

GI Special: thomasfbarton@earthlink.net

4.15.05

Print it out (color best). Pass it on.

GI SPECIAL 3A99:



From the I-R-A-Q (I Remember Another Quagmire) portfolio of Mike Hastie, US Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71. (Contact at: hastiemike@earthlink.net for more of his outstanding work. T)

OVER 1 MILLION GONE TO WAR

"Unless things start to improve, we will start to see a serious problem in six to nine months," said Bernard E. Trainor, a retired Marine Corps three-star general and a former Marine Corps deputy chief of staff under Ronald Reagan. "I think they (the Pentagon) are betting that things are going to get better. But that could be a miscalculation," said Trainor. "This crowd has been pretty good at miscalculating."

An increasing number of military experts believe those forces -- the Army and Marines -- are months away from being overtaxed to the point of serious dysfunction.

Apr 12, 2005 Mark Benjamin, Axis of Logic

Three and a half years have passed since U.S. bombs started falling in Afghanistan, and ever since then, the U.S. military has been engaged in combat overseas.

What most Americans are probably unaware of, however, is just how many American soldiers have been deployed. Well over 1 million U.S. troops have fought in the wars since Sept. 11, 2001, according to Pentagon data released to Salon. As of Jan. 31, 2005, the exact figure was 1,048,884, approximately one-third the number of troops ever stationed in or around Vietnam during 15 years of that conflict.

More surprising is the number of troops who have gone to war since 9/11, come back home, and then were redeployed to the battle zone.

Of all the troops ever sent to Iraq or Afghanistan, one-third have gone more than once, according to the Pentagon. In the regular Army, 63 percent of the soldiers have been to war at least one time, and almost 40 percent of those soldiers have gone back. The highest rate of first-time deployments belongs to the Marine Corps Reserve: Almost 90 percent have fought.

An increasing number of military experts believe those forces -- the Army and Marines -- are months away from being overtaxed to the point of serious dysfunction.

"Unless things start to improve, we will start to see a serious problem in six to nine months," said Bernard E. Trainor, a retired Marine Corps three-star general and a former Marine Corps deputy chief of staff under Ronald Reagan. "I think they (the Pentagon) are betting that things are going to get better. But that could be a miscalculation," said Trainor. "This crowd has been pretty good at miscalculating."

Indeed, the revelation that well over 1 million U.S. troops have fought in Iraq and Afghanistan surprises even close military observers. "Those are big numbers ... a lot bigger than I would have thought," said John Pike, the director of GlobalSecurity.org, a defense information Web site that tracks the logistics of war.

Pike thinks it is too early to tell what the impact will be on the regular Army, but he said the repeated deployments have already broken the reserve forces.

The Iraq war is burning through troops.

In addition to troops getting treatment in military hospitals, nearly 50,000 veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan, including those discharged for wounds or injuries, are now out of the military and getting medical treatment from the Department of Veterans Affairs, according to V.A. data.

Around 25,000 troops have been medically evacuated from Iraq and Afghanistan, according to the Pentagon's transportation command.

"The guard is broken and cannot be fixed," Pike said. "I don't think anybody would voluntarily, of their own volition, join the National Guard. I think they will have to come up with a new mission statement for the thing."

Comment: BULLSHIT!

In a letter to Army Times, Retired 1st Sgt. J. Alan Waters, Copperas Cove, Texas wrote:

"I have a problem with people complaining about stop-loss and the call-up of the Individual Ready Reserve.

"Read your contract. You signed it.

"The military is not a scholarship to play Army and then go to college."

So, according to Waters, the following happens in the recruiting office:

"OK, and one more thing. If some criminal asshole in the White House starts a war for oil and Empire, lies about the real motives, and the invasion gets all fucked up, you can be forbidden to leave the Army for as long as the war lasts.

"You may have signed up here for X years in the Army, but that don't matter at all. If the war goes on for 5 years, you can be kept in the Army for 5 years. If the war lasts 10 years or 20 years, it could be that you will NOT be allowed to leave the Army, or the battlefield, until the war is over, unless it's feet first. There is no limit on how long you can be forced to remain in the army.

"If you try to leave, you can be arrested and imprisoned.

"We call that 'stop-loss.'"

Sgt. Waters says that's what soldiers knowingly signed up for at the recruiting station?

Bullshit.

T.

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

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Haverstraw Man Dies In Iraq

April 14, 2005 By RON X. GUMUCIO, THE JOURNAL NEWS

HAYERSTRAW — Before leaving for Iraq in January, Army Spc. Manny Lopez had his wife record him reading bedtime stories to their newborn daughter, Isabella.

Lopez made the video diary so Isabella wouldn't forget her father while he was in Baghdad for 18 months with the 3rd Battalion of the 7th Infantry Regiment.

The two-hour videocassette now is the only memory the infant will have of her father, who was killed Tuesday by a rocket-propelled grenade. The 20-year-old was the first service member from Rockland County killed since coalition forces invaded Iraq.

As family and friends gathered at her Orchard Street home yesterday, Lopez's mother, Yolanda, recounted the last conversation she had with her son, more than a week ago by telephone from Iraq.

