

GI SPECIAL 3B93:

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



US soldiers run to take cover near Al-Nusur Square in central Baghdad
(AFP/Yuri Cortez)

**“This Is Just Ridiculous”
“I Don't Understand What We're
Doing Over There”
Milton Soldier Upset Army Won't
Let Him Out**

[Thanks to Phil G, who sent this in. He writes: From the local paper in Janesville, WI, where I'm currently on vacation.]

July 10, 2005 By Marcia Nelesen, Gazette Staff

MILTON-Ryan Nofsinger figures he held up his end of the bargain.

But Uncle Sam didn't.

The 22-year-old Milton resident served four years in the Army, including 14 months in Iraq.

His discharge date was July 27. The paperwork was done. His family was counting the days on a calendar.

And then Ryan got the heart-stopping, breath-sucking news.

His active-duty status had been extended for a year.

But that wasn't all.

He will go back to Iraq in October.

The Nofsingers are devastated.

"He got away (from Iraq)," said his stepmother, Shelley Nofsinger of Milton. "Nothing happened. It's kind of like playing Russian roulette. Every time you go back, you're playing the odds."

The Nofsingers have no military background and never really wanted Ryan to join.

It bewilders them that the law allows the Army to put Ryan back in harm's way.

Ryan joined the Army while in high school. He wanted to test his new freedom as a young adult and thought the Army was a good way to see the world.

"I wanted to live a little first," Ryan wrote on Memorial Day 2004. "Too many movies and books shot me into the idea that the Army was glamorous, so I joined."

The recruiter told Ryan he was agreeing to four years of active duty and four years of nonactive status. He would finish his hitch in the National Guard. The recruiter told Ryan he could be called back to active duty from the Guard-if a bomb dropped on Washington, D.C., for instance.

Ryan left for basic training in 2001-two weeks before the planes hit the twin towers and the Pentagon. The bomb had dropped.

The military uses the term "stop loss" to describe the process that forces troops to stay in active service even though they are scheduled to get out.

"I never heard about stop loss until I got to my first duty station," Ryan said.

He was sent to Iraq in April 2003, where he drove an ambulance.

He doesn't like Iraq. The heat is difficult. He discovered he doesn't much like the military.

"You're always thinking about home," Ryan said. "It seems like the days go by fast and the day you're supposed to go home keeps getting farther and farther away."

This isn't the first time the Army has snatched away one of those all-important dates.

On his 21st birthday, a week before leaving for Kuwait after serving 10 months in Iraq, Ryan's unit was extended another four months. The troops had been packed and ready to go, a chore in the heat.

"That's not just another four months," he said. "That's over the summer, when it's 140 degrees, and you have to wear a flack vest.

"That was one of the most defining moments in my life because I was just so ready. I had my hopes up. I couldn't wait to see my family, and they threw it all away down the drain. And now they're doing it again..."

In July 2004, Ryan was stationed with a new unit in Fort Benning, Ga.

He was alive. He had made it back to American soil.

His release date-July 27, 2005-was a beacon, the thing that kept him going.

He signed his discharge papers. He was excited to start a new life. He was thinking about buying a place in Madison and going back to school. His service in Iraq had soured ambitions of a career in medicine. Instead, he would explore music.

When his mom died unexpectedly on Mother's Day, Ryan came home for only four days. He didn't want an extended leave to mess up his paperwork and discharge date.

But shortly after he returned, Ryan was told his new unit is being sent to Iraq in October. And so is Ryan.

His stepmom, Shelley, is worried. Ryan's had a lot to deal with, especially with the death of his mom, she said.

He's only 22 years old. He's been to Iraq. He's done his time. Now, he needs to move on and start something new, she said.

The whole family is reeling. Shelly delayed telling Ryan's younger siblings until after school ended. When Ryan was in Iraq, the children were stressed.

"They're old enough to know what's going on," Shelley said. "They see the fallen heroes every day.

"Many a time at night they start to cry."

His dad, David, gets up every morning at 5 to watch the news.

Shelley remembers the awful call from Ryan telling them he was going back.

"You know how they try to hide it, that they've been crying, but you can kind of tell," she said. "He said, "I just can't do it."

"What scares me, if you're going over there, you gotta be pretty pumped up, on top of things, very alert. He's not thinking positive at all. If you're not 100 percent, you're in danger."

Shelley has no complaints about what the Army has done for her son up to this point.

"It's not that we're not proud," she said. "But if you keep him in the Army and send him back, are these good things going to be buried? He's served his time and was in Iraq. People can't say he's taking the easy way out.

"A lot of people ... do the four years and never see wartime. He saw wartime. He's done more than his fair share for his country."

Ryan is angry and filled with foreboding.

"When I was there, every day was like, you never knew. Every convoy you go on was, 'This could be the one. And you can't think of it like that. You can't be afraid. If you're afraid to die, it's just going to make it worse."

Ryan doesn't want to seem like a rebel.

It isn't fair, however, that they make up the rules as they go along, he said.

"How can they make me stay another four years?" he asked.

It's a volunteer force, but this feels like a draft to him.

"I fulfilled my obligation," Ryan said.

"Why can't I go home?"

Ryan, who drove an ambulance in Iraq, writes about the dead. At the time of his e-mail, the number of U.S. soldiers who died was at 800. That count today is 1,750.

"Imagine your father going to a climate comparable to the Sahara, only to be brutally murdered by a roadside bomb. Imagine your first-born son, sleeping peacefully at night dreaming of someday finally getting home and having a mortar round land on his head..."

"These 800 people I hope are in a better place, but their last memory of home will not be their loved ones gathered around a bed. It is of their vehicle overturning onto the frying-pan hot Iraqi highway, or watching a mortar round land near them

and not being able to do anything about it. I don't understand how the defense secretary sleeps...

