

GI SPECIAL 3C70:

**THIS IS HOW BUSH BRINGS THE TROOPS HOME:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW**



Master Sgt. Stephen Walter stands at attention as Marines line up to carry casket of Cpl. Andre Williams, who was killed in Iraq Aug. 6, 2005 in Columbus, Ohio. Williams was a member of Lima Company 3rd Battalion based in Columbus. (AP Photo/Kiichiro Sato)

**One Marine Survives,
11 In His Squad Die:
“The Operation Was Hastily
Planned And Executed, With
Significant Risks And Little
Return”**

"I think the most frustrating thing is there's no sense of accomplishment," Williams said. "You're biding your time and waiting. But then you lose your friends, and it's not even for their own country's freedom."

"We've been here almost seven months and we don't control" the cities, said Gunnery Sgt. Ralph Perrine, an operations chief in the battalion from Brunswick, Ohio. "It's no secret."

"Their intelligence is better than ours," Owens said.

"I had concerns that the operation was hastily planned and executed, with significant risks and little return," Toland said.

Oct. 01, 2005 ANTONIO CASTANEDA, Associated Press

Associated Press reporter Antonio Castaneda spent three weeks in western Anbar province in Iraq with Marines in Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 25th Regiment, 4th Division, earlier this year. He was with the unit when they led an offensive into the city of Haditha in late May. And he returned to the area after an August blast killed 14 Marines - and shortly before the unit began demobilizing to return to the United States by early October.

The ranks listed for the Marines were those they held when they were killed. Some of the men were promoted posthumously.

HADITHA DAM, Iraq - Cpl. David Kreuter had a new baby boy he'd seen only in photos. Lance Cpl. Michael Cifuentes was counting the days to his wedding. Lance Cpl. Nicholas Bloem had just celebrated his 20th birthday.

Travis Williams remembers them all - all 11 men in his Marine squad - all now dead.

Two months ago they shared a cramped room stacked with bunk beds at this base in northwest Iraq, where the Euphrates River rushes by. Now the room has been stripped of several beds, brutal testament that Lance Cpl. Williams' closest friends are gone.

For the 12 young Marines who landed in Iraq early this year, the war was a series of hectic, constant raids into more than a dozen lawless towns in Iraq's most hostile province, Anbar.

The pace and the danger bound them together into what they called a second family, even as some began to question whether their raids were making any progress.

Now, all of the Marines assigned to the 1st Squad, 3rd Platoon, Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 25th Regiment, based in Columbus, Ohio, are gone - except Williams.

They died in a roadside-bomb set by insurgents on Aug. 3 that killed a total of 14 Marines. Most of the squad were in their early 20s; the youngest was 19.

"They were like a family. They were the tightest squad I've ever seen," said Capt. Christopher Toland of Austin, Texas, the squad's platoon commander. Even though many did not know each other before they got to Iraq, "They truly loved each other."

All that is left are photos and snippets of video, saved on dusty laptops, that run for a few dozen seconds. As they pack up to return home by early October, the Marines from Lima Company - including the squad's replacements - sometimes huddle around Williams' laptop in a room at the dam, straining to watch the few remaining moments of their young friends' lives. Some photos and videos carry the squad's adopted motto, "Family is Forever."

In one video, Lance Cpl. Christopher Dyer, who graduated with honors last year from a Cincinnati area high school, strums his guitar and does a mock-heartfelt rendition of "Puff the Magic Dragon" as his friends laugh around him.

In a photo, Kreuter rides a bicycle through a neighborhood, swerving under the weight of body armor and weapons, as Marines and Iraqis watch and chuckle.

Each video ends abruptly, leaving behind a blank screen. Some are switched off as soon as they start - some images just hurt too much to see right now.

The August operation began like most of the squad's missions - with a rush into another lawless Iraqi city to hunt insurgents and do house-to-house searches, sometimes for 12 hours in temperatures near 120 degrees.

On Aug. 1, six Marine snipers had been ambushed and killed in Haditha, one of a string of cities that line the Euphrates, filled with waving palm trees. Two days later, Marines in armored vehicles, including the 1st Squad, rumbled into the area to look for the culprits.

Like other cities in this region, Haditha has no Iraqi troops, and its police force was destroyed earlier in the year by a wave of insurgent attacks. Marines patrol roads on the perimeter and occasionally raid homes in the city, which slopes along a quiet river valley.

Since their arrival in February, the Marines had spent nearly all their time on such sweeps or preparing for them, sometimes hurrying back to their base to grab fresh clothes, then heading off again to cities that hadn't seen American or Iraqi troops in months.

The intense pace of the operations, and the enormous area their regimental combat team had to cover - an expanse the size of West Virginia - caught some off guard.

The combat was certainly not what the 21-year-old Williams had expected.

"I didn't ever think we'd get engaged," said the soft-spoken, stocky Marine from Helena, Mont. "I just had the basic view of the American public - it can't be that bad out there."

In some sweeps, residents warmly greeted the Marines.

But in others, such as operations in Haditha and Obeidi near the Syrian border, the squad members met gunfire and explosions.

In the Obeidi operation in early May, another squad from Lima Company suffered six deaths. Williams himself perhaps saved lives, once spotting a gunman hidden in a mosque courtyard, said Toland, the platoon commander.

The night before the Aug. 3 operation, an uneasy Toland couldn't sleep. Instead he spent his last night with his squad members talking and joking, trying to suppress worries the mission was too predictable for an enemy that knew how to watch and learn.

"I had concerns that the operation was hastily planned and executed, with significant risks and little return," Toland said.

The road had been checked by engineers and other units, Marine commanders say. But insurgents had been clever - hiding the massive bomb under the road's asphalt.

Several Humvees first drove over the bomb, but the triggerman in the distance apparently waited for a vehicle with more troops. Then, as the clanking sound of their armored vehicles neared, a massive blast erupted, caused by explosives weighing hundreds of pounds. It threw a 26-ton Amphibious Assault Vehicle into the air, leaving it burning upside-down.

