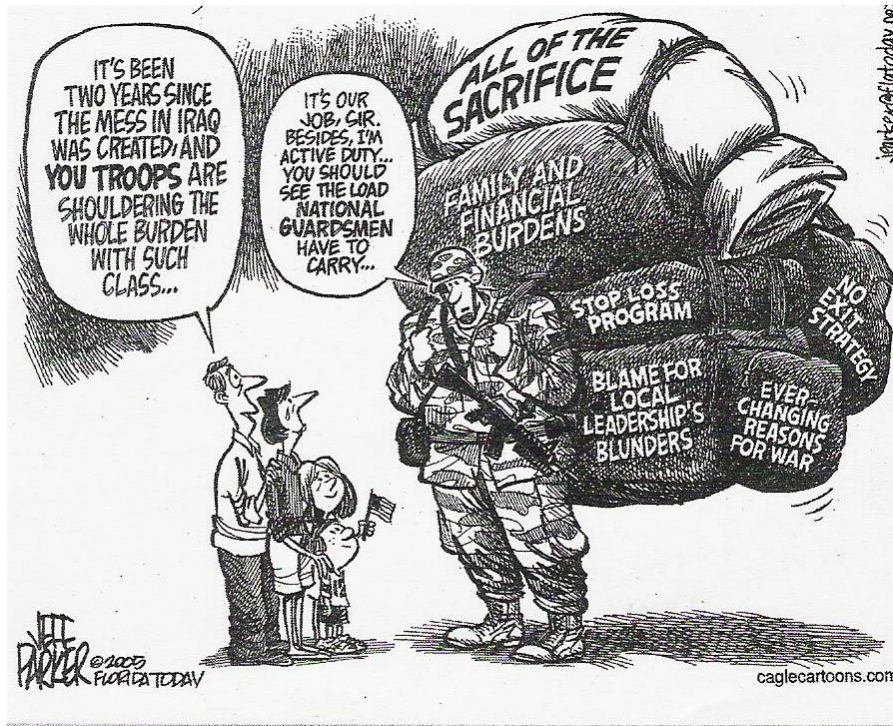


GI SPECIAL 3A87:



Army Times 4.4.05

“No, No, Don't Go!” Recruiter Tells His Daughter "Why Am I Going To Go Risk My Life For Political Bullshit?"

These shortfalls were worse than those in February, when the Army and its reserve components failed to meet recruiting goals for the first time since May 2000.

"The dad freaked out on me," Decavelle said. "He was waiting in the front yard when I got there and he went all crazy. He said, 'You just want my son so you can send him to Iraq and send him back home in a body bag.'"

[Thanks to Phil G. who sent this in.]

April 1, 2005 Chicago Tribune

Cortnee Smith, a high school honors student, last year had her mind set on joining the National Guard. Her parents supported her. Friends in the Army told her what to expect. Smith took a military aptitude test and told school counselors and a recruiter she planned to join after graduation.

But last fall, her father quashed those plans. Michael Smith, himself a former National Guard recruiter, was called to duty last July and shipped to Iraq. What he saw there evidently persuaded him he didn't want his daughter going.

"He was like, 'No, no, don't go,'" said Smith, 17, now a senior at Shepard High School in southwest suburban Palos Heights. "Tell (the recruiter) to stop contacting you."

The Pentagon announced Wednesday that the active-duty Army achieved only about two-thirds of its recruiting goal for March, and the Army Reserve reached slightly more than halfway to its target.

The active Army was 2,150 recruits short of meeting its March goal of 6,800 new troops, and the Army Reserve fell 739 short of its goal of 1,600. These shortfalls were worse than those in February, when the Army and its reserve components failed to meet recruiting goals for the first time since May 2000.

Army Secretary Francis Harvey has conceded he expects recruiting to fall short in April as well.

Just as the armed forces are facing their most pressing needs since the end of the Vietnam War, **many Americans do not see enough of a national cause to warrant their sons, daughters or themselves joining the military, let alone instituting a draft.**

Such global concerns may be far from the mind of Cortnee Smith, whose father never told her what it was in Iraq that persuaded him to keep her out of the military. But she does know this: Rather than ship out to Iraq to fight insurgents, she now plans to spend the next few years studying criminology at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

The military's problem, perhaps, is that there are thousands of Cortnee Smiths.

Sgt. Justin Ramsey recently tried to persuade John Gentry, a freshman at a community college outside Portland, Ore., to join the Marines. Gentry seemed interested in the money he might earn, but not if it meant going away for six months to train and eating "that food in little packets."

Out of recruiters' earshot, Gentry, wearing a rumpled T-shirt and flip-flops, conceded that Iraq also worried him. "I wouldn't sign up if I had to go to Iraq," he said. "Why am I going to go risk my life for political bullshit?"

Sgt. Armin Englerth, an Army recruiter, said he hears that quite a bit. "I get a lot of the 'we're at war' response," Englerth said. "There's no really great way to address it. It's like, 'OK, we're at war.' I'm not going to tell them they won't go. It's the luck of the draw."

Recruiters say it's the parents of potential recruits, such as Cortnee Smith's father, who often are the biggest impediments. Where young people may view themselves as invincible, parents are painfully aware of their children's mortality.

On a recent Friday, Sgt. Nathan Decavelle, a Marine recruiter, met a high school senior in West Lynn, near Portland, who seemed interested enough in joining the Marines to give the recruiter his name and home address. But when the Marine showed up at the teenager's home on Monday morning, he encountered the boy's irate father instead.

"The dad freaked out on me," Decavelle said. "He was waiting in the front yard when I got there and he went all crazy. He said, 'You just want my son so you can send him to Iraq and send him back home in a body bag.'"

