

GI SPECIAL 3B13:



Tactical Painting
From Soldier X 4.25.05

You Can't Eat A Soccer Ball

From: Soldier X
To: GI Special
Sent: April 25, 2005
Subject: You Can't Eat A Soccer Ball

In the Autumn of 2004 in Baquabah, Iraq we made a lot of effort after the razing of Fallujah to win back some support of the Iraqi people.

A general distrust grew among the local nationals and it was important to not lead into the elections with negative backlash. There was a surge of insurgent recruiting due to the injustice of destroying Fallujah and we wanted to take the wind out of it.

One of the officer think tanks perched high above real action in Iraq, and high above any common sense, decided it would be a great idea to hand out free soccer balls to the towns in the area.

I thought it was a strange idea from the start.

When we arrived in Iraq we were never greeted with flower baring women and showered with thanks. What we encountered when we confronted the Iraqi people were beggars and peddlers. The kids would approach us with offers on knives, old Iraqi money, whiskey, hashish, bootleg porn, and even prostitution.

Most would beg. First for money. They could buy anything they wanted with an American dollar. Then they would beg for food. It was obvious they were starving for something more nutritious than what their diet allowed.

Then they would beg for clothes, shoes, and school supplies.

I even asked to look in one child's backpack to cure a curiosity on what the school supplies he owned and what the schools were teaching him.

He explained that his father burned the books because it was getting cold outside. Coal is expensive and the Iraqi desert is not in abundance with wood.

After these questions were exhausted they would settle for anything they could see and ask for. All day it was "Mhister, mhister, gimmie mhister" and "for you one dollar mhister". Never once was I begged for a soccer ball.

Alas here we were with an entire train car full of soccer balls, however the one missing ingredient was a pump to inflate them.

Thousands of deflated soccer balls.

You would think that someone would raise a stink about it and get some way to inflate the balls, but not in this army.

This army is commanded by fear.

No one was willing to explain to higher that shit was all fucked up. That would mean it was either their fault or the person they are complaining to. And since the person they complain to is of higher rank, it means that the person complaining is responsible.

But an order is an order and "You will hand out those fucking balls!"

So here we are, a group of sixteen soldiers with deflated soccer balls piled up so high in the humvees we couldn't get to our ammunition.

We drove through the canal crossed Iraqi villages handing out useless sagging plastic to a bunch of hungry children. At first they were grateful. Then some confusion set in. Some tried to play with them by kicking them around and into the sky. They threw them

like frisbees and wore them like hats. We shrugged and moved on to the next town away from the pleas "Mhister, foood mhister"

As we completed our trip and ran out of balls we had to drive through the same towns on the way back.

Deflated soccer balls littered the ground, some were thrown onto houses and in palm trees.

The children at first were not to be seen. But around one corner we were welcomed by the grateful Iraqi children with a rain of rocks.

Many of the soldiers get upset and angry at the kids. They point weapons at them and some even fire off warning shots to scare them.

I just shrink into my turret and let the stones fall about my helmet and weapon shield.

I never blamed them.

Maybe we will be greeted with flowers when we stop handing out destruction, death, fear and deflated waste.

Soldier X

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Irwin Infantryman Killed

April 27, 2005 By SCOTT SHACKFORD/City Editor, Desert Dispatch

An infantryman from Fort Irwin's 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment was killed in an attack by insurgents while he patrolled in Iraq last weekend, according to an Army report.

Cpl. Kevin W. Prince, 22, died Saturday, April 23, after he was hit by an explosive while on a routine patrol, according to the report.

Prince, a native of Plain City, Ohio, served with E Troop, 2nd Squadron of the 11th ACR, which deployed to Iraq in January.

"He was not like anybody else," close friend and Ohio resident Chris Holehouse said. "He wasn't apathetic to what was going on. He wasn't lazy and he wasn't selfish; he was dependable. He reminded me of those books about Camelot. He reminded me of one of those guys."

Prince had talked with his family back home in Ohio on the phone a couple of hours prior to leaving on his last patrol, Holehouse said.

"He got to make peace with them before he left," Holehouse said. "He said 'I love you' on the phone with them before he left. Sometimes families don't always get their last 'I love you's in."

Prince joined the Army in 2001. He is survived by his father, mother, brother and sister.

Prince is the fourth soldier from Fort Irwin and the third from the 11th ACR to die as a result of action in Iraq.

A private memorial for Prince is scheduled for Tuesday at Fort Irwin.

Grenade Kills Sioux City Soldier: Had His Tour Extended



This Sioux City East High School yearbook photo shows Sioux City, Iowa, native U.S. Army Sgt. David Rice. (AP Photo)

04/27/05 Argus Leader

A Sioux City, Iowa, soldier serving his second tour in Iraq was killed when a rocket-propelled grenade struck his vehicle, family members said Tuesday.

Sgt. David Rice, 22, was killed Monday northeast of Baghdad, said his mother, Laurinda Finken.

Rice, a 2001 graduate of Sioux City East High School, is the 29th Iowa soldier to be killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. Finken said she learned of her son's death Tuesday morning when two military officials came to her workplace.

Rice was a fire support specialist with the Army, based out of Fort Riley, Kan., his mother said. She last saw her son before he was deployed in January.

She said she thought of her son every day but became more concerned for his safety when he was deployed for a second tour in Iraq.

"When he told me he was going back for a second time, I had some thoughts about what if something happened to him ... " she said, her voice trailing off.

Finken said she and her daughter both had been in contact with Rice in the past few days. His vehicle rolled over after it was attacked, she said. "We don't know if the rocket-propelled grenade killed him or if he died when his vehicle rolled over," Finken said. Rice enlisted before he graduated from high school, his mother said.

