

GI SPECIAL 3C5:

An Honorable Soldier, True To His Oath



Sgt. Kevin Benderman, right, and his attorney Bill Cassara walk into a pretrial hearing Friday July 22, 2005 at Fort Stewart, Ga. (AP Photo/Stephen Morton)

Sgt. Kevin Benderman Sentenced To 15 Months

[Thanks to PB who sent this in. He points out that 15 months is a victory, not a defeat. He's right. The early Vietnam anti-war soldiers got 5 and 10 year prison terms.]

July 28, 2005 By Russ Bynum, Associated Press & Eric Garris

An Army mechanic who refused to go to Iraq while he sought conscientious objector status was acquitted of desertion Thursday but found guilty of a lesser charge and sentenced to 15 months behind bars.

Judge Wright threw out the bogus charge of larceny (for receiving the wrong pay grade) earlier in the week.

Sgt. Kevin Benderman, 40, also was given a dishonorable discharge and a reduction in rank to E1 – private -- on the charge of missing movement. If he had been found guilty of desertion, he could have faced five years in prison.

Benderman failed to deploy with his 3rd Infantry Division unit in January, 10 days after he told Fort Stewart commanders he was seeking a discharge as a conscientious objector. He has previously said he refused to deploy to Iraq after his first combat tour during the 2003 invasion made him opposed to war.

Attorneys on both sides wrapped up their cases within three hours after Benderman's court-martial began Thursday.

Benderman said during the sentencing phase that he didn't mean for his actions to hurt his comrades.

"I am not against soldiers," he said. "I don't care what anyone says. Though some might take my actions as being against soldiers, I want everyone to be home and safe and raising their families. I don't want anyone to be hurt in a combat zone."

Military police immediately took Sgt. Benderman into custody.

MORE:

Thanks to D for asking the letter below be reprinted, in honor of Sgt. Kevin Benderman, who, by his courage and dedication to duty, has earned the thanks of a grateful nation. The comments preceding the letter originally appeared with Sgt. Benderman's letter in GI Special 3A11, <http://www.militaryproject.org/article.asp?id=439>

George Bush: A Domestic Enemy Of The United States

[When the history of the movement that finally stopped the war in Iraq is written, this letter will have a very special place. Coming from a serving soldier, and a Sgt., it is a declaration of principle and allegiance to the liberties of the people of the United States in the spirit of Tom Paine and Patrick Henry.

[Read it with loving care, consider carefully what it means, carry it with you, and draw strength from it. And if you come across one or some of our troops, have spare copies to pass along. T]

November 20, 2004

To: George W. Bush

From: SGT Kevin M. Benderman

When are you going to tell the truth to the people of the United States?

Why don't you tell them why you want to be in Iraq so bad?

I was there for six months and I did not see the first weapon of mass destruction. I did receive orders from the company commander to shoot children if they threw small rocks at us and that was when I figured out that the entire thing was way over the line.

Over 1200 soldiers have died in Iraq so that you can have a couple billion more dollars, that should make you feel very good about yourself.

The soldiers that have died for this sham that you have put over on the American people are so much more deserving than that. You are not worth the dust off of their boots.

If you truly had respect for the military and the people that serve then you would not continue to kill them in your war.

I joined the Army to protect my country and not to be a mercenary for a political despot.

If you wish to put me in prison because of my views then you should make room for about 75% of the military.

And while you are at make some room for yourself and about half of your administration. You are responsible for what happened at Abu Gharaib and you are shirking your responsibility.

The commander in chief is not above the UCMJ, as you would like to believe.

I want to fulfill my contract that says I joined the Army to protect my country against all enemies foreign and domestic, and as far as I am concerned you are a domestic enemy of the United States.

You care nothing for this country; you just care about the profits that are to be made from the oil in Iraq. That much is evident to me from the way the contracts were passed out to Halliburton and KBR. It must be nice to have the deck stacked in your favor by the president of the USA.

Since your are raising the debt ceiling of America so that we can pay the bills that you have run up, why don't you forgive the debts of every one in the armed forces

since they are the ones that are making it possible for you to make billions from the oil from Iraq.

Sincerely,
SGT Kevin M. Benderman

Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward this E-MAIL along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, at home and inside the armed services. Send requests to address up top.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Two Task Force Baghdad Soldiers Killed By IED, One Wounded

July 28, 2005 MNF: Release A050728a

BAGHDAD , Iraq -- Two Task Force Baghdad Soldiers were killed when their patrol struck an improvised explosive device at 2 p.m. July 27 in north Baghdad .

One other Soldier was wounded.

Soldier Dies In Iraq; “His Tour Of Duty Was Extended”



CBS

Jul 27, 2005 Suzanne Le Mignot, (CBS)

PORTAGE, Ind. One of the youngest soldiers to fight in the Iraqi war was killed in the line of duty.

Adam Harting was 19 years old when he was featured in Time magazine in 2003 as one of the youngest soldiers to arrive in Kuwait as part of the American invasion of Iraq. At 18, he had only been out of high school for six months when he was called to duty.

Adam would have been home two months ago for good, but his tour of duty was extended. With that in mind, Adam's death is especially hard for his twin brother, Alex.

"They were one person that was split in two and, he was, he was a best friend," the boys' father said.

Adam's father said, he feels blessed he was just able to see his son a few weeks ago. He came home for two and a half weeks and arrived to see his dad on Father's Day.

Adam Harting is the 13th member of the U.S. military from northwest Indiana killed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

SOLDIER DIES FOLLOWING ACCIDENT AT CAMP TAQADDUM

July 28, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
Release Number: 05-07-22C

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq – A Soldier assigned to the 30th Naval Construction Regiment died as the result of a non-hostile vehicle accident July 27 at Camp Taqaddum, Iraq.