The blast was so large that Toland and his radioman, Williams - traveling two vehicles ahead and not injured - thought their vehicle had been hit by a bomb. They scrambled out to inspect the damage, but instead found the blazing carnage several yards down the road.

A total of 14 Marines and one Iraqi interpreter were killed.

There was no time for grieving - not at first. There was only sudden devastation, then intense anger as the Marines pulled the remains of their friends from the vehicle.

Then there was frustration, as they fanned out to find the triggerman.

Instead, they found only Iraqis either too sympathetic toward the insurgency, or too afraid, to talk.

Although the bomb had been planted in clear view of their homes, residents claimed they had seen nothing of the men who had spent hours digging a large hole several feet deep and concealing the bomb.

It was a familiar - and frustrating - problem.

"They are totally complacent with what's going on here," said Maj. Steve Lawson of Columbus, Ohio, who commands Lima Company.

"The average citizen in Haditha either wants a handout, or wants us to die or go away."

In a war where intelligence is the most valued asset, the Marines say few local people will divulge "actionable" information that could be used to locate insurgents.

Some Iraqis apparently fear reprisal attacks from militants. Many just want to stay out of the crossfire. Others hate the Americans enough to protect the insurgents: Marines say lookouts in cities would often launch flares as their vehicles approached.

In this region ruled by Sunni tribal loyalties, few voted for the new central Iraqi government, and many suspect the U.S. military is punishing them and empowering their longtime rivals, the Shiites of the south and the Kurds of the north.

"From a squad leader's perspective, the intelligence never helped me accomplish my mission," said Sgt. Don Owens, a squad leader in Lima Company from Cincinnati, who fought alongside the 1st Squad throughout their tour.

"Their intelligence is better than ours," Owens said.

The first night after the attack, Williams couldn't sleep. He stayed near his radio, listening to the heavy sobbing of fellow Marines that punctured the night around him.

He thought of his best friend, Lance Cpl. Aaron Reed, a 21-year-old with a goofy demeanor and a perpetual smile, now dead.

A world without his second family had begun. The young men Williams had planned to meet up with again, back in the States, had vanished in a matter of minutes. He was alone.

Yet from a military standpoint, it was important to press on to show the enemy that even their best hits couldn't stop the world's most powerful military. The Marines were ordered away from the blast site, to hunt insurgents, just one hour after the explosion.

They stayed out for another week, searching through dozens of homes in the nearby city of Parwana and struggling to piece together intelligence about who had planted the bomb.

"I pushed them back out the door to finish the mission," said Lawson. "They did it, but they were crying as they pushed on."

As word spread back in the United States that 14 men had been killed, the Marines on the ongoing mission couldn't even, at first, contact their families to let them know they had survived.

Marine commanders say the large-scale raids in western Anbar province have kept the insurgency off-balance, killing hundreds of militants and leaving a dwindling number of insurgent bases in the area.

They say the sweeps are critical to beat back the insurgent presence in larger cities such as Ramadi and Baghdad, where suicide bombings have been rampant.

But, among some Marines and even officers, there are doubts whether progress has been made.

The insurgents lurk nearby - capable of launching mortars and suicide car bombs and quietly re-entering cities soon after the Marines return to their bases on the outskirts.

"We've been here almost seven months and we don't control" the cities, said Gunnery Sgt. Ralph Perrine, an operations chief in the battalion from Brunswick, Ohio. "It's no secret."

Even commanders acknowledge that with the limited number of U.S. and Iraqi troops in the region, the mission is focused on "disrupting and interdicting" the insurgency - that is, keeping them on the run - and not controlling the cities.

"It's maintenance work," said Col. Stephen W. Davis, commander of all Marine operations in western Anbar. "Because this out here is where the fight is, while the success is happening downtown while the constitution is being written and while the referendum is getting worked out. ... *If I could bring every insurgent in the world out here and fight them all day long, we've done our job.*" [Blather blather blather bullshit bullshit bullshit. The Col. is spewing out his own version of "Bring 'Em On," as he stands on the heaps of dead Marines thumping his manly chest. And after reporting this inane crap with a straight face, the reporter has the gall to characterize what Marine Williams says next as "personal" and "visceral." Anybody with an IQ of 25 knows the cities are lost to the occupation and the "constitution" is a piece of empty propaganda written at the U.S. Embassy. So, is the Col. terminally brain-dead, or just lying in his teeth, hoping somebody in the Pentagon will love his ass-kissing and reward him accordingly?

[Marine Williams, who speaks next, isn't "visceral," as the reporter condescendingly says. Marine Williams is calmly reporting the facts of war that Col. Stephen W. Davis is either is too blind or too frightened to admit to the reporter: that the war is bullshit, the resistance is winning, and the Bush regime is helpless to do anything about it, which means time to come home.]

For Williams, the calculation is much more visceral and personal.

"Personally, I don't think the sweeps help too much," he said quietly on a recent day, sitting in a room at the dam, crowded with Marines resting from a late mission the night before.

"You find some stuff and most of the bad guys get away. ... For as much energy as we put in them, I don't think the output is worth it," he said.

Williams, a Marine for three years, has decided not to re-enlist. [Mourning the loss of his brothers brought on because of what Toland said, who can blame Williams? Remember Toland? "...the operation was hastily planned and executed, with significant risks and little return"]

Instead, in these last days in Iraq, he thinks of home and fishing in the clear streams of Montana. He hopes to open a fishing and hunting gear shop once he returns and complete his bachelor's degree in wildlife biology. He looks forward to seeing his mother, his only surviving parent, and traveling to her native Thailand this fall.

He said his "best memory" will be the day he leaves Iraq. His only good memories, he said, are of his friends:

Of Dyer, 19, an avid rap music fan who would bob his head to Tupac Shakur. He played the viola in his high school orchestra and had planned to enroll in a finance honors program at Ohio State University.

Of Reed, his best friend. He was president of his high school class from Chillicothe, Ohio, and left behind a brother serving in Afghanistan.

Of Cifuentes, 25, from Oxford, Ohio. He was enrolled in graduate school in mathematics education and had been working as a substitute teacher when he was deployed.