So the military is exhausting every imaginable idea, effort and inducement to keep manpower up and attract qualified troops. Recruiters are hitting NASCAR events, rock concerts, rodeos and rib festivals, using custom-painted Humvees and other gimmicks to attract the masses like old-fashioned traveling salesmen.

Within the Army, the biggest fall-off in recruiting is in the Army Reserve and National Guard, ostensibly citizen-soldiers who are being made to serve full time because of the war in Iraq.

The highest death rate in Iraq is now being sustained by Army National Guardsmen--35 percent higher than for the entire active-duty Army.

That is one reason the Army is no longer getting double use from its soldiers: Those coming off active duty are reluctant to immediately join the National Guard or Reserve, as many have done in the past.

"They don't want to join because they know they'll go right back to Iraq," said Lawrence Korb, who was an assistant defense secretary in the Reagan administration. "That means the Guard and reserve have to go out into the marketplace and compete for new people. . . . The market is drying up."

With a return to the draft considered a political impossibility, many in the defense community fear that the recruiting shortfall could eventually mean lowering standards, diminishing quality to the abysmal levels of the "hollow army" of the late 1970s. [It's already happening.]

In those days, operating and repair manuals were printed in comic book form because of the low reading skills of many enlistees.

The Army is still meeting its threshold requirement that at least 90 percent of its recruits must have high school diplomas, and no more than 2 percent can come from the substandard Category 4 group of recruits who score 30 points or lower out of 99 on the Army aptitude test.

But the number of high school dropouts being accepted has nearly doubled, to 9 percent of total recruits, and the number of Category 4 scorers has gone from 0.6 percent of the total to 1.8 percent.

FOR MORE ON THE RECRUITING CRISIS, INCLUDING, YEAH, AN ARTICLE ON LOWERING OF STANDARDS, SEE THE SECTION "TROOP NEWS" RIGHT AFTER "WAR REPORTS"

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Orlando-Area Marine Killed; Had Been With Fire Department

April 1, 2005 The Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. -- A Marine from Orange County has been killed on his second tour of duty in Iraq.

Charles Wells, with the 2nd Force Service Support Group out of Camp Fallujah, was killed Wednesday when his vehicle struck a land mine while on a logistics patrol to Qaim, authorities said.

In his civilian life, Wells was a member of the Orange County Fire Rescue Department, the Orlando Sentinel reported.

He had completed training as an emergency medical technician when he received orders for his first deployment to Iraq, said Tammy Wunderly, a department battalion chief.

He completed that tour and returned to Orange County to resume his firefighter training.

A few months later, he received orders for a second tour in Iraq.

Wells leaves behind a wife and daughter.

Grand Bay Soldier Wounded

April 01, 2005 By GEORGE WERNETH, Staff Reporter, Mobile Register

Army Spc. Kenneth Delon Bosarge, 24, of Grand Bay was seriously injured in Iraq on Sunday when the Humvee he was riding in ran over an improvised explosive device, his father said Thursday.

Bosarge, a 1999 graduate of Alma Bryant High School, was serving as a gunner on top of the Humvee when the incident occurred, said Paul "Kenny" Bosarge of Grand Bay.

Paul Bosarge said his son, serving with the 3rd Infantry Division, sustained 32 shrapnel wounds to his lower body. He also has shrapnel wounds to his arms, neck and face. He lost the sight in his right eye but is expected to recover from his other wounds.

The soldier will be transferred to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., and is expected to arrive there Sunday. Paul Bosarge said he and his wife, Renae Bosarge, along with their son's wife, Tiffany Bosarge of Grand Bay, plan to drive to Walter Reed today to be with him.

The soldier was based at Camp Al Asad near Fallujah and was a member of a security detail that was escorting a military convoy when the incident occurred, his father said.

The soldier and his wife have two children: a daughter, Hannah, 3, and a son, Hayden, 21 months.

U.S. Convoy Attacked At Ramadi

FALLUJAH, Iraq, April 1 (Xinhuanet)

A suicide car bomb hit a US checkpoint at the entrance of a US military base west of the restive city of Ramadi on Friday, witnesses said.

The explosion took place when a bomber drove a booby-trapped truck into the US military checkpoint around midday. Casualties were not known as the US troops sealed off the area, the witnesses said.

TROOP NEWS

National Guard Relaxes Recruiting Standards

[Thanks to Phil G who sent this in.]

4.1.05 The Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. - The Army National Guard, which recently increased its age limit in an effort to reverse a decline in recruitment, is now opening its doors to less educated people.

Under a policy approved this week, the guard will accept recruits with at least a ninth-grade education, as long as they get a satisfactory score on a vocational aptitude test and obtain a General Education Development diploma within three years of signing up, said spokesman Lt. Col. Mike Milord at the National Guard Bureau in Arlington, Va.

Previously, recruits needed a high-school diploma or GED certificate to enter the guard, said Pennsylvania Army National Guard spokesman Capt. Cory Angell.

"The risks now are certainly greater," Milord said. "That's certainly a consideration with parents."

The National Guard and Army Reserve also recently raised the maximum enlistment age from 34 to 39.

On Thursday, a 39-year-old construction superintendent from Wallingford became the first person covered by the new age standard to enlist in the Pennsylvania Army Guard.

"I felt an obligation, but all the services said I was too old," said James Neikam, who is single and said he is not worried about being sent to Iraq or Afghanistan to fight alongside younger people.

"I've been doing martial arts for 20 years. I fight 19- and 20-year-olds all the time," Neikam said. [Perfect. The resistance in Iraq is well known for using martial arts in fighting the occupation.]

Marine Recruiter Caught Lying; Marine Major Whines About Vet Calling Recruiters Liars

March 21, 2005 By Rick Hampson, USA Today

NEW YORK — The Marines didn't have to recruit Greg McCullough; He signed a promise to enlist last year, while still in high school.

