

GI SPECIAL 3C88:



Camp Casey, Crawford Texas

Photo from the I-R-A-Q (I Remember Another Quagmire) portfolio of Mike Hastie, US Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71. (For more of his outstanding work, contact at: hastiemike@earthlink.net) T)

“Don't Get Hurt”
“Don't Get Sick”

[Thanks to Don Bacon, The Smedley Butler Society, who sent this in.]

10.11.05 BY JOYCE RUSSELL, nwitimes

PORTAGE, INDIANA: For 27 years, Bob Rodriguez has given part of his life to the U.S. Army.



Portage resident Bob Rodriguez is a 27-year veteran of the Army Reserves who was discharged from active duty suddenly after suffering a brain aneurysm shortly after finishing a tour of duty. Rodriguez is now trying to find out why the Army took away his pay and benefits with little notice. (CASEY RIFFE, THE TIMES)

A reservist since 1978, he's been called to active duty twice. A medic, he spent two tours of duty in Panama and most recently spent 18 months away helping process soldiers in and out of the country from Fort Bragg, N.C. He serves with the Army Reserves 7203rd Support Unit based in Gary.

Rodriguez, 54, says the military is something he loves. It's in his blood. His grandfather served in World War I, his father in World War II. His oldest son, Rob, spent 10 years with the Marine Corps. His youngest son, Rick, a National Guard member, recently spent a tour of duty in Iraq.

"I recommend the Army to any young kid," he said recently. But then quickly added a caveat.

"But don't get hurt, don't get sick, because you don't know if they will take care of you," Rodriguez said.

For more than a month, Rodriguez has been battling with the Army he loves to do the right thing. On Sept. 2, in the middle of medical treatment for a line-of-duty medical condition, Rodriguez was discharged from active duty with 12 hours' notice, leaving him without insurance for a short time, without any income and without any real guidance.

An Army representative said the Army did what it was supposed to do, but a representative of the American Legion's national headquarters in Washington, D.C., says Rodriguez's story is all too familiar.

"This is not a crack (in the system), this is a major gap. They can't kick him to the curb and give him a tin cup," said Steve Robertson, a legislative lobbyist for the American Legion who has been working with Congress to improve the "seamless transition" from soldier to civilian.

Rodriguez's story began one night in June 2004.

After serving 18 months at Fort Bragg, Rodriguez's tour of duty was over. He drove 14 hours from North Carolina to his Portage home. He planned to take a week's vacation and then return to his civilian job as a salesman for a food broker in Chicago.

Tired, Rodriguez went to bed.

"The next morning, I got a call from my mom saying he was in the hospital," son Rob said.

Bob had suffered a brain aneurysm and was eventually airlifted to the University of Chicago Hospitals where he spent a week in the intensive care unit and remained hospitalized for nearly two months.

"I don't remember anything. They say I have a problem with short-term memory. I have to really, really think about what I did Saturday, but I can tell you what I did a year ago in Fort Bragg," Rodriguez said, adding he also suffers from severe headaches each day, has some problems walking and is continuing to undergo physical and occupational therapy as well as counseling.

After an initial glitch in the system, the Army agreed to keep Rodriguez on active duty until he could be released by his civilian doctors to return to work. His pay and medical benefits for himself, his wife Rosa and college-age daughter, Becky, would continue.

His two neurologists estimated Rodriguez would be released to return to work at the end of this year. His last visit to a military doctor was in February 2005. They last spoke to that doctor in May 2005 and the family was assured, they say, that Rodriguez would remain on active duty until he had completed treatment and was released by his civilian doctors.

Then, on Sept. 2, Rodriguez received a telephone call from military payroll in Fort Knox, Ky. He'd been medically cleared for active duty discharge in 12 hours. His pay would end, as would his insurance.

"They told me to go on unemployment. I said, 'I still have a job, but I'm waiting to be released by my doctors.' They said some general told them they needed to clear the dockets, that they have too many people on medical hold. I don't want to stay on forever. I just want to get better and get on with my life," Rodriguez said.

Since then, Rodriguez has been caught in a quagmire of red tape and bureaucracy. With the assistance of son Rob, they've visited unemployment offices. He was turned down. They've had appointments with the Veterans Administration. He doesn't qualify for insurance and a disability claim could take

six months. They've sought help from the Social Security Administration. They were told the administration could do nothing until he returns to work.

Waldron said the military doctor overseeing Rodriguez's case was ready to clear him for an active duty discharge in June, but granted a two-and-a-half-month extension at Rodriguez's request.

"In general terms, we've fixed you, we've gotten you healthy, you are fit to go back to your civilian job," Waldron said. "If the Army said you are good to go, but the other doctors said you were not, it would be between his civilian doctors, civilian job and Sgt. Rodriguez."

However, Waldron said Rodriguez's case may point to problems in the new community-based health care initiative, in particular, what to do with a returning soldier who may be caught in a gap such as Rodriguez's, when the military doctor and civilian doctor do not agree on the same time frame for a soldier to be released to return to his civilian job.

Robertson said what happened to Rodriguez should never have happened. He said Rodriguez should have not been discharged from active duty until either his medical condition was cleared by his own doctors or until a claim had been filed with the VA so that agency could have taken over his case.

"He should have had a seamless transition from active duty to the VA. There was a disconnect. The VA should have been aware of his case and awarded him a disability. It shouldn't have happened until a decision was made," Robertson said.

They also contacted U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky's office. A congressional aide has been working with the family, spokesman Justin Kish said. The aide discovered Rodriguez may be eligible for incapacitation pay -- something no one from the Army told them about.

"The congressman and (his chief of staff) Chuck Brimmer have been making calls on Mr. Rodriguez's behalf. We've followed up with the Army liaison and still waiting to see if he's eligible. We are trying to expedite the case," Kish said.

