

GI SPECIAL 3C34:



Iraqis rally in Najaf, Aug. 26, 2005. (AP Photo/Khalid Mohammed)

“Bush And America Out” One Hundred Thousand March Against Occupation And Collaborator Constitution

The cleric also slammed media reports which presents the situation as a sectarian conflict.

"Presenting the case in this way is a foreign plot to divide the nation. Let us put it in other words: Followers of the occupation and the government of the occupation want the constitution, and Iraqi nationalists including Shia and Sunni do not want it."

Aug. 26, 2005 Reuters & Washington Times & 25 August 2005 Aljazeera

A hundred thousand Iraqis across the country marched on Friday in support of a maverick Shi'ite cleric opposed to a draft constitution that U.S.-backed government leaders say will deliver a brighter future.

The protest could reinforce the opposition of Sunni Arabs who dominate the insurgency and are bitterly against the draft.

Supporters of young Shi'ite firebrand Moqtada al-Sadr, who has staged two uprisings against U.S. troops, also protested against poor services during their marches, stepping up the pressure on the government.

A hundred thousand Sadr supporters marched in eight cities, including 30,000 people who gathered for a sermon delivered on his behalf in a Baghdad slum district.

They hardly noticed a huge government poster which read "One Nation, One People, One Constitution," instead seeking guidance from Sadr who inspires fierce devotion in his followers.

He is stirring hopes among his vast following at a time when Iraq's divided politicians have missed a series of deadlines for reaching a consensus on the constitution, which is expected to be put to a referendum in October.

Sadr has also come out in support of Sunni opposition to the federal state that his Shi'ite rivals in government, with their Kurdish allies, have outlined in the charter.

"Bush and America out," yelled cleric Abdel-Zahra al-Suwaidid, reading a statement on Sadr's behalf in the Baghdad slum of Sadr City which is named after his revered father, a cleric allegedly killed by Saddam Hussein's agents.

Another widespread complaint was written simply on banners: "We want water, we want electricity."

The young cleric has gained followers by portraying himself as a champion of the poor.

Young boys wore T-shirts with images of Sadr and his father as others played a song on a scratchy cassette which repeated "Oh Moqtada, Oh Moqtada" over and over.

"I like Sayyid Moqtada," said eight-year-old Montadhir Taei, using Sadr's religious title.

"Iraqis should write the constitution, not the Americans," he said.

The image of Sadr, a burly figure with a turban, was pasted on a water tank carried by a teenager spraying cool water at the crowd of tens of thousands under a cruel sun in Baghdad.

Now he faces the Iranian-trained Badr movement, which some Iraqis accuse of operating in hit squads alongside government forces.

"These people just want power and money. You go ask the Interior Ministry who did this," said Hussein Saleh, referring to the Badr movement.

Sadr is rapidly gaining support among Iraqi youth, raising fears he could eventually unify Shiites and Sunnis against American forces.

At the Baghdad protest, fighters in Sadr's Mehdi Army stood alert on rooftops with assault rifles as speakers condemned the United States.

"We condemn the shameful attack on our office in Najaf and know it is the work of Badr Organisation, which came back to Iraq on American tanks," a member of al-Sadr's group announced at a local mosque in Sadr City.

Iraq's Sunni Arabs and parts of its Shia population are standing staunchly against a new constitution, saying it will lead to division of their country.

Sunni demonstrators showed support to their leaders in rejecting the constitution.

Supporters of Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, a young Shia cleric who also strongly opposes the constitution, joined the demonstrations in Hawija.

Another revered Iraqi Shia authority voiced strong opposition to the suggested Iraqi constitution, saying it serves the "occupation's interests".

"There is nothing called Sunnis wanting the constitution and Shia do not" Shaikh Hadi al-Khalisi told Aljazeera.net.

The cleric also slammed media reports which presents the situation as a sectarian conflict.

"Presenting the case in this way is a foreign plot to divide the nation. Let us put it in other words: Followers of the occupation and the government of the occupation want the constitution, and Iraqi nationalists including Shia and Sunni do not want it."

Abdul-Salam al-Kubaisi, spokesman for the major Sunni clerical organisation, the Association of Muslim Scholars, reiterated that any political process under US occupation "would not serve the interests of Iraq".

"This week's constitutional process has paved the way to the partition of Iraq and wiping out its identity, and it has failed to gain a national acceptance," al-Kubaisi said.

"We call upon the United States to end its arrogance and not impose useless political processes on the Iraqi people, and to put a timetable for its withdrawal from Iraq."



A member of the Mehdi Army guards the crowds demonstrating against the U.S. occupation. (AFP/Essam Al-Sudani)

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Jefferson Soldier Injured

August 26, 2005 BY CARA HOST, Staff writer, Observer

A soldier from Jefferson was shot in the neck last Friday while fighting near Mosul, Iraq.

Sgt. Daniel Lama, a member of the Army's 25th Infantry Division, Stryker Brigade, was hit by sniper fire while his unit was patrolling the area, according to the soldier's uncle, Carl Lama of Newell.

"It was a bad wound, but through the grace of God, he's still with us," Carl Lama said. "It's almost like a miracle."

Daniel Lama is now recovering in a military hospital in Fort Lewis, Wash., where his unit is headquartered. The bullet apparently missed major arteries as well as his spine, Carl Lama said.

Two Danes Wounded By Basra IED

26 August 2005 Aljazeera.Net

Two members of Denmark's 500-strong contingent in southern Iraq were lightly wounded when a roadside bomb exploded as they drove past, the Danish army said Friday.