He was scheduled to return home on leave May 12 and was to get out of the Army in June but had his tour extended, Finken said.

Rice, a high school football player and wrestler, had planned to go to community college after he got out of the Army and train in welding, his mother said. Clarice Sturges, a teacher at East Middle School in Sioux City, said a care package from students was sent to Rice before Christmas.

Instrumental music director Pete Hittle remembered Rice as a good student who played the trumpet in middle school.

"He was a sweet kid," Hittle said.

Local Soldier Injured In Mortar Blast

April 27, 2005 By DREW BRACKEN, Advocate Correspondent

NEWARK -- Robert and Becky Darnes sit by their phone, anxiously waiting for another call from their wounded son in Iraq. They admit it's a nerve-racking time. "Momma wants a call from him big time," Robert said.

So far, they've talked to their son, U.S. Marine Reserve Lance Cpl. Justin Darnes, 21, just once since he was injured during a mortar attack last Sunday. He and another member of the Moundsville, W.Va.-based 325th Kilo Company, now stationed in Hit, Iraq, on the Euphrates River, were preparing for a mission when 16 mortar rounds bombarded their camp. Darnes received shrapnel wounds to his left foot.

"My son was helping a buddy put his backpack on and two rounds came in real close," his dad said from their Newark home.

Justin now lies in a hospital bed somewhere in Iraq. His parents aren't sure where. His mission is apparently too secretive to disclose his whereabouts.

Darnes, a 2002 graduate of Newark High School, went to Iraq on March 5. He was there a little more than a month when he was injured.

Wife Of Injured Lewiston Soldier Optimistic



National Guard soldiers pull Specialist Kenneth Parham from the Humvee that was hit by a roadside bomb.

April 27, 2005 By David Gale, KLEW-TV

A Lewiston woman says she's optimistic her soldier husband will make a full recovery, this after she says a roadside bomb in Iraq sent his Humvee soaring almost 50 feet in the air.

Cheryl Parham is married to Specialist Kenneth Parham, who is a member of the Idaho National Guard's 116th Engineer Battalion.

Cheryl says her husband has been in Iraq since the Guard was deployed and is assigned to the gunner's mount on a military Humvee.

"They do convoys, security missions, I'm not sure exactly what he does," Cheryl Parham said. "They don't tell you. I think, some of the time, it's so you don't worry about them. Yeah, right."

According to Cheryl, her husband, who is a former assistant football coach for Asotin High School, was riding at the tail end of a convoy when his vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb.

"And they said it went about 50 feet into the air and you can see the distance between the crater and where the Humvee landed," she said. "He said he had a collapsed lung, a really severe bruise and they thought at first his leg was broken. He's got a big gash in his left leg. He said he remembers seeing the smoke,

hearing the bomb, he remembers going up and going down and it did knock him out."

Cheryl says, though Kenneth is in pain and on a ventilator to assist his collapsed lung, he has a great attitude and she's trying to emulate that.

Resistance Launching 400 Attacks A Week: Pentagon Happy Talk Gone: Admits No Decline In Offensive Capabilities

April 27, 2005 JOHN J. LUMPKIN, AP & BBC

The BBC's Adam Brookes at the Pentagon says, it is clear that the optimism or even euphoria that gripped America's military leadership after the success of the Iraqi elections in January has now dissipated.

After a postelection respite, the pace of insurgent attacks in Iraq has increased in recent weeks to approach last year's levels, Pentagon officials said Tuesday.

That's about 400 attacks a week of all kinds: bombings, shootings, rocket and mortar attacks, Pentagon officials said. About half cause significant damage or injure or kill someone.

The frequency of attacks is one measure of the strength of the insurgency in Iraq, and the success of the efforts of the U.S.-led coalition to combat it. **["Success"? What "success"?)**

A U.S. defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said post-invasion attacks in Iraq were at lower levels - 150 to 200 per week - until April 2004, when uprisings occurred in Najaf and Anbar province. The first pictures of tortured prisoners from the Abu Ghraib prison were also made public that month.

Afterward, the rate of attacks doubled, to around 400 or more per week, the official said. The number spiked during U.S. offensives in Najaf in August and Fallujah in November.

The BBC's Adam Brookes at the Pentagon says, it is clear that the optimism or even euphoria that gripped America's military leadership after the success of the Iraqi elections in January has now dissipated.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT THE NEW TRAVELING SOLDIER

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

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

TROOP NEWS

Funeral Services For Coast Guard Auxiliary Member Pending

April 26, 2005 U. S. Coast Guard

YAQUINA BAY, Ore. - **Services are pending for a young Army private who has become the first known Coast Guard Auxiliarist to be killed during the current military operations in Iraq.**

Private First Class Kevin Scott Wessel, 20, of Newport, died last Tuesday in Baghdad when a car bomb detonated near him while he was on foot patrol, according to the U.S. Defense Department. Spc. Jacob Pfister, 27, of Buffalo, N.Y., also was killed by the improvised explosive device.

Wessel was a member of U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 69 in Yaquina Bay.

Flotilla 69 members say Wessel moved from Hawaii to Oregon after graduating from high school in 2003. **He dreamed of becoming a Coast Guard surfman at Station Yaquina Bay and decided to join the flotilla in the meantime.**

Flotilla members say Wessel was a quick study, partly because he had undergone extensive training with the Sea Cadets in Hawaii.

Unready For Combat:

Troops Say They Lack The Skills To Protect Themselves

April 26, 2005 By Bryan Bender, Boston Globe Staff

Most of them have received only crash courses in basic combat, in some cases after they've arrived in the Middle East and then been stationed near the front lines...

