

GI SPECIAL 3A86:



**BENDERMAN COURTS-
MARTIAL MOVES
FORWARD:
U.S. Army Sergeant
Kevin Benderman Steps
Up To The Plate;**

Conscientious Objector Status Pending

To: GI Special
Sent: March 31, 2005 9:48 PM
Subject: SGT. KEVIN BENDERMAN

This is the latest. Please feel free to publish. Attached image of Sgt. Benderman copyright released for publication.

Warm Regards –
Robert S. Finnegan
Managing Editor
Southeast Asia News
seanews1@yahoo.com

03/31/2005 0135 GMT
By Robert S. Finnegan
Managing Editor, Southeast Asia News

The ongoing saga of Sergeant Kevin Benderman's denial regarding the legitimacy of war and his refusal to participate in it has now crystallized into a war of words and legalities, pitting his beliefs and first-hand battlefield knowledge against an action by the U.S. Government and Army prosecutors who are charging him with desertion for choosing to follow his conscience, in a war declared illegal by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan.

Benderman is scheduled to stand trial before a General Courts-Martial at Ft. Stewart on May 11 on counts of desertion and missing a unit movement.

Benderman's wife, Monica says that she is having a hard time expressing her feelings at this point. "Our lives right now have been put on hold by this issue. My husband is baring his soul. I don't know what more proof these people need, something so simple, so basic, and they do not appear to have a clue."

The Investigating Officer overseeing Sgt. Benderman's Conscientious Objector application, U.S. Army Captain Victor Aqueche maintains that Benderman does not have sufficient grounds to pursue his claim, and Aqueche's DOA (Department of the Army) Memorandum For Record regarding Bernderman's case recommends disapproval, citing non-qualification.

U.S. Army Major S. Scot Sikes, military counsel for Benderman has filed a lengthy rebuttal to Aqueche's finding, stating in part that "On behalf of SGT Kevin M. Benderman, U.S. Army, I hereby challenge for cause the continued appointment of CPT Victor Aqueche to SGT Benderman's CO Inquiry. His appointment should be terminated immediately.

It is apparent to every thoughtful observer that CPT Aqueche is not the unbiased, fair, and impartial officer required for such an important inquiry and recommendation. In addition, I request that the hearing from 8 February 2005 be declared void ab initio and that both a new IO and a new hearing date be established. The hearing in question was botched beyond belief, and SGT Kevin Benderman stands to suffer the insult of not having had a fair, accurate, and professionally conducted inquiry."

Monica Benderman is looking forward to their day in court.

"What more evidence does this guy need of Kevin's sincerity? Honestly with all these soldiers going AWOL then returning and agreeing to return to Iraq, or deserting and speaking from other countries about their commitment to their conscience, here is Kevin going through everything he is, facing the command, the courts martial, not running and fulfilling all duties."

In addition, she stated that the very act of filing for Conscientious Objector status alone is a testament to Kevin's sincerity, and his commitment to that status should be all anyone needs.

Mrs. Benderman says it is a clear-cut issue. "Killing, the act of it, in any circumstance, is negative. It can't help but bring negative feelings into a person's mind. When someone faces his conscience and realizes just how negative he has become, looks deep and admits the reasons, the change is amazing.

"When that person acts on his conscience, and makes a decision to live for life and to seek peaceful solutions to difficult situations even when it goes against the current "norms" of society, it's a positive change. It is scary for people who still believe that there is a justification for war to face someone who has become positive in their thought process. People who still can't see the power in turning away from violent solutions will continue to question someone who can. That is what is happening now. Kevin has made a conscious choice to "study war no more."

He has made a statement for himself, and his speaking out about it threatens those who believe war is the answer," she said.

A General Courts-Martial, the highest level of adjudication under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, also carries the maximum penalties for those convicted, including up to seven years confinement, a dishonorable discharge and forfeiture of all pay and allowances.

Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward this E-MAIL along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, at home and inside the armed services. Send requests to address up top.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

ONE TASK FORCE FREEDOM SOLDIER KILLED, FIVE INJURED DURING ATTACK AT MOSUL CHECKPOINT

March 31, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
Release Number: 05-03-24C & By ANTONIO CASTANEDA, Associated Press

MOSUL, Iraq – One Task Force Freedom Soldier was killed, and five others were injured after insurgents opened fire on Coalition Forces at a check point in Mosul March 30.

A clash erupted after soldiers tried to conduct a routine check of a taxi, Lt. Col. Andre Lance said. The taxi's passengers opened fire on the soldiers, and they shot back, killing the assailants and causing the taxi to explode. Officials believe it was carrying explosives.