Six U.S. Troops Wounded; Details Unknown

7.28.05 UPI

Six U.S. troops were injured in incidents north of Baghdad. It gave no details about how the incidents occurred.

Notes From A Lost War:

Occupation Forces Retreat To Bases To Minimize Casualties

7.28.05 AP

In the face of relentless suicide bomber attacks, U.S. forces have withdrawn as much as possible in the past few weeks to the safety of their bases, drastically reducing their "operational tempo" and cutting casualties to about half those in June.

A Year Ago Seems Like A Thousand Years Ago: A Soldier Reports From Iraq, 2004

I remember McCaffrey saying (and he said this a lot): "This is b-----, man. They're not going to stop pushing us until someone gets hurt or killed. Then maybe they'll let up."

07-13-2004 By Chris Murphy, 81ST BDE – IRAQ (SFTT.ORG)

BALAD, Iraq - June 22 was a day I'll never forget. The week before it, six long-range rockets hit the base here - Camp Anaconda, about 50 miles north of Baghdad - and one of them hit the PX, killing two soldiers and wounding 25 others. **I had a feeling something else bad was going to happen.**

It's one of the hardest things to deal with: knowing that incoming rockets and mortars come in on a regular basis. I've learned to deal with it, though, just like everyone else around here. Sometimes we don't even hear the boom; all we hear is the alarm going off to tell us to get to hardened shelter. But what I saw and what happened on June 22 will be something much harder for all of us here to deal with.

The day started off with a 3 a.m. wakeup. **No one had gotten much sleep because they didn't put the mission out until 11 the previous night. So at best most of us slept only four hours. This wouldn't have been too much of a problem because this sort of thing happens a lot. But usually we would only go out and do mounted patrols and area coverage. On this day we were walking through about eight different places. It was way too big of an area to cover on foot with just two squads.**

We were at the first site around 5 a.m. Everyone who was going on the foot patrol dismounted from the vehicles. Since I'm a driver, I usually have to sit with the vehicle. I did for an hour or two, and when we met up with the group the lieutenant - Andre Tyson

of Riverside - decided to switch me out with another specialist. I didn't mind too much. I actually wanted to go stomping through the terrain.

I also carried the mine detector, along with my M203 [grenade launcher] and all my grenades. The areas we walked through were densely vegetated. The ground wasn't flat, and there were small canals every 25 feet. We're walking through brush neck high, trying to keep our footing and hoping our next step doesn't land us in a canal.

"It's like being in Vietnam" was the running joke. After an hour and a half of searching this area we finally got out of the "jungle." It was at this point where we linked up with a platoon of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC). **They're the new Iraqi Army that we've been training. I've heard on the news that they're more than ready to take over after we're gone.**

But from what I've seen, that news couldn't be more wrong.

For the two weeks leading up to June 22, our "off" days had been spent babysitting the ICDC and giving them some training. As if we didn't have enough to do already. But on this day, they were going to be patrolling with us.

Up until now, my squad and another squad were sticking close together. Since each squad had a radio and we could cover more area, Lt. Tyson split us up.

He sent the first squad back through the "jungle" and then it was to head east along the Tigris River. We headed south towards the Tigris. This area wasn't much better. It was tall grass, dried wheat fields and big spiky weeds. I don't know which terrain was worse. We ended up marching through some farmers' crops. We linked up with the vehicles to get resupplied on water and to get a little food in us. By now it was 10:30 a.m. It had been go, go, go since 5 this morning with no breakfast.

It was getting hot, and my squad leader, Staff Sgt. Sarla, had already come down with heat exhaustion. Specialist Patrick Ryan McCaffrey gave him an IV bag. McCaffrey, from Tracy, is a combat lifesaver, whose job is to help a victim until a medic arrives. **Meanwhile, our medic, PFC Woodbury, treated another member of our group for a mild case of heat exhaustion. I talked with medics later and they said they should've ended the mission right there.**

They took Sarla back to base and switched out the other heat stroke victim with Spc. Hemmelright, who was a gunner in first squad's humvee. We only got a 20-minute break and then it was back on again. So now it's myself, Lt. Tyson, Spc. McCaffrey (who was carrying the radio), Spc. Camaya, Sgt. Antonio, Spc. Hemmelright, Spc. Ulen and about 12 ICDC along with an interpreter.

We headed southeast towards a town. We walked across large dirt clumps for awhile and then came to a stop and circled around the lieutenant. The ICDC wanted to know why we were out walking around; they didn't think there was anything here. Of course, they were talking through the interpreter and all the questions and gripes were aimed at the lieutenant.

Lt. Tyson explained to them that we had to search these areas for caches of rockets, mortars, weapons or anything else that they might be hiding. He said they wouldn't be in

these open areas and that we were going to search where it was more dense to the southeast where some tall palm trees were. From here the lieutenant decided to split us up. One group would go north towards the town and the other would head into the dense area towards the palms.

I wasn't sure which group to go with; I stopped and looked at Lt. Tyson. He looked at me as if he were going to tell me to come along with him. He didn't say anything so I went with Camaya, Ulen and Antonio along with some of the ICDC towards the town. Lt. Tyson, McCaffrey, Hemmelright and the rest of the ICDC went southeast towards the palm trees.

We were supposed to meet back up where the palm trees were.

I remember McCaffrey saying (and he said this a lot): "This is b-----, man. They're not going to stop pushing us until someone gets hurt or killed. Then maybe they'll let up."

That was the last thing I remember him saying.

As my group headed towards the town, I could still see the other group, and they were still heading towards the trees. We then went east along the right side of the road. We started making our way off the road into the fields where we were to link up with the other group.

We were all wondering why the lieutenant split us up like this. Our group didn't even have a radio. It didn't make any sense, but a lot of the things we undertake rarely do.

