages that Bremer ordered a one-month shut-down of al Sadr's press.

The irony of a US administration, which ostensibly came to Iraq to spread free speech and democracy, shutting down a printing press because we did not like what it was saying caused me a great deal of reflection.

Suddenly, we were facing an entirely new war; al Sadr's "Mahdi Army" seemed to materialize out of thin air, wearing black uniforms with yellow armbands. **Rather than battling the underground remnants of Saddam's regime and some foreign insurgents that had crossed over the border, we were now facing a group that represented the overwhelming majority of Iraqis.**

My division, the 1st Armored Division, had in that first week of April already completed the Transfer of Authority to our replacements from the 1st Cavalry Division. My own unit was scheduled to leave Baghdad on April 15. Some of our division's battalions had already made their way to the port in Kuwait to return to Germany. Those units were told to come back, and our Main Support Battalion was told to stay put.

The 1st Armored Division received orders extending us in Baghdad for an additional three months, breaking a promise that we would only be deployed for 365 days.

US intelligence then went into full attack mode; the intelligence briefings we received every morning started referring to the Mahdi Army, along with the rest of the insurgents struggling against us, as "anti-Iraqi forces".

This brilliant bit of Pentagon propaganda made me laugh, since these forces were, clearly, homegrown Iraqis.

I asked how could they be "anti-Iraqi" if they were, in fact, Iraqis themselves? Of course, what the Coalition meant is that these forces were arrayed against us, and since we know what is best for Iraqis everyone against us is, therefore, anti-Iraqi.

We also received new "rules of engagement", which stated that we could fire on an entire crowd of civilians if we could identify them harboring a member of al Sadr's Mahdi Army.

These rules were later amended, but the damage to our cause was done.

We came to Iraq to take out Saddam and, we were told, to free the Iraqi people from tyranny. Now, we were fighting the same people that we had come to help, and my feelings only intensified as I soon saw US troops fighting in the holy Shiite city of Najaf.

But my opposition to the war had been building as early as May 2003 when we hit the ground.

What were the triggers to this?

From a purely military standpoint, the piss-poor planning. For instance, the entire 1st Armored Division was deployed to Iraq with green woodland-camouflaged vehicles, rather than the desert-camouflaged tanks and HMMWVs used by other units.

My own battalion did not receive the complete bullet-proof body amour set used by the Infantry until late August 2003. None of our wheeled vehicles had any sort of “up-armor” protection plates either, and would not until we were well past half-way into our deployment. I wondered why, if we were going to start a war with a country, we did not wait until our own forces were better prepared for the undertaking.

While leading convoys all over the Baghdad city grid, I was initially shocked at the dearth of US and coalition troops guarding the roads. I expected that under an occupation, I would see a tank on every corner, and an US patrol walking every city block. Instead I was greeted by mostly empty highways, meaning that our 16-truck-long supply convoys were mostly unsecured from the moment we left our base to our arrival at another base 30 to 45 minutes later.

This lack of troops directly contributed to the strength of the insurgency that continues to this day. The Bush administration cavalierly disregarded the advice of some like former Army chief of staff Eric Shinseki, who testified before Congress in 2002 that an Iraq occupation would require several hundred thousand troops, and yet we invaded with a force of just 120,000 soldiers.

Another sad decision came in May 2003 when US viceroy Paul Bremer famously dissolved the Iraqi Army. Under the plan of Bremer's predecessor, a retired American Lieutenant General named Jay Garner, the Coalition of the Willing would employ the 400,000-strong Iraqi Army in helping secure the country.

Indeed, many US generals in Iraq — most famously the commander of the 101st Airborne Division Major General David Petraeus — had begun to work closely with their Iraqi counterparts. The coalition had also continued to pay the salaries of the Iraqi officers and troops, until Bremer's decision to dissolve the army and start from scratch. This decision sent hundreds of thousands of angry Iraqi men with guns home and forced them to find other means of providing for their families.

The Iraqi people I met want the same thing for their children and themselves as we do: safe streets, good schools, clean drinking water, and a healthy economy. I learnt from my time in Iraq that while the locals initially rejoiced in Saddam's fall, eventually they came to blame us for bringing the foreign terrorists into Iraq.

Did you talk about your growing concerns with your friends?

