

GI SPECIAL 3B64:



28% Want Withdrawal Of All U.S. Troops From Iraq

[Thanks to D who sent this in.]

June 15, 2005 JOHN WALSH, CounterPunch & Jun 13 (AP)

The results of the new Gallup poll:

Gallup asked: "Which comes closest to your view about what the U.S. should now do about the number of U.S. troops in Iraq: the U.S. should send more troops to Iraq, the U.S. should keep the number of troops as it is now, the U.S. should withdraw some troops from Iraq, (or) the U.S. should withdraw all of its troops from Iraq"? The answer:

Send more: 10%;

Keep the same number: 26%;

Withdraw some: 31%;

Withdraw all: 28%.

Support for staying in Iraq has also dropped in a Pew Research Center poll.

People were about evenly split on whether the U.S. should keep troops in Iraq until the country is stabilized or bring them home as soon as possible.

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

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Two US Soldiers Killed, One Wounded In Buhriz Shootout

18/06/2005 Thomas Crosbie Media

Two US Army soldiers were killed and one was wounded during a small arms skirmish with insurgents while transporting a detainee north of Baghdad, the military said today.

A civilian and the detainee were also killed in the incident late last night near Buhriz, about 35 miles north of Baghdad. Five Iraqi police were wounded, the military said.

“The Return Of Search And Destroy”And The Return Of Body Counts

[Thanks to PB who sent this in. He writes: THE RETURN OF SEARCH AND DESTROY: “The goal is not to seize territory, said Marine Col. Stephen Davis, a commander from New Rochelle, N.Y. This is about going in and finding the insurgents. This is not a walk-through-the-river exercise.”

6.18.05 By JACOB SILBERBERG, Associated Press Writer

U.S. Marines and Iraqi forces battled insurgents on two fronts Saturday in a restive western province, killing about 50 militants in a dusty frontier town in the military's latest campaign to stop foreign fighters infiltrating from neighboring Syria.

Operation Spear, or Romhe in Arabic, was in its second day in Karabilah, about 200 miles west of Baghdad, in Anbar province. Karabilah, which is along the Syrian border, long has been considered an insurgent hotbed.

"The goal is not to seize territory," said Marine Col. Stephen Davis, a commander from New Rochelle, N.Y. "This is about going in and finding the insurgents. This is not a walk-through-the-river exercise."

Three U.S. troops have been wounded since the operation began Friday, Davis said.

"Approximately 50 insurgents have been killed since the operation began," Marine Capt. Jeffrey Pool said from Ramadi, the provincial capital.

MORE:

More Pentagon Smoke And Mirrors: Body Counts Are Back

11 June 2005 By Mark Benjamin, Salon.com

The body counts are back. For the first time since Vietnam, the US military has begun regularly reporting the number of enemy killed in the war zone - in contradiction, apparently, to prior statements by its own top brass.

"Marines Kill 100 Fighters in Sanctuary Near Syria" was a front page headline in the Washington Post last month. The body count, coming from a Marine spokesman, was carried in other major papers that day.

What was striking about the factoid, besides the elegantly even number, was that it showed how the US military has increasingly released body counts in reports depicting successful operations in Iraq - despite decrees from the highest levels of the Pentagon, throughout the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, that "we don't do body counts."

As the bloody insurgency continues in Iraq, the US-led counterinsurgency campaign is yielding frustratingly few tangible ways to show progress to the American people. If anything, the insurgency seems firmly entrenched, from reports of its air-conditioned underground bunkers to its own Ho Chi Minh trail. Counting enemy bodies at least offers a number to grab on to, some sense of incremental victory.

"It may be that they regard it as being part of the good news story: that we are winning the war," John Pike, the director of GlobalSecurity.org, said about the military's stepped-up use of body counts in Iraq.

Commanders on the ground characterized the battles of Operation Matador near the Syrian border last month as a success and later said 125 insurgents were killed, according to a military statement. The military does not report civilian casualties.

"I'm quite certain that there are civilian numbers in there," said an Army officer who served in Iraq, regarding the military's current use of body counts. The officer asked that his name not be used because he fears retribution for criticizing Pentagon policy.

But body counts show success - or that's the message, at least, that the military is continuing to give reporters on the ground.

The Los Angeles Times' Solomon Moore, who filed some crackerjack reports from Operation Matador, told CNN last month that commanders in the field measured success by a high body count.

"Basically, they're defining (success) as killing a number of insurgents, especially on the first day of fighting," Moore told CNN on May 15. "They say at the time they killed dozens and maybe as many as 75 to 100 insurgents."

‘Scuse me, anybody headed for Turkey? I’ll chip in for gas.’



June 18, 2005. REUTERS/Thaier Al-Sudani

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Welcome To Liberated Afghanistan

May/June 2005 By Rachele Marshall, Washington Report On Middle Eastern Affairs

In an article for the March 10 New York Review of Books entitled "The Real Afghanistan," Pankaj Mishra reported that much of the aid intended for reconstruction has gone for Land Cruisers and high-rent housing in Kabul for foreigners.

The U.S. military continues to hold thousands of Afghan prisoners in undisclosed locations across the country, and tribal elders complain about the presence of heavy-handed American soldiers in their villages.

Women outside Kabul are still without rights. Afghan human rights activist Sima Samar said to Mishra, "Democracy and freedom are meaningless without justice."

TROOP NEWS

**Gold Star Mother Says:
“Our Leaders Betrayed Too Many
Innocents Into An Early Grave”**



Cindy Sheehan, founder of Gold Star Families for American Peace, with a photograph of her son, Army Specialist Casey Sheehan who was killed in Iraq, after making her opening statement during an unofficial forum on the Downing Street Minutes on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC June 16, 2005. **The document, created in 2002 for British Prime Minister Tony Blair said that United States President George W. Bush was intent on invading Iraq and that intelligence was being manipulated to support Bush's interests.** REUTERS/Chris Kleponis

June 17th, 2005 Democracy Now!