We came to a wall and started yelling for Lt. Tyson and the other group. We asked a farmer if she had seen any other Americans in the area. She said she saw some walking towards the town. I didn't think it was the other group. They shouldn't have been walking back that way.

Besides, we had already covered that area. Soon after that we heard some automatic fire, followed by some single shots. At first I thought it was the police shooting off their guns or an attack on the police station. We knew it came from the police station. We all got on our knees and looked in the direction of the fire. Some more single shots went off. From the way it sounded, I knew it was an M16.

Then I saw a bunch of Humvees speeding towards the police station. We decided to get back on the road and go back towards the police station. After a while I knew something bad had happened and we started to run. I ran through some vehicles and saw McCaffrey on the ground. He was all pale and almost green. He wasn't moving and his eyes were wide open.

I rushed to pull his mine detector equipment off and throw it in a truck. From what I saw, he didn't look good and was shot up pretty bad. I didn't see much bleeding, but I saw a large wound in his leg and in his stomach. Ulen, Antonio, Camaya and the driver of the five-ton truck lifted Mac up onto the vehicle.

I got on the radio trying to tell the task force what was going on. It was total chaos. I didn't see the lieutenant or Hemmelright anywhere. I was wondering why it was just Mac. I grabbed a weapon and a bloody Kevlar helmet I saw lying on the ground and threw it in the truck. Ulen started CPR on McCaffrey in the back of the five-ton while Camaya and Antonio were holding pressure to the wounds. I was directly behind the five-ton while we were escorting them back to base. I had to watch them try to bring Mac back to life while speeding back to base. From the way he looked, I didn't think he was going to make it.

Then we had to return to the police station to get the rest of the vehicles and the ICDC. This whole time I'm trying to stay focused and not break down. A million questions are going through my head. Why did the lieutenant split us up? What if I had gone with that group?

I'm trying to hear what is going on over the radio. The reason I didn't see the lieutenant or Hemmelright is because they had already been evacuated from the scene before I got there. The Kevlar I threw in the back was the lieutenant's. I found out that he was shot in the back of the head twice. He probably died almost instantly. I looked at the helmet and knew it was his.

He got hit right under where the helmet stops. I also found out that Hemmelright was wounded, but he was going to be OK. I guess he took four shots to the body armor and one got him in the ass. By now, the entire task force was out and there were Humvees and tanks everywhere surrounding the town. There were vehicle checkpoints on the main roads to inspect all vehicles.

I guess three of the ICDC are missing, and there is some confusion as to whether or not they did it. The captain got the names of the three ICDC and we headed to the town where they supposedly lived to talk to the sheik to find out where exactly they lived. I'm not exactly sure what was said because after he talked to the sheik we went back to the police station.

By this time it is confirmed that Lt. Tyson and Spc. McCaffrey are KIA - killed in action - and SPC. Hemmelright is in critical condition. It's just sad that it had to be Mac. No matter how strong he was or how tough he was, he couldn't stop all the bullets that hit him. McCaffrey was hit on both sides of his body where there was no protection from the body armor. There was nothing the medics could do for either of them. Mac had too much internal bleeding and Lt. Tyson had a serious head wound. It was an ambush, plain and simple.

When we came back in we dropped the ICDC off at their camp and searched all of them because Mac's watch was still missing. Antonio said that he had thrown it in the back of the five-ton. We weren't able to find the watch.

There were a lot of sad faces and folks crying. We could all finally break down. Sgt. Maj. Menard said to go back to the headquarters tent and that the chaplain would be over. We went back to the tent and tried collecting ourselves. Later that night the task force went to the airfield and stood on each side of the plane as they loaded McCaffrey and Lt. Tyson. It's going to be hard for those of us that were close to these individuals. McCaffrey was in my squad and was a good friend of mine. I spent a lot of time with Lt. Tyson since I was his driver.

We still have to keep on fighting and continue the mission. We still have at least nine more months here. I can only take it day by day here. June 22 was definitely the worst. I hope no more will have to die. It looks like it's going to get worse before it will get better.

But what is done is done, and there is no going back. I just pray for the families that have lost their loved ones and for the soldiers here who lost their friends. And I know these friends are in a better place.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Get The Message?



Angry Afghan protestors throw stones at a vehicle belonging to the U.S. military out side the main U.S. base in Bagram, north of Kabul, July 26, 2005. About 2,000 Afghans protested outside the main American base in Afghanistan on Tuesday after the arrest of several villagers. REUTERS/Omar Sobhani

Another Chinook Destroyed

July 28, 2005 By Daniel Cooney, Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — A Chinook helicopter carrying six U.S.-led coalition crew and 25 Afghan troops was destroyed by a fire after making a hard landing near the Pakistan border, the U.S. military said Thursday. No one was hurt.

U.S. military spokesman Lt. Col. Jerry O'Hara said. "Because of the force of the landing, a fire ensued, which destroyed the aircraft." [In plain English, crashed and burned. But "hard landing" and "a fire ensued" tries to make it sound like nothing really serious happened. As in, "The Titanic made hard contact with a piece of ice, and water entry ensued."]

The accident came as the massive, twin-rotor chopper was rushing troops to combat militants near Spin Boldak, a town close to the border with Pakistan, a military statement said. It said hostile fire was not involved.

"It made a hard landing because it hit the ground hard, due **in part** because of reduced visibility caused by debris and dust thrown up from the ground by the helicopter's rotors,"

Afghan and U.S. forces killed three suspected rebels and captured another 15 during a clash Thursday in central Afghanistan, the U.S. military said. Two Afghan soldiers were wounded.

A roadside bomb exploded in Wardak province, about 80 kilometers (50 miles) east of the capital Kabul, damaging one U.N. vehicle but causing no injuries, said U.N. spokesman Adrian Edwards.

