

GI SPECIAL 3A69:

**THIS IS HOW BUSH BRINGS THE TROOPS HOME:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE.**



The casket of 2nd Lt. Brian Gienau, March 9, 2005, in Cedar Falls, Iowa. Gienau, on duty with Company A, 224th Engineer Battalion out of Burlington, IA, died when his Humvee was struck with a bomb between Karbala and Ar Ramadi (AP Photo/Dan Nierling)

**"We've Been In Hell.
After You've Been In
Hell, Nothing's Ever
Really The Same Again"**

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The unit arrived to no running water, no sanitation, no air conditioning and a sheep camp with blood and feces on the wall for a base. The "guinea pigs" often felt like sitting ducks with no armor for their trucks, and inadequate flak gear for their bodies. Sweltering in 120-degree heat, they steamed when officers in air-conditioned SUVs rolled down their electric windows to bark orders.

2005-03-08 M.L. LYKE, SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER

EPHRATA -- A guardsman walks into a local Wal-Mart, freaks, does a 180, and walks back out again. Even after seven months, he can't stand the crowds. Another jerks awake in the middle of the night, holding an imagined gun at his wife's temple.

"Uh ... honey?" she asks.

The soldiers tear down highways, swerve to avoid trash in the road. The bag that held a Big Mac could now hide a bomb. One still jumps if you touch his neck. Others refuse to sleep in beds. Those who do may awake in a sweat.

They're members of the Ephrata-based 1161st Transportation Company, the close-knit National Guard unit that returned from Iraq seven months ago to a happy little town dolled up in yellow ribbons and townsfolk who breathed a collective sigh of relief.

Everyone in the town knew someone in uniform. The 130 citizen soldiers -- from age 18 to 60 -- were the region's postmen, tractor mechanics, lab technicians, firefighters and weekend warriors called to war.

"There was this sense of something missing when they were gone," says Wes Crago, city administrator of Ephrata, population 6,980. "Now, watching the news, hearing about roadside bombings, there's not the weight, not the burden.

"Our people are back home."

All of them. The unit had no casualties, only three wounded. Driving was extreme-danger duty in Iraq, but the 1161st managed to complete more than 14,000 missions, covering more than 1 million miles.

Some call it "The Miracle Company." But if no one paid the ultimate price, the deployment still came at a considerable cost.

Although some citizen soldiers have slowly eased back into routines, others still feel like strangers in their own lives seven months after troops touched down.

They landed. And crashed.

"You talk to someone and they say, 'You're fine now, you're home, so everything's good.' You want to say, 'No. It's not good. I'm feeling lost,' " says Spc. Keith Bond, a 31-year-old explosives specialist and father of two.

Some nights he goes to bed not even thinking about Iraq. "Others I lay down and 'Bam!' " The face of a young Iraqi boy who aimed a gun at his truck haunts him. Bond drew a bead on him, almost took the kid out before he realized the gun was a toy. He says it felt like 45 minutes. It was probably 10 seconds. It's still messing with his head.

"What if I had shot that boy?"

How, ask soldiers, do you explain that to civilians? How do you explain anything - the claustrophobia of being close, the anger that lashes out of nowhere, the desire to hole up?

"For a while I just wanted to sit home and do nothing," says Spc. Steve Hurt, whose son, Tanner, was four days home from the hospital when he left. "I was tired of talking about the war, tired of hearing people ask, 'Did you shoot anybody?' I didn't want anything to do with anybody -- and here I was with a wife who wanted attention, and a 2-year-old son who was walking."

Seven months after his return, Hurt and wife, Michelle, both 26, are still quarreling. "We fight over stupid things, like disciplining Tanner and paying bills," he says. "I wasn't used to having to deal with all this stuff."

The small 1161st unit -- closely tracked by larger National Guard battalions with new waves of soldiers coming home -- could still sniff the gunfire when it arrived in Iraq in May 2003.

The company was one of the first on the ground, one of the most poorly equipped and pulled one of the longest deployments, with two tough extensions. The soldiers -- some call themselves "guinea pigs" -- found out about the last extension from newspapers, a problem higher-ups vowed not to repeat.

"The military has said they hoped to learn by mistakes made with our unit," says Sheila Kelly, wife of Spc. Edward Kelly.

With training and extensions, the unit was gone from families for more than 18 months, finally arriving at Fort Lewis at the end of July. The military had prepped soldiers and spouses on possible reintegration problems. But nothing, some say, could fully prepare them for what was to come.

After the tractor parades, the award ceremonies, the celebrations and chili feeds died down, it was all quiet on the eastern front. In some households, eerily quiet.

Sheila Kelly says her husband locked himself in the bathroom to dress when he first got home. He'd become a smoker. He cursed. He was reclusive. He didn't want to be kissed, hugged -- it felt "suffocating." When she threw a big dinner party, he bolted.

"They say it's like a roller coaster, and sooner or later the ride comes to an end. But it doesn't. There's always another ride that begins," says Sheila Kelly, 41, tears spilling onto her cheeks.

Even after seven months, Spc. Kelly, 42, still craves privacy. "For me the hard part is getting back to the day-to-day, re-establishing my feelings and emotions," says the soldier, a lab technician in civilian life. "It's like you have this little buffer zone around you -- and you don't want to let anyone in."

Kelly doubts he'll ever be "old normal" again.

But who defines "new normal?"

"I keep trying to bring back the old me," says Bond. "I bring him back one day, and the next I have to try to find that person all over again."

One 1161st mother says her son left a boy and came back a man.

Sgt. Jeff Elliott, 35, left a kid at heart, and came back feeling "like a 60-year-old man."

The father of five is one of three Guardsmen in the unit decorated with a Purple Heart. He was wounded in June 2003, when a bomb in a black plastic bag hit the truck he was driving. He was in medical hold at Fort Lewis until last November, undergoing treatment for an injured back and anxiety, with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

He came home with an electronic box on his hip to interrupt pain signals to his back. It flashes like the light on a pursuing cop car.

