

GI SPECIAL 3B52:

**HOW MANY MORE FOR BUSH'S WAR?
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!**



Memorial ceremony to honour fallen, 1st Infantry Division, who died in Iraq, Leighton Barracks, Wuerzburg, Germany, June 6, 2005. REUTERS/Alex Grimm

Rebellion In The Ranks? Blair's Soldiers Turning Against The War

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

Anti-war protesters have leafleted army recruitment centres, barracks and even the Save our Regiments marches and on each occasion have received a positive response. 'We shouldn't be in Iraq,' is the most heard expression.

June 2005 By Andrew Burgin, Socialist Review (UK)

Military families are forging a unique campaign against the Iraq war.

'Shame on you.' These three words addressed to Tony Blair and George Bush at the funeral of Rose Gentle's 19 year old son Gordon announced the beginning of the Military Families campaign. Reverend Mann pointed the finger at those ultimately responsible for Gordon Gentle's death in Basra. Rose Gentle had encouraged Mann to tell the truth about her son's death.

Within weeks Rose had been joined by Reg Keys and together they founded Military Families Against the War (MFAW).

This campaign is unique in British political history - it bears comparison with the Military Families Speak Out campaign in the US, with which it is linked. The campaign exposed very quickly the fragility of the army and the resonance of the anti-war movement throughout the population.

MFAW discovered that many soldiers and their families had been present on the 15 February demonstration. They had opposed the war and knew all the arguments that had been central to the Stop the War campaign. There was also an embryonic network of internet chatrooms and support groups on army bases already set up by army wives. These echoed the support groups set up by the miners' wives in the 1984-85 strike.

As the arguments for the war began to unravel others joined these military families, including many families and soldiers who had initially supported the war because they believed the case made by the government over weapons of mass destruction.

The 'families group' of those whose sons and husbands have been killed in Iraq started by Reg and Rose has grown to include 16 families and each week more families are coming forward.

The Ministry of Defence is desperate to stop families contacting each other because it realises that the majority of them now want many questions answered.

All these families, now joined by a number of soldiers wounded in Iraq, are united around a central demand - for an effective public and independent inquiry into the legality of the war.

It is almost unprecedented that any family of a soldier killed in battle would speak out. The fact that close to 20 percent now do so reflects the deep opposition to the war within the army itself. Anti-war protesters have leafleted army recruitment centres, barracks and even the Save our Regiments marches and on each

occasion have received a positive response. 'We shouldn't be in Iraq,' is the most heard expression.

Soldiers themselves have come forward from the reserves, the Territorial Army and the regular army. All testify to the unpopularity of the Iraq war stretching through all ranks.

Many hundreds of young soldiers are now absent without leave (Awol) and recruitment among teenagers is at an all time low.

As one general put it, 'Soldiers feel there's no point in busting themselves to do a dirty job in Iraq, if back home people are saying the commitment is wrong, maybe even illegal.'

So far the army has ignored the Awol crisis but there has also been a 35 percent drop in recruitment meaning that many regiments will be unable to operate in Iraq. This echoes the situation that developed in Vietnam but over a much shorter period and in more concentrated form in Iraq.

In Vietnam the war was lost because the army refused to fight. The army refused to fight both because of the resistance in Vietnam and because a mass anti-war movement was built in the US.

In Britain part time Territorial Army soldiers are increasingly drawn into front line service to try and overcome the recruitment problem here. They are also a cheap option for the army. The army has little responsibility for these soldiers who can be discharged as soon as they've been wounded and sent to receive their medical care through the NHS. Many TA soldiers have returned suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder but have received little psychiatric help. Mental illness among those who have served in Iraq is common.

The recruitment crisis is based on poor pay and endemic bullying, particularly of very young recruits. The British army is the only one in Europe that still recruits child soldiers - you can sign on for 22 years on your sixteenth birthday.

The campaign of the parents of the soldiers killed at the Deepcut barracks has highlighted the bullying but it is the agitation of Rose Gentle and others against the Iraq war that has been mostly responsible for the drop in recruitment and fed the general dissatisfaction within the army itself. Rose has also exposed the way unemployed youngsters are enticed into the army, often recruited when they go to sign on. As Rose puts it, 'Gordon wanted to travel and get a trade. When he signed up that is what he was told his future was. They didn't mention their war in Iraq.'

The ripples from the 15 February movement have reached into previously untouched sections of the population. The depth and breadth of the anti-war movement meant that the left had to organise new ways of working politically. We were forced to respond to the fact that the 'war on terror' was radicalising whole communities with whom we previously had little contact. This is the case with the Military Families campaign, who are doing some of the most effective work against the war.

George Solomou, who resigned from the TA because of his opposition to the war, has just returned from a tour of Scandinavia where he spoke at a series of anti-war rallies. Ray Hewitt, a reservist who fought in the first Gulf war, received a standing ovation when he addressed delegates at the recent NUT conference. Rose Gentle and Reg Keys are national political figures. Reg Keys' speech at the count in Sedgefield was, apart from George Galloway's victory in Bethnal Green and Bow, the defining moment of the 2005 election.

Blair may believe that he is over the worst with Iraq but he underestimates the depth of anger of the military families towards his war. As one mother said, 'I asked Hoon, why did my son die? He was silent and turned away from me.' Blair has refused to meet these families but their day will come.

They are taking legal action to force a public inquiry into the war and its legality. This will be accompanied by a national petitioning campaign. The families are linking up with wounded and serving soldiers to hold this government to account.

The crisis for the Blair administration rests in this - it is now impossible to conceive of the army being able to fight another war on the same basis as the invasion of Iraq.

Nor is it even possible for the British army to deploy in support of US forces in Iraq. When the Black Watch were re-deployed to the so called triangle of death in order to support the attack on Fallujah last November there was a public outcry. Relatives of Black Watch soldiers accompanied others from MFAW to protests in central London. British troops are largely confined to barracks in southern Iraq or are, at most, detailed to protect oil exports.