The injured Soldiers were taken to a combat hospital for treatment.

TASK FORCE BAGHDAD SOLDIER DIES

March 31, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
Release Number: 05-03-23C

BAGHDAD, Iraq — A Task Force Baghdad Soldier died March 30 around 4:30 p.m. when his patrol in east Baghdad came under small arms attack.

Soldiers at the scene determined the shots came from a local national who fled into the crowd.

The patrol later performed a cordon-and-search at a house in the vicinity and detained five suspected terrorists [TRANSLATION: anybody standing around looking] for questioning.

TASK FORCE LIBERTY SOLDIER KILLED IN HAWIJAH

March 31, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
Release Number: 05-03-22C

TIKRIT, Iraq – One Task Force Liberty Soldier was killed in action near Hawijah at about 1:50 p.m. March 31.

“I Wish All Those Kids Could Come Home” Dad Says: Wellsville Marine Almost Dies As His Call For Help Refused By Stupid Assholes

03/31/2005 By DANIEL LEBLANC, The Times Herald

A Wellsville Marine narrowly escaped a car bomb last Friday, near Fallujah, Iraq. The incident was caught on film by CNN reporters.

Lance Cpl. Jason Hunt, 23, of Wellsville, was pushing a vehicle off the road with his Humvee when a bomb inside the vehicle exploded, said his father, James Hunt. Cpl. Hunt was unharmed by the explosion.

“They came across an abandoned car and called for an explosives unit,” Mr. Hunt said. “They were told that if they didn’t see any wires hanging out of the vehicle that the explosives unit would not come out.”

While Cpl. Hunt was using his Humvee to push the car off the road, the vehicle exploded, Mr. Hunt said. A CNN report Tuesday night indicated that the explosion may have been remotely detonated, he added.

“I’m just glad no one got hurt,” he said.

His son had also been involved in a rescue operation after a Humvee overturned and went into a sewage pond a few weeks ago, he said. Jason Hunt helped rescue three of the men from the vehicle. A non-military interpreter drowned in the incident, he said.

“We’ve heard enough stories to last us the rest of his tour,” Mr. Hunt said.

Jason Hunt has been in the Marine Corps for nearly one year and has only been stationed in Iraq for a few months. He was trained as a “radio man,” but has recently been detached to a unit to search for weapon caches and roadside bombs, Mr. Hunt said.

“I’m worried about the soldiers over there,” he said. “I wish all those kids could come home,” said Mr. Hunt, who lives with his wife Lois in Wellsville.

Second Unmanned Predator Aircraft In Three Days Crashes

March 31, 2005 LAS VEGAS (AP)

For the second time in three days, an unmanned Predator spy plane has crashed in Iraq, officials said.

A military statement from Baghdad said the remotely piloted MQ-1 Predator crashed at 7 p.m. Wednesday in Rawah, northwest of Ramadi, about 60 miles east of the Syrian border.

Both planes were assigned to the 15th Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron at Nellis Air Force Base, near Las Vegas.

MQ-1s are equipped with video and infrared cameras and armed with laser-guided Hellfire missiles.

They cost up to \$3.8 million each.

Oops: British Army Fuck Up Iraq Home Raid; \$260,000 Taken From Home Of Well- Paid Top Collaborator

The blunder was compounded by the fact the British military had provided a helicopter to fly Mansour to Baghdad for the second meeting of the national assembly just hours before the raid.

31st March, 2005 BigNews

The British army has apologized for raiding the home of a prominent Iraqi politician based on flawed intelligence, The Telegraph reported Thursday.

The blunder occurred Monday night in Basra, when the home of Iraqi Member of Parliament Mansour Abdulrazzaq Mansour was swarmed by troops and surrounded by tanks and helicopters. Mansour has long been a staunch ally of coalition forces.

They smashed the windows of the cars parked in the garage, smashed the computer to the ground and took \$260,000 from the house, an angry Mansour said.

Eleven members of his family were detained, but released soon afterward.

The blunder was compounded by the fact the British military had provided a helicopter to fly Mansour to Baghdad for the second meeting of the national assembly just hours before the raid.

Army officials said a glitch in intelligence was behind the raid. [Or a neatly managed bit of disinformation by the resistance?]

It's Official: Strykers Are Deadly, Worthless Pieces Of Shit

For example, an armoring shield installed on Stryker vehicles to protect against unanticipated attacks by insurgents using low-tech weapons works against half the grenades used to assault it, the newspaper said.