Army representatives were to contact Rodriguez on the incapacitation pay issue, but have not as yet.

Waldron said she has never heard of incapacitation pay.

Rodriguez has expedited his own care with his civilian doctors in order to get back to work as soon as possible. Moving up his December medical review to meeting with a doctor late last month where, said Rob Rodriguez, the doctors have agreed to release his father earlier than first advised, possibly sometime this month.

In the meantime, Rodriguez waits to hear from the Army as to why he was abruptly given an active duty discharge. He's still a member of the reserves, he says, planning to officially retire early next year.

That, in itself is an irony.

"I've been discharged off active duty status, but I'm still officially in the reserves. But they (his reserve unit) tell me I'm not well enough to perform my duties or to participate in the drills," he said.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

ONE SOLDIER KILLED AND TWO SOLDIERS WOUNDED BY AL ISKANDARIYAH IED

October 19, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 05-10-22C

LSA ANACONDA, BALAD, Iraq – One 56th Brigade Combat Team Soldier died as a result of his wounds and two Soldiers were wounded as a result of an improvised explosive device attack while conducting a combat logistics patrol at about 11:00 p.m. October 18, near Al Iskandariyah, Iraq.

The Soldiers were taken to a Coalition forces medical treatment facility.

SOLDIER KILLED, FOUR WOUNDED IN TIKRIT VEHICLE FIRE

10.19.05 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 05-10-23C

TIKRIT, Iraq – A Task Force Liberty Soldier was killed and four were wounded when their vehicle caught fire near Tikrit at about 6:00 p.m. Oct. 19.

Area Marine Dies

October 19, 2005 By David Royer, staff, The News Leader

GROTTOES — It was the only thing he wanted for his 17th birthday, Janey Harrah said, so she fought back the tears and signed her oldest son over to serve in the Marines.

Three years later, Lance Cpl. Daniel Bubb is on his way back home from Iraq, and Harrah again is fighting tears.

Her son was killed in combat Monday, one day shy of his 20th birthday.

"He was just a special boy," she said Tuesday. "He was brought up right."

Bubb was killed by gunfire about 10:15 a.m. Iraqi time Monday. A recipient of the Navy/Marine Corps Achievement medal, he had returned home briefly last October before deploying for a second tour in Iraq.

At Fort Defiance High School, where he graduated in 2003, Bubb ran track and played drums in the marching band.

"He was an extremely proud young man," Hill said. "He was just a real good, salt-of-the-earth type of individual."

Bubb's aunt, Julie Bubb, said she had spoken with her nephew by telephone hours before he was killed.

She sang him Happy Birthday, then the two looked at the full moon together.

"I said, 'We're not that far apart are we?' and then three hours later, he's dead," she said, sobbing.

Bubb leaves behind his mother, grandmother and two younger brothers.

Johnson Funeral Service in Grottoes has not yet announced funeral arrangements.

N.M. Marine Shot, Killed



Marine Lance Cpl. Chad Robert Hildebrandt, 22, of Springer, N.M., a 2003 graduate of Maxwell High School, was killed Oct. 17, 2005, in Rutba, Iraq. (AP Photo/Courtesy of Susan Robinson-Maxwell Municipal Schools)

October 18, 2005 Associated Press

A former Maxwell High School basketball player who left for Marine Corps boot camp only days after graduation has died while patrolling the Syrian border with Iraq, relatives said Tuesday.

Lance Cpl. Chad Robert Hildebrandt of Springer died Monday after being shot in the head while patrolling near the Syrian border.

Hildebrandt, who turned 22 last Wednesday, is the 18th service member from New Mexico killed in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Hildebrandt is survived by his parents, Bob and Colleen Hildebrandt of Springer, as well as two younger sisters. He was preceded in death by an infant brother.

Services are pending.

Amarillo Man Killed

10/19/05 KAMR-4

AMARILLO -- A hometown hero was killed in Iraq Tuesday.

According to a family representative, 31-year-old Staff Sergeant Tommy Ike Folks, Junior went to both Amarillo High and West Texas A&M.

Folks was in the Army. He had just gone back to Iraq after being in Amarillo for two weeks. The funeral will be in the next two weeks.

Soldier From Tonganoxie Killed

October 19, 2005 By Shawn Linenberger, The Lawrence Journal-World

Tonganoxie has lost one of its own in Iraq.

Lucas Frantz, a 2002 Tonganoxie High School graduate, died this week while serving in the Middle East.

Frantz was 22. He was a specialist in the Army.

News about the Tonganoxie graduate filtered through the Tonganoxie school district Tuesday.

Phil Jeannin, a Tonganoxie Junior High School physical education teacher, was Frantz' father-in-law. Jeannin's stepdaughter Kelly was Frantz' wife.

LeAnn Bond, also a P.E. teacher at the junior high, was told someone needed to cover Jeannin's classes mid-morning.

Later that morning, a school official told Bond that Jeannin had met with military personnel.

"Then we knew," Bond said. "That's when I got a sick feeling in my stomach."

Bond described Frantz as "always having a smile on his face."

"He was a good kid to give a hard time," Bond said.

In the summer of 2001, Frantz had attended boot camp in Georgia before starting his senior year at THS.

Before this Friday's football game at Beatty Field, the team will retire Frantz' football jersey, No. 69. "What's weird is we have every lineman number used, except this one," Elston said as he folded the jersey.

The American flag will fly at half-staff at the game, Elston said. Fellow classmates who played with Frantz as seniors in the fall of 2001 have been contacted for the ceremony, Elston said.

Tonganoxie's opponent Friday will be De Soto. When THS played De Soto in 2001, Frantz blew out his knee. He returned, though, to play the final three games of his senior year that fall.

Junior high teachers remembered Frantz as a hard-working student with personality. Chris Weller, an industrial arts instructor, said Frantz always was positive. "He was a kid who always was really cheerful and in a good mood," Weller said. "An extremely hard worker for me. Just overall a very likable kid."

