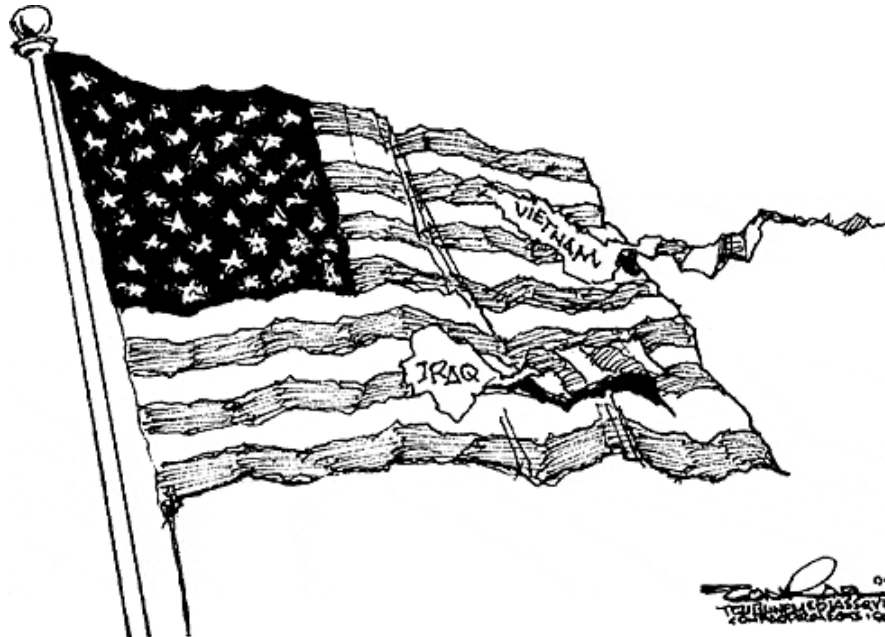


## GI SPECIAL 3B87:



# Lessons Unlearned: Vietnam Then, Iraq Now

They had never heard of General Gwynn and so did not realize that, in countering an insurgency, the military was fulfilling a police role and had to apply minimum, not maximum, force; nor would they have known of his warning that a lull in guerrilla action is usually a danger sign, not a “victory”.

Unlike the Western battlefield, a rising body count in an insurgency is a danger sign.

The oft-expressed American desire to persuade the Viet Cong “to stand and fight,” a desire inherited from the French, was another pathetic fallacy. These were professional guerrillas who would not stand and fight—except on their own terms.

From: WAR IN THE SHADOWS: THE GUERRILLA IN HISTORY, BY Robert B. Asprey; Captain, USMC, ret'd; William Morrow And Company; New York, 1994

**Whatever the President said about guerrilla warfare, these officers, in general, secretly believed that military professionalism would prove more than a match in any battle with “irregulars.”** Although, in time, some of the younger advisers would realize this error, the bulk remained convinced that professionalism—by which they meant adherence to Western military doctrines—would *win the war*.

They had never heard of Major Callwell's writings on small wars, so they would never have pondered his sage advice to regard the native as the professional, the newcomer as the amateur.

**They had never studied Gallieni's and Lyautey's pacification campaigns. They had never heard of General Gwynn and so did not realize that, in countering an insurgency, the military was fulfilling a police role and had to apply minimum, not maximum, force; nor would they have known of his warning that a lull in guerrilla action is usually a danger sign, not a “victory”.**

**Lacking suitable background, the American command did not realize that Western-style warfare is quantitative and that insurgency warfare is qualitative.** To fight the latter successfully is frequently to reverse normal standards of measurement, just as trick mirrors in an amusement park make a fat person thin and a thin person fat.

**From the beginning, the American command erred by trying to use maximum, not minimum, force, and by designating the guerrilla the primary target rather than the population that supported him.**

**Dead guerrillas became “victories”—enough “victories” would “win” the war.**

**They did not understand that an insurgency is not “won”—except that it fades into relative quiescence.**

**Unlike the Western battlefield, a rising body count in an insurgency is a danger sign.** So is the necessity for “surprise” encounters, no matter how successfully fought.

Progress is not made in an insurgency situation until local peasants are protected sufficiently and have sufficient reason to support government forces and supply necessary information on which to base operations.

**The oft-expressed American desire to persuade the Viet Cong “to stand and fight,” a desire inherited from the French, was another pathetic fallacy. These were professional guerrillas who would not stand and fight—except on their own terms.**

**The Americans also failed to understand that qualitative warfare calls for careful target selection—that “saturation” of a battle area contains a number of built-in booby traps in an insurgency situation. The more units involved, the more-attenuated the lines of communication, thus the more targets available to the enemy.**

Worse than this, saturation of a battle area invariably damaged the peasants' crops and villages, frequently killing innocent people, thereby alienating the very persons the government needed to "win."

Military commanders could not understand this. When General Harkins "... was asked about the political consequences when villages were hit with napalm, he replied that it 'really puts the fear of God into the Viet Cong.' 'And that,' he said, 'is what counts.'"

\*\*\*\*\*

## **"Impregably Armored By Good Intentions And Ignorance"**

With a few splendid exceptions, American advisers did not understand very much. They came with confidence instead of caution; they taught before they learned. From Nolting on down, too many of them resembled Alden Pyle—Graham Greene's *Quiet American*, "... who was impregably armored by his good intentions and his ignorance."

**The insurgencies of our time, not to mention those of history, might never have happened. The lessons they furnished weren't so much lost—they were never learned. To accomplish the military goal in Vietnam, to win the war," to achieve "victory," the American military command sought to repair doctrinal deficiencies with machines.**

**It relied on technology as opposed to motivation, on helicopters and jeeps and trucks and armored personnel carriers, aircraft and ships as opposed to men.**

**It did precisely what the American military command in China had done nearly twenty years earlier. It attempted to remedy political, social, and economic deficiencies with metal.**

The advisers were not at first discouraged because the new technology brought illusory success.

