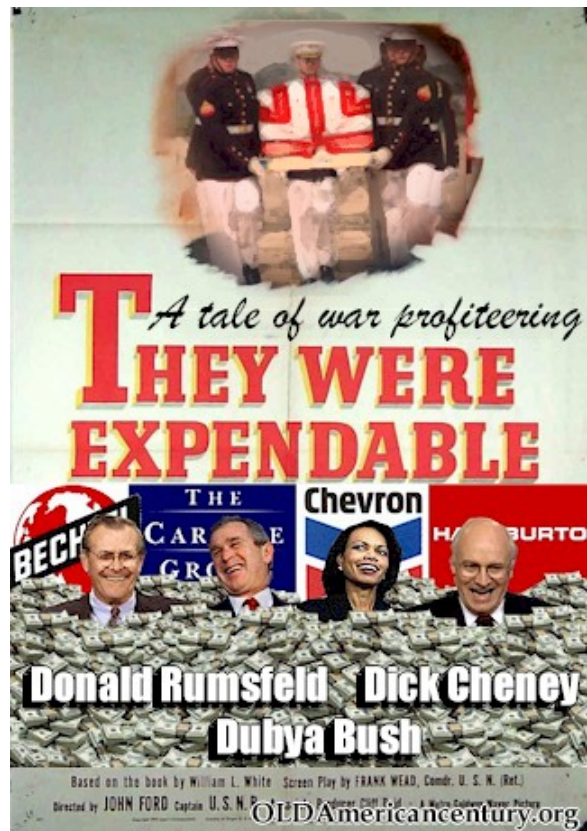


GI SPECIAL 3C11:



“Why Didn't They Tell Me About It?”

Deadly Infection Hits Hundreds Of Iraq Wounded

From: Marcie Hascall
To: GI Special
Sent: August 02, 2005
Subject: Forbes story

This is of course the very mellow version of the story in Forbes but at least he got something out there about this.

I hope they choke up something that's not a PR story about leishmaniasis soon.

This is the first time they have publicly admitted to more than 109 cases. The five who died were contractors.

[For those who may not know, Marcie Hascall – who is quoted at the end of this story – has been courageously raising hell to bring attention to this problem for over a year now.

[Her web site is: www.acinetobacter.org Check it out. T]

08.02.05 Matthew Herper, Forbes

Military doctors are fighting to contain an outbreak of a potentially deadly drug-resistant bacteria that apparently originated in the Iraqi soil. So far at least 280 people, mostly soldiers returning from the battlefield, have been infected, a number of whom contracted the illness while in U.S. military hospitals.

Most of the victims are relatively young troops who were injured by the land mines, mortars and suicide bombs that have permeated the Iraq conflict.

No active-duty soldiers have died from the infections, but five extremely sick patients who were in the same hospitals as the injured soldiers have died after being infected with the bacteria, *Acinetobacter baumannii*.

"This a very large outbreak," says Arjun Srinivasan, a lieutenant commander in the U.S. public health service and a medical epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control.

Doctors worry not only about soldiers who are already infected but also those who are carrying *Acinetobacter* on their skin even though they themselves are not infected.

Lt. Cmdr. Kyle Petersen, an infectious disease specialist at National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) in Bethesda, Md., says his hospital treated 396 patients who had been wounded in Iraq between May 2003 and February 2005. About 10% were infected and another 20% were found to have *Acinetobacter* bacteria on their skin but were not infected. The rate of appearance of the bacteria has "been flat-out steady," says Petersen.

The same has been true at Army hospitals that include Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington, D.C., Tripler Medical Center in Hawaii and Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, where there has been a total of about 240 cases of patients infected, while another 500 have carried the bacteria, according to Col. Bruno Petrucelli, director of epidemiology and disease surveillance for the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine.

Petrucelli says the five patients who died were at Army hospitals—most of them at Walter Reed. They were already suffering from serious health problems before they contracted the bacteria. "These were the sickest of the sick," says Petrucelli. The

infections are split evenly among wound infections, respiratory infections and a mix of bloodstream and other infections.

Preventing the bacteria's spread has required doctors to take extreme care, putting all patients who are returning from the theater of war into isolation. "It's one of those pathogens that once it gets into a population and a chain of care, it can set up shop. Trying to contain the spread of this infection to other people is very difficult," says Andrew Shorr, a doctor who recently left Walter Reed for Washington Hospital Center. "What has happened over the past 18 months is every patient who shows up, we assume they're positive until they are demonstrated negative."

One of those infected in Iraq was Marine Cpl. Sean Locker. On July 10, he was attacked by a suicide bomber in a car while guarding a convoy. Shrapnel hit him in his nose, his right index finger and his right eye, blinding him. His left lung collapsed. But the worst damage was done to his left arm. It was amputated, and Locker says he knew it would be as soon as he looked down at it. "I tried to stay level-headed," he says.

Locker, 25, was flown to an army base in Landstuhl, Germany, and then to NNMC in Bethesda. There, doctors found that what was left of his arm after the amputation had been infected with *Acinetobacter*.

For Locker, the prognosis was good, as two years of hard experience treating patients who had returned from war had taught doctors how to deal with the infection—and to prevent it from spreading to sicker patients. Using imipenem, one of three intravenous antibiotics effective against *Acinetobacter*, doctors are treating Locker's infection. He hopes to go home soon and buy a new truck.

But other patients have been less fortunate, as they have suffered from infections of the bone, the bloodstream or of internal organs, which have complicated their care. Lt. Cmdr. Petersen says that NNMC's annual bill for the kind of antibiotics Locker received has increased tenfold to \$200,000.

Besides imipenem, which carries a risk of seizure, two other drugs have worked. Another is amikacin, which does not work for bone infections and has not been effective against some strains of the bacteria. A third is colistin, an antibiotic doctors had stopped using because of its toxic effects on the kidneys.

