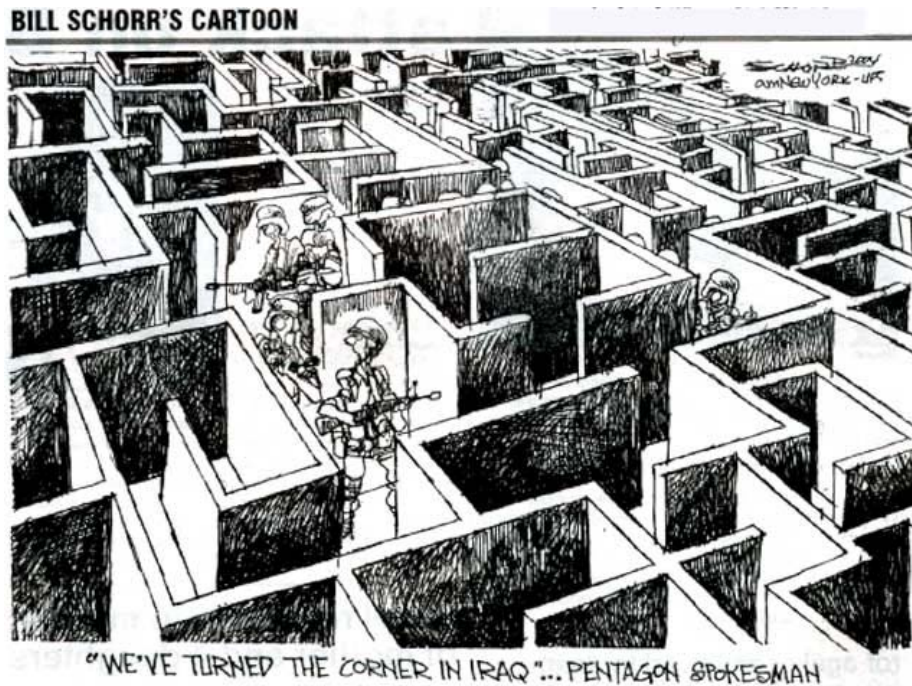


GI SPECIAL 3C89:



“They Have An Enemy,” Adkins Said. “We Don’t.”

Like countless counterinsurgent forces before, U.S. troops find themselves frustrated by their enemy’s ability to blend in with the local population.

“They could be right in front of you and you wouldn’t know it,” said Adkins. Meanwhile, the Americans, in their uniforms and vehicles, are easily identifiable targets for the Taliban.

“They have an enemy,” Adkins said. “We don’t.”

October 24, 2005 By Sean D. Naylor, Army Times staff writer

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — The rocket-propelled grenade flew out of the night and hit the Humvee with a loud boom, blowing a hole in the driver's door and spraying his leg with molten shrapnel.

The noise was all that registered at first with 2nd Lt. Christopher Gilluly, who rode in the front passenger seat. The leader of 2nd Platoon, A Company, in the 82nd Airborne Division's 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, Gilluly assumed a roadside bomb had detonated beside his Humvee, the second in a five-vehicle convoy.

But those in the vehicles behind knew better. They had seen not one but two RPGs fired almost simultaneously from the vineyard next to the road.

The first flashed harmlessly past the rear of the first Humvee in the convoy. The second, with an armor-piercing warhead, struck.

Its driver stunned and wounded, the Humvee veered into a ditch, breaking its axle.

But it could have been much worse.

After bursting through the driver's door, the shaped-charge warhead continued its flight diagonally through the Humvee. Fortunately, no one was sitting behind the driver. But the Taliban had again drawn first blood.

The ambush occurred in the early hours of Oct. 11 on the main road a few kilometers west of Kandahar, a one-mile stretch of highway that had seen two other RPG attacks and a roadside bomb aimed at U.S. vehicles in the previous two weeks. What followed exposed the frustrations and difficulties experienced by junior Army leaders in their attempts to come to grips with an enemy that refuses to fight by their rules. [What fucking "rules" are those, exactly? Commit suicide? Lose? These are the warriors who whipped the best the Russian Army could bring against them, driving them out of their country and all the way back home. *They make the rules. Let's try that one more time. They make the rules.*]

On the south side of the highway, Capt. Mike Shaw, commander of A Company, 1-325 AIR, searched for the attackers with a squad from his 3rd Platoon and one from the Afghan National Army.

As they tried to piece together the attack, there was initial confusion about where the RPGs were fired from. Scouring the vineyard between the highway and a river, the soldiers eventually settled on a spot 5 meters from the road, where the brush was scarred by burn marks.

October is grape-picking season, and the weather was mild enough that workers were spending the night outside among the vines. As the soldiers approached, four men who had appeared to be sleeping took off running, with the troops in hot pursuit. Two escaped across the river, but the soldiers captured the others.

Then the U.S. and Afghan troops gathered as many of the other workers as they could find and told each worker to take off a shoe, to compare it with a print left in the dirt beside the presumed firing location. One shoe matched. Letting the other workers go,

the Americans detained the shoe's owner, whose manicured hands and feet appeared unsullied by manual labor.

After dropping the three captives at a safe house on the north side of the highway, most of the allied force continued with the original mission — clearing a refugee camp north of the road, between the mountains and the highway.

But the Americans realized they didn't have nearly enough force for the mission. They were a platoon-size element with a squad of ANA troops marshaled by two French special operators, along with an explosives-sniffing dog and its handler. The camp housed 47,000 refugees.

The refugees were housed in identical family compounds of mud and straw, which stretched in the thousands almost to the horizon. The Americans and their allies split into a couple of groups and traveled compound to compound, searching for weapons or other evidence of Taliban involvement. The battalion chain of command thought the camp's location between the mountains and the main road made it a likely hotbed of enemy activity.

"This is a perfect jump-off spot to get to Highway 1," said 2nd Lt. Bo Prosch, A Company's 3rd Platoon leader. "They can eat and refit here."

The sole interpreter assigned for the mission accompanied Prosch as the lieutenant asked each homeowner for information about the enemy. But in compound after compound, he got the same answer: "I don't know anyone in the Taliban and I've never seen Taliban around here."