Peters and his Air Force comrades were given five days of weapons training in Kuwait before taking up their posts guarding convoys in Iraq . Normally, infantry receive a minimum of eight weeks of training in combat skills, with most receiving months more of special preparation to survive under dangerous conditions.

WASHINGTON -- When Dustin W. Peters, an Air Force supply technician, arrived in Kuwait in January 2004, all he and his fellow airmen knew was that they would be supporting US troops in Iraq. But when their unit received its assignment, they recalled, they were stunned: They would be protecting supply convoys traveling along Iraq's violent roadways.

Peters, 25, was killed last summer when his Humvee was struck by a roadside bomb near the town of Bayji, placing him among at least 13 Air Force and Navy members to die in Iraq while on assignments that were different from what they signed up for -- and with far less training than military personnel who usually performed those missions, according to a Globe analysis of Pentagon statistics.

At least 3,000 Navy and Air Force personnel such as Peters -- trained mainly in noncombat specialties such as mechanics and construction -- are serving on the front lines of the Iraqi insurgency. The Iraq war is the first military engagement in which such large numbers of air and naval personnel are serving in combat roles on the ground, facing imminent threat of attack.

Most of them have received only crash courses in basic combat, in some cases after they've arrived in the Middle East and then been stationed near the front lines because of shortages of troops in the Army and Marine Corps.

Though technically defined as support units, their jobs -- guarding convoys and oil facilities, or defusing bombs under fire -- bear little resemblance to traditional "noncombat" duty in the safety of a base.

"Airmen are driving trucks in Iraq because the Army didn't have enough of them," Brigadier General S. Taco Gilbert, the Air Force's deputy director for strategic planning, said in a recent interview. "They're manning .50-caliber machine guns."

Some of the service members contend that they have not been provided with sufficient skills to protect themselves in combat situations.

Peters and his Air Force comrades were given five days of weapons training in Kuwait before taking up their posts guarding convoys in Iraq, according to three members of his unit, two of whom received the training with Peters. Normally, infantry receive a minimum of eight weeks of training in combat skills, with most receiving months more of special preparation to survive under dangerous conditions.

The Navy....set up a new command in October to enhance combat training for sailors who will be assigned to perform unfamiliar jobs in Iraq, but officials acknowledged that none of the sailors currently on duty have learned the full regimen of skills.

Lieutenant Lesley Smith, a Navy spokeswoman provided a description of the training that the Navy believes any sailor performing an unusual mission in Iraq or Afghanistan should receive, including how to coordinate within a small team in battle situations; how to operate high-tech weapons; how to spot roadside bombs; and how to operate so-called crew-served weapons, the large, powerful guns that are designed to protect an entire unit from enemy forces.

The Navy's Maritime Force Protection Command said in a statement that such training is "essential" and "strengthens and builds the skill sets that these units need to conduct their jobs safely."

But the statement also acknowledged that only some of the training is currently available.

Currently, more than 2,500 Air Force personnel are involved in convoy operations in Iraq, transporting troops and supplies between cities. Convoy duty has proven to be one of the deadliest assignments of the counterinsurgency, as roadside bombs and ambushes have killed hundreds of troops. Meanwhile, about 400 of the Navy's bomb specialists, who are trained in port security and are not accustomed to working in a hostile environment, are checking out bombs in Iraq or Afghanistan, in many cases in the midst of combat.

Comrades and family members of those who died wonder whether extra training and greater familiarity with their roles would have spared their lives.

Air Force and Navy commanders stopped short of saying these support troops are dying for lack of training, but acknowledged that training must be expanded. But the pace of expansion, which began more than a year after the start of the war, has not been quick enough to satisfy family members who lost loved ones in Iraq.

Petty Officer Ronald A. Ginther, 37, was a Navy reservist called to active duty in early 2004. He was deployed to Ramadi, a hotbed of insurgent activity in western Iraq, where he joined a construction battalion assigned to help rebuild the city. Ginther received three weeks of weapons training in Mississippi, according to relatives. He died on May 2, 2004, when his unit came under insurgent attack.

"He told us he would not have anybody shooting at him," his mother, Darleen Ginther, said in an interview from her home in Port Charlotte, Fla. "The fear was there, but not as somebody who is going out with the infantry. Every time we talked to him we heard mortar rounds in the background. He had three weeks training. Before, he was on a ship, not on land. What kind of training did he have for that? No training whatsoever as far as I am concerned."

For example, the Navy's bomb technicians "are finding their operations are no longer routine explosive disposal operations," involving sea mines, according to the statement by the Maritime Force Protection Command. The units are routinely called on to dispose of stockpiles of weapons used by Iraqi insurgents in the midst of what the command acknowledges are "hostile" environments.

Some military specialists acknowledge that the short duration of combat training for airmen and sailors puts them at a disadvantage on the battlefield.

"In terms of doctrine, equipment, training, and force structure, they are playing catch-up across the board," said Andrew Krepinevich, a retired Army lieutenant colonel and specialist on counterinsurgency. "The fact that we are seeing people put into different roles than they have been accustomed to or trained for is a product of institutional lapses."

For example, more in-depth instruction on how to spot booby traps and better discern signs of a possible ambush would increase some service members' chances of survival, Krepinevich said.

But the changes instituted last fall came too late for those in Peters's unit, which ended its seven-month deployment in August. They recall both the trauma of being assigned such dangerous duty and the brief preparation they received.

"We were excited about the deployment, but were trying to find out what the parameters would be," Air Force Master Sergeant Luis Acuria, 39, recalled in an interview at his base in Nevada.

"It was a last-minute thing," he said of their orders to provide convoy security, which came after they arrived in Kuwait. "It was a request from the Army."