Every soldier now killed in Iraq undermines any residual support for the war and shortens Blair's tenure in Downing Street.

This is not just Blair's problem though - the whole cabinet, with the exception of Robin Cook, went along with this war. The whole cabinet asked not one question of the attorney general nor did a single member ask to see his written legal advice. The Labour Party might feel they have a get out of jail free card with Gordon Brown, but there is a crisis of legitimacy that spreads through the whole system. The Iraq war will haunt Labour's third term just as it did the second.

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

TASK FORCE LIBERTY SOLDIER KILLED BY KIRKUK IED

June 6, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 05-06-04C

TIKRIT, Iraq -- **A Task Force Liberty Soldier was killed when an improvised explosive device detonated near a vehicle patrol in Kirkuk Province at about 4 p.m., June 5.** The Soldier was evacuated to a Coalition Forces medical facility where the Soldier died of wounds sustained in the attack.

Marine Dies Of February Wounds

June 6, 2005 U.S. Department of Defense News Release No. 560-05

The Department of Defense announced today the death of a Marine.

Cpl. Antonio Mendoza, 21, of Santa Ana, Calif., died June 3 at Brook Army Medical Center, San Antonio, from wounds received as a result of an explosion while conducting combat operations against enemy forces in Ar Ramadi, Iraq, on Feb. 22. At the time of his injury, Mendoza was assigned to 5th Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Army Tank Driver From Racine Killed

Jun. 06, 2005 Associated Press

An Army tank driver who joined the military to get experience driving big equipment was killed in Iraq on his second tour of duty and two weeks before he was to come home to visit, his father said Monday.

Spc. Eric Poelman, 21, of Racine, was killed Sunday, his father, Matt Poelman, said in a telephone interview from his home in Longview, Texas. The father and mother, who moved to Texas about a year ago, were awaiting word from the military on exactly what happened, other than he was engaged in battle, the father said.

Poelman married his "sweetheart of three years," Renate Klema, on May 1, 2004, the father said. She is living with her parents in Racine. The Poelmans lived in Mount Pleasant, just outside Racine, before moving to Texas. Eric Poelman has two brothers, Andy, 23, and Greg, 17.

Poelman is the 38th Wisconsin soldier or Marine killed in Iraq. He was assigned to the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Battalion, his father said.

The soldier spent five months in Iraq in 2003 and was redeployed for another tour of duty in March after being based in Fort Carson, Colo., Matt Poelman said.

In Saturday's call, the son reported he had a broken DVD player, and the parents already bought one to replace it by Monday, the father said.

"He was planning to come home in two weeks, at the end of June. We still got the DVD player laying here," he said.

After high school, Poelman became interested in operating heavy equipment. He joined the Army to bide some time until he turned 21 and would find it easier to get such a job, Matt Poelman said.

"The military gave him a good option for driving tanks. So that became his pursuit in the military," the father said. "While in Iraq, he had multiple roles. He could either be driving a Humvee (utility vehicle) on missions or he would be driving a tank on missions."

The father called his son a "rambunctious young man. He loved to do snowmobiling. He liked to work on cars. He had fixed up an old '85 Buick Regal that turned out very nice."

"He wanted to work on cars, on vehicles and heavy equipment, and maybe open up his own garage, that type of thing," he said.

2 Romanian Soldiers Injured In Baghdad

6 June 2005 FOCUS News Agency, Bucharest

Two Romanian soldiers were injured in Baghdad in an attack against a car transporting a diplomatic mail of the Romanian Embassy to the Airport of the Iraqi capital, AFP reported going by the words of Romanian President Traian Basescu.

President Basescu has added that the soldiers have been injured in the legs and their life is out of danger.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

“His Brother Sensed He Might Not Return Alive”

June 06, 2005 Associated Press, KABUL, Afghanistan

Two soldiers killed in a bomb explosion in Afghanistan have been identified as residents of Virginia and New Jersey, the U.S. military said Monday.

Sgt. Leroy E. Alexander, 27, of Dale City, Va., and Capt. Charles D. Robinson, 29, of Haddon Heights, N.J., were killed near Urgan district in eastern Paktika province on Friday when a bomb exploded near their vehicle, the military said in a statement.

Both were assigned to the 1st Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group, based at Fort Bragg, N.C.

Alexander had wanted to be in the military since he was a little boy, said his father, Ronald E. Alexander, a former Marine.

"I want to be just like you," he recalled his oldest son telling him.

He returned to the United States on home leave in January. His wife, Marissa, is pregnant with twins, a boy and a girl, his father said. Alexander's mother, Felecia, traveled to Fayetteville, N.C., to be with her daughter-in-law after the Army notified the family of her son's death.

In retrospect, Reggie Alexander said, he believes his brother sensed he might not return alive.

"He was scared to go back," he said. "But he had to. He loved what he was doing. He was the best at it. He always finished at the top of his class. It was what his calling was. But he was also scared."

A third soldier and an Afghan interpreter were also wounded in Friday's blast.

TROOP NEWS

Springfield Soldier Has Foot, Leg Amputated

June 6, 2005 The Associated Press, PORTLAND

Military surgeons in Germany have amputated the left foot and part of the right leg of an Oregon National Guard sergeant injured in Iraq by a roadside bomb.

Sgt. Johan Bagge, 23, of Springfield was among ten Oregon National Guard troops injured by a roadside bomb Friday in Iraq. Surgeons were able to save his wounded arm.

Lorraine Bagge of Salem said her cousin was in "good spirits."

Army Command Prefers Half-Blind, Fucked Up Reservists On Battlefield

June 6, 2005
Letters To The Editor
Army Times

As a Reserve soldier, I am disappointed with the Army's view of reserve-component soldiers. We are still looked down upon.

