

GI SPECIAL 3C53:

“We Don't Need To Stay On A Course That's Heading Toward A Cliff”



Sean Cayton

I think any American would agree that if our country was overrun and occupied and we suffered all this violence and death at the hands of a foreign army, we wouldn't just submit, we wouldn't just passively say, "OK, you know what's best for us. You are smarter than us. You know how to fix us."

September 1 - 7, 2005 by Kathryn Eastburn, CSindy.com [Excerpt]

Kelly Dougherty has seen more of the world than the average 27-year-old American. A native of Cañon City, Dougherty joined the National Guard during her senior year at Cañon City High School. To her surprise, she was deployed overseas twice during her

eight-year service period: first in 1999 to the Balkans, then in 2003 to Kuwait and, ultimately, to Iraq.

Now Dougherty is seeing her own country, crisscrossing the U.S. to attend rallies, give speeches and demonstrate against the war in Iraq and current American military policy.

Dougherty was assigned to a military police unit while in Iraq. An E5 sergeant, she spent nearly a year escorting convoys and conducting raids in a country of people she observed to be mired in poverty and traumatized by American bombings.

In August 2004, Dougherty departed military service with an honorable discharge. Around that time, she and eight other Iraq war returnees founded Iraq Veterans Against the War, a group whose mission is to bring the troops home, provide reconstruction aid to the people of Iraq, and support veterans and troops now and when they return home.

Dougherty believes the U.S. military should disengage as soon as humanly possible, before the war becomes another Vietnam -- a subject she knows something about, since her father is a veteran of that war. **[Wrong. Dougherty believes the U.S. military should disengage immediately, now, at once, not "as soon as humanly possible," whatever that means.]**

The Independent caught up with Dougherty before she departed Colorado Springs on Sunday, Aug. 28 as part of a local group headed to Crawford, Texas to show solidarity with Cindy Sheehan and others demonstrating there in opposition to the war.

Indy: Did your parents support your decision to join the military at age 18?

Kelly Dougherty: It was kind of my stepfather's idea (that I) go and talk to the National Guard recruiter. I think my mother thought it would be good to give me some direction, some discipline.

My dad, who had served in Vietnam, said, "No. Don't do it. They'll turn you into a robot. Be a raft guide and go to college."

But, obviously, they didn't turn me into a robot. And although my father didn't want me to join, he was very supportive of me.

Then, when I got the call that I was going to be deployed, first to Kuwait and then to Iraq, my parents had different reactions. My mother tried to just support me and not really express her fears to me.

My dad said, "You can't go. You're gonna die." He was completely against the war, as was I. My getting deployed actually got him very active in the anti-war cause.

Indy: You say you opposed the war before you went over. Did you find there were other soldiers who felt the same way?

KD: I think the numbers that opposed the war grew the longer we were over there.

Before we left it was hard to gauge. A lot of people thought that Saddam did have these weapons of mass destruction, then we didn't find them and we didn't find them, then -- oh, it turns out there never really were any. Then it was, "Well, we're here to help the Iraqi people." Then the longer we stayed, it turned out that what we were doing wasn't really helping the Iraqi people.

I think there was a change, though not a huge change. People tried to justify any way they could.

It was interesting. Before we left, I was talking to my captain and I said, "I don't believe in any of this. It's just so wrong. I don't know if I can do this." And he said, "Well, between you and me, I have my serious doubts about this whole thing, too."

Then, that same day, he addressed our platoon and said, "Those people who are protesting the war, saying this isn't the right thing to do, tell them to remember September 11. Remember when those twin towers came down."

Maybe some people use that excuse and don't realize it's completely false reasoning, but I know that he didn't mean what he was saying because he had said to me just before that he had doubts about it.

Then he lied to us, to get us pumped up, to make us think we were avenging the deaths of those who died on September 11.

Indy: What was your initial experience like, over in Iraq?

KD: When we first got there, it was in April, so the initial invasion had just taken place. The troops hadn't been in Baghdad very long. I think the Iraqi people were still in shock, because they had been bombed continuously before the troops came in, then the troops came in with smaller artillery and guns, so there was just this bombardment.

I can't even imagine what it was like for them.

When we were first in Kuwait, we experienced a lot of Scud missile alarms, where they detect and sound the alarm, we put on our gas masks and all our gear and hunker down in concrete bunkers. It's scary, and all you can do is hope you don't get hit by a bomb.

I remember one night I was settling down, about to fall asleep. I'd taken my chemical gear off and there was a loud boom, and all the windows in the building blew out. The impact happened, and afterward the alarm went off. We didn't know if it was a missile, or if a car bomb had gone off at the gate.

Everyone was panicked, leaders who you looked up to for guidance, who were supposed to be strong in emergencies, were just panicked, looking around, wide-eyed. Finally, we found out it was a small missile, a surface-to-air missile that hit about eight miles away in the water.

So for the Iraqi people who were being constantly bombed, with bombs dropping just across the street or next door, I can't even imagine how frightening it was.

Indy: Where were you stationed?

KD: South of Nazarea, where it's really, really dry and barren. The people were really poor, then the war came. That's what we saw first.

It was so confusing. We didn't really know what was going on in the country, since we didn't really have any way to communicate. All the news they show on the Armed (Forces) Network is Fox News, so you don't really know what's going on. You don't really hear anything of substance. Everything's just rumors.

We'd get crazy things in our intelligence reports, like Marines went blind because they were drinking Iraqi whiskey. Or, there were some Iraqis who were trying to give apples to American soldiers, but a dog came up and ate one and died because it was poisoned. This wasn't just a rumor -- this was actually in the intelligence report.

There were so many rumors flying. And we didn't have any translators for the majority of the time we were there. When we had to do roadblocks and pull people over, it would have been good to be able to speak to them.

