

GI SPECIAL 3C23:

ENOUGH: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



Keenan Gienau, 9, at the casket of his father, Second Lt. Richard B. 'Brian' Gienau, 29, March 9, 2005, in Tripoli, Iowa. Gienau, an Iowa Army National guardsman, injured in a roadside bombing in Iraq died March 3. (AP Photo/Dan Nierling)

“George Bush Killed My Grandson”

Papers Increasingly Note Antiwar Views In Covering Funerals Of The Fallen

[Thanks to S/T who sent this in.]

14 August 2005 By E&P Staff, Editor and Publisher

NEW YORK In a departure from past policies, newspapers around the country, with the U.S. death toll in Iraq again soaring, increasingly are reporting the antiwar sentiments of family members of the deceased in their coverage of funerals. The latest example comes from the Lexington (Ky.) Herald-Leader on Sunday.

It concerns the funeral of Lance Cpl. Chase Johnson Comley. The story notes that "in a departure from the norm in Kentucky -- one of the reddest of red states - - some of Comley's relatives, including a few sitting in the front pews, have spoken out strongly against the Bush administration and the war that took the 21-year-old Marine's life."

Comley's grandmother, 80-year-old Geraldine Comley of Versailles, described herself as a former Republican stalwart who is "on a rampage" against the president and the war.

"When someone gets up and says 'My son died for our freedom,' or I get a sympathy card that says that, I can hardly bear it," Geraldine Comley said.

She added that she would like nothing better than to join Cindy Sheehan, who has been holding a protest outside President Bush's ranch in Texas.

Her daughter, Missy Comley Beattie, also was critical of Bush and the war in a column she wrote for Friday's Herald-Leader.

"I've never seen my father cry, but I've heard him cry this week," she said in an interview. "And he will look at the picture of Chase that's on their hearth and say 'George Bush killed my grandson.'"

MORE:

**“Consider What We've Lost.
Too Much. Think Of What
We've Gained. Nothing.”**

As I write, Chase is being flown to Dover Air Force Base. His 6-foot-4 body is in a coffin draped with the American flag. He loved his family, his country, his Sayre classmates and his life, but we don't think he loved his mission in Iraq.

[Thanks to Don Bacon, Smedley Butler Society, & ST, who sent this in.]

Aug. 12, 2005 By Missy Comley Beattie, Lexington Ky. Herald Leader

Missy Comley Beattie of New York is the aunt of Marine Lance Cpl. Chase J. Comley of Lexington who was killed in Iraq last weekend.

He is number 1,828, 1,829 or 1,830. We don't know for sure, because so many died last week.

Marine Lance Cpl. Chase Johnson Comley died when his vehicle was hit head on by a suicide bomber. His death admits his family to a club no one wants to join: the grieving, questioning families who have heard the dreaded ring of the doorbell followed by a messenger's words, "We regretfully inform you that your son ..."

You realize that nothing you've thought, done or felt has prepared you for this reality. The feeling is so much worse than a broken heart. It is an evisceration.

As I write, Chase is being flown to Dover Air Force Base. His 6-foot-4 body is in a coffin draped with the American flag. He loved his family, his country, his Sayre classmates and his life, but we don't think he loved his mission in Iraq.

When he was recruited, he told us he would be deployed to Japan. He called every week when he wasn't in the field to tell us he was counting the days until his return.

He tried to sound upbeat, probably for our benefit, but his father could detect in Chase's voice more than a hint of futility and will never say, "my son died doing what he loved."

For those of you who still trust the Bush administration -- and your percentage diminishes every day -- let me tell you that my nephew Chase Johnson Comley did not die to preserve your freedoms. He was not presented flowers by grateful Iraqis, welcoming him as their liberator.

He died fighting a senseless war for oil and contracts, ensuring the increased wealth of President Bush and his administration's friends.

He died long after Bush, in his testosterone-charged, theatrical, soldier-for-a-day role, announced on an aircraft carrier beneath a "Mission Accomplished" banner that major combat was over.

He died in a country erupting into civil war and turned into a hellhole by Bush, a place where democracy has no chance of prevailing, a country that will become a theocracy like Saudi Arabia.

Have we won the hearts and the minds of the Iraqi people? Apparently not.

Have we spent more than half a trillion dollars -- an amount that continues to rise -- in a war that King Abdullah advised Bush against because it would disrupt the Middle East? Apparently so.

Consider what the money spent on this could have done for health care, our children's education or a true humanitarian intervention in Sudan. And then think about Bush's inauguration. Picture the lavish parties, the couture gown worn by Laura Bush. And imagine the cost of the security for the event.

And then think about Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld when he visits our troops. Picture his heavily armored vehicle, a machine impregnable to almost anything the insurgents toss in its path, while our troops are not provided sufficient armor to survive an improvised explosive device.

Think of the mismanagement of this entire war effort. Consider what we've lost. Too much. Think of what we've gained. Nothing.

And think of someone who says, "We will not cut and run," but who did just that years ago when he was called.

Think about a man who speaks about a culture of life when the words fit a wedge issue such as abortion or the right to die when medical effort has failed.

Then think about this war, Bush's not-so-intelligently designed culture of death.

Think, too, about naming a campaign "Shock and Awe" as if it's a movie and, therefore, unreal. And then think that this, perhaps, is one of the problems.

For many Americans, the war is an abstraction. But it is not an abstraction for the innocent Iraqis whose lives have been devastated by our smart bombs.

And it certainly is not an abstraction for those of us who have heard the words that change lives forever.

So think of my family's grief -- grief that will never end. Think of all the families. Think of the wounded, the maimed, the psychologically scarred.

And then consider: The preservation of our freedom rests not on U.S. imperialism but on actively changing foreign policies that are conquest-oriented and that dehumanize our own young who become fodder for endless war as well as people in other countries who are so geographically distant that they become abstract.

The answer is not Bush's mantra: "They're jealous of our freedoms."

And, finally, think about flowers:

The flowers for Chase Comley will be presented not by grateful Iraqis but by loved ones honoring him as he's lowered to his grave and buried in our hearts.

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

Three Tennessee Soldiers Were Killed In Iraq Over The Weekend

8/15/2005 NewsChannel 5.com

The 278th guardsmen were part of a patrol investigation when a rocket-propelled grenade hit their vehicle.