The South Vietnamese Government estimated that the Viet Cong began the year with about sixteen thousand hard-core guerrillas. They estimated that in 1962 they had killed about twenty thousand "guerrillas" (I use quotation marks because we shall never know how many innocents were included in the figure). Yet VC strength, they estimated, had increased to twenty thousand! "... At the same time," Roger Hilsman later wrote, "captured documents, interrogation of prisoners, and other intelligence indicated that at the most only three to four thousand infiltrators had come down the Ho Chi Minh trail." The other replacements came from hamlets and villages, and if some arrived under duress, a great many others came freely.

Despite ARVN "victories," the Viet Cong retained control of major areas.

**In summer of 1962, this writer flew several missions with U. S. Marine Corps helicopter squadrons operating out of Soc Trang, south of Saigon, the mission being to haul ARVN units to this or that threatened area. Fuel for these machines came from Saigon by tank truck, the Saigon trucker paying the Viet Cong a "toll" in order to pass to Soc Trang.**

**This meant that at any moment the Viet Cong could prevent marine helicopters from flying. This rarely if ever happened—should it not have occurred to MACV that the effort could scarcely have been hurting the Viet Cong if the choppers were allowed to keep flying?**

The fallacy of the new approach was already becoming evident. Initial Viet Cong fright soon turned to bewilderment; analysis followed to produce countertactics. Night operations increased, since helicopters at first did not fly at night.

**Assassinations and kidnappings greatly increased, the reasons being to enforce discipline, demonstrate determination, and gain recruits.** By spring of 1962, the Viet Cong were beginning to fight back, and, by autumn, were not only pursuing active guerrilla tactics but were standing against ARVN units. Once again, Viet Cong countertactics were immensely aided by intelligence derived from peasant networks that, while on the defensive, were scarcely defunct.

**Marines at Soc Trang and American field units elsewhere were living, to use Bernard Fall's term, in a fishbowl, their every movement, their take-off and landing, their resupply, noted and reported by Viet Cong agents.**

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Static Defense**

The new technology did nothing to repair the existing gap between Vietnamese army units and peasants; indeed, helicopter delivery widened the intelligence gap by flying troops over villages and thus eliminating personal contact with the peasants—perhaps a good thing in the case of rapacious army units.

The new vehicles also proved expensive.

**Helicopters and armored personnel carriers require large workshop and storage complexes, installations that in Vietnam demanded ground troops to provide security and nonetheless remained vulnerable to guerrilla attack, as did their lines of communication to major supply centers.**

**Troops so assigned inevitably assumed a static role, to the guerrilla's benefit.**

Armor plate and motors did not erase poorly conceived plans. American and Vietnamese planners were trying to strike the enemy all over the place. All too often, these were random strikes, because the commands lacked proper intelligence on which to base specific and profitable operations.

**Where good intelligence existed, Viet Cong intelligence frequently countered it. Helicopters and APCs are noisy, and a black-pajama-clad Viet Cong did not take long to ditch his weapon and either commence work in the field or hide along the reeded bank of a nearby canal.**

By summer of 1962, frustrated American airmen had begun developing new tactics, for example “eagle flights,” whereby helicopters landed a unit in a suspect area. If contact resulted, other, lingering helicopters immediately brought in reinforcements. The poverty of this tactic is too obvious for comment.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Blaming The Reporters

The conflict between Saigon and the field—between wishes and facts—had already produced a chilling corollary: extreme intolerance, on the part of both the Saigon regime and the American mission, of journalists who questioned the validity of allied performance.

In March 1962, Mme. Nhu had begun persuading President Diem to expel three troublemakers, the veteran news correspondents Homer Bigart of the *New York Times*, François Sully of *Newsweek*, and James Robinson of NBC, each of whom was increasingly harassed by the Saigon government, as were other correspondents who, in Joseph Buttinger’s words, were “. . . accused of being part of an international Communist-inspired conspiracy to slander the regime.”

*“The U.S. mission was anything but forceful in defending these correspondents against abuse and ill-treatment, and almost apologetic in explaining that these men were merely trying to live up to the American concept of a free press. Ambassador Frederick E. Nolting, Jr., and General Paul Harkins in particular were incensed by the American newsmen’s attacks on the regime. . . . They, as well as their superiors in Washington, spoke repeatedly of the “slanted” or even “irresponsible” press reporting out of Saigon, convinced not only that the correspondents who criticized the regime did harm to U.S.-South Vietnamese relations, but also that they were wrong.”*

Reporters who wrote favorable accounts, among them Marguerite Higgins, Joseph Alsop, and Richard Tregaskis, received comforting little pats for their part in what was rapidly becoming the great deception. The Administration was running scared.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Recruiting for The Resistance, 1960’s Style

Lansdale warned that the most urgent function is “. . . to protect and help the people”:

*“When the military opens fire at long range, whether by infantry weapons, artillery or air strike, on a reported Viet Cong concentration in a hamlet or village full of civilians, the Vietnamese officers who give those orders and the American advisers who let them “get away with it” are helping defeat the cause of freedom. **The civilian hatred of the military resulting from such actions is a powerful motive for joining the Viet Cong.**”*

On the following day, Ambassador Taylor joined the select group of officials to report on the Vietnam situation. His words could not have been more gloomy. A

**new civilian government in Saigon was proving no more effective than the former military government, either in the capital or in the provinces. The Viet Cong everywhere had advanced and were threatening to cut the country in half. Despite heavy casualties produced by an increasingly stronger professionally competent ARVN (!), the Viet Cong not only were making good their losses but were adopting new and improved tactics:**

*“The ability of the Viet-Cong continuously to rebuild their units and to make good their losses is one of the mysteries of this guerrilla war. ... (We find) no plausible explanation of the continued strength of the Viet-Cong if our data on Viet-Cong losses are even approximately correct.*

