

GI SPECIAL 3B62:



On Loyalty: An Open Letter To U.S. Troops In Afghanistan And Iraq

I hate people who get away with shit just because they have money and power. And I hate people who sacrifice the lives of others to amplify or protect that power.

June 15, 2005 By STAN GOFF, CounterPunch

I was a soldier for most of the time between 1970 and 1996. I signed out on my retirement from 3rd Special Forces in Ft. Bragg. I had also served in 7th Special Forces, on three Ranger assignments, with Delta for almost four years, as a Cavalry Scout for a while, and in the 82nd Airborne Division as an infantryman. I started my career in Vietnam with the 173rd Airborne Brigade.

I thugged around in eight different places in East Asia, Latin America, and Africa, where I pointed guns at people. Like you, I was an instrument of American foreign policies - policies controlled, then as now, by the rich.

In the course of that career, I heard everything you have heard and felt everything you have felt about "loyalty."

Tricky thing, loyalty.

Nowadays, when I talk with some of you, or when I hear conversations recorded with you, I hear many who have very serious reservations about these wars of occupation. I had more than reservations from the get-go about Iraq and Afghanistan, and I opposed them as hard as I could, and so did millions of other people around the world.

But that brain-dead piece of shit in the White House who is legally your boss, and all his handlers, starting with Vice President Dick "Halliburton" Cheney they sent you to do this thing anyway.

They talked themselves into believing this would be - and these are their words - a cakewalk. They surrounded themselves exclusively with others who echoed what was already in their minds; and they punished and vilified and isolated anyone who told them what they didn't want to hear. Because they made up their minds to conduct these invasions years ago, and with the attacks of September 11 - in which Iraq's role was exactly nothing - they figured now was their chance to conduct the re-disposition of the old Cold War military into their new plan to build permanent bases in Southwest Asia.

Since they'd made up their minds, they didn't want to hear anything except rosy scenarios for their plans, because these reptile-minded, preppy gangsters are like spoiled children who can't abide anyone fucking up their toy-emperor fantasies.

But when those fantasies did get fucked up, by the realities they ran so hard to escape, they continued to pursue their grim agenda in spite of the mounting consequences, because they don't pay those consequences.

If I had my way, we would issue the whole shriveled, manicured lot of them their assault rifles, put them aboard an Air Force transport, tighten the leg straps on their static line parachutes, and boot their sorry asses out from 800 feet right over the middle of Ramadi - where they could drop their harnesses in the street and explain democracy to the locals.

But that's just ranting, because I do so despise them. I hate people who get away with shit just because they have money and power. And I hate people who sacrifice the lives of others to amplify or protect that power. [Amen]

But I'm not telling you anything. You all already know by now what generation after generation has learned the hard way. When the rich start their wars, it's not the rich that get sent to fight them. Yeah, a few go get their time as part of putting together a political career, but we know who does the heavy lifting.

And in these conversations that many of you have with me and thousands of other people, we hear you say - more and more often now - that you know this war is wrong, but that you have to "do your job," because you are loyal to your buddies; because you

feel that you have to back them up; and because if you don't go, someone else will have to. And I respect that sentiment.

But I have to challenge this loyalty thing, and I do it out of respect for you, and because I care about you, and because my own son is back there for his second go-around.

A young friend of mine, Patrick Resta, who recently returned from Iraq, and who is now a member of an organization called Iraq Veterans Against the War, recently told me, "My platoon sergeant tried to get us to violate the Geneva Convention, and when we resisted, he threatened us with punishment. **He told us that 'the Geneva Convention doesn't exist in Iraq, and that is in writing at the Brigade level.'**"

You all know that this is bullshit, and if you didn't know, let me give you a news flash about some - not all, but some - military lifers; and this is coming from a military lifer.

Some of them are dumber than dog shit. Some of them say things when they don't have the foggiest fucking idea what they are talking about. Some of them will say any goddamn thing to get you to do what they want you to do.

But then again, there was a memorandum that came down that suggested the Geneva Conventions were void in Iraq. It didn't come from the Brigade level, though; it came from fucking George W. Bush's office. And it's a lie. That's why they sat there in front of Congress before they made the author of that memo into the Attorney General of the United States - get your head around that and denied that they meant it.

But it is a lie.

You do not have to follow illegal orders EVER, under any circumstances, and you ARE bound by International Law. You should also be bound by what you know is right, by your sense of plain common decency.

One of the ways they will get you to do things that you will not want to live with for the rest of your lives is to impose that group-think on you. If one of us is guilty, we are all guilty. And "what happens in Iraq stays in Iraq." This is one of the many ways they take that buddy-to-buddy loyalty and twist it into a way to control you, even when they are trying to get you to violate the law and not only the formal law, but to violate what you know is right, to violate your own conscience and jeopardize your own peace of mind for the rest of your life.

And I'm telling you that you do not owe them or anyone else that kind of loyalty.

They know that many of you know that you were sent to do this thing for a pack of lies about weapons of mass destruction and mushroom clouds over New York City and phony al Qaeda connections (and then when that fell apart, you were there to deliver democracy at gunpoint). So they know that many of you can't stay committed to this violent occupation out of loyalty to that gang of thugs in Washington DC, who are busy every day at home undermining the same Constitution you swore to protect (from all enemies foreign and DOMESTIC).

They know that you know that plenty of the officers are out there trying to get new fruit salad medals on their Class-A uniforms, and bucking for promotion, by risking your asses on pointless glory patrols. So they know that they can't rely on the loyalty of many of you to the chain of command any more either.

Where do they have to go with this, then, after all? What do they tell you?

"You get out there on that Humvee, and face those IEDs together, as loyal buddies."

"You get out there and ransack people's houses in the middle of the night, and make their babies cry together, as buddies."

"You get out there and set up a road block without Arabic signs or interpreters and get put into that situation where you are tense and don't know, and you shoot up that car and kill parents in front of their children, and you have to live with that for the rest of your lives - together, because you are loyal buddies."

