

GI SPECIAL 3C24:

STAND OFF



(Photo Via Soldier X From Crawford, Texas)

**“This Movement Is True
And Honest”**

**“Oust That Tyrant Bush And
Have A True Democracy For
Once”**

I have always been outraged at the deaths of my fellow soldiers in Iraq, but there was a new feeling of spite that grew within me: the fact that Bush was using the names of my fallen comrades as an excuse to promote the nations guilt and motivate a cause to continue this unjust war.

From: Garrett Reppenhagen [Soldier X]
To: GI Special
Sent: August 15, 2005 6:03 AM
Subject: Cindy and the Crawford Ranch

It is amazing that in a sea of a million important events finally one has pushed through the American consciousness to invoke some compassion in the right and left.

It doesn't take a rocket science to figure that Bush has manipulated tax payers into sacrificing their children into a war based on deceit. It is time to take back the ideals of justice and freedom from the regime of liars and place it back into the hearts of the common populace.

Fuck Right Wing and Left Wing polarization. Fuck the split faction mentality that has divided our nation and the world.

It is obvious that we as citizens, no matter what political affiliation, has been duped into supporting a criminal war. We should band together and oust that tyrant Bush and have a true democracy for once.

When I was asked by Cindy Sheehan to stand by her side the day she decided to leave the Vets For Peace national conference in Dallas and journey two hours away to Crawford and confront George W Bush while he relaxed on vacation, I couldn't bear saying no. I had to be with her.

I have always been outraged at the deaths of my fellow soldiers in Iraq, but there was a new feeling of spite that grew within me: the fact that Bush was using the names of my fallen comrades as an excuse to promote the nations guilt and motivate a cause to continue this unjust war.

I was sick to my stomach knowing that more Americans would accept this guilt trip and back Bush's decision. None of the families of the dead soldiers gave Bush permission to use their names as an advertisement for violence. Especially since it only leads to more soldiers being killed in the line of duty.

Bush claims they are for noble causes. But his noble cause is to make his bank account fatter at the expense of hard working Americans, their children and the lives of innocent Iraqis.

I jumped aboard the impeachment bus to Crawford eagerly and with full support of Cindy and her will.

From the moment I talked to her I knew that her desires were fueled only by the love of her son and the hurt she feel of his death.

It is easy to side with the force of compassion and sympathy.

My case for fighting against the war as a vet is more then justified after the horrors I have witnessed first hand in Iraq.

However, a mother or father of a child lost to the war is a power to be reckoned with. They have more right than anyone to resist the war. And, have a better chance of reaching folks who still have problems relating the effects of this war to their own personal lives.

This movement is true and honest.

I love Cindy for her actions and feel immense sorrow for her lose.

Parents like her and Rose Gentle speak the voice of painful truth.

I hope we can all listen before we share their tears.

Garett Reppenhagen

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Douglas County Soldier Killed



This May 14, 2005, family photo provided by the Douglas County Board of Commissioners, shows Georgia National Guard Sgt. Thomas Strickland, 27, of Fairplay, a member of the Georgia National Guard's 48th Brigade who was killed in Iraq. (AP Photo/Family Photo via The Douglas Co. Board of Commissioners)

08/16/05 By SAEED AHMED, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

A Douglas County soldier has been reported killed in Iraq.

Corporal Thomas Strickland, 27, of Fairplay, was a member of the Army's 48th Infantry Brigade (Mechanized), according to Wes Tallon, county communications director.

Strickland's family was notified Monday, Tallon said.

Tallon said it was the first combat death in Douglas County since Vietnam.

THREE TASK FORCE BAGHDAD SOLDIERS DIE IN VEHICLE ACCIDENT

August 16, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 05-08-26C

August 16, 2005 BAGHDAD, Iraq — **Three Task Force Baghdad Soldiers died when the vehicle in which they were riding overturned into a sinkhole Aug. 15 at 3:45 a.m. in south Baghdad during combat operations.**

Rosedale Soldier Killed



Army Spc. Toccara R. Green of Rosedale, Md., killed when a bomb exploded near her convoy during operations in Iraq Aug. 14, 2005. Green is believed to be the first female from Maryland killed in combat duty in Iraq. (AP Photo/Family Photo)

Western Kentucky Soldier Wounded:

“He Wasn't Real Happy About Going Back”

Aug. 16, 2005 Associated Press

OWENSBORO, Ky. - An Army helicopter pilot from Daviess County had his left foot amputated after being injured in a helicopter crash in Iraq last week.

1st Lt. Clay Taylor, 25, is expected to be flown from a U.S. military hospital in Germany to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., his family said.

Army surgeons in Iraq tried to reconstruct his left heel, which was cut off by a piece of metal in the crash, said his mother, Mary "Spanky" Taylor. The surgeons saw there was no blood flow going to the heel, so they had to amputate, she said.

The helicopter went down last Friday in a muddy area, which likely saved Taylor's life, said Bob Steele, Mary Taylor's boyfriend.

"He was embedded in the mud," said Steele, who took the Army's call about the crash. "They said that helped clot the blood."

The pilot was able to walk away, Steele said.