AMY GOODMAN: I'm Amy Goodman, as we go back to the hearing on the Downing Street minutes. Cindy Sheehan, among the witnesses called yesterday. **Her son, Casey, killed in Iraq in April 2004. She is co-founder of Gold Star Families for Peace.** This is what she had to say in her opening statement.

CINDY SHEEHAN:

I believe that the reasons that we citizens of the United States of America were given for the invasion of Iraq have unequivocally been proven to be false.

I also believe that Casey and his buddies have been killed to line the pockets of already wealthy people and to feed the insatiable war machine that has always devoured our young. Casey died saving his buddies, and I know so many of our brave young soldiers died doing the same thing. But he and his fellow members of the military should never have been sent to Iraq.

I know the family of Sergeant Sherwood Baker, who was killed guarding a team that was looking for the mythic WMDs in Baghdad, the same WMDs that were the justification for invading Iraq, as outlined in the Downing Street memo. Sherwood's brother, Dante Zappala, and his dad, Al Zappala, are here with us today.

I believe the Downing Street memo proves that our leaders betrayed too many innocents into an early grave.

The lives of the ones left behind are shattered almost beyond repair.

I also believe an investigation into the Downing Street memo is completely warranted, and the necessary first step into righting the wrong that is Iraq and holding someone accountable for the needless, senseless and avoidable deaths of many thousands. As far as I am concerned, it doesn't matter if one is a democrat or republican, a full investigation into the veracity of the Downing Street memo must be initiated immediately.

AMY GOODMAN: Cindy Sheehan, speaking at Thursday's hearing in Washington. She lost her son in Iraq.

As Half A Million Demand Bush Face His War Fraud, Another Silly Pentagon Liar Surfaces

[Thanks to D who sent this in.]

Jun. 17, 2005 BY RON HUTCHESON, Washington Bureau, The State (South Carolina)

Anti-war activists delivered petitions with more than 540,000 signatures to the White House demanding that Bush respond to new allegations that he deceived people in the months before the war.

The controversy kicked up anew after publication last month of a secret British government memo, which said that Bush "fixed" intelligence to promote his choice for war and that he'd been determined to go to war months before he said so publicly.

At the Pentagon, Defense officials and military commanders said talk of withdrawal could undermine U.S. troop morale and encourage Iraqi insurgents. They declined to predict when U.S. troops might come home or offer any clear yardstick for victory.

Lt. Gen. James Conway, director of operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff also suggested that eroding public support would hurt U.S. troop morale.

"American public opinion is the center of gravity," he said. "It's extremely important to the soldier and the Marine, the airman and the sailor over there to know that their country's behind him."

[So, the logic here is that when people demand the troops be brought home, this hurts their morale. And when the pack of betraying traitors running the government lies about why they are being sent to their deaths, and keeps them stuck in the middle of losing war where they are hated as invaders, occupiers and oppressors in the service of greedy Imperial politicians in DC, that's good for their morale. Sure. And slaves loved slavery. All those abolitionists were bad for slave morale. Right. And workers loved making 5 cents an hour and working 12 hours a day six days a week. And all those union organizers were bad for worker morale. Oh yeah. The scum on top always have this tired old line when things start going against them. Assholes. Fuck 'em.

[What is extremely important to the morale of the troops is that they know a majority of Americans think this war is for shit, should never have been fought, and want them to start coming home *now*.]

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)

How To Get Troops Back Home? Send Lawmakers' Kids To Iraq!

Letters to the Editor
Army Times
6.13.05

I read the article on Rep. John Kline's son going to Iraq ("Lawmaker's son to deploy to Iraq," ArmyTimes.com, May 20).

There is no doubt that a few family members of Congress people are either on active duty or in Iraq. The problem is the percentage.

In previous wars, many family members of those in Congress and the administration volunteered for military service. Now the percentage is probably around 1 percent.

My son is on his way to Iraq, and there are no family members of those in Congress in his unit, and I am sure he will never meet any.

If those in the administration and Congress had family members in harm's way, they would figure some way to bring them home.

They have no vested interest in ending the war until the next election in three years.

Eddie Quinn
East Northport, N.Y.

More Than 1,200 Who Had Anthrax Vaccine Now Sick

June 16, 2005 By Jeff Donaldson, LAS VEGAS SUN

More than 1,200 military personnel who received the anthrax vaccine before going to Iraq have developed serious illnesses, according to an Army report released last month, though local military officials contend the shots still are safe and necessary.

But with Army officials reporting 1,200 illnesses and several thousand more queries about potential side effects, the Defense Department has started allowing troops deploying overseas to opt out of receiving the anthrax vaccine without penalty, according to the Army and Air Force.

Maj. Brian Blalock, public health flight commander at Nellis Air Force Base, said the anthrax shot is no longer mandatory for service members who are willing to sign a waiver releasing the military from liability.

Roughly 30 percent of men, and 60 percent of women, who receive the anthrax vaccine have some sort of minor reaction, such as swelling or a small lump at the injection spot, Blalock said.

But the illnesses reported by the Army have been more severe. Initial symptoms of the reported cases included minor diarrhea, cramping and fever to more intense problems like sleep and memory loss, chronic fatigue, headaches and chest pains.

Soldiers' Relatives Sue Blackwater For Killing Them

June 13, 2005 Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — The families of three soldiers killed in an Afghanistan plane crash on Monday sued the contractor that supplied the plane and crew, Blackwater USA, saying it was negligent and didn't make safety a priority.