"We've been in hell. After you've been in hell, nothing's ever really the same again," he says.

He can't tolerate crowds and avoids restaurants -- unless his buddy Bond is there to cover his back. Like other soldiers accustomed to strict discipline, he's often impatient with the kids. "It's Daddy wants it done now, and he wants it done right now. If it's not, it pushes his button," says Penny, his wife of 15 years.

Elliott's family wonders what happened to the outgoing baby-faced dad who laughed and joked with the kids, chasing them through the house, rolling around on the floor with them.

This other dad hurts, and he's angry. "There's a mentality in the military that, if you complain you're hurt, you're faking it, you're slacking," says the sergeant. "So 99.1 percent of the time you suck it up, don't complain."

There was plenty to complain about in Iraq in 2003.

The unit arrived to no running water, no sanitation, no air conditioning and a sheep camp with blood and feces on the wall for a base. The "guinea pigs" often felt like sitting ducks with no armor for their trucks, and inadequate flak gear for their bodies. Sweltering in 120-degree heat, they steamed when officers in air-conditioned SUVs rolled down their electric windows to bark orders.

For some, serving in Iraq was a matter of pride; for others, a waste of time.

"I lost almost two years in my children's lives for something I see as a total waste of time and money and effort," says Spc. Kelly.

For Kory and Melissa Brown, it has been an exercise in togetherness. The husband and wife shipped out together, returned together. Although they couldn't touch or show affection in camp -- they stole a kiss or two -- they shared the same experiences. It's made readjustment simpler.

"She knows where I'm coming from ..." says Kory, 29.

"And he knows where I'm coming from," says Melissa, 28, completing the sentence.

She's a dental hygienist in town, and, like others in the 1161st, found re-entry into the civilian work force challenging. Away almost two years, she was rusty, and it took her several months to get her skill level back. There are still procedures she has to learn again. "I thought I would come back and just jump right into things," she says.

At least she came home to a job. Some soldiers didn't, including Spc. Hurt. He had to quit his old job when his wife moved to Ephrata. He came home from an 18-month deployment to a long, seven-month hunt for work. He applied everywhere and had only two phone calls, he says. "I felt like, after serving the country for 18 months, I come home, and I couldn't even get a job. That got to me.

"I started thinking, 'Maybe they're not hiring me because they know I could be redeployed.' "

Redeployment is a touchy topic in this little town, where remaining yellow ribbons are now faded by sun, frayed by wind.

With guard enlistments falling 30 percent short of recruitment goals, and members of the reserve and guard providing at least 40 percent of personnel in Iraq, the pressure's on. "When soldiers call to ask me what are the chances we'll go back, I tell them 50-50," says Sgt. 1st Class Merle McLain, the 36-year-old readiness manager for the 1161st and father of 3-year-old twins Alex and Sara.

They were 20 months old when the tall sergeant with the booming voice left for Iraq. He missed the "terrible 2s," potty training, his son's bout with pneumonia and emergency surgery. **He tried to get home and was denied -- a low point.**

Wife, Marcee, 32, who heads family support for the unit, says the kids are still working to reconnect with Dad. They bawled the first time he raised his voice and still run to Mommy for comfort.

"The kids have to regain the trust that the parent is going to stay."

Is he?

Mom doesn't like to think about the troops going back.

But, like everyone else in the "Miracle Company" family, she can't help it.

"It's always in the back of my mind," she says softly.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT THE NEW TRAVELING SOLDIER

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

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

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

BAGHDAD SOLDIER DIES IN IED ATTACK

3/9/2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 05-03-05C

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- A Task Force Baghdad Soldier died March 9 when his patrol was hit by an improvised explosive device around 3:30 p.m.

Another Soldier was wounded.

Army Sergeant From Fountain City Killed

3.9.05 FOUNTAIN CITY, Wis. (AP)

An Army sergeant from western Wisconsin who wanted to become an architect one day was killed in Iraq, his mother said Tuesday.

Sgt. Andrew Bossert, 24, of Fountain City, was killed Monday after a car exploded near him, Diane Bossert said.

"We don't really know a whole lot of the details yet. Basically, all they've told us was he was at a checkpoint, a car went through the checkpoint and it blew up," Diane Bossert said.

Her son was the 35th Wisconsin soldier killed in Iraq since the U.S. military invaded the country almost two years ago.

Bossert enlisted in the Army five years ago after graduating from Fountain City High School, was assigned to an engineering company and was shipped to Iraq last August, his mother said. He had been stationed in South Korea for 2 1/2 years before he was assigned to Iraq, she said.

Bossert, who was married two years ago, loved motorcycles and had dreams of becoming an architect after he finished his military career in a year, his mother said.

She said she last talked to her son Saturday when he called home.

"He basically said what he always does. That he was fine. Not very often did he talk about the dangers."

30 U.S. Mercenaries Blown Up: Hotel Housed Americans Running Iraq Occupation Prisons



"A Wednesday Morning In Liberated Baghdad"
March 9, 2005 Ahmed Al-Habbabi, Anti-Allawi Group

03/09/05 KXAN.com & By Todd Pitman (AP) & By PATRICK QUINN, Associated Press Writer & BBC News & By Kevin Graman, Staff writer, SpokesmanReview & Aljazeera

Baghdad, Iraq -- **U.S. officials say at least 30 American contractors [translation: mercenaries] are among those injured when bombers blew up a garbage truck packed with explosives outside the Agriculture Ministry and the Sadeer Hotel,**

The U.S. Embassy says the Americans are among 40 people hurt in the blast, which killed at least three people. Officials say no Americans were killed.

Police said a group of insurgents wearing police uniforms first shot to death a guard at the Agriculture Ministry's gate, allowing the truck to enter a compound the ministry shares with the adjacent Sadeer hotel. Guards in the area then fired on the vehicle, trying to disable it before it exploded. The ministry building caught fire but police said the main target may have been the hotel, which is used by Iraqi police and Western contractors.