Taylor, a member of the 229th Aviation Regiment, was home on leave June 24 to July 6. "He wanted to go back and get his time done, but he wasn't real happy about going back," Steele said.

Taylor was a former all-district soccer player at Owensboro Catholic High School. He went to Georgetown College on a soccer scholarship and later went to the University of Kentucky. He graduated from Eastern Kentucky University in 2001 with a bachelor's degree in security management.

13,877 Wounded

August 15, 2005 By Martin Sieff, UPI Senior News Analyst

The number of U.S. troops wounded in action from the beginning of hostilities on March 19, 2003, through Wednesday, Aug.10 was 13,877, an increase of 108 on the previous week, the IIP said.

This figure was remarkably close to the figure of 112 for the previous week of July 28 to Aug. 3, and this in turn suggested that despite the dramatically increased death toll of U.S. troops, the insurgency was reporting in its attacks against U.S. forces across Iraq at about the same level.

But this remained cold comfort as the increased lethality of attacks through the first third of August strongly indicated that the insurgents are now capable of producing much more complex and lethal improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, capable of inflicting far more fatalities on U.S. forces.

The number of U.S. troops wounded over the week of Aug. 3 - Aug. 10 was 108, the IIP said. This remained far below the figure of 293 U.S. soldiers wounded from July 6 to July 13, but still above the grim average of over 100 U.S. soldiers injured per week, many of them losing limbs or suffering other permanent disabilities.

It clearly indicated that the insurgency was continuing to run at the same serious levels as it has in recent weeks with no reduction in sight.

REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



U.S. Marines Cpl. Frank Rye, left, of Hamilton, Ohio and Lance Cpl. Benjamin Adams, right, of Worthington, Ohio, both from the 3rd Platoon from Lima Company of the 3rd Battalion, 25th Regiment from Ohio, patrol in Parwana, near Haditha, Iraq, Friday, Aug. 5, 2005. (AP Photo/Jacob Silberberg)

IED Teams Hard To Stop: “The Enemy Is Evolving And Constantly Innovating”

August 15, 2005 By Greg Grant, Special to the Army Times [Excerpt]

On an average day, there are 40 IED “events” in Iraq — improvised explosive devices that either explode or are disarmed. So far in 2005, 213 American troops have been killed by IEDs.

U.S. intelligence officials are only now beginning to understand how insurgent cells operate.

“The enemy is evolving and constantly innovating. If there were any thoughts that this is a rudimentary, unsophisticated enemy, those thoughts have been replaced,” Brig. Gen. Joseph Votel said earlier this summer at the Lexington Institute in Washington. Votel is director of the Army’s IED Defeat Task Force.

Counterinsurgency forces have long studied the pyramidal model of enemy forces — strong leadership at the top and the group expanding in size at each lower level, to the foot soldiers at the bottom. That type of guerrilla organization was highly vulnerable to a decapitation strike that would often lead to its collapse.

But the groups in Iraq have no hierarchical structure, the officers said. Vast numbers of small, adaptive insurgent cells operate independently without central guidance. There may be some loose coordination of attacks, but then the cells go their separate ways.

This highly decentralized characteristic of the IED cells makes them nearly impossible to penetrate.

Their small size allows them to focus on specific American units, learn their tactics, patrol schedules, transportation routes and readily adapt to counter-IED techniques.

Taking down the foot soldiers causes a temporary disruption, as new people must be recruited. But even then, the cell is disrupted only for two weeks or so. The only way to get rid of the cell is to target the whole group — and there are a lot of cells.

One U.S. intelligence officer said that if you capture the leader of an IED cell, the leaderless foot soldiers simply get rolled up into another cell or start their own splinter cell. By cutting off the heads, you don’t fix the problem — other heads emerge.

The IED cells are patient and methodical and they follow an identifiable operational cycle.

Five days are usually spent conducting reconnaissance of prospective targets, conducting pattern analysis of U.S. patrols and looking for vulnerabilities.

The insurgents try to discover why and at what times American patrols travel along specific routes. Insurgents have even used hoax IEDs placed in plain view so they can watch the American response and gather intelligence on security methods and bomb disposal team operations to prepare for future attacks.

IED target selection is done with the intent of maximizing casualties and media exposure. Favorite targets include convoys of civilian SUVs, as they believe these transport American government officials and intelligence agents. They also target fuel tankers, as the flames and billowing smoke from a burning fuel tanker makes for compelling television footage.

The target site must also have multiple escape routes.

Bomb components are assembled at a well-concealed bomb factory and then moved from any area likely to be searched by American patrols to a holding area until the weapon is placed. IEDs are often kept in what the military calls “rolling weapons caches,” cars with false bottoms or trunks loaded with explosives that blend into the thousands of vehicles on Iraq’s crowded city streets.

Five days of preparation are then followed by 10 days of heavy IED attacks, then the cycle starts again.

After a successful attack or if a device is detected by a U.S. patrol, the IED cell evaluates the results and adjusts its tactics accordingly for the next strike.

Nine times out of 10, the military and intelligence officers said, the insurgents videotape IED attacks. The insurgents scrutinize the tapes — much as a coach watches post-game films — to prepare for future attacks. They’re also used as motivational tools for new recruits and to advertise a cell’s technical proficiency.