"This crash was totally preventable," said attorney Bob Spohrer who filed a wrongful death suit against five subsidiary companies of Blackwater. He contended that a pilot error caused the plane to slam into a snow-covered mountain near Afghanistan's western border of Iran last November.

Lt. Col. Mike McMahon, 41, Chief Warrant Officer Travis W. Grogan, 31, and Spc. Harley D. Miller, 21 died in the crash, along with three employees of Blackwater USA.

The suit alleges there was nothing wrong with the aircraft and that there was no enemy fire, but that the pilots were newly deployed to the region — arriving in Afghanistan just 16 days before the crash — and had not flown the route they were taking the day of the crash.

The pilots also failed to file a flight plan and rescue efforts were delayed because the company failed to use the electronic location transmitter that might have

saved at least one life: *Miller survived the crash but died of internal injuries before rescuers arrived two days later.*

“Blackwater violated standards ... and their contract with the (U.S.) Department of Defense,” Spohrer said.

“Above all, they failed in their safety obligation to these U.S. servicemen and their families.”

“In an instant, I went from being Mike McMahon’s wife to being his widow,” said McMahon’s widow, Jeannette.

Brig. Gen. Thomas Hemingway: Stupidest Liar Of 2005, So Far

18 June 2005 The New York Times, Editorial

At the hearing, four military and civilian officials overseeing the processing of prisoners at Guantánamo could not, or would not, provide the most basic information - such as how many detainees there are and what countries they came from.

Lt. Cmdr. Charles Swift, a military lawyer, later courageously testified that he was assigned to represent one of the prisoners at Guantánamo, for the sole purpose of extracting a guilty plea.

He provided a written order that contradicted the denials of the man who made the assignment, Brig. Gen. Thomas Hemingway, who oversees the military tribunals Mr. Bush created after 9/11 to screen selected prisoners away from public and judicial scrutiny.

Panic At The Pentagon: Army Lowers Standards For Officers

2005-06-12 Tom Bowman, Baltimore Sun

Faced with a need to expand the Army and ease recruitment problems, Army officials have decided to loosen the requirements for junior officer candidates - accepting prospects who exceed the current age limit by more than a decade, and permitting more flexibility to waive their minor criminal or civil offenses, according to a memo obtained by The Sun.

The May 25 memo, sent to division commanders and other generals, said the Army hopes to attract 300 soldiers up to age 42 to attend Officer Candidate School and

become second lieutenants. Using the same age criteria, they also hope to attract an additional 300 civilians with college degrees as officer candidates. The Army National Guard and Army Reserve are working on similar programs, according to the memo.

The new criteria establish a clear departure from current requirements, which state that applicants should not reach their "29th birthday prior to training" and should be in "good moral standing." The average age for an OCS graduate is 27, Army officials said.

According to the memo, soldiers ages 18 to 42 may apply and division commanders may recommend waiving minor civil or military offenses.

Some Army officers at the Pentagon who were shown the memo were incredulous that the Army would resort to attracting a 42-year-old to become a second lieutenant, the most junior officer, given the physical requirements to lead troops in the field.

Retired Army Maj. Gen. Robert H. Scales, Jr., a Vietnam War combat veteran and former commandant of the Army War College, said in an interview that he found it "disturbing" that the Army would waive offenses.

Scales also could not recall a time when the Army tried to attract officer candidates so old, other than during the Civil War. "It is unusual to stretch the upper level that far," he said, referring to the age limit.

The retired general also said the "seemingly endless" U.S.-led military mission in Iraq, with repeated deployments for soldiers may be starting to have an effect on officers. "Now that we're in the third year, we're starting to see some fissures in our long-term professional officer corps," he said.

Pentagon Fights Helping Deployed Reservists

As to complaints about costs, she said that is just a matter of priorities. "We have voted time and time again to hand out relief to corporations for far less important reasons," she said.

6.20.05 By Rick Maze, Army Times staff writer

Despite continued Pentagon opposition, a bipartisan group of senators is pressing on with a proposal to have the federal government make up any salary losses for federal employees in the National Guard or reserve who earn less when mobilized than they do in civilian life.

Most reservists lose money when called to active duty, with an average loss of \$368 a month, Sen. George Allen, R-Va., said. "This is \$368 that goes into putting

food on the table, paying the mortgage, the utility bills and making the car payment,” he said.

Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La, said reservists who volunteer to fight and possibly die for their country “shouldn’t have to sacrifice financial stability.”

As to complaints about costs, she said that is just a matter of priorities. “We have voted time and time again to hand out relief to corporations for far less important reasons,” she said.

“Cut The Salaries Of These Already Wealthy Civil Servants Who Run Our Defense Department”

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
6.20.05

I am angered and disappointed after reading the article “Scrap Tricare, senator says” in the May 2 edition of Army Times.

I am angered at the comments of the two Republican senators — Tom Coburn of Oklahoma, and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina.

I am angered by the suggestion of Susan Horek of the Rand Corp., that the Pentagon faces a “serious problem with retirees who are eligible for other health coverage deciding to drop their other health plans and enroll in Tricare because of its lower costs.” Why would a military retiree not avail himself of a medical plan cheaper than the one he currently uses?

I have a suggestion for the Defense Department. Cut the salaries of these already wealthy civil servants who run our Defense Department. Also, let us see what kind of pensions and health care these people receive.

Sgt. 1st Class Richard N. McKiddy (ret.)
Kansas City, Mo.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

“We Are The Only Ones Who Can Liberate Iraq”



The al-Haq Army surround the main mosque in Ramadi, Iraq, to block entrance June 16, 2005. The armed men blocked the entrance to the mosque to stop city officials and tribal elders who planned a conference to select representatives to collaborate with coalition forces. (AP Photo/Bilal Hussein)

Jun 16 By FRANK GRIFFITHS (AP) & Rory Carroll in Baghdad and Osama Mansour in Ramadi, The Guardian

Dozens of hooded insurgents surrounded a downtown mosque in Ramadi, 70 miles west of Baghdad, to prevent a meeting of local politicians and tribal leaders on the country's new charter and reconciliation efforts.