The incident happened late on Thursday in a suburb of Basra, where the Danish troops are based. The soldiers were treated at the British military hospital in Basra, and later released.

Last week, a Danish army vehicle was damaged when a roadside bomb exploded in the same neighbourhood.

U.S. Military Vehicle Bombed In Falluja: Casualties Not Reported

26 August 2005 Aljazeera.Net

A US military vehicle was damaged when it hit a roadside bomb in Falluja west of Baghdad, a US marine said. No casualties were immediately reported.

General Says "Insurgents Have Become Part Of The Fabric Of Iraqi Life" [Duh]

8/26/2005 (AP)

Asked why the U.S. military has been unable thus far to defeat the insurgents, Army Maj. Gen. Joseph Taluto, commander of the 22,000-soldier Task Force Liberty, said progress is being made and it is not widely recognized that U.S. troops stop many attacks before they can be executed.

On the other hand, he said, it also is true that the insurgents have become part of the fabric of Iraqi life.

"They are intrinsic, and so it seems like they can act with impunity," Taluto said. "And then they do escalate their activities, so they surge and so on and so forth."

“I Don't Think Of This In Terms Of Winning,” Said Col. Davis; “Marines And Soldiers Now Give The Insurgents A Measure Of Respect”

Instead, they're trying to hold on to a handful of population centers and hit smaller towns in a series of quick-strike operations designed to disrupt insurgent activities temporarily.

Instead of referring to the enemy derisively as "terrorists" - as they used to - Marines and soldiers now give the insurgents a measure of respect by calling them "mujahedeen," an Arabic term meaning "holy warrior" that became popular during the Afghan guerrilla campaign against the Soviet Union.

[Thanks to D, who sent this in.]

Aug. 25, 2005 BY TOM LASSETER, Knight Ridder Newspapers [Excerpt]

FALLUJAH, Iraq: Insurgents in Anbar province, the center of guerrilla resistance in Iraq, have fought the U.S. military to a stalemate.

After repeated major combat offensives in Fallujah and Ramadi, and after losing hundreds of soldiers and Marines in Anbar during the past two years - including 75 since June 1 - many American officers and enlisted men assigned to Anbar have stopped talking about winning a military victory in Iraq's Sunni Muslim heartland.

Instead, they're trying to hold on to a handful of population centers and hit smaller towns in a series of quick-strike operations designed to disrupt insurgent activities temporarily.

"I don't think of this in terms of winning," said Col. Stephen Davis, who commands a task force of about 5,000 Marines in an area of some 24,000 square miles in the western portion of Anbar.

Military officials now frequently compare the fight in Anbar to the Vietnam War, saying that guerrilla fighters, who blend back into the population, are trying to break the will of the American military - rather than defeat it outright - and to erode public support for the war back home.

"If it were just killing people that would win this, it'd be easy," said Marine Maj. Nicholas Visconti, 35, of Brookfield, Conn., who served in southern Iraq in 2003. "But look at Vietnam. We killed millions, and they kept coming.

"It's a war of attrition. They're not trying to win. It's just like in Vietnam. They won a long, protracted fight that the American public did not have the stomach for. ... Killing people is not the answer; rebuilding the cities is."

Minutes after he spoke, two mortar rounds flew over the building where he's based in Hit. Visconti didn't flinch as the explosions rang out.

During three weeks of reporting along the Euphrates River valley, home to Anbar's main population centers and the core of insurgent activity, military officials offered three primary reasons that guerrilla fighters have held and gained ground: the enemy's growing sophistication, insufficient numbers of U.S. troops and the lack of trained and reliable Iraqi security forces.

They described an enemy who's intelligent and adaptive:

Military officials in Ramadi said insurgents there had learned the times of their patrol shift changes. When one group of vehicles comes to relieve another, civilian traffic is pushed to the side of the road to allow the military to pass. Insurgents plan and use this opportunity, surrounded by other cars, to drop homemade bombs out their windows or through holes cut in the rear floor.

The insurgents have figured out by trial and error the different viewing ranges of the optics systems in American tanks, Bradley Fighting Vehicles and Humvees.

"They've mapped it out. They go into the road and try to draw fire to see what our range is and then they make a note of it and start putting IEDs that far out," said Army Maj. Jason Pelletier, 32, of the 28th Infantry Division, referring to improvised explosive devices, the military's term for homemade bombs.

"It's that cat-and-mouse game. They do something, we react and they note our reaction," said Pelletier, who's from Milton, Vt.

Faced with the U.S. military's technological might, guerrilla fighters have relied on gathering intelligence and using cheap, effective devices to kill and maim.

Marines raided a home near their base in Hit and found three Sudanese insurgents with a crude map they'd drawn of the American base, including notes detailing when patrols left the gate, whether they were on foot or in vehicles and the numbers of Marines on the patrols.

The guerrilla fighters in Hit have used small, yellow and pink, Japanese star-shaped alarm clocks - similar to those popular with little girls in the United States - as timers to detonate rocket launchers and mortar systems aimed at Marine positions.

They frequently use sawed-off curtain rods planted 50 or so yards away to calibrate the ranges to nearby bases. One of the two Marine positions in the city receives mortar fire almost daily. Patrols from the other base are hit by frequent roadside bombings.

Instead of referring to the enemy derisively as "terrorists" - as they used to - Marines and soldiers now give the insurgents a measure of respect by calling them "mujahedeen," an Arabic term meaning "holy warrior" that became popular during the Afghan guerrilla campaign against the Soviet Union.

