

GI SPECIAL 3C6:

ENOUGH: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



Baquba city, 60kms northeast of Baghdad. 7.29.05 (AFP/Liu Jin)

“I Have Never Seen A Freer Man” The Case of Sergeant Benderman

The defense successfully showed the humiliation Sgt. Benderman went through because of his Conscientious Objector beliefs, from the harassment of his wife by the Sgt. Major (who admitted to commenting on her physical figure) to his 1st Sgt. calling him a coward.

28 July 2005 By Camilo Mejia, Truthout Perspective

Fort Stewart, Georgia - When Sgt. Kevin Benderman went to Iraq on March of 2003, he saw the destruction of a nation, he saw a little girl with a burnt arm asking the soldiers for

help they were ordered not to provide, he saw people drinking water from mud puddles, and he saw that Iraqis were regular people, just like himself, and that our military should not bring destruction to that country.

What Sgt. Benderman saw in Iraq changed him in a way so profound, that after ten impeccable years in the Army, he decided to apply for conscientious objection.

But Sgt. Benderman also spoke truth to the people about what is going on in Iraq, and he spoke about how the war is not destroying Iraq alone, but our own country as well. He spoke of how American soldiers are dehumanized by the war.

But today's general Court-Martial did not deal with Sgt. Benderman's war experience, nor with the dehumanization of America's children in Iraq; it mostly dealt with a forty-five minute meeting Sgt. Benderman had with his Sgt. Major just an hour before his unit was to deploy to the Middle East, where they were to provide logistic support to American infantry units, and they were to train Iraqi police officers and military personnel.

The defense successfully showed how during that meeting Sgt. Benderman's chain of command, not knowing how to deal with his Conscientious Objector packet, released him to work on documents and to have dinner with his wife, just an hour prior to his unit's deployment, and how they made no effort to get him to the airfield, or to get him onboard a later flight.

The defense showed how Sgt. Benderman, far from being absent without authority or having missed movement, continued to perform a sergeant's duties while and after his unit deployed to Iraq.

The defense also showed the ambiguity in Sgt. Benderman's chain of command.

For instance, one of the government's arguments in seeking both a conviction and a harsh punishment was that Sgt. Benderman's logistic duties were crucial for the unit in Iraq, yet the defense proved that his chain of command had planned to fire him from his job and to assign him to latrine duty.

Another argument was the hazardous component of the unit's mission in Iraq, yet the 1st Sgt. insisted that Sgt. Benderman would be perfectly safe and in a position where he would see no combat at all.

The defense successfully showed the humiliation Sgt. Benderman went through because of his Conscientious Objector beliefs, from the harassment of his wife by the Sgt. Major (who admitted to commenting on her physical figure) to his 1st Sgt. calling him a coward.

Why then, one wonders, was Sgt. Benderman convicted of Missing Movement by Design, and sentenced to 15 months of confinement, reduction to the lowest rank, and a dishonorable discharge?

The defense strategy was sound and solid. The government's prejudice and Sgt. Benderman's chain of command's unmeasured persecution and incompetence were all made evident.

Why the conviction and the harsh sentence then?

Perhaps because a legal strategy is no match for a political strategy.

The Army had in its hands a blond, blue-eyed, six foot two, all American soldier, born and raised in the south, someone white America can look up to and identify with, someone who went to Iraq and came back with his humanity enhanced, most definitely a threat to a government on a mission to militarize its society and spread its empire.

The government threw the book at Sgt. Benderman to ensure others like him don't follow behind.

Therefore, his case should not have been boiled down to a forty-five minute meeting, because in doing so, the defense disconnected itself from the humanity of the action and from its message of resistance, and that is something America cannot afford at this time.

Sgt. Benderman is not an African American Muslim, he is not a Cuban Buddhist, his parents are not Latin Americans.

Unlike other recent conscientious objectors, Benderman looks like he belongs at a George W. Bush rally.

The humanity he displays in his refusal to fight a senseless war cannot be blamed on a foreign ethnicity, or on the color of his skin; it cannot be blamed on his religion either.

And he cannot be accused of being a Yankee liberal.

Sgt. Benderman's courageous stance gives the conscientious objector response to the war in Iraq a universal touch that breaks down barriers and goes beyond borders, bringing down the issue of war resistance to the humanity in each and every one of us, regardless of who we are or where we come from.

Sgt. Kevin Benderman chose to put his weapon down; he chose not to kill but to love his fellow human beings; he chose to put his career and physical freedom in jeopardy; he chose to speak truth in the face of power and adversity; he was harassed, humiliated, accused, tried, convicted, and sentenced to jail.