TROOP NEWS

Staff Sgt. Recovering From Deadly Encounters; "I Constantly Think About The Stuff That I've Seen"

July 28, 2005 By John Andrew Prime, The Shreveport Times

NATCHITOCHEs -- A charred helmet, two sad dog tags and a curled sliver of razor-sharp metal are souvenirs of Iraq for combat veteran Jonathan Meziere.

At Fort Irwin in September, he was a joke-cracking man with sad eyes topping a wistful smile, a Cajun accent and enough Tony Chachere's seasoning to gag Emeril Lagasse.

Now the staff sergeant from this city's Alpha/108th Cavalry Troop, part of Shreveport's 1/156th Armor Battalion, has two Purple Heart medals and memories that keep him awake nights, though his thoughts still are with buddies half a world away.

"It's really difficult to not be over there and my guys are still over there," he said while sitting in his tiny office at the Natchitoches Armory, where a small air conditioner labored against heat that pales against the 110 degrees in the shade of Baghdad. "My wife doesn't like it, but it's like, 'Baby, I should be back over there.'"

His first brush with death was March 26, when a suicide car bomber targeted the Humvee that Meziere shared with three other soldiers near a checkpoint. Sgt. Broderick Mosley of Shreveport was injured with Meziere. Sgt. Isiah J. Sinclair, 31, of Crowley and Sgt. Lee Godbolt, 23, of New Orleans were killed.

"I suffered first-, second-, third-degree burns on my hand and face, but most of it has cleared up," he said, showing the affected areas.

You can only see the scars where my military glasses were. The bridge on the nose melted in."

The quantity of explosive in the vehicle led Meziere to believe that he and his soldiers were a secondary target the bomber chose when he arrived at the gate only to find it closed. The explosion "disintegrated the vehicle. The only thing left was the engine block, and what was left of (the bomber)."

Meziere remembers looking up and wondering what the driver was doing "when I felt that ... intense heat ..."

On June 25, almost three months to the day later and after a two-week visit home, he got shot. It was in the same Baghdad neighborhood where, just a few weeks earlier, Australian hostage Douglas Wood was rescued by other members of the 1/156th Armor Battalion.

"I was madder when I got shot," Meziere recalls. "It was like 'Goddogit, they got me again!'"

Meziere says an explosion is worse than being shot. "I can see stuff on TV now and you know, I can just feel it. Being blown up was horrific; but being shot, it made me mad."

"They said they were gonna put an IV in me. I said 'No thank you. I'm paranoid of needles.' I was more scared of that needle than I was of the bullet wound or anything else."

Meziere said he always has tried to look at the positive in life. "Being able to talk about it, being able to breathe" give him that outlook.

The 34-year-old has roots in the Melrose and Cloutierville areas. He joined the Navy right out of high school in 1988. After Desert Storm, Meziere returned home and, at his brother Rodney's urging, switched to the Army, first the reserve, finally the National Guard.

Married just more than a year, he and wife Josephine together are the parents of nine children. He's the youngest of seven children, and his parents still are alive. Family is important, and he's more aware of that since coming home.

"They, the everyday people, have it bad over there," Meziere said. "I loved the children. The first thing out of their mouths is 'Mister, Mister, chocolate-ay,' and they're going through your uniform trying to get whatever they can."

Morale among the Louisiana soldiers "is really good now because they know they have less than 50 days before they come home."

Meziere has heard dates the soldiers are supposed to leave Iraq.

"As usual, there's a combination of secret facts and rampant speculation all clouded by the fact that nothing is set in stone yet," said Capt. Lance Magee, a former Shreveporter who is the personnel officer with the 1/156th Armor Battalion. "I can confirm that we will rotate out in September, but the dates of troop movements in and out of Baghdad is secret."

Meziere knows firsthand the transition home isn't always easy.

"It's taking a lot of getting used to, being back home. And knowing that I don't have to go back. I constantly think about the stuff that I've seen."

3,800 Soldiers And Their Rolling Coffins Off To The Imperial Slaughterhouse

July 28, 2005 By MARGARET FRIEDENAUER, Staff Writer, Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, Inc.

The 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team will get an official send-off today from Army officials, families, friends and the public when the 3,800 soldiers assigned to the brigade gather today at the Fort Wainwright Army Post.

The ceremony marks the deployment of the brigade, comprised of 3,100 soldiers stationed at Fort Wainwright and 700 at Fort Richardson in Anchorage.

Waves of troops from the brigade begin leaving for Iraq in early August. The 172nd is relieving the 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division--another Stryker Brigade from Fort Lewis, Wash., that has been serving in Iraq since September.

Operation Iraqi Freedom? Generals Call It A "Shit-Hole"

28 July 2005 By Patrick Sabatier, Libération

A majority of Americans have understood that the boys will never be able to "win the war." It's not even a major political risk for Bush any more. **But he wants to exit, and quickly, what his generals call a "shit-hole,"** provided it doesn't look like an American defeat.

Senators Call Out Multinational Forces General Casey On His Lying Bullshit

July 28, 2005 By Gordon Trowbridge, Army Times staff writer

The two ranking members of the Senate Armed Services Committee said Thursday they are skeptical that the United States could begin withdrawing troops from Iraq by next spring — a possibility raised this week by the top U.S. commander in Iraq.

Army Gen. George Casey, commander of Multinational Forces-Iraq, told reporters Wednesday in Baghdad that a "fairly substantial" reduction in troop levels would be possible by early next year if Iraqis continue to make progress in establishing a permanent government and if training of Iraqi security forces remains at its current pace.

