

GI SPECIAL 3A70:



**Average Age 19:
From the senior prom to Vietnam**

“We saw the Vietnam War as an extension of the Cold War. The Vietnamese say it as a civil war. We were wrong.”

Robert McNamara

Sec, of Def. 1961-68

The Fog Of War

Photo and caption from the I-R-A-Q (I Remember Another Quagmire) portfolio of Mike Hastie, US Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71. (Contact at: hastiemike@earthlink.net) for more of this outstanding work. T) [R. Hastie, far left 3rd row, above.]

Scum In Uniform Out Of Control: Thugs Beat Up, Arrest Counter-Recruiters At City College Of New York

When Mr. Rodriguez was being arrested, his head was slammed into the wall. He called out "look what they're doing to me!" According to Ms. Paul, to silence him one of the guards pulled Mr. Rodriguez's hood over his head and slammed his head into the wall again.

March 09, 2005 CAN-NY-NJ

Three undergraduate students at the City College of New York (CCNY) were arrested Wednesday in the course of a peaceful protest against military recruiters.

Hadas Thier, Nick Bergreen, and Justino Rodriguez, along with approximately a dozen other protesters attended a job fair organized by the college, and stood up in front of a National Guard recruitment table chanting anti-war slogans.

Private security and campus peace officers immediately surrounded the protesters, pushed them into an empty hallway outside of the job fair, closed the hall door and assaulted two protesters and arrested a third who was taking pictures.

The two students who were assaulted are now being charged with felony assault, and the third with obstruction of a government administrator.

"Counter-recruitment" has become a national issue (USATODAY "Counter-recruiters shadowing the military" 3/7/5), and it's working. Between these efforts, and general disagreement about the war, recruitment is down - according to a 3/6/5 Reuters report, "The regular Army is 6 percent behind its year-to-date recruiting target, the Reserve is 10 percent behind, and the Guard is 26 percent short."

After similar counter-recruitment efforts have taken off from New York to Seattle, the military has clearly become concerned.

At William Patterson University in New Jersey an activist was arrested for simply handing out counter-recruitment leaflets.

Twice last semester, CCNY student protesters drove military recruiters off the campus with peaceful protests. This time campus security was ready.

"We didn't even get through one round of chanting," according to Tiffany Paul, a junior at CCNY and a member of the Campus Anti-War Network, who was one of the protesters. **"We were completely peaceful, it was the officers who were violent."**

When Mr. Rodriguez was being arrested, his head was slammed into the wall. He called out "look what they're doing to me!" According to Ms. Paul, to silence him one of the guards pulled Mr. Rodriguez's hood over his head and slammed his head into the wall again.

"He just stood on the guy," remembers Mark Turner, a staff member at CCNY, recalling the manner in which Mr. Bergreen was subdued by a private security guard, Mr. Robertson. "His foot was on his back, after he had tackled him. Private security are not supposed to touch us."

Ms. Thier was arrested simply for taking pictures.

Several witnesses recall that the guards were pulling on her hair.

Juan Alduey remembers that the guards pushed Ms. Thier when she tried to give a statement to students who began filming the event. "I'm being arrested for exercising my right to free speech" Mr. Alduey recalled.

MORE:

Press Conference

WHO: City College Counter-Recruiters: Hadas Thier, Nicholas Bergreen,

Justino Rodriguez (pending their release) and their supporters: representatives from civil liberties organizations, national anti-war organizations, student anti-war organizations, veterans and military family members, and the legal community

WHERE: Thursday March 10th
4pm
100 Centre Street

CONTACTS:

Activist: Meredith Kolodner (917) 881-3896
Lawyers: Sean Maher, Darlene Jorif (212) 876-5500

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Italian Prime Minister Says U.S. Officer At Baghdad Airport Knew Hostage Coming; Shit-Brained Liars At Pentagon Had Denied It

March 11, 2005 The Sydney Morning Herald

On Wednesday, the Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, told his country's Senate that US military officials in Iraq had approved an Italian intelligence officer's mission to free a kidnapped journalist and were expecting the convoy's arrival at Baghdad's airport last Friday when US soldiers opened fire.

After Giuliana Sgrena was handed over, the intelligence officer, Nicola Calipari, put her in the back seat of his car, sat beside her, and phoned his superiors.

One call was to an Italian official who was standing next to an American colonel at the airport. Mr Calipari "therefore warned the American military officials of their immediate arrival in the airport zone", Mr Berlusconi said.

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)

Foreign Security Guards Nearly Kill Leading Collaborator

March 11, 2005 The Sydney Morning Herald & "PA" News

The Iraqi Planning Minister, Mehdi al-Hafedh, a key figure in efforts to rebuild the country, narrowly avoided death when foreign security guards mistakenly opened fire on him. Two of his guards were killed and two others wounded.