Prosch got aggravated, at one point turning to his interpreter and saying, "Tell him he's lying to my face. [Duh. What exactly did he expect? "Oh yes, I'm so happy George Bush is occupying my country I will tell you everything about everybody."]

"Sometimes you feel like you're not making a direct impact, so it's frustrating," Prosch said, slamming his fist into his palm to emphasize the word "direct."

Sgt. Christopher Norton of Shaw's 3rd Platoon summed up the impossible challenge. "Unless you catch somebody red-handed in a place like this, it's next to impossible ... because there's no tell-tale signs that they're bad or good," he said. "Everybody looks the same." The Sgt. has it right. Imperial occupying armed have had this little problem for about 4,000 years now. For more, see the complaints of the Redcoats in Massachusetts.

The sound of artillery rounds, fired into likely Taliban escape trails in the mountains by a battery of 3rd Battalion, 319th Field Artillery Regiment, then reverberated around the camp.

If the camp residents were "normal people," commented an American soldier, they would be running away at the sound of the firing. "These aren't normal people," replied Staff Sgt. Emmitt Adkins, an affable West Virginian who had the symbol of a cross inside a fish hanging from his Humvee's side mirror. "This land is cursed by God." **[This is not a satire.]**

The U.S. troops headed back to the compound by the highway. There, working through an interpreter, they interrogated the trio and turned up enough circumstantial evidence to keep the men detained, but failed to prove any of them had fired the RPG that hit Gilluly's Humvee.

The first suspect into the interrogation room — an empty room with walls painted white and yellow, and a bare, dusty cement floor covered in splotches of white paint — was one of the two who had tried to run away.

He gave his name as Mohammed Hassan and said he was “about” 20 years old. The only identification in his wallet was a voting card that belonged to another man. Hassan quickly explained that his cousin gave it to him, but he failed to provide a satisfactory reason why he would want his cousin's voting card.

Both Hassan and his friend, Noor Ahmad, 22, said they had nothing to do with the RPG attack, and they only ran because they were scared of the Americans. Neither said they saw anyone suspicious moving through the vineyard prior to the attack. To the obvious disbelief of the Americans, Ahmad also said that he hadn't seen or heard any of the previous attacks along the same stretch of highway.

They each said they did not know the third captive, a 22-year-old man who said his name was Mujahed, or “holy warrior,” a name he said his mother gave him in honor of the mujahidin who were fighting the Soviet invaders at the time of his birth.

Mujahed, who was dressed in a beige shalwar kameez, a gray scarf and a skullcap, said he was the son of the vineyard's owner. He said he had been sleeping in his family's home at the time of the RPG attack, but by the time the soldiers cleared the area, he had wandered outside “just to look at the grapes.”

Staff Sgt. James Griffith, the top NCO in Shaw's 3rd Platoon, threatened to hand over Mujahed to the Afghan secret police — “and you know what they can do” — unless he started to tell the truth. But Mujahed continued to insist that he knew nothing about the attack.

Griffith tried another tack. “People say you work with the Taliban and feed them and supply them with weapons,” he said. Mujahed firmly denied the allegation.

If there was any proof to be found that Mujahed, Hassan or Ahmad were responsible for the attack that morning, it might be on their hands.

Shaw requested a kit to test each man for the presence of explosive residue, but although he waited throughout the next night, it never arrived, another in a string of small frustrations for the young Americans.

Indeed, to some junior leaders, the irregular nature of the war here is almost unbearable.

The Americans are strangers in a strange land, trying to elicit information from Afghan villagers, a people from whom they are separated by centuries of progress and yawning chasms of language and culture.

“We can’t fight this enemy,” said Adkins, a section leader in 3rd Platoon of 1-325’s D Company. “We’re airborne infantry — trained to search for and destroy the enemy.”

But this enemy was almost impossible to find, he said. “There’s no intelligence on them. All we can do is react to them — reaction to contact. ... You kind of feel helpless sometimes.”

“These chickenshits won’t stand and fight,” said Sgt. 1st Class Michael Torano, a platoon sergeant in 1-325’s D Company. [Yeah, that’s what the British officers said about the Minutemen at Lexington and Concord. Get real. Their interest is in winning an armed combat with an occupation army and liberating their nation, not playacting in somebody’s comic book fantasy. They’ve only been doing it since the days of Alexander the Great. It’s their specialty. They pick the bones of invading armies. It’s one of their few sources of national income.]

Staff Sgt. Phillip Velasquez, 3rd Squad leader in 3rd Platoon of 1-325’s A Company, also evinced a grudging respect for his adversaries. “They hit and run,” he said, “which is a smart tactic, ’cause we ain’t catching ’em.” [This Sgt. is far smarter than whoever sent him.]

Like countless counterinsurgent forces before, U.S. troops find themselves frustrated by their enemy’s ability to blend in with the local population.

“They could be right in front of you and you wouldn’t know it,” said Adkins. Meanwhile, the Americans, in their uniforms and vehicles, are easily identifiable targets for the Taliban.

“They have an enemy,” Adkins said. “We don’t.”

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Three Task Force Liberty Soldiers Killed By IED Near Balad

October 19, 2005 MNF Release A051019j

TIKRIT, Iraq – Three Task Force Liberty Soldiers were killed and one wounded when their combat patrol struck an improvised explosive device (IED) near Balad at about 7:45 p.m. Oct. 19.

MARINE KILLED BY VEHICLE-BORNE IED AT KARABILAH

October 20, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 05-10-26C

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq – A Marine assigned to Regimental Combat Team 2, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), was killed in action by a suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device on Oct. 19, while conducting combat operations against the enemy in the vicinity of Karabilah, Iraq.

SOLDIER DIES FROM NON-HOSTILE GUNSHOT WOUND NEAR MOSUL

October 20, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 05-10-24C

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq – A Soldier assigned to Regimental Combat Team 2, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), died from a non-hostile gunshot wound on Oct. 18 at a forward operating base near Mosul, Iraq.

South Dakota Man Dead In Salwa

October 19, 2005 U.S. Department of Defense News Release 1062-05

Chief Warrant Officer Paul J. Pillen, 28, of Keystone, S.D., died in Salwa, Kuwait, on Oct. 17, of a non-combat related cause. Pillen was assigned to the Army National Guard's 249th Aviation, Rapid City, S.D.

