

GI SPECIAL 3D30:



Ryan Timmins (Photo from Operation Truth)

**“I Wanted To Run Up To
Bush's House And Kick
In His Door”**

**“What Allowed Him To Sleep
Peacefully At Night While I
Tossed And Turned With The
Sound Of Gunfire And Mortars
In My Head?”**

I was angry. I wanted to run up to Bush's house and kick in his door. I wanted to force him to tell me what we were fighting for. Why all of this death? What reason did he justify this with? What allowed him to sleep peacefully at night while I tossed and turned with the sound of gunfire and mortars in my head?

[Thank to Anna B, who sent this in.]

By Ryan Timmins, www.optruth.org/

After I returned from Iraq in Feb 2005, I began to struggle with my political and moral justification for the war that I was now a veteran of.

My political views began to falter. I no longer could swallow what the public was being told. I knew it was different than what the talking heads on the news and the spin-doctors in the government were saying it was.

I floated around thinking about what I had done, what I had seen, where I had been. It all seemed surreal. I was trying to talk to my friends at home and they didn't quite get it. They tried to understand but nothing could put it into terms they could grasp.

This went on for several months, but I never quite connected with anyone well enough to explain it. I began to feel isolated and alone. I thought that I would never get anyone to "understand" me. Then sometime around August something happened that made me realize how I was to come to terms with it.

Cindy Sheehan had moved into Crawford. The small town of less than 1000 had been turned into the site of a national media spectacle. The mother of a soldier wanted to know why her son had been killed. She needed to hear from the President what the real reason was.

I felt a pull to the town just to see what was going on. A buddy of mine and I made the 105 mile drive to the north on a Sunday afternoon. Little did I know that this trip would change me forever. I sat down and wrote this with memory still fresh in my head

My week had been a little off. I had this nagging feeling since Sunday evening. I thought it was school starting or maybe I was coming down with something, but tonight I figured out what it was. I had yet to find the correct words to describe my and my buddy's trip to Crawford on Sunday.

I then came to a solution. There is no way to describe it. You had to see the helplessness, fear and disillusionment in the eyes of the people. You had to see the white crosses. You had to see the world turned on it's ass in microcosm in a small Texas town. But here goes nothing...

On the drive to Crawford, we mused about what to expect in Crawford. We came to a consensus and decided that it was going to be a circus. Upon arrival, we were not disappointed.



Ryan Timmins (Photo from Operation Truth)

On our drive through town (approx. 10 seconds), we saw protestors from both sides lining the main strip. Neither side was making an effort to talk to the other. There was a tension that you could taste. Somewhere out there was the answer to what caused the tension. After a quick turn around, we headed back into town and fell in behind a "Peace Bus." We knew we were on the right track.

As we made the turn onto the road leading to Camp Casey, a knot formed in my stomach. I began to wonder if I was doing the right thing. Am I supposed to be here? Am I betraying my brothers in arms like the media says? Is this the right thing to do? I couldn't answer the questions. So I drove on.

We drove past Camp Casey 1. Protestors were on both sides yelling at us and at each other. This was the circus that we had talked about. I noticed the white crosses. I tried to ignore them and focus on the road. My buddy made a comment about how nice the country side was. It helped snap me back from the blackness I was beginning to feel. We drove past the turn to Bush's "ranch" and made our way to Camp Casey 2.

We parked on the road and began to walk towards the area. Part of me wanted to run. I still wasn't sure if I was doing the right thing, but as we crested the hill and I saw the cross memorial. I was certain that I knew someone in there. I knew I was in too deep.

We paid a nominal visit to the crosses, and then moved into the tent to see what was going on. I saw posters for varying organizations. I saw the 15 ft. coffin covered with the names of fallen soldiers. People were milling about, talking about this and that. The knot tightened in my stomach a little. But I drove on.

My buddy had to pee, so we went over to the Porta-John area. A woman wearing an organizational button approached us.

She asked our names, but was more concerned about our stance on the war. "Are you guys against the war," she asked?

I shook head and begrudgingly mumbled yes. I am against the way that it has been handled and managed. I am against the massive loss of life on both sides. I was then struggling with the plausibility of being against the war and for the troops. I then told her that I was a veteran. She turned cold. I think she saw me as a threat. I walked away.