"We told them to leave Iraq's issues for us, we are the only ones who can liberate Iraq by fighting infidels and not by holding conferences. And instead of spending money for this conference, they have to give it to us to buy weapons to help our fighting against the Americans," a masked man told Iraqi reporters outside the empty mosque.

Insurgents have taken over much of the Iraqi city of Ramadi and used it to launch attacks against US forces

A huge bomb killed five American marines yesterday and showered body parts on to rooftops, fuelling suspicion that armour-piercing technology is being developed and tested in Ramadi.

US troops recovered the remains and withdrew to their base outside the Arab Sunni stronghold, leaving masked gunmen to erect checkpoints.

In other towns and cities in Anbar the guerrillas returned after the Americans withdrew and swept aside weak or non-existent Iraqi forces.

American troops guarded two bridges outside the city and every few entered the town in armoured Humvees.

Each time streets emptied, leaving the convoy to patrol in near silence. Once it passed, people ventured outdoors again, including men in scarves and masks who wielded knives, assault rifles and rocket launchers.

Two cars with about 10 men set up checkpoints during the day, stopping and questioning anyone deemed suspicious. Several people were taken away, their fate unclear.

Residents said they were frightened of the insurgents but most dreaded a US-led offensive similar to that which flattened Falluja. **They said the rebels were Iraqi Sunnis, not foreign Islamist radicals.**

Residents said that in reprisal for their losses US troops fired grenades at a minibus as it crossed the bridge at 6am yesterday. Eight girls and women died and a Jordanian man was injured, said hospital staff.



Iraqi insurgents take up positions at a crossroads in Ramadi June 16, 2005. Photo by Stringer/Iraq/Reuters

Assorted Resistance Action: War In Falluja

18 June 2005 (AFP) & Indo-Asian News Service & By JACOB SILBERBERG, Associated Press Writer & (KUNA)

A car bomb attack in Falluja on Saturday killed 14 soldiers and injured eight others, Xinhua reported.

Quoting witnesses, the agency said the attack had been apparently targeted at an Iraqi army patrol near the Iraqi Islamic Party headquarters in Fallujah, west of Baghdad.

The explosive-laden vehicle was driven on Friday into a crowd of Iraqi soldiers near the headquarters of the Iraqi Islamic Party where a meeting, attended by Iraqi and US officers, was being held.

North of Baghdad, gunmen opened fire on a US-Iraqi convoy near Baquba, wounding four policemen, the Iraqi army said.

A car bomber killed five Iraqis, including three soldiers, Friday afternoon in an attack on an Iraqi army convoy in Fallujah. Ten others were wounded in the attack, including six soldiers.

In Baghdad, a car bomber slammed into an Iraqi army convoy in the Yarmouk neighborhood, killing two soldiers and wounding six near a dangerous highway — also known as the Street of Death — leading from downtown to the airport, police Lt. Thaer Mahmoud said.

Two Iraqi policemen were killed and two others were wounded in a raid on their patrol by resistance soldiers in Al-Gazaliya area, in the western sector of the Iraqi capital, a police source said on Saturday.

The source, who requested anonymity, said the injured were taken to a nearby hospital while the other two died on the spot.

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

Al-Mahdi Army Reigns In Sadr City: “To A Hearty Round Of Applause, She Set Ablaze An American Flag”

A mock battle between U.S. soldiers - eight Iraqis in camouflage fatigues, sunglasses and bandanas - and Iraqis, was well received by the several hundred people who gathered to watch the parade on a blistering afternoon. *The scene ended with a woman in Islamic dress killing five of the soldiers and capturing three while chanting Allahu Akbar, or God is Great. To a hearty round of applause, she set ablaze an American flag.*

BAGHDAD, Iraq - Since the guns fell silent in Sadr City last November, Baghdad's sprawling Shiite district has been the safest place in the Iraqi capital - no car bombings, no suicide attacks, roadside bombs or assassinations.

But security and political empowerment of Sadr City's estimated 2.5 million residents have brought little improvement to life. Lengthy power cuts and open sewage drains remain the norm. Running water is scarce and many streets are strewn with garbage.

In many ways, the district's reality is similar to that of other former Iraqi hotspots where the end of violence has failed to change the quality of life. Pledges of reconstruction funds have failed to materialize, been slow in coming or poorly managed.

In the case of Sadr City, the absence of a peace dividend is boosting the standing of Muqtada al-Sadr, the anti-American cleric whose militiamen are loyal to his Imam al-Mahdi Army and fought U.S. troops last year.

With that, al-Sadr's lieutenants have further tightened their hold on the area through an elaborate network of modest but reliable social and religious services and feeding anti-American sentiments.

Last week the Sadrists, who burst on the political scene soon after Saddam's ouster and now rival established Shiite parties, staged a colorful parade in Sadr City in memory of al-Mahdi militiamen killed in last year's fighting.

In a sign of the vast influence they wield, vehicles belonging to the local Sadr City police took part in the parade with their loudspeakers blaring songs praising al-Sadr. Commanders of the force joined the movement's turbaned clerics in the reviewing stand.

A mock battle between U.S. soldiers - eight Iraqis in camouflage fatigues, sunglasses and bandanas - and Iraqis, was well received by the several hundred people who gathered to watch the parade on a blistering afternoon. The scene ended with a woman in Islamic dress killing five of the soldiers and capturing three while chanting Allahu Akbar, or God is Great.