Along with Peters, Acuria and the rest of his unit were given a five-day course in how to fire automatic weapons, grenade launchers, and .50-caliber machine guns out the windows of trucks and Humvees while traveling at high speeds.

Air Force Staff Sergeant Lee Moses, a 37-year-old supply technician who survived the attack last July 10 that killed Peters and their Iraqi driver, said he had virtually no weapons training before arriving in Kuwait. He said the five-day crash course he received in Kuwait was "what we lived on."

"It was good training but it was definitely pretty short," said Moses, awarded a Purple Heart for injuries sustained that day. Once put to work guarding convoys, "we were on pins and needles."

More than two years into the Iraq war, an average of one American service member is killed every day. Most of them are from the Army or Marine Corps. But so far, at least 31 Air Force and 37 Navy personnel have died since the invasion of Iraq and hundreds of others have been wounded, according to Pentagon figures.

Ronald Ginther's brother Don said in an interview that "it still amazes me" that "they sent Ron away for a couple weeks of training."

ACTS OF DEFIANCE: “60 Per Cent Of The Troops Are Against The War And It Is Growing”

April 2005, **Portion of Interview with Mike Hoffman, Iraq Veterans Against the War,** IVAW <http://www.ivaw.net> published in Z Magazine

"I've learned a lot from talking to Vietnam Veterans Against The War. They've taught me about what happened when they were organizing.

The big marches were important, but so were the individual acts of defiance.

A squad would be sent out on some mission in Vietnam and they would just set up camp somewhere and send in false reports.

One battery made a Declaration of Peace and negotiated a truce with the North Vietnamese they were engaged in battle with.

There were hundreds of underground base newspapers. One of them was called, 'All Hands Abandon Ship.'

There were four guys on this one base that were doing a lot of organizing. The military split them up and sent them to different bases, thinking that would undermine their work. But instead, they helped multiply those efforts. Each of the four guys organized at their new base and started a new core group of activists. When they got split up, they multiplied even further.

These acts of resistance and defiance are going on now in Iraq.

We heard from one guy that his whole unit organized to vote for Kerry.

Another guy insists on calling everyone in his chain of command by his first name.

One of our members is writing under a pseudonym about what's really happening in Iraq. Those guys who refused to drive their unarmored vehicles into dangerous territory took a big risk. That was an important act of defiance.

I'd say something like 60 per cent of the troops are against the war and it is growing.

People are still afraid to speak out, though. When I was traveling in Britain, I heard about a British corporal who said in front of his troops that Blair was a madman.

There's dissension all through the ranks."

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.

NO FOOD? NO SOLDIERS !

From: Max Watts

Sent: April 27, 2005

THIS IS THE KIND OF STORY SOME PEACENIKS SOMETIMES DISCONSIDER AS IRRELEVANT IN THE BIG SCHEME OF THINGS.

ME, I SUGGEST A QUICK LOOK AT THE FILM: POTEMKIN.

Story sent in by Adam Keller – who got 3 months in an Israeli Military Prison for painting 117 tanks "Don't serve in the Occupied Territories" And now edits the Other Israel

27.4.05

According to today's Yediot Aharonot, 14 newly-recruited conscripts were sent to week in prison each after a kind of mutiny.

According to the paper, they were at Nitzanim training camp in the Negev. Because the base kitchen was being made kosher for Passover (which according to the Jewish rite involves a very thorough search for any hidden crumb of leavened bread) **the soldiers had no cooked meals for three days, and had to content themselves with crackers, cold meat and fruit.**

They complained to the commander who told them there was nothing to be done, that they had to wait patiently and that officers also the same rations.

Thereupon, they started marching and chanting "No food - no soldiers!"

The camp gate was closed against them, so they climbed the fence outside, threw stones at passing cars on the road outside and went home to their parents.

All this happened on Thursday last week. (21.4.05)

After the holiday 14 came back to the camp and were sent to seven days in prison each, four have not yet come back and two were granted leave by phone because of special family circumstances.

Criminal Investigation Of War Profiteer Warns Of Defective Artillery Shells

Wall Street Journal, April 26, 2005, Pg. 2

A criminal investigation of an L-3 Communications Holdings unit, Interstate Electronics, that supplied defective parts for military radios has expanded to include at least several other programs involving the subsidiary, government officials familiar with the case said.

Several federal agencies recently warned managers of weapons programs throughout the Pentagon about the parts problem and of a broader investigation, which includes the Pentagon's most advanced artillery shells.

War Profiteers At Lockheed Report Profits Up 27 Percent: (War Is Good Business, Invest Your Kid)

(Washington Post, April 27, 2005, 2004, Pg. E10)

Lockheed Martin, the Pentagon's largest contractor, reported a 27 percent increase in its first-quarter profit and raised its 2005 revenue forecast.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action

April 27, 2005 By SINAN SALAHEDDIN, Associated Press & FOCUS News Agency & (Reuters) & Aljazeera

In Baghdad, Iraqi militants have targeted a U-S fuel-supply convoy. Witnesses say two explosions went off, leaving a tanker truck in flames and sending black smoke over the city.

Iraqi police officers were dismantling what appeared to be a decoy roadside bomb near Kirkuk today when another bomb exploded.

Lamia Abed Khadouri al-Sakri, who was elected to the National Assembly on the ticket of Allawi's Iraqi List party, was shot and killed by militants in Baghdad's Hay Aur neighborhood, police Capt. Ali al-Obeidi said. The attack occurred in front of her home.

She was the first member of the parliament elected on Jan. 30 to be slain by insurgents.

"We believe it is politically motivated. She was killed in her home," said Iraqi National Security Adviser Mouwafak al-Rubaie. The attack is being investigated and police are taking precautions to protect other legislators, he said.

