

GI SPECIAL 3C20:

HIM



**Soldier Says:
“I Don't Want Anything
To Do With Him”
“His Ego Is Getting People
Killed And Mutilated For No
Reason”**

"It's gonna go on as long as we're there," he says. "There's always gonna be insurgents trying to blow us up. There's just too many of 'em that are willing to do it. You're never gonna catch all of 'em. And it seems like they have unlimited amounts of ammunition. So I don't think it's ever gonna end."

August 10, 2005 By Peter Carlson, Washington Post Staff Writer

"So we're driving down the road and it's midnight, so it's pitch-black, and when you're driving at night, you don't use any lights," says Terry Rodgers, "but we can see fine because we've got night vision goggles."

He's sitting in the living room of his mother's townhouse in Gaithersburg, telling the story of his last night in Iraq. He's still got his Army crew cut and he's wearing a T-shirt with an American flag on the chest.

"We're driving down this road and there's this tiny bridge over a little canal," he says. "They had rigged up this bomb and they had a tripwire running across the bridge and we hit it and it blew up."

Like the rest of the 13,877 Americans wounded in Iraq, Rodgers has a story to tell. He tells it in a matter-of-fact voice, like he's talking about making a midnight pizza run or something. He's sitting in an armchair with his right leg propped on an ottoman, the foot encased in a soft black cast that reaches almost to the knee. His crutches are lying on the rug beside the chair.

"The Humvee finally comes to a stop and the right side is just torn apart and I hear my squad leader screaming, 'I think I lost my arm!' And my best friend Maida was in the front passenger seat where the bomb went off and he was screaming, 'Where's help? Where's help?' And then he went quiet.

"And me, I'm trying to crawl out of the Humvee and I get most of my body out and just this leg is stuck and I thought it must be caught on something in the twisted metal. I look back and I see it's just laying there on the seat, so I'm like, 'Why is it stuck?' So I try to lift my leg up and it won't lift. I just had to pick up my leg and crawl the rest of the way out."

He mimes the action of picking up his leg with his hands, then he continues the story.

"I started patting myself down and that's when I noticed that my face took some shrapnel," he says. "It was all swollen on this side, so when I'm patting myself down, my middle finger went, like, this deep into my cheek where the shrapnel went in."

He points to a spot about halfway down his finger, showing how far it went into the shrapnel wound behind his right eye, which is still pretty much blind, unable to see anything but bright light.

"Then I started checking out my leg. I knew my femur was broken, but at that time I didn't know my calf was missing," he says. "And that's when I hear my best friend Maida and he started heaving."

Rodgers takes a few loud, quick breaths to show what Mark Maida sounded like.

"And he breathes like that for a few seconds and then he just stops. And that's when he died."

Rodgers pauses a moment.

"The two trucks behind us had to stop and make sure the area was secure before they could help us," he says. "And the first guys that showed up saw Maida in the front seat, leaning against the windshield and all I heard was, 'Sir, we lost Maida.'

"And then they helped my squad leader, who lost his right arm, and then they came over and helped me. They bandaged us up . . . and when the helicopter finally showed up, they loaded me and Maida into the chopper and flew us to Baghdad.

"And after that, I don't remember anything till like a week after I got to Walter Reed."

Heeding the Call

Terry Rodgers, who just turned 21, grew up in Rockville, son of a carpenter and a courthouse clerk. After graduating from Richard Montgomery High School in 2002, he worked as a mechanic in a Washington gas station, then joined the Army.

"It was something I always wanted to do," he says. "I thought it looked fun. I just wanted to get out on my own for a while. I got kind of bored being around here. I wanted to try something new."

He signed up in October 2002, but he didn't go into the Army until the following July. In between, the United States invaded Iraq, but Rodgers didn't pay much attention to that.

"I didn't have a political view," he says. "I'm not into politics."

He did his basic training at Fort Benning, Ga. Then his outfit -- the 2nd Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment -- was assigned to Fort Irwin, Calif., in the Mojave Desert, where they played the bad guys in warfare training exercises.

"Basically we would just play laser tag in the desert," he says. "It was kind of fun."

They deployed to Iraq this January, assigned to a town about 30 miles south of Baghdad. Two nights after they arrived, an IED -- improvised explosive device -- blew up near their patrol base but nobody got hurt. Later, somebody set off a car bomb on the street in front of the base.

"It didn't do anything to us Americans," he says, "but it killed a few civilians."

Most days, Rodgers's platoon would patrol the town in Humvees, then set up a TCP -- traffic control point -- where they'd stop cars and search them for weapons. Or they'd do "house calls": "We'd pick random houses and just go in and search 'em." Sometimes they'd do a "dismounted patrol," which meant they wandered through the streets on foot.

"We'd have an interpreter with us and we'd try to talk to people," he says. "We didn't have any incidents when we were out walking. The biggest incident we'd have on foot patrol is we'd be mobbed by little kids asking us for candy. When people from back home would send me candy, I'd always give that to the kids."

Occasionally the Americans would hear about a house where somebody was rumored to be storing weapons or building bombs. They'd wait until dark and raid the place.

"It was very intense and very fast," he says. "We'd try to be as quiet as we could until we got to the front door, and then you just have the battering ram and you open the front door and you run in yelling and pulling your weapons and try to gain control of the house as fast as you can."

Other patrols found illegal weapons on these raids, but Rodgers's never did.

"We did hit the wrong house quite often," he says. "We had these overhead maps, satellite maps, and when you're on the street in the middle of the night, it's hard to find the right house. In those instances, we'd say, 'Sorry,' and give 'em a card with a phone number to call the Army and we'd pay for the damages."