U.S. officials hope that a strong turnout in national elections in December will turn people away from violence. They expressed similar hopes before last January's elections. However, while those elections were a success in many parts of the nation, in Anbar the turnout was in the single digits.

"Some of the Iraqis say they want to vote but they're worried there'll be a bomb at the polling station," Marine Capt. James Haunty, 27, of Columbus, Ohio, said recently.

"It's a legitimate fear, but I always tell them, just trust me."

Less than five minutes after Haunty spoke, near the town of Hit, a roadside bomb down the street produced a loud boom followed by a funnel of black smoke.

As with much of the province, Fallujah has no functioning police force. Police in Ramadi are confined to two heavily fortified stations, after insurgents destroyed or seriously damaged eight others.

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



In this US Army photo, hospital man 3rd Class Chan Vang, of Minneapolis, Minn. patrols with a squad of Marines from Company 'I', 3rd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment in the city of Hit. The Pentagon plans to deploy two additional battalions to Iraq amid rising insurgent attacks. (AFP/US ARMY/Corp. Ken Melton)

U.S. Troops Attack Collaborator Deputy Minister

24 August 2005 Aljazeera.Net

An Iraqi deputy justice minister has escaped assassination after armed men fired at his convoy, killing four of his bodyguards and wounding five.

It was the second attempt against Undersecretary Osho Ibrahim.

A witness at the scene of the shooting on Wednesday, who did not give his name, told Associated Press Television News that the motorcade was attacked by armed men.

The five wounded bodyguards, however, said US troops opened fire on them.

"American troops opened fire on the three-vehicle Land cruiser convoy without any reason," Nasir Bayan said from his hospital bed.

His four colleagues in the same room also said they were attacked by Americans.

A US Bradley fighting vehicle had been seen in the area after the attack, but spokesmen for Task Force Baghdad said they had no information on the incident.

CRAWFORD TEXAS WAR REPORTS

“Casey Never Died, And He Never Will”

25 August 2005 Cindy Sheehan, Electronic Iraq,

I got to Camp Casey and I arrived with a mom whose son, John, was killed on January 26, 2005, and his wife and baby, who never met his dad. We arrived in Waco at about 4:30 to the local press. The White House Press Corps was still with the president.

When I arrived at Camp Casey II this afternoon I was amazed at what has changed since I was gone. Now, we have a huge tent to get out of the sun; caterers; an orientation tent; a medic tent (with medics); a chapel, etc.

The most emotional thing for me though was walking through the main tent and seeing the huge painting on canvas of Casey. Many things hit me all at once: That this huge movement began because of Casey's sacrifice; thousands, if not millions of people know

about Casey and how he lived his life and the wrongful way in which he was killed; but the thing that hit me the hardest was how much I miss him.

I miss him more everyday. It seems the void in my life grows as time goes on and I realize I am never going to see him again or hear his voice.

In addition to all this, the portrait is so beautiful and moving and it captures Casey's spirit so well. I sobbed and sobbed. I was surrounded by photographers, I looked around until I finally found a friendly face, then the news people crushed in on me and I couldn't breathe. I didn't mean to have such a dramatic re-entrance to Camp Casey, but the huge portrait of Casey really surprised me.

I can take all of the right wing attacks on me. I have been lied about and to before. Their attacks just show how much I am getting to them and how little truth they have to tell. What really hurts me the most is when people say that I am dishonoring Casey by my protest in Crawford. By wanting our troops to come home alive and well, that I am somehow not supporting them.

So, after Joan Baez gave us a great concert tonight, I got up and I talked about Casey. About the sweet boy who grew up to be a remarkable young man. Casey was not always a brave, big soldier man. He was my sweet, sweet baby once. I told the people at the Camp named after him, that when he was about 2 years old, he would come up behind me and throw his arms around my legs, kiss me on the butt and say: "I wuv you mama."

I also talked about the loving big brother and wonderful, nearly perfect son. Casey was a regular guy who wanted to get married, have a family, be an elementary school teacher, and a Deacon in the Catholic Church. He wanted to be a Chaplain's assistant in the Army, but was lied to about that also by his recruiter. The last time I talked to him when he called from Kuwait, he was on his way to mass.

For Casey to even join the Army, let alone being killed in battle was the thing that was most uncharacteristic of him. He was a gentle and kind soul who only wanted to help others. What did his untimely and unnecessary death accomplish? It accomplished reinvigorating a peace movement that was sincere, but not very active...or if active, not well covered by the main stream media.

Joan sang the song Joe Hill In it Joe Hill says: "I never died."

Well, looking out at the faces here at Camp Casey, and knowing that for everyone who is present here, there are thousands of others who support our work, I am convinced that Casey never died, and he never will.

When I look into the eyes of the kind and gentle souls who have come here, I see Casey and the faces of all the others killed in George Bush's war for greed and profit.

We will never forget them and we will honor them by working for peace.



Cindy Sheehan touches a white cross, representing her son who was killed in Iraq, as Melanie (R) and Susan (C) House embrace, while holding a picture of John House who was also killed in Iraq, at the protest camp near U.S. President George W. Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas August 25, 2005. (Jeff Mitchell/Reuters)

“They Saw Him As An Occupier”

August 25, 2005 RAW STORY. **Excerpt from Cindy Sheehan's 16-minute speech to supporters Wednesday night**, taken by RAW STORY via The Brad Show on Raw Radio.

The hardest thing for me to hear, I don't care about them talking about me being a crackpot or a media whore, or a tool of the left, you know.

I'm like if I truly was a media whore do you think I would like maybe get myself fixed up a little bit before I went on?