"He never talked about the missions he was on," said Lopez, sitting in the living room of the house Manny grew up in. "He told me he loved me, that he was OK and that he was safe. He told me he couldn't wait to come home."

Yolanda Lopez, 43, said two soldiers came to her house late Tuesday to inform her that her son had been killed and that his body would be flown home in seven to 10 days.

Lopez's wife, Kira, 20, and Isabella will fly to New York shortly to be with her husband's family. She moved out of their Fort Stewart, Ga., home three months ago to stay with her mother in Florida while her husband was in Iraq.

The couple — high school sweethearts — graduated from North Rockland High School in 2002. They moved to Georgia a month after getting married in September 2003.

His family remembered him as an athletic, polite, affectionate and loving person who enjoyed spending time with them. He liked to play paintball and go four-wheeling with his friends. He had played Little League baseball and loved the Yankees.

Carlos Accattato, Lopez's uncle, said his nephew would spend summers with him and his family at their Garnerville home playing with his four children and go on vacation with them to Seaside Heights, N.J., and the Rocking Horse Ranch in Highland, Ulster County. They also visited the Bronx Zoo. Accattato said his wife, Zoraida, was like a second mother to the young man.

"Wherever we went, Manny was with us," Accattato said, as tears streamed down his face. "He was always helping out the family. He took care of his mom. He was good at that."

Yolanda Lopez said her son was responsible and wasn't a complainer. She said that after his 4-year-old brother, Gian Carlo, died in 1996 of complications from a heart transplant, Manny assumed the role of man of the house. His father, Manuel Lopez Jr., also is deceased.

"He was our hero," Yolanda Lopez said. "He got me through a lot of things. He was my support system."

Lopez, who works two jobs, said her son was proud to be so young, already a homeowner and married with a child. He met his future wife in nursery school. He often would fall asleep on the phone with her on the other end. Manny and Kira were parishioners at St. Peter's Church in the village, where she sang in the choir.

"They went to church faithfully every week," Yolanda Lopez said. "I didn't have to make them go."

Manny Lopez's sister, Kathy, 26, said her brother had a great sense of humor and loved to crack jokes. She said they spent hours talking on the phone when she lived in Texas and that their relationship became stronger.

"We weren't real close growing up, but the last year, we really bonded and had a friendship," Kathy Lopez said, as she held her 18-month-old daughter, Adrianna Soto. "He became a beautiful man in a short period of time."

Accattato said Manny sent photos, letters and postcards to his 8-year-old son, Angelo, from boot camp and Iraq and would sign them, "Love always, your big brother."

Accattato said his son tailored his Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. "I Have a Dream" school essay after his cousin Manny.

"He wrote, 'for my cousin to come home safe from Iraq,' " Carlos Accattato said, crying in Manny's childhood bedroom. "So he could have fun with him and do things with him. Now he can't ever again."

Kira said she spoke to her husband last at 2 a.m. Tuesday. She said he was supposed to call her later in the day to find out how Isabella's doctor visit went.

"I knew in my heart when he didn't call, something was wrong," she said. "We had this special connection. ... A love like that only comes once in a lifetime. Not only was he my husband but my best friend. I'll never find another best friend like that again."

Kira said their daughter was due the day he was scheduled to leave for Iraq, but she was born six weeks early.

"We believe she came out early to meet her daddy," she said.

Soldier From Cape Coral Dies; Widow Doesn't Believe Pentagon Explanation Of Why

April 14, 2005 By THE NEWS-PRESS

A U.S. Army soldier from Cape Coral died in Iraq Tuesday, but the cause of his death remains a mystery.

Manny Lopez, 20, died of cardiac arrest, according to the Army. His widow, Kira, doesn't believe it.

Through correspondence with Army friends serving with Lopez, she found out a rocket propelled grenade went off near him and could be a factor in his death.

The Army is not confirming involvement of the grenade. The Army told family it will let them know more about the circumstances surrounding his death as additional information is collected.

Cpl. Lopez worked as a signal support systems specialist in communications. He worked for Delta Company repairing and maintain communication systems.

Manny Lopez also leaves behind a 4-month-old daughter Isabella, plus relatives.

His funeral will be in Haverstraw, New York, where his parents live.

Kira and his in-laws are having a memorial service Monday at Kings Way Church in Cape Coral.

Car Bomb Wounds U.S. Soldier In Tikrit

14/04/2005 AP

In Tikrit a car bomb exploded outside a US military installation, injuring nine civilians and setting nearby houses ablaze, police Lt Col Amer Ahmed said.

The US military said one American soldier and two Iraqi troops suffered injuries in the bomb blast – but maintained there were no civilian casualties.

TROOP NEWS

Big Surprise: Pentagon Faulted For Shortage Of Critical War Supplies

April 11, 2005 By George Cahlink, GovExec

Poor planning, lagging funding and an ineffective distribution system have led to delays in getting supplies to troops in Iraq, according to a new report by the Government Accountability Office.

The agency found the Defense Department spent more than \$60 billion supplying troops with 2 million tons of equipment, spare parts and other items before, during and after major combat operations in Iraq from October 2002 to September 2004.

