

GI SPECIAL 3B32:



(Soldier X)

**“War Is Shit, And It’s Not
Accomplishing
Anything.”**

May 6, 2005 Socialist Worker

FOR U.S. troops in Iraq who oppose the war for oil and empire they were sent to fight, speaking out can be dangerous. But three soldiers--whose pen names are hEKLe, Heretic and Joe Public--found that their consciences made it more difficult not to speak out.

Each spent about a year in Iraq. Throughout their tours, they earned a reputation for reporting the truth--on their Web log at ftssoldier.blogspot.com--about what was taking place in occupied Iraq. Their dispatches have also been featured in Thomas Barton’s *GI Special*, a daily Internet newsletter for soldiers and military families, available on the Web at www.militaryproject.org.

In mid-April, hEkLe, Heretic and Joe Public spoke to *Socialist Worker's* ERIC RUDER about their experiences, observations and opinions of the U.S. occupation.

This is the first interview, with hEkLe:

WHAT DO you think about morale in the military?

WHILE WE were in Iraq, it was pretty low. It depends on what camp or operating base you were at. If you are at a place where you didn't go out on missions, but stayed on and provided support for others, morale was higher, because they weren't seeing the shit. Battalions that were going out every day and doing missions--their morale was pretty low.

You're crammed into a 15-by-20-foot aluminum box with two other roommates--plus the heat, plus the miserable conditions, plus bad food for a whole year. You add it all up, and morale gets pretty low.

I saw the military bring in reporters who they knew would tell a picture-perfect story. They wouldn't talk to reporters who might tell it how it is. The soldiers they interviewed all gave the Army hoo-hah. Low morale never got out to the public.

A lot of soldiers coming back now are starting to realize that they have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Some of the things you've seen start to creep back up on you. Whatever you had growing in you--bottled up all year long--is starting to come out now. It's going to be really interesting to see how guys react to this now that they're back in the real world.

SOME PRESS reports acknowledge that the Army and National Guard are missing their recruitment quotas, and that a small number of soldiers has refused to re-deploy to Iraq. What's happening among soldiers in Iraq?

I KNOW a lot of people who say they're never going back. The three of us agree that we're never going back.

There are people who have re-enlisted while they're in Iraq. There are a lot of people in the Army who came from poor families. They join the Army, and the government feeds them and clothes them and takes care of their families. All they have to do is go out and kill for a year. They're not afraid to sacrifice that comfort level.

The number of resisters in the ranks is still very, very low. It's going to take time before they realize that the war isn't right--that it's wrong. There are definitely some resisters, but not as many as the antiwar movement would like to see.

CAN YOU talk about life as a U.S. soldier in Iraq?

YOU WORK every day, and your mission could stay the same or change greatly, depending on where you're at, or what you're doing. My mission was pretty monotonous, but it always involved going "beyond sector," and coming in at night and trying to regroup your thoughts.

A lot of times nothing happened. We'd go out, get a lot of ugly looks and come back home. But at least once or twice a month, there'd be something that was really disturbing--something that would really just make you sit down and think for a while.

Going out every day and doing what you're told is your mission, and then coming back and waiting for the clock to run down every day for a year--it gets very tedious and stressful. You don't even realize how stressful it is until you're back, and you're in normal society. It was a long year of my life, but at the same time, it flashed right by because of the amount of work that we were doing.

CAN YOU describe life for average Iraqis?

WHERE WE were, there were many peasant farmers and small shopkeepers. Many didn't want anything to do with the violence, but they didn't sympathize with American forces either, which only helps the insurgency. Stuff like car bombs at Iraqi police checkpoints didn't faze the people--it was just more violence added on. You could see in their eyes--they were just getting tired of the violence.

We were there for a year, and nothing changed--nothing was solved. And I don't imagine anything is being accomplished now, as we speak. There's a lot of poverty, roads need repairs, street lights need repairs. A lot of people didn't have electricity or running water. These are things we promised them when we came in, and nothing is getting solved. A lot of the reason is because we're too busy trying to hold down this insurgency that's not dying out, and seems to be getting stronger.

WHAT KIND of pressure did you face for opposing the occupation?

IF YOU'RE a soldier that your chain of command recognizes as a resister--a peace-freak, somebody that doesn't like the Army--you have an enemy on both sides of the wire.

The three of us have been labeled "shit bags" by the Army--that's what they like to call people like us because they don't like what we believe in. They don't like the way we see things, and we're pretty vocal about it. The chain of command can make it very hard on a soldier who constantly says, "This is fucked up, this is wrong," or just generally dismisses a lot of what the Army thinks is important.

I was really stressed out that I could go out and die--or I could get court-martialed and sent to jail because I said some bad things about George W. Bush and the war. So it felt like I had an enemy on both sides. There are people trying to fuck me in the camp and my chain of command--and then there are insurgents out to kill me on the outside.

The chain of command creates stress. And outside of the wire, you had to deal with blown-up bodies. Car bombs that killed innocent civilians. A little girl's pink sandals smoldering on the side of the road. A guy's face in a watermelon after a watermelon truck full of explosives blew up and killed Iraqi soldiers at a checkpoint. U.S. soldiers dying in Bradley tanks.

You deal with that kind of shit for a year, and you recognize it as disturbing and gross. But when you get back and start thinking about it, all of a sudden it becomes much more horrific, much more painful. All this creates a classic diagnosis of PTSD--general depression for no reason, problems concentrating and remembering little details. You don't even know what's affecting you. It parallels a lot of the traumas associated with victims of abuse.

A lot of it boils down to guilt. That's what I feel for the people I killed out there and the stuff that I saw--just knowing what you're doing is wrong. All of these guilty feelings bottle up and explode in moments.

Patriotism in itself isn't wrong, but overzealous patriotism and overzealous nationalism isn't right. The public's own inability to see its nationalistic fervor is what's actually hindering people from seeing the overall picture.