The insurgents’ technical proficiency has increased with experience. In recent months, shaped-charge explosives have become more common, Votel said. Also called platter charges, these devices combine an explosive charge with a low-melting-point metal such as copper that is shaped in a concave way. When the blast occurs, it shapes the metal into a molten slug that can penetrate the heaviest armor.

The military has found no appreciable decrease in IED attacks when a bomb maker is killed, and it represents at best a temporary setback for the insurgency as that talent is easily replaced.

The next person in the cell is the “emplacer.” This person usually has some military expertise and is skilled at moving unnoticed into and out of an area while transporting an IED.

Most IEDs are the wired 155mm shells that can weigh 100 pounds. Moving these objects around unseen and placing them along high-trafficked roads takes experience and daring, as the emplacer knows if he’s spotted placing an IED he’ll be killed.

He is familiar with American patrolling tactics and techniques and is often supported by lookouts armed with cell phones who will tip him when a patrol nears.

Morale Tents Guttled



Maj. David "Duke" Kahanu

August 16, 2005 By William Cole, Advertiser Military Writer

A fire Saturday in Iraq that engulfed two big tents and sent a thick column of black smoke into the desert sky destroyed a bunch of recreation equipment used by the 29th Support Battalion of the Hawai'i National Guard.

The morale, welfare and recreation tents at Logistical Support Area Anaconda about 50 miles north of Baghdad housed a TV room/karaoke parlor, fitness machines and weight room, library, pool table and kitchen.

Maj. David "Duke" Kahanu, the 29th Support Battalion's executive officer, said the fire, reported about 8:30 a.m., likely was due to an electrical short. No one was injured.

Within five minutes, two large circus tents that housed the equipment were fully engulfed in fire, and efforts to limit its spread were not possible, said Kahanu, a fire captain with the Honolulu Fire Department at the Mililani Mauka station.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Helicopter Crash Kills 17 Spanish Troops

August 16, 2005 By Daniel Cooney, Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Two helicopters carrying NATO-led forces to prepare for next month's elections crashed Tuesday in the desert in western Afghanistan, killing at least 17 Spanish troops, officials said.

Afghan army commander Abdul Wahab Walizada, whose troops are providing security in the area near Herat, said the aircraft came too close to each other while flying and their rotor blades collided.

One of the helicopters belonging to the international security force crashed in the desert near Herat, killing 17 Spanish troops — the first troops from Spain to be killed in Afghanistan, officials said.

The second helicopter made an emergency landing in the same area and an unspecified number of troops on board were believed to be injured. Rescuers had reached the site to recover the dead and wounded.

“The second helicopter landed heavily. There are survivors from that helicopter.”

He said both choppers were on a training mission to support crucial Sept. 18 legislative elections — the next major step toward democracy for Afghanistan after more than two decades of war and civil strife.

Spain said in June it was sending an extra 500 troops to Afghanistan to boost security ahead of September elections there, adding to 500 it already had there.

Rescue teams had been sent to the crash site near the airport in Herat, said Andrea Tolan, a press official for the International Security Assistance Force.

CRAWFORD TEXAS WAR REPORTS

“Casey And Jeremy Would Be Proud Of Their Moms For What They Were Doing”

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

August 16, 2005 by Amy Branham, Gold Star Families for Peace; A BUZZFLASH GUEST CONTRIBUTION [Excerpt]

I went back out to Crawford this week to see for myself how things are going and what it's like there now. I couldn't believe my eyes. It was just absolutely amazing.

I left in the wee hours of the morning Saturday to get there, in a caravan with members of Military Families Speak Out (MFSO) from Houston. I think it was about 10 a.m. by the time we arrived at the Peace House.

There were so many cars and people there that I had to drive to the stadium to park my car and catch a shuttle back to the Peace House. I was told there was going to be a rally at noon at the stadium and that I needed to be there.

When we finally got to Camp Casey I was stunned. When I left a week ago this past Sunday, there were about a dozen people there, a few folding chairs, banners and signs. It looked nothing like it does now. The place has been transformed. There were more people than I could possibly count. People had come and set up tents and chairs in the ditches to stand in solidarity for Cindy and the cause of peace. It was amazing.

On the road back to Camp Casey I was pleasantly surprised to see most of the counter protesters gone.

When I initially drove up Cindy was standing at the end of the triangle, looking down the road to see all of the cars, stretched out for miles, coming to support her.

I rolled my windows down to wave at her and she came running, calling out my name. I asked Tammera to park the car for me as we were holding traffic up. Juan and I jumped out to hug Cindy and Dede (who was with Cindy) and were immediately surrounded by cameras snapping our picture as the four of us hugged and cried.

Cindy asked me if I could believe what this had become from what we started, her, Dede and me, a week ago.

I stayed with Cindy for a little while, talking in front of the cameras, before stepping out of the crowd. I wanted to see for myself what was going on, to wander around in the crowd and take in the energy of the place. It was amazing. I hadn't seen the crosses except in pictures. I hadn't seen the tents set up under the canopy or the dozens upon dozens of flowers sent by well wishers when I had gone in earlier that day. So, as I wandered up the road by myself I started to weep.

