

GI SPECIAL 3B9:

Only A Tear Remains



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From: Soldier X On Leave

Sent: Tuesday, April 19, 2005 2:38 AM

Subject: Only A Tear Remains

Hello again,

Well I am back from another amazing weekend of adventure. This time we went to Poland to visit Auschwitz.

It was The Cave Man (he just learned that Paris Hilton had a tv show), Comrade (he apparently speaks fluent Russian now), "Jose" (we call all the Hispanic guys "Jose" because racial prejudice is not allowed and we are rebels that make are own rules) and of course myself (who is too perfect for any strange nickname).

We decided to brave the roads once more in a rental car and this time it proved to be a horrible idea.

Krakow and Auschwitz are intense places to visit but the Eastern European road system is the worst I have every seen. If the commies spent more money in transportation and less in trying to out nuke the states they would have been better off.

So we armed ourselves with all the junkfood, beer, and gas coupons we could carry and drove East. Out of the two routes we could take we chose a direct route through Czech would be best opposed to up and over to Dresden and around Czech all together. It was smooth sailing and even the boarder guard glance at the bald eagle relief on our pass ports and handed them back without opening them. We cranked up the tunes and before long we found ourselves lost in the middle of Prague.

The city is giant and maze like. Many European cities were destroyed in WWII making it easy to remap a handy grid system of streets. Prague however just adapted the best it could and its best was not very hard. The Auto Bahn dumped us in the city center without warning and we scrambled around town looking for our way.

Comrade, who was driving at the time, dove out of the car at red lights, which he is now known to do frequently, and ask directions to the most non-English speaking person he could find. We drove down one way streets, down sidewalks, and through parking lots. Eventually we gave up on maps all together and guided ourselves East the best we could be the setting sun. It was dark and two hours later as we sped away from the dizzy Czech city.

Highway 11 was a straight shot to Krakow. So with the worst behind us we pressed the lead to make up lost time. Soon the multiple lane highway became a two lane highway, then a street with traffic lights and stop signs, then a non marked stretch of asphalt, then a pot holed ridden broken up route with no signs what so ever, then a dirt path. We drove through towns that weren't even aware that there was a WWII or electricity and running water for that matter.

Hwy 11 took us into the darkest woods I have ever seen. It was a fairy tale type of place where monsters hid still and children were not allowed to go. Many hours of slow driving near perilous cliffs we passed across into Poland without even realizing it.

Other than a few detours because the Polish Highway was completely deteriorated we managed to find Krakow as the sun was coming up.

Since we couldn't check into a hostel for a while Cave Man and Comrade slept in the car while Jose and me decided to walk around. Krakow is beautiful, full of churches with

emerald brass tops and cobble stone (Poles call cobble stone Cat Hats) squares and iron work street lamps.

Candle vigils for the Pope John Paul II where still burning all over the town. Every shop had a small shrine in his remembrance with a picture and a cross. We found statues of Copernicus the astronomer monk that discovered our place in the solar system and killed for it, we found churches with Masonry, Illuminati and Priory symbols in it, and we found a dragon's den underneath the castle. It even had a fire breathing dragon statue, that breathed real fire every five minutes like some scorching Ole Faithful shooting flame instead of water. We found a hostel finally that would check us in early and slept all day.

We woke up at 3pm and went down to a café for toast and White Russians. After a good buzz we walked about some more. The streets were more active and we found a music shop that sold rare imports and bootlegs. The man at the counter proudly showed off his photo album of him posing with Metallica and Ace Of Spades. Apparently from the t-shirts and Man O War/Pantara graffiti, But Rock is still alive and well in the Eastern Bloc.

I walked out of the shop with a new Pearl Jam "9 out of ten kids prefer crayons to guns" shirt, a rare live acoustic bootleg, and a John Lennon "Imagine" record still in mint condition.

The last track is "I don't want to be a soldier".

Cave Man found a rare Nirvana CD he and his brother have been searching for, for ten years call "Seattle Sounds".

Sites were seen and shopping was done we decided to get the party started. We hoped from cocktail bar to pizzeria, to pub, to lounge when we found a good sized club with a random music selection. It went from old school punk to R&B to disco to techno. We dubbed it the Slash Club. It was hard to order Red Bulls and Vodkas because I kept getting served a Polish beer called Warka I ended up drinking Rum and Cokes all night. So the rest of this paragraph will be omitted due to it's embarrassing content.

Once again the I am conscious to welcome the sun rise. This time the light chased me back to the hostel and I crawled under the sheets in fear of it. I was in a feral state and the fiery ball was not welcome.

Hours later we forced ourselves up and rotated through the one bathroom. This time we filled the car with OJ and water.

We popped painkillers and drove off to Auschwitz. It is hard to express the impact of the museum. The whole place leaves you with a sorrow for so much suffering and a fear that it might happen again if we never learn from our past.

There was a slight rain falling dampening the ground and causing a grey light in the sky. It was perfect for setting the sobering mood.

On the walk into the camp there were plaques with quotes about peace from world leaders from the Dali Lama to Hillary Clinton. My favorite was a short line from Edgar M Bronfmann saying "Nothing can be said, a cry remains."

Once through the front gates with the words "ARBEIT MACHT FREI" (work will set you free) the compound is organized in three story long brick buildings about four rows deep and ten building across. Double barbed wire circles them and wooden towers and dug out machine gun nest are positioned outside of that.

The buildings mostly show how the prisoners lived and worked. Many were museums. The most intense were the memorial museums. There were one for each Eastern European nation that mass anti-Semitic genocide was carried out. There was history on how things became so awful and many pictures and quotes. The extermination museum went into detail on how the Jews were murdered and even had an exhibit of belonging found after the camp was liberated. There were entire rooms separated by glass of piles of shoes, combs, luggage, even one room with mountains of human hair ten feet high in a ten foot by forty foot area. The hair was shaved off after the Jews were gassed and sold to the textile industry. YUCK!

The last part of the compound was the extermination room.