"You get out there and lose life, limb, or eyesight face mental and physical ailments for the rest of your lives together, as an act of loyalty to your buddies."

That's the pressure you have on you today. Cover your buddies, and for some of you, go to Iraq so someone else doesn't take your place.

But let's look at the bigger picture here, and for that I'll take you back to Vietnam, before many of you were born. We heard this same bullshit then. Almost verbatim. And do you know what one of the main contributing factors was for getting us out of that war?

We quit being good soldiers.

<p>The United States military got to the point where it was no longer an effective fighting force, because US soldiers quit taking orders. It got to the point where an officer who was using his men's bodies to chase medals might find himself on the wrong end of a Claymore mine.</p>

Now I'm not advocating that again, and I hope we can stop this before it goes that far.

The other thing many soldiers did was become part of the political resistance at home. They looked at this question of looking out for their buddies and for fellow soldiers in the short term, but staying in a barbaric and immoral war. And they realized that the best thing they could do for their buddies - not as soldiers, but as human beings - was to enlist in the opposition to the war and bring it to an end.

In the process, many of them discovered that it took a lot more endurance and a lot more courage to oppose the war than it did to demonstrate that macho bullshit they were expected to display as they continued to do terrible things to those other human beings whose country they occupied.

Here's how you can exercise a deeper loyalty to the troops there now, and to all those who will continue to go as long as this obscenity continues:

Do everything you can to stop the war.

Question every order, and base those questions on the Geneva Conventions and the Law of Land Warfare. Let them see you keeping a detailed journal of your experience. Send your stories home in letters. Open up discussions about the legitimacy of the war when you are in your billets, even if it does spark controversy. Spread around information you get about the war from sources other than those loud-mouthed news-mannequins on FOX. And email or mail your anonymous membership in to Iraq Veterans Against the War. The link is at the end of this letter.

The day this war stops and they put the last of you on an airplane home, is when you will never again have to smell that fresh-blood smell that stays in your head for hours after you've loaded someone onto a stretcher or rolled them into that big Ziploc bag.

The day will come when you all pull out, because this was a losing proposition from the outset, but Bush and his crew were too fucking stupid to know it.

The best thing is that this war of occupation ends sooner than later, and - as an exercise of loyalty to your own conscience, of loyalty to those who are there and those who may go there, and loyalty to the principle of human decency - you can find ways to hasten that day.

You can find ways to bring closer the day when the Iraqis can get on about the business of taking control of their own destiny, and you and your buddies can sleep in security and comfort in your own homes, play with your children, make love with your partners, and walk down familiar streets unencumbered by the rattling luggage of war.

If bringing this day closer for all of you is the goal, how much more loyal can you get?

Yours for walking unencumbered,

Stan Goff
US Army (Retired)

Stan Goff is the author of "Hideous Dream: A Soldier's Memoir of the US Invasion of Haiti" (Soft Skull Press, 2000), "Full Spectrum Disorder" (Soft Skull Press, 2003) and "Sex & War" which will be released approximately December, 2005. He is retired from the United States Army. His blog is at www.stangoff.com.

Join with Iraq War vets in the call to end the occupation and bring our troops home now! (www.ivaw.net)

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Marines' Toll In Iraq Passes 500: Traitor “Commanders In Iraq” Lie Again About Armored Vehicles

June 15, 2005 By Otto Kreisher, COPLEY NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON – The Marine Corps has passed a grim milestone in its service in Iraq this week, topping 500 deaths since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom in March 2003.

According to a Copley News Service tally of casualties reported by the Pentagon, 502 Marines have died from hostile action or accidents in Iraq, as of the last reported death Monday. Thirty-two Navy personnel also have died in Iraq, most of whom are hospital corpsmen serving with the Marines or Seabee construction specialists.

The Marine and Navy losses represent 31 percent of the total U.S. military death toll of 1,703 recorded by the Pentagon on Wednesday, even though the naval services constitute less than 20 percent of the total U.S. force in Iraq.

A tally kept by the Pentagon shows at least 4,138 Marines and 274 Navy personnel have been wounded or injured in Iraq, out of a total of 12,896 American service members injured since March 2003.

After an initially slow response to the IED threat, commanders in Iraq now says every military vehicle operating outside a U.S. compound has the best armor protection available and all personnel have the improved body armor.

[A few days ago two soldiers died in an unarmored Humvee. So, “best armor protection available” means none, if none is available. How they twist and lie to hide the ugly truth. And what about those thousands of defective body armor outfits the Marine Corps admitted were handed out to the troops? Are those the “improved” ones? Do you think “commanders in Iraq” got stuck with any of those?

[Hell no, they might get killed, reducing their ability to lie to the press and the people back home like reported here. Of course, the troops in Iraq know better, as do the family members who bury them after their deaths in the unarmored vehicles traveling “outside a US compound”.]

[Do they really think people are too stupid to catch on? Payback is overdue.]

FIVE MARINES KILLED BY HAKLANIYA IED

June 16, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
Release Number: 05-06-21C & By Alastair Macdonald (Reuters) & By Samar Kadi (UPI)

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq – Five Marines assigned to 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), were killed in action June 15 when their vehicle hit an improvised explosive device.

The U.S. military command said five Marines were killed in an explosion that cut through their convoy in the region of Haklaniya, near the city of Ramadi in western Iraq Wednesday.

This is the second time in a week an entire armoured Humvee crew has died there in what U.S. officers said on Thursday could be a new insurgent tactic.

Rarely have so many troops in armoured vehicles been killed in a single blast in the two years that U.S. forces have been in Iraq, though long experience with dozens of daily bomb attacks has forced commanders to improve vehicles' armour.

U.S. officers have said some rebels have been using "shaped charges," which concentrate blasts onto a small area allowing them to penetrate even the heavy armor of tanks.

Improvised explosive devices, as the troops call them, are the biggest single threat to Americans in Iraq. Though many are spotted and defused, dozens go off every day.