In April, Rodgers's company was transferred to a tiny farming town about 20 miles away -- a place where no Americans had been stationed.

"We started looking for a building that would be suitable for a patrol base," he says. "And we took this building over. There was a family living there and we had to kick 'em out. . . . They weren't too happy about it, but there was nothing they could do."

A few days after they arrived in the little town, a Humvee on patrol was blown up by a bomb buried on a dirt road.

"It picked up the Humvee, and when it was in the air, it turned on its side," Rodgers says, "and my friend fell out and the Humvee ended up landing on him and it crushed him and he was killed."

His friend was Kevin W. Prince, 22, of Plain City, Ohio.

About a week later a car approached their patrol base, and the guys fired a few rounds to signal the driver that he should stop. He got out. Two American soldiers searched the car. When they opened the trunk, a bomb exploded, killing both of them.

It was scary. In three months, Rodgers's company had suffered no casualties -- nobody killed, nobody wounded. Now they'd lost three guys in a couple of weeks.

"We hadn't experienced anything like that before so it was nerve-racking," he says. "You try not to think about it because you have to get out there and keep doing the same things. Obviously if it's gonna happen, it's gonna happen, and worrying about it isn't going to do you any good."

Then, on a Thursday night, May 26, Rodgers's platoon was guarding the base when it got a call from a platoon that was patrolling the area: They'd found a bomb and needed reinforcements.

Rodgers and about 10 other guys piled into three Humvees and scrambled off to help. Speeding through the darkness, wearing their night vision goggles, they came to the canal with the bridge, where the bomb was.

The Wounds of War

Rodgers was flown to Baghdad, then to Germany, then to Washington, where he was taken to Walter Reed Army Medical Center on Memorial Day. But he doesn't remember any of that.

"The first memories I have turn out to be hallucinations," he says. "I thought my leg was burned off. I thought half my face was blown off. I thought little kids were jumping on me, stealing my eyes and my teeth."

He was doped up on pain medicine that made him see things that weren't there.

"He kept yelling at me to get the people behind him," his mother, Ann Rodgers, recalls. "He said, 'Get them away from me!' I said, 'There's nobody behind you.' He asked me if I could see the back of his eye because his face was gone. I said, 'Your face isn't gone.' He said, 'Liar!' "

His real injuries were almost as bad as the ones he hallucinated. He had a broken femur, broken jaw, broken cheekbone. His right calf was blown away. Also, his right ear couldn't hear and his right eye couldn't see.

He spent a month and a half at Walter Reed. The doctors wired his jaw shut, put a metal rod in his leg, did nine hours of surgery on his eye, reconstructed his calf, and did skin grafts.

"I've had way too many surgeries to count," he says.

He was never alone. Every night somebody stayed with him -- his mother or father or sister Marie, or his girlfriend, Jane Libert, 19, a student at McDaniel College in Maryland.

"I always had somebody to talk to," he says.

He got visits from celebrities, too. Generals came by to shake his hand and ask how he was doing. The Dave Matthews Band visited, as did players from the Washington Nationals and Colorado Rockies.

"I didn't catch their names," he says. "I was kind of high on morphine at the time. And you can't read their autographs."

One day a nurse came in to ask Rodgers if he wanted to meet President Bush, who was visiting the hospital. Rodgers declined.

"I don't want anything to do with him," he explains. "My belief is that his ego is getting people killed and mutilated for no reason -- just his ego and his reputation. If we really wanted to, we could pull out of Iraq. Maybe not completely but enough that we wouldn't be losing people -- at least not at this rate. So I think he himself is responsible for quite a few American deaths."

Bill Swisher, a spokesman for Walter Reed, says it's "fairly common" for patients to decline to see visitors. "We've had visitors from Sheryl Crow to Hulk Hogan," he says, but he has no idea how many have refused to see Bush, who has visited the hospital eight times.

Rodgers says he also declined to meet Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Condoleezza Rice. This wounded soldier has lost faith in his leaders, and he no longer believes their repeated assurances of victory.

"It's gonna go on as long as we're there," he says. "There's always gonna be insurgents trying to blow us up. There's just too many of 'em that are willing to do it. You're never gonna catch all of 'em. And it seems like they have unlimited amounts of ammunition. So I don't think it's ever gonna end."

Moving On

"I can start putting weight on the leg and learn to walk again," Rodgers says.

He's lying in bed, head propped up on a pillow with an American flag design on it. He can't climb the stairs to his old bedroom so he's got a new one -- it used to be the family dining room. Next to his bed is a little table topped with three bottles of pills, a stick of Right Guard and a statue of Jesus.

He's been home for a few weeks now. He's feeling pretty good and is fairly optimistic about his future.

"I should be able to walk normally," he says. "My eye -- we really don't know about that yet. I might get some vision back. I lost most of the hearing in my right ear."

By the end of the year, he'll be out of the Army -- "medically retired" -- and he's happy about that: "I did my tour. I had my fun. Time to move on with my life."

He wants to go to school -- the Veterans Administration will pay for it, he says -- but he's not sure what he wants to study. "I've got a few ideas, but I don't know what I want to do yet."

For now, he'd like to get back on his feet and take a few weekend trips while he goes to rehab during the week. And he wants to get reacquainted with his old friends. Maybe he can tell them what Iraq is like, he says, but it won't be easy.

"They see it on TV, but they can only guess what it feels like over there," he says. "To actually be there and feel it and hear it -- I don't think many people have a clue what it's like."

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.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

TASK FORCE LIBERTY SOLDIER KILLED BY TIKRIT IED

August 12, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 05-08-19C

TIKRIT, Iraq – One Task Force Liberty Soldier was killed when an improvised explosive device detonated during a combat patrol near Tikrit at about 4:00 a.m. August 12.