Indy: How did you spend your time there?

KD: When we were first there we were patrolling on the highways south of Nazarea. Then gradually, when convoys of contracted vehicles came through, there would be Iraqi hijackers hoping to pull them over and rob them. What we tried to do was protect the convoys from hijackers. Maybe we made a difference. I don't know.

Mostly they were delivering fuel. Sometimes food. All of the stuff was slated to go to military bases -- all the water, all the fuel.

While the rest of the country sat in ruin, we made all these improvements to quarters where American military were stationed. As for the Iraqi people, the only improvements I saw in the whole year I was there were to military establishments, not to the homes or neighborhoods of those who lived there.

Indy: So was it the nature of your job that bothered you, or your general opposition to the war from the beginning?

KD: Well, it was frustrating. I knew that (President Bush) lied to get us there and I just thought, gosh, here I am and I could get hurt or killed and I don't believe in any of it.

What was more difficult, however, was realizing our mission was so absurd. One of the things we did all the time was, when a semitruck would break down, we would guard it against the Iraqi people that wanted to loot it.

The people in this part of the country were so poor that a little scrap of something you would think was trash was important to them. They would want to loot the vehicle for the tires or some little metal door or a door handle or whatever. Anything had value.

So we would guard these vehicles and call Brown & Root, which is the main contractor we worked with, part of Halliburton, and ask them to send a recovery asset. We'd wait and wait and wait, standing between the crowd and the vehicle, very outnumbered, and luckily nobody ever got shot with real bullets, though we did have fake bullets that some people seemed to like to use a lot. I was always so worried that one day an Iraqi would bring their AK-47 and shoot at us. I was really surprised that never happened, because every single day we'd be in this situation, standing between them and something they needed.

And then, inevitably, after guarding the vehicle for two or three hours, we'd get a call saying (Brown & Root) didn't have anyone to send out for the vehicle, so just go ahead and leave it. After pretending that this was an important asset to us, that we were willing to shoot people to protect it, we'd just leave it ... or we'd burn it.

Indy: You burned vehicles?

KD: The theory was, if you let the Iraqis have it, then they'd just run off with any old vehicle; they'd think they could have any asset they saw. We just have to teach these people a lesson because they don't understand, they're less than us, they're not as smart as us.

It's hard to feel proud of your mission when your mission is to burn fuel, and they have to wait for fuel in a line miles long, all day, every day.

Once we burned produce on a flatbed truck. We burned food, we burned fuel. Once we burned a brand-new ambulance. We ran over bottles of water to destroy them so that the Iraqi people couldn't have them.

It's not that the people in my unit were going, "Hey, great! Let's burn some more fuel." We were so frustrated by what we were doing every day, but those were our orders.

The ambulance was on the back of a flatbed truck that was mired in the mud. We tried to get someone to come, but they didn't.

We burned it and completely destroyed it. And for the Iraqi people to see that every day, to see us wasting things of such value every day, it was so weird. I didn't want to even look at the Iraqi people. I felt so absurd just being there.

I thought, wow, this is really helping. I can throw some candy to your kid. That's about as much as I can help you.

Indy: And when you returned, how did you become mobilized in anti-war activity?

KD: I (was discharged) in August after I returned.

While I was in Iraq, I'd had the experience of just doing this stuff day in and day out, and feeling that it was so meaningless. Then, finding out more through reading about our foreign policy, after being in the middle of it, I thought I needed to get involved.

I got back home and I did a few things locally with the Kerry campaign through moveon.org. But it wasn't until July that I became deeply involved. I went to the national Veterans for Peace convention in Boston that took place just before the Democratic convention, and that's when we announced the formation of Iraq Veterans Against the War.

It seemed that after we did that, people began to take notice that, hey, it's not just crazy leftists who are against this war -- it's also the veterans who are returning.

In the year since then, I've been getting more involved, speaking to different groups about my experience.

Indy: What's available for vets who've returned from Iraq and need help?

KD: One of the other things that some of us have started is called Vets4Vets. It's an Iraq veterans support group, for those who come back, so they have a space to talk about their experience. In Colorado Springs, we have one of the most successful chapters. We meet every Tuesday at 6:30 at the Unitarian church on Tejon Street.

Indy: Have you found with these groups that veterans are getting the help they need when they return?

KD: One of our members, who's not in the Army right now but was in the Army at Fort Carson, went down there to out-processing recently, and was told, "We don't have time for you right now, just get out."

Some soldiers in hospital beds are reportedly being pressured to sign their discharge papers and, of course, they don't want to sign their discharge papers and lose their benefits.

Others can't find a job because they suffered an injury and can't work as much as they used to be able to, but are being denied unemployment benefits.

People think, oh, they can go to the VA, they'll be taken care of. Well, look -- Walter Reed Army Hospital is being closed. We're completely overwhelming all our services, but at the same time that our president is saying you have to support the war to support the troops, he's shutting the biggest Army hospital in the U.S.?

You can't even get buried if you get killed in this ridiculous war. I've heard there's a three-week wait to get buried in Arlington Cemetery.

I don't see how the VA can be underfunded by a billion dollars, and they're saying this war is going to last at least four more years, it'll last as long as this president is in office. What's going to happen?

We see what happened to Vietnam vets who came back, and a lot of the Vietnam vets that I know suffered terrible psychological damage after serving only one year.

Now we've got soldiers who've served one, two years in Iraq and are going back for a third year-long deployment. And what about these people's families? Some of these soldiers have seen their families maybe two weeks out of two years. You

come back and find out you don't have a spouse any more, or your children don't know you.

Indy: What do you say to those who say, "Well, we can't just pull out?"

KD: I'd say, "Yeah, we actually can."