*“Not only do the Viet-Cong units have the recuperative powers of the phoenix, but they have an amazing ability to maintain morale. Only in rare cases have we found evidences of bad morale among Viet-Cong prisoners or recorded in captured Viet-Cong documents.”*

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

## IRAQ WAR REPORTS

### Omaha PFC Killed



U.S. Army Pfc. Eric Paul Woods, 26, of Omaha was killed by an explosion early Saturday morning in Iraq. Woods was a member of the G-Troop, 2nd Squadron of the 3rd Army Cavalry, based out of Fort Carson, Colo. The troop's operating base is in Tal Afar, Iraq. (AP Photo/Woods Family)

---

## TWO MARINES KILLED IN HIT

July 11, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS  
RELEASE Number: 05-07-06C

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq – Two Marines assigned to Regimental Combat Team 2, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), were killed in action July 10 by indirect fire while conducting combat operations in Hit, Iraq.

---

**REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE:  
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!**



Night operations in Iraq. (AFP/File/Stan Honda)

---

## TROOP NEWS

### The New Issue Of Traveling Soldier Is Out!

1. You can't eat a soccer ball - <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/7.05.soccer.php>
2. "Our motivations had more to do with oil and imperialism than to with Saddam Hussein or WMDs" - <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/7.05.ivaw.php>

3. A letter from Iraq: *"When I found your site, I became excited to find a military paper, more precisely a soldiers' paper, that will cut through the bullshit"* - <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/7.05.mail.php>

4. Soldiers debate the war - <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/7.05.debate.php>

5. "Dean, you have become one of them" a military mom's letter to the Democratic Party boss - <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/7.05.dean.php>

6. Kerry knew about WMD lies and didn't care <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/7.05.kerry.php>

7. It's about damn time! <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/7.05.Sept24.php>

8. Words from the front-lines <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/7.05.words.php>

9. Download the latest issue so you can distribute it: <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/TS11.pdf>

## A Rhino For Rumsfeld While Troops Perish

While Rumsfeld and his buddies got to tour the safer parts of Iraq in this mobile bomb-shelter, the common grunts still have to traverse the Iraqi killing fields in lightly equipped Humvee death-traps that a well-placed pineapple fragmentation hand grenade could take out.

[Thanks to DB, Smedley Butler Society, who sent this in.]

07.01.2005 By Philip A. Quigley, Soldiers For The Truth [Excerpts]

**Is it so shocking that when Defense Department representatives venture into unstable and unpredictable terrain like that of war-torn Iraq, that they turn to the private sector to equip them? Quite recently, when Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld visited Iraq, the Army turned to Halliburton to provide the vehicles to safely transport him and his delegation.**

The vehicle, aptly called the Rhino Runner built by Labock Technologies Inc., is as armored and well-protected as the beast for which it is named. This vehicle, which costs \$250,000 and more depending on features, will withstand a bomb blast and is fully protected to Type IV (NIJ standard), with armored sides, front, back, roof, floor, and even glass, against everything up to and including NATO calibers and armor-piercing projectiles like the infamous anti-armor .50 BMG sniper rifle employed by today's forces. The Rhino Runner also has significant protection from Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) and suicide bombers.



What's so significant about this story? Let's go over a little history and recent news.

Route Irish is the road between Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) and the American-controlled Green Zone in downtown Baghdad. That stretch of highway has become infamous as of late because of the American death toll sustained while traveling on it.

For me, this stretch of land has personal meaning because my Marine Corps comrades and I shed blood, sweat and tears over it just two years ago in the summer of 2003. While my unit, A Company of the 4th LAR Battalion, was responsible for the routes in our area of operations in Northern Babel Province during "Task Force Scorpion"—particularly Routes Sue, Peggy, Temple, Elm, and Highway 8—we infrequently patrolled the five-mile stretch of road between Baghdad proper and BIAP known as "RPG Alley" because of Iraqi-built entrenchments along a 15-foot high brick wall where they would launch RPG's and small arms at us.

"RPG Alley" was not a designated patrol zone, but as a courtesy to the Army's 3rd Infantry Division we invariably frequented it, hoping that our inconsistent and random patrols would confuse the enemy and offset their tactics. The experience that we gained from these patrols formed the inspiration for our later famous "Trojan Horse" missions (See "Steel Plates, Sandbags and 'Trojan Horse' Trucks," DefenseWatch, Dec. 13, 2004.)

The U.S. Army soon thereafter bulldozed this wall down but even with constant American patrols, the Iraqi fighters still launched attacks almost daily. Despite the ability of our fast-moving Light Armored Vehicles (LAV-25) to respond with overwhelming firepower when called upon—particularly with its 25mm Bushmaster Cannon and a 2,700-yard reach, the insurgents still attacked Army patrols when it was obvious we were not in the area.

The Iraqis respected the LAV's capability: They could hear and see us coming from far, and feared with dread the "small fast tanks," as they described us. Once we had left the area, however, the insurgents would resume picking off slow-moving, lightly-armed and even armored Army vehicles ranging from Humvees to 5-ton trucks and Dragon Wagon logistics vehicles.

In the past year, U.S. Army records show there have been over 135 attacks and enemy incidents on this one stretch of highway, including:

- \* Nine complex attacks (daisy-chained IEDs with light infantry-type fire support with light to medium machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades);
- \* As many as 20 explosive devices found including multiple hand grenades;
- \* Numerous direct and indirect fire attacks;
- \* Significant numbers of roadside explosions;
- \* Approximately 15 RPG attacks;
- \* As many as 19 vehicle-borne suicide attacks.

Army officials in internal reports add that there have been an estimated 11.25 attacks per square mile – or a minimum of one attack per day – along Route Irish since November 2004.