"So, I guess Memorial Day is about remembering the ones that have sacrificed for the good of the group. Some of these sacrifices have passed in our aid station. You try not to make it personal, but when you see his daughter's picture in his helmet, it leans towards the personal side.

"This holiday is all very different for me because I have seen a lot of those sacrifices up close and personal..."

"I love this country. There's no other country in the world (where) you can go and have as much fun as in the United States. But to go over there and not really know what we're fighting for ... The Iraqi people don't know what they want. They're killing each other for whatever reason. It's total confusion every day.

"It is just so exhausting to have to get up every day and tell yourself, every day, 'come on, another day of heat.' It's just so exhausting. It totally wears on your head.

"It changed my entire life because everything that you take for granted, everything in the world, doesn't mean anything when you know that your life could end at any minute."

"This is just ridiculous," he said in a recent interview. "I don't understand what we're doing over there."

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

One Task Force Liberty Soldier Killed, Two Wounded By Tikrit IED

July 17, 2005 MNF Release A050717a

TIKRIT, Iraq – One Task Force Liberty Soldier was killed and two were wounded by an improvised explosive device at about 4 p.m. on July 16 in Kirkuk Province.

The two wounded Soldiers were taken to a Coalition Forces medical treatment facility.

Soldier Dies Of Fallujah Wounds

17/07/2005 AFP

A soldier succumbed to wounds received near Fallujah, the military said without giving other details.

BRILLIANT PLANNING STRIKES AGAIN



Marine's amphibious assault vehicle kicking up dust as it **rumbles through the desert** in western al-Anbar province. (AFP/USMC/Mike Escobar)

TROOP NEWS

Interviewing New Recruits: Report On Interviews At Atlanta Airport

From: D
To: GI Special
Sent: July 16, 2005

With the increase of anger to the war in Iraq, the military has seen a decrease in the number of young people it can recruit. But if you work in the Hartsfield-Jackson international airport, in Atlanta, you might think the military was recruiting a ton of folks.

This summer, the Army is shipping newly-signed recruits through the Atlanta airport on their way to basic training in Ft. Benning and Ft. Stewart. Virtually every weekday, you can find a group of about 50-150 kids fresh out of high school, wearing "Go Army" T-shirts and backpacks.

How should an antiwar activist approach this situation? You can't counter-recruit them because they've already enlisted, but you can talk to them about why they joined the Army, what they think about the war, and you can give interested

troops antiwar material like Traveling Soldier newsletter (www.traveling-soldier.org).

This was the approach I decided to take just to get a feel for doing this.

I walked up to the recruits and told them that I wanted to ask them a few questions for an article, this article, that I was going to write for GI Special. I wanted to ask them basic questions like where they were from, why they joined the Army, were they recruited or did they visit a recruiting office, and so on.

The first day that I went to interview new recruits, there were about 100 people there, but because they happened to be leaving as I arrived I only talked to three of them. But what I learned from them would generally apply to the other recruits I would interview later.

They were three young men, all white, and all fresh out of high school. They were all from small towns in Indiana, Michigan and Illinois, respectively, and when I asked them why they decided to join the Army, two said it was for better educational opportunities and the other said he had wanted to join the military ever since he was six-years-old. He said, "As cheesy as it sounds... I want to serve my country."

With these three recruits the attraction of the promise of college money and the opportunity to get out of a small town was apparent, as was the weight of patriotism in society. These are two things military recruiting lives on, but these things can also backfire.

Will soldiers who signed up for college money sacrifice as much as Iraqis fighting to free their country? Or how hard will a soldier fight to expose the truth when he or she learns that everything they've been told about the military was a lie?

The second time I went for interviews I talked to nearly 20 recruits, each interview with 3-4 at a time.

The geographic representation included Maine, Texas, Illinois, California, Michigan, Indiana, Tennessee and Kentucky. The group of recruits was overwhelmingly white. I only interviewed one Black recruit. Of the entire group, including those I didn't interview, there were probably only a couple of Latinos. There were no women, and in passing through the airport a few times before, I only saw a few female recruits, and people of color, out of a group of 100-150 recruits.

When asked how they joined the military, several recruits said they contacted a recruiter, or visited a recruiting center to join. Of these recruits, several had a family member with military service, expressed patriotism as a reason for joining, or were encouraged to join by a family member. A few said they were recruited in high school, one was a member of JROTC, and one student was recruited at the University of Maine.

About half of the recruits said they joined either for college money, for training, or just for a job, period. In fact, one student joined the Army during "Career Day" at his school. I asked one recruit why he joined. He said, "To get out of there." He was from South Dakota.

Some recruits seemed more serious than others. These recruits had more of a sense of what they were getting into, the rigorous nature of basic training, the discipline of the military, the possibility of war, etc. Only a couple of recruits came off as immature, literally responding that they joined to "blow shit up."

Most were fairly level-headed. One recruit stood out in particular. After I asked how long he planned to serve in the Army he said, "We'll see how I like the Army and how the Army likes me."

Most of the recruits joined the Army just two months (or less) before the day of the interview. In fact a couple of the recruits had joined only one week before, and were already on their way to basic training. I asked one recruit if there was a minimum wait period between signing a contract and being sent to basic training, he said it was five days.

Conducting interviews is not the only approach antiwar activists could take to reaching out to soldiers.

In some situations it's better to start an individual conversation about the war, or ask a service member if they know about Iraq Veterans Against the War, GI Special, etc.

Interviews can be a useful approach, but you can't be too cautious. This can only be a tool for organization if you make it clear that you're against the war.