I wept for joy that so many people from all over the country and the world would join Cindy and lend their voices to her cause, to our cause. I wept with sorrow at the tremendous loss we had all suffered. I wept because I no longer felt alone in my grief and anger at the loss of my own son. At that moment I felt that Casey and Jeremy would be proud of their moms for what they were doing.

As I stood there on the side of the road, tears streaming down my face, a stranger came to me to see if I was okay. She didn't know who I was because I didn't have a GSFP shirt on. She comforted me, brought me Kleenex to dry my eyes and wipe the tears, made sure I had water to drink. We introduced ourselves to each other. For the rest of the day, she was pretty close by if I needed anything.

The camaraderie at Camp Casey is unreal, almost surreal to me. Members of GSFP only have to state a need and it is met almost immediately. Sometimes we don't even have to say anything, people keep an eye on each other out there and if one person sees that another person is getting overheated, seems to be struggling or in some kind of distress, they are taken care of right away.

The whole time of the rally there was a Sheriff's helicopter circling round and round above Camp Casey. At first they kept their distance and it wasn't any big deal. When Cindy got up and began to speak, the helicopter got down closer. It seemed they were trying to drown her out. I would certainly hate to think that was why they got so close. A couple of times some of us thought they were going to land nearby, but they never did.

While Cindy was speaking the counter protesters across the street, who by now had dwindled down to less than a dozen people, tried to taunt us and Cindy. For the most part we ignored them although there was at least one or two people that I know of that did have a little discussion with them. They were quickly led away to cool off.

When Cindy asked for a moment of silence to remember America's fallen, the counter protesters kept yelling and taunting. I couldn't believe the disrespect they showed, but I shouldn't have been surprised by this.

The people coming to Crawford are amazing. One lady, Lorraine, flew out from California, complete with cooking supplies, to cook for Cindy for the week. Others dropped everything when they heard what was going on, driving across the country just to hug Cindy and tell her thank you. Many times they would rest up a bit before turning right around to go back home. Still others are spending their vacation time at Camp Casey.

Cindy is amazing. She spent all day long with reporters, giving interviews and having her picture taken. Never once did I see her turn down a request from someone who came to see her. She hugged every man, woman and child who came to say thank you. Everyone wants something from Cindy, but I think she receives as much from her supporters as she gives to them. Cindy is absolutely, one hundred and ten percent, dedicated to her mission of ending this war and bringing our soldiers home.

Today, once again, I sit in awe of the events occurring at Camp Casey. Once again I am proud to be an American, proud to be from Texas and proud to be part of something larger than myself.

Thank you America for your support, your encouragement and your love.

By the way, a baby watch update for all those who have asked: We are still waiting the arrival of my first grandchild, a little boy to be named Aiden Russell Smith after the uncle he will never know, Jeremy Russell Smith. The doctor said today he will induce Thursday.

Amy Branham
Houston, TX
Mother of fallen hero Jeremy R. Smith

Nov. 1981 – Feb. 2004



Holding a picture of her nephew Sgt. Daniel Torres, Beatriz Saldivar, of Fort Worth, Texas, expresses her opposition to the war in Iraq as she speaks at Cindy Sheehan's camp near Crawford, Texas, Aug. 15, 2005. Torres was killed in action in Iraq and his wife is expecting their first child. (AP Photo/LM Otero)

Crawford Man Donates Land For Sheehan Camp

August 16th, 2005 Cindy Sheehan; michaelmoore.com

The property owner who owns property near Bush's ranch and right across the street from Bush's church will let us move Camp Casey there!! He has property on both sides of the road ... a full acre for us to camp!

We are so excited!!!

We can fit more people and we will be closer to the ranch.

Miracles, miracles.

MORE:

August 16, 2005 posted by Emily Sharpe @ 18:42; Crawfordupdate.blogspot.com & By Scott Galindez, Truthout

We're moving!!!

Miracles happen all the time here at Camp Casey, and this one in particular is pretty amazing: Crawford resident Fred Matlage has offered us his land as a new base for our camp!

The highlight of the day had to be the pig farmers. These three old boys looked like they walked off the ranch down the road (wouldn't want to compare anyone with the rancher across the street).

These guys were from West Texas. They are very angry with the play rancher down the road a few miles and are behind Cindy one hundred percent. These guys drove their tractors to DC to protest "The Pig Tax."

One of these farmers happened to have a cousin with a ranch closer to George and land that Camp Casey can move to. Like Cindy said, another Camp Casey miracle ...

This land is a gift in more than one sense-- it is more private and secure than our current location on Prarie Chapel road; it provides us with more space to set up; and it's a HECK of a lot closer to Bush's ranch.

The land is also adjacent to the church Bush attends while in Crawford, so maybe we'll get a glimpse of him this Sunday. And who knows, during his time in God's house he might just be moved to walk over and greet Cindy! But perhaps this is too great a miracle to expect.

With this new, exciting opportunity comes some new needs. This land has far fewer trees than the old site, and so we're going to be baking under the Texas sun. To help us stay healthy and cool, we REALLY need the following:

1. large tents (both the camping type and the canopy type)
2. tarps

And remember, our much larger campsite means that we now have room for YOU!!!