So, the still-critical question asked by our troops in Iraq today remains: Where is our armor?

**What has the Bush administration and Pentagon done to prevent such attacks from becoming a systemic problem not just for this region, but all of Iraq?**

**The short answer is, little if anything.**

**Despite repeated promises by administration officials in recent months that our troops will soon see a significant increase in armor production and more armor-equipped vehicles in the field, this has yet to have happened.**

Pentagon officials meanwhile try to mask their failure with words: "We are constantly assessing and making the necessary adjustments to make sure (American troops) have the best possible protection this country can provide," DOD spokesman Bryan G. Whitman said recently.

Whitman insisted that Secretary Rumsfeld and other DOD dignitaries had ridden in many types of vehicles during their recent tour of Iraq, "including Humvees, and travel in whatever vehicle the commander feels is appropriate." **Translation: The SecDef and his luggage handlers got a Rhino Runner.**

**While Rumsfeld and his buddies got to tour the safer parts of Iraq in this mobile bomb-shelter, the common grunts still have to traverse the Iraqi killing fields in lightly equipped Humvee death-traps that a well-placed pineapple fragmentation hand grenade could take out.**

Don't get me wrong: No one begrudges Rumsfeld using a vehicle that significantly increases his safety and chances of survival.

**It's just that the grunts would like to enjoy such protection themselves.**

Here is an example of what life could be like for our troops:

On Nov. 27, 2004, insurgents ambushed a convoy of three Rhino Runners making the five-mile trip from Baghdad to BIAP. The passengers included 17 military contractors and a driver. A BMW sedan loaded with approximately 250 pounds of explosives ran against the side of one of the Rhino Runners, then pulled out in between two of the Rhino Runners and the third vehicle. The driver detonated himself and the BMW vehicle no more than two meters from one of the Rhino Runners. The explosion left a crater nearly six feet wide and two feet deep with a blast felt over 300 feet away.

After the ensuing flames and smoke died down, it became clear that the explosion had hurt no one in the convoy except for several instances of blown-out eardrums.

An Army captain with a year of combat experience in Iraq was in the 3rd vehicle in that convoy. He wrote a letter thanking Labock Technologies Inc. saying:

"I am writing you to thank you for saving my life. While traveling to the airport in one of your Runner busses, a civilian vehicle suddenly veered close to my bus, which was very unusual, then cut closely in front of us. Before anyone could react, the driver detonated a huge bomb, and we were engulfed in a large sea of orange flames, and the bus severely rocked. I quickly checked the other passengers for injuries, and found them to be OK, with the exception of some sore eardrums. Area soldiers quickly escorted us from the Runner, and as I left the bus, I saw a large crater, but absolutely no sign of the suicide vehicle – it had been completely obliterated. Soldiers later found the nearly 400 pound engine 100 yards from the explosion site."

**Why does the civilian sector have these mobile bomb-shelters and our troops are left welding sheet metal to the sides of their vehicles?**

**The answer is the old-fashioned Potomac two-step. Pentagon brass and administration reps keep dancing back and forth with "budget" and "procurement" issues, while our soldiers still die in a war too distant for the bureaucrats to see clearly.**

**The lack in armor problem exists mainly due to the Army's procurement officers and its testing regime – or as Hack would call them, "perfumed princes."**

**The Pentagon has given standing orders that no U.S. military vehicle without armor shall leave American encampments in Iraq.**

**At the same time, U.S. military records show that only one in six Humvees used by the Army and Marines today is armored at the highest level of protection needed.**

The military uses a Texas company called Armor Holdings Inc. to up-armor our current Humvees. As of today, the Marines are still waiting on a backlog of 498 Humvees scheduled for production.

**Army officials admit that half of the 20,000 Humvees it is using deployed overseas do not have sufficient armor. So, what are soldiers and Marines doing in the meantime to fix this problem? Weld sheet metal to Humvees and other vehicles. The tactic is both crude – and *ineffective!***

What needs to happen is this: The problem is growing and it isn't getting better. We need effective armored vehicles fast.

The alternatives are either to have our different suppliers and manufacturers work around the clock to up-armor the vehicles we already have, or for the Pentagon to buy new and better ones such as the Rhino Runner.

The solution is for the SecDef – who can offer first-person testimony to the Rhino Runner's effectiveness – to exercise his authority: to declare an emergency, find and divert the funds necessary, and oversee a crash project – multiple contractors, 24-7 production, bureaucracy be damned – to get those vehicles to our troops as fast as humanly possible.

**Anything less than such an effort will expose Rumsfeld and his traveling circus as failing in their sacred obligation to ensure that our troops go to war with the best equipment possible.**

**And having driven Iraq in a Rhino Runner themselves, it will confirm that they are the worst of hypocrites for consigning the troops to anything less capable.**



**NOTHING TOO GOOD FOR SOLDIER-KILLING ASSHOLE**

June 5, 2005. Photo by Luis Enrique Ascui/Reuters

---

## **1st ID Back From Iraq With High Rates Of TB; Other Units Got Sloppy, Unreliable Testing**

**It is known, though, that 1st ID deployed about 12,000 troops to Iraq. Based on Mancuso's statistics, between 450 and 600 of those must have tested positive.**

July 11, 2005 By Steve Liewer, Stars and Stripes

WÜRZBURG, Germany — Army medical officials are investigating why an unusually high percentage of 1st Infantry Division troops have tested positive for exposure to the lung disease tuberculosis after returning this spring from Iraq.

Dr. (Maj.) James Mancuso, chief of epidemiology for the Center for Health Promotion and Preventative Medicine-Europe, said 4 percent to 5 percent of deployed 1st ID troops reacted positively in the tuberculin skin test all of them received when they came home.

During previous deployments to Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, he said, about 1 percent or 2 percent typically have been exposed.