**NO MORE
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!**



Richard Gienau pauses at the coffin of his son, Second Lt. Richard 'Brian' Gienau, after graveside ceremonies for the soldier March 9, 2005, in Tripoli, Iowa. Gienau, an Iowa Army National Guard soldier, was killed in a roadside bombing in Iraq. (AP Photo/Dan Nierling)

TROOP NEWS

**Soldier Who Lost Legs Doesn't
Resent Resistance Fighter:
"He Had Just As Good A Reason To
Be There In His Thinking As I Did."**

March 10, 2005 Fort Sill, Oklahoma (AP)

Specialist Kevin Pannell may have lost his legs in a grenade attack in Baghdad, but the 26-year-old soldier from Glenwood, Arkansas, says he's happier than he's ever been.

As he promised to his comrades in arms, Pannell was at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to greet the 250 Arkansas soldiers who returned to America's shores last night. He told The Associated Press today that he finally knows where he's going in life, even though his legs are gone.

He said he isn't bitter and wouldn't have changed anything about the day in June 2004 when he walked down an alley on patrol.

He doesn't even resent the Iraqi insurgent who threw the grenade at him because he says, "he had just as good a reason to be there in his thinking as I did."

He greeted his old buddies in Fort Sill while wearing prostheses and gym shoes. He promised them he would walk again and be there when they got home.

"I Risked My Life Supporting The Country. They Should Support My Family."

Army Made Wounded Soldiers' Mother Pay Her Own Way To See Him

Mar. 10, 2005 SYLVIA LIM, Herald Staff Writer

Besides the occasional sight-seeing trip in his wheelchair at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Spc. Derrick Randall spends most of his time willing his right leg to heal faster.

The Palmetto High School graduate's leg was shattered during an explosion in Iraq last month. After undergoing seven surgeries, the recovery of his leg is at the top of the 26-year-old's mind - that, and his 6-year-old son, his mother and relatives.

"I don't know when I am getting out - it could be six, nine or 12 months," the Urbana resident said by telephone Wednesday.

The army specialist was part of a convoy heading to Mosul, Iraq, from Kuwait on Feb. 8 when his supply truck triggered an improvised explosive device.

"All of a sudden everything went black, and everything was silent to me for two seconds," Randall recalled.

"I was thrown out of the truck. I was lying on the side of the road about 20 feet away from the truck when I realized my leg was broken. My foot was turned inside out."

Though he had to face the possibility of losing his right leg, the surgeries seemed to have paid off, said his mother, Mary Randall. Among some of the operations performed on Derrick include a reconstructive surgery and one to install a brace in his leg.

"The skin graft did take, and he will be wearing that leg brace for six to eight months," Mary Randall said. "As far as we know, the doctors did not say everything is safe and sound. But they're hoping that the leg will mend."

Since his last surgery, Derrick Randall goes through at least two physical therapy sessions a day.

"It's not too bad. It's the usual pain. It's not unbearable," he said.

Most importantly, Mary Randall said her son has regained some of his spirit. Dealing with the pain of losing a comrade in the explosion, the injury to his leg and being apart from his family affected Derrick's morale.

"I talked to Derrick and he is himself again," she said Wednesday.

Though she visited her son at Walter Reed briefly last month, both Mary Randall and her son were upset that the U.S. Army did not financially assist her with the trip or provide her with a place to stay.

"I don't understand what's going on there," the young soldier said. "I risked my life supporting the country. They should support my family. I just don't understand the logic behind that."

But the Army is supposed to help Mary Randall, a teacher's assistant at Tillman Elementary, an Army spokeswoman said Wednesday.

"We do provide travel money and invitation travel orders in every case," said Lt. Col. Pamela Hart of Washington, D.C.

When told about the Randall's, a representative from Congresswoman Katherine Harris' office was appalled.

"There are options," said Garrison Courtney, Harris' press secretary. "I'm surprised that nobody counseled them on what the options were." [Hey, why be surprised? Wounded soldiers and their families are treated like shit all the time. Why should this situation be any different? After all, saving money is important so Halliburton and the other Bush Buddies can pig out on more of it.]

Mary Randall plans a second trip to Walter Reed at the end of March, thanks to concerned Manatee County residents. Officials plan to present the Purple Heart to Derrick Randall when his mother can be at his side.

The Palmetto chapter of the American Legion gave her \$1,000 on Wednesday, and the school district raised an extra \$1,300, she said.

"It's really overwhelming how people throw their arm around me and they didn't even know me," Mary Randall said. "Now I won't be in a financial strain when I go visit my son . . . If I have to leave tonight, I don't have to worry."

Derrick Randall said he could not wait to come back to Manatee County again.

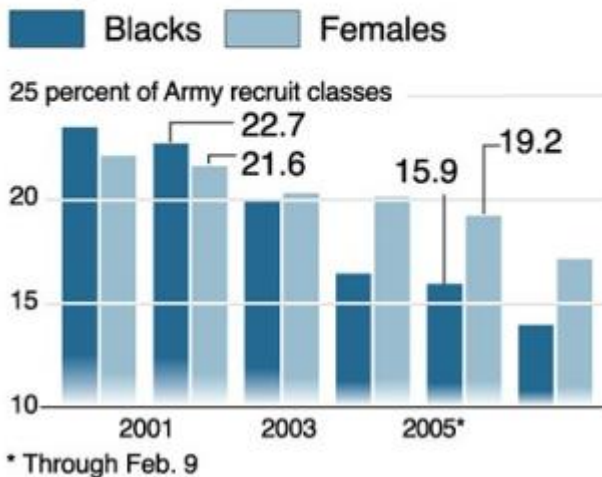
"I'm trying to get my leg to get better," he said. "I am going to take one day at a time, and just spend more time with my family and son."