The building was underground like a bunker and had a giant iron door with a port window on it. The inside still smelt like Cyclone B gas. There were nearly twenty tourists inside at the time and I felt cramped. The plaque inside said that over two hundred jews were packed into the room at a time.

The ovens that were used to burn the dead bodies were right inside the gas room with them so after it was through the Germans didn't have to carry the bodies far. There wasn't a person that didn't leave that place green in the face and full of horror.

A long walk down the railroad tracks was camp Birkenau another camp and a much larger camp. Over four times the size of Auschwitz. The rows of stable like buildings went on forever. The railroad went through the center of the camp and at the very end were two massive gas chambers.

They were in ruins, destroyed by the Germans when they tried covering up the camps at the fall of the war. A huge memorial statue was between the gas chambers. And flowers were set at the base of the railroad where it stopped. Only fifty feet from the gas chamber doors. Women and children too small or weak to work were taken directly there for extermination.

I couldn't help trying to understand how a soldier could obey orders to do such inhumane things and how far the war in Iraq could turn.

I thought about Abu Gharib and the prejudice of Arabs by middle America.

Could another mass Genocide happen like that?

Maybe if infrastructure broke down, like after another great depression perhaps. Genocide occurred in the Balkans and still continues in parts of Africa. Pol Pot in Cambodia was not too far long ago.

Sober and deep in thought we piled into the car for another long drive.

We decided to go around Czech this time hoping to hit major highways and autobahns. We did manage to get lost once real well after a detour with no marks to guide us back to the highway. The rest of the trip we drove on the wrong side of the highway because our side was being repaired. Over three hundred kilometers of construction that probably started when the Sputnik was sent into orbit.

We were stopped at the boarder for an hour as the guards were perplexed at the idea of renting a car. I don't think we fully convinced them that our car wasn't stolen, but they were sick of us and let us go on into Germany. We made it back in time to get a couple hours of shut eye before formation.

The trip was totally worth the trouble, but next time I think we will fly straight into Krakow. Poland and Czech are now part of the European Union so things might become better soon.

Our dollar won't be triple the value any longer, but they might have some paved roads.

Next weekend who they hell knows where we will end up. There are talks of Athens or Barcelona if we can fly, or Budapest if we take a train.

Until then all the best



Here is a photo of the rail head in Birkenau between the two huge gas chamber ruins

NOTE FROM SOLDIER X: 4.21.05

I heard rumors today about a July stop loss for our Battalion. I won't be here for that but shit man,,,we just fucking got back [from Iraq] you know!

Oh and the Reserve guy here said that we should expect to get called back in two years for the IRR.

GOOD LUCK GETTING ME! those fucking bastards.

We will never forget.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

SOLDIER KILLED BY IED NEAR AL HASWAH

April 23, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 05-04-24C

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq – A Soldier assigned to the 155th Brigade Combat Team, II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), was killed April 23 when an improvised explosive device detonated near the convoy in which he was traveling.

The incident occurred near Al Haswah, Iraq.

The 155th BCT is assigned to II MEF (Fwd)

Three U-S Soldiers Injured In Car Bomb Explosion



US soldiers check a destroyed car after car bomb attacked on a US military convoy near Baghdad airport on Saturday. (Xinhua/AFP Photo)

April 23, 2005 The Associated Press, BAGHDAD, Iraq & (Xinhuanet)

The military says three U-S soldiers have been hurt in a car bomb explosion along a busy Baghdad road.

A U-S patrol had been the target of the attack that has left one Iraqi dead and a total of seven wounded.

The attack took place in the al-Atebaa neighborhood near the main road leading to Baghdad International Airport, setting a US Humvee and two civilian cars ablaze.

Power lines have been knocked down and one military and two civilian vehicles have been destroyed by the explosion.

WHS Grad Loses Leg While Checking For Car Bomb

4.23.05 By SHAWBONG FOK/Democrat Staff Writer

Woodland resident Sgt. Brandon Huff has been severely injured by an explosive while serving in the Stryker Brigade in Mosul, Iraq.

Brandon was injured on Wednesday by a hidden electronic explosive that went off while his platoon was checking out a reported car bomb. He lost his left leg above his knee and had shrapnel throughout his body.

"We don't know if he stepped on a mine (or) if it went off electronically," said Don Huff, his father.

Brandon was taken to the intensive care unit in Landstuhl Medical Center near Ramstein Air Base in Germany.

"I am not happy by any of it," the father said. "I am happy he is alive."

Brandon is currently listed in very serious but stable condition, according to his dad.

Brandon, 22, graduated from Woodland High School in 2000. He later attended Lewis and Clark College in Portland before enlisting in the U.S. Army in 2001. He trained in Ft. Denning, Ga., until he was stationed at Ft. Lewis, Wash. His Iraq service started last October.

Nampa Grad Wounded In Iraq

04/23/05 By Adam Rush- Idaho Press-Tribune

NAMPA -- The family of 19-year-old sailor William Briscoe is breathing a sigh of relief after learning he survived an explosion in Iraq this month.

Relatives said the military flew Briscoe first to Germany and then to the United States for medical treatment after shrapnel from the explosion of a crude bomb caused multiple injuries.

Wendell Hoppins of Nampa, his grandfather, said the shrapnel went up his leg, through his calf, past the knee and into his femur. Other shrapnel struck near the young sailor's left shoulder blade, his mother, Shawndra Hoppins of Nampa, said.

Wendell Hoppins read part of an e-mail his grandson sent to him.

"Glad to hear things are going well," Briscoe wrote. "I hope Grandma gets better. As for me, I was en route to Kalsu from Fallujah. I almost made it to Kalsu when an IED went off under me."

William graduated from Nampa High School in 2004. In January of that year, he was inducted into the Navy. After graduating from high school, he went to Great Lakes, Ill., for training as a Navy Seabee -- the U.S. Naval Construction Force.

"They go in before the Marines and they build bridges. They set up camps," Briscoe's mother said Friday. "They build stuff that's needed."