A lot has been done to mold the service into an "Army of one," but things still need to change. Since joining in October 2003, I have been active for many different training opportunities, and trained units for deployment to Iraq and Kosovo. I haven't even been in for two years and have more than a year of active-duty days.

With this in mind, I want to know why some benefits do not apply to Reserve or Guard members, especially LASIK eye surgery.

The Army pays for this surgery, but only for active duty.

OK, can I pay the price that the Army pays and get it done? It's around \$1,000 for the Army to do it. I would gladly pay that out of my own pocket, but the Army won't let me do that because I am a reservist.

I recently got back from Desert Environmental Survival Training: hard-core training in the desert.

While I was busy being evasive, I had to keep worrying about my glasses or my goggles falling off my head or fogging up.

My biggest fear is going overseas and having my glasses and goggles cause those problems, and not being able to see.

The Air Force and Navy both offer LASIK to their reserve-component members. Why can't the Army?

Spc. Jason Knowlton
Wallingford, Conn.

Jack Self Doesn't Laugh Much Anymore

June 06, 2005 By Ravi Nessman, AP

As his new bride, Amanda, and her friends chuckle at stories over dinner, Jack Self stares in silence. He doesn't laugh much anymore.

Jack has spent half of the last two years patrolling the cities of Iraq, dodging sniper fire and roadside bombs, and watching friends die. The 26-year-old Marine corporal no longer sees the humor in everyday life.

His first deployment Self now calls "Disneyland.' His second stint in Iraq, fighting the deadly, amorphous Sunni insurgency, that was "Vietnam.' The first was a mission of liberation. The second was an apocalyptic nightmare.

Self knows he's changed, but it is hard to tell how. He only really sees himself reflected in the mirror of Amanda's eyes. She tells him he is more serious than he used to be, perhaps more aggressive.

He sees it too, in comrades from the 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines. Some can't sleep. Some use alcohol to numb themselves. Others try counseling.

On April 9, 2003, the day Baghdad fell, as the Marines waved civilian cars off the road, one car did not stop. The Marines screamed for it to stop. Now dangerously close, it flashed its headlights and continued.

Self, perched behind his gun on top of the Humvee, squeezed the trigger. Seven grenades tore through the car's windshield, and the vehicle exploded in flames.

The Marines watched in silence, waiting for the fire to detonate any explosives or ammunition inside the car. Nothing, not even the sound of bullets cooking off, interrupted the faint notes of Johnny Cash's "Live From Folsom Prison" playing on the speakers in Self's turret.

The three people in the car were almost definitely civilians, and they were dead.

Still behind the gun, Self looked down at me, standing in the road, and let out an angry, defensive yell: "Yeah, I'm a monster!"

He is still haunted by the image of the burning sedan, and the thought of the other victims of his gun. Dozens, scores, maybe more, he's not really sure.

"That's something I think about: If I'll see the faces of every person I killed."

He even worries he'll be haunted by those whose faces he never saw.

He saw nine comrades killed. Many others were badly injured.

"I don't know what's worse, a guy that's dead or a guy with his arm and half his face blown off. He's only got one eye and he's crying out of his one eye and he's patting his arm looking for it," he said.

At first, Self was reluctant to talk of his friends' deaths. In time, the stories poured out.

One Marine was laying concertina wire when he suddenly fell over dead. A single sniper's bullet had pierced his heart. Another jumped on a grenade and covered it with his helmet, sacrificing his life to save his friends.

Once, a Marine was shot and vomiting. The medic couldn't bring himself to do CPR, so Self did. The Marine died anyway. "I can still smell it. I can still see his eyes and know he's dead," he said.

On a mission searching for bombs, Self's vehicle cruised past an elaborate explosive device: two rockets hidden in a roadside pile of garbage. As the next Humvee passed, the rockets were remotely launched into it, tearing through a group of Marines sitting in the back.

Self and a medic sprinted to help and found the vehicle, which had been filled with their friends, soaked with blood and carnage. Three Marines died.

"That was the worst thing I've ever seen," Self said.

Some Marines reacted to their buddies' deaths by wanting to kill everybody, Self said. Others froze up.

Back home now, the Marines of the 3/7 carry the scars of war.

One terrified his wife when he swerved across lanes of highway traffic to avoid a bag of garbage, fearing it was a roadside bomb.

Another told of grabbing his girlfriend and running for cover at the crackle of fireworks after a college football game and of checking the rooms of her house for guerrillas when he woke to use the bathroom in the night.

Self, in a sleepy daze, leapt out of bed when he mistook the red light on a hotel smoke detector for a tracer round. Amanda told him he coordinates troop movements and calls out grid positions in his sleep.

The first time he returned to an American shopping mall, he was unnerved by the wide open spaces and by the numerous places snipers could hide. He wanted to back into a corner. "You don't have security to your rear, to your flanks," he said. He turned and hurried out.

Now Self has Amanda and his dreams of their future together. He has already sent out applications to fire departments in Texas, looking for a job for after he leaves the Marines early next year.

He just has one more nightmare to confront first. The 3/7 is scheduled to return to Iraq in September.

"They're Not Speaking For Us"

[Thanks to D, who sent this in.]

June 13 By Scott Johnson and Eve Conant, Newsweek

It took only a few ambushes, roadside bombs and corpses for Neal Saunders to know what he had to do: turn the streets of Baghdad into rap music. So the First Cavalry sergeant, then newly arrived for a year of duty in Sadr City, began hoarding his monthly paychecks and seeking out a U.S. supplier willing to ship a keyboard, digital mixer, cable, microphones and headphones to an overseas military address.

He hammered together a plywood shack, tacked up some cheap mattress pads for soundproofing and invited other Task Force 112 members to join him in his jerry-built studio. They call themselves "4th25"-pronounced fourth quarter, like the final do-or-die minutes of a game-and their album is "Live From Iraq."

