

GI SPECIAL 3C77:



Iraq Veterans Against The War [Veterans For Peace 9.24 Photo]

“For The First Time I Believe We Have Lost”

Bombing Iraq’s Bridges: An Admission Of Military Defeat

For the first time as a military professional I think we have no way of winning this. We are willing to destroy the basic structures of the country to deny the enemy their use.

Oct 6th, 2005 ksuwildkat, Daily Kos

"Baghdad - US-led forces have bombed eight bridges on the Euphrates River in western Iraq to stop insurgents using them, US military spokesperson Major General Rick Lynch said Thursday.

"We have been taking out portions of bridges with precision strikes," he told a news conference.

Of 12 bridges between the Syrian border and Ramadi, 110km west Baghdad, "four remain under control of the coalition forces and Iraqi forces after precision strikes on the others," he said.

Why is this a big deal?

Because we are actually destroying infrastructure in a country we occupy. We are saying that the military value of the bridges to the insurgency is greater than the value to us in either a military or economic/social way.

This can be compared to the use of chemicals to destroy the jungle in Vietnam. Not because it caused cancer but because it was the long term destruction of some portion of the country.

As a soldier I have been involved in this war in one way or another since 1990. I was in Baghdad early on when we actually thought we could rebuild the country. It was a tough decision then to cut down the trees on the airport road then but when you are getting shot at, you have to do something.

Now we are blowing up bridges.

For the first time I believe we have lost.

For the first time as a military professional I think we have no way of winning this. We are willing to destroy the basic structures of the country to deny the enemy their use.

This means we have no other way to deny them the use of these assets. We can't stop them, the Iraqi Army can't stop them, the Iraqi police can't stop them and we can't collect enough intelligence to make the enemy pay for using what should be choke points.

There is no way to sugar coat this.

This is a MAJOR development.

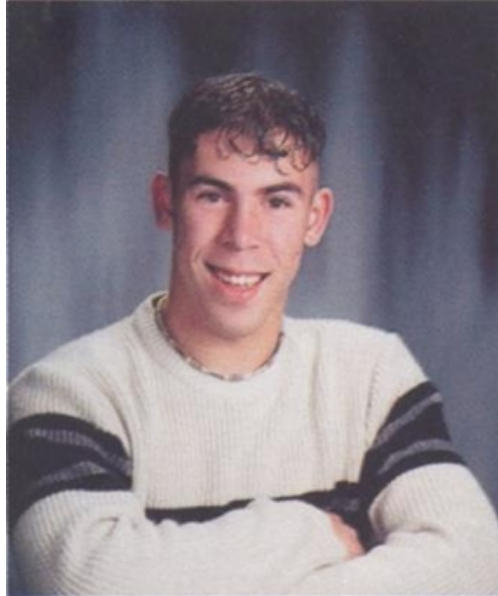
That we have made it public is also a big deal because every other military professional in the world knows we are done.

This war may go on for a long time but the conclusion is decided as far as I can see.

I never imagined I would see this day.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Alliance, Ohio Marine Killed



In this photo provided by WKBN, Lance Cpl. Daniel McVicker, 20, of Alliance, Ohio, is shown. McVicker's was killed Oct. 6, 2005, in western Iraq while driving an armored vehicle that was hit by a roadside bomb, his father said Friday, Oct. 7, 2005. (AP Photo/WKBN TV)

IED KILLS ONE, WOUNDS ONE



A smoke grenade sends out a yellow cloud to guide a medivac helicopter following a roadside bomb explosion in Baghdad October 6, 2005. One U.S. soldier was killed and another wounded when a roadside bomb struck their vehicle near a highway in the Shua'la district in western Baghdad, eyewitnesses said. REUTERS/Ali Jasim

ABANDONED IN HELL: NO HONORABLE MISSION: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



US soldiers of Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment land in the desert in Baghdaddi, west of Baghdad Sept. 21 2005. (AP Photo/Lance Cpl. Michael R. McMaugh, US Army, HO)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Futility Squared

Nasir's comments underline the central challenge for the coalition forces in this part of Afghanistan: they do not have the troop strength to cover more than a fraction of the territory for which they are responsible, and wherever they are absent, the Taliban can operate with impunity.

Stammer's 950-soldier Task Force Rock, built around 2-503 Airborne Infantry Regiment, has to cover all 6,700 square miles of Zabul.

October 07, 2005 By Sean D. Naylor, Army Times staff writer

SOLAYMANI, Zabul Province, Afghanistan – Two Chinooks descend from the cobalt sky and land in a frenzy of whirring rotors and flying grit. The ramps come down, and 48 figures emerge through the swirling clouds of brown dust.

At their head is 2nd Lt. Jed Richard, a thoughtful and engaging 26-year-old West Pointer from Cheshire, Conn. Since March, his platoon has been conducting what he refers to as “Special Forces work” in Khakeran, the northernmost district of dry, mountainous Zabul province.

Last year, the Taliban overran the government compound there, burning it to the ground and killing several policemen. But since Richard’s troops arrived and made their headquarters in the same compound, 75 kilometers from his battalion headquarters in the provincial capital of Qalat, no U.S. or Afghan soldiers have been killed there.

He and his men of 2nd Platoon, B Company, 2nd Battalion (Airborne), 503rd Infantry Regiment, have been busy training the Afghan National Army unit there, building a school, hiring teachers, holding medical clinics and establishing rapport with local leaders. Preventative-medicine programs with local clinics and pharmacies have cut the typhoid rate from 200 cases in 2004 to 30 this year.