First of all, if the majority of Americans feel that this war was unnecessary and it hasn't been worth it, and we know that all the information used to support this war was complete lies, how can we continue to support a war that is unfounded and unnecessary, and how can we justify the deaths of more people, when it didn't need to happen?

There's no solution that's going to be a good solution now, but I think the best solution is to pull our troops out and bring them home and take care of them and give the Iraqi people real assistance instead of giving all the jobs over there to foreign contractors, to foreign workers.

It just seems to me that the supposed goals of the occupation, which now are to bring the Iraqis democracy and freedom, seem contradictory.

I don't see how you can have a free society when they're being occupied by a foreign military; when their people can't drive around the city without being stopped at a dozen checkpoints, or live in fear of having their house raided at 3 a.m.; when their constitution and their laws and all their leaders are being watched over and supervised and dictated by the Americans.

How can that be a free society as long as we exist there? How long do we think it's going to take until the Iraqi people say, "Oh, now we accept you American occupiers. Now you're welcome."

I would say, never. I would say either we commit mass murder, we continue to commit murder there until so many have been slaughtered that the people cannot fight anymore, or else we leave.

I think any American would agree that if our country was overrun and occupied and we suffered all this violence and death at the hands of a foreign army, we wouldn't just submit, we wouldn't just passively say, "OK, you know what's best for us. You are smarter than us. You know how to fix us."

Indy: Why do you think the argument is rarely framed that way?

KD: I think there's just this inherent racism, this inherent disregard for the Iraqi people.

We've lost about 2,000 Americans and an estimated 100,000 Iraqis, most of them civilians. You don't see them on CNN or Fox News or network news. You might see the aftermath of a bomb, but you don't hear their stories. You don't hear from them what it's like to live in fear and uncertainty every day.

So it's easy to just say, "Oh, 30 Iraqis died today; what else is on TV?"

They're dehumanized. And I think the soldiers are dehumanized too. People get more upset whenever an American soldier dies, but they don't really get that upset. A lot of people really don't.

I don't think (President Bush) will admit he's made a mistake. I don't know if he's capable of that. I think the only way to end this war before it ends in complete disaster, before we have another Vietnam, is for people right now to demand -- not just a couple hundred here and a couple hundred there, but thousands, millions of people -- to demand that the war end, to make (the opposition to the war) look so bad and so ever-present that he has no choice but to change course.

Indy: How do you respond to the president's statement to the American people urging that we must stay the course in order to honor those soldiers who have died?

KD: I think that's a very obvious ploy to work on people's most emotional and inner values, and I think he's stealing and completely abusing people's true emotions.

For him to say that we can't leave Iraq, or the people who have already died in Iraq, their deaths will be in vain -- well, that's not the reaction a president should be expressing. That's the reaction that someone who has watched their friends die in Iraq would have, because it's an emotional reaction to something they've experienced; you can understand it from them. For a president to say that ...

Who does he know? How many of his friends has he seen die in Iraq?

Of course, none. He's stealing those heartfelt emotions from suffering people and using them to manipulate others.

Indy: Do you feel that the anti-war movement is growing?

KD: I know that before the election, people were saying, "Gosh, I've never been involved in politics but now I'm involved." Trying to get Bush out of office mobilized a lot of people.

But now I see even more of that happening, and I think it's good. I do think it's growing. You can tell from the polls that the president's approval rating is low, that people may not say unanimously, "We have to get out of Iraq now," but they're asking, "Why are we there?"

I don't think we should have gone.

And that's what the majority of people are saying, that they don't think it's been worth it.

And it's only a matter of time, hopefully not a very long time, that the majority of people will say, "OK, it's not worth it, so we don't need to stay on a course that's heading toward a cliff."

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

11 Attacks In Baghdad: 10 U.S. Soldiers Wounded

9.14.05 The Associated Press & Reuters

At least 160 people were killed and 570 wounded in more than a dozen highly coordinated bombings — the capital's bloodiest day since the end of major combat.

At least 11 other car or roadside bombs shattered what had been a few days of relative calm in Baghdad. Two mortar attacks were reported and a multitude of gunbattles broke out between U.S. and Iraqi forces and insurgent attackers.

At least six attacks targeted U.S. forces, Iraqi authorities said. The U.S. military said there were four direct attacks on Americans, with 10 soldiers wounded.

A Reuters cameraman saw a Humvee military vehicle burnt out by a roadside bomb in the western Amiriya district of Baghdad.

Baghdad Car Bomb Wounds 2 U.S. Troops

Sept. 14, 2005 AP & (Xinhuanet)

At 9 a.m., a bomb detonated on a U.S. convoy in east Baghdad.

The bomber was reportedly driving against traffic before detonating on the convoy. Two U.S. soldiers received non-life-threatening wounds in the attack.

The blast took place at around 11:00 a.m. (0700 GMT) on the highway in al-Jadida district, and US troops cordoned off the area, an Interior Ministry source told Xinhua on condition of anonymity.

Wiscasset Soldier Wounded; “It Is Time For The U.S. Army To Leave The Country”

A veteran of Desert Storm himself, Jones has firsthand knowledge of what the situation is like in Iraq and in his own mind believes it is time for the U.S. Army to leave the country.

9.14.05 By Greg Foster, Lincoln County News

A Wiscasset High School graduate serving in the U.S. Army's Third Infantry Division out of Fort Stewart, Ga., sustained wounds to the head a week ago in Iraq after a rocket propelled grenade struck the Humvee he was riding in.

Sgt. Michael Jones, son of Karroll and Cindy Jones of Wiscasset, received a ruptured eardrum after the missile struck and seriously damaged the front end of the Humvee without injuring the other four occupants of the vehicle, according to his father Karroll “Ben” Jones.

“It hit the front end while they were on patrol at night,” Jones said.