But now McCullough has had second thoughts, and he's talking to a different kind of recruiter.

Jim Murphy is a “counter-recruiter,” one of a small but growing number of opponents of the Iraq war who aim to compete with the military for the hearts and minds of young people.

“I don’t tell kids not to join the military,” said Murphy, 59, a member of Veterans for Peace. “I tell them, ‘Have a plan for your future. Because if you don’t, the military has a plan for you.’”

The Marines told McCullough that signing up for the Delayed Entry Program was a binding commitment, which Murphy told him was not true.

Murphy gave him a form letter to send to the commander of the Marine recruiting station, saying he’d changed his mind. Murphy told McCullough that the armed services don’t consider recruits to have joined until they go to basic training — “until they shave your head,” as he put it.

Maj. J.J. Dill, commander of Marine recruiters in metro New York, said counter-recruiters such as Murphy “don’t know what they’re talking about. But saying that we’re tricking and lying, that certainly has an impact on a young person. A lot of them are influenced by these counter-recruiters or by negative media coverage” of Iraq. [Getting caught telling a stupid lie also “has an impact on a young person.” As for that “negative publicity” he’s moaning about, does that include troops being dead? See next item:]

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)

MORE:

What Does Have “An Impact On A Young Person”?

March 21, 2005 By Jane McHugh, Army Times staff writer

Statistically, the fear factor is about twice as strong among potential recruits as a whole than it was in 2000, the GfK study found in August.

The fear is evident in a high proportion of survey respondents, who said their main reasons for not joining the military included: "I might be killed in combat," "I don't want to kill people," and "I might be captured or tortured."

For Recruiters, A Hard Toll From A Hard Sell



Sgt. Latrail Hayes, a recruiter who sought conscientious objector status (Marty Katz/*New York Times*).

At least 37 members of the Army Recruiting Command, which oversees enlistment, have gone AWOL since October 2002, Army figures show.

One recruiter in the New York area said that when he steps outside his office for a cigarette, he often is barraged with epithets from passers-by angry about the war.

In January, the brother-in-law of a prospective recruit lashed into him. "He swore at me," the recruiter said, "and said that he would rather have his brother-in-law in jail for selling crack than in the Army."

March 27, 2005 By DAMIEN CAVE, New York Times

[Thanks to Desmond & Tom J, who sent this in.]

The Army's recruiters are being challenged with one of the hardest selling jobs the military has asked of them in the nation's history, and many say the demands are taking a toll.

A recruiter in New York said pressure from the Army to meet his recruiting goals during a time of war has given him stomach problems and searing back pain. Suffering from bouts of depression, he said he has considered suicide.

Another, in Texas, said he had volunteered many times to go to Iraq rather than face ridicule, rejection and the Army's wrath.

An Army chaplain said he had counseled nearly a dozen recruiters in the past 18 months to help them cope with marital troubles and job-related stress.

"There were a couple of recruiters that felt they were having nervous breakdowns, literally," said Maj. Stephen Nagler, a chaplain who retired in March after serving at Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn, where the New York City recruiting battalion is based.

Some two dozen recruiters nationwide were interviewed about their experiences over four months.

Ten spoke with The New York Times even after an Army official sent an e-mail message advising all recruiters not to speak to a reporter, who was named. Most asked to remain anonymous to avoid being disciplined.

But most told similar tales: of loving the military, of working hard to complete a task that seemed out of reach, of struggling to carry the nation's burden at a time of anxiety and stress.

The careers and self-esteem of recruiters rise and fall on their ability to fulfill a mission, said current and former Army officials and military experts who were also interviewed. Recruiters said falling short often generates a barrage of angry correspondence, formal reprimands, threats or even demotion.

"The recruiter is stuck in the situation where you're not going to make mission, it just won't happen," the New York recruiter said. "And you're getting chewed out every day for it. It's horrible." **He said the assignment was more strenuous than the time he was shot at while deployed in Africa.**

At least 37 members of the Army Recruiting Command, which oversees enlistment, have gone AWOL since October 2002, Army figures show.

And, in what recruiters consider another sign of stress, the number of improprieties committed - signing up unqualified people to meet quotas or giving bonuses or other enlistment benefits to recruits not eligible for them - has increased, Army documents show.

The Army is seeking 101,200 new active-duty Army and Reserve soldiers this year alone to replenish the ranks in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere around the world and at home. **That means each of the Army's 7,500 recruiters faces the grind of an unyielding human math at a time of extended war without a draft: a quota of two new recruits a month.**

The mission puts them in a different kind of cross-fire: On one side, the military's requirement that new soldiers be found. **On the other, resistance by many parents to Army careers for their children in wartime.**

Maj. Gen. Michael D. Rochelle, commander of the Army Recruiting Command, acknowledged it is a stressful time for recruiters, who face "the toughest challenge to the all-volunteer Army" since it began in 1973.

But many recruiters said the Army continues to minimize how difficult it has become to find qualified volunteers during a war and in a growing economy.

The Army is the nation's largest military branch, comprising 80 percent of the 150,000 troops in Iraq. Its recruiters are among its best soldiers. Most are sergeants with 5 to 15 years of experience, pulled randomly from the top 10 percent of their specialty, as defined by their commanding officers. More than 70 percent did not volunteer for the job.

Some soldiers are better suited to the task than others. Staff Sgt. Jose E. Zayas, 42, is outgoing, bilingual and embraces his mission. Recently, canvassing in the Bronx, he had little trouble persuading a couple from Massachusetts to accept a few pamphlets.

But for every Sergeant Zayas, there is a recruiter like Sgt. Joshua Harris, 29, a former personnel administrator in a New Jersey recruiting station, who struggles when talking to strangers. Seven weeks of instruction in approaching prospects helped him, he said. But many recruiters said few soldiers possess the skills they need.