To a hearty round of applause, she set ablaze an American flag.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Not Much Oil For Blood

June 15, 2005 Michael Rivero, What Really Happened & June 13, 2005 London Daily Telegraph

Yes, there is oil in Iraq, but we're not getting much of that.

Turns out Bush is spending \$5 billion a month to get out only \$150 million in oil. Good business sense like that wrecks companies.

Attacks by insurgents against the Iraqi oil industry have effectively cut off all exports through the north of the country.

And, according to Petroleum Intelligence Weekly, a leading industry source, precious little reconstruction work has been done, leaving Iraq unable to meet its production targets even during periods of calm.

This Is Not Church

**From: Mike Hastie
To: G.I. Special:
Sent: June 18, 2005**

99% of the war in Iraq is a lie. The other 1% represents the tip of the iceberg.

**Mike Hastie
Vietnam Veteran**

When? Where?

"It's just war," he says. "The American boys who came here didn't want to fight. We didn't want to fight. The U.S. soldiers were ordered to come by their government. And when they came we had to resist. We were just trying to defend our country." [See RECEIVED section at the end for the answer.]

“We Will Not So Much Defeat Dictators Such As Saddam Hussein As Become Them”

If we do not confront the lies and hubris told to justify the killing and mask the destruction carried out in our name in Iraq, if we do not grasp the moral corrosiveness of empire and occupation, if we continue to allow force and violence to be our primary form of communication, if we do not remove from power our flag-waving, cross-bearing versions of the Taliban, we will not so much defeat dictators such as Saddam Hussein as become them.

I have spent most of my adult life in war.

I began two decades ago covering wars in Central America, where I spent five years, then the Middle East, where I spent seven, and the Balkans where I covered the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo. My life has been marred, let me say deformed, by the organized industrial violence that year after year was an intimate part of my existence. I have watched young men bleed to death on lonely Central American dirt roads and cobblestone squares in Sarajevo.

I have looked into the eyes of mothers, kneeling over the lifeless and mutilated bodies of their children. I have stood in warehouses with rows of corpses, including children, and breathed death into my lungs. I carry within me the ghosts of those I worked with, my comrades, now gone.

The most powerful antiwar testaments, of war and what war does to us, are those that eschew images of combat.

It is the suffering of the veteran whose body and mind are changed forever because he or she served a nation that sacrificed them, the suffering of families and children caught up in the unforgiving maw of war, which begin to tell the story of war.

But we are not allowed to see dead bodies, at least of our own soldiers, nor do we see the wounds that forever mark a life, the wounds that leave faces and bodies horribly disfigured by burns or shrapnel. We never watch the agony of the dying.

War is made palatable. It is sanitized. We are allowed to taste war's perverse thrill, but spared from seeing war's consequences. The wounded and the dead are swiftly carted offstage. And for this I blame the press, which willingly hides from us the effects of bullets, roadside bombs and rocket-propelled grenades, which sat at the feet of those who lied to make this war possible and dutifully reported these lies and called it journalism.

War is always about this betrayal.

It is about the betrayal of the young by the old, idealists by cynics and finally soldiers by politicians.

Those who pay the price, those who are maimed forever by war, however, are crumpled up and thrown away. We do not see them. We do not hear them. They are doomed, like wandering spirits, to float around the edges of our consciousness, ignored, even reviled.

The message they bring is too painful for us to hear. We prefer the myth of war, the myth of glory, honor, patriotism and heroism, words that in the terror and brutality of combat are empty, meaningless and obscene.

We are losing the war in Iraq.

We are an isolated and reviled nation.

We are pitiless to others weaker than ourselves.

We have lost sight of our democratic ideals.

Thucydides wrote of Athens' expanding empire and how this empire led it to become a tyrant abroad and then a tyrant at home. The tyranny Athens imposed on others, it finally imposed on itself.

If we do not confront the lies and hubris told to justify the killing and mask the destruction carried out in our name in Iraq, if we do not grasp the moral corrosiveness of empire and occupation, if we continue to allow force and violence to be our primary form of communication, if we do not remove from power our flag-waving, cross-bearing versions of the Taliban, we will not so much defeat dictators such as Saddam Hussein as become them.

Rumsfeld Gets His 'Leaner Army'

[Thanks to D, who sent this in.]

June 15, 2005 By PAT MURPHY, Express Staff Writer

Donald Rumsfeld's fondest dream as Defense Secretary is a "leaner" Army. Now he's got what he wanted.

The prospects are for an even leaner Army as President Bush's attack on Iraq continues losing support (nearly 60 percent of the public say it's not worth casualties and costs) and American parents in droves advise sons and daughters not to sign up and end up fighting an unpopular war with no end in sight.

Enlistments in the Army have fallen off precipitously -- missing the quota by 42 percent for May's original goal of 8,050 enlistees.

Like the stubborn Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, who admitted decades after the fact he was wrong about victory in Vietnam, will Rumsfeld as a doddering old man someday find courage to confess blunders in Iraq?

That wouldn't be much consolation for families with only grave markers to remind them of just how dreadful the Bush administration's blunders were.

“The Grunts Openly Grumble”

June 17, 2005 Charles Walker, Liberty.hypermart.net

Fallujah is flattened, Al-Qaim is quashed, Al-Hit hit by missiles. Houses blasted by tanks, orchards bulldozed, innocent Iraqi citizens bound and hooded are trucked to the bowels of American torture chambers.

Yet the next day Fallujah fights on, Al-Qaim battles back, and Al-Hit is not "pacified".

At the bottom the grunts openly grumble and count the days left of this futile "tour of duty", hoping only to return home in one piece. Junior Officers voice private doubts on the tactics and strategy, and just as fervently as the lower ranks hope to come home alive.