Weller also recalled a day when local residents were re-roofing a Tonganoxie resident's home. "He came over and volunteered the whole darn day," Weller said. "If he wouldn't have shown up, we would never have gotten the thing finished.

"He was more mature than anybody else his age."

In the end, Frantz left many people in Tonganoxie proud of their former football-player-turned-military-soldier. His loss also left many in disbelief.

"It was pretty disturbing because he was such a wonderful person," Elston said.

British Soldier From 1st Battalion The Coldstream Guards Killed

19th October 2005 MOD

It is with deep regret that the Ministry of Defence can confirm that a British soldier from the 1st Battalion the Coldstream Guards died as a result of injuries sustained from a roadside bomb at approximately 2320 hrs local time in Basra, Iraq, on Tuesday 18 October 2005.

His next of kin have been informed.

The Battle Of Tal Afar: “This Enemy Is Not A Rabble” “They've Even Removed Their Dead,” Said A Green Beret, Not Really Believing It Himself.

September 26, 2005 By MICHAEL WARE, TIME Magazine. [Excerpt]

The troops call it Route Barracuda, a patch of terrorist territory in the northern Iraqi town of Tall 'Afar, where thousands of U.S. and Iraqi forces have converged for the biggest battle in nearly a year.

On this sweaty September afternoon, the neighborhood is living up to its name. A squad of U.S. commandos enters an abandoned house and clambers up to the roof. The 2-foot lip doesn't give much cover from the bullets raining down on them from insurgent gunmen firing from a building 200 yards to the north.

Rounds flying at supersonic speed crack inches from the troops' ears. "Get down, goddammit," a Green Beret hollers to his Iraqi counterparts. On their bellies, two weapons sergeants start loading an 84-mm M-3 antitank recoilless rifle. "They got guns," says a commando shouldering a rocket launcher. "Let's f_____ do this." He kneels, exposing himself without any choice, takes aim and fires. Whump. The top of the insurgents' building blossoms black smoke.

Over the cacophony of machine-gun fire and explosions, the leader of the commando team bellows to his men that the insurgents have spotted them. "Displace, displace--they got our position!" he yells, as the troops vacate the open rooftop in a stooped sprint.

The offensive in Tall 'Afar, which wound down last week, was this year's Fallujah--a mass assault involving 7,000 U.S. and Iraqi soldiers and hundreds of Bradleys, battle tanks, artillery pieces, all combined with AC-130 Spectre gunships, F-16 fighter jets and attack helicopters.

Waiting for the Americans were hundreds of hardened local fighters, small bands of foreign zealots and, in the notorious Sarai quarter of the city, a labyrinth of medieval alleyways laced with booby traps and roadside bombs.

Stretched thin fighting rebels in places like al-Qaim and Mosul, the military dedicated just a single infantry battalion to an area twice the size of Connecticut.

In May, however, more than 4,000 troops of the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, a unit with a unique combination of tanks, Bradleys and helicopters that is back for its second tour in Iraq, were hastily rerouted from the south to the Tall 'Afar region, where they began disrupting the insurgents' supply lines and safe havens.

They paid a price: two platoons alone saw a third of their 50-odd soldiers killed or wounded in less than four months, and hardy Abrams tanks and Bradley vehicles burned in the streets. "A day can go from good to bad in a heartbeat in there," says reconnaissance helicopter pilot Captain Matthew Junko.

And so last month the regiment's commander, Colonel H.R. McMaster, told his troops what he had been itching to say all along: it was time to take back Tall 'Afar.

The order for the main force to move comes on Sept. 2.

That day, in an armored squadron pushing into the city from the north and the south, Grim Troop's Blue Platoon, dubbed the Dragoons, enters from the southeast along an artery code-named Route Corvette, into a predominantly Shi'ite neighborhood. Within 30 minutes, they come under sniper fire.

A three-man sniper team from the elite Iraqi Counterterrorism Task Force (akin to the U.S. Delta Force), with a pair of U.S. special-forces liaisons, takes positions in front of the platoon, scanning for muzzle flashes, as an Abrams tank 50 yards up Corvette fires its 120-mm cannon at an insurgent mortar team, followed by a burst of .50-cal. machine-gun fire.

A helicopter swoops ahead, firing a Hellfire missile at the insurgent position to help clear Blue Platoon's path. The helicopters kill at least a dozen insurgents by firing missiles into safe houses.

At day's end Blue Platoon pulls out of the city to a rendezvous point in the desert, but fresh intelligence suggests the insurgents are displaying their mettle and have fallen back into well-defended positions. This enemy is not a rabble.

The Dragoons re-enter Tall 'Afar at 6 a.m. the next day, linking up with two Iraqi army infantry companies of Kurdish peshmerga and the U.S. special-force teams attached to them. The mission is to begin "draining the pond," as U.S. officers call it--clearing civilians from what is about to become a battlefield so that the insurgents could not blend back into the fold.

The scenes are heart wrenching: the Kurds burst into houses as families gather for breakfast, ordering them at gunpoint onto the street with only the possessions and provisions they can grab in a few seconds. Women wail, and children cling to their mothers' sides, as they head to temporary camps on the city's fringe.

Although explosions can be heard in the distance, the town takes on an eerie silence. "The city has never been this quiet," says a U.S. special-forces officer. "They're either getting ready, or they've left." Captain Brian Oman, the leader of the Dragoons, wonders if the homegrown "bad guys" are going to put down their weapons and sneak out with the civilians. "We'll be fighting them again in a week," he says.

It doesn't take that long. In the morning, the U.S. and Kurdish special forces begin moving north, toward Sarai, through the stone-paved alleyways. Within minutes, they are ambushed. The U.S. commanders rush machine-gun teams to the rooftops to pour out suppressing fire as the others advance below, clearing houses as they go.