The truck blew up in a parking lot, where several burning vehicles were in flames and 20 others were damaged. The explosion carved a hole in the parking lot that was at least 30 feet wide and more than 10 feet deep. It shattered most windows in the hotel.

The hotel is used by Western contractors.

The bombing shook nearby buildings in the heart of the capital, injuring dozens of people and sending up a huge column of acrid black smoke. Volleys of automatic weapons fire could be heard before and after the explosion.

The militants who claimed the Baghdad suicide bomb attack said it had been timed to avoid hurting Muslim passers-by.

"Two men, dressed in police uniforms, shouted 'Allahu Akbar' and detonated the garbage truck in a street behind the ministry," a security guard said, declining to give his name.

It began at 0630 (0330 GMT) with insurgents firing a rocket-propelled grenade on to a checkpoint sealing off the main road to the ministry and Hotel Sadeer.

"I saw a black BMW pull up to the checkpoint and shoot one guard. There was a change of guard at the time. The BMW killed the guard and cleared the way for the garbage truck to enter," witness Haidar Hamid told the AFP news agency.

Another witness said two men in police uniforms had subsequently shot another guard at a checkpoint to the main entrance to the ministry.

Guards at the hotel started to fire heavily down the street, Mohammed Fadl said.

The bomber then drove the truck through the checkpoints and exploded it.

A corrections team headed by the former director of the Geiger Corrections Center in Spokane survived a suicide bombing early today at Baghdad's Al-Sadir Hotel.

Spokane's Mike Pannek, who is now in charge of American contractors administering Iraqi prisons and training Iraqi corrections personnel, called The Spokesman-Review early Wednesday morning.

“All of my corrections people are OK,” Pannek said, adding that a few members of the team, including Pannek, suffered “minor cuts and scrapes from flying glass.”

Pannek left Spokane last February to take a job with Scientific Applications International Corp., which was under contract with the Iraq Ministry of Justice, according to a Spokesman-Review report last spring.

The Spokane corrections official served for a while at the notorious Abu Ghraib prison, where American military personnel had abused Iraqi prisoners.

Before leaving for Iraq, Pannek told the newspaper he would be training a new Iraqi warden and other prison guards.

According to Pannek’s wife, Sherry, her husband has been promoted and now oversees all contractors providing corrections services for the Iraqi government.



“How many 9-11s to pay for what we had nothing to do with?”

March 9, 2005 Ahmed Al-Habbabi, Anti-Allawi Group

Car Bombers Attack U.S. Troops At Habaniyah And Abu Ghraib; Casualties Not Reported

3/9/2005 By Todd Pitman (AP)

Two car bombings were reported.

Police 1st Lt. Mohammed al-Duleimi said one car bomber targeted an American checkpoint outside a base in Habaniyah, 50 miles west of Baghdad.

Another car bomb exploded near U.S. troops close to a U.S. base in Abu Ghraib, just west of the capital, police Lt. Akram al-Zubaie said.

U.S. Bullets Found In Body Armor Of Dead Bulgarian; Dictatorship Won't Pull Troops Out

Mar 9, 2005 SOFIA, Bulgaria (Reuters) - Bulgaria is now sure U.S. forces killed one of its soldiers last week in a "friendly fire" accident.

Defense Minister Nikolai Svinarov said spent bullets removed from rifleman Gurdi Gurdev's body armor were of U.S. issue. Gurdev had been sprayed with automatic weapons fire after his unit shot warning rounds to halt an Iraqi vehicle in the dark.

"They were 7.62x51 Winchester," he said.

Bulgaria's government, led by former King Simeon Saxe-Coburg, is a strong supporter of the U.S.-led operations in Iraq, but **roughly three quarters of the population disagree with its military presence there. [When 75% want the troops out, and the government refuses, that's called a dictatorship, and the cure for that is a revolution that wipes it out.]**

Gurdev's death — Bulgaria's eighth fatal casualty suffered in Iraq — has also ignited a storm of criticism from media and opposition parties at home, who say officials kept the details of the shooting secret for several days.

"The ease with which the authorities lied reveals their guilty conscience to society, which staunchly disapproves of their policy in Iraq and their servility to the Americans," daily Sega wrote in an editorial Wednesday.

TROOP NEWS

U.S. Pakistani Soldier To Be Buried Next Week

March 9 (SANA)

Funeral arrangements have been made for one of the New York City soldiers Azhar Ali, 27, who was killed last week by a roadside bombing in Iraq.

Spc. Azhar Ali, 27, of Kew Gardens Hills, New York was killed March 1 when he was ambushed while riding in a Humvee near a roadside near the Iraq airport. **Ali, who was scout for the "Fighting 69th" Regiment, which has lost six New York-area members since the fighting started.**

Meanwhile, the family of Ali, which is originally from Pakistan, is working to get his body to New York to proceed with a Muslim funeral.

Ex-Marine Says Public Version Of Saddam Capture Phony

03/09/05 UPI

A former U.S. Marine who participated in capturing ousted Iraqi President Saddam Hussein said the public version of his capture was fabricated.

Ex-Sgt. Nadim Abou Rabeih, of Lebanese descent, was quoted in the Saudi daily al-Medina Wednesday as saying Saddam was actually captured Friday, Dec. 12, 2003, and not the day after, as announced by the U.S. Army.

"I was among the 20-man unit, including eight of Arab descent, who searched for Saddam for three days in the area of Dour near Tikrit, and we found him in a modest home in a small village and not in a hole as announced," Abou Rabeih said.

"We captured him after fierce resistance during which a Marine of Sudanese origin was killed," he said.

He said Saddam himself fired at them with a gun from the window of a room on the second floor. Then they shouted at him in Arabic: "You have to surrender. ... There is no point in resisting."

"Later on, a military production team fabricated the film of Saddam's capture in a hole, which was in fact a deserted well," Abou Rabeih said.

Abou Rabeih was interviewed in Lebanon.

