

GI SPECIAL 3B20:



'Gosh, I sure hope nobody ever liberates us!'

War Support Hits New Low: 57% Say Not Worth It

[Thanks to Phil G who sent this in.]

May 4, 2005 WASHINGTON (Reuters)

A majority of Americans do not think it was worth going to war in Iraq with support at the lowest level since the United States launched the invasion in 2003, according to a CNN/USAToday/Gallup poll released on Tuesday.

Fifty-seven percent of those polled said it was not worth going to war compared to 41 percent who thought it was. In a February poll, 48 percent said the war was worth it and half said it was not.

A poll in April 2003, shortly after the war began, found that 73 percent of Americans held the view that the war was worth fighting. The new poll results had a margin of error of plus or minus five percentage points.

Asked how things are going for the United States in Iraq, 56 percent said "badly," up from 45 percent in March.

Forty-two percent said things were going "well," down from 52 percent in March. The margin of error for that question was plus or minus three percentage points.

The telephone poll of 1,006 adults was conducted April 29-May 1.

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

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

TWO TASK FORCE BAGHDAD SOLDIERS KILLED BY IEDS

May 4, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
Release Number: 05-05-02C

BAGHDAD, Iraq – Two Task Force Baghdad Soldiers died when their vehicles were struck by roadside bombs.

The two separate incidents occurred May 3.

Remains Of Second Pilot Recovered In Iraq

May. 04, 2005 ROBERT BURNS, Associated Press

Military investigators said Wednesday they located the remains of the second of two Marine Corps fighter pilots whose planes crashed in south-central Iraq earlier this week. The remains of the first pilot, Maj. John C. Spahr, were found on Tuesday.

Both pilots were flying single-seat F/A-18 Hornet fighters about 30,000 feet over south-central Iraq when radio contact was lost on Monday evening.

Spahr was executive officer of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 323, based at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar in San Diego. He was a native of Cherry Hill, N.J., and a graduate of the University of Delaware.

Spahr had been flying F/A-18s since 1993, according to his official biography. He attended the Navy's "Top Gun" fighter weapons school in 1996, later was an instructor pilot there and was embarked aboard the aircraft carrier USS Constellation when the Iraq war began in March 2003.

Pentagon officials had said Tuesday that one F/A-18 fuselage had been found about 15 miles from Karbala in south-central Iraq, and that the pilot was found strapped in his ejection seat some distance from the wreckage. They said then that investigators were still searching for the other plane.

The officer said the fuselages were found at separate locations, but he did not know how far apart.

Ms Soldier Killed In Explosion

05/04/05 By Roslyn Anderson, WLBT

It's an image no soldier's family wants to see: military officials standing at their door.

It happened to a Sharkey county family Tuesday when they learned Army Sergeant John McGee was killed in an explosion.

Family members joined hands in prayer as they await more news from military officials on the specifics of McGee's death in Iraq.

The 36 year old career soldier was killed when the tanker he was driving rolled over a bomb and exploded. A devastating loss for this close knit Cary Mississippi family of nine children.

His nephew Michael McGee said, "Just saying his name it really brings laughter to me. He was a very outgoing person, fun loving... He was a good person, kind, our grandmother, my grandmother his mother raised up with a lot of respect."

His death is especially hard on his mother Rebecca, who received a Mother's Day card from him Monday.

Michael McGee said, "She received the Mother's Day card from my Uncle John and the next day, that morning that's when the military officials came to the house."

News of McGee's death is a blow to close friends like Rolling Fork Police Chief Undray Williams. Williams said, "It hit me like a ton of bricks. I couldn't believe it."

The two attended Rolling Fork High School, now South Delta High and graduated in 1986

Chief Undray Williams said, "We were really looking forward to our 20th year class reunion that we had talked about before he even went to Iraq. We sat at the store for about an hour and talked about how much fun we were gonna have. When they told me that, it really hurt."

McGee returned to Cary, the town he called home about three weeks ago, spending 15 days with family, who planned a big celebration when his Iraqi tour ended in July.

Now they have to plan a funeral for the man who died in service to his country.

Relatives tell WLBT Sgt. John McGee was one of two soldiers killed Monday in Baghdad.

He was an active duty soldier based in Fort Benning Georgia assigned to a transportation unit.

Woodbridge Man Injured, Five Dead When Stryker Blown Up; Family "Weary Of Waiting For The Pentagon"



Nick Beintema

His mother was angry that he had to be sent into combat a second time, but she is proud nevertheless.

May 04, 2005 By Ross Farrow, News-Sentinel Staff Writer

Shortly before leaving for his second tour in Iraq, Army Specialist Nick Beintema told his parents, "I have a real bad feeling this time."

His worst fears, and those of his parents, were prophetic.

Beintema, 22, was almost killed and faces up to four months in the hospital after being wounded last Thursday in a reconnaissance mission in northern Iraq, less than a month before he was due to be discharged.

"It brings the war home; it brings it into our own house," said his father, Woodbridge resident Randy Beintema.

Nick Beintema is a 2000 graduate of Lodi High School. He didn't star on the Flames football team, nor was he a high-profile student. His father described him as "a typical kid."

According to his father, doctors in Germany reported that Beintema suffered a concussion, a broken jaw in two places, a severely injured right leg apparently broken in two places, a damaged kneecap, minor shrapnel wounds to his face and bruising to his chest.

Beintema is unable to talk because of his broken jaw. He is also heavily sedated because he remains on a ventilator, said Randy Beintema, a lieutenant for the San Joaquin County Sheriff's Department. The good news is that he has been upgraded from critical to stable condition.

Four soldiers were killed in the incident, including two from Beintema's Army unit stationed in Ft. Carson, Colo.