By and large the attitude was that we all have a job to do, and we should just focus on doing it. Moreover, we are trained not to bring political opinions into calculations.

However, one of my close officer friends was completely against the war, and felt that it was purely driven by economics and a desire to control Iraq's oil.

Another officer friend, hailing from "red-state America", completely supported the US president and the Iraq war. He was a typical "true-believer". In May 2004, when sarin gas was found in the unexploded shell of one of the road-side bombs, this friend said it was evidence of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, and justification for our presence in the country.

Do you think there's a growing sentiment inside the army in Iraq that it should leave?

Yes, though not for the reasons you might expect. There is a strong sentiment among the rank and file that the Iraqi people are just not worth the blood of US boys and girls, that the Iraqis are lazy and corrupt. This is not my opinion. I don't think we should be there.

What is your assessment of the recent Iraqi elections?

The paternalistic (belief) that the Iraqis cannot govern themselves without US and coalition forces is a fallacy. The Kurds in the north, of course, have enjoyed a de facto independence and have had self-government for over a decade. That Kurdish independence was hard-earned, and their peshmegas would defend it to the death against any designs from Sunni or Shiite.

But one really needs look only as far as Moqtada al Sadr's uniformed "Mahdi Army" militia to see that the Shiites are just as capable of organisation. We may not particularly like how they are organised, but I'm sure the British did not really like George Washington's upstart colonial militiamen either. Suffice to say, the nascent United States did fine once left to its own devices, and so too would the Iraqi people.

What the Coalition wants, however, is a democracy that looks like our own, and they are terrified that the majority Shiites will set-up an Iran-style theocracy in Iraq. This fear is unfounded; the conditions in Iraq are very different to those which produced the Iranian revolution of 1979. **And in the final analysis, if that is the government the Iraqis desire, it is not our place to tell them no.**

What do you think should happen to those responsible for the torture at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere?

What offends me about the Abu Ghraib torture is that the US army and Bush administration have made scapegoats of the lower enlisted soldiers, all of whom have testified that they were following orders. No officer or person of any consequence has been held accountable for what went on in that dark prison.

Since the Nuremberg trials, the world has rejected the "just following orders" defence, and rightfully so. Yet in the military, the lower enlisted are ingrained not to ever question authority until they have a position from which to do so. **It is the officers and non-commissioned officers who are responsible for what happens under their noses.**

To my knowledge, the army has tried and convicted only two non-commissioned officers, a sergeant and staff sergeant, for their roles in the prison scandal. The other five that the army is holding accountable are all of the rank of specialist or below; four pled guilty, and two are awaiting trial.

Beyond that, the army has relieved some officers and senior non-commissioned officers from their commands, most famously the female Brigadier General that was in charge of the 800th Military Police Brigade that ran Abu Ghraib. But none have been tried in a court of law and held accountable, and as far as I know the army has no plans to do so.

As a former officer, I find this disgraceful. The officers at the top only have the job of supervision — you have to “inspect what you expect”, as one of my old first sergeants used to say. If officers are doing their jobs, talking to the troops, walking the grounds, seeing things with their own eyes, keeping their ears open, there is no way the tortures that occurred at Abu Ghraib could have happened without their knowledge, and they are guilty, at the very least, of complicity.

The US Army is not like the British Army, with its separate messes for officers and enlisted. Ours is a much more egalitarian system, where the officer is expected to associate with his soldiers.

The abuses at Abu Ghraib were so horrendous I find it beyond belief that soldiers would not talk about it over dinner at the mess hall or while working on their vehicles. “Hey man, I shoved a nightstick up a haji’s ass while forcing him to masturbate in front of a barking dog!” Any officer worth his salt should have heard those things, and gone to check them out. If these officers were truly unaware of what went on, then they are incompetent and should be tried for dereliction of duty.

What do you make of the so-called “war on terror”?

The current “war on terror” has started its descent into a war on civil liberties and thrown good sense out the window. The US seems to have forgotten the lessons of the 1960s when the administration and FBI shamefully obtained wiretaps on Martin Luther King, Jr. by labeling him a communist and an enemy of the state.

We should never forget that what separates Western democracies from other forms of government. In our system, the individual does not exist to serve the state; rather the state exists to serve its citizens, and derives its power from the consent of the governed. But when the current US administration argues that it can lock people up and hold them without trial just because it says so, then we have fallen a long way from the ideals of our founders.