US Soldier Killed In Explosion In Baghdad

12 August 2005 Focus Information Agency

Baghdad: US soldier was killed in explosion of a self-made bomb north of Baghdad on Friday, announced AFP, citing a communiqué of the US Army. The number of died US soldiers in Iraq since 2003 until now reached 1841 people. [Note: This may be the same attack described just above.]

Apache Down In Dogmat; Two Wounded



US Apache helicopter after crashing Aug. 12, 2005 (AP Photo/Yahya Ahmed)

BAGHDAD - A US Apache attack helicopter crashed Friday morning near the northern Iraqi oil centre of Kirkuk, wounding two people, the US military said.

"An Apache helicopter went down in the vicinity of Kirkuk around 10 am (0600 GMT) this morning," said a spokesman for the 42nd Infantry Division, responsible for the area.

"There are two injured who are being medevaced out," he added.

Iraqi police said the Apache crashed in a village named Dogmat, some 70 kilometers (45 miles) south of Kirkuk, and that US forces had sealed off the area.

U.S. Loses Spy Drone As Iraqis Make Off With Wreck

August 12, 2005 By Steve Holland (Reuters)

Iraqis in the northern city Mosul have made off with a top secret American spy plane.

The U.S. military in Iraq said in a statement on Thursday that one of its "unmanned aerial vehicles" -- otherwise known as a drone -- had crashed in the town the night before.

"Within the hour, the crash site was investigated by nearby troops who assessed that no civilians or property were harmed or damaged as a result of the accident," it said.

"The UAV was not recovered, however, as the local population carried it away."

DEATH TOLL FOR PART-TIME TROOPS SOARS: Summer Months Prove Deadly For Reserves And National Guard

[Thanks to PB & Phil G who sent this in.]

Aug. 12, 2005 The Associated Press & The Toledo Blade, Editorial

The National Guard and Reserve suffered more combat deaths in Iraq during the first 10 days of August — at least 32, according to a Pentagon count — than in any full month of the entire war.

More broadly, Pentagon casualty reports show that the number of deaths among Guard and Reserve forces has been trending upward much of this year, totaling more than 100 since May 1.

That ranks as the deadliest stretch of the war for the Guard and Reserve, whose members perform both combat and support missions.

There is little evidence to suggest that part-time troops are being specifically targeted by the insurgents, since the Guard and Reserve troops are mostly indistinguishable from — and interchangeable with — regular active-duty troops. [Do you believe this witless comment? The occupation command is so thoroughly infiltrated that the resistance knows the exact location and designation of every U.S. unit in country. T]

The Pentagon rejects any suggestion the Guard and Reserve are more vulnerable in combat because they are part-timers.

[The Pentagon, as usual, is either blind stupid, or lying. Everybody knows the Guard and Reserves, ill-equipped, ill-trained, and unready, are the weak link in the Imperial chain holding down Iraq. Everybody, of course, includes the Iraqi resistance. Their command also knows the basics, for example: attack the weakest link. During World War II, at Stalingrad, the Russian armies first hit the Romanian, Bulgarian, and other weak units fighting for Hitler. Rumsfeld and his Imperial hacks think the fight is against a bunch of amateurs with rags on their heads. They're up against some of the finest, toughest, most experienced soldiers in the world, who stood off Iran for years. They know enough to concentrate against the Guard and Reserves. Check what O'Hanlon says:]

Michael O'Hanlon, a military analyst with the Brookings Institution think tank, said Thursday that while the performance of reservists has been generally excellent, some are shortchanged on training prior to arriving in Iraq.

“If we really believe that military personnel need months of intensive training before being at their best — as logic suggests and other evidence would seem to prove — it is hard to believe that most reservists in Iraq are really as strong as active-duty troops, especially when they first arrive in country,” O'Hanlon said.

In a recent fiscal year, reserves and national guard members represented 47 percent of US forces but cost only 7.8 percent of the defense budget.

The previous highest monthly killed-in-action total for the Guard and Reserve was 27 in May, when there were also four non-combat deaths. In August 2004, there were six Guard and Reserve combat deaths and eight total.

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)

“He's A Proud Soldier, But He's Ready To Come Home” Local Man Hurt As Another Stryker Blown Up

8.12.05 By JENNIFER SICKING, Gainesville Daily Register Staff Writer

An Army soldier from Cooke County was injured Monday when his vehicle hit an explosive device in Mosul, Iraq.

Staff Sgt. William "Bill" J. Shaw, with the Striker Brigade out of Fort Lewis, Wash., suffered shrapnel wounds to his left thigh and leg, his mother, Carlotta Barron said Thursday.

Shaw was transported to the 228th Combat Hospital in Mosul, Iraq, for emergency treatment. He was released from the hospital Friday and is on light duty while he recovers.

His wife, Sarah, said she received a call on her cell phone from her husband's platoon sergeant Monday about 5 p.m. Texas time.

"I knew it was something bad," she said. "They don't call you unless something happened. I was scared and worried. It terrified me."

The family received official notification of Staff Sgt. Shaw's injury on Tuesday.

"He was in a Striker (tank) going down a street in Mosul when his vehicle hit an IED (improvised explosive device)," Barron said.

Barron said it was "hard" to hear of her son's injuries and for him to be in a hospital so far away.

"This is his second tour with the Army," she said. **"He's a proud soldier, but he's ready to come home. I'm ready too."**

He's scheduled to return from Iraq in September to Washington and to be discharged from the Army in December.

Staff Sgt. Shaw and his wife, Sarah, have a 5-year-old son, Jonathan, who are staying in Cooke County. Shaw is the son of Carlotta and Miguel Barron and Johnny and Peggy Shaw of Gainesville.