Beintema, serving a combat mission in Iraq with the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment in Talfar, about 200 miles northwest of Baghdad, was injured as his group went through change of command with a unit out of Ft. Lewis, Wash.

Two members of the Ft. Lewis unit were also killed.

Randy Beintema said he was told that the two units were on a reconnaissance mission when an explosive device planted by Iraqi insurgents exploded.

Soldiers from both units were riding in an eight-wheeled Stryker combat vehicle being used for the first time in combat when the attack took place, according to the Colorado Springs Gazette newspaper. [So much for the bullshit about how wonderful these defenseless rolling coffins really are. And how is it the blown up Stryker itself never got mentioned in the major media?

While the rest of the regiment patrolled neighborhoods on Baghdad's southern outskirts, soldiers from Beintema's group were sent north to help quell a flare-up of guerilla attacks, according to the Colorado Springs Gazette.

The senior Beintema said he had just returned home from work Thursday afternoon when he received a phone call from a stateside liaison with the unit in Iraq.

After hearing the news, Randy Beintema was in total denial after learning his son was critically wounded and unconscious. "It doesn't happen to me; it happens to others," he reasoned.

This time, it didn't happen to someone else.

Beintema's mother, Stacy, began wondering why there wasn't more on TV about the American war effort in Iraq.

But what has frustrated Beintema's parents the most is that they haven't been able to see their wounded son, who has been at two field hospitals in Iraq before being flown to Germany and then to Walter Reed.

"You think, 'What can I do?'" Randy Beintema said. "You can't do anything because he's halfway around the world."

Stacy added, "That's your child, whether he's 2 years old or 22 years old. You want to be with him."

The parents have been on a holding pattern. First they thought they were going to Germany. Now they're headed to Washington, but first they have to get a call from the U.S. Department of Defense.

The Defense Department will pay transportation and expenses as long as Beintema remains in serious or critical condition, his father said.

If his condition is upgraded from "serious," the parents must foot the bill themselves, Randy Beintema said.

The couple have grown weary of waiting for the Pentagon to go through its bureaucratic maze.

"We're preparing to leave probably sometime Thursday, whether the DOD sends us or not," Randy Beintema said.

The Beintemas will have a lot to think about as they fly to Washington. For one, it may very well be a shock to see their son so severely wounded. His mother said she's prepared for it emotionally.

"I have some friends who are ICU nurses," said Stacy Beintema, health programs manager for the American Cancer Society in Stockton. "I pressed them for that (information)."

Because Nick Beintema has been so heavily sedated, he isn't aware that two of his comrades were killed in the attack.

"What went through my mind just (Tuesday), is that Randy and I may be the ones who'll have to tell him his friends have died," Stacy Beintema said. "That's what I thought about -- how to tell him."

The Fort Carson soldiers killed were Pfc. Robert W. Murray Jr., 21, of Westfield, Ind., and Specialist Ricky W. Rockholt Jr., 28, of Winston, Ore. Additionally, Sgt.

Eric W. Morris, 31, of Sparks, Nev., and 1st Lt. William A. Edens, 29, of Columbia, Mo., from the 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division at Fort Lewis, were killed.

Yet another decision is how often Beintema's parents will visit him. Right now, they're talking about rotating time, with one of them being in Washington with their son and the other remaining at home tending with their respective jobs. One or the other will be with Nick Beintema at all times during his recovery.

Perhaps sensing that something bad might happen, Stacy Beintema noticed that her son began showing more sensitivity and love for his family in his e-mails from Iraq this year. Previously, he joked around a lot.

Beintema would express his love to his parents and his younger sister, Madison, 18, who is about to graduate from St. Mary's High School in Stockton.

"The tone of the e-mails were different," Stacy Beintema said. "They were sweet, but they were different. They didn't have the joking edge to them or bravado, not the typical male testosterone stuff."

Beintema enlisted in the Army well before the 9/11 terrorist attacks. He had his parents' support, but they were nervous about his desire to seek combat duty.

He was deployed to Iraq after stops in Germany and Kuwait on April 6, 2003, but returned to his Colorado base a year later. He returned to Iraq for his second tour of duty last month.

His mother was angry that he had to be sent into combat a second time, but she is proud nevertheless.

"He's a hero to me."

U.S. Convoys Attacked Near Baakouba & Samraa

May 4, 2005 By SITE Institute

The Military Corps of the Iraqi insurgent group, Ansar al-Sunnah issued a communiqué, posted on the group's official website, claiming responsibility for attacking two American convoys, one near Baakouba and a second near Samraa.

The attacks destroyed several Humvee vehicles and caused damage and injuries to the soldiers, according to the group's statement.

How Bad Is It?

"Out Here, You Take Whatever You Can Get."

Nine battalions now hold an area where 13 battalions had been stationed until February. In northern Anbar province, which includes Haqlaniyah, about 3,000 Marines are stretched among outposts in an area the size of South Carolina.

May. 04, 2005 BY JAMES JANEGA, Chicago Tribune

HAQLANIYAH, Iraq

After an hour of shooting, rocket-propelled grenades were still crisscrossing in front of **Sgt. Aaron Hanselman, and he was looking at the horizon for backup as bullets snapped through the air around his men.**

"It was whizzing by. Our gunner swears that a couple hit the Humvee," said Hanselman, 28, a mobile assault team leader and Marine reservist from Marysville, Ohio.

Their vehicle had started the firefight with 1,200 rounds of ammunition, he said, but the five men inside had whittled the supply down to 75 bullets.

The four Humvees in Hanselman's unit - named Kabar 6 after the Marine fighting knife - took enemy fire from two groups of houses and an oil refinery behind them, Marine officials said. Help for the unit, stuck on a road in the open, was 15 minutes away.

But it was a lot of help.

Hundreds of troops were directed at Haqlaniyah soon after trouble started, said Col. Stephen Davis, the commander of Regimental Combat Team-2.