Recruiters are paid about \$30,000 a year, plus housing and other allowances, including \$450 a month in special-duty pay for recruiting. They live where they recruit, often hundreds of miles from a base.

These men, and occasionally women, spend several hours a day cold-calling high school students, whose phone numbers are provided by schools under the No Child Left Behind law. They also must "prospect" at malls, at high schools, colleges and wherever else young people gather.

The follow-up process often takes months. Though parents do not have to sign off on the decision to join, recruiters said it is virtually impossible to enlist a new recruit without their approval. Over dinners and on the phone, they make the Army's case over and over to win parents' support.

If they succeed, they are responsible for bringing the recruit in for 5:30 a.m. processing, organizing physical fitness training or, in the case of one California recruiter, taking 3 a.m. phone calls to comfort a recruit crying over a breakup with her boyfriend.

Recruiters have "the only military occupation that deals with the civilian world entirely," said Charles Moskos, a military sociologist at Northwestern University.

Army data found that, even before the war, recruiters contacted on average about 120 people before landing an active-duty recruit. That number has only grown, recruiters said.

One recruiter in the New York area said that when he steps outside his office for a cigarette, he often is barraged with epithets from passers-by angry about the war.

In January, the brother-in-law of a prospective recruit lashed into him. "He swore at me," the recruiter said, "and said that he would rather have his brother-in-law in jail for selling crack than in the Army."

The recruiter said, when out of uniform, he often lies about his profession. "I tell them I work in human resources," he said.

Still, they must sign up two recruits a month.

A December report from the commanding officers overseeing about 40 recruiters in West Houston reflects the mission-driven culture of recruitment. Sent by e-mail to station commanders, it started by declaring, "We can sum up the month of Dec with one word - Unprofessional!"

The document noted that in an end-of-the-month push to meet quota, seven recruits had appeared for processing. Of those, two did not meet weight requirements and needed a waiver, while two others lacked paperwork.

"We are processing crap," the report stated, "double and triple waivers, waivers which get approved and the applicant refuses to enlist (two this month), waivers on people with more than 20 charges, etc. We are putting these people in our Army!"

The cause, it said, was a lack of leadership: "I challenged you to fix your stations. No one has stepped forward."

Asked to respond to the document, the Houston recruiting battalion declined.

The report was followed on Jan. 6 by an e-mail message from Command Sgt. Maj. Frank Norris, the second in command of 212 recruiters in and around Houston, threatening to deny all requests for leave.

"There are no excuses and I am tired of entertaining such lack of discipline and focus," he said in the e-mail message forwarded to The Times by a recruiter who received it. "Let this serve notice that any station commander that is holding this great battalion back will not be a station commander in this battalion very much longer."

Neither document contained any mention of the war, nor other possible obstacles. Sergeant Major Norris declined through an Army spokesman to be interviewed. General Rochelle said most battalions do not resort to such tactics.

The recruiter in New York who had considered suicide said he has seen at least four marriages break up among the 9 or 10 recruiters in his area since 2002. He said he has been subjected to threats of discharge and "zero-roller training," when superiors comb through recruiters' phone logs and other materials, then lambaste them for failing to enlist anyone.

After more than a decade in the military, he said he still loves the Army.

"It's just this detail," he said. "This is hell."

A Texas recruiter - a gruff man whose home is decorated with military commendations - said that he suffers from severe headaches lasting up to six hours. "I never had them until I got out here," he said. "They're from recruiting."

He and other recruiters said they occasionally feel angry enough to hit someone. About two years ago, he said, two recruiters in his office brawled over who should get credit for a new recruit.

"We call this the pressure plate, like on a land mine," he said, pointing to the recruiter patch on his uniform. "If you push it too hard, we'll explode."

His wife, like spouses in California and elsewhere, is furious at what she sees as the Army's lack of support.

"What we are doing is good; recruiting is good and important work," she said. "But the fact of the matter is that it's killing our soldiers."

Many of the recruiters said they have asked for other assignments. One of them is Sgt. Latrail Hayes. Now 27, Sergeant Hayes enlisted in the Army 10 years ago, out of high school in Virginia Beach, continuing a family tradition of military service. He volunteered to be a recruiter in 2000, after 52 jumps as a paratrooper, and at first his easy charm, appeals to patriotism and offers of Army benefits enticed dozens of recruits.

But Sergeant Hayes said he started rethinking his assignment as the war went on. Mothers required months, not weeks, of persuasion. And the stories he heard from some of his recruits who had deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan made him reluctant to pursue prospects by emphasizing the Army's benefits. When his cousin - whom he had recruited - came home from Iraq with psychological trauma, he filed for conscientious objector status in June, as a strategy to obtain a new assignment.

The application was rejected in November. Now, instead of serving 20 years in the Army, he intends to leave in December, when his recruiting tour is done. "There's a deep human connection when you try to persuade someone to do something you've done," he said. "So when it turns into something else - maybe even the opposite - it's difficult."

Some recruiters said they witnessed an increase in "improprieties," which are defined as any grossly negligible or intentional act or omission used to enlist an unqualified applicant or grant benefits to those who are ineligible. They said recruiters falsified documents and told prospects to lie about medical conditions or police records.

An analysis of Army records shows that the number of impropriety allegations doubled to 1,023 in 2004 from 490 in 2000. Initial investigations substantiated 459 violations of Army enlistment standards in 2004, up from 186 in 2000. In 135 cases, recruiters - often more than one - were judged to have committed improprieties, up from 113 in 2000. The rest were defined as errors.

General Rochelle acknowledged that the impropriety figures "may be a reflection of some of the pressure that is perceived at the lower levels." He also said that the increase could partly be explained by improvements in tracking improprieties.