That has limited U.S. troops' freedom of movement and forced the military to improve the armor on all its vehicles, at considerable cost in both equipment and in added fuel bills for the heavier loads.

MORE:

Haklaniya Payback?

June 16, 2005 Sabah Ali, BRussells Tribunal

"This is the problem" Dr. Walid Abdul Khaliq, the Haditha General Hospital director explained. "The innocent are being caught between the fighters and the American troops.

"Two days ago, in Al-Haqlaniya (7 kilometers to the east of Haditha), the road was cut and there were military traps that the people did not know about. A municipality employee and his son were shot; he kept on bleeding so that when

we reached him he was already dead. An employee in this hospital who has just moved to a clinic was shot too, we moved him to Ramadi but he died on the way.”

SAILOR WITH MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE KILLED

June 16, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
Release Number: 05-06-22C

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq – A Sailor assigned to 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), died June 15 from wounds received from enemy small-arms fire.

The incident took place during combat operations in Ar Ramadi, Iraq.

***Ho Hum:* General Says 5 Dead Marines And Dead Sailor Nothing Extraordinary**

June 16, 2005 By Andy Mosher and Omar Fekeiki, The Washington Post Company

The deaths of six American service personnel near Ramadi added to a sharp increase in U.S. casualties in Anbar province, a vast area that stretches from Baghdad's western edge to the country's borders with Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Ramadi, the provincial capital, has been a center of Iraq's insurgency for more than a year; insurgent activity in nearby Fallujah spurred two U.S.-led assaults on the city, the most recent in November.

Air Force Brig. Gen. Donald Alston, the chief spokesman for the foreign military force in Iraq, said Thursday that he "would not consider the situation in Ramadi to be anything extraordinary at this time."

Jay Grad Killed By Bomb Is S.A.'S Latest Loss In War

06/16/2005 Scott Huddleston, Express-News Staff Writer

When Jonathan Flores returned to Jay High School, his alma mater, he talked to students in the Junior ROTC.

Flores, who had spiked his hair and had green highlights in it at Jay, where he graduated a year ago, came to school last October with a shaven head and a tan uniform, per Marine regulations.

Without an instructor present, he told students what basic training was like and what he hoped to do with his career.

No one could have known it would be his last return visit.

Flores, 18, was killed Tuesday in Iraq by a roadside bomb near Fallujah.

As a senior, he helped collect canned food and picked up trash by the highway as part of the ROTC's community service projects.

Aside from his parents, who live in San Antonio, Flores also leaves two younger twin brothers who are in the ROTC program at Jay and will be sophomores in the fall, LeVan said.

LeVan said the school will dedicate a wall to Jay graduates now serving in the military, with a special area set aside for the ones who died.

"I just remember what a great kid he was," he said of Flores.

N.H. Marine Wounded For Second Time

June 16, 2005 (AP) PLAINFIELD, N.H.

A Marine from Plainfield is lucky to be alive, after being wounded for a second time in Iraq.

According to his parents, Lance Cpl. Mark Drye suffered a bruised chest and lungs and broken ribs on Tuesday when a bullet broke the chest plate in his body armor.

Drye called home to tell his folks he was bruised, but okay.

Drye was wounded in March in Baghdad when his Humvee was hit by a bomb.

Notes From A Lost War:

“Fewer Than 500 Troops To Patrol A Region Twice The Size Of Connecticut”

"We have a finite number of troops," said Maj. Chris Kennedy, executive officer of the Third Armored Cavalry Regiment. "But if you pull out of an area and don't leave security forces in it, all you're going to do is leave the door open for them to come back. This is what our lack of combat power has done to us throughout the country. In the past, the problem has been we haven't been able to leave sufficient forces in towns where we've cleared the insurgents out." ["In the past?" Somebody clue him in. That's now and the future.]

June 16, 2005 By RICHARD A. OPPEL Jr., New York Times

TAL AFAR, Iraq, June 15 - Nine months ago the American military laid siege to this city in northwestern Iraq and proclaimed it freed from the grip of insurgents. Last month, the Americans returned in force - to reclaim it once again.

After the battle here in September the military left behind fewer than 500 troops to patrol a region twice the size of Connecticut.

It is a cycle that has been repeated in rebellious cities throughout Iraq, and particularly those in the Sunni Arab regions west and north of Baghdad, where the insurgency's roots run deepest.

"We have a finite number of troops," said Maj. Chris Kennedy, executive officer of the Third Armored Cavalry Regiment, which arrived in Tal Afar several weeks ago. "But if you pull out of an area and don't leave security forces in it, all you're going to do is leave the door open for them to come back. This is what our lack of combat power has done to us throughout the country. In the past, the problem has been we haven't been able to leave sufficient forces in towns where we've cleared the insurgents out."

While officials in Washington say the military has all the troops it needs, on-the-ground battle commanders in the most violent parts of Iraq - in cities like Ramadi, Mosul and Mahmudiya - have said privately that they need more manpower to pacify their areas and keep them that way.

Now, with the pace of insurgent attacks rising across Iraq and scores being killed daily in bombings and mass executions, Tal Afar and the surrounding area is becoming something of a test case for a strategy to try to break the cycle: using battle-hardened American forces working in conjunction with tribal leaders to clear out the insurgents and then leaving behind Iraqi forces to try to keep the peace.

Many tribal sheiks here say they favor an all-out assault to rout the city's insurgents, but American commanders say a major attack like the one that leveled

Falluja last November is to be avoided almost at all costs. The bloodshed, destruction of property and alienation of the Iraqi public is too high a price to pay, they say.

The military's decision to reassign the regiment from the so-called Triangle of Death south of Baghdad to the region around Tal Afar was an implicit acknowledgement that it had lost control of the area. The first troops began arriving in April, and nearly 4,000 were in place by mid-May.