"It is a scary thing about any drug-resistant bacteria, when you grow it for the very first time out of a patient and you've only got three antibiotics, one so old that we had to bring it back from the archives," says Col. Joel Fishbain, chairman of the infection-control committee at Walter Reed.

Patients arriving are swabbed in the armpit and the groin. Until the cultures show they are negative, the soldiers are kept in isolation. Doctors and nurses make sure to wear gloves and gowns when coming into contact with them. At NNMC, the cost of gowns and gloves to help prevent infection has jumped 80% to \$12,000, according to Petersen. Soldiers and their family members are not confined to the room, however—the main point is to keep doctors and nurses from spreading bacteria from one patient to another.

A patient such as Locker might not even think much about *Acinetobacter* if the infection can be treated quickly and doesn't cause other problems.

But some others feel they weren't given enough information about the bug—perhaps because military researchers themselves were still putting together answers.

Merlin Clark, a civilian contractor who was in Iraq doing humanitarian de-mining, was also infected with Acinetobacter and treated at Walter Reed, according to his wife, Marcie Hascall Clark.

"My biggest problem," she says, "isn't so much that my husband had it, but why didn't they tell me about it?"

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces. Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces. If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers.

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/> And join with Iraq War vets in the call to end the occupation and bring our troops home now! (www.ivaw.net)

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

14 MARINES KILLED NEAR HADITHA: “This Is A Very Lethal, And Unfortunately, Adaptive Enemy”

Marines often criticize the protection provided by the AAVs. Since the vehicle is also designed to be dropped from ships for coastal assaults, the armor plating is not as heavy as that of the Bradley fighting vehicles the Army uses.

August 3, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND Release Number: 05-08-04C & MNF Release A050802c & JOHN J. LUMPKIN (AP) & By John Hendren, Los Angeles Times

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq – Fourteen Marines and a civilian interpreter, assigned to Regimental Combat Team 2, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force

(Forward), were killed in action early this morning when their amphibious assault vehicle was attacked by an improvised explosive device.

The Marines were riding in an armored amphibious vehicle, or AAV, designed to carry troops from ship to shore and on land. It has a road speed of about 45 mph and can carry up to 25 Marines.

Marines often criticize the protection provided by the AAVs. Since the vehicle is also designed to be dropped from ships for coastal assaults, the armor plating is not as heavy as that of the Bradley fighting vehicles the Army uses.

The incident occurred during combat operations approximately two kilometers south of Haditha, patrolling during combat operations in the Euphrates River valley.

One Marine was wounded in the attack.

Military official says 14 Marines killed in Iraq on Wednesday were members of Ohio-based battalion that lost six members on Monday. The 14 were from a Columbus-based company whose headquarters is in Brook Park.

Six Marines were killed Aug. 1 while conducting dismounted operations outside Haditha. They were engaged by terrorists and killed by small-arms fire.

Five Marines were killed in the initial attack; one was unaccounted for and his body later found and safely recovered a few kilometers away. Officials declined to say whether he was taken hostage before he was killed.

Brig Gen. Carter Ham, deputy director for operations at the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the attackers have used different types of triggering techniques, larger amounts of explosives and different techniques to penetrate U.S. armor.

"This is a very lethal, and unfortunately, adaptive enemy that we are faced with inside Iraq," Ham said.

MORE:

“Tell Bush To Get Our Soldiers Out Of There Now Before Any More Of Our Soldiers Die”

August 3, 2005 BROOK PARK, Ohio, By CONNIE MABIN, Associated Press Writer

The rash of violence in Iraq this week has taken an especially brutal toll on a Marine battalion based in this working-class town: at least 19 members from the unit were killed over two days.

Grief and anger shook the town, as families and residents anxiously awaited answers after learning that 14 Marine reservists were killed Wednesday by a roadside bomb -- one of the heaviest blows suffered by a single unit in the war.

The sorrow in Brook Park, a Cleveland suburb of 21,000 people, was painfully clear Wednesday among the line of customers sipping their morning coffee at the counter of a doughnut shop down the street from the battalion's headquarters. Nearly everyone at the counter said they knew someone who was connected to the battalion.

"You never know who it could be. It could be your best friend. It could be your husband -- it could be anyone from here," Eleanor Matelski, 69, said as she angrily tore up a paper cup that had held her coffee.

"Tell Bush to get our soldiers out of there now before any more of our soldiers die," she said.

A few steps away, near the gates of the 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines, residents piled red roses, American flags, handwritten notes of condolences and white crosses for the victims.

Nine of the Marines came from a Columbus-based company of the battalion, said Master Sgt. Stephen Walter, a spokesman for the company. The battalion was activated in January and went to Iraq in March.

"It makes me upset. This affects a lot of families," said Clarence Koon, 56, as he sipped coffee at the doughnut shop.

Shop manager Pat Wilsox, who said some of the reserves from the battalion frequent the doughnut shop, threw her hand over her heart when she heard the news that the unit had suffered more losses.

"Oh my God," she said softly. "I'm all for protection, but this is getting a little bit ridiculous."

Rex Lott's son, Cpl. Billy Lott, serves with the battalion's weapons company out of Akron. He said the last 24 hours have been rough, waiting for any word, hoping his son is all right. He left work early Wednesday to go to the reserve center.

"They expressed that they hadn't heard anything yet," said Lott, 53. "No news is good news as far as they're concerned."

Military officials told the family of Lance Cpl. Edward Schroeder, 23, of Cleveland, that he was one of the Marines who died Wednesday. His mother, Rosemary Palmer, said he joined the military in 2002 despite her opposition; she wouldn't even let her son play with toy guns while he was growing up.

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



U.S. soldiers from the third battalion of the seventh infantry division in front of an Iraqi police station, after a U.S. soldier of another unit was hit by a sniper in the station, in Baghdad August 2, 2005. Nearly 60 U.S. troops have died in the past month, including five who were killed in two roadside bomb attacks in Baghdad at the weekend. REUTERS/Andrea Comas

July IED Deaths Set Record: Pentagon Says Good News Is That Only 60% Aren't Found Before Detonation

Aug. 02, 2005 By Drew Brown, Knight Ridder Newspapers

In July, IEDs claimed 39 lives among multinational troops in Iraq, the highest monthly total since the war began in March 2003.