How Rumsfeld & Pentagon Incompetence Killed And Maimed U.S. Troops: 167 Days For Body Armor To Get To U.S. Forces; Soldiers From Other Countries Got theirs In 12



But an examination of the issues involving the protective shielding and other critical equipment shows how a supply problem seen as an emergency on the ground in Iraq was treated as a routine procurement matter back in Washington.

3.8.04 By MICHAEL MOSS, The New York Times

The war in Iraq was hardly a month old in April 2003 when an Army general in charge of equipping soldiers with protective gear threw the brakes on buying bulletproof vests.

The general, Richard A. Cody, who led a Pentagon group called the Army Strategic Planning Board, had been told by supply chiefs that the combat troops already had all the armor they needed, according to Army officials and records from the board's

meetings. Some 50,000 other American soldiers, who were not on the front lines of battle, could do without.

In the following weeks, as Iraqi snipers and suicide bombers stepped up deadly attacks, often directed at those very soldiers behind the front lines, General Cody realized the Army's mistake and did an about-face. On May 15, 2003, he ordered the budget office to buy all the bulletproof vests it could, according to an Army report. He would give one to every soldier, "regardless of duty position."

But the delays were only beginning.

The initial misstep, as well as other previously undisclosed problems, show that the Pentagon's difficulties in shielding troops and their vehicles with armor have been far more extensive and intractable than officials have acknowledged, according to government officials, contractors and Defense Department records.

In the case of body armor, the Pentagon gave a contract for thousands of the ceramic plate inserts that make the vests bulletproof to a former Army researcher who had never mass-produced anything.

He struggled for a year, then gave up entirely.

At the same time, in shipping plates from other companies, the Army's equipment manager effectively reduced the armor's priority to the status of socks, a confidential report by the Army's inspector general shows. Some 10,000 plates were lost along the way, and the rest arrived late.

In all, with additional paperwork delays, the Defense Department took 167 days just to start getting the bulletproof vests to soldiers in Iraq once General Cody placed the order.

But for thousands of soldiers, it took weeks and even months more, records show, at a time when the Iraqi insurgency was intensifying and American casualties were mounting.

By contrast, when the United States' allies in Iraq also realized they needed more bulletproof vests, they bypassed the Pentagon and ordered directly from a manufacturer in Michigan. They began getting armor in just 12 days.

The issue of whether American troops were adequately protected received wide attention in December, when an Army National Guard member complained to Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld that troops were scrounging for armor to fortify their Humvees and other vehicles.

The Pentagon has maintained that it has moved steadfastly to protect all its troops in Iraq.

But an examination of the issues involving the protective shielding and other critical equipment shows how a supply problem seen as an emergency on the ground in Iraq was treated as a routine procurement matter back in Washington.

While all soldiers eventually received plates for their vests, the Army is still scrambling to find new materials to better protect the 10,000 Humvees in Iraq that were not built for combat conditions.

They are re-enforced by simple steel plates that cannot withstand the increasingly potent explosives being used by the insurgents, according to contractors who are working to develop more sophisticated armor for the Army.

I.E.D.'s.....have caused about a quarter of the more than 1,500 American deaths in Iraq, including those of two National Guard members from New York City just last week.

American military commanders and Pentagon officials now concede that they consistently misjudged the strength and ingenuity of the insurgency in Iraq, which has grown more sophisticated in its tactics. **Because commanders failed to take that force into account, the Army's procurement machine could never catch up, no matter how hard it tried.**

Others say that the Pentagon's longstanding preference for billion-dollar weaponry has made it less prepared to deliver the basic tools needed by soldiers on the ground.

"We've never been very good at equipping people in a simple, straightforward fashion," said Thomas E. White, who resigned as secretary of the Army in April 2003 after a falling out with Mr. Rumsfeld.

Scrambling for Body Armor

The insurgency had already taken root in Iraq when General Cody made his decision on April 17, 2003, that enough soldiers had bulletproof vests. As more casualty reports flowed in during the next month, he came to recognize that the advice he had gotten from staff members in Washington did not reflect the reality of the war.

"We began to realize how wrong we were and the Army has been scrambling ever since," Mr. White recalls.

General Cody, now the Army's vice chief of staff, declined to comment, but his staff members confirmed the details of the supply problems. **Some of the most glaring problems were contained in an April 20, 2004, report by the inspector general that remained confidential until it was released to The New York Times under the Freedom of Information Act.**

The Pentagon put the inspector general on the case after Defense Department officials, noticing that its allies were getting armor so quickly, became suspicious that they were taking armor intended for American soldiers.

But the report wound up criticizing the Pentagon instead.

<p>The allies had indeed asked the Defense Department for bulletproof vests, the inspector general found.</p>
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After being told they would have to wait until the Americans were fully equipped, they ordered their 9,600 sets from a manufacturer from Central Lake, Mich., Second Chance Body Armor.

By contrast, the inspector general found, the Pentagon took much longer.

For starters, it took the Army 47 days from when General Cody issued his order for bulletproof vests to allocate the necessary funds so that contracts could be awarded, the inspector general found.

Then, the handful of tiny companies making the vests and plates for the Army were snowed under by the soaring demand.

To speed things up, the Pentagon decided to relax its weight requirement, accepting some plates 30 percent heavier and making it possible for more manufacturers to produce them.

But by the fall of 2003, as Pentagon officials were assuring Congress that they were moving as fast as they could to get armor to soldiers, one of the Pentagon's chief producers of plates was fuming.

The company, ArmorWorks of Tempe, Ariz., and its supplier of ceramics, the beer-making Coors family of Colorado, had ramped up their operations to meet the demands of the war, but ArmorWorks' president, William J. Perciballi, says Defense Department delays in awarding contracts for more plates forced him to lay off workers and shut down his assembly line for two months.

When the additional orders were finally awarded in early 2004, he lost out to three lower bidders.

One of those companies, High Performance Materials Group of Boothwyn, Pa., said it could make 20,000 plates for \$4,960,000, a price 11 to 15 percent below even the next two successful bidders.

The Pentagon's Defense Supply Center, which handled the contracts, says an Army ballistics engineer determined that High Performance, a research and development company, could do the work, despite its lack of experience in mass production.