"Despite these expenditures, there have been widespread reports of serious shortages of critical items needed by U.S. troops," the report (GAO-05-275) stated.

Specifically, GAO cited shortages of batteries, tires, vehicle track shoes, body armor, meals ready to eat (MREs), Humvees with extra armor, and add-on armor kits for Humvees. Auditors found that those items were not available for five reasons that it called "systematic supply system deficiencies."

Those deficiencies were:

Inaccurate and inadequate funding of Army war reserve requirements. Auditors found that the Army has not fully funded its war reserve supplies for years, and even today, only about 24 percent of those reserves are funded.

Inaccurate supply forecasts. Army computer models used to forecast supply levels during peacetime did not have a mechanism for forecasting needs during a war. As a result, managers had to make manual forecasts that were often inaccurate due to unreliable data.

Insufficient and delayed funding. Officials at the Army Materiel Command often asked for more money to move more supplies to the theater, but the funding was delayed.

Acquisition delays. Some items were in short supply because vendors lacked key production materials or because long lead times were needed to produce them. For example, a lack of key materials was cited as the reason in delays in manufacturing body armor.

An ineffective distribution system. Auditors found improper packaging of air shipments, insufficient supply and transportation personnel, and poor tracking systems in Iraq.

Soldier Dies For Lack Of Sandbags

April 13, 2005 Minneapolis Star Tribune

Sen. Mark Dayton wants more details about what caused the death of Cpl. Travis Bruce, soldier who was killed by a rocket-propelled grenade in Baghdad.

The day before his death, Bruce had told his girlfriend he did not have enough sandbags to fortify his position adequately.

MORE:

Pentagon Can't Track Millions In War Spending (Obviously It Didn't Get Spent On Sandbags)

USA Today, April 14, 2005

DoD is unable to track down how tens of millions of dollars were spent in Afghanistan and Iraq and elsewhere in the war on terrorism, according to Comptroller General David Walker. [How about checking the bank accounts of every fucking officer, Major or above, who's been in Iraq with all those cash disbursement accounts to buy Iraqi support, and all those assholes in suits in the Green Zone in charge of handing out contracts for suitcases full of cash? It couldn't be that any of these noble leaders in the endless fight for the U.S. Empire have been stuffing their own pockets, could it? Oh heavens, no.]

***How To Kill Your Own:* Commanders Got Armored Vehicles While Soldiers Died**

"I'm not impressed at all," Pulliam said of Army efforts to protect soldiers in trucks. "I think the resources are not what is required."

As frustrating as the delays have been in getting humvees protected, delays for armoring the truck fleet have been worse.

Only commanders had use of available armored vehicles, such as humvees, McCook said.

Apr. 14, 2005 BY CARRIE BUDOFF, TOM INFIELD AND JOSEPH TANFANI, Knight Ridder Newspapers

PHILADELPHIA - (KRT) - After Sgt. Nick Pulliam got to Kuwait and saw how the Army had armored his unit's cargo trucks, he did what other troops in Iraq have done: He went dumpster-diving.

"We had to beg and scrounge for additional steel plate so that we could armor the floors, the exposed rear of the cab and armor the exposed corners," Pulliam, 42, of North Chelmsford, Mass., wrote in an e-mail from Iraq. His unit is now stationed near Fallujah.

When his National Guard unit got to Iraq, he said, it found more steel on hand. But as recently as March, he said he and other soldiers were still jury-rigging and welding armor with no advice from the Army about how best to do it.

"I'm not impressed at all," Pulliam said of Army efforts to protect soldiers in trucks. "I think the resources are not what is required."

As frustrating as the delays have been in getting humvees protected, delays for armoring the truck fleet have been worse.

The task of supplying a large modern military force with fuel, ammunition, food and equipment has proven a perilous one. Since May 2003, the Philadelphia Inquirer's review of war deaths found, at least 29 troops have been killed in attacks on trucks in Iraq.

Because this work has proved so risky, and civilian drivers so hard to come by, thousands of troops have been pressed into service to drive trucks and the combat vehicles that escort them.

The military now counts 12,111 trucks available for potentially dangerous travel or convoy duty in Iraq.

Two thirds of these have the lowest level of armor, the Pentagon says: steel plates cut and bolted on.

Gen. Paul Kern, former head of Army Materiel Command, said in an interview that, in hindsight, he wished truck armoring had begun in 2003. Instead, this did not begin until late last year.

Some of it won't be done until August, top officials said April 8.

As with humvees, Army planners had talked for years about the need to armor trucks. In 2000, Maj. Gen. William E. Mortensen termed them "the most vulnerable" part of the military's fleet.

As early as 2002, in the run-up to the Iraq war, a design for armoring the cabs of widely used five-ton trucks was drawn up, and some Pentagon officials pushed to get it funded and built. But until this year, that was where the design stayed: on the drawing board.

Late last week, Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Sorenson acknowledged that the current kit for armoring the truck cabs, although somewhat changed, is "something close" to what was designed in 2002.

At the dawn of the Iraqi insurgency, in May 2003, civilian workers relayed word home to Stewart & Stevenson, a Texas maker of Army truck cabs: Send armor.