Flag rank officers, eyeing their next star, wax optimistic about the putative successes which occur under their watch.

Of course no officer of flag rank (Brigadier General or Rear Admiral and above) has been killed or wounded and given their position far from danger are much more likely to be injured or killed by a drunken fall than blown to bits by a bomb or shot in a firefight.

“It Is Remarkable Indeed How Misinformed Some People Can Be”

[Thanks to John Gingerich, Veterans For Peace, who sent this in.]

June 13, 2005 by William Blum, The Anti-Empire Report

The Pentagon awarded three contracts this past week, worth up to \$300 million, to companies it hopes will inject more creativity into US psychological operations efforts to improve foreign public opinion about the United States, particularly their opinion of the American military.

Dan Kuehl, a specialist in information warfare at the National Defense University, added: "There are a billion-plus Muslims that are undecided. How do we move them over to being more supportive of us? If we can do that, we can make progress and improve security."

But what if it's not a misunderstanding? What if the problem is that people in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world understand the Pentagon and US foreign policy only too well? In short, what if they don't know how good we are?

What if they -- in their foreign ignorance and al-Jazeera brainwashing -- have come to the bizarre conclusion that saturation bombing, invasion, occupation, destruction of homes, torture, depleted uranium, killing a hundred thousand, and daily humiliation of men, women and children do not indicate good intentions?

Last week, as well, Zalmay Khalilzad, nominated to be US ambassador to Iraq, appeared before the Senate. "The degree of support for our policies, opinion polls indicate, is not very high," he said. It has partly "to do with the perception that what we are about in Iraq is occupation, what we're about is to gain control of Iraqi resources. I

think what we need to do is a better job of explaining our goals, the goal of an Iraq that's self-reliant, an Iraq that's successful. We want Iraq for the Iraqis, an Iraq that works for the Iraqi people. It's the insurgents who don't care about the Iraqi people."

Yes, it is remarkable indeed how misinformed some people can be.

“I Have Watched In Horror The Mirror Image Of Another Vietnam Unfolding”

These leaders have never experienced the tears, the dread and rage, the feeling that there is no God, no country, nothing but the wound, the horrifying memories, the shock, the guilt, the shame, the terrible injustice that took the lives of more than 58,000 Americans and over two million Vietnamese.

We had to act. We had to speak.

June 13, 2005 By Ron Kovic, AlterNet

*Ron Kovic served two tours of duty during the Vietnam War. He was paralyzed from the chest down in combat in 1968 and has been in a wheelchair ever since. Along with Oliver Stone, Kovic was the co-screenwriter of the 1989 Academy Award-winning film based on his book, *Born on the Fourth of July* (Akashic Books). The following is from the introduction to the new edition of the book.*

I have watched in horror the mirror image of another Vietnam unfolding.

So many similarities, so many things said that remind me of that war thirty years ago which left me paralyzed for the rest of my life.

Refusing to learn from our experiences in Vietnam, our government continues to pursue a policy of deception, distortion, manipulation, and denial, doing everything it can to hide from the American people their true intentions and agenda in Iraq. The flag-draped caskets of our dead begin their long and sorrowful journeys home hidden from public view, while the Iraqi casualties are not even considered worth counting--some estimate as many as 100,000 have been killed so far.

The paraplegics, amputees, burn victims, the blinded and maimed, shocked and stunned, brain damaged and psychologically stressed, now fill our veterans hospitals. Most of them were not even born when I came home wounded to the Bronx V.A. in 1968. The same lifesaving medical-evacuation procedures that kept me alive in Vietnam are bringing home a whole new generation of severely maimed from Iraq.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which afflicted so many of us after Vietnam, is just now beginning to appear among soldiers recently returned from the current war. For some, the agony and suffering, the sleepless nights, anxiety attacks, and awful bouts of insomnia, loneliness, alienation, anger, and rage, will last for decades, if not their whole lives.

They will be trapped in a permanent nightmare of that war, of killing another man, a child, watching a friend die ... fighting against an enemy that can never be seen, while at any moment someone--a child, a woman, an old man, anyone--might kill you. These traumas return home with us and we carry them, sometimes hidden, for agonizing decades. They deeply impact our daily lives, and the lives of those closest to us.

To kill another human being, to take another life out of this world with one pull of a trigger, is something that never leaves you. It is as if a part of you dies with them. If you choose to keep on living, there may be a healing, and even hope and happiness again--but that scar and memory and sorrow will be with you forever.

Some of these veterans are showing up at homeless shelters around our country, while others have begun to courageously speak out against the senselessness and insanity of this war and the leaders who sent them there.

During the 2004 Democratic Convention, returning soldiers formed a group called Iraq Veterans Against the War, just as we marched in Miami in August of 1972 as Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Still others have refused deployment to Iraq, gone to Canada, and begun resisting this immoral and illegal war.

For months leading up to the invasion of Iraq, citizens here in the United States and around the world marched and demonstrated in growing opposition to our government's reckless plan to launch an attack. I proudly participated in protests in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C., doing countless interviews and speaking out wherever people would listen to me.

This extraordinary opposition culminated on February, 15, 2003, when more than 30 million citizens in over 100 nations participated in the most massive demonstration on behalf of peace in the history of the world. Never before had so many human beings come together before a war had even begun to say no to the insanity and madness.

Many of us promised ourselves long ago that we would never allow what happened to us in Vietnam to happen again.

We had an obligation, a responsibility as citizens, as Americans, as human beings, to raise our voices in protest. We could never forget the hospitals, the intensive care wards, the wounded all around us fighting for their lives, those long and painful years after we came home, those lonely nights.