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)

Ft. Monmouth Gates: A Friendly Response To Anti-War Activists

July 12, 2005 By John Catalinotto, Workers World

Another sign from the home front came in to Workers World from Al Strasburger in Fort Monmouth, N.J. Between 10 and 20 local anti-war activists have been holding a vigil at the fort's main gate every Saturday since soon after Bush exploited the Sept. 11, 2001, attack to declare endless war.

The slogans were "U.S. Out of the Middle East," "Israel Out of Palestine," "Bring the Troops Home Now," and No Blood for Oil." "Our 'Honk' signs have been particularly effective in recent months, with the vast majority of responses being favorable to us," writes Strasburger. "Indeed, we have clearly seen the public response go from vile and patriotic insults in 2001 to the current situation of obvious appreciation of our pickets."

The strongest sign came from Sydney, Australia, with one of the first examples of widespread fraternization between the anti-war movement and U.S. sailors. Three major U.S. warships were in port: the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk and the guided-missile destroyers USS John Paul Jones and USS Cowpens, with a total of about 6,000 officers and sailors.

On July 7, as "a small group of peace activists conducted a candlelit vigil at the main gates of the naval base through which all service personnel coming or going passed and in full view of the bridge of the Kitty Hawk, we laid out candles in the shape of the peace symbol," writes James Courtney of Greenpeace in Australia.

"The response was moving and inspiring. We had naval personnel helping to light candles and taking photos. Many words of thanks from ships crew, some with tears welling in their eyes. We had nothing but positive feelings from the ships crew that spoke with us. We managed to hand out around 200 copies of Traveling Soldier," a U.S.-based anti-war GI newspaper. (www.traveling-soldier.org)

The demonstrators set up a data projector and sound and broadcast David Zeiger's documentary about GI resistance in the Vietnam War, "Sir! No Sir!" onto the side of a shipping container sitting beside the Kitty Hawk. "We estimate that at least 700 personnel saw some of the movie," writes Courtney, and "around 200 or so watched it for 10-15 minutes."

"We felt moved by the plight of the young men and women that we met. There was one line that we heard from many: 'Sometimes I feel that we are fighting for the wrong reason.'"

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.

20 Year Pro-War Veteran Defends Anti-War Protestor From Two-Bit Piss-Pot Enemy Combatant Deputy Sheriff

[While you've been off in Iraq, supposedly fighting for freedom, pieces of shit like this Deputy are doing their level best to make sure there isn't any left when you get home. One of the best reasons all the troops need to come home now is that civilians need some defense against the nasty little tyrants here. You note the honorable veteran who disagreed with the protester, but understands better than the asshole cop what freedom of speech is all about. Maybe there could be a way to send the cop to Iraq for a year or two. He can show everyone how brave he can be when faced with more than a lone man with a picket sign exercising his right to free speech.]

[Thanks to Phil G, who sent this in.]

July 16, 2005 By Charles McChesney, Syracuse Post Standard

Mark Harris, a 20-year veteran of the Air Force, was not pleased to see a sign-carrying Iraq war protester in Thursday night's Mexico Volunteer Fire Department Field Days parade.

What he saw happen to the man, though, raised some questions for him and, he said, his children.

An Oswego County sheriff's deputy pulled Joshua A. Davies, 23, of 25B North St. in Mexico, out of the parade and charged him with disorderly conduct. Davies had been walking in the parade carrying, Harris said, an "Impeach Bush" sign and another sign calling for an end to the war in Iraq.

Harris said he saw Davies get searched, handcuffed and put in a sheriff's patrol car. Harris said Davies was kept in the car until the parade ended about 45 minutes later.

"My kids watched it," said Harris. "Some asked, 'Can they do that?' "

They were talking about what the deputy did, not the protester. And it wasn't just children asking the question, Harris said. "There were older people, senior citizens, saying it too."

Oswego County Sheriff Reuel Todd said Davies was arrested because he was a spectator who jumped into the middle of the parade. "He was not entered in the parade," Todd said.

"We had a complaint that he disrupted the parade," Todd added. "He was arrested and released on an appearance ticket."

"I felt bad that he was there," Harris said of Davies, "but I thought he had the right to his opinion."

"This was a signal to the kids that you can't do that here," Harris said. "Dissent, I mean. I thought that's what being an American means - the right to protest, to speak your mind."

Military Families Report Threat Of Stop-Loss Used To Blackmail Soldiers Into Reups

From: LR
To: GI Special
Sent: July 11, 2005

This is an email exchange shared this morning between member families MFSSO and Cindy Sheehan, Gold Star Families for Peace. Use what you want and okay to mention the organizations.

In shared respect,

L

From: LG
Date: 10 Jul 2005

My son in law in Iraq said they are being pressured round the clock to re-enlist or face stop loss.

They are being offering \$30,000 signing bonus, tax free and told if they don't re-enlist, they are going to be stop lossed and get zero dollars.

They are pushing the troops round the clock and Mark only got 3 hours sleep in 48 hours and when they get back, they are faced yet again with re-enlisting.

Mark said many guys are scared and signing up and their families at home are very upset. (with good reason)

We really need to push our media and congressmen to expose the horrible way our troops are being treated.

LG

Dear Cindy & L

Responding to the emails, Yes, I have been trying since January 05 to get the word out regarding my own 2 loved ones and the soldiers in their division.

Both served in Iraq, and their division, 1st Armored, was the first to be 'extended' so they served 15 months in Iraq, April 03 - July 04. They came back to their bases in August 04. A mere 5 months later, Jan 05, their division was told they were under orders to redeploy to Iraq and Stop Lossed and would redeploy in Fall 05. And I have been trying to call attention to the 'Retention' practices ever since.

March 05, it was time for both to make decision to re-enlist. As already under orders to redeploy; as already under Stop Loss; their choices = 1) don't re-enlist but you will wind up in Iraq anyway under Stop Loss or 2) re-enlist and while you'll still wind up in Iraq under Stop Loss, at least you'll have the attractive bonus being offered.