The soldiers were identified as Staff Sergeant Asbury Hawn, II, 35, of Lebanon, Sergeant Shannon Taylor, 30, of Smithville, and Sergeant Gary Reese, 22, of Ashland City.

James Kevin Downs, 20, from Kingston Springs survived the attack but was listed in critical condition in a German hospital.

CRAWFORD TEXAS WAR REPORTS



Tottering Thrones: Ft. Hood Troops Fraternize With Iraq War Opponents

8.15.05 By Tonia Young, Topanga Peace Alliance [Via Ed Pearl]

Co-founder of Iraq Veterans Against the War, Tim Goodrich, spent the entire day giving interview after interview. He'd like for more Iraq Veterans to join Cindy.

Tim reports that he met soldiers from Fort Hood, a nearby military base. They came to observe. Some were quiet and curious--on the fence, while many others, including Iraq vets, said specifically that they are against the Iraq war.

Saturday was phenomenal--lines of cars coming in to support Cindy Sheehan for as far as the eye could see. Many mothers and children of fallen soldiers (some who had supported the war) have joined now in the struggle to end the Iraq war.

A right-wing radio guy drummed up a hundred people (who support Bush's policy of invading sovereign countries) to harangue the peace-makers.

The police kept the harassers at a distance--on the opposite side of the road. It was poorly organized, as they came with no hats, no water and they were forced by the police to walk the last mile in the August heat to reach Camp Casey.

As they approached, they saw the Iraq War Memorial--rows upon rows of over a thousand white crosses interspersed with stars of David and crescent moons. They saw the American flags adorning the memorial, and must have felt a bit surprised.

The overblown image of us, that they are taught by the radical right, was deflated. When they arrived at Camp Casey, they had very little energy to rouse a protest. They were too exhausted. After about an hour, they walked back, leaving their own American flags among the Memorial crosses.

“Come Meet With Us Who Served In Your Imperial War”

As a few of us veterans had a good conversation with him, I realized one important thing: He gets it. This former marine was just another of countless veterans across the United States that realize the war in Iraq is a tremendous waste of life and resources.

14 August 2005 By Tim Goodrich, Iraq Veterans Against The War: Truthout

Upon arrival at Camp Casey one of the first new people I met was a Gulf War Marine veteran who now works driving a truck out of Augusta, Georgia.

While listening to his satellite radio, he heard about the encampment here in Crawford. Since he was running ahead of schedule and didn't have to be to San Antonio until the next morning, he took a detour to investigate.

As a few of us veterans had a good conversation with him, I realized one important thing: He gets it. This former marine was just another of countless veterans across the United States that realize the war in Iraq is a tremendous waste of life and resources.

The weather is very hot and humid here, as evidenced by the few who succumbed to heat stroke. Despite the lack of most creature comforts, the spirit and will of the people here amazes me.

In the end the world will know the truth, but in the meantime, I have a request for my former Commander-in-Chief. Come meet with us who served in your imperial war. Come meet with the military families who have loved ones serving in Iraq. Come meet with Cindy and the other Gold Star families. It's about time you're honest with the American people.

Asymmetric Warfare: Iraq & Texas

8.14.05 Tom Engelhardt, TomDispatch [Excerpts]

Talk about asymmetric warfare. One woman against the massed and proven might of the Bush political machine and its major media allies (plus assorted bloggers) and though some of them started whacking away immediately, Cindy Sheehan remained unfazed.

And yet Sheehan herself seems unfazed by the media circus and image-shaping going on around her. In a world where horrors are referred to euphemistically, or limned in politely, or artfully ignored, she does something quite rare -- she calls things by their names as she sees them.

She is as blunt and impolite in her mission as the media is circumspect and polite in its job, as most of the opposition to George Bush is in its "opposition." And it was her very bluntness, her ability to shock by calling things by their actual names, by acting as she saw fit, that let her break through and that may help turn a set of unhappy public opinion polls into a full-scale antiwar movement.

In fact, the Bush administration's occupation of Iraq -- as Howard Zinn put the matter recently, "(W)e liberated Iraq from Saddam Hussein, but not from us." -- is threatening to prove one of the great asymmetric catastrophes in recent military history.

A rag-tag bunch of insurgents, now estimated in the tens of thousands, using garage-door openers and cell phones to set off roadside bombs and egg-timers to fire mortars at U.S. bases (lest they be around when the return fire comes in), have fought the U.S. military to at least a draw.

We're talking about a military that, not so long ago, was being touted as the most powerful force not just on this planet at this moment but on any planet in all of galactic history.

As our President likes to speak about "our mission" in Iraq and "our mission of defeating terrorists" in the world, so Cindy Sheehan has found herself on a mission.

Our President speaks resolutely of "staying the course" in Iraq. That's exactly what Cindy Sheehan is planning to do in Crawford (and undoubtedly beyond). George prides himself on not flinching, giving ground, or ever saying he's sorry. But he also had remarkably good luck until he ran into Cindy.

Whether in his presidential runs, in Congress, or elsewhere, he really hasn't come up against an opponent who was ready to dig in and duke it out blow for blow, an opponent ready never to flinch, never to apologize, never to mince words, never to take prisoners.

Now he's got one -- and like so many personal demons, she's been called up from the Id of his own war: A mother of one of the dead who demands an explanation, an answer, when no answer he gives will ever conceivably do; a woman who, like his neocon companions, has no hesitation about going for the jugular.

And, amazingly, she's already made the man flinch twice.

“My Son Does Not Have A Life To Live. He Can't Ride His Bike Again”

Glancing toward his wife, Waste, who hears echoes of Vietnam in administration rhetoric about Iraq, said: "She bore three boys and suckled them and raised them into adulthood and raised them to be patriotic. They served their country. They were misused. They were sent to another no-win war. I don't know why we're in this war."

August 15, 2005 By KEN HERMAN, Cox News Service, CRAWFORD, Texas

On the hot pavement on a hot Texas Sunday afternoon, a mother walked slowly, looking for her son.

About halfway down the long row of white crosses, she found one bearing his name — Ryan M. Campbell — rubber-banded to the cross.

"It's OK," said Mary Ann MacCombie of Atlanta as she saw the cross that served as another reminder that her boy had been killed in Iraq. "It's not OK, but, I don't know. I don't know."

A deep sigh punctuated her words as tears welled in her eyes.