National Guard Recruiting Collapses; 42% Short Of Goal In Feb.

Recruiting slows

The Army has been seeing a slump in recruiting young blacks and females since the terrorist attacks in 2001.

Army recruits, 2000-05



SOURCE: Army Recruiting Command

AP

[Thanks to PUB, who sent this in.]

Rangel said "When my (Guard and reserve) outfits come home, these guys get their medals, and they're proud. But when I'm called up (to speak), they cheer and stomp their feet, knowing that I fought against the war."

March 08, 2005 By Jane McHugh, Army Times staff writer & BY ROBERT BURNS, ASSOCIATED PRESS & March 6 2005 By Tom Philpot, Military Update & March 11, 2005 AFP

Recent signs that Army recruiting is in dire straits were underscored Tuesday when National Guard officials released figures that showed they will come up short for the fifth straight month.

February appears to have been the worst recruiting month for the Guard in this fiscal year, which began Oct. 1. Recruiters signed up only 3,192 new troops, 42 percent short of the goal of 5,533. The numbers were provided to Army Times by Lt. Col. Michael Milord, a spokesman for the National Guard Bureau in Washington.

On Dec. 14, the Guard began offering enlistment bonuses of \$10,000 and re-enlistment bonuses of \$15,000. [Not enough for a bad war, obviously.]

The army's active force is six per cent behind its recruiting goal for the fiscal year so far, the army reserve is 10 per cent behind, and the national guard is 26 per cent behind, said Army Secretary Francis Harvey.

Young blacks have grown markedly less willing to join the Army, citing fear of being sent to fight a war in Iraq they don't believe in, according to unpublicized studies for the military that suggest the Army is entering a prolonged recruiting slump.

"More African Americans identify having to fight for a cause they don't support as a barrier to military service," concluded an August 2004 study for the Army. It also said attitudes toward the Army among all groups of American youth have grown more negative in recent years.

Blacks make up about 23 percent of today's active-duty Army, but the share of blacks in the recruit classes of recent years dropped. From 22.7 percent at the time of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the share slid to 19.9 percent in 2002; 16.4 percent in 2003 and 15.9 percent last year, according to figures provided by Army Recruiting Command spokesman Douglas Smith.

The slide has continued, dropping to 13.9 percent as of Feb. 9.

U.S. Rep. Charles B. Rangel, a Democrat whose New York City district includes Harlem, said he wasn't too surprised by the Army recruiting data.

"I have not found a black person in support of this war in my district," he said. "The fact that every member of the Congressional Black Caucus - emotionally, politically and vigorously - opposes this war is an indication of what black folks think throughout this country."

Because black youths are 14 percent of all recruit-age youth, their recruiting numbers remain "acceptable," i.e., proportional to black citizens in U.S. society.

Rangel said "When my (Guard and reserve) outfits come home, these guys get their medals, and they're proud. But when I'm called up (to speak), they cheer and stomp their feet, knowing that I fought against the war. It's inconsistent as hell."

Fear of being killed or injured was the top reason to avoid service for 26 percent of youth in 2004, almost double the 14 percent reported in 2000.

Army Recruiting Problem: How To Market Dying In Iraq

March 08, 2005 Moshe Furuhashi, montages.blogspot

Black Army Recruits Down 41% since 2000

The "propensity to serve" is very low, according to the "U.S. Military Image Study" 8.4.04 prepared for the Army.

Last not the least, the "U.S. Military Image Study" is worth reading in its entirety, as it presents many fascinating findings that have not been reported by the media.

To take just one example, the study, in the inimitable language of marketing experts, offers an unintentionally funny recommendation to the Army in its conclusion:

"For the Army to achieve its mission goals with Future Force Soldiers, it must overhaul its image as well as its product offering" . . . because, "in today's reality, the risk/reward ratio is even more out of balance" than usual (8.4.04 p. 98).

Army Snoops Reading Private Emails

But soldiers are warned that all activity on government computers, including the e-mail traffic that travels over their servers, is monitored.

"It means that no one in America could bitch about their bosses. If that were so, everyone in the military would be in jail."

March 03, 2005 By Kelley Beaucar Vlahos, Fox News

WASHINGTON: **National Guardsman David Culbreth knew the military monitored the e-mail of soldiers overseas for operational security, but he never thought he could lose his job for an e-mail he sent from North Carolina to a friend stationed in Kuwait.**

"I'm losing my career here," said Culbreth, 39, a former full-time National Guardsman in North Carolina who was expecting a promotion to lieutenant colonel when he was fired in February 2004.

His bosses called him in November 2003, holding an e-mail he sent from his personal computer at home to his friend, Col. Fred Aikens, a fellow North Carolina guardsman who was stationed under Central Command (search) in Kuwait. Aikens was using an AOL address on a government computer.