The point is that the 'Retention' rate that is being touted as demonstrative of soldier's fervor and good faith in the war is another deception being foisted on the media and public.

Closer to the truth of the situation is that one they are in, they cannot get out and it is entrapment from the front end with deceptive recruitment practices, again at re-enlistment time with the threat of deployment to Iraq under Stop Loss, again when contract ends and they are kept in and deployed via Stop Loss.

What continues to be called an 'all voluntary military' has become an 'involuntary' military through the use strategies of deception and legal maneuvering for which there seems to be no remedy in the Stop Loss.

The Stop Loss; I learned from the Santiago v Rumsfeld trial is a mechanism that the President can employ at his discretion in times of National Emergency. He can simply re-new it annually due to ongoing National Emergency and the effects of Stop Loss serve to keep soldiers deployed and in service involuntarily, apparently indefinitely.

There is a mechanism in place with a 3-month window just before re-enlistment time and just at completion of original enlistment time. At both times, simply applying the Stop Loss to a soldier ensures he will re-enlist or serve beyond his contract, and serve in deployment to Iraq.

In Lisa's situation, her son-in-law was kept beyond his contract due to Stop Loss. In my situation, both my 2 were kept through the re-enlistment process with Stop Loss applied limiting their choices as I described above. Magnify this across the spectrum of the troops, and you get a snapshot of how the military is managing to keep 'an all volunteer' military involuntarily.

It has been the theme of my speaking activities since January 05 and I feel like a tiny voice shouting in a windstorm, it goes relatively unheard amongst so much other noise.

At this time, for example, it seems folks don't know or realize the 1st Armored division is and has been under Stop Loss and orders to redeploy to Iraq since January 05.

When they actually do redeploy, around Aug, Sept or Oct, then is when maybe we will hear about it in media. But it's not a secret, there has been the report from DOD, and a mention in European Stars and Stripes. And of course, the troops and their families know about it and have since Jan 05.

Let your light so shine...

LR, member family MFSO
military family of 2 Iraq veterans; second deployments

website; Military Families Speak Out, Pacific Northwest
blog; Dying to Preserve the Lies
topic writer; Military Families; Impact with Loved Ones Deployed to Iraq

Operation Iraqi Foul-Up

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
7.18.05

President Bush did the Army no favors with his June 28 "stay the course" speech at Fort Bragg, N.C.

Even Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld acknowledges we could be in Iraq for as long as 12 years.

No, the U.S. must stay the course so that no one is ever held accountable for the decision to go to war in Iraq in the first place.

No additional troops in Iraq means no chance of taking and holding ground so that infrastructure reconstruction operations can occur at a minimally acceptable pace.

Public support for our involvement in Iraq is dwindling fast and, without public support, this Army is doomed.

One needs to only look at the poll numbers each subsequent month to determine the Army's ultimate fate. No timeline to measure U.S. progress (or lack thereof) means further avoidance of accountability. Either U.S. forces are sufficient to achieve meaningful objectives in a published war plan or they're not.

Then the question becomes do we send sufficient troops or do we cut our losses and leave? No disclosure of quantifiable objectives tells this retired officer that there really aren't any worthwhile war plans, reconstruction plans or exit plans in place.

We are fast approaching the breaking point for Army recruiting, and repeatedly deploying both active and reserve units will surely break this Army's back and quickly return us to the "hollow force" days that followed Vietnam.

All of this raises the question of why the Army's senior leaders who might disagree with the current war strategy lack the courage to speak out (and resign).

Maj. Harry Markopolos (ret.)
Whitman, Mass.

“You Don't Hear About The Wounded” “We Can't Forget About Them”

July 17, 2005 By Leigh Dethman and Natalie Andrews, Deseret Morning News

His walk is not as steady. His every move is pained. Yet Lance Cpl. Robin Griffiths stands tall.

Ever since an enemy mortar attack struck his camp in Iraq, the proud Utah Marine hasn't been able to move like he used to: Scar upon scar mark his arms, chest and leg. His left arm barely moves. But for a moment Saturday, Griffiths forgot about the pain.

With his eager family waiting, Griffiths limped through the Salt Lake City International Airport Saturday morning. The Marine has endured months of rehabilitation at a burn unit in Texas and hasn't been back home since June 2004.

"It's really nice to finally be home," Griffiths said.

Griffiths was 10 days away from completing his second tour of duty in Iraq when the attack changed his life. It was Jan. 27, and Griffiths was sound asleep in a tent at the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit's Iskandariyah forward operating base.

A mortar landed 2 feet away from him, causing multiple injuries: a collapsed lung, his left elbow shattered and a burst artery in his left leg. Shrapnel cut his chest and stomach area. In total, Griffiths was burned over 35 percent of his body, from his toes to his armpit on the left side of his body.

The 22-year-old has been rehabilitating at the U.S. Army Institute of Surgical Research Burn Center at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, since Feb. 1. He's endured skin grafts and major surgeries to fix his war wounds, but "he's still got a lot to go through," his mother, Connie Griffiths, said.

But for now, he'll enjoy his brief vacation from the hospital.

Griffiths is in town for 10 days with his wife, Tonia, and their son, 8-month-old Chase. The family flew into Salt Lake City Saturday morning.

When Griffiths finally appeared at the top of the escalators, the crowd clapped and whistled while waving flags and signs that read, "Welcome home!" and "You're a hero!" Perfect strangers also welcomed the wounded Marine home.

Griffiths limped through the airport terminal, heavily relying upon his right leg, which was unharmed in the attack. Even hugs were hard for the wounded Marine, but he wanted them anyway.