Tribes sympathetic to the new Iraqi government have suffered constant assaults at the hands of insurgents and rival tribes. More than 500 mortars have struck lands belonging to the Al-Sada al-Mousawiyah tribe since September, said the tribe's leader, Sheik Sayed Abdullah Sayed Wahab. "All of my tribe are prisoners in their own homes," he says. "We can't even take our people to the hospital."

The Tal Afar police force disintegrated last fall, and the few who remain stay in an ancient hilltop castle, afraid to venture out. Commanders here caution troops to assume that anyone on the street dressed as a policeman is an impostor. Insurgents wearing police uniforms shoot at American helicopters.

Even with the new regiment, the military still lacks troops to completely patrol the outlying desert and grazing lands, where insurgents had taken over remote villages, providing sanctuary a short distance from Mosul, the country's dominant northern city and an active insurgent hub.

Insurgents use irrigation canals to elude American forces chasing them in armored vehicles that cannot cross the waterways.

Smugglers drive through holes cut in the large berm that guards the Syrian border. Remote cinderblock farmhouses serve as safe havens.

In its first weeks here, the regiment has pressed sweeps deep into desert areas that had not seen a large American presence since the 101st Airborne Division left in early 2004. Instead, many areas had witnessed, at best, only sporadic patrols that had done little to deter insurgents, commanders say.

"Resources are everything in combat, and when you don't have enough manpower to move around, you have to pick the places," said Maj. John Wilwerding, executive officer of Sabre Squadron, a 1,000-strong unit that now oversees Tal Afar.

Two weeks ago more than 1,000 troops from the new regiment poured into Biaj, a town of 15,000 people about 40 miles southwest of Tal Afar, where insurgents had destroyed the police station, and the mayor and the police fled last fall. Soldiers eventually searched every house in the town, capturing more than a dozen suspected insurgents without a shot being fired. **[Wow! A whole dozen "suspected insurgents." The resistance must be shaking in their shoes.]**

Commanders plan to withdraw all but 150 American troops and leave a battalion of about 500 Iraqi soldiers and 200 police officers in Biaj. [And we know what happens next.]

Tal Afar has little municipal leadership to speak of. American commanders say the mayor, a Sunni Arab, may have ties to the insurgency. The police chief - a Shiite dismissed a few days ago for the second time in as many months - may have been involved in the abuse or torture of suspects, they say.

Real leadership in Tal Afar lies with the 82 tribal leaders. Angered by the attacks and emboldened by the enlarged American military presence here, some sheiks have become outspoken critics of the insurgency. On June 4, at great risk to their own lives, more than 60 attended a security conference at Al Kasik Iraqi Army base near here. To the surprise of Iraqi and American commanders who organized the gathering, many sheiks demanded a Falluja-style military assault to rid Tal Afar of insurgents and complained that American forces do not treat terror suspects roughly enough.

Other sheiks said it was better to pursue a political solution. But sheiks from each point of view accused one another of being unwilling to identify suspected insurgents. American commanders had planned to circulate a list of 1,400 people thought to have potential insurgent connections, seeking verification - or denials - from the sheiks. *But they decided against it because few sheiks would openly affirm or deny the status of insurgent suspects in front of other Iraqis, Colonel Hickey said.*

One week ago Tuesday, 1,000 American soldiers and hundreds of Iraqi troops swept into the insurgency's principal safe haven in Tal Afar, the Sariya neighborhood, detaining 34 suspected insurgent leaders and fighters and killing as many as 10 fighters. **[In a city of 200,000. Another breathtaking victory for the occupation.]**

Yet American troops also remain wary of Iraqis' tendencies to respond to an attack by shooting wildly in all directions - a "death blossom," as the troops here call it. "They keep their fingers on the trigger and they'll just shoot without aiming," Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Horsley warned during the operation Tuesday, as fire rang out.

Last Tuesday, an insurgent gunman wounded an American officer as he walked through an alley accompanied by Iraqi troops. When the shooting started, the Iraqis ran back to the street as the gunman continued to fire at the wounded officer, said Capt. Jesse Sellars, a company commander here. An American sergeant had to cajole a handful of Iraqis to return fire in an effort to rescue the officer, who later died.

"They're new soldiers," Major Wilwerding, of Sabre Squadron, said of the Iraqis who fled. "They're not conditioned yet. They'll get better." **[Silly Imperial fantasies die hard.]**

**“It's Like Rolling The Dice When
We Go Out”**

“But, Oh Yeah, We're Sitting Ducks.”

Benish says that a unit that's hit by a bomb but can keep driving usually meets up at a specific distance away. The insurgents noticed this and began to hide other bombs at the spots where they figured the soldiers would stop to regroup.

"They watch ours, we watch theirs. We adjust to them, they adjust to us," Benish says.

Jun. 16, 2005 BY MEG JONES, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

SAMARRA, Iraq:

Staff Sgt. Justin Sabo stood June 8 in the bright sunlight of a garbage-strewn street, looking up at the windows of homes. He wonders if anyone is looking down at him, wanting to kill him.

Fifteen minutes earlier, an improvised explosive device - a makeshift bomb - had detonated a few yards away from where Sabo and the rest of his squad from the 3rd Platoon of Charlie Company stand in the afternoon heat. They warily eye the trash - old cans, garbage bags, stinky food and stuff that its original use was no longer apparent - and wonder if another bomb is buried nearby.

"I definitely feel exposed out here. It's like rolling the dice when we go out," says Sabo, who waves away a car that tries to come down the street where Charlie Company's four Humvees are parked. "But, oh yeah, we're sitting ducks."

As Sgt. Michael Francis swivels the gun turret in his Humvee to face down the street, Sabo orders soldiers to look for the crater left by the bomb's explosion. While that might sound easy, there are many holes and piles of dirt.

Sgt. John Benish walks toward a soccer stadium and yells, "Hey, look for any wire along here."

A man is changing a flat tire in the roadway. Benish and James Lundstrom, a medic, check his vehicle and frisk him. The man finishes and drives away.