I had noticed a tent set up near the rear of the camp. My interest was peaked, so we walked over.

It was the tent for Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW).

I stood outside for a few minutes and finally mustered up the guts to go in. The first guy I talked to seemed a little distracted. But there was another vet there that seemed more interested. We started a short conversation about where we had been stationed in Iraq and what not. Normal Army guy chit-chat, but there was more in that conversation than anyone could have known.

My buddy saw the whole exchange, but I'm not sure that he got it all. I saw in the other vet's eyes that he knew exactly where I was without even asking. I saw that he understood my pain. He shared the demons I have. I said more to him in five minutes than I have to anyone since I got back six months ago. My healing began at that point.

I knew then it was time to face my personal hell. I walked over to the crosses and I began to look at each one. I said a prayer and told them that I would use the rest of my life to make sure that they were not forgotten. I wanted to find the parents of each one and give them a hug. I wanted to tell them that their son or daughter had not died in vain. That they fought for each other and a ticket home. I wanted to go back to the second that they were killed and rescue them so that their families would stop suffering.

When I was done, we got back in the jeep and rolled down to the other camp. This one was more chaotic. Had more of a militant feel. These people were there to get a message out. I listened, but something else was calling me. The first set of white crosses we had passed. They were sitting there begging me to do something for them. All I could do was walk and say a prayer.

I started down the row heavy footed with my friend. We walked together for a bit, exchanging glances at names we thought we knew. I adjusted flowers and even righted a flag that had been placed upside down. I then began to get ahead of him. I just kept walking. I got half way through and tears began to stream down my face.

I was angry. I wanted to run up to Bush's house and kick in his door. I wanted to force him to tell me what we were fighting for. Why all of this death? What reason did he justify this with? What allowed him to sleep peacefully at night while I tossed and turned with the sound of gunfire and mortars in my head?

As I calmed down, we headed back to my Jeep. Amid the honks of cars and the screaming of protestors, the true message was there. Never forget the fallen. I took one last look around and drove on.

This simple trip made me realize that I had a duty as a soldier to get the word out.

There are other soldiers out there that need to have an experience that I did. They need to start the healing process.

On top of that, the American people needed to know what was really going on. People needed to see what was happening in Iraq.

I have since made a pledge to myself and to the memory of the more than 2000 dead that the world will never forget them.

That their names, deeds and actions will be remembered every time.

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)

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

2 TASK FORCE BAGHDAD SOLDIERS KILLED

November 29, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND
NEWS RELEASE Number: 05-11-46C

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Two Task Force Baghdad Soldiers were killed when their patrol struck a roadside bomb north of Baghdad shortly after 10 a.m. Nov. 29.

Friendly Fire May Have Killed 2 In 101st



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Aram Bass, 25, of Niagara Falls, N.Y. Bass died Nov. 23 in Baghdad, according to the Department of Defense. Officials at Fort Campbell, Ky., where both soldiers were based, said Monday the deaths were under investigation 'as potential friendly fire incidents.' The photo was taken when Bass was a Marine. (AP Photo/Bass family)

November 29, 2005 Associated Press & The Buffalo News

FORT CAMPBELL, Ky. -- The deaths of two Fort Campbell soldiers last week in Iraq are being investigated as possible friendly fire incidents, the Army said yesterday.

Staff Sgt. Aram J. Bass, 25, of Niagara Falls, N.Y., and Sgt. William B. Meeuwsen, 24, of Kingwood, Texas, died Wednesday in Baghdad when they came under fire during combat operations, the Army said.

Both soldiers were 101st Airborne infantrymen assigned to A Company, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team.

Bass entered the Army in June 2000 and arrived at Fort Campbell in August 2004.

He is survived by his wife, Breanne Sterner of Youngstown, N.Y.; his father, William Bass of Niagara Falls; and his mother, Debbie Johnson, also of Niagara Falls.

Meeuwsen entered the Army in October 2002 and arrived at Fort Campbell in April 2004.

He is survived by his wife Lauren, of Fort Bliss, Texas; and his parents, Michael and Thresa Meeuwsen of Kingwood, Texas.