Mar 31, 2005 WASHINGTON (Reuters)

A new U.S. Army troop transport vehicle in Iraq has many defects, putting soldiers at risk from rocket-propelled grenades and raising questions about its \$11 billion cost, The Washington Post reported in its Thursday edition.

The vehicle is known as the Stryker, which is made by General Dynamics Corp., according to the newspaper, which said it reviewed a classified study by the Army in December.

The report, drawn from confidential interviews with operators of the vehicles in Iraq in the last quarter of 2004, lists complaints about the vehicle including design flaws and maintenance problems that are "getting worse not better," the paper said.

The Army report makes clear that the vehicle's military performance has fallen short, the Post said.

For example, an armoring shield installed on Stryker vehicles to protect against unanticipated attacks by insurgents using low-tech weapons works against half the grenades used to assault it, the newspaper said.

The shield, installed at a base in Kuwait, is so heavy that tire pressure must be checked three times daily and nine tires a day are changed after failing, the paper said, referring to the Army document.

"The additional weight significantly impacts the handling and performance during the rainy season," the Post cited the Army report as saying.

The paper listed other complaints such as slow and overheating computers and a \$157,000 grenade launcher that fails to hit targets when the vehicle is moving.

The Army report said its laser designator, zoom, sensors, stabilizer and rotating speed all need redesign; **it does not work at night; and its console display is in black and white although "a typical warning is to watch for a certain color automobile,"** the Post reported.

Army figures show 17 soldiers in the Stryker combat brigade have died in Iraq in 157 bomb explosions. But whether the deaths occurred outside or inside the vehicle has not been specified, the Post said.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT 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)

Command Caught In Another Violation Of Geneva Conventions: Starvation And Thirst Used As Weapons Of War Against Civilian Population Of Falluja

31.03.2005 GENEVA (AFP)

A UN human rights expert sharply condemned the invasion of Iraq, accusing the US-led coalition of using food deprivation as a military tactic.

The report also highlighted "widespread concerns about the continued lack of access to clean drinking water" and allegations by British campaigners that water sources were deliberately cut off by coalition forces.

"Those are the allegations, but what is proven is that at Fallujah, denial, the blockade imposed on food and the destruction of water reservoirs was used as weapon of war," Ziegler told journalists.

He insisted that the practice was a "clear violation" of the Geneva Conventions and delivered a firm condemnation of any attempt to deny food or water supplies.

Citing previous studies reported last year, the report said that "acute malnutrition amongst Iraqi children under the age of five has almost doubled from four percent to 7.7 percent," since Saddam Hussein was toppled.

TROOP NEWS

Great Falls Engineer Goes The Distance For Montana Soldier Wounded In Iraq

3.31.05 By SONJA LEE, Tribune Staff Writer

A Great Falls man is going the extra mile, 128.6 miles to be exact, to help out a Cascade man who was injured while on duty in Iraq.

Shannon Chouinard, senior engineering technician at Glacier Engineering in Great Falls, is running four endurance races over the next seven months. Every mile he runs will raise money for Staff Sgt. John Bennett.

In February Staff Sgt. John Bennett of Cascade was seriously wounded by gunfire in Iraq and is recovering in the Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C.

Bennett, who was serving with the 163rd, a combat unit of about 700 Montana Army National Guard soldiers, was hurt when his convoy was ambushed.

"He is still battling for his life," said Lori Snyder, Bennett's sister-in-law and also Chouinard's running trainer.

Bennett remains in stable, but critical condition. He was shot in the side and suffered serious injuries to his internal organs. Doctors are unable to close his wounds, and are waiting out infection.

His spine also was damaged, and it is unknown if Bennett will remain paralyzed from the waist down, she said.

"But we have had some encouragement. He has had a burning sensation in his legs," Snyder said. "We are praying for good news."

Bennett's wife, Dena Bennett and the couple's four children are currently visiting John. It is the first time the kids have had the opportunity to see their father, Snyder said.

Snyder, who works at the Peak Health and Wellness Center, said Chouinard's offer is wonderful.

"I am very touched, and my family is very touched that he is doing this," she said.

PTSD On The Rise Among Iraq, Afghanistan Veterans; Bush Regime Traitors Cut Treatment Funds

Large funding cuts in VA psychiatry programs and the limited number of doctors trained in PTSD could signal big trouble ahead, cautions Bruce Kagan, staff psychiatrist at the West Los Angeles VA Hospital.

March 31, 2005 By MARILYN ELIAS, USA TODAY

As many as one out of four veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq treated at Veterans Affairs hospitals in the past 16 months were diagnosed with mental disorders, a number that has been steadily rising, according to a report in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine.