He kissed his wife goodbye, and he kept his head up high as he walked to his fifteen months of confinement.

I have never seen a freer man.



Recruiting station closed early due demonstration in support of Sgt. Benderman: Armed Forces Recruiting Center, Oakland, California. by Jeff Paterson, Not in Our Name Jul. 29, 2005 at 12:48 AM, jeff@paterson.net 510-601-8000 <http://www.CourageToResist.org>

MORE:

**A Message From Monica
Benderman:
“Please . . . Let People Know Just
What They Are Capable Of”**

July 29, 2005 By Monica Benderman

THANK YOU -- to everyone for supporting Kevin and me.

Kevin is currently in a local county jail -- but he is being treated well. We are waiting to see where he will be going next, and what will be happening.

The appeals process has been initiated -- BUT -- Kevin has not actually been convicted as yet. He is in jail, but the conviction will not be official until the Convening Authority, Col. John Kidd, has signed off on it.

He cannot make the sentence any greater, but he can reduce it. It's doubtful that he will do that, he has an inordinate amount of disdain for me.

The entire prosecution team, including witnesses, all stood outside the doorway and laughed while Kevin was walking to the van. They wanted to put him in shackles and chains "so that the media could take pictures of him that way" but his supervisor, the man they had placed in charge of that, refused to do that, so Kevin walked freely.

This supervisor has been very supportive of Kevin from the start - and continues to be very upset about what is happening, as he knows the truth.

Kevin could serve his entire sentence without Col. Kidd approving the sentence, which means that he will have the potential to serve without being convicted.

The reason this is a possibility is that until the sentence is confirmed, they cannot officially process the appeal, and until the conviction is official, the defense team cannot receive the full transcripts from the trial. Without these, they cannot begin to create the brief to file for the appeal.

People need to be aware of this. Please . . . let people know just what they are capable of.

Kevin is fine, and says THANK YOU for staying with him.

Love,
Monica



Sgt. Kevin Benderman's wife Monica, center, is comforted by Maritza Castillo, left, and other supporters July 28, 2005, outside the military courthouse in Fort Stewart, Ga. where Benderman's husband was convicted of missing movement during his units deployment in January. (AP Photo/Stephen Morton)

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 MARINES KILLED IN CYKLA

July 29, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 05-07-23C & (AP)

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq -- Two Marines assigned to Regimental Combat Team-2, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), were killed in action July 28 when their unit came under attack by small arms fire and rocket propelled grenades.

The incident took place during combat operations in Cykla, Iraq. Cykla is about 200 kilometers west of Baghdad.

On Thursday, the Marines reported killing nine insurgents, five believed to be Syrians, during an engagement in the same small village.

Two suspected insurgents were arrested, the statement said.

It did not say how the military determined that five of the dead insurgents were Syrian.

TASK FORCE BAGHDAD SOLDIER DIES IN VEHICLE ACCIDENT

July 29, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 05-07-24C

BAGHDAD, Iraq: A Task Force Baghdad Soldier died when the vehicle he was driving was involved in a single-vehicle accident off base in central Baghdad around 11:30 p.m. on July 28.

The Soldier was taken to an Iraqi hospital where he was pronounced dead. His body was later recovered by U.S. military authorities.

First Fond Du Lac Soldier Dies



John Tollefson

July 29, 2005 By Lara Margelofsky, Fond du Lac Reporter

A 2001 Goodrich High School graduate is the first city of Fond du Lac soldier to be killed in the war in Iraq.

Spc. John O. Tollefson, 22, of Fond du Lac, a young man loved and respected by those who knew him, died Wednesday while serving with the U.S. Army in Iraq. He became the first Fond du Lac soldier to die since Operation Iraqi Freedom began in March 2003.

The 2001 Goodrich High School graduate was the son of Walter Tollefson of Fond du Lac and Mary Steinman of Rosendale and had been serving in Iraq since January.

“He was one of those exceptionally wonderful people you’ll meet in your life,” said Fond du Lac High School football coach Mike Dressler, who coached Tollefson at Goodrich High School. “He was so special and worked so hard at everything. Everyone that knew him respected him.”

Those who knew Tollefson said that he was a great young man and a joy to be around.

“He was Wally’s pride and joy, and he thought the world of him,” said Fond du Lac City Councilman Sal Curcurio, a friend of the family. “It seems like it’s always the good kids that get killed, and this time it really, really was.”

Curcurio said that Tollefson was interested in cars, motors and football and that he never gave his dad a bit of trouble.

Corpsman Killed In Iraq Went To Area High School; “He Also Said He Had Seen Horrible Things.”

[Thanks to Tom/RegimeChanger who sent this in.]

