

GI SPECIAL 3C85A:

NOT GOOD: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



Lance Cpl. Jeffery Wilson from 3rd Platoon, Company K, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, and soldiers of the Iraqi Security Forces take cover on the streets in Haditha, Oct. 4 2005. (AP Photo/ Cpl Kevin N. McCall, US Army HO)

NOTICE:

The reason for this GI Special B issue for 10.16 is that the articles below are too long for a news issue of GI Special, but don't deserve to be ignored.

1. **"It Is Worse Than Vietnam, Because The Enemy Is Punier And The Original Ambitions Greater"** by Patrick Cockburn, one of the few reporters to spend time outside the green zone, and able to understand the extent of resistance control in Iraq.
2. **"It Looked Like A Concentration Camp"** by David Phinney, Special to **CorpWatch**. The most thorough documentation assembled on how the war-profiteers hire cheap outside labor to work the U.S. bases in Iraq, feeding them garbage, and treating them worse than they would their own pets.
3. **NEW TESTIMONIES BY ISRAELI SOLDIERS** By Yonathan Geffen. These are accounts by soldiers of their killing of Palestinians, mostly children, as ordered by their officers.



“It Is Worse Than Vietnam, Because The Enemy Is Punier And The Original Ambitions Greater”

There should be nothing surprising about the unpopularity of the occupation. How many occupations have been popular? Even Robespierre, no shrinking violet when it came to inflicting violence on others, pointed out to fellow French revolutionaries occupying foreign lands that "nobody likes armed missionaries."

A policeman guarding a petrol station in this area explained that he was going home at 8pm "because the resistance takes over then and I will be killed if I stay".

14 October 2005 By Patrick Cockburn, The Independent (UK) [Excerpt]

The American and British governments seem disconnected from the terrible reality of Iraq. Tony Blair says the time scale for withdrawal is "when the job is done." But stop any Iraqi in the streets of Baghdad and the great majority say the violence will get worse until the US and Britain start to pull out. They say the main catalyst for the Sunni Arab insurrection is the US occupation.

A deep crisis is turning into a potential catastrophe because President George Bush and Tony Blair pretend the situation in Iraq is improving. To prove to their own voters that progress is being made, they have imposed on Iraq a series of artificial milestones. These have been achieved but have done nothing to halt the ever deepening violence.

The latest milestone is the referendum on the new constitution - the rules of the game by which Iraq is to be governed.

The need for the White House to produce a fantasy picture of Iraq is because it dare not admit that it has engineered one of the greatest disasters in American history.

It is worse than Vietnam, because the enemy is punier and the original ambitions greater. At the time of the invasion in 2003 the US believed it could act alone, almost without allies, and win. In this it has utterly failed. About 1,950 American soldiers have been killed, 14,900 have been wounded, and its military command still has only islands of control.

It is a defeat more serious than Vietnam because it is self-inflicted, like the British invasion of Egypt to overthrow Nasser in 1956.

The US would take control of a country with great oil reserves. It would assume quasi-colonial control over a nation which 15 years previously had been the greatest Arab military power.

Few governments can resist the temptation to fight a short victorious war that will boost their standing at home. It enables them to stand tall as defenders of the homeland. Domestic political opponents can be portrayed as traitors or lacking in patriotism. The Bush administration had been peculiarly successful in wrapping the flag around itself after 11 September and later during the war in Afghanistan. It intended to do the same thing in Iraq in the run-up to 2004 presidential election.

When US troops began to spread out into Iraq after the fall of Baghdad they made a surprising discovery. Most people were armed, often with high-powered modern weapons. Saddam Hussein was reduced to introducing a buy-back programme in the early 1990s to cut down on the number of heavy weapons on the streets. Even so, his officials in south-east Iraq were astonished when a tribe turned up with three tanks - presumably purloined during the Iran-Iraq war - which they were prepared to turn over for a sizeable sum of money.

It was not until three years after the British army captured Baghdad in 1917 that the first serious rebellion took place. In the case of the US occupation in 2003 the rebellion started in three months.

But the two uprisings have a point in common: Iraqis do not like foreign rule or occupation any more than the people of any other country.

The vast majority of them did not support Saddam Hussein. By and large they did not fight for him. They do not feel the military victors had any rights over them as Germans or Japanese may have done in 1945.

Strangely, the Americans and the British never seem to have understood the extent to which the occupation outraged Iraqi nationalism, though anger might take a different form in the Sunni and Shia communities.

In Sunni areas anybody resisting the occupation - including bigoted and fanatical Sunni groups - could expect a degree of protection. Former members of the Baath party and the security services - never popular institutions in Iraq - may have provided a skeleton

organisation for the resistance. But this would not have been enough to mount a widespread uprising if it had not enjoyed popular support.

