

## **GI SPECIAL 3B66:**

**ENOUGH:  
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!**



U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Kurt Rardin, left, of Roanoke, Virginia and Lance Cpl. Troy Weber of Canton, Ohio sleep in a house commandeered by Marines in Karabilah June 19, 2005. (AP Photo/Jacob Silberberg)

**“Everyone’s Asking,  
What Are We Doing It  
For?”**

**“Everyone's Asking, Am  
I Next?”**

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

June 20, 2005 By Ann Scott Tyson, Washington Post Staff Writer'

Under the glare of a midmorning sun, Staff Sgt. Jody Hayes stands sweating in the hatch of his M-113 armored vehicle, scanning for insurgents. Hayes and his Iowa National Guard crew have been stalled for nearly 30 minutes on a risky, slow-moving mission to clear road bombs, and he's getting nervous.

Suddenly he hears the snap of a sniper's bullet flying past his head. The round pierces the neck of the soldier next to him, Spec. John Miller, entering the two-inch gap between his Kevlar vest collar and helmet.

"Get down!" Hayes yells. Miller falls heavily against Hayes's leg, and at first Hayes believes his friend is taking cover. "Man, he got down pretty quick," he recalls thinking. Then he glances down and sees Miller bleeding at his feet.

Sgt. Ty Dermer, who is manning a .50-caliber machine gun within arm's reach of Miller, radios for help: "We got a man down! We need a medic, ASAP!"

Hayes drops down and cradles Miller's head in his lap, while Dermer rips open a pressure dressing and places it on the neck wound. Each man grabs one of Miller's hands and feels for a pulse. They still haven't found one when medic Spec. Jaymie Holschlag pulls open the back door of the M-113 and rushes, breathless, to Miller's side.

"Doc," Hayes says, looking up at her. "He's gone."

Holschlag begins checking Miller's pulse herself, as if she hasn't heard.

"Doc," Hayes repeats, louder. "He's gone!"

It is 10:18 a.m. on April 12, and John Wayne Miller is no more.

In the frenzy to save Miller, no one was thinking about why the war had snatched away the gangly 21-year-old Wal-Mart stocker from West Burlington, Iowa.

**Only later, as darkness falls and details of the day's horrors ricochet through their camp, do that question and others begin to haunt Hayes and his tightknit Iowa platoon.**

**With a fifth of its soldiers killed or wounded, the platoon is reeling from the trauma of repeated loss, facing a constant threat from bombs and gunfire on Ramadi's streets, or mortar strikes on their base.**

**They are angry, anxious, wracked by guilt -- one soldier suffers from combat stress so acute that he is unable to go on missions, and stays behind camp walls.**

Dermer asks bitterly why the crew had sat exposed so long, making them an easy target.

Hayes turns inward, tormented over why the sniper had set his cross hairs on Miller instead of him.

**Others wonder what Miller -- who sought escape by playing video games underneath a blanket -- was doing here in the first place.**

**Ramadi is a grim destination for U.S. troops. No battalion stationed inside the city has so far escaped a tour without serious casualties. More than 120 troops have been killed and hundreds more wounded since the summer of 2003 -- proportionally more than in Baghdad.**

**And not all the deaths are from combat: One homesick 19-year-old recently shot himself in the head.**

**Miller's platoon of the 224th Combat Engineer Battalion headed to Ramadi in late February with 31 soldiers. Six weeks later it was down to 25.**

Soldiers and Marines give roads here unofficial names like RPG (rocket-propelled grenade), Easy Street and Death Row -- routes so littered by bombs they're too dangerous to drive down. Although small-arms skirmishes with bands of insurgents have decreased sharply in recent months, the threat of snipers keeps troops crouching low on rooftops, ducking into doorways and sprinting across streets.

"It's kind of the heart of darkness," says Lt. Joseph Hallett of the 2nd Infantry Division, as he loads his Humvee for the April 12 mission with Miller's unit. Their task: to clear a neighborhood along Easy Street of road bombs, known as improvised explosive devices, or IEDs.

At dawn, Miller and his platoon awaken from a rough slumber cramped inside Humvees or stretched out on the packed dirt of an austere Army base in eastern Ramadi known as Combat Outpost. **The base has no running water, only a few wooden latrines, and is regularly pounded by mortars.**

As Miller's vehicle commander, Hayes, 31, of Des Moines, is tough on his men in an effort to keep them alive, but he does what he can to lift morale. He notices a row of rose bushes in the otherwise barren compound. He picks a red and a pink rose, puts them in a plastic water bottle, and ropes it to the top of his M-113. Then he pulls on his body armor.

The convoy rolls into the city, zigzagging down alleys to avoid major roads. Almost immediately, soldiers start spotting telltale signs of explosives. "Corner of RPG and Easy, possible IED," calls out Staff Sgt. Kris Rainwater of Nowata, Okla. Rainwater and his infantry squad dismount. Banging on doors and climbing over courtyard walls, they begin searching houses bordering Easy Street, looking for IED-makers and triggermen.

**Invisible to the Americans, the insurgents are ready.**

**"We have sniper fire down by the water tower," Rainwater says. "They're starting to come out and play." Meanwhile, Hayes, Dermer and Miller advance south of Easy Street in their M-113 with the engineers' bomb-clearing crew, outpacing the infantry's protection. They find the road ahead oddly deserted. Fruit stalls are open, and skinned sheep and fowl hang from shop fronts -- a car idles without a driver, Dermer later recalls -- but not a single Iraqi is in sight.**

The engineers soon discover why: Two 155mm rounds lie ready to explode, buried in a crater on the edge of the street. Using "the Buffalo," a lumbering anti-mine vehicle with a long metal claw, the soldiers try to remove the bomb. But before they can, a white dump truck comes storming down the street. A Bradley gunner fires warning shots, then opens up on the truck, stopping it and killing an Iraqi inside. All the while, Miller is standing guard, giving the sniper time to aim, squeeze the trigger and get away.

Holschlag runs to Miller. When the platoon medic sees that insurgents have taken out another of her "boys," she swears, grabs her medic's bag and walks back to her Humvee, slamming the side of it with her fist. Then she pulls out the gray body bag she has learned to carry at all times, and waits for a vehicle to evacuate Miller's body.

Hayes and Dermer ride back to camp in their M-113, the roses still tied to the back. They've barely cleaned the blood off the vehicle when frustration begins to erupt that afternoon over what seemed to some a flawed, futile mission.

Their faces dusty and streaked with sweat, the soldiers huddle to talk through the incident, raising more questions than answers. Why had the engineers been operating in daylight, when insurgents could easily "template" their position? Why had the infantry left them vulnerable? Why hadn't they caught the sniper who killed Miller?