Of those, 36 were Americans, tying June's U.S. total and continuing a trend of IEDs being the No. 1 cause of U.S. casualties, according to Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, a Web site that compiles statistics on U.S. and allied casualties based on Defense Department press releases and media reports.

In May, 33 Americans were killed by IEDs. The worst previous month was January, when IEDs killed 29 U.S. soldiers, according to the Web site.

Despite the recent spike, Richard Bridges, a spokesman for the Joint IED Defeat Task Force at the Pentagon said U.S. forces "still are rendering safe" about 40 percent of the bombs they encounter before they explode.

U.S. Soldier Killed Near Syrian Border

8.3.05 By John Hendren, Los Angeles Times

A U.S. Army soldier was killed near the Syrian border in a car bombing that also injured an Army Times reporter.

TROOP NEWS

Guardsman In Iraq Punished Over Blog Post

**From: Debbie Clark
To: GI Special
Sent: August 02, 2005 11:52 PM
Subject: Guardsman in Iraq Punished Over Blog Post**

August 02, 2005 Associated Press

PHOENIX - An Arizona National Guardsman serving in Iraq has been demoted for posting classified information on his Internet Web log, an Army official said Monday.

Leonard Clark, 40, was demoted from specialist to private first class and fined \$1,640, said Col. Bill Buckner, a spokesman for the Multi-National Corps-Iraq.

Blogs are "a growing phenomenon, I guess. It's something a lot of people do and has some uses."

Buckner said he didn't know what kind of classified information Clark had posted.

Clark's blog contained two posts Monday, one with links to articles on him and one stating Clark would comply with a gag order.

Clark is a Glendale, Ariz., kindergarten teacher who has run for the state Legislature four times.

Clark's company was called to active duty in November and has been in Iraq since around January, said Capt. Paul Aguirre, a spokesman for the Arizona National Guard. The company is expected to be brought home next January.

Injured Soldier Coming Home

Aug 3 2005 By PETE WICKHAM, Jackson Sun

Spc. Chris Lewis was hurt by bomb that also killed a McKenzie man.

Company A got some good news Tuesday.

Spc. Chris Lewis of McKenzie is in stable condition in a military hospital in Germany. Lewis was one of three members of the 230th Engineer Brigade unit wounded Sunday when their vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb while on patrol south of Baghdad.

He is expected to fully recover, according to his wife, Catherine.

The bomb claimed the life of Spc. James Dustin "Dusty" Carroll, 23. Two other members of the unit, Timmy Dyal and Bobby Gullede, were treated and released.

"I talked to the doctors today. He's in stable condition, and things are looking up," Catherine Lewis said Tuesday. "He's stable enough that we know he will be arriving at Walter Reed Army Medical Center on Friday, and I'll be going up there.

"The doctors told me the liver is an amazing organ in terms of healing itself, and that despite the surgeries he's had, he's going to be fine. It's just going to take a long time."

Lewis, a 24-year-old Milan native, was working for Milan Decorators when he was activated. He had been home on leave in time to celebrate his first anniversary with Catherine, 21.

"I'd only spoken to him once Monday evening and he was pretty out of it. He just wanted to call and tell me he was OK," said Catherine Lewis, who had kept silent about her husband for the past 24 hours in part "because I didn't want to take away from the coverage that Dusty's death deserved.

"Chris was really close to Dusty, and when he finds out, I know he'll be very upset," she said.

Catherine Lewis also had one request for friends, and even for strangers.

"Keep sending prayers. Keep putting him and all the guys on prayer lists," she said. "Those prayers are helping perform a miracle; I'm sure about it."

Catherine Lewis was about to start a new job with a law firm in Jackson on Monday. "I'll have to put it on hold for a bit, and I think they'll keep the position open awhile for me," she said.

Meanwhile, funeral arrangements were still pending for Dusty Carroll, according to his mother, Deborah.

"We've been told to expect Dusty's body back sometime within the next few days," Deborah Carroll said.

Carroll's father, Sgt. James P. (Pat) Carroll, was also serving with the 230th in Iraq.

Deborah Carroll, who divorced Pat Carroll and has since remarried, said "he should be back in this country to help with the funeral arrangement sometime in the next few days, but we don't know exactly when."

Fewer Early Sign-Ups As Army Struggles To Recruit

July 27, 2005 By Dave Moniz, USA Today

The Army, which expects to miss its 2005 recruiting goal by about 12,000, already is falling behind for next year.

The pool of recruits who sign up as much as a year before they report for training is dwindling. So far, 3,100 have signed up for 2006, according to Army Recruiting Command at Fort Knox, Ky. The Army says it hopes to have 7,200 recruits in the pool by Oct. 1, when the 2006 recruiting year begins. By comparison:

The Army started the 2005 recruiting year with about 14,700 recruits in the delayed entry pool. It is making up some of the shortfall in recruiting by re-enlisting soldiers at a higher-than-expected rate. But the Army also has tried to trim this year's shortfall by rushing many delayed entry enlistees into basic training.

1,680 More Called Up: Fresh Meat For Bush's Imperial Slaughterhouse

August 3, 2005 U.S. Department of Defense News Release No. 786-05

National Guard and Reserve Mobilized as of August 3, 2005

This week, the Army, Air Force and Navy announced an increase in the number of reservists on active duty in support of the partial mobilization, while the Marine Corps number decreased and the Coast Guard number remained the same.

The net collective result is 1,680 more reservists mobilized than last week.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action

Aug. 3 (UPI) & Agence France Presse & Aljazeera & CNN

Two people from a force that guards oil installations were killed and seven others wounded in a highway attack in Iraq Wednesday, police said.