The incident is under investigation.

County Man Killed

10/20/05 MyWebPal.com.

Family and friends gathered in Fulton this week to remember Spc. Samuel Boswell, a young man with a sunny outlook on life who was dedicated to his country and dreamed of a future as a civil engineer.

Boswell, 20, a Fulton native and member of the Maryland Army National Guard, died in a vehicle accident Oct. 14 in Iraq.

Boswell was killed when an 18-wheel tractor trailer accidentally struck the rear of the vehicle in which Boswell was traveling, according to a statement released by the U.S. Department of Defense.

The collision started a fire and caused ammunition to detonate. The accident occurred in Al Taji, 17 miles northwest of Baghdad, at 5:06 a.m. local time, the release stated.

Boswell was killed along with Sgt. Brian Conner, 36, and Spc. Bernard Ceo, 23, both of Baltimore. All three soldiers were members of the guard's 243rd Engineer Co. based in Baltimore, defense officials stated.

The three were the first Maryland guardsmen to die in the line of duty overseas since World War II, said Maj. Charles S. Kohler, a public affairs officer for the Maryland Army National Guard.

Boswell was the youngest of eight children of Anthony Boswell, of Fulton, and the late Martha Boswell. He joined the guard in June 2003, after graduating from River Hill High School.

Boswell, a skilled paintball enthusiast who hoped to become a civil engineer, had an upbeat and caring nature, said his brother, Michael Boswell of Ellicott City.

"He was probably the happiest person you'll ever meet," his brother said. "He was always walking around with a smile on his face. ... He always wanted to do things that would help other people whether he knew them or not."

Boswell had been working in construction with his brother, Tony Boswell, before his unit was mobilized, Michael Boswell said.

U.S. Soldier Wounded In Baquba

10.20.05 CNN

The U.S. military reported a bomb slightly wounded a soldier outside a government building in Baquba.

Beacon Soldier Is Injured

October 20, 2005 By THE REGISTER'S IOWA NEWS SERVICE

Beacon, Ia. — An Iowa Army National Guard soldier was wounded this week in Iraq and has been evacuated to a military hospital in Germany, a military spokesman said Wednesday.

Spc. Matthew Houser, 22, of Beacon, a small community near Oskaloosa, was injured Tuesday night in an attack involving a roadside bomb near Fallujah, said Lt. Col. Gregory Hapgood, the Iowa National Guard's public affairs officer. Houser is among 500 members of southeast Iowa's 224th Engineer Battalion, which has had four soldiers killed since arriving in Iraq in January.

Houser sustained shrapnel wounds about 9:45 p.m. while traveling in an armored Humvee that was part of a convoy. The vehicle was destroyed, Hapgood said.

Houser is expected to be flown soon from Germany to a U.S. Army medical facility in the United States. No condition report was available Wednesday.

CAR BOMB HITS HUMVEE IN MOSUL



Damaged US military vehicle in Baqouba Oct. 20 2005. A car bomb exploded near the vehicle in front of a provincial government building on Thursday, killing three people and wounding 14, police said. (AP Photo/Mohammed Adnan)

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces. Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces. If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers.

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/> And join with Iraq War vets in the call to end the occupation and bring our troops home now! (www.ivaw.net)

REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!



U.S. army soldiers walk during a patrol near Baquba, Iraq October 14, 2005. (Jorge Silva/Reuters)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

**“A Grotesque And Disturbing
Extreme. U.S. Soldiers Have Set Fire
To The Bodies Of The Two Taliban”
“One Soldier Told Me He Felt Like He
Was Fighting On The Moon”**

There's no lie there is a pretty heavy enemy presence up in those mountains. That's where all the enemy hides out because the terrain there is just so difficult to operate in. Because, you know, a marine with his pack and everything will be carrying literally over 100 pounds of gear and you've got these insurgents who are just carrying, you know, like pyjamas and an AK, and they can run like the wind, they know where to hide, they know all the trails and everything.

10/19/05 REPORTER: John Martinkus "SBS" Transcript of Dateline, Australia.
[Excerpts]

Earlier this month, Dateline's John Martinkus was in Afghanistan to cover their elections, but his story tonight actually starts with some startling footage from another Australian, photojournalist Stephen Dupont, who, while he was embedded with the Americans, managed to record some of the grotesque tactics being used by Australia's allies in that part of the world.

The video was taken by a freelance journalist, Stephen Dupont, who told The Associated Press he was embedded with the Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade earlier this month. Dupont said the burnings happened Oct. 1.

Dateline should warn you that this report does include some pretty disturbing scenes, particularly for any Muslim viewers.

REPORTER: At the top of the hills above the village the soldiers have taken the tactics of psychological warfare to a grotesque and disturbing extreme. US soldiers have set fire to the bodies of the two Taliban killed the night before.

The burning of the corpses and the fact that they've been laid out facing Mecca is a deliberate desecration of Muslim beliefs.

SOLDIER: Wow, look at the blood coming out of the mouth on that one, fucking straight death metal.

REPORTER: PsyOps specialist Sergeant Jim Baker then broadcast an inflammatory message over the loudspeakers in order to taunt and bait the enemy.

SGT JIM BAKER Attention, Taliban, you are all cowardly dogs. You allowed your fighters to be laid down facing west and burned. You are too scared to come down and retrieve their bodies. This just proves you are the lady boys we always believed you to be.

SOLDIER 2: The first message we sent was - Attention, Mullah Tahir, Mullah Sadar, Mullah Kairadullah, Mullah Abdullah Khan and other Taliban, we know who you are. Your time in Afghanistan is short. You attack and run away like women.

You call yourself Talibs but you are a disgrace to the Muslim religion and you bring shame upon your family. Come and fight like men instead of the cowardly dogs you are.

And the second one. Attention Mullah Tahir and other Taliban fighters, we have you surrounded, there is no way for you to escape.