The sound may be raw, even by rap standards, but it expresses things that soldiers usually keep bottled up. "You can't call home and tell your mom your door got blown off by an IED," says Saunders.

"No one talks about what we're going through. Sure, there are generals on the TV, but they're not speaking for us. We're venting for everybody."

Rap is becoming the pulse of the Iraq war, as the sounds of Jimi Hendrix and Jim Morrison were for Vietnam. The essential difference is that new electronic gear is giving today's troops the ability to create a soundtrack of their own rather than having a mass-produced version flown in from home.

Stateside rap sounds tame to the guys serving in Iraq anyway. This week an open-mike competition in Baghdad is expected to draw many of the front-line military's top performers.

The GI rappers, many producing or aiming to produce their own CDs, are giving listeners back home an uncensored glimpse of life in Iraq, straight from the troops-troops like Johnny (Snap) Batista and Richard (Ten Gram) Bachellor, who patrol Baghdad with a unit of the Marine Antiterrorism Battalion.

In their off-duty hours they place a boombox on the pavement in the Green Zone and improvise rhymes about how it feels to be shot at or to lose a friend to an improvised explosive device (IED).

One of their most popular numbers starts in a hushed tone, almost a whisper: "There's a place in this world you've never seen before / A place called streets and a place called war / Most of you wanksters ain't never seen the fleet / You talk about war and you've only seen the street."

“It Seems Like The Current Administration Is More Interested In Our Deaths Than In Our Lives”

Says Curry: "In Vietnam they poisoned us with Agent Orange, and now they are poisoning another generation with depleted uranium and other toxins. When the Pentagon minimizes the hazards of depleted uranium, they are playing politics with Iraq Veterans' health."

May 26, 2005 from VVAW

**From a report Produced by Vietnam Veterans Against the War, 773-276-4189
Co-sponsored by Iraq Veterans Against the War, 215-241-7123**

Written by Dave Curry. Additional research by Della Moran and Hannah Frisch.
Consulting by Tracy Van Slyke.

"As Memorial Day approaches, we protest the coming cuts to an already underfunded system of health care for veterans.

It seems like the current administration is more interested in our deaths than in our lives, said Dave Curry, VVAW National Staff.

The result is that hundreds of thousands of veterans must suffer with untreated medical injuries and mental ailments. Their illnesses worsen while their disabilities push them towards bankruptcy.

Says Curry. "In Vietnam they poisoned us with Agent Orange, and now they are poisoning another generation with depleted uranium and other toxins. When the Pentagon minimizes the hazards of depleted uranium, they are playing politics with Iraq Veterans' health."

Without massive changes, millions of veterans who have been promised access to health care will slip through the cracks of the VA system. To provide quality health-care for American veterans VVAW and IVAW recommends the following:

Iraqi veterans have been exposed to dangerous levels of depleted uranium by the U.S. military. The United States must immediately cease production of depleted-uranium weapons and stop their use in overseas military efforts. Like Agent Orange-a herbicide used by the military during the Vietnam War which caused serious physical damage to U.S. soldiers-the short-term military gains made with depleted uranium can cause long-term and possibly life-threatening mental and physical repercussions.

The VA must expand current services and improve access to quality medical care in order to meet the actual needs of the millions of veterans across the country in a timely manner.

"Our government has an obligation to provide meaningful support for the veterans of this unjust and immoral war. Over one million soldiers have rotated through Iraq in the two years since the invasion and there is still no viable exit strategy.

"As our government pursues policy that will create new veterans, they have a sacred duty to provide the educational, medical, and financial benefits promised to all soldiers upon enlistment." says Charles Anderson a member of IVAW. Anderson served in the Middle East from February 1, 2003 to May 28, 2003. He was a hospital corpsman with a tank battalion and entered Iraq on March 20th with the first wave of U.S. troops.

While the U.S. government sends its soldiers overseas to a war with insufficient body armor and outdated equipment and exposes them to dangerous chemicals, at home the government cuts funding and increases the amount of money veterans must pay into an already-insufficient healthcare system.

In early January, President George W. Bush released his disappointing FY 2006 budget detailing that funding for veteran's medical programs would receive only less than half of one percent budget increase, far below the necessary 13 to 14 percent increase that Veteran's Administration noted that it would need just to keep up with the current level of services and accommodate growing enrollment numbers;

While the mantra "Support Our Troops" has reverberated from Capitol Hill and the White House, acts such as President Bush's FY 2006 budget proposal to increase the burden of healthcare costs on veterans have made it clear that the soldiers of past and current wars will continue to be dishonored.

"It's particularly offensive to send people off to war and not take care of them when they come home," said Dr. Steffie Woolhandler, a professor at Harvard Medical School, founder of Physicians for a National Health Program, and coauthor of the study.

Charles Anderson's Story: Coming Home: Mental Health Needs

Charles Anderson was a hospital corpsman 3rd class, promoted to 2nd class and made platoon sergeant before he left. He was with a tank battalion and went in to Iraq on March 20th with the first wave of U.S. troops. He served in the Middle East from February 1, 2003 to May 28, 2003

I was medically retired from the Navy this year because of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. I was having nightmares and was diving for cover whenever I heard a loud noise. When I spent New Years Eve hiding behind the couch because of the firecrackers, I realized I needed help.

I did receive counseling while still on active duty, but I have not received treatment since my discharge because I have run into such a hassle trying to get it.

I tried to get into a pilot program in which the Navy permits you to pre-register for services with the Veterans Administration instead of going through the typical months-long waiting period while your application is processed.

I went in to the office and was told I could not see anyone that day. I went back the next day and, after a two-and-a-half hour wait, I was told that I was ineligible for the pre-registration program because they only accept people who are not medically discharged, which means that the people who need services the most have to wait the longest.