Briscoe had at least two surgeries in Germany at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Wendell Hoppins said.

Shawndra Hoppins said her son was flown from Germany on Friday to the United States, where he will undergo additional procedures to repair damaged muscle tissue.

The sailor had been in Iraq for about a week before the explosion. Briscoe was in the back of a truck with other servicemembers, one of whom was also injured.

"He was right above the wheel well when the mine went off," Shawndra Hoppins said of her son. "That's what saved his life." Shawndra Hoppins said her son is careful what he tells her, and that she suspects he's keeping some details to himself.

"If you knew my son, you'd understand why he's not telling me everything," she said. "He knows it would make me more upset. It's been a pretty traumatic few weeks."

General Says Resistance “Resilient” And “Viable”

The Hill, April 21, 2005

A retired Army general just back from a fact-finding trip to Iraq has warned the U.S.-led multinational coalition that insurgents may be planning spectacular large-scale attacks to slow the momentum of recent military and political gains there.

"The insurgency is viable and resilient and has the capacity to achieve significant surprise," Gen. John Keane said.

TROOP NEWS

Congress Wants Military To Cut Troops' Health Benefits

(Washington Post, April 22, 2005, 2004, Pg. 15)

Confronting medical costs that have doubled in four years, military officials and congressional leaders said that ***the Pentagon needs to rethink the generous coverage it provides or risk making sacrifices in other areas of the Defense Department budget.***

Iraq War Means Booming Business For Tombstone Makers

London Daily Telegraph, April 21, 2005

Almost daily, another e-mailed order from the U.S. military arrives at monument-maker Granite Industries of Vermont, all too many carrying the acronym OIF—Operation Iraqi Freedom. Ten days after the order is received, a 230-pound headstone is shipped to military cemeteries such as America's premier graveyard, Arlington in Virginia.

A Different Kind of Patriot

By Diane Rejman, April "Peace Times," published by the San Jose Peace Center.

Diane Rejman, a member of Veterans for Peace, served in the US Army from 1977-80. She speaks to high schools students about the military, and helps produce and manage the political folk group, Annie and the Vets. Diane holds an MBA in International Management, is listed in Who's Who in America, and has contributed articles to Counterpunch.

They're NOT unpatriotic, and they certainly are not cowards. It takes bravery to stand up for your principles, especially against the attitudes of society. And true patriots are often those who challenge the decisions made by their leaders. Their voice of "dissent" is often the voice of truth.

It's an "all-volunteer" military, so why have almost 6,000 soldiers deserted? These individuals made a choice – shouldn't they be forced to live with it? The accusations start flying as soon as a soldier refuses to deploy with his or her unit, or decides they won't return to fight a war they find immoral. **It's loathsome to realize how many of those who make the accusations have never served.**

I'm not going to pretend I understand all the reasons a soldier would walk away from their enlistment agreement, so of course I don't speak for all of them. I do believe that, whatever the specific reason, at the core is the painful realization that somewhere along the way they were betrayed, or they see the probability of betrayal. Maybe the recruiter promised them a different assignment.

Maybe they had enlisted in the National Guard to help fight fires in their home state, but instead ended up on extended duty in a war zone. Maybe they've seen too many of their buddies stop-lossed for months beyond their enlistment commitment. They realize too late that their enlistment agreement is one-sided – they are supposed to adhere to the specifics contained in it, but the government can modify its terms any time it wants.

Maybe they didn't fully understand the reality of the military, and especially of war. Then they witness the horror of what they volunteered for, and realize they should be spending their lives differently.

This horror can become visible in the hate training camps they attend. Boot camp does not only teach discipline and how to fire a weapon. It includes what could almost be considered a brainwashing technique to teach the recruits it's ok to hate and kill. In northeastern New Mexico, Rev. John Dear was awakened by a National Guard unit, "...with their war slogans, chants like 'Kill! Kill! Kill!' and 'Swing your guns from left to right; we can kill those guys all night.'"

Is this the kind of training young men and women actually expect when they enlist? Of course not. The recruiters never talk about this. They quickly realize they made a mistake, and become desperate to get out, even if it means going home to a job at a fast-food restaurant, or even to jail.

But not all deserters are new recruits. Many have served for years. Something has changed in the military they used to love. They become willing to throw their careers away because events have triggered their conscience and humanity.

Who killed the 20,000-100,000+ Iraqi civilians? Mostly American soldiers, since they comprise the majority of the troops over there. Who witnessed the deaths of over 1,500 American soldiers, and the maiming of possibly 20,000 more? American soldiers.

Can any training prepare a person to pick up body parts of their buddies from a river and put them in plastic bags, not knowing which parts even belong together?

War is not a video game. It includes sights and sounds and smells that are unimaginable to a young adult sitting in their bedroom pushing buttons to kill or maim digital images. "I just blew his head off! Cool!"

At the time the atrocities happen, it all may seem ok. In a way, it HAS to seem ok. Their physical survival is at stake. Psychologically they have to tell themselves it's just "part of war" to have to do these things.

But what do they do when their humanity returns?

No – it's not cowardice that keeps them from returning. It's a true understanding of the nature of what they are being asked to do.

Some deserters are refusing to return because they feel they would be "war criminals" to continue fighting. Others have taken their stands to give dissent a "powerful voice."

Soldiers have the legal right to refuse an unlawful order. It is unfortunate when they use this right, they are verbally attacked and have to fight off false accusations. And aren't they in an impossible situation, anyway? When soldiers such as Lynndie England followed orders at Abu Ghraib, she, and others in similar situations, have faced courts-martial.

Far from being cowards, deserters display bravery in taking a stand to make people aware of the horrors of war, and try to do something to end it.

Unfortunately, there is a strong similarity between what is happening in Iraq, and what happened in Vietnam. Why didn't we learn from that war, from stories told at events such as the Winter Soldier hearings? We need this war in Iraq to end years faster than it took to end the war in Vietnam.

Wars would end if all soldiers laid down their arms and refused to fight.