Anguished families come rushing out, caught in the cross fire and herded by the soldiers to the relative safety of the edge of town. A little girl cups her ears with her hands and wails each time firing breaks out. A 5-year-old boy gingerly waves a white flag. Insurgents duck and weave across housetops a few blocks away, trading fire as they withdraw back into their nest in the Sarai neighborhood.

The Green Berets pursue them onto Route Barracuda. Fire fights rage from one side of the street to the other, the combatants as close as 55 yards apart. Bradleys from Red Platoon pull forward, pounding the enemy firing positions; then the insurgents shift buildings and fire from new locations. Only after an Apache attack helicopter sends missiles into two insurgent buildings does the firing stop.

But the next day begins with a blistering fire fight.

With the insurgents sniping at the soldiers on the front lines, the U.S. troops blast the area with cannon fire, obliterating nearby shops and houses from where gunmen had been shooting just moments before.

The fighting is so close, you could throw rocks and hit the man trying to kill you. Buildings erupt in smoke and flames. F-16 fighter jets roar overhead. "We got people moving around on rooftops in the vicinity of the mosque," the Green Beret team sergeant reports on radio. Six Hellfire missiles come barreling in, detonating 80 yards away and showering rubble onto the troops' helmets. Pulling out, the Renegade Troop Apache pilot calls merrily to the team sergeant on the ground, "Stay safe, and kill some bad guys."

The insurgents withdraw, only to resurface in a flanking movement from the west, trying to snipe at Green Berets looking to the east, sparking another long fire fight.

When things quiet down, it isn't for long.

Eight Delta men are wounded, two so seriously that an AC-130 Spectre gunship has to give a medevac covering fire to get the wounded to a combat-hospital operating theater in time to save them. Elsewhere, an improvised explosive device detonates under a Bradley fighting vehicle, blowing off its lid and killing a young medic who, though based in the rear, had volunteered to enter the fighting fray. A few feet forward, the toll would have been worse, killing the Bradley commander and his gunner. "This is a war of inches," says a shaken U.S. officer.

Across Iraq, the prize for the U.S. remains a clear-cut outcome, some indication that the U.S. is doing anything more than playing whack-a-mole with the insurgents.

In Tall 'Afar, the U.S. and Iraqi troops awake on the morning of Sept. 6 to the sound of messages being broadcast over loudspeakers instructing civilians to leave. At mid-morning, families begin to emerge across Route Barracuda waving sad little white flags.

As a family shuffles past, a Green Beret weapons sergeant bellows for them to be stopped. "Who's that red-headed guy?" he asks. The men are sifted out, five identified as suspicious. Flashes of defiance and anger raise suspicions. "Hey, flex-cuff 'em," orders a Green Beret. Chemical swabs read positive for explosives on two of the men. Masked informants identify three--all brothers--as snipers, the other two as a rocket-propelled-grenade team.

Across the battlefield, insurgents attempting to slip out of Sarai mix with civilians. Five dressed as women are snared, one with fake breasts. Others force children to hold their hands as though they are family. Some are caught; others are not.

The two-day grace for civilians to evacuate stretches to a four-day standstill, as Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jafaari orders a tactical "pause."

With his nation divided along sectarian lines over the Tall 'Afar operation, al-Jafaari insists on assurances from military commanders that the battle will be a decisive success.

The wait leaves the troops embittered, their momentum lost to what they see as political calculations.

"This is turning into a goat fuck," bemoans an angry Green Beret.

By the time al-Jaafari approves the dreaded assault into al-Qaeda's heartland, it fizzles. Not a hostile shot is fired, not a single enemy fighter is found. Safe houses and weapons caches are empty, cleansed like an operating room. Only one blackened corpse, left rotting for days, is found.

"They've even removed their dead," said a Green Beret, not really believing it himself.

What did Tall 'Afar accomplish?

At best, the picture is mixed. McMaster did succeed in driving the insurgents out, denying al-Qaeda its Tall 'Afar base and disrupting its networks. Intelligence picked up in Tall 'Afar led to the arrest last week of Abu Fatima, al-Qaeda's military emir in Mosul. The cost in U.S. lives was minimal: only four died in the two weeks of fighting since Sept. 2.

At the same time, many of the insurgents who had holed up in the city got away because of the indecision of Iraqi political leaders. And while the Pentagon hailed the operation for displaying the improved mettle of the U.S.-backed Iraqi forces, the operation showed that deep sectarian and ethnic schisms still exist among the Iraqi troops.

With the war wrapped into so many political knots in Baghdad and Washington and the insurgents proving so resilient, the fight in Tall 'Afar, as in Iraq, is far from over.

On the ground in the deserted city, the U.S. is pouring money into reconstruction in a bid to win local opinion. But there is every reason to believe the violence will return and the U.S. will be forced to fight there again--with the insurgents betting that the Americans will lose a bit more of their will and support each time they go back.

In a house overrun during the battle, a newspaper sits in a living room, its pages brimming with pictures of a U.S. assault in the city. Dated Sept. 2-10, the report could have been an account of this month's battle, but it isn't. It is already a year old.

REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



A US soldier at the scene of a car bomb attack in Baghdad, Oct. 10 2005. (AP Photo/Mohammed Uraibi)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Occupation Troops Kill Collaborator Troops

October 18, 2005 By Noor Khan, Associated Press

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — U.S.-led coalition forces killed four police officers after mistaking them for militants during an operation in southern Afghanistan, a provincial spokesman said Tuesday.

Coalition troops opened fire at the police in Kandahar province's Maywand district late Monday after spotting the officers firing their weapons into the air and mistaking them for Taliban rebels, Kandahar Gov. Asadullah Khalid said.

He said the shooting occurred while the coalition forces were hunting for militants thought to be in the area.

A fifth officer was injured in the shooting, and five police fled the area but were later found, he said. It was not immediately clear why the police were firing into the air.