If they can try to understand it through the eyes and from the shoes of the Iraqis, they can understand that war is shit, and it's not accomplishing anything. It's hard for an American to say that war is wrong when all they're given is a patriotic shot in the ass about it.

Of all the casualties, almost 50 percent are women and children. How is this right? How is this war justified? How is it correct? How is it even helping our country? War is wrong.

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

Mercenary Convoy Hit, American, Two Iraqis Killed

5.16.05 CNN

A roadside bomb killed two Iraqis and wounded two other Iraqis and an American -- all security contractors working for a Western firm -- in eastern Baghdad on Monday night, Iraqi police said.

Marines Say Iraqi Resistance Better Armed Than Expected; “Proxies Do The Killing”

16/05/2005 By Oliver Poole, Telegraph & Washington Post

Iraqi insurgents have proved to be better equipped and more elusive than expected, United States marines have said at the end of a week-long operation near the Syrian border. **[Expected by who? Underestimating the enemy has been a constant for Imperial invaders since ancient Rome.]**

Many rebels wore bullet-proof vests and a number had Soviet-designed armour piercing bullets and night sights, equipment rarely seen previously in Iraq. [But no doubt to be seen more and more.]

As U.S. Marines swept west across Iraq in a week-long operation to flush out foreign fighters north of the Euphrates River, fleeing insurgents left proxies to do the killing for them: meticulously rigged roadside bombs and mines, planted on dirt roads where wheels or tank treads would pass.

Yawn, Quiet Night, More Casualties To Evacuate

(Aviation Week & Space Technology, May 16, 2005)

The air war in Iraq has changed from one primarily of bombing to that of intelligence-gathering, surveillance and command. During a recent flight on an E-8C Joint Stars aircraft, improvised explosive devices were found, convoys were rerouted and **casualties were evacuated—and the air crew said it was a quieter than normal night**

The End Had Come, But It Was Not Yet In Sight

From *In The Company Of Soldiers*, by Rick Atkinson; Henry Holt And Company; New York, N.Y.; 2005.

[In this thoughtful book on the invasion of Iraq, traveling with the 101st Airborne over the line, Atkinson leaves clues to everything that was to come, including more than one case of “famous last words.” Excerpts make that clear. T]

Brig. Gen. Benjamin J. Freakley, Assistant Division Commander For Operations:

Asked how long he anticipated the campaign would last, he mulled the question for a moment. “Two weeks if it goes well, two months if it doesn’t. If it gets into Baghdad, or the other cities, the plan is to use precision strikes by identifying points of resistance and hitting quick and hard, then getting out. ***There will be no kicking-in of doors.***”

A few minutes later, I buttonholed [Sgt. Maj.] Savusa near the tent flap and asked about morale. “More than half the soldiers in this brigade have combat experience in Afghanistan,” he said. **“The biggest challenge now is maintaining the standards and discipline, and getting across to younger soldiers the dangers involved.** I’m not sure they really grasp what we’re about to undertake. But these guys are ready. They have confidence in their leaders. And they have a certain look in their eyes.”

I made my own morale assessment with a quick inspection of several plywood latrines. Soldiers had so few authorized opportunities to articulate stress and frustration that graffiti assumed an importance larger than simply providing a doodleboard for sophomoric crudities, although there were plenty of those. “Fuck this place,” one poet had written with a kind of rap exuberance. “Fuck the Rakkasans. Fuck you. Fuck me. Fuck, fuck, fuck.” **I also read “Bush is the Anti-Christ.”**

Lt. Col. D.J. Reyes:

“People say he’ll use chemicals as soon as we cross the berm into Iraq. Naw, why would he show his hand there? I personally think he’ll use them when he sees that we’re definitely coming into Baghdad.

“I’m very concerned about Baghdad. I’m very concerned about all the urban areas. Our systems to a large extent will be mitigated or defeated if this gets into a street fight. Urban canyons allow the enemy to canalize us into ambush channels. We’ll get drawn like a fly into the fire.”

He shifted on his sandbag seat. An added anxiety for the 101st was the vulnerability of the division’s helicopters, particularly in the MEZ, the missile engagement zone, around Baghdad; it was said to be second only to Pyongyang, North Korea, in air-defense lethality.

“I lose sleep over it. Because you have to worry about everything. Roland missiles, triple A”—antiaircraft artillery— “and even iron-sight guns that have no radars associated with them.

“In the Mog”—Mogadishu—“helicopters were shot down with rocket-propelled grenades, RPG-7s. How do you fight that? I lose sleep over it. Every day I walk into the briefing and I wonder, What is it that I can’t answer?”

I asked about working for Petraeus.

“He’s very compassionate, very understanding,” Reyes said. “But the man has some seriously high standards. **All generals are like this. You give them something and they want more. You have to have the balls to say, I don’t know but I’ll find out. You also have to have the intestinal fortitude to say, This is what I think. It’s an art, as well as a science. You don’t get that as a lieutenant. You get it after twenty years of getting shot in the face. My good day is when nobody says anything to me.**”

Could this war, I asked, turn into a quagmire? What if the Iraqi asymmetrical tactics led not to a conventional slugfest, where the United States was clearly superior, but to a guerrilla campaign?

“There’s some serious fog of war out here,” Reyes said. “At the end of the day, the question is, Can you live with yourself? Did you give it your best? **We’re doing this for a reason. I don’t know what it is, but I know that it’s something bigger than me. Just submit to it.**” [How’s that for dodging and twisting the question?]

The next morning dust lay drifted in windrows *inside* the tent. After moderating slightly at daybreak, the wind picked up with redoubled howling. Humvees and helicopters appeared to have been dipped in milk chocolate. I arrived in the ACP at 7:30 A.M. to find Petraeus on the phone with Wallace. His face was drawn, as if he had slept poorly.