July 29, 2005 By LOUIS HANSEN, The Virginian-Pilot

Navy Corpsman Travis L. Youngblood saw more sand than he could imagine in Iraq. He met friendly villagers. And he saw horrible sights while rushing into combat with Marines.

In his last conversation with his mother, Debra Youngblood of Smithfield, he warned that his work was dangerous. He told her he wouldn't be safe until he was home.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Youngblood, 26 , died July 21 of combat wounds suffered in Iraq. Youngblood was struck by shrapnel from an improvised explosive device six days earlier during a mission in Hit, Iraq, according to the Department of Defense.

Youngblood was assigned to Naval Hospital Great Lakes in Illinois and deployed with the II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward).

Youngblood graduated from Southampton High School in 1997. He was a member of the drama club.

“He went about his business,” Principal Allene Atkinson said. “He was one of our quiet ones.”

The rural district has about 700 students in its high school.

After school, Youngblood moved to Georgia to be with his father, Elmer “Mo” Youngblood.

His father and an uncle served in the military, and Travis soon followed when he enlisted in the Navy in 1999, Debra Youngblood said. He asked his mother if he should enlist.

“I supported him,” she said.

Travis wanted to serve on submarines, but a vision problem prevented him from getting his first choice, she said. He became a medic, charged with caring for wounded Marines in the field.

He deployed to Iraq in January and called his mother at least once a month. He joked about the sand and told her stories about good-natured locals.

He also said he had seen “horrible things.”

Debra Youngblood was staying with her son E.J. in Smithfield when they received the news that Travis was dead.

“At first you think it’s a dream and you think you’re going to wake up,” she said. “Then you bury yourself in details. At night, you sit and think. You’re never going to hug him again – you’re never going to touch his face again.”

Travis Youngblood will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery on Aug. 1. He leaves behind a wife, Laura, and a 4-year-old son, Hunter.

His wife is due to deliver their second child in September. Their daughter will be named Emma.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Liberated Afghanistan (Just In Case You Missed It)



Afghan protesters throw stones at a U.S. military convoy outside the U.S. base in Bagram, 31 miles north of Kabul, Afghanistan, July 26, 2005. U.S. and Afghan troops fired warning shots after more than 1,000 protesters chanting 'Die America!' threw stones at the convoy at the main U.S. base in Afghanistan to demand the release of eight villagers detained in a raid. (AP Photo/Amir Shah)

TROOP NEWS

30% Of Iraq Troops Coming Home Fucked Up

July 29, 2005 USA Today

Military medical officials said 30 percent of U.S. troops returning from the Iraq war have developed stress-related mental health problems three to four months after coming home. A survey of 1,000 troops found problems such as anxiety, depression, nightmares, anger and an inability to concentrate, according to Lt. Gen. Kevin Kiley, the Army's surgeon general.

Wounded Marine Recovering

7.29.05 By Karen Blackledge, The Daily Item

NORTHUMBERLAND — Todd Bucher was severely wounded by a bomb in Iraq, but he considers himself fortunate.

"I am lucky to be alive," he said. "Somebody was watching over me. I was only two feet away from when it went off."

The Marines lance corporal was talking about the IED, or improvised explosive device, that detonated while he and other Marines were on foot patrol during the early morning hours of July 10 in Iraq.

"I only remember bits and pieces of what happened," said Mr. Bucher, who is at home with his mother, Debbie, for 30 days. He goes two days a week for physical therapy.

Another Marine was hurt in the explosion, but Mr. Bucher didn't know how badly he was injured.

"I just remember waking up on the ground and screaming for a medic," Mr. Bucher, 21, said Thursday.

He suffered multiple injuries from shrapnel.

"I have pain every day," he said. "Some days are worse than others. The pain is from all my wounds in my stomach, my hip, lower back and hand. My feet swell from shrapnel when I walk."

Shrapnel hit the entire left side of his body, along with both his hands and feet.

"I have 144 pieces in my left arm alone," he said. "A piece went through my back and my spleen had to be removed. I lost hearing in my left ear."

Doctors weren't able to remove all the shrapnel and he isn't sure if any more will be taken out. Besides the surgery when his spleen was removed, he underwent surgery to have the holes cleaned out in his hip and one hand.

He goes to Lebanon Veterans Hospital for physical therapy for his left hand.

He has limited movement in the hand and barely any strength. He expects therapists to work with his left leg as soon as they can. His mother, family or friends take turns driving him to the hospital.

Mr. Bucher, who uses a cane to walk, was able to come home after being taken off IVs at Bethesda Naval Hospital.

His mother dresses his seven large wounds.