By that summer, the firm was, with Army cooperation, designing a fully armored cab, as opposed to an add-on kit, for medium trucks. But delays kept many of these trucks from rolling off lines for nearly 18 months.

Company president Denny Dellinger said the Army kept ordering design changes - "polishing the apple to make it just what they wanted" - in order to raise protection levels as roadside bombs grew deadlier.

The Army did not sign a contract with Stewart & Stevenson until November, and then the firm ran into a shortage of welders. In January, the Pentagon sent Navy welders from Norfolk, Va., shipyards.

The Army sent its first truck-armoring order to its own depots and arsenals in September, more than a year after the bomb attacks began.

The actions of some defiant soldiers helped sound an alarm. In October, 18 members of a South Carolina National Guard unit refused direct orders to deliver a load of fuel in Iraq.

"We were riding in subpar equipment from day one," said former Sgt. Larry McCook, who lives in Mississippi. "They said, 'Here is some sandbags, fill them up with sand. And some scrap plywood. Do what you can.'"

Only commanders had use of available armored vehicles, such as humvees, McCook said.

Within a month of the drivers' refusal, Army depots and arsenals got orders to armor 371 fuel tanker trucks. The job was done by February.

Meanwhile, a new order has gone out to restart a production line at Radian Corp. in Arizona, Maj. Gen. Stephen Speakes said last week. The order, for 835 kits to fit on cabs of 10-ton trucks in Iraq, means more steel and glass must be bought on the open market, Speakes said.

The goal: finish the kits by September.

How To Kill Your Own: **Marines Bosses Refused Help As Corps Fell Behind Army In Protecting Troops**

In the end, the Marines fell behind in getting the kits on their humvees.

"We offered to help them, and they said no," said retired Army Gen. Paul Kern, who until November headed Army Materiel Command.

Apr. 14, 2005 BY TOM INFIELD AND MICHAEL MATZA, Knight Ridder Newspapers

When the Marines went to Iraq a year ago to help quell the insurgency, they got a nasty surprise.

They needed to shield their vehicles. But the only armor available was too thin, and designed primarily for stopping bullets, not roadside bombs.

So the Corps wound up doing armor a little differently from the Army. Along the way, they got a little help from friends in the neighborhood: the Israelis.

The story of the Marine Corps effort to protect its troops in Iraq runs parallel to the Army story. But as often happens, the Marines plotted their own course.

In Iraq, they needed to armor a vehicle fleet about a sixth the size of the Army's. They decided that some protection was better than none.

They wanted 1/2-inch-thick armor plate, but none was available on the market. So they bought the 3/16th-inch steel they could get, bolted it to their vehicles, and set out to replace it all with stronger steel as soon as they could.

That meant the Marines got some armor onto all their vehicles almost a year quicker than the Army - and not just on humvees, but on trucks.

By March 2004, when the First Marine Expeditionary Force began assisting the Army in combating the insurgency, all its vehicles at least had armor sheets bolted to the doors.

The Army, which for months delayed its decision to armor trucks, would not manage to get all its Iraq vehicles armored until this February - and like the Marines, still doesn't have top-grade armor on many vehicles.

The Army has outdone the Marines in one way. It is now ahead of the Marines in putting on a second generation of humvee armor - a factory-made kit to replace the crude cut-steel plates used initially.

The Marine Corps says it will need until late this year to achieve that goal.

In the end, the Marines fell behind in getting the kits on their humvees.

"We offered to help them, and they said no," said retired Army Gen. Paul Kern, who until November headed Army Materiel Command.

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)

Organizers Report: Military Project Update From Georgia State

There was a recruiter from the GSU ROTC there with his own table. I told him, we weren't there to piss him off (at least not that day), and that we were a group of students opposed to the war in Iraq.

He said, I know "most people are against the war. I'm against the war too."

From: D

To: GI Special

Sent: Wednesday, April 13, 2005 11:35 PM

On April 12, the GSU antiwar group hosted an event with Michael Hoffman, co-founder of Iraq Veterans Against the War.

I got to campus before the event to set up a table and pass out flyers. There was a recruiter from the GSU ROTC there with his own table. When I saw him I thought of the reports from other campuses who have actually met antiwar recruiters in similar situations.

I told him, we weren't there to piss him off (at least not that day), and that we were a group of students opposed to the war in Iraq.

He said, I know "most people are against the war. I'm against the war too." Another student said he told her, military people should be against the war because they're the ones who have to pay for it.

He said he had never fought in a war, but said he was told that "once you kill somebody you're never the same."

He asked me for a flyer for the IVAW event, as well.

The antiwar group tabled for about an hour and thirty minutes. During this time, I was able to give IVAW meeting flyers to two ROTC members, one who is a reservist who earlier told me he was against the war.

Right as we were packing up, I saw another ROTC member and invited her to the IVAW event. She was polite, but informed me that she couldn't attend the event because she was in uniform.

I didn't recognize this obvious fact until then. They couldn't come to the event without risk. Military law claims service members in uniform might give the appearance of officially representing the military when they don't.

So, no ROTC students attended our event. (I wouldn't be surprised if they were ordered to wear uniforms on that specific day. I asked the ROTC member in uniform whether they told them not to attend the event and she said no.)