Staff Sgt. Shaw attended Callisburg High School and San Antonio College. He joined the Army in 1998.

How Bad Is It? 500 Attacks A Week Across Iraq, On Average: Bomb Strikes On Supply Convoys Doubled

August 12th, 2005 By ROBERT BURNS, AP Military Writer & Special DoD Press Briefing, August 12, 2005 9:00 a.m. EDT: Presenter: Brigadier General Yves J. Fontaine, USA, Commander, 1ST Corps Support Command, Multinational Corps-Iraq

The number of bomb strikes on supply convoys has doubled to about 30 per week, Gen. Yves J. Fontaine, commander of the 1st Corps Support Command, said Friday. GEN. FONTAINE: Yes, sir. **It's about a hundred percent increase from last year.**

The 30 attacks per week that he cited are a relatively small part of the broader insurgent violence, which frequently includes the use of land mines and small arms as well as mortars launched against fixed sites such as the air base where Fontaine has his headquarters.

U.S. military officials say there are about 500 attacks a week across Iraq, on average.

To a degree, the addition of lifesaving armor to the thousands of combat, support and other vehicles in Iraq has worsened the logistics challenge for Fontaine. The extra weight on the vehicles creates more maintenance problems and lowers gas mileage, which means Fontaine must acquire and distribute more spare parts and fuel. [This is called a death spiral.]

In mentioning that the number of roadside bomb attacks against his troops had grown to an average of 30 a week, Fontaine did not elaborate except to say that most of the strikes are in the Sunni Triangle north and west of Baghdad.

"Our main threat is the IED for the logistics convoys coming from Kuwait, Jordan and Turkey, and then going to the Baghdad area," Fontaine said.

Q: General, Bob Burns again. **You mentioned earlier on the use of aircraft to move supplies and minimize the danger on the roads.** Is that entirely from Kuwait, or what's the amount that you move by air from Kuwait or Turkey or Jordan?

GEN. FONTAINE: We fly aircraft -- or the Air Force flies aircraft from all over the world to support our requirements. **The majority of requirements coming by aircraft are Class 9 repair parts to fix our vehicles. Sometimes we have ammunition coming by aircraft as well.**

Stupid Dinosaurs In Command: Vietnam Style "Quick Strike" Sweep Butchers Civilians; More Iraqis Sure To Join Armed Resistance

August 12, 2005 People's Daily Online

US forces ended a major military operation in the western restive Anbar province, while local residents said all they got is agony.

"US Marine forces from Regimental Combat Team-2 concluded Operation Quick Strike on Aug. 10," the US military said in a statement.

About 1,000 US marines and Iraqi forces launched the operation, dubbed Quick Strike, on Aug. 3 in the Euphrates River valley, where 14 marines were killed on the same day.

The offensive focused on areas around cities of Haditha, Haqlaniyah and Parwana, some 250 km northwest of Baghdad.

Local residents said Haditha and neighboring cities suffered a humanitarian crisis due to the military operation.

"What is happening in Haqlaniyam, Browana and Haditha is a disaster. Bodies are in the streets or buried under the rubble for days, but US forces do not allow people to move and claim the bodies. This totally ran counter to basic human rights," 33 year-old Flah Ahmed told Xinhua.

"I still can not believe that I could take my family out of the city. It was a big risk as some people were killed when trying to leave the city, but we had no other choice because there was no electricity or water in the past seven days. The air raids do not distinguish civilians and armed groups," Ahmed Al-Haditha said.

"Old people, children and women were killed. What is the United Nations doing? What are human right organizations doing? What is the Iraqi Ministry for Human Rights doing?" he said.

In the city of Haditha alone, civilian casualties reached 35, most of them women and children, some residents said.

Local residents also doubted if there are any real foreign fighters in the areas. [Wrong. They're called The Occupation. They're commanded by the Imperial politicians in Washington DC.]

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

One U.S. Soldier Dead, Five Wounded

August 12, 2005 By Daniel Lovering, Associated Press

On Thursday, an American soldier was killed and two others were wounded in an explosives training accident in central Uruzgan province, the military said. It was the seventh U.S. fatality in Afghanistan in eight days.

The two wounded Americans were evacuated for medical treatment at Bagram Air Base, the main U.S. base north of the capital, Kabul.

Qari Amadullah, believed to have led up to 50 Taliban militants armed with rockets and rocket-propelled grenades, died in a firefight Tuesday with Afghan and U.S. forces near the city of Wazikwa in Paktika province, the U.S. military said in a statement.

Three U.S. soldiers were wounded during the clash in an area where Afghan and U.S. forces were hunting suspected Taliban insurgent leaders, the statement said.

Guerrillas ambushed a vehicle carrying police in southern Zabul province's Arghandab district, sparking a gunbattle that killed three militants — including a local commander — and wounded two policemen, said the Zabul governor's spokesman, Ali Khail.

<p>OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME <u>NOW!</u></p>

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

CRAWFORD TEXAS WAR REPORTS:



Anti-war protester Cindy Sheehan (L) of Vacaville, California holds up a cross bearing her son's name as Bush passes by her protest in Crawford, Texas August 12, 2005. REUTERS/Jason Reed

Ft. Hood Soldier At Crawford “Doesn't Believe In This War”

12 August 2005 By Scott Galindez, Truthout

There is a soldier who is being deployed to Iraq in one month. He is talking about how is unit has staff shortages. He said that while he opposes this war he is not a conscientious objector. I'll talk with him now and report more later.

The last couple of hours were amazing.

The soldier from Fort Hood who is being deployed to Iraq met with Cindy at the Peace House. Cindy told him that she was doing this for him and the other troops.