**"What sucks the most," says Miller's platoon leader, Lt. Tom Lafave, of Escanaba, Mich., "is we sweep an area and five hours later an IED goes off in the same spot."**

**Miller's squad leader, Staff Sgt. Steve "Shaggy" Hagedorn, is more blunt. "We spent three days clearing a route and I guarantee it's worse now than when we started," he says. "So everyone's asking, 'What are we doing it for?' Everyone's asking, 'Am I next?' "**

Dusk envelops the camp, and soldiers brace for mortars. Miller's best friend, Spec. Greg Feagans, and his bunkmate, Spec. Shawn Conrad, withdraw into their barracks and begin packing up the remnants of his life.

Into a black plastic trunk they lay his uniform and sewing kit, his "Book of Dragons" and lucky red pack of Magic game cards. They carefully arrange his Xbox, Wal-Mart ID badge, and the volleyball he bought for others even though he didn't play.

"He can't be replaced," says Conrad, recalling how Miller would keep him awake with stories about fantasy space stations and underwater military bases. "We'll miss him."

"J-Dub," as platoon mates called Miller, was an unlikely hero. His mother died when he was a teen, and his father was in and out of jail, they said.

After high school he found a job stocking shelves at Wal-Mart on the graveyard shift, which he liked because it let him devote his days to his real passion -- video games.

Miller had a one-bedroom apartment on Prairie Street in West Burlington and a mean pet ferret. Other than that, they said, the lanky young man didn't have much going on in his life. So one day in March 2002, more for friendship than anything else, Miller signed up for the Iowa National Guard.

"At first he seemed sort of annoying, but then he became the best friend I ever had," says Feagans, 22, of Burlington. "We did everything together. It was just me and John Wayne."

In Iraq, Miller pulled pranks, like stealing Holschlag's cans of Pepsi. His platoon mates loved him for his generosity -- the pizzas he bought when they were home, how he was always ready to help. On chilly nights, when Conrad and other soldiers stood guard at a detention center nicknamed the dog pound, Miller would talk with them to help pass the time.

But he almost never got mail. And every night, he climbed into a narrow space created by a blanket draped over his top bunk, and watched movies like "Dragonball Z" and "Resident Evil" or played video games alone. "He loved the dark," says Feagans. "It was his way of getting away from the war."

A cat-whisker moon rises over the base, quiet but for the hum of generators. In the gravel outside their barracks, soldiers from Miller's platoon pull up chairs around a "campfire" of three green light sticks. Shirtless in the heat, they talk and swig nonalcoholic beer.

Miller has made his final escape from the war, his body refrigerated and readied for the flight out. But his death will replay in the minds of his platoon mates for a very long time.

The shock is compounded by the loss just weeks earlier of the platoon's commander, 2nd Lt. Richard B. Gienau, 29, of Peoria, Ill., and Sgt. Seth K. Garceau, 27, of Oelwein, Iowa, when their Humvee was hit by a large road bomb. For some, it was already too much to bear.

Spec. Justin Edgington lights a cigarette and inhales, his face illuminated by the pale green glow.

"It's been pretty hard," says Edgington, 23, of West Burlington, who was close to all three of those killed. "I don't think John's death has really set in yet."

Edgington, so traumatized by the losses that he has been unable to go on missions, is one of hundreds of soldiers in Iraq being treated for combat stress each month, even as they confront new dangers every day in the war zone.

Only about 2 percent of troops with combat stress are evacuated, Army psychiatrists in Baghdad say, based on a belief they have a better chance of recovery if they stay with their units. **[That is a flat out fucking lie. They have a "better chance of recovery" back in Iowa. Duh. But the command can't have soldiers leaving combat alive or with all their body parts. There wouldn't be anybody left to put up with this futile, meaningless, dishonorable bullshit "mission" for the Empire and the politicians in DC.]**

Edgington is the sole survivor to stay in Iraq from the IED attack Feb. 27 that killed Gienau and Garceau and wounded two other soldiers. He says he still dreams about the attack nightly, disturbed above all by his last glimpse of his commander. After the bomb exploded and the dust cleared, he found Gienau lying in his lap. "I remember

looking for blood, and all it looked like was a little scrape on his scalp. He really looked like he had put his head in my lap and gone to sleep," he recalls.

After treatment in Baghdad for a concussion and combat stress, Edgington went back to Iowa for two weeks in March. There he saw a man halfway across the Wal-Mart who, from behind, looked exactly like Gienau. "I followed him around for a while trying to get a look at his face, and when I saw it -- it was totally different," he said. "It was really hard, almost like reliving the whole thing from the start."

**Edgington, who in civilian life deals cards at Burlington's Catfish Bend Casino, can't stop thinking about his own close scrape with death. He's troubled about being apart from his wife, baby daughter Emylea and 5-year-old stepson Jaydon. "I won't see my family for so long," he says, taking a drag on his cigarette, "or I might not see them ever."**

Then came the morning's news of another death, hitting Edgington hard. "Which buddy did I lose this time?" Edgington recalls thinking as he escorted Iraqi workers on the base. When he learned it was Miller, he says, "I was, like, numb all over."

Now he stays on the base, taking cover under his bunk when mortar rounds fly in. But he struggles to overcome his fear and return to combat to help the platoon. "Part of me wants to just stay here and never go out again. Another part wants to help my buddies, even though I'm scared to death to go out."

Back in the barracks, Hayes silently cleans his weapon, readying his gear for the next mission. Hoarse vocals from the Staind song "It's Been Awhile" play in the background, and Hayes's body language tells platoon medic Holschlag just how badly he's hurting.

Combat stress takes many forms, and Hayes wrestles not with fear but with guilt over narrowly surviving twice -- when Miller was shot next to him, and when Gienau died riding in his place.

"Lieutenant Gienau jumped in . . . my seat" in the Humvee the day he was killed. "Why did he do that?" Hayes asks quietly. "This time, we were standing shoulder to shoulder," he says of Miller. "What's to say (the sniper) didn't have his cross hairs on each one of us?"

Holschlag worries about Hayes blaming himself for what she sees as the fickle nature of war. With the unit facing several more months in Iraq, she knows all they can do is trudge on.

A construction worker from New Hampton, Iowa, Holschlag tries to sway fate with good-luck charms. On every mission, she fills her pockets with talismans: her bullet, her lucky dollar, photos of Gienau, Garceau and Miller, prayer beads and her Uncle Sam bear. "He brought me to Iraq -- he'll take me out," said the M-16 sharpshooter and mother of two.

To Holschlag and many in the unit, Miller was their "boy," their "kid," and in his sudden death, the good-hearted but awkward young man was mourned as a family member. "You live on top of each other. You get used to working together . . . then you go out one day and -- boom -- he's gone," she says.

"In 2 1/2 seconds, for no particular reason, because we found their weapons cache, they took him out," she says. "And never again will John Wayne Miller steal my Pepsi."