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.

**Doing It For Tom:
Mr Keys Takes On The Prime
Minister;**

Father Of Iraq War Victim A More Dangerous Foe Than The Usual List Of Also-Rans

April 22 2005 Ed Vulliamy, The Guardian

By tradition, an incumbent prime minister - when time comes for re-election - faces a miscellany of Monster Raving Loonies and hapless candidates from the other major parties. Tony Blair is now up against no less than 14 rivals for his Labour fortress of Sedgefield.

But this time around, with so much hanging on Mr Blair's personality and credibility, the prime minister faces one challenge more solemn and serious than usual, one which combines personal tragedy and political effervescence: that of Reg Keys, father of Lance Corporal Tom Keys, a royal military policeman, horribly killed along with five others in the Iraqi town of Majar al-Kabir in June 2003.

Tragic, because of the heavy-heartedness of the candidate and his reason for standing. Effervescent, because Mr Keys has unleashed some mercurial political energy.

The contents of a private conversation with Mr Keys in a local pub after a hard day's campaigning are not really publishable, simply because they are so intimate, passionate and ridden with grief and anger over his son's death. They reveal Mr Keys as a man stricken, brave to be doing this at all.

"At least I will be able to walk to Tom's grave and say that I tried to do something," he said.

The conversation emphasises the abyss between Mr Keys' situation and demeanour, and that of the country's most powerful figure, who sent L/Cpl Keys to war; it seems unbelievable the twain will meet at the polls - and share a platform when the result is announced on May 5.

"Two years ago, I wouldn't have believed it," said Mr Keys, from Solihull, for 18 years an ambulance paramedic. "I had just retired after all that blood and gore to convert a barn in Wales. I was about to embark on a sane life. Then - all this".

Before embarking on a day's doorstep canvassing on Tuesday, Mr Keys insisted that war in Iraq was "an illegal catastrophe - 35 British soldiers killed, 900 maimed and 100,000 Iraqi deaths - which cannot be swept under the carpet".

Standing against the prime minister in Blair country is not easy.

Keys' campaign was refused successive vacant downtown shop fronts in their search for a headquarters, ending up on an industrial estate. A request to hold a rally at Sedgefield racecourse was refused because management feared that to grant it might prejudice a planning application lodged with the local council.

His layman's candidacy taps into a general disenchantment.

Mr Keys spent Tuesday canvassing in the Labour heartland of former pit villages to the north, beginning in Fishburn.

Here, some six out of 10 voters say they are undecided, with the remainder split between Mr Keys and Mr Blair. Daniel Boyle thought Mr Blair "a wonderful man doing a great job and standing up for his principles".

Then, out of nowhere, came an anti-Blair outburst. "I think Labour should represent people locally, instead of breaking the law right and centre, and spending all those billions on the war," said Helen Newton.

"I think people want Labour but not Blair," he told Valerie Hall, in her front garden. "No trust there," replied Mrs Hall.

"Will you think of me on May 5?" asked Mr Keys.

"It's looking that way so far," was the reply.

Wednesday morning dawned, and Mr Keys - with Mr Bell, wearing, of course, the white suit - boarded a roofless double-decker bus, to drive back through the lanes into what was coal mining country, and the town of Ferryhill.

Perhaps it is a combination of Mr Keys' sincerity and bereavement, and Mr Bell's immediate recognisability and raw honesty that attracts such attention.

"Everybody's talking about this Keys man," said Julie Hymer, a home carer.

And perhaps it is Mr Keys' presence in this constituency that makes Iraq more of a factor than it seems across much of the country.

"I used to think Blair was OK, but I'm not sure now," said Marjorie Richardson. "I was against the troops going to war, and the community tax rises".

"I'm against the war," said Julian Shilbock, who works for a private ambulance firm and will vote for Mr Keys, "and there are so many lies being told, you don't know what to believe".

Finally the bus arrived in Trimdon village, Mr Blair's ward, the place the prime minister calls home in the north-east.

Over the road from the Labour Club, Simon Cross was taking a day off from his job as a psychiatric nurse.

"I haven't decided yet. I'm very sorry about that man losing his son in the war, but you sometimes think they would elect a monkey in a suit around here, so long as it was Labour."

Alcohol And Sex Are Banned For Battle-Wearied GIs From Iraq: "This Is Like A Correctional Facility"

[Thanks to Tom at "RegimeChanger.Com" tom@regimechanger.com who sent this in.]

26/03/2005 By Oliver Poole at Camp As Sayliyah, Qatar, Telegraph (UK)

"This is like a correctional facility," said 25-year-old Specialist Lashunda Townes. "We sleep in bunk beds, 30 to a room. We can't get off base when we want. What are you to do?"

The biggest stimulants on offer are piles of free chocolate bars and cans of Coca-Cola piled throughout the facility. Alcohol is limited, and sex between male and female soldiers strictly banned.

The soldiers knew what they considered real rest and recuperation. "Beer and babes," a crew-cropped private, just arrived at the US military's new Middle East rest and recuperation resort, shouted to hoots of approval from his buddies.

They would not find much of either here. America may have instigated four-day off-duty trips for its Iraq servicemen but these breaks obey all the modern-day rules of acceptable behaviour for a soldier.

During the Vietnam war, American troops made resorts such as China Beach a byword for immorality as the booze flowed, the local vice girls laboured and the pungent smell of marijuana drifted through the breeze.

Others flew to neighbouring Thailand for even livelier debauchery.

This time things are different.

The troop planes land daily amid the concrete warehouses that constitute Camp As Sayliyah - the barren, sand-covered base in Qatar which is the American military's new entertainment centre - and pour out their daily cargo of battle-wearied GIs in search of a good time.

But the biggest stimulants on offer are piles of free chocolate bars and cans of Coca-Cola piled throughout the facility. Alcohol is limited, and sex between male and female soldiers strictly banned.

Qatar was struck by a suicide bomb attack on a British amateur dramatics group last Saturday - force off-base tours to be accompanied by armed guards while civilian visitors are strictly prohibited.