He responded by telling that we need more people like her.

The 35 year old soldier doesn't believe in this war and described Iraq as a 360 degree killing zone.

This young man knows the history of the region, so he knows this an unnecessary, un-winnable war. The group talking to the soldier included Ray McGovern, and Medea Benjamin who offered to tie him to the chair so he wouldn't have to go to Iraq.

While this was happening back at the camp a busload of counter demonstrators visited the camp and laid flags in front of the crosses. The camp sang America the Beautiful as the counter demonstrators chanted we don't care." One of the counter demonstrators showed his humanity and while visibly shaking, asked a military family member for hug. They only stayed for a short time and then got back on their bus and went home to Irving.

People are still arriving here in Crawford, preparations are under way for tomorrow's rally which is at the high school football stadium in town at 12 noon. After the rally there will be a caravan back to Camp Casey.

Back at the Peace house there is buzz in the air. The phones are ringing off the hook and messages of support are coming in from all over the country ... Corretta Scott King, Rosa Parks, Barbara Lee and others have made statements of support.

Cindy has awakened a movement in the country, one that George w. Bush can no longer ignore.



Beatriz Saldivar, of Fort Worth, Texas, holds a picture of her nephew Sgt. Daniel Torres at the Cindy Sheehan camp near Crawford, Texas, Aug. 12, 2005. Torres was killed in action in Iraq and his wife is expecting a child. (AP Photo/LM Otero)

"We need to get our troops out of Iraq. The only reason Bush wants to stay there is because his buddies are getting rich and feasting off the blood of our children."
Cindy Sheehan, reported August 12, 2005 by Tom Baldwin, Independent UK



Nooshin Razani gives a testimony on the life of her brother Omead who was killed while serving in Iraq, during a rally in honor of Cindy Sheehan in downtown San Francisco Aug. 12, 2005. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez)

MORE:

Update On Cindy Sheehan: **“This Is George Bush's Accountability Moment”**

8.12.05 Via Troops Out Now

Dozens of protesters from across the country have joined Cindy Sheehan at Camp Casey, the roadside encampment where she waits to speak to President Bush about the war and about the death of her son, and dozens more are mobilizing. A delegation from Ithaca NY is preparing to go right now.

She said at a press conference today, "The election of Nov. 2 was not George Bush's accountability moment. This is George Bush's accountability moment, and I'm not leaving Crawford until we hold him accountable."

Camp Casey has grown to about 50 people, including other military families, veterans, and activists from all over the region, and there are predictions that numbers will swell to several thousand this weekend. Organizers are asking anyone who can to join them in Crawford, Texas.

MORE:

12 August 2005 By Nedra Pickler, The Associated Press

While Bush hosted a strategy session with foreign affairs and military advisers at his ranch, protesters who had traveled from across the country pitched tents outside in ditches next to Sheehan.

Among them were at least three other parents who had lost children in the war.



Jane Prewitt, right, of Birmingham, Ala. and Dante Zappala, of Philadelphia, Pa., comfort each other after an emotional prayer at Camp Casey near Crawford, Texas, Aug. 12, 2005. Prewitt's son Kelly Prewitt and Zappala's brother Sherwood Baker were both killed in Iraq. (AP Photo/LM Otero)

MORE:

When Demosthenes Spoke, They Said, 'Let Us March!'

11 August 2005 By Arianna Huffington, HuffingtonPost.com

During my many years as a writer, I've interviewed hundreds of people. But talking with Cindy Sheehan this morning was unlike any conversation I've ever had. Even though we were talking via cell phone - and had a crummy, staticky connection at that - her authenticity and passion reached through the receiver and both touched my heart and punched me in the gut.

She spoke with a combination of utter determination, unassailable integrity, fearlessness, and the peace of someone who knows that their cause is just.

Her commitment was palpable - and infectious. It reminded me an old quote about the great Greek orators: "When Pericles spoke, the people said, 'How well he speaks.' But when Demosthenes spoke, they said, 'Let us march!'"

She may not be the kind of media figure the cable news channels would order up from newsmaker central, a la Natalee Holloway.

But she is the kind of unexpected leader I've been writing about for years. One who springs not from the corridors of power, but from among the people.

The time has passed when we can stand around waiting for a knight on a white horse to ride to our rescue. We've got to look to ourselves - to the leader in the mirror.

Our elected officials have woefully failed to provide the leadership needed on this most vital issue of our time.

And stepping into that void is Cindy Sheehan. Inspiring us. Touching our conscience. Calling forth our courage and our commitment. Focusing our outrage.

And acting as a catalyst for the tens of millions of Americans who know that the war in Iraq is a disgrace.



Flowers sent in support of the protest line the roadside camp as Cindy Sheehan, left, of Vacaville, Calif., holds hands with Sue Niederer of Pennington, N.J., at the makeshift camp near the Bush ranch Aug. 11, 2005, in Crawford, Texas. **Both Sheehan and Niederer's sons were killed in the war in Iraq. Casey Sheehan was killed on April 4, 2004 and Niederer's son, Seth Dvorin was killed in action on Feb. 3, 2004.** (AP Photo/Tony Gutierrez)

MORE:

“My Son Died To Spread The Cancer Of Pax Americana, Imperialism In The Middle East”

Cindy challenges Bush to level with her: "You tell me the truth. You tell me that my son died for oil. You tell me that my son died to make your friends rich. You tell me my son died to spread the cancer of Pax Americana, imperialism in the Middle East. You tell me that, you don't tell me my son died for freedom and democracy."

12 August 2005 By Marjorie Cohn, Truthout Perspective

I first met Cindy at a support rally in San Diego for Pablo Paredes, who was on trial for refusing to deploy with a ship that was loaded with 300 Marines and bound for Iraq.