"I think the most frustrating thing is there's no sense of accomplishment," Williams said. "You're biding your time and waiting. But then you lose your friends, and it's not even for their own country's freedom."

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Task Force Liberty Soldier Killed By Mine

Oct. 1, 2005 MNF Release A051001c & Reuters

TIKRIT, Iraq -- A Task Force Liberty Soldier died of injuries sustained when a combat patrol struck a mine near the oil refining town of Bayji at about 12:00 p.m. Oct. 1.

Task Force Baghdad Soldier Killed By IED

Oct. 1, 2005 MNF Release A051001b

BAGHDAD, Iraq – A Task Force Baghdad Soldier was killed when a patrol struck an improvised explosive device at 8 a.m. Oct. 1 in central Baghdad

Best Friend, 'Brother,' Remembered



Oliver Brown, right, and Brandon Johnson, left, pose for a photo in 1996 after winning the Pennsylvania District 15 Little League Championship. ... Photo provided

10.1.05 By LISA R. HOWELER, Times Reporter, Sayre Evening Times

ATHENS -- Oliver Brown and Brandon Johnson were like brothers.

From kindergarten on, they were inseparable.

They started in T-ball and went on to play together in Little League. Their team won the 9-to-10-year-old Pennsylvania District 15 Championship in 1996. They graduated together in 2004 from Athens Area High School.

They bicycled together. They both loved to hunt. Johnson held a "Hunt for a Cure" for Cystic Fibrosis for his senior project. He and Brown planned it together and traveled to Michigan to learn about the program from musician Ted Nugent, who they were able to meet.

The two were almost always outdoors, at the beach in Ocean City, or in the woods hunting and when they weren't outdoors, they were watching movies and eating pizza -- tons of pizza.

A blanket and pillow with Johnson's name on it sat in a laundry basket ready for him to use during the many nights he stayed at Brown's house. They planned to be each other's best man when they got married.

The two even signed up for the Army together. Last year, they trained for a deployment to Iraq in the Mojave Desert.

On Thursday, Brown was killed in an attack near Ramadi, Iraq.

It was one of the few times Johnson wasn't by Brown's side. It wouldn't be long before Johnson was with his friend again, guarding the damaged Bradley Fighting Vehicle Brown was in.

Johnson wouldn't find out until later his best friend had been killed in the attack.

Lisa and Robert Johnson poured over photos of their son and Oliver Brown Friday, left with the memory of a friendship and of a young man who always made them smile.

"Oliver always had a come back. We were never surprised when he pulled a joke on us," said Robert Johnson.

Friends called Brown "O" and Johnson "Bam," said Lisa Johnson with a small laugh.

Brandon's father Robert Johnson remembers when the two signed up for the National Guard.

"Oliver joined and Brandon said, 'I want to go with you.' They joined together because they didn't want to be alone. They even asked the recruiter to make sure they were placed in the same unit. The recruiter said he would try his best and he did a good job. They were in the same barracks, same boot camp."

The news of Brown's death Thursday "hit like a ton of bricks," said Johnson.

"It was like losing a son. One of Oliver's parents told us they didn't see Oliver without seeing Brandon."

The Johnsons spent Thursday wondering what the fate of their own son was. Only a week before he had been injured when a land mine had exploded near him.

He was thrown in the air, shrapnel landed on his head and he ended up out of work for two days.

"We don't sleep anyhow with Brandon over there, but we didn't sleep all night Thursday," his father said.

Brandon called early Friday morning. He was alive, he said.

"Physically he is OK," said Lisa Johnson Friday. "Emotionally he is a wreck. 'I lost my best friend. I lost my brother,' he told me."

"Now I have to find a new best man," Brandon Johnson told his father, unable to fully place his feelings into words.

"He was hurting so bad and we wanted so much to be there with him," said Robert Johnson. "We can't, but we want to hear from him every hour to know he's OK."

Brown's mother Sue Orchard and father Bob Brown were notified of their son's death by two National Guard officials Thursday, said Lisa Johnson. Brown also has a stepmother, Debbie Brown, and stepfather Joe Orchard.

Johnson is receiving counseling from the unit chaplains. His superiors are working to get him home for Brown's funeral, but can't promise him he will be granted leave, his parents said. A knock on the front door sends a wave of fear rushing through Lisa Johnson.

"I'm so afraid I will open the door and there will be two men from the military telling me my son is dead."

In Little League, Brown was a catcher and Johnson was a pitcher. Last week, Brown called his mother and asked her to send him his mitt so he and Johnson could play catch together. He asked his mom not to tell Johnson she was sending it. He wanted the gift from home to be a surprise.

Sue Orchard sent the mitt Thursday before she heard the news.

Bomb Killed 2 Wisconsin Soldiers, Wounded A 3rd

Sep 27, 2005 WBAY

Two Wisconsin soldiers from the 127th National Guard infantry unit were killed in Iraq, Action 2 News has learned. The three were traveling together when their vehicle hit a roadside bomb.

In addition to Andy Wallace of Oshkosh, the bomb killed Michael Wendling, 20, of Mayville. Jeremy Roskopf, also from Mayville, was wounded.

Wendling and Roskopf graduated together from Mayville High School in 2003.

Danish Soldier Killed, Three Wounded By A-Harta IED

10.1.05 AFP & Reuters

A Danish soldier was killed and three seriously wounded when a roadside bomb blew up near their patrol in Al-Harta in southern Iraq, the Danish defence ministry said, marking the second fatality for the Danish military.

Three U.S. Soldiers Wounded In Tikrit

10.1.05 AFP

Three U.S. soldiers were slightly hurt in a bomb explosion in Tikrit, central Iraq.

Who, Us? No Thanks; You And Him Fight

10.1.05 AFP

In western Iraq, US forces launched Operation Iron Fist "to root out Al-Qaeda in Iraq terrorists" in and around Sadah, near Al-Qaim in Al-Anbar province, the US military said.

The sweep also aimed to prevent "foreign fighters" from crossing over from Syria.

A defence ministry official said Iraqi forces were aware of the operation but not involved.