A private poll conducted for the coalition, in effect the US and Britain, in February this year showed that 45 per cent of Iraqi Arabs supported armed attacks on the coalition forces.

Presumably to the American and British officials cut off in the Green Zone, the day-to-day friction between Iraqis and the occupation forces was not visible.

But for anybody living in Baghdad in 2003 and 2004 the ferocity of Iraqi-Arab hatred for the occupation was very evident. Local people would dance and rejoice when a bomb or a rocket hit an American vehicle. The US was outraged in the spring of 2004 when the burnt bodies of four American contractors were hung from a bridge in Fallujah. But they were mutilated not by the insurgents who killed them but by townspeople, day labourers waiting by the road for a job. The same savage joy was visible on the faces of the Shia crowd setting fire to a British armoured vehicle in Basra on 19 September.

There should be nothing surprising about the unpopularity of the occupation. How many occupations have been popular? Even Robespierre, no shrinking violet when it came to inflicting violence on others, pointed out to fellow French revolutionaries occupying foreign lands that "nobody likes armed missionaries."

Given that the Americans are probably no stupider or more crooked than anybody else, why was the occupation regime so dysfunctional? The answer is probably that the senior US officials who ran Iraq owed their positions to the exigencies of American, not Iraqi politics. They knew how to function in Washington but not Baghdad. If they failed to deliver a better life to Iraqis their careers suffered no damage; but if they displeased the White House they were fired.

It was extraordinary to watch the US occupation unravel.

In the first year and a half of the war it was still possible to drive out of Baghdad and talk to people in Sunni Arab towns and villages.

From early days they were full of rage against the American army. US generals seemed to pride themselves on their ignorance of local customs. Many innocent farmers were being shot dead. They often died because when they heard a loud knocking on their door in the middle of the night they would open it with a gun in their hand.

This was because, ever since the Saddam Hussein closed the banks in 1990 and the Iraqi dinar collapsed in value, Iraqis kept their money at home and in hundred dollar bills. Even a modest household might have \$20,000 in cash, perhaps the life savings of an extended family. Farmers feared robbers and were usually armed. When a US soldier knocked at the door of a house in the middle of the night and saw an armed Iraqi in front of him he would open fire.

It was typical of the cast of mind of the US Army at this time that they thought they had dealt with questions about the number of Iraqi civilian deaths by simply not counting them. It might have public relations advantages in the US - though even this was dubious - but the Iraqis themselves knew how many of their people were being killed. And this was in a country where the tribal tradition is that a man must seek vengeance against the killer of anybody related to him over five generations. American soldiers on the ground eventually came to understand if they accidentally killed an innocent Iraqi then they would be the targets of a retaliatory attack a few days later.

The US military commanders and their civilian equivalents were in a state of denial in Baghdad. Every few days they would hold press briefings in which they would describe the insurgents as either foreign fighters or the remnants of Saddam Hussein's regime, the "bitter-enders" in the words of Donald Rumsfeld, the US Defence Secretary.

Every escalation in attacks was described as the insurgents' last desperate convulsion. The chasm between this rosy picture of the war and the bloody reality became ever deeper.

One day I heard a rumour that there was an uprising in Baiji, a Sunni Arab oil refining town north of Baghdad. The US military had not said anything about it. When I got there I found the police station and the mayor's office burnt out and the police fled. Thousands of people were on the streets chanting pro-Saddam slogans and setting fire to Turkish fuel trucks that they claimed were stealing Iraqi oil.

Back in Baghdad the US generals at their daily briefings in the Convention Centre in the Green Zone were refusing to admit that Iraq was out of control. They must have believed their own propaganda, which would explain why they were sending convoys of vulnerable fuel tankers through guerrilla-controlled territory.

There is a great sump of misery in Iraq. And until the lives of people in general improve the political crisis will not end. Given such deprivation and corruption, why should soldiers fight for the government, particularly if they only joined the army or police for a job?

Government leaders frequently travel to Washington and London to give a rosy picture of Iraq slowly emerging from the present bloody chaos. Living behind the walls of the Green Zone, protected by US troops and foreign security companies, they seldom have little idea themselves of life in Iraq.

Mr Jaafari must give 24 hours' advance warning to his security detail if he leaves the Green Zone to visit President Talabani, whose heavily defended house is just five minutes' drive away. Iraqis do not enjoy many jokes, but the disappearance of so many cabinet ministers abroad on essential business has been a source of general amusement in the last two years.