Jones explained that his son was partially exposed while standing up and manning the M-60 machine gun that was mounted on a turret on top of the Humvee.

Jones received word of the occurrence a couple of days after it happened which came as a shock to him and his wife Cindy. “I didn't like it,” he said.

At this point it is uncertain whether Jones will return home after being treated for the injury and returning shortly after to duty. He has holes in his eardrum and thus has suffered critical hearing loss in that ear, and the medical people have told Sgt. Jones that it is rare that someone can regain hearing after such an injury but are waiting a couple of weeks to see what the outcome is, according to Jones

“If push comes to shove, I'd rather have him home,” he said. “Any person doesn't want his son in harm's way.”

The attack was especially unnerving to the soldier and his family at home in the United States, since Sgt. Jones lost three close friends in a similar attack on a Humvee two or three weeks ago.

A veteran of Desert Storm himself, Jones has firsthand knowledge of what the situation is like in Iraq and in his own mind believes it is time for the U.S. Army to leave the country.

In fact, Jones served in the same unit that his son is serving in now during the two-month ground war to remove the Iraqis from Kuwait.

“I think we’ve done our job,” he said. “Now they need to stand on their own two feet.”

Jones argued that there is no longer any army to fight now. “It’s a cat and mouse game,” he said.

Sgt. Jones meanwhile is serving his second tour of duty in Iraq and was originally assigned there until this January for a complete year. He previously served a year there, and the Army sent his unit back for a yearlong deployment after being back home for only six months.

Sgt. Jones is married to Cindy Jones, who is living in Richmond Hill, Ga. with the couple’s five month old daughter Carmen.

Injured Marine Comes Home

Sep 14, 2005 WorldNow

A Marine has returned to southeast Ohio after being injured in an explosion in Iraq last week.

Marine Reservist Private First Class Seth Judy returned home Tuesday.

During an explosion in Haditha last week, shrapnel pierced his leg, requiring him to have surgery.

He was a part of the same company that lost 14 men in Iraq last month. The rest of the unit returns home in October.

**REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW**



Iraqi and U.S. soldiers search house-to-house for weapons and insurgents in Tal Afar, Iraq, Sept. 11, 2005. (AP Photo/Jacob Silberberg)

TROOP NEWS

Downs Recovering In Texas Hospital

09/14/05 By Gary Burton, The Ashland City Times

In the month since the attack in Iraq that killed three of his comrades, Spc. Kevin Downs has been undergoing extensive reconstructive surgery and rehabilitation to help him recover from his wounds.

Downs, of Kingston Springs, lost both legs and was severely burned over 60 percent of his body when an explosive device ripped through the Humvee he was riding Aug. 13 - killing Sgt. Gary Reese, also of Cheatham County's 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment and two other Middle Tennessee guardsmen.

After being transported to Germany first to stabilize him, Downs was transferred to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, where he is being treated at the post's burn unit.

"He's doing pretty good," said his father, Joe Downs who has been with his son since the soldier's return from Europe. "He had another surgery (last week) and some more skin grafts. There are still some more to go."

Joe said the Army has been taking good care of him and his wife by allowing them to stay in a government facility while their son heals.

He said the 15 minute walk each day from their temporary residence to the burn unit to see Kevin was refreshing and gives him a chance to reflect on the event of the last month.

According to Joe, his son is able to communicate with his doctors and family by mouth movement or by spelling out words, but is still unable to talk.

"His throat was burned pretty badly in the blast," Joe said. "The doctors said it was healing, but would take time. He gets aggravated at us sometimes because we aren't lip readers and don't do it very well."

Both of Downs' legs were amputated below the knee and his left arm needed reconstruction by doctors, but Joe said those surgeries are nearing an end.

"He's about halfway through on his skin grafts," Joe said in a telephone interview with The Ashland City Times last week.

Joe said he only recently told his son the fate of the other three soldiers he was riding with after many inquiries by Kevin.

“No matter how much it hurts, I believe in telling my son the truth about everything,” he said. “I told him what happened to his buddies and he just stared away for the longest time - and didn’t say anything. It was really hard on him.”

Because Kevin is in a “clean room” at the hospital to protect his burns, he has been unable to see the hundreds of cards and letters that have been sent to the family since his arrival in Texas.

Joe said the mail has been arriving daily at the room and they are saving them for Kevin to read when he is able.

“It means so much to us to hear from people who don’t even know Kevin,” he said while becoming emotional. “We have gotten mail from all over the country wishing him well and I honestly appreciate that.

He asks that people donate blood to The Red Cross in Kevin’s name if they want to help more.

“He may not be the one receiving that blood directly,” Joe said. “But it will go to some other person like my son who really needs it badly.”

1352 More For The Imperial Slaughterhouse

September 14, 2005 U.S. Department of Defense News Release No. 938-05

This week, the Army and Navy announced an increase in the number of reservists on active duty in support of the partial mobilization, while the Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard had a decrease. The net collective result is 1,352 more reservists mobilized than last week.

The War At Home:
Returning Iraq Vets Face Massive Unemployment:
“We Left With Nothing, And We Came Back To Nothing”



Courtesy of McAtee
Jaquaie McAtee brushes his teeth while serving in Iraq.

Soldiers in his age group have the highest unemployment rate in the country, which both surprises and frustrates him. "What else do I have to prove to my country? Do I have to get shot to get a job?"

September 04, 2005 Text by Moustafa Ayad, PG Publishing Co

A year ago, former Sgt. Jaquaie McAtee was in charge of the most sought-after service in Iraq.

McAtee, a mine expert, was responsible for locating and detonating the most effective weapon in the arsenal of the metastasizing insurgency -- improvised explosive devices, or IEDs.

After three tours of duty, two in Iraq and one in Afghanistan, McAtee returned from battle as one of the most competent men in his field, working against the roadside bombings that take so many soldiers' lives.