"We hold every recruiter responsible for being a living and breathing example of Army values," he said.

The quotas will remain unchanged, General Rochelle said. But the commanders should be held responsible for finding ways to meet their goals. "It does no good to pass the heat, as it were, or the correction down to the individual soldier," he said.

In a small concession to recruiters, Army brass announced in February that they can trade the green slacks and shirts that they said made them feel and look like security guards for battle fatigues.

General Rochelle said the uniform swap was part of a new recruiting strategy to stress patriotism over salesmanship and enlist veterans to help make the Army's pitch. "It's less materialistic, in terms of the focus, once we get a recruiter face to face with a young American," he said.

The recruiter in Texas, for one, said the changes are too little too late. He said he would rather be in Iraq.

Ukraine, Italy, Bulgaria Announce Timelines For Bringing Their Troops Home

4/1/2005 By Antonio Castaneda, (AP) & (AEST)

Ukraine and Italy announced timelines to pull troops from Iraq later this year, further dwindling the number of U.S.-led coalition forces.

Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko confirmed Thursday that Kiev would withdraw its last remaining troops from Iraq in October, as tentatively planned, Interfax news agency reported.

"It will be mid-October," Mr Yushchenko told a press conference in Kiev.

However, he added that the exact date for the withdrawal could still fluctuate.

"Our conceptual position is the following: our troops must leave Iraq this year," he said.

A first batch of 137 soldiers returned home earlier this month and in May, Ukraine plans to cut the now 1,300-strong force to some 850.

Mr Yushchenko - who promised ahead of his election in December to bring the troops home - announced in early March that the some 1,600 troops then stationed in Iraq would be withdrawn from that country in three stages: nearly 150 in March, some 590 in May and the rest in October.

Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi also said he plans to trim his contingent of troops at the end of September by about 300 soldiers from his current force of 3,300.

Bulgaria has decided to fully withdraw its troops from Iraq by the end of this year, reports from Sofia said on Thursday, quoting a government spokesman.

The spokesman also said Bulgaria will cut the number of its troops from the current 450 to 400 in June.

The nation's national assembly is expected to approve the decision in mid-April as both the ruling and opposition parties support the troop withdrawal plan, the reports said.

A public outcry against the troop deployment in Iraq prompted Bulgarian Defence Minister Nikolai Svinarov last week to propose a total troop withdrawal by the end of this year.

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.

Marine Reservist Arrested For Deserting Unit

April 1, 2005 The Associated Press.

A Marine reservist from the Chicago suburb of Hoffman Estates was taken into custody this week by local police who turned him over to the military for allegedly deserting his unit.

Lance Corporal Charles Lee surrendered to police Wednesday. Military officials say Lee was supposed to be with the Second Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment based in Chicago. The unit has been serving in Iraq since last year.

Military officials say Lee was turned over to the military yesterday and will be taken to the Quantico Marine Base in Virginia where he will be processed.

Lee's family says he thought he completed his Marine Reserves' obligation and was concentrating on his studies at Northwestern University.

Army Knew Strykers Were Fucked Up In December; Report Just Now Made Public

April 01, 2005 By Pauline Jelinek, Associated Press

The problems were cited in an Army report from December that was made public Thursday by the private Project on Government Oversight.

“The Army should not put inadequately tested equipment in the field, as it creates a false impression that the troops are properly equipped to fight in combat,” said Eric Miller, who investigates defense issues for the oversight group.

Among the other problems with the Army’s first new combat vehicle in two decades were:

- The weapon system does not shoot accurately when the Stryker is moving.
- Troops cannot fasten their seat belts when they are wearing bulky body armor.
- Computer systems for communications, intelligence and other systems have malfunctioned in the desert heat due to air conditioning problems.

A study of the Stryker’s performance in Iraq found numerous design flaws and other problems. For example, the 19-ton, eight-wheeled vehicle bogs down in mud and the engine strains when 5,000-pound armor is added to protect troops from insurgents’ explosives.

‘An Illegal, Immoral Order’

2005 Newsweek, Inc. Interview with Jeremy Hinzman, who deserted from the 82nd Airborne.

Your main argument in seeking political asylum in Canada hinged on the legality of the war—that, on the one hand, it wasn't sanctioned by the international community, and on the other, that the United States is systematically violating humanitarian law on the ground.

It was established at Nuremberg, you can't act preemptively, you have to wait until the gun is pointed or you're actually being attacked. And as a soldier, they tell you from day

one, that it is your duty and obligation, and you will be punished if you go along with an illegal, unlawful, immoral order. And I feel that the order to attack and occupy Iraq is an illegal, immoral order and it's my duty as a soldier to refuse to carry it out.

When the Canadian government intervened, calling the legality of the war "irrelevant," did it seriously compromise your case?

Our hands were tied. We weren't even allowed to argue it. I think that had the government not intervened in our case, and had they said that the war was legal and sent me back, the U.S. would say, "yeah, fine, thanks for sending the bastard back." But they would also say, "Hey Canada, you're our biggest ally.

And we were begging for countries to go along with the Coalition of the Willing. It was us, England, and, like, Costa Rica or something"—which doesn't even have an army, right?—"and you didn't send troops and now you're saying the war was legit?"

So they dig themselves a hole that way. And then, obviously, if they said the war was illegal and I could stay, then obviously that creates a lot of friction, too.

Your lawyer was a Vietnam-era draft evader and you've received support from other Americans who settled in Canada at that time. How do you respond to critics who argue that, "Hey, unlike the Vietnam-era dodgers, you signed up for this?"

That's a fair thing to say. ...just because you volunteer to do something, it doesn't mean that your ability to be a moral being should become static. Life is dynamic, and if you're confronted with doing something wrong, it's not right to abdicate your duty and obligation to be a moral being.

Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board didn't feel you'd be facing persecution in your homeland, one of the criteria for political asylum. What are you expecting if you are forced home?

I don't think (the judge) knows the full extent of what U.S. prisons are like. And I don't think I'm going to be going to the prison where Martha Stewart was if I was to go back. But more importantly, we meet the criteria for refugee status. I know we're not from Darfur or anything.

But it says in the Geneva Convention on Refugees that a soldier who refuses to fight in a war that's condemned by the international community and faces prosecution for that, that amounts to persecution on the basis of political opinion. And we met that criteria. And rotting away in a jail is cruel and unusual for doing the right thing.

They used to shoot Army deserters, didn't they?

At least theoretically, you can get a death sentence for this. And, no, I don't think it's a real likely possibility. But look at the Bush administration and look at what they've done or what Gonzales has done, or whoever. They're totally willing to do unprecedented and uncustomary things to fight this war. And I wouldn't put it past them to do something drastic with us.

U.S. Soldiers Arrested for Colombian Cocaine Plot

[Thanks to PB for sending this in. He writes: Echoes of Vietnam.]

Apr 1 (Reuters)

Five American soldiers have been arrested for trying to smuggle hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of cocaine into the United States on a U.S. military aircraft, the U.S. military said.

The five unidentified Army personnel were detained on Tuesday and are being held in the United States for "allegedly trying to transport approximately 16 kilograms (35 lb) of cocaine," U.S. Southern Command said in a news release late on Thursday.

The cocaine could be sold in the United States for \$300,000-\$500,000.

The U.S. Congress has authorized the presence of up to 800 U.S. troops in Colombia to train Colombian soldiers and provide support for the country's war on cocaine and rebels, as well as up to 600 civilian contractors.

The United States has provided Colombia with more than \$3 billion in mainly military aid since 2000.

Where Even Generals Fear A Military Draft

(Philadelphia Inquirer, April 1, 2005)

A certain amount of panic will take hold of Russia today, when the country begins its annual military draft. Generals are worried that they will end up with another group of drug abusers, convicts and misfits.

Mothers are terrified at handing over their sons to a military notorious for its brutal hazing of recruits. And tens of thousands of draft-age young men fear for their lives as they face two years of menial labor, sadistic senior officers, and, worst of all, a possible deployment to Chechnya.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Attacks

4/1/2005 By Antonio Castaneda, (AP) & Agence France-Presse & BBC

Iraqi police say guerrillas have killed a local chief of police in an ambush in Balad Ruz, north of Baghdad.

Hatem Rashid Mohammad was killed along with another police officer as they visited a police stations.

Reports say a third policeman died on Friday when police stormed a house they believed contained insurgents.

In Samarra about 17 guerrillas in three cars blocked off roads to the centre and pounded the station with rocket-propelled grenades, provoking a 10-minute firefight in which a policeman was wounded.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Death Of An Empire

03/30/05 By Gwynne Dyer, "Cincinnati Post"

People who search for a long-term strategy in neo-conservative policies invariably end up thinking there is none, but that's because they are looking for coherence. They expect too much.

When strategists are confronted with an insoluble problem, they generally try to solve it anyway, and they are not above using irrational assumptions to stick the bits of rational analysis together.

Great powers on the brink of decline typically have incoherent and foredoomed strategies to ward off their fate, simply because no better strategies are available.

"I have not become His Majesty's first minister to preside over the dissolution of the British empire," Winston Churchill harrumphed in 1940 - but from the Spanish armada of 1588 to the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt in 1956, the flailing efforts of paramount powers to ward off impending demotion from "superpower" status have generally just hastened the process.

<p>What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Send to</p>

**contact@militaryproject.org. Name, I.D., withheld on request.
Replies confidential.**

RUMMY STRUGGLES WITH METRICS

From: "Don Bacon"
To: GI Special
Sent: April 01, 2005

---portion of interview on National Public Radio, 29 March 05

RUMSFELD: . . . We track, for example, the numbers of attacks by area. We track the types of attacks by area. And what we're seeing, for example, and one metric is presented graphically and it shows that we had spiked up during the sovereignty pass to the Iraqi people and spiked up again during the election, and are now back down to the pre-sovereignty levels which are considerably lower.

NPR: **Fifty-some attacks a day or something like that?**

RUMSFELD: **I don't know what the number is, I don't have it in front of me.**

(OR DOESN'T CARE??)

Major General Smedley Butler (USMC) said seventy years ago:

"War is a racket. It always has been. It is possibly the oldest, easily the most profitable, surely the most vicious. It is the only one international in scope. It is the only one in which profits are reckoned in dollars and losses in lives."

The Smedley Butler Society <http://www.warisaracket.org>

The First American Revolution

[Thanks to Liz Burbank for posting this.]

ERADICATING BACON'S REBELLION FROM POPULAR MEMORY by Jonathan Scott,
Guest Commentator, The Black Commentator

For those interested in an alternative history of American slavery, the first installment of PBS's new four-hour series, Slavery and the Making of America (February 9 and 16) began on a promising note.

The first American bond-laborers, we are shown in vivid color and told by narrator Morgan Freeman, were a rather mixed group: English, Scottish, Irish, and African.

Rarely do U.S. history texts start with this crucial fact in telling the story of America's so-called Peculiar Institution. In the main, U.S. slavery is presented as either an embarrassing aberration or a painful yet necessary stage in the nation's triumphant march toward democracy and equality for all.

In both conceptions, American slavery is always racialized, creating the false impression that Anglo-American slave-owners imposed a system of chattel slavery on Africans and African Americans because of their phenotype (or skin tone), not their labor power.