"I have to pack them and put adhesive bandages on them," she said.

Mr. Bucher said he couldn't discuss where he was stationed in Iraq. He was with the 1st Battalion, Sixth Marines security patrol, whose mission was to "kill or capture the enemy and train Iraqi forces and win the hearts and minds of locals," he said.

He didn't want to discuss the Iraqi forces or the Iraqi people since his unit is still there.

"Service people over there are making it. There's no way to describe what it's like unless you're there," said Mr. Bucher who spent 4 1/2 months in Iraq. He previously served seven months in Afghanistan.

After the explosion, he was taken to Camp Fallujah and then flown to Germany.

His mother was notified 10 hours after he was injured. There's an eight-hour time difference between Iraq and the Valley.

"A staff sergeant called me and said he was injured, was in surgery, was in stable condition and took shrapnel wounds to the majority of his body," she said.

At that time, he was in Germany.

"I went numb and didn't know what to think. I was just devastated," she said.

The staff sergeant told her that her son would call her as soon as he was stable enough.

Mr. Bucher later phoned saying: "Hi Mom. I'm alive. I'm doing good."

His mother said, "I kind of broke down when I heard his voice."

After he was stable enough, he was flown July 15 to Bethesda, Md.

His mother arrived at the hospital followed by Mr. Bucher's father, Barry, of Michigan, and his brother, Nathan, 23, of South Carolina.

"I'm thankful he's alive. It could have been a lot worse," his mother said.

"The doctors and nurses at Bethesda were awesome," she added.

Since Mr. Bucher has been home, "The phone pretty much hasn't stopped ringing," he said.

The 2002 Shikellamy High School graduate joined the Marines in March 2003 and has 19 months to go.

He was influenced in joining the military by his grandfather, the late Donald Marks Sr., who served with the Navy, his grandfather, Douglas Bucher, of Sunbury, who was in the Army and two uncles in the Navy.

Mr. Bucher chose the Marines, saying "I went for the best of the best."

After the 30 days are up, he will head to Camp Lejeune to be evaluated on whether he will stay in the Marines.

Doctors expect the young man, who played baseball and basketball in school, to make a full recovery in about a year.

Regardless of whether he is discharged or continues to serve, he plans to go to college to study engineering or marketing.

He thanked everyone who sent cards and phoned. "I thank my family for everything they did and my girlfriend," he said.

His mother thanked all who supported him with prayers. "Thanks to Betty and Ronda Winters who were here for me 24-7," she said.

Commanders Try Silly Irrelevant Bullshit To Motivate Troops For Imperial War: What Else Is New?

July 29, 2005 USA Today

The frequency with which troops are being sent back to combat is unprecedented in the all-volunteer U.S. military. Three Marine battalions are now fighting in Iraq for the third time, and two others are preparing for their third combat tours there.

To boost morale, commanders draw comparisons to the sacrifices of the Greatest Generation, those who fought for the duration of World War II.

But that war is dust-covered history to those fighting in Iraq, and defense researchers concede that they do not yet know what back-to-back-to-back tours of duty will do to this military—or to those fighting.

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.



Charges Dropped Against Wife Of Soldier Opposed To Iraq War

July 29, 2005 Associated Press

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — Prosecutors have dropped a federal felony charge filed against a housewife accused of helping her husband desert his Army unit before he was to be sent to Iraq.

Amy Bartell's attorney said Thursday prosecutors dropped the charge of enticing, abetting a deserter.

The U.S. attorney's office in Denver confirmed Bartell will not be prosecuted, but declined to comment further.

Her husband, Spc. Dale Bartell, who was assigned to the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment based at Fort Carson, was convicted of intent to avoid hazardous duty. He was sentenced earlier this month to four months in prison and ordered to be dishonorably discharged once he completed his prison term.

Bartell already served a tour in Iraq and tried declaring himself a conscientious objector. He left his unit twice in early April when he thought he would be deployed.

MORE:

Bartell Case Up-Date

July 28, 2005, From: Bill and Genie Durland

Amy, Dale and I are grateful for your help and/or interest which will continue to be their need.

So far Amy hasn't been able to speak with Dale or receive letters from him. The fort says he is in "transition" there.

If this continues, I will contact Ft. Sill authorities on August 1. You may contact St. sill and ask how to be in contact with him as well.