Guerrillas in Baghdad also opened fire on the convoy of Brig. Gen. Jihad Luaibi, in charge of civil defense at the Interior Ministry, as he was on his way to work, killing two of his bodyguards, Iraqi police said. The General was badly injured.

The attack occurred in the Salam neighborhood, said a police officer who asked not to be named in fear of his safety.

A roadside bomb targeting a joint U.S.-Iraqi military patrol exploded Wednesday in Samarra, killing an Iraqi soldier and injuring three others, the Iraqi police said. The vehicle carrying the police officers was destroyed in the explosion.

Today in the afternoon, Iraqi Police found two bodies that drifted along the Tigris River in vicinity of As Suwairah, It happened about fifty-five kilometers north-east of Al Hillah, spokesman of the division Lt. Col. Staszko Zbigniew reported for FOCUS News Agency. **One of the bodies was identified as the Chief of Iraqi police from Najaf.**

Fighters ambushed an Interior Ministry car in Baghdad and shot and killed Lieutenant Jihad La'eebee, his son who was also an Interior Ministry official, and three of their bodyguards.

In the southern city of Basra, a police officer was killed when men armed with machine guns shot at a police patrol.

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

**Attack By Saboteurs Cuts Electricity
Supplies To The Capital**

27/04/2005 Al-Sabah al-Jadeed

According to an official source in the ministry for energy, the Baghdad-Beiji powerline has been repaired after an attack by saboteurs which cut electricity supplies to the capital.

Electricity in the city is currently available two hours out of eight; the repairs mean the blackout periods will be reduced from six to four hours.

Engineers are also working to repair the al-Musayeb-Baghdad powerline which was also damaged in an attack.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

30 April 1975

From: Billy Kelly
To: GI Special
Sent: April 27, 2005
Subject: 30 April 1975

Xin Chao Tom,

I am now in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam where the city and country are gearing up for a 30th Anniversary celebration of Sai Gon's Liberation and the Re-Unification of the Vietnamese people. 30 April 1975. This year also marks the 60th Anniversary of Ho Chi Minh's Declaration of The Independence of Viet Nam. 2 September 1945.

Being in Viet Nam, I am continually reminded of the terrible dilemma that Bush & Co have placed our soldiers and ourselves in.

It is not a dilemma of our own making but one imposed upon us.

Recently a majority of our fellow citizens have determined that the war in Iraq is a 'mistake'.

I lived a 'mistake' and will always suffer because of the hubris of my 'leaders'. That hubris of the REMF that sends others to do their wetwork and then abandons them to a life of daily remembrance of something gone terribly wrong that they participated in.

I have enclosed a short 'war story' that I feel might be apropos to our situation in Iraq:

Bodies Do Count !!

A Cautionary Tale:

By Billy Kelly

I killed other human beings who were fighting against me for what is now recognized as an honorable and just end. My opponents were fighting for their freedom, liberty and independence. The Viets had a goal.

Our opponents took up arms to defend their 'homeland' from an aggressive invader who was occupying their land. An occupier who was intent on imposing his will upon the will of another by use of brute force. To resist that is a person's duty and obligation.

Tap An Bac is a very small hamlet on the central coast of Viet Nam. It and several other hamlets comprise an entity called a 'ward' or township. This township, Pho Van, consisting of 5 hamlets, is located in Quang Ngai Province. During the American War this province was one of several that made up I Corps.

I am probably the only American alive who knows of this hamlet's name. On 15 March 1969, I was involved in an all-day battle in this very area. Mercifully, the only one of my brief military career. The combat was enclosed within a 2K by 4K rectangle.

I remember the name only because I received a few citations with this hamlet's name printed on them and the date of the action was noted. I was also slightly wounded twice on separate occasions that same day. I still have the military map for the area.

Over the years, I have come to fully understand the terrible reality of my people's involvement in the affairs of the Viets.

Beginning in 1968, the majority of my fellow countrymen have designated our Viet Nam adventure as a 'mistake'. I bridle at that term for I think of a mistake as something akin to forgetting to pick up the laundry on the way home from work. Millions dead and a land nearly obliterated calls for a term less facile than a 'mistake'.

That day in March 1969, I led a company of infantry 'grunts' to what appeared to be a resounding success. At the time the 'score' was approximately 30 Viets killed and we suffered not a single loss of life. The numbers belie the difficulty of the engagement.

Our opponents, initially caught off guard, soon regrouped and hunkered down for a fight. It was close, very close, combat and movement by either side seemed to be suicidal. Finally, sanity prevailed and a troop of cavalry was brought in. Forming up on-line, they quickly brought their firepower and strength to bear and all resistance was crushed as the tracks and tanks followed by an infantry company moved forward.

Months later I was apprised that captured documents indicated the Viet losses might have been much greater for many were buried as the APC's and the tanks did their work. The following day we retraced our path and the 'stench' from burned and decomposing bodies lent credence to that new information.

My feelings were numb. I can only remember the 'fear', that 'pissing in your pants' fear. There was no elation save for the fact we were alive. In a military sense it was a big win. Our opponents were uniform-wearing, arms-bearing soldiers. Soldiers intent on killing us!

I have always remembered that day. It was a day where I personally killed four Viets by rifle-fire or grenade. And by proxy, as the CO, I was responsible for the deaths of so many others. Ironically only a day shy of a year from Calley's handiwork at My Lai and only 40 K's south of that bludgeoned village.

After 36 years of reflection, I have come to the unassailable conclusion that our presence in Viet Nam was at best a cruel misuse of power; at worst a 'quasi' genocide. I was a part of the war machine. The technological juggernaut that would annihilate all in its path.