Records show that 20 percent of eligible ex-soldiers came to VA hospitals for medical treatment between October 2003 and February 2005. Overall, 26 percent of them were diagnosed with mental disorders, say Han Kang and Kenneth Hyams of the VA.

Post-traumatic stress disorder was most common, diagnosed in 10 percent of patients, followed by drug or alcohol abuse (9 percent). Seven percent were diagnosed with depression; 6 percent had anxiety disorders, such as phobias and panic. Many ex-soldiers had multiple disorders, Kang says.

Fear of being stigmatized was a key reason that traumatized soldiers didn't seek help while still in the military, an earlier study showed. So these post-duty numbers could more accurately reflect the final toll, says Harvard psychologist Richard McNally, a PTSD expert.

Large funding cuts in VA psychiatry programs and the limited number of doctors trained in PTSD could signal big trouble ahead, cautions Bruce Kagan, staff psychiatrist at the West Los Angeles VA Hospital.

"The soldiers didn't come right away after Vietnam, either. If they come in the numbers predicted, the numbers the VA's own studies predict, we could be overwhelmed," Kagan says.

Veterans Dependent On GI Bill Endlessly Fucked Over

March 24, 2005 By Alison Young, Knight Ridder Newspapers

WASHINGTON

Nearly three months into the spring semester, Army veteran Melishsa Fairman can't afford some textbooks because the Department of Veterans Affairs hasn't come through with her education benefits.

"I'm making it, barely. But I'm making it," said Fairman, 28, who's studying business at Tallahassee Community College.

About 100 of the 475 students who attend the Florida college with help from the Montgomery GI Bill and other VA education programs are still waiting on payments even though they applied for the benefits in December, said Delorise Robinson, the college's veterans affairs specialist.

Nationwide, more than 35,000 students have waited more than 60 days for the VA to approve their education claims in recent months, prompting colleges to defer tuition payments and offer emergency loans to students waiting on checks.

Nearly 100,000 other veterans have experienced delays of one to two months, according to a Knight Ridder analysis of VA claims data for Oct. 1-Feb. 28.

The agency's goal is to process first-time education claims in 25 days and claims from continuing students in 13 days. About half of 88,000 first-time applicants and 80 percent of 460,000 continuing students had their claims processed in a month or less, the data for that period show.

Jack McCoy, director of the VA education service, said an influx of veterans going to school with the VA's help, **too few claims processors and a computer glitch last fall that kept 67,000 claims from being processed automatically are among the reasons for the spring backlog.**

VA education programs are a key inducement used by military recruiters.

"I had 10 brand-new veterans apply this last semester and I haven't had any of them get any of their money yet. They're into the third month of the semester and they're like: 'What do I do?'" said Charlene Lance, who handles VA certifications at the University of Akron's Wayne College in Ohio.

"We have about 200 students who have experienced lengthy delays in getting their checks," said Christian Basi, spokesman for the University of Missouri-Columbia. Seven of those veterans were so cash-strapped that they sought emergency loans from the school's financial aid department, Basi said.

Army veteran Dave Wilson, who served in Bosnia, said he was subsisting on ramen noodles until his first VA check of the semester arrived last week.

"It was getting pretty close. My utility bill was three weeks past due; my cell phone was three weeks past due," said Wilson, 25, who's been a student at Red Rocks Community College in Lakewood, Colo., since August 2004. "I was trying to balance when to write checks and when to put them in the mail, who to pay and who to let roll another week."

After calling the VA's St. Louis regional processing office, the VA inspector general and then getting help from a staffer in Sen. Ken Salazar's office, Wilson said the VA direct-deposited his accrued education benefits of \$1,974.53 on March 14.

About 74,000 veterans' education claims awaited processing by the VA as of March 19, more than double the number this time last year, agency records show.

The backlog spiked to more than 115,000 last month, prompting the St. Louis office to warn Midwest schools that it was taking eight to 10 weeks to process claims submitted electronically - and three weeks longer for those submitted on paper.

VA officials in Washington said Thursday that Fairman should get about \$1,500 in past-due education payments by the start of next week.

Tallahassee Community College transmitted her claim electronically on Jan. 6 to the VA's Atlanta office, which handles Florida colleges. But her claim became tangled in the backlogs and bureaucracy as the Atlanta office sought some of Fairman's records from the St. Louis office.

"You can't really concentrate on school because you're worrying about how you're going to make it," Fairman said. "I have family that helps me, but they're getting about tired of me."

Hundreds Of Injured Veterans Are Facing Termination

3.21.05 By Ian Bruce, Defence Correspondent, Newsquest, UK

HUNDREDS of British soldiers are expected to be sacked because wounds or injuries suffered in Iraq have left them unfit for frontline service, The Herald can reveal.