Assorted Resistance Action

October 18, 2005 By Noor Khan, Associated Press

Militants shot dead a police intelligence officer as he was walking in Zabul province,

A roadside bomb exploded Tuesday on the main road linking Kandahar to the western city of Herat, wounding three Afghan guards working for an American security company, Khalid said.

<p>IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATION</p>

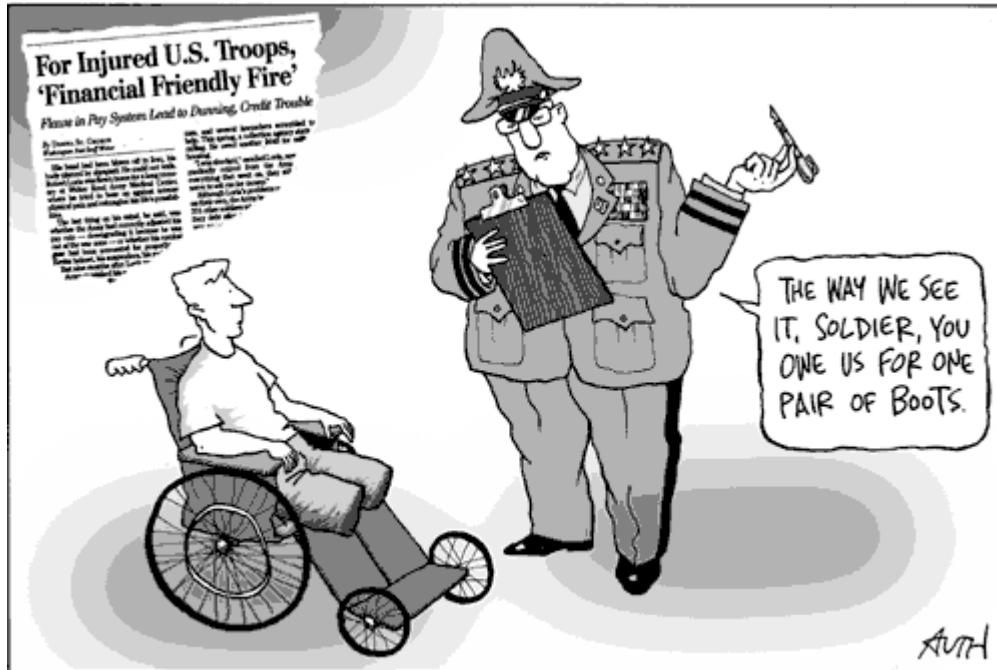
TROOP NEWS

2,460 More Reservists Off To Bush's Imperial Slaughterhouse

October 19, 2005 U.S. Department of Defense News Release No. 1060-05

This week, the Army and Air Force announced an increase in the number of reservists on active duty in support of the partial mobilization. The net collective result is 2,460 more reservists mobilized than last week.

Pay Cut Off For Unconscious Iraq Vet In VA Hospital: He's Listed As AWOL



10-16-05 THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER. UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

"The most stressful part of getting your leg blown off isn't losing your leg," he says. "It's all the bureaucracy that you have to go through afterwards."

The problems have imposed the greatest hardship on wounded soldiers, who have to battle over financial problems even as they cope with physical ones.

10/24/05 By Alex Kingsbury and Julian E. Barnes, U.S. News & World Report

Having nearly lost his life in Iraq, the 1st Infantry Division soldier became lost to the Army payroll system because of a paperwork snafu as he lay comatose in a veterans hospital near Chicago.

As a result, an Army bureaucrat classified him as absent without leave and cut off his pay, as is sometimes done when the system loses track of a soldier. The theory is that a GI wrongly listed as AWOL will start shouting and then the issue can be resolved. "That may work for an able-bodied soldier," says Michael Hurst, a former Army finance officer, "but it doesn't work so well for a guy in a coma in Chicago."

The case of the AWOL grunt in the coma may be particularly egregious, but it exemplifies the widespread problems with an Army pay system that of-ten doesn't

get the numbers right. The problems have imposed the greatest hardship on wounded soldiers, who have to battle over financial problems even as they cope with physical ones.

An internal audit conducted earlier this year by Hurst, then a captain in an Army finance battalion, showed that 82 percent of the 1st Infantry Division soldiers wounded in Iraq had "significant errors" in their paychecks.

Based on his own investigation of 123 wounded 1st Infantry Division soldiers, and another examination of problems with soldiers stationed at Fort Hood, Texas, Hurst estimates in his March 2005 audit that up to 4,000 of the soldiers seriously injured in Iraq have encountered payroll problems.

Congress has already raised concerns about National Guard and Reserve soldiers who have had pay problems, and the House Government Reform Committee plans further hearings this week to examine the military's attempts to improve that pay system.

But the audit of the 1st Infantry Division shows that the errors are not confined to reservists. Indeed, the Government Accountability Office, in the wake of the hearings, has expanded an ongoing investigation to include pay problems with active-duty troops.

Staff Sgt. Eugene Simpson, who was paralyzed from the waist down in a roadside bomb attack in Iraq. He was evacuated to Walter Reed Army Medical Center and then to a veterans hospital in Richmond, Va. While Simpson was in the Richmond hospital, his pay was suddenly reduced, then cut off altogether.

One month the Army paid him \$472, the next month nothing, and then he received a check for \$870.

It turned out the Army had docked his paycheck because he had been overpaid by several thousand dollars--since he was no longer overseas. But Simpson's wife and children were still living in Germany, where Simpson had been based, and his injuries were adding to their bills--meaning he had already spent the "extra" money. Simpson, now retired, feels he had earned the money the government took back. "I returned injured," Simpson says. "I wasn't on vacation. I was still fighting the same war. It's just that I wasn't in Iraq; I was fighting for my life."