The work has borne fruit. Business is booming in Khakeran, Richard said. Before the Americans’ arrival, “they basically were people hiding from the Taliban.” he said.

But Richard’s 34-man platoon doesn’t spend all its time on civil-affairs projects. For the past three days, his men have been humping their rucksacks across 30 kilometers of the country’s most rugged terrain, hunting for Taliban fighters.

Richard’s battalion commander, Lt. Col. Mark Stammer, is repositioning his platoon via Chinook to the northeast. Richard’s new mission is to scour a cluster of tiny villages near Solaymani for any sign of Mullah Alim, a mid-level Taliban leader.

But the patrol is also part of a larger strategy headed by Brigade Commander Col. Kevin Owens **to force the Taliban to engage U.S. troops or lose credibility as an insurgent force. [This is about as silly a notion of how resistance to foreign occupation works as has been expressed since the war started. With that level of ignorance of counter-insurgency basics, the resistance has nothing whatever to worry about. They know that all they have to do to win is survive. And this idiot thinks if they commit suicide by fighting on terms set by the occupation military, they gain credibility? But then, U.S. officers like this have racist Hollywood notions of what will impress the locals. See more below. Afghans have been fighting Imperial invaders for about 4,000 years. They make Owens look like the amateur he is.]**

“My intent is not to react to the enemy, but to force him to react to us,” Stammer says. **[Yeah, that’s what the British said in 1776.]**

Jumping off the Chinooks Oct. 3 alongside the 23 U.S. paratroopers are 20 Afghan soldiers, dressed in woodland green BDUs similar to those worn by the U.S. Army until very recently, and three young Afghan interpreters. All are armed with AK-47 variants.

With the Afghans in the lead, the patrol advances through the dappled shade of an almond orchard towards the first village in its path, which consists only of a few dirt-colored, one-story compounds with thick walls of mud and straw. It appears almost deserted, but the uninvited visitors soon attract attention.

An old man with brown, leathery skin strolls along the dirt path that serves as the route through the village. He is wearing a light-colored shalwar kameez — a thin cotton shirt and baggy pants — and a dark vest, essentially the national dress for male Afghans. Richard motions for him to sit down and starts to question him via an interpreter.

But in a pattern to be repeated throughout the day, the old man answers vaguely when asked about Mullah Alim and complains that he is hard of hearing as the questioning grows more intense.

Richard grows frustrated. Mullah Alim is a major figure in these parts. “This guy’s f---ing bull-----ing me if he says he doesn’t know Mullah Alim,” Richard says.

Then Richard examines his map and realizes the helicopters have put his force at a different landing zone than the one he thought. The village he is supposed to clear is due east. It’s time to pick up and move. Richard tries one last time to elicit information from the locals gathering around his men.

“Is there Taliban in that village?” he asks. “No, no,” say the villagers through the interpreter.

A sardonic smile spreads across the face of one of the ANA soldiers. “Bull----” he whispers in English.

The soldiers hoist their rucks over their heads and march on, again with the Afghans out front. Within a few minutes they reach the next village, slightly larger than the first, but no more prosperous. With the exception of Kalashnikovs and a few motorbikes, this part of Afghanistan bears little evidence of having absorbed any of the world’s technological advances since the 18th century.

A cock crows in the distance.

More villagers arrive – all men or children. As always in rural Afghanistan, women are conspicuous by their absence. Richard directs the members of the small crowd to sit with their backs to a mud-and-stone wall in the shade of some almond trees.

When he asks them again about the Taliban, one villager speaks up. The Taliban came through seven to 10 days ago, took bread from the villagers and left, he says. Other villagers chime in. **The Taliban had asked the villagers when the ANA and Afghan National Police would be passing through – in other words, exactly the same questions Richard is asking them about the Taliban** – and the villagers had replied that they had no way of knowing, as no ANA or ANP patrols had ever passed through their hamlet.

Undeterred by the villagers’ obvious reluctance to give up any substantive information about the Taliban, Richard presses on with his script.

“Here’s the difference between us and the Taliban,” Richard tells the villagers. “When we come to a village and you say you don’t want us, we don’t try to harm you or kill you. The Taliban does.”

He points out that cooperating with coalition forces brings them construction of schools and infrastructure.

“The next time the Taliban come here, you tell them they should probably leave your village, because we’re going to kill them. Tell them the only chance they have to live is if they help out the new government and the ANA.”

A man in a white skullcap explains that the Taliban will come in the night, bang on the door and say, “We are 10 guys — give us food,” and if the villagers refuse, they get beaten or shot.

“The only way we’re going to make your country stronger is if you don’t give the Taliban sanctuary in your village,” Richard replies.

He tells them to report Taliban activities at the police station in Akhtar, 10 miles to the west.

“If you want your country to be successful and you want your children to have good lives, you have to be more proactive and go 10 kilometers west to Akhtar and report these things,” he tells them.

Then he addresses the half-dozen young boys among his audience. He explains the benefits of helping the Americans. In Khakeran, he told them, he built a school so that local children could be educated.

“I hired four teachers, and 200 children go to school every day in a place where the Taliban took away their school,” he tells them.

The words have resonance here. The government of Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai created a small school for the children of these villagers, but the Taliban burned it to the ground last year.

The episode still rankles one of the locals. “I wish I could burn the Taliban to the ground,” he says bitterly.

Then Richard returns to his main theme. “You’ll be the last ones with schools, clinics, roads and everything else that’s happening in Afghanistan, if you don’t start to become more proactive in this area,” he says. “We’ll bring food here (in winter) if I start hearing from this village. But if you don’t go, and I hear the Taliban have been here every 10 or 15 days, I’m gonna think you like the Taliban and I’m not gonna give you anything.