In far-flung capitals across the globe they bid the insurgents defiance and tell them their days are numbered.

In reality security is getting worse. Insurgents are tightening their grip in Sunni-dominated districts in south and west Baghdad. A policeman guarding a petrol station in this area explained that he was going home at 8pm "because the resistance takes over then and I will be killed if I stay".

Neither Mr Bush nor Mr Blair want to reveal the depth of the quagmire into which they so confidently plunged in 2003. They also presumably believe that at any moment they may touch bottom. Iraqi governments, dependent on foreign support, parrot whatever they believe Washington or London wants to hear at the time. Iraq is full of mirages.

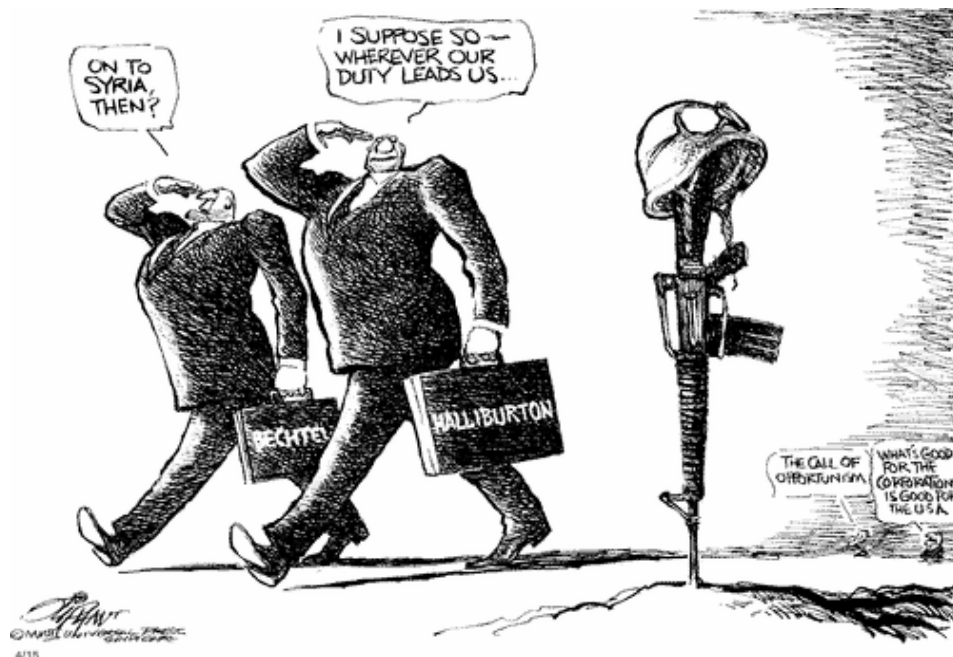
Much of the Iraqi government exists only on paper. It is more of a racket than an administration. Its officials turn up only on pay day. Elaborate bureaucratic procedures exist simply so a bribe has to be paid to avoid them.

The fact that so many Iraqis blame the US occupation for their ills does not mean they are right. But, having spent most of my time in Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein, I believe that the biggest mistake being made by the US and Britain is a very simple one:

They do not realise the unpopularity of the occupation. No people wants to be ruled by another.

The occupation exacerbates a crisis it purports to cure.

Mr Blair says British and American troops will stay until the job is done, but their very presence means Iraq will never be at peace.



“It Looked Like A Concentration Camp”

War Profiteers Treat Iraq Employees Like Slaves: Garbage For Food, No Protection From Attack; Often No Pay

As for living conditions, TCNs “ate outside in 140 degree heat,” she says. American contractors and U.S. troops ate at the air-conditioned Pegasus Dining Facility featuring a short-order grill, salad, pizza, sandwich and ice cream bars under the KBR logistics contract.

“TCNs had to stand in line with plates and were served something like be curry and fish heads from big old pots,” Reynolds says incredulously. “It looked like a concentration camp.”

October 3rd, 2005 by David Phinney, Special to CorpWatch. [Excerpt]

Jing Soliman left his family in the Philippines for what sounded like a sure thing--a job as a warehouse worker at Camp Anaconda in Iraq. His new employer, Prime Projects International (PPI) of Dubai, is a major, but low-profile, subcontractor to Halliburton's multi-billion-dollar deal with the Pentagon to provide support services to U.S. forces.

But Soliman wouldn't be making anything near the salaries-- starting \$80,000 a year and often topping \$100,000-- that Halliburton's engineering and construction unit, Kellogg, Brown & Root (KBR) pays to the truck drivers, construction workers, office workers, and other laborers it recruits from the United States.