Culbreth said he wrote about not getting an expected promotion, which he believed was in retaliation from an administrative complaint he and Aikens had made about their adjutant general, the head of the state National Guard. He says he was told that he was being let go because of that e-mail.

"Not only did I lose my promotion, but I lost my job," he said.

Culbreth filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Raleigh against Col. William T. Boyd, chief of staff of the North Carolina National Guard (search), and Maj. Gen. William Ingram Jr., the adjutant general of the North Carolina National Guard. Culbreth claims they orchestrated the e-mail monitoring and used his own e-mails against him.

The case is expected to set precedence on the expectation of privacy that inactive, off-duty soldiers have when using e-mail. It also calls into question whether any employer looking to fire a subordinate may do so by reading their e-mails, veterans said.

"I support the Army and the Department of Defense process of maintaining security," Culbreth said. "That's right — we don't want troop movements or sizes to be known.

"But when an individual sends a message from here, they need to know they have privacy."

William Webb, Culbreth's lawyer, said soldiers in Aikens' unit who were friendly with Ingram back home were accessing the e-mails over the servers in Kuwait and sending them back to Ingram in the States, where they were used against his client. This, he believes, is not part of the military protocol.

"We contend that my client and Col. Aikens both have expectations of privacy in this regard, and he (Ingram) furthermore violated his constitutional rights," said Webb. "Obviously, to me, this is a very bad precedent."

Aikens, now returned from duty, is an African-American and a deputy secretary of the state department of corrections. He said he believes his race played a role in his treatment at the National Guard, leading him to file a complaint with the National Guard Bureau's equal opportunity office.

"There is proof that the North Carolina guard had a stack of my e-mails as high as my TV set," said Aikens, who always used both his military e-mail addresses and personal accounts when sending mail back home. He says all his e-mail was snatched. "Culbreth, he's the collateral damage," he said.

He said he knows and believes in military policy that all active-duty servicemember's e-mails are monitored for security. "If my wartime command wanted to do that, I wouldn't care," he said. "(But) some guys in my unit were kicking my e-mails back to North Carolina," he said.

A spokeswoman for Central Command said Centcom does not have authorized access to personal e-mail accounts – like Hotmail or AOL accounts – without a court order or cooperation by the Internet service provider. ***But soldiers are warned that all activity on government computers, including the e-mail traffic that travels over their servers, is monitored.*** She did not comment on the Culbreth case specifically.

Since all service members use government computers in the field, their e-mail and Internet activity is completely transparent and monitored for operational security. Centcom said that traditional "snail mail" is not opened, but it is screened for things like Anthrax.

Paul Rieckhoff, director of the Iraq War-based organization Operation Truth said he was unaware of the Culbreth case, but said it would not seem right if he was fired for the content of his letters. Rieckhoff said when he was in Iraq, soldiers had sent e-mails to their congressmen and others all the time, complaining of the lack of equipment or wondering when they will be sent home – and no one that he knows of was taken to task.

"I think we would have a Supreme Court issue here – you're talking about freedom of speech, essentially," he said. "It means that no one in America could bitch about their bosses. If that were so, everyone in the military would be in jail."

Bigger War Profiteer Buys Corporation That Makes The Bradley: "Because That's Where The Money Is."

[Thanks to Artisan, who sent this in.]

08 March 2005 By Michael Harrison, The Independent (UK)

BAE systems, Europe's biggest defence contractor, dramatically increased its presence in the United States market yesterday by agreeing to pay \$4.2bn (£2.2bn) for United Defense Industries (UDI), the maker of the Bradley fighting vehicle.

BAE systems, Europe's biggest defence contractor, dramatically increased its presence in the United States market yesterday by agreeing to pay \$4.2bn (£2.2bn) for United Defense Industries (UDI), the maker of the Bradley fighting vehicle.

The US will account for a quarter of BAE's revenues, one-third of its profits and nearly 40 per cent of its 90,000-strong worldwide workforce when the deal is completed in the middle of the year. It will also make the Pentagon by far the biggest customer of BAE, accounting for some 25 per cent of its sales.

Asked why BAE had been so keen to buy a US manufacturer of fighting vehicles, Mike Turner, its chief executive, replied: "Because, like the robber of the bank said, that's where the money is." [War is good business. Invest you son or daughter now.]

There are more than 7,000 of the vehicles in service and \$1.3bn has been set aside in this year's US defence budget for the fleet's upgrade, which has been extensively deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action: Two Police Chiefs Killed In Baghdad

March 10, 2005 Guardian Newspapers Limited & By Patrick Quinn, Associated Press & March 11, 2005 The Sydney Morning Herald & "PA" News

Five people, including two police chiefs, were killed in a series of shootings in Baghdad.

Colonel Ahmed Abeis, the chief of the al-Salihiya police station, in central Baghdad, was killed when guerrillas in two cars opened fire as he was being driven to work in a white truck. **His driver and three guard also died in the attack.**

Insurgents set up a fake police checkpoint and stopped Colonel Ahmed Abeis's car as he was on the way to work at Salhiya police station. After asking his name, they shot him along with two other policemen in his car. One of the insurgents filmed the killing, police said.