"We certainly demonstrated that we could make the plates," said the company's founder, Kenneth A. Gabriel, a former Army researcher who left the military in 1999. He said he had developed his own version of the ceramic plates that passed Army testing and prepared detailed plans for production that the supply center reviewed.

But Mr. Gabriel said he ran into unforeseen trouble. His source for ceramic dried up. Then he lost his building lease. Last December, after missing four deadlines and delivering only 356 plates, he transferred the contract to one of the other winning bidders, and his company dissolved.

In interviews and written responses, the Defense Supply Center said it pressed High Performance as best it could. "Throughout the period of delinquency the contracting

officer considered the possibility of a termination for default and a repurchase of the items. However, when reviewing the facts together with the applicable FAR (Federal Acquisition Regulation) provisions, it was determined that a termination for default would not be the appropriate action," the center said.

Mr. Perciballi of ArmorWorks eventually got more orders, but said: "It was stop, start, stop, start. Couldn't they have ramped up at the start of the war? Our problem was they were taking little bites and never got the whole industry together to see just what we could do."

The final hitch arose in Iraq.

The Army agency responsible for equipping soldiers got swamped by other materials being rushed to Iraq, the inspector general found."

The bulletproof vests had been labeled high priority, but in the ensuing chaos, everything got treated as high priority, which meant that in fact nothing was. The Pentagon has a special term for items that get lost in the shuffle: frustrated cargo.

"The massive push of supplies and materiel initially led to containers with OTV (the outer tactical vest portion of body armor), Desert Camouflage Uniforms, boots, T-shirts, and socks being stacked up and becoming frustrated cargo," the inspector general's report found.

The delivery and tracking of body armor was so chaotic that by Jan. 23, 2004, when the last American soldiers got theirs, 10,000 plates were still missing, the report says. Pressed by the inspector general's inquiry, the Army quickly found 97 plates in containers filled with uniforms, boots and socks.

General Kern, who had overseen the procurement system as head of Materiel Command until he retired this year, said he accepted the criticism in the report as a "fair assessment." The report did commend the Army for pushing the industry to increase production by recruiting more companies.

But in all, General Kern said, the 167 days it took to start getting armor to the troops was "historically pretty good."

Representative Duncan Hunter, a California Republican and the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, said some of the acquisition rules are necessary to prevent fraud and abuse, but the Pentagon could strip away layers of approvals and evaluations without jeopardizing the process.

"Congress is to blame for some of this," he said, citing the oversight hoops through which the Pentagon has to jump.

Some soldiers waiting for the body armor say they felt punished for speaking out about the delays. Specialist Joseph F. Fabozzi of the New Jersey National Guard complained publicly during a visit home in late 2003.

Returning to Iraq a few weeks later, he said, he was handed a \$912 bill for having rear-ended a truck the previous summer while on a convoy. His National Guard unit did not respond to requests for comment.

Mr. Fabozzi appealed the bill and won, records show, in part by explaining precisely how his gas pedal had jammed - because the trucks did not have armor plating, he and others had been told to place sandbags on the floors. "They would break and spill into the pedals," he said.

Vehicles Without Shielding

Soldiers are still jury-rigging protection for their trucks and Humvees because of another contracting problem with which the Pentagon continues to wrestle.

Going into the war, it had only one contractor, O'Gara-Hess & Eisenhardt of Fairfield, Ohio, re-enforcing new Humvees with armor, handling 50 a month.

The Pentagon decided against asking Detroit automakers like General Motors, which makes the Humvee's civilian version, the Hummer, to start making armored Humvees because they would need too much time to set up new assembly lines.

But the Pentagon only gradually pushed O'Gara-Hess to ramp up to 550 vehicles a month, a level the company expects to reach only this spring. The latest uptick in ordering came in December after Specialist Thomas Wilson, a member of the Tennessee National Guard, confronted Mr. Rumsfeld in Kuwait.

Mr. Rumsfeld immediately came under criticism for what some saw as a callous dismissal of Mr. Wilson's complaints.

Dov S. Zakheim, the Pentagon's comptroller and chief financial officer until last May, said the Pentagon did not want to saddle O'Gara-Hess with more work than it could handle because of problems that arose with other manufacturers of big-ticket items.

"Given the level of Congressional scrutiny about all contracting procedures," Mr. Zakheim said, "clearly there was a concern that this be done in a graduated fashion so as to avoid another scandal."

At the same time as installing shielding in new Humvees, the Pentagon has had to deal with the 10,000 Humvees in Iraq that were never re-enforced for combat.

To help protect these vehicles, a Pentagon unit that was expediting purchases began pushing the Army to buy ceramic plates from private contractors.

The Army, though, opted for plain steel plates that it could make in its own depots. The plates are failing to withstand the insurgent's bigger bombs, which are also blowing up more heavily armored vehicles. As a result, the Army has been forced to look for additional materials to protect the Humvees, according to contractors involved in the effort.

Long before the war, the Pentagon was excited about new ways to subvert these bombs.

A California military contractor developed a countermeasure during the 1991 Persian Gulf war. Known as the Shortstop Electronic Protection System, it evolved into a portable device that was heralded for its ability to jam the radio frequencies used by insurgents to detonate their bombs.

Col. Bruce D. Jette, a participant in the meetings of the Strategic Planning Board, the panel led by General Cody, used a jamming device to protect the oil fields in Iraq. Colonel Jette was heading up a new unit called the Rapid Equipping Force, which was given license to ignore the lumbering ways the Army traditionally fills orders from the field.

Colonel Jette, who has a Ph.D. in electronic materials from M.I.T., dodged the Army's research-and-development agencies and phoned his scientist friends to find a commercial robot that could search for explosives. He embedded his staff in combat units. He took manufacturers to Iraq so they could quickly modify designs for body and vehicle armor.

In a report to Congress in January, Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker, the Army's chief of staff, said the unit's work in developing these explosive countermeasures and other tools was emblematic of the Army's transformation into an agile force.