I had been improving with counseling, but I've backslid since I was discharged and unable to continue with the active duty counseling program.

Once you are out, no one comes around to offer help, which is a big problem because lots of people don't know what to do and where to get help.

Bush Continues Drastic VA Cuts: Wants To Take Back PTSD Benefits From Troops Now Getting Them

5/27/2005 U.S. Newswire

The Budget Resolution passed by both houses of Congress will result in staff reductions in every VA Medical Center at a most inauspicious time—as veterans return from the war in Iraq and as increasing numbers of veterans need care from the system, said Thomas H. Corey, National President of Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA).

The impact will be significant among those returning troops who suffer from mental health issues such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), those who have sustained loss of limbs, and other serious injuries.

In addition to devastating decreases in the availability of care for veterans that will result from such budget cuts, the VA seems determined to contest even long-standing disability compensation for PTSD from veterans currently receiving VA benefits and health care.

A recent VA Inspector General's (IG) report concluded that following a brief review of certain grants of service-connected benefits for PTSD, the "subjectivity" involved in such determinations has resulted in over-granting of benefits.

As a result, the VA will be reviewing PTSD grants between 1999 and 2004, with an eye toward revoking benefits.

"We must make it crystal clear to Congress that the budget appropriation for fiscal year 2006 year is at least \$3.5 billion less than what is needed to fund the VA medical programs adequately," Corey said.

"This is a critical time. Without these resources, veterans will have longer waits to see specialists, much-needed maintenance will be deferred, and medical equipment will not be purchased.

"Together, through the Partnership for Veterans Health Care Budget Reform veterans service organizations will demonstrate against these drastic cutbacks.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

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

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

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Al-Sadr: “Legalizing The Occupation Is Rejected From Any Angle”

06/06/05 By Qassim Abdul-Zahra, AP, NAJAF, Iraq

A cleric says the Iraqi elections "legitimized the occupation."

In a rare interview with a Western news organization, al-Sadr told The Associated Press he will stay away from Iraqi politics as long as U-S troops remain in Iraq.

He indirectly criticized Iraq's top Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, for promoting the process that led to the formation of the country's Shiite-led government.

Al-Sadr said al-Sistani's appeal presented voting as an act of "political resistance" against the U.S. presence in Iraq, but it in fact legitimized the occupation.

"In reality, the electoral process was designed to legitimize the occupation, rather than ridding the country of the occupation," al-Sadr said.

Al-Sadr said in the interview he would continue to personally stay away from politics while there are foreign troops in Iraq.

“As long as the occupier is here, I will not interfere in the political process,” he said. “I would like to condemn and denounce the last Iraqi government’s decision to legalize the occupation. Legalizing the occupation is rejected from any angle.”

Anyone who sees himself capable of bringing about political reform should go ahead and try, he added, “but my belief is that the occupiers won’t allow him.”

“I call on authorities to spend Iraqi money on Iraqis and serve the interests of Iraq’s people ... not on America’s interests in Iraq,” he said, warning that “for every action there’s a reaction.”

Al-Sadr said he preferred to see an Islamist constitution adopted in Iraq, but that the decision should be left to the Iraqi people.

Iraqi Oil Union Rejects Privatisation

From: Ewa Jasiewicz
Sent: June 06, 2005

Translation Of The Final Communiqué Of The Basra Conference On Privatisation Of The Public Sector

Bismillah al-rahman al-rahim

“Wa-inna li-`l-insan illa ma sa`a wa inna sa`i-hi saufa yura” Sadaq allahu al-`ali al-azim From the holy Koran: “Indeed man has only what he works and his work will be seen.” OR “Indeed man has only his struggle and his effort will be seen”

To the Parliament, the Iraqi government, the Ministry of Oil, the Ministry of Industry:

The General Union of Oil Employees in Basra held its first scientific conference on the topic of privatisation of the public sector between 25-26th May 2005 in the auditorium of the Cultural Centre of the Oil Sector under the banner: “To revive the public sector and to build an Iraq free of privatisation”.

Sixteen studies were presented and debated during the conference sessions, eight studies by professors of the University of Basra, four studies by figures from the oil sector, and four studies by representatives of civil society from the USA and Britain.

The papers, debate, and opinions expressed in the course of the conference led to the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. The public sector economy of Iraq is one of the symbols of the achievement of Iraqis since the revolution of 4th July 1958.

It represents the common wealth of all Iraqis who built this sector.

Hence it is impermissible that a Ministry or other party effect any change in this sector without consulting the people through the Parliament or a general referendum.

As for the oil sector, it could be said that the Iraqi economy and people breathe with two lungs, in the north the Northern Oil Company – and it is scarcely functioning for known reasons – and the Southern Oil Company. In short at present the economy and people breathe with only one lung.

Therefore the conference participants judged it inconceivable that this structure, so central to the life of all Iraqis, be tampered with.

2. If certain of the public industrial plants suffer from problems and faults, there are a variety of possible solutions and means, notably with regard to machines, technology, and human resources required to renew these plants. Iraqis have the capacity to do the work if given the chance.

3. The present conjuncture of Iraq is one where the country lacks a stable political infrastructure and a clearly defined economic system on which the people can rely. This being so, the conference participants believe that the privatisation of the oil and industrial sectors, or of any part of them, will do great harm to the Iraqi people and their economy.

4. It is Parliament, as representative of the Iraqi people, that we hold responsible for preserving the wealth and achievement of Iraqi people gained through long struggle.

The conference participants call upon the members of Parliament as representatives of the people all to take a firm stand against political currents and directives calling for the privatisation of the public sector in Iraq. It is the view of the Iraqi people which must decide this vital matter.

5. The conference participants call upon all States to remit the odious debts undertaken by the previous regime, without condition and without infringing the independence, sovereignty and economic self-governance of Iraq.