That doesn't bother me at all, but what bothers me so much is when they say I am dishonoring my son's memory by what I'm doing, that my son would be ashamed of me or what they really like to say is that I'm pissing, or shitting, or spitting on his grave.

And look what Casey, look what Casey has started. You know, I'm here because of Casey, we're all here because of Casey and you know literally there is, there is over 2000 of our brave young people and tens of thousands of innocent Iraqis and I know they are behind us, and I see them, all their faces on your faces.

But Casey was such a gentle kind loving person. He never even got in one fist fight his whole life. Nobody even hated him enough to punch him let alone kill him, and that's what George Bush did.

He put our kids in another person's country and Casey was killed by insurgents. He wasn't killed by terrorists. He was killed by Shiite militia who wanted him out of the country, when Casey was told he was going to be welcomed with chocolate and flowers as a liberator.

Well, the people of Iraq saw it differently. They saw him as an occupier.

“A Dozen Gold Star Family Members And Relatives”

August 26, 2005 Jeff Paterson, Not in Our Name, Crawford, Texas

The morning press conference featured a dozen Gold Star family members and relatives of servicepersons currently in the military.

One by one mothers and widows of troops killed in Iraq stepped up to the bank of microphones and briefly described their immense loss, and driving force that compelled them to come across the country to Crawford, Texas in their search for real answers.

Archie Comes To Crawford



Archie, "a former right-winger," drove from Missouri in his old Ford to be at Camp Casey. Photo by Jeff Paterson, Not in Our Name, Aug. 26, 2005, 12:34 PM. jeff@paterson.net

August 25, 2005 RICHARD WARD, CounterPunch [Excerpt]

And then there was Archie from Missouri, whom at first glance one would have taken for a hayseed or redneck, overweight, unshaven, past middle age, loud of voice and wearing faded denim overalls.

He had driven from Missouri in his 1980 Ford pickup and was in Crawford in support of Cindy and to protest Bush's "ugly, immoral war."

An ex-Marine, Archie had gone to Guatemala in 1989 to visit his son, then a Peace Corps volunteer, and had had his head turned around by what he saw.

Since then Archie has been a man on a mission, going to Baghdad to deliver medical supplies with Ramsey Clark, going to Cuba, hounding Presidents, writing endless letters to his local paper.

Breaking News! Army And Marine Recruiters Head For Camp Casey As Pro-War Crowd Gathers

[Thanks to Ward Reilly]

What: Army and Marine Recruiters Head to Counter Protest at Camp Casey

When: August 27 & 28, 2005

Where: Camp Casey, Crawford, TX

Released by The Political Switchboard (PoliticalSwitchboard.com)

Hungry for new recruits to bolster declining enlistment numbers, Army and Marine Recruitment offices from nearby Texas cities are sending military recruiters to the Counter Protest at Camp Casey this weekend.

The recruiters anticipate a positive response from these patriots who surely wish to demonstrate their support of the war by making the ultimate sacrifice.

All media outlets are urged to send journalists and film crews to the Counter Protest at Camp Casey immediately to record this heroic action.

Cindy Sheehan's Fellowship Of Grief

Phil and Linda Waste came from Hinesville, Ga., to support their three children and two grandchildren, all active-duty military. Between them, they've served 57 months on tours of duty in Iraq. The Wastes say they would like to know how much more they must give to a war in which they don't believe.

August 15, 2005 By Celeste Zappala and Dante Zappala, Tompaine.com. Celeste Zappala is the mother of Sgt. Sherwood Baker, who was killed in Iraq in 2004. Dante Zappala is the brother of Sgt. Sherwood Baker. [Excerpt]

We are in Crawford, Texas. We are sunk down into the soil of our country, digging in for a few days near the president's ranch. Our friend Cindy Sheehan has been entrenched here for a week, demanding a meeting with the president.

We've come to speak up for a man who is now forever silent. Sgt. Sherwood Baker, our Sher, was a member of the Pennsylvania National Guard. He was killed in Baghdad last year. He was on duty for the Iraq Survey Group. He was looking for weapons of mass destruction.

We came to bear witness to this event and to share our story.

We have now in Crawford an invaluable collection of ordinary Americans who can speak a plain and irrefutable truth about the reality of the Iraq war.

We're here with moms like Sherry Glover. She came in from Houston with her daughter, Katie, and her 3-month-old granddaughter, Dakota. Katie enlisted in the Army. Stationed in Korea, she met her husband. He's in Iraq now. Katie is on Immediate Ready Reserve, and it is within the realm of possibility that she, too, could be activated when her maternity leave is over.

Soldiers visit the Glover house regularly. When they come, Katie peeks fearfully out of the window to study their clothes. She knows a class A Army uniform could be the messenger there to say, "We regret to inform you..." She sighs with relief when she realizes that they are merely recruiters who have come, yet again, to talk to Sherry's 19-year-old twin sons.

Phil and Linda Waste came from Hinesville, Ga., to support their three children and two grandchildren, all active-duty military. Between them, they've served 57 months on tours of duty in Iraq. The Wastes say they would like to know how much more they must give to a war in which they don't believe.

Mary Sapp, age eight, came from Massachusetts with her mom and big sister. She says she'd like to know why her dad, a National Guardsman, can't return home from Iraq.