"It's going to take a long time to really, really accept," she said.

MacCombie, like many, has made the trek to Crawford in support of Cindy Sheehan of California, the grieving mother who has camped out here for more than a week while demanding to be allowed to ask President Bush why her son had to die in Iraq.

Campbell, 25, died on April 29, 2004, the victim of a suicide bomber.

"It's meant a great deal to see this kind of love and support and a common cause," MacCombie said Sunday, prior to separating from the crowd for her solitary walk down the row of crosses. "I spent over a year grieving in private. And I'll never be the same. Bush will be the same. I won't."

On Sunday, anger and hurt joined other emotions MacCombie endured as she heard a recording of Bush's Saturday comments about not meeting with Sheehan.

The president, whose Saturday included a bike ride and a Little League game, as well as briefings and meetings, said "it's important for me to be thoughtful and sensitive to those who have got something to say."

"So I'm mindful of what goes on around me," he said. "On the other hand, I'm also mindful that I've got a life to live, and will do so."

After hearing the recording, MacCombie said, "It hurts, because my son does not have a life to live. He can't ride his bike again."

Two other Georgians who have spent several days at Camp Casey do have direct family links to the war.

"We have three sons and two grandchildren that are all veterans of this war," said Linda Waste, who traveled here with her husband, Philip, from their home in Shellman Bluff to show solidarity with Cindy Sheehan and to press Bush to develop a strategy for speeding the return of U.S. troops.

"It's a war based on lies," Linda Waste said Friday, "and we need to bring our troops home."

The couple has three sons on active duty in the Army. All have served tours in Iraq, and one is serving his second tour now in Baghdad. They have a granddaughter in the Army and a grandson in the Navy.

Both of them have served in the Iraq campaign as well. The couple wouldn't give the names of their offspring for fear that they might be punished, but they showed photos of them all in uniform.

"We're not traitors," said Philip Waste, a retired elevator mechanic who said he spent four years in the Navy.

Glancing toward his wife, Waste, who hears echoes of Vietnam in administration rhetoric about Iraq, said: "She bore three boys and suckled them and raised them into adulthood and raised them to be patriotic. They served their country. They

were misused. They were sent to another no-win war. I don't know why we're in this war."

BUSH REFUSES TO SET TIMETABLE FOR WITHDRAWAL FROM CRAWFORD: Early End to Vacation Would 'Send Terrible Signal,' President Says

August 14, 2005 The Borowitz Report

President George W. Bush said today that he understands and respects the views of those who are calling for him to cut short his summer vacation, but warned that an immediate withdrawal from Crawford, Texas would "send a terrible signal to the enemy."

"The enemy would like nothing better than to see me cut short my vacation and get back to the White House," Mr. Bush told reporters. "They hate my freedom."

While the president said that he would withdraw from Crawford "soon," he refused to set a timetable for his departure from the ranch, saying that much work there still needs to be done.

Mr. Bush, who has been spending much of his vacation clearing brush, said that he is making great progress in training ranch hands to take over that job for him, but cautioned that they are not yet prepared to do the job themselves.

"Once the ranch hands have shown that they are able to clear the brush on their own, I will withdraw from Crawford, but that day has not yet come," the president said.

Mr. Bush was dismissive of polls showing that the public thinks his current vacation is becoming a quagmire, much like his August 2001 vacation.

At the White House, spokesman Scott McClellan defended the president's decision to remain in Crawford indefinitely: "President Bush deserves August off, especially when you consider how many summers he had to go to school."

Bits And Pieces

"We are here for all the soldiers who don't have a voice anymore," says Sergio Torres, whose son Army Sgt. Daniel Torres was killed in February when a

roadside bomb hit his unarmored Humvee. 15 August 2005, Brad Knickerbocker and Kris Axtman, The Christian Science Monitor

15 August 2005 By William Rivers Pitt, Truthout Perspective

Over the weekend, as the camp prepared for the arrival of the counter-demonstrators, a huge diesel pickup truck rumbled into camp with its nose menacingly pointed towards the tents. It sat for a while, and everyone waited to see what would happen.

Ann Wright, the main organizer of camp activities, finally approached the truck and met the driver. He was a father, Wright discovered, and his son had been killed in Iraq.

He did not agree with this protest, he said, but wanted to know if his son's name was on one of the crosses in the Arlington West cemetery. Ann Wright invited the man to walk the rows of crosses and find his son's name. They found it. Ann and the man from the truck sat down in front of the cross, wrapped their arms around each other, and wept.

Later, the man shared a beer with Cindy Sheehan and told her he loved her. That is a victory, one that surpasses any sort of mean politics.

Sherry Bohlen of Scottsdale, Ariz., drove with two friends to Crawford last week but did not leave Sunday as planned.

“This is history in the making, and it’s hard to walk away from that,” said Bohlen, whose son, Thor, has been in Iraq for a month. August 15, 2005 Angela K. Brown, Associated Press

August 14, 2005 By Ken Herman Cox News Service

Pro- and anti-war forces continued to gather in Crawford and demonstrators held dueling rallies on Saturday.

“We speak out ... so that your loved one can be next to you and not in a picture,” Fort Worth resident Beatriz Saldivar told anti-war demonstrators at Crawford's Tonka Park.

Saldivar's nephew, 23-year-old Army Sgt. Daniel Torres, was killed Feb. 4 by a bomb blast during patrol duty in northern Iraq.

Saldivar was among the seven speakers who lost a family member in the Iraq war.

Veterans and families of servicemembers also spoke at the event, which was sponsored by several anti-war organizations including Military Families Speak Out, Gold Star Families for Peace, Iraq Veterans Against the War and Veterans For Peace.

It is really incredible that we are doing so well in the media because I keep telling all of the reporters that I am doing their jobs. I am asking the tough questions of the President that they don't ask. Cindy Sheehan, 13 August 2005

TROOP NEWS

Battling The Pentagon: Father-Son Legal Team Has Won Four Cases On Ex-Soldiers' Behalf

"It's really been an outpouring of calls," said Stuart Slotnick. "I'm talking about hundreds of calls involving people who joined the Army and served eight years according to agreements, and now the Army won't let them out pursuant to contract. This is unconstitutional. At a basic level, it's just plain unfair."

[Thanks to Don B, who sent this in.]