Wa-allahu al-muwaffiq

Committee of Presidency of the Conference
The first conference on privatisation
Basra 26th May 2005

Ibrahim Muhammad Radiy
Faruq Muhammad Sadiq
Dr. `Abd al-Jabbar al-Hilfi
Falih `Abbud `Amarah
Hasan Jum`ah `Awwad

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

Another Attack On Pipeline; Oil Exports Cut Sharply

06 June 2005 By Borzou Daragahi, The Los Angeles Times & June 3, 2005 Energy Security

An attack on pipeline between Kirkuk and the Dibis refinery, about 30 miles west, shut down a pipeline from Kirkuk to Turkey from Friday to Sunday.

Oil industry officials say sabotage has dragged northern oil exports down from 1 million barrels a day during Hussein's rule to no more than 350,000.

Because of sabotage, Kubba said, the country failed to fully fund its 2004 budget and is in danger of falling further behind in 2005. Oil exports amounted to 95% of Iraqi revenue last year

Assorted Resistance Action

6 June 2005 FOCUS News Agency & CNN & UPI

Mosul. One Iraqi died and another two were injured in an attack with mortar against a police station in the Northern Iraqi town of Mosul, announced AFP, citing police sources. According to the information unidentified persons have fired five shells against the building of the police.

Six Iraqi soldiers and two civilians were wounded Monday by a car bomb in Babil province, police told CNN. The incident took place at 9:45 a.m. in Babil,

A bomber detonated his booby-trapped car north of Baghdad Monday, injuring four Iraqi soldiers despite security raids near the Iraqi capital.

Security sources said the attack occurred outside a U.S.-Iraqi military base in Tikrit.

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Iraq?

“That Situation Is Irretrievably Lost”

"There's nothing that you can do in Iraq today that will work," said William Lind, a military analyst and former Senate aide who is director of the Free Congress Foundation's Center for Cultural Conservatism, one of the original Fourth Generation Warfare authors.

"That situation is irretrievably lost." 06 June 2005 Stephen J. Hedges, The Chicago Tribune

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.

Bush-Cheney Iraq Happy Talk Vs. Reality: “Things Could Turn Badly Very Quickly”

Military commanders in Iraq privately told a visiting congressional delegation last week that the United States is at least two years away from adequately training a viable Iraqi military but that it is no longer reasonable to consider augmenting U.S. troops already strained by the two-year operation, said Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr. (D-Del.).

June 5, 2005 By Jim VandeHei and Peter Baker, Washington Post Staff Writers

President Bush's portrayal of a wilting insurgency in Iraq at a time of escalating violence and insecurity throughout the country is reviving the debate over the administration's Iraq strategy and the accuracy of its upbeat claims.

The disconnect between Rose Garden optimism and Baghdad pessimism, according to government officials and independent analysts, stems not only from Bush's focus on tentative signs of long-term progress but also from the shrinking range of policy options available to him if he is wrong.

Military commanders in Iraq privately told a visiting congressional delegation last week that the United States is at least two years away from adequately training a viable Iraqi military but that it is no longer reasonable to consider augmenting U.S. troops already strained by the two-year operation, said Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr. (D-Del.).

"The idea that the insurgents are on the run and we are about to turn the corner, I did not hear that from anybody," Biden said in an interview.

Cheney offered an even more hopeful assessment during a CNN interview aired the night before, saying the insurgency was in its "last throes."

Several Republicans questioned that evaluation. "I cannot say with any confidence that that is accurate," said Rep. Steve Chabot (R-Ohio), a member of the House International Relations Committee.

Peter Khalil, a former national security policy adviser for the Coalition Provisional Authority that ruled Iraq after Hussein's fall, said the rosy views expressed by Bush and Cheney reflect tentative hopes for progress down the road rather than a focus on day-to-day events at the moment.

"They're thinking more long term when they make such optimistic remarks," said Khalil, now a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution.

"There's some cause for optimism; however, things could turn badly very quickly." [To go badly from where things are now means the bottom pit of hell and copters going off the embassy roof. Not much more left than that now.]

OCCUPATION REPORT

Welcome To Liberated Iraq: Baghdad "Justice" Is Swift And Deadly

06 June 2005 By Jeffrey Fleishman, The Los Angeles Times

The blacksmith, the builder and the laborer were sentenced to death just before noon.

The trial had lasted two hours. It was the third time since the end of Saddam Hussein's regime that the death penalty had been handed down.

The defendants at last week's trial never met the lawyer who argued their case. They weren't allowed to introduce medical or other evidence. There was no cross-examination of prosecution witnesses, because there were none. The little testimony given was mainly the denials of the accused.

The men were charged with assassinating a senior intelligence official in the Interior Ministry.

The three accused, Asaad Diafis Abdullah, Ayad Salman Chiad, Mohammed Ali Ghadhban and their alleged accomplice, Hamad Jabar Atiyah, were led from holding cells. They stood outside the courtroom and offered their manacled wrists to the bailiff. Silver shackles clunked on the floor. The men were ordered to turn and face the wall, sitting cross-legged.

Policemen wearing bulletproof vests gathered and shared cigarettes around them. One officer, Ahmed Hashim, said: "Why waste the court's time and money on these men? We should cut them up and throw away the pieces."

Ghalib Rubaii sweated in a wrinkled black robe. The homicide lawyer had received a call the night before, the friend-of-a-relative-of-a-friend kind of call coming from a poor street in a mean neighborhood. He would represent the defendants.

"I don't know all the details," he said. "I haven't seen the full case." **When asked if he had met his clients, he said no. He double-checked a piece of paper to remember their names.**

The trial would begin in 20 minutes.

The defendants have confessed, but said they did so under torture that included rape with a metal rod.