Whether you can stay for a few hours, a few days or until the end of August, you are welcome at Camp Casey.

People keep streaming in from all over the United States and the world, and we are so thrilled to have them.

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.

Farmers For Cindy



Photo by Emily Sharpe

August 16, 2005 by Emily Sharpe, Crawfordupdate.blogspot.com

Yesterday, we at Camp Casey had some unexpected yet much-appreciated guests. Wayne, Buddy and Larry, three farmers from Oklahoma, Texas and Kansas, respectively, wandered into the Crawford Peace House around 3 p.m. and my first thought was, "uh oh, these might be Bush supporters."

But to our great relief, Wayne announced in his charming Okie accent, "Hello! We're here to see Cindy and tell her that we support her and her cause 100%." Goes to show it doesn't pay to stereotype, and even more importantly, that Cindy supporters and pro-peace people come from all different backgrounds.

Cindy was at Camp Casey, so they offered me a ride in their F-250 and off we went down the windy road towards the Bush ranch.

On the way, they told me that they had driven hours in their pick-up truck to tell Cindy that they are very upset by the negative things some people are saying about her, and that they are so proud she is standing up for the truth. Wayne, Larry and Buddy are leaders in American Agriculture Movement, Inc., and they too have taken their stand for justice by participating in the Tractorcade to Washington, D.C.

When Cindy met them, she was so thrilled by their encouraging words!

Wayne's daughter will be deploying soon as a nurse in the Reserves, leaving her 7 year-old son at home, and so the two of them exchanged words of comfort.



August 15, 2005 Around 10:00 PM local time, someone drove over some of the crosses in the Arlington West Cemetary at Camp Casey. (Photo: Japhet Els and Emily Sharpe)

Back From Cindy City

From: Mike Hastie, Vietnam Veteran
To: GI Special
Sent: August 16, 2005 4:27 PM
Subject: [vfp72] Back from Cindy City

VFP Chapter 72,

Well, this is Mike Hastie back from the Lone Star State of Mind.

I arrived back in Portland on Monday night.

I stayed at the camp site the whole time, sleeping in a van I rented at the Austin airport.

The trip was everything and more than I could have ever expected.

Most Americans live in a Twilight Zone, but for five days, I got to experience history.

I don't know what the media's interpretation was, but from my stand point, Cindy Sheehan is another Rosa Parks. The Anti-War movement has got to stop riding in the back of the Bush Bus. Plain and simple.

It is important that what is going on in Crawford, Texas not be an event, but a movement. If this thing dies down, we as a peace movement will die out.

George War Bush is very serious about making us the enemy, just like Cindy is being made the enemy. She is a very scary person for everyone who supports this war for OIL.

If she gains a lot of momentum, she will be stopped, unless Americans across this country make a stand to support her.

When I left Monday around noon, there were about 100 people at Camp Casey. On Saturday, there were around 300 supporters, along with about 50 pro-Bush people.

I have a feeling their numbers will get larger as the days go by. The weekends bring in the most people, for obvious reasons.

I understand after I left, a pick-up truck ran over several of the white crosses along side of the road. They go for about a quarter of a mile. It is quite a sight to see, especially when the sun is going down.

Two nights ago when I was pulling guard duty, I was walking along the road checking on the crosses, when a car went by, and someone yelled at me to go home. Since Texas is a part of the U.S., I kind of thought I was.

When you walk along the long row of crosses, you feel the power of the presence. I will just leave it at that.

If I met one kind person, I met a hundred. People from all over the U.S. Many of them were from Texas, and I think they hated Bush the most.

I love being around a Southern accent, maybe because my mother was born and raised in Tuckerman, Arkansas. Now, the Bush supporters with a Southern accent are a little different. Maybe because they always seem to have a little American flag in their hands.

I will write some more tomorrow, as there is a lot more to tell. Every time I had a conversation with someone, it turned into a Gone With The Wind story. Maybe it had something to do with the humidity, story telling gets your mind off the heat.

So many down home people, I truly felt like it was home, even if Bush, Rice, and Rumsfeld were down the road apiece--helicopters and all.

It's good to be back, but I think I will miss all of the State Police, and the angry farmer who shot his gun off.

Never a dull moment in the Lone Star State of Mind.

Tex Hastie--the fastest peace sign in the West

The Exodus Of Grief And Anger To Crawford

[Thanks to Phil G who sent this in.]

August 16, 2005 By Steve Duin, The Oregonian

When the three Army officers finally tracked Michelle DeFord down at her Colton home last September, she didn't believe their story: "I kept thinking to myself, while the soldiers were talking to me, 'They're going to straighten this out, I know it's a mistake, David calls home every Monday.' "

And his message was always the same. "He kept telling me he wasn't doing anything dangerous," DeFord said. "He kept telling me he was safe." That gunfire in the background? "That was just Iraqis celebrating another soccer victory."

Thus, when the Army said she had 24 hours to notify her family before her son's death became public, DeFord didn't reach for the phone: "I just kept thinking that I don't want to get everyone upset, because I know this is wrong."