08-15-2005 The New York Law Journal

From Manhattan to Waikiki, an informal network of private attorneys seems to be coalescing around a new sign of difficult times for the U.S. military: Uncle Sam's surprise greetings to soldiers who have fulfilled their reservist obligations according to contract.

In recent New York cases, for example, lawyers claim the U.S. Army targets soldiers who have served eight years of active and inactive duty. When they make pro forma application for honorable discharge, the Army is slow to sign off and sends out deployment orders during this period of status limbo.

The lawyers battling this phenomenon use the media's term to describe it: a "back-door draft," or conscription in all but name.

The Defense Department and the U.S. Army have denied that any such thing is going on.

Nevertheless, said attorney Barry I. Slotnick of his work on behalf of plaintiffs grown accustomed to civilian life, "Every one of our suits starts the same way. A client comes in showing us an order to report for duty with regard to Operation

Iraqi Freedom, usually with a three-day notice to show up someplace at 7 o'clock in the morning."

Slotnick and his son Stuart P. Slotnick -- both of whom are litigation partners at the New York office of Buchanan Ingersoll -- have prevailed against the Army in four such cases during the past year. Each time, the father-son team filed a federal suit as a lever in winning freedom for their clients in subsequent military administrative hearings.

Bruce Hill, a spokesman for the Army's 77th Regional Readiness Command at Fort Totten on Staten Island, is unsurprised by the Slotnicks' string of victories.

"I'll bet they won hands down," said Hill. He said reservists who have served eight-year obligations "cannot be forced" to go beyond that, according to "mandatory" guidelines set down by §135-91 of U.S. Army Regulations. But disputes exist, said Hill, in cases involving "individual officers' discretion."

Typically, according to complaints lodged by the Slotnicks, disputes arise when reservists resign by seeking honorable discharge, which is their option following the eight-year period or at any time thereafter.

For instance, in the Eastern District matter of *Petitto v. Rumsfeld*, CV 05 1509, "the Army departed from its own policy of processing (resignations) ... within 180 days of receipt," allowing more than 10 months to pass.

In that interim, according to the suit, plaintiff Carl A. Petitto, a decorated veteran of the Persian Gulf War in the early 1990s, "first received order 01482, dated 23 February 2005, involuntarily ordering him to a three-day pre-mobilizing training course in Queens ... effective 26 February 2005, a date that had already passed."

The Slotnicks, along with Honolulu solo practitioner Eric A. Seitz and Marti Hiken, co-chair of the Military Law Task Force of the National Lawyers Guild, call such interims "stonewalling."

According to the Slotnicks, not a day goes by without inquiries from lawyers and potential clients from around the country seeking direction in their own actions against Pentagon paperwork.

Although nobody knows precisely how many reservists are affected by the so-called back-door draft, Seitz estimates the number could be as high as 5,000.

According to Hiken, there were 32,000 telephone inquiries to the guild's "G.I. hotline" service last year on problems of all types, up from 28,000 calls in 2003, when the United States invaded Iraq.

"It's really been an outpouring of calls," said Stuart Slotnick. "I'm talking about hundreds of calls involving people who joined the Army and served eight years according to agreements, and now the Army won't let them out pursuant to contract. This is unconstitutional. At a basic level, it's just plain unfair."

Hiken has taken note of what has become known as the "Slotnick brief," applying it to the body of materials used by the Military Law Task Force to help train attorneys.

"The networks growing up, nationally and internationally, are astounding," said Hiken. "But still, we need more lawyers."

Despite their own clients being prevailing parties at Army administrative hearings, said Stuart Slotnick, "We've decided not to pursue attorney's fees. If we lose, our clients bear greater expense."

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)

“Marine Of The Year” Opens Fire On Crowd Of Civilians

[Thanks to AS, who sent this in.]

August 15, 2005 By Denise Lavoie, Associated Press

LAWRENCE, Mass. — A decorated Marine accused of firing a shotgun at a crowd of revelers pleaded innocent Monday to attempted murder and other charges and will be evaluated at a state psychiatric hospital to determine whether he's competent for trial.

Daniel Cotnoir, 33, of Lawrence, was named “Marine of the Year” by Marine Corps Times last month for his service in Iraq. A mortician by trade, he prepared the bodies of dead U.S. service members for burial and later said the job took a heavy psychological toll.

Early Saturday morning, police said, he pointed a 12-gauge shotgun out the window of his second-floor apartment and fired a shot at a noisy crowd that was leaving nearby nightclubs. Lissette Cumba, 15, and Kelvin Castro, 20, were both struck in the leg by fragments. They were treated at local hospitals and released.

Prosecutor Poppi Hagan told the judge that some of the club-goers had seen Cotnoir standing with his gun in the window of his apartment over his family's funeral home, but thought the weapon was fake.

Cumba's cousin, Stephanie Tejada, who was with the crowd that night, described seeing the muzzle poking through the open window.

“I just thought he wanted to scare us to get away from the area,” said Tejada, who attended Cotnoir’s arraignment Monday in Lawrence District Court. “Who shoots at an open crowd?”

Last month, Marine Corps Times chose Cotnoir over 180,000 other candidates for its annual Marine of the Year award.

Now a Marine reservist, Cotnoir said in an interview last month with the Eagle-Tribune that he was getting counseling at a veterans hospital in Bedford.

“It’s a lot harder to talk about the job now than it was at the time to actually do it,” he said. “The stories I’ve gained from my deployment aren’t the kind of stories you share.”

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Line Of Defence – “If Anyone Was Shot, They'd Blow Up The Tanks”

August 05 2005 By Ewa Jasiewicz, Morning Star

Ewa Jasiewicz reports from Basra on recent solidarity visit with the General Union of Oil Employees (GUOE) (www.basraoilunion.org)

Basra oil refinery is towering above us. A wheezing, whirring, oil-products factorium rooted in the She'iba dessert. Refinery manager Mr Wahid gestures up at the decrepit structure. 'All of this was destroyed' he says, referring to the damage caused by the Kuwait-Iraq war. 'And Iraqi workers repaired all of it'.

Mr Wahid is a supporter of the GUOE and has stood by the union, echoing its' demands when it has taken strike action. Asked about his views on privatisation, he is candid, 'Not now. Iraq is in no way at a level where it can accept any privatisation. It's not the time now'.