I killed for this machine. Yet, I had always given myself a personal pass for I did not partake in any civilian mistreatment. There was no burning of hootches; no killing of livestock; no shooting into 'free-fire' zones; and so on. I acted morally and honorably.

This past March, I was in Quang Ngai to honor the victims of My Lai. Arriving a few days before that anniversary on 16 March, I decided to visit Tap An Bac and its neighboring hamlets on 'my' anniversary. I had the map and knew the names of the hamlets and strolled about the lanes and pathways. There is a Martyr's monument for the township, something to be found in every hamlet, village or city in Viet Nam.

I stopped to observe. Together with the sculpture, there was a rectangular structure with the names, dates of birth and death of all the soldiers buried in this one graveyard. The total came to 584!! That amount in a grouping of hamlets that probably never had more than 1000 inhabitants at any one time. An amount equal to one fifth the casualties suffered in NYC on 11 September.

I walked amidst the headstones and read the names and dates. When I first saw a name with 'my' date upon it, I was hit with that fabled 'epiphanous thunderbolt'. Now I knew the name of someone whose death I was responsible for.

Suddenly my pass no longer worked. Dead is dead! Does it really matter how that death was accomplished? We humans have no 'Christs' to bring back all those 'Lazaruses'.

Certainly to most soldiers My Lai seems incomprehensible. But in the grand scheme of things does it really matter whether the death is of a 'non-combatant' or a young soldier? If it comes in a gratuitously brutal way or in a 'fair fight'?

The conclusion I have reached with enormous personal pain and sorrow is this: If the end is immoral, unlawful and dishonorable, then, whatever the means used to reach such, will be equally immoral, unlawful and dishonorable.

There are no free passes. No shrink in the world can undo what I did. I killed other human beings who were fighting against me for what is now recognized as an honorable and just end. My opponents were fighting for their freedom, liberty and independence. The Viets had a goal. A justifiable end might permit a 'justifiable' homicide.

I envy them. All wars suck but some might be deemed 'just' or 'necessary'. Our opponents took up arms to defend their 'homeland' from an aggressive invader who was occupying their land. An occupier who was intent on imposing his will upon the will of another by use of brute force. To resist that is a person's duty and obligation.

Sadly, I now know that I was the neighborhood 'bully'!

"Solitudinem Faciunt, Pacem Appellant"

"They Made a Wasteland and They Called It Peace" - Tacitus

Hoa Binh,

Billy Kelly

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

OCCUPATION REPORT

Work Stoppage Threat At Iraq's Largest Airport; Rioting At Iraq's Second Largest Port

A.P. Moeller-Maersk, a Danish shipping company, has been challenged both by the Iraqi government over contracts as well as by the local people.

After Iraqis began rioting over its management contract for Iraq's second largest port, Khor Az Zubayr on the Persian Gulf, the company immediately shut down its operations and abandoned much of its equipment on March 1.

April 27th, 2005 by David Phinney, Special to CorpWatch

Rioting and threats of work stoppages at critical transportation hubs needed to rebuild the war-torn Iraq have erupted in recent months following payment disputes between contractors originally hired by the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority and Iraqi officials skeptical of the billings and the CPA's handiwork.

The contractors include the world's largest shipping company managing Iraq's second largest port, a security contractor responsible for protecting Baghdad International Airport and a major Pentagon supplier hired to install new air traffic control equipment.

All have clashed with the Iraqi government, which has refused to pay the companies.

Backing up the contractors' demands for payment, the U.S. State Department says the billing disputes stem from the transition of control from the CPA, which ran the country for 15 months, to the Iraqis. There is no cause for alarm, say the US officials: "patient firms have been rewarded."

Critics, including one Iraqi official who supervises the contractors, say the disputes are widespread and much more serious: many contracts were signed by CPA bureaucrats without proper paperwork or procedures. **In addition many companies have overcharged for work done or failed to deliver on their promises.**

The U.S. embassy in Baghdad acknowledged in early April that Iraq is specifically withholding payments from four companies -- A.P. Moeller-Maersk, Global Risk Strategies, Raytheon and Olive Security -- but sources at the Pentagon and former CPA officials believe that there are many more contractors engaged in similar quarrels over payment.

"There's a lot of them," one former CPA official told CorpWatch.

A.P. Moeller-Maersk, a Danish shipping company, has been challenged both by the Iraqi government over contracts as well as by the local people.

After Iraqis began rioting over its management contract for Iraq's second largest port, Khor Az Zubayr on the Persian Gulf, the company immediately shut down its operations and abandoned much of its equipment on March 1.

Details of the original contract are sketchy, but A.P. Moeller is said to have originally planned on managing the port for five years, which would have positioned the company for an even longer-term 10- to 15-year contract. In return, the company collected 93 percent of all revenue from port fees and a \$15,000 daily management fee, according to sources familiar with the contract.

"It was like a Danish colony," one former CPA transportation official said glibly.

The March 1 riot outside the port put a sudden end to the agreement, with A.P. Moeller citing safety concerns for its workers.

The U.S. embassy in Baghdad claims to have made progress in resolving at least one of the disputed contracts - held by Global Risk Strategies, which provides security services

at Baghdad International Airport (BIAP), Iraq's main air terminal and a key lifeline for occupation forces and international support.

Ron Chavez, a Halliburton security coordinator at the airport working on an Army logistic services contract sheds a different light on the gravity of Global Risk's grievance with the Iraqis.

"I have been working very hard to secure this airport and it is a dangerous place," Chavez says in a December 27 e-mail to his father. "The company that runs the security is unmanned and when you have people in your perimeter it's almost impossible to secure."

Saying that employees of Global Risk Security threatened to walk off the job if they were not immediately paid, Chavez adds: "The Army was not ready to take over their positions, so they finally settled on a handshake deal."



DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

We Need Our Troops Home To Stop This Shit:

California Cops Beat, Choke Non-Violent Students Protesting School Fee Increases

25 April 2005 By Matthew Cardinale, YubaNet.com

Over 80 student protesters are reported wounded by Riot Police and 19 students were arrested, according to phone interviews with two "Tent University" organizers at UC Santa Cruz.

"Students had numerous bruises and contusions. And figures I heard were 20 arrested and 80 wounded. My girlfriend caught a baton to the chest unprovoked. And numerous people witnessed a cop go into a frenzy and basically dive forward into the crowd with a baton and that's how my girlfriend caught a baton," Indigo Moonstar, 23, a recent graduate of UCSC, said. Moonstar is not his real name, but this is the name he also gave to the Associated Press.

The seemingly pointless arrests and acts of state violence occurred because of the University's concern the students were violating the "No Camping Ordinance."

The students had set up a Tent University to protest student fee increases as well as the exploitation of AFSCME service workers. The Tent University, which was conducted all this week, April 18-22, included workshops on such topics as environmental sustainability, nonviolent activism, social justice, politics, and even yoga.

The arrests on Monday, April 18, prevented the students from holding Tent University at the base of campus during evening hours for the rest of the week like they had originally planned, but the daytime events proceeded without incident.

"For one, that's the most traumatizing thing I've ever been through in my life," Austin Harless, 21, a student organizer at UCSC, said. "Myself and others have been changed. The effects have been extremely pervasive."

"It's causing a lot of us to question our lives," Harless said.

"You have your assumed notions you hold about freedom and the safety of the community and you see the police choking your friends, you think, Who can I call? But the police are the ones who are supposed to be upholding the peace," Harless explained.

"I think it was atrocious. I think it was pure fascism," Moonstar said.

"It was a completely unnecessary and inappropriate response on the part of the University. There's been a lot of discussion amongst us on what happened and why. And the conclusion we've come to is it appears to be a premeditated show of

force on the part of the University administration in response to the recent resurgence of radical activism on our campus," Moonstar said.

"The way it works at UCSC campus is that from 7am to 8pm, those are the hours of free speech. So we were allowed to assemble in the field until 8pm," Harless said.

"We also had two big shade tents in the morning which were allowed because they are open air shade structures. People had their own individual tents, but they didn't put up the tents until after the 4pm vote," Harless said.

"At 8pm we gathered again. Two administration reps came in. Jean Marie Scott (Associate Vice Chancellor of The Colleges and University Housing Services) and Gail Heit (Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs)," Harless described. "They said, look, there will be repercussions. Let's talk about (relocating to) the quarry or camping someplace else. And people were like, no, we decided earlier," Harless said.

"People started taking out individual tents and putting up tents. People were playing drums," Harless said.

"At that point they gathered in a group of Administrators, and they started gathering and giving the official order to disperse," Harless said.

"I was standing back and watching Administration going through the crowd and giving the official order to disperse, and they'd only talked to about 25% of the people when a line of police cars rolled up in the street, at least 8 to 10 of them, vans and stuff too," Harless said.

"And there was a Paddy Wagon sitting on our campus that said Berkeley Police on it, and so they'd been preparing all day with riot police," Harless said.

Bush To Wed Saudi Prince: Impending Nuptials Alter President's Gay Marriage Stance

April 26, 2005 The Borowitz Report

In a stunning development that could alter both the politics of oil in the Middle East and the politics of gay marriage in the United States, President George W. Bush and Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah announced today that they would wed this June.

Tongues began wagging after President Bush greeted the Saudi prince at his Crawford, Texas ranch today with a passionate hug and a kiss, igniting rumors that the two men were more than just good friends.

Former Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry, who was accused of being overly affectionate in public with his then-running mate, Sen. John Edwards, while on the 2004 campaign trail, was one of the first to note the steamy display between Mr. Bush and Prince Abdullah.

"John and I looked pretty gay, I'll admit, but not as gay as these two," said Mr. Kerry. "I was like, get a room!"

The announcement that Mr. Bush was set for a trip to the altar with a Saudi prince immediately raised the ire of gay marriage foes, who saw the president's decision as a cruel betrayal.

Hundreds of protesters appeared outside the Crawford ranch moments after the announcement, carrying signs reading, "No Love For Oil."

While Mr. Bush acknowledged that his decision to marry Prince Abdullah represents a startling U-turn in his position on gay marriage, he said, "When a Saudi billionaire asks you to marry him, you have to say yes."

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

U.S. Soldier Killed As Resistance Opens Offensive; “Belying” Silly Military Leaders Claim That Things Are Getting Better

April 27, 2005 By Paul Haven, Associated Press, KABUL, Afghanistan

Fighting between U.S. forces and the Taliban has increased in recent weeks, perhaps due to improving weather, belying claims by American military leaders who say the insurgency is fading.

A U.S. soldier and four police officers were killed in rebel attacks in Afghanistan, while three civilians were injured by gunfire following the bombing of an American patrol, U.S. and Afghan officials said Wednesday.

The soldier was shot when his unit was ambushed on Tuesday in Deh Rawood, 280 miles southwest of the capital, Kabul. He was evacuated to a nearby base but pronounced dead by doctors.

The soldier's name was not released pending identification of next of kin. His remains were sent to Kandahar Air Base, where a memorial service was held Wednesday ahead of transportation of the body back to the United States, the military said in a statement.

Also Tuesday, Taliban militants ambushed a convoy carrying the police chief of the Dishu district of Helmand province, killing four officers and abducting two others, local mayor Mohammed Rahim told The Associated Press. The police chief was unhurt.