### **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](http://www.ivaw.net))

## **IRAQ WAR REPORTS**

### **1ST COSCOM SOLDIER KILLED BY TALL AFAR IED**

June 20, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS  
Release Number: 05-06-26C

**LSA ANACONDA, BALAD, Iraq – One 1st Corps Support Command Soldier was killed as a result of wounds sustained from an improvised explosive device attack while conducting a combat logistics patrol northeast of Tall Afar June 20.**

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### **MARINE KILLED IN KARABILAH**

June 20, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS  
Release Number: 05-06-25C

**CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq – A Marine assigned to Regimental Combat Team-2, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), was killed in action June 18 by small-arms fire.**

The incident took place during Operation Spear, a combat operation in Karabilah, Iraq.

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### **Former UGA Cheerleader Killed**

June 20, 2005 AP

ATHENS, Ga. -- A former captain of the University of Georgia cheerleading squad has been killed in Iraq, according to a member of his family.

Noah Harris, a 2003 graduate, died Friday when the Humvee he was riding in came under fire.

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## Freeport Soldier Injured

6.20.05 By Michelle Tan, St. Cloud Times

Two Minnesota National Guard soldiers — including a staff sergeant from Freeport — were injured last week in Iraq.

Staff Sgt. Michael Mills and Spc. Stanley Tell were injured Tuesday in an incident involving an improvised explosive device.

Mills and Tell belong to Bravo Company, 434th Main Support Battalion. The unit, which specializes in transportation and is based in St. Cloud and Austin, has been in Iraq since January.

The soldiers are being treated at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas.

"He's better than we thought," Alverna Leach said about her son-in-law, Mills.

Mills' wife, Sue, flew Saturday to San Antonio to be with him, Leach said.

Mills sustained burns on 30 percent of his body. He has a dislocated shoulder and a broken left foot. He remains in the burn unit's intensive care unit, Leach said.

"He is heavily sedated, but his vitals are all good," Leach said Sunday. "They think they will start skin grafts probably tomorrow."

The couple's 15-year-old son and 10-year-old daughter are staying with Leach in her Melrose home.

Tell sustained burns on his hands and face. His condition and hometown were unavailable Sunday.

Mills' family learned about his injuries Tuesday, Leach said. Sue Mills was at her parents' house when she was informed.

"That was a good thing. At least she had family with her," Leach said. "We have a very good support group, and the people around here have been more than marvelous. We're pretty lucky, we feel."



Michael Mills, who is 40 or 41, has been in the Guard for more than 20 years, Leach said. He re-enlisted for three more years about a month ago, she said.

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## **Attack On U.S. Forces Used To Set Up Ambush**

6.20.05 Aljazeera

**A band of insurgents launched a bold assault on a Baghdad police station just before dawn.**

On Monday, fighters detonated a car bomb and fired on Iraqi police and soldiers in Baghdad.

**The clashes happened shortly after US troops came under attack from armed men near a police station in the Baya district of southwest Baghdad before dawn.**

**"When an Iraqi police patrol responded to the incident, terrorists detonated a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device, killing four police and wounding four others," the US army said, using the term for a car bomb.**

**Police and hospital officials say at least eight police officers killed in the attack, and at least 23 people were wounded.**

**Police Captain Talib Thamir said the attack on the Baya police station began just before dawn and included at least three car bombs, mortars, rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire.**

**A police major-general was among the wounded, Thamir and Dr Muhaned Jawad of Yarmuk hospital said. At least five police vehicles were destroyed, Thamir added.**

Reuters Television pictures showed a column of smoke rising from near a building in the area, as a US helicopter circled low overhead and occasional shots of gunfire rang out.

The complex attack only subsided after U.S. air and ground support was called in.

**It was not the first time a Baghdad police station has been attacked, but the assault appeared particularly brazen coming during Operation Lightning, a high-profile sweep by around 40,000 U.S. and Iraqi troops and police in the city.**

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**TROOP NEWS**

# "You Go Outside, Drink A Few Beers, Smoke A Few Cigarettes And Roll On."

June 14, 2005 By Jonathan Finer, Washington Post Foreign Service

Combat stress control teams are deployed at six U.S. bases across Iraq, tasked with identifying front-line soldiers suffering from early symptoms of PTSD, a condition that causes a range of psychiatric and physical symptoms, from violent flashbacks to difficulty sleeping. The battalion's headquarters in Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone serves as an oasis for overwhelmed fighters, who are pulled out of the field for three to seven days of counseling, classes on psychological disorders and relaxing by the pool at one of Saddam Hussein's palaces.

On a recent afternoon at the 55th Medical Battalion's headquarters -- a former Hussein guesthouse with a sandy volleyball court in the front yard, high-speed Internet connections and a vast library of movies and books -- seven soldiers on leave from their units sat in a dimly lit room for lectures on relaxation techniques, PTSD and conflict resolution.

The discussions of soldiers' combat experiences were pointed and raw.

"How many of you have experienced flashbacks?" asked Sgt. Kara Loveland, 24, from Janesville, Wis., as she handed out a sheet labeled My Symptoms that asked soldiers to rate the frequency and severity of such occurrences as nightmares or angry outbursts.

"This is my second deployment, and I only had nine months in between," said an Army medic. "When I try to sleep, I've got to go through the battles all over again, running out to pick up my fellow soldiers with rounds flying around. You don't have time to clean your mind and you're right back out there. And as soon as a dead person comes into the aid station all demolished, it all comes back."

**"What does your commanding officer tell you when something like that happens?" Loveland asked.**

**"They don't care," the medic said. "You go outside, drink a few beers, smoke a few cigarettes and roll on."**

**Lt. Col. Kathy T. Platoni, a psychologist from Beaver Creak, Ohio, said that unit commanders often resisted allowing their soldiers time away from training for stress treatment.**

"Our main purpose is to help people get back to the field, and we get more than 90 percent of them back out so they can do their jobs," she said.

"But sometimes the command just doesn't support it. You schedule something and no one shows up. It's not always easy, but you just have to fight your way in."

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# Louisiana DU Testing Bill NOW LAW!

From: Ward Reilly, Veterans For Peace  
To: GI Special  
Sent: June 20, 2005

I am very proud to announce that Governor Kathleen Blanco, D-Louisiana, has now SIGNED the Depleted Uranium Testing law that was placed on her desk last week, which makes it law.

**This is, as my friend Dennis Kyne says, a "right-hook" to the jaw of the Pentagon, who has constantly ignored or understated the effects of DU.**

The bill, HB570, was sponsored by Rep. Juan LaFonta, D-New Orleans, and Vietnam Veterans Against The War and Veterans For Peace members Ward Reilly of Baton Rouge, and Bob Smith of New Orleans, teamed up and testified in front of both the Senate and House investigative committees. Both committees and both houses voted UNANIMOUSLY in favor, and the Governor signed the bill after only 2 days on her desk.