The white truck could be seen on the side of a road in Baghdad's southwestern Saidiyah neighborhood, its windows shattered and bullet-ridden.

In a separate attack, Colonel Aiyad Abdul Razaq, the deputy chief of Jisrdiala police station, was killed in a south-eastern area of the capital as he travelled to work.

The statement said the attack was on "an intelligence officer who used to investigate the mujahideen and hurt them".

In northern Mosul, two police officers were killed and two others were injured in clashes with insurgents, officials said.

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

Workers' Resistance In U.S.- Occupied Iraq

Iraqis have a right to resist. It's absurd to think they don't. If people read some history--their own history and the history of all liberation struggles against colonial regimes in the world--they'll realize that violence has been a necessary part of that. I often find that it's people who haven't witnessed the violence of an occupation or even violence in their own specific context who are the first to advocate pacifism.

March 11, 2005 Socialist Worker

EWA JASIEWICZ is a human rights activist and journalist from London who lived in U.S.-occupied Iraq from June 2003 to February 2004. Her reports served as one of the few sources of honest information about what was taking place under the U.S. occupation.

While there, Ewa helped other antiwar activists tour Iraq--including representatives of U.S. Labor Against War, who spoke with fellow Iraqi unionists and returned home with stories of how Iraqi workers have fought for their union rights, and to resist privatization of the Iraqi economy. **Much of the time, she lived in Basra, working closely with a crucial union for workers in the oil industry.**

Here, Eva talks with Socialist Worker's ERIC RUDER about the reality of Washington's occupation of Iraq--and the struggle of Iraqis to oppose it.

U.S. OFFICIALS claim that they are bringing democracy to Iraq. Does this square with what you've seen?

THERE'S BEEN no liberation of the Iraqi people in the sense that some of the worst Baathists of the former fascist regime have been re-employed in positions of power and influence.

They've taken positions in various ministries as civil servants, and they are prominent in the managerial class--the people who were repressing workers, getting them killed. The security apparatus is again active using intelligence agents for internal repression. These people have been re-recruited.

Paul Bremer came out with a statement while he was still serving that the administration would have to rely on them again, despite the supposed de-Baathification--which really only targeted lower-level Baathists and skipped over higher-level ones that were useful to the occupation. It's common knowledge now that these people have been re-employed.

I don't think the intention of the invasion was ever regime change.

There definitely has been a "decapitation" strategy to remove some of the leaders of the Baath regime, and the seconds in command. But the thirds and fourths in the command--people who also have a lot of blood on their hands and a history of tyranny--have been reemployed to administer the country, for the purposes of "business as usual" and to bring in structural adjustment programs from the International Monetary Fund, the free market and free trade.

This is all in the orders of Paul Bremer--100 of which were passed from the very beginning of the occupation to the phony handover in 2003. **Order number 19 from Bremer addresses freedom of assembly--stating that you cannot have free assembly, a demonstration or a protest without the permission of a commander. So for Iraqis to even go out into their own streets and protest is unlawful.**

The media is completely controlled--as, for example, when the occupation authorities decided to close down Moktada al-Sadr's newspaper, which sparked street demonstrations. That's just one incident out of many. Al Jazeera has been kicked out of the country. But also, **small homegrown newspapers that are critical of the occupation have had their editors imprisoned or tortured.**

It's worth mentioning that there's been a split between those Baathists who are useful to the occupation--who want to save their own skin, want to make money and are willing to collaborate with the occupation--and those who are part of the resistance and fighting back.

WHAT DID Iraq's January elections actually accomplish?

INITIALLY, THE United Nations reported that elections were possible six months after the invasion. This report was ignored, and one of the central demands of a lot of Iraqis--not just the Shia--was for democratic elections so that people with a history of fighting the Baath regime and with credibility in their community could be given some power.

This didn't happen, but there were massive demonstrations for this. I was in Basra, and there was a huge demonstration in January 2004 when people came out of Hayania, which is the equivalent of the Sadr City suburb of Baghdad.

People were demanding democracy and elections, and (the Shiite cleric) Ayatollah al-Sistani was one of the biggest proponents of this. He was very popular and still is-- though he's lost a bit of his popularity because he remained silent about so many atrocities committed by occupation forces. But he wouldn't meet with Bremer. He boycotted him. He was telling people not to join political parties and instead work within communities to build up power from the grassroots.

In June 2003, U.S. occupation forces appointed a governing council that was organized along ethnic, religious and tribal lines. It was handpicked. More than half were exiles who were living outside Iraq. Some hadn't lived in Iraq for 30 years, so whole generations didn't have a clue who these people were.

Occupation officials described this as an attempt to represent Iraq in all its "diversity," but what it was doing was creating sectarianism and asking people to identify along ethnic and religious lines. **Then there was another interim governing council brought in, and another one after that--and along the way, you had people weeded out who were considered "disruptive," not "on message," or not supporting the ends of the occupation fully.**

Two such people--the minister of communication and the minister of industry--were unequivocally opposed to privatization. They regarded such measures as illegal because there was no popular mandate from the people. And they lost their seats.