He led 12-man teams into the fray of Fallujah at the height of the coalition's mission to rid the town of rebels, yet has come home to the stigma of being unable to hold a job as simple as herding crowds of raucous Steelers fans through the gates of Heinz Field.

"We left with nothing, and we came back to nothing," said McAtee, a 23-year-old veteran who lives in East Liberty. He has fought two wars in two countries and now struggles on the front lines of the job market, fighting unsuccessfully for work.

He's not alone. Soldiers in his age group have the highest unemployment rate in the country, which both surprises and frustrates him. "What else do I have to prove to my country? Do I have to get shot to get a job?"

One thousand active-duty, reserve and National Guard servicemen come home every day to the possibility of unemployment lines.

Despite six or more federal vocational and hiring initiatives available to servicemen, many soldiers such as McAtee have scant knowledge about the \$222.5 million worth of services designed to help them.

"It's unfortunate," said Charles Sheehan-Miles, executive director for Veterans for Common Sense, a Washington, D.C., organization working to provide public affairs scholarships for returning veterans. "Once upon a time, people believed they could get past the average blue-collar jobs by enlisting in the military and returning with what was considered an experience equivalent to a college degree. It's sad, but that's not the case anymore."

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, while the national unemployment average hovers around 5 percent, McAtee and 20- to 24-year-old African-American veterans like him have the highest unemployment rate in the country -- 29 percent or more.

Historically, veterans have better employment statistics than nonveterans. While the 2004 unemployment rate for the civilian population is 5 percent, it drops to 4.6 percent for veterans of all races.

But that's not much consolation for men like McAtee, who works odd part-time jobs to pay the bills -- for his Section 8 apartment, car, college.

He grew up watching people in the streets of Garfield hustle to make a dollar. Raised against the backdrop of street violence, McAtee envisioned an escape from the dismal conditions -- the Marine Corps.

His father and uncles were Marines. In high school, while friends dabbled in drugs and gangs, McAtee was playing sports. Whether it was basketball, baseball, volleyball or football season, McAtee participated. His mother figured that with school and organized sports little else could lead him astray.

McAtee's story runs parallel to that of Pvt. Lucas Cope. Cope and McAtee shared a neighborhood. They went to Peabody High School and played on the drum line. Cope joined the Marines after seeing McAtee return in his pristine dress blues.

Now Cope, who returned from Iraq after serving a seven-month tour driving trucks in highly vulnerable convoys, is struggling along with McAtee to find work that's fitting for a Marine with combat experience.

"Being a grunt you are trained to do one thing -- kill people," said Larry Tritle, a Vietnam veteran and professor of ancient history at Loyola/Marymount University in Los Angeles.

"The skills you learn are simply not transferable into the overcrowded and competitive job market. Kids coming out of the military are not in a good situation. It all harks back to Vietnam, the things we are talking about-- it's deja vu."

Both McAtee and Cope are struggling in the pursuit of job opportunities that might pay even half of the \$30,000-a-year salaries they earned in the military.

"I'm not looking for a handout," said Cope, who is working the night shift for a janitorial service earning \$9.50 an hour. "But, I didn't think I'd be struggling like this. I never thought you could be (in Iraq) struggling to survive and then be back here struggling, too."

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act protects returning National Guardsmen or Reserves against employer discrimination in hiring and retention practices.

Pennsylvania has the third-highest rate of complaints filed under the legislation. During the past five years, National Guardsmen and Reserves returning to their jobs in Pennsylvania have filed more than 290 complaints against employers.

"Employers, in general, could not care less if you've served in the military," said Sgt. Mark Hatfield, recruiter for the Pennsylvania Army National Guard. Hatfield fought in both the invasion of Panama and the first Gulf War, yet spent the better part of three years unemployed after his tours of duty.

The best job Hatfield could land during that time was a \$9-an-hour stint in the shipping and receiving department of a radiator company. "It's like that across the board. It's very sad, but that's the society we live in."

"You're coming home to a harsh reality," said Jason Brosk, a global war on terrorism outreach worker at the McKeesport Vet Center for the Department of Veterans Affairs. "I was 24 years old, in charge of 40 people and had three years of battlefield experience and pressure. I could probably do your job and seven others, but the responses I would get from employers was, 'It never panned out.' "

For now, McAtee is on the front lines of a nursing home near his East Liberty apartment, and Cope is emptying trash bins and mopping floors in office buildings. The neighborhood they once shared is theirs again, as are the experiences that drew them to the military and the challenges they face now.

"I'm a Marine and he's a Marine, and we're in this together," said McAtee. "We're bros."

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)

Soldiers Who Refused Occupation Duty A Threat To Military Prison System; Send Them To Civilian Prisons Please

February 19, 2004 Report by Adam Keller on behalf of the Refusers Parents' Forum. [Israel] **[Better late than never.]**

In the courtroom of the Military Appeals Court - a surrealistic scene - the testimony by Colonel Major Ochana, Deputy Commander of the Israeli Military Police Corps.

"Ever since these five arrived at Military Prison-6, in January, their presence is completely undermining discipline and good order in the prison. The prison commandant and the entire staff are mainly concerned with them, and have no time and energy left for the rest of the five hundred prisoners. They are political activists with their own agenda, completely unfitting for the conditions of a military prison, governed by military discipline.

"Therefore, we demand that they be forthwith be transferred to a civilian prison."

He was addressing the committee concerned with such prisoner transfers, convened at the Appeals Court hall.

Persistently questioned by advocate Avner Pinchuk appointed by the civil rights association ACRI to defend the five, Colonel Ochana could mention no other example than Shimri Tzameret publishing a prison blog on the internet "in contravention of prison regulations."