"This is a military camp and military rules are going to apply," an officer said. "Not everyone may like it but those are the rules and everyone is expected to abide by them."

Since being launched in July 2003, around 60,000 servicemen have been on the breaks, available to everyone who has served four months in the Middle East.

Millions of dollars were spent building a giant gym, a swimming pool and pizza restaurants and burger bars. Comfortable sofas in pastel colours, DVD screens and a mini-cinema fill the building.

In Vietnam, rest and recuperation meant officialdom turning a blind eye to excess.

In the Iraq conflict, soldiers are being offered the modern American teenager's fantasy living room, and encouraged to sit on a sofa playing computer games while gorging themselves on an unlimited supply of snack foods.

In its centrepiece, the computer gaming room, GIs lounged on Ikea furniture and played the latest X-Box and Playstation2 games while a Filipino attendant provided sweets and crisps on demand, bringing them straight to their table so that they did not even have to rise from their console.

There are two nightclubs but drinks are limited to a total of three a night, a system monitored via a computer logging system that requires military IDs to be swiped with each purchase.

But it is not, perhaps unsurprisingly, to everyone's liking.

"This is like a correctional facility," said 25-year-old Specialist Lashunda Townes. "We sleep in bunk beds, 30 to a room. We can't get off base when we want. What are you to do?"

Pte Randy Pemberton, 22, bemoaned the lack of a good party. "They give you just enough beer that it's a tease," he said. "As for the girls - there is a severely limited hunting ground."

The problem for the facility's organisers is how to keep the troops happy while not breaching contemporary standards of morality, as defined by the Pentagon and their Arab hosts.

Now women soldiers make up 15 per cent of US troops, the previous staple of visits by female dance troupes is no longer politically acceptable. A two-week tour to installations in Iraq and Kuwait last month by a scantily-clad group, known as the Purrfect Angels, resulted in a reprimand for the officer who organised it.

Instead, horseshoe throwing competitions, the occasional comedian, volleyball games and even a chess tournament are on offer.

There is, in fact, a massage parlour but it is not the vice den the words would have implied to their comrades who fought in the paddy fields of South-East Asia.

Run by the military, a sign at the door of one stated: "All male patrons are required to wear BRIEFS during entirety of their session."

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Abu Ghraib Attack Kills 8 Local Occupation Troops; 20 Wounded

23 April 2005 Khaleej Times

Eight Iraqi soldiers were killed on Saturday when their convoy struck an improvised explosive device in Abu Ghraib west of Baghdad on Saturday, Iraqi police said.

The police said 20 soldiers were also wounded in the blast.

Other soldiers open fire after the incident, killing a civilian who drove by the scene.

Assorted Resistance Action

23 April 2005 irib.ir & Khaleej Times & Associated Press

Three Iraqi soldiers and an assailant were wounded in a firefight late Friday near an army checkpoint in Muradia.

In a separate attack in Yusifiya, 40 kilometres south of Baghdad, another two soldiers were killed and three injured when their convoy was hit by an improvised explosive device.

In Mosul, 225 miles northwest of Baghdad, a roadside bomb hit an Iraqi army convoy on Saturday morning, wounding three soldiers, said Dr. Bahaaldin al-Bakri at the city's al-Jumhuri hospital.

In eastern Baghdad, two policemen were wounded when a roadside bomb hit their car in another morning attack, said police Capt. Mahir Abdelsatar.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

A Magnificent Idea!

The Story:

April 22, 2005 by James Cagan, Znet

An incident on Tuesday graphically illustrated the real relationship that exists between the US military forces in Iraq and the newly-elected, so-called "sovereign" Iraqi national assembly. **At a vehicle checkpoint controlling the entrance to the "Green Zone" compound where the assembly's building is located, a US army private threw an assembly member's identity card in his face, pulled him from his car, handcuffed him and dragged him away in front of stunned onlookers.**

A member of the Kurdish Alliance, Abd al-Khaliq Zanganah, stated: "According to the Geneva Conventions, an occupying force must respect the occupied nation. *The offending soldier must be thrown out of our country.*"

The Comment

April 23, 2005 By Kelebdooni, Anti-Allawi Group

"The offending soldier must be thrown out of our country."

Great idea!!! I think the other GIs will just love it if implemented.

Can't get a chance to get out of Iraq that easy!

I can see it all right now. Every GI in Iraq is pulling some MP out of his car..dragging him along the asphalt... and if that doesn't work, hang him up on a post...etc.

In a very short while, we'll have neither US forces nor collaborators in Iraq!

The Normalization Of War

By Andrew J. Bacevich. A graduate of West Point and a Vietnam veteran, he has a doctorate in history from Princeton and was a Bush Fellow at the American Academy in Berlin. From his new books: *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced By War*, copyright © 2005 by Andrew J. Bacevich, Oxford University Press, Inc.

Since the end of the Cold War, having come to value military power for its own sake, the United States has abandoned this principle and is committed as a matter of policy to maintaining military capabilities far in excess of those of any would-be adversary or combination of adversaries. This commitment finds both a qualitative and quantitative expression, with the U.S. military establishment dwarfing that of even America's closest ally.

Thus, whereas the U.S. Navy maintains and operates a total of twelve large attack aircraft carriers, the once-vaunted Royal Navy has none -- indeed, in all the battle fleets of the world there is no ship even remotely comparable to a Nimitz-class carrier, weighing in at some ninety-seven thousand tons fully loaded, longer than three football fields, cruising at a speed above thirty knots, and powered by nuclear reactors that give it an essentially infinite radius of action.

Today, the U.S. Marine Corps possesses more attack aircraft than does the entire Royal Air Force -- and the United States has two other even larger "air forces," one an integral part of the Navy and the other officially designated as the U.S. Air Force.

Indeed, in terms of numbers of men and women in uniform, the U.S. Marine Corps is half again as large as the entire British Army--and the Pentagon has a second, even larger "army" actually called the U.S. Army -- which in turn also operates its own "air force" of some five thousand aircraft.