If I realized this problem earlier, I could have let them know about the IVAW speaking events outside of GSU.

Back to the IVAW event, There were about three veterans in attendance and one military family member.

None of the vets were hostile.

I've heard that often the vets who show up and speak up at IVAW events come to argue *against* IVAW, but these veterans were not.

One of them (an Iraq veteran) was especially sharp. We passed around a contact sheet for our campus antiwar group, and included a section for "Active Duty, Veterans, Military Family Members" and we got a couple of responses.

As T said, "Let's get to work."

[Once upon a time, if you take off your hat, take off and fold up your jacket, take off your tie, and unbutton your shirt a few, and put on a jacket or something like that, you were no longer considered to be in uniform, at least for ROTC purposes. Might be worth checking if that still applies. T. (Ex-Air Force ROTC)]

Guardisman Wears 'Lucky Bullet' Around His Injured Neck



John Harris

April 13, 2005 IBS, COLUMBUS, Neb.

A Nebraska National Guard soldier is back home after he was seriously injured in Iraq last month in a well-orchestrated attack by insurgents.

The left side of John Harris's face is noticeably paralyzed. Around his neck, he wears the bullet that nearly took his life.

"It's not often you get shot and live to tell about it," Harris said. "So, it's kind of like a lucky bullet in a way."

That bullet pierced the side of his head.

"The bullet came straight into my ear. Took off the bottom of the ear and hit the bone and stopped," he said.

Harris is a member of the Nebraska National Guard's 1075 Transportation Unit. His convoy was ambushed just south of Baghdad in the largest firefight since the battle for Fallujah. Six soldiers, including Harris, were injured.

"Rounds started coming in at us, and then me and my battle buddy both were hit," Harris said.

Harris tried to stop the bleeding. He said all he could think about was focusing on his job.

"I tried to talk, but couldn't talk, so I just gave him hand signals telling him to get to the front," Harris said. "(I thought,) 'I've got to focus and do what I have to do or none of us are getting out of here.'"

They moved their truck so the convoy could form a defensive position.

Eventually, Harris was airlifted to safety. Now he's recovering at home in Columbus. Harris said he doesn't hear well out of his left ear, but doctors said his hearing will improve. The nerve damage to his face and arm should get 50 percent better over time.

Military Kids Fucked Over;

Denied Health Care

April 13, 2005 By Rick Casey, Houston Chronicle,

Private hospitals are reluctant to accept the Tricare federally funded insurance program, which is contracted out to the private sector for military families.

It is difficult for doctors and hospitals who accept Tricare to know which hoops to jump through in order to get Tricare's cooperation.

Our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan shouldn't have to worry about their families getting effective medical insurance---we owe them much more than that.

REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



Apr 14 US soldiers secure the scene of a double bombing in Baghdad. (AFP/Ahmad al-Rubaye)

Espresso Bar Warriors

April 13, 2005 By Ralph Peters New York Post

The Air Force is morally bankrupt---willing to turn a blind eye to the pressing needs of soldiers and Marines at war in order to get more of its \$300-million-a-piece junk fighters.

The Air Force staff dwells at the Pentagon espresso bar and lobbies for more money.

Military Recruiting Among Foreigners Falls; "We Can't Get Enough Middle-Class Kids To Die For Our Country"

April 14, 2005 LOS ANGELES (AP)

The number of foreign nationals enlisting in the U.S. military is dropping, even though service now provides a fast track to American citizenship, an Associated Press review of military data shows.

The decrease in non-citizen enlistees, who hail from countries such as the Philippines, Mexico, Nigeria and Germany, has hit all branches of the armed services, which already are struggling with recruitment as the U.S. presence in Iraq enters year three.

While U.S. citizen enlistments also have fallen, the drop is more pronounced among non-citizens - legal immigrants the military has long let serve as everything from cooks to front line soldiers, though not generally as officers. The decline surprises immigration and military experts, who expected that green-card holders who might otherwise wait years to become Americans would jump at the citizenship offer President Bush (website - news - bio) extended nearly three years ago.

Instead, the annual number of non-citizen enlistees has fallen nearly 20 percent from fiscal year 2001 - the last full year before the changes - to fiscal year 2004, according to military data. Much of the decline, from 11,829 to 9,477 recruits, came last year alone.

By comparison, annual enlistments among citizens dropped 12 percent, from 264,832 to 232,957 recruits.

Although non-citizens represent a fraction of active-duty personnel, every recruit matters as casualties mount and more reserves are being called up than at any time since the Korean War.

Non-citizens' casualty rates represent 8 percent of the total despite being less than 3 percent of active duty military personnel.

Bush pitched citizenship not as a selling point but as a reward for service. Last year, more than 7,500 people already in uniform gained citizenship through the military, the highest numbers since the Vietnam War.

But potential recruits who are legal immigrants are less drawn to the offer, noting they can apply to be citizens without risking their lives.

Victor Raygosa and his friends are among the skeptics. After flirting with Navy enlistment - recruiters would leave their cards at high school football practice and stop by his home - Raygosa chose instead to work odd jobs and get an education.