Connie Griffiths said it is a miracle her son survived the mortar attack.

"We were just so blessed," Connie Griffiths said. "We all get teary eyed when we think of it."

Griffiths will spend a few days in St. George visiting his grandparents during his time home.

Once his visit is over, Griffiths faces another painful surgery. Doctors will remove bone from his right leg and place two inches into his left elbow, which was shattered in the mortar attack.

"You don't hear about the wounded — the ones that fought and survived," Connie Griffiths said. "We can't forget about them."

VA Tormenting Hurt Vets, As Usual

"We laid our life on the line and then got blown up and then you come here and you get turned away. That ain't fair," said McKee, who suffers from a variety of ailments and uses a walker to get around. "And then they got all the kids coming back from Iraq."

July 11, 2005 By Sylvia Moreno, Washington Post Staff Writer

As Congress works to eliminate an emergency funding shortfall this year of at least \$1 billion and a projected shortage in the VA health care budget of more than \$1 billion in the coming fiscal year, VA hospitals have felt the impact nationwide.

According to documents released at recent meetings of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs committees, the VA hospital in White River Junction, Vt., was forced to shut its operating rooms temporarily because of a lack of maintenance funds to repair a broken heating, ventilation and air conditioning system. Hospitals in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Louisiana and eastern Texas stopped scheduling appointments for many veterans.

The VA medical center in San Diego, with a waiting list of 750 veterans, diverted \$3.5 million in maintenance funds to partially cover operating expenses and delayed filling 131 vacancies for three months to cover operating expenses.

The Portland, Ore., hospital delayed non-emergency surgery for at least six months, and 7,000 veterans who use the VA facility in Bay Pines, Fla., are waiting longer than 30 days for a primary care appointment.

"I'm going to go to a civilian doctor rather than wait 70 to 90 days," Douglas McKee, 63, of Chilton, Tex., said as he left the Waco facility on Thursday afternoon.

McKee, who said he was disabled by a mine explosion in Vietnam while serving with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, had just learned that his regular doctor was on duty in Iraq and that he could not get an appointment with a new physician until mid-October. He would also have to wait for some of his prescription refills, he said.

"We laid our life on the line and then got blowed up and then you come here and you get turned away. That ain't fair," said McKee, who suffers from a variety of ailments and uses a walker to get around. "And then they got all the kids coming back from Iraq."

No Joy Here

July 17, 2005 By FAYE FIORE, LOS ANGELES TIMES

KILLEEN, Texas - Most of the men in 4th Squad, Charlie Battery, fought two wars while they were in Iraq. There was the war against the insurgents that had them patrolling for roadside bombs and raiding houses at all hours.

Then there was the war back home, which had them struggling, over phone lines from 7,000 miles away, to keep their marriages and bank accounts intact.

They say they eventually got used to the bombs. The crazy possibility of dying any minute didn't haunt them so much. But that other war, that was the one that tore them up in the downtime spent in Sgt. Cox's trailer at Camp Victory. It would get quiet, and then one or another of them would ask: "So, how are things going at home?" And they would begin to brood.

They all knew about "Jody," the opportunist of Army lore who moves in on a soldier's girl while the soldier's off fighting a war. They had sung hundreds of cadences in basic training deriding the name. But it had always seemed like a joke, something that happened to others.

After all, Sgt. Brent Cox, 36, and his wife, Kristina, were expecting their first child after 12 years of marriage.

Pvt. Ray Hall, 21, was married to his high school sweetheart, an airman first class stationed in San Antonio.

Spc. Jason Garcia, 23, believed that his on-again, off-again relationship with the mother of his then-2-year-old son was on again; he had given her his ATM card as a gesture of commitment.

But on the long-awaited day in February when the three soldiers returned here to Fort Hood, turned in their rifles and stood on the parade field, only Hall had a sweetheart there to meet him. And he found himself wishing she hadn't come at all.

Cox's wife was five months pregnant when she announced she was leaving him and going back home.

Hall visited the Internet trailer less often after he checked the phone messages on his home answering machine one day and heard another man tell his wife he loved her.

Garcia stopped hearing from his girlfriend and started tracking his bank account. He says thousands of dollars of his saved pay was gone.

There are only six men in the squad, and five of them saw their marriages or relationships come under severe pressure. One relationship survived and three didn't; the fate of the fifth is unresolved. Concentrating on the mission became hard. Sitting in a Humvee, waiting for orders to roll out, the men would think about how life at home was falling apart, and they could do little about it.

"When we go outside that gate and into Baghdad, you've got to have your head straight," said Cox, who now lives alone in an apartment at Fort Hood. "You're trying to stay alive, but your mind goes to back home."

Soldiers tend to enlist young and marry young: Just 1 percent of the civilian population under 20 is married, compared with nearly 14 percent of military members in the same age group, said Shelley M. MacDermid, co-director of the Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University.

Married or not, soldiers are encouraged to assign powers of attorney to people they trust to monitor their finances while they are overseas. Some hand over their ATM cards and sign blank checks to people they hardly know.

Krystal Owen, 21, is the mother of two girls: Ashlynn, 4, and Avrie, 3. She grew up without a father in Academy, just outside of Fort Hood, and has left Texas only once, to visit her brother in a Louisiana federal penitentiary. Determined to graduate from high school, she received her diploma while pregnant.

Married at 18 to a young private and divorced at 20, Owen earns \$7 an hour as a secretary in the quaint old house that White converted into a law office. More than half of the \$231.58 she clears each week goes to child care, another \$85 toward rent. Money is a constant worry. Her mother tries to lend a hand, but she has financial problems of her own.