Military officials who notified Bass' family of his death reportedly told them he died trying to save another soldier.

A public affairs officer for the Army couldn't be reached to comment further Monday night.

What has the family been told now?

"I'm sorry. At this time, I really can't give any information," said Bass' widow, Breanne Sterner of Youngstown.

Bradley Hit, Three Wounded



An Iraqi child flashes a victory sign as a U.S. Bradley fighting vehicle is seen burning in Baghdad Nov. 28, 2005.

A roadside bomb detonated next to a passing U.S. Army convoy in northeastern Baghdad setting fire to a Bradley fighting vehicle. **Police Capt. Mohammed Abdul-Ghani said three soldiers were injured, but no other information was immediately available.** (AP Photo/Karim Kadim)

Car Bomb Wounds Four U.S. Soldiers In Baquba

11.29.05 Aljazeera

The US army announced that four US soldiers were wounded when a bomber driving a booby-trapped car attacked them in Baquba.

N.H. Soldier Wounded

November 29, 2005 AP

DURHAM, N.H. An Army medic from Durham (New Hampshire) is recovering from wounds suffered in an attack in Iraq this month that killed four other soldiers.

Specialist Adam Millett is in Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington.

His cousin, Sharon Dove of South Hampton, says Millett was wounded on November 19th when a bomb exploded near the Humvee carrying him and four other soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division.

The father-in-law of one of the soldiers killed in the attack said a medic in the Humvee, presumably Millett, treated the other victims until he passed out from his own wounds.

Millet's cousin told the New Hampshire Union Leader the family considers him a hero.

Humvee Hit: Casualties Not Announced



11.28.05: According to eyewitnesses a car bomber detonated his vehicle next to a US military convoy, damaging a humvee. There were no reports of U.S. casualties. (AP Photo/Mohammed Adnan)

Former Nauvoo, Ill., Man Sustains Injuries

November 28, 2005 The Daily Gate City, NAUVOO, Ill.

Cpl. Justin D. Hamma of the U. S. Marine Corps was wounded in action on the morning of Nov. 6. He is a former resident of Nauvoo, Ill.

Hamma is an explosive Military Working Dog handler. Hamma and his dog, Chang, a black German Shepard, were attached to an Army infantry battalion and worked with a group of Iraq Army Infantry.

On Nov. 6, Hamma was performing a sweep of some houses and roads in Ramadi, Iraq. After the mission was complete, the unit began a return to their military vehicles. Along the road, some Iraq citizens told the unit about an unexploded mortar shell in their driveway. The decision to explode the shell in place was made and Hamma and his dog took cover.

After the explosion when Hamma was calming his dog, a single shot was fired in the direction of the U.S. troops.

Hamma was then shot while attempting to return fire. The round went through his shoulder blade and out through his back. He was treated by a medic at the scene and was transferred to a base hospital where he received X-rays and debridement surgery.

He was later flown to Baghdad to await a flight to Landstuhl, Germany, where further cleansing of the wound took place.

On Nov. 11, Hamma was flown to Andrews Air Force Base and then to Camp Lejuene, S. C.

Hamma is making good recovery and is hopeful for a 100 percent recovery and use.

Notes From A Lost War:

**Since July, 1 In 3 Platoon
Members Has Been Killed Or
Hurt:
“The Military Has Barely Made A
Dent In The Insurgency”**

Nov. 27, 2005 By MICHAEL WARE/RAMADI, Time Inc. [Excerpts]

Do you see 'em?" screams a gunner as he spots al-Qaeda fighters dart in front of him. "Just kill people to the north," a sergeant bellows. "Light him up," cries another soldier as a gunman approaches.

Throughout the day, members of Blue Platoon had been hunkered down in their battle-scarred observation post (dubbed "Hotel") in Ramadi, sniping at reconnaissance units.

With the mini-Tet raging, more than 50 rebels lobbed mortars and fired rocket-propelled grenades at the U.S. bases before they closed in under cover of machine-gun fire from virtually 360°. By the end, about the time Murtha wrapped up his press conference in Washington, coalition forces had stormed past dead insurgents to retake Ramadi's central mosque.

But this is still a city the insurgents can claim they own.