Instead, the 35-year-old father of two anticipated \$615 a month – including overtime. For a 40-hour work week, that would be just over \$3 an hour. But for the 12-hour day, seven-day week that Soliman says was standard for him and many contractor employees in Iraq, he actually earned \$1.56 an hour.

Tens of thousands of such TNC laborers have helped set new records for the largest civilian workforce ever hired in support of a U.S. war. They are employed through complex layers of companies working in Iraq.

At the top of the pyramid-shaped system is the U.S. government which assigned over \$24 billion in contracts over the last two years. Just below that layer are the prime contractors like Halliburton and Bechtel.

Below them are dozens of smaller subcontracting companies-- largely based in the Middle East --including PPI, First Kuwaiti Trading & Contracting and Alargan Trading of Kuwait, Gulf Catering, Saudi Trading & Construction Company of Saudi Arabia. Such companies, which recruit and employ the bulk of the foreign workers in Iraq, have experienced explosive growth since the invasion of Iraq by providing labor and services to the more high-profile prime contractors.

The menial wages paid to TCNs working for the regional contractors may be the most significant factor in the Pentagon's argument that outsourcing military support is far more cost-efficient for the U.S. taxpayer than using its own troops to maintain camps and feed its ranks.

But there is also a human cost to this savings.

Numerous former American contractors returning home say they were shocked at conditions faced by this mostly invisible, but indispensable army of low-paid workers.

TCNs frequently sleep in crowded trailers and wait outside in line in 100 degree plus heat to eat "slop."

Many are said to lack adequate medical care and put in hard labor seven days a week, 10 hours or more a day, for little or no overtime pay.

Few receive proper workplace safety equipment or adequate protection from incoming mortars and rockets. When frequent gunfire, rockets and mortar shell from the ongoing conflict hits the sprawling military camps, American contractors slip on helmets and bulletproof vests, but TCNs are frequently shielded only by the shirts on their backs and the flimsy trailers they sleep in.

Adding to these dangers and hardships, some TCNs complain publicly about not being paid the wages they expected.

Others say their employers use "bait-and-switch" tactics: recruiting them for jobs in Kuwait or other Middle Eastern countries and then pressuring them to go to Iraq. All of these problems have resulted in labor disputes, strikes and on-the-job protests.

While the exact number of TCNs working in Iraq is uncertain, a rough estimate can be gleaned from Halliburton's own numbers, which indicate that TCNs make up 35,000 of KBR's 48,000 workers in Iraq employed under sweeping contract for military support. Known as the Logistics Civilian Augmentation Program (LOGCAP), this contract -- by far the largest in Iraq -- is now approaching the \$15 billion mark. Citing security concerns, however, the Houston-headquartered company and several other major contractors declined to release detailed figures on the workforce that is estimated to be 100,000 or more.

The TCNs not only do much of the dirty work, but, like others working for the U.S. military, risk and sometimes lose their lives. Many are killed in mortar attacks; some are shot. Others have been taken hostage before meeting their death.

The Pentagon keeps no comprehensive record of TCN casualties. But the Georgia-based nonprofit, Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, estimates that TCNs make up more than 100 of the estimated 269 civilian fatalities. The number of unreported fatalities could be much higher, while unreported and life-altering injuries are legion.

Soliman was one TCN who barely escaped death on the night of May 11, 2004, when his living trailer at Camp Anaconda was blown apart by a bomb attack.

"The Army treated us like friends," he said, boasting of a certificate the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers awarded him in recognition of his service as a warehouse worker who handled and received food supplies for the camp.

His memories of PPI are less congenial. His managers were foul-mouthed and verbally abusive and lunches served on the job sites were unfit to eat, Soliman said. PPI restricted employees to two 5-minute phone calls home a month and deducted the cost from their paychecks.

"They were \$10 more expensive than at the PX (the retail store on the military base), but if they see you making a call at another location, they would send you home," Salomon said.

A number of former KBR supervisors say they don't know why TCNs continue working in Iraq when they face much more brutal working conditions and hours than what their American and European co-workers would tolerate.

"TCNs had a lot of problems with overtime and things," recalls Sharon Reynolds of Kirbyville, Texas. "I remember one time that they didn't get paid for four months."

"They don't get sick pay and if PPI had insurance, they sure didn't talk about it much," Reynolds recalls. "TCNs had a lot of problems with overtime and things. ...I had to go to bat for them to get shoes and proper clothing,"

As for living conditions, TCNs "ate outside in 140 degree heat," she says. American contractors and U.S. troops ate at the air-conditioned Pegasus Dining Facility featuring a short-order grill, salad, pizza, sandwich and ice cream bars under the KBR logistics contract.