<p>OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME <u>NOW!</u></p>

NOTES FROM A LOST WAR:

**“This Is Not Your Usual Call To
Prayer,” Said Link.**

**“This Guy Was Angry,” Said
Larson. “Probably At Us”**



Chronicle / Kim Komenich

Smoke from a mortar round rises as a Marine struggles to attach a tow chain to his humvee. **Chronicle photo by Kim Komenich**

October 1, 2005, By Anna Badkhen, San Francisco Chronicle Staff Writer

Outside Sada, Iraq:

The mortar rounds hit in the early morning. The first one, a harbinger of the assault to come, whooshed up from the sleepy border town of Sada at around 5:30 a.m. Friday, landing in a burst of sparks several hundred yards short of the sandstone cliffs where U.S. Marines were camped out.

The shell's trajectory left a momentary orange trace in the predawn sky, but the impact was almost inaudible, and most of the Marines slept right through it, wrapped in their sleeping bags in the foxholes they had dug in the hard-packed desert dust.

The second round landed closer, and the Marines felt the impact with the soles of their feet as it shook the ground.

The third hit closer yet, followed by several rockets and more mortar shells. The aim had become steadily more accurate, forcing the Marines to get into their armored humvees, withdraw from the cliffs overlooking Sada and move to a swath of parched wasteland farther from the town, about 7 miles east of the Syrian border.

"They were mortaring us good," said Sgt. Stephen Lybarger, a member of the 1st Mobile Assault Platoon, Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment. "They were making good adjustments. I felt like a coward, leaving that hill."

As the 3rd Battalion prepared for an assault on insurgents holed up in five Iraqi towns on the border with Syria, the mortar and rocket attack suggested that the Marines are up against a well-armed and determined enemy.

"They were as good as our guys were," Lybarger said. "I wanted to kill them before they teach all the other guys how to do that." [Having spent years fighting a war with Iran, there are only about 20,000 other guys who already know how to do that.]

Lt. Col. Julian Alford, commander of the 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines, stationed outside the western Iraqi town of Qaim, said fighters linked to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi control Sada and four other towns in this western corner of Anbar province, including Qaim. **[This Zarqawi bit is getting lame. Time go to back to "Saddam Hussein remnants"? How about Tasmanian devil dogs? Flesh eating cannibal fiends? The Pentagon needs some new script writers and fresh material.]**

As Marines drove away from the cliffs, another mortar landed about 40 yards to the left of the armored humvee carrying Gunnery Sgt. Derrick Link and the vehicle's gunner, Cpl. Jeremy Anderson. The crack from the explosion rang in their ears.

"That one was close, gunny," Anderson called down from his turret as Pfc. Dale Fellows swerved the wheel hard.

"Yep," Link replied. Another mortar landed about 100 yards behind their truck.

"Another impact," Anderson remarked.

"Is that outgoing?" asked Link, distractedly, as he tried to speak to the battalion commanders on the humvee's radio.

"That's incoming, gunny," Anderson said.

"It's always from the left or the right of the blue mosque, that f -- ing area down there," he said.

After the humvees pulled out, U.S. helicopter gunships patrolled the skies over Sada. Within an hour, the pilots had located a house from which U.S. forces believed insurgents had lobbed the mortars and a car they said was packed with mortar rounds. The helicopters fired at the car and it exploded, the boom echoing over the town and into the wasteland where Link's humvee now stood.

An F/A-18 Hornet strike fighter, flying so high that it was invisible from the ground, dropped a 500-pound bomb known as Joint Direct Attack Munition, or JDAM, on the house, sending a plume of black smoke in the air. Several seconds later, there was a large cracking sound and the rumble of an explosion.

It was not *immediately* clear how much damage the bomb had caused or whether it had killed or injured any fighters or Iraqi civilians. [OK. How about later? Clear later? Or maybe best not to go there to find out?]

For the next several hours, the Marines sat in the baking desert sun, smoking and napping after a sleepless night in the desert. Fellows leaned his head against the armored window of his humvee, his mouth slightly open. Navy medic Michael Larson slept in the back seat, his head slightly bowed. Anderson also dozed off, standing up in his turret.

Link stood by his humvee smoking a cigar.

Sgt. Scott Wood stopped by on his way back from a patrol.

"How'd it go?" Link asked, sounding uninterested.

Wood shrugged: "F -- ing desert."

Shortly after midday, the muezzin in Sada began his elaborate, melodious call to Friday afternoon prayer, the most important prayer of the week.

After the call ended, a mullah took over, spewing words into the loudspeaker.

The Marines, who did not understand Arabic -- there was no translator on hand -- took notice of the mullah's enraged tone.

"This is not your usual call to prayer," said Link.

"This guy was angry," said Larson. "Probably at us."

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

U.S. Soldier Killed, Another Wounded Near Kandahar

October 1, 2005 The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan -- A U.S. soldier and an Afghan soldier have been killed in an attack in southern Afghanistan, the U.S. military said Saturday.

The small-arms and rocket-propelled grenade attack on Friday also wounded another U.S. soldier and two Afghan National Army troops during combat operations north of the city of Kandahar, the military said.

The three wounded soldiers were taken to a nearby forward operating base for treatment.

The American's death brought to 198 the number of U.S. service members killed in and around Afghanistan since the 2001.

TROOP NEWS

Americans Don't Support The War Anymore

63% said the troops should be partially or completely withdrawn, *up 10 percentage points from August.*

October 1, 2005 By Mark Mazzetti, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

Among Americans, support for the war continues to dwindle, as growing numbers conclude that U.S. troops should be partially or completely withdrawn.

Only 32% of those surveyed for a CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll released last week approved of Bush's handling of Iraq, compared with 40% in August and 50% earlier this year.

And 63% said the troops should be partially or completely withdrawn, *up 10 percentage points from August.*

The survey also showed that 59% considered it a mistake to have sent U.S. forces to Iraq, up from fewer than half during the summer.

Just 21% of those surveyed believed U.S. forces would win the war, while 34% said they considered the conflict unwinnable.