For students of the history of colonial Virginia, the PBS documentary's unorthodox beginning was exciting for another reason.

For next would be one of the most remarkable moments in all of American history: Bacon's Rebellion of 1676, the largest and most consequential slave revolt in the history of the continent.

At first a small opposition movement within the Anglo-American ruling class, over profit-making opportunities in Virginia, the revolt became hurriedly a mass rebellion of bond-laborers, their sights set on the chief garrison and magazine at West Point.

Nathaniel Bacon was a member of the colony council and a militant opponent of Virginia land policy.

He had prepared the revolt a few years earlier by organizing an armed mutiny of angry taxpayers at Lawnes Creek Parish, and, in November of 1676, proclaimed freedom to all bond-laborers, in anticipation they would join his cause against the big tobacco bourgeoisie.

He was right.

Thousands of bond-laborers - six thousand European Americans and two thousand African Americans - took up arms against the numerically tiny Anglo-American slave-owning planter class. Seizing the day, dramatically, they drove Governor Berkeley back to England, hat in hand, and shut down all tobacco production for fourteen straight months.

The slave rebellion introduced a near terminal crisis in the young British imperial system, and, for the Anglo-American slave owners and planters, the frightening prospect of losing forever the entire Chesapeake, home to some of the richest tidewater land on the planet, which they had been exploiting massively and ceaselessly for the previous sixty years, through a system of bond-labor servitude known as chattel slavery.

But the American bond-laborers - English, Irish, Scottish, and African - had had enough. Throughout the seventeenth century, the death toll in the Virginia colony had been around 80 percent, due to the nightmarishly harsh conditions of labor and the vicious punishments inflicted by magistrates on resistant tobacco workers. The bond-laborers were not going back.

Most significant about Bacon's Rebellion is the fact that the bond-labor rebels took up arms together without the slightest regard for each other's complexion.

A month into the successful rebel takeover of the Virginia colony, the British crown sent one Thomas Grantham, a Navy captain, to bribe the rebel leaders. The rebel leaders weren't having it, and, according to Grantham himself in the official report he penned weeks later, recommended "cutting me in peeces."

Grantham described the rebel leaders as "four hundred English and Negroes in Armes." This is no small point, as the historical record of Virginia verifies.

The British would eventually crush Bacon's Rebellion through a relentless bombing campaign of the Chesapeake.

1783: The Second American Revolution: Vets Fucked Over By "Founding Fathers" --- A Long Tradition Begins; No Thanks From An Ungrateful Pack Of Politicians

April 1, 2005, By Ben A. Franklin, Editor, The Washington Spectator

After the British surrendered Yorktown in 1781, rumors spread throughout the ranks that the Continental Army would be demobilized without being paid.

In June 1783, a small band of soldiers from the unit known as the Pennsylvania Line marched on the capital of the new nation, then in Philadelphia, demanding the back pay owed them. They surrounded the State House and poked their bayonet-tipped muskets through the windows at the assembled Congress, which included James Madison and Alexander Hamilton.

Fearing a coup d' état, Congress quit the building, pushed through the jeering armed mob [translation: fucked over vets. And in this sentence it sounds like a whole lot more than "a small band" mentioned above, doesn't it?] and headed to Princeton, New Jersey.

For weeks the soldiers held their ground.

They grew into a mutinous mob of 400, [note how anytime troops stand up for themselves they suddenly become a “mutinous mob?” That’s an old tradition too: slander] making daily demands on the government and terrorizing the citizens of Philadelphia. [translation: terrorizing the war profiteers who had gotten rich selling supplies to the Army, and the British too, and were pissing their pants that the soldiers’ benefits might cost them some of their riches. Sound familiar?]

Finally, after weeks of the renegade [translation: betrayed] soldiers’ daily demonstrations and threats, General George Washington sent a force of 1,500 Continental soldiers to compel the men to return to their homes. Two of the leaders of the mutiny were sentenced to be shot, led out to be executed, and set before a line of soldiers with loaded guns. At the last minute, they were pardoned by Congress. Other leaders were whipped before being released. [Lesson learned. When you got them surrounded with the weapons pointing in the windows at Congress, do not let them escape and regroup.]

The Revolutionary War mutinies were not about power or ideology but simply about being paid for services rendered.

Although most Revolutionary War veterans were not paid for years, they eventually got back pay and pensions. [Oh, so the troops had it right. They were getting ripped off by the wealthy new American rulers. It was OK to die for the American revolution, but expecting the politicians to keep their promises? How dare they!! Just a “mob” of “renegades”!!]

The mutiny had another consequence. During the Revolutionary War, on separate occasions, Congress had retreated from Philadelphia to York and Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and to Baltimore, Maryland, to avoid capture by the British.

The Congress had always returned.

After the 1783 mutiny and the humiliating departure from Philadelphia, the members vowed never to return. They stayed in Princeton until the end of the year, then moved to Annapolis, Maryland, and then on to Trenton, New Jersey.

When the Constitutional Convention met in 1787, memories of 1783 were still so fresh in the delegates’ minds that they wrote a provision into the Constitution providing for a new kind of capital federal enclave, which would become Washington, D.C., by the turn of the century. [And where slavery was legal. Which fit right in.]

OCCUPATION REPORT

Liberation Bush Style:

Secular Women Say That They Fear For The Future

March 31, 2005 Catherine Philp, Timesonline

JENAN AL-UBAEDEY peers over her half-moon glasses, waving her black-gloved hands between repeated tugs on her long, flowing abaya to pull it closer around her face.

"If you say to a man he cannot use force against a woman, you are asking the impossible," she explains. "So we say a husband can beat his wife, but he cannot leave a mark. If he does that, he will be punished."