An intelligence officer, Lieutenant Jeanne Hull, told me that orders had come down overnight banning the term “Fedayeen,” which means “men who sacrifice themselves for a cause,” because it ostensibly invested those fighters with too much dignity. They were to be referred to as paramilitaries. (Later the approved phrase would be “terroristlike death squads.”)

Hull estimated that there were nine to twelve Fedayeen battalions in Iraq, each with roughly six hundred fighters, including a battalion in Najaf. **In a small blow against Orwellian excess, most officers continued to call them Fedayeen.**

General Petraeus:

“See, 3 ID was around Karbala quite a while, and look at how many bad guys were still there,” he said.

“I think we’re going to have to go into every town. 3 ID sets conditions by shooting the big pieces, and then the infantry moves in to clean out the diehards and secure the towns. The lesson in Karbala is that you can rum around all you want -- you can even run tanks through the streets -- yet it doesn’t clear the city. It has to be methodical.”

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)

WELCOME TO SAIGON --- OOPS --- LIBERATED IRAQ: HAVE A NICE DAY



US Black Hawk helicopters fly over smoke billowing from the site of explosion in Baghdad, 14 May 2005. (AFP/Marwan Naamani)

TROOP NEWS

“I Feel Like I Fought For Nothing”

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

May 13, 2005 Film Review by Sarah Macaraeg, Socialist Worker

Arlington West, a documentary by Peter Dudar and Sally Marr, Laughing Tears Productions.

IN SANTA Monica, Santa Barbara and Oceanside, Calif., Veterans for Peace has constructed temporary cemeteries in the sand, honoring the soldiers who have died in Iraq. If a cemetery were created to honor the Iraqi dead, it would fill the entire beach.

The memorial also serves as a gathering place for military families and veterans of both the Vietnam and Iraq wars, whose interviews are documented in the film Arlington West.

The strength of this film lies in the testimonies of those who have fought or lost family members in the war--ordinary people trying to figure out why they've been forced to sacrifice so much for a war based on lies. They speak to the human cost of the war, the true motives behind it and the realities on the ground in Iraq.

As one veteran says, "I know a lot of us were being lied to because I feel like I fought for nothing. I saw exactly what happened in the war and I hear what they tell everyone and it doesn't match."

Another veteran remarks, "I can tell you from my own experience from being in Iraq, that we're the bad guys, we're invading their territory." The documentary highlights the hypocrisy of the Bush administration's claim that it "supports the troops."

Various soldiers, most of whom cite money for college as their reason for joining the military, speak to the amount of trauma undergone in war, how little they're paid, and the treatment they receive from the Veterans Administration.

As a homeless Vietnam veteran describes it, "it's as if they don't expect to see a live veteran."

In its effectiveness at speaking to people who haven't yet been exposed to antiwar politics, Arlington West serves as a powerful tool in building the antiwar movement.

Inflation Eats Up Next Military Pay Raise

May 16, 2005, Army Times

The Consumer Price Index, which measures the cost of goods and services, is increasing at an annual rate of 3.1 percent, as are private-sector wages, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The increase in consumer prices, largely due to growing energy costs, means that a 3.1 percent hike in basic pay in January would be just enough to maintain — but not increase — the purchasing power of military paychecks.

That's hardly a financial incentive for military people who could get private-sector jobs that often pay more, which is one reason why the services want bigger bonuses to retain people with critical skills.

Army Sec. Thanks Big Red One For Signing On To Fight Bush Regime

May 16, 2005 AFPS:

Army Secretary Francis Harvey told the soldiers of the 1st Infantry Division that their service was against "a ruthless and immoral enemy willing to employ any means necessary to achieve their objective.,"

Soldiers Are Scapegoats: When Will The Higher Ranking Officers Be Facing Charges?

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
5.16.05

It looks as if the Pentagon has been successful in isolating the prisoner abuse scandal at Abu Ghraib prison to a few unfortunate lower enlisted soldiers.

Most of these soldiers were no doubt threatened into plea bargaining their cases and accepting their penalties without much fanfare. These soldiers were indeed guilty of mistreating Iraqi prisoners and deserved to be punished.

But there is no possible way that prisoner abuses of this magnitude could have taken place without the acquiescence of higher headquarters, or the dereliction of duty by the chain of command to not have noticed what was happening in Abu Ghraib prison.

By blaming the whole scandal on seven lower enlisted soldiers, the Army and the Pentagon successfully protect those higher up in the chain of command who should have stopped what was happening, who ordered the abuses, who never properly trained the soldiers serving as guards or who were not aware of what was occurring in that prison but should have been.

This prisoner abuse scandal is a good lesson for senior noncommissioned officers and officers on how not to allow lower enlisted soldiers to be made into scapegoats.

Soldiers should be curious about when the higher-ranking officials at the Pentagon, who are responsible for creating this culture that allowed such human rights abuses to happen, will be facing their own charges.

Staff Sgt. Thomas P. Murt

Hatboro, Pa.

MORE:

Congress Adopts Restriction On Treatment Of Detainees

[New York Times, May 11, 2005]

Congress barred the government from using any money in a newly passed emergency spending bill to subject anyone in U.S. custody to torture or "cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment" that is forbidden by the Constitution.

Rumsfeld Liberating DoD Workers:

Federal Times, May 16, 2005

Most employees believe proposed changes to personnel policies at the Defense Department give managers too much authority to adjust salaries and change work assignments, strip workers of basic rights and protections and will destroy morale, according to a sampling of public comments submitted on the changes.

Drill Sgt. A 'Disgrace'

May 09, 2005
Letters To The Editor
Army Times

This is my opinion on the outcome of Staff Sgt. (David H.) Price's punishment ("Busted a rank," April 25).