Come down from the mountains now and you will not be harmed. We will give you food and cold water. If you persist and stay in the mountains it will become your graveyard. **[The Pentagon just has to be using 9th-rate Hollywood scrip writers to come up with this silly shit. It wouldn't fool a fourth grader.]**

REPORTER: The soldiers say they're burning the bodies for hygiene purposes but out here, far away from the village, this appears to make no sense.

These soldiers have clearly been trained to denigrate and enrage Muslims.

Such blatant disrespect for the corpses of their enemy is a breach of the Geneva Convention. It also heightens the perception of local people that the Americans are just as barbarous as the Taliban say they are.

Australian troops operate out of the same army base and in the eyes of the locals, as members of the same coalition, there is no distinction between American and Australian forces.

REPORTER Less than an hour later, I'm going on a patrol down the same road with the US Marines. They're hunting for insurgents who've been spotted not far from here.

REPORTER: Can you tell us what's going on? What are you looking for?

SOLDIER: Anybody with weapons.

They'll have lookouts up on the ridge lines like this. And they'll start radioing in all the way down the valley to let the guys now if there's an ambush set up or if they got guys working on the road, they'll give them a heads-up from a long ways off. They usually see us coming from miles away.

They've been having fucking white puffs of smoke lately. They've been doing that a lot.

Martinkus: Unable to travel far from their fortified bases, the troops are resupplied and flown in and out on choppers.

One soldier told me he felt like he was fighting on the moon.

CHRISTOPHER HAGAN: That ambush was pretty wild, yeah. What was really strange was it was the first time that they had shot at us from like very close. Normally they shoot at us from like about 700m - it's like just right at the max range of their weapons. These guys, a lot of them were pretty close.

They were shooting at us from houses, they were shooting at us from like cornfields, like everywhere basically. They were using like little kids as distractors, because before we went to the ambush site, before we got ambushed they had these like kids standing in pairs up along the road. They looked kind of nervous. I mean, there's kids everywhere and stuff but in this one part the kids tend to stay away from the US forces but when we went there this one time they were kind of standing deliberately and making it a point to shake each one of our hands. We were like, "OK, what's going on?" and then they just opened up on us. And you know, pretty wild.

There's no lie there is a pretty heavy enemy presence up in those mountains. That's where all the enemy hides out because the terrain there is just so difficult to operate in. Because, you know, a marine with his pack and everything will be carrying literally over 100 pounds of gear and you've got these insurgents who are

just carrying, you know, like pyjamas and an AK, and they can run like the wind, they know where to hide, they know all the trails and everything.

REPORTER: Shortly after I left, these marines had their base attacked. One of their Humvees was also blown up by an improvised explosive device or IED, seriously wounding four marines.

The soldiers don't know where the enemy is but in this part of the country there is a lot of contact. Stuck on the roads in their vehicles, they are often ambushed.

“The Scenes Of Increasing Insurgency”

Oct. 20 (Xinhuanet) & New York Times

Two Afghan soldiers were killed Thursday as their vehicle hit a land mine in Baghran district in southern Afghan province of Helmand, the provincial police chief said.

"The incident took place in Baghran district today, and killed two soldiers on the spot and their vehicle was destroyed," provincial police chief Abdul Rahman told Xinhua. He didn't give more details about the explosion.

Taliban militants, failing to derail the landmark Sept. 18 parliamentary elections, have intensified attacks against Afghan, foreign troops and even civilians. Especially southern provinces like Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan and Zabul, commonly known as the heartland of Taliban, have been the scenes of increasing insurgency over the past several months.

Armed fighters killed a local Afghan government official in Kandahar province, the latest in almost daily attacks in the region by suspected Taliban militants.

TROOP NEWS

Another Wounded Iraq Vet Fucked Over By Piece Of Shit In Command And V.A. System

When his commanding officer told him to appear for formation in the snow, he went AWOL for a week. “I just got on crutches, and they said you’ve got to go to

formation at 7:30 a.m.," said Robert. "I told them I don't care what you do--you can take my rank away--but I'm not showing up, because my leg hurt."

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

October 21, 2005 By ERIC RUDER, Socialist Worker

ROBERT ACOSTA'S life changed forever on July 13, 2003. At the time, he was 20 years old and serving in Iraq. He and his best friend Anthony had gone out in a Humvee to pick up ice and other supplies when a hand grenade was tossed into the vehicle.

Robert picked it up to throw it out, and it went off in his hand. The shrapnel and concussion obliterated his hand, broke his right leg and shattered his left leg and foot.

"I still have my foot, but it really hurts," Robert told Socialist Worker. He has a prosthetic in place of his hand.

Robert credits the medical treatment he received at Walter Reed for saving his foot, but that's where the praise ends. From filling out paperwork for out-processing to struggling to get disability benefits, he has faced one obstacle after another.

When his commanding officer told him to appear for formation in the snow, he went AWOL for a week. "I just got on crutches, and they said you've got to go to formation at 7:30 a.m.," said Robert. "I told them I don't care what you do--you can take my rank away--but I'm not showing up, because my leg hurt."

Robert has given up on trying to get his prosthetic hand fine-tuned so that he's comfortable with it. "The VA here in Long Beach doesn't have the facilities to deal with my injury," he said. "I think I'm the only upper-extremity amputee here. You show up, and you want something small done, and it takes two to three months.

"When I first got back and filed my claims for the VA, my claims got denied, and they said that they weren't going to count the injured leg and my hearing and my PTSD as part of my disability."

Asked how he resolved this, Robert gave a three-word answer: "The Washington Post." "A reporter interviewed me about the VA treating soldiers the way they should be treated when they return," he says. "I told him everything--about how I was denied, my checks coming late in the mail so I couldn't pay for rent and bills. And that's what got me my disability.

"They were trying to shut me up.

"My best friend, the guy who was with me when I was injured, is still waiting to get his claim--a year and a half later.

"It's kind of satisfying that you get what you wanted, but then again, they're shutting you up, and you think about all the soldiers with the same problems, but

they won't re-file their claims a lot of times, and they don't have the option to talk to the Washington Post."

101,000 Iraq Vets Ailing On Return: More Now Say They Felt "In Great Danger"

Almost 1,700 servicemembers returning from the war this year said they harbored thoughts of hurting themselves or that they would be better off dead. More than 250 said they had such thoughts "a lot." Nearly 20,000 reported nightmares or unwanted war recollections; more than 3,700 said they had concerns that they might "hurt or lose control" with someone else.