Bill Durland
The Center on Law and Human Rights

Join The Army:

**Grab People's Countries For Bush;
Frighten Their Kids;
Make Them Want To Kill You:
That's A Fucking Brilliant Foreign
Policy**



Iraqi children run away into a house as U.S. Army Private First Class Jeremy Bellanger of the Stryker brigade patrols a street in Mosul July 29, 2005. REUTERS/Andrea Comas

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

**“U.S. Sources” Say Resistance
More Powerful Than Ever:
"We're Operating At The Margins.
We're Running To Stand Still"**

"We're not making forward progress," he said. "The insurgency has great untapped resources. The insurgency isn't defeated. It just isn't so. The overall trend is up."

July 27, 2005 By Martin Sieff, UPI Senior News Analyst

Both the Iraqi government bureaucracy and the new security forces have been heavily infiltrated, they [some U.S. sources] said, by insurgency agents.

The insurgents continue to enjoy excellent intelligence that enables them to attack Iraqi security forces and even massacre them at large gatherings. They remain able to kill officials in the new state structure at will around the country.

The U.S. forces' ability to protect Iraqi officials apart from the most senior remains "minimal," one U.S. military source said.

Yet even as things are, as one U.S. military analyst told UPI on condition of anonymity, "We're operating at the margins. We're running to stand still."

Another highly respected U.S. military expert, speaking on condition of anonymity Tuesday, said that the levels of U.S. forces in Iraq were far too low to be able to secure the country against the current level of the insurgency and that the trend of the insurgency over the past two years had been "consistently upward" in terms of the number of incidents recorded by U.S. forces and in terms of the numbers of casualties inflicted, especially on Iraqi civilians and military forces.

"We're not making forward progress," he said. "The insurgency has great untapped resources. The insurgency isn't defeated. It just isn't so. The overall trend is up."

The sources did not dispute Gen Jack Keane, a former deputy chief of staff of the Army, who claimed at a meeting Monday of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy that U.S. forces had killed or imprisoned 50,000 insurgents over the past seven months.

But they cautioned that this figure included thousands of detained suspects as well as confirmed insurgents and that the insurgency among the 30 percent or so Sunni Muslim minority in central Iraq continued to enjoy massive popular support and extensive, decentralized organization.

U.S. military analysts believe that only 5 to 10 percent of the insurgents are of foreign origin.

"The ability of the insurgents to kill large numbers of Iraqis remains unimpaired," the respected military analyst cited above said.

"They kill at all levels. They even kill washer-women working at U.S. bases. When they make a threat, they carry it out. Their ability to kill people is only increasing."

MORE:

**Having Read That, Now Check This
White House Sewage**

July 29, 2005 Washington Post

Efforts to rebuild water, electricity and health networks in Iraq are being shortchanged by higher-than-expected costs to provide security and by generous financial awards to contractors, according to a series of reports by government investigators.

Taken together, the reports seem to run contrary to the Bush administration's upbeat assessment that reconstruction efforts are moving vigorously ahead *and that the insurgency is dying down.*

MORE:

The Silly Fantasies Of A Defeated Occupation

6.29.05 Washington Post

On Baghdad's streets, the daily reality involves death, random violence and routine deprivations for people who are beyond anger.

But a different view has been presented in the Green Zone, the concrete-barricaded headquarters for U.S. troops, diplomats and contractors and the interim Iraqi government.

There, the situation is described as progressing toward a gradual handover from U.S. forces to Iraqi control.

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)

Assorted Resistance Action

July 29 (KUNA) & Suni System (P) Ltd.

In the capital, scores of Iraqis staged a demonstration at the green zone, protesting maltreatment of prisoners. The protestors carried pictures of Iraqi men kicking and beating up prisoners.

A police patrol discovered seven beheaded bodies in a field south of the Iraqi capital Baghdad, police said.

The murder victims were five police officers and two Iraqi civilians who worked for the US Army, police in the town of Mahmudiya said Thursday.

An Iraqi civilian working as a translator at a US base was killed in Ouja village, 10 km south of Tikrit, said the US coordination centre.

The centre said Nabil Yousif was in a convoy of trucks carrying logistics to the base when it was attacked by gunmen. Three drivers were also injured in the assault.

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

No Comment Necessary



A woman holds up a copy of the Quran as other women carry posters and images of victims of police brutality during a protest march condemning U.S. and Iraqi forces for ill treatment July 29, 2005, in front of the Al-Shawi mosque in Baghdad, Iraq. (AP Photo/Karim Kadim)

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Bad Moon Rising

[Sent in without attribution.]

TAC: *What do you think the chances are of a weapon of mass destruction being used in an American city?*

RP: I think it depends not exclusively, but heavily, on how long our combat forces remain in the Persian Gulf.

The central motive for anti-American terrorism, suicide terrorism, and catastrophic terrorism is response to foreign occupation, the presence of our troops.