“Stop making excuses about how they’re gonna come and kill you and do something about it.”

Sitting quietly off to the side is 1st Sgt. Noor Ulwahid Safie, the senior ANA man on the patrol. Unlike most of his men, all but one of whom are armed with AK-47s, he carries a Dragunov sniper rifle, to which he affixes a bayonet.

A Pashtun from eastern Afghanistan's Kunar province, he grew up as a refugee in Peshawar, Pakistan, where he attended a madrassa for seven years in the 1980s. As a boy he was exposed to the Pakistan army and decided to join if ever there was an equivalent army for Afghanistan.

He returned to Afghanistan after the fall of the communist regime in the early 1990s, worked as a shopkeeper and got married. He worked for a couple of years as a policeman. He has been a soldier for only 11 months.

Safie talks quietly with the locals. He writes a letter for them to bring when they report Taliban activity to the police or the ANA. The letter says the villagers here have a very low standard of living, and asks the recipient to do something to improve their lives. Safie signs the letter and hands it to a village elder.

The pattern of the patrol repeats itself at the next village. Richard asks the locals what they know of Mullah Alim. Most say they have never heard of him. One man replies, almost contemptuously, "You know the name, also I have heard the name."

Richard is visibly aggravated with the inability of his interpreter, a slight 19-year-old from Kandahar, to convey his words with the force he desires. The interpreter seems intimidated by the situation, and repeats Richard's strong commands in a timid tone.

The problem underlines the extent of Richard's reliance on his three Afghan interpreters. None of his troops knows more than a couple of words of Pashto, and none of the ANA soldiers speaks more than pidgin English.

The lieutenant calls over the one interpreter upon whom he can rely — a young, professional-looking man from Herat called Nasir. He listens to the villagers, and in summarizing their complaints, encapsulates the major challenge facing coalition forces in this part of Afghanistan:

The villagers say that the Americans will be here for maybe four or five days and then leave, then the Taliban will come back and punish the villagers for helping the Americans.

Later Nasir says to a reporter, "These are poor people, they are scared of the Taliban."

Nasir's comments underline the central challenge for the coalition forces in this part of Afghanistan: they do not have the troop strength to cover more than a fraction of the territory for which they are responsible, and wherever they are absent, the Taliban can operate with impunity.

Stammer's 950-soldier Task Force Rock, built around 2-503 Airborne Infantry Regiment, has to cover all 6,700 square miles of Zabul.

"We're covering a 50 kilometer-by-50 kilometer box with one platoon," Richard says. There are also a couple of provincial reconstruction teams and a tiny

Special Forces presence in the province, but nothing close to the numbers needed.

“There are still places we are not, and we are not able to stay in all places all the time,” Stammer said in an interview two days later.

Since arriving in March, his task force has killed about 200 Taliban fighters, but between 100 and 300 remain in Zabul, he estimates. However, increasing the number of U.S. troops would risk creating a culture of dependency on coalition forces in the long run, he said.

With little chance of an expanded U.S. presence, the only potential solution — and the best, according to standard counterinsurgency doctrine — is to increase the footprint of the Afghan army and police.

Safie, the ANA first sergeant, says the key is to establish a strong police presence in each village.

“All of the problems are because of the ANP,” he says.

But U.S. officials admit they are having a harder time standing up the Afghan National Police than the ANA, and they acknowledge that the boundaries between the two services’ roles and missions remain blurred.

Although the establishment of small police substations in villages like Solaymani would, in theory, help establish trust between the security services and the populace, the recent history of such experiments is less hopeful — the Taliban just overruns the police stations, according to Richard.

Nor is the ANA ready to take over.

On this patrol, it is clear that while most of the ANA troops are eager, they lack the professionalism that U.S. soldiers take for granted. Upon entering one village, rather than remaining alert for an ambush, an ANA fighter immediately lies down on his back beside his rifle to rest in the sun. Few, if any, ANA soldiers march with their weapons at the ready, preferring to sling them over their backs, even though they were patrolling through reportedly hostile territory.

Richard and his men are aware of the ANA’s weaknesses but remain optimistic. “Our job is to train them and let them see as much of what we do as possible, so that when we leave, they can take care of themselves,” He said.

“Where it used to be the Americans who went into the village first, now it’s the ANA,” says Staff Sgt. Michael Gabel, one of Richard’s squad leaders.

The troops need somewhere to spend the night. Richard negotiates with the owner of an adobe compound in the middle of Solaymani. If the farmer allows Richard and his men to move into his yard, the platoon leader promises to bring enough food to get the entire village through the cold winter months, when peasants in this part of Afghanistan go into a state of virtual hibernation, many freezing to death.

The farmer relents. He is the same man who earlier expressed his anger at the Taliban. Richards ends up paying him 1,000 Afghani – about \$20 – for the use of his property.

The exhausted soldiers move into the courtyard, which contains two gnarled trees, a well, three piles of lumber and one of dried brush, a donkey, a bullock and a kitten who meows incessantly until the soldiers pay her some attention. The air is redolent with the smell of manure.

Once villagers realize the U.S. and ANA troops really are going to stay the night, they become more accommodating. They bring several services of sweet green tea with candy — the traditional refreshments served to guests in Afghanistan.

Nightfall brings a visitor to the door of the compound, a man who wants to talk to the Americans. This is the way it usually goes, Richard says: People afraid to be seen speaking with the Americans, but who have information they want to share, will wait for darkness before making their approach.