Some Pentagon officials say they first realized soldiers were being killed by I.E.D.'s as early as June 2003, and late that summer the Army's 101st Airborne Division issued a report that cited "numerous" injuries from I.E.D.'s in its plea for more vehicle armor and training to evade the bombs.

The Defense Department had been producing various I.E.D. countermeasures. But the Pentagon did not start ordering large quantities of one of the most promising ones, known as the Warlock, until December 2003, nine months after the war began, according to GlobalSecurity.org, a research firm based in Alexandria, Va.

The firm said in a report that EDO Communications and Countermeasures of Simi Valley, Calif., has received three orders totaling \$31 million for 1,899 Warlocks. EDO declined to comment, citing the secrecy constraints imposed by the Pentagon.

The Pentagon has declined to say publicly how many devices it still needs in Iraq to protect all of the troops. But after learning the Army had so few that it could not spare any for training exercises, the House Armed Services Committee in December pushed the Pentagon for a big increase in its spending on I.E.D. countermeasures, to \$161 million, in the next few months, until next year's budget is approved.

In presenting that budget to the committee on Feb. 16, Mr. Rumsfeld said the Defense Department had begun a vast effort to fight I.E.D.'s that encompasses many tools and strategies. "U.S. forces are now discovering and destroying more than one-third of I.E.D.'s before they can detonate," he said. "We have every reason to believe that this will improve."

At the hearing, Representative Gene Taylor, a staunch military supporter and Democrat from Mississippi, pointed out that his state had just lost four more

National Guard members and criticized the secrecy enshrouding the Defense Department's efforts to deal with the explosives.

"There is the technology to prevent the detonation of most improvised explosive devices that exist," Mr. Taylor said, speaking with frustration. "We've allocated money for it. And yet that number remains classified, Mr. Secretary, not because the insurgents don't know how few are protected, but because I'm of the opinion the American people would be appalled if they knew how few are protected."

Colonel Jette was also frustrated, and in October he resigned. In interviews, he said as the rush of war wore off, the Army's traditional supply corps began reasserting lengthy contracting and testing regimens, leaving him increasingly discouraged.

"That perfection in testing becomes the enemy of what is operationally good enough," he said. "And the soldiers in the field are looking for good enough."

The Rapid Equipping Force has a new leader, but still operates without a permanent charter. Gen. John M. Keane, a former Army vice chief of staff who helped establish the program, said he shares Colonel Jette's concern for its future.

"The acquisition system would see it as a threat," said General Keane, who retired in 2003. "There is an implied indictment that they can't deliver in that rapid a period of time, which is essentially true."

Rumsfeld Defies Congress: Refuses To Pay Families For Armor They Bought For Their Soldiers In Iraq; Bullshit Excuses Offered Instead

[Thanks to PB who sent this in. Re the quote below, he writes: WRONG - IT'S DELIBERATE:

"Very simply, this is either negligence on their part, because they were not happy with this when it passed, or its incompetence"]

March 09, 2005 By Rick Maze, Army Times staff writer & By LOLITA C. BALDOR, Associated Press Writer

The Defense Department has missed a deadline for creating a program to reimburse deployed troops, their friends and family members for the purchase of safety and protective gear, prompting complaints from the program's chief congressional sponsor.

Sen. Christopher Dodd, D-Conn., said the 2005 Defense Authorization Act, signed into law by President Bush Oct. 28, included a new program under which the Pentagon could provide reimbursement of up to \$1,100 for the purchase of protective, health or safety equipment for deployed troops if the government could not or would not provide it.

"Very simply, this is either negligence on their part, because they were not happy with this when it passed, or it's incompetence," Dodd said. "It's pretty outrageous when you have all their rhetoric about how much we care about our people in uniform."

The provision covered items purchased between Sept. 11, 2001, and July 31, 2004, either by or on behalf of service members.

Congress gave the Pentagon four months to come up with specific rules and procedures, a deadline that arrived Feb. 25, with no program in place.

In a March 9 letter to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Dodd said he doesn't understand the problem.

"There should be no higher priority for our government than ensuring that American troops are well-equipped, particularly those on the front lines in battle in Iraq and Afghanistan," Dodd wrote in the letter. **"This amendment was adopted after troubling reports surfaced that our men and women in uniform were digging into their own pockets or relying on charitable giving to buy such life-saving items as bulletproof vests, vehicle armor and medical supplies."**

The Defense Department opposed Dodd's reimbursement plan, arguing it was a bad precedent to reimburse troops for personal items.

Defense officials said rules for reimbursement are still being discussed, and blamed the delay on an internal dispute about who should write the eligibility rules — a task now assigned to the Army — and other questions, such as whether the government should end up owning equipment for which it reimburses purchase costs.

["Defense officials" are lying assholes. They know Rumsfeld didn't want to do it, so why make it happen? Anybody with an IQ of 15 or better knows if Rumsfeld ordered it done, it would be done. Rumsfeld kills and maims the troops in a hopeless Imperial war; now he won't pay the families who scraped up the money to try to keep their loved ones alive. Rumsfeld is the enemy, not the Iraqis. This government of traitors has killed 1500+ U.S. troops so far, first by starting a war based on lies for no mission other than corporate greed and oil, and then refusing to equip the troops it sends. These people belong on trial in a military court as enemy combatants, not sitting safely in their Washington offices. T]

The \$1,100 reimbursement limit was part of the compromise, an amount designed to cover the cost of body armor purchases for a Connecticut National Guard member, Spc. Bill Palifka, by his mother, a nurse, according to a statement from Dodd's office.

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.