Unbeknownst to me, Mr Wahid is standing within earshot when I ask General Secretary Falih Abood Amara about whether it is possible to have an oil industry without bosses?

Falih explains that structure, managers, supervisors are necessary but that definitely a boss can come from the ranks of the workers. Mr Wahid then chips in saying, 'Managers should not be authoritarian. We need to have a co-operative effort and collective responsibility. Decisions should be taken collectively'.

But not all managers are so conciliatory. Following strike action at the Basra Pipeline Company in June 2003, strike organisers were punished. 'We were deprived of land for building employee homes, forbidden from taking part in foreign delegations and many other things', says Hadi Shabood Mootlek, GUOE rep at the Basra Pipeline Company. 'The boss is still angry from that time and considers us enemies. We are still hurting'.

A violet-orange sunset is spreading across the sky when myself, Faraj Rabat Mizban, Executive Committee Member responsible for cultural affairs and Ibrahim Radi Abd Wahid, Responsible for company affairs, meet a group of around 10 engineers and manual workers, along with their supervisor.

The supervisor is an older, white-haired, steely-eyed man in his 60s. I ask them a provocative question. 'Western companies like KBR and Bechtel, they think they know better than you'. It's the bedrock propaganda of the bomb-and-build industry, one of the key lies of the privatisation through reconstruction racket, the one that tries to hide the fact this it is working class people who build and rebuild industries, and know their industries better than anyone else. Particularly in Iraq.

'Without offence' begins the older, worn-faced supervisor, 'We are the cradle of civilisation, the birthplace of science, law, and mathematics, yes, the dictatorship regressed us. But we have the skills and intelligence and resources to be the most developed country in the world!

“We could be at the same level as America if we had the chance. The science, the knowledge, the talents, the faith we have them all but we were cut down, with wars, sanctions, and Saddam'.

Asked what they want for the future, the whole group responds, 'to rebuild our country'. 'But on our terms' interjects the supervisor, 'If we need assistance or experts in any field, we will ask for them. It has to come from us, it should not be imposed on us'.

Despite being conscious of the national and international political dynamics around them, many Iraqi workers are not clear on what the oncoming dynamic of privatisation will really mean. Iraq's oil industry has been nationalised since 1972 and the state sector was, before the Iran-Iraq war, the most advanced in the Middle East. Privatisation is an alien term for people who have only known a state-run economy. And the group I met was no exception.

Faraj Mizban begins to explain. And when Faraj talks, you listen.

Currently chief fire-fighter at the Basra Refinery, he was jailed and tortured for organising protests in the 1991 uprising against the regime. Now he writes essays and communiqués in his spare time on union principles, workers rights and the political battlefield that is post-totalitarian dictatorship occupied Iraq.

Dusk is descending and the flare from the Basra refinery is warping and licking the sky behind him. It lends the optical illusion of his words being punctuated with flames of fire.

He begins intently, calmly, addressing the workers before him. 'With privatisation, there are four phenomena, four essential ingredients. Capital, Means of Production, Production itself and the Human element. Privatisation puts the human element and contribution as the lowest denominator; it is in the last place.

"In our concept, as people from the East, as Muslims, it is the human element, which comes first; this is top of the list, followed by production and means of production and capital in the last place. The value system held by advocates of privatisation is the opposite of our value system. We emphasise the human element because we believe humanity carries the most value'.

The GUOE started out as the Southern Oil Company Union. Their first strike focused on wages for the workforce, which had not been paid for two months. June 2003 saw around 100 activists blockade Basra Refinery, preventing oil tankers leaving to service British occupation troops. Workers laid a crane across the road and sat behind it.

During the four-hour stand-off, British troops allegedly threaten to kill workers, pointing their weapons at them and physically assaulting them. Some workers slid under the tankers and signalled with their cigarette lighters that if anyone was shot, they'd blow up the tanks.

Negotiations ensued and the protest ended peacefully with workers paid within hours.

Following the protest, union membership leapt from 100 to 3000. Since then it has expelled Halliburton subsidiary KBR from oil sector locations, shut down oil exports over low wages, eradicated the last two levels of Bremer's Order 30 wage table, found work for Petroleum institute graduates, and reconstructed port equipment, pipelines, refineries and drilling rigs.

Yet despite a current membership of 23,000 and trade union councils in nine oil sector companies in Amara, Nassiriyah and Basra, the GUOE is still illegal. The government still refuses to grant it any legal status or recognise it for bargaining purposes.

Autonomous reconstruction is a great source of pride for the Union.

In the past two years, workers at the Iraqi Drilling Company (IDC) have rebuilt 12 drilling rigs in a sector which was looted post-war for four months. British forces did nothing to protect the sector says Ghafla Talib Dahmash, head of the IDC Union. 'The military strategy of America was to destroy the public infrastructure of Iraq' he says, 'On the other hand, American forces undertook protection of some private sectors. This was in order to steer the country in a capitalist direction, to create the conditions, which would force privatisation. But we succeeded in our reconstruction achievements, and under great pressure; under American missiles, tanks and warplanes'.

Proud, measured, and steadfast, Ghafla continues, 'We did this ourselves. Foreign companies have brought us nothing, and they have reconstructed nothing. We have had no help, not from the occupation and not even from the government of Iraq'.

Hassan Jumaa calls workers like Ghafla 'mujahadeen' or 'fighters'. 'Because they succeeded in making something out of nothing'. And challenged the privatisation agenda or economic imperialism agenda, as Hassan refers to it, of the occupation.

Packed into the office of a two-room IDC cabin in the Basra desert are four international delegates, seven GUOE reps and IDC manager Nasser Muhsin Mohan. The back room, around 7 ft by 12 contains three beds, and a small television perched on a small cabinet. The office, of the same size, consists of two desks, a few chairs, a notice board and a rattling 1970s air conditioner.

'Look at this cabin' says Hassan, gesturing around the room, 'Is this the kind of accommodation an engineer should have? This is where engineers sleep and work. Look at it', he goes on to say, 'In Iraq, an engineer with 15 years of experience earns less than the lowest paid, basic-skilled worker in the North Sea in Scotland. See the neighbouring oil states like Kuwait, Saudi, and Jordan? These are oil countries, like Iraq, but their workforces have much higher wages, and better conditions than we do, even though we have increased efficiency and oil production and we are creating new wealth.'