On the subject of polygamy, the former pediatrician turned politician says: "If you don't allow your husband to take another wife, he'd have an affair anyway . . . I'd rather know my husband has another wife that I know about."

In fact, Dr Ubaedey's husband is back home in the Shia holy city of Najaf, looking after the couple's four children while she stays in Baghdad to take up her duties as one of Iraq's new parliamentarians.

As a devout Shia Muslim and one of eighty-nine women sitting in the new parliament, she knows what her first priority there is: to implement Islamic law. **When Dr Ubaedey took her seat at last week's assembly opening, she found herself among an increasingly powerful group of religious women politicians who are seeking to repeal old laws giving women some of the same rights as men and replace them with Sharia, Islam's divine law.**

Among the new laws that they are pushing for is one allowing men to marry up to four wives, one awarding women half the inheritance given to men **and another denying women custody of children over the age of 2 in the event of divorce.**

More than 50 per cent of female parliamentarians belong to the cleric-backed United Iraqi Alliance, which won the election in a landslide with just over half the seats. It has called the implementation of Sharia "non-negotiable".

Secular women fighting the conservative religious agenda say that women such as Dr Ubaedey make their job harder. "It's weakening our position," Nada al-Bayiati, of the Women's Organisation for Freedom in Iraq, said. "How can you argue for women's rights when the women are undermining you?"

Other critics also contend that the quota has worked against women's rights because the male leaders of the Shia parties stacked the list with women who had few qualifications or political ambitions of their own but who would blindly support their agenda.

Dr Ubaedey cannot be counted among them. Her views are her own and her ambitions cannot be doubted. But she admits that the same cannot be said of all her female

colleagues. “It’s true that many of them — maybe a third — have just been put there by the men. They are not aware and don’t come to meetings, so they don’t know what’s going on,” she said. “About 10 per cent of them are learning, but the others don’t really care.”

Under Saddam Hussein, Iraqi women were among the most free in the Middle East, with many rights equal to those of men. Conservative Shias say that the code that ensured those rights is an alien secular one that belongs to the old regime and should be dropped.

Early last year, women’s groups were treated to a taste of their vision of women’s rights in the new Iraq, when the Shia-led governing council issued a resolution cancelling the old civil code on family law and referred all cases instead to the religious courts — a de facto imposition of Sharia.

That resolution was cancelled by Paul Bremer, the former US administrator.

With such external regulation gone, secular women say that they fear for the future.

Dr Udaebey is not for turning. “Look,” she says, as she explains why she would be obliged to give up her job in parliament if her husband wanted her to, “I didn’t make the law, God did, so it can’t be changed. This is the way things are.”

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

One Million Iraqis Flee “Liberated” Hell

(Wall Street Journal, April 1, 2005, Pg. 8)

When the United States invaded Iraq, neighboring countries prepared for a wave of refugees. But few showed up. **Instead, the exodus of Iraqi refugees has happened in slow motion over the past two years, leaving as many as a million new Iraqis living in Jordan and Syria alone and overwhelming the scant resources available to take care of them.**

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



[Thanks to CZ, who sent this in.]

CLASS WAR NEWS

Tariq Ramadan Calls For Freeze On Corporal Punishment

“A still more grave injustice is that these penalties are applied almost exclusively to women and the poor, the doubly victimized, never to the wealthy, the powerful, or the oppressors.

March 30, 2005 (IslamOnline.net)

Tariq Ramadan, a world-renowned Muslim thinker, issued Wednesday, March 30, a call for an international moratorium in the Muslim world on the application of Hudud (prescribed Islamic penalties), a call likely to stir controversy among Muslim scholars.

“We are officially launching today an international call for an immediate moratorium on corporal punishment, stoning and the death penalty in all majority Muslim countries,” Ramadan said in a press release obtained by IslamOnline.net.

“This call for a moratorium is being made considering that the opinions of most Islamic scholars is neither explicit nor unanimous (indeed even without a clear majority) as far as the comprehension of the texts and to the application of the Hudud.”

Ramadan further said the political systems and the state of the majority Muslim societies do not guarantee just or equal treatment of individuals before the law.

“A still more grave injustice is that these penalties are applied almost exclusively to women and the poor, the doubly victimized, never to the wealthy, the powerful, or the oppressors.

“Furthermore, hundreds of prisoners have no access to anything that could even remotely be called defense counsel. Death sentences are decided and carried out against women, men and even minors (political prisoners, traffickers, delinquents, etc.) without ever given a chance to obtain legal counsel.

“In resigning ourselves to having a superficial relationship to the scriptural sources, we betray the message of justice of Islam,” Ramadan argues.

Received:

“Other People Will See What Is Going On”

From: XXX [Iraq veteran, active duty]
To: GI Special
Sent: Thursday, March 31, 2005 11:19 AM
Subject: Capitalism At Work Article

I just want to say thank you for posting our story on your site. It means a great deal to us that other people will see what is going on.

[For the story this concerns, see in [GI Special 3A83](#): the story headlined:

Capitalism At Work:

**“Don't Let Them Hear You Cry”
Soldiers & Military Families Raped By Profiteering
Corporate Scum**

Received:

Play To Win

From: t eto
To: GI Special
Sent: April 01, 2005
Subject: "love the show" / The media circus

Greetings,

i write only as an interested observer...

my question to you is do you want to break through the media silence that surrounds DC's treatment of veterans ?

how would it have been if at Terri Schiavo's vigil there was a peaceful / disciplined / focused, yet outrageous 'action' to inform the public of the government's neglect of veterans ? photogenic, in your face, forcing the media to acknowledge it...

perhaps some of the things that 'act-up' did are good examples...

what are the other current media spectacles - baseball's opening day, michael jackson's trial, etc

... play to win ...

Web Copies

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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/magalat/english/gi-special.htm>**

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