RUMSFELD SUED BY MILITARY BRASS & ACLU FOR IRAQ PRISONER TORTURE

Mar 1, 2005 Humanrightsfirst.org, Washington DC

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld bears direct responsibility for the torture and abuse of detainees in U.S. custody, Human Rights First, the ACLU and military leaders charged, in the first federal court lawsuit to name a top U.S. official in the ongoing torture scandal in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The lawsuit was filed March 1, 2005 in federal court in Illinois on behalf of eight men who were subject to torture and abuse at the hands of U.S. forces under Secretary Rumsfeld's command. **The parties are seeking a court order declaring that Secretary Rumsfeld's actions violated the U.S. Constitution, federal statutes and international law.**

"Secretary Rumsfeld bears direct and ultimate responsibility for this descent into horror by personally authorizing unlawful interrogation techniques and by abdicating his legal duty to stop torture," said Lucas Guttentag, lead counsel in the lawsuit and director of the ACLU's Immigrants' Rights Project.

"He gives lip service to being responsible but has not been held accountable for his actions. This lawsuit puts the blame where it belongs, on the Secretary of Defense."

The groups are joined as co-counsel in the lawsuit by Rear Admiral John D. Hutson (Ret. USN), former Judge Advocate General of the Navy; Brigadier General James Cullen (Ret. USA), former Chief Judge (IMA) of the U.S. Army Court of Criminal Appeals; and Bill Lann Lee, Chair of the Human Rights Practice Group at Lief, Cabraser, Heimann & Bernstein, LLP and former Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights at the Department of Justice. Admiral Hutson and General Cullen are "of counsel" to Human Rights First.

In legal papers, the groups charged Secretary Rumsfeld with violations of the U.S. Constitution and international law prohibiting torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment. The lawsuit also seeks compensatory damages for the harms suffered as a result of torture and other abuse.

“In dealing with detainees, the attitude at the top was that they are all just terrorists, beneath contempt and outside the law so they could be treated inhumanely. Our effort to gain information vitiated 200 years of history. International obligations didn’t matter, nor did morality or humanity. That attitude dropped like a rock down the chain of command, and we had Abu Ghraib and its progeny.”

– Rear Admiral John Hutson (Ret. USN), of counsel to Human Rights First

“Mr. Rumsfeld has made clear that he does not intend to accept responsibility for the patterns of misconduct emerging in the wake of his policy decisions. We feel the honor of our military is at stake. We owe it to those who still wear the uniform and continue to serve their country honorably to bring this suit. Mr. Rumsfeld's policies have stained our military's record for adherence to the rule of law and observance of human rights. We want to remove that stain.”

– Brig. Gen. James Cullen (Ret. USA), of counsel to Human Rights First

Families Of Deployed Going Broke

3.8.05 SHAILA DEWAN, New York Times

Pamela Bout and her four children are among the 5,000 families who have received grants of at least \$500 [from the state of Illinois]. Ms. Bout, a school bus driver in Gurnee, Ill., whose husband, Robert, is a Navy reservist deployed last July, is navigating single-parenthood, a new health insurance policy and the anxiety of her husband's service in the Middle East.

"I've had to deal with so much since he's been gone," she said. "Cars breaking down, the dishwasher breaking down - everything that could happen since he's left, has happened. These little things add up."

Were it not for help from the state, Ms. Bout said, she would not have had a Christmas meal or gifts last December.

Airmen Test Kevlar Shorts

From: David Honish, Veterans For Peace
To: GI Special
Sent: March 09, 2005 1:48 AM
Subject: Fwd: Airmen Test Kevlar Shorts

From: Military.com
To: David Honish
Subject: Airmen Test Kevlar Shorts
Date: Tue, 8 Mar 2005 19:58:57 -0800 (PST)

Gotta love that subject line.

I suppose it is an improvement over sitting on your helmet?

Might be handy for dating Lorena Bobbit too?

DH

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

**WELCOME TO RAMADI.
HAVE A NICE DAY**



An insurgent carrying a rocket-propelled grenade launcher takes up position in Ramadi, March 9, 2005. Insurgents controlled the city streets, causing shops to close and the streets to empty of civilians fearing possible clashes. (AP Photo/Bilal Hussein)

Basra Bomb In Suburbs Gets Occupation Cops

9 March 2005 FOCUS News Agency & 3/9/2005 By Todd Pitman (AP) & By PATRICK QUINN, Associated Press Writer & ROBERT F. WORTH, NY Times

Basra. The Head of the police in Zubeir and three of his bodyguards were blown up after an explosion of a bomb Wednesday morning in the suburbs of Basra, AFP reported, citing an announcement of the local police.

The explosion was killing two policeman and wounding three more, Lt. Col. Karim Al-Zaydi said.

Assorted Resistance Action

3/9/2005 By Todd Pitman (AP) & By PATRICK QUINN, Associated Press Writer & (KUNA) & ROBERT F. WORTH, NY Times Reuters)

Interim Planning Minister Mahdi al-Hafidh escaped assassination after guerillas opened fire on his convoy in Baghdad. Two of his guards was killed and two others were wounded, police said.

In the northern city of Kirkuk, a woman identified as Nawal Mohammed, who worked with U.S. forces, was killed in a drive-by shooting, police said.

Three Iraqi soldiers were injured in a bomb attack in the town of Miqdadia, located to the north-east of the capital, a source in the Iraqi army said.

It added that the explosive charge blew up "near one of the bridges" in that town, which is located in the district of Dialli, north-east of Baghdad. An Iraqi army vehicle was also destroyed as a result of the explosion. The injured were taken to hospital for treatment, the source said.

In Habbaniya, 50 miles west of the capital, a bomber drove an Oldsmobile sedan into an Army base this morning, killing two officers and a civilian, and wounding at least 15, Army officials said.

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

Two Sudanese Occupation Base Employees Captured

3/9/2005 AFP and Turkish Press

DUBAI - The Islamic Army in Iraq has abducted two Sudanese men for collaborating with US forces. **Mohammad Harun Hammad and Maher Attaya were captured for "working at the Al-Bakr base, one of the biggest US bases, in the region of Al-Dhuluiya north of Baghdad,"** said the statement posted on an Islamist website.

The group had repeatedly warned "those who help the Americans in one way or another, including by working in the occupation camps."