There were lives to save on both sides, young men and women who would be disfigured and maimed, mothers and fathers who would lose their sons and daughters, wives and loved ones who would suffer for decades to come if we did not do everything we could to stop the forward momentum of this madness.

We sensed it very early and very quickly. We saw the same destructive patterns reasserting themselves all over again as our leaders spoke of "bad guys" and "evil-doers," "imminent threats" and "mushroom clouds," attempting to frighten and intimidate the American people into supporting their agenda.

The Bush administration seems to have learned some very different lessons than we did from Vietnam.

Where we learned of the deep immorality and obscenity of that war, they learned to be even more brutal, more violent and ruthless, i.e., "shock and awe."

Sadly, the war on terror has become a war of terror.

Where we learned to be more open and honest, to be more truthful, to expose, to express, to shatter the myths of the past, they seem to have learned the exact opposite--to hide, to censor, to fabricate, to mislead and deceive--to perpetuate those myths.

Instead of being intimidated or frightened, many of us became more outraged and more determined than ever to stop these ignorant, arrogant men and women who never saw the things we saw, never had to grieve over the loss of their bodies or the bodies of their sons and daughters, never had to watch as so many friends and fellow veterans were destroyed by alcoholism and drugs, homelessness, imprisonment, neglect and rejection, torture, abandonment and betrayal, in the painful aftermath of the war.

These leaders have never experienced the tears, the dread and rage, the feeling that there is no God, no country, nothing but the wound, the horrifying memories, the shock, the guilt, the shame, the terrible injustice that took the lives of more than 58,000 Americans and over two million Vietnamese.

We had to act. We had to speak.

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

OCCUPATION REPORT

Baquaba Doctors Strike Against “Organized Terrorism” Of Collaborator Cops, Troops

Iraq's security forces, particularly the police, have in recent months been accused of wrongful arrest, abuse, beatings and even torture by Iraqis, who say their attitude has changed little since Saddam Hussein's era.

June 18, 2005 By Waleed Ibrahim, (Reuters)

Doctors at the main hospital in Baquba, north of Baghdad, have gone on strike, saying they are fed up with constant abuse at the hands of aggressive Iraqi police and soldiers.

Staff and security guards at the hospital, the largest in the province with more than 100 doctors and 400 beds, handed a petition to the director on Saturday saying they would only handle emergency cases until their grievances were addressed.

"We want the governor and the minister to do something to protect us from the organized terrorism of the police and army," Mohammed Hazim, a specialist at Baquba General Hospital, said.

"There is continuous harassment at the hands of the police and army. They are rude, very disrespectful and aggressive."

Doctors said that on Friday night, the latest of several incidents in recent weeks, members of an elite police rapid reaction unit had contacted the hospital's security staff to tell them to alert doctors to get ready for patients.

Dozens of police, some in uniform, some in civilian clothes and all carrying weapons, had then turned up with wounded colleagues demanding treatment.

Doctor Ali Hussein said he had tried to treat one policeman hit in the leg with shrapnel, but when he told him that he was going to need an x-ray, the officer became abusive.

"He told me to go to hell and then started to beat me," Hussein told Reuters. "Then he told other policemen to put a bag over my head and they tried to take me out to their cars to take me away," he said.

"Our security guards tried to stop them, telling them I was a doctor, but they didn't listen and beat the security guards too. Then one of them put a gun to my head and threatened me."

Other doctors and security staff at the hospital corroborated Hussein's account of Friday's incident, saying they were stunned by the behavior of the police, who arrived in a group of around 50, all of them heavily armed.

"I swear they were not normal. They seemed drunk or medicated, they were crazed," another doctor said, asking that his name not be used for fear of reprisals. He said he had signed the petition handed to the hospital director.

"We can't work under such circumstances. No one can work with police with weapons all around. They are so abusive."

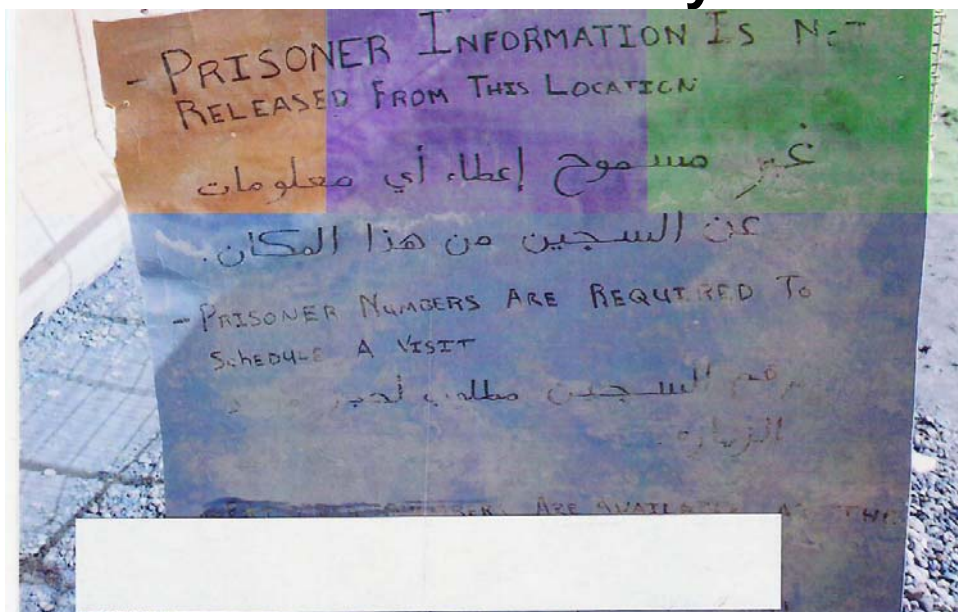
Doctors at Baghdad's Yarmouk hospital, one the busiest, recently reported a similar incident involving Iraq soldiers.