Owen has straight, dark hair and a face like actress Lindsay Lohan. She frequents the nightclubs around Fort Hood, where soldiers take advantage of women - and women take advantage of soldiers. When Owen met a young soldier two weeks before he deployed to Iraq in the spring, she declined his absurd marriage proposal - he was, after all, already married, and she'd had enough of that.

But when he asked her to handle his finances while he was off manning the gun on top of a tank, she agreed. He left her his ATM card, his pass code, a book of signed checks and instructions to spend some money on herself.

The thousands that accumulated in his account was irresistible, and she soon became the sort of woman she had seen so many others in Killeen become.

First, she went to Wal-Mart and bought her daughters a \$400 motorized bicycle. That was followed by clothes for all three of them, a DVD player and a television set for the girls' room. She took one of the blank checks and paid her April rent. There were a few nights of \$600 rounds of drinks for her friends at one of the local strip clubs. When the soldier's \$10,000 re-enlistment bonus came through, there was no stopping her.

"I got caught up on my bills and bought clothes for me and my girls. It was nothing he didn't know about. He knew about most of it," she said, laughing weakly. "He knew I was taking money out of his account. He just didn't know how much."

Kristina Cox lasted all of two months in Killeen after her husband deployed. She packed up and went back to her mother in Oklahoma to have her baby. She declined to be interviewed, but her divorce attorney, Arthur South, described their 12-year marriage as another casualty of the war.

"She's finding out that she doesn't need him. That's what happens," said South, who has handled his share of military divorces. "The gals get married, they are kind of young, and all of a sudden the husband is gone for months. They find out they can write checks, mow the lawn.

"This is a real tragedy of war."

Deployment strengthens the strong marriages and breaks the weak, Army brass often say. But 4th Squad member Lance Fernandez and his wife, Emily, say it damages the strong ones too.

Watching his baby daughter grow up via webcam, he bounced between doubt and faith in Iraq, listening to his friends' despair and his wife's reassurances.

"This whole deployment really messed up a whole lot of marriages," Spc. Fernandez said. "I can see six or eight months - it has to be done. But anything longer than that takes too much out of the marriage. My little girl is still getting to know me."

Fernandez's marriage survived. Cox's is over. Garcia and Pekarek have forged a friendship; he has his ATM card back, she's engaged to someone else, and he's OK with that.

As for Hall, the voice of "Jody" on the phone that day still hurts. He's talking divorce; his wife, Airman First Class Melissa Hall, 22, is struggling to hold them together.

They married right out of Central High in Duluth, Minn. She says she tried to write or e-mail every day while he was in Iraq. But when the Air Force moved her to Randolph, near San Antonio, she had no friends, and he seemed very far away.

"I did kind of meet someone, but it was just friends. I needed emotional support," she said in a telephone interview. "I felt terrible that (Hall) was so hurt. It just tore him apart when he listened to the phone machine. He can't drop it now."

Dumbshit U.S. Military Occupation Cops Finally Let Navy Vet Out Of Iraq Prison

July 11, 2005 Frank Griffiths, Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq — ***Almost two months after being held on suspicion of terrorist activities***, an aspiring Iranian-American filmmaker was freed from a U.S. military jail in Iraq.

"I don't hold anything against them for holding us," he told the Los Angeles Times. "What I hold against them is they put us in a cell and forgot us."

"They knew from the get-go that we were nothing more than filmmakers," added Kar, a Navy veteran. "They saw my VA card in my wallet."

The U.S. military said in a statement that "Kar was detained as an imperative security threat to Iraq" and that the FBI investigated whether he had "engaged in terrorist activities." [Looking for traitors and terrorist mass murderers? Try the White House and the Pentagon SecDef office.]

In Los Angeles, family members and Kar's lawyers celebrated his release but harshly criticized the government and the filmmaker's treatment while in U.S. custody.

They said Kar told them the government destroyed his personal property, including a laptop computer, film equipment along with 20 hours of footage, his passport and even a cherished college ring. [Right. Good precaution: those terrorist Navy vets can really wreck havoc with their college rings. Unless it was just some scumbag MI thief at work.]

Kar, who is staying in a Baghdad hotel, told family members he was exhausted and very hungry. His lawyers said they are pressing the government to get him a passport so he can return to this country.

“I think it’s a shame the government tried to smear him,” said Shahrzad Folger, a cousin.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Iraqi Oil Workers Strike Today; Oil Exports Shut Down

If the Iraqi government does not agree to the Union's demands, a general strike will ensue.

July 17, 2005 By Ewa Jasiewicz

15,000 Southern Oil Company workers from the General Union of Oil Employees - Iraq's largest independent union - began a 24-hour strike today, cutting most oil exports from the south of Iraq.

The strike is in support of demands made by Basra Governor Mohammad al-Waili - reflective of the wishes of the vast majority of Basra's residents - for a higher percentage of Southern oil revenue to be ploughed back into Basra's local economy. Basra's sewage system, electricity grid and medical services are still damaged and running at limited capacity.

Despite being the capital of Iraq's oil reserves, the governorate is still struggling with entrenched poverty, malnutrition and an unemployment rate of 40%

The GUOE has been involved in an industrial dispute with the Southern Oil Company administration, Ministry of Oil and Government since June 20th when workers at the Basra Oil Refinery staged protest action and a lock out. The Union is demanding the removal of high ranking Baathist managers in the SOC and regime loyalists serving in the Ministry of Oil. The Union has given the Ministry of Oil until January 1st 2006 to comply. 15 in total are marked for removal.

The Union is also calling for an increase in workers wages. According to the Media and Culture Officer, Faraj Rabat Mizbhan, the basic starting pay for an Iraqi soldier is 700,000 ID (£270) per month whilst a senior oil worker with 30 years service is being paid on average 400,000 ID (£150). The Union is also calling for land allowances for workers - currently a provision limited to high ranking managers.