MORE

Halliburton And The Laundry Take-Over

<p>I’m no businessman, but something tells me somebody is getting rich off of the US occupation of Iraq, and it’s not the Iraqi people.</p>
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Green Left Weekly, March 9, 2005.

In an email home on September 29, Brayden described how the US multinational Halliburton took over the lucrative laundry facilities at the Baghdad airport.

Stationed here at BIAP (Baghdad International Airport) for the past year, we saw the local Iraqis open up a laundry facility on post last summer. It was quite a relief to know that we wouldn't have to wash our own clothes by hand (nothing worse than endeavoring to get Iraqi sand out of your socks).

The BIAP Laundry Service, at the southern end of the airport, a half-way point between BIAP-West and BIAP-East, opened up at the southern end of the airport, and quickly grew in size.

Pretty soon it was handling the drudgery of washing soldiers' dirty T-shirts, underwear and uniforms, for everyone stationed here — more than 30,000 soldiers and civilians.

Of course, they had some hiccups running such a large operation ... (however) overall they did a good job with a one-day turnaround on most bags. It was entirely Iraqi run — managed by an English-speaking Iraqi woman of about 45 — which many soldiers liked, also because they could drive over to check out the young Iraqi girls who also worked there.

A couple of months ago, Kellogg, Brown & Root (KBR), the Halliburton subsidiary that has so many lucrative military contracts with the US government decided that it, too, wanted to get in on the laundry business.

They opened up two laundry facilities; one on BIAP-West, right down the street from my battalion's encampment, and one on BIAP-East, a couple of blocks down from the Iraqi-run operation.

It didn't matter to me, because I kept taking my laundry to the Iraqi-run BIAP laundry. I liked the people; they were there first, and I thought it made good sense to support a local operation.

I found out yesterday, however, that KBR had out-bid the BIAP Laundry Service and my little Iraqi-run operation is closing down. Now, we'll have no choice but to use the KBR laundry facilities.

This makes me a little disheartened, because KBR chooses not to employ local Iraqis in any of its operations.

Not only did a good local Iraqi business get shut out by a big American competitor, good local Iraqi people that want and need work are being shut out every day by an American corporation that is importing cheap laborers instead of using the locals.

I'm no businessman, but something tells me somebody is getting rich off of the US occupation of Iraq, and it's not the Iraqi people.

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.

How Bad Is It? Chopped Up Louisiana Unit Asks For Volunteers

[Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, Little Rock, March 7, 2005]

Twenty-two soldiers from Arkansas' Bowie Brigade have volunteered to stay in Iraq and bolster the ranks of the Louisiana National Guard's 256th Infantry Brigade, which has taken heavy losses in its first six months in Iraq.

Pentagon Refusing To Rush-Order Protection Against Roadside Bombs: (Rumsfeld Wants More Dead And Maimed Troops) Congress "Dumfounded"

[CQ Today, March 7, 2005]

Congress and the Army are arguing over the lack of electronic jammers troops need for protection from roadside bombs in Iraq.

Legislators are dumbfounded that the jammers haven't been put on rush order and sent to Iraq. Army officials say it's hard to say how many systems---and what kind---are needed in the field, because the threat constantly changes. [Send those fucks to Q and let them see if they can figure it out, up close and personal.]

Burlington Votes To Bring The Troops Home Now!

How Organizers Fought To Make It Happen

3.8.05

To: GI Special

By James Marc Leas, Colleen McLaughlin, and Ashley Smith. James Marc Leas is a member of the Burlington Anti-War Coalition and was the 2004 Green Party Candidate for Vermont Attorney General; Colleen McLaughlin is a member of the Vermont Chapter of Military Families Speak Out; and Ashley Smith is a founding member of the Burlington Anti-War Coalition. They can be reached at ashley05401@yahoo.com.

“A town meeting revolt over the Iraq war” is what The Christian Science Monitor called Vermont’s historic votes for anti-war resolutions in 49 of 57 cities and towns. The resolutions passed not only in traditional liberal strong holds, but also in rural areas usually dismissed as conservative. The votes demonstrated overwhelming anti-war sentiment.