The force was on its way in a convoy from Kirkuk in northern Iraq to Baghdad when they were attacked

Five Iraqi soldiers were killed when a bomber blew himself up at a army checkpoint in Al-Isakhi, north of Baghdad, while another soldier died when a bomber blew up a tractor in Balad.

Two policemen died when their patrol was attacked by guerrillas in Baquba, northeast of Baghdad.

Two other policemen died when militants opened fire on the car they were travelling in.

Two Iraqi police officers were killed within 12 hours of each other in Baghdad, police said Wednesday.

The first police officer was killed about 9 p.m. Tuesday, when guerrillas opened fire on his car in the western Baghdad neighborhood of Amiriya as he returned home, police said.

The second police officer was killed about 8:30 a.m. Wednesday as he left home in the western Baghdad neighborhood of Al-Jami'a, police said.

<p>IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATION</p>

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

**7.67 Deaths Per Day For
August:
“It Has To Stop. The Time Is Now. I
Mean It”
“I Am Going To That Mother F'ers
Ranch”**

From: Cindy Sheehan
Subject: 7.67 deaths per day for August.
Date: 3 Aug 2005

Dear Friends

We can relax now. From the war zone of Crawford, Texas, George said that we families of loved ones that have been killed in Iraq can: "rest assured that your loved ones died for a noble cause."

I am going to be in Dallas this weekend for the Veterans For Peace convention, and I don't care how far Crawford is from Dallas, I am going to that mother f'ers ranch.

I will not leave until he explains to me exactly what the noble cause is.

I hope some VFP's will join me in the crusade to Crawford. If they don't, I know my sister will, and we will go alone if we have to.

It has to stop. The time is now. I mean it.

Peace soon,
Cindy Sheehan
Buddy Spell (my attorney) be ready for a call...=)

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.

“Nothing Is More Powerful, Than A Veteran Armed With The Truth” “The Truth That No One Wants To Talk About Is, The Civilian Population IS The Resistance”

From: Mike Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: Wednesday, August 03, 2005 9:13 PM
Subject: Nothing is more powerful, than a veteran armed with the truth.

Breaking News: Roadside Bomb Kills 14 Marines in Iraq

White House response: President Bush lamented the deaths of the 14 Marines, calling the attack a "grim reminder" that America is still at war.

My reminder to Bush: "For the love of money is the root of all evil." 1 Tim. 6:10

I feel dreadfully sorry for the people in America who think George Bush is a born-again Christian. "Beware of false PROFITS, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves." Matthew 7:15

My Fortune Cookie: The Bush Administration is on a rampage to protect American interests.

Returning soldiers from Iraq: There is nothing more powerful, than a veteran who is armed with the truth.

There were never any weapons of mass destruction. There was never any uranium purchased in Niger by Iraq. There was never a connection between Iraq and 9/11. That would have been political suicide for Saddam Hussein. Twelve years of economic sanctions by the United States against Iraqi civilians was a policy of starvation.

The U.S. put sanctions against Vietnam for twenty years after the war, to further punish that country. The repercussions were immense.

The United States lost the Vietnam War, because the vast majority of the Vietnamese living in South Vietnam did not support the corrupt Vietnamese government we put in power.

When I was in Vietnam, I could see that on the faces of the Vietnamese people.

YOU CANNOT WIN A WAR, WHEN THE RESISTANCE IS EMBEDDED INTO THE CIVILIAN POPULATION.

What happens is, American soldiers get severely traumatized by killing civilians day after day.

The truth that no one wants to talk about is, the civilian population IS the resistance.

Just like Vietnam. THEY DO NOT WANT AMERICANS IN THEIR COUNTRY!!!!!!!!!!!!

Two days before I left Vietnam, I stayed in a holding barracks waiting to get a flight back to the United States.

On the walls of that entire barracks was graffiti written by American soldiers who had long since left Vietnam.

What I read was astounding. American soldiers called President Johnson, President Nixon, and General Westmoreland every vile thing they could think of.

I remember one choice piece of writing: "Serving my country in Vietnam, is like fucking for virginity."

I will say, the most profound piece of Veteran graffiti I have ever read was in a bathroom at a bar in San Francisco, twenty years after the Vietnam War was over. "The last thing I felt before I left Vietnam, was Dick Nixon's dick withdrawing from my ass." (Send guys to war, they come home talking dirty. Tim O'Brien, Vietnam Veteran.)

LYING IS THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON IN WAR.

"If any question why we died, tell them, because our fathers lied."

Rudyard Kipling

1918

Mike Hastie

Vietnam Veteran

August 3, 2005

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.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Winning More Friends: For The Armed Resistance That Is



An Iraqi woman in front of her children with U.S. Specialist James Malugin of the third battalion of the seventh infantry division and an interpreter working for the U.S. army inside her house during a patrol in Baghdad, August 2, 2005. REUTERS/Andrea Comas

There's nothing quite like invading somebody else's country and busting into their houses by force to arouse an intense desire to kill you in the patriotic, self-respecting civilians who live there.

But your commanders know that, don't they? Don't they?

U.S. Command Encourages More Iraqis To Join Armed Resistance; Another Stupid Raid On A Sunni Leader

Aug. 3 (UPI) & Aljazeera & CNN

Sunni leader Adnan Dalimi reported U.S. troops raided Dalimi's house in Baghdad early Wednesday and interrogated him before letting him go.

Dalimi, the former head of the Sunni religious endowment, said the troops handcuffed and blindfolded him, then forced him to lie on the floor before an officer interrogated him about people he said he did not know.

Dalimi charged that the operation was aimed at silencing him for demanding the release of Sunni Imams and pressing for the rights of the Sunni community to participate in the political process.

His grandson Mohemmed Adnan, 16, said one of the soldiers beat him and slammed his face against a wall.

The Iraqi Islamic Party politburo on Wednesday condemned the U.S. raid.