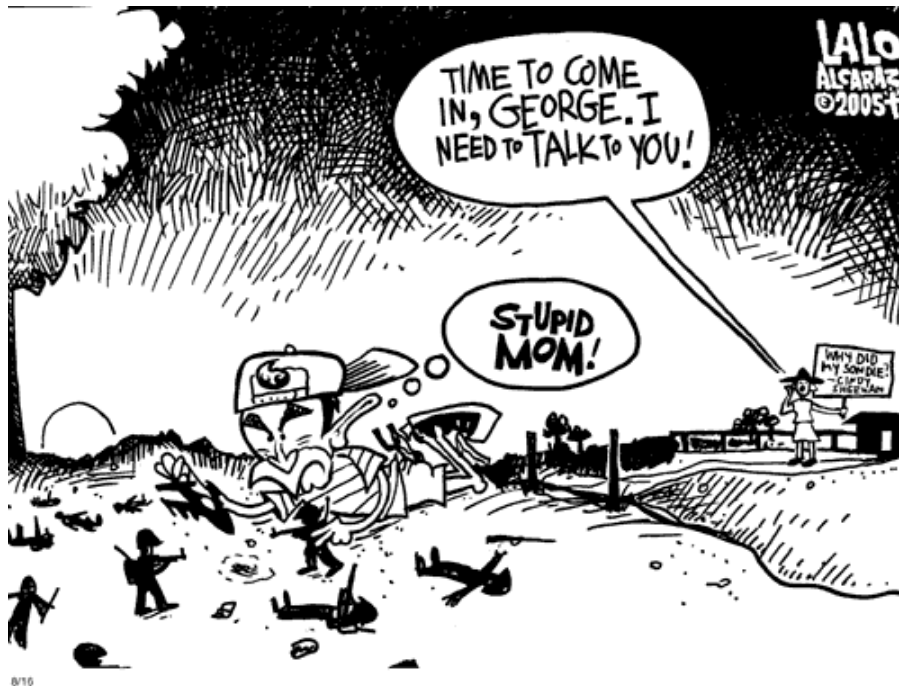
We're humbled by their struggles. We realize that our story is, in many ways, complete. Sherwood will never return to us. For these families, and more than 100,000 like them, every day involves another bargain with God.

The president vacations nearby, using the readily available press corps to tell these families that their loved ones will come home when things get better in Iraq.

To these families, this statement pulls hope from under their feet. They know from the phone calls, the e-mails and the return visits home that things aren't getting better in Iraq. They're getting worse.

The President offers them the guarantee that he cares. And then he reiterates his plan for success in Iraq: more of the same. That's a tough sell to the folks here at the encampment.

More of the same has a unique meaning to them. It means redeployments to a war zone, increased vulnerability to physical and mental injury and a guarantee of family hardships.



Mona In The Field Of Crosses (At Camp Casey)

August 15, 2005 Greg Moses, Peacefile.org

“Every voice that comes behind Cindy Sheehan sparks a new voice, and someone else stands up. Someone else is not afraid anymore.”

Mona is speaking from the back seat of a Camp Casey shuttle as the Texas prairie speeds past. Today Mona is not afraid what the President will think. But she is worried to death about her son, who is headed for Iraq next month. Mona's anti-war movement is on a tight schedule indeed. Even the national protests scheduled for Sept. 24-26 in D.C. may be too late.

"I was on Air America earlier this week," says Mona, answering to the usual round of "where you from?" She called the radio station from Ohio to defend Cindy Sheehan's protest action, and someone asked her if she was planning to go. "Well, if I can arrange it, I'll go," Mona recalls. After she hung up, the station got calls. Someone offered a plane ticket from Ohio to Texas. Another offered the rent car. "So I'm here for at least a week, but I can always just turn in the rent car and stay longer."

Over on Prairie Chapel Road, beneath a few freshly erected white crosses, some flowers have been placed.

For 24-year-old Kelly Prewitt of Alabama, someone has placed a collection of colorful cut flowers on the ground. Florist delivery trucks are not uncommon out here. According to a CBS news report archived at the pigstyle Iraq Page, Prewitt wrote his dad to say he was homesick.

Back in the fateful month of April 2003 when Kelly was killed, his dad Steve was quoted saying he hoped his son's death would mean something, that the war would do some good. Out here in the blazing light of August, Kelly's mother Jean tells a French wire service that her whole attitude toward the war changed in December 2003 when the reason for starting the war was exposed as "a big lie".

For 22-year-old Irving Medina of Middletown, New York, someone has cut wildflowers from the prairie—a sunflower and a purplish bulb from a nettle or thistle. Irving's twin brother Ivan had just survived an 11-month tour in Iraq when a West Point officer and chaplain, dressed in their best uniforms, knocked at the family home. They were soon followed by tv cameras. Irving had been killed by a "homemade grenade" while on patrol in the streets of Baghdad in late 2003 reported the Times Herald-Record of Hudson Valley.

He was going to propose to a woman when he returned. All the family knew was her name: Leslie. Was it Leslie who cut the wild flowers today? As I search to find a Crawford connection, all I come up with is Medina, holy city of the prophet.

A rose and a daisy have been placed at the cross of 20-year-old Christian Schulz of Colleyville, Texas, who was stationed at nearby Ft. Hood. His death is attributed to "non-combat" causes, but he died in a war nevertheless, July 11, 2003. Finally, although no flowers yet appear at the cross of Pablito Pena Briones, Jr., who died from a "non-hostile gunshot" in Falluja, something about the name Pablito reminds me how young a 20-year-old can be.

By the time I reach the end of the line, Mona is bent over, trying to rattle loose one of the crosses from a pull-cart. From a string, hanging around her neck, dangles a laminated photo of a young man in uniform.

"Mona, is that your son?" I ask. She looks up, slightly startled, then, "Yes, that's him." Standing up, she twirls the picture to show me the flip side, a photo of her three grandchildren.