Almost a year after Spc. David W. Johnson, a 37-year-old cook turned machine gunner, was killed by a roadside bomb on a supply run to Taji, Michelle DeFord still thinks something is irrevocably wrong. That's why she and Lynn Bradach will fly to Texas on Wednesday, drive to "Camp Casey" and join Cindy Sheehan's vigil outside the Crawford ranch of President George W. Bush.

The nation is at war, the president is on an extended vacation, and DeFord and Bradach are the mothers of dead soldiers. Bradach's son, Marine Cpl. Travis J. Bradach-Nall, 21, of Portland, died in July 2003 while clearing a Karbala minefield.

In the months following her son's death, DeFord was too numb to wrestle with her pain in public. "I didn't speak out for a while," she said, "because I felt I'd be viewed as a grieving mother who was misguided."

DeFord first met Sheehan in Florida last October when both worked on a get-out-the-vote campaign. Since Sheehan formed Gold Star Families for Peace, the two women have grown quite close, staying in each other's homes when DeFord travels to the Bay Area or Sheehan journeys to the Pacific Northwest.

"I have never met anyone so determined, so calm, so rational and so well-spoken under these circumstances," DeFord said.

"I'm so proud of Cindy," Lynn Bradach said. "I've had a really tough time this spring. I got to the point where I couldn't handle the news anymore." She was fleeing media coverage of the deaths of 19 Marine reservists from the same Cleveland battalion when she was swept away by the story of Sheehan's arrival in Crawford.

"The minute I read the article, I said I should be there to support her," Bradach said. "There should be many more mothers there."

This pair will tote backpacks and a tent into the sauna of summer in Texas and onto the firing range of those who scream these families aren't "supporting the troops."

"We're in Bush country," Bradach said. "There will be a lot of detractors, people saying we aren't patriots. I'd like to know what they've given up.

"There is no way our children died in vain, not if we pay attention, not if we learn. I'm proud of my son. I love the Marines. And I'm very much against this war and always have been.

"I guess our children went and were sacrificed for us to take a look at what we let happen. We let this war happen.

If nothing else, this is a huge lesson. Watch who you vote for. Watch what they're telling you. Don't be so afraid."



Cindy Sheehan, president of Gold Star Families for Peace, speaks at a press conference on the morning after a pickup truck tore through rows of white crosses at the anti-war protest camp near President Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas, Aug. 16, 2005. **She is joined at left by Benjamin Hart of Austin, Texas, who served with the Army's 82nd Airborne in Iraq.** (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

TROOP NEWS

Sept. 24 Anti-War Mass March Will Go To White House!

8.16.05 A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition

March permits obtained for mass march on September 24 directly in front of the White House on Pennsylvania Ave.

The A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition has secured a permit from the Metropolitan Police Department for the mass march on September 24 that will take the demonstration directly in front of the White House on Pennsylvania Ave.

This is the first time in many years that a march permit has been secured allowing people to exercise their First Amendment right for a mass assembly march and protest on Pennsylvania Ave. right at the doorstep of the White House.



400 Vermont Troops Off To Bush's Imperial Slaughterhouse

Aug. 16, 2005 By Kathryn Casa, Vermont Guardian

On Thursday, another 400 Vermont troops are scheduled to leave for Iraq as part of a brigade combat team. Their base is not identified ahead of time for security reasons. Lt.

Veronica Saffo, a National Guard spokeswoman in Colchester said "they will be in the combat areas, definitely in the villages and working with the Iraqi police as part of a significantly sized brigade combat team."

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces. Our goal is for Traveling

Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces. If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers.

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

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action

August 16, 2005 Xinhua

"Armed men opened fire at about 4:30 a.m. (0030 GMT) at a civil defense center in Baghdad's eastern Sadr City, killing two policemen and wounding two others," an Interior ministry source told Xinhua on condition of anonymity.



An Iraqi police vehicle on a street following an attack in Kirkuk August 14, 2005. An Iraqi police captain was shot dead and three other officers were wounded when militants attacked a police patrol on Sunday. REUTERS/Slahaldeen Rasheed

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Is Their Bombing Worse Than Ours?

[Thanks to JM, who sent this in.]

American and British media have devoted hours to wondering what would drive a seemingly normal young Muslim to destroy himself and others.

No one asked what would cause a seemingly normal young Christian or Jew to strap himself into a warplane and drop bombs on a village, knowing full well his bombs will kill civilians (and, of course, soldiers).

3 August 2005 By Saree Makdisi, San Jose Mercury News

Suicide bombing is merely a tactic used by those who lack other means of delivering explosives. What happened in London occurs every time a U.S. or British warplane unloads its bombs on an Iraqi village.

But, you may say, our forces don't deliberately target civilians. Perhaps not. But they have consistently shown themselves to be indifferent to the civilian casualties produced by their operations.

"Collateral damage" is the inevitable result of choosing to go to war. By choosing war in Iraq, we chose to kill tens of thousands of civilians.

It does not matter to bereaved parents whether their child was killed deliberately, as the result of a utilitarian calculation of "the greater good," or of the callous indifference of officials from a distant power.