The Leadership of the GUOE has repeatedly stressed the need for organisational training. For 16 years, since Saddam outlawed them in 1987, unions were illegal throughout the public sector (including the oil industry) - with the exception of the 'yellow' unions which represented not workers but Saddam's security apparatus.

Key goals of the GUOE are the creation of shop stewards and organisational structures which can ensure the perpetuation of the union, generation after generation.

The struggle against the economic occupation of Iraq can be won through the united action of effectively organised workers.

Workers who are able to translate their consciousness of their own power and opposition to occupation and privatisation, into a culture and structure of open organisation, accountability and collective responsibility. A structure that can cultivate and sustain struggle, counteract co-optation, and recover from attacks, an institution of solidarity, a union.

Assorted Resistance Action

8.15.05 Antonio Castaneda, Washington Post & AP & CRIENGLISH.com & (KUNA) & Middle East Online & Reuters & AFP

A Turkish lorry driver has been killed in Dujail, 40 kilometres north of Baghdad, as a roadside booby-trapped cow carcass exploded targeting a convoy of 30 trucks transporting supplies to the US Army.

Mohammad Hussein, a member of the municipal council of Al-Khaliss, just north of Baquba, and his driver were shot dead by gunmen, a military source said.

Four Iraqi soldiers were killed and three wounded in an attack at a checkpoint near the restive town of Baquba north of Baghdad, an Iraqi military source said.

"Armed men attacked... the position south of Baquba with grenades and small arms, killing three soldiers and seriously wounding two others," the source said.

The attack took place near the village of Bohruz, 15 kilometres (nine miles) south of Baquba, the main town in Diyala province.

In Baghdad, one Iraqi soldier was killed and another wounded when they came under fire in the eastern neighbourhood of Al-Amiriyah, an interior ministry official said.

A mortar struck the rear courtyard of the Interior Ministry on Monday, wounding five troops and three civilians, police Lt. Col. Fouad Assad said.

In Baquba, 35 miles northeast of Baghdad, the body of a government food program worker was found, police said.

Fifteen Iraqis, including six policemen, were wounded as a motorbike riding suicide bomber wearing an explosive-laden belt blew himself up against a parked police patrol vehicle in the central Karadha district of Baghdad, the interior ministry official.

An AFP photographer at the site said the body of the bomber was lying in a pool of blood with the belt around it.

Militants on Monday killed two and injured three personal guards of Iraq's Vice-President Adel Abdul-Mahdi.

According to a military source, the VP's convoy was assaulted with a bomb blast in Dayala governorate north-east of Baghdad.

The VP, added the source, was not in the convoy when the blast occurred.

As eyewitness claimed that the VP's guards opened fire randomly after the blast leading to the death of two civilians,

BAGHDAD - Lieutenant Colonel Khaled Badran of the Iraqi army was shot dead as he drove in central Baghdad with his brother, police said. The brother was wounded.

BAGHDAD - Mohammed Hassan Muhyi, a member of a municipality in the western Adil district of the capital, was killed by militants.

TIKRIT - Mahir Younis, an Iraqi contractor working with the U.S. army, was abducted for the second time in al-Qadissiya area, north of Tikrit, a police source said.

In Samaraa, 125 kilometres north of Baghdad, another Iraqi soldier has been shot and a colleague wounded as insurgents attacked their US-Iraqi patrol.

An Iraqi woman was killed in Balad, 75 kilometres north of Baghdad, as a US-Iraqi military base was hit by a mortar attack. The woman had reported to the base to inquire about her son who is a soldier and had not gone home for two months.

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

Roadside Bomb Kills Four Collaborator Soldiers In Center Of Fallujah

August 15, 2005 Xinhua

A roadside bomb attacked an Iraqi security forces patrol in Fallujah on Monday, killing four Iraqi soldiers, witness said

The bomb was detonated at around 7 a.m. (GMT 0300) when Iraqi security forces were patrolling in the center of the city, some 60 km west of Baghdad, witnesses told Xinhua.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Civil Wars

From: Alan Stolzer
Sent: Aug 15, 2005
To: GI Special

Those who wring hands and beat breasts over the possibility of civil war in Iraq might start contemplating that same possibility here, given the state of political turmoil over Iraq that might bring us to another American tragedy.

“The Criminals In Charge Don't Give A Damn About Democracy”

You my age may find yourself reacquainted with the word "fragging", with widespread disobedience to orders, with sabotage of naval vessels, particularly aircraft carriers, by crews.

You'll have your memory jogged over printing of underground newspapers opposing the war by active duty troops on land and sea.

You'll remember that "support the troops" was code for "support the war", then as now, though the preferred hawk bumper sticker was "America, Love It, or Leave It". That's how it was.

August 11, 2005 By Harvey H. Reading, Retired and mad as hell in Shoshoni, WY; Information Clearing House [Excerpt]

This is for you who might otherwise be visibly protesting the unjustifiable and immoral war that your government wages on the people of Iraq, and those of the Muslim faith in general.

For you who hesitate for fear of being compared with the untruthfully labeled "spitters" and "traitors" who protested the Vietnam war, from its beginnings in 1945 until its end. You should be proud to carry on a great tradition of protest that stretches back to the founding of our country. And, let me tell you, we need a massive, proud, long-lasting reassertion of the peace movement right now ... before the ruling criminals steal every last bit of our freedom.

Those of you who were children during, or born after the Vietnam war have some excuse for falling prey to myth, to the rewriting of history, particularly those of you whose educational opportunities were limited by increased college costs to the brainwashing of our K-12 system.

However, those of you who, like me, came of age during the 60's have no excuse for deleting from your memories the truth of what was happening then. Your self-imposed ignorance is in large part responsible for the repetition of history that unfolds in Iraq.

Your memory lapse and willingness to support the current crop of ruling criminals, and the criminals who preceded them, are responsible for killing nearly a million Iraqis and two thousand - and climbing - of your own children in our military.

Shame on you! You're falling for the same pack of lies that you were fed 35 years ago. Democracy my foot. The criminals in charge don't give a damn about democracy.

They want CONTROL. Just like they did in Vietnam. But, as in Vietnam, they're not going to get it.

In their bloody process of reaching that conclusion you, the self-deluded, and the rest of us, are going to have sons and daughters die or be maimed, not for defense of country, but for their lies.