In the state’s largest city, the Burlington Anti-War Coalition (BAWC) proposed a resolution (full text below) that called for bringing the troops home now.

It passed with 65.2% of the vote. It won in all the city’s wards, including the two most conservative. In the towns of Marshfield and Hinesburg (one of the more conservative towns in Vermont) voters also considered and passed “Out Now” resolutions by overwhelming margins.

However, only a handful of the anti-war resolutions put forth in Vermont towns included the word “now.”

Ben Scotch, former executive director of the Vermont ACLU, sparked the statewide campaign and drafted the resolution used outside Burlington, Marshfield and Hinesburg. That resolution calls for the Vermont Governor to have more control over the state’s National Guard, demands an investigation into the impact on the state of the guard’s large deployment, and advocates the return of the troops in accordance with international humanitarian law.

Both resolutions were universally recognized as victories for the anti-war movement. Nevertheless, the two resolutions flow from different perspectives within the state’s anti-war leadership on public opinion about the war, what demands we should put forward, and what actions we should build.

On one side several leaders thought that calling for an immediate end to the occupation was too radical.

They feared the resolution would be defeated in Burlington and elsewhere if it included the word “now.” [And from the evidence in Burlington, they clearly didn’t know what the fuck they were babbling about.]

This position was widely shared among anti-war activists who concluded that in the wake of Bush's victory in the presidential election, public sentiment had shifted to the right and our task was to reach out to those who disagree with us with more palatable language. [They're talking about their own "sentiment," not the public's sentiment.]

They argued for presenting demands that would be acceptable to the Democratic Party which, in their view, was the only viable vehicle for opposing Bush's occupation.

BAWC respectfully disagreed. In discussions leading up to its internal vote, members argued that an "Out Now" referendum question would attract more popular support, especially among military families who had much to lose from any delay. [Got that right. Politicians opposed to out *now* are for more dead troops and more dead Iraqis. That's not rocket science either.]

As the March 3rd poll in the New York Times demonstrates (<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/03/politics/03poll.html>), the US is sharply polarized, with half of the population opposed to Bush on everything he stands for, including the occupation of Iraq.

Instead of rallying this fifty percent to oppose Bush, the Democrats offer only the mildest criticism, ratify his nominees, support his saber rattling against Syria and Iran, and refuse to call for an immediate end to the occupation of Iraq.

The votes in Burlington, Marshfield and Hinesburg show we do not have to moderate our demands and adapt to the pro-occupation Democrats. They demonstrated that "Out Now" is a demand that can galvanize our side, win majority support, and form the basis of a popular movement to end the occupation and oppose Bush's future wars. [YES!]

Winning this vote was surprisingly easy. First, activists participated in a democratic debate inside BAWC, which voted to try to get the "Out Now" referendum question on the ballot for a vote. We then pursued a dual-track strategy of petitioning in the streets and in the City Council.

During the coldest and snowiest days of January, we collected over 1,000 signatures on petitions, and found an overwhelmingly positive response from Burlington voters. While petitioning, we distributed a flier that made the case for "Out Now."

At the same time, we found allies on the City Council, one of whom, Jane Knodell, agreed to sponsor a motion in the Council to put the resolution on the ballot. **At two meetings Democratic and Progressive councilors tried to amend the resolution, objecting specifically to "Out Now" language. They argued that the resolution should read, "Bring the troops home as soon as possible." [Why not "Bring The Troops Home Eventually"? Or "Bring The Troops Home One Of These Days"? Or "Bring The Troops Home After Another Thousand Are Dead"? What utterly lame bullshit.]**

But BAWC and Military Families Speak Out (MFSO) members spoke eloquently during hearings, arguing that since the war was based on lies, not one more American or Iraqi life should be sacrificed to maintain the occupation.

The City Council then voted twelve to one to preserve our “Out Now” wording and to place it on the ballot.

As part of the campaign, we helped publicize four public forums that made the case for immediate withdrawal. These included: Colleen McLaughlin and Fernando Suarez del Solar from MFSO; Jerry Colby, President of the National Writers Union and steering committee member of United States Labor Against the War; Anthony Arrove, co-editor with Howard Zinn of Voices of a People’s History; Stephanie Seguino, Chair of the University of Vermont Economics Department; and Elaine Hagopian, Middle East expert and editor of Civil Rights in Peril.