American and British media have devoted hours to wondering what would drive a seemingly normal young Muslim to destroy himself and others.

No one asked what would cause a seemingly normal young Christian or Jew to strap himself into a warplane and drop bombs on a village, knowing full well his bombs will kill civilians (and, of course, soldiers).

Because "our" way of killing is dressed up in smart uniforms and shiny weapons and cloaked in the language of grand causes, we place it on a different moral plane than "theirs."

I read an article about a Marine sniper who was given a medal at a California ceremony for having shot dead 32 Iraqis during the battle for Al-Fallujah last year -- young men who were defending their city from an invading army. A nod to their deaths was made by the sniper and a chaplain, but these are the sentiments that struck me:

"He didn't kill 32 people," said a sergeant major. "He saved numerous lives. . . . That's how Marines look at it." And his mother said, "It's difficult. You send off your little boy and he comes back a man who has protected everyone."

Clearly, "our" lives are all that matter.

And are we really expected to believe that such brutal indifference to other people's lives has nothing to do with what happened in London three weeks ago?

"It is by distortedly exalting some men, that others are distortedly debased," the Anglo-American revolutionary Thomas Paine warned two centuries ago. As a result, he added, "A vast mass of humankind are degradedly thrown into the background of the human picture."

Ironies Of Conquest: The Bush Administration's Iranian Nightmare

From: Paul D'Amato
Sent: Aug 10, 2005 2:46 PM

By Michael Schwartz [Excerpt]

A second key development neutralized the American ability to turn its military might in an Iranian direction: the rise of the Iraqi resistance.

During the several months after the fall of Baghdad, the Saddamist loyalists who had initially resisted the U.S. occupation were augmented by a broader and more resilient insurgency.

As the character of the occupation made itself known, small groups of guerrillas began defending their neighborhoods from U.S. military patrols. These patrols were seeking out suspected "regime loyalists" from the Baathist era by knocking down doors, shooting whomever resisted, and arresting all men of "military age" in the household.

As the resistance spread, its various factions became more aggressive and resourceful. Over the next year, it blossomed into a formidable and complex enemy that the U.S. Army -- to the surprise of American officials in Washington and Baghdad -- did not have the resources to defeat.

It was, then, the swiftly growing Iraqi resistance that, by preventing the consolidation of an American Iraq, forced an Iranian campaign off the table and back into the shadows where it has remained to this day.

The increasingly destructive, devolving American occupation in Iraq also deflected the anger of an Iranian population that had been growing restless under the harsh clerical hand of Iran's political leaders.

At the time of the invasion, opinion surveys in Iran indicated both "widespread discontent within the Islamic Republic" and a generally positive attitude toward the United States. ("[T]he average Iranian does not bear ill will against America.") American officials interpreted this to mean that "the clerics may have lost the upper hand" in Iran.

However, this widespread discontent quickly dissipated under the pressure of regional events; and two years later, Iranians elected as president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a fundamentalist militant and electoral underdog, who eliminated the U.S. favored "moderate" in the first round of voting and then, in a runoff round, soundly defeated a less radical representative of the Iranian establishment.

Moreover, he ran on a platform that advocated making Iran's nuclear program -- then at a halt while negotiations were once again underway with the Europeans -- a priority. Unlike his defeated opponent, who said he would "work to improve relations" with the U.S., Ahmadinejad claimed "he would not seek rapprochement."

In other words, instead of deterring or ending the Iranian nuclear effort, the U.S. invasion and botched occupation encouraged and accelerated it, lending it national prestige and rallying Iranian public opinion to the cause.

China and Russia soon began shipping Iran advanced missile systems, a decision that generated angry protests from the Bush Administration. According to Asia Times correspondent Jephraim P. Gundzik, these protests made good sense, since the systems shipped were a direct threat to U.S. military operations in the Middle East:

"Iran can target US troop positions throughout the Middle East and strike US Navy ships. Iran can also use its weapons to blockade the Straits of Hormuz through which one-third of the world's traded oil is shipped. With the help of Beijing and Moscow, Teheran is becoming an increasingly unappealing military target for the U.S."

The Iraqi elections in January 2005 and their aftermath made the growing symbiosis between the two neighboring areas fully visible. Though the Sadrists officially boycotted the election, the SCIRI and Da'wa parties, having asserted leadership within Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani's Unified Iraqi Coalition, won a majority of the seats in the new parliament. The prime minister they selected, Da'wa leader Ibrahim al-Jaafari, had spent nine years in exile in Iran.

More open and formal relationships followed as soon as the new government took office.

As Juan Cole, perhaps the foremost academic observer of Middle Eastern politics, put it: "The two governments went into a tizzy of wheeling and dealing of a sort not seen since Texas oil millionaires found out about Saudi Arabia."

Beyond facilitating pilgrimages in both directions across the border and formalizing plans for the Najaf airport, the new government facilitated connections that affected almost every economic realm in depressed Iraq.

Among the many projects settled upon were substantial improvements in Iraq's transportation system; agreements for the exchange of products ranging from detergents to construction materials and carpets; a shift of Iraqi imports of flour from the U.S. to Iran; the Iranian refining of Iraqi crude oil pumped from its southern fields; and a billion dollar credit line to be used for the Iraqi purchase of Iranian "technical and engineering services."