A huge thanks should go to Governor Blanco for this signing this bill, and having the courage to buck the feds in her continuing role as commander of our National Guard and Reserves.

**This makes Louisiana the FIRST state in the nation to support and PASS this legislation, and is truly a measure to "support our troops"...much more so than yellow ribbon magnets on cars, which I personally think that people should mail to the troops, so that they can use them to armor their vehicles!!!**

PEACE from Ward Reilly

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## **“The Vast Majority Of The Parents Who Support The War Do Not Want Their Children To Fight It”**

6.20.05 By BOB HERBERT, The New York Times Company

It has become clearer than ever that Americans do not want to fight George W. Bush's tragically misguided war in Iraq.

You can still find plenty of folks arguing that we have to stay the course, or even raise the stakes by sending more troops to the war zone.

**But from the very start of this war the loudest of the flag-waving hawks were those who were safely beyond military age themselves and were unwilling to send their own children off to fight.**

**It's easy to be macho when you have nothing at risk. The hawks want the war to be fought with other people's children, while their own children go safely off to college, or to the mall. The number of influential American officials who have children in uniform in Iraq is minuscule.**

Times Square in Midtown Manhattan is the most heavily traveled intersection in the country. It was mobbed on V-E Day in May 1945 and was the scene of Alfred Eisenstaedt's legendary photo of a sailor passionately kissing a nurse on V-J Day the following August. There is currently an armed forces recruiting station in Times Square, but it's a pretty lonely outpost. **An officer on duty one afternoon last week said no one had come in all day.**

**What hasn't changed is the fact that the vast majority of the parents who support the war do not want their children to fight it.**

**A woman in the affluent New York suburb of Ridgewood, N.J., who has a daughter in high school and a younger son, said: "I would not want my children to go. If there wasn't a war it would be different. I support the war and I think we need to be there. But it's not going well. It's becoming like Vietnam. It's a very bad situation. But we can't leave." [There's that "we" bullshit again. "We" are not in Iraq, you condescending piece of shit. Other people's kids are in Iraq. You don't get any closer than your smug words coming out of your smug mouth. You certainly don't have to worry about "we can't leave." You wouldn't go there for anything: they don't have credit cards and neat shopping; you know, the things that are really important for "affluent" people.]**

**The Bush crowd may be bellicose, but for most Americans the biggest contribution to the war effort is a bumper sticker that says "support our troops," and maybe a belligerent call to a talk radio station.**

The home-front "warriors" who find it so easy to give the thumbs up to war endanger the truly valorous men and women who are actually willing to put on a uniform, pick up a weapon and place their lives on the line.

The president and these home-front warriors got us into this war and now they don't know how to get us out.

**Nor do they have a satisfactory answer to the important ethical question: how do you justify sending other people's children off to fight while keeping a cloak of protection around your own kids? [Wrong. You just don't get it. They don't have to "justify" anything. They own and run the whole country for themselves, and if you don't like it, they really don't give a fuck. You can whine or go shit in your hat. As long as you don't threaten their wealth and power, why should they take you any more seriously than an annoying house fly?]**

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# Even In Heartland, War Support Failing

June 19, 2005 Chicago Tribune,

**Twenty-seven months into the Iraq war, public frustration and impatience have increased as the military death toll rises and an end to the conflict appears nowhere in sight.** While the Vietnam-era peace movement never gained much footing in culturally conservative St. Louis, Mo., attitudes toward the Iraq war are shifting in subtle and sometimes contradictory ways.

**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.**

## V.A. Devises Clever New Way To Torment Disabled Iraq Vets

Via Ray Greiner, Veterans For Peace. He writes: Another generation is welcomed back from the war. We all know this isn't about "delay," the real purpose is to DENY more claims.

June 19, 2005 BY CHERYL L. REED Chicago Sun Times Staff Reporter

**The most seriously disabled veterans will now have to wait for their claims to pass a second review before they can receive any disability pay from the federal Veterans Affairs Department, according to a new policy ordered last week.**

**Veterans who have been granted disability for post-traumatic stress disorder or are judged to be 100 percent disabled or unemployable by one VA disability reviewer must now receive a second VA nod before the agency will grant any disability pay.**

**Denials for those same disabilities, though, do not require a second review.**

VA officials defended the policy, which went into effect immediately Tuesday and was issued to all 57 regional VA offices through a memo, a copy of which was obtained by the Chicago Sun-Times.

Veterans advocates, as well as Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.), fear the new policy sends a message that VA disability reviewers are not to grant high-paying claims.

**Some veterans advocates fear the new policy is the VA's way to get back at veterans who complained about low disability pay, which ultimately resulted in the agency being investigated by its inspector general this year. Other advocates say the extra review will just increase the existing backlog of cases.**

Currently it takes an average of 167 days for the VA to decide a new claim. At the Chicago VA office, it is taking 206 days.

The VA estimates a second review could take a day or two if the second reviewer agrees with the first decision.

**But if there's a disagreement, officials admit it will take much longer.**

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## **South Korean Private Kills 8 Soldiers After Being Tormented By Officers**

June 20, 2005 New York Times

A 22-year-old South Korean soldier who had been bullied by his superiors killed eight soldiers at a guard post at the demilitarized zone separating North and South Korea, inflicting the highest number of casualties on the South Korean Army since 2000.

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## **IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP**

### **Resistance Attack Cuts Baghdad Water Supply**

20 June 2005 Aljazeera

**A rocket attack on a water pipeline near Baghdad has left millions in the capital without enough water for a second day, officials say.**

The pipeline serves a high-pressure room in the northern suburb of Taji.

The attack, which happened on Sunday, affected distribution from the Karkh processing plant that serves northern and western Baghdad, said Amir Ali Hasson, a spokesman for the Baghdad mayor's office. More than 30 districts of the capital have been affected.

"There is a real water shortage problem in Baghdad," Hasson said.

Crews were working around-the-clock and Hasson said the repairs would be completed by late on Tuesday.

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## **Iraqi Oil Workers Union Demands End To The U.S. Occupation**

**“Privatization is a kind word but the substance of it is to transfer public property to private property,” said Juma'a Awad Al Asade. “People with wealth and capital will go up, and the rest of the classes will go down and there will be elimination of the middle class.”**

June 20, 2005 By Becky Bartindale, San Jose Mercury News

Two leaders from one of Iraq's most powerful labor unions visited San Jose on Sunday as part of a national tour to publicize the plight of working people in occupied Iraq.