**“They are not infectious. They can’t transmit it to anyone else,” Mancuso said. “The bacteria is just lying there in (their) lungs.” [That’s supposed to be good news?]**

Even without treatment, only 10 percent of those exposed worldwide to TB ever develop the full-blown disease. With the Army’s mandatory nine-month treatment regimen using the drug isoniazid, he said, the rate drops to 1 percent.

**Untreated active tuberculosis can cause the deterioration of the lungs and, eventually, death.**

Mancuso said units returning from Iraq have shown markedly different rates of TB exposure.

The 3rd Infantry Division, he said, which fought for Baghdad and went home six months later, showed an exposure rate near zero. The 101st Airborne Division, which joined in the invasion and stayed for a full year, showed a high exposure of 4 percent to 5 percent. The 1st Armored Division, which ended a 16-month deployment in late summer 2004, showed a 1 percent to 2 percent rate of infection.

***But because of questions about the reading of test results, Mancuso said, the Army couldn’t be sure earlier data were accurate. With the 1st ID, the nurses were uniformly trained in how to give and read the results.***

“I consider their data to be of good quality, and reliable,” he said. **[Meaning the tests mentioned for the units just above were given by untrained personnel, giving data of bad quality, and unreliable. Marvelous.]**

**It is known, though, that 1st ID deployed about 12,000 troops to Iraq. Based on Mancuso’s statistics, between 450 and 600 of those must have tested positive.**

---

## **IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP**



(Graphic: London Financial Times)

# Coordinated Resistance Attack In Khalis Kills 9 Collaborator Troops

Jul 11 By Faris al-Mehdawi, Reuters Limited & Aljazeera

**Insurgents stormed an Iraqi army checkpoint as dawn broke north of Baghdad on Monday, killing 9 soldiers.** Six soldiers and three civilians were wounded in the half-hour gunbattle at Khalis,

**As the sun rose on Monday over their checkpoint on a road at Khalis, near the city of Baquba, 65 km (40 miles) northeast of Baghdad, a detachment of Iraqi soldiers found themselves under fire from several directions, survivors told police officers.**

**Rocket-propelled grenades targeted sentries in their watchtower, letting other guerrillas move in close to rip into the soldiers on the ground with heavy machinegun fire.**

**Alerted, other troops headed to the rescue. They appeared to fall into a carefully prepared trap, running into a car bomb. At 6.30am the bomb in a parked car exploded as the Iraqi army patrol passed by, killing two soldiers and wounding another.**

"We heard the checkpoint was hit. We headed there and a pickup truck blew up on the road," said one young soldier lying in a hospital bed with shrapnel wounds to the leg.

"It was definitely a suicide bomber because we were covered in his flesh."

Another soldier was wounded when a parked pickup truck carrying watermelons exploded as reinforcements arrived to drive off the guerrillas

**In recent months, insurgents have targeted police stations in coordinated raids, sometimes overrunning them entirely.**

---

## Assorted Resistance Action

11 July 2005 Khaleej Times Online & By ROBERT H. REID (AP)

**South of the capital, two soldiers were shot dead as they searched homes near the town of Al-Azisiyah for a fugitive suspect, the army said.**

**In Baghdad, two officials from the Shiite-based Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the dominant [pro-occupation] party in parliament, were shot dead in their car, an interior ministry spokesman said.**

**Two of the 15 Sunni Arabs on a committee drafting Iraq's constitution have quit after receiving threats, committee members said.**

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

## **FORWARD OBSERVATIONS**

One day while I was in a bunker in Vietnam, a sniper round went over my head. The person who fired that weapon was not a terrorist, a rebel, an extremist, or a so-called insurgent. The Vietnamese individual who tried to kill me was a citizen of Vietnam, who did not want me in his country. This truth escapes millions.

Mike Hastie  
U.S. Army Medic  
Vietnam 1970-71  
December 13, 2004

# **THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESISTANCE INSIDE THE ARMIES (RITA) AS A FUNCTION OF CAPITAL ACCUMULATION**

RR3280FL

The following article - an "update" about RITA - was initially a paper given at a Marxist conference, University of Wollongong, in December 1999 and published in "Australian Socialist" 1/2000. Although it is now four years old, I'm re-running it as a Round-Robin FL - to be, I hope, followed by an analysis of the present importance of RITA and FRITA, support work for the resistance inside the armies. Max Watts, 22 September 2003.

By MAX WATTS

ABSTRACT

During the Vietnam War widespread resistance movements appeared in the United States army and played a significant, though even today little known, part in the American defeat. At first it seemed that this Resistance was a "localised and temporary" phenomenon, linked to, indeed caused by, the Vietnam War. However, it soon became

apparent that quite similar "modern" resistance movements had developed inside many other militaries, although at this time these armies were not, or no longer, engaged in active warfare. Furthermore, resistance activities, including attempts at unionisation, have continued in the US army after the end of the Vietnam War.

Detailed studies of such movements showed that **SOLDIER** resistance is encountered in many, indeed most, countries above a certain **threshold of capital accumulation**, countries where the price and value of **labor power** (wages, standard of living) is relatively **high** (eg. USA, Western Europe). Below this threshold resistance, where it appeared, was initially an **OFFICER** phenomena, though under certain conditions it could and did spread to the soldiers (eg. Portugal, Papua New Guinea).

Countermeasures by the ruling classes of the highly capitalised, above the threshold countries, such as the complete or partial phasing out conscription (National Service) and the amelioration of the quality of soldier life, have reduced and altered, but not abolished these resistance movements. In these "rich" countries soldier behaviour has changed quite dramatically and apparently permanently. (It would be difficult to engage the Australian military in a prolonged, unpopular, colonial war, for instance to recapture and hold the Panguna mine in Bougainville).