Congressional hearings in February highlighted pay problems encountered by National Guard troops and reservists, who deal with an even more labyrinthine pay system since they move on and off active-duty status.

"Soldiers are dropped from one system and not picked up by another and caught in between," says Gayle Fischer, assistant director of the forensic audits and special investigations at the GAO. "Just researching and tracking one soldier's specific pay problem is difficult and extremely time consuming."

Debt collectors. The GAO is currently investigating cases where wounded soldiers were referred to collection agencies for Army-related debts.

Army Staff Sgt. Ryan Kelly's right leg was blown off two years ago when a bomb exploded near his convoy on a highway outside Baghdad. When he retired in August 2004, the Army owed him reimbursement money for travel expenses and vacation time. He was shocked then, in January, when he received a letter from the Defense Department threatening to report him to a collection agency for a \$2,232 debt.

As is turned out, the Army erroneously credited Kelly, an Army reservist, with two weeks of active-duty service months after he'd left the service. It took Kelly several months, and a few calls to Congress, to clear his credit history, but his dispute with the Army over the debt continues.

"The most stressful part of getting your leg blown off isn't losing your leg," he says. "It's all the bureaucracy that you have to go through afterwards."

Part of the problem is that the Army pay stub is amazingly complicated to read, and advance warning that pay will be docked is anything but clearly presented.

[Now check this out. As they say in school, "contrast and compare."]

Pentagon Refusing To Inspect For Fraud In Use Of Iraq Billions

[They get real hard-ass with an unconscious wounded Iraq War Vet, and at the same time don't care who's stealing billions in Iraq. Can you come up with a better definition of "the enemy domestic?" Revolutions have been made for smaller reasons, and rightly so.]

Oct. 18, 2005 By Seth Borenstein, KNIGHT RIDDER

WASHINGTON - The chief Pentagon agency in charge of investigating and reporting fraud and waste in Defense Department spending in Iraq quietly pulled out of the war zone a year ago -- leaving what experts say are gaps in the oversight of how more than \$140 billion is being spent.

The Defense Department's inspector general sent auditors into Iraq when the war started more than two years ago to ensure that taxpayers were getting their money's worth for everything from bullets to meals-ready-to-eat.

The auditors were withdrawn in the fall of 2004 because other agencies were watching spending, too.

Yet experts say those other agencies don't have the expertise, access and broad mandate that the inspector general has -- and don't make their reports public.

That means that the bulk of money being spent in Iraq doesn't get public scrutiny, leaving the door open for possible waste, fraud and abuse, experts say.

A Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction has a 45-person staff in Baghdad to monitor \$18.4 billion in contracts.

In contrast, the Defense Department inspector general, whose responsibility includes reviewing the \$142 billion earmarked for the military, doesn't have a single auditor or accountant in Iraq tracking spending, Knight Ridder has found.

Spokeswoman Lt. Col. Rose-Ann Lynch, of the Defense Department IG's office, acknowledged Monday that the agency has no auditors in Iraq and that its criminal investigative arm "ceased operations in Iraq in October 2004."

Since the war in Iraq began, government spending has been tainted by charges of inflated pricing, double billing, bogus shipments of goods and kickbacks.

Investigations of fraudulent contracting practices have focused on the rebuilding effort, where the special inspector general found millions of dollars in cash either missing or unaccounted for.

Between October 2004 and this month, only one of the 107 audits listed on the Defense Department inspector general's Web site is about Iraq.

By contrast, the reconstruction inspector general has completed 25 audits and has 60 investigations under way.

"The IG is probably the best-equipped office to look at the broad range of problems and possible misconduct that will arise in Iraq," said Danielle Brian, executive director of the Project On Government Oversight. "It's really hard to fathom how the IG could have thought how it wasn't worth having his people on the ground in Iraq scrutinizing the situation."

“Sending Another Young Kid To His Death”

19 Oct 2005 Scotsman

A mother whose son was killed fighting in Iraq said the death there of another British soldier made anti-war campaigners even angrier and more determined.

Rose Gentle, who was in Downing Street with Labour MP Clare Short to deliver a letter calling for the Government to get Parliamentary approval before declaring war, said Tony Blair should feel "guilty as hell".

Mrs Gentle's 19-year-old son Fusilier Gordon Gentle, from Glasgow, was killed in a roadside bombing in Basra in June 2004.

She said: "The more boys get killed the more angry we get because we shed a tear for them as well and their families.

"Every time you turn on the telly and see that another soldier has died it just reminds you of our own boys being killed.

"Mr Blair is sitting over there in Parliament and I hope he feels guilty as hell sending another young kid to his death."

Clutching a picture of her son and with tears in her eyes, Mrs Gentle explained that she was supporting Ms Short's Private Member's Bill because it meant people "would have to find out the truth about the war" before it was declared.

"Something stronger has to be done," she said.

"How many more boys getting killed out there is it going to take before Tony Blair says enough is enough?"

VA Warns Of Prescription Scam

October 19, 2005 By Karen Jowers, Army Times staff writer

Department of Veterans Affairs officials are warning veterans and their family members about a new fraud tactic that is making the rounds.

Veterans have reported getting calls from people identifying themselves as part of the "Patient Care Group" and claiming that VA prescriptions are now being dispensed through them.

Veterans are told they must provide credit card information if they want to continue receiving their prescriptions, according to a fraud alert issued by the VA Midwest Health Care Network.

VA has not changed its process for receiving and dispensing prescriptions, the alert states. Veterans should contact their local VA medical facility if they have questions about VA prescriptions or services.

Fraud alerts have been issued through VA hospitals nationwide warning that no one connected with the VA would call a veteran and ask for a credit card number for any reason.

While the scam seems to be focused on the Midwest, it could happen anywhere. Veterans and their family members, especially older veterans who may not be as cautious with such phone calls, should remain vigilant, a VA official said.