Although a U.S. Army brigade hunts them daily, the rebels move freely among a supportive populace. U.S. troops are despised here. The insurgents are embraced. "They are the people we see every day who give us a loaf of bread on a patrol, the people we will be fighting that night," says Lieut. Colonel Robert Roggeman, whose 2-69 Armored Regiment is battling to control the eastern part of this city of 400,000.

Since July, 1 in 3 platoon members has been killed or hurt. "All of my squad leaders and section leaders have been wounded," says the platoon leader, 2nd Lieut. Joe Walker, a South Carolinian who volunteered to fight after 9/11.

"For a while, our unit was fighting at less than 70%, and we're still below 60% on our vehicles--so many Bradleys have been blown up."

For weeks the 2-69, an entire armored battalion, was cut off from other American forces.

The roads in and out of its base were saturated with improvised explosive devices, says Captain Chas Cannon. At one stage, there were 100 explosions a week.

"You expected to get hit ... possibly several times," says Cannon. The roads were closed; some food was rationed. But with aggressive combat operations, sniper assaults and the building of precarious outposts, the 2-69 has regained control of the city's main artery, "Route Michigan," the troops' lifeline.

The military has barely made a dent in the insurgency.

MORE FROM MICHAEL WARE, RAMADI:

“A Very Senior U.S. Military Intelligence Officer Said To Me, These Iraqi Forces Will Never Be Able To Crush This Insurgency”

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

Aired November 28, 2005 /transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0511/28/acd.01.html

ANDERSON COOPER: As we told you before the break, Saddam Hussein's trial was put on hold for one -- one more week, the latest act in a trial plagued by delays and murders.

While many Americans and Iraqis are eagerly anticipating the eventual verdict, if it comes, there remains the question as to whether it will have any effect on the violence in Iraq, on the insurgents.

Earlier, I spoke by phone with "TIME" magazine's Michael Ware, who is in Baghdad and has been on the ground with U.S. troops.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

COOPER: In terms of the impact on the insurgency, what do you think that might be?

MICHAEL WARE, BAGHDAD BUREAU CHIEF, "TIME": Look, Anderson, it is absolutely zero.

I mean, this is the thing about the whole trial. The trial is essentially circus. It is a three-ring circus. It is theater. I mean, this is for Western consumption.

For the Iraqis, it means nothing. For the Iraqi Shia, for the Kurds, for anyone who had been touched by Saddam's regime, there's no question of guilt. There's no question of what should happen and what will happen.

COOPER: You were just embedded with a group, the Blue Platoon, up in Ramadi. An amazing statistic I read in your article that is in "TIME" magazine this week, one in three members of this platoon have either been killed or wounded since July. That's a remarkable statistic, a terrible statistic.

What was it like being embedded with them?

WARE: *It really is one of the great front lines that remains of the Iraq war.*

Their convoys get hit by IEDs. They get rocket-propelled grenades. They came under coordinated simultaneous attack on five U.S. bases at once. I mean, that's what it is like out there for these guys. And that is what it's like to be with them. I mean, I got off a helicopter, and I walked straight into a city-wide firefight.

COOPER: You write in your article, "The insurgents' ability to preserve and regenerate their forces is a hallmark of the war."

I mean, there have been thousands of insurgent fatalities, but you're saying they're -- they're able to just regenerate?

WARE: We are roughly looking at 15,000 to 20,000 fighting men in the field on any one given day. Now, the significant thing is that that 15,000 or 20,000 that's in the field, it takes at least six or eight people behind that man to put him into that field.

So, the support base is quite considerable. The real thing is that that 15,000 never changes. Despite everything that the coalition does, everything the military does, taking out Fallujah, taking out Samarra, taking out Tal Afar, all the disruptions that it causes to the insurgents, that number stays at 15,000, 20,000.

COOPER: We are starting to hear from this White House talk that the Iraqis maybe are doing better than we had previously thought. Their -- their security forces, their military is -- is maybe more ready than we had thought. There are a lot people that say, well, look, that's just politics. They're just trying to say that to set the timetable for withdrawal.

From what you're seeing, from what you're hearing from the troops you have been embedded with, do they have confidence in -- in the Iraqis they're training?