"I was told my son was killed in the war on terror," Cindy told the crowd. "He was killed by George Bush's war of terror on the world." People wept quietly as they viewed Casey's baby picture. Cindy always carries it with her.

Bill Mitchell's son Mike was killed in Iraq in the same battle with Casey Sheehan. Bill is in Crawford with Cindy. "My life's been devastated," Bill told the editor of the Iconoclast. "It's been turned upside down. Very few aspects of my life have a similarity to the past. It just kind of churns you up, shakes you out, and drops you off. I'm doing much better than I have been."

"The death of any child is a devastating event for a parent," Bill said. "A piece of your heart dies when your child dies. So I just want to stop this. I don't want to hear about anybody else dying, American or Iraqi."

It is coming together with other families of the slain that empowers Bill. "I met Cindy shortly after our sons' deaths," he said. "We did some military speak-out events together. I realized there was a power in her speaking and in her stories."

Bush claims we must stay in Iraq to honor the sacrifices of those who have fallen. Cindy says, "Why should I want one more mother to go through what I've gone through, because my son is dead ... the only way he can honor my son's sacrifice is to bring the rest of the troops home - to make my son's death count for peace and love, and not war and hatred like he stands for."

Cindy challenges Bush to level with her: "You tell me the truth. You tell me that my son died for oil. You tell me that my son died to make your friends rich. You tell me my son died to spread the cancer of Pax Americana, imperialism in the Middle East. You tell me that, you don't tell me my son died for freedom and democracy."

When questioned about the war, Bush invokes his mantra of September 11. "Yeah, but were any of those people in Iraq?" Cindy asks. "And the people who flew those planes into the Trade Center, were they from Iraq?"

"I don't believe (Bush's) phony excuses for the war," Cindy told a CBS reporter. "I want him to tell me why my son died." She said, "If he gave the real answer, people in this country would be outraged - if he told people it was to make his buddies rich, that it was about oil."

Many members of Gold Star Families for Peace, a group Cindy co-founded, Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), and Military Families Speak Out (MFSO) are in Crawford with Cindy.

Both IVAW and MFSO are calling for the United States to immediately and unilaterally withdraw from Iraq.

MORE:

Two Arizona Troops' Moms Join Crawford Action

12 August 2005 Carol Sowers, The Arizona Republic

Two Scottsdale mothers have joined a highly publicized vigil near President Bush's remote ranch in Crawford, Texas, to demand that he withdraw troops from Iraq.

"This is a real pivotal moment in the anti-war movement," said Sherry Bohlen, whose son is in Iraq. "We want to raise public awareness."

Bohlen and Rebecca Bahr, also of Scottsdale, arrived in Crawford on Wednesday afternoon, where about 200 protesters have gathered since Saturday.

Bahr was not available for comment Thursday. She has a daughter stateside who is a member of the Marine Corps.

Bohlen's son, Thor, 36, joined the Army two years ago after the Sept. 11 attacks.

"He wanted to serve his country," Bohlen said Thursday.

She said she believes military men and women serve their country honorably.

"But there is nothing honorable about a war based on lies." she said. Bush went to war "knowing there were no weapons of mass destruction," Bohlen said.

"We want to keep the pressure up," Bohlen said. She praises Sheehan for empowering people to speak out against the war.

Bohlen compared Sheehan to Rosa Parks, a Black woman who defied segregation laws when she refused to sit in the back of a bus in Montgomery, Ala., 50 years ago.

"Just as Rosa Parks refused to get off that bus," Bohlen said, "this will be the spark that sets off a nationwide anti-war movement."

Bohlen and Bahr are staying in a motel in another town because a campground is thick with mud from heavy rainstorms. She said they spend all day Thursday and much of the evening at Camp Casey, where there is food and music "and people telling their stories."

Bohlen said she is not sure when she and Bahr will return to Scottsdale.

"We are playing it by ear."



Barbara Porchia of Camden, Ark. stands on the roadside near the President Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas, Friday, Aug. 12, 2005. Porchia's son, Pfc. Johnathan Cheatham, died at age 19 when his convoy was attacked west of Baghdad. (AP Photo/LM Otero)

TROOP NEWS

**“It's Too Late For My Son,” She Said:
“Now Is The Right Time, The Right
Place, The Right Mission — To Bring
Our Troops Home”**



Sgt. Ryan Montgomery Campbell visits his mom in Kirksville, Mo., during his last two-week leave in February 2004. He was killed April 29, with seven others from his unit. In previous weeks his e-mails home had betrayed growing bitterness. (HO/Family photo)

[Thanks to Phil G who sent this in.]

Now, he wrote his mother, he couldn't trust the Army to keep its word.

On April 10, 2004, he wrote: "Well, the days are just dragging by over here ... before at least there was something to look forward to. ... I continue to hate this place. I hate the Army."

08/12/05 By ANNA VARELA, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Mary Ann MacCombie didn't protest Vietnam. She was in her early 20s and wasn't sure she understood that war well enough to take a stand.

And she didn't know anybody who died there.

When the United States invaded Iraq in March 2003, she was "cautiously supportive." And when her son's Army unit joined the fight, she thought it would be like the Gulf War in 1991 — few casualties, "in and out."

In April 2004, MacCombie's son was killed in Iraq. Suddenly the war became personal.

On Thursday, two years after the invasion of Iraq, MacCombie spoke out at an anti-war demonstration for the first time. It took her more than a year to trust herself to talk about her son without breaking down, a year spent in a state of shock and coping with the bureaucratic details that follow death in a faraway place.