So you can see the occupation administration going through a filtration process. The January election was part of that process.

The governing councils served to impose on the Iraqi people political parties and forces, many of which had no standing, popularity or reputation. They set the political stage and the parameters of views with which people were allowed to identify. **Any candidate standing also had to accept Bremer's constitution--which implied that you had to accept his 100 orders, even though these orders are illegal under international law.**

Sistani declared a fatwa against this constitution initially, and then came out in support of the elections. This contradiction comes from a deep belief that any kind of democratically elected government is going to refuse and reject these orders.

Everyone I spoke to who supported the elections was also anti-occupation. They saw the election as a great first step to ending the occupation and changing the constitution, and they believe that there can be some kind of democratic forms. I don't know if they had the full details about the structure of the occupation itself--and how much effort and finance and killing has gone into keeping Bremer's orders and structural reforms on the agenda.

Hassan Juma'a Awad, the president of the Basra oil union, told me that the people who voted in the elections are just as hostile to the occupation as those who didn't. And I think there's respect for both the people who voted and those who didn't.

WHAT'S LIFE like for ordinary Iraqis in Basra?

THE SECURITY situation in Basra is very different from a place like, say, Falluja. There aren't regular attacks and military operations going on.

I was staying in working-class neighborhoods. Life was hard. There was no proper sanitation or sewage. There were big piles of rubbish rotting in the streets, uncollected.

People have to buy water. If they're lucky enough to have a water filter, then they could drink the water from the tap, but then it was saline and disgusting. Poor families are forced to drink the tap water if you can't afford to buy it. This water makes your skin really flaky, and people's hair was falling out--I lost a lot of hair.

Most people are unemployed. Hassan Juma'a Awad says that the unemployment rate is about 50 or 55 percent. The electricity still cuts in and out, and much of it is diverted to Baghdad, just as it was under the former regime. Baghdad always got most of the electricity.

Hospitals are in a really bad state. And there's a lot of corruption. Because NGOs no longer operate, which is a real shame, humanitarian assistance is all controlled by the occupation itself. Hospitals still lack basic provisions and medicines, especially for chronic illnesses. This was a problem from the very beginning of the occupation because of the legacy of the genocidal sanctions since the first Gulf War, which destroyed Iraq's infrastructure and debilitated medical services. That hasn't changed.

The diet of most Iraqis is dependent on very basic food, and there's a lot of malnutrition. Occupation authorities want to eliminate the country's food ration--under the terms of the structural adjustment plan that the IMF has written up for Iraq to deal with its "debt"--and replace it with a cash subsidy.

The ration is a survival package for Iraqi families that contains rice, flour, baby milk, salt, sugar, tea, some beans. While I was there, even this was quite erratic--sometimes, there wouldn't be any baby milk, sometimes, there wouldn't be any beans. Once, there wasn't any rice, which was catastrophic, because this is a staple of the Iraqi diet.

Everyone gets this food ration, and some families sell part of this ration to bigger families so they can buy shoes for their children, clothing, medicine--so it's a really crucial resource. The effect of the cash subsidy will be to empower the puppet government to "play" with the standard of living--with the price of life--by changing the price of food and rent at its whim. And they're also going to remove the gasoline subsidy, which will further put the screws to people.

This is also intended to create a dependency and a legitimization of the government, because people will have to go to the government for financial help. I think it's also a way of cracking the resistance. People are able to fight back and survive because they have the physical presence of food in their homes every month, and they know it's going to be there.

If that's taken away, what you also do is break people's means of subsistence and force them into accepting slave wages just to survive.

COULD YOU talk about the union battles that you're familiar with?

ONE AREA where workers have traditionally been incredibly repressed, endured an incredible level of surveillance and lost many of their comrades has been the oil industry.

In the south, I worked with a union called the Southern Oil Company Union (SOCU). This union is a militant, non-sectarian, uncompromising union.

I was doing seminars with them about workers' rights according to the International Labor Organization, giving them information about Bremer's orders, and also sharing with them U.S. Labor Against the War's "Corporate Invasion of Iraq" report, which deals with the corporations trying to privatize Iraq.

SOCU immediately began de-Baathification at the grassroots level in their industry, throwing out old managers. In August 2003, they went on strike over low wages. At that point, they would have been paid according to the emergency wage table, which was \$60, \$100 or \$120 per month, depending on which tier you were in. This is low, but I also know that wages weren't being paid on time, and sometimes, they were paid in dinar, sometimes in dollars.

There was also a huge fuel and electricity shortage, and the price of cooking gas had rocketed upward, so people rioted for three days. There was a general strike during those three days in August. Basra was burning.

SOCU doesn't belong to any political party and isn't dominated or controlled by any political party, and it doesn't belong to any union federation either. It has formed its own federation of sorts. That's the Basra Oil Union, which represents 23,000 workers and has workers in 10 different national oil companies in Iraq.