10/18/2005 By Gregg Zoroya, USA TODAY

More than one in four U.S. troops have come home from the Iraq war with health problems that require medical or mental health treatment, according to the Pentagon's first detailed screening of servicemembers leaving a war zone.

Almost 1,700 servicemembers returning from the war this year said they harbored thoughts of hurting themselves or that they would be better off dead. More than 250 said they had such thoughts "a lot." Nearly 20,000 reported nightmares or unwanted war recollections; more than 3,700 said they had concerns that they might "hurt or lose control" with someone else.

Overall, since the war began, about 28% of Iraq veterans — about 50,000 servicemembers this year alone — returned with problems ranging from lingering battle wounds to toothaches, from suicidal thoughts to strained marriages.

The figure dwarfs the Pentagon's official Iraq casualty count: 1,971 U.S. troops dead and 15,220 wounded as of Tuesday.

A greater percentage of soldiers and Marines surveyed in 2004-05 said they felt in "great danger" of being killed than said so in 2003, after a more conventional phase of fighting. Twice as many surveyed in 2004-05 had fired a weapon in combat.

Benson said the percentage of troops back from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan with health issues is close to the portion of former servicemembers coming to the VA for mental health or medical care.

He says 101,000 of the 431,000 war vets who have separated from the military, or about 23%, have sought help.

Forty-seven percent of National Guard troops and 45 percent of reservists required some kind of medical or mental health care last year, vs. 29 percent of active-duty troops. This year, 30 percent to 35 percent of Guard and Reserve troops needed health referrals, compared with 25 percent of active-duty service members.

VA Stalling Help For Wounded Vets: Getting Worse Despite Lying Promises

Oct. 20, 2005 By CHRIS ADAMS, Knight Ridder Newspapers

WASHINGTON — Months after the Department of Veterans Affairs told Congress that it expected its processing time for veterans' disability claims to drop, agency internal reports show little or no progress.

The waiting-time measure is one of the agency's key goals to show how well it is serving veterans.

Last March, the department was under fire from lawmakers for poor service. VA Secretary James Nicholson told Congress he expected processing times to drop to 145 days for the fiscal year, a target that had been changed from prior goals that aimed to bring the average to 100 or fewer days.

For the first 11 months of the 2005 fiscal year, which ended Sept. 30, the department's average time to process disability claims was 167 days, one day slower than last year, according to a Sept. 22 VA report. The average for August claims was 169 days.

Many claims for disability compensation, which pays veterans for injuries suffered while serving in the military, take far longer than the average.

The Sept. 22 report said that 4,300 cases from August had taken longer than a year to decide. And while some categories of claims have shown improvement in the past two years, others showed a "marked deterioration in performance" and on balance, things haven't improved at all, the report said.

As a result, the backlog of pending claims is on the rise, just the opposite of what the department had anticipated. Only last year, VA officials said the backlog should drop to 250,000 claims nationwide. Instead, it is above 350,000.

Capitalism At Work:

Profiteers Get Rich Off Pentagon Contracts For Disabled: Jobs Programs Help Only A Few Of Intended Beneficiaries

October 20, 2005 USA Today

Two programs established nearly 70 years ago to create jobs for the disabled have made millions of dollars for a handful of companies but helped only a fraction of those who were supposed to benefit, a Senate investigation has concluded.

As of 2002, the most recent year for which figures are available, the 2,681 licensed vendors in the program employed 337 legally blind workers, 278 with other disabilities and 6,507 persons with no disabilities, investigators reported.

The Shame Of Ft. Lewis Military Prison Conditions: Sgt. Kevin Benderman Reports

Benderman reports: prisoners' families not being officially informed where they are, severe overcrowding, denial of contact with lawyers, no heat, raw sewage leaking from overhead pipes, money stolen from confiscated bank cards, female guards who routinely watch male prisoners shower and use toilets and an exposed prostitution ring resulting in only minor disciplinary action.

October 19, 2005 By David Lynn, Reporting from Fort Lewis, Washington. **David Lynn lives in Wauna, WA. He is an ex-Marine Sgt. and a combat Viet Nam veteran.**

"Support the Troops," is a slogan no longer held captive by ultra-conservatives who believe if you do not support the war in Iraq, you do not support our troops. In reality, supporting our troops means working to end the war and bringing all of our military personnel safely home, as well as honoring soldiers refusing to participate in the Iraq war -a war that more than 50 percent of Americans no longer believe in.

Although Alabama-born and Tennessee-raised Sgt. Kevin Benderman served with distinction in Iraq during the initial invasion of 2003, when Benderman was tapped for a second tour late last year, he chose the moral high ground over further participation in a war he could no longer defend.

As a result of his moral convictions, Benderman was criminally convicted at Fort Stewart, Georgia, landing him recently in the Fort Lewis stockade serving a 15-month sentence for "missing movement." Benderman also lost his hard-earned Sgt. stripes and upon release from prison, will be branded with a dishonorable discharge.

Benderman received two Army Commendation Medals during his first tour in Iraq because, among a list of other attributes, he served with "distinction." Medals aside, the reality of serving in Iraq is seared into Benderman's conscience. After witnessing a pack of dogs savage the bodies of dead Iraqi men, women and children and after hearing an officer's order not to care for a young girl screaming in pain from severe burns, Benderman would never be the same. Those experiences changed his values, morals and conscience. Ask any war veteran and most will acknowledge a similar path.

"I spent six months over there, and I came back and thought about it. What I know is that it's inhumane. It's turning 18-year-old men and women into soulless people," Benderman has stated. "I went to war, I never ran from it. I experienced it and I realized it's not what I should be doing. In my opinion, it's not what anybody should be doing..."

Benderman applied for conscientious objector's (C/O) status just ten days before he was to re-deploy to Iraq for a second tour. In fact, Benderman has applied for C/O status twice, both of which were flatly rejected even though a review of his applications appears to meet all the necessary criteria for C/O status as outlined in Army Regulation 600-43.