The politburo said forces "messed around with the contents of the house, terrorized women and children, tied Dr. Dulaimi's hands and blindfolded him for not a short time."

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

IRAQ: Shortage In Food Rations

25 Jul 2005

BAGHDAD, 25 July (IRIN) - **A shortage of items in Iraq's monthly food rations is starting to worry government planners and the UN World Food Programme, particularly as most of the Iraqi population still depends on food aid.**

"There is a shortage of oil, tea, sugar, rice and washing powder, across all governorates," said Ali Mazlon, deputy director of the state company for food stuff at the Ministry of Trade, which is responsible for the distribution of food items under the Public Distribution System.

The WFP reported significant commodity shortages earlier this month. "The July circle of the PDS is well underway," it said in mid-July. "However, there continue to be significant shortages in the supply of commodities in many governorates.

"This situation has been exacerbated by the continuing shortages in water and electricity, and now increasingly in fuel such as gas, kerosene and petrol."

"I have not had any tea, sugar or oil for a month - and I cannot afford to buy it," Baghdad housewife Samira Jabbar said.

The monthly food ration is the only source of food for many in Iraq. A baseline study released by the WFP and the Iraqi government in 2004 found that around 25 percent of the population was highly dependent on the public distribution system, and that 11 percent of the population was extremely poor.

Occupation Prison: Up Close And Personal

7.30.05 By Khalid Jarrar, From Baghdad, Anti-Allawi Group

I found myself...

Sleeping in a grave-size space, defined by two walls touching both my head my and feet, and surrounded with human bodies touching me from both sides, in a way that hardly leaves any chance to move at all during the long, long night, in a 12 square meters room stuffed with 35 people trying to sleep, and to hold themselves together in order not to fight.

The whole thing started when I went to the university to pay my tuition fees, the thing is that the engineering campus is separated from the rest of the university with few kilometers, but for such administrative issues, students should go to the headquarter, and this is what I did. I entered the main campus and went to the financial department to pay money. I started the paperwork process, and then reached to a point where we needed the director's signature to finish the paperwork, but she was in a meeting. So, the employee asked me to go and waste an hour inside the campus till the meeting is over, and I did.

What would you do in such a case? Go to the cafe? I tried, but was totally bored after less than 15 minutes, and then I don't remember how an idea flashed in my head like a big light bulb: internet!

Of course, what is better than the internet to kill time?

I remembered there was an internet cafe inside the campus. I rarely came to this campus during the last five years. I think I came like three or four times only. Anyways, so I went to the internet cafe and did my regular tour: raed in the middle, riverbend, etc etc..and then I was bored again. I left the internet cafe heading towards the financial department again.

In my way, I was stopped by an old man, with a hateful face. tfaal, he said (it means something like: (how can I help you?) I was a bit surprised, I said inta tfaal!, (meaning: how can I help you?) he said: where are you going? So I knew that he must be some kind of a security guy. I should have guessed from his tone, he sounds like a typical saddam-style security-man.

"to the financial department, to pay my tuition money" I said.

"where were you right now?"

"in the internet café"

"where is your ID?"

“at the campus entrance reception, with my mobile phone” (this is common now, in all governmental buildings you have to leave your mobile phone in the reception, you cant take it with you).

Please people; don't be surprised because of all these questions. It used to be very common in Saddam's Iraq and it's very common in today's Iraq.

Anyway, the old hateful man decided to escort me to make sure I was telling him the truth. Once we entered the financial office, the employees there talked to me spontaneously, so he knew I was there before and he left.

I paid the money, took the receipt, and left. When I went back the campus entrance reception to take my mobile and leave, I found out that the mobiles' closet was “mistakenly locked” as I was told. They were waiting for the guy that has the key. “He'll be here in any moment” I was told.

I sat there waiting for my mobile phone to be freed. Then suddenly, after few minutes, someone came and asked “where is the detained guy?”

The other security guard pointed at me!!!

I was like: ehhhhh..sorry there is misunderstanding here, I am not detained, its only that the mobile phones closet is mistakenly locked!

“come with us, we have some questions please” they said, and I went with them, searching for answers inside my head.

They searched me very carefully; they took my shoes off and searched them, and even took my watch. They read every paper I had in my pockets, and asked me questions about my origin, nationality, and many other questions. Then they asked me to unlock my mobile phone so that they can check it out. At that particular point I had had enough, I said I wouldn't unlock it except if it was in front of “the person” who is hiding somewhere in the campus, the one asking all these questions through messengers.

They didn't like my response.

Another guy came after a while, and asked me: who did you contact on the internet?

“my mother and brothers” I said.

He didn't look satisfied.

“keep him” he said.

Next thing I know, a very fat policeman entered the small room, asked me to face the wall, searched me again, took my money and glasses, put a bag on my head and handcuffs in my hand (I still have the marks on my hand till now). While my hands were behind my back and my head in a bag, he made me run for about a minute, till we reached a police van, where I was forced to get in. The car starting moving towards an unknown destination.

You don't want to know the swearing and curses I heard all the way, but maybe you'll want to know that no one beat me.

We reached a luxurious building, I could tell from the marble on the floor. The floor was the only thing I could see at that point through a very small space between the bag and my nose. Then I was led to a room after taking an elevator.

I was afraid to be taken to the torture rooms directly; I was praying to find someone to talk to, to explain to him that this all is nothing but a little silly mistake!

God answered my prayers.

Instead of being lead to some underground dungeon, I was taken to an air conditioned room with a lot of people. I could tell from their voices they were interrogating someone, I couldn't see anything still, but they released my hands.

I understood that this person they were interrogating, (Sa'ib as I knew later, he was in the same cell with me), did a very awful thing. Sa'ib came to the ministry of interior, and went to the office of a high ranked officer, and tried to remind the officer of Sa'ib's own father who served with this the officer long time ago, hoping to ask this officer for a favor. The Favor was to order the transferring of a friend of Sa'ib, a cop, to another governorate.