The Union is also calling for an increase in risk payments - currently at the same level as workers employed in offices. Risk payments are allocated to workers working in dangerous locations usually situated far into desert regions.

Union President Hassan Jumaa Awad al Assadi plus members of the executive committee have been involved in negotiations with the Ministry of Oil and Central

Government over the past month. The Governor of Basra fully supports the demands of the GUOE.

Negotiations between the Ministry of Oil and Government and Union have resumed in order to avert a full general strike which would involve a further 8,000 union members included in Amara and Nassiriyeh provinces.

Non Union workers have also been known to join GUOE strike action in the past.

If the Iraqi government does not agree to the Union's demands, a general strike will ensue.

Notes

Currently, the Southern oil sector is providing the central and Northern areas of Iraq with the vast majority of it's' petroleum, LPG and oil, as well as providing the bulk of oil exports.

The GUOE held its' first conference on Privatisation this May which ended with a resolution against the privatisation of Iraq's oil industry, declaring that 'privatisation of the oil and industrial sectors, or of any part of them, will do great harm to the Iraqi people and their economy'.

It also called upon 'members of Parliament to take a firm stand against political currents and directives calling for the privatisation of the public sector in Iraq' and called 'upon all States to remit the odious debts undertaken by the previous regime, without condition and without infringing the independence, sovereignty and economic self-governance of Iraq', (Final Conference Communiqué May 25 2005)

For further information please contact: www.basraoilunion.org

Faraj Rabat Mizbhan, Responsible for Culture and Media, GUOE 00964 7801 393 137 (Arabic only)

Nafutna - UK Support Committee for the General Union of Oil Employees: Ewa Jasiewicz (0044) 07749 421 576 or Munir Chalabi (0044) 7952 683 415

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

Assorted Resistance Action

7.17.05 Aljazeera & Haider Fathi, The Associated Press

The first attack on Sunday killed two policemen and one civilian in the eastern New Baghdad neighbourhood, police 1st Lieutenant Muhammad Jasim said. Seven policemen and one civilian were also wounded, some seriously.

About an hour later a second car bomb exploded near a police convoy near the Bayaa bus station in southern Baghdad, killing three police commandos and four civilians, police Captain Talib Thamir said.

One policeman and two civilians were killed in another attack in east Baghdad, police said.

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Soldiers say that IRAQ has come to mean "I Really Am Quitting." The Veteran, Spring 2005

Ye Olde Civilizing Mission

From: Z
To: GI Special
Sent: July 17, 2005
Subject:

"A barbarous people can never become civilized without the salutary apprenticeship which slavery secured. It is the duty and decreed prerogative of the wise to guide and govern the ignorant ... through slavery, and the sooner civilized men learn their duty and their right the sooner will the real progress of civilization be rescued."

Louisiana Courier, November 12, 1857.

The New Orleans newspaper quoted above was championing the ongoing efforts to conquer Nicaragua. A puppet Nicaraguan government run by a US adventurer had already been officially recognized by the US President Franklin Pierce.

Around the same time, a commercial convention meeting at Savannah expressed enthusiasm for the "efforts being made to introduce civilization in the States of Central America, and to develop these rich and productive regions by the introduction of slave labor."

The above is excerpted from "An Empire for Slavery," a chapter in James McPherson's book *Battle Cry of Freedom* (pages 112-114).

Evidently, the people of Central America stubbornly resisted the blessings being offered them by the United States then, as people of other regions are resisting them now.

The US adventurer mentioned above ended up before a Honduran firing squad.

Jeez Louise, don't these folks know what's good for them?

Indeed they do.

Solidarity,
Z

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.

"For The Love Of Money Is The Root Of All Evil" "That Is What Vietnam Taught Me"

From: Mike Hastie, Vietnam Veteran
To: GI Special
Sent: July 10, 2005

I keep wondering if Rome ever got as sick as America.

I use to think the U.S. was dying by the inch everyday, but it is really dying by the mile everyday.

I know one thing, if my parents and grandparents were alive today, both of those generations would surround the White House. That is how far this country has gone in the last 40 years.

The enemy is so close, Americans can't see them. That's because the enemy is US.

"For the love of money is the root of all evil." That is what Vietnam taught me, plain and simple.

Mike

Hope For Change Lies With The American Public

[Like the story about the Civil War general who leaped on his horse and rode off in all directions at once, the writer expresses a variety of contradictory views, from calling for a draft to: “Let’s stabilize and finish what we’ve begun even if it means finding a feasible and rapid exit from Iraq.”

[The reason it’s worth a second look is that Zimmermann is the Army Times’ lead military columnist. His article reflects the increasing polarization with the military leadership over the Iraq disaster, between those who keep on spouting the Bush-Rumsfeld bullshit, and those who see it for what it is; another lost Imperial war. T]

July 18, 2005 By Ralf W. Zimmermann, Army Times. The writer is a former tank battalion commander and decorated Desert Storm veteran who writes on numerous military topics.

The light flickering at the end of the tunnel could well be the imminent personnel wreck I’ve predicted since late in 2003.

Despite all the recent initiatives—including the “creative” juggling of statistical release dates and enlistment incentives promising potential recruits financial heaven on earth for a little time in the hell of Iraq’s bubbling civil war, things haven’t improved much for desperate military recruiters.

And it’s not that they aren’t trying. I personally know quite a few of them, and most are well meaning ex-warriors from the trenches who have been given a new mission, almost as critical as combat. That is, to fill the ranks of the Army’s fighting formations so they can sustain the breakneck speeds of endless deployments and service transformation.

Their rewards for meeting quota: maybe a medal and a few letters of commendation.

But the price for not making quota is dire: most likely a career-ending efficiency report and an unpleasant follow-on job.