Tonight's visitor has a lot to offer. He tells Richard he knows where three boxes of ammunition are buried. The platoon leader promptly tells him to retrieve them. The man disappears, and returns a short while later with three metal boxes, each about 12 inches by 4 inches by 4 inches. The Americans pry the boxes open, revealing about 100 armor-piercing rounds of 12.7mm DShK heavy machine gun ammunition in each one. It's a significant find, and one that suggests more is going on in and around the village than the locals are willing to acknowledge.

The visitor also tells Richard that he knows where a local Taliban figure, Qazimullah, lives — in a big farm compound less than a mile from where the platoon is billeted.

Richard is excited. He tells the informant to lead him to Qazimullah's home.

Under a new agreement with the Karzai government, U.S. troops are not allowed to conduct nighttime searches of Afghan homes, so the lead element tonight must come from the ANA. Safie gathers a handful of men. Richard brings a few Americans to set up a support-by-fire position overwatching the compound. The small group sets off into the night. Despite the lack of cloud cover, there is almost zero illumination.

Little attempt is made to disguise the sound of the dozen men approaching the compound. A dog in the compound barks loudly before the Afghan troops are 100 meters from the home. The Americans break off. Safie and four other ANA soldiers continue to the front door.

Two of the five Afghan soldiers are armed with long Dragunov sniper rifles, not ideal for close-quarters battle. None of the Afghans is wearing body armor or night-vision gear.

The ANA troops knock politely, then more loudly, on the door, with no response for 15 minutes. The American platoon leader later acknowledges that his Afghan partners "don't quite have the violence-of-action thing down."

Finally, as the Afghans are preparing to shoot off the lock, a man who is not Qazimullah opens the door. The target of the search is away, he says, as the troops file past him.

The ANA soldiers find nothing of value, but speak intently with one villager who clearly has differences with Qazimullah.

He speaks to Richard and turns out to be a mine of information. He tells Richard that the three major players in the local Taliban are Mullah Alim and a man called Mullah Qadir. They operate in the Arghandab and Zargaran districts, he says. This information backs up recent signals intelligence “hits” indicating Taliban activity in Zargaran, according to Richard.

“A-ha!” he says. “This is awesome.”

The man says the Taliban “are working very hard in Akhtar” and offers only vague information on Qazimullah’s whereabouts, though he says he left the village just two days earlier.

Richard shines a red flashlight in his face.

“Listen to me,” he says sternly. “Even when I’m not at your compound or in this village, there is someone watching your home, from the sky. The sooner you help me find these three men, the sooner this will be over.” [**“Ugh. Me have big white man magic! Me watch you from sky with big magic bird that speak! Ugh!” Amazing. He’s so dim he thinks this makes some kind of impression. The village will have a laugh about that one, later, when they’re gone.**]

The man says the Taliban fighters he has seen passing through the village carried AKs and RPGs.

“How often do they come to the village?” Richard asks.

“If you leave this village,” the man villager answers, “they will come the next day.”

The next morning, Richard orders Sgt. Matthew Simon’s squad to clear every building between Qazimullah’s compound and the farm where the platoon has spent the night. The ANA troops are considered out of action, because this is the first day of Ramadan, when observant Muslims are forbidden from eating or drinking anything during daylight hours.

In one compound, the Americans find a footlocker full of dismantled radios and wires. The past six months have seen a rise in the Taliban’s use of homemade bombs, and this gadgetry looks particularly incongruous in a village that has no electricity or running water. But the homeowner says the contents of the footlocker belong to his brother, who fixes radios.

Every compound the Americans enter contains at least one large pile of dried brush big enough to hide multiple cases of assault rifles or RPGs. But the soldiers rarely investigate them, because new rules restrict what U.S. troops can do during clearing operations. “They don’t want us to friggin’ tear people’s places apart any more,” says Simon. “We’ve got to be the nice new guys.”

Simon and his men head to Qazimullah’s compound.

It being daylight, the U.S. soldiers are free to poke around the household.

While there, Simon gets an interesting report over the radio from Richard: Because the Taliban rely on unencrypted hand-held ICOM radios for tactical communication, Richard has his interpreters carry ICOMs, in the hope of picking up enemy traffic.

For the last 24 hours they have heard nothing, but suddenly the ICOMs crackle to life with chatter to the effect that the Taliban have eyes on the troops going through the villages, and are reporting, “They haven’t found anything yet.”[Ugh. We gottem own big bird watch your ass. Every move you make, every breath you take.]

The Americans question Qazimullah’s son, Ahmad. He says he doesn’t know where any weapons are hidden, **but his sly smile makes the Americans suspicious. [Oh, please, do start teaching that one at West Point. How to recognize insurgents? They have *sly smiles!*]**

The soldiers march him back to their compound, with his tearful younger sister, who can’t be more than 10 years old, following. When they get to the compound, the Americans tell Ahmad that they intend to keep him there until his father comes to collect him.

Slowly, the boy starts to open up. He says his father works with the Taliban because he’s scared of the Taliban.

Richard isn’t buying it. “Scared of the Taliban? Bull----! He’s one of their leaders!” he says.

The boy says there are two local Taliban groups – one led by Mullah Alim, the other by Mullah Mohammed. Qazimullah supplies the Taliban with food and water, but doesn’t go to the fight with them, the boy says.

As the interrogation continues, Gabel, the 1st squad leader, threatens to take the boy away in a helicopter if he doesn’t give the Americans the information they want.

“You and me, going on a trip,” he taunts, his hand making the motions of a helicopter taking off.

The ANA soldiers and Nasir, the interpreter, say the boy is now very scared. However, after letting him stew for a couple of hours, Richard lets Ahmad and his sister go.