A few minutes later, Benish barks, "Tell your team we see it." The crater is in the median of the boulevard, a couple feet deep and 5 or 6 feet around. Big piles of dirt are next to it, along with chunks of concrete road barriers apparently blown apart by the blast as another U.S. military patrol traveled past. There were no injuries.

Sabo radios to headquarters and is told an explosives team is on its way from a patrol base about 10 miles away. Charlie Company soldiers secure the scene until the team arrives about half an hour later.

As the soldiers wait, they check alleys, nose through debris on the side of the road and wave off pedestrians and vehicles. While Samarra is in a war zone, it is also a busy city of 200,000 people: On their way to the bomb site, the soldiers of Charlie Company had seen children playing in the streets, women in long, black robes buying produce at open-air markets, drivers making deliveries.

The soldiers drove on streets with Arabic names that the American military has also given English names to make it easier to understand for the U.S. soldiers. Some have numbers, while others are named for NBA teams; this patrol, for instance, has stopped near 30th and Lakers.

"You don't know if there's a secondary device or parts that didn't blow up. Sometimes they (the explosives experts) want to look at the detonation device," says Sabo, 26. He lives in Minnesota and is a member of a Wisconsin National Guard unit from River Falls - part of the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry - whose members are attached to Charlie Company.

Gunfire is heard close by. Sabo says it's probably Iraqi police at a checkpoint who are firing warning shots at cars.

As a white car turns toward the squad, Sabo stops in midsentence. The car changes lanes and continues slowly forward. Sabo waves his arms. The car doesn't stop.

Sabo raises his M-4 rifle. A few seconds tick by. He pulls the trigger. A puff of dust rises from the dirt about 150 yards in front of the car, followed by the popping sound of Sabo's rifle. The car stops, backs up and leaves.

Charlie Company soldiers frequently fire warning shots into the air or the ground, since drivers in Samarra often don't obey commands or don't understand what the soldiers want them to do.

Ten minutes later, there's another car. It doesn't stop, either. The soldiers wave their arms. Then Francis fires a warning shot from the Humvee gun turret. The car turns around.

The soldiers stand in the heat, sweating in their "battle rattle:" body armor, helmets, vests loaded down with ammunition pouches and radios, kneepads, 9 mm Berretta pistols strapped to their thighs, gloves, sunglasses. Knives are tied to some of the soldiers' legs.

A woman in a long dress and headscarf opens her door, looks out and closes it. A rooster crows. It's quiet.

Back in December, a member of Charlie Company, Staff Sgt. Todd Olson, was killed by a roadside bomb. A week later, two other members were shot, both suffering minor injuries. No one has been wounded since then as the unit patrols parts of this city in the heart of the Sunni triangle, looking for insurgents, responding to reports of improvised explosive devices, raiding homes looking for munitions and trying to keep the peace.

In late May, another patrol base in Samarra, not far from Patrol Base Olson where Charlie Company lives, was hit by two car bombs and a suicide bomber. Charlie

Company soldiers on guard duty saw a fireball bigger than the revered Golden Mosque in Samarra billow into the sky. At Patrol Base Olson, doors blew open from the concussion of the blast.

Earlier this day, as the four Humvees race to the scene, Sabo explains that any time a bomb goes off, there's the fear that insurgents are lying in wait to detonate more explosives.

"Lately the insurgents have planned complex attacks, and they sit and wait for us to respond," Sabo says.

Benish says that a unit that's hit by a bomb but can keep driving usually meets up at a specific distance away. The insurgents noticed this and began to hide other bombs at the spots where they figured the soldiers would stop to regroup.

"They watch ours, we watch theirs. We adjust to them, they adjust to us," Benish says.

The explosives team arrives and releases a tracked robot vehicle, about 18 inches long, that zooms down the street and then bulldozes its way up the piles of dirt and into the crater. A tiny camera feeds video to the experts who watch on a suitcase-size monitor.

Then one of the explosives team members dons a green suit that looks like an astronaut's moon outfit and waddles to the site, looking for evidence.

By now, Charlie Company has been at the scene for two hours, and the soldiers are guzzling Gatorade and cold water.

They're given the OK to leave. They pile back into the Humvees and drive back to Patrol Base Olson, take off their battle rattle and wait for the next call.

TROOP NEWS

U.S. Staff Sergeant Accused Of Fragging 2 Senior Officers

[Thanks to Phil G. David Honish and D who sent this in.]

05-06-06 June 16, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND
NEWS Release Number: 05-06-06 & NBC News & CBS NEWS & By Patrick Quinn
Associated Press Writer

An Army National Guard staff sergeant has been charged with premeditated murder in a "fragging incident" that killed two senior officers at a U.S. base near Tikrit, Iraq, last week, the U.S. military said Thursday.

The United States Government preferred charges against Staff Sgt. Alberto B. Martinez, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 42nd Infantry Division (Mechanized) June 15, in the deaths of two Task Force Liberty Soldiers who died June 7 at Forward Operating Base Danger, near Tikrit, Iraq.

Army officials told NBC that Martinez had been disciplined previously by the officers, which could have been a possible motive for the attack.

When it happened last week, the Army first thought the two officers had been killed by enemy mortar or rocket fire, but an investigation turned up evidence Sgt. Martinez threw grenades into the room Esposito and Allen shared at one of Saddam Hussein's palaces in Tikrit.

Martinez is charged with violation of Article 118 (Murder) with two specifications of premeditated murder.

This charge, along with supporting evidence, will be forwarded through the appropriate chain of command for review and recommendations as to disposition.

An attorney from the US Army Trial Defense Service represents Martinez in this matter. He may also retain a civilian defense attorney to represent him at no cost to the government.

Martinez is currently in pretrial confinement at a military confinement facility in Kuwait.

Capt. Phillip T. Esposito and 1st Lt. Louis E. Allen died of their wounds later in what was initially thought to be an indirect fire attack. Both officers were assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 42nd Infantry Division, New York Army National Guard. Esposito was the company commander; Allen served as a company operations officer.