The defendants stood in the dock. Atiyah, a narrow man with bristly gray hair, and Abdullah, a stockier sort, tilted back their heads to see over the wooden railing. Ghadhban and Chiad are taller and younger. Judge Samiraii sat in the big chair in the middle of the bench. A second judge, a man with a polished pate and two pairs of reading glasses, sat to his right, and a third with a heavy face and a blunt mustache whispered from the left.

The accused were called one by one to testify. Shortly before 11 a.m., Judge Samiraii questioned Chiad. At 11:11, the judge turned to Atiyah. At 11:24, he questioned Ghadhban. Abdullah was next at 11:32. The questioning was finished at 11:36.

The defendants said they were welding, plastering and working construction on the morning of the murder. Atiyah, the accused driver of the car, said his brother was a policeman killed by rebels. "How can I cooperate with terrorists?" he said.

He told the judge that the police "tortured me for five days, tore off my clothes and underwear and threatened to rape me and bring my wife and sisters in to rape them."

"Why did you confess?" the judge asked Abdullah.

"By force and torture," he said.

The judge looked at Chiad: "An AK-47 was confiscated from your house, and the empty shells match your rifle."

"No. No rifle was taken from me," Chiad said.

Atiyah rose on his tiptoes as if to say something, but was hushed. A chorus of crinkling sounds drifted over the bench as the judges fanned themselves with paper. There was no cross-examination.

Rubaii wagged his finger at the judges. He said he needed time to collect witnesses, accumulate medical evidence and meet his clients. The second judge changed his glasses and opened a folder. The court granted a two-day postponement and adjourned at 11:57.

Shackled at the ankles and wrists and threaded together, the defendants were marched through the foyer.

Less than 48 hours later, Rubaii, wearing the same gray suit and wrinkled robe, still had not met his clients.

"This is a breach of justice," he said. He added that requests were denied for medical examinations to determine if the defendants had been tortured. But he did round up alibi witnesses. He was confident, too, about a closing statement he had prepared. At 10:34 a.m., his clients were back in the dock.

By 10:59, Judge Samiraii had questioned six witnesses. They were laborers, welders and contractors. Some were relatives. Most were friends. Samiraii didn't believe them; these kinds of men sometimes also give allegiance to the insurgency.

The judge motioned to Rubaii. The lawyer lifted the pages of his closing statement. It was a flourish of a textured voice, a plea, strings of words and outrage, but little evidence. "Is this the way of handling a case like this?" he asked the court. "Is it good to convict people whose confessions were gotten in such a manner that is counter to our laws?"

He flicked to another page and read on. The prosecutor nodded off for a moment. **Rubaii reached the final sentence at 11:17. The judges cleared the courtroom to begin deliberations.**

The courtroom doors reopened at 11:36. Rubaii tossed his cigarette on the floor.

"Only in God can we trust," he said.

Guilty.

Atiyah was given 10 years in prison. The others were sentenced to death by hanging. No execution date was set. Rubaii promised to appeal.

“Elite” Occupation Cops Stage Wages Protest In Baghdad

06 June 2005 By Borzou Daragahi, The Los Angeles Times

On Sunday, members of Iraq's elite police commando units, heralded by U.S. and Iraqi officials as a key to stemming the insurgency, staged a protest outside Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone, saying they hadn't been paid in four months, witnesses said.

Collaborators: Seduced And Abandoned

Some of them seem bewildered to learn that, no matter how good their relationships with their American bosses were, there is no mechanism to help them.

June 5, 2005 By KATHERINE ZOEPF, The New York Times Company

DAMASCUS, Syria, June 4 - Nashwan Hassan Ahmed's belief in the American mission in Iraq never wavered.

Hired fresh out of Baghdad University, he served for 18 months as an interpreter for American forces in Mosul. Former colleagues recall him working bravely and tirelessly, side by side with troops on dangerous nighttime hunts for insurgents, and in the offices and conference rooms where the details of reconstruction projects were hammered out.

The days were long, but Mr. Ahmed, now 24, said he did not care, "because I felt that I was trying to help Iraq stand up again, and because I felt I was like a brother to them."

By "them," Mr. Ahmed meant the American soldiers he lived with, and who came to call him Nash. He spent mornings with them at the shooting range and evenings playing video games. He learned to like lasagna and root for the Atlanta Braves.

Then the threats started. **Because of his work with American troops, some Iraqis saw Mr. Ahmed as a collaborator. [Imagine that!]** Mr. Ahmed said his family was harassed and abused, and they moved three times in an effort to hide from insurgents.

When Mr. Ahmed begged his American bosses for help, he was told they could do nothing. He said he finally realized that for his family's safety, he would have to leave Iraq.

Alone, he crossed the border into Syria in January.

Mr. Ahmed is one of a growing group of Iraqis who used to work as interpreters, drivers or cooks for American forces in Iraq but have fled to Syria because the insurgency branded them as traitors.

They were once among the most enthusiastic Iraqi supporters of the American-led invasion to overthrow Saddam Hussein.

But now, they say, they feel confused and abandoned.

They bombard American consular officials with their visa requests but, despite their idiomatic English and their reference letters from American commanders, without relatives in the United States, their chances of being admitted are slim.

The Iraqis, for their part, say they continue to hope that Syria is a temporary stop.

Some of them seem bewildered to learn that, no matter how good their relationships with their American bosses were, there is no mechanism to help them.

Binyamin Shamoon, 36, who came to Damascus in August 2004, said he quit his job as a laundry worker at an American base in Baghdad after he received an anonymous letter that contained a threat to bomb his house. The letter demanded only that he give up his job, but Mr. Shamoon said he did not feel safe until he brought his family to Syria.

"We would like to go to the U.S.," he said. "But there is no program that helps us. This seems strange to me. It's because of our work with the Americans that we had to flee our country."

American soldiers returning from Iraq say they often worry about the safety of their Iraqi colleagues, but have no way to help them.