“I’m not about harassing kids,” the platoon leader says. “There’s a point where they’re not going to give you any more information.”

Gabel’s squad has also returned from clearing a handful of compounds on the other side of the valley.

“We only found one item of intelligence value, sir,” Gabel tells Richard, “but I think it points to significant Taliban activity.”

Richard turns around, his interest piqued. With a flourish, Gabel pulls out a large piece of paper he found in a deserted compound. With obvious relish, he unfolds it to reveal a poster of Elvis Presley.

The troops stay one more night. In the frozen morning, they prepare for pick-up by Chinooks that will return them to Khakeran.

Richard is pleased with the results of the operation. He has been able to fill in several important blanks in his battalion's knowledge of local Taliban operations.

"Now we know that there's also Taliban activity in Zargaran," he says. "We also know that Mullah Alim doesn't just use this place as a sanctuary, he actually has fighters here ... and the fact that we know that Mullah Alim was here two days ago is big." **[This is not satire.]**

In addition, the discovery of the DShK ammo tells him "there's something here that isn't good."

Sitting outside the compound, Safie, the Afghan first sergeant, also reflects on the events of the previous 48 hours. The best way to get the locals to reveal what they know about the Taliban would be to make two visits to the village, he says. On the first, the ANA should hold a big meeting with the villagers at which they deliver on promises to help them.

Only on a second visit should the issue of Taliban activity be raised, he says.

"After (the first visit) the people will understand there is a government that is strong, and we are their national army," he says.

Only on a second visit should the issue of Taliban activity be raised, he says.

"Not like this way where we come with weapons out and the people are scared and the Taliban escape."

TROOP NEWS

Disgruntled Troops Abandon Guard Duty In Protest Of Dire Service Conditions

It is estimated that the rebellion had been planned over a period of time.

10/6/2005 Yossi Yehoshua, YNetNews (Israel)

It doesn't happen much but it happened on New Year's Eve: Following a row with their commander over dire service conditions, 17 soldiers abandoned their base Monday evening and headed home.

They later argued that their commander ignored their complaints and interpreted them as an attempt to evade operational duties. The escapees said that one of their main concerns was the dreadful quality of the food being served on the base.

The incident is considered one of the worst ever in Israel's military history since the rebellion took place on duty: The soldiers had been assigned to guard the security fence around Gaza.

Last time such an incident occurred was in Lebanon 10 years ago when soldiers of the 202 Reinforcement Brigade similarly abandoned their base while on duty.

The army was quick to send reinforcements to fill the vacuum left on the stretch of the fence that was abandoned by the fighters.

The soldiers, who were persuaded to return to duty less than 24 hours after they had left, following intensive negotiations with the battalion commander, will be sentenced by the brigade commander on Thursday.

The brigade to which the soldiers belong had recently left the Netzarin settlement in the Gaza Strip, which is one of the hottest spots the IDF ever had to defend.

The service conditions at bases occupied by the brigade had been upgraded and made more favorable in light of the intensive fighting routine it had endured. The soldiers argue that since their redeployment along the security fence, their service conditions had deteriorated.

It is estimated that the rebellion had been planned over a period of time.

A source in the brigade said that a new battalion commander had been newly appointed and the soldiers wanted to see how far they can push the new officer. The soldiers were also encouraged by the fact that the brigade commander is also a two-week-old appointee.

As such, on New Year's Eve, acting on coordinated timing, 15 soldiers left their surveillance positions, defied the state of alert, and went home. Following the instructions of the rebels, two soldiers who were on leave for medical reasons refused to make their way back to the base after a routine medical check and they too headed home.

The battalion commander was quick to call the soldiers to convince them to return. Those who were not convinced by the battalion commander received a call from the brigade commander. When this maneuver failed the commanders called the soldiers' parents who in turn pressured their sons to resume their duty.

The soldiers said yesterday that they were fully aware of the heavy price they will have to pay for their misconduct, yet the conditions on the base were the worst they had ever come across and therefore they decided to abandon.

It should be noted that this is the second grave event to occur in the IDF in the last two weeks: Earlier, two brigades in training camp clashed and threw stunt grenades at each other.

A Son Gone Too Soon



Army Pfc. Roberto C. Baez's mother, Jeannette Carrasco, and best friend, Brian Pena, mourn in Baez's room Wednesday over his death in Iraq. "We did not enjoy our son after high school," Carrasco said. Baez was 19 years old. Times photo: William Dunkley

October 6, 2005 By JUSTIN GEORGE,

TAMPA –

Roberto C. Baez's family wishes they could have done more to prevent him from joining the Army.

There was regret in Army Pfc. Roberto C. Baez's bedroom Wednesday.

His mother wished she never let her 19-year-old son join the military. His brother wished he would have coaxed Baez into the Navy.

But it's unlikely either could have persuaded the headstrong and confident Baez differently. The Army was his first job. He signed up for six years until his mother went back to the recruiter and changed his enlistment to three years. He slept next to a checklist that included running, pushups and situps, things to do to prepare for boot camp. He was proud of his meager pay and came home always asking his mother what she wanted to buy.

Baez died in Haqlaniyah, Iraq, on Monday, when an explosive device blew up near his Humvee, according to the Defense Department. He had three diplomas - infantry training, javelin course and airborne course - framed on his dresser. He had a can of

spray starch on his entertainment center. He had an "Army of One" bumper sticker above his bed.

Baez was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division.

"We did not enjoy our son after high school," Baez's mother, Jeannette Carrasco, 48, wailed from a hallway. The recruiter had stolen him away too quickly after his graduation from Tampa's Alonzo High School.