All of these massive and redundant capabilities cost money. Notably, the present-day Pentagon budget, adjusted for inflation, is 12 percent larger than the average defense budget of the Cold War era.

In 2002, American defense spending exceeded by a factor of twenty-five the combined defense budgets of the seven "rogue states" then comprising the roster of U.S. enemies.

Indeed, by some calculations, the United States spends more on defense than all other nations in the world together. This is a circumstance without historical precedent.

Even before the Pentagon officially assigned itself the mission of "shaping" the international environment, members of the political elite, liberals and conservatives alike, had reached a common understanding that scattering U.S. troops around the globe to restrain, inspire, influence, persuade, or cajole paid dividends. Whether any correlation exists between this vast panoply of forward-deployed forces on the one hand and antipathy to the United States abroad on the other has remained for the most part a taboo subject.

During the entire Cold War era, from 1945 through 1988, large-scale U.S. military actions abroad totaled a scant six.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, however, they have become almost annual events.

The brief period extending from 1989's Operation Just Cause (the overthrow of Manuel Noriega) to 2003's Operation Iraqi Freedom (the overthrow of Saddam Hussein) featured nine major military interventions.

And that count does not include innumerable lesser actions such as Bill Clinton's signature cruise missile attacks against obscure targets in obscure places, the almost daily bombing of Iraq throughout the late 1990s, or the quasi-combat missions that have seen GIs dispatched to Rwanda, Colombia, East Timor, and the Philippines.

Altogether, the tempo of U.S. military interventionism has become nothing short of frenetic.

How Do We Justify These Kinds Of Wars?

THE POINT is that terrorism has been isolated and made to look like some kind of thing that has no past and has no future and is just some aberration of maniacs. It isn't. Of course, sometimes it is.

But if you look at it, the logic that underlies terrorism and the logic that underlies the war on terror is the same: Both hold ordinary people responsible for the actions of governments.

And the fact is that Osama bin Laden or al-Qaeda, in their attacks on September 11, took the lives of many ordinary people.

And in the attacks in Afghanistan and on Iraq, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and Afghans paid for the actions of the Taliban or for the actions of Saddam Hussein.

The difference is that the Afghans didn't elect the Taliban, the Iraqis didn't elect Saddam Hussein. So how do we justify these kinds of wars?

By Arundhati Roy, International Socialist Review Nov.–Dec. 2004

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.

Imperial Reach

This is certain to involve the United States more deeply in the tangled internal politics of these regions, and to invite resistance from local forces—and there are many of them—that object to current US policies and will resent a conspicuous American military presence in their midst.

Far from leading to a reduction in terrorism, as advertised, these moves are certain to provoke more of it.

April 25, 2005 By Michael T. Klare, The Nation [Excerpt]

American leaders have placed ever-increasing reliance on the use of military force to protect the global production and transport of oil. This trend began in 1980, when President Jimmy Carter vowed that the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf would be assured “by any means necessary, including military force.”

The same basic premise was subsequently applied to the Caspian Sea basin by President Clinton, and is now being extended by President Bush to other producing areas, including Africa. All of this entails the increased involvement of US military forces in these areas—and it is to facilitate such involvement that the Defense Department seeks new bases and “operating locations.”

Normally, Pentagon officials are reluctant to ascribe US strategic moves to concern over the safe delivery of energy supplies.

Nevertheless in their explanations of the need for new facilities, the oil factor has begun to crop up. **“In the Caspian Sea you have large mineral (i.e., petroleum) reserves,” observed General Charles Wald, deputy commander of the US European Command (EUCOM), in June 2003. “We want to be able to assure the long-term viability of those resources.”**

Wald has also spoken of the need for bases to help protect oil reserves in Africa (which falls under the purview of the EUCOM). “The estimate is in the next ten years, we will get 25 percent of our oil from there,” he declared in *Air Force* magazine. “I can see the United States potentially having a forward operating location in São Tome,” or other sites in Africa.

Of the dozen or so locations mentioned in Pentagon or media accounts of new basing locations, a majority—including Algeria, Azerbaijan, Cameroon, Gabon, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Qatar, Romania, São Tome and Príncipe, Tunisia—either possess oil themselves or abut major pipelines and supply routes.

And, from the Pentagon’s perspective, the protection of oil and the war against terrorism often amount to one and the same thing.

Thus, when asked whether the United States was prepared to help defend Nigeria’s oilfields against ethnic violence, General Wald replied, “Wherever there’s evil, we want to go there and fight it.”

Equally strong geopolitical considerations link the pursuit of foreign oil to American concern over the rise of China. Like the United States, China needs to import vast amounts of petroleum in order to satisfy skyrocketing demand at home. In 2010, the Energy Department predicts, China will have to import 4 million barrels of oil per day; by 2025 it will be importing 9.4 million barrels.

China will also be dependent on major producers in the Middle East and Africa, and so it has sought to curry favor with these countries using the same methods long employed by the United States: by forging military ties with friendly regimes, supplying them with weapons and stationing military advisers in them. A conspicuous Chinese presence has been established, for example, in Iran, Sudan and the Central Asian republics. To counter these incursions, the United States has expanded its own military ties with local powers—and this in turn has helped spark the drive for new basing facilities in the Gulf and Caspian regions.

This is certain to involve the United States more deeply in the tangled internal politics of these regions, and to invite resistance from local forces—and there are many of them—that object to current US policies and will resent a conspicuous American military presence in their midst.

Far from leading to a reduction in terrorism, as advertised, these moves are certain to provoke more of it.

OCCUPATION REPORT

The Sewer: So Much For Iraqi "Democracy" Long Live The Shadow Government.

The resistance is relentless. Western Iraq is totally out of US control. Mosul is infiltrated by the Iraqi resistance. Ramadi, the resistance capital of the Sunni triangle, is controlled by - who else - the resistance.