Martinez is 37 years old. His Military Occupational Specialty is 92Y (Supply Specialist).

Martinez, who joined the New York Army National Guard in December 1990, was deployed to Iraq in May 2004.

Fragging entered the American lexicon in the Vietnam War.

Such incidents increased late in the 1960s as the strains grew on a draftee army waging an unpopular war. Young men feeling hassled or unnecessarily put in harm's way by their commanders settled their grievances with a fragmentation grenade or a bullet in the back.

Between 1969 and 1971, the Army reported 600 fragging incidents that killed 82 Americans and injured 651. In 1971 alone, there were 1.8 fraggings for every 1,000 American soldiers serving in Vietnam, not including gun and knife assaults.

As President Nixon drew down U.S. forces, troops felt they were fighting a lost cause they were unwilling to die for.

SWEEPING BACK THE SEA: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



6.15.05 A US soldier carries brooms as he makes his way towards Camp Falcon, on the outskirts of Baghdad. (AFP/Yuri Cortez)

2200 PA Guard Members Off To The Imperial Slaughterhouse

Jun 16, 2005 (AP)

Some 22-hundred Pennsylvania Army National Guard members—the state’s largest deployment since the Korean War— are being sent to Iraq.

The Pennsylvania guard will make up the bulk of the 35-hundred-member Second Brigade Combat Team, which includes personnel from 23 other states.

Members have been training since January at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, and in Fort Irwin, California. A deployment ceremony is scheduled June 23rd in Mississippi.

The brigade includes two infantry battalions and one armored battalion. A guard spokesman, Captain Cory Angell, says it will be “pretty much self-sufficient,” with its own surgeon to provide immediate combat care and its own engineers to demolish obstacles or destroy captured ordnance.

Commander Colonel John Gronski says the brigade will be in the large Anbar province in central Iraq.

He expects the mission to involve cordon-and-search operations and occasional raids, patrols to keep transportation routes safe, joint operations with Iraqi security forces, and working on local projects such as sewerage, power systems and schools.

Seven Arrested At Army Birthday Celebration: Antiwar Veterans Attacked By Police



Protesters John Schuchardt (center) and Khury Petersen (right) were pushed back by police yesterday at Cambridge Common. (Globe Staff Photo / Bill Greene)

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

June 15, 2005 By Megan Tench, Boston Globe Staff

CAMBRIDGE -- Antiwar protests and angry confrontations with police led to seven arrests on Cambridge Common yesterday as the city attempted to celebrate the 230th birthday of the US Army.

What started as a peaceful march by more than 100 sign-waving antiwar demonstrators quickly heated up after a group of protesters refused to move away from the stage and onto a grassy area designated by police. After several

warnings, police lined up shoulder to shoulder, shoving some members of the group back behind jersey barriers and arresting others who refused to budge.

Cambridge has been a city known for its fierce liberalism and antiwar protests. But Cambridge Common was the site where 230 years ago many servicemen came together when the Continental Congress formally established the Army, organizers pointed out. On July 3, 1775, General George Washington arrived on Cambridge Common and took command of the newly formed Continental Army.

Yesterday, the grassy lawn was filled with Army exhibits, including live reenactments of different periods and uniforms in Army history.

Still, the birthday celebration was overshadowed by mostly middle-age protesters chanting, "Shame," and sporadic arrests. Meanwhile, a few 20-somethings marched around the common dressed as dead soldiers and Iraqi civilians with party hats, bullet wounds, and fake blood running down their faces.

Aligned with the demonstrators was Councilor Marjorie Decker, who called the event a veiled attempt at captivating youngsters as the Army copes with recruitment woes.

Decker, who also serves as the city's vice mayor, said she was deeply suspicious of the Army's motives, adding that members of the City Council did not know the event was happening until last week. "There was no communication in the City Council to decide if this was an appropriate time to hold a celebration," she said.

The event was sponsored by the Massachusetts National Guard, the US Army, and the City of Cambridge.

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.

Veterans For Peace Chapter 87: No Retreat: "We Have Refused To Be Intimidated"

From: David Honish, Veterans For Peace
To: GI Special
Sent: June 16, 2005

Subject: VFP 87 at MEPS

George Main, VFP 87, wrote:

Chapter 87's action against the Military Entrance Processing Station, Sacramento, continues 6/16/05.

There now is only one police officer there to ensure our 1st Amendment rights are protected. He had a lot of questions for me today. Among the usual questions that get the dialogue going, he asked me if this was a national campaign. Then he asked me why not.

Why not? If you want to counter-recruit during the peak enlistment period; shouldn't MEPS be the focus.

We have been at MEPS daily since May 2nd. We have refused to be intimidated. We have ignored threats of arrest. We have persisted in demanding our 1st Amendment rights.

Yesterday an applicant turned around and went home with her mother.

Peace hard,
George

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action

Jun 16, 2005 (Reuters) & By Frank Griffiths, Associated Press Writer & (KUNA) & By Samar Kadi (UPI)

A women demonstration was launched in front of the teachers union building in Mosul, in protest against arrest of several women by multinational forces yesterday.

In Telaafar, 70 kilometres east of Mosul, clashes between Iraqi police and armed militants were occurred, leading to the death of five civilians and two police men, in addition to the injury of nine others.

A car bomber slammed into a truck Thursday that was carrying policemen along the main road connecting Baghdad with its airport, killing at least eight officers and injuring at least 25, police and hospital officials said.

A source in the Iraqi Interior Ministry said most of those wounded were police.

The bomber plowed his black sedan at high speed into a truck carrying police officers from checkpoint to checkpoint along the road about 4 p.m.

The officers were part of an evening shift that was replacing other officers at the checkpoints, said police Maj. Moussa Abdul Karim and medic Najam Abid of the al-Yarmouk hospital.

Judge Salem Mahmud Haj Ali was killed in Iraq's third largest city Mosul along with his driver, said police and hospital sources.