Even in "poorer" nations the native ruling classes and their foreign allies can no longer count on the **unthinking** obedience of their armies. The successful revolt of the Papua New Guinea "Defence Force" against the Sandline mercenaries, the rapid politisation of the rank and file soldiers and their subsequent alliance with "the left" against the Chan government are a particularly striking example. It can be compared with similar developments in Portugal between April 1974 and November 1975.

These phenomena have been widely ignored by the left – unhappy with "militaries" per se and – of course - unpublicised by the right, horrified by the very concept of the **thinking soldier**.

### **RN3205.1.12**

**RITA - The Resistance Inside the Armies** - tends to be an unhappy, avoided, subject for the left (1,2) I personally have some difficulty in taking "Marxists", "revolutionaries" – indeed anybody seriously attempting to change class structures – seriously – as long as they ignore military matters.

My personal involvement with RITA began more or less by accident. In the mid-sixties I was living in Paris and a member of PACS, the Paris American Committee to Stop-the-war, the war in question of course being the Vietnam War.

PACS, most definitely a middle-class and mostly middle-aged organisation, had no problems in supporting American Draft Resisters and/or Draft Dodgers, then pullulating in France and many Western European countries. There they usually lived quite legally, often as students. The Draft Dodgers/Resisters came almost entirely from the same or similar classes as the PACS members, though these were usually several decades older. Here there was "no problem."



But "soldiers", GIs, (3) were another matter entirely. When, in December 1966, an American GI showed up in Paris, stating "I don't mind burned bonzes, but I hate fried drivers" – that he had no objection to Vietnamese bonzes burning themselves as an anti-war action but that he, a "gas" (petrol) truck driver, didn't want to die slowly after having been burned by a mine in Vietnam - most of the respectable PACS leaders were thrown into a tizzy of inaction. The GI, who had come from the US Army in Germany, was settled in France; he was first seen as an exceptional, isolated individual, but others, many others, dozens, scores, hundreds, soon followed. "Desertion" (actually often AWOL, absent without leave) was a becoming a mass phenomenon. In fact, according to official Army figures, 432,000 American GIs legally deserted during the Vietnam War period 1964-1973.

But things soon became much more complicated for the anti-war, peace, movements in the USA and in Europe. As more American soldiers began to resist, and as after 1967 these **RITAs** no longer found themselves isolated within their units, they now tended not to leave, but to stay "inside" and fuck the army up (**FTA** all the way !) where they were. They were only occasionally linked up with left-wing, or rather new-left, organisations, but tended to "do their own thing", in their own way. One of these, important as an easily visible indicator, was the "**GI Newspaper**" often printed on base, sometimes with civilian help. In our books (4, see also 5,6) we listed over 400 (American) GI papers published during and immediately after the Vietnam War; obviously this is an incomplete total.

1.3/ As the GI resistance grew, the peace movements could no longer ignore it, but relations were often complex. Many American peaceniks were students, and opposed the draft. Faced with resister soldiers, most of whom had volunteered (7) – the New Left students became confused. Often they attempted to impose their ideas on the GIs. They had difficulties envisaging "on base" resistance, organising, and initially tried to tell the soldiers that "desertion is the only solution", later modified to "in the end, desertion is the only solution". Struggles around bread and butter issues (8) such as hairlength, messhall food or housing conditions, and above all against "harassment", failed to impress the student peaceniks who spoke of imperialism and – in Europe – Communism. I remember the utter confusion of a well-meaning French Leftist when told by a GI activist: "Communism sucks, I live inside a Communist conspiracy, the United States Army, where you have no freedom, no private initiative; they issue you clothing, medical treatment, etc. That's Communism, but no way, that's what we are against."

But perhaps the biggest surprises came later, as the Vietnam War wound down and – for the US Army - ended in January 1973. The Draft, as in Australia, was abolished. The American Peace movement "faded", the American GI resistance diminished as the now all-Volunteer US military was reduced from its maximum of approx. 3.7 million "members" to about 2.1. Most RITAs, sometimes specifically targeted and offered "early outs", went home.

"We" had once assumed that **RITA**, the Resistance inside the – then only one studied – American Army was a specific American phenomenon, directly linked to the hated Vietnam War. It was "localised" and would, we assumed, disappear after the Vietnamese victory.

It didn't. It only changed its forms. During the middle 1970's there was a serious attempt to unionise the US Army, only ended when the civilian organising union (9) – panic-stricken by the - for them - unexpected hostility of the military and political establishment,

ran away. (5). Other forms of action also continued, though now "far from the Left", which had its own problems.

But another enormous surprise, quite unexpected and still almost totally un-reported, was the emergence, sometimes at the same time as in America, sometimes somewhat later, of a new, modern, form of RITA, resistance inside the armies, in militaries of nations where there was no Vietnam war, in fact no then ongoing war of any kind.

The Dutch soldiers, in many ways pioneers, unionised an official, recognised, conscript union, the VVDM, which in a few years utterly changed conditions inside their army. French soldiers – quite illegally – demonstrated in garrison towns in Germany and France; Italian conscripts and (volunteer, professional) NCOs marched in their thousands. In Switzerland (where we had been told "this can never happen in our totally accepted militia military") soldiers formed "Soldatenkomites" and published their GI newspapers, almost identical apart from the language with American or Swedish.

In the mid-seventies David Cortright and I studied the then available data – and strengthened a "**THRESHOLD THEORY**" which I had initially suggested in the early seventies (4).

From our observation we noted that

1/ a **new form of soldier resistance** (RITA) had appeared after the mid-nineteen sixties in a number of countries.

2/ the **countries** where this soldier resistance developed – when ranked by Gross National Product per Capita – were (almost) all **above** a certain **economic THRESHOLD, a certain degree of CAPITAL ACCUMULATION**. (The two exceptions: South Africa and Portugal have specific conditions explaining their situation).