One of the forums was organized by Burlington Mayor Peter Clavelle and City Councilor Jane Knodell. They invited representatives from the Vermont Congressional Delegation and speakers on both side of the question to speak at Burlington City Hall. The pro-war speakers declined the invitation, but the Vermont Congressional delegation all sent representatives. We were delighted to hear from Congressman Bernie Sander’s representative that Sanders would vote in favor of the resolution. **But he and the representatives for Pat Leahy and Jim Jeffords all made clear that they would not argue for that position in Congress.**

These forums politically educated the core of anti-war activists on the case for immediate withdrawal and how little help we could expect from the politicians. We tabled, leafleted, stuffed mailers, and put up posters to help win the vote.

The issue now for Vermont activists is how to transform the “Out Now” sentiment into a revitalized mass movement. Referenda, public forums, petitions, and demonstrations have all been vital means to build campaigns among military families, soldiers, and the general population, and to create a renewed mass movement. Such mass movements scored the major victories of the 1960s, forcing politicians to abolish Jim Crow segregation and end the Vietnam War.

Further campaigns are planned in Burlington. Local campus activists in Students Against War at the University of Vermont are organizing counter-recruitment to stop the military preying on working class students for their war machine. **MFSO is organizing a statewide speaking tour of anti-war military families to demand immediate withdrawal.** MFSO has also launched a campaign to secure government services for returning soldiers. BAWC is planning a citywide anti-occupation demonstration on March 20th.

Burlington activists hope that our successful referenda will set an example.

Particularly needed is a national demonstration that can mobilize hundreds of thousands of people demanding an immediate end to the occupation.

The referenda showed that "Out Now" is the right demand and commands enormous popular support. Now we need to make that sentiment visible on a national and global level.

Full Resolution: "Shall the voters of the City of Burlington advise the President and Congress that Burlington and its citizens strongly support the men and women serving in the United States Armed Forces in Iraq and believe that the best way to support them is to bring them home now?"

MORE:

Vermonters Say War A Mistake

March 3, 2005 by John Nichols, The Nation & 02 March 2005 By Elizabeth Mehren, The Los Angeles Times

Ned Coffin, an 83-year-old retired poultry farmer in the town of Bethel agreed. "I can't think of another forum in which people can express their views on any subject, even ones of national importance," explained Coffin. "The war was a mistake and this is a way for that message to be heard."

In November, San Francisco voters endorsed Proposition N, an antiwar statement that ended with the declaration, "The Federal government should take immediate steps to end the US occupation of Iraq and bring our troops safely home now."

"It has touched us very deeply," said state Sen. Mark MacDonald, a Democrat who spoke at the town meeting in the central village of Strafford.

"When I campaigned last fall," he said, "there was not a day that I stopped at a house where a son or a daughter, or a brother or a sister, or a husband or a wife was not in Iraq."

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Senior Iraqi Collaborator Killed

8 March 2005 (AFP) & Khaleej Times & AP

BAGHDAD - A senior Iraqi official was killed in Baghdad on Tuesday.

In Baghdad, guerrillas killed the deputy chief of the Interior Ministry's immigration office, Gen. Ghazi Mohammed Issa, in a drive-by shooting in the western suburb of Ghazaliya, a top ministry official said on condition of anonymity.

Despite major US-led assaults and the arrest of hundreds of suspects over the past six months, including a massive onslaught on rebels in Fallujah last year, the insurgency shows no signs of dying out.

Resistance Action: Five Local Occupation Soldiers Blown Up By Exploding Coffin

March 8 (KUNA) & AP & AFP

Five soldiers were killed overnight in Iskandariya when a coffin attached to a car's rooftop exploded near their checkpoint, the Iraqi army said.

Other five Iraqi soldiers were killed today when a car-bomb blew up near a checkpoint on the road to Karbala city, according to Defense ministry sources.

The Interior Ministry official said guerrillas also attacked a convoy of trucks carrying food for the Trade Ministry in Salman Pak, southeast of the capital.

Three civilians were killed in the assault and at least one of the trucks was set on fire.

**IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE
END THE OCCUPATION**

Five Bechtel Employees Captured

March 8, SPA

Five employees of the U.S. construction company Bechtel were captured Tuesday on the highway near Tuz, 230 kilometers north of Baghdad, police said.