The military authorities had been quite tardy in stamping upon this dangerous subversive activity which Tzameret maintained with the mediation of his grandmother. It had gone on for nearly a year, and in fact during the five's court martial the prosecutor had extensively quoted from the blog in his speeches.

"There is much more, but I can't disclose it right now for fear of compromising intelligence sources" was the Colonel's way of saving his face. In fact, the committee obliged him by holding a session in camera, expelling the five, their lawyer, and the entire audience of supporters and family members.

The five, Noam Bahat, Matan Kaminer, Adam Maor, Haggai Matar and Shimri Tzameret, seemed rather amused, as they sat in the sun on the lawn outside the courtroom, surrounded by parents and girl friends. Their good spirits were undampened by their being handcuffed two by two (the sixth one being a non-political transfer case).

"The prison intelligence officer does maintain a network of spies and informers, and tries to give the prisoners the impression that he knows everything. But I doubt that they have anything real on us to say in there", said Haggai Matar.

One by one, the five were called back in, to give their own testimony and state their position towards the possibility of going to a civilian prison. Each in turn repeated the position which they had agreed upon: "We consider the intention of transferring us to a civilian prison as part of the campaign of harassment by the military authorities."

Colonel Elisha Caspi, presiding judge grew impatient: "Why do you persist in throwing out this abstract principles? Do you have no personal preferences? No practical considerations?"

The five did not oblige him. "But why?" exclaimed the military prosecution representative, Lieutenant Colonel Inbar. "You don't want to be soldiers. You don't accept military discipline. Why then are you trying to stick to the military prison? Would you not rather move to a civilian prison where you will not will have to get up at 5am, stand at roll calls the whole day, and address every guard with 'Sir', and where you will have a much better chance to have your term reduced for good behavior?"

"If we are not fitting for a military framework and military discipline, then the army really should send us out of the military prison, not to a civilian prison - but home. After all, our entire court martial turned on the issue whether or not we are to be soldiers, and there the army firmly insisted that we should. The civilian prison is a place for people who have done something wrong in civil society. We have not committed a light traffic offence."

This was followed by a speech of adv. Pinchuk. "The military system is exhibiting a completely irrational hysteria towards these five guys, as if they carry in their pocket atomic bombs, ready to explode. The claim of "secret intelligence material" is void of any substance. They are not on trial here; they have already been tried and sentenced. They are not here because of any activity on their part, but because of their very essence as refusers, as people who follow the dictates of their conscience. Their integrity and courage to refuse is perceived as a threat."

Lieutenant Colonel Inbar addressed an identical question to each of the five in turn: "If you stay in Prison-6, would you be willing to oblige yourself to the prison commandant to adhere to military discipline without exception?" The answers were very much alike: "In the month and half that we are in Prison-6 we have obeyed the orders given to us, but we can't give a blanket promise for the future. If we get an order contradicting our conscience, we will not obey."

Colonel Ochana pounced upon this answer. "You see! They are not willing to abide by the most basic obligation, keeping military discipline in the prison. For example, we have started a project of taking prisoners out to do work on the Security Fence. Do you think that if we ordered these five to do it, they would obey?"

The faces of some of the other officers present showed some consternation. To threaten imprisoned refusers with being sent to work on the very disputed fence, due next week to be on the agenda of the International Court in The Hague, that seemed to be going a bit far for them.

The members of the military committee remained closeted for more than an hour, to come out and announce that the decision will be given on another day.

On March 3, the next act is due on the same place: the appeal prepared by adv. Dov Chenin against both the conviction of the five and the length of their term.

February 26, 2004

With "The Five", I am afraid the army got its way, they are now in civilian prisons and no longer a "threat to discipline".

They were in fact very divided among themselves, three in favor of moving to the civilian prison and two against, though they took very good care to present a united front to the military authorities.

They were inclined to resist the army decision to move, just on general principles because they regarded the top brass as their enemy.

But it was in fact very difficult to find a good reasoning to campaign about it - how to explain that people who refuse as a point of principle to be part of the military system and wear a uniform are suddenly demanding and insisting upon staying in the military prison where they are under military discipline and have to wear a uniform? So in the end, they agreed to the move.

Now in the civilian prisons (they are divided between two prisons) they are already making good contacts with the new fellow-prisoners and suggested to the prison administration that they would give lessons to prisoners with low education... (That's what they did in Prison 6, too, they gave English lessons which were very popular with the other prisoners, and I think that might be one of the main reasons the army wanted them out of there...)

So far, I see no sign in the Israeli of "The explosive combination of the two groups". On the other hand, I saw in my lifetime many things happen for the first time which did not happen before, so why not this?

There was once something of the kind in another sphere - not in the army. In the late 1960's and early 1970's in Jerusalem, radical social workers (mostly immigrants from the US and Latin American) got together with frustrated Sephardi Jerusalem slum youths who started out as petty criminals - and the quite explosive result was the Israeli Black Panther Movement. But nothing of the kind in the army, so far.

On Sunday 24.2.04 the five conscientious objectors were transferred to the civilian prison service to serve the rest of their sentence. The army, in its determination to rid itself of the COs by passing them to the civilian service opened a campaign of

harassment and witch-hunting that started at the Tuesday (17.2.04) hearing of the committee on prisoner transfers (from army to civilian jails).

At this hearing Colonel Ochana, Deputy Commander of the Israeli military Police Corps, described the five as "well poisoners."

Had Colonel Ochana bothered to attend history classes he would have learned that the origin of the anti-Semitic expression "well poisoner" was in the middle ages during the period of the Black Death plague. At that time Jews were accused of spreading the plague as part of a "Jewish Conspiracy" by poisoning European water sources. On the grounds of these accusations tens of thousands of Jews were butchered or were burnt at the stake. Very few anti-Semites would dare to use such this expression today.