The Generals Dither, Slither And Spin: “Yes, We Should Leave Iraq, We’re Just Making It Worse,

But No, We Shouldn't Leave Iraq;" Pentagon Admits The Resistance Now Has "A Battle Tested Army"

[Thanks to CS, who sent this in.]

"There's a line between what constitutes casual dependence and what constitutes not being ready to fight," he said. "For the most part, (Iraqi troops) are not ready to do the job.

"And stepping back is just going to leave them vulnerable to a battle-tested army of insurgents."

October 1, 2005 By Mark Mazzetti, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — The U.S. generals running the war in Iraq presented a new assessment of the military situation in public comments and sworn testimony this week:

The 149,000 U.S. troops currently in Iraq are increasingly part of the problem.

During a trip to Washington, the generals said the presence of U.S. forces was fueling the insurgency, fostering an undesirable dependency on American troops among the nascent Iraqi armed forces and energizing terrorists across the Middle East.

For all these reasons, they said, a **gradual withdrawal** of U.S. troops was imperative. American officials backtracked on their expectations of what the U.S. military can achieve in Iraq months ago.

But this week's comments showed that commanders believe a large U.S. force in Iraq might in fact be creating problems as well as solutions.

"This has been hinted at before, but it's a big shift for them to be saying that publicly," said Michael O'Hanlon of the Brookings Institution in Washington. "It means they recognize that there is a cost to staying just as there is a benefit to staying. And this has not really been factored in as a central part of the strategy before."

During his congressional testimony, Army Gen. George W. Casey, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, said that troop reductions were necessary to "take away one

of the elements that fuels the insurgency, that of the coalition forces as an occupying force."

The same approach may prove helpful across the Middle East, commanders said. The Central Command's Gen. John P. Abizaid, who supervises all U.S. troops in the region, said the broader fight against Islamic extremism required the United States to "reduce our military footprint" across the region and push governments in the Middle East to fight the extremists themselves.

Although Abizaid advocates a troop reduction, he does not favor total withdrawal. He envisions such an exit preceded by the establishment of stable governments in Iraq and Afghanistan and accompanied by an assured flow of oil and enhanced regional security networks.

[What he's saying is that the troops stay until the resistance to the troops stops and the collaborator governments are "stable." Never happen. As long as the occupation troops are there, the resistance goes on. As for the collaborators having a stable government, that's just laughable. They're loathed by every Iraqi who wants independence from the U.S. Empire. Can Abizaid really be this stupid? Or are all these "plans" being announced merely more spin to try to damp down the growing anti-war sentiment at home and the growing demands from Washington politicians for "an exit strategy"? Three guesses.]

Even among themselves, military officials have differed in their assessments of the number of Iraqi troops ready to take on the mission.

During a briefing Friday, Casey was asked whether there were enough Iraqi troops in Tall Afar to permanently keep insurgents out of the western town, where U.S. and government forces recently launched a major offensive.

"We do have enough force," Casey said.

Yet the U.S. commander of the Tall Afar operation, Army Col. H.R. McMaster, said Sept. 13 that it would be some time before the town had enough trained Iraqi troops to keep insurgents from filtering back.

"Is there enough force here right now to secure this area permanently? No. Are there opportunities for the enemy in other areas within our region? Yes," McMaster said.

Military officials and others familiar with Casey's strategy in Iraq say the U.S. plans a phased withdrawal, first pulling its troops out of the 14 provinces that commanders believe are most secure.

Initially, they would maintain a presence in the predominantly Sunni provinces of central Iraq, where most of the violence is occurring and the U.S. military suffers most of its casualties. [How cheery for the troops. They get to stay and die.]

"Withdrawing from the secure areas would be a good signal to the rest of Iraqis that this is coming for them eventually," said a Central Command advisor who has traveled

frequently to Iraq and requested anonymity because he was speaking about a classified strategy.

The advisor said that U.S. commanders were concerned that Iraqi troops could become too dependent on the American presence, **but that there were no plans for a hasty pullout from the violent provinces before the Iraqis were up to the task.**

"There's a line between what constitutes casual dependence and what constitutes not being ready to fight," he said. "For the most part,(Iraqi troops) are not ready to do the job.

"And stepping back is just going to leave them vulnerable to a battle-tested army of insurgents."

MORE:

Idiot General Casey Calls 500 Attacks A Week On U.S. Troops “A Lagging Indicator Of Success” Admits He Is Clueless About Resistance Reach And Power

[Thanks to Don Bacon, The Smedly Butler Society, who sent this gem in. . Not dated. Presumably from the same visit to DC discussed above.]

"Asked whether the insurgency has worsened, Casey said it has not expanded geographically or numerically, *'to the extent we can know that.'*

But he noted that current "levels of violence are above norms,' exceeding 500 attacks a week.

'I'll tell you that levels of violence are a lagging indicator of success,' he added.

[He's just admitted he's clueless about whether the resistance has taken more territory, or has increased the size of their forces. You want any better markers for a lost war and a blind command hated by a whole nation? They can't find out shit. Nobody will tell them shit. They don't know shit. What an amazing admission. Almost as good as how the insurgents have "a battle tested army."]

“There Are People Dying Here”



A U.S. Army bugler plays Taps during funeral services for Sgt. Jeremy M. Campbell, of Middlebury, Pa., Sept. 27, 2005 at Arlington National Cemetery. Campbell died on Sept. 11, 2005, in Baghdad, Iraq, where an improvised explosive device detonated near his Humvee during patrol operations. (AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais)

"They say 75 percent of the people die in their sleep, and here, the people all die when they are awake," said Captain Moore, 47, of Virginia. "They are young and awake, and I'm sure they'd want to die like John Wayne, with a bayonet in their hand, marching across a field, but it doesn't end up that way."

"Sometimes the dead soldiers are in body bags only this big," he said, holding his hands about a foot apart. "It's discouraging."

October 1, 2005 By JULIET MACUR, The New York Times Company

CAMP SPEICHER, Iraq - Specialist Ryan Firth leaned out the doorway of the idling Black Hawk helicopter, the thump, thump, thump of the blades above him drowning out all sound, and he grabbed the handles of the green stretcher being passed his way.