Nine battalions now hold an area where 13 battalions had been stationed until February. In northern Anbar province, which includes Haqlaniyah, about 3,000 Marines are stretched among outposts in an area the size of South Carolina.

While the idea to swarm enemy fighters is not new to the Marines in Iraq, it is rare that they do it fast enough for more than a few dozen Marines to shoot back at the fighters, let alone to surround the fast-moving insurgency. When the Americans shift forces into a town, it is usually only for a few days, and the action is so telegraphed that insurgents and foreign fighters can flee ahead of them.

Because several smaller units near Haqlaniyah were ready for other missions April 20, nearly 200 troops from the 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines were able to respond to the shootout there within the first hour. The troops remained in town for the next three days. **When left Haqlaniyah on April 23, things appeared to have returned to normal. The locals had learned on several previous occasions that the Marines rarely stay.**

But on April 26, about 500 Marines from 3-25 and other battalions suddenly returned to Haqlaniyah, a small town of about 5,000 on the Euphrates River. Not only were major roads sealed off, but so were the desert and surrounding villages. Troops began rolling into all of Haqlaniyah's neighborhoods almost at once, and stayed until early Sunday.

Besides being able to actually shoot back at insurgents in the first phase, more than 40 arrests were made in the second phase, said battalion commander Lt. Col. Lionel Urquhart. Marine officials said the insurgents were apparently surprised the Marines had returned.

The first move in the new strategy for Anbar could not have begun in a more mundane way. Just after noon on April 20, two gunmen fired on a civil affairs patrol carrying repair proposals to schools in a neighboring town.

A description was sent out of the shooters' getaway car, which Hanselman's patrol stumbled across south of Haqlaniyah. But the Americans quickly found themselves outnumbered by an insurgent counterattack that sent gunfire and rockets down on them from several homes on the edge of town. Another American platoon arrived to pin down the Iraqi gunmen, and then a fresh company of troops backed them up.

By the time the fighting died down five hours later, hundreds of Marines from the 3-25 had poured in, supported by tanks, armored vehicles and helicopters.

"It's one of the first times they actually stayed and fought," said Staff Sgt. Michael Knittle, 35, of Wakeman, Ohio, who was in the initial firefight alongside Hanselman.

Then came the pullout and the surprise return April 26, when hundreds more troops from battalions as far away as the Jordanian and Syrian borders sealed off Haqlaniyah, trapping insurgents and foreign fighters.

"Insurgents typically run like rats on a sinking ship," said Maj. Steve White, the operations officer who directed the fight in Haqlaniyah. "This time, I don't think they realized the ship was sinking."

The 3rd Battalion moved almost all of its forces in the area into town April 26 and sat there, hoping for insurgents to grow impatient and begin fighting again.

North of them, a company from the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines, based in Al Qaim, seized the shops, neighborhood and pontoon bridge where the fight had begun a few days before. Across the river and on the outskirts of town, parts of the 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, stationed on the border with Jordan, blocked off road junctions in the desert.

The insurgents soon tried to fade into the populace. In the five-day operation that followed, there was sporadic gunfire each day, a suicide car bomber and roadside blasts. No Americans were killed, and along with the more than 40 detainees swept up in raids, Marines also netted bomb-making materials, documents and weapons.

Among the prisoners was a suspected former Iraqi special forces officer believed to be coordinating local insurgent attacks, and three Sudanese men who claimed to be sheep shearers, and who sat ramrod straight and refused offers of water from their Marine captors as others begged to be let go.

The detainees were brought to regimental holding facilities each night by a squadron of Humvees directed by Cpl. Josh Smith, 23, of Poplarville, Miss. His mission orders were simple: "Keep your drivers awake."

On April 31, Smith made his 11th late-night prisoner run to Al Asad air base, about an hour away across darkened roads.

Both the men and vehicles were dirty from days in the field, and scratched by roadside bomb blasts. They blared heavy metal music on jury-rigged speakers and called each other frequently on the radio to keep from falling asleep.

Along with the prisoners, weapons and documents, there was another benefit of the Marines' operation.

During the Friday call to prayers, an imam in town declared no love for the Marines, but then denounced the insurgents for picking fights with Americans that they didn't want to finish.

Younger Marines excitedly passed the news about the imam. As White put it, "Out here, you take whatever you can get."

Mortar Attacks Cut Off Baghdad Airport: Commercial Flights Cancelled "Until Further Notice"

05/03/05 By Dalya Dajani, Jordan Times

Royal Jordanian (RJ) maintained the suspension of its flights to Baghdad for the third consecutive day on Tuesday pending safety clearance from Iraqi civil aviation authorities.

The national carrier suspended its two daily flights to Baghdad on Sunday following an increase in mortar attacks on the airport.

The national carrier will resume its Baghdad flights once the Iraqi Civil Aviation Authority (ICAA) issues ground safety clearance, an RJ source told The Jordan Times yesterday.

Increasing mortar attacks on and around Baghdad Airport also prompted the ICAA to suspend Iraqi Airways flights to Jordan until further notice.

RJ, the first commercial airline to resume flights to Baghdad following the US-led invasion, has provided an alternate route for those wishing to avoid the seven hour overland trip to the war-torn country.

Resistance “Going To School On Us.”

[Thanks to DG, who sent this in.]

May 3, 2005 By ROBERT BURNS, AP Military Writer

Army Col. Jim Brooks said the insurgents will plant false bombs - sometimes even with real blasting caps - and then study how U.S. forces respond.

That is a classic technique for developing countermeasures, or, as Rumsfeld described the insurgents' method, “going to school on us.”