The officer didn't remember Sa'ib's father, and refused to help him. Then he ordered his guards to take Sa'ib for interrogation!!!

Untill I left the jail, Sa'ib was still there!

They beat him a lot, "how dare you enter the office of an officer just like that? they were telling him.

Back to the air-conditioned interrogation room, I was still facing the wall, my eyes were covered, and my brain working so fast, trying to see behind the darkness in front of my eyes.

Then it was my turn:)

"Finally!" I told myself!

They started by asking me: "What's the connection between you and the London Bombs?"!!!

And I was like: "haaaaa????!". I said: "London Bombs????! Nothing!"

BANG!!

A heavy hand landed on my neck, my brain was too busy to feel the pain, I felt my neck numbing for a while.

"SPEAAK" he shouted.

“Turn around” he yelled.

I turned, facing the room now, but not seeing anything other than my nose and the shoes of the person who was interrogating me, standing so close.

“Why do you have a beard?” he asked.

“Because the prophet...” (I was trying to tell him that prophet Mohammad had one, and that I have one because I love to look like him...)

BANG

He slapped me on the face. It made a loud noise that the room became dead-silent for some seconds.

“May the prophet curse you” he shouted.

Again, my brain didn't respond to the pain signals, I didn't feel it.

For the next few hours, they asked me questions like “who are the other members of our terrorist cell, where does your fund come from? What operations did you have?”

“What do you have against Shia?”

I said: “nothing, my mother is Shia!”

He said “what do you have against Kurds? Why don't you go blow yourself up and kill Kurds?”

I said: “Because God says in Quran” (I was trying to tell him a part of Quran where God orders us not to kill any innocent soul) he interrupted me shouting, “We know Quran better than you.”

“My best friend is Kurdish!” I said.

“Of course he is, so that you can get information about Kurds from him, right?” he answered.

Nothing I said seemed to make sense to them. And nothing they said makes sense to anyone in the world.

Then finally I understood why I was there, after few hours.

Security guards at the university had printed out all the websites I was reading while I was online there. They were accusing me of “reading terrorism sites” and “having communications with foreign terrorists.”.

“Do you know what these pages are?”

I looked at them and figured out they were the comment section of Raed in the Middle!!

I opened the comments section while browsing in the university, read some comments, and didn't even post anything. But these people don't seem to know what the internet is, and they don't speak English, so I was a major suspect of being an assistant of al Zarqawi maybe! Or that I have a terrorist group of my own, with foreign connections!

I was accused of terrorism, and sent to jail after they decided that I'm not helping myself because I am not helping them!!!

“Help you with what??!!” I asked. “I am so willing to help you with anything you want, just tell me what exactly you want to know?”

“Tell us the name of the other members of your group, and where you get your fund from” then answered.

I entered the jail, and found people staring at me with curiosity, but with total silence.

“assalamo alaykom!” I said with a smile, and sat down on the ground, just like the others.

“alaykom assalam!” everyone said.

Then one of them couldn't resist it anymore, so he asked: “why were you brought here?”

I told them my story, and they all looked very upset.

In the next few minutes, I learned about the stories of the other people that were there.

Then it suddenly hit me: “where are we? Do you know?” I asked curiously.

They all looked a bit afraid, I knew they had an answer but didn't know whether they should trust me enough already to tell me or not, I have been there for a couple of minutes only.

Then someone whispered in my ears Istikhbarat il Dakhliyya, don't tell anyone that we know.” Istikhbarat il Dakhliyya means the Mukhabarat, and that is the intelligence or the secret service police.

“Ohhh!!” I said “Do your families know you are here?”

They nodded with their heads: no.

There were around 35 people in that room, 4 of the arrested people in this floor were teenagers. I'll tell you about some of their stories at the end of this post.

I made friends with almost everyone there that day, and then I slept, it was a long day, I was so worried about my family, how would I let them know that I wasn't killed in a car bomb, or kidnapped? I'm sure they don't expect that I ran away from the house to go party with my friends or join the circus!

Next day I was taken to interrogation again.

They asked me all the questions you can ask anyone, but they did it very fast. They took the name of my teachers, my friends, even my colleagues and the girls in my class. They asked me if I had ever had sex before, I said no. They didn't believe me, they made fun of me and asked if I prefer men more, and I said no too.

Then they wanted me to write my "confession" finally, which is the paper that will go to the judge to decide my fate.

He asked: you are accused of attending terrorist sites (Did he say that they are sites that recruit young people for terrorism? I don't remember) so what do you say?

I said, with my eyes covered: please write my answer "I deny that completely, I was practicing my democratic right of viewing people's opinion about a certain topic on a site that people visit from all the countries around the world to give their opinions."

He said: what in the hell is that? Did I ask you to write me a composition? Answer my question Goddamn it!

You are accused of visiting terrorist websites, what do you reply?

I repeated my answer, but I reformed it in a way that is less complicated for his simple brains to understand, they wrote something and made me sign on the paper.

I don't know if any of them finished high school, they are uncivilized, they lack morality and education, the way they swear all the time and the words they say tells you what kind of people they are, I asked them about the things that were with me when I was arrested, they said that they have my mobile phone, and my IDs, but the fat policeman broke my glasses and stole some of my money, till now, they didn't give me back my mobile phone or my IDs.

Since they don't speak English, they didn't even ask me one time about the content of the site, which my one and only crime was that I read.

The third day, I found a way to contact my family, to tell them that I am alive and that I am in the seventh floor of the ministry of interior affairs. By that time, my dad checked every hospital, police station and morgue in the city. He checked with the Iraqi army, the Iraqi militias, the US army, and even the ministry of interior which denied that I was there!

It was such a relief to know that my family knows where I was, I told them that I was very well, and that we eat well and sleep well and no one hurts us.

Eight days after I was arrested, I was sent to see the judge, in a court that is a bit far of the prison, when we reached the court they put cuffs on my legs too, and a chain that ties my cuffed hands with my body. I felt the humiliation to be treated like a criminal and sent to a court tied with all these chains. I cried for few seconds only, and held myself together before anyone noticed.