Now, there is a blue candle pooling wax in the living room where Baez's picture sits on a small stand. He wears Army fatigues behind a stretched tight American Flag.

Nearby a stack of pictures are tossed on the dining room table. A picture of mother wrapping her arms around the neck of her youngest son, "Robertcito," little Robert, stands out.

"He really had everything," said Carlos Baez, 57, Roberto's father and Carrasco's husband. "A good friend; a good son."

Juan Carlos Baez, 28, said his brother wanted to join the military after Sept. 11, 2001. He used to quiz Juan about the Navy. "He wanted me to talk to him about the Navy," Juan Carlos said. "I wasn't ready. I was going through some hard times, and I didn't open up about it."

So Roberto joined the Army when his time came.

"I would have rather he joined the Navy," Juan Carlos said, standing in his room, where baseball trophies and an apple-shaped piggy bank sits on his dresser. "I just would have wanted to talk to him about the Navy or veer him to the Navy."

Roberto Baez's mother said he wanted the Army to pay for college so he could be a psychiatrist. He was good with people. He would befriend children. He would speak to seniors. He would give up his television for his young niece.

But his best friend of 16 years, Brian Pena, 18, said he was content finishing his career in the Army. He wanted to put in 20 years, Pena said.

"He wanted it to be his career," Pena said. "It was his first job, and he was proud of it."

Nearby are Baez's books: The U.S. Army Infantry Training Brigade. The Iraq War. Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six.

His mother knows he was meant for the military. He used to shut off the ceiling fan and air conditioner on Saturday mornings just to sweep his room when other teens would be sleeping.

"He was like a little big boy," she said.

"I'm upset," Carrasco added. "Being so young, they send him over there, and I don't agree with that. They're young kids."

Then she got tired of talking.

"I never get tired of talking unless someone hurt me," Carrasco said.

"It hurts me not to have him here."

Bush And Blair

[This is a message to Americans from Rose Gentle. Her son was killed in Iraq. She leads a campaign to bring all the Scots and other troops home from Iraq, now. Her words carry more weight, and contain more truth, than 5000 pages of bullshit from the politicians. T]

**From: Rose Gentle
To: GI Special
Sent: October 08, 2005
Subject: bush and blair**

BUSH HAS TO GO,

**IN GB, WHEN YOU HERE VOICES IN YOUR HEAD
YOU GET PUT IN A MENTAL HOSPITAL, I THINK ITS TIME BUSH
WAS IN ONE, AND TONY BLAIR TO, THESE TWO MEN ARE NUTS**

**HOW CAN TONY BLAIR SEND OUR TROOPS TO IRAQ, TO HELP
BUSH, WHEN BUSH SAED GOD TOLLD ME TO GO TO IRAQ,**

**I WISH GOD TOLLD HIM TO TELL BLAIR, LETS GET THE TROOPS
OUT OF IRAQ. HAS BUSH NAIVER HERD OF I SHAL NOT KILL,**

I HOPE MY BOY IS NOT WITH THE GOD THAT'S IN BUSHES HEAD,

**HE IS NOT FIT TO RUN AMERICA, OR BLAIR FOR GB, IS GOD
GOING TO TELL HIM LETS HIT IRAN NEXT, WELL I HOPE
GOD TELLS BUSH ITS TIME FOR YOUR GIRLS TO GO TO IRAQ**

**THEN BUSH CAN SAY, TO BLAIR THE BIG MAN TOLLD ME TO
TELL YOU, ITS TIME FOR YOUR BOYS TO GO TOO,**

THEN WE WOULD SEE HOW BLAIR WOULD HELP BUSH THEN,

OUR COUNTRY IS RUN BY NEUTERS

Poles Want Their Troops Home Now Too



Protestors shout slogans during an anti-war demonstration in Warsaw, Poland, Thursday, Oct. 6, 2005. Hundreds of residents attended the demonstration, demanding a withdraw of the Polish troop from Iraq. (AP Photo/Xinhua, Xu Lingde)

U.S. Boosts Iraq Troop Level By 14,000

10.7.05 Arizona Daily Star

The U.S. military has increased forces in Iraq to 152,000, about 14,000 above the usual level.

Among The 300,000

Oct 06, 2005 By TIM DICKINSON, Rolling Stone. [Excerpt]

Bridget Palmatier, a widow at thirty, had never been to a protest before, but she knew the gold star pinned to the collar of her blouse gave her the standing to speak out. Her plain face carried her grief; in her hands she held a photo of her husband, Cpl. Jacob Palmatier: "KIA 02/24/2005."

Elizabeth Frederick, her blond hair pulled back in a long ponytail, came to represent her boyfriend, Sgt. Michael Bernabe, currently stop-lossed in Tikrit. "I became anti-war because of him," says the twenty-two-year-old. "It's not indoctrination. It's not a slogan. It's what he tells me -- someone on the front."

These reluctant activists -- one with nothing, the other with everything left to lose -- joined the estimated 300,000 protesters in front of the White House on September 24th in the largest anti-war demonstration since the fall of Baghdad.

Petraeus Kicked Out Of Iraq; Career Dead

[It seems only yesterday he was running his mouth incessantly to every reporter in sight about what a magnificent job he was doing building a new Iraqi army that would be loyal to Bush and the Empire. He's not the first general to have his neck broken by people who refuse to submit to invasion and occupation of their country by a pack of greedy foreign politicians. He won't be the last.]

October 5, 2005 by Robert E. Bartos, Baltimore Sun. [Excerpt]

Lost in the turmoil and scandals of Katrina and Rita was the sudden reassignment of Lt. Gen. David H. Petraeus, head of the Multinational Security Transition Command in Iraq, whose job was to train Iraqi military forces, which, from most of the evidence, are still raw.