TROOP NEWS

“Futility, And Tragedy” "I Felt Like I Was Wasting Time And The Taxpayers' Money" Marine Says

04 May 2005 By Scott Ritter, Aljazeera. **Scott Ritter is a former UN weapons inspector in Iraq, and a former major in the US marines, having served for 12 years, including in the first Gulf War in 1991.**

Recently, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard Myers, insisted, at a press conference, that the US and coalition forces were winning the war in Iraq, and noted that he was confident of a military victory.

"I'm going to say this: I think we are winning, okay. I think we're definitely winning. I think we've been winning for some time," Myers said.

Myers' statements, mirroring his earlier pronouncements, as well as those of his fellow joint chiefs, represent a posturing for the public that is not matched by the reality on the ground in Iraq.

For every general who speaks of winning the war, there are hundreds of soldiers and marines, veterans of the harsh reality of ground truth in Iraq, who believe otherwise.

A typical example is the experience of the third battalion, seventh marines, who are based in 29 Palms, California. This battalion was assigned the task of securing the area around the western Iraqi city of al-Qaim in April 2004.

"The marines", the battalion commander Lieutenant-Colonel Lopez wrote in a letter to families back in the US, "are hard at work establishing security and bringing a better life to the people of al-Qaim ... we are actively engaged in establishing local governance, local Iraqi police forces, and improving schools."

However, the reality of al-Qaim was much different. The marines entered what they called "silent war", where they engaged in unforgiving combat with faceless insurgents that killed and wounded them in alarming numbers, and which went largely unreported back home in America.

The third battalion, seventh marines returned home in September 2004, having suffered 17 dead and many dozens wounded.

The marines of this proud battalion were deeply scarred by their experiences in Iraq. This was the same unit that had, in April 2003, spearheaded the American assault on Baghdad, helping liberate Iraq from Saddam Hussein. During that phase of the war, not a single marine from 3/7 was killed.

This time it was different. Rather than a sense of victory, the marines were struck by the futility, and tragedy, of what they had gone through.

"I feel like I wasted my time, caring about something that doesn't have any meaning any more," one marine was quoted as saying, speaking of his time in al-Qaim. "I felt like I was wasting time and the taxpayers' money."

His battalion commander concurred, noting that while much had been accomplished on the surface, little had fundamentally changed in Iraq as a result of the sacrifices of his marines.

Simply Marvelous

05/04/05 U.S. News & World Report

It is not just the toll in dead and injured that makes the roadside and car bombs such effective tools of the insurgency. Bombings create a sense of chaos and make government officials and security forces look incompetent, helpless to stop the mayhem.

To help them take the offensive, the military has examined how conventional forces have dealt with bombing campaigns in other fights, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict *and the Vietnam War*.

Italy Minister Calls U.S. Version Of Iraq Killing "A Lie"

May 4, 2005 By Crispian Balmer, SwissInfo.org

Italy and the United States have issued differing reports on the incident, with the U.S. military exonerating its troops of any blame while Rome said nervous American soldiers and a badly executed roadblock were at the root of the shooting.

The U.S. conclusions, based largely on the soldiers' testimony because forensic evidence was not preserved, infuriated many Italians; Reforms Minister Roberto Calderoli said on Wednesday the American report was "clearly a lie".

The row has severely strained relations between the two allies and prompted calls in Italy for Berlusconi to speed the withdrawal some 3,000 Italian troops deployed in Iraq.

Calipari was shot by a U.S. soldier on the night of March 4, as he was escorting an Italian hostage to freedom on the notoriously dangerous road to Baghdad airport.

Rome and Washington set up a joint inquiry into the shooting, but failed to reach the same conclusions.

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)

Army Misses April Recruiting Goal By "Whopping" 42 Percent;

Reserve Short 37%

May 3, 2005 By Will Dunham (Reuters)

The U.S. Army missed its April recruiting goal by a whopping 42 percent and the Army Reserve fell short by 37 percent, officials said on Tuesday, showing the depth of the military's wartime recruiting woes.

With the Iraq war straining the U.S. military, the active-duty Army has now missed its recruiting goals in three straight months, with April being by far the worst of the three

The active-duty Army signed up 3,821 recruits last month, falling short of its goal of 6,600 for April, Army Recruiting Command spokesman Douglas Smith said. **That left the Army 16 percent behind its year-to-date goal, officials said.**

The Army Reserve, a force of part-time soldiers who train regularly and can be called to active duty in times of need, signed up 849 recruits in April, short of the monthly goal of 1,355, Smith said. **That left the Army Reserve 21 percent behind its year-to-date goal.**

Two Recruiters On The Hot Seat

May 6, 2005 Letters To The Editor, Socialist Worker

[Thanks to PB who sent this in. He writes: Who would've thought that the military would call the ISO to whine about the falling recruitment numbers? They should just fucking call Bush tell him, "get out of Iraq so we can make our numbers."]

AFTER WORK last week, I received an interesting phone call from two Army National Guard recruiters in Pennsylvania. They got my phone number off an advertisement in Socialist Worker for a counter-recruitment event at my school featuring Nadia McCaffrey, a Gold Star mother--the mother of a soldier killed in Iraq.

For about 45 minutes, they peppered me with questions about why I was trying to make their jobs harder. The first sergeant I spoke with was cordial, but kept emphasizing that our activities were hurting his recruitment. He admitted, "Sure, we embellish a little," but contested that the military ever told actual lies.

After I was through with him, he called in his buddy, who was much more aggressive. At one point, the second recruiter told me: "You're anti-establishment, the military is the establishment. The military is made of people. You're anti-people!" I think that this is the first time, as a socialist, I've been accused of being "anti-people."

Why was this man so upset with me? He admitted that because of antiwar activists, no one wants to join the military any more out of "patriotism," so they

have to entice people with \$10,000 signing bonuses. Of course, he denied that this targeted the poor.