Police immobilized one of the assailants' cars with rockets but failed to prevent their escape in other vehicles. Rahim said it was unclear if the attackers, who he asserted were Taliban guerrillas, were hurt in the exchange.

Meanwhile, a bomb exploded near U.S. military vehicles traveling through Khogyani district of Nangarhar province Tuesday, Faizan ul-Haq, a provincial government spokesman, told AP.

No one was hurt in the explosion, but three civilians were injured when U.S. soldiers shaken by the bombing opened fire on an approaching bus, said ul-Haq, calling the incident a "misunderstanding."

A witness, Delsoz Khogyani, said the incident happened in a village called Karem Khel.

"It's a busy road and the coach was coming from Jalalabad with 18 people on board and the Americans fired their guns at it," Khogyani, a farmer, told AP by telephone.

Also Tuesday, a man on a motorbike shot dead a policeman who tried to prevent him from approaching an operation to destroy opium crops near Kandahar. Other officers gunned down the motorcyclist, police chief Zamaray Khan said.

Elsewhere in Zabul, a local official and two police officers were reported wounded when militants opened fire on their vehicles on Wednesday, police said.

Fighting between U.S. forces and the Taliban has increased in recent weeks, perhaps due to improving weather, belying claims by American military leaders who say the insurgency is fading.

Even Collaborator Karzai Rejects U.S. Bases

(New York Times on the Web, April 26, 2005)

President Hamid Karzai wants a long-term security arrangement with Washington, but adds, "I don't think the establishment of bases is in the interest of Afghanistan."

OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION

BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME NOW!

CLASS WAR NEWS

One Million Demonstrate Against Mexican Government: "They Got Rid Of Their President," She Said. "It's Time For Mexico To Do The Same."

"I am here to defend the democracy of my country, or what little there is of it," she added. "We cannot allow a few people in power to control the will of the majority by decree."

April 25, 2005 By Ginger Thompson, The New York Times, MEXICO CITY

A capital typically clogged with traffic was thronged Sunday by hundreds of thousands of people who marched into the main plaza to protest a government effort against Mayor Andrés Manuel López Obrador that threatens to force him out of next year's presidential elections.

The police estimated that more than one million people participated in the march.

Aides to the mayor estimated that there were 750,000 people. Several political observers described it as the biggest in the country's recent history.

After two weeks of heated political discourse and confusing legal maneuvers, the march was not the first to denounce the government's campaign against the mayor. But it was a dramatic illustration of seemingly growing support for Mr. López Obrador and disappointment in President Vicente Fox.

The demonstrators were of all ages and walks of life. Some came from the southernmost corners of Mexico. There were men in business suits and women in traditional Indian clothes. And while some said they had been longtime supporters of the mayor, others said that even though they were not likely to vote for him they thought the government's campaign against him was unfair.

Unlike most other demonstrations, there was no real disorder or rowdiness. And people covered their mouths with hospital masks and marched without chanting.

"Our silence says everything," read many of the banners that floated above the crowds. Others depicted Mr. Fox as a traitor.

Rocio Jiménez González, a 26-year-old lawyer, wore a banner that urged Mexico to follow the example being set in Ecuador.

"They got rid of their president," she said. "It's time for Mexico to do the same.

"I am here to defend the democracy of my country, or what little there is of it," she added. "We cannot allow a few people in power to control the will of the majority by decree."

Mr. Fox did not comment on the demonstration on Sunday. His government was widely criticized after Congress voted April 7 to lift Mr. López Obrador's immunity so he could stand trial in a minor land dispute.

Under most interpretations of Mexican law, Mr. López Obrador, of the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution, cannot run for office or be put on the ballot until after a trial, which could take more than a year.

Received:

General Myers

From: D
To: GI Special
Sent: April 27, 2005 5:34 PM
Subject: General Myers

General Myers is a complete neophyte in the insurgency business. He has absolutely no experience in ground combat or counter-insurgency of any kind.

He is completely unqualified to be in the position he's in, so we shouldn't expect too much of him. Like making sense, for example, or assessing progress in a ground war.

General Myers entered the Air Force in 1965 through the Reserve Officer Training Corps program. His career includes operational command and leadership positions in a variety of Air Force and Joint assignments. General Myers is a command pilot with more than 4,100 flying hours in the T-33, C-37, C-21, F-4, F-15 and F-16, including 600 combat hours in the F-4.

As the Vice Chairman from March 2000 to September 2001, General Myers served as the Chairman of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council, Vice Chairman of the Defense Acquisition Board, and as a member of the National Security Council Deputies Committee and the Nuclear Weapons Council. In addition, he acted for the Chairman in all aspects of the Planning, Programming and Budgeting System including participation in the Defense Resources Board.

From August 1998 to February 2000, General Myers was Commander in Chief, North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Space Command; Commander, Air Force Space Command; and Department of Defense manager, space transportation system contingency support at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado.

Prior to assuming that position, he was Commander, Pacific Air Forces, Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii, from July 1997 to July 1998. From July 1996 to July 1997 he served as Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Pentagon; and from November 1993 to June 1996 General Myers was Commander of U.S. Forces Japan and 5th Air Force at Yokota Air Base, Japan.

General Richard B. Myers became the fifteenth Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on Oct. 1, 2001. In this capacity, he serves as the principal military advisor to the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the National Security Council. Prior to becoming Chairman, he served as Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for 19 months.

Web Copies

For back issues see: GI Special web site at <http://www.militaryproject.org/> .

The following that we know of have also posted issues:

<http://www.notinourname.net/gi-special/>, www.williambowles.info/gispecial,
<http://www.albasrah.net/magalat/english/gi-special.htm>

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