**The top leaders of the General Union of Oil Employees, which was banned along with other independent unions by Saddam Hussein, called for Iraqi self-determination and an end to the U.S. occupation.**

**“The American administration claims it is bringing democracy and freedom and human rights to Iraq,” said Hassan Juma'a Awad Al Asade, chief of the union's executive branch. “This is the third year of occupation and we see no improvement in our situation.”**

While most Iraqis were happy to see Saddam go, he said through an interpreter, they have come to see U.S. forces as occupiers, not liberators.

About 80 peace activists and union members attended the presentation at the headquarters of the Service Employees International Union Local 715 in San Jose. Afterward, the Iraqi leaders were whisked away to speak in Berkeley.

The tour is sponsored by U.S. Labor Against the War, a coalition of 110 union and labor groups that is spending \$50,000 to take the Iraqis around the country.

**Both Juma'a Awad Al Asade and Fleh Abbood Umara, general secretary of the oil workers' union, are longtime oil workers who were imprisoned for human rights and union activities by Saddam's government.**

**Although labor unions have a long history dating to the 1920s in Iraq, they were banned from state-owned enterprises in 1987, through Law 150. Most of Iraqi industry -- especially such important sectors as oil, electricity and ports -- were owned by the state under Saddam.**

**The unions were meeting in secret before Saddam fell, but resurfaced publicly in 2003 shortly after the occupation began, said Abbood Umara.**

Although Law 150 remains on the books, unions have become increasingly active and influential. For example, Abbood Umara said, oil workers won higher wages after pay was lowered by the Conditional Provisional Authority. They also won concessions after going on strike to protest the use of many foreign workers at a refinery being operated by KBR, a subcontractor of Halliburton.

With unemployment rates reaching 50 percent to 75 percent, Juma'a Awad Al Asade spoke of the need for labor laws, social security and unemployment insurance.

The Iraqis spoke out strongly against U.S. efforts to privatize all Iraqi businesses except for the oil industry. Among other things, workers fear privatization would drive high unemployment even higher.

**“Privatization is a kind word but the substance of it is to transfer public property to private property,” said Juma'a Awad Al Asade. “People with wealth and capital will go up, and the rest of the classes will go down and there will be elimination of the middle class.”**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME <u>NOW!</u></b></p>
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## **Working For The Insurgency**

June 27, 2005 Newsweek

According to U.S. intelligence officials in Baghdad, Iraq's security services have hundreds of "ghost soldiers"—members who vanish, sometimes for months on end, but continue to draw their pay. **The fear is that they are working for the insurgency while keeping up their ties in uniform.**

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### ***Assorted Resistance Action:* 20 Occupation Cops Killed, 100 Wounded**

Jun 21 2005 AEST & June 20, 2005 San Marcos Daily Record & CNN & Reuters & KUNA

**IRBIL, Iraq - A car bomber killed 20 traffic policemen and wounded 107 police employees Monday outside the unit's headquarters in this northern Kurdish city, police and hospital officials said.**



**The bomber in Irbil was wearing a police uniform when he slammed his car into a gathering of some 200 traffic officers during morning roll call in a courtyard behind the headquarters at 8 a.m., police Lt. Sulaiman Mohammed said.**

The police recruits had gathered for roll call in a dusty field behind the police headquarters when the suicide bomber raced his red vehicle towards them and blew up among them as they scattered.

Iraqi police opened fire and failed to stop the Japanese-made car that was heading directly to the crowd.

"Some people were running away but others couldn't move and the car blew up," said Raeder Mohammed, one of the trainees.

The attack occurred on a main street that leads to the oil-rich northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk, which is 50 miles south of Irbil, police said.

**Two car bombs targeted Iraqi police in the Mansour district of western Baghdad, Iraq's Defence Ministry said, and a fifth blew up at a checkpoint on the road to Baghdad airport.**

**Iraqi insurgents have claimed in a web posting that they killed a foreign contractor working for a US company along with six Iraqis in an ambush west of Baghdad.**

**The militant group Ansar al-Sunnah Army said its fighters attacked a convoy leaving a base near the town of Ramadi, killing the men and capturing two other Iraqis.**

**The cards name the contractor as Binkumar Gurung, working for the American-Iraq Solution Group, a firm contracted by the US Defence Department to do work in Iraq. The cards included a license to carry weapons.**

The statement said the contractor was Japanese. One of the cards also gave his name as "Gurung Bilprasad, alias Binkumar".

Pictures of ID cards of five Iraqis were also shown - all issued by the American-Iraq Solution Group. The statement said the Iraqis were all guards, but the IDs showed that among them were a cook, a kitchen helper, a driver, a "general helper" and a security guard working for the firm.

Militants interrogated the two Iraqis and learned that Gurung's job was to distribute salaries to Iraqi National Guard personnel, it said.

**In northern Iraq, a car bomb near an Iraqi army convoy killed an Iraqi army officer and three other soldiers, according to Maj. Gen. Anwar Mohammed Amin, the army's Kirkuk commander. Four people were wounded in the attack, one of them a soldier.**

**Amin said the attack took place about 6:45 p.m. near an Iraqi army checkpoint between Tuz Khurmatu and Tikrit.**

**A second such attack in the normally more tranquil Kurdish region killed the security chief of the town of Halabja. The security chief of Halabja was killed along with three bodyguards when a bomber drove at their vehicle, local security officials said.**

**Meanwhile, five policemen were injured in a booby-trapped car explosion that targeted a convoy of an Iraqi colonel in Kirkuk.**

A Kirkuk police source said the car exploded near Ghirnada bridge, targeting Lillan area's Police Chief Colonel Nozrad Mohammed.

**The explosion injured four policemen who were accompanying the colonel, and one civilian who was near the bomb site, the source added.**

**It is still unclear on whether the police chief was injured or not.**

Eyewitnesses said an Opel car was parked on the road and exploded when the convoy passed by.

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

## **FORWARD OBSERVATIONS**

# **Patriots Vs. Traitors; Which Side Are You On?**

**Who would fight harder under those circumstances - those drawn to serve in this new army by the promise of a paycheck, or those Americans who were fighting to drive the Chinese invaders out of our country?**

06/14/05 By Jay Bookman, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

**If you want to understand why it's so difficult to build a new Iraqi army that is willing to fight and die for a new Iraq, a little imagination is a very helpful thing.**

**More specifically, it helps if you can imagine what is unimaginable. Imagine that some foreign power - say, China - has invaded and occupied the United States, imposed a form of government similar to that of China and is now recruiting Americans to serve in a new American army, to be trained by and to fight alongside the Chinese military that is now occupying our country.**

That, in a rough sense, is what we're trying to accomplish in Iraq.