"TCNs had to stand in line with plates and were served something like be curry and fish heads from big old pots," Reynolds says incredulously. "It looked like a concentration camp."

And even when it came to basic safety, the TCNs faced a double standard. "They didn't have personal protection equipment to wear when there was an alert," Reynolds said. "Here we are walking around with helmets and vests because of an alert and they are just looking at us wondering what's going on."

PPI in Dubai has failed to respond to numerous phone calls about the accusations of mistreatment. "I don't think anyone will want to comment." said a representative who answered the phone and decline to provide phone numbers or e-mail addresses of company executives.

There is little public information about PPI, but other contractors say the company's leading officers boast of a close association with Halliburton and say that it was formed by staff who previously worked with local firms sponsoring Halliburton's business activities in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Several sources say PPI was active as a major Halliburton subcontractor in Bosnia and at the high-security prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Halliburton spokesperson Melissa Norcross denied that the company has ownership or investment ties with PPI. The Halliburton unit is proud of its employees and subcontractors "who daily face danger to support the troops serving in Iraq and the Middle East," said Norcross, adding that Halliburton requires all subcontractors to provide acceptable living and working conditions for its workers.

Former KBR supervisors say they frequently witnessed subcontractors failing to meet required conditions , while some TCNs share horror stories with claims that they were falsely recruited, believing they were signing up for work in Kuwait and then having their contract changed to Iraq.

"I had no idea that I would end up in Iraq" says Ramil Autencio, who signed with MGM Worldwide Manpower and General Services in the Philippines. The 37-year-old air conditioning maintenance worker thought he would be working at Crown Plaza Hotel in Kuwait for \$450 a month.

Once in Iraq, Autencio found that there were no air conditioners to install or maintain, so he spent 11 hours a day "moving boulders" to fortify the camps, first at Camp Anaconda and then at Tikrit.

Food was inadequate and workers were not getting paid, he says. "We ate when the Americans had leftovers from their meals. If not, we didn't eat at all."

The Washington Post lays out an intricate recruiting scheme involving dining service workers from India who were lost in a maze of five recruiters and subcontractors on several continents. The Indians claimed to have been falsely recruited for jobs in Kuwait, only to end up in Iraq. During their time at a military camp in the war zone, they lacked adequate drinking water, food, health care, and security, according to the July 1, 2004 article.

But cared for or not, hundreds of Filipinos in Iraq face being fired for staging labor strikes and sickouts to protest their treatment at military camps. In May 2005, 300 Filipinos went on strike at Camp Cook against PPI and KBR. The workers were soon joined by 500 others from India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal to protest working conditions and pay, according to the Manila Times. The dispute was settled with intervention from the Philippines Department of Foreign Affairs.

At the time of the strike, the Philippines offered the strikers free flights back to the Philippines, an invitation first made in April when the Philippines reiterated its ban on work in Iraq. The offer sparked concern at the U.S. embassy in Manila, according to news reports, because a loss of Filipino workers threatened military support services in Iraq.

Other strikes have gone unreported, recalls former KBR employee Paul Dinsmore. Hired as a carpenter, he later transferred to Logistics as a heavy truck driver at Camp Speicher, a sprawling 24-square-mile installation near Tikrit in northern Iraq. Dinsmore says the work crews he supervised at the former Iraqi airbase were made up of Hindus, Pakistanis, Nepalese, and Filipinos working for First Kuwaiti.

Randy McDale, who rose to be a KBR foreman for heavy construction equipment at Camp Victory and other installations near the Baghdad International Airport, confirmed many of the other contractors' and TCN's charges of miserable conditions and inadequate safety.

"Everyday was like T-bone steaks for us, but I would starve to death before eating what they had," he said of the workers with PPI. "Guys would just go and get lunch for them and bring it to the work site. The TCNs couldn't get it fast enough."

Earning about \$7,500 to \$8,000 a month before his promotion, McDale said many American workers saw a clear line between themselves and the TCNs. "There's a prejudice among some Americans that they are not equal and just labor force," he said. "Americans are supposed to be the experts."

The division was made all the more clear to McDale by TCNs' lack of protective armor for threat alerts and boots and hard hats for construction work. "Some were wearing sandals walking in the mud when it was winter and 40 degrees," he said of the Indians, Sri Lankans and Filipinos he worked with. "One guy didn't even have a coat."

KBR gave McDale grief after he requested 20 hard hats for his workers, he said. "I don't know why KBR wasn't giving PPI a hard time for not getting the right equipment. That's the way it works in the States. If a subcontractor isn't ready, you fire them."