Its agenda is, of course, better health and safety conditions and better wages, but it also opposes American and imperialist domination of the oil reserves.

Oil workers in Iraq have a very high level of consciousness about their own strength and power in the Iraqi economy.

They have the power to shut down the oil industry and oil exports if they want-- and they've done it twice now. The first time was during the general strike I mentioned, and the second time was to express their opposition to the U.S. attack on Sadr's forces in Najaf. This started as an autonomous strike and then was fully supported by the union.

SOCU threw out Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR)--a subsidiary of Halliburton-- because they didn't want any foreigners in their workplace. That happened in the first few weeks of the occupation. Even to this day, there's no KBR whatsoever in the workplaces they have organized.

They also threatened to join the armed resistance if their wages weren't raised.

And they created their own wage table that they deemed a living wage. This was eventually accepted because of their capacity to strike and shut down oil exports--I think this was more important than their threat to join the armed resistance.

The story of Iraq is the story of ruling-class oppression that affects workers the world over. Working-class people created these places in the very first place. They created them with their own hands--these power stations, oil refineries--and they are the ones who will reconstruct them in the future, using materials brought to them by international corporations making a massive profit.

These companies exist to control profit and to control people's labor and their lives, and they are not needed. Working class people can do it themselves. They have the knowledge, but they just don't have the instruments.

IN THE U.S., the Iraqi resistance is portrayed as terrorist gangs that target civilians. Does this picture accurately reflect what's going on?

THE FEDERATION of Workers' Councils and Unions in Iraq (FWCUI) has always said--along with the Union of the Unemployed in Iraq--that the occupation is perpetuating and deepening a lot of very pathological resistance.

Most people are unemployed in Iraq, and the infrastructure is still devastated. This is an obstacle to a genuine and vibrant workers' movement. If most people aren't working, it's hard to organize in the workplace.

The FWCUI is definitely anti-occupation. I don't know to what extent the influence of the Workers' Communist Party (WCP) is a controlling one within the FWCUI, but they definitely have a very large part in it, and are the organizational force for it. They are resolutely against occupation and demand an end to it.

But at the same time, the WCP has a very dubious position on the Iraqi resistance. They talk about the Iraqi working class as if it isn't part of the resistance--and as if workers are trapped between two poles of terrorism: the occupation on the one hand, and the Islamic resistance on the other.

This kind of homogenized view of the resistance and this kind of dichotomy they're creating is a false one and is unhelpful. It doesn't allow much debate for the nature of the resistance, its different elements.

The resistance may not have a strong secular nature. It's largely Islamic. But not everybody fighting jihad wants an Islamic state. Not everybody fighting or organizing through their religion wants an Islamic state.

People are organizing at the local level around the mosque and through the mosque. This has been an organizational forum and space for decades in the Middle East. It plays into the hands of the occupation to have the resistance rejected and demonized as a purely Islamic force that is going to drive everybody back to the dark ages.

It's not a unified resistance movement with a unified political aim. In fact, one of the biggest critiques of the resistance is that it doesn't seem to have a political platform and seems inchoate. There have been centers of leadership and organization formed, but I don't know the nature of those.

I would say the Baathist element of this resistance is probably quite strong, because they've been getting regular injections of capital from overseas and wealthy Baathists--and the more inchoate, random and autonomous elements that predominated in the beginning have, I think, largely run out of ammunition now. Now they're being forced to be a part of some bigger movement.

SOME PEOPLE in the antiwar movement say that they're opposed to the occupation, but they aren't comfortable with a armed resistance, or one that has religious or political views they don't agree with. What do you make of this?

I THINK this confusion happens naturally when you don't have an understanding of a different cultural context. People tend to imagine the kind of people they're talking about in terms of what they know from the media or from academia.

The situation on the ground is so different. These are just ordinary people fighting, and it has to be remembered that it is a grassroots movement. Whatever political agendas might be involved in the leadership of the resistance, the people that make that resistance successful are also the people who are dying and fighting at the grassroots level. They also have interests, and they also have agendas.

When it was reported on the news that Moktada al-Sadr's followers invaded Najaf, the media portrayed this as if these people were following a charismatic god, and they had no interests of their own or no class interests. That fit into the stereotype of Islamic fanatics.

It serves the interest of the ruling class and the occupation to have a one-dimensional image of the resistance--and to not have it understood as a working-class movement. We don't have to like the resistance. They aren't obliged to fit our political-ideological framework. I'd be very surprised if they did. It's a country that has a completely different from the U.S. and Britain.

People will fight and social movements will emerge within the specific historical and social context and conditions that they find themselves in--and they're not the same as ours. So they will be Islamic in character, and they might be very reactionary, and there might be support from Iran, and there might be Baathists involved as well.

We can run the risk of being racist or colonialist in our own political outlook. Of course, you and I would like a secular society in Iraq. I want to see a libertarian society. We shouldn't think that these forces and ideas don't exist, but we should also be conscious of people coming from their own context and conditions.