**Given that situation, what sort of Americans do you think would volunteer to serve in this Chinese-sponsored army? Hardly the cream of the crop.**

**And would those volunteers have the respect and support of their fellow Americans? No. They would probably have to hide their faces from the rest of us when they went on patrol alongside Chinese troops in American neighborhoods, just as Iraqi troops do now.**

**Furthermore, would such men take pride in their service, or would it be a source of inner shame? Would such troops be willing to fight and die for each other, and for their Chinese sponsors, or would they melt away when things got hard?**

**Who would fight harder under those circumstances - those drawn to serve in this new army by the promise of a paycheck, or those Americans who were fighting to drive the Chinese invaders out of our country?**

**Today, we can preach to the Iraqis all we want about individual rights and the rule of law and democratic self-government. We can tell them that they now have sovereignty, that we're remaining in Iraq just to help them.**

**But all that fine talk goes for naught when uniformed Americans stop and search Iraqis at gunpoint, humiliating them before their wives and daughters. The relationship then is not about equality, it's about power: We have it, they don't, not even in their own country, not even in their own homes.**

In the immediate wake of our invasion, experts talked of having a window of opportunity, a brief period of time in which U.S. officials had to get control of the security situation, surrender day-to-day control of Iraq and withdraw the bulk of our troops. If we stayed beyond that window, they warned, Iraqi resentment would grow so great that our presence would become more of an obstacle than a benefit.

Most such estimates put that window at roughly three months. When those initial three months passed and it became clear that withdrawal was not yet an option, a team of five experts assembled by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld traveled to Iraq to assess the situation.

**While the panel reported "rising anti-Americanism in parts of the country," it also held out hope that the window might be held open slightly longer. To do so, however, "the entire effort (I) must be immediately turbo-charged."**

**"The next three months are crucial to turning around the security situation, which is volatile in key parts of the country," the panel reported to Rumsfeld.**

That was almost two years ago.

**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.

## **Doddering Old Dumbsfeld**

From: Anita Job  
To: GI Specail  
Sent: June 20, 2005

### **Rumsfeld Gets His 'Leaner Army'**

[Thanks to D, who sent this in.]

June 15, 2005 By PAT MURPHY, Express Staff Writer

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?

### **Comment From Anita:**

TOO LATE! HE ALREADY IS A DODDERING OLD MAN (72 YEARS OLD GOING ON 73 IN A MONTH OR SO)

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## **“Left” Cover For The Empire: How A Marvelous Alliance Of Cowardice And Opportunism Helps Bush Keep The War Going**

Why do many antiwar groups and sectors of the left withhold support from the Iraqi resistance, or even the right to resistance? Clearly, this reluctance strengthens Bush's contention that the resistance is composed of nothing but unworthy terrorists intent upon crushing Iraq's nascent "democracy," the latest justification for keeping the army of occupation in Iraq indefinitely.

May 29, 2005 Jack Smith, Information Clearing House [excerpt]

**It is crucial to understand that were it not for the Iraqi resistance, the U.S. would have won a swift victory in Iraq and quickly implemented the Bush administration's neoconservative plan to extend American hegemony throughout the entire Middle East under the guise of "promoting democracy."**

Had Iraq simply surrendered, this example of the Pentagon's invincibility would have demoralized the entire region. It certainly would have tempted the White House to barge into "rogue" Syria and Iran to replace their governments with regimes subordinate not

only to Washington but to the requirements of corporate globalization and transnational capital, which, after all, is what "democratization" is all about.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld even had a simple formula for obtaining this objective. Conservative Harvard historian Niall Ferguson, who supports the notion that an explicit American empire would be good for the world, wrote in the New York Times May 24 that Rumsfeld was guided by a theoretical blueprint for conquest called the "10-30-30 timetable: 10 days should suffice to topple a rogue regime, 30 days to establish order in its wake, and 30 more days to prepare for the next military undertaking."

The resistance, thus, has erected two great obstacles in the path of President Bush's drive to control the vast petroleum reserves that have transformed barren deserts into the most strategically important region of the world today.

**First, the myth of invincibility has been shattered by a small irregular urban guerrilla force, Rumsfeld's plans for conquest have gone up in smoke, and the Bush administration has evidently curbed some of its more unsavory ambitions.**

**The nature of the fight back itself has been grossly distorted by the mass media at the behest of the White House. It is important in this regard to recognize three things: 1. The resistance is composed of political as well as armed elements. 2. The masses of Iraqis oppose the occupation and want U.S. troops to get out. 3. The resistance enjoys support from the people of Iraq, despite U.S. efforts to neutralize various constituencies through pressure, manipulation, grandiose promises, threats and bribery.**

**How else could an armed urban guerrilla force function in heavily occupied territory without the support of the people?**

The resistance war is largely being fought with small arms and homemade bombs. There are no countries who would dare supply more powerful weapons for fear of instant retaliation from the United States.

Arrayed against these forces is an occupying power possessing the greatest arsenal of weapons, tanks, planes, communications equipment and surveillance devices in human history.

Aside from street patrols, supply convoys, campaigns to round-up anti-U.S. suspects and occasional large-scale attacks, American forces are protected in military bases that are extremely difficult to penetrate.

**There are no hiding places for combatants, such as forests and mountains, forcing them to fight almost exclusively in heavily populated cities, towns and along certain highways. ["Forcing"? On the contrary, urban resistance movements today are best situated to resist foreign invasion and occupation. In the cities, a klunky armed force like the U.S. possesses is crippled, and popular support for resistance potentially strongest. Further, it is where the working class is concentrated, making it impossible for collaborator politicians to win significant support for the predators in command of occupying their nation.]**

These subjective and objective conditions determine the composition of the resistance and the means deployed to oust the invader. ‘

**This is why the car bomb and suicide bombers are deployed in the towns and cities. They are the most powerful weapons the guerrillas have, and they can be transported in daylight. The targets are police stations, military checkpoints, passing U.S. patrols and officials who cooperate with the occupation authorities.**

**The nature of car bombings in such tight quarters results in civilians casualties, but they are rarely if ever the primary target. Some of the attacks that seem directed only at civilians may well reflect sectarian religious provocations, not necessarily associated with the resistance.**

### **How The Slightly “Anti-War” Opportunists Help Bush Rule**

**Why do many antiwar groups and sectors of the left withhold support from the Iraqi resistance, or even the right to resistance? Clearly, this reluctance strengthens Bush's contention that the resistance is composed of nothing but unworthy terrorists intent upon crushing Iraq's nascent "democracy," the latest justification for keeping the army of occupation in Iraq indefinitely.**

In our view, there are two reasons the liberal sector of the peace movement in particular tends to withhold support from the insurgency.

First there is the political factor, as demonstrated in last year's presidential elections where the candidate virtually all liberals supported was committed to winning a victory in Iraq. John Kerry's pro-war stance continues to reverberate, manifesting itself in a variety of subtle ways.