Atop that stretcher was a black vinyl body bag. Inside it were the remains of an American contractor killed just hours before in a suicide bombing in downtown Baquba, 35 miles northeast of Baghdad.

"That's when it hit me," Specialist Firth, 29, said the next day. "To feel the weight of one of your comrades, to lift the dead body of a fellow American, you can never prepare yourself for that."

For a moment, he fell silent. "It wakes you up to reality, you know?" he said as tears welled in his eyes. "There are people dying here."

This was the first time Specialist Firth, a helicopter technician for the Missouri National Guard, was conducting what the military calls a hero mission, which is the process of retrieving the body of an American soldier, or sometimes a dead contractor, from the battlefield. American soldiers in Iraq handle the bodies with ritual and respect, from

almost the instant of death to the moment those bodies are loaded onto a cargo plane headed back home. They catalog the names and formally transport the personal belongings, determined to preserve as much dignity as possible for those killed.

Inside the chopper parked in front of Specialist Firth's at Camp Warhorse that day in August was the body of an American soldier who had died in the same attack as the contractor. More than 40 soldiers assembled to pay their last respects before the bodies were flown to a base in Balad, from which they would be shipped back to their families.

The First Battalion (General Support), 150th Aviation, made up mostly of soldiers from the Delaware and New Jersey National Guards, is based here at Camp Speicher, near Tikrit, and has been flying these missions since it arrived in Iraq in December, including a flurry in August - one of the war's bloodiest months for American soldiers - when 85 died.

(The American military reported 13 deaths of American troops in the week that ended Friday, with most killed in explosions when the vehicles they were riding in hit roadside bombs. That brought the number of American soldiers killed in Iraq and identified publicly to 1,928.)

The pilots and crew chiefs from the battalion, called the 1-150th, usually fly their Black Hawks about 900 hours a month in central Iraq, said Capt. Jonathan Lapidow, one of the unit's battle captains. They mainly shuttle soldiers from base to base, or escort generals or visiting entertainers like Jessica Simpson or Toby Keith. Sometimes, they fly combat air assaults to help units on the ground go after insurgents.

Whatever the mission, those pilots fly fast and low over palm groves, salt flats or fields dotted with goats, shepherds and mud huts, occasionally tossing Beanie Babies encased in protective Ziploc bags or red-white-and-blue soccer balls to Iraqi children below.

While they zip around, their radios may capture the sounds of firefights in which American soldiers are wounded or killed. Then, sometimes, the crews from the 1-150th end up recovering the bodies of those soldiers who died on the ground below them that day.

Those bodies are usually transported to the nearest base, and two Black Hawks from the 1-150th escort them from there.

"For some guys, the hero missions are too hard on them emotionally, so they say they don't want to do them anymore," said Captain Lapidow, 34, of Hillsborough, N.J. "But some guys, they just never turn one down."

Chief Warrant Officer Bruce Johnston, 52, a wiry man who wears thick, square glasses, flew 12 hero missions from June through August, and he tears up thinking about each one.

Most of the dead were killed in roadside bomb blasts, which are becoming even more dangerous because insurgents are lacing them with fuel to cause burns, Mr. Johnston said. But some of the soldiers transported by the 1-150th's pilots had died because of land-mine explosions and car bombs. One had committed suicide.

On one mission, Mr. Johnston's chopper and a second Black Hawk carried six dead American soldiers, which would have been an impossible fit if their bodies had not been so broken from the bomb blasts.

Black Hawk pilots on hero missions are given first priority to land at bases. Once on the ground, soldiers from the dead soldier's unit or base often escort each body from a Humvee or an ambulance to the helicopter, at times in the blackness of night, occasionally so soon after the incident that the soldiers who are escorting them are still bloody from the attack that killed their friend.

There, an entourage of soldiers often forms two lines at the helicopter door, and the body passes between them as they give a slow salute. "The hardest part is when the helicopter takes off," said Capt. J. D. Moore, the 1-150th's chaplain, who goes on every hero mission with his unit. "The dust is swirling around those soldiers, and they're just standing at attention."

Mr. Johnston, who is from Carneys Point, N.J., keeps a record of each soldier he transported: name, unit, hometown and cause of death. He said he wanted those details so he could someday visit the soldier's family and tell them he had cared for their loved one, in some small way, when they could not be there. He often volunteers to transport the soldier's or contractor's belongings a few days later, a task called a hero effects mission.

One day in August, Mr. Johnston offered to pick up the personal effects of four soldiers killed in a roadside bombing, but he was told to wait for a general, whom he was transporting that day, to finish a meeting.

Mr. Johnston became more and more upset, insisting that picking up the soldiers' belongings should be the priority. "I'm going to call the general about this, if I have to," he told his battle captain.

Finally given the go-ahead by the general's assistant, he flew as quickly as possible to Camp Speicher to pick up 16 black plastic footlockers, eight Army green duffel bags, two folding chairs and a guitar, all of which belonged to soldiers from the First Brigade Combat Team, Third Infantry Division of Fort Stewart, Ga.

Last names were stenciled on the ends of the duffel bags: BOUCHARD, DOYLE, FUHRMANN, SEAMANS. But the guitar case, black and battered and taped shut with green duct tape, bothered Mr. Johnston the most. On it was an America West Airlines luggage tag with Nathan Bouchard's name and his parents' address in Arizona written on it.

"That's so personal," Mr. Johnston said over the radio from the cockpit. "That poor kid was probably playing that thing just last week."

Eventually, he said, the emotional toll of going on hero missions leads many pilots and crewmen to the chaplain, Captain Moore.

Perhaps it was hosing down the helicopter's floors after a body bag had ripped open midflight or simply coming into contact with death so tangibly. Nearly every day, Captain

Moore said, soldiers come to him for counseling because the missions have affected them so deeply. They have affected him as well.

"They say 75 percent of the people die in their sleep, and here, the people all die when they are awake," said Captain Moore, 47, of Virginia. "They are young and awake, and I'm sure they'd want to die like John Wayne, with a bayonet in their hand, marching across a field, but it doesn't end up that way."