Apr 21, 2005 By Pepe Escobar, Asia Times Online Ltd.

According to Washington's script, progressive invisibility of the occupying force means increasing repression exercised by Iraqi forces.

This means the return - in full force - of Saddam's Mukhabarat agents, now posing as agents of the new Iraqi security and intelligence services.

Bush equals Saddam because the same people who repressed us are back.

The masses correctly interpreted the meaning of Rumsfeld's "message" to the Shi'ite al-Jafaari: don't touch the defense and interior ministries, ie, don't touch our old Mukhabarat allies and counterinsurgency experts.

Not featured in the elaborate Pentagon plans to regiment Mukhabarat agents is that these same Sunni, Saddam-era operatives may not be exactly inclined to fight the Sunni resistance.

To complicate the equation, 70% of the US-trained Iraqi security forces are former Ba'athists. The top commando, with 10,000 operatives, is almost 100% composed of former Saddam army officers. If the new prime minister, Ibrahim Jaafari of the Da'wa Party purges them, it's the end of the American dream of having Iraqis doing the dirty jobs.

All the explosive issues - federalism, who gets Kirkuk, the fate of the oil industry - which translated into nine weeks of turbulence before a president, two vice presidents and a prime minister were appointed - are now back into the negotiations over a new constitution. People in Baghdad knows it's unrealistic to expect a draft of the new constitution in the course of the next four months, according to the American-imposed calendar.

Allawi - the Americans' man, as he is known in Baghdad - also has his reasons to be furious. He badly wanted the Interior Ministry, so he could organize the Mukhabarat-led espionage and overall repression in conjunction with the Green Zone.

The occupation is worse than an economic tsunami: it managed to plunge Iraq - once a beacon of development in the Arab world - into Sub-Saharan poverty.

There's less electricity each day than in 2003 or even 2004. Without electricity, the whole country is paralyzed: nothing - communications, industry, the healthcare system, the educational system - works properly. All water plants "reconstructed" by Bechtel and co are breaking down. **With weekly, sometimes daily attacks on pipelines, oil production is pitiful, still inferior to Saddam-era, pre-war levels. Sixty percent of the total population survives on food stamps.**

Baghdad is a hellish labyrinth of concrete walls and barbed wire, where a BMW is "the kidnappers' car", 4X4s are favored by candidates for suicide attacks and there's no safe place to hide.

Reuters staff survive barricaded behind sandbags and concrete walls; the only one able to venture out to collect images by motorbike is Abu Ali, a kind of local hero. Gas lines are endless.

The resistance is relentless. Western Iraq is totally out of US control. Mosul is infiltrated by the Iraqi resistance. Ramadi, the resistance capital of the Sunni triangle, is controlled by - who else - the resistance.

There may be no funds for rebuilding American-bombed Iraqi infrastructure, but US\$4.5 billion promptly found its way to Halliburton's subsidiary KBR for the construction and maintenance of the 14 "enduring camps" or permanent military bases.

The most notorious of these may be Camp Victory North, a sprawling complex attached to Baghdad (former Saddam) International Airport. Camp Victory is a KBR-built, bungalow-with-air-con American city for 14,000, complete with Burger King and gym.

When finished, it will be twice the size of giant Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo, the base attached to surveillance of oil pipelines in the Balkans.

American economist Jeremy Rifkin has calculated the number of years known world oil reserves would last at current rates of consumption and extraction.

In the US it would be only 10 years. By contrast, in Iran it would be 53 years; in Saudi Arabia 55; in the United Arab Emirates 75; in Kuwait 116; and in Iraq no less than 526 years. That says it all about controlling oil reserves in the Middle East.

Nothing gets done in Iraq without Green Zone approval, ie the all-powerful American Embassy.

The overwhelming majority of Sunnis as well as many disgruntled Shi'ites who sympathize with the Sadrists know the Green Zone would never tolerate new Iraqi ministers not pliable to the White House/Pentagon military/corporate agenda for Iraq.

The only way Jaafari's transitional government can garner any measure of popular credibility is to demand a firm deadline for total American withdrawal. This is what the Shi'ite masses voted for. Whatever the scale of mass protests though, Rumsfeld remains unfazed: he wants Saddam's Mukhabarat back in action and he wants the 14 military bases.

The White House/Pentagon/Green Zone axis wants "shock therapy", deregulation, wide-ranging privatization, control of Iraqi natural resources, Iraq reduced to a deregulated capitalist colony with all or most government properties and services controlled by American multinationals and all assets held by the foreign lending institutions that own the majority shares of the Iraqi National Bank.

People who disagree may hit the streets and scream.

So much for Iraqi "democracy".

Long live the shadow Iraqi government.

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

**Bush Buddies Iraq Thieving Total
Nears \$2 BILLION:**

"That Money Could Have Been Used To Take Care Of Soldiers"

"The evidence suggests that the U.S. used Iraqi oil proceeds to overpay Halliburton and then sought to hide the evidence of these overcharges from the international auditors."

Halliburton - of which Vice President Dick Cheney was formerly chief executive officer - is the largest single contractor in Iraq.

22 April 2005 By William Fisher, Inter Press Service

New York - The Halliburton corporation, already the Iraq war's poster child for "waste, fraud and abuse", has been hit with a new double-whammy.

A report from the U.S. State Department accuses the company of "poor performance" in its 1.2-billion-dollar contract to repair Iraq's vital southern oil fields.

And a powerful California congressman is charging that Defence Department audits showing additional overcharges totaling 212 million dollars were concealed from United Nations monitors by the George W. Bush administration.

The new overcharges bring to two billion dollars, or 42 percent of the contract amounts, the grand total of questionable bills from Halliburton.

According to Rep. Henry Waxman, the Defence Contract Audit Agency, which monitors all Pentagon contracts, had identified Halliburton overcharges and questionable costs of totaling 212.3 million dollars - double the total amount of known overcharges under Halliburton's Iraq oil contract.

In one case, Waxman said, the overcharges exceeded 47 percent of the total value of the task order.