Two of them are from her son's family, one is from her daughter's, but she has made a group photo for her son to take with him, to give him hope, to encourage him to come back alive.

Back to her work with the crosses, she says in a wavering voice, "I sure hope I don't have to put out one of these for him." And we both stand there crying. "Where are all the mothers," she asks, "that these crosses belong to?"

A Korean reporter looks at us, and he is also frozen stiff by this grief. His pen hovers over his notebook, but what exactly is there to say?

"Ma'am, do you want me to help you put names on those crosses?" asks the gentle voice of a brand new volunteer who has just walked the line. Which helps to get us all moving again.

Under the high sun, with cicadas and crickets buzzing from their invisible homes in the grass, Mona, with her hat brim pulled down, returns to her work among the field of crosses at Prairie Chapel Road.

TROOP NEWS

Bush Sending 22,000 More Troops To Iraq

[Thanks to Phil G who sent this in.]

25 August 2005 By Kim Sengupta, independent.co.uk

The United States military is in the process of replacing National Guard contingents in Iraq with regular combat troops in anticipation of a surge of violence during the coming electoral process.

The extra forces will raise the number of US troops from around 138,000 to 160,000 and will be perceived as delaying America's exit strategy for Iraq which was due to begin with the new constitution.

Around 2,000 paratroopers from the Airborne Division are preparing to be in position in time for October's constitutional referendum which will be followed by national elections. Other "warfighting" units have been put on alert for rapid deployment.

The extra US troops are being sent in response to requests by the two senior US commanders in Iraq, General John Abizaid and General George Casey Jr.

240 Soldiers From Occupied Puerto Rico Sent To Help Occupy Iraq

Aug. 26 (Xinhuanet)

A group of 240 soldiers of the National Guard of Puerto Rico will be deployed Monday to Iraq to join the US military presence in the Arab country, National Guard's Public Affairs official Millie Rosa said on Friday

The soldiers are part of an 840-strong maintenance contingent to be stationed in Juana Diaz of southern Iraq.

On Monday, they will go to the United States to receive special training before going to Iraq.



General Politely Says Iraq Mercenaries A Pain In The Ass

8.26.05 Defense Daily

The Army's top general said the service has been able to lure highly trained special operations personnel away from lucrative work with private security firms but suggested the sizeable presence of armed contractors on the battlefield has the potential to be "problematic."

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker said commanders in the field were best qualified to answer questions about contracting, but added that the use of private security firms in places like Iraq raised key issues of command and control.

Marvelous News! VX Nerve Gas Might Leak Undetected

8.26.05 Lexington Herald-Leader

Monitoring equipment used to detect the most lethal chemical at Blue Grass Army Depot in Kentucky is being used incorrectly, making it unlikely or impossible to detect a leak, an employee charged. The Pentagon and the state of Kentucky are looking into the allegation that a detector for VX nerve gas is located incorrectly.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Tips On How To Beat US From Resistance Consultant

[Thanks to PB, who sent this in.]

<p>In this part of the country, fixing guilt for supporting the insurgents would be difficult. Everyone knows everyone else, and everyone seems to back the mujahideen, or holy warriors.</p>
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August 23 2005 By Dhiya Rasan and Steve Negus, Financial Times

North of the western Iraqi town of Ramadi lies the "peninsula" a bend in the Euphrates, dotted with vegetable fields, orchards and occasional low earthen mounds on which stand memorials to the "martyrs" killed in the struggle against the US marines based across the river.

This is the territory of the "Omariyun," an insurgent network drawn from four of the main tribes in the peninsula, named after a 7th century Muslim ruler venerated by the Sunni.

The peninsula clans' unofficial leader and consequently the Omariyun's informal consultant is a former army colonel named Watban Jassam, a tall officer in his 50s, well groomed and well spoken, who for 15 years was a prisoner of war held by the Iranians and now lives on a farm with his five sons.

The Omariyun are very much a local movement, but similar networks are common across Sunni Arab Iraq.

This makes Colonel Jassam, a respected community leader who wields influence over local insurgents but does not share the radical Islamist ideology of extremists such as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, exactly the kind of man that the Americans want to convince to give up armed struggle.

However, as long as US forces remain in Iraq, and as long as pro-Iranian Shia parties wield power in Baghdad, he does not seem ready to be convinced.

Colonel Jassam's wartime suffering and his piety (he memorised the Koran while in prison) as well as his educated demeanour give him a moral authority with the Omariyun, even if he does not engage directly in the planning or conduct of operations although he once ambushed some US soldiers after his brother was killed in a raid.

He has no objection to his name appearing in print. He says he is known to the Americans and, in fact, claims that they once tried to hire him as an adviser, in between raids on his house.

In this part of the country, fixing guilt for supporting the insurgents would be difficult. Everyone knows everyone else, and everyone seems to back the mujahideen, or holy warriors.

At one point during a meeting with Colonel Jassam, shooting echoes in the background. The next morning, after one of the colonel's sons talks to the neighbours, the family discovers that it was not an attack authorised by the Omariyun leadership, but rather a freelance attack by a group of youths.

"They were out to make their reputation so they will be called upon to carry out future operations," Colonel Jassam explains.

The colonel's advice to the insurgents is twofold: hints on how to strike while dodging the marines' devastating firepower, and thoughts on what their political goals should be.

He suggests that the insurgents fire mortars or rockets from multiple locations at once, and then flee immediately, so as not to give the Americans' counter-battery radar the chance to locate them. He tells the peninsula's insurgents to fight smartly not like the Salafi Islamists, he says, "who spend too long in one place, and who don't think through their resistance".