General Petraeus, whose assignment lasted about a year, will be exiled to the U.S. heartland to train U.S. military officers.

His mission was, by most U.S. standards, including those of President Bush, the most important task in Iraq. U.S. troop withdrawals hinged on General Petraeus' success in preparing Iraqi forces to take over security functions from U.S. troops.

There is no question that General Petraeus' reassignment was abrupt and with cause. He leaves his assignment unfinished by a long shot. From a career standpoint, a training assignment at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., is the end of his promotions. Had he pleased the chain of command, he might have been off to a high-level billet on the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

There's been no explanation for his reassignment. A smoke screen of his purported accomplishments covered his departure. But the smoke cleared a little when the top U.S. commander in Iraq, Gen. George W. Casey, declared before a surprised Congress on Thursday that the number of combat-ready Iraqi battalions was reduced from three to one.

When the general was being interviewed on the eve of his reassignment, he pointed out that he was taken aback by the role of bribes in Iraq, known as baksheesh. He appeared shocked at how much they permeated the country's ancient culture.

Welcome to the real world, general.

Troops Stranded In Iraq By Grounded Planes

10.7.05 London Daily Telegraph

Hundreds of British troops were stranded in Iraq after all the RAF's specialized aircraft were grounded with mechanical problems.

Soldiers who have completed their six-month tours or are due to go on leave have had to wait for a week as technicians try to fix the three RAF Tristars, which can carry up to 260 troops.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

GET THE MESSAGE?



A billboard advertising for the 15 October 2005 vote on the occupation Constitution smeared by paint in Baghdad. (AFP/Karim Sahib)

“Our People Are Resisting Because Their Houses Are Being Destroyed And Members Of Their Family Are Being Killed”

October 7, 2005 By Louise Roug, LA Times Staff Writer

"The confrontations that occurred were so brutal" that residents "are now seeing members of their families being killed in front of their own eyes by the American bombardment," said Sheik Iusamah Judaan, a tribal leader from Karabilah in Qaim.

"Obviously, they'll seek revenge and this is what's happening."

US-led troops cordoned off this city five days ago before starting their raids, he said.

"The American savage attacks left no place for us to live," said Judaan, taking issue with claims that his town is a haven for insurgents.

"We don't have terrorists or foreigners but our people are resisting because their houses are being destroyed and members of their family are being killed."

American attacks will disenfranchise residents who intend to vote against the constitution, he said.

"This is all tied up with the timing of the referendum" he said. "The security situation is chaotic and deteriorating, getting worse hour after hour. Just tell me, how can we have a referendum in one week...their military operations they will hinder the political process rather than facilitate it."

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Those "Foreign Fighters"

One Lebanese journalist contemptuously asked: "Why are Americans condemning foreign fighters in Iraq? Are they including themselves in this category, or considering themselves native fighters of Iraq?" Oct 4, 2005 By Ehsan Ahrari, Asia Times.

<p>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.</p>
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"American Soldiers In Iraq Are Dying For Dollars!!"



Presenting the flag which covered the casket of Army Spc. Toccara Renee Green of Rosedale, Md., to her parents, Yvonne and Garry Green, at Arlington National Cemetery Aug. 26, 2005. Green was killed in an ambush in Iraq on Aug. 14. (AP Photo/Dennis Cook)

From: Mike Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: October 08, 2005
Subject: Profits Over Soldiers Cemeteries

American Soldiers In Iraq Are Dying For Dollars!!

The only thing that is keeping most Americans from seeing this truth, is their own rigid beliefs.

Whenever the truth threatens one's belief system, there is a strong tendency to deny its reality.

We don't want to see the truth, if it causes fear. It is like being stalked by a bounty hunter, it scares you to death.

**Mike Hastie
Vietnam Veteran
October 8, 2005**

“It's A Fiendish Terrorist Plot”

October 6, 2005 Xymphora, xymphora.blogspot.com.

They're getting a bit obvious, aren't they?

Fitzgerald is getting ready to announce who, if anybody, he's going after (with Rove apparently singing like a little turd canary), and we get a big subway terrorism scare in NYC.

And get this! It's an attack by Iraqi pharmacists (I guess the Iraqi fightin' ophthamologists were busy).

So if you're on the New York subway and some guy in a white coat with a funny accent tries to sell you the new wonderdrug called Ricin-o-Cyanide, don't be fooled. It's a fiendish terrorist plot.

I don't know why the U.S. doesn't just give their Constitution (complete with amendments to protect against torture, illegal search and seizure, to ensure freedom of speech and assembly etc.) to Iraq?

After all, it's a perfectly good one, and they're not using it...

October 08, 2005 James Patton, Anti-Allawi-group

OCCUPATION REPORT

U.S. Command Launches New Recruiting Drive For Iraqi Armed Resistance Movement: Occupies 7 Ramadi Mosques And Turns Them Into Barracks

6 October 2005 FOCUS News Agency

Baghdad. In a one of a kind military operation the US army occupied 7 mosques yesterday in the Western Iraqi town of Ramadi and turned the mosques into barracks, the Iraqi News Agency INA reported.

According to information, the American soldiers have taken the praying out of the mosques, closed them and banned access to the mosques within a range of 1 kilometer.

“What A Pathetic Couple Of Losers”

October 05, 2005 from Raed in the middle: Iraq blog [Excerpt]

Meanwhile, Jaafari and Talbani are having a big fight and each one is demanding the resignation of the other. Talbani thinks that Jaafari is "monopolizing power".

What "power" is he talking about?