The longer our forces stay on the ground in the Arabian Peninsula, the greater the risk of the next 9/11, whether that is a suicide attack, a nuclear attack, or a biological attack

A History Of U.S. Armed Forces Rebellions, Con't

By Martin Smith (Sgt. USMC; out of service)

Writing this was about healing a really dark chapter in my life, my experience in the marine corps. The words I wrote came out of an inner pain and experience that needed to heal.

But most of all, I hope that my words in some way bring an end to this god damn war and that no one else will have to come back in a body bag.

This isn't about me, it's all about bringing the troops home now,

Martin Smith

Heads And Fraggers—Soldiers' Networks And Life In The Rear

This cold officer upon a monument, who dropped epithets unconcernedly down, would be finer as a dead man, he thought.

Stephen Crane's The Red Badge of Courage.

The experience of combat troops serving in the rear, the support units, was a different terrain from those assigned to the front.

Soldiers in the rear included the generals and their officers; motor transportation dispatchers and truck drivers; supply and warehouse clerks; and administrative personnel in charge of personnel records, payroll, and finance. Known as "bennies," "REMFs" (for Rear Echelon Mother Fuckers), and "Saigon Cowboys" to the grunts, such troops were rarely in harm's way and made up over eighty percent of the troops in Vietnam.

The conditions in the rear, far away from the "search and destroy" missions and forced marching, created stress of a different kind, fomenting means of resistance not possible for those serving in combat.

Troops in Vietnam developed a soldiers' culture that made life in Vietnam bearable on their own terms. Enlisted soldiers engaged in illegal activities and actions that were considered inappropriate by the military planners and career soldiers. From these activities, soldiers developed networks of solidarity that challenged military authority.

Troops read, contributed to, and distributed underground newspapers. They broadcast pirate radio that played counterculture acid rock and soul music, connecting the entire country with such stations. Soldiers also experimented with drugs as a form of informal resistance, and they began forcing the lifers and military brass that stood in their way to negotiate by collective action.

Resistance in the rear differed from that in the front due to the circumstances and conditions afforded by the relative security of living on base. The U.S. Army Depot of Long Binh, twenty miles north of Saigon, is perhaps the most glaring example of the stark difference between life in the rear versus that in the front.

In "America Pulls Back," CBS news featured Long Binh Depot in 1970, the largest Army facility the encompassed a greater area than the city of Saigon, where 26,000 service personnel worked in the conditions of relative safety. The base had four football fields, eight Olympic size pools, and ranges for archery and skeet shooting. Diego Garcia, a truck driver in the 1st Logistical Command and stationed at Long Binh in 1969, reveals:

"To tell you the truth, I had it made over in Nam...I had access to all of the cold beer I wanted...We used to haul these refrigerated trailers...where we would off load the ships. It wouldn't be nothing to rip off two or three boxes of steaks off them suckers...We didn't go a day without eating a porter house steak. That was when I was in Long Binh."

While troops at Long Binh had it easier than those assigned to the field, it was also the location for a uniquely military class conflict. Long Binh, like most bases in the rear, had a disproportionate number of career officers and non-commissioned officers, known pejoratively as "lifers" to the regular enlisted men (EM). As a result, tension at the base camps swelled with the conflict inherent in the military rank structure.

Soldiers in the rear could not understand the unnecessary make-work and “Mickey Mouse” regulations imposed on the lower enlisted.

“The enlisted men are the pawns of an authoritarian system designed to deploy soldiers in combat efficiently; yet, the dangers that justify its discipline are absent,” according to Eugene Linden’s “Fragging and Other Withdrawal Symptoms,” written in 1972.

A common complaint was the enforcement of wearing perfectly starched camouflaged uniforms and spit shined boots, even during the monsoon season, while “lifers” enjoyed the luxury of air-conditioned quarters and the brass relaxed in the officers’ clubs and played sports.

General William Westmoreland’s love for tennis, for example, allowed him to play “twice a week through most of the Vietnam campaign,” according to an April 1968 *Sports Illustrated* magazine article.

The picture of the general casually playing tennis, however, brought a different reaction in the underground newspaper, *Vietnam GI*.

Instead of focusing on the trim, energetic celebrity of General Westmoreland, *Vietnam GI* exposed the hypocrisy of the military brass, whose weekly tennis matches in Vietnam were a stark reminder of the class distinction that was at the heart of the military hierarchy.

“How can you tell a ROTC officer? He’s the one with the red, white and blue tennis rackets,” joked a veteran that contributed to the newspaper.

According to Matthew Rinaldi, *Vietnam GI* was the most widely circulated underground in the early part of the GI movement from 1967 to 1969 and was started by Vietnam veteran Jeff Sharlet out of Chicago. Sharlet grew disgusted with the student anti-war movement, in particular with the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) chapters, the main student anti-war organization, which were generally dismissive of GI organizing.