On the other hand, had Colonel Ochana learnt history he would not have been so eager to pursue the conscientious objectors as he did.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP



(Graphic: London Financial Times)

Assorted Resistance Action

09/14/05 AP & Aljazeera & (KUNA) & (Xinhuanet) & Reuters

BAGHDAD - Two guards were killed and three officials in the interior ministry were wounded when gunmen attacked their convoy in the Waziriya district, northern Baghdad. When reinforcements came and cordoned off the area, a bomber driving a car blew himself up near them, wounding four policemen, police said.

In the pre-dawn attack in Taji the 17 men were shot to death including one policeman. Others worked as drivers and construction workers for the U.S. military, said al-Hayali.

In Baghdad's al-Amin district, a roadside bomb exploded at 7:30 a.m., wounding three Iraqi policemen.

Armed fighters attacked two police stations in the western Baghdad district of Karada at about 2 p.m., critically wounding three policemen.

Armed fighters shot to death an Iraqi army officer and wounded a man nearby in the southern Dora district of Baghdad and killed a police officer in Rumatha, about 217 miles south of Baghdad.

Iraqi police sources said that armed fighters opened fire against Judge Hassan Taher Hadi upon his return to Baghdad. According to the sources, the judge suffered serious injuries and was rushed to Baghdad Hospital for treatment.

A car bomb blew up targeting a police patrol in Baghdad's northern district of Adhamiyah on Wednesday, killing two policemen and wounding another, police said.

The attack took place at about 12:45 p.m. (0845 GMT) in Untar Square when a suspected car bomb detonated near a police patrol killing two policemen and wounding another, a police source asked not to be named told Xinhua.

Three more policemen and three civilians were killed in an attack on a police convoy. Minutes later another bomb nearby wounded two Iraqi policemen in a convoy.

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Trivializing Fascism Dishonors The Dead And Menaces The Living

Fascism is a term too casually tossed around, used almost as a swear word for anybody and anything on the right. And misusing this term is problematic in numerous ways. It trivializes what fascism is, and that dishonors the memory of those who have laid down their lives fighting it, not to mention the millions who have been its victims.

10.15.03 By John Bell, Socialist Worker (Canada) [Excerpt]

In a feature interview with the Guardian's Gary Younge, [Michael] Moore is telling the tale of his Oscar acceptance speech, explaining that he was compelled to use the podium for a political purpose.

"Let's turn the clock back and it's 1936 in Berlin and you got a theatre award: would it be inappropriate if you say something then, or do you just accept the award because 'You don't mix politics and theatre'?"

Huh? Hollywood in 2003 equals Nazi Germany in 1936?

He fudges the comparison by telling Younge that, while Bush is not a Hitler, America's democracy is "in peril".

"Since 9/11," Moore continues, "the Bush administration has used that tragic event as a justification to rip up our constitution and our civil liberties. And I honestly believe that one or two 9/11s, and martial law will be declared in our country and we're inching toward a police state."

"At that point you will find millions of Americans clamoring for martial law. I'm not talking about a takeover by Bush and his people. They won't have to fire a shot."

This is terrible jumble of half-baked ideas and fears, the very things he has cut his teeth satirizing.

There is no connection between the situation in the US today and Nazi Germany in 1936.

Bush and his gang, despicable as they are, are not fascists.

Not all forms of dictatorship or "police state" equal fascism.

And the US is far, far from becoming any of the above.

Let's be clear, in 1936 Berlin democracy was not in peril. It was extinguished. A Michael Moore would not be making a movie, let alone an award acceptance speech. He would be in a concentration camp.

Fascism is a term too casually tossed around, used almost as a swear word for anybody and anything on the right. I think Moore has fallen into this trap.

And misusing this term is problematic in numerous ways. It trivializes what fascism is, and that dishonors the memory of those who have laid down their lives fighting it, not to mention the millions who have been its victims. And it leads to disastrous tactical conclusions.

The definition of fascism does not lie in its superficial phenomena — nationalism, racism, dictatorship, etc. It is a specific form of capitalist rule. It emerges out of severe crisis, and is a mass movement based in the so-called middle class, what political scientists call the petty bourgeoisie.

The best analyst of fascism — as well as how to fight it — was the Marxist Leon Trotsky. Here's how he describes the first fascist movement in Italy:

“The fascist movement in Italy was a spontaneous movement of large masses, with new leaders from the rank and file. It is a plebian movement in origin, directed and financed by big corporate powers. It issued forth from the petty bourgeoisie, the slum proletariat, and even to a certain extent from the proletarian masses; Mussolini, a former socialist, is a ‘self-made’ man arising from this movement.”

The first, essential act of a rising fascist movement is to marshal this mass to physically smash all forms of independent workers organizations — from trade unions to socialist organizations.

Nothing taking place in the US resembles this in the slightest. Moore is wrong to exaggerate the Bush administration's use of the Patriot Act. While it is undeniably part of a terrible attack on Muslims and Arab-Americans, it simply does not “rip up” all civil liberties.

This is especially true in light of the fact that there is a huge and growing movement to refuse to cooperate with the Patriot Act on the part of more than 170 municipalities and three States.

The Patriot Act and the so-called war on terror are falling in popularity so far and so fast that John Ashcroft, the act's architect, has had to go on a special tour — speaking to only carefully pre-selected audiences to avoid any debate— to try and resell the whole idea to an increasingly skeptical American people.

As for the million of Americans who would beg for a fascist police state, this is Moore's most perplexing mistake.

Millions of Americans do want an alternative—a left alternative. Moore's very career is proof of that. These are the millions who kept his last book on the best seller list for 84 straight weeks.

I still intend to get Moore's new book — I'm sure there will be more than enough sharp insights, like the bin-Laden/multimillionaire connection, to make it worthwhile.