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>



Faris Fa'iq Odeh, a few days shy of his 15th birthday, near the Muntar/Karni checkpoint in Occupied Gaza. He was shot in the neck and left to bleed to death. Ten days earlier he was photographed throwing stones at an Israeli tank. In spite of all the sufferings and oppression and against all the odds, the Palestinian will was never defeated.

NEW TESTIMONIES BY ISRAELI SOLDIERS

9.23.05 From: Adam Keller, The Other Israel, via MAX WATTS
For more, see: <http://otherisrael.home.igc.org/index.html>

Voices Of The Soldiers

By Yonathan Geffen
Ma'ariv, 23/9/2005

Sometimes you find in your postbox an envelope which must not be ignored.

Many letters beginning with "I am addressing you as a well-known columnist" turn out to contain some very touching but highly amateurish new novel or book of poetry, and with the best of my good will I don't really feel inclined to inflict samples of it on my readers.

But the envelope which I got this week from "Shovrim Shtika" (Breaking the Silence) was something I could not just quietly put on the pile marked "look at once upon a time".

It contained a slender booklet, utterly black in colour (which is highly appropriate). It contained the testimonies of soldiers who served in the Territories during the present Intifada, the kind of soldiers who don't often talk.

The criminal side of war is something you will not see on the evening news, nor will you see it in the Khaki Films produced by the talented Barabash brothers. The most true war books are those which tell of the eroding borderline between heroism and malignant moral degeneracy.

In one such, "Farewell to Arms", Hemingway took care to warn us the every war is a crime, even the most necessary and justified one - as he knew from personal experience.

I feel it as a nearly sacred duty to publicize excerpts from these Voices of the Soldiers (though I did not want to totally ruin your weekend, so I did not choose the worst ones.

After hearing these voices from the ground, you can't help thinking that there might be something to issuing an arrest warrant in London against an Israeli general accused of war crimes during the present Intifada.

I have concentrated on the testimonies from Nablus, which I left as they are - in the soldiers' own words, and without editing.

Don't shoot me, I am just the messenger.

Targeting The Children

The witness: 1st Sergeant, Paratroops
The Location: Jenin
Date: February-May 2003

Description:

We took up positions of 'Straw Widow' (a disguised ambush). We were told that this 'Straw Widow' was against armed people and against people climbing on our armed vehicles.

Our APCs (armed personnel carriers) were cruising 24 hours a day close to buildings (in Jenin), waiting for kids to climb on them and try to dislodge the top - mounted MG (machine gun) - and when the kids come, to shoot them.

We had fixed observation posts in houses inside Jenin's Casbah, the APCs were on the streets, below us. They were moving continuously.

We were expressly told that we were just waiting for someone to climb on an APC. We were ordered to shoot to kill. We quickly understood that we weren't expected

to deal with armed people, as no armed Palestinian would roam the streets with so many APCs around.

They (our authorities) were looking for children or plain people daring to climb on an APC or on any other armoured vehicle. We understood that from the talks with our officers.

After a day or two, a 12-year old kid climbed on one of the APCs. There were lots of guesses about his age. First they said he was 8, later, that he was 12. I don't know.

In any case he climbed on an APC and one of our sharpshooters killed him. I already mentioned, we were looking for kids. The neighbouring company also had an incident with a kid or teenager, climbing an APC, who was also killed. Some of us said that this whole operation was unnecessary as its purpose was to kill kids, while others said that it was very good.

Was it known that he was unarmed?

He was surely unarmed and he climbed on this.... No one asked you why you had two Xs (a mark on the rifle signalling a killed target), and if they were armed, they were legit targets.

The Wild West At The Nablus Casbah

The witness: 1st Sergeant

The Location: Nablus

Date: End of 2003

Description:

What disturbs me most, and what bothers me most is the lack of value of human life in the Territories. When my friend was killed, I caught myself suddenly saying 'Wallah' (exclamation of surprise) here's a man gone, in the middle of his life. A person whose life has stopped.

His aspirations, what he was, what he said, the happy moments of his life, his jokes, his friends. A man's life has lots of aspects, and all of a sudden, everything stopped. And then it dawned on me that this was the death of a human being and you start thinking 'Wallah' what about all these people we killed ?

And my team killed....innocent people, or at least apparently innocent people. Some were killed by mistake, really by mistake. But what's a mistake? Really—say 'we are sorry'. We killed your husband, your daughter, your child or your grandfather or whoever.

And there who were executed, on orders that in my opinion were illegal.

As I told you, the most disturbing thing to me is that there is an absolutely Wild West in the Territories. Brigade Commanders, Regiment Commanders and Company

Commanders do whatever comes to their mind. No one checks them, and no one stops them.