Changing the number of bodyguards?

What is the power that either of them have aslan?

What a pathetic couple of losers...

Some Who Welcomed Americans Now Scorn Them: “Tell Them This Is The Sovereignty The Americans Have Brought Us”

"We used to be able to walk in the streets with our heads high, not afraid," Emad said. What happened in New Orleans -- the contrast between official words and deeds -- should give the world a better idea of the U.S. performance in Baghdad, she said. "They failed there, they failed here," Emad added angrily. "Americans should take a lesson from what Americans have done for three years in Iraq."

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

September 27, 2005 By Ellen Knickmeyer, Washington Post Foreign Service

BAGHDAD -- In the chaotic, hopeful April of 2003, Baghdad's Karrada district was one of those neighborhoods where residents showered flowers on U.S. forces entering the capital. Revelers threw water on one another and the Americans, exuding joy at the crushing of a dictatorship that had silenced, tortured and killed their people.

Now, with the end of the third and in many ways hardest summer of the U.S.-led occupation, the lights of Karrada are dimmer. The collapse of Iraq's central power system has left Baghdad averaging less than eight hours of electricity a day.

And more than two years after flowers and water cascaded onto the arriving Americans, what's being thrown on Karrada's streets, and who is throwing it, has changed as well.

Mohammed, a courtly, gentle-mannered man, carefully chose the harshest word he could think of for urine.

In Karrada this summer, Mohammed and the neighborhood watched as American soldiers on patrol grew irritated at an Iraqi who had left his car in the street to run inside a store on an errand, blocking their armored convoy.

The Americans took one of the empty plastic water bottles they use to relieve themselves when on patrol, Mohammed said. When the Iraqi driver ran out to move his car, an annoyed American plunked him with the newly filled bottle and rolled on, Mohammed said.

"He started crying," Mohammed said of the Iraqi driver, humiliated in front of the neighborhood.

Mohammed, who said he had been one of the happiest people in Karrada to see the Americans when they came in April 2003, retrieved the bottle and handed it to the weeping man.

"I said, 'Give this to the Iraqi government,' " Mohammed said. " 'Tell them this is the sovereignty the Americans have brought us.' "

When the Americans came, they protected only a few public buildings from looters, said Nagham Emad, 23, a university student lingering in a Karrada ice cream shop, spooning up her frozen sundae slowly to put off the return to a dark, hot home.

One of the buildings was the Oil Ministry, Emad said. The others were Saddam Hussein's marble-and-gilt palaces, which the Americans took over for their offices.

Now, when power outages darken the rest of Baghdad, she said, massive generators make the barricaded, highly guarded palaces of the Americans glow.

Americans, and the rest of the world, frequently compared the chaos in New Orleans this month to the situation in Baghdad. But New Orleans didn't look that way a month ago. And three years ago, neither did Baghdad, Karrada's people said.

"We used to have electricity," said Emad, the university student. "We used to have water."

"Entertainment," interrupted Emad Mahdi, a driver for a government ministry who was with her.

"We used to be able to walk in the streets with our heads high, not afraid," Emad said. What happened in New Orleans -- the contrast between official words and deeds -- should give the world a better idea of the U.S. performance in Baghdad, she said.

"They failed there, they failed here," Emad added angrily. "Americans should take a lesson from what Americans have done for three years in Iraq."

"In the States now, everyone wants to help, but here -- everyone forgets about us," said Saif Ali, a 27-year-old merchant with a mobile phone shop two doors down from Mohammed's lighting store.

Like many heads of households in Baghdad, Ali awakes three or four times each night to switch generators and appliances off and on. One of his aunts has spent the summer lingering between life and death -- one of seven members of his family injured by bombs, he said.

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Public Thinks U.S. Fucked Up

07 October 2005 By Will Lester, The Associated Press

Public sentiment about the nation's direction has sunk to new depths at a time people are anxious about Iraq, the economy, gas prices and the management of billions of dollars being spent for recovery from the nation's worst natural disaster.

Only 28 percent say the country is headed in the right direction while two-thirds, 66 percent, say it is on the wrong track, the poll found.

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.

Republicans "Mutiny" Against Bush Torture Policy

07 October 2005 By Francis Harris, The Telegraph UK

The Bush administration pledged yesterday to veto legislation banning the torture of prisoners by US troops after an overwhelming and almost unprecedented revolt by loyalist congressmen.

The mutiny was the latest setback for an administration facing an increasingly independent and bloody-minded legislature. But it also marked a key moment in Congress's campaign to curtail the huge powers it has granted the White House since 2001 in its war against terrorism.

The late-night Senate vote saw the measure forbidding torture passed by 90 to nine, with most Republicans backing the measure. Most senators said the Abu Ghraib abuse scandal and similar allegations at the Guantánamo Bay prison rendered the result a foregone conclusion.

The vote was one of the largest and best supported congressional revolts during President George W Bush's five years in office and shocked the White House.

Torturer-In-Chief: The Enemy Domestic



Oct. 6, 2005. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

Received:

Toe?

From: Marti Hiken, mlhiken@pacbell.net
To: GI Special
Sent: October 07, 2005

Do you have the article about the GI shooting himself in the toe because he wanted out?

I need it for an article and can't find it.

[Could somebody help out here please? The writer works with the Military Law Project, helping provide legal counsel for troops opposed to the war. T]

GI Special Looks Even Better Printed Out

All GI Special issues achieved at website <http://www.militaryproject.org/> .

The following have also posted issues; there may be others:

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

www.williambowles.info/gispecial,

<http://www.albasrah.net/maqalat/english/gi-special.htm>

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