Erik Schiemann, 27, a former infantry captain with the 101st Airborne Division, said he had been sending e-mail to Mr. Ahmed, his interpreter in Mosul, with information about community colleges in the United States, in the hopes that Nash might one day get a student visa.

"There's no other way for us to really bring him to the States, or help him with visas," Mr. Schiemann said. "I think the best thing I can do is to keep in touch with him and to try to help him on his future path."

Samer Zora Borka, 28, who worked as an interpreter for the American military in Baghdad, said he knew at least 15 former employees who were living in a Damascus suburb.

Mr. Borka said many Iraqis in his situation felt anger and disappointment at their former employers, but that he tried to avoid such feelings.

"The American soldiers love to use the word family," he said. "They kept saying it. About the unit, I mean. They'd say, 'We're family, we work as a family.' "

Mr. Borka smiled and added, "And I guess we used to believe them."

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



BUSHES TO RULE U.S. UNTIL 2090: Former President Bush Unveils Dynastic Plans On 'Larry King Live'

June 5, 2005 The Borowitz Report

In an appearance on CNN'S "Larry King Live," former President George H. W. Bush unveiled ambitious plans to extend the Bush dynasty in the White House, indicating that if all goes as planned the Bushes will rule the U.S. until 2090.

When asked if he hoped that his son, Florida Governor Jeb Bush, would run for president in 2008, the former president replied, "Yes, Larry, I think it's the smart one's turn."

The former president added that plans for a Bush dynasty had been in the works for years, and that a wall-sized chart outlining the family's plans to hold the White House for the better part of a century dominates the Bush family rec room at their Kennebunkport, Maine estate.

According to the former president, Gov. Bush's eight years as president would be followed by another eight by First Lady Laura Bush, at which time, he said, "The stage would be set for Barb and Jenna."

With the presidency of Jenna Bush wrapping up in the year 2040, he said, it would be time for "as-yet unimagined Bushes" to ascend to the nation's highest office.

Presidential historian Davis Logden of the University of Minnesota said he sees advantages in such an unprecedented White House dynasty: "It could provide useful continuity to have a Bush in the White House in 2090, because we will most likely still be in Iraq."

CLASS WAR REPORTS

“History Is Once Again Being Written In The Bolivian Streets”

June 6, 2005 Luis A. Gómez, The Narco News Bulletin

I write to you a few blocks from the Palace of Government.

While around half a million people have mobilized in the streets of La Paz today, the rumors in the streets and information coming to us from government sources agree: President Mesa could resign at any time.

A little more history was written today, Monday, June 6, in the streets of the seat of government, the city of La Paz: The most combative sectors of the social movements (the urban and rural Aymara, the miners and El Alto university students, among others) have expanded their siege of the center of State power: there have been clashes with the police for hours in attempts to take the Plaza Murillo.

This morning there were more people in the streets than before, possibly more than ever before in the recent history of social mobilizations in Bolivia. Perhaps half a million people, perhaps more, according to the calculations of a leader from District 8 of El Alto.

<p>The public school teachers arrived earlier at the Plaza de los Héroes. Today is Teachers' Day in Bolivia, and there were more than 30,000 educators in the streets. It was just after 10:00 in the morning and they went out alone to shut</p>
--

down central La Paz. A half hour later the two immense marches from El Alto arrived, one made up of the city's southern districts and another from the north.

The minerworkers' federation arrived, as did the factory workers, the students, followed by the peasant farmers from the communities south of La Paz, and the neighborhoods from La Paz's eastern slopes, which form the border with El Alto. They were all there, together with Aymara peasant farmers from several provinces, and together held another great council like the one last week...

The council's decisions, approved by hundreds of thousands of raised hands, came out around noon:

Total hydrocarbon nationalization, and the occupation of gas and oil wells.

While all this occurred, for the last two days in the city of Santa Cruz, the Bolivian political class and the Santa Cruz right wing have been meeting to try to reach a solution and end this crisis (President Mesa himself was there on Saturday)... and they are not getting anywhere.

Because of this, according to a source within the Catholic Church who asked to remain anonymous, Carlos Mesa has a resignation letter ready and could present it, at latest, tomorrow night.

But the people in La Paz were one step ahead. Around 1:30 pm a contingent of peasant farmers from various provinces and interrupted the popular assembly: they wanted to take Plaza Murillo once and for all and throw Mesa and the members of Congress out of there.

And so the clashes began... and the gas and rubber bullets began to fall on the people. For nearly two hours the people have been fighting the police and at the moment the smell of teargas and the tires burning to lesson its effects is everywhere. The people are regrouping and still encircle the plaza on all sides.

Such is the situation in the first few hours of the afternoon... nothing is certain, nothing confirmed, but we are sure of one thing: the people are determined, and it doesn't seem that Mesa's eventual resignation or a call to a Constituent Assembly (especially if Vaca Diez takes power) will hold them back... stay here, kind readers, because history is once again being written in the Bolivian streets.

Received:

Remembering The Liberty

From: JM
To: GI Special
Sent: June 05, 2005
Subject: Remembering the Liberty

I already knew about the attack on the Liberty and I'm so very pleased it's got a write-up. I wish it was in the top newspapers.

I have never been able to understand the hold Israel has on America. Israel acted in its normal way right down to the excuse for its actions. The American response was mystifying. If any other country had done this there would have been a terrible outcry but Israel got away with it. The machine gunning of the life rafts was an enormous crime, by any standard, and seems to indicate no one was to be left alive.

If no messages for help had got out, and all the crew had died, was Egypt going to take the blame? If so for what reason? How could America have benefited?

Israel breaks every international law created and America lets it. This is only one of Israel's innumerable crimes against humanity and it proves how expendable people are when governments act in ways no normal person can understand.

That's what's wrong with modern-day democracy

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The following that we know of have also posted issues:

<http://www.iraq-news.de/>, <http://www.notinourname.net/qi-special/>,

www.williambowles.info/qispecial,

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