Many nights we went into the (Nablus) Casbah. Our firing orders were simply "2 to 4". That is: anyone you see in the Casbah between 2.00 am and 4.00 am should just be shot. These were the words: 'doomed to die'.

Words we heard from the CC (Company Commander) in the briefing. The CC gave us a briefing before every mission. Sometimes he said between 2 and 4 whoever wanders around the Casbah is doomed to die, or sometimes between 1 and 3: doomed to die.

It happened during the battle of the Casbah.

We took over a strategic building, set up positions there, and one of the sharpshooters identified a man on the roof. The man was on a roof about two roofs away from us. I think he was between 50 to 70 m from the sharpshooter. Unarmed, I looked at the man with a night vision binoculars. He was unarmed.

It was 2AM: an unarmed man on a rooftop, turning around. We reported it to the PC (Platoon Commander) who ordered 'Take him down'. He (the sharpshooter) shot and took him down. The PC, in a radioed message, actually sealed the man's fate to die.

An unarmed man!

Did you see that he was unarmed?

I saw with my own eyes that the man was unarmed. He (the sharpshooter) also reported the report said: 'an unarmed man on the roof'.

The PC interpreted it that the man was an observer. He interpreted that the man was an observer (for the terrorists) ...

I myself didn't shoot, a fellow soldier shot and killed him.

And you start thinking that in the US death sentences are imposed, and on every sentence there are thousands of appeals, as they take it very seriously, judges, academically trained people, and there are demonstrations, and so on.

Actually a 26-year-old man, my PC, imposed a death sentence on an unarmed man.

Who was he? What's that 'an observer?' So what? Is that enough of a reason to kill him?

And how did he know he was an observer? He obviously didn't know. All he knew was that there was an unarmed man on top of the roof, and he ordered to kill him, which, in my opinion was an illegitimate order, and we carried the order out, and killed a human being. The man died. In my opinion that was outright murder. And that wasn't the only case.

We entered at 2AM, and at 4AM the sharpshooter's position, of which I was part, identified a man carrying a bag. I, too, saw the man this time. The man walks on Jama Al Kabir Street, carrying a bag in his hand, between 3AM and 4AM. When this was reported to the squad commander and to the PC, the order was given to 'take him down'.

He was shot, taken down. Killed. A man fell. Something in order of 70 m from the house.

Then the jeep of the PC's CP (Command post) came and 'confirmed kill'. A really brutal 'confirm kill': throwing two grenades on the body that smashed it completely. Then they opened the bag to see what's in it and found: pitot (pitah breads). Pitot!

An Eighty Year Old With A Bullet In His Gut

Witness: Staff sergeant
Place of Incident: Nablus

Description:

There were operations titled 'Looking For Trouble'. What does 'Looking For Trouble' mean? It means going on a patrol, touring the nablus Casbah, hope someone will shoot at us, and that we get into combat.

Now, when one says that 'fire was exchanged, it does not mean... people do not understand that 'exchange of fire' (usually) means that the Palestinians shot a bullet, one or two bullets from a Kalashnikov or a gun or I don't know what, and that this is usually followed by the soldiers shooting back, spraying, shooting quite freely everywhere...

So "fire exchange" is not really fire exchange. It is one initial shot of theirs, and spraying in all directions of ours.

Almost never is there an identification of the source of the fire. This concept of fire sources is something nonexistent, you know.

Rarely does one identify a source of fire... Sources of fire – this is very relevant to this story – sources of fire means 360 degrees of shooting.

This is what 'sources of fire' means.

You don't know from where you are being shot at... It must be at us, because we are the only force in the Casbah...

So we were being shot at; for sure. The reaction to this shooting was... Usually when one shoots, the procedure is to get inside a house as quickly as possible, to get out of the alleys, to enter as quickly as possible into a house, and shoot.

Everyone is saying: "I identify" – and how can you tell if that person identified something or only imagined it, or I don't know – and shoots.

In this type of cases, whenever there is fire, it becomes a complete mess. You don't know what's right and what's left. Everyone is shooting...

It goes a bit like this: "Identify" – Boom Boom Boom. "Asking permission to open fire". Something like that. It is a complete mess. People shoot at water tanks, identify 20 different images in the vicinity, and shoot with out too much...

I was the commander. Someone tells me "I identify an image". – What am I supposed to tell him? "Keep an eye on it"? I've got nothing to say to him. What should I tell him? "Shoot it down"? –

It's an image – how can I tell what he identifies? I tell him "Keep an eye on it". The soldier, maybe because he was under pressure, or perhaps... I think...