Iraqis have a right to resist. It's absurd to think they don't. If people read some history--their own history and the history of all liberation struggles against colonial regimes in the world--they'll realize that violence has been a necessary

part of that. I often find that it's people who haven't witnessed the violence of an occupation or even violence in their own specific context who are the first to advocate pacifism.

UNIONISTS IN the U.S. who want to show solidarity with SOCU can find a model resolution to pass in their union local at www.iraqoccupationfocus.org.uk.

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Soldiers Then And Now: The Big Lie From The Vietnam War

From: David Zeiger

Subject: Soldiers then and now

Date: 10 Mar 2005

Hello, friends.

I recently submitted the following letter to L.A. Weekly and wanted to share it with you.

Best to all,
David

Dear Editor:

Although I shouldn't have been, I was shocked to read in Ella Taylor's review of "Gunner Palace" that she wept "for the sympathy (Vietnam Veterans) never got back home from opponents of the war."

I shouldn't have been shocked because this mantra has been repeated over and over again to the point where even people who know how false that statement is have come to believe it.

It is the Big Lie from the Vietnam War-created and fueled by the most rabid pro-war folks of that time, declared historical fact by the Reagan administration as it proclaimed the Vietnam War a "noble cause," and turned into a powerful weapon against the antiwar movement during the Gulf War.

Painting the antiwar movement in the 60s as "anti-GI" is a convenient way to immediately put antiwar forces today on the defensive and strip us of our own history.

Here are the facts:

The antiwar movement in the 60s did not target GIs or vets, nor did it for blame them for the horrendous atrocity that was the Vietnam War. It seems absurd that I even have to write this now, as if it could in any way be a point of contention.

The chant in the streets was not "Hey, hey, American GI, how many kids did you kill today?" It was "Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?"

It was patently obvious then, as it is now, that the policies of the government and military were the cause of mass slaughter of the Vietnamese people, not crazy GIs.

In fact--and here's the ultimate irony--it was the government and pro-war forces who were bent on blaming the GIs themselves for the atrocities committed in that war, with the clear goal of absolving the real culprits.

The military policies of "Search and Destroy" and "Free-Fire Zones" not only sanctioned but required the wanton killing of civilians. Take a look at the My Lai massacre: First the military covered it up, then they picked the lowest-ranking officer they could find, Lt. Calley, and chose him and his troops to blame and prosecute.

Sound familiar?

Try substituting "Abu Ghraib" for "My Lai," and ask yourself which side is "anti-GI."

And what did the antiwar movement do back then? Did it say, "Yeah, get those baby-killing GIs?" Hardly.

Then, as now, it pointed the finger at the government and declared "YOU are the criminals, not the GIs forced to carry out your orders."

(Although it was clear then, as it is now, that international law does indeed require soldiers to refuse to commit war crimes). And beyond that, the movement welcomed and embraced what turned into a massive rebellion against the war inside all branches of the military itself--a rebellion that has been written out of most histories of the war.

And here's another fact:

Babies were killed in Vietnam.

Thousands of them.

And babies are being killed today in Iraq. Thousands of them.

This is a reality that everyone, in and outside of the military, must come to terms with. That is why it is incumbent on all of us to make choices.

To be blunt, the GI who is put in a position of participating in the killing of civilians on the frontlines of this putrid war is no more culpable than any of us back home who turn a blind eye to the truth and allow these things to be done in our name.

I don't blame the GIs who face heavy penalties if they refuse orders and whose lives have been put on the line by a criminal government, but who I choose to hold up as an example to honor is Camilo Mejia, who after 6 months in Iraq declared the war a criminal venture and refused to fight, receiving a one-year prison term and dishonorable discharge. Does that make me "anti-GI?"

It is to be expected that those for whom wars like Vietnam and Iraq are glorious undertakings in spreading democracy to the heathens would bend every effort to paint the antiwar movement, then and now, as "anti-GI."

But I ask my comrades-in-arms to think about the defensive position you have allowed yourselves to be forced into-and to know our real history that we must build on, not run away from.

David Zeiger
Displaced Films

I am currently producing a feature documentary film on the GI Antiwar movement during the Vietnam War.

Displaced Films
3421 Fernwood Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90039
323-906-9249
www.displacedfilms.com

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.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

WHITEHOUSE GHOSTS VISIT GW

From: David H
To: GI Special
Sent: March 08, 2005

Late one night, GW was awakened by an apparition in his Whitehouse bedroom. When he realized it was the ghost of George Washington, he asked if it had any advice for him? Washington's ghost told him to cease his shilling for corporate greedheads and to emulate the unselfish integrity that characterized Washington's presidency.

The following night GW was visited by the ghost of Thomas Jefferson. Again GW asked for advice from the ghost. Jefferson's ghost told him to repeal the patriot act and become an advocate for the individual's rights, as Jefferson had done.

The following night GW was visited by the ghost of Lincoln. Again GW asked for the ghost's advice. The ghost of Lincoln told him "You should get out more. Why don't you go to the theater?"



Bush March 6, 2005 in Washington. (Mike Theiler/Reuters)

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.

Web Copies

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

<http://www.albasrah.net/maqalat/english/qi-special.htm>

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