Up to 2000 veterans have been permanently medically downgraded and many are being assessed for compulsory discharge on the grounds that they are no longer capable of fulfilling operational roles.

The Ministry of Defence said 79 personnel had been discharged on medical grounds by September last year.

The total for last year was 1669, of whom 468 were downgraded due to combat wounds or accidents, 587 for "musculo-skeletal disorders", 140 for mental and behavioural disorders, and 87 for respiratory complaints aggravated or caused by the desert climate. Army medical service sources said the number diagnosed with post-traumatic stress syndrome is more than 800.

The Veterans' Agency, an independent executive branch of the MoD, confirmed 263 soldiers have applied for disablement pensions and 148 applications have been approved.

Shaun Rusling, vice-chairman of the National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association, said: "The number applying for a war pension on health grounds between 2003 and now is five times greater than the level for the two years after the 1991 Gulf war.

"Someone in power should be asking why so many are facing what is effectively the sack after serving their country faithfully in increasingly dangerous circumstances."

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

1000 Collaborators Killed In Past Year

Mar. 31 (UPI) By Pamela Hess, Pentagon correspondent

By Pentagon estimates, at least 1,000 Iraqi security force members and recruits have been assassinated over the last year.

"We can't tell if it is increasing, but it certainly doesn't look it's decreasing," said Deputy Central Command chief Lt. Gen. Lance Smith, in an interview with reporters at the Pentagon Wednesday. [A penetrating analysis. That's why they made him a general.]

Car Bomb Kills Local Occupation Soldiers In Toz, Eight Wounded

March 31 (Xinhuanet) & By ANTONIO CASTANEDA, Associated Press & MARIAM FAM, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS & (Reuters)

A suicide bomber drove a booby-trapped vehicle at an Iraqi national guard vehicle which was guarding a Shiite procession at 8:00 a.m. (0500 GMT), killing three Iraqis including two Iraqi soldiers and wounding 19 others including eight Iraqi soldiers.

The US and Iraqi forces cordoned off the area of Imam Ahmad in central Toz Khormato, some 240 km north of Baghdad, according to the statement obtained by Xinhua.

A second car bomber attacked a joint U.S.-Iraqi patrol in the center of Samarra, killing two soldiers and injuring more than a dozen others, hospital officials said.

The bomber in Samarra, north of Baghdad, rammed a car into an American Humvee in the city center, police official Qasim Omar said.

Also in Samarra, resistance fighters briefly attacked a police station with rocket propelled grenades and gunfire, police official Qasim Muhamed said.

A roadside bomb Thursday injured six policemen on patrol and one bystander in the southern city of Basra, police official Lt. Col. Karim Al-Zubaidi said.

Also Wednesday, Al-Jazeera satellite television broadcast a tape showing three kidnapped Romanian journalists and a fourth unidentified person -- possibly an American -- with guns pointed at them. The station said the four were being held by an unidentified group and no demands were made.

Romanian TV stations confirmed the three shown were the same journalists reported kidnapped late Monday near their hotel in Baghdad. The State Department said an American citizen was also taken hostage with them.

Private Romanian television station Realitatea TV reported that an Iraqi-American who worked as the journalists' translator was the fourth person kidnapped.

Three Iraqi national guards and two civilians were killed in an attack on a military checkpoint near Suleiman Beik, 60 miles south of the city of Kirkuk, a captain in the force said.

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

“Is This What We Want?”

To: GI Special
Sent: March 30, 2005

I took the attached image of an illustration from an October 1972 issue of Ramparts magazine.

The credit inside the magazine reads: ILLUSTRATIONS FROM A SERIES ENTITLED "IS THIS WHAT WE WANT" BY SATTY

I thought GI Special may find it useful.

Regards,
John Kevin Fabiani



Who's On First?

“Bush May Be In The Funny Books, But The Democrats Are Buying Them.”

From: Mike Hastie, Medic, Vietnam
To: GI Special
Sent: March 30, 2005
Subject: Who's On First ?

Are the Neocons really running this country?

I'm beginning to think there is a myth about checks and balances in this country.

George Bush is a village idiot, we all know that, but where are the Democrat Gladiators?

I think they pop out of their spider holes every once and awhile, fire a pot shot at Bush, then go back into their holes. They get a round of applause from the liberal cheerleaders, and everyone is happy. Then we go back to killing more Iraqis in Iraq.

So, write your Democrat congressperson, senator, or James Dean, I mean Howard Dean, and see if they will do anything to stop the insanity.