The Federal Trade Commission advises consumers to refuse to give their credit card numbers or other personal information over the telephone unless they have initiated the phone call and are confident they are dealing with a reputable business. Anyone who

has given this information to such a caller, and is concerned about possible illegal use of their personal data, should contact their credit card company and the FTC at www.ftc.gov to report the possible fraud.



IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action



Burning oil pipeline near Samarra after it was attacked by the resistance Oct. 19 2005. (AP Photo/Hameed Rasheed)

10/19/2005 By THOMAS WAGNER, (AP) & (Xinhua)

Three election commission officials were shot and killed on the outskirts of the capital in Abu Ghraib, as they drove home after another round of counting ballots from last weekend's constitutional referendum, police said.

Insurgents opened fire on a police checkpoint near the Hai Al-Adil highway in a western Baghdad, killing four policemen and wounding 11, said police Capt. Qassim Hassan. The fighting continued for several hours, and it was not immediately known if any militants were hurt, Hassan said.

BAGHDAD - Two Iraqi police commandos were killed and three wounded when security forces clashed with insurgents in the Ghazaliya district in western Baghdad, police said.

In other attacks in Baghdad on Wednesday, insurgents shot and killed Hakim Mirza, a municipal director, and his driver, in the Dora neighborhood.

FALLUJA - In Falluja, in the Sunni province of Anbar west of the capital, two Iraqi soldiers were killed and two wounded by a roadside bomb, an army officer said.

In Kirkuk, 180 miles north of the capital, a vehicle carrying Kurdish tribal leader Sheik Anwar Khalifa was hit by a car bomb, police said. He escaped unhurt, but a relative with him was injured.

Two mortar rounds landed Wednesday on Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone ahead of the trial of the toppled president Saddam Hussein, an Interior Ministry source said.

"Two mortar rounds hit the Green Zone but it was not clear whether there were any casualties or damages," the source told Xinhua on condition of anonymity.

Baghdad Mayor Killed

19 October 2005 FOCUS News Agency

Baghdad. The mayor of Baghdad Hatem Mirza Hamza and his driver were killed Wednesday in al-Durra neighborhood in the Iraqi capital, Interfax reported citing a statement of the Iraqi Interior Ministry. A group of armed fighters opened fire in the car of the mayor and then escaped.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Our Leaders

From: Debbie Clark, Georgia Veterans For Peace
To: GI Special
Sent: October 18, 2005
Subject: Re: our leaders

Please see Howard Wolf's comments that are in response to the recent article of Kevin Benderman.

Howard is a VFP member in our Greater Atlanta VFP Chp. 125 -- a vet who served two tours as a combat pilot in Vietnam, and an MFSO member who has a son who is a combat pilot heading to his fourth tour in Iraq next year.

Howard Wolf:

I try to listen to Rush Limbaugh 5 - 10 minutes every day just to hear him rant about the left and their complaints about Bush.

Oddly enough, he was discussing Kevin's topic today but it had to do with Reagan, not Bush. Rush was discussing the time when Reagan was running against Jimmy Carter and folks thought you should trust the leaders.

Reagan corrected the commentator and said he had it backwards.

That is, our form of government required the leaders to trust the wisdom of the voters. That our country would be in trouble when this was no longer was the case.

Right Idea, Not Enough Preparation

[The idea is fine. The preparation to make it happen isn't there. The Nov. 2 event referred to is a one-trick pony launched by one organization. Sorry about that. People who would prefer not to wait another three years to remove the traitors and are serious about it may wish to consider preparing the ground and assembling the required forces before making the move. See the article after this one. T]

From: Steven Chase Spurgeon
To: Vietnam Veterans Against The War Net
Sent: October 18, 2005 9:56 AM
Subject: 2 Nov. Call to Action-Remove Bush from Office

Fellow Patriots:

I just received this url on the Indianapolis Peace and Justice Center listserv.
<http://www.worldcantwait.org/>

It's a national call to action to force Bush from office.

His administration's policies, from the illegal Iraqi and Afghan wars, the border skirmishes with Syria, threats to attack Iran, his numerous war crimes, violation of the constitution, his two stolen elections are certainly enough reason. Not to forget his total

disregard for the people abandoned and left to die during the last two hurricanes. Or his packing of federal and supreme courts with fundamentalist jurists that will undo decades of civil rights victories.

The basic premise is to have a national strike. No work, no school and masses of people taking over public squares and downtown areas. We have the right under the first amendment to peacefully assemble and petition our government. SO LET'S DO IT!

Please distribute this far and wide.

In Peace
Steven Chase Spurgeon
Indiana Contact
Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc

MORE:

Demand His Resignation

<p>"What country can preserve its liberties if its rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms." Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, 1787. ME 6:373, Papers 12:356</p>

It's absolutely amazing that otherwise rational people who can go on for days and weeks about how the Congress is a war Congress can turn right around and ask Congress to impeach George Bush over the issue of the Iraq war.

If you want Bush out:

- 1. Start a national petition campaign demanding his resignation and that of his entire government.**
- 2. When you hit one million signatures, gather in Washington DC, and every other major city, and above all at the gates of every military base in the country, on a date certain, and engage in a peaceful assembly, in order to gauge public support for further, more extensive activity, and to show our brothers and sisters in the armed forces our honorable intentions, and our need for their support.**
- 3. Determine the next steps to take to enforce the resignation. Be sure our troops are well informed.**

When a clear majority wish his resignation, things will get interesting.

Our troops will not obey orders to kill us at that point.

Of course it will take time, and extensive preparation. Winning always does. Cindy Sheehan does a pretty fair Patrick Henry.

T

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.

The General Gets It 100% Right About Prisoner Abuse

October 10, 2005 By Matthew Cox, Army Times staff writer. [Excerpt]

Responding to new allegations that soldiers abused prisoners in the war zone, Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker told Army Times he was committed to ensuring that troops do the right thing when handling detainees.