Police said gunmen intercepted a vehicle belonging to Bechtel and abducted all five occupants. The nationalities of the passengers were not immediately known.

Pipeline Blown Up South Of Baghdad

3/8/2005 AFP and Turkish Press

HILLA, Iraq - **An oil pipeline feeding Al-Dura refinery south of Baghdad was blown up Tuesday near Jorf al-Sakhr**, 60 kilometres south of the capital, an Iraqi oil official said.

"Unknown assailants placed explosives on the 'strategic' pipeline," said Muayyed al-Shemmari, a local oil official.

The blast occurred at 1 pm (1000 GMT) and firemen were called to the scene, Shemmari said.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

A Bit Of GI Resistance History

March 08, 2005 By Max Watts

ONE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN "PHILOSOPHERS" AND SARTRE:

ONCE UPON A TIME.. LET US BE PRECISE: JANUARY 1968: A GROUP OF AMERICAN GI'S IN EUROPE STARTED PUTTING OUT A GI PAPER: Rita's ACT aka as "GI'S ACT"

(rita = Resist(ers) Inside The Army)

They v badly needed a POSTAL ADDRESS to which the people, mostly American GI'S, reading their paper (Circulation: from 10,000 to 25,000) could reply, write to, send their contributions.

Any such published address could expect visits from various polices, baddies. Have Problems.

No mouse wanted to bell that cat, but then a Friend of RITA, (A frita, of course, or ffrita, for french frita?) one Simon Regnier, since deceased, but remembered fondly said: I shall ask my friend, Sartre, if.. he is willing to stick his neck out?

So Simon asked and Sartre immediately said: Sure

And took out a Postal Box for GI's ACT

Jean Paul Sartre
BP 130
Paris 14,
FRANCE

That PO BOX (BP in Paris) did yeo/wo/man service ! for many a RITA GI, writing from VIETNAM, USRAEUR AND CONUS, even OZ.

(although sometimes there were problems, like that sgt. wandering around Paris asking puzzled Frenchies "who and where is that Sartre.? I can't find him at the BP!")

MAX A FRITA

OCCUPATION REPORT

So Much For Illusions

March 7, 2005 By Haifa Zangana (**Haifa Zangana is an Iraqi-born novelist and former prisoner of the Saddam regime**)

Almost two years on from the beginning of the occupation, eyes no longer shine in many Iraqi cities. Thousands of civilians have been killed.

One of them was Hazim Ahmed al-Obaidi. On January 16, Hazim, 57, left his house to go to work. He had a cash-and-carry shop, for fruit, vegetables and dates, in Mosul.

Before leaving, his wife reminded him to get some paraffin, if possible. He laughed loudly, hugging his four-year-old daughter, Manar, who wanted to go with him. He waved goodbye to his mother and his children: Dalal, 17, Shahad, 12, Maha, 9, and Zayed, 11.

Hazim never came back.

He was shot, according to eyewitnesses, by a US patrol.

His car was burned and, because of the curfew, his family had to wait until the next morning to start looking for him. Two days later, his charred and barely recognisable body was found. **To the bewilderment of his family, US troops stopped them after they had collected the body, uncovered it and took photos.**

Hazim was not a "terrorist" or a "Saddamist".

He was a cheerful family man who was wounded in the Iran-Iraq war, and survived the harshness of the sanctions years by selling fruit and vegetables.

Who is going to investigate his killing, compensate his family, and help his children to make sense of their tragedy? Will it be the Iraqi interim government, or the US-led occupation?

Judging by the human rights records of both, the answer is that neither of them will investigate Hazim's killing, or any other. Human rights under occupation have proved to be a mirage similar to WMD. (my emphasis)

In his message broadcast to Iraqis last April, Tony Blair said: "Our aim is to help alleviate immediate humanitarian suffering, and to move as soon as possible to an interim authority run by Iraqis ... which represents human rights and the rule of law and spends Iraq's wealth not on palaces and WMD, but on you and the services you need."

So much for illusions.

Charred bodies, the massacre of children in a wedding party, the killing of detainees, shootings at demonstrations, kidnappings of civilians - these are the features of that "better future".