Some antiwar friends have told me that they hesitate to call for immediate withdrawal "because we are in so deep it would cause chaos if we pulled out now." ‘

**For others, who frequently proclaim they "support the troops," it's must difficult to suggest the resistance has a right to kill those troops in defense of national sovereignty.**

**Others are beset by the possibility that the Iraqi people might be better off today than under the previous regime which Bush deposed, despite the war, occupation, 100,000 deaths, deepening chaos and the prospect of civil war.**

**The second reason seems be a desire for respectability coupled with the fear that appearing to support the resistance will cause the right-wing to label individuals and the movement "unpatriotic" and "disloyal."**

**These are serious charges, but today's dreadful political environment is not comparable to periods of repression in the past, such as when they were leveled in the red-hunting 1950s or a few years after World War I.**

**In any event, the right-wing already claims the entire movement is composed of traitors, communists, flag burners, and Bush haters. That's just every day rightist rhetoric.**

The political left is also divided on the question. Many left groups, peace organizations with an anti-imperialist perspective, socialists and those further to the left explicitly support the right of Iraq to engage in a guerrilla war to defeat aggression.

But some others on the left express various qualms, mostly about the composition and the tactics of some elements in the resistance.

**Several sources said they were uncomfortable because "there are Ba'athist elements active in the struggle and we don't want to see the return of forces favorable to Saddam Hussein," as though the question of who will ultimately govern Iraq is for the American left to decide.**

Others hold back because "Sunni Wahabbists" are part of the diverse fight-back effort. And of course the supposed presence of al-Qaeda operatives, although very small in number, is another reason. Additional arguments are critical of guerrilla tactics.

**Another sector of the left and antiwar movement is simply resorting to political expediency and perhaps a soupçon of opportunism, modifying its views in order to attract "mainstream" elements to its banner and if that means not backing the right to resistance (or for that matter, not calling for an end to the occupation of the Palestinian territories), so be it.**

Others see the resistance as constituting an obstacle to the creation of an improbable progressive coalition of forces in Iraq who are essentially passive toward the occupation in order to contest for influence, or at least be invited to table where the powerful dine. Some are supporters of the course followed by the Iraqi Communist Party (which opposes the resistance, seeks a place at the aforementioned table, and is willing to work with the occupation).

**In a recent conversation in New York following the 2005 Left Forum this writer was confronted by several people of social-democratic and left disposition (who strongly supported immediate withdrawal) after indicating that it was correct to back the right to resistance. "Do you support car-bombings that kill innocent civilians, too? I was asked by one. "Do you think it's okay that they behead and kidnap people?" said another. "Do you want the Ba'athists to put in another Saddam?" queried a third. "Why not give the middle forces in Iraq a chance to work things out without the background noise of guerrilla war continually disrupting any chance of dialogue?" intoned a fourth. And lastly, "Doesn't your position lead to civil war?"**

**My reply, in effect, was a follows:**

**It is not up to the peace movement and the left in the United States to dictate the terms by which a subject people is allowed to manifest opposition to the violent invasion and occupation of their own country by our government. The Iraqi**

**people, like all people throughout the world, are entitled to wage their struggle against foreign invaders by any means at their disposal.**

**Given that the Iraqi people suffered a dozen years of killer sanctions and frequent bombings by U.S. and British warplanes, followed by a "shock-and-awe" invasion and a recklessly repressive and racist occupation that has deprived many of them of reasonable living conditions, their means are quite limited.**

**Their entire society is under intense surveillance and there is no freedom for its people. They cannot fight a conventional war. They do not have an armed forces to defend their rights. The task of the army of the unemployed, who are being trained by the Pentagon to be members of the "Iraqi Army," is to suppress the struggle for national liberation on behalf of the invader. So they use the means and tactics at their command.**

Does that mean one must therefore support some of the excesses of the resistance?  
No.

**It means we recognize that in any struggle of this nature excesses take place, although they are simply not comparable to the "excesses" involved in George Bush's attack on Iraq.**

**If we are so concerned about excesses, the task is not to haughtily distance ourselves from the resistance but to intensify our campaign to remove the root cause of the resistance, which is the continuing occupation and domination of a sovereign country.**

At this stage, and I hope I'm wrong, the U.S. has caused such a catastrophic disintegration of a complex and ancient society that it will take a long time with many hardships before things settle down, even if the U.S. is kicked out."

**Whether sectors of our movement support the right to resistance or not, the fact remains that this major setback for the Bush administration would not have come pass without the extraordinary uprising that developed in the aftermath of Rumsfeld's "10 day" war and 30-day restoration of order.**

**"When the first signs of a fightback occurred, Bush smirked, "Bring 'em on!" Well, as an antiwar activist who of course would prefer a resistance movement with a different political leadership, I'm just glad they exercised their right to resist, or to "come on", as Bush taunted.**

**Without that fightback by the Iraqi resistance, a triumphant Bush by now might be dancing a jig in Damascus or Teheran, or wherever else his neoconservative inclinations and tanks were prepared to lead him.**

**Received:**

**Fuelling Resistance:**



# “Privatisation Will Happen Over Our Dead Bodies”

## “Support The GUOE”

June 2005 By Ewa Jasiewicz, Big Issue Scotland

'What Bleeds Leads' has been the mass media's narrow angle when it comes to stories on Iraq. Soaring death-tolls, explosions, wailing mourners, harried police, - these are the bloody images of a typical Iraq news story.

The story that didn't make the news last month though was that of one of Iraq's most powerful unions - the 23,000 strong General Union of Oil Employees - holding a historic conference on Privatisation.

150 trade union activists, mostly GUOE members and union council leaders from Nassiriyah and Amara and Basra, plus Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions reps, local party political party activists and an international delegates from Britain and the USA gathered under the banner 'To revive the public sector and to build an Iraq free of privatization.'

In Iraq no public debate has occurred on the issue of the prising open of Iraq's economy to the free market.

Few people were aware of the Orders (de facto laws) which US Pro Consul Paul Bremer III passed in his term. The notorious Order 39, passed September 2003, which allows for 100% foreign investment (ownership of Iraqi companies and assets) and 100% profit repatriation; orders on trade liberalisation, tax strategy, salaries and employment all legalised what is regarded by international law experts as an illegal process which violated The Hague and Geneva Conventions.

An occupying power does not have the right to remould a country's entire economy in the interests of international capital and the free market. Bremer's Orders, all 100 of them, are still on Iraq's legal books and form the structural basis for the process of aggressive state sector privatisation tipped to engulf Iraq in the next 6-12 months.

The financial crowbar set to actually force through privatisation, is Iraq's \$180bn debt. September 2004 saw the Paris Club - the group of creditor countries to which Iraq owes its debts - agree to 'forgive' two thirds of Iraq's debt on condition that it accepts an IMF structural adjustment program which will transform the present economy into a free market economy over the next five years.