Kevin Benderman was charged with desertion, but was found guilty of a lesser charge, "missing movement." As a result, his distinguished tour of duty is being played-out at the Fort Lewis stockade under conditions not unlike Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay prisons.

Benderman reports: prisoners' families not being officially informed where they are, severe overcrowding, denial of contact with lawyers, no heat, raw sewage leaking from overhead pipes, money stolen from confiscated bank cards, female guards who routinely watch male prisoners shower and use toilets and an exposed prostitution ring resulting in only minor disciplinary action.

According to an Amnesty International "Urgent Alert" declaration, "Amnesty International considers his (Kevin Benderman's) objection to war to be genuine and credible, and also that he took reasonable steps to secure release from his military obligations, and therefore considers him a prisoner of conscience."

Monica Benderman believes her husband is a hero, a champion of true morality and so do many others as confirmed by the hundreds of letters of support now pouring into Fort Lewis. She has launched a new website (<http://www.bendermantimeline.com>) which not only serves to expose her husband's journey to justice, but also offers a one-stop shop for soldiers and Marines who are interested in taking a stand against the war.

Kevin Benderman deserves our support for his courage and our outrage over his imprisonment.

He represents the conscience of the majority of Americans who say, "No more."

Cops And Recruiters Defeated: Demonstrators Refuse To Back Down

October 21, 2005 By Jocelyn Blake, Socialist Worker

SAN DIEGO--Activists from the Campus Antiwar Network (CAN) and the International Socialist Organization turned out last week to demand that the military get off of our campuses.

The protest came as military recruiters "occupied" San Diego State University (SDSU) for three days last week, putting on an extravagant display with Humvees, war simulation games and a rock-climbing wall. Recruiters even rappelled off of buildings and parachuted out of aircrafts as part of their attempt to project an image of the military as a hub of adventure and excitement.

But protesters turned out to expose the reality of life in the military: war, discrimination, sexual harassment and unfulfilled promises of opportunity.

Ten activists surrounded the recruiters during one of their rappelling stunts and demanded that the military leave our campus. Within minutes, campus security showed up and tried to shut the protest down. When activists refused to leave, security became even more aggressive--despite the fact that it is against California State University policy to confine free speech on campus to a designated "free-speech zone."

As the confrontation escalated, a group of bystanders grew, and several joined the protest against the recruiters and defended the right to free speech. Even the dean and assistant dean of the university left their offices and came to the defense of protesters, and campus police were eventually forced to leave in frustration.

Not a single person stopped to talk to a military recruiter, while CAN was able to connect with dozens more students who want to make the antiwar majority known at SDSU.

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.

Twisted Freaks Torture Prisoners At Guantanamo

19 October 2005 By Ben Fox, The Associated Press & 20oct05 news.com.au network

NEWLY declassified notes taken by a lawyer of meetings with hunger-striking detainees at the Guantanamo Bay US 'war on terror' detention camp detail the "brutal treatment" of inmates, the Centre for Constitutional Rights (CCR) said today.

Lawyer Julia Tarver recently visited the US Navy base in Cuba to interview clients Yousef Al Shehri, Abduhl-Rahman Shalabi and Majid Al Joudi, who are currently on a hunger strike.

According to CCR, which lists Ms Tarver as a "cooperating counsel", up to 200 prisoners have participated in the hunger strike that began in August.

Prisoners on hunger strike at the U.S. prison at Guantanamo Bay say troops force-fed them with dirty feeding tubes that have been violently inserted and withdrawn as punishment, according to declassified notes released Wednesday by defense attorneys.

The repeated removal and insertion of the tubes has caused striking prisoners to vomit blood and to experience intense pain that they have equated with torture, the lawyers reported to a federal judge after visiting their clients at the U.S. base in eastern Cuba.

Yousef al Shehri, 21, of Saudi Arabia, told his lawyers that guards removed a nasal feeding tube from one prisoner and reinserted it into another without cleaning it first.

"Large tubes - the thickness of a finger - were viewed by detainees as objects of torture. They were forcibly shoved up the detainees' noses and down into their stomachs. ... No anesthesia or sedative was provided," Ms Tarver said in notes released by the CCR in a statement.

"We never thought we would see the day when this sort of treatment took place at a facility run by the United States government," the statement cited Ms Tarver as saying.

There are about 500 detainees held at Guantanamo. **Some have been held for more than three years without charge.**

Armored Troop Vehicles Slated For Iraq Idling In Texas

October 20, 2005 CQ Today

House Armed Services Chairman Duncan Hunter plans to grill senior Army officials today on why more than 800 heavily armored troop vehicles were parked at a base in Texas, rather than being sent immediately to Iraq.

The military contends the vehicles were being upgraded with new communications equipment before being sent into battle, but Hunter says the delay made no sense because of the desperate need for armor in the field.

Big Surprise! **National Guard Units Are Short Of Equipment At Home**

Officials believe the National Guard's response to Hurricane Katrina "was more complicated because significant quantities of critical equipment such as satellite communications equipment, radios, trucks, helicopters and night vision goggles were deployed to Iraq," the report said.

Oct. 20, 2005 KIMBERLY HEFLING, Associated Press

WASHINGTON - Army National Guard units are short of equipment at home partly because they have been told to leave such vital items as armored Humvees in Iraq for replacement troops, congressional investigators say.

As of June, Army National Guard units had left overseas more than 64,000 pieces of equipment worth more than \$1.2 billion, and the Army cannot account for more than half, said the report Thursday by the Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress.

On average, National Guard units at home have only 34 percent of their essential war-fighting equipment, which could leave them vulnerable in a domestic emergency, said the report released at a hearing of the House Committee on Government Reform.

Officials believe the National Guard's response to Hurricane Katrina "was more complicated because significant quantities of critical equipment such as satellite communications equipment, radios, trucks, helicopters and night vision goggles were deployed to Iraq," the report said.

Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell, whose state has 3,200 National Guard troops in Iraq - the highest per capita in the nation - said Pennsylvania troops have had to leave behind a variety of equipment, ranging from seven helicopters in Afghanistan to 59 tractors and 118 trailers in Iraq.

Replacement of the equipment has been slow, and items sent in their place are not the same quality or quantity, Rendell said.