Taking snaps of Hazim's charred body has shaken his family's belief in the humanity of the Americans, as well as the British and the Iraqis working with them.

Following the US and British governments' line on human rights, members of the interim Iraqi government have sought to play down the violations committed by occupation troops - either by recalling that similar abuses were committed under Saddam's regime or by labelling the victims as terrorists.

Under Iyad Allawi's regime, the newly trained Iraqi police are torturing detainees. Last week, leaders of the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution in Iraq accused the police of torturing and killing three of their members because of their political and religious affiliations, and demanded an immediate investigation.

Facing these daily atrocities, what do we expect an oppressed Iraqi to do?

<p style="text-align: center;">OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME <u>NOW!</u></p>

**“An Assortment Of Snakes,
Weasels And Hyenas.”**

March 08, 2005 Baghdad Burning, riverbendblog, Iraq

You want a rabbit?

We are relieved the Italian journalist was set free. I, personally, was very happy. Iraqis are getting abducted these days by the dozen, but it still says something else about the country when foreigners are abducted.

Iraqis have a fierce sense of hospitality that can border on the obnoxious sometimes. When people come to our houses, we insist they have something to drink and then we insist they stay for whatever meal is coming- even if its four hours away. We cringe

when journalists and aide workers are abducted because it gives us the sense that we're bad hosts.

People are always wondering why they abduct journalists, and other innocents. I think its because the lines are all blurred right now. It's difficult to tell who is who. Who is a journalist, for example, and who is foreign intelligence? Who is a mercenary and who is an aide worker? People are somewhat more reluctant to talk to foreigners than they were at the beginning.

The irony of the situation lay in the fact that Sgrena was probably safer with her abductors than she was with American troops.

It didn't come as a surprise to hear her car was fired at.

Was it done on purpose? It's hard to tell.

I can't think why they would want to execute Giuliana Sgrena and her entourage, but then on the other hand, I can't think how it could have possibly happened that they managed to fire that many rounds at a car carrying Italian intelligence officers and a journalist (usually they save those rounds for Iraqi families in cars).

I have a feeling it will be the usual excuse, "The soldiers who almost killed the journalist were really, really frightened. They've been under lots of pressure." But see, Iraqis are frightened and under pressure too- we don't go around accidentally killing people. We're expected to be very level-headed and sane in the face of chaos.

I wager that this little incident will be shoved aside with one of those silly Pentagon apologies that don't really sound like apologies, you know: "It was an unfortunate incident, but Sgrena shouldn't have been in Iraq in the first place. Journalists should stay safely in their own countries and listen for our daily military statements telling them democracy is flourishing and Iraqis are happy."

I don't understand why Americans are so shocked with this incident.

Where is the shock? That Sgrena's car was under fire? That Americans killed an Italian security agent? After everything that occurred in Iraq- Abu Ghraib, beatings, torture, people detained for months and months, the stealing, the rape... is this latest so very shocking? Or is it shocking because the victims weren't Iraqi?

I'm really glad she's home safe but at the same time, the whole situation is somewhat painful. **It hurts because thousands of Iraqis have died at American checkpoints or face to face with a tank or Apache and beyond the occasional subtitle on some obscure news channel, no one knows about it and no one cares. It just hurts a little bit.**

The event of the week occurred last Wednesday and I was surprised it wasn't covered by Western press.

It's not that big a deal, but it enraged people in Baghdad and it can also give a better picture of what has been going on with our "heroic" National Guard.

There was an explosion on Wednesday in Baghdad and the wounded were all taken to Yarmuk Hospital, one of the larger hospitals in Baghdad.

The number of wounded were around 30 - most of them National Guard. In the hospital, it was chaos- patients wounded in this latest explosion, patients from other explosions and various patients from gunshot wounds, etc. The doctors were running around everywhere, trying to be in four different places at once.

Apparently, there weren't enough beds. Many of the wounded were in the hallways and outside of the rooms. The stories vary. One doctor told me that some of the National Guard began screaming at the doctors, telling them to ignore the civilians and tend to the wounds of the Guard.