Sharlet, however, tragically died of cancer at the age of 27 on June 16, 1969, and the paper did not continue.

Similarly, in an *Esquire* magazine article in 1968, Robert Christgau claims that *Vietnam GI* is a “newspaper about Vietnam for enlisted men, written in their language and in terms of their experience, pro-‘e.m.’ (enlisted men) and anti-‘lifer.’”

Vietnam GI was one of several underground newspapers that were mailed to troops in Vietnam, providing a unique culture and network of resistance that emerged in the rear

The newspaper had a mailing list of 3,000 troops stationed in Vietnam alone.

Such papers took up the enlisted troops’ issues and spoke in a way that the official base papers, particularly *Stars and Stripes*, controlled by the military establishment, could not.

“Newsletters like Vietnam GI are very helpful in making guys feel they are not alone,” a Private First Class wrote to the paper, published in May 1968, and a soldier sent a letter printed in the September 1969 edition stating that “the guys really groove on it.”

***Vietnam GI* carried articles the mainstream press would not dare print.**

The contributors wrote articles about the frequent jamming of M-16 rifles that caused many deaths, connecting the story to the huge Pentagon contracts that the weapon manufacturer received.

The paper also discussed the issue of how the military brass forced soldiers to buy war bonds that financed the war effort.

In addition, *Vietnam GI* revealed false stories printed in traditional media outlets and exposed by troops who were actually on the ground.

GIs considered such false reporting in the military and civilian newspapers as blatant lies. In an interview with Corporal Craig Walden in 1969, the veteran contended that *Time* magazine reported his unit’s casualties as “light to moderate,” when in truth only 11 survived out of his entire company of 237.

By providing the “truth” as soldiers saw it, the paper became an organizing tool. In one letter written in to *Vietnam GI* in 1968, a soldier explained how the paper formed a network of dissent:

“I just finished...Vietnam GI and I was glad to read the ‘truth’ for a change. The only paper we get is the S&S (*Stars and Stripes*) and that put out for the Army, by the Army and like you say is full of B.S. If you could send me about 10 copies of your paper I could pass them out to my buddies who think this war and the Army is a bunch of B.S. also.”

In a letter printed in June 1968 by a Private First Class from the 173rd Airborne, the soldier revealed how the paper enlarged its distribution base:

“Got your 10 VN G.I.’s today. Really dug on the truth. Now listen to this I passed them around to all the platoons and the guys really enjoyed them. I will bet that...you will get at least 25 to 30 more guys writing to you requesting to receive “the Truth” paper. I barely had them out before they were grabbed and read. The guys really like it and they want to hear the truth about all this shit over here. Guys asked for your address and I showed it to them in the paper...Good luck and FTA.

Similar letters by soldiers stationed overseas and numerous interviews with veterans of the war printed within *Vietnam GI*, provide evidence that the newspaper developed a significant base of support within Vietnam.

Within the newspaper, the transcript of the world of the soldier comes to life, especially the battle between the lifers and the lower enlisted and draftees.

In one letter printed in June 1968, for example, a Private First Class (PFC) writes, “I’m sick of always getting stepped on by these lifer shitheads! We...bear all the

burden while the brass just sits back in their air-conditioned trailers getting boozed up! I just wanted to add my experience to 'OUR' paper. Thank you for showing the way it is!

This private's letter reveals how the paper was a means to expose the "way it is" from the viewpoint of the soldier, written in the coarse and "frivolous" language common to the troops.

It also exposes how the military rank system gave privileges to officers and lifers that created the dynamics of class conflict. An army member also discussed the glaring inequality in this letter printed in the June 1968 edition as well:

"There's the question of the General's air-conditioned office and his air-conditioned conference room and...the Sgt. Major's private air-conditioned club in the 1st floor of his private barracks. The CG (Commanding General)...had five air-conditioners in his head shed that I saw. The Sgt. Major not only had two air-conditioners in his private club, but he had two Vietnamese girls serving drinks for his elite circle of lifer friends. The NCO club on the Support Command compound was a veritable brothel...I'm not advocating corruption at all levels, just a little honesty for a change. I'm human and if I've got to be straight. I don't see why some ignorant lifer doesn't.

Thus while base camps offered a cozier atmosphere than the world of the grunts, there were privileges within these units that magnified the class hierarchy within the rank structure, pitting the brass and lifers on one side versus the enlisted and draftees on the other.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Blind, Arrogant, Imperial Asshole Meets Would Be Collaborator; Resistance Wins Again

28 July 2005 By Sara Daniel, Le Nouvel Observateur

The next day, Colonel Oscar Hall, the American military official in charge of this part of Diyala province, visits the City Hall of Khan Bani Sad.