Six masked gunmen in two cars blocked the road and sprayed the judge's car with machine-gun fire, said Mosul court Judge Abdul al-Hassaniani and Dr. Bahaa al-Din al-Bakri of the city's hospital.

Eight Iraqis, including four soldiers, were wounded when a car bomber blew himself up in the path of an army convoy near the entrance of the Northern Oil Company in Kirkuk, said Major General Shirku Chaker, the provincial police chief.

In Baghdad, five Iraqi soldiers were wounded in a car bomb attack against their convoy, an interior ministry source said.

"The five soldiers have been taken to a Baghdad hospital," he said, adding that the attack took place behind a police station in the northern Sulaikh district of the capital. The car was parked on a street and detonated by remote control, he said.

The remains of six people were found in Latifiyah, about 20 miles south of Baghdad, Khalid said. Guerrillas used the bodies as a trap to ambush arriving officers and engaged police in a fire fight, he said. There were no immediate reports of injuries.

Witnesses said a car bomb exploded near an Iraqi army patrol in the region of Salikh north of Baghdad, wounding six soldiers.

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

**The Iraqis' Iraqis Vs. Bush's
Iraqis:
Who Fights And Who Won't**

*From: Z
To: GI Special
Sent: June 16, 2005*

Subject: vietnam parallels: engelhardt excerpt

Tom Engelhardt is editor of Tomdispatch.com and the author of The End of Victory Culture. These are the concluding paragraphs of his recent essay 'Down the Rabbit Hole' from atimes.com

Solidarity, Z

For years in Vietnam, the bloodbath that was Vietnam was partly supplanted by a "bloodbath" the enemy was certain to commence as soon as the United States withdrew.

This future bloodbath of the imagination appeared in innumerable official speeches and accounts as an explanation for why the United States couldn't consider leaving. In public discourse, this not-yet-atrocity often superseded the only real bloodbath and was an obsessive focus of attention even for some of the war's opponents.

In the meantime, the bloodbath that was Vietnam continued week after week, month after month, year after year in all its gore.

Or how about the development of right-wing theories that the war in Iraq was won on the battlefield but lost on the home front; that, as in Vietnam, we were militarily victorious but betrayed by a weak American public and stabbed in the back by the liberal media? Watch for all of these, they're soon to come to your TV set.

Oh, and speaking about Vietnam-era parallels, how about this one: It turns out there are two different races of Iraqis.

There are their Iraqis - jihadis, Ba'athist bitter-enders, terrorists, Sunni fanatics and even, as Major General Joseph Taluto, head of the US 42nd Infantry Division, admitted the other day, "good, honest" Iraqis "offended by our presence".

The thing about all of them is, without thousands of foreign military advisers, or a \$5.7 billion American-financed program to train and equip their forces, or endless time to get up to speed, they take their rocket-propelled grenades, their improvised explosive devices, their mortars, their bomb-laden cars, and they fight.

Regularly, fiercely, often well and no less often to the death. They aren't known for running away, except in the way that guerrillas, faced with overwhelming force, disband and slip off to fight another day.

American military men, whatever they call these insurgents, have a sneaking respect for them.

You can hear it in many of the reports from Iraq. They are - a typical word used by military officers there - "resilient". No matter what we throw at them, they come back again. All on their own they develop sophisticated new tactics. Facing terrible odds, when it comes to firepower, they are clever, dangerous, resourceful opponents. The adjectives, even when they go with labels like "terrorists", are strangely respectful.

Then there's this other race of Iraqis, as if from another planet - our Iraqis, the ones who scatter "like cockroaches". They are, as several recent articles on the desperately disappointing experience of training an Iraqi army reveal, not resilient, not resourceful, not up to snuff, not willing to fight, all too ready to flee, and, in the eyes of American military men on the scene, frustrating, cowardly, child-like, and contemptible.

Compare that, for instance, to the following comment on the enemy: "The ability of the (insurgents) to rebuild their units and to make good their losses is one of the mysteries of this guerrilla war ... Not only do (their) units have the recuperative powers of the phoenix, but they have an amazing ability to maintain morale." Oh sorry, that wasn't Iraq at all. That was actually General Maxwell Taylor, American ambassador to South Vietnam, in November 1964.

Let's face it. This is deja vu all over again. In Vietnam, their Vietnamese regularly proved so much more admirable - in the eyes of American military officers -- than ours.

America's Vietnamese often seemed like the sorts of thugs white adventurers in Hollywood films had once defeated single-handedly. They were corrupt, cowardly, greedy and rapacious in relation to their own people, and regularly amazingly unwilling to fight their own war.

The enemy, on the other hand, often seemed like "our kind of people". They were courageous, disciplined, willing to endure terrible hardships, and capable of mobilizing genuine support among other Vietnamese.

Major Charles Beckwith, the chief American adviser to the Special Forces camp at Plei Me, was not atypical in his reported comment after a siege of the camp was broken, "I'd give anything to have two hundred VC under my command. They're the finest, most dedicated soldiers I've ever seen ... I'd rather not comment on the performance of my Vietnamese forces."

OCCUPATION REPORT

So Much For That "Sovereignty"
Bullshit:

Killing Of Teacher Illustrates Why Iraqis Join The Resistance; “We Have No Authority Over The Americans.”



Iraqi school teacher Farqad Mohammed Khinaiisar is shown in this family photo with her husband, Mohsen Hameed. Shatha Al Awsy, KRT

[Thanks to JL who sent this in.]

June 16, 2005 by Nancy A. Youssef, Knight-Ridder

BAGHDAD, Iraq - Farqad Mohammed Khinaiisar was driving to work in her dark green Kia Sephia at 8 a.m. on May 29 when she came up behind three American Humvees that were about to enter a traffic circle in Baghdad's Sadiya neighborhood.

A high school Arabic teacher, she'd left home five minutes earlier, and she was 15 minutes from work. In the American convoy were soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment of the 3rd Infantry Division, based at Fort Stewart, Ga. They were out on a ride-around to get to know the community.