The colonel's political vision, meanwhile, is shaped by his 15 years in Iranian detention, where he was held by the Badr militia of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq an Iraqi party that fought alongside Tehran in the 1980 to 1988 Iran/Iraq war, and

which is now the most important power in his own country's Shia-dominated government.

He was released in 1997, eight years after the war's end. The Badr militiamen, he says, tortured him harshly - a common charge heard from former POWs. In Colonel Jassam's case, the militia forced him to eat 2kg of salt a day, leaving him with kidney problems that persist.

He also says the Badr forced the prisoners to dirty themselves when they went to the bathroom, rendering them ritually impure and therefore unable to pray.

He stresses he has nothing against the Shia per se. "We like (anti-American Shia leader) Muqtada al-Sadr. I don't have any problem with Shia, just with the Supreme Council and with Badr."

To win the war against the US military and Badr, Colonel Jassam advises the Omariyun to follow two short-term goals to cement mujahideen control over the Ramadi area, and to stage operations that will increase pressure on US opinion to withdraw troops.

In Ramadi, the insurgents are setting up a nascent mini-civil administration in its outskirts, distributing petrol and water to civilians. They finance themselves through the Transport Ministry's local office in charge of vehicle registration, which they essentially control by threats against its administrators.

For a few thousand dollars they issue licences to second-hand vehicles more than five years old, which are banned from import under an anti-congestion decree passed by former prime minister Iyad Allawi. With the permits, such cars can be sold elsewhere in the country.

To achieve their second goal, turning Americans against the war, the mujahideen need to shape their operations "to support anti-war sentiment in the west", he says.

To gauge US public opinion, he has become an avid watcher of satellite news channels, and never misses the White House press briefings.

When he sees footage of another insurgent groups' attack on a bus station, he exclaims: "They were innocents no one should kill them." He also denounces the Americans for using Mr Zarqawi's name to tarnish the mujahideen as a whole.

After the mujahideen have driven out the Americans, they will move on to their next goal - destroying Badr as a force that could ever hold power in Iraq. The otherwise good-natured Colonel Jassam displays a rare flash of hatred when he describes his former tormentors.

"The Badr said that the Sunnis were infidels . . . but who pledges allegiance now to the (American) infidels?" he asks. "The Badr forces have abandoned Islam."

Assorted Resistance Action:

26 August 2005 Aljazeera.Net & (Xinhuanet)

Armed men on Friday shot dead two policemen when they were travelling in their car in Baquba, city north of Baghdad which has seen an increase attacks in the last few days.

Two truck drivers lost their lives when their convoy hit a roadside bomb near al-Rashad, also north of Baghdad, as it was headed towards an Iraqi military camp.

A senior Iraqi army officer and two civilians were killed in separate attacks in Dora, south of the capital.

Near Tikrit, armed men attacked an Iraqi military patrol, killing one soldier and wounding four.

A police officer and his friend were shot dead by armed men northeast of Baghdad, police said.

An Iraqi policeman was killed and two others wounded when a roadside bomb struck their patrol in southern Baghdad on Friday, police said.

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

Just In Case You Missed It above



One hundred thousand supporters of Moqtada Sadr took to the streets condemning the U.S. occupation. (AFP/Essam Al-Sudani)

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Accelerating Antiwar Resistance Among Military Families

24 August 2005 By Christian Appy, TomDispatch.com

During the Vietnam era, Lyndon Johnson decided to rely almost exclusively on the draft and the active-duty military to fight the war, hoping to keep casualties (and so their impact) largely restricted to young, mostly unmarried, and powerless individuals.

The Reserve forces, he understood, tended to be older, married, and more rooted in their communities.

Now, the Reserves and the National Guard make up half of U.S. combat forces in Iraq, a figure that has doubled since early 2004. This increasing reliance on the Reserves only serves to accelerate antiwar resistance among military families.

Theft Over-Rules The Constitution

From: Mike Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: August 26, 2005
Subject: Theft Over Rules The Constitution

To G. I. Special:

There is no exit strategy from Iraq.

The United States government is not going to leave that oil in Iraq, just like the miners in 1849 did not leave the gold in California. "Walk softly and carry a big stick."

The U. S. government is going to try and steal everything, because that is what an Empire does.

As far as the anti-war movement goes, no one said this was going to be easy. Like Omaha Beach, it will take several waves of protesters to stop the madness. I do not feel I am being negative here, I just know how long it took to get out of Vietnam.

Mike Hastie
Vietnam Veteran
August 26, 2005

The Troops Vs. The Imperial Liberals

The true leaders of the anti-war movement are going to be Casey's fellow troops like Kelly Dougherty, Pablo Paredes and Jason Gunn who have served in Iraq and are now speaking out against the war. There are hundreds of them. Perhaps thousands.

26 August, 2005 By Joshua Frank, Countercurrents.org. [Excerpt]

Go ahead and get excited about Cindy Sheehan's overnight popularity. It really is a incredibly important development for the antiwar movement. But before we drop what we are doing and follow her lead, we better take a sobering step backward and recognize Sheehan, alone as a one-woman show, has very real limitations.

First, we should start listening to what she is actually saying, which is that this is not about her or her loss. It's about the war. It's about the slaughter taking place in Iraq right now.

She's also calling for troops to come home right now. Which is exactly what the antiwar movement should be calling for. But isn't. Not yet anyway.

Liberals like Marc Cooper and Juan Cole are calling for a phased withdraw ala Senator Russ Feingold's exit December 2006 proclamation.