"My mother told me if I went into the military, she would go crazy," said Raygosa, 25, who came to Los Angeles from Mexico 10 years ago and now attends Santa Monica College.

A few months ago, he filled out his citizenship application.

"It was easy, a lot easier than joining the military," he said. "I can wait."

America's roughly 30,000 foreign soldiers come from more than 100 countries, with the largest contingent living in California. More than a third are Hispanic. The dip was smallest between fiscal years 2002 and 2003, according to military data, when the Army and Marines experienced a small rise in non-citizen enlistments.

By fiscal year 2004, however, Army and Marine non-citizen enlistments dropped to their lowest level in at least five years. Annual non-citizen enlistments in the Navy and Air Force have declined without exception.

Charles Moskos, a military sociologist at Northwestern University, said he was surprised by the dip but still believes the military will be forced to turn toward non-citizens.

"We can't get enough middle-class kids to die for our country," he said. "This is the next step."

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 RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Car Bombs Target Police Convoy In Baghdad

14/04/2005 By Mussab al-Khairalla (Reuters) & Aljazeera

Two car bombs killed at least 15 people and wounded around 20 during rush hour near an Iraqi Interior Ministry building in central Baghdad on Thursday, ministry and hospital officials said. Witnesses said some 15 cars were destroyed in the explosions and human debris was scattered over a wide area.

An Iraqi police captain told Aljazeera many of the victims were part of the highway patrol responsible for accompanying oil trucks from the al-Dura refinery to the refinery at Beiji.

The blasts occurred near Iraqi police vehicles protecting an entrance to the Interior Ministry building. Reuters television pictures showed several policemen covered with blood.

Iraqi journalist Walid Khalid told Aljazeera that as the convoy was about to enter the complex, the two bombers attacked from the back and the front.

A police officer said he believed a convoy he was traveling in was targeted.

"We were cutting through the traffic jam when a car in the middle of the crowded street blew up. We crossed over to the other side to avoid the traffic jam and another car tried to cross ... but flipped over and when it did it also blew up," said Abbas Jhudier.

"The first car was in the middle of the traffic jam and caused a lot of casualties," he said.

The blasts took place at about 10 a.m. and sent a black plume of smoke over the Iraqi capital.

The U.S. military says the number of insurgent attacks has dropped by around a fifth since the election, but the scale and sophistication of their operations has increased.

IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATION

Assorted Resistance Action

14/04/2005 AP & By Mussab al-Khairalla (Reuters) & By Bassam Sebti and Ellen Knickmeyer, The Washington Post & Aljazeera

Guerrillas hit police patrolling near the central Iraq city of Baqouba, killing one officer and wounding three, Lt Col Muthafar al-Jubori said.

In the capital, attackers shot 1st Lt Firas Hussein in the head and torso as he made his way to work at Iraq's intelligence service, police Maj Mousa Abdul Karim said. Aljazeera quoted Iraqi police sources as saying on Thursday morning unidentified fighters assassinated one of the new officers at the Iraqi intelligence service in the al-Mansur neighbourhood west of Baghdad.

In Kirkuk, seven gunmen riding in two vehicles fired on a new police station just south of Kirkuk shortly after dawn, killing five police officers and one civilian, police Brig Sarhat Qadir said. A mortar round hit the station afterward.

The attack happened at about 8am (0400 GMT) when police were preparing to go for a patrol in the southern neighbourhood of Adala, said police Colonel Munis Ishak.

The police station had opened seven days ago, he said, adding that one of the wounded was a civilian.

A bomber blew himself up near an Iraqi police checkpoint in Mahawil, 50 miles south of Baghdad, killing four policemen and wounding six others, the Polish-led military force said.

In Latifiya, south of the capital, gunmen shot dead the mayor.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

“Now I Am The Viet Cong.” A Soldiers’ Story



Stan Goff: APISC Conference 2005

[Part 2]

After reflection on my two decades plus of service, I am convinced that I only served the richest one percent of my country.

December 22, 1999 By Stan Goff, Consortiumnews.com. Editor's Note: **Stan Goff served in the U.S. military for two decades, much of the time with Special Forces training Third World armies.** He retired from the U.S. Army in February 1996, after serving in Vietnam, Guatemala, El Salvador, Grenada, Panama, Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, Honduras, Somalia and Haiti. He lives in Raleigh, N.C.

1991:

As a member of 7th Special Forces, I went to Peru in 1991. The reasons we went there were manifold and layered, as are many of our rationales for military activity.

We were committed, as a matter of policy, to encouraging something called IDAD for Peru. That means Internal Development and Defense.

We were involved in a nominal partnership with Peru in the "war on drugs." Peru was in our "area of operational responsibility," and we (our "A" Detachment) were performing a DFT, meaning a Deployment for Training.

So, we went to Peru to assist in their internal development and defense, to improve their "counter-drug" capabilities, and to train ourselves to better train others in our "target language," Spanish.

Those were the official reasons. No briefing mentioned another part of the mission: unofficial wars on indigenous populations.

The course of training we developed for the Peruvians was basic counterinsurgency. Drugs were never discussed with the Peruvian officers. It was a sensitive issue -- if you get my drift.