She joined about three dozen protesters who gathered in front of the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Decatur to show support for Cindy Sheehan, the California mother who lost a son in Iraq and has camped out on a road leading to President Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas, where he is vacationing. Sheehan has vowed to stay until he meets with her personally.

MacCombie read a speech she wrote ahead of time because she didn't think she could speak off the cuff.

"It's too late for my son," she said, "but not for his best friend and thousands of their fellow soldiers and Marines. Now is the right time, the right place, the right mission — to bring our troops home."

Afterward, MacCombie admitted she was nervous. She knows she shook a little during her speech. But she thought she did OK, and she's willing to do it again.

She's thinking about going to Texas to join Sheehan.

When Sgt. Ryan Montgomery Campbell settled in for his yearlong tour of duty, MacCombie supported her son by sending video games, music CDs and a laptop computer, making sure his bills got paid, and e-mailing him regularly.

The 25-year-old swapped gossip with his mother about friends back home in Kirksville, Mo. They talked about the intense heat of the Baghdad summer and the college classes she was taking. Toward the end of the tour, Campbell e-mailed his mother to suggest she meet him at his base in Europe so they could see Germany and Spain together.

But a few days before he was to leave Iraq in April 2004, he e-mailed her with bad news: The Army had ordered his unit to stay for four more months.

The extension was a shock.

The soldiers in his unit had already packed and shipped their personal items to their home base in Germany. Campbell dropped plans to re-enlist, intentions based on assurances that he could be stationed in Hawaii.

Now, he wrote his mother, he couldn't trust the Army to keep its word.

On April 10, 2004, he wrote:

"Well, the days are just dragging by over here ... before at least there was something to look forward to. ... I continue to hate this place. I hate the Army."

He e-mailed his sister, Brooke Campbell, and urged her not to vote for Bush.

On April 26 he sent his sister another e-mail, noting that he was pulling 16-hour workdays providing security for an engineering unit assigned to dig up roadsides where Iraqi insurgents often hid bombs.

"My morale is at an all-time low," he wrote, "and the days are hard. Our mission is more dangerous than ever before."

On April 28, Campbell called his mother twice, sounding very discouraged. She didn't know how to console him.

The next day, he was killed by a suicide bomber along with seven other soldiers from his unit.

MacCombie buried her son in Arlington National Cemetery on May 11, 2004. The next week she moved to Atlanta to be closer to Brooke, a graduate student at Emory University.

MacCombie had remained in Kirksville so Ryan would have a home to return to. When he died, there was no point staying there, she decided. She dropped out of college because she didn't have the heart to go on.

She lives in a rented duplex in Virginia-Highland and drives the red Jeep Wrangler her son bought on his last two-week leave home. At 59, she thinks she probably looks silly in "his dream car," but it makes her feel closer to her son.

MacCombie has been slower to go public with her opposition to the war than her daughter. Brooke, 29, appeared in an anti-Bush TV ad that was aired in swing states during the 2004 election campaign.

MacCombie long ago concluded the president's stated reasons for going to war in Iraq were untrue.

One of her first steps toward protest came July 22, when Bush visited Atlanta to promote his Social Security plan and the new Medicare prescription drug benefit. She stood silently in a black T-shirt with "Bush Lied" on the front and "They Died" on the back. Names of U.S. troops who died in the war cover both sides of the shirt. Her son's name runs across the middle of the B in "Bush."

She is monitoring the situation in Texas, where news reports Thursday said more than 50 war protesters had joined Sheehan. Rumors were flying that Sheehan would be arrested. If that happens, MacCombie is ready to take her place to show Bush that the California mother "speaks for a lot of us."

Several opinion polls show support for the war has slipped. In a USA Today-CNN-Gallup Poll released this week, 56 percent of Americans surveyed said the war was going badly.

The same poll asked if they supported sending more troops, keeping troop levels the same, a partial pullout or a complete pullout. The leading choice was complete withdrawal, with 33 percent favoring that option. Twenty-three percent supported a partial withdrawal.

MacCombie rejects the idea that mothers like her endanger the troops by speaking out. [This is just lying stupid filth spewed out by the assholes who want the war and the deaths to go on.]

She feels they are already demoralized and nothing she says will put them in greater danger than they already face. [Right.]

She also knows that many people, including some mothers who have lost children in Iraq, see her criticism as bringing dishonor to the soldiers who have died. She said she respects their feelings and hopes they will respect hers.

She thinks about the mothers whose sons and daughters are still fighting. More than a thousand U.S. soldiers and Marines have been killed in Iraq since her son died. "How many is enough?" she asks.

"Maybe it's going to take more speaking out. ... It just seems to be the right time for me personally."

And, she notes sadly, she didn't speak up during Vietnam.

MORE:

Public Supports Atlanta Anti-War Protest: Veteran Joins In

From: D, Atlanta

To: GI Special

Sent: August 12, 2005

Subject: Re: ANOTHER GOLD STAR MOTHER AGAINST THE WAR

The antiwar rally/press conference that Mary Ann MacCombie spoke at was organized in support of Cindy Sheehan by the Georgia Peace and Justice Coalition/Atlanta; Military Families Speak Out; Veterans For Peace Chapter 125; Gold Star Families For Peace, Atlanta WAND, and the Atlanta International Action Center.

About 50 people showed up (at 10am), and we lined the side walk outside a local VA hospital with antiwar signs. The response from people driving by was tremendous--literally, about 99% positive--including people visiting the VA hospital, truck drivers and bus drivers.

At one point, an Army veteran, visiting the VA hospital, came out to join our protest.

He said the hospital probably won't treat him even though he injured his knee in the service, because it happened several years ago, and he can't afford to get the surgery on his own. So, unless the VA helps him, his knee will just get worse.