But the Defence Department - at Halliburton's request - withheld the new amount from IAMB, the U.N. audit oversight body for the Development Fund for Iraq, Waxman charged.

"The withholding of this information is highly unusual and raises serious issues," Waxman complained in a letter to Subcommittee Chairman Christopher Shays.

"The evidence suggests that the U.S. used Iraqi oil proceeds to overpay Halliburton and then sought to hide the evidence of these overcharges from the international auditors."

He also alleged that although Halliburton was paid in significant part from Iraqi oil proceeds in the Development Fund for Iraq, **the administration - acting at Halliburton's request - concealed these overcharges from the international**

auditors charged by the United Nations with monitoring the expenditures from the fund.

Scott H. Amey, general counsel of the Project on Government Oversight, a non-partisan government watchdog, told IPS, "If a taxpayer was able to support only 63 percent of their tax return, he or she would be brought to justice. In the case of Halliburton, however, the government continues to let it slide."

Halliburton - of which Vice President Dick Cheney was formerly chief executive officer - is the largest single contractor in Iraq.

A former Halliburton employee, Marie deYoung, audited accounts for Halliburton subsidiary KBR. She claims there was no effort to hold down costs because all costs were passed on directly to taxpayers. She repeatedly complained to superiors of waste and fraud.

The company's response, according to deYoung was: "We can be as dumb and stupid as we want in the first year of a war, nobody's going to care."

The former Army chaplain produced documents detailing alleged waste even on routine services: 50,000 dollars a month for soda, at 45 dollars a case; one million million a month to clean clothes - or 100 dollars for each 15-pound bag of laundry.

"That money could have been used to take care of soldiers," she said.

Another former employee, Mike West, says he was paid 82,000 dollars a year to be a labour foreman in Iraq, but never had any labourers to supervise. "They said just log 12 hours a day and walk around and look busy," he said.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT THE NEW 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)

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

3 Occupation Soldiers Wounded In Gaza Blast

YNetNews 4/21/2005, GAZA

Three soldiers were wounded Thursday afternoon after an explosive device was detonated near a security fence in the northern Gaza Strip, close to the Kfar Aza kibbutz.

One of those injured sustained moderate wounds and was taken to Soroka hospital in Beer Sheva for treatment. A hospital spokeswoman said the soldier sustained an injury to his skull, but added the wound was not life threatening.

The two other soldiers suffered from shock and were treated at the scene.

IDF [Zionist Occupation Force] officials say 10 similar explosive devices were uncovered by troops in the past week. Military officials estimated the roadside bomb, which targeted a jeep on routine patrol, was remotely detonated.

On Monday, a soldier sustained moderate wounds after being hit by Palestinian sniper fire on the Philadelphi Route.

[To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation by a foreign power, go to: www.rafahtoday.org The foreign army is Israeli; the occupied nation is Palestine.]

Received:

The White Rose

From: JF
To: GI Special
Sent: April 23, 2005 9:56 PM
Subject: The White Rose

Unbelievably I had never heard of the White Rose leaflets or of the brave young people who wrote and distributed them in Germany in 1942 and 1943. They were beheaded by the German government.

I change 'German' to 'American' and quote the first leaflet of the White Rose:

Nothing is so unworthy of a civilized nation as allowing itself to be governed without opposition by an irresponsible clique that has yielded to base instinct. It is certain that today every honest American is ashamed of his government.

Who among us has any conception of the dimensions of shame that will befall us and our children when one day the veil has fallen from our eyes and the most horrible of crimes - crimes that infinitely outdistance every human measure - reach the light of day?

If the American people are already so corrupted and spiritually crushed that they do not raise a hand, frivolously trusting in a questionable faith in lawful order of history; if they surrender man's highest principle, that which raises him above all other God's creatures, his free will; if they abandon the will to take decisive action and turn the wheel of history and thus subject it to their own rational decision; if they are so devoid of all individuality, have already gone so far along the road toward turning into a spiritless and cowardly mass - then, yes, they deserve their downfall. '

America does not have to keep funding imperial war in the Middle East. America does not have to continue goose stepping to its own destruction.

We Americans can change that, if we are outraged and courageous.

<http://www.jlrweb.com/whiterose/leafoneeng.html>

Received:

Voices in Wartime

As the Iraq War continues, the numbers of returning veterans and civilians suffering from post traumatic stress disorder grow. Millions of veterans and civilians from other conflicts still suffer from the psychological injuries of war.

"Voices in Wartime" has developed a short documentary, "Beyond Wartime" which will be in theaters sometime this month. We urge you to participate in getting the word out about this film by hosting a house party to show a clip from this film and begin a dialogue about what needs to be done in our community on this issue.

Voices in Wartime is a feature-length documentary that delves into the experience of war through powerful images and the words of poets - unknown and world-famous.

Poets around the world, from the United States and Colombia to Britain and Nigeria to Iraq and India, share their poetry and experiences of war. Soldiers, journalists, historians and experts on combat interviewed in Voices in Wartime add diverse perspectives on war's effects on soldiers, civilians and society.

You can join the effort to help millions of people learn about post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other consequences of war by hosting a Dialogue for Voices in Wartime. # Order a Dialogue Kit with a DVD, Discussion Guide, buttons and post cards. # Show a 37-minute video titled Voices in Wartime and Beyond, including short documentary Beyond Wartime, preview of Voices in Wartime and intro to the filmmakers. # Facilitate a discussion about Voices in Wartime and Beyond Wartime.

Go to <http://www.voicesinwartime.org/VoicesInWartime> to learn more about getting involved. View the movie trailer, find a showing of the movie in your area, host a dialogue, submit your own works; learn how at their website.

DVD Release Date: Summer 2005 Voices in Wartime will be available for purchase on DVD by mid-year 2005. To receive news and updates on how and when you can purchase the DVD, please sign up for the Voices in Wartime newsletter.

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.notinourname.net/gi-special/>, www.williambowles.info/gispecial,

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

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