"I cannot guarantee that every soldier forever will never be (confused) in the heat of battle, when they are scared to death, when it's hot as hell, (they are) getting shot at and (they are) given a very complex decision to make.

"I can't guarantee that it will be clear as crystal. That is unrealistic and it's not the nature of our business," Schoomaker said.

Comment:

If you're looking for people to blame for the endless evil shit that happens in Iraq in this dishonorable Imperial war, blame the politicians that put troops in an impossible situation.

Everything flows from the act of invasion and conquest ordered up by the greedy Imperial liars and traitors in Washington DC. The enemy isn't in Iraq.

People who shit on and sneer at troops, call them ugly names, and blame them for atrocities in Iraq might as well be paid agents of George Bush. They're doing his work for him.

People who demand that troops stand up in formation and earn a ticket to military prison by denouncing the war and throwing down their weapon might as well be paid agents of George Bush. They're doing his work for him too.

Not only are they cowards, standing safely on the sidelines telling somebody else to do a Kamikaze; even worse, if they had their way, every organizer inside the armed forces would be ID'd and arrested in a heartbeat. Brilliant way to stop a war.

More and more troops are turning against the war. Instead of snotty moralizing about what bad things they do, they need a helping hand.

You want something to support, support the GI resistance. It's alive and well.

Quit making excuses about how busy you are with "more important" things, get off your ass, and go find some active duty, guard or reserve troops to listen to, talk with about what you think, and learn from, provided you leave the condescending preachy "look how political I am" bullshit at home. Assuming you have some sane, responsible associates who don't babble endless stale rhetoric at anybody that comes within range, bring them along.

Compared to today's anti-war soldiers, too many arrogant "activists" don't know shit and don't do shit.

You think not?

Check out what this 2005 Iraq combat veteran has to say:

"We are just beginning to build on the movement. It will grow as the soldiers start coming back and seeing what a lie the war was.

"The boys and I will stay active and it will gain speed and mass. By the time we hit the real brick walls we should have enough power to blast them down.

"Every avalanche starts with one snow flake, but requires a million more to wreck some shit.

"We just have to learn where to dynamite!"

It's time to stop living in the past and start acting in the present.

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.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Government Accountability Office Says Bush Lying About "Progress"

“The Security Situation In Iraq Continues To Deteriorate”

October 18, 2005 By Rick Maze, Army Times staff writer

The U.S. mission in Iraq appears stuck in a spiral in which reconstruction is taking longer and costing more than planned because of continued attacks by insurgents, while failure to improve the infrastructure is breeding the discontent that helps fuel the attacks.

Testifying Tuesday before the national security panel of the House Government Reform Committee, Joseph Christoff of the Government Accountability Office said the security situation in Iraq continues to deteriorate, adding costs and delays to efforts to improve water, electrical and sewer services and to restore Iraq's oil production.

Even when reconstruction projects are being done, it is difficult to measure progress, Christoff said. For example, the State Department claims 143 water and sewer projects were completed as of early July, but was unable to provide congressional investigators with the location, scope or cost of the projects or say if the amount and quality of water reaching Iraqi households had improved.

OOPS Iraqis Seek Aid Without Crosses

10.19.05 Washington Times

The president of the Iraqi Red Crescent aid society has urged the International Committee of the Red Cross to stop sending aid marked with red crosses after the internationally protected symbol almost cost four staffers their lives.

They were seized by a terrorist group who threatened to behead them because they thought the crosses on the water and food containers meant the men were Christian missionaries, according to Said Hakki, a neurology professor who returned from Florida last year to take charge of the group's Iraqi relief operations.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Faking It

October 18, 2005 Bruce B. Lawrence, Los Angeles Times

A professor of Islamic Studies at Duke University and editor of the forthcoming "Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden" writes that a recent letter from Ayman Zawahiri to Abu Musab Zarqawi, which has been cited as a sign of internal struggles in Al Queda, is probably wishful thinking.

There are good reasons to question its authenticity and suggest that it may be part of a disinformation campaign against Al Queda which, if exposed, could embarrass the Bush administration.

Iraqis Nail Condoleezza Rice Bullshit

10.18.05 BBC

During her visit to London last week, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said initial information from the field indicated the constitution would be backed.

Hussein Hindawi, an official at the commission, said he was "surprised" by the statement.

"As far as I know, she does not work at the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI)," Mr Hindawi added.

Karina Parelli, head of the United Nations Election Assistance Team in Iraq, also questioned Ms Rice's comments.

"Unless Rice is more well-informed than the IECI, thus far there is no way to know the turnout percentages or the results of the voting," she said.

<p style="text-align: center;">OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME <u>NOW!</u></p>

Received:

**Charlie Sherdyl Motz Remembered:
"Vets Now, Like Those Then, Are Getting
Shafted"**

[The email from Linda and Ken Mitchell below refers to this story in GI Special 3B30:]

*Vets Die Forgotten:
Fallen Hero Memorial Sunday May 15*

*From: Pattypink
To: GI Special
Sent: May 14, 2005 11:11 AM*

Our beloved Charlie Sherdyl Motz completed his final transition into everlasting life on Saturday, May 7, 2005.

From: Linda and Ken Mitchell
To: GI Special
Sent: October 19, 2005
Subject: Charlie Sherdyl Motz

I went to school with Charlie in 1959 and 1960. We got together several times when I was in college and he in the navy. We lost contact in 1967.

I regained contact in 2003. I heard about his health problems. We discussed things. I was saddened to hear about his death.

I was disappointed that the vets now, like those then are getting shafted. I opposed both the Vietnam war then and Iraq now, but supported desert storm. In all 3 cases the government sent people to kill or be killed.

They deserve much more.

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/qi-special/>,

www.williambowles.info/qispecial,

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

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