Although I didn't make much headway with either of these two gentlemen in our one conversation, it's nice to know that what we do matters.

It matters that two military recruiters spent part of their evening trying to talk me out of politics--rather than working on conning the local high schoolers into making the worst mistake of their lives.

John Green, Davis, Calif.

Scum In Command Deliberately Lied To Public And Family About Tillman Death; Abizaid Involved In Fraud

An initial investigation found fratricide just days later. Top commanders within the U.S. Central Command, including Abizaid, were notified by April 29 -- four days before Tillman's memorial service in San Jose, where he was given a posthumous Silver Star Award.

[Thanks to PG, who sent this in.]

May 4, 2005 By Josh White, Washington Post Staff Writer

The first Army investigator who looked into the death of former NFL player Pat Tillman in Afghanistan last year found within days that he was killed by his fellow Rangers in an act of "gross negligence," but Army officials decided not to inform Tillman's family or the public until weeks after a nationally televised memorial service.

A new Army report on the death shows that top Army officials, including the theater commander, Gen. John P. Abizaid, were told that Tillman's death was fratricide days before the service.

Soldiers on the scene said they were immediately sure Tillman was killed by a barrage of American bullets as he took shelter behind a large boulder during a twilight firefight along a narrow canyon road near the Pakistani border, according to nearly 2,000 pages of interview transcripts and investigative reports obtained by The Washington Post.

The documents also show that officers made erroneous initial reports that Tillman was killed by enemy fire, destroyed critical evidence and initially concealed the

truth from Tillman's brother, also an Army Ranger, who was near the attack on April 22, 2004, but did not witness it.

After the shooting, Tillman's brother was not informed about what had happened and was flown back to the United States with his brother's body.

Officers told the soldiers not to talk about the incident "to prevent rumors" and news reports.

"I mean, it's horrible that Pat was dead. Absolutely horrible. But it hurts even more to know that it was one of our own guys that did it . . .," one soldier told Brig. Gen. Gary M. Jones. "We just, we didn't want to get anything, you know, bad said about the regiment or anything like that. That was my guess to what the whole thing was about. We didn't want the world finding out what actually happened."

The first report about Tillman's death within Army channels -- sent at 4:40 p.m. April 22 -- said that Tillman died in a medical treatment facility after his vehicle came under direct and indirect fire, attributing the gunshot wounds he received to "enemy forces." **An investigation was immediately launched, and several documents show that the local chain of command was largely convinced it was fratricide from the beginning.**

The next day, Tillman's Ranger body armor was burned because it was covered in blood and was considered a "biohazard." His uniform was also burned. Jones noted that this amounted to the destruction of evidence.

Soldiers reported they burned the evidence because "we knew at the time, based on taking the pictures and walking around it it was a fratricide. . . . We knew in our hearts what had happened, and we weren't going to lie about it. So we weren't thinking about proof or anything."

An initial investigation found fratricide just days later.

Top commanders within the U.S. Central Command, including Abizaid, were notified by April 29 -- four days before Tillman's memorial service in San Jose, where he was given a posthumous Silver Star Award.

Jones concluded that Tillman, who was bravely leading his fire team into battle, was given the award based on what he intended to do.

The family learned about Tillman's fratricide over Memorial Day weekend, several weeks later. Commanders felt they could not hold on to the old version because the Rangers were returning home and "everybody knows the story," the documents show.

Pentagon Colonel Arrested: Spying For Israel

[Thanks to David McReynolds who sent this in. He writes: I have to admit it couldn't have happened to a nice group.]

May 4, 2005 By David Johnson and Eric Lichtblau, New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 4 - Federal agents arrested a Pentagon analyst today, accusing him of illegally disclosing a highly classified document about possible attacks on American forces in Iraq to two employees of a pro-Israel lobbying group.

The military analyst, Lawrence A. Franklin, turned himself in to authorities this morning and was scheduled to make an initial appearance in federal court in Alexandria, Va., later in the afternoon. If convicted, he could be sentenced to a maximum of 10 years in prison.

Mr. Franklin was suspended last year, along with his security clearance, but he had been rehired in recent months in a nonsensitive job. He has been employed by the Defense Department since 1979 and is a colonel in the Air Force reserve.

According to a 10-page F.B.I. affidavit accompanying the complaint, Mr. Franklin divulged the secret information about attacks on American forces in Iraq at a lunch on June 26, 2003, attended by two senior staff members at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. Four days later, F.B.I. agents who searched Mr. Franklin's office found the top-secret document that contained the classified information.

The investigation into a midlevel career employee at the Pentagon has stirred anxious debate in some political circles in the capital. The investigation has cast a cloud over Aipac, which has close ties to senior policymakers in the Bush administration, among them Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who is expected to appear later this month at the group's annual meeting.

During the June 2003 lunch at a restaurant in Arlington, Va., which was apparently held under F.B.I. surveillance, Mr. Franklin disclosed the information related to the potential attack on American forces in Iraq, according to the affidavit. It said that Mr. Franklin told the two men "that the information was 'highly classified' and asked them not to 'use' it."

The affidavit, signed by Catherine M. Hanna, an F.B.I. agent, said Mr. Franklin had engaged in other illegal acts. The complaint said he had disclosed government information to an unidentified foreign official and to journalists. In addition, investigators found 83 classified documents in his home in West Virginia. The documents had dates that spanned more than three decades.

Payday Loan Predators Have Friends In High Places

May 02, 2005 By Gordon Trowbridge and Karen Jowers, Army Times staff writers

They line the streets outside every military base with bright-colored signs advertising “E-Z Cash” “E-1 and up” and “Payday Loans.”

But the leaders of the \$25 billion payday loan industry insist they don’t target military members or communities. Now new studies show clear evidence that payday lenders are far more likely to be located outside military bases than elsewhere.