It is a sad disgrace to be in an NCO Corps where leaders are able to get away with such abuse. Situations such as this once again give the military a bad rap.

If I were a parent, would I want my child to join the military when things like this happen and all you get is a slap on the hand?

Taking away rank is not much. Most soldiers just look at it as a pay decrease. Maybe recruiting efforts would increase if the Army was professionally led by those put in charge as leaders.

Why is it necessary to keep individuals in uniform who are a disgrace to this country and Army?

Sgt. Charley Westerhold
Clarksville, Tenn.

May 09, 2005
Letters To The Editor
Army Times

Leaders act as the guides who are supposed to direct young soldiers toward success. But sometimes, some leaders fail to distinguish efficiency from error.

When a person in charge of leading troops to battle displays something other than professionalism, the validity of the mission in question is jeopardized. The mission, in this case, is ensuring that fresh recruits successfully complete and graduate from basic training.

If intimidation and physical abuse are utilized by those whom new soldiers are supposed to trust, then loved ones back home cannot sleep at night with the confidence that their children are safe in the hands of the leaders in charge of them.

The scandals involving abuse by various drill sergeants over the past few months are poor displays of an organization that is supposed to stand for the exact opposite: equal treatment of all individuals, regardless of race, age or gender.

Perhaps in days of old, many people thought nothing of the occasional thrust or shove by an infuriated drill sergeant on some recalcitrant trooper. But we now find ourselves fighting a new war with a new kind of soldier, one raised in a politically correct society, free of the violent antagonism that was once an accepted form of disciplinary reprimand.

From Bunker Hill to Baghdad, soldiers with little to no military experience will make mistakes.

However, this does not mean correction of the error should involve physical and psychological torture.

Until those who fill the demanding role of drill sergeants are instilled with sound reasoning and judgment in regard to the treatment of new recruits, the image of the Army will continue to be tarnished by the flaws of a few.

Spc. Moses Cortez
Fort Drum, N.Y.

May 09, 2005
Letters To The Editor
Army Times

I think the drill sergeant got off easy.

Young people join the Army because they want to do something good and make a difference. A soldier in training trusts that the Army will take care of him.

When I joined the military in 1998, I thought my drill sergeants — Drill Sgts. Dunkin, High and Kelsey at Fort Jackson, S.C. —were the best thing that ever happened to the Army.

I don't know if they make drill sergeants like that any more: drill sergeants who care and have feelings but are not afraid to correct a soldier in a fair way to train the soldier properly.

Sgt. Jesse Leal
Camp Doha, Kuwait

Smackdown Of The Week

5.9.05 Army Times

Two paratroopers in India's elite Eastern Frontier Rifles who were on different duty schedules got into a fight over whether barracks lights should be on or off — and it ended with one soldier missing a chunk of his nose.

Bhupesh Rava had just come off duty and wanted the lights off so he could sleep. Sepoy Durga Lama, who was about to go on duty, wanted the lights on a little longer while he dressed. In the ensuing battle, Rava pinned down Lama and gnawed off part of his nose, according to a Reuters report.

Police said Lama's screams led others in the barracks to rush to break up the fight. Lama, bleeding profusely, was taken to a hospital, where doctors operated to reattach the bitten piece of flesh to his nose. Rava was arrested on assault charges.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Al-Sadr Demands Immediate End Of Occupation & Freedom For U.S. Prisoners

May 16, 2005 By ABDUL HUSSEIN AL-OBEIDI, NAJAF, Iraq (AP)

Muqtada al-Sadr, whose militia battled U.S. forces in Baghdad and Najaf last year, held a press conference in his father's home in this holy Shiite Muslim city, 100 miles south of Baghdad. Al-Sadr criticized the American-led occupation and called for an immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq.

"I want the immediate withdrawal of the occupation forces."

Al-Sadr also accused the United States of trying to foment a sectarian conflict, and he demanded the coalition release all detainees.

"The occupier is trying to make up a sectarian war between the Sunnis and Shiites," al-Sadr said. "It is not acceptable to direct the allegations of ugly acts committed by the occupier against the Shiites, to the Sunnis, we also condemn and denounce all the terrorist acts."

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

Iraqi Prime Minister Threatens To Kill Bush, Rumsfeld & U.S. Occupation Commanders

5/16/2005 By ALEXANDRA ZAVIS, The Associated Press

"The new government will strike with an iron fist against any criminal who tries to harm a Sunni or a Shiite citizen," Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari told reporters after visiting Iraq's top Shiite cleric in the holy city of Najaf. "The death sentence will be implemented."

Assorted Resistance Attacks

5.16.05 Mail & Guardian & By ALEXANDRA ZAVIS, The Associated Press & (Reuters) & Terence Neilan & Sabrina Tavernise, New York Times

Four Iraqi soldiers were killed and at least four people wounded after a mortar and roadside bomb attack against a fire station in Khan Bani Saad, a town 30km north-east of Baghdad, said police Colonel Mudafar Mohammed.

A roadside bomb killed four soldiers who had raced to the town's fire station, which had come under mortar attack, Mohammed said.

"I just arrived at the gate of the base and mortar rounds landed on it, injuring some of us," said Lieutenant Colonel Jabbar Hussein, who was taken to a nearby hospital suffering from shrapnel wounds.

There's word that two car bombings in Baghdad have killed nine Iraqi soldiers and injured many civilians. A senior police official says the blasts came minutes apart near a street market.

Armed men also opened fire on an Iraqi National Guard patrol, killing two civilians and wounding three people, one of them a guardsman and the others civilians, the official said.

An army patrol responding to the first explosion was struck down by the second blast. Authorities say five soldiers were wounded,

Three Iraqis working for Kuwaiti television have been killed south of Baghdad, the Iraqi military said on Monday.

The three men -- two journalists and a driver -- were on their way back to Baghdad from the Shi'ite holy city of Kerbala when they were ambushed near the towns of Mahmudiya and Latafiya.