A video showed the two men reading a text in which they identified themselves and admitted to their "mistake" in working as drivers for a Turkish firm at the Al-Bakr base.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

"Recruiters Off Our Campus!" The Growing Crisis Facing The Military

A petition drive by college students in Georgia to ban recruiters from campus has found significant support among military families and vets-with a number of them signing the petition, and some even helping to gather signatures.

To: GI Special

Sent: Wednesday, March 09, 2005

Subject: Recruiters Off Our Campus!

(March 8, 2005) Desmond Gardfrey. Desmond is a student at Georgia State University and a member of the Campus Antiwar Network Coordinating Committee. He can be contacted at dgardfrey@gmail.com

"It is a challenging recruiting environment right now."-- Marine Corps spokesman Maj. David Griesmer

In other words, recruiters better watch their backs.

The military is pushing harder to sign people up for the war. Signing bonuses for new recruits have gone up a few thousand. The military plans to hire several thousand more recruiters. The department of defense is spending billions of dollars on advertising.

But there are millions of people outraged at the idea that more lives will be wasted for empire.

This outrage has exploded on the frontlines of high schools and college campuses-key targets for military recruiters.

In New York, Seattle, Chicago, Southern Connecticut and San Francisco, college students confronted recruiters and successfully frustrated recruiters efforts with direct protests. In most cases, students held signs, passed out literature, led chants, and directly challenged recruiters with tough questions to expose their lies. In each case, recruiters struggled to attract students, packed up early and left discouraged.

High school students are stepping up their efforts as well. In Minnesota, antiwar high school students set up a table next to military recruiters, who the school regularly invites on campus. The students got over 200 signatures on their petition against military recruitment in their school, totally embarrassing the recruiters. **The school then tried to ban the students from tabling, but a flood of community support forced the school to back down.**

In Los Angeles, high school teachers told students they were required to take the ASVAB test, which the military uses to target "good recruits." **Several students refused to take the test, and when threatened with disciplinary action, they walked out of school in protest.**

The base of this anger includes people with loved ones in the military.

A petition drive by college students in Georgia to ban recruiters from campus has found significant support among military families and vets-with a number of them signing the petition, and some even helping to gather signatures.

With the US unable to stamp out resistance to the occupation, a growing number of service members and their loved ones are rightfully concluding that the mission is pointless. A growing number realize that the presence of US troops is doing nothing to help Iraqis-and is actually making things worse.

This is not about weapons of mass destruction, September 11th, or "liberating" Iraqis, or Afghans. **As one soldier wrote, "This war is about money. The money is only making the rich man richer." Many service members now realize they were lied to about the reason for the war, and over 1500 of them have died for a lie. The idea of dying for nothing is an issue for many troops.**

What can be even more devastating to Iraq war veterans can be the reality that they killed ordinary Iraqis-the very people they were supposed to be helping-for the same lie.

In January, Sgt. Kevin Benderman, of Ft. Stewart, Ga. refused a second deployment to Iraq. His refusal was largely based on his first tour in Iraq where he witnessed two awful events that turned him against the war.

When his unit was on a patrol, he saw an injured Iraqi girl on the side of the road. An older woman was holding her and crying for help. The girl's arm was badly burned. Kevin asked his officer to stop and help, but the officer ordered the convoy to move on, saying they couldn't afford to use their limited medical supplies. In the second event Kevin witnessed, some Iraqi children were throwing rocks at U.S. troops. Sgt. Benderman's commander ordered them to shoot if those kids came back again.

A recent article in The Guardian expressed the average troop's mindset in Iraq. A Sergeant "spoke for 150,000 American soldiers in Iraq" when he said, "I just want to stay alive and go home with all my body parts." One private asked "[W]hat are we doing here?" His friend agreed, "And tomorrow we're giving out candy to kids again. We didn't train for this."

Service members aren't willing to risk their lives to hand out candy and soccer balls to children. Neither are people looking for college money. The recruitment crisis would be even greater without "stop-loss", which allows the military to extend service members' length of service, beyond their original contract.

Even with the stop-loss policy, the military has to call up the injured, mothers with young children, and people who haven't thought about the military in years. The strain is so intense that members of the Navy and Air Force are being reclassified to serve on the ground in Iraq, usually in transport positions.

All of these factors, from "stop-loss" to the lies about weapons of mass destruction, have eroded support for the war among the general public. This has created an opening for a campaign against military recruiters.

The same factors allow for the greater involvement of antiwar service members and their families. We need to reach out to those antiwar folks in the military, and March 19, is great opportunity to do this.

Join Iraq Veterans Against the War and Military Families Speak Out for a march and rally in the "home of Ft. Bragg" to: Bring the troops home now!

Come to Fayetteville!

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.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Occupation Attack On Baghdad University Condemned

BAGHDAD, March 9 (KUNA)

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Berhum Saleh condemned Wednesday breaking into the Faculty of Education of Al-Mustanseriyah University, center of Baghdad by the Iraqi National Guards and the Multi National Forces (MNF) few days ago.

A statement issued by the Iraqi government said that Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Berhum Saleh met with Rector of the University, the Dean of the Faculty of Education in addition to a number of the university officials, and representatives of the university's students.

During the meeting Saleh affirmed the importance of respecting the university campus, rejecting any attacks against the universities, the statement explained.

Saleh condemned the unacceptable behavior of storming into the Faculty of Education, emphasizing that the government launched an investigation in the accident through the Defense Ministry and the MNF Command to unravel the circumstances of the assault.

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

Baghdad Mayor Wants More GIs Out Of Town

[Washington Times, March 9, 2005, Pg. 6]

Baghdad Mayor Alaa Mahmoud al-Tamimi wants a reduced U.S. military presence in the Iraqi capital---both on the streets of the city and in the concrete and barbed-war fortified green zone.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

British Employee Of Afghan Agency Is Slain In Kabul

[Washington Post, March 9, 2005, Pg. 15]

A British employee of the Afghan government was shot and killed by unknown assailants while driving on a major street in Kabul.

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/qi-special/>, www.williambowles.info/qispecial,
<http://www.albasrah.net/magalat/english/qi-special.htm>

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