Writing for his blog Cole explains his lofty perspective: "I think 'US out now' as a simple mantra neglects to consider the full range of possible disasters that could ensue. For one thing, there would be an Iraq civil war. Iraq wasn't having a civil war in 2002. And although you could argue that what is going on now is a subterranean, unconventional civil war, it is not characterized by set piece battles and hundreds of people killed in a single battle, as was true in Lebanon in 1975-76, e.g. People often allege that the US military isn't doing any good in Iraq and there is already a civil war. These people have never actually seen a civil war and do not appreciate the lid the US military is keeping on what could be a volcano."

Yep. Those are prolonged occupation excuses from an "antiwar" scholar.

Cole's thesis is a non sequitur. Funny how the tenured Prof's rationale mirrors that of the Bush administration - "stay the course" he effectively says. Keep the occupation steaming onward. Forget the mounting death count. Forget that the US does not have any intention of running Iraq justly.

Oh, how noble of Professor Cole. If we are to accept his putrid rhetoric, however, then we are not acknowledging the voices of dissent in Iraq that have been ringing in unmistakably clear these past months. They want the US out yesterday. Occupiers like Cole don't listen, though. They impose whatever they think is best on those they occupy.

The true leaders of the anti-war movement are going to be Casey's fellow troops like Kelly Dougherty, Pablo Paredes and Jason Gunn who have served in Iraq and are now speaking out against the war.

There are hundreds of them. Perhaps thousands. They can't be discredited in the same manner as Cindy Sheehan. They've seen the blood and smelled the death first hand. These are the men and women who will become the leaders of the movement.

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

Winning More Friends: For The Armed Resistance That Is



A man picks up a piece of torn art work following a raid by U.S. troops in Baghdad August 12, 2005. Residents of a house on Baghdad's Palestine Street said that U.S.

soldiers searched their home at 0300 local time Friday morning, breaking open the front door, ransacking the interior, and torching their car. REUTERS/Thaier Al-Sudani

[There's nothing quite like invading somebody else's country, busting into their houses by force and trashing their most personal possessions 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?]

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Bush's Popularity Hits Lowest Level Ever In US Poll

8.26.05 AFP

President George W. Bush's approval rating has plummeted to the lowest level in his four and half years in the White House, according a poll.

According to the Gallup poll, conducted in August, 40 percent of Americans approve of Bush's job performance while 56 disapprove. It is the worst result for the president since he took office in January 2001. Bush was re-elected in November.

The previous low score was last month, when 44 percent of Americans polled between July 25-28 said they approved of Bush's performance.

His previous worst disapproval figure was in a June 24-26 poll, when 53 percent had a negative opinion of the US leader.

Compared to the average of other presidents during August of their second terms, Bush is only ahead of Richard Nixon, whose August average was 34 percent.

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.

BUSH PROPOSES MOVING NATION'S CAPITAL TO IDAHO

August 24, 2005 The Borowitz Report

Idaho, the state which currently gives President George W. Bush his highest approval rating in the nation, could soon be getting something in return as the president today proposed moving the nation's capital to Idaho for the remainder of his second term.

Mr. Bush used a speech in Boise to float the idea of moving the nation's center of government from Washington, D.C. to The Gem State.

"I'll tell you this," Mr. Bush told the cheering crowd. "I wouldn't mind going back to Washington so much if Washington were in Idaho."

While some in the audience at first thought Mr. Bush was suffering from a bout of geographic confusion, he soon made it clear that he was actually proposing moving the Federal government to Idaho, a decision that could mean trillions of dollars to the state, business leaders say.

But Dr. Charles Nesvig, professor of political science at the University of Minnesota, believes that moving the nation's capital from Washington to Idaho could hold hidden perils for Mr. Bush.

"Right now, Idaho loves Bush, but Bush is almost never there," Dr. Nesvig said. "There's a possibility that once Bush is in Idaho a whole lot, Idaho won't like him nearly so much."

But Dr. Nesvig says there could be a silver lining to such a scenario: "Once President Bush realizes that Idaho is where he has to go to work every day, he probably won't be there that much, especially in the summer."

“The Dems Seem Hell-Bent On Trying Out For The Dance Band On The Titanic”

August 25, 2005 By LUCINDA MARSHALL, CounterPunch [Excerpt]

Democratic Senators Nancy Pelosi and Hilary Clinton recently sent out a fundraising letter. An acquaintance of mine who received the letter tells me that it also included a questionnaire asking him which issues were on his mind.

But there was something very strange about the questionnaire. It seems that in the list of issues you could check off, they forgot to include anything about Iraq. My friend was rather peeved about that because as it turns out, he is mighty concerned about Iraq.

But perhaps the omission isn't so strange after all.

Indeed, as the Washington Post points out, the Democratic leadership seems to be of the opinion that the crucial issue is how best to achieve success in Iraq.

At a time when most Americans are beginning to wonder, "Where's the exit?", the Dems seem hell-bent on trying out for the dance band on the Titanic. Little wonder that their approval rating is even lower than the President's rating. A June Washington Post/NBC poll showed that just 42 % of Americans approved of the Congressional Democrats' performance.

Apparently the DNC party leadership hasn't seen the recent polls that indicate that most Americans no longer support this war.

The Dems delusion that the name of the game is to convince voters that they can do a better job of winning the war is insupportable.

This isn't a 'winnable' war and it is well past time to acknowledge that the Empire is butt-naked. What Americans want is a plan to end this deadly misuse of our military might.

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)

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