A nurse said that the National Guard who weren't wounded began pulling civilians out of the beds and replacing them with wounded National Guard. The gist of it is generally the same; the doctors refused the idea of not treating civilians and preferring the National Guard over them and suddenly a fight broke out. **The doctors threatened a strike if the National Guard began pulling the civilians out of beds.**

The National Guard decided the solution to the crisis would be the following- they'd gather up some of the doctors and nurses and beat them in front of the patients. So several doctors were rounded up and attacked by several National Guard (someone said there was liberal use of electric batons and the butts of some Klashnikovs).

The doctors decided to go on strike.

It's difficult to consider National Guardsmen as heroes with the image of them beating doctors in white gowns in ones head. It's difficult to see them as anything other than expendable Iraqis with their main mission being securing areas and cities for Americans.

It seems that Da'awa Party's Jaffari is going to be the Prime Minister and Talbani is going to get the decorative position of president. It has been looking like this since the elections. There is talk of giving our token Sunni Ghazi Al Yawir some high-profile position like National Assembly spokesperson. The gesture is meant to appease the Sunni masses but it isn't going to do that because it's not about Sunnis and Shia.

It's about occupation and Vichy governments. They all look the same to us.

What it seems policy makers in America don't get, and what I suspect many Americans themselves "do" get, is that millions of Iraqis feel completely detached from the current people in power.

If you don't have an alliance with one of the political parties (ie under their protection or on their payroll) then it's difficult to feel any affinity with people like Jaffari, Allawi, Talbani, etc. We watch them on television, tight-lipped and shifty-eyed after a meeting

where they quarreled about Kirkuk or Sharia in the constitution and it feels like what I imagine an out-of-body experience should feel like.

In spite of elections, they still feel like puppets.

But now, they are high-tech puppets. They were upgraded from your ordinary string puppets to those life-like, battery-powered, talking puppets.

it's almost like we're doing that whole rotating president thing Bremer did in 2003 all over again. The same faces are getting tedious.

The old Iraqi saying sums it up nicely, "Tireed erneb- ukhuth erneb. Tireed ghazal-ukhuth erneb." **The translation for this is, "You want a rabbit? Take a rabbit. You want a deer? Take a rabbit."**

Except we didn't get any rabbits- we just got an assortment of snakes, weasels and hyenas.

Brave Occupation Commandos Raid Hospital

8 March 2005 (AFP) & Khaleej Times

In Ramadi, the provincial capital of Anbar province, new Iraqi commandos conducted a raid on a hospital Tuesday.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Half Million Lebanese Tell Bush To Get Fucked

[Thanks to PB who sent this in. He writes: Where are Bush's praises of the demonstrators now??]

Mar 08, 2005 By TANALEE SMITH, Associated Press Writer

BEIRUT, Lebanon - Nearly 500,000 pro-Syrian protesters waved flags and chanted anti-American slogans in a central Beirut square Tuesday, answering a nationwide call by the militant Shiite Muslim Hezbollah group for a demonstration to counter weeks of massive rallies demanding Syrian forces leave Lebanon. [For how "massive, see the number below.]

Demonstrators held up pictures of Syrian President Bashar Assad and signs saying, "Syria & Lebanon brothers forever."



Lebanese protesters take part in a demonstration organized by pro-Damascus movements led by Lebanon's Shiite Muslim Hezbollah group in central Beirut. (AFP/Patrick Baz)

Other placards read: "America is the source of terrorism"; "All our disasters are from America"; "No to American-Zionist intervention; Yes to Lebanese-Syrian brotherhood."

Tuesday's rally was far bigger than the more than 70,000 anti-Syrian protesters who filled the nearby Martyrs' Square on Monday. That was the biggest rally yet of anti-Syrian furor, as demonstrators waved Lebanon's cedar-tree flag and thundered, "Syria out!"

"We have come here to affirm Lebanon's independence, sovereignty and unity ... and say no to the flagrant foreign interference in our affairs," he said.

Participants stressed that the foreign influence they referred to was from the United States, France and other countries, not Syria, which they welcomed.

"Syria should not leave. We are one hand and one people," said 16-year-old Esraa Awarki, who traveled by bus from Sharkiya in southern Lebanon. "Why do they want us to split now?"

Gee, George, You Just Got Outvoted.

We'll See Now Whether You Shut The Fuck Up About Syria.



(AFP/Anwar Amro)

GET THE MESSAGE?



(AP Photo/Mahmoud Tawil)

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