Amongst the countries above the threshold there were initially three groups where we could not observe "soldier" resistance:

2a/ OPEC countries, whose inclusion amongst highly ranking nations is due to a statistic rather than cultural development.

2b/ Countries of the Australian – Japanese – British group, where the all-volunteer military is relatively much smaller than in nations with mass armies. However, later observation has shown that tendencies towards RITA also exist in these countries, although its forms are different.

2c/ Countries such as Israel, where there may be widespread national consensus in "the mission" as perceived by the dominant elements in society. However, here too RITA has appeared despite this countervailing trend.

3/ At or just below the threshold resistance tends to appear first in the "more educated" technical services, the navy and air force, rather than in the (terrestrial) army.

4/ **below** the threshold left-wing military resistance, if it occurs, tends to be limited to **officers**.

5/ There seems to be a negative correlation between capital accumulation and the officer ranks in which resistance appears, i.e. the poorer the country, the higher the ranks in which left-tending resistance may first appears.

=====

Although these observations can hardly be contested, they can be countered by two (obvious) questions:

6/ Is this RITA really a new phenomenon, only found in modern armies, or has it occurred periodically already in the past ?

7/ Even if RITA took this form for the first time in or after the 1960's, was it not temporary and has it not – in part as a result of its own successes in changing military life, in part because of countermeasures applied by the ruling classes - already disappeared ?

We attempted to study these questions in "Left Face (5) and believe that the answer to both is a qualified **"NO"**. However, an updated analysis of these points requires much further study, which we are now no longer in a position to conduct. Such a study should be done in the first place by serving soldiers and their associates.

We believe that the threshold theory, first formulated in the early 1970's, has been confirmed by subsequent events. The Chilean disaster of 1973, the Portuguese revolution of 1974-75, gave good examples of "below the threshold" military behaviour. (See 5). The counter-measures applied by the ruling classes of the "highly capitalised" capitalist countries – in the first place the downgrading or abolition of conscription, its replacement by much smaller volunteer militaries - have changed the character of RITA in these countries, but do not seem to have abolished it. In the formerly socialist dictatorships (Eastern Europe, ex-USSR) – economically at, near, or below the threshold - whose armies were only discussed summarily in "Left Face" – very similar trends towards RITA have emerged.

RITA does not mean that soldiers will resist any and all missions, but rather that if a mission is repugnant to the rank and file, it can no longer be carried out unconditionally. It is, for instance, quite possible to use the Australian army for – un-armed - Peace Keeping on Bougainville; but even its volunteer soldiers would probably perform very badly if sent against the Bougainvillian BRA to capture Panguna for Rio Tinto.

In East Timor there is no doubt that the Australian soldiers see themselves as "useful" and positive and perform not only well, but very well.

The revolt of the PNG army in March 1997 is also a good example of what we call "induced" soldier resistance. With remarkably few exceptions the PNG "DF" soldiers fought their brothers, villagers in Bougainville, for 8 years without any developed resistance. This – in accordance with our threshold observations – is "normal" for below the threshold societies, where a volunteer soldier does not see military service as a drop in his quality of life. Here the "three hots and a cot" are an "improvement" on village life; "below the threshold" his education and training do not seem to produce, as in highly capitalised nations, a self-developing resistance movement. But although in such

armies soldiers seem to accept much without beginning to resist, once their officers start such movements they can become "fast learners".

In PNG, once General Singirok had decided to stop the mercenaries, which in fact meant an end to the war against Bougainville, he quickly needed and obtained the active cooperation of mid-level officers. These, too, soon had to obtain the support of the rank-and-file soldiers. But as in Portugal, at a certain point the officers, almost afraid of their success, called a halt to their movement, and, as in Portugal, the now mobilised rank and file now said: "Sorry Sir(s), these orders are a betrayal of our cause, of our "allies". And – in decisive moments – these previously passive soldiers carried their action forwards, even against their "left" officers (10).

In – far below the threshold - Indonesia the soldiers of the TNI have, so far, shot Timorese, students, Aceans, workers, as ordered. There is little sign of an independent soldier resistance. However, it is quite probable that at a certain point some senior officers, Majors, Colonels, Generals, will "resist", will try and move the – till now solidly reactionary – army towards the left. Their success will surely depend on their ability to link up with a civilian left and also to "induce" RITA amongst their – till now obediently passive – rank and file.

30303030

=====

*(1) Many "old left" communist parties, parties which are no longer really with us, but who where once important players (particularly in France, Italy, Spain, Portugal), tended to concentrate on officers, and – by the Vietnam War, New Left, period, to ignore and "disconsider", even oppose, "soldier resistance"(2).*

*(2) Soldiers, of course, are not officers, nor are officers soldiers, though for purpose of simplicity here the term "soldier" is extended to cover the rank and file of all services (army, marines, navy and air force).*

*(3) American soldiers of course, those of other nationalities were not yet in the picture.*

*(4) Cortright, David. Soldiers in Revolt: The American Military Today. New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1975. OP. Xerox copies available from Max Watts (A\$ 40)*

*(5) Watts, Max. US-Army Europe: Von der Desertion zum Widerstand in der Kaserne, oder wie die U-Bahn zur RITA fuhr (From desertion to on-base resistance, or: how the Underground Railway led to Resistance Inside the Army). West Berlin: Harald Kater Verlag, 1989. DM 10/ A\$ 10 in German, English text (without illustrations or Appendixes: A\$ 10 from Max Watts.*

*(6) Cortright, David and Watts, Max. Left Face: Soldier Unions and Resistance Movements in Modern Armies, ISBN 0-313-27626-9. Greenwood Press, Westport CT, USA, 1991 US 59.95*

*(7) According to our calculations, the highest proportion of (all male) draftees in the US military during the Vietnam war was approx. 17%; in the Australian military I believe there were never more than 10% conscripted National Servicemen, no women.*

(8) except "racism". The civilian peaceniks rarely tried to impose their ideas on the black brothers... and when they did, didn't get far.