They will then write you back a long letter, telling you what they are doing to stop the madness of G. W. (Global Waring) Bush, and then we are happy again.

And then, we go back to killing Iraqis in Iraq.

Nothing like being killed in your own country.

I guess what I'm trying to say, is that we need to stop Bush Bashing, and start asking the Democrats where their balls are.

Now, if they don't have any, I think it is our job to help them find them. Nothing like finding your genitals in your adulthood. So, is Bush a village idiot, or is collaboration the real enemy?

Bush may be in the funny books, but the Democrats are buying them.

This is like watching the Globe Trotters play the Chump Team, we all know who is going to win. Who's on first?

Mike Hastie
Vietnam Veteran

What Did Smedley Say?

From: Don Bacon
To: GI Special
Sent: March 31, 2005

President Bush said in June 2002, "Our security will require transforming the military (to) be ready to strike at a moment's notice in any dark corner of the world."

Major General Smedley Butler said in 1935: "Can't we be satisfied with defending our own homes, our own women, our own children?"

“An Understandable And Predictable Hatred Of Occupation Felt By Anybody Who’s Being Occupied.”
“Why Don’t They Kill Americans Instead?”

The last poll I saw showed that 82% of the Sunni Arabs want the U.S. to withdraw now or in the near future. That is somewhat predictable, but the figure for Shi’a Arabs was 69%.

March 25, 2005 Arab Media Watch member Omar Waraich interviews Patrick Cockburn, Iraq correspondent for the Independent

Patrick Cockburn:

At last count, I think there are 38 different organizations that are claiming attacks on the Americans. It’s a very complicated jigsaw.

It is important to realise, in the beginning, the main motive is a very simple one, that the Iraqis – like everyone else in the world – don’t like to have their lives controlled by foreigners and foreign troops. All this happens in the context of an understandable and predictable hatred of occupation felt by anybody who’s being occupied.

Often people start by saying, “But, the resistance are clearly violent and bigoted Salafi or Wahhabi groups, or they are remnants of the *ancien regime*.”

Leave aside how true this is, and there is an element of truth in this, the real important question to ask is, even supposing that this is all true, why is it that they are able to operate in Iraq? Why is there sufficient sympathy among large groups for these often pretty ruthless brutes? This is the most important question. The antipathy to the occupation is, aside from Kurdistan, universal.

The last poll I saw showed that 82% of the Sunni Arabs want the U.S. to withdraw now or in the near future. That is somewhat predictable, but the figure for Shi'a Arabs was 69%.

Even when I have travelled in the Shi'a areas, often after a bomb directed at say police recruits, people I speak to around the site say, "Why are they attacking Iraqis like this, why don't they kill Americans instead?"

The first part of the sentence often appears on American television. The second part, very seldom, is ever mentioned.

So they are fine with insurgents attacking Americans?

Yes, in fact that's what they invariably say.

There is no government at the moment in Iraq, and the question to ask is who really holds power in Iraq? The answer is, obviously, the American army of 150,000. This government wouldn't exist without that, so it's not really a transfer of power. And the members of this government, leaving aside the Kurds who are a special case, unless they have western bodyguards they would have to leave the country.

Everyone gives too much credit to American policy as being highly sophisticated.

First of all, what has happened has been pretty disastrous for the US. Iraq, if we stand back a bit, was meant to be a demonstration of power – of the military and political ability of the US to act alone and destroy its enemies.

In fact, the opposite has happened. Two years on, the US army doesn't even control the roads between Baghdad and its base at Baghdad airport.

Washington sometimes draws comfort from the fact that it is only fighting Iraqi Sunnis, which is largely true. That's four or five million people.

But what if the Shi'a turned against them as well? They couldn't hold Iraq.

The inability of the US to coerce only one Iraqi community shows their basic weakness. The number of actual combat troops that they can put on the streets is very limited; hence the desperation to enlist British troops to help with the attack on Fallujah while they had to pull their own troops from Mosul.

They do not have the military strength to control Iraq, or to turn whatever military strength they do have into political victory.

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.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Iraqi Squatters In Baghdad Get Thrown Off Public Property. U.S. Command Squatters Live In Palaces.



March 26 By Harkavy, Village Voice blogs

Help yourself: Young Iraqis (above) protests homeless families eviction from public property by the Bush regime and its puppet government. But it's no picnic for other squatters. In fact, it's a feeding-and-inner-tube frenzy for U.S. Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez (below, right) during a pool party at a palace in which Americans are luxuriously squatting. (Irin [© 2005] and DOD photos)



The Iraqi kids are members of families whose homes were pulverized by the U.S. invasion and whose still-homeless clans were squatting in government buildings in Baghdad's Green Zone. Now, those families have been kicked out of the humorously named "Freedom Complex" buildings.