The report said that in addition to what was left overseas, more than 101,000 pieces of equipment from units on the home front have been transferred to deploying units.

"Quite simply, we are robbing the non-deployed Peter to pay the deployed Paul," said committee Chairman Thomas Davis, R-Va.

War Profiteers At It Again: \$2 Million Diverted From Navy To Corporation To Study Pissing

October 20, 2005 National Journal's CongressDailyAM

The House wants to divert \$2 million in the Navy's fiscal 2006 operations accounts to boost a Michigan environmental technology firm that markets itself as the "world leader for water-free urinals."

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Pipeline Blown Up Again: “The Damage Is 100 Percent”



Burning oil pipeline in the Kirkuk area, Oct. 20, 2005. Insurgents using explosives set fire to the main oil pipeline in northern Iraq. The pipeline links an oil field in the northern city of Kirkuk to Iraq's largest oil refinery in Beiji. (AP Photo/Yahya Ahmed)

October 20, 2005 BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Iraq-- Suspected insurgents using explosives set fire to the main oil pipeline in northern Iraq on Thursday, officials said.

The pipeline links an oil field in the northern city of Kirkuk to Iraq's largest oil refinery in Beiji, 155 miles north of Baghdad.

The explosion occurred at about 5 a.m., setting fire to the pipeline and several oil valves about 35 miles west of Kirkuk, said firefighter Adil Mohammed.

"The damage is 100 percent, and we've haven't been able to control the fire yet," he said.

Assorted Resistance Action

October 20 Associated Press & CNN & Aljazeera & Reuters

Armed fighters dressed as Iraqi policemen kidnapped the head of a concrete company in the al-Mansur district of Baghdad.

In the city's al-Dura section, an Iraqi intelligence officer a guard were killed Wednesday in a drive-by shooting. Two other guards in the car were wounded.

Armed fighters opened fire on a car in the al-Sydiya neighborhood Wednesday night, killing three Baghdad International Airport employees on their way home from work.

In Khalis, nine miles northwest of Baquba, a suicide car bomb killed a police officer and wounded eight others about 1:30 Thursday afternoon near the base of Iraqi rapid reaction forces in Khalis.

A few minutes earlier, a car bomb killed four people and wounded 13 others across the street from the governor's compound in downtown Diyala, according to the U.S. military.

The attack targeted a coalition convoy traveling to the compound, the military said. Three of the wounded were Iraqi police.

BAIJI - One Iraqi soldier was killed by armed fighters in Baija, 110 miles north of Baghdad, local authorities said.

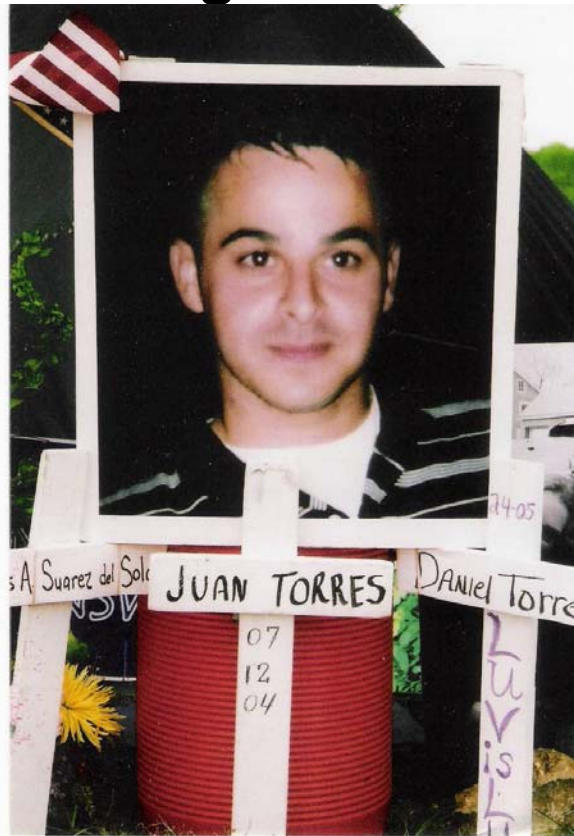
TIKRIT - The governor of Salahaddin province north of Baghdad survived an assassination attempt when a roadside bomb exploded near his convoy, damaging three cars, while he was driving north towards Baiji, one of his aides said.

IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE

END THE OCCUPATION

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Remembering The Dead For Oil



“The Face Of Youth”

Juan Torres, killed in Afghanistan. It was later revealed that he was murdered by an American soldier involved in drug smuggling. He was shot in the shower.

Photo and caption 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)

From: Mike Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: October 20, 2005
Subject: Remembering The Dead For Oil

To G.I. Special:

Everyday, the death toll of American soldiers in Iraq is climbing higher and higher. As Americans, we need to put a name to those numbers.

If you don't need to put a quart of oil in your car engine, go to a gas station and ask for an empty plastic bottle. Clean the bottle out as best you can. Everytime you buy gas, keep the receipt. On the back of the receipt, write the name of an American soldier killed in Iraq, since the beginning of this war for the corporate elite. After doing that, roll that small piece of paper up, and put it in the plastic oil bottle, and leave it in your car.

Just keep repeating this process every time you buy gas.

It will be in the repetition of this ritual, that something will happen to your conscious awareness. As the weeks and months go by, you will begin to remember the names of dead soldiers, and what they are constantly dying for.

For me, it is in the remembering, and the WHY they died. I never want to forget that reality.

As a Vietnam veteran, I wish I had something tangible like this to remind me of the insanity of the Vietnam War. There was so much heroin in my unit in Vietnam, I wish I had kept the empty plastic vials that I found on the ground.

An I.V. bottle full of these reminders, would have validated my memory even more.

So much heroin, so many souls wasted in Vietnam.

And now, heroin is arriving in Iraq.

All the pro-war fools, where do they all come from?

**Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
October 20, 2005**

“No Preordained Mandate To Determine The Future Of Iraq”

10.19.05 By Kristina M. Gronquist, Information Clearing House. [Excerpt]

From our armchairs, our meeting halls, our coffee shops, and our comfortable bomb-free environments, we have absolutely no preordained mandate to determine the future of Iraq.