Five Iraqi soldiers were killed Monday when a roadside bomb exploded outside Baquba, north of Baghdad, police said. Seven soldiers and three civilians also were wounded. **A car bomber blew himself up near a courthouse, narrowly missing the governor of Diyala Province.**

<p style="text-align: center;">IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATION</p>

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

“Let's Stop This, Let's Quit!”

From: Z
To: GI Special
Sent: May 16, 2005
Subject: let's stop this, let's quit!

A short excerpt from a 1927 story entitled "The Sleigh" by Japanese writer, and former imperial soldier, Denji Kuroshima.

The scene is Siberia, circa 1920, when Japan's troops formed part of a multinational intervention led by the United States trying to reverse by force the recent political victory of the Soviet revolution. The Japanese fought on the longest only to be driven out after several years.

Kuroshima became and remained a lifelong antimilitarist. In this scene the Japanese soldiers have just repelled a group of Russian guerrillas, killing some civilians in the process.

All the very best to you!
Solidarity,

“If we don’t quit, I’m telling you, it’ll go on forever.”

[A Flock of Swirling Crows and Other Proletarian Writings by Kuroshima Denji, University of Hawaii Press, 2005]

Shortly the Japanese troops arrived at the spot where father and son lay.

“They ever want us to stop chasing them?”

“I could use some food.”

“Hey, let’s take a breather.”

They too were tired of fighting. Winning brought them no benefit. War consumed their physical and mental energy as an express train burns coal.

The ill Kimura, coughing and out of breath, caught up at last, dragging his rifle.

The thin hard surface of the snow kept on caving in under the men’s weight. Whenever they shifted their feet, the snow threatened to snatch away their boots.

“Ah, I’m worn out.” Kimura spit out phlegm mottled with blood.

“You’d better go back.”

“I can’t even move.”

“Take him back on the sled,” said Yoshihara.

“Yeah, that’d be better. What is this, making even sick men go out and kill!” Two or three nearby voices burst out at the same time.

“Ho, I may have killed them myself,” Asada looked at the fallen Lipski and shuddered. “I pulled the trigger two or three times back there.”

Father and son lay a few feet apart in the snow, their heads pointing in the same direction. There was a small piece of black bread by the man’s fingertips, as though he was shot at the moment he was about to eat it.

The boy lay face down, his left arm thrust into the snow. The small shoes were torn, and the snow all around him was dyed with blood. It was a pitiful sight. Little pale lips pressed against the snow seemed on the verge of shouting something to the soldiers.

“It’s heartless, this killing!” A mighty emotion welled up in their chests.

“Hey, I’ve finally got it now,” said Yoshihara. “We’re the guys making war. Nobody but us.”

“Other people force us to do it,” said someone.

“Still, we’re the ones making war. When we stop, it stops.”

Like a stemmed tide, the soldiers stood before the father and son. All were utterly weary. What are we doing, said some. Some sat on the snow to rest. Others flung away their still smoking rifles, scooped up the snow and ate it. They were thirsty.

“There’s no end to this.”

“I’m hungry.”

“Isn’t it time to pull out? I’ve had enough.”

“If we don’t quit, I’m telling you, it’ll go on forever. Those jokers are out for medals and they’ll drive us on and on and on until we’re all dead! Let’s stop this, let’s quit! Let’s get out of here!” Yoshihara was as agitated as a man in the midst of a brawl.

The battle-fatigued troops wanted to get back to the barracks as soon as they could and rest in the warm rooms. Better yet, they wanted to go all the way home and throw off the stifling uniforms for the rest of their lives.

They thought of the men who had escaped conscription relaxing in warm beds, their pretty wives beside them. Same age as the soldiers, these men had remained in Japan enjoying the right to choose the most beautiful and appealing women.

They had *sake* too, and all manner of good food. Viewing snow-clad scenery was a diversion to them, something done while sipping cups of heated *sake*. All this while the soldiers themselves were condemned to exist in Siberia engaging in mutual slaughter a people they did not hate!

“Advance, you bastards! What do you think you’re doing in the presence of the enemy!” The company commander stormed up to them clutching his sword.

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

Occupation Cops Caught: Butchered 8 Baghdad Sunnis

5/16/2005 By ALEXANDRA ZAVIS, The Associated Press

Late Sunday, at least eight more men were found near a dam in another Shiite-dominated Baghdad neighborhood, their hands tied behind their backs and bullet wounds to their heads.

Two of the victims were still alive, but died soon afterward, police said.

Associated Press Television News footage showed the blood-soaked ground where the bodies were found, and three of the corpses being brought into a Baghdad hospital.

The Sunni-based Association of Muslim Scholars said the two survivors told their families before they died that security force members seized them from mosques and shot them.

Defense Minister Saadoun al-Duleimi denied the accusation, saying the killings were carried out by "terrorists" wearing military uniforms. **But in a gesture to the association, he said Iraqi security forces would be banned from entering places of worship and universities.**

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Secret Service Searches Home Of Anti-War Protester

April 27, 2005 Matthew Rothschild, The Progressive

Renee Jensen of Elkins, West Virginia, likes to express herself.

She has put up as many as a dozen signs in her yard over the past year, protesting the war in Iraq, Bush and Cheney, and the crackdown on civil liberties.

Some of her signs have said:

"Mr. Bush, You're Fired."

"Mr. Ashcroft, We Prefer Our America Remain the Home of the Free and the Brave."

"Mr. Cheney, What You Sow You Shall Reap. Those Who Destroy the Earth Will Be Destroyed."

"Mr. Rumsfeld, Human Beings Are Not Just Collateral Damages, but People with Hopes, Dreams, Relationships, and Lives to Live."

"O, Evil Doers, Bush and Cheney Are Destroying America. I Cry Liberty and Stand for Our Constitution."