Though the Bush Administration, with its control over both the purse strings and the armed forces of the new Iraqi government, undoubtedly had the power to nullify these unwelcome agreements, circumstances on the ground made it difficult for its officials to intervene. Any overt interventions in matters that touched on Iraqi economic sovereignty would surely have triggered loud (and perhaps violent) protests from at least the Sadrists, who might well have been joined by the governing parties in the regime the U.S. had just installed.

The most spectacular agreement, a proposed mutual defense pact between Iraq and Iran, was indeed abrogated under apparent pressure from the Bush administration, but American officials said nothing when "the Iraqi government did give Tehran assurances that they would not allow Iraqi territory to be used in any attack on Iran -- presumably a reference to the United States."

The increasingly desperate circumstances that constrained Bush administration actions when it came to the developing Iranian-Iraqi relationship were addressed by Middle East scholar Ervand Abrahamian, who pointed to a similarly precarious American situation in Afghanistan.

He concluded that the U.S. could not afford a military confrontation with Iran, since the Iranians were in a position to trigger armed revolts in the Shia areas of both countries: "If there's a confrontation, military confrontation, there would be no reason for them to cooperate with United States. They would do exactly what would be in their interests, which would be to destroy the U.S. position in those two countries."

A "senior international envoy" quoted by Christopher Dickey in NewsweekOnline, offered an almost identical opinion: "Look at what they can do in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Lebanon. They can turn the whole Middle East into a ball of fire, and (American officials) know that."

In light of all these developments, Juan Cole commented: "In a historic irony, Iran's most dangerous enemy of all, the United States, invaded Iran's neighbor with an eye to eventually toppling the Tehran regime -- but succeeded only in defeating itself."

Despite the deepest desires of the Bush administration, to this day Iran remains uninvaded -- the horrors of devolving Iraq have, so far, prevented the unleashing of the plagues of war on its neighbor.

Among signs that a major military strike against Iran may not be in the offing are increasingly visible fault lines within the Bush administration itself.

This can be seen most politely in various calls for accommodation with Iran from high-profile former Bush Administration officials like Richard Haass. The Director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff from 2001 to 2003, Haass published his appeal in *Foreign Affairs*, a magazine sponsored by the influential Council for Foreign Relations.

More tangible signs of a surfacing accommodationist streak can be found in modest gestures made by the administration, including the withdrawal of a longstanding U.S. veto of Iran's petition for membership in the World Trade Organization.

Beyond this, one would have to note the rather pointed leaking of crucial secret documents, including the Military Quadrennial Report, in which top commanders gave a negative assessment of U.S. readiness to fight two wars simultaneously, and a National Intelligence Estimate -- the first comprehensive review of intelligence about Iran since 2001 -- which evidently declared Iran about ten years away from obtaining "the key ingredient for a nuclear weapon."

And, finally, the Bush administration endorsed a European-sponsored nuclear treaty with Iran that was almost identical to one it had opposed two years earlier.

But perhaps the most striking sign that some acceptance of regional realities and limitations is afoot can be found in the strident complaints by various neoconservatives about Bush Administration failures in Iran.

Michael Rubin, a key figure in the development of Iraq policy, spoke for many when he complained in an American Enterprise Institute commentary that the Bush Administration showed "little inclination to work toward" regime change there. He followed this claim with a catalogue of missed opportunities, policy shifts, and other symptoms of a lack of will to confront the Iranians.

OCCUPATION REPORT

“My Dog Ate The Constitution” Iraq Misses Deadline, US Ambassador Blames Weather

Aug 15 AFP

Iraq missed a crucial deadline to finalize the first post-Saddam Hussein constitution and MPs granted a one-week extension, with thorny differences ranging from federalism to the role of Islam unresolved.

US ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad blamed the August 8 sandstorm for Iraqi politicians missing the deadline, though the country was saved from a political crisis by just a few minutes.

"We recognize that the three days lost because of the recent sandstorm set back the schedule of deliberations," Khalilzad said in a statement, adding "and that Iraqi leaders determined that a seven-day extension was needed to resolve remaining issues and to fine tune the language of the draft to avoid errors."

Another Stunning Military Victory For The Occupation: 26 Unemployed Bricklayers Shot



Shoot a bricklayer for peace today: Hamza Jaber lies on a hospital bed with neck and leg injuries after he was shot at Alawi. (AFP/Sabah Arar)

August 16, 2005 Xinhua

US forces wounded 26 bricklayers in Baghdad on Tuesday, police said.

In a separate incident, the US forces fired at a group of bricklayers at about 5:30 a.m. (0130 GMT) in Alawi district in central Baghdad, wounding 26 of them, the source said.

The US troops told the Iraqi police that they had shot at "terrorists".

"But when our patrols reached the scene they discovered the wounded people were bricklayers who left home early looking for work," the source said.

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

Winning More Friends: For The Armed Resistance That Is



U.S. soldiers of the army infantry, from the Stryker brigade, run into a house past an Iraqi woman and a girl July 25, 2005. REUTERS/Andrea Comas

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

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

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