A growing number of senior military leaders and advocates call the business a threat to military families that not only targets those in uniform but also entraps them in a cycle of debt built on small loans carrying enormous interest rates.

Lenders, in response, are increasingly active political contributors, lining up powerful politicians in Washington and state capitals — and even the assistance of retired generals and admirals — to stay in business.

Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Terry Scott complained about payday lenders in testimony before Congress in February.

“I’ve heard increasing concern among leadership about payday loans,” he said in an April 19 interview. “The only conclusion I can come to is they are preying on sailors.”

Rep. Sam Graves, R-Mo., has introduced a bill that would cap the interest rate charged on loans to service members and their dependents at 36 percent.

“A lot of people are deployed. Spouses are left back home to take care of bills, and they are being targeted by predatory lenders,” Graves said.

“These places are like the legal mafia,” said a soldier at Fort Bliss, Texas, who is still trying to dig out of debt after taking out several payday loans — to pay other payday loans.

“They’re on every corner,” said the soldier, who asked that his name not be used.

But even as the industry’s critics call for protections against lenders, the industry is fighting back with a sophisticated, costly and growing lobbying campaign.

The industry has given millions of dollars to state and federal campaigns, rapidly growing from a political nonentity to a significant lobbying force in just the past few election cycles.

And in some cases, retired general and flag officers have joined forces with an industry that critics say threatens to put military families at financial risk.

Friends In High Places

As military leaders and advocacy groups have criticized the industry for its military focus, payday lenders have relied on their growing political clout to fend off tighter regulation.

The industry has important friends. Rep. Tom DeLay, R-Texas, the powerful House majority leader, delivered the keynote address in March to the trade group's annual convention.

Rep. Paul Kanjorski, D-Pa., a top Democrat on the House Financial Services Committee, was honored with a private reception, and the head of the Florida state agency that regulates the industry in that state delivered a speech there.

Sound Familiar?

Officers In Israel Worried By Rising Number Of Soldiers Fucked By Payday Loan Sharks

From: JM
To: GI Special
Sent: April 28, 2005

This is information on the problems of the Israeli army.

For a long time the Israeli army has been having trouble getting enough soldiers. They are conscripted straight from school and later have reservist duty.

Some refuse to serve, and go to prison, but most get a doctor's certificate saying they are unfit for service. The first piece, just received, is about financial troubles for the soldier's family.

From: Rela, New Profile
Sent: April 28, 2005

Hello all,

New Profile has long been aware of the phenomenon of social refusal and, in several cases, has offered legal aid and moral support to social refusers.

Conscripts' so-called "salaries" are so low in the Israeli army that families actually pay to maintain a son, daughter, brother, partner, etc. in his or her term of mandatory military service.

First, many of the poorer families lose the vital income provided by young conscripts who took part in family support before becoming soldiers.

In addition, conscripts need family support for transportation to and from home on weekend leave, for recreation while on leave, for various 'extra' equipment items that ease field conditions, etc.

Maintaining a family member in the military accordingly involves a tax, although a hidden, unrecognized one.

While this is true of all conscripts, those stationed close to home are sometimes allowed to work after hours, a solution that is not generally open to combat soldiers.

Consequently, structural inequalities are worsened further by military service due to the current over-representation among combat troops of working classes (a majority of whom are Mizrahi Jews of Middle Eastern, Asian and North African descent) and newly immigrated communities (mainly from the former U.S.S.R. and Ethiopia).

The following item from today's Haaretz is reflection of this reality.

4.28.05 By Amos Harel, Haaretz Correspondent (Israel)

Commanders of army battalions recently have reported a worrying increase in the number of soldiers getting themselves deeply into debt due to gray market loans.

The commander of an infantry battalion stationed in the territories told Haaretz Wednesday that in his battalion alone, he knows of more than 10 soldiers who have fallen into debt in such a way.

A senior source in the Israel Defense Forces' General Staff confirmed that this is a known phenomenon in a large number of combat units.

The infantry battalion commander said that in one case, a soldier was found to owe more than NIS 50,000. For soldiers in elite combat units, who are not allowed to hold civilian jobs during their army service and are paid just a few hundred shekels a month by the IDF, this is a tough amount to pay back.

The commander believes that other soldiers, in addition to the ones mentioned by the battalion commanders, are finding it difficult to pay back similar loans, but are reluctant to tell their unit about their financial woes.

When commanders do find out about their soldiers' money problems, they usually do all they can to assist them, both through providing their families with groceries and through allowing the soldiers to work on the weekends. The battalion commander said that he had worked out a sort of "business plan" for one soldier who found himself heavily in debt in an attempt to help him gradually pay back the money.

Some soldiers find themselves in debt due to their personal expenses, such as high cell phone bills.

Most turn to the gray market for loans because their parents, who are themselves heavily in debt, find it difficult to help them.

Combat unit commanders say that "the economic upswing the finance minister talks about is still not being felt by the families of our soldiers."

Many of them describe "situations close to starvation" in some soldiers' families. This can be attributed partly to the large percentage of combat unit soldiers who are new immigrants (25 percent, compared to 15 percent of new immigrants in the overall population).

Of the infantry battalion's 500-plus soldiers serving in the territories, more than 100 of them (around a fifth) receive some kind of financial assistance from the army. The battalion helps by distributing vouchers to the families ahead of the festivals, but the amount allocated by the General Staff (some NIS 15,000 in vouchers every three months) does not meet these pressing needs.

The family's financial situation is one of the most influential factors in a soldier's decision to leave combat duty and ask for a posting close to home, or to quit active duty completely.