Meanwhile, U.S. soldiers and officials are still living in the Iraqi people's government buildings, including Saddam Hussein's former palaces, where Americans dine under chandeliers and splash around in the ex-dictator's swimming pools.

What a mess: Evicted Iraqi families (above) are homeless and fed up, while U.S. officials and soldiers (below) are, well, fed in one of Saddam's palaces

You enjoy the fine dining scene pictured directly above? The one with the chandeliers and waiters in one of Saddam's former palaces? Well, here's a factoid that wouldn't even register with the Iraqi squatters who are being evicted but might gall some of you readers:

This particular shot is from the official Web site of former Florida election official (and now congresswoman) Katherin Harris.

As Easter neared, the squatter families in Baghdad had little hope for resurrection. The deadline for their eviction was this weekend. Earlier in the week, they mounted a protest to try to draw attention—that real news didn't get much notice in the U.S., what with the GOP's cynically manipulated 24/7 reality-show death watch on Terri Schiavo.

The U.N.'s IRIN news service, which plays events strictly down the middle, reported:

Over 300 people demonstrated on Tuesday at the gates of the heavily fortified Green Zone in the Iraqi capital Baghdad, calling on the government to allow them to stay in government buildings as they have no homes following the conflict in 2003.

Nearly 200 Iraqi families have been ordered to leave the buildings in a government complex, called the Freedom Complex district, by the end of this week. There are approximately 2,000 people and some families have up to 10 members.

So we invaded Iraq to "liberate" its people? I guess that's why L. Paul "Jerry" Bremer seized one of Saddam's most well-appointed palaces and converted it into headquarters for the Coalition Provisional Authority. In fact, we've seized most, if not all, of the palaces. It's tough work keeping all that gold and glass gleaming.

And of course, Americans are still squatting in the Iraqi people's "liberated" buildings. Squatting in style too.



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

Iraqi Collaborator Troops So Bad They Can't Ride In U.S. Armor

(Los Angeles Times, March 28, 2005)

The U.S. military's hopes for saying farewell to Iraq are riding on home-grown troops who are so prone to firing in error or panic that they are not allowed in American armored vehicles. Ethnic resentments divide the ranks of what should be cohesive units fused by comradeship and sacrifice.

**For U.S. Imperial Visitors, Blending In Is
Crucial.
Few Flowers Being Thrown**

(USA Today, March 31, 2005, Pg. 8)

A key to survival in Baghdad is blending in, looking as Iraqi as possible. So arriving Americans take off their glasses and leave their seat belts unbuckled before the 40-minute drive to a downtown hotel from the fortress-like Baghdad International Airport.

Allawi Regime Admits Their Cops Tortured & Slaughtered Innocent Men

April 1, 2005 The Boston Globe, By Anne Barnard

The Iraqi government's unprecedented admission that its police officers tortured and killed three Shiite Muslim militiamen while they were in custody has set off angry complaints from newly elected Shiite legislators who are engaged in a political battle for control of the police.

Shiite leaders have beamed gruesome images of the dead men to Iraqi television sets, displaying their bruised, scarred bodies as an argument for radically reshaping the police force, which is crucial to the fight against the country's bloody insurgency.

In a series of steps rarely seen in Iraq, Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's interim government has acknowledged the men "died under torture by police," arrested six police officers in the case, initiated a high-level investigation, and paid the men's families about \$2,000 each plus a \$500 monthly stipend.

"Iraqis are being tortured by Iraqis, by the security groups which are responsible for their safety," said Hadi al-Ameri, head of the Badr Organization, an Iranian-trained militia founded in the 1980s as the armed wing of the Islamist party that is now the largest in the Shiite bloc.

"Under Saddam, we were used to prisoners being tortured until they died," he said. "But the strange thing is that after Saddam, the same thing happens in the new Iraq."

The Badr case stands out because Iraqi officials acknowledge that the men were tortured, and medical records detail the brutal beatings they received.

The tale reverberates with Iraqi citizens, who desperately want improved security from their first elected government, but also demand new accountability from the police.

Majbal Adnan Latif al-Alawi, 39, his brother Ali Adnan Latif al-Alawi, 35, and their friend, Aidi Mahaisen Lefteh, 30, returned from exile in Iran after the U.S. invasion two years ago.