But Sen. John Warner (R-Va.), who chairs the armed services committee, asked Thursday how those statements squared with a Pentagon memo to the committee last week reporting that only "a small number" of Iraqi units are capable of fighting on their own.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT THE NEW 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)

“Sending Soldiers To Deliver Frozen Chickens Seemed Insane”

27 July 2005 By Phillip Robertson, Salon.com

The day after I looked at the photos on Joe's laptop, I went out with his platoon on a patrol in Amariyah. It was July 14 and it was 125 degrees.

Within a few minutes we were drenched with sweat. "This is a perfect place for a vee-bid," the platoon sergeant said as he stood outside the concertina wire on a busy street. (For security reasons, none of the soldiers involved will be named.)

He was halfway through handing out a thousand frozen chickens in a part of the city that has been flooded by refugees from Fallujah and Ramadi. It was not a good place to stand on the street for longer than a few minutes and no one wanted to be there.

"Vee-bid" is U.S. slang for a Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device, a weapon otherwise known as a car bomb, which insurgents prefer to use against U.S. forces because there is no defense against it. The armor on Humvees will not stop the force of a blast fueled by artillery shells and anti-tank mines. Whenever soldiers talk about vee-bids, their sense of dread comes through.

The soldiers were not enthusiastic about giving the chickens away. One man called it "Operation Chicken Choker" because he didn't want to be blown up giving food to people who were sympathetic to the insurgents.

It was easy to see what he was talking about. There is a constant sputter of gunfire in Amariyah. If it's not coming right down on the soldiers, they barely look up.

The platoon managed to finish the mission in 45 minutes, throwing the chickens in careful arcs to the sergeant, who relayed them gracefully to the surprised passengers of passing cars.

The platoon had been waiting for the chickens for hours because they had been stuck on the highway behind a roadside bomb, and when they were finally gone, there was a sense of relief.

Knowing the intensity of violence in Amariyah, sending soldiers to deliver frozen chickens in the insurgent-controlled neighborhood seemed insane. [Reporter doesn't get it. Some Bush Buddy got the contract to delivery frozen chickens to Iraq, no doubt for several hundred million dollars. So, what are some soldiers lives worth measured against the money to be made from war profiteering?]

**Twisted Congressional Freak Blames
V.A. For Not Funding V.A.;
Veterans Fucked Over, As Usual**

Wait a minute! This information came to light in a hearing about FUNDING shortfalls in VA healthcare. Since when is the VA responsible for its own underfunding?

July 27, 2005 Larry Scott, Military.com

There's lots of "I told you so" going around Capitol Hill these days, with good reason. Those politicians who've long criticized the ongoing underfunding of VA healthcare have been proven right. And those who have consistently voted down more funds for VA healthcare still remain clueless.

Among the latter is Rep. Steve Buyer (R-IN), Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs (HCVA). The following shows why.

On July 21, the HCVA learned, from a VA IG report, something that comes as no surprise to veterans: waiting lists for healthcare at VA hospitals all over the country are getting longer and longer.

As of July 15, the number of new enrollees and established patients waiting more than 30 days for appointments in Cleveland was 1,638 -- in San Diego, 621 -- in Indianapolis, 287 -- and in Tampa, 2,650. And this is just a quick look at four VA facilities. These lists grow longer every day.

Rep. Buyer's response to this information?

Blame the VA!

In a July 26 press release, Buyer stated, "To provide the best care possible to veterans, the VA must more efficiently handle the basics ... I want the VA to resolve these problems with appointment scheduling, eliminate these waiting lists, and improve access."

Wait a minute! This information came to light in a hearing about FUNDING shortfalls in VA healthcare. Since when is the VA responsible for its own underfunding?

The White House and the OMB set VA funding levels, and Congress passes the legislation that provides the funding.

Here's the simple math for Rep. Buyer. Veterans are on waiting lists to receive healthcare because VA hospitals don't have the doctors to treat them -- because the White House and Congress haven't properly funded VA healthcare.

I can't make it any simpler.

I have been writing about this for nearly a year now and this is the most blatant attempt I've seen to take the blame off the White House and Congress and lay it on the VA.

Adding to the confusion, veterans have been waiting for healthcare inside and outside the system.

In Northwest Arkansas, the VA is refusing to enroll eligible veterans. But, in other VA facilities, like Portland, Oregon, veterans continue to be enrolled but are put on a waiting list inside the system because there are not enough primary care providers.

The VA policy, at this time, requires that any veteran with a service-connected disability rating of 50 percent or more and veterans who need care for any service-connected disability will be scheduled for care within 30 days of the desired appointment time.

If they cannot be scheduled, the VA must provide for their care at another VA facility or through a non-VA provider at VA expense. It is obvious that this is not being done.

And it comes back to the simple matter of VA healthcare funding. No money equals no doctors equals no healthcare for veterans.

More veterans are waiting longer for VA healthcare while others look to take the blame off themselves.

Blaming the VA for inefficiency when it doesn't have the funds to be efficient doesn't cut it.

And veterans, caught in the middle of the political blame-game, are the losers. Healthcare delayed is healthcare denied.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action

July 29, 2005 The Standard Newspaper, Ltd., & The Billings Gazette & (KUNA) & Reuters & UPI & TINI TRAN, Associated Press Writer

Coordinated attacks against army checkpoints northeast of Baghdad, three checkpoints in Baquba and two in Khan Bani Saad, killed at least six Iraqi soldiers. Attackers fired automatic weapons and rocket-propelled grenades during the attacks.

Three soldiers, four policemen and one civilian were wounded as fighting continued into late afternoon.

The attacks began about 2:30 p.m. against four Iraqi checkpoints along a road near Baqouba, 35 miles northeast of Baghdad, police Col. Mudhafar Mohammed said.

Attackers fired automatic weapons and rocket-propelled grenades during the attacks, he said. There was no report of insurgent casualties.

The assistant chief of Haditha police station was shot dead by militants in the town, 200 km (125 miles) northwest of Baghdad, chief of Haditha hospital Dr. Waleed al-Hadithi said.