But I'm afraid the confusion about the danger Bush poses and how to fight it will blunt his edge.

Truly a sad retreat.

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.

TEAM AMERICA,



FUCK YEAH!

[Thanks to Mike Hastie, Vietnam Veteran, who sent this in. He writes: A vet friend from Gulf War I (Will Campbel), did this pencil drawing.

[I thought you might be interested.

[Will is a great artist, with an attitude for Truth.]

Iran

Comment: T

The fact that the regime in Iran arrests and tortures journalists is hardly surprising or inconsistent with their attitude toward serious criticism of their doings in general.

Their history is long and bloody.

In his book, *Revolution And Counter-Revolution In Iran*, Phil Marshall (Bookmarks 1983 ISBN 0 906224 43 8) documents the frantic efforts of the new regime immediately after

the February 1979 revolution to isolate and destroy the shoras, powerful new democratic working class council organizations springing up in major workplaces all over Iraq. Rightly perceived as the greatest danger to a new regime fronted by religious figures and backed by the merchant and small business class, the shoras were destroyed by a combination of pressure and simple thuggery.

In the 25 years since, genuine opposition from below has been met with brutal repression time and time again.

The arrest and torture of reporters is merely one dimension of that policy.

It must be noted that the policy of various U.S. regimes since the 1979 revolution has also been consistent in lending legitimacy this repression, and not only in Iran. As usual in repressive regimes targeted for one reason or another by the U.S. empire, organized opposition to the regime from below is accused of being nothing but servants of the U.S. empire.

So it is that hostile dependency between various U.S. political leaders and the various succession of repressive governments that have run Iran since 1979 is the reality on the ground , however much they bluster at each other.

Just as the War On Drugs and the criminal syndicates who produce and sell illicit drugs would both be ruined by legalization of illicit substances, so too the U.S. Empire and regimes like that of Iran are in fact hostile brothers. Both would be ruined by revolutionary movements from below asserting power for ordinary working class people. That would be a good thing.

OCCUPATION REPORT

So Much For That Sovereignty

Bullshit:

**Iraqi Justice Minister Says
There Is No Sovereignty;
Demands Occupation Stop
Arresting Citizens And Let
Prisoners Go**

"There is abuse (of human rights) due to detentions, which are overseen by the Multinational Force (MNF) and are not in the control of the justice ministry," said Shandal, a Shi'ite judge respected for standing up to Saddam Hussein on the rule of law. *"This is a matter of sovereignty."*

14 Sep 2005 (Reuters)

Iraq's justice minister has condemned the U.S. military for detaining thousands of Iraqis for long periods without charge and wants to change a U.N. resolution that gives foreign troops immunity from Iraqi law.

Speaking to Reuters, Justice Minister Abdul Hussein Shandal also criticised U.S. detentions of Iraqi journalists and said the media, contrary to U.S. policy in Iraq, must have special legal protection to report on all sides in the conflict.

"No citizen should be arrested without a court order," he said this week, complaining that U.S. suggestions that his ministry has an equal say on detentions were misleading.

"There is abuse (of human rights) due to detentions, which are overseen by the Multinational Force (MNF) and are not in the control of the justice ministry," said Shandal, a Shi'ite judge respected for standing up to Saddam Hussein on the rule of law.

Killings and unjustified arrests of Iraqi civilians by U.S. troops risked going unpunished, he said, because of U.N. Security Council resolution 1546, which granted U.S.-led forces sweeping powers following their overthrow of Saddam in 2003.

"The resolution ... gives immunity to the MNF and means taking no action against the MNF no matter what happens or whatever they do against the people of Iraq," Shandal said.

"We're hoping to make more efforts with the Security Council and the whole United Nations to end this resolution or amend it so that anyone who violates Iraqi law or assaults any citizen is held accountable," he said.

"This is a matter of sovereignty."

He said he was pressing the occupying forces to speed up releases for some of the 10,000 Iraqis held at Abu Ghraib prison and elsewhere, often for many months without charge, on suspicion of aiding Sunni Arab insurgents.

Iraqi officials voice frustration with U.S. and British vetoes on some requests for release, noting that Iraqis have been held for two years without charge to "gather intelligence".

Speaking of the Combined Review and Release Board (CRRB) which guarantees detainees a hearing every six months, Shandal said: "The representatives of the

MNF in the committee have the rights and all the authority under the U.N. resolution."

Shandal said he was concerned about the U.S. military's refusal to accord special consideration to the media and at the number of journalists detained for many months by U.S. troops.

Among these are two cameramen for Reuters. One of them is Ali Omar Abraham al-Mashhadani, who was ordered detained by the CRRB last month as a "threat to the people of Iraq". The military will not say what suspicions it has against him.

Asked to clarify the CRRB definition of "threat", Shandal said: "It's a catch-all term to portray this person as a threat to the nation and allow the other side to keep him in custody."

Asked if the government approved of such measures, which U.S. generals say they implement with Iraqi official support, he said: "I am a man of law and a judge and I respect human rights ... No citizen should be arrested without a court order."

Though the nature of their work brings journalists under suspicion from both sides, the U.S. command in Iraq refuses to consider special treatment for accredited reporters and says it will detain them under the same conditions as any other suspect.

Shandal, however, said journalists needed special protection and defended independent reporting from all sides, including from rebel-held areas. He insisted on journalists' right to film and interview Iraq's insurgents without fear of arrest or worse.

"In this time of conflict ... between terrorists and the army or Multinational Forces, the journalist comes to the fore.

"Full freedom should be given to journalists to take pictures and film in the field," he said. "Without images what would we know of history? ... We would know nothing."

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

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The following that we know of have also posted issues:

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

www.williambowles.info/qispecial,

<http://www.albasrah.net/magalat/english/qi-special.htm>

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