During the Vietnam war, the only spitting was by pro-war types on peace demonstrators.

Claims to the contrary are just lies from supporters of that war, like the current one, based entirely on lies.

Not a shred of evidence has been found to support the charge that the peace movement of that day (or the present) was spitting on troops. There weren't even rumors. It's just a right-wing myth, much like the myth that encourages people to believe that Vietnam continues to hold U.S. prisoners.

These myths were conceived by vile liars whose massive egos were "shamed" by our loss to a people determined to fight to the death against colonialism, first against the French, then against our government. The myths continue, promoted by pathetic, and dangerous, supporters of U.S. dominance over the world. This nonsense must be discarded.

My former, and home state, the great "liberal" enclave called California (which elected Reagan twice as governor, twice as President, and Nixon twice as President) considered a legislative bill in 2003, as the Iraq invasion became imminent. It was approved by the current parody of a governor in August 2003. The new law doubled the penalties for assault and battery (spitting is battery), against victims belonging to U.S. armed forces.

The power of a myth. Why did it take over 30 years for such a law to be passed? Simple, assaults on military personnel were NOT EVEN RUMORED during the Vietnam war. The law is simply an example of jingoism, not patriotism, in action. An example of deification of militarism. Just like those meaningless magnets that people plaster on their cars.

Do a little research. Find out what was happening in this country during the mid 60's through the mid 70's. Study our history of dealing with Vietnam from 1945 through the present. Type the following into your favorite Internet search program: spit Vietnam; then start digging, don't stop with the first page that fits into your preconceived notion of reality.

You'll learn that Vietnam veterans joined the peace movement in droves and in leadership roles. You'll find that only about three percent of them reported unfriendly homecomings of any sort, and that 75 percent returned opposing the war, all based on surveys taken at the time.

You'll find that the active-duty troops were supportive of the peace movement, that many of them risked courts-martial, prison, and less-than-honorable discharges in the name of peace.

You my age may find yourself reacquainted with the word "fragging", with widespread disobedience to orders, with sabotage of naval vessels, particularly aircraft carriers, by crews.

You'll have your memory jogged over printing of underground newspapers opposing the war by active duty troops on land and sea.

You'll remember that "support the troops" was code for "support the war", then as now, though the preferred hawk bumper sticker was "America, Love It, or Leave It". **That's how it was.** Not what you younger folks learned in the page or two of high school history covering that war.

You know, every time I hear Cindy Sheehan speak on television, or read something she has written, I break into tears and sobs, uncontrollable.

And then, I feel an incredibly deep and abiding anger over what is being done to my country by those in power who murdered her son.

For the sake of all those who have lost sons or daughters, and all those who may, for the sake of our own humanity and survival, we must rise up in numbers uncountable, demanding an end to this war NOW, not later.

And, we must accept no double-talk or compromise from those who we pay to represent us. It is our patriotic duty.

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.

OCCUPATION REPORT

***An All-Time Classic Of Blind
Imperial Arrogance:
Foreign Occupation Officer Has
Local Kid Arrested For Tearing Up
His Precious Leaflet And (Gasp)
"Smiling About It"***

August 15, 2005 By Matthew Cox, Army Times staff writer

RAWAH, Iraq — Soldiers are beginning to think fighting off suicide car-bombers here was easy compared to convincing the locals to trust coalition forces.

The troops with B Company, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, patrol the streets daily here in search of insurgent activity, but they also spend a lot of time trying to convince the residents of this town near the Syrian border that they no longer live under the control of terrorists. [When you read what happens to the kid, that becomes the best stand up comedy line of the year.]

The lull in the fighting since U.S. forces arrived here in mid-July has prompted many locals to return to their homes. People are beginning to cooperate with coalition forces in small ways, such as spilling the locations of enemy weapons caches.

Still, progress is slow and some residents are boldly defiant of U.S. troops.

During an Aug. 11 patrol, a 20-year-old Iraqi man tore up a coalition flier in the face of Capt. Mark Ivezaj, Bravo Company commander. U.S. forces have been handing out the single sheet of paper explaining why American and Iraqi forces are in Rawah and how residents can cooperate.

“Ask him why he thinks it’s OK to tear up our stuff in front of us!” Ivezaj shouts in a stern voice to his interpreter, while questioning the man. The young man’s demeanor changes quickly. Fear and a touch of regret spread across his face.

“I’m just a kid,” he replies through the interpreter.

Ivezaj orders his soldiers to detain him. The frustration is clear in his voice.

He tore it up “right in front of me and smiled about it,” he said, shaking his head.

A few minutes later, Ivezaj turns the man over to nearby Iraqi forces for questioning.

The steady enemy attacks on Stryker vehicle patrols have eased since 3-21 and other U.S. forces arrived here in mid-July. Nevertheless, they remain a moment-to-moment threat.

Troops with Bravo Company’s 2nd Platoon got a violent reminder of that Aug. 12 when the Stryker they were riding in rolled over a homemade bomb, fashioned from an anti-tank mine and a 155mm artillery shell.

The blast rocked their vehicle and although no one was killed, one soldier suffered a cracked pelvic bone, another had cuts to his face and a third complained of chest pains. The three were flown out by medevac helicopter to the combat support hospital in Balad for more advanced medical treatment. Three other soldiers suffered minor injuries and later returned to duty.

"At some point, the citizens of Rawah need to make a stand for themselves," Ivezaj said. **"The days of living in fear are over. [Unless, of course, your tear up a piece of paper the local Imperial dictator likes, and dare to smile, in which case it's arrest and off to the tender mercies of the Iraqi "forces" for "questioning." Golly gee, isn't liberation, freedom and democracy just wonderful?] "It's a matter now of getting the citizens together, and with our help, make the terrorists live in fear."**

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

Wonderland

15 August 2005 By Robert Fisk, The Independent UK

This is a unique place in which Saddam's trial is always being predicted to start in two months' time - on at least four occasions this has happened - in which Iraqi reconstruction is always about to restart and in which insurgent strength is always weakening.

In fact, Iraqi guerrillas are now striking at the Americans 70 times a day and so fearful are senior American officers of an increase in attacks that this has become their principle reason for trying to prevent the release of 87 further photographs and videotapes of the Abu Ghraib prison torture and abuses.