In addition, commanders are also reporting an increase in the number of soldiers asking for help in finding alternative housing due to violence at home.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Bomber Kills At Least 60 At Occupation Police Recruiting Center In Arbil

5.4.05 Reuters & By THOMAS WAGNER, (AP) & By SITE Institute & By Yahya Barzanji, The Associated Press

An Iraqi carrying hidden explosives set them off in a police recruitment center in northern Iraq Wednesday, the U.S. military said, killing at least 60 people and wounding 150 more in the northern Iraqi city of Arbil on Wednesday.

At least seven cars parked near the center were destroyed by the blast. Several nearby buildings were damaged.

Police and security officials said a large crowd was gathered outside the building and recruiting center when the suicide bomber struck.

Capt. Mark Walter, the spokesman who provided the U.S. military death toll in Irbil, said the blast occurred as many Iraqis were applying for Iraqi police jobs at the recruitment center.

Ambulances and taxis raced to the chaotic scene and took casualties to local hospitals.

The Military Corps of the Iraqi insurgent group, Ansar al-Sunnah issued a communiqué, posted on the group's official website, claiming responsibility.

The communiqué details the devastating attack on a recruitment center in Arbeil, stating that this attack *“is a response to our brothers who are being held in your jails and to your converters of the Bashmarka Forces who sided with the Americans against our people in Fallujah, Mosul, and Baghdad and everywhere in Muslim lands. “*

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

Nine Local Occupation Soldiers Killed In Baghdad Car Bomb

May 5, 2005 (AEST)

Nine Iraqi soldiers were killed and 17 people wounded in a car bomb attack in Baghdad on Wednesday.

Six of the wounded were also soldiers, an Interior Ministry source said.

The attack took place in Dura, a neighbourhood in southern Baghdad where insurgents have relocated in recent months after US-Iraqi raids against their strongholds south of the capital.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

“We Look For An American Defeat In Iraq”

It's not the insurgency that's killing American soldiers. It's the self-serving strategy to control 12% of the world's remaining petroleum and to project American military power throughout the region. This is the plan that has put American servicemen into harm's way. The insurgency is simply acting as any resistance movement would; trying to rid their country of foreign invaders when all the political channels have been foreclosed.

By Mike Whitney

May 1, 2005, AxisofLogic.com

The greatest moral quandary of our day is whether we, as Americans, support the Iraqi insurgency. It's an issue that has caused anti-war Leftists the same pangs of conscience that many felt 30 years ago in their opposition to the Vietnam War. The specter of disloyalty weighs heavily on all of us, even those who've never been inclined to wave flags or champion the notion of American "Exceptionalism".

For myself, I can say without hesitation that I support the "insurgency", and would do so even if my only 21 year old son was serving in Iraq. There's simply no other morally acceptable option.

As Americans, we support the idea that violence is an acceptable means of achieving (national) self-determination. This, in fact, is how our nation was formed, and it is vindicated in our founding document, The Declaration of Independence:

"That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government, having its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness..when a long train of abuses and usurpations pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty to throw off such government, and provide new guards for their future security."

The Declaration of Independence is revolutionary in its view that we have a "duty" to overthrow regimes that threaten basic human liberties.

We must apply this same standard to the Iraqi people. Violence is not the issue, but the justification for the use of violence. The overwhelming majority of the world's people know that the war in Iraq was an "illegal" (Kofi Annan) act of unprovoked aggression against a defenseless enemy.

A recent poll conducted in the Middle East (released by the Center for Strategic Studies) shows that "for more than 85% of the population in four of the five countries polled (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine) thought the US war on Iraq was an act of terrorism". Lebanon polled at 64%. (Pepe Escobar; "Its Terror when we say so").

Terrorism or not, there's no doubt that the vast majority of people in the region and in the world, believe that the war was entirely unjustifiable.

The argument most commonly offered by antiwar Americans (who believe we should stay in Iraq) doesn't defend the legitimacy of the invasion, but provides the rationale for the ongoing occupation.

The belief that "We can't just leave them without security", creates the logic for staying in Iraq until order can be established.

Unfortunately, the occupation is just another manifestation of the war itself; replete with daily bombings, arrests, torture and the destruction of personal property. Therefore, support of the occupation is a vindication of the war. The two are inseparable.

We should remember that the war (which was entirely based on false or misleading information) was both illegal and immoral. That judgment does not change by maintaining a military presence of 140,000 soldiers on the ground for years to come. Each passing day of occupation simply perpetuates the crime.

At the same time we have to recognize that the disparate elements of Iraqi resistance, belittled in the media as the "insurgency", are the legitimate expression of Iraqi self-determination.

Independence is not bestowed by a foreign nation; the very nature of that relationship suggests reliance on outside forces.

True independence and sovereignty can only be realized when foreign armies are evacuated and indigenous elements assume the reigns of power.

(Bush acknowledged this himself when he ordered Syrian troops to leave Lebanon)

The character of the future Iraqi government will evolve from the groups who successfully expel the US forces from their country, not the American-approved stooges who rose to power through Washington's "demonstration elections". This may not suit the members of the Bush administration, but it's a first step in the long process of reintegrating and rebuilding the Iraqi state.

There's no indication that the conduct of the occupation will change anytime soon. If anything, conditions have only worsened over the past two years. The Bush administration hasn't shown any willingness to loosen its grip on power either by internationalizing the occupation or by handing over real control to the newly elected Iraqi government.

This suggests that the only hope for an acceptable solution to the suffering of the Iraqi people is a US defeat and the subsequent withdrawal of troops. Regrettably, we're nowhere near that period yet.

Who's killing whom?

It's not the insurgency that's killing American soldiers. It's the self-serving strategy to control 12% of the world's remaining petroleum and to project American military power throughout the region. This is the plan that has put American servicemen into harm's way. The insurgency is simply acting as any resistance movement would; trying to rid their country of foreign invaders when all the political channels have been foreclosed.