Polls show that the majority of folks are against the war, and Cindy Sheehan's action has forced Bush to acknowledge antiwar sentiment. Recently saying that he has "heard the voices" saying "pull out now" (but of course, he disagrees).

Hopelessness is fading away.

People feel like they "have to do something" to stop this insane war.

A few people from Georgia might go to Texas to join Cindy Sheehan. Obviously, now is the time for the antiwar movement to stand up.

MORE:

Atlanta Antiwar Action in Solidarity With Cindy Sheehan

Aug 11, 2005 Report by Debbie Clark, Anti-War.com

Atlanta war mothers and antiwar activists held a press conference and protest in front of the Atlanta Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Decatur, Georgia today in a show of solidarity with Cindy Sheehan, currently camped outside of George Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas.

The event was organized by the Georgia Peace and Justice Coalition/Atlanta; Military Families Speak Out; Veterans For Peace Chapter 125; Gold Star Families For Peace, Atlanta WAND, and the Atlanta International Action Center.

The press conference was moderated by Rev. Timothy McDonald, national chair of African American Ministers in Action.

Also speaking was Patricia Roberts of Lithonia, Georgia, mother of Army Spc. Jamaal Rashard Addison, the first Georgian killed in Iraq, on March 23, 2003; Mary Ann MacCombie of Atlanta, whose son Sgt. Ryan M. Campbell was killed in Iraq on April 29, 2004; and Howard Wolf, a Veterans For Peace member, former Navy combat pilot who served two tours in Vietnam, and father of a combat pilot who is preparing for his fourth tour in Iraq

Fox 5 Atlanta covered this event as well; however, coverage does not appear on their website. The Fox 5 coverage of this on television on the ten o'clock news contained a good clip of Patricia Roberts speaking, with Mary Ann MacCombie standing behind her. The Fox 5 news clip was also interspersed with video clips of Cindy Sheehan's protest in Crawford.

MORE:

Grieving Mothers Protest;

“No More False Leadership And No More War”

8/11/2005 By GREG BLUESTEIN, The Associated Press

DECATUR, Ga. -- Her voice suddenly steady, Mary Ann MacCombie blinked through her tears Thursday and took a very public stand against the war in Iraq that cost her son his life.

Surrounded by TV cameras and reporters, MacCombie blasted the U.S. involvement in Iraq in honor of her son, Sgt. Ryan Campbell, who was killed in April 2004 in a car bombing in south Iraq.

“It’s too late for my son, but not for his best friend and thousands of other soldiers,” said MacCombie, who was part of a procession of mothers that protested the war outside a veteran’s hospital.

“It is time to answer the call and say no more pain, no more false leadership and no more war,” said Patricia Roberts, whose son, Spc. Jamaal Rashard Addison, was killed in Iraq in March 2003.

Many in the crowd of 50 or so supporters held aloft signs proclaiming “I stand with Cindy Sheehan,” the grieving mother camped outside President Bush’s Crawford, Texas ranch whose 24-year-old son was killed last year in Sadr City.

MacCombie said she’s disagreed with other mothers of soldiers in online chatrooms over her stance. But she and other demonstrators, some who brought their toddlers, said speaking against the war is just maternal instinct.

“I think they took the only stand you can take if you’re a mother that has any conscience,” said Ronda Reynolds, a protester.

***“This Thing, The Wheels Are Coming Off It” General Says:
Bush Regime Has “Given Up” On
U.S. Military Victory,
So, Assholes Are Sending 10,000
More U.S. Troops To Iraq***

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

August 12, 2005 By Peter Baker, Washington Post Staff Writer & Aug. 11 (Bloomberg)

Administration officials have all but given up any hope of militarily defeating the insurgents with U.S. forces, instead aiming only to train and equip enough Iraqi security forces to take over the fight themselves.

In the face of all that, Bush is trying to buy time.

Pentagon plans call for increasing the 17-brigade U.S. troop presence this fall by a brigade or two, or about 10,000 troops, before bringing it down to about 15 brigades next spring and possibly to about 12 brigades **by the end of 2006**, according to officers familiar with the planning.

"It's a race against time because by the end of this coming summer we can no longer sustain the presence we have now," said retired Gen. Barry R. McCaffrey, who visited Iraq most recently in June and briefed Cheney, Rice and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

"This thing, the wheels are coming off it."

"We want to get out of this. . . . The American people are walking away from this war."

Michael O'Hanlon, an analyst at the Brookings Institution, a Washington-based policy research organization, said the administration is "trying hard to send the message that we are hoping to get out in large numbers next year" while keeping the president's commitment to stay in Iraq until the country is secure and has a democratic government.

Said Lawrence Korb, a former assistant secretary of defense for readiness in the Reagan administration, "If you want to keep the same number of ground troops there a year from now, you are going to have to do things that will destroy the all-volunteer Army." "The military guys are really worried about the future of the Army."

Iraq "has become a conflict that we can't win," said James Dobbins, director of the International Security and Defense Policy Center at RAND.

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.

Early Pullout Unlikely In Iraq

Aug. 10 Ellen Knickmeyer, Washington Post Foreign Service

U.S. military officials in Iraq said last month that it might be possible to withdraw 20,000 to 30,000 of the 138,000 American troops by next spring if Iraqi civilian leaders managed to meet deadlines for drafting a new constitution and holding elections.

On Wednesday, the military official said a significant spring withdrawal was "still possible."

But while primary military responsibility for some parts of Iraq could likely be handed over even before the elections, the official said, U.S. forces would have to play a lead role in fighting the insurgency for at least a year.

Even if a new government is elected on time in December, "the earliest they're going to be capable of running a counterinsurgency campaign is . . . next summer," the official said.

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