I was taken first to an interrogator who works for the court, where he re-wrote my confession in a way that makes it easier to be understood correctly. He said that the court will assign a public defender for my case. I asked him what did that mean and he

replied “Nothing, just some formalities.” He asked me to sign the paper of my “confessions”, and then he called a big chubby man with cheap outfit. The strange man came from outside and signed on my paper: “The Lawyer I-Don’t-Know-What’s-His-Name.”. Then after some waiting, I was taken to see the judge, finally.

The judge was a very elegant man in his 40s, sitting behind a fancy desk in his air-conditioned room, with a computer beside him and a cool mobile phone too, with guards outside and a secretary beside him.

He didn’t look at me in the beginning. He asked me while surfing the papers of my case: “What’s your case?”

I said: “I went to the university to pay the fees.”

He interrupted me impatiently: “the website, tell me about the website.”

I said: “It’s a forum, it’s a place where people discuss a topic written by the owner of a website. I visited it and I didn’t even post an opinion, I closed it and left the internet place, and then I was brought here.”

It seemed he was following me. He said: “Is it like chatting?”

I said: “Yes, your honor. This is more like a website than a chat room. You don’t have to sign in and be a part of what’s happening in the case of forums. I was just watching things there. For me, it was more like watch a TV with different channels; you go to a channel not knowing what will be there and without knowing the content. If you didn’t like the channel, you can change it.”

He interrupted me: “ok ok I know I know.”

He had 37 translated papers of Raed’s Comments Section, that’s it, that’s my case. He asked me “What are these strange letters between the words here?” I said “Maybe the person who printed out the papers selected the wrong font, these strange characters appear when you pick the wrong encoding for the language.”. He didn’t seem to be a computer expert, but at least he knows the basics.

He said “I will take the papers to read them at home, and will decide about them tomorrow.”

The chubby entered the room and sat on a chair in front of the judge. He was my “lawyer”, but he didn’t say a single word, not one single word. He only signed a paper that says that he is my lawyer.

I was taken back to the prison. That was my Wednesday.

On Thursday, the judge decided that I was innocent.

He figured out that the papers were from a public forum, and he didn’t find any comments posted by me.

I wasn't released till Saturday morning, after I was forced to sign a paper committing that I wouldn't tell the families of the arrested people that they are arrested, and that I wouldn't tell anyone about anything that happened while I was arrested or tell them what I saw inside the jail, and that I would report any case of breaking the law that I know about to the authorities (at this point I laughed and asked: even if someone drove his car through a red traffic light?), and that I wouldn't visit terrorism websites.

I, of course, told all the families I could that their sons are arrested in the seventh floor of the ministry of interior in the hands of the Mukhabarat, and here I am telling you everything that happened with me, and I am planning to visit all kind of websites as much as I like as long as I want.

I was so lucky that I was taken to the Mokhabarat directly.

Usually you have to go through a police station or a center of the national guards to get there, where the standard procedure of torturing is hanging people upside down and beating them with cables for hours, pinching their bodies with electrical drills, burning them with hot water, ripping out their finger nails, breaking bones, using acids on the wounds after whipping them, the dead bodies that are found in the dumpsters in Baghdad even had their eyes taken out of them, and a lot of these things happened with people that I know, or with people that were detained with the people that were with me in this jail, before they were brought here, and the list of torturing techniques is long, and you don't want to hear them or know about them if you want to sleep at night.

In one of the floors in the same building, there is another prison, a bigger one called "The Palace of Hospitality" (doesn't this remind you of 1984? The ministry of love and stuff?) Where recently a father and his son were arrested, and the son died at night because his ribs were broken after they beat him, and then they spelled hot water on his body, he kept moaning of pain for the whole night, said Abo Ayid, who slept right beside him, and then he died. I'll tell you more about Abu Ayid in the end.

The one thing in common between all the people that were there is that almost all of them were Sunnis. Interrogators told one of the prisoners during an interrogation session "you Sunnis are all terrorists" and during my interrogation, I heard a lot of racist remarks and questions. The Shia Iraqis who were there were mostly accused of non-terrorism crimes, like stealing, carjacking, etc.

If you were wondering how did we spend our time in jail. I'll tell you.

We read Quran a lot, we prayed five times a day, we had three meals a day, and we praise God for long periods of time too. We sat all together talking and telling jokes and stories about our lives.

At night, while trying to sleep, I mostly was thinking of what I should write in my next post!

I always had the hope that I would leave that place, time goes really slow there, when I used to feel sad I would think of the nice places that I would go to when I leave, and all the other positive ideas that would keep me happy, I asked people: what is the first thing you want to do when you leave this place?

And we all sat thinking of the nice things we want to do, the things we want to eat, the places we want to visit; it was a hope-generating game.

My family played an important role to help me get out of the Mukhabarat's jail faster than other people.

Like any other corrupt system, you can get a better treatment by knowing the right people and giving the right "gifts.". My family didn't pay anything to the judge because they believed I was innocent, they tried their best to get me a lawyer, but they couldn't. I was freed because I was innocent, and I have the capabilities to defend myself in front of a judge.

The question is: what about the rest of Iraqis?

The ones who don't have the money or the power to leave places like that?

The innocent people who were taken away from their families and loved ones and accused of false crimes?

What happens to them? Who will stand for them? What about human rights? What about civil rights? What about humanity?

Here are just some of the people that were in the jail and their cases, as a sample to the cases.

I hope that these people and all the other Iraqi prisoners will go back home safe. And I'll work with my family to ask the US administration and the Iraqi authorities to improve the situation of the detention for the Iraqis.

People should have the right to inform their families about their location, and they should have the right to appear in front of a judge very soon after being detained without being questioned and tortured, and they should have real lawyers in the court, they should at least know their charges!