A captain at Azzuhur police station was killed on Wednesday night near his home in al-Sha'ab district, northern Baghdad, a police source said.

One policeman was killed and four injured by a roadside bomb in front of a police station in Baghdad's southern district of Doura.

In Kirkuk, in northern Iraq, resistance fighters killed Saleh Jabbouri, a member of the local Arab Consultative Council.

Also, 10 employees of the Ministry of industry were wounded when guerrillas sprayed them with automatic rifle fire in a northern suburb of Baghdad.

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

Resistance Attacks Oil Train; Train Explodes; Pipeline Blown Up Near Beiji



Iraqi firefighters fight flames of an exploded fuel tanker train carriage, July 28, 2005, in the Dora area of Baghdad, Iraq. (AP Photo/Karim Kadim)

July 29, 2005 The Standard Newspaper, Ltd., & The Billings Gazette & Reuters

Iraqi insurgents set off a huge blaze when they blew up a train carrying fuel in Baghdad Thursday. The train was carrying oil derivatives from a refinery in Doura.

The morning attack on the oil train was the first such attack in Iraq, railway spokesman Jawad Al-Kharsan said, and ignited a massive blaze extending down the railway line in southern Baghdad.

The five-man train crew escaped unhurt. **One of those killed and four of the injured are security force members**

The seven-tanker train was attacked less than a kilometer from the Dura oil refinery.

An Interior Ministry official said the train struck a bomb on the line, railway workers said the explosion could have been caused by a rocket-propelled grenade, while a police lieutenant thought a nearby commando post was the target.

A bomb hit an oil pipeline that provides Baiji's refineries with oil from Kirkuk's oil fields, 90 km (55 miles) south-west of Kirkuk, a source at the northern oil protection force said.

A gas pipeline that supplies Baiji power station was also damaged during the attack.

Pipelines running between the oil fields at Kirkuk and Baiji are frequently attacked by insurgents and saboteurs, as is the main oil export pipeline that runs from Baiji north to the Turkish port of Ceyhan.

That line has been out of commission for several weeks following a previous attack, hindering Iraq's ability to export oil, the mainstay of the economy.

Resistance Attacks Cripple Baghdad Electric System

July 29, 2005 The Billings Gazette

The electricity ministry said six attacks in the last 10 days on the power grid has led to a reduction in the electricity supplies to Baghdad and nearby southern provinces, according to government newspaper al-Sabah.

Power in Baghdad is down to a half an hour of electricity followed by a six-hour blackout.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Karl Marx Wins Popularity Contest

7.21.05 By Francis Wheen, World-crisis.com

A penniless asylum seeker in London was vilified across two pages of the Daily Mail last week. No surprises there, perhaps - except that the villain in question has been dead since 1883.

"Marx the Monster" was the Mail's furious reaction to the news that thousands of Radio 4 listeners had chosen Karl Marx as their favourite thinker. "His genocidal disciples include Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot - and even Mugabe. So why has Karl Marx just been voted the greatest philosopher ever?"

The puzzlement is understandable. Fifteen years ago, after the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, there appeared to be a general assumption that Marx was now (to quote Monty Python) an ex-parrot.

He had kicked the bucket, shuffled off his mortal coil and been buried forever under the rubble of the Berlin Wall. No one need think about him - still less read him - ever again.

"What we are witnessing," Francis Fukuyama proclaimed at the end of the Cold War, "is not just the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution."

But history soon returned with a vengeance.

By August 1998, economic meltdown in Russia, currency collapses in Asia and market panic around the world prompted the Financial Times to wonder if we had moved "from the triumph of global capitalism to its crisis in barely a decade." The article was headlined "Das Kapital Revisited".

In October 1997 the business correspondent of the New Yorker, John Cassidy, reported a conversation with an investment banker. "The longer I spend on Wall Street, the more convinced I am that Marx was right," the financier said. "I am absolutely convinced that Marx's approach is the best way to look at capitalism."

His curiosity aroused, Cassidy read Marx for the first time. He found "riveting passages about globalisation, inequality, political corruption, monopolisation, technical progress, the decline of high culture, and the enervating nature of modern existence - issues that economists are now confronting anew, sometimes without realising that they are walking in Marx's footsteps".

Quoting the famous slogan coined by James Carville for Bill Clinton's presidential campaign in 1992 ("It's the economy, stupid"), Cassidy pointed out that "Marx's own term

for this theory was “the materialist conception of history”, and it is now so widely accepted that analysts of all political views use it, like Carville, without any attribution.”

Even the Economist journalists John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, eager cheerleaders for turbo-capitalism, acknowledge the debt. “As a prophet of socialism Marx may be kaput,” they wrote in *A Future Perfect: The Challenge and Hidden Promise of Globalisation* (2000), “but as a prophet of the ‘universal interdependence of nations’ as he called globalisation, he can still seem startlingly relevant.”

Their greatest fear was that “the more successful globalisation becomes the more it seems to whip up its own backlash” - or, as Marx himself said, that modern industry produces its own gravediggers.

The bourgeoisie has not died. But nor has Marx: his errors or unfulfilled prophecies about capitalism are eclipsed and transcended by the piercing accuracy with which he revealed the nature of the beast.

“Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones,” he wrote in *The Communist Manifesto*.

Until quite recently most people in this country seemed to stay in the same job or institution throughout their working lives - but who does so now? As Marx put it: “All that is solid melts into air.”

In his other great masterpiece, *Das Kapital*, he showed how all that is truly human becomes congealed into inanimate objects - commodities - which then acquire tremendous power and vigour, tyrannising the people who produce them.

The result of this week's BBC poll suggests that Marx's portrayal of the forces that govern our lives - and of the instability, alienation and exploitation they produce - still resonates, and can still bring the world into focus.