(9) The AFGE – American Federation of Government Employees – see also Left Face (6), ch. 3

(10) I have discussed the PNG Officer and Soldier RITA in a number of papers, the most recent is: RN3204 MLOC: A review of Mary-Louise O'Callaghan's "Enemies Within" (Max Watts)

---

## OCCUPATION REPORT

# Occupation Terrorists Suffocate Nine Bricklayers To Death



An Iraqi terrorist occupation policeman threatens photographer with AK-47 machinegun as he blocks access bodies of nine bricklayers outside the morgue of a local hospital in Baghdad. **The men were suffocated to death by being locked for over 14 hours in a police van, an interior ministry official said.** (AFP/Karim Sahib)

11 July 2005 AFP & Aljazeera & BBC News

**Nine Iraqi bricklayers detained by security forces on suspicion of involvement with armed fighters have suffocated to death while held for more than 14 hours in a police van in the burning Iraqi summer heat. The survivors were taken to a central Baghdad hospital where staff said a ninth man died.**

**Three other men who survived the ordeal were rushed to hospital for emergency treatment early Monday but two were later seized from their sick beds by police commandos. [Right. Got to kill them too, sloppy work otherwise.]**

The incident began on Sunday in the Amariyah district of western Baghdad when one of 12 bricklayers sustained gunshots during a firefight between armed fighters and police.

His colleagues took him to a hospital in the Shuala district where he was pronounced dead.

Iraqi police commandos then arrived at the hospital where they arrested the 11, along with one other man who was there accompanying his pregnant wife.

**The suspects were taken to the commando headquarters in the Jihad neighbourhood in western Baghdad where they were said to have been beaten and locked in the police van from 11am on Sunday to 1am on Monday.**

**A doctor told the BBC that one of the survivors had said he had been given repeated electric shocks by the commandos.**

An oil ministry employee who was among those detained gave a news conference to recount his ordeal.

"Everyone suffocated," said Diya Adnan, 27.

**Police commandos systematically torture and abuse detainees.**

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

## **Collaborator Leaders Fighting Each Other**

7/11/2005 Arabic News.com

**The Interim Iraqi President Jalal al-Talibani accused the interim Iraqi President Ibrahim al-Jaafari of monopolizing authorities in Baghdad.**

**In a message he addressed to Jaafari, Talibani considered that Jaafari acts on his own and that he has ignored the content and spirit of the agreement signed between the Shiite coalition and the Kurdish alliance.**

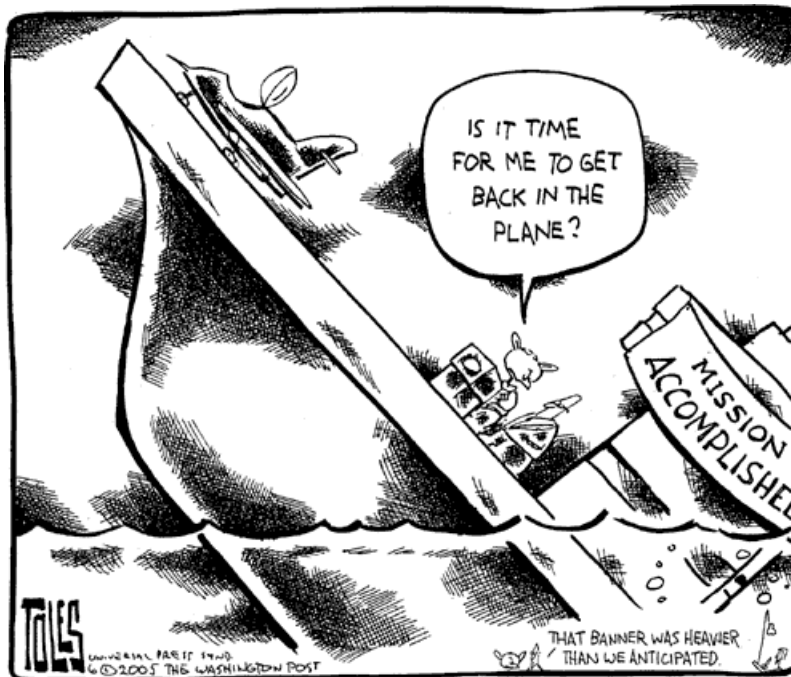
Talibani expressed in his message his regret over "Jaafari's formation of ministerial committees linked to him, and converting the Kurdish ministers to non-authorized ministers."

Concerning the city of Karkouk, Talibani said that Jaafari did not ask for transferring necessary money to normalize the situation in the city.

## DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



[Thanks to Kate, who sent this in.]



**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.**

## **Received:**

# **Newsweek Needs Opt-Out Parent To Interview**

From: Debbie Clark  
To: GI Special  
Sent: July 11, 2005  
Subject: Media request

**I received information third-hand today that Newsweek wants to do a story on the "Leave My Child Alone" campaign and would like to interview a parent involved in the Opt-Out who has a military connection (veteran or military family member) and a child in school.**

**Please call or email me if you're a veteran or military family member involved in the Leave My Child Alone campaign and would be willing to give an interview to Newsweek regarding this.**

I do not have the name and number of the Newsweek reporter; I have the name and number of a lady connected with the "Leave My Child Alone" campaign who, according to the information I received from another activist, is in touch with the Newsweek reporter.

**It will be an in-person interview, as I understand, and Newsweek will fly the reporter to wherever needed for the interview.**

**Debbie Clark  
Veterans For Peace - Atlanta  
dclark@antiwar.com  
770-855-6163**

### **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://gi-special.iraq-news.de>, <http://www.notinourname.net/gi-special/>,  
[www.williambowles.info/qispecial](http://www.williambowles.info/qispecial),  
<http://www.albasrah.net/maqalat/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.**