"Love One Another: War Is Dead Wrong."

Her vigorous exercise of free speech has not been well received.

One day in early January, her signs were vandalized.

"I had gone to the movies, and when I came back, all my signs were stolen," she tells *The Progressive*. "And one had been turned over, and someone wrote, "We love George Bush" on it."

The mayor of Elkins, Judy Guye, tried to use a city ordinance to make Jensen take her signs down.

"Guye had said she believes Jensen's signs pose a potential traffic hazard, since people driving by her house often stop or slow down to look at them," Paul J. Nyden wrote in an article for the *Charleston Gazette* on January 16. Nyden pointed out that the mayor, "a Republican, had a pro-Bush sign in her own front yard."

Guye backed off.

But those were the least of Jensen's problems.

In the fall, the Secret Service gave her a call.

"They said they wanted to ask me some questions," she recalls. "I said sure. They said someone called them and said I had signs up in my yard that were threatening the President. I said I did have some signs in my yard, but I wasn't threatening the President. The worst I've ever said was that he's an Evildoer. And this Secret Service man specifically asked me about the sign about Mr. Cheney. He said, "That's from revelations." I said, "Yes, I have no desire to destroy anybody. I'm just quoting out of the Bible." His name, she said, was Agent Brian Atkins.

Then on January 11, she had some unexpected visitors.

"I was actually taking a nap, and there was a knock on my door, there was a West Virginia State Trooper and a Secret Service agent," she says, identifying them as Trooper R. J. Boggs and Agent James Lanham. "They asked to come in. And I let them. And they started interviewing me."

Jensen, who at the time was running for city council, asked why they were there.

"Apparently someone had made a statement that I'd been canvassing door to door and had said I wanted to cut President Bush's head off," she says. "I told Agent Lanham that I was running for city council, but I hadn't started my door-to-door campaign yet and I never had said anything like that."

This didn't satisfy them, though.

"They conducted an extensive interview about my background, my family, and any political organizations I belonged to," she says. "I told them I belong to the ACLU and that's about it."

They continued to pry, she says.

Agent Lanham "asked me several times to sign a form about releasing my medical records, and I refused," she says. "That was kind of annoying. And he asked to search my house. He didn't have a search warrant, but I said go ahead. And they took some pictures of me and some pictures of my signs."

Before they left, she says, "I had to sign a statement that I never threatened the President's life."

Though she hasn't heard from the Secret Service since, Jensen is not happy about the power citizens have to rat their neighbors out for merely expressing political views they disagree with.

"It's very easy for other people to call up the Secret Service or the Department of Homeland Security," she says, "and say things about you and have you investigated."

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Karzai Demands Control Of US Troops As Uprising Spreads: Pathetic Puppet Postures Preposterously

16 May 2005 By Nick Meo, The Independent UK

President Hamid Karzai insisted the Kabul government will veto US military operations after a week of hugely destructive anti-American rioting left Afghan cities and towns in flames and hospitals overflowing with casualties.

The Afghan leader, installed with Washington's support in 2001 and often derided as an American puppet, seemed to be bowing to a growing mood of popular anger with American military tactics and uneasiness over how long bases will remain on Afghan soil.

He promised to correct "mistakes" made by US forces, especially intrusive searches of village homes by American troops in areas where the Taliban insurgency continues.

Searching homes for weapons is a highly contentious issue in the southern and eastern Pushtun tribal areas, especially when soldiers barge into womens' quarters, a deeply insulting act in tribal culture.

Afghans also complain that innocent villagers are frequently arrested and taken to Guantanamo Bay or the interrogation centre north of Kabul at Bagram if they are unlucky enough to be in the vicinity of attacks on US soldiers or if they are the victim of faulty intelligence.

Last year, Mr Karzai appealed to the US military to rethink their tactics. But he is now demanding. **[Could he have figured out that the handful of U.S. troops in Afghanistan can't hold down a nation of 30 million when they rise against him and the Occupation? The whole Russian Army couldn't hold Afghanistan. A pathetic 18,000 U.S. troops have no hope at all. 18,000 vs. 30 million is absurd. Duh.]**

The President also called for the return of hundreds of Afghan prisoners held at Guantanamo, another major friction point, and promised to raise the issue with President George Bush when the two leaders meet in Washington this month.

But he stressed the importance of the relationship with America which has underpinned his government. "We know that without the strategic partnership with America, Afghanistan would not make it as a sovereign, independent nation," Mr Karzai said. **[Translation: My worthless ass won't last 5 minutes without the Occupation.]**

After Silly U.S. Commanders Said The Resistance Was Finished, Afghans Rise Again For The Fighting Season

15 May 2005 Independent News & Media (UK) Ltd, Nick Meo

Instead of fizzling out, the rebels are staging their annual spring resurgence with a surprising new spirit, writes Nick Meo from Kabul. This wasn't what US military planners were expecting

American soldiers in the mountain valley of Deh Chopan expect to be targeted by an unseen enemy. But the amateurish hit-and-run attacks of the Taliban - wildly fired rockets and mistimed roadside bombs - rarely inflict casualties.

It was a shock, then, when a patrol was ambushed a fortnight ago with rocket-propelled grenades and sustained small arms fire. Six Americans were wounded. Two had their legs blown off. Two more were wounded badly enough to require evacuation to Germany for surgery.

The outcome of the ferocious five-hour battle was predictable enough - withering air power obliterated the Americans' enemies - but not before a US unit had suffered serious casualties and was forced to fall back before a determined enemy assault.

A couple of days later nine Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers died when they were ambushed by machine-gun fire as they got down from a truck in Kandahar province - the newly formed ANA's worst-ever combat loss. Then two US marines were killed in a cave where they had insurgents pinned down.