If it was not our right in 2002, before the war - as millions marched in opposition - how is it acceptable now in 2005 to try to determine Iraq's future?

Those who are stating that U.S. troops need to pull out slowly, in a year, or two (or more) in order to "save Iraq" from itself insult the dignity and intelligence of the Arab and Muslim world, which does not need our interference in their affairs and can determine their futures on their own.

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

The Magnificent Ninawah Vote Fraud: "It Wouldn't Surprise Me If The Election Was Rigged,' Said A U.S. Army Officer

October 20, 2005 KEVIN ZEESE, Counterpunch & Gareth Porter, Antiwar.com.
[Excerpts]

"It wouldn't surprise me if the election was rigged," said a U.S. Army officer in Mosul who requested anonymity from Time and who worked on security arrangements for the poll with Iraqi security and election officials. "I don't even trust our election process."

More controversial are reports that up to 70 per cent of the voters in Ninawah voted "yes" a tally that some local Sunni Arab politicians say does not correspond with reports that they received on election day.

According to the Financial Times, Saleh al-Mutlek, a Sunni politician and prominent opponent of the charter, said that in the provincial capital of Mosul, carloads of Iraqi National Guards had seized ballot boxes from a polling station and transferred them to a governorate office controlled by Kurds. "There is a scheme to alter the results" of the referendum, he claimed.

Other Sunnis have claimed members of the main Shia and Kurdish parties in some governorates had filled out blank ballots and stuffed them into boxes after the polls closed resulting in unusually high numbers of voters.

In the constitutional vote huge discrepancies were reported in the Nineveh governorate, whose capital is Mosul. Sources close to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) said that 55% of the voters there voted against the constitution, Abd al-Razaq al-Jiburi,

the secretary general of the Iraqi Independent Front said, "I have been informed by an employee of the electoral high commission in Mosul that the voting for the constitution has been 'no.'"

On September 30, historian and national security expert Gareth Porter wrote: "it now appears very likely that the document will be defeated by a two-thirds majority in the three Sunni-dominated provinces of Anbar, Salahadeen and Nineveh, plunging Iraq into a new political crisis."

He went on to write: "However, one way such a defeat could be averted is by massive vote fraud in the key province of Nineveh."

"According to an account provided by the US liaison with the local election commission, supported by physical evidence collected by the IEC, Kurdish officials in Nineveh province tried to carry out just such a ballot-stuffing scheme in last January's election." He describes how the US was dependent on Kurdish militia to deliver ballots resulting in ballots being denied to non-Kurdish areas as well as massive ballot stuffing resulting in the election of Kurdish officials.

Driving doubts are results that do not pass the straight face test. In Ninevah initial reports claimed 75 percent favored the Constitution. This is a majority Sunni Province. Making it less believable were the results in neighboring province, Salaheddin, were 71 percent were voting against the Constitution. The two provinces are similar, both with Sunni Arab majorities.

In some jurisdiction press reports indicate 99 percent support for the Constitution - numbers so astounding that they are reminiscent of the votes in favor of Saddam Hussein in previous Iraqi elections!

Time reports some Sunni views: "We have proved we are against the constitution," said Mishaan al-Jubouri, a Sunni legislator from the Liberation and Reconciliation Party. "The Sunni Arabs will reject this constitution totally."

"It will be very difficult to convince people to come back to the political process," said Saleh Mutlaq, a member of the National Dialogue Council, a Sunni group that strongly opposed the constitution.

"People will be disappointed that their voices mean nothing." That will be bad for Iraq, "and for the people occupying it," he added ominously.

The final figures revealed by the U.S. military liaison with the IECI suggest a voter turnout in Nineveh that strains credibility. On a day when Sunni turnout reached 88 percent in Salahuddin province and 90 percent in Fallujah, a total of only 778,000 votes - " about 60 percent of the eligible voters" - in Nineveh appears anomalous. Even if the turnout in the province had only been 70 percent, the total would have been 930,000.

The final vote totals suggest that the Sunnis, who clearly voted with near unanimity against the constitution, are a minority in the province. It is generally

acknowledged that Sunnis constitute a hefty majority of the population of Nineveh, although Kurdish leaders have never conceded that fact.

A total of 350,000 votes for the constitution in the province is questionable based on the area's ethnic-religious composition. The final vote breakdown for the January election reveals that the Kurds and Shiites in Nineveh had mustered a combined total of only 130,000 votes for Kurdish and Shi'ite candidates, despite high rates of turnout for both groups.

To have amassed 350,000 votes for the constitution, they would have had to obtain overwhelming support from the non-Kurdish, non-Arab minorities in the province.

According to official census data, before the invasion of Iraq in 2003, Assyrian Christians and Sunni Arabs accounted 46 percent of the more than 350,000 people on the Nineveh plain. Most of the others are Shabaks and Yezidis. Kurds represented just 6 percent of the population.

But the Kurds have asserted political control over the towns and villages of the plains, with a heavy Kurdish paramilitary and Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) presence. That Kurdish presence provoked widespread opposition and some public protests among non-Kurdish communities on the plains, especially Christians and Shabaks.

Saleh al-Mutlek, one of the Sunni negotiators on the constitution last summer and now a leading opponent of the constitution, told reporters, "There is a scheme to alter the results" of the vote. He alleged that members of the Iraqi National Guard had seized ballot boxes from a polling station in Mosul and transferred them to a governorate office controlled by Kurds.

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

Col. Michael Caples Caught Lying About Iraq Electricity Projection

Oct. 20, 2005
LETTERS TO THE VALLEY TIMES
The Contra Costa Times

It is good to learn about what is going on in Iraq. However, the interview with Col. Michael Caples (Times, Oct. 11) paints a false picture of the progress of reconstruction when he states that "there's a heck of a lot more of it (electricity) than in 30 years.

I returned from my third visit to Iraq two weeks ago. While there I visited the al-Dora Electrical plant in Baghdad.

According to Iraq and U.S. military sources, Iraq produced 10,000 Megawatts of electricity in 1990.

Today production is only 5,500 Mw. In 2002 Baghdad had electricity 20 hours per day. Today it is 12-16 hours per day. That's the "ground truth."

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/qispecial,

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

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