Like many men in their families, they carried Badr identification cards, a badge that inspires respect in some Iraqis and fear in others. **Sunnis, especially, recall that the Badr Brigades took Iran's side in its war with Iraq.**

The three victims, their families say, had office jobs with Badr and hoped it would find them government jobs.

On Feb. 12, they were arrested in Zafaraniya, in eastern Baghdad.

Abd Ali al-Alawi, the brothers' uncle, said they drove there to rent an apartment and mistakenly ran a police checkpoint, where they were detained after showing their Badr cards.

The uncle, Alawi, said he went two consecutive days to the police station where the men were being held, but was not allowed to see them or the officer in charge, Brigadier Amer Sajid al-Dami. On the third day, he said, a police major agreed to check on the case.

"When he came back out, he was trembling," recalled Alawi, whose big toe bears a scar he said was inflicted when Saddam's torturers pulled out the nail a decade ago.

"He told us, 'Please don't make me interfere with this case. I am afraid for my family.'"

By then, the three men were already dead. First Lieutenant Haider Abdul-Wahab, who works in another police station, said in an interview that he found the men's blindfolded corpses, dumped by a roadside Feb. 13, the day after their arrest.

Who Is Al-Jaburi?

31 March 2005 Aljazeera + Agencies

Following a stormy opening session of the Iraqi parliament, Sunni Arab political forces in Iraq have chosen Mashaan al-Jaburi as their candidate for the post of speaker in the country's interim National Assembly.

Al-Jiburi was nominated at a meeting attended by representatives of the Islamic Party, the Royal Constitution Movement, the Arab Democratic Party and Independent Democratic Party, among other Sunni political forces.

However, Aljazeera learned that some members of the 275-member parliament have voiced their concern over the choice of al-Jaburi.

The exact nature of their concerns were, however, not immediately known.

Comment On Al-Jaburi

31 March 2005 By Ahmed Al-Habbabi, [anti-allawi-group]

I'll tell you what "the exact nature of their concerns" might be.

This character "assumed"* the governor of Mosul post immediately after the invasion.

The people of Mosul know him to be a former corrupt official in the governorate office there who left the country with public funds a few years before.

A week later, the people of Mosul gathered in a sort of popular move to ask him nicely to go home and he did.

Those were the nice days.

Today, they'd address him with an RPG of course.

The whole lot of imported Iraqis who came back on American tanks are a most notorious bunch to string together on one planet.

They couldn't have been more meticulously selected for corruption, incompetence, and warped character in every possibly imaginable manner. But of course, he'd tell you he didn't leave Iraq because he was a thief...er the poor patriot was persecuted.

A similar character, Al-Zubaidi, "assumed" the governor of Bagdad post at the same time.

A couple of weeks later, he was arrested by the Americans for thieving the Central Bank, spent a few months in custody, got released, and is now living in Jordan with whatever loot he managed to transfer out of the country, happily ever after.

* "assumed" means he wasn't appointed by anyone.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

**BUSH OFFERS RETIREES OPTION
OF SERVING IN IRAQ:
Social Security Participants Given
Wide Choice of Iraqi Cities to Patrol**

March 20, 2005 The Borowitz Report

After receiving only muted support for his sweeping proposals to overhaul Social Security, President George W. Bush attempted to sweeten the pot today, offering all retirees the opportunity to serve in Iraq.

With most insiders calling the president's proposal for individual investment accounts dead on arrival in Congress, the White House hopes that Mr. Bush's offer of guaranteed military service to all retired Americans will find more favor.

Speaking at a rally in Detroit today, the president told his audience, "In the year 2054, the Social Security trust fund will be bankrupt, but the war in Iraq will be alive and well."

Under his new plan, the president said, upon reaching the age of 59 every participant in the Social Security program would be offered the opportunity to begin basic training for what Mr. Bush called "the adventure of their lives."

According to the president, retirees would be "totally free to choose" which Iraqi city they would like to patrol from a list of twenty cities including Baghdad, Tikrit, Fallujah, and oil-rich Kirkuk.

Mr. Bush added that the average retiree serving in Iraq would earn approximately \$1500 a month, which would be boosted to \$1800 if the retiree should somehow stumble across weapons of mass destruction.

In Washington, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz said he was "intrigued" by the notion of spending his retirement years in Iraq but that he had decided to run the World Bank instead.

Elsewhere, antiwar protesters across Europe marked the second anniversary of President Bush ignoring antiwar protesters across Europe.

**TERRORIST CHIEF NABBED;
AT CIA HEADQUARTERS;
CHARGED WITH DEATH OF OVER
1500 U.S. TROOPS**



(Jason Reed/Reuters)

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