This wasn't what US military planners were expecting at the start of this spring's "fighting season" when the snow thaws in the mountains. After all, Afghanistan is supposed to be the war that the American military has won. The official emphasis has changed from combat operations to "hearts and minds" programmes.

Then, over the freezing Afghan winter, there were few attacks, leading to talk from the Kabul government and US military that the Taliban were short of recruits and low on morale. Soon, went the word, their commanders would be joining the amnesty set up to lure tired fighters in from the mountains.

This programme is the hoped-for endgame after three and a half years of desultory guerrilla warfare which has tied down 18,000 US combat troops and cost the Pentagon more than \$10bn a year.

The military is desperate to scale down troop numbers after September's parliamentary elections and hand over to Afghan forces and the 5,000 British troops who arrive at the end of this year.

Instead of fizzling out, the Taliban have staged what has become a now-annual spring resurgence, and with a surprising new fighting spirit.

This year their ranks seem to have been reinforced by more experienced and more determined men.

Other reports indicate that more sophisticated tactics are being used and that new weapons are being smuggled in over the Pakistan border. When a Romanian soldier was killed near Kandahar last month it was a modern anti-tank mine that blew up his armoured personnel carrier, not an improvised bomb or one of the old Soviet landmines that frequently don't work.

Further north along the Pakistan border, near Khost, the war has become a hot one - human waves of Taliban fighters launch night assaults against the fortified bases of an Afghan mercenary force recruited by the CIA.

Those insurgents are under the command of an old warlord with links to Saudi Arabia - Jalaluddin Haqqani - whose Pakistan-based operations seem to have received a new infusion of Gulf money.

Then the worst anti-US riots since the fall of the Taliban devastated eastern Afghanistan last week. Seven died, aid agency buildings were burnt and looted, causing millions of dollars of damage.

Orchestrated as they may have been, the riots showed a new mood of anti-Americanism which will worry the US military and the Kabul government.
[“Worry?” Pissing their pants is more like it.]

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Palestinians Mark Nabka, Day Of Catastrophe

5.16.05 Aljazeera By Khalid Amayreh in the West Bank

Palestinians have observed the blackest day in their history with warnings that there will be no Middle East peace until they get independence and the plight of their refugees is solved.

Millions of Palestinians at home and in the diaspora on Sunday commemorated the 57th anniversary of the Nakba (catastrophe).

The term denotes the loss of Palestine to Zionism, the creation of Israel and the expulsion of most of the Palestinian people from their historical homeland....

[To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation by a foreign power, go to: www.rafahtoday.org The foreign army is Israeli; the occupied nation is Palestine.]

CLASS WAR REPORTS

Uprising Against Uzbekistan Tyrant Spreading:

"It Was A Popular Uprising. There Were No Terrorists Here, Just Ordinary People"

16 May 2005 The Associated Press

Sporadic shooting continued Monday in an eastern Uzbek city where an uprising sparked a crackdown by security forces that left up to 500 people dead, and a human rights group reported that clashes in another town killed an additional 200.

The spreading unrest in a region bordering Kyrgyzstan - the worst since Uzbekistan gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 - also left 11 people dead in clashes Sunday in a third town and sparked a rampage by residents in a fourth town on Saturday, witnesses said.

Andijan remained extremely tense on Monday after gunfire continued throughout the night. Residents said government troops were fighting militants in Bogishonol, an outlying district of the city, but the claim could not officially be confirmed.

Troops and armored personnel carriers formed a tight circle around the city center, where the local administration building - at the center of Friday's violence - was on fire late Sunday.

Piles of sandbags used as defenses in the fighting dotted the streets.

In a separate clash in the border town of Teshiktosh on Sunday, eight government soldiers and three civilians were killed and hundreds of Uzbeks fled into neighboring Kyrgyzstan, witnesses said.

In another border community, Korasuv, an estimated 5,000 people went on a rampage on Saturday and forced authorities to restore a bridge across a river that marks the border with Kyrgyzstan. Local residents saw the government's closing of the bridge more than two years ago as a move to deny them access to the better economy and more open politics of Kyrgyzstan.

"It was a popular uprising. There were no terrorists here, just ordinary people," said Furkat Yuldashev, 32, as he stood with other townspeople near the bridge.

"It's necessary to get this ruler out," said a 75-year-old man named Umarjon-Aka, dressed in a traditional black robe and dark blue hat.

MORE:

The U.S. Empire And Its 'Special' Dictator

[Thanks to Z, who sent this in.]

May 17, 2005 By Pepe Escobar, Asia Times Online Ltd.

"I am delighted to be back in Uzbekistan. I've just had a long and very interesting and helpful discussion with the president ... Uzbekistan is a key member of the coalition's global war on terror.

And I brought the president the good wishes of President Bush and our appreciation for their stalwart support in the war on terror ... Our relationship is strong and has been growing stronger." - US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in Tashkent, February 2004

Uzbekistan dictator Islam Karimov's army, which last Friday opened fire on thousands of unarmed protesters in Andijan, in the Ferghana Valley, has been showered by Washington in the past few years with hundreds of millions of dollars (US\$200 million in 2002 alone) - all on behalf of the "war on terror".

So you won't see the White House, or Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, hammering Karimov. You won't hear many in Washington calling for free elections in Uzbekistan.

The former strongmen of color-coded, "revolutionary" Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan were monsters who had to be removed for "freedom and democracy" to prevail. So is the dictator of Belarus.

Not Karimov. He's "our" dictator: the Saddam Hussein of Central Asia is George W Bush's man.

Karimov relies on proven "counterinsurgency" torture methods with a macabre, creative touch (immersion in boiling water) thrown in.

The Washington-Tashkent "special relationship" started as early as the mid-1990s, during the Bill Clinton administration. In 1999, Green Berets were actively training Uzbek Special Forces.