The usual crowd was gathered at the traffic circle - the shepherd and his 20 sheep, the kabob shop owner, the drivers waiting for someone to rent one of their trucks.

Everyone heard a gunshot from the third Humvee. The soldiers at the rear of the convoy thought they saw a suicide bomber, said Lt. Col. David Funk, the battalion commander, and they'd fired a warning shot, then kept firing. The Iraqi men in the circle said they looked up and saw only a frightened woman in a careening car.

No one knows what Khinaisar saw or thought. She was shot once in the head, and she died five days later, on June 3. She spoke only once during that period, when her husband arrived at the hospital. When she heard him speak, she quietly called out his name: Mohsen.

In the car, the soldiers found only a purse and a Quran on the dashboard. They found no evidence that the 57-year-old teacher was a suicide bomber.

"We are living in constant terror because of these convoys," Khinaisar's husband, Mohsen Hameed, said at his wife's funeral.

Others think the shooting of innocent people is a reflection of the Americans' nervousness and their lack of intelligence about the insurgency.

Lt. Col. David Funk, the battalion commander, who wasn't present when his soldiers shot Khinaisar, defended his troops. Soldiers must decide who's a suicide bomber in a split second, and mistakes "tear us up."

"I truly honestly believe that, in the balance, we do so much good here," Funk said. This shooting "does not define our presence." [Winner of bullshit award for 2005, so far. Yeah, it perfectly defines the "presence" of a foreign occupation resisted by a proud people. And, "on balance," that occupation is doing evil on behalf of the evil politicians in DC who keep it going, for their own selfish interests.]

Khinaisar's car jumped the curb and came to rest against a utility pole. A crowd quickly gathered. Witnesses said the Americans were standing to one side, talking about what to do. Funk said they were waiting for an ambulance.

One of the truck drivers standing in the circle, Raid Sabri, 38, said he saw Khinaisar's hand and leg move. He told the Americans that if they wouldn't take her to the hospital, he would. They agreed to let him take her, he said.

"We were furious after seeing them not rescue her while she was still alive. To them, killing a human being is nothing," Sabri said. "When an American soldier gets killed, they make a big fuss. Helicopters and ambulances come to rescue, but when an Iraqi gets killed in the street, it means nothing to them."

Sabri, his boss, Ibrahim Abdullah, 64, and the other men lifted Khinaisar into the back of Sabri's white Datsun pickup. They took her to the closest hospital, Yarmouk, where records show that witnesses brought her in. She was immediately transferred to Al-Kadimiya Hospital, the best place for head injuries, according to those records.

At the scene, U.S. forces found Khinaisar's address book, leading them to Khinaisar's niece, Inas Ahmen Muhammad, 25, who lived in an apartment above her aunt's house.

Muhammad rushed to Al-Kadimiya and found her aunt lying alone in a hallway, blood coming from her head. Khinaisar's hand and leg were still moving, but in Iraq's overburdened hospital system, she was waiting.

"We were begging the doctors to come and do something," Muhammad recalled.

Khinaisar's husband arrived home about noon. The neighbors saw him getting out of a taxi and told him that his wife of 17 years had been in an accident. He headed to the hospital.

"They told me she had a simple car accident," he said. "They did not want to shock me with the news."

But at the hospital, he learned the truth. "The Americans shot her,' they told me. I don't know why."

Khinaisar's husband and several family members said they waited until 5 p.m., when hospital staff members finally wheeled Khinaisar into an operating room for a four-hour procedure.

After the operation, she didn't speak again. Because there weren't enough nurses, the family stayed at her bedside, cleaning her and changing her bandages. They said they noticed that other families at the hospital brought their own fans and water to care for their loved ones, and they did the same.

Regardless, they said they knew she was dying.

Khinaisar's funeral lasted three days. The family erected a large tent on a neighborhood street, the kind that lets everyone know they're mourning. Khinaisar's husband and the other men wore long white robes in 105-plus-degree heat.

In the house, the women, clad in black gowns, sat on cushions arranged on the floor. At every fifth woman or so, a box of Kleenex rested on the floor.

They said Khinaisar was a kind woman who loved her students and enjoyed visiting her parents in Spain.

They scorned the American forces that killed her. Even a young boy sitting next to his mother tried to describe how the Americans are attacking people.

Khinaisar's husband was distraught. "Why are they roaring down our streets? Why can't they stay on their bases?" he said, moving black prayer beads through his fingers faster and faster.

A police commander at the Sadiya station said the Iraqi police aren't looking into the shooting: "If the Americans are part of the investigation, we don't investigate. We have no authority over the Americans."

Muhanned Methal, Khinaisar's nephew, said the family has no plans to ask for compensation.

"What are we going to do with money?" he said. "We lost the important thing. All she did was go to school."

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

“Peace” Lawmakers Want Another 14 Months Of Dead & Maimed U.S. Troops & Iraqis

June 16, 2005 By Rick Maze, Army Times staff writer

A bipartisan group of lawmakers are sponsoring what they call the Homeward Bound resolution, which tries to start that process by demanding the Bush administration begin a pullout by Oct. 1, 2006.

Exact details of the pace and timing of the withdrawal would be left to the White House and Pentagon.

The chief sponsors are Democrats Neil Abercrombie of Hawaii and Dennis Kucinich of Ohio and Republicans Walter Jones of South Carolina and Ron Paul of Texas.

[Obviously no help on the way here. Obviously, it takes a movement in the streets and in the armed forces to stop this war. Relying on the scum in Congress never got anybody anything. Begging them to do the right thing wasn't what stopped Vietnam. They love the Empire too much to do anything serious about bringing the troops home *now*. They know where their campaign contributions come from.]

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)

Web Copies:

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

The following that we know of have also posted issues:

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

www.williambowles.info/qispecial,

<http://www.albasrah.net/maqalat/english/qi-special.htm>

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