Far from being buried under the rubble of the Berlin Wall, he may only now be emerging in his true significance.

For all the anguished, uncomprehending howls from the right-wing press, Karl Marx could yet become the most influential thinker of the 21st century.

Published Sunday, July 17th, 2005 In the public poll, conducted on Melvyn Bragg's Radio 4 show "In Our Time", which assessed the popularity of a shortlist of 20 philosophers, the following results were obtained:

Karl Marx (27.93%), David Hume (12.67%), Ludwig Wittgenstein (6.80%), Friedrich Nietzsche (6.49%), Immanuel Kant (5.61%), St. Thomas Aquinas (4.83%), Socrates (4.82%), Aristotle (4.52%) and Karl Popper (4.20%).

OCCUPATION REPORT

Occupation Killing 8 Times As Many Iraqis As The Resistance

Almost three-quarters of civilian deaths can be traced back to the invasion and occupation.

That's eight times the number of civilians killed by terrorist bombs and other insurgent attacks.

By Max J. Castro Progreso Weekly, 28 July to 03 August 2005 Issue

The average American, watching U.S. media coverage of Iraq on Fox, MSNBC or even CNN, which focus on insurgent atrocities contrasted to U.S. efforts to help the Iraqis and promote democracy, has no clue about the extent and source of civilian casualties.

Lacking this basic information, Americans are at a loss to understand why Iraqi revulsion in the face of terrorism does not automatically translate into support for U.S. forces.

Last week's report by the Iraq Body Count project and the Oxford Research Group, which most of the U.S. press managed to bury, suggests a powerful reason.

According to the British study, the war and its aftermath have produced almost 25,000 civilian deaths.

Of these, 37 percent resulted from the actions of coalition forces, 36 percent from criminal activities, and 9 percent from insurgent action.

Given that the paroxysm of criminal violence that grips Iraq was a direct result of the invasion and the subsequent failure of occupation troops to provide security, these figures indicate that almost three-quarters of civilian deaths can be traced back to the invasion and occupation.

That's eight times the number of civilians killed by terrorist bombs and other insurgent attacks.

This grim reality - about which the administration and the media fails to inform the U.S. public but which the rest of the world and especially the Iraqis know too well - explains why so many Iraqis take a dim view of the U.S. mission and are unwilling to risk their lives in common cause with American forces.

Notwithstanding the standard response of the U.S. military that it takes care to avoid civilian casualties, the reality is that the awesome firepower used by coalition forces coupled with the nature of urban guerrilla war and the absolute priority of minimizing American casualties guarantees a high civilian death toll.

And, civilian deaths speak louder to the Iraqi American people than the professed good intention of the military or the democratic rhetoric of U.S. political leaders.

Winning More Friends: For The Armed Resistance That Is



Iraqis show their IDs to U.S. Sergeant Terpstra of the army infantry from the Stryker brigade during a raid in the town of Hammam Al Alil, near Mosul July 28, 2005.
REUTERS/Andrea Comas

[There's nothing quite like invading somebody else's country; making them line up like children to show you, a foreigner, their ID cards while bearing and threatening to use deadly weapons if they do not immediately comply with your orders; humiliating them publicly before their friends and fellow citizens; and making it clear to the world they are occupied sub-humans who must obey your every wish, or be arrested and thrown in one of the occupation prisons in their country.

[This behavior is guaranteed to arouse an intense desire to kill you in any patriotic, self-respecting, honorable civilian who lives there.

[But the officers ordering you to do this insane shit know that, don't they? Don't they?

[Just to shame them completely, make them all stand in a neat little line in public where everybody in town can see (next photo). Make sure that while they have to stand around waiting for you to tell them what to do next, they are not allowed to look at you. In their own town. In their own country. They have to learn obedience, don't they? They have to learn who's boss, don't they?

[What they certainly are learning up close and personal is motivation to join the 20,000 underground armed forces that are fighting Bush's occupation of their country. Congratulations. If they had any doubts before, they have none now. Mission accomplished.

[Just in case you didn't get it the first time, now they really want you dead, and will act accordingly at the first opportunity. Isn't that exactly what you would do if Iraqi troops were ordered to pull this disgusting shit in Ohio, or North Carolina?

[But the officers ordering you to do this know that, don't they? Don't they? So why are your officers ordering actions that make people hate you and organize to kill you? Think that one over.]



U.S. Sergeant Pinkerton of Stryker brigade during a raid in the town of Hammam Al Alil, near Mosul July 28, 2005. Photo by Andrea Comas/Reuters REUTERS/Andrea Comas

General's "Secret" Report Says Iraqis Getting Slaughtered Because Troops Not Issued The Right Weapons

07/28/05 UPI

Excessive force has been used by the U.S. Army while guarding supply convoys because they don't have the right weaponry, The Washington Times reported Thursday.

The Times said it obtained a "secret internal memorandum" written by Brig. Gen. Joseph Chaves that says arming soldiers differently could cut down on incidents in which innocent people have been killed during attacks on U.S. convoys.

Chaves is the commander of the Army National Guard brigade that guards convoys from Camp Anaconda to other army posts in Iraq.

In a memo marked "secret" he wrote that quick attacks do not give soldiers time to reach into vehicles for the right guns, so larger, more indiscriminate weaponry is used, sometimes resulting in "unauthorized deadly force."

Chaves suggested convoy guards be given sidearms with laser targeting capabilities, both to improve shooting accuracy during attacks and because, he wrote, wearing a sidearm in Iraq is a sign of authority.

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.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Imperial Arrogance Plus World Class Stupidity: Rumsfeld Spokesman Says Knowing How Many In Resistance, Or Who They Are, Not “A Worthwhile Metric”

7.28.05 AP

The new U.S. ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, has arrived on the bloody scene to warn of impending civil war. But U.S. intelligence does not have an accurate sense of either the number of insurgents or their composition. "That would not be a worthwhile metric," Pentagon spokesman Lawrence DiRita said recently.