The mayor of the little town - Naief al-Zaidai, one of the very few Sunni mayors in Diyala province - had asked to see him, urgently. And we were allowed to be present for the interview, all the way at the other end of the mayor's office. At first, the two men and their translators whispered, and we had to strain our ears to hear the conversation. Then the volume went up and the exchange got heated along with the tone.

Edifying, their dialogue said much about what is taking place right now in Iraq.

"I asked to see you," the mayor explains, "because the situation is serious. Many people complain about the violence Iraqi police and soldiers carry out against detainees. That violence leads to reactions that snowball ... The coalition must help us."

"Why should we worry," Colonel Hall replies, "when the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior arrests bad guys? That's Iraqis' business; it doesn't concern the coalition."

"The Iraqi government is in the process of escalating the tension between Shia and Sunni tribes. At the Ministry of the Interior, they're all Shiites and the Badr Army is raiding Sunni houses, whether those of former friends of Saddam or not. And that's happening all over Iraq."

"Is that a fact or an impression? Don't trust rumors. Remember when people were saying that garbage was being imported from Iran to be burned in the Baquba incinerator?"

"That's irrelevant to this. I'm talking about facts; go check out the list of houses that have been searched, the lists of people arrested. A poor schoolteacher. An imam. The coalition had interrogated them; the Ministry arrests them again. It's serious."

"I can't do anything about it. An Iraqi judge must determine their guilt. If they're innocent, they'll be set free. Don't worry." [If he really believes this, he's got his head stuck so far up his ass it would take a search party a week to find it. But of course he's just spouting the silly lies occupation officers have told their victims in the long tradition extending from the Roman generals who presided over the murder of Christ down thru Stalin and Hitler's officers in more modern times. Don't think so? Watch the rest of his condescending bullshit flow.]

"Aren't you going to do anything to stop the civil war in Iraq, sir?"

"If the Chief of Police wanted to start a civil war, Mr. Mayor, he would arrest all the Sunni, including you. I don't understand your logic. Why don't you talk about the Shiites who died at the Mohammed Sacran check-point?"

"Exactly. Today the population thinks that Mohammed Sacran was Sunni revenge against the Shia ... This mechanism has to be dismantled. Today, my country is governed by Shiites only. They believe that Saddam favored the Sunni. That's not true. If his own finger raised itself against him, Saddam would have it cut off. Saddam made no distinction between Shia and Sunni. I know the Shiites say bad things about me. That I'm a terrorist. A Baathist. At the Ministry of the Interior, they have a fat file against me."

"You've never handed a guilty person over to me. The bad guys, to hear you talk, are always somewhere else, never here. While you know that the boy responsible for yesterday's attack lived right across the street. So don't tell me anything, guy. The people lined up at your door are Sunni, not Shiites!"

"They arrested 35 Sunni in a little village. If they had searched all the houses, that wouldn't be a problem. I don't want to make you angry; I want you to help us maintain stability."

"I'm going to ask you to be patient and to wait for Iraqi justice to do its work. Don't feed the rumor of civil war. If you throw fuel on the fire, it will burn you!"

[Yup, head firmly up the ass. It's his soldiers who are getting burned, every day, in this evil Imperial occupation, and officers like this are a perfect example of why the war was lost. Their knowledge of counter-insurgency warfare is even more insignificant than their chances of doing anything remotely constructive.]

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

Winning More Friends: For The Armed Resistance That Is



U.S. soldiers of the army infantry from the Stryker brigade search a house in Mosul, northern Iraq, July 26, 2005. REUTERS/Andrea Comas

There's nothing quite like invading somebody else's country, busting into their houses by force and violence, groping through their most personal belongings and terrorizing their kids [back left] to arouse an intense desire to kill you in the patriotic, self-respecting civilians who live there.

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

Philippine Diplomats Pulled Out Of Iraq

29 July 2005 Aljazeera

Philippine diplomats in Iraq have left their Baghdad mission indefinitely pulling back to Jordan due to a rash of kidnappings of foreign diplomats.

Philippine Foreign Undersecretary Jose Brillantes said in a written statement on Friday that the three-member mission, led by charge d'affaires Eric Endaya, had arrived at the embassy in Amman where they would be posted "for an indefinite period of time,"

"The diplomats in Baghdad are in Amman for security reasons occasioned by the recent kidnappings of diplomats," he added.

Brillantes said a Philippine travel ban to Iraq "remains in force."

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