**Half Billion Stolen;
Bremer Implicated:
He Lies About Knowing Major Player;
"There Are No Real Contracts, Even.
They Just Signed Papers And Took The
Money"**

Knights Ridder reported last month that \$300 million in defense funds had been lost. But the report indicates that the audit board uncovered a much larger scandal, with losses likely to exceed \$500 million, that's roiling the ministry as it struggles to build up its armed forces.

Aug. 11, 2005 By Hannah Allam, Knight Ridder Newspapers

BAGHDAD, Iraq - Iraqi investigators have uncovered widespread fraud and waste in more than \$1 billion worth of weapons deals arranged by middlemen who reneged or took huge kickbacks on contracts to arm Iraq's fledgling military, according to a confidential report and interviews with U.S. and Iraqi officials.

The Iraqi Board of Supreme Audit, in a report reviewed by Knight Ridder, describes transactions suggesting that senior U.S.-appointed Iraqi officials in the Defense Ministry used three intermediary companies to hide the kickbacks they received from contracts involving unnecessary, overpriced or outdated equipment.

Knight Ridder reported last month that \$300 million in defense funds had been lost. But the report indicates that the audit board uncovered a much larger scandal, with losses likely to exceed \$500 million, that's roiling the ministry as it struggles to build up its armed forces.

The episode deprives Iraq's military of essential gear that could help prepare the way for U.S. forces to withdraw. It also raises questions about the new government's ability to provide an effective defense against an entrenched insurgency and win broad acceptance among Iraqis.

The audit board's investigators looked at 89 contracts of the past year and discovered a pattern of deception and sloppiness that squandered more than half the Defense Ministry's annual budget aimed at standing up a self-sufficient force, according to a copy of the 33-page report.

Its revelations offer the most comprehensive look to date at corruption that allegedly thrived for eight months or longer even with about 20 American civilian advisers working alongside Iraqi defense chiefs, including those now under investigation.

Iraqi Defense Minister Saadoun al-Dulaimi confirmed most of audit board report's findings in an interview last Sunday, saying that at least \$500 million in Iraqi money essentially has disappeared.

Among the findings:

-Senior Iraqi officials kept little or no record of major purchases, sometimes noting lucrative deals in "undated and unnumbered" memos.

Nearly all purchases contained a clause - unusual in international contracting of this magnitude - that required the contract's full value to be paid up front in cash.

-Instead of buying directly from a foreign company or government, Iraqi arms procurers hired third-party companies to negotiate the contracts.

When Iraqi leaders later complained about unfulfilled contracts, they discovered they had no recourse to demand a refund because the payments were made to Iraqi middlemen who vanished after receiving the millions. "The undertakings make no obligation ... toward the Iraqi Ministry of Defense," according to the report.

-The sole beneficiary on 43 of the 89 contracts was a former currency-exchange operator, Nair Mohamed al-Jumaili, whose name doesn't even appear on the contracts. **At least \$759 million in Iraqi money was deposited into his personal account at a bank in Baghdad, according to the report.**

"There's no rebuilding, no weapons, nothing," said retired Iraqi Lt. Gen. Abdul Aziz al-Yaseri, who worked in the Defense Ministry at the height of the alleged corruption. "There are no real contracts, even. They just signed papers and took the money."

Lt. Gen. David H. Petraeus, who oversees the U.S. military's training of Iraqi troops, conducts weekly briefings with the defense minister. Other Iraqi defense officials seldom are spotted without American civilian advisers nearby.

The close relationship has raised questions as to how \$500 million or more could vanish without U.S. intervention to stop the suspicious contracts that flowed for at least eight months.

"Ask them. I have the same question," al-Dulaimi said. "I blame those who posted them (the officials under investigation). And, by the way, the CPA posted them."

"Before me, there was another prime minister. His name was Bremer," Ayad Allawi, who served as interim premier when the corruption investigation began sometime last year, told Knight Ridder.

"He ran this country, he had this ministry and a lot of the corruption started then. ... There was no auditing. Airplanes were flying in and the money was handed out in suitcases."

Former Defense Minister Hazem Shaalan has told U.S. and Iraqi officials that Bremer personally requested that Ziad Cattan - the alleged ringleader of the corruption and the ministry's former procurement chief - stay in his job after sovereignty was transferred last summer.

Bremer said this week, through his former CPA spokesman Dan Senor, that he didn't know Cattan. "At least to his knowledge, he'd never met him," Senor said.

Cattan, a dual Polish-Iraqi national, was fired in May and a warrant was issued for his arrest in connection with "the abuse of an employer's funds." He fled Baghdad and hasn't returned to answer the charges.

Even as hints of a corruption scandal emerged last spring, Cattan told others in the ministry that U.S. Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld personally had assured his job and no Iraqi had the power to remove him, al Dulaimi said.

Cattan, a Sunni, contacted the Iraqi National Dialogue Committee, the main Sunni faction negotiating with al-Jaafari on Cabinet appointments, and offered members \$10 million cash to nominate him as their candidate for the post, said Mohammed al-Daini and two other committee members who heard Cattan's proposal.

When the extent of the alleged corruption leaked to the U.S. Embassy, senior diplomats were "hopping mad," said an official with the U.S.-led Iraq Reconstruction Management Office who has personal knowledge of the Defense Ministry's transactions. He spoke on condition of anonymity Wednesday because he could face dismissal for discussing the matter without authorization.

"The entire embassy was upside down over this," he said. "I swear to God the advisers didn't know everything going on over there. Where did they get their information? From the Iraqis. **I can give you one budget that says this country is flourishing and another that tells you this country is going to s---**. The Iraqis told us only what they wanted us to hear."

While many of the contracts did result in useful, if overpriced, equipment for Iraq's 80,000 new troops, contracts involving shoddily refurbished helicopters from Poland, crates of loose ammunition from Pakistan and a fleet of leak-prone armored personnel carriers were among purchases that now are deemed unnecessary or unusable.

With the money paid in advance and no mechanism for a refund, al-Dulaimi said, the Defense Ministry is negotiating with weapons dealers to substitute the equipment for more useful items such as guns, radio communications and other vital supplies.

"It's chaos," al-Dulaimi said, visibly exasperated. "It's a result of all the chaos brought to Iraq."

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The following that we know of have also posted issues:

<http://qi-special.iraq-news.de>, <http://www.notinourname.net/qi-special/>,

www.williambowles.info/qispecial,

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