Thus Rumsfeld's assistant secretary for public affairs acknowledges that he doesn't know precisely who the enemy is.



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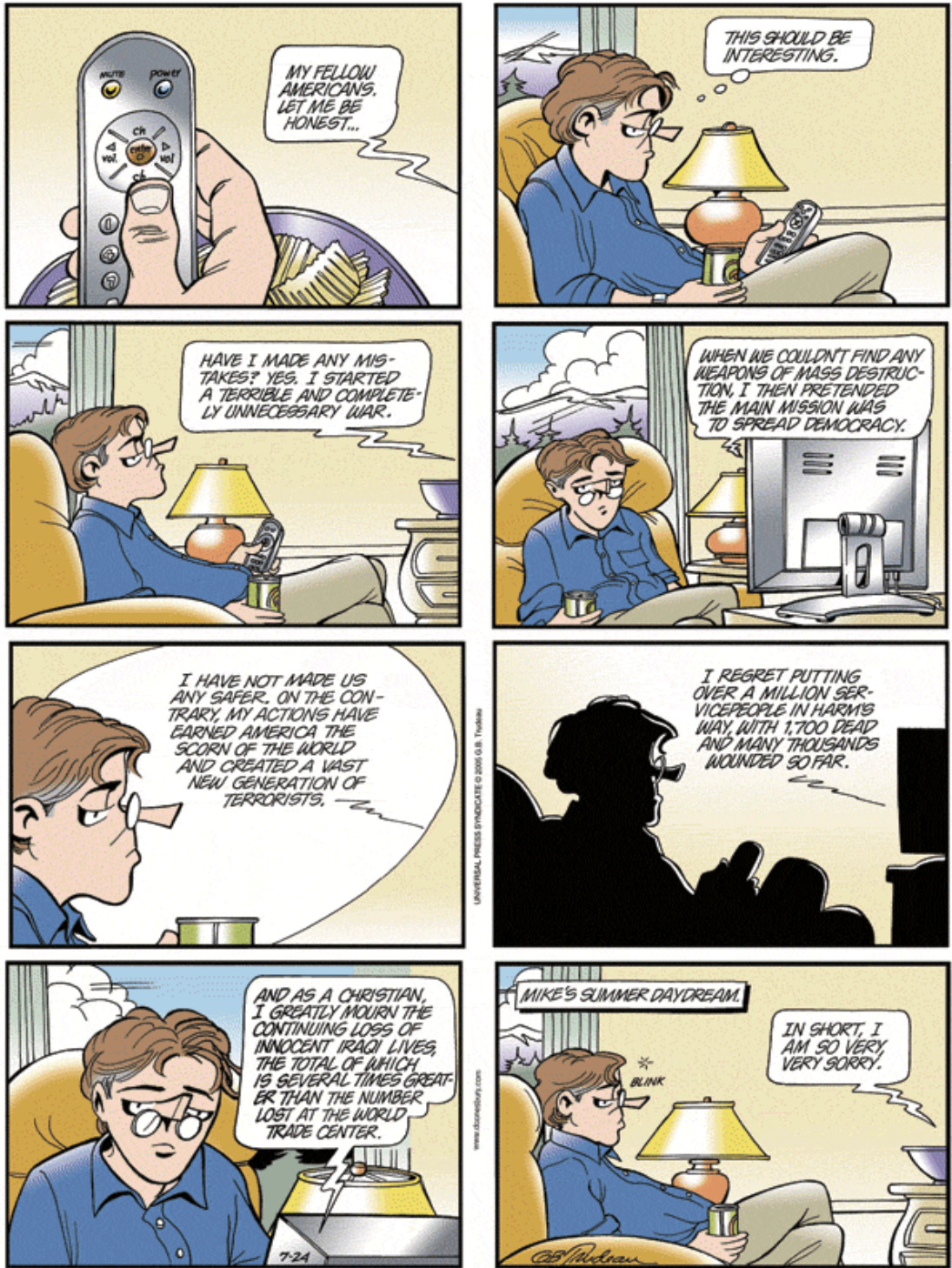
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[Thanks to Phil G, who sent this in.]

Debris Falls Off Cheney Scientists Study Videotape Of Vice President Disintegrating

July 27, 2005 The Borowitz Report

Government scientists were busily scrutinizing videotape of Vice President Dick Cheney today after debris appeared to fall off Mr. Cheney during a speech to a business group in Lansing, Michigan.

While Mr. Cheney's speech to the group appeared to go smoothly, only later did scientists notice that debris from the vice president appeared to fall from him as he wrapped up his address.

"We are examining the tape to determine the nature of the debris that fell from the vice president's surface," said scientist Kirk Belsher. "Hopefully these are non-essential parts of Dick Cheney that will have no significant impact on the rest of his mission."

Even as scientists studied the tape of Mr. Cheney's mysterious debris, news that parts of the vice president had disintegrated during a routine speech raised fresh concerns about the fitness of the nation's second most powerful man.

"Dick Cheney is usually stored in a secure, undisclosed location which is kept at a constant temperature of forty degrees Fahrenheit," said Dr. Ivan Loker of the University of Minnesota, who studies the nation's aging fleet of vice-presidents and cabinet members. "Every time they wheel him out into the atmosphere for a new mission, we all hold our breath."

For his part, scientist Belsher remained optimistic that the falling debris would turn out to be a false alarm: "The good news is, when debris falls off Dick Cheney, there's still plenty of Dick Cheney left."

Elsewhere, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said today that if dogs were used to intimidate prisoners at Abu Ghraib then the dogs would be court-martialed at once.

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