Fact is that today’s recruiters are given the proverbial mission impossible. To provide cover, our slick Beltway business neocons have come up with new gimmicks.

The latest is the 15-month enlistment. All of a sudden, 15 months are plenty to train quality tank crews and Bradley fighting vehicle crews and to certify troops for other complex military skills.

Just a year ago, many flag-waving know-it-alls—most without one day in uniform—ripped into me for suggesting a two-year draft. Two years would never produce a quality soldier, they said.

Unfortunately, our military leaders don’t have many choices.

Given the current political climate, mission demands and career pressures to report success, they are often forced to push their people to the breaking point.

They can no longer live by the values once promised to the troops and their families that included providing the troops with the best training, equipment and support to win in battle at the lowest cost in human sacrifice, all while affording sufficient time to rest between deployments to maintain a decent family life.

Hope for change can come only from the American people.

And the people are finally emerging from their Sept. 11 daze, which had temporarily turned them into blind followers. Many Americans are finally realizing that the neocon warpath to reshape the Middle East isn't what they would like their own children to experience.

They are rightfully concerned that our nation could ultimately end up quagmired and bankrupt.

To prevent a meltdown, we must slow the neocon race into more ideological crusades.

Let's stabilize and finish what we've begun even if it means finding a feasible and rapid exit from Iraq. Let the Iraqis figure out how to rule their own. Might there be civil war and a possible break-up into three separate nations? Sure — but if that's what they want, more power to them.

America has a constitution and the world's most enviable democracy. We have the opportunity to freely express our political will. **All we have to do is remind our political leaders who really owns the country.**

There comes a point when the people demand some input. To me, it seems young Americans have begun to vote on our foreign policy by gradually rejecting our highly honorable military service.

This retired soldier is willing to bet that a more balanced and creative foreign policy could recruit more quality troops than any outrageous bonus offer.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Bush Regime Signs Trade Agreement With Bush Regime: Iraq "Union" Collaborators Love It

12 July 2005 By Indlieb Farazi, Aljazeera.Net

The United States and the US-backed government in Iraq have signed a formal agreement aimed at boosting economic ties between the two countries, the US Trade Representative's office said.

The pact, which could lead to a free trade agreement between Washington and Baghdad, was signed during a meeting of the US-Iraq Joint Commission on Reconstruction and Economic Development in Amman, Jordan.

Abdullah Muhsin, Iraqi Federation of Workers' Trade Unions (IFTU), international representative told Aljazeera.net: "What is important for Iraq now is the need for foreign investment to build infrastructure and technology."

[The IFTU are the disgusting scum who participate in the Occupation, and pretend to care about ordinary Iraqi workers. Stalin and Hitler had the same kind of fake "union leaders" to support their dictatorships, and so did Saddam Hussein. Stalin and Hitler also had American apologists for their dictatorships, who told other Americans that collaborators like the IFTU were real union leaders, and, would you believe it, some blind, stupid assholes here in the USA are playing the same role now for Bush. Just last month, a pack of US labor bureaucrats set up public meetings here for visitors from the IFTU, trotting them out as if they represent anybody but the Occupation and the U.S. Empire. Wonder where the money came from for putting on that show? Inquiring minds want to know]

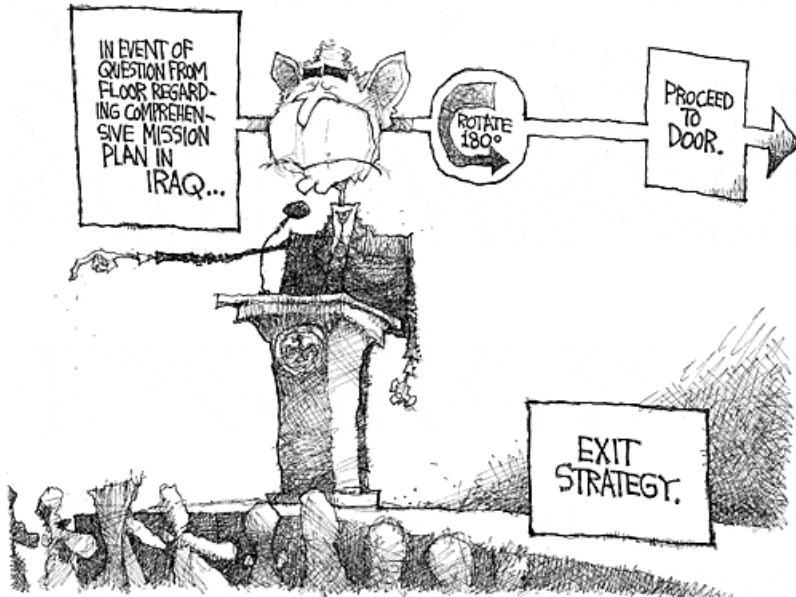
Sabah Jawad, the secretary of London based Iraqi Democrats Against Occupation (IDAO), told Aljazeera.net: "The US is trying to implement it's own economic policy on Iraq including privatisation of major companies and the oil industry."

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

British Defence Secretary: Says No "Imperialist Ambitions" In Iraq

Jul 17, 2005 (AP) - Britain could start scaling back its troop presence in Iraq over the next 12 months, Defence Secretary John Reid said Sunday.

In an interview with CNN's Late Edition, Reid said neither Britain nor the United States had "imperialist ambitions" in Iraq and wanted the country's own forces to take over responsibility for security.



CLASS WAR REPORTS

Stupid People Say The People Are Stupid

[Thanks to PB, who sent this in.]

July 11, 2005

**From an AOL poll today:
Who do you blame most
for high gas prices?**

The Bush administration	47%
Oil companies	37%
Other	7%
Congress	5%
Gas stations	2%
No one	2%

Total Votes: 81,788

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