"Sometimes the dead soldiers are in body bags only this big," he said, holding his hands about a foot apart. "It's discouraging."

In August, Captain Moore was sitting at Camp Speicher's mess hall when a soldier approached, complaining that another soldier had interrupted his lunch.

Captain Moore glared, then pointed to a dark stain on one of his own tan boots.

"Do you know what that is?" he told the soldier. "That's another's soldier's blood."

"I just came back from a hero mission. So look, man, if you want to whine and cry, get the heck out of here and take it outside."

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action

10.1.05 AFP & Aljazeera & Reuters

An Iraqi army officer was shot dead in his car in the Shiite district of Sadr City.

Three Iraqi policemen were killed and four wounded when a bomb targeted their patrol in the northern city of Kirkuk, police said.

"One vehicle was completely burnt with three policemen inside," said police Captain Mohammed Adil.

The second patrol car was badly damaged and its four occupants wounded, he added.

In Baquba, north of the capital, a soldier and bus driver were killed and three soldiers wounded when armed fighters opened fire on their vehicle, a military source said.

A seven-year-old child was accidentally killed after police opened fire on the car he was travelling in suspecting it of being a car bomb, said the same source. Another passenger was wounded.

Two Iraqis, including a soldier, were killed in a bomb attack in Dujail, south of Baquba, against an army patrol, said a local military source.

The brother of Iraq's interior minister was captured by insurgents in Baghdad

Abdul Jabar Sulagh, brother of Interior Minister Bayan Baqer Sulagh, was captured in the Al-Habibiyah district at around 4:30 pm by armed men who blocked his car and forced him into theirs, a ministry official said.

He was identified from documents the police found in the car afterwards.

The minister, who had just ended a meeting in Amman with his Jordanian counterpart, Awni Yervas, was visibly perplexed when asked by an AFP reporter about the capture.

"We do not know what has happened," he said. "No one had told us the news."

The Islamic Army in Iraq, an insurgent group known for capturing and killing foreigners, offered rewards on September 11 for Sulagh's assassination, along with that of the prime minister and defence minister.

It said the bounties were to avenge the US-Iraqi assault to oust rebels from the northern Iraq town of Tal Afar.

MIQDADIYA - Two Iraqi soldiers were killed and three wounded when resistance fighters attacked them while they were heading to work in Miqdadiya, northeast of Baghdad, police said.

<p style="text-align: center;">IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATION</p>

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

American History Is Repeating Itself In Broad Day-Light

From: Mike Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: October 01, 2005
Subject: American History is Repeating Itself in Broad Day-light

To G.I. Special:

I just returned from the Roman Empire in Washington, D.C.

I was gone for nine days from Portland, Oregon.

What I am about to say is certainly my opinion, and please take into consideration that I am very tired and dealing with jet lag. But, I have to say this to release some stored up energy:

Our government is so mentally ill, it reminds me of an American soldier on heroin in the last days of the Vietnam War, with a loaded M-16 rifle in his hands.

As a medic in Vietnam, I saw the end results of a 19 year old boy blow his brains out with his M-16, because he was a full blown heroin addict.

This is what the hopeless war in Iraq is about to turn into.

Before I left Washington, D.C., I went to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to touch that name on the Wall. It screwed me up big time. This is one Vietnam Veteran who does not suffer from amnesia. Before I left the Wall, I touched two more names. And, I remembered two Vets that died as a result of being in Vietnam.

The White House is the house of execution for American soldiers in Iraq, and countless Iraqi civilians.

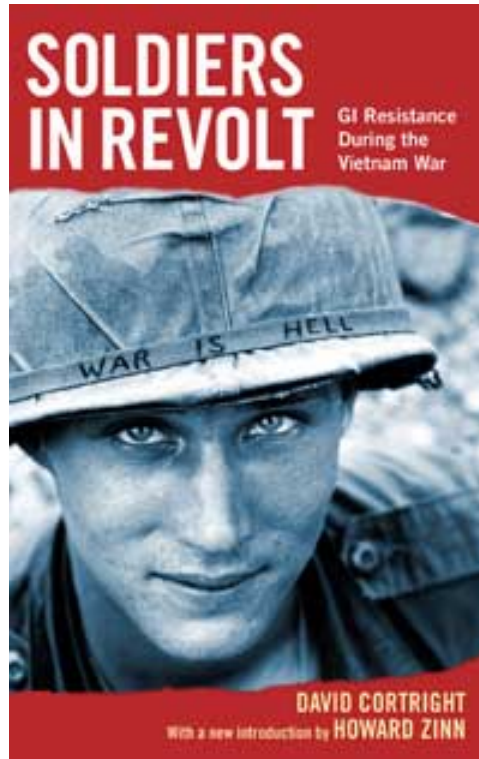
One of the last things I saw before I left Vietnam, was American soldiers throwing their jungle fatigues into a burning oil barrel.

This is one American soldier who does not have amnesia.

Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
1st Squadron 10th Cavalry
4th Infantry Division
Vietnam 1970-71

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.

From Danang To Talafar: Bring 'Em Home: A Review Of David Cortright's Soldiers In Revolt (Haymarket 2005)



[Haymarket Books, ISBN 1-931859-27-2 paper, 364 pp, Sept 2005]

A review by Ron Jacobs, October 01, 2005

To: GI Special

Of all the antiwar buttons I could wear, the only one I choose to pin on my coat or backpack is one that reads: I Support the Iraq Veterans Against the War.

Not only does this statement make clear my opposition to the war, it also serves to stifle most supporters of Washington's latest imperial exercise who like to pretend that those who oppose the war want to see the occupation troops dead.

Actually, we just want them out of the combat zones—at least for starters.

It's not that war veterans have more legitimate reasons to oppose a war than civilians, although their understanding of war is obviously much more personal.

However, because they are veterans, they tend to get a hearing from individuals and groups that might otherwise dismiss antiwar sentiment out of hand.

Two such audiences that come immediately to mind are other veterans and those men and women currently in the military.

One other is the young people around the country currently preyed on by those traders in human flesh we call recruiters.