We were quartered in an ammunition factory outside the town of Huaichipa, for the first few weeks. Later, we moved into DIFE, the Peruvian Special Forces complex at the edge of Barranco district in Lima.

During the middle of the mission, we camped at the edge of an Indian village called Santiago de Tuna in the sierra four hours out of the capital.

Tuna is the Spanish word for prickly pear cactus fruit. Blessed with Cactus Fruit would be the direct translation. Local Indians did bring us two sacks full of cactus fruit, which was delicious and which kept everyone regular.

We became very chummy with the Peruvian officers, some of whom were easy-going fellows, and some of whom were aggressively macho. They stuffed us full of anticuchos (spicy, charbroiled beef heart) and beer every night.

Sometimes the combat veterans would get very drunk and spit all over us as they relived combat. One major couldn't shut up about how many people he had killed, and how the sierra was a land for real men.

A lot of drinking went on. Beer with the officers and soldiers. Cocktails in the bars; pisco with the Indians, who the soldiers tried to run off because they were considered a security risk.

One Indian man, in particular, toothless and dissipated, his blood-red eyes swimming with intoxication, astonished me with his knowledge of North American Indian history. He even knew the years of several key battles in our war of annihilation.

Geronimo was a great man, he said. A great medicine man. Great warrior. A lover of the land.

A Peruvian captain said a strange thing to me, as we walked past an Indian cemetery during the gut-check forced march out of Santiago de Tuna.

"Aqui hay los indios amigos." Here are the friendly Indians. He opened his hand toward the little acre of graves.

1992:

When I was training Colombian Special Forces in Tolemaida in 1992, my team was there ostensibly to aid the counter-narcotics effort.

We were giving military forces training in infantry counterinsurgency doctrine. We knew perfectly well, as did the host-nation commanders, that narcotics was a flimsy cover story for beefing up the capacity of armed forces who had lost the confidence of the population through years of abuse. The army also had suffered humiliating setbacks in the field against the guerrillas.

But I was growing accustomed to the lies. They were the currency of our foreign policy. Drugs my ass!

Today:

Drug czar Barry McCaffrey and Defense Secretary William Cohen are arguing for massive expansion of military aid to Colombia.

Already, Colombia is the third largest recipient of U. S. military aid in the world, jumping from \$85.7 million in 1997 to \$289 million last fiscal year. Press accounts say about 300 American military personnel and agents are in Colombia at any one time.

Now, the Clinton administration is seeking \$1 billion over the next two years. The Republican-controlled Congress wants even more, \$1.5 billion, including 41 Blackhawk helicopters and a new intelligence center.

The State Department claims the widened assistance is needed to fight "an explosion of coca plantations." The solution, according to the State Department, is a 950-man "counter-narcotics" battalion.

But the request is strangely coincident with the recent military advances of Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionario Colombiano (FARC), the leftist guerrillas who already control 40 percent of the countryside.

In the United States, there is a different kind of preparation afoot: to prepare the American people for another round of intervention.

McCaffrey -- not coincidentally the former commander of Southcom, the Theater Command for the U.S. armed forces in Latin America -- is "admitting" that the lines between counter-narcotics and counterinsurgency are "beginning to blur" in Colombia.

The reason? The guerrillas are involved in drug trafficking, a ubiquitous claim that it is repeated uncritically in the press. There is no differentiation between the FARC and a handful of less significant groups, nor is there any apparent preoccupation with citing precise evidence.

When this construct first began to gain wide currency, former U.S. Ambassador to Colombia Miles Frechette pointed out that there was no clear evidence to support the claims. His statement was soon forgotten.

We were to be prepared.

In Colombia, it is well known that those who profit the most from the drug trade are members of the armed forces, the police, government officials, and the "big businessmen" of the urban centers.

The FARC taxes coca, a far cry from trafficking. The FARC also taxes gas, peanuts and furniture.

Coca also is the only crop left that keeps the campesinos' heads above water. The peasant who grows standard crops will have an average annual income of around \$250 a year. With coca, they can feed a family on \$2,000 a year. These are not robber barons.

They are not getting rich.

Once the coca is processed, a kilo fetches about \$2,000 in Colombia. Precautions, payoffs and the first profits bring the price to \$5,500 a kilo by the time it reaches the first gringo handler.

The gringo sells that kilo, now ready for U.S. retail, for around \$20,000. On the street in the United States, that will break out to \$60,000. There are some high rollers at the end of the Colombian chain, but the real operators are the Americans.

Still, drugs can fill in for the World Communist Conspiracy only so far. Drugs alone won't justify this vast military build-up. For that, we also must believe we are defending democracy and protecting economic reform.

The rationales have become more sophisticated since I was in Guatemala in 1983, way more sophisticated than the blunt instrument of open war in Vietnam.

Democracy wasn't the goal then. We were stopping communists. Drugs are a great rationale, too. But with the FARC, we can have our drug war and our war against communists.

Yet, behind the democratic facade in Colombia are the most egregious and systematic human rights violations in this hemisphere. Except in the 40 percent of the country where the FARC holds sway, right-wing paramilitaries, supported and coordinated by the official security forces, are involved in a process that would have made Roberto D'Abuissou or Lucas Garcia or Rios Mott proud: torture, public decapitations, massacres, rape-murder, destruction of land and livestock, forced dislocations. Favored targets have been community and union leaders, political opponents, and their families.