**The GUOE's conference presented a direct challenge to this agenda as well as the culmination of two years of organising, protesting, blockading, striking and negotiating on the part of a union which is still regarded as illegal by the occupation authority and Iraqi government.**

GUOE activists repeatedly voiced their opposition to foreign ownership of Iraqi oil or assets and spoke of their own efforts in reconstructing their war-battered industry.

Established just a month after the end of the war, first in the Southern Oil Company, the union has since led reconstruction efforts which have seen refineries, drilling rigs, pipelines and port equipment rehabilitated, as well as strike action against low wages which halted exports.

The union has also lead wildcat strike action over the attack on Najaf last year; blockaded access to tankers serving British troops; expelled Halliburton subsidiary Kellogg Brown and Root from all oil sector worksites; negotiated returns of workers sacked under the former regime; and forced the exchange of 1000 imported Pakistani labourers brought over by Kuwaiti giant 'Al Khoufai Company' for Iraqi workers needing work.

The GUOE also confronted Bremer's humiliating Order 30 wage table with its own collectively crafted table and succeeded in raising the minimum wage for oil workers from 69,000 Iraqi Dinar (then \$35) to 102,000 (\$50) plus risk and location payments. The Union has also secured land and building rights for homes for oil workers, protects pipelines from sabotage and is active in finding work for graduates from Basra's Petroleum Institute.

**One of the greatest strengths of the GUOE is that it was not organized by and is not affiliated to any political party. It maintains a commitment to political independence.**

**Faraj Rabat Mizban, Executive Committee member responsible for Culture and Media for the Union explains, 'When we come to work and we put on our uniforms, we are workers, and we organize as workers, for workers, that is our role, that is our responsibility as a union. We are no instrument of any party'. At a time when the country's working class is fraught with the demands and pressures of co-opting and competing parties and religious forces, this is the key to successful union building.**

GUOE President Hassan Jumaa Awad al Assadi, three times a prisoner of the Baath regime and a father of six, is standing in his living room.

It is a decrepit, paint-chipped stone-walled room, bearing little more than a picture of the Imam Ali and verses from the Q'ran, a TV, battered cupboard and a stack of mattresses. The guestroom's ceiling scatters a daily faint dusting of plaster snow on the carpet; it's falling apart. His whole home is just four rooms and a rooftop, nestled in a street just a few blocks away from where US missiles hit civilian homes between the 1991 and 2003 wars.

Despite over 30 years service at the Southern Oil Company, Hassan still cannot afford to buy his own home - he and his family live in rented accommodation. 'Look at my home now', says Hassan smiling, 'I don't even want to think what it will like if privatization happens!'

On the issue of privatization and reconstruction in Iraq, he feels short-term contracts which can bring needed investment and new technology to Iraq's oil industry are the way forward. 'If I have a house that needs some renovation, I can hire someone and they can

come and help me, give me some materials, help with fixing it and then they can leave. This is the kind of investment we are looking for'.

**Hassan and other members of the Union believe there has been a policy of deliberate degradation of the oil industry following the war aimed at selling privatization as a form of progress and necessary for any reconstruction. The autonomous reconstruction efforts of oil workers, in particular at the Iraqi Drilling Company (IDC) have proved this logic wrong.**

It's a sweltering day in late May and we are all piled into IDC manager Naser Muhsin Mohan's cramped, bare, computer-less cabin at the foot of a giant drilling platform. Basra's desert, the topsoil to a 'large lake of oil' upon which we are frequently told the governorate rests, stretches all around us, burning in the gaining midday heat.

**Wiping his brow, boss Mohan begins to talk to us about Privatisation. 'There is a lot of talk, particularly on the Arab satellite channels about the privatisation, but this is just propaganda. Those who do not believe in Iraqi people are spreading this propaganda; we have the intelligence and skill to do our own reconstruction'.**

On the issue of the looting of the IDC post-war, Mohan is quietly bitter.

British troops he says, 'Did not prevent the looting of the IDC' (Iraqi Drilling Company). For four months the company was left open to ransacking and theft. Rigs and wells were stripped of their parts and left dysfunctional.

'People were saying that this was the end of the Iraqi Drilling Company, they wanted to consign it to the dustbin of history' adds Ghafla Talib Dahmash, the leader of the IDC union. A tall, sturdy, work-worn man, he has spearheaded autonomous reconstruction efforts at the Iraqi Drilling Company. 'But we proved them wrong'.

In just 45 days, the first drilling rig was back up and running. Since the virtual write-off of the IDC, a further 12 rigs have been reconstructed by the workers.

**'And we did this without any help, not from foreign companies, the occupation, not even from the Iraqi government' adds Dahmash. 'And we don't need foreign companies or their privatisation, Iraqi workers are capable of carrying out reconstruction'. It is a sentiment we hear echoed up and down the worksites we visit, and which I heard two years ago in Bergeseeya and North Rumeilla Refineries, accompanied by the vow, 'Privatisation will happen over our dead bodies'. Without international pressure and solidarity, it may well do.**

Iraq's oil industry had to be sustained. Historically, throughout three wars and 13 years of genocidal sanctions, it has remained the economic backbone of the country.

As a result, it bears the conditions which have formed a community in a country where communities were patrolled, infiltrated, carved up, deported and massacred, and the ethos of collective struggle and organisation, stolen and smashed.

Workers in the oil industry suffered intense surveillance and repression under the regime, which only reinforced their collective consciousness of their necessity and power in terms of creating Iraq's wealth.

It is these conditions and this consciousness which have formed a bedrock from which a union and a struggle against the dictates of a brutal military and economic occupation is being generated. If the millions who marched through the streets demanding no blood for oil mean what they say, this is the struggle which can turn that slogan into a reality.

Iraqi oil workers are fighting back, in a struggle which may see the fruits of the war and occupation soured, and the prize which Washington's oil hawks have set their sights on, defended and held out of reach.

This is a resistance we can practically support and engage with. A resistance we can communicate with; an open resistance demanding international solidarity. We couldn't stop the war, we can't stop the ongoing military operations, massacres and bombings carried out by occupation forces in Iraq, but we can work to stop the corporate occupation agenda, which depends on and is fuelled by war and massacre from being realised. An agenda which is being pushed from the centres of the global North - London, Washington, Warsaw and beyond and which has met its match in the form of thousands of workers in the oilfields of southern Iraq, refusing, rejecting and vowing to hold out against the corporate invasion and occupation Iraq.

We have a responsibility to join them.

A GUOE website will be up and running shortly. See [www.iraqoccupationfocus.org.uk](http://www.iraqoccupationfocus.org.uk) for more details on how to support the GUOE

#### **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.williambowles.info/qispecial),**

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