Iraq's security forces, particularly the police, have in recent months been accused of wrongful arrest, abuse, beatings and even torture by Iraqis, who say their attitude has changed little since Saddam Hussein's era.

The director of the Baquba hospital said he had received the petition, signed by doctors and security staff, and said he hoped to discuss the situation with the regional governor soon.

"We need order. Doctors feel afraid, they don't know what could happen to them, and we can't have that," he said, asking not to be identified for fear of retribution.

Welcome To Abu Ghraib Prison, Have A Nice Day



[Thanks to Billy Kelly, Vietnam Veterans Against The War, who sent this post card in from Sai Gon, Vietnam. He writes: "\$100 of billions spent for this Lousy Sign!"]

Text from post card:

Well into the occupation of Iraq, the world's 'sole' remaining Superpower, had this savvy sign to offer advice to those visitors wishing to find their imprisoned and/or abducted.

It reads:

"Prisoner Information Is Not Released From This Location. Prisoner Numbers Are Required To Schedule A Visit. Prisoner Numbers Are Available At The Al Monsor Shopping Mall."

High tech?

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

A New Meaning For The Word "Released"

16 June 2005 Tom Fox, Electronic Iraq

A father has been coming to Falcon camp regularly seeking news on his two sons who were detained three and a half weeks ago. The last time the father came to the camp he was told that one son had been released and the other son was still being held at Falcon.

"If he has been released where is he?" the father asked us on the way into the camp. When he went into check on his detained son he was told that the detained son and the "released" son are now in prison at Abu Ghraib.

As Occupation Stooges Steal Food Rations, People Go Hungry: Iron Filings In The Flour, Maggots In The Rice

Retail agents who sell the food baskets say the ministry is corrupt, a charge supported by Radhi Radhi, the government's anti-corruption chief.

Some agents speculate that ministry employees have added metal filings to cheat on the parcels' weight. The same employees also sell tea and flour on the black market, agents say.

June 17 2005 Louise Roug, The Financial Times

After his American employers left and monthly food rations began to shrink, Hussein Hadi started selling his furniture. His bed was the last thing to go. Now Hadi, his wife, sister, mother, two brothers, three children and a nephew sleep on his living- room floor in Baghdad, their blankets sewn from flour sacks. Some nights they fall asleep hungry.

"Hope is small," said his wife, Zainab. Like many Iraqis, the Hadis depend on food rations distributed by the government.

Sometimes the sugar they receive has been hardened by rainwater and the rice is crawling with maggots. The soap is so harsh it causes rashes. On the rare occasions when the Hadis received all the items - sugar, rice, flour, baby milk, tea, vegetable oil and a few other essentials - they thought themselves lucky.

The United Nations World Food Programme, which monitors the distribution of rations, recently reported "significant countrywide shortfalls in rice, sugar, milk and infant formula".

Families in Baghdad have received no sugar or baby milk since January. Newspapers have also begun reporting that the tea and flour hand-outs contain metal filings and that people have fallen ill after consuming food rations.

Officials with the trade ministry, which is in charge of distributing the rations, said the media have created the crisis. But they have refused to release results of the tests for contamination they said they are doing.

Retail agents who sell the food baskets say the ministry is corrupt, a charge supported by Radhi Radhi, the government's anti-corruption chief. Some agents speculate that ministry employees have added metal filings to cheat on the parcels' weight. The same employees also sell tea and flour on the black market, agents say.

More than half of Iraq's population lives below the poverty line. The median income fell from \$255 (£144, €211) in 2003 to about \$144 in 2004, according to a recent UN survey. Families buy the food baskets for a few dollars at state-licensed shops.

Ahmed Mukhtar, director-general of the ministry, blamed the shortage of rations on security threats that created bottlenecks at the borders with Jordan, Syria and Turkey.

Zainab Hadi said she and other women had been forced to buy food at the market, pushing prices up. The cost of tea and flour has almost tripled. At food markets, a 35-pound can of vegetable oil, which just a few months ago cost \$4 - a little more than an average day's wage - now costs \$12. Mr Hadi recently lost his job as an electrical engineer with US troops and now works as a minibuss driver.

Over the doorway of the Hadis' tiny house, a small blue ceramic plaque offers praise to God. The 10 family members share two rooms. The fridge is largely empty. Sprite and Coke bottles filled with tap water share shelf space with medicine to relieve the aching joints of Hadi's widowed mother.

In Sadr City, a Baghdad slum into which 2m people are crammed, the reduction in food rations is also taking a toll. Intisan Karim, 26, lives with 24 family members in a small house. If rations continue to shrink, she joked, laughing without mirth, "we'll start eating each other".

"The food basket is shrinking and the people's hopes are also shrinking," said Amir Huseini, who dealt with social issues in an office affiliated with Moqtada al-Sadr, the anti-American Shia cleric.

"One or two missing items have become three, four and five, until this point when the really vital item - the flour - is also missing."

He had visited many families locally, trying to raise morale and hope, he said, "although this does not fill the stomachs of the hungry".

Received:

When? Where?

Le Hoang Khanh, Vietnam, interviewed 2005. 2005-06-03 David McNeill, OhmyNews

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/magalat/english/qi-special.htm>

GI Special distributes and posts to our website copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available in an effort to advance understanding of the invasion and occupation of Iraq. We believe this constitutes a "fair use" of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law since it is being distributed **without charge or profit** for purely educational purposes to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for educational purposes, in accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107. Go to: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml> for more information. If you wish to use copyrighted material from this site for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use', you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

If printed out, this newsletter is your personal property and cannot legally be confiscated from you. "Possession of unauthorized material may not be prohibited." DoD Directive 1325.6 Section 3.5.1.2.