This July, Commander of the Colombian Army, Jorge Enrique Mora Rangel intervened in the Colombian judicial process to protect the most powerful paramilitary chief in

Colombia, Carlos Castano, from prosecution for a series of massacres. Castano's organization is networked for intelligence and operations directly with the security forces.

That network was organized and trained in 1991, under the tutelage of the U.S. Defense Department and the CIA. This was accomplished under a Colombian military intelligence integration plan called Order 200-05/91.

The cozy relationship between the Colombian army and Castano raises another little problem for the drug-war rationale. Castano is a known drug lord. Not someone who taxes coca growers, but a drug lord.

There is also the U.S. government's troubling history of fighting with -- not against -- drug traffickers. Indeed, the CIA seems to have an irresistible affinity for drug lords.

The Tibetan contras trained by the CIA in the 50's became the masters of the Golden Triangle heroin empires. In Vietnam and Cambodia, the CIA worked hand in glove with opium traffickers.

The contra war in Nicaragua was financed, in part, with drug profits. The CIA's Afghan-Pakistani axis employed in the war against the Soviets was permeated with drug traffickers. Most recently, there were the heroin traffickers of the Kosovo Liberation Army.

It might make more sense for McCaffrey to find \$1 billion dollars to declare war on the CIA.

I was in Guatemala in 1983 for the last coup. In 1985, I was in El Salvador; 1991, Peru; 1992, Colombia.

People don't generally hear from retired Special Forces soldiers. But people need to hear the facts from someone who can't be called an effete liberal who never "served" his country.

A liberal will tell you the system isn't working properly. I will tell you that the system is working exactly the way it's supposed to.

As an insider on active duty in the armed forces, I saw the deep dissonance between the official explanations for our policies and our actual practices: the murder of schoolteachers and nuns by our surrogates; decimations; systematic rape; the cultivation of terror.

I have concluded that the billions in profit and interest to be made in Colombia and neighboring nations has much more to do with the itch for stability than any concern about democracy or cocaine. After reflection on my two decades plus of service, I am convinced that I only served the richest one percent of my country.

In every country where I worked, poor people's poverty built and maintained the wealth of the rich. Sometimes directly, as labor; sometimes indirectly, when

people made fortunes in the armed security business, which is needed wherever there is so much misery.

Often the companies that need protecting are American. Chiquita is a spiffed up version of United Fruit, the company that pressed the United States for the coup against Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954. Pepsi was there for Pinochet in Chile in 1973.

But the top interest now is financial. The United States is the dominant force in the dominant lending institutions of the world: the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

What the United States exports, more than anything else, is credit. So the money is made from squeezing the interest out of those loans.

What that means in the Third World is that the economic elites borrow the money, with the government as their front, then bleed the population to pay the interest. That's done through higher more regressive taxes, by cutting social services, by selling off public assets, by co-opting or crushing labor unions, and so forth.

If the governments don't do enough, Washington pressures them to do more. At home, the American people are told that these countries need "structural adjustment" and "economic reform," when the reality is that U.S. foreign policy often is being conducted on behalf of loan sharks.

The big investors and the big lenders also are the big contributors to political campaigns in this country, for both Republicans and Democrats. The press, which is run by a handful of giant corporations, somberly repeats this rationale again and again, "economic reform and democracy."

Pretty soon, just to sound like we're not totally out of touch with current events, we catch ourselves saying, yeah ... Colombia, or Venezuela, or Russia, or Haiti, or South Africa, or whomever ... they need "economic-reform-and-democracy."

Though phrased differently, this argument is not new. In 1935, two-time Medal of Honor winner, retired Gen. Smedley Butler accused major New York investment banks of using the U.S. Marines as "racketeers" and "gangsters" to exploit financially the peasants of Nicaragua.

Later, Butler stated: "The trouble is that when American dollars earn only six percent over here, they get restless and go overseas to get 100 percent. The flag follows the dollar and the soldiers follow the flag.

"I wouldn't go to war again as I have done to defend some lousy investment of the bankers. We should fight only for the defense of our home and the Bill of Rights. War for any other reason is simply a racket.

"There isn't a trick in the racketeering bag that the military gang is blind to. It had its 'finger men' to point out enemies, its 'muscle men' to destroy enemies, its 'brain men' to plan war preparations and a 'Big Boss'-supernationalistic capitalism," Butler continued.

"I spent 33 years and four months in active military service in the Marines. I helped make Tampico, Mexico, safe for the American oil interests in 1914; Cuba and Haiti safe for the National City Bank boys to collect revenue; helped purify Nicaragua for the International banking house of Baron Broches in 1909-1912; helped save the sugar interests in the Dominican Republic; and in China helped to see that Standard Oil went its way unmolested. War is a racket."

Like Gen. Butler, I came to my conclusions through years of personal experience and through the gradual absorption of hard evidence that I saw all around me, not just in one country, but in country after country.

I am finally really serving my country, right now, telling you this. You do not want some things done in your name

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