Listen – all this business about people saying, "I was under pressure, I was scared", I think it is all bullshit. Because I don't remember... There is adrenalin, on action there is adrenalin, there is tension, but I don't remember ever being scared, or others being scared.

To be sure, it is a fact we were very cynical about this fear business and all. I think – and I can only speak here for myself – most of the shots I've taken, and I believe most of the shots of most IDF soldiers, and most of the things they identify, and all this pressure – you shoot not because you're scared, and not because you're a coward. It is because they want to mark that X on their rifles. One wants to go back and say – 'Hey, I put an X. I killed this, I killed that.' –

'Hey you came out a man, you killed a man.' So the finger is very easy on the trigger. In short: exchange of fire, end of the night, an eighty-year-old person, a bullet in his gut.

Where? Who found him?

The Red Cross. We didn't... we saw the Red Cross people taking his body out. We never came in contact with bodies. The Red Cross would always come. The family probably calls, alerts the Red Cross; that is it.

Another fire exchange casualty.

Weren't there talk, later, about why this old person died?

No. None. First of all, not every one feels... I told you, my opinion is that this was a stupid shooting that resulted in someone's death ... some people think: "Look, what is he expecting? There are fire exchanges. Why is he at the window anyway? What does he expect would happen? – If in your Kibbutz there were fire exchanges, would you stand at the window?" Some people couldn't care less about killing a person.

The Yossy Bachar Horror Show

Witness: Staff sergeant, Paratroops

Place of incident: Nablus

Date: end of 2003

Description:

In this operation we were supposed to enter the city. We called it "Yossi Bachar's Horror Show". (Colonel) Aviv Kohavi was replaced by Yossi Bachar.

You know, every new brigade commander wants to leave an impression, wants to make a big entrance. He got us into this completely useless operation...

There was this part when we put 'New- Jersey' roadblocks, those plastic roadblocks. So we put up these New Jerseys, and the kids there, those who throw stones all the time, would come and move them away. There was a mess.

We couldn't... In the beginning we would put the New Jerseys and the local residents would move them away, so we put it again, and then there were riots and stone throwing and it became a complete mess.

Then the battalion commander gave the order: "Whoever touches the roadblock, the New Jerseys, must be shot in the legs." Live ammunition. Shoot his legs. In my vehicle there was talk, and we asked whether he was out of his mind; a person touches the roadblock – are we to shoot him in the legs?

(We thought) he was just making noise.

Apparently, this specific battalion commander. thought very highly of setting personal example. In a roadblock he came to – I was not personally there, but the guys from the commander's own crew ... The man drove his jeep next to some New Jersey, and saw this kid touching it – apparently at some distance – and aimed at the kid's leg.

But, you know, instead of hitting the kid in the legs he hit him in the chest, and killed him.

For touching a New Jersey. If you'll excuse me, I do not think of touching a New Jersey as a reason for death.

How do you know the kid is dead?

We got back to base from this operation, we talked, and then the guys from the commander's crew say: "Hey guys, he killed a kid, he killed a kid."

They told us the story. People who saw it happen. I'm pretty sure. cannot think that someone went and checked his pulse, but not many kids survive a bullet in the chest.

These soldiers' testimonies tell of military service in an utterly impossible situation full of manifestly illegal orders, explicit orders to shoot civilians. revenge shootings reminiscent of third- rate Westerns, deliberate shooting of medical teams, mass "confirmation of death", a corrupt military apparatus, total moral indifference in all levels of the hierarchy.

The stories of soldiers expose not only the suffering of the people trampled underfoot, but also the hell which those who do the trampling go through. Every combat soldier knows that painful experiences can lodge in your subconscious (thanks, Freud!), to be sometimes completely forgotten - only to suddenly re-emerge in highly unpleasant ways. And in a certain way, the Territories are the subconscious of this country.

Every person reading this authentic and chilling document would agree with the organization which published them: an enlightened society cannot exist without a constant examination and criticism of the army, the organization holding the most power in the society. Therefore, we should raise our voice in calling for an independent commission of inquiry to check and expose these testimonies.

You can read the full testimonies on the Breaking the Silence website http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il/index_en.asp, or phone +972-50- 8454725 to organise a meeting or give new testimonies of your own.

Yonthan Geffen contact: geffen@maariv.co.il

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.

One day while I was in a bunker in Vietnam, a sniper round went over my head. The person who fired that weapon was not a terrorist, a rebel, an extremist, or a so-called insurgent. The Vietnamese individual who tried to kill me was a citizen of Vietnam, who did not want me in his country. This truth escapes millions.

**Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
December 13, 2004**

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