Americans would behave no differently if put in a similar situation and Iraqi troops were deployed in our towns and cities. Ultimately, the Bush administration bears the responsibility for the death of every American killed in Iraq just as if they had

lined them up against a wall and shot them one by one. Their blood is on the administration's hands, not those of the Iraqi insurgency.

Expect another dictator or Mullah

We shouldn't expect that, after a long period of internal struggle, the Iraqi leadership will embrace the values of democratic government. More likely, another Iraqi strongman, like Saddam, will take power. In fact, the rise of another dictator (or Ayatollah) is nearly certain given the catastrophic effects of the American-led war. Regardless, it is not the right of the US to pick-and-choose the leaders of foreign countries or to meddle in their internal politics.

At this point, we should be able to agree that the people of Iraq were better off under Saddam Hussein in every quantifiable way than they are today. Even on a physical level, the availability of work, clean water, electricity, sewage control, medicine, gas and food were far superior to the present situation. On a deeper level, the insecurity from the sporadic violence, the increasing brutality, and the gross injustice of the occupation has turned Iraq into a prison-state, where the amenities of normal life are nowhere to be found.

Support for the Bush policy is, by necessity, support for the instruments of coercion that are used to perpetuate that occupation. In other words, one must be willing to support the torture at Abu Ghraib, (which continues to this day, according to Amnesty International) the neoliberal policies (which have privatized all of Iraq's publicly owned industries, banks and resources), an American-friendly regime that excludes 20% (Sunni) of the population and, worst of all, "the return-in full force-of Saddam's Mukhabarat agents, now posing as agents of the new Iraqi security and intelligence services." (Pepe Escobar, Asia Times)

Are Americans prepared to offer their support to the same brutal apparatus of state-terror that was employed by Saddam? (Rumsfeld's unannounced visit to Baghdad last week was to make sure that the newly elected officials didn't tamper with his counterinsurgency operatives, most of whom were formerly employed in Saddam's secret police)

We should also ask ourselves what the long-range implications of an American victory in Iraq would be.

Those who argue that we cannot leave Iraq in a state of chaos don't realize that stabilizing the situation on the ground is tantamount to an American victory and a vindication for the policies of aggression.

This would be a bigger disaster than the invasion itself. The Bush administration is fully prepared to carry on its campaign of global domination by force unless an unmovable object like the Iraqi insurgency blocks its way.

Many suspect, that if it wasn't for the resistance, the US would be in Tehran and Damascus right now. This, I think, is a rational assumption.

For this reason alone, antiwar advocates should carefully consider the implications of "so-called" humanitarian objectives designed to pacify the population. "Normalizing" aggression by ameliorating its symptoms is the greatest dilemma we collectively face.

We should be clear about our feelings about the war and the occupation.

The disparate Iraqi resistance is the legitimate manifestation of a national liberation movement.

Its success is imperative to the principles of national sovereignty and self-determination; ideals that are revered in the Declaration of Independence.

The toppling of foreign regimes and the destruction of entire civilizations cannot be justified in terms of "democracy" or any other cynically conjured-up ideal. **Crushing the insurgency will not absolve that illicit action; it will only increase the magnitude of the crime.**

Therefore we look for an American defeat in Iraq. Such a defeat would serve as a powerful deterrent to future unprovoked conflicts and would deliver a serious blow to the belief that aggression is a viable expression of foreign policy.

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

Not Much Oil For Blood

04 May 2005 Aljazeera.Net

Post-war Iraq has been importing around \$2 billion a year worth of petrol and other fuels to compensate for losses in domestic production as saboteurs attacked refineries and distribution systems, and smugglers stole petrol trucks and fuel from pipelines.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Blair Knew Bush Faking Reasons For Iraq War

5.2.05 Wall St. Journal

LONDON—Five days before Britain’s general elections, Prime Minister Tony Blair was embarrassed by a leaked document showing he was advised ahead of the Iraq invasion that the case for war was “thin” and that Washington was fixing “intelligence and facts” to the policy of going to war.

The leaked document, published in the Sunday Times newspaper, is the second to upset the re-election campaign of Mr. Blair’s Labour Party in a week. It is likely to ensure the final days before Thursday’s vote are dominated by accusations that Mr. Blair “lied” about the reasons he took Britain to war.

Opinion polls continue to show Labour anywhere from three to 10 points ahead of the main opposition Conservative Party, suggesting Labour remains likely to win. But Mr. Blair’s personal authority and the huge parliamentary majority he enjoys -- 161 more seats than all other parties combined in the 659-Seat parliament ---look increasingly threatened.

The document -- minutes of a July 23, 2002, meeting between Mr. Blair and his top security officials -- shows him being told by his then-foreign intelligence chief that a U.S. invasion of Iraq was now seen as “inevitable” in Washington, and that “The intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy.”

The government’s top lawyer warned that invading to secure regime change would be illegal, making some form of United Nations Security Council mandate essential. Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said that the case for war was weak.

Received:

From: NF
To: GI Special
Sent: Wednesday, May 04, 2005
Subject: Sent "Send your friends" story link to Drudge

Hi!

YOU have a great site. Amazing in fact. Since I found it a couple of days ago I've told everyone about it and forwarded links to many people.

Your stories are quite exceptional. It will be sites like yours that change the direction of the country.

REPLY:

Thanks for your encouragement. It means a lot.

Your comment forwarded on to the source of the item you mention. That will mean a great deal to him.

All GI Special does is provide some focus.

The changes we need are being brought about by soldiers, veterans, military family members, and people who do what you're doing: taking action. You, and they, are changing the direction of the country, by refusing to accept things as they are. Honor and respect to you, and to them all.

T

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/qi-special/>, www.williambowles.info/qispecial,
<http://www.albasrah.net/maqalat/english/qi-special.htm>

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