Inevitably, there will be more uprisings in the impoverished Ferghana Valley that has reached a boiling point. Karimov again will unleash his American-funded army. The White House will be silent. The Kremlin will be silent (or dub it "green revolution" - by Islamic fundamentalists, as it did with Andijan).

Corporate media will be silent: one imagines the furor had Andijan happened in Lebanon when Syrian troops were still in the country.

Uzbeks in the Ferghana won't be valued as people legitimately fighting for freedom and democracy: they will be labeled as terrorists. And Rumsfeld will keep cultivating a "strong relationship" with Karimov.

MORE:

Fuck Democracy: The Empire Needs The Uzbek Torturer; White House Shits On The Dead

The western news agenda has moved the dead of Andijan from the "democrat" to the "terrorist" pile. Karimov remains in power. The White House will be happy.

May 16, 2005 Craig Murray, The Guardian

The bodies of hundreds of pro-democracy protesters in Uzbekistan are scarcely cold, and already the White House is looking for ways to dismiss them.

The White House spokesman Scott McClellan said those shot dead in the city of Andijan included "Islamic terrorists" offering armed resistance. They should, McClellan insists, seek democratic government "through peaceful means, not through violence".

But how? This is not Georgia, Ukraine or even Kyrgyzstan. There, the opposition parties could fight elections. The results were fixed, but the opportunity to propagate their message brought change. **In Uzbek elections on December 26, the opposition was not allowed to take part at all.**

And there is no media freedom. On Saturday morning, when Andijan had been leading world news bulletins for two days, most people in the capital, Tashkent, still had no idea anything was happening.

Nor are demonstrations in the capital tolerated. On December 7 a peaceful picket at the gates of the British embassy was broken up with great violence, its victims including women and children. So how can Uzbeks pursue democracy by "peaceful means"?

The conviction rate in criminal and political trials in Uzbekistan is over 99% - in President Karimov's torture chambers, everyone confesses.

But the torture by no means ends on conviction. In prison there is torture to make you sign a recantation of faith and declaration of loyalty to the president. And there is torture to make you sign evidence implicating "accomplices". It was at

this stage that the infamous boiling to death of Muzafar Avazov and Husnidin Alimov took place in Jaslik prison in 2002.

One of the uses of Uzbek torture is to provide the CIA and MI6 with "intelligence" material linking the Uzbek opposition with Islamist terrorism and al-Qaida. The information may be untrue, but it is valuable because it feeds into the US agenda.

Karimov is very much George Bush's man in central Asia. There is not a senior member of the US administration who is not on record saying warm words about Karimov. There is not a single word recorded by any of them calling for free elections in Uzbekistan.

The airbase opened by the US at Khanabad is not essential to operations in Afghanistan, its claimed *raison d'être*. It has a more crucial role as the easternmost of Donald Rumsfeld's "lily pads" - air bases surrounding the "wider Middle East", by which the Pentagon means the belt of oil and gas fields stretching from the Middle East through the Caucasus and central Asia.

A key component of this strategic jigsaw fell into place this spring when US firms were contracted to build a pipeline to bring central Asia's hydrocarbons out through Afghanistan to the Arabian sea. That strategic interest explains the recent signature of the US-Afghan strategic partnership agreement, as well as Bush's strong support for Karimov.

So the Uzbek people can keep on dying. They are not worth a lot of cash, so who cares?

I travelled to Andijan a year ago to meet the opposition leaders, and kept in touch. I can give you a direct assurance that they are - or in many cases were - in no sense Islamist militants.

They died an unwanted embarrassment to US foreign policy.

The western news agenda has moved the dead of Andijan from the "democrat" to the "terrorist" pile. Karimov remains in power. The White House will be happy.

"I wouldn't be sitting here if I didn't think that the United States benefited greatly from our partnership and strategic relationship with Uzbekistan."

12 August 2004, General Richard Myers, the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff speaking in Tashkent. [Thanks to William Bowles, 5.16.05, williambowles.info]

Millions Of Uninsured Adults Forgo Needed Treatment For Chronic Health Conditions

02 May 2005 By Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, YubaNet.com

A new analysis of government data shows that millions of uninsured adults in the U.S. suffer with chronic illness and have medical needs that are unmet.

Nearly half (45 percent) of non-elderly, uninsured adults report having one or more chronic health problems. More than 15 million uninsured adults in the U.S. have diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or other chronic conditions.

The analysis documents that millions of these chronically ill adults forgo needed medical care or prescription drugs due to cost, leaving them at serious risk for increased health problems.

"Being uninsured carries serious health consequences," said C. Everett Koop, M.D., a former Surgeon General of the United States appointed by President Reagan.

"Americans who are uninsured have the same medical conditions that insured Americans have -- high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer, and so forth. But because they do not have health coverage, they are not able to get the medical care they need. They don't see their doctor as early as do patients with insurance. **To be blunt, uninsured patients are more likely to die than their insured counterparts with the same diagnosis.**"

Almost half (49 percent) of uninsured adults with chronic conditions forgo needed medical care or prescription drugs due to cost. Uninsured adults with chronic conditions were 4.5 times as likely as their insured counterparts to report an unmet need for medical care or prescription drugs.

Many uninsured adults with chronic illness do not have a usual source of health care. Uninsured adults with chronic conditions were more than seven times as likely as insured adults with chronic conditions to lack a usual source of health care.

Uninsured adults with chronic conditions are less likely to visit a health professional than their insured counterparts. More than one in four (27 percent) uninsured adults with chronic conditions reported no visits to a health professional in the past year, compared to about one in 14 (seven percent) insured adults.

Despite having fewer contacts with the health care system, uninsured adults with chronic conditions still face large out-of-pocket expenditures for their care. More than one in five (21 percent) uninsured adults with a chronic condition report spending at least \$2,000 out of pocket on medical care in the 12 months prior to the survey.

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