If one remembers the various campaigns of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) during the war in Vietnam and the effect those campaigns had on the conscience of America, the importance of vets in the antiwar campaign becomes quite obvious.

As for the importance of active duty soldiers, it can't be overstated. After all, if the soldiers refuse to fight, there can be no war.

The recent republication of David Cortright's 1975 classic, *Soldiers in Revolt*, makes this fact abundantly clear.

A history of US military resistance, a compilation of statistics from various studies done by and for the Department of Defense and its subsidiaries, and a stirring rendition of anecdotes detailing multiple actions by GIs and marines around the world during the US war on Vietnam, *Soldiers in Revolt* is required reading for antiwarriors no matter where they live or where they organize.

Current campaigns like those of Cindy Sheehan and Military Families Speak Out are reaching out to those who have seen their sons and daughters go to war, and veterans' groups like the aforementioned Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), VVAW and Vets for Peace are beginning to mobilize numbers of Iraq war vets, but the movement against the war among those serving is still in its infant stages.

As Cortright's book makes clear, this segment of the movement needs to grow exponentially if it is to make a difference. Furthermore, once it does grow, it is likely to make a difference—along with the counter recruitment organizing—a greater difference than all of the rest of the movement.

***Soldiers in Revolt* reads like a combination organizing manual, history text, and underground newspaper. Cortright lists the details of mutinies, revolts, congressional actions, and armed attacks on commanding officers.**

The telling is never dry, despite its occasional dry content, and the history is about more than just the Vietnam period—although it is primarily concerned with that time. This latter fact limits its relevance to today's time a little—after all, today's youth culture is different from the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s—but the overriding and oppressive reality of military culture transcends this minor aspect.

As a teenager who opposed the war in Vietnam while living on military bases in Germany, this book was like a blast from the past. I remember when it first came out in 1975. A Vietnam vet friend of mine named Steve who was attending the University of Maryland and worked out of the VVAW office near Ft. Meade lent me his copy and I read it in a weekend.

The chapters titled “Armed Farces” and “Over There” listed at least two incidents in Germany that I had helped organize support for the GIs charged in their wake. Cortright's descriptions of GIs daily acts of resistance—things like not saluting, wearing peace buttons, refusing haircuts—all of this was part of the life I knew from hanging out with GIs in Europe; and all of it added to the breakdown in

military discipline that was so important to the eventual failure of US imperial designs in Southeast Asia. Not all of it was necessarily political, but it all added up.

If we are serious about getting the troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan, two things must happen: the military must fail in its recruitment efforts and the men and women currently serving must challenge the mission they have been assigned.

If this doesn't occur, then the antiwar movement is likely to be just a never ending series of marches and other actions that become just another sideshow.

It's not that the civilian antiwar movement is irrelevant or unnecessary. Indeed, it is essential. All soldiers were civilians at one time, and most of them will be civilians again. It is the antiwar movement's job to insure that they all do.

No, it's not that the civilian part of the antiwar movement is irrelevant, nor is it that the GI movement is able to stop the war on its own. As Cortright's book makes clear, one is the complement of the other.

Currently, military recruitment is falling short of its needs. This has caused the military to continually lower its qualifications. Even that has failed to bring the numbers of recruits up to where the military feels secure in its objectives. Part of the cause for this happening is the growing success of the counter-recruitment efforts of groups like the Campus Antiwar Network (<http://www.campusantiwar.net/>) and the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (<http://www.objector.org/>).

As far as dissension in the ranks of those already enlisted, it seems to be growing, although it remains unorganized. Efforts like GI Special (<http://www.militaryproject.org/>) and Traveling Soldier (<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/>) provide soldier and civilian alike with an idea of individual GI's frustration and anger at their current lot, but the apparent lack of local or national organizations that could channel this frustration into protest and resistance have yet to appear.

If history has anything to tell us, such organizations will appear. Soldiers in Revolt makes this quite clear.

Check it out.

Now.

Buy a copy and send it to a GI or Marine that you know.

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.

OCCUPATION REPORT

The Occupation Follies Roll On: Collaborator Politicians At Each Others's Throats: President Says Prime Minister "Is Violating The Laws"

October 1, 2005 Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq - Sharp divisions emerged Saturday between Iraq's ruling [translation: collaborator] Kurdish and Shiite Muslim factions after Iraq's Kurdish president accused the Shiite prime minister of breaking coalition promises and overly dominating the government.

Kurdish officials warned they would consider pulling out of the government if their demands aren't met. That would cause the collapse of the government and add a new layer of political instability and fragmentation between Iraq's main communities.

Kurdish leaders have complained to Shiite Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari that the coalition's Shiite parties, known as the United Alliance, have not upheld promises to start work on resettling Kurds in the northern city of Kirkuk or to fairly distribute government positions between the coalition parties.

Earlier this month, the heads of the Kurdish Alliance - President Jalal Talabani and Massoud Barzani, president of the northern Kurdish region - sent a letter to al-Jaafari outlining the Kurds' complaints but received no reply. Talabani on Saturday lashed out at the prime minister.

"One of the problems with the Prime Minister is that he is violating the laws," Talabani told reporters. He said al-Jaafari's office was acting unilaterally without working with its Kurdish allies.

"The ministry is not the government - the ministry is the ministry," he said, referring to al-Jaafari's office. "It is not right that the Ministry puts itself before the government.

Talabani's comments brought angry reaction from Shiite legislators during a parliament session Saturday. Lawmaker Mahmoud al-Radhi criticized Talabani for going public with the differences just before the Oct. 15 referendum.

In the letter sent to al-Jaafari this month, Talabani and Barzani made a veiled threat to pull out of the government. We hope that we will not have to take further steps, particularly what is allowed in Article 6 of the coalition agreement," they wrote, referring to an article allowing either party to withdraw, according to a copy of the letter received by The Associated Press.

The collapse of the government would cause more political turmoil at a time of already great uncertainty. If the constitution passes, national elections are to be held in December to create a new parliament to choose a government. If the constitution fails, the elections will pick a new transitional parliament tasked with drafting a new document.

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