Firas: a 26 years old light skinned guy, was walking in the street with grocery bags in his hands when a car attacked an American convoy, he ran away, in a normal reaction, so the police followed him and caught him, and beat him continuously for 7 hours with pipes while he was tied up to a chair, and when he didn't confess of attacking the US troops or Iraqi police, his investigators wrote a report that he must have been trained in foreign terrorists camps to tolerate torturing, and sent him to this place, supposedly a place for more expert interrogators.

Mohammed: a very dull 23 year old dark skinned guy, works in a very poor traditional café in a very poor neighborhood, the owner of the cafe was high on drugs and reported that Mohammed killed 4 policemen and 4 national guards.

Mohammed is hardly smart enough to form a sentence, he can read and write, but besides serving tea and coffee, don't expect much of him.

One minute with him and you will discover that he has a heart of a 6 year old child, he thinks that an imaginary bird comes to him everyday and tells him the news of his mother, the only family member he has.

When they were interrogating him they asked him: "did you kill eight men?" He said sayyidi ya aras waani ya kharyan istor alenaâ hahaha (meaning: "I killed no national guard and no shit at all, don't put me in trouble" which makes sense in English, but its extremely funny in Arabic and tells you that a person isn't sane at all), since Mohammed is accused of killing eight men, we called him Mohammed the wolf, haha, and that was his nick name for the rest of the time, till I left, and God knows what will happen to him.

All what it takes to put someone in jail is to call anonymously and claim that he is a terrorist, and that's it, he will be tortured and put in jail for 45 days, so you, "the secret informer," can chose to come to the court during this period and swear that he is a terrorist, if so, that's it, he will be legally accused of terrorism and might spend the rest of his life in jail, or he maybe executed, or maybe set free, **its totally up to the judge to decide that, or maybe its up to the CIA, which I knew later that they occupy the floor that was above us in the building, where the orders come from.**

Maysam and Nathom: two brothers, in their twenties, very poor, amazingly good looking, if there was an Arabic version of Hollywood, they would sure be Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt.

When I was in jail I cried twice, one of them was when Nathom came to the toilets from an interrogation session, and I was in the toilets at that time, and he started crying hard, he said that they beat him so much to the point that he had to say that his brother killed 300 people and stole many cars.

He came to the toilets while they started to torture his brother to make him confess of these crimes, I went back to the cell and cried for minutes, it was so unfair, so unfair.

That night we made jokes about it, and that since we all are supposed to be "terrorism experts" we knew that a sword can kill up to 50 people, so he must have used so many swords, or maybe he used chainsaw? How else would anyone kill 300 people with his own hands?

Yes, we made jokes about that, in prison, and when it's such a silly situation, you learn to joke about it.

So the interrogator said: "he killed 300 people?"

"yes sir" Nathom answered, and the interrogator writes the confession.

"and he stole an Opel Car?"

"yes sir"

“a yellow one?”

“yes sir”

And then the interrogator put down the pen and said “you son of a b****, it has been more that two years since the war and I never saw one yellow Opel car.”

(And it’s true, for some reason all Opels in Iraq are grey, some are black or blue but it’s rare, but no yellow ones!)

All of that interrogation happened while Nathom is hanging upside down, and being hit at the same time.

I left the jail and the two brothers where still there.

Abo Kamal, and his nephews: a sheikh of a tribe, had an appointment with a friend to have dinner, and they agreed to meet in front of a well known police station in that area, so they waited there in their car, with the four hazard lights flashing, and the light inside the car turned on, on the side of the road right in front the police station waiting for their friend, and then some cops came out of the station, arrested them and accused them of killing a man, till I left, abo kamal and the others weren’t told the name of the person that was killed, how and when he was killed.

Abo ayid: you know that in our region we call people “abu something” and abu means “the father of” so for example my dad would be abu raed, cause raed is the oldest son, and if your oldest son is called james for example, you would be called abu james ok?

Ok.

Abu Ayid is a nick name that is used, rarely, to call someone that is married in long time but doesn’t have children, for any reason, cause its rude to call people with their names, calling them “abu“ is a formal and respecting way, so if you know someone that doesn’t have children you call him abo ayid, ok?

Ok!

Now abu ayid has been in prison for about three months, he was tortured a lot, his fingernails were taken out, his toes were broken, he was beaten so much, because someone thought that the name abo ayid sounds like a name of a terrorist, maybe a leader of a terrorist group, it SOUNDS like that, so they tortured him, and they are keeping him till he confesses and tells them about the other members in his group and their fund etc.

Kathom: a dark skinned man in his late 40s walking late at night passed by a governmental building while he was drunk. After a while, an explosion happened in that building, so the police picked him up walking not far of that building, and needless to say that they weren’t nice to him.

And so on, so many sad stories, sad because they are stupid, sad because they aren’t fair.

Whenever someone new arrives, I had this bad feeling in my stomach, its sick, and it keeps happening to other people everyday.

One of the guys there, Msaid, was so sad, he has been there for about 50 days, he never says a word, he never speaks to anyone, no one knows what he is accused of cause he wouldn't talk, and I wouldn't tell you about this if I didn't see it with my own eyes, Msaid haven't eat a bite since over 40 days, we all live in the same place and its easy to keep track of that, people there watch him and be him to eat every now and then, all they hear from him is: I don't feel like eating.

Guys I haven't lost my mind in jail, its true, and I saw it myself, Msaid drinks water only.

I really learned that yama fission mazaleem!

Which is an Egyptian saying says that many of those in prison are really innocent.

I learned also the value of freedom, now just looking from the window or going out in the street is a lot of fun to me, I learned to appreciate freedom.

May God free everyone that is under such great injustice, and send them back home to their families and friends, about us, we will do what we can to make sure that happens, any kind of help that you can offer, any legal help or support from human right groups will be much appreciated and evaluated, we must do all we can to try to get some rights to those arrested, and being arrested in occupied Iraq, everyday.

posted by khalid jarrar at 5:46 PM

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