WARE: Whoever from the White House is saying that is one of two things. Clearly, they have never been in Iraq. And, clearly, they have never been in a firefight with an Iraqi unit.

Secondly, they're clearly lying, whether they know it or not.

I mean, a very senior U.S. military intelligence officer, one of the most high-ranking in the country, just in the last few days, said to me, these Iraqi forces will never be in a position to be able to crush this insurgency.

On the ground here, no one has any real illusions about that. I have been in battle with almost every type of Iraqi security force there is, from police commandos, to special forces, to 36 Commando, to the elite counterterrorism force akin to the Delta.

I have been with Kurds and Shia and Sunni. And I'm telling you, if the Iraqi security forces are the exit strategy, then get ready to be here for a long time. And your troops know that. They work with them side by side every day.

Yes, there are advances. Yes, there are gains. But will this military that's emerging here ever be able to replace the American military in Iraq? No.

Slight Problem

November 29, 2005 By Gordon Lubold, Army Times staff writer

American-led coalition and Iraqi forces are receiving nearly 10 times the number of tips from Iraqi civilians that are leading to insurgents and their hideouts than were coming in just a few months ago, the Pentagon's top general said.

Officials could not cite data to show the quality of the tips they are receiving, so it is unclear how much "actionable intelligence" has been gained from them.

**LETHAL ENVIRONMENT:
NO HONORABLE MISSION:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW**



10.31.05: US soldiers from Bravo Company 1-87 Infantry 10th Mountain Division 1st Brigade Combat Team climb a staircase during a search of a civilian Iraqi home during a patrol in western Baghdad. (AFP/David Furst)

TROOP NEWS

War Kills 100th New York State GI

November 29, 2005 New York Daily News

Army Staff Sgt. Steven Reynolds became the 100th New York resident to be killed in Iraq.

**Camouflage Cool:
“Being A Single Soldier Is Actually
Quite Fun. They Put A Lot Of Events**

On So People Can Get To Know Each Other”

If you do decide to join the active Army, you get even more, an all-inclusive lifestyle package that might be described as "Life Med." Tranquil suburban life with spouse and kids, campus-like life in the barracks, edifying world travel, jet-skiing, horseback riding, glamorous adventures just like you've seen in the movies, exciting adventures resembling video games and all the (heterosexual only, please) sex you want. You thought the Army disapproved? Not at all. Uncle Sam wants you to get some.

November 28, 2005 By Carina Chocano, LA Times Staff Writer

How awesome is the Army?

You really have no idea until you send away for the "Stand Ready: Being a Soldier in the Army Reserve" DVD, as advertised on MTV. Because "learning more" is usually not enough incentive to get the kids on the phone — especially the kinds of kids who sit around watching MTV all the time — the Army was throwing in a free camo hat, the way Sports Illustrated might offer a free sneaker phone with your subscription, to sweeten the deal, if you call now.

I called then. Actually, I went to the Go Army! website and filled out an online form. Three e-mail requests; a brief but terrifying phone conversation with a recruiter; and six to eight weeks of anticipation, then patience, then the total loss of hope later, the DVD arrived.

There was no hat in the package — the gift had been upgraded to a sports watch. Does that sound weird? Well, watch the DVD and learn — the Army is all about giving.

Produced by Leo Burnett USA, whose Army contracts totaled about \$350 million this year, and directed by Hank Vincent of Avalon Films, "Stand Ready: Be a Soldier in the Army Reserve" opens on a video loop of super-macho, sepia-toned, high-contrast images of modern soldiering.

A square-jawed soldier glistens in profile, a chopper flies low overhead, a soldier in a helmet raises a flag. It's very retro, very now. And that's just the menu screen.

"We are the men and women of the Army Reserve," a deep voice intones, as a series of Rockwellian tableaux vivants flashes in front of your eyes to some extremely heartfelt John Mellencamp-ish acoustic strumming. "We live in big cities and small towns. We are regular people who have taken an oath." The soldiers stand proudly amid the kind of real estate beloved by the makers of breakfast-cereal commercials. The burnished, bucolic beauty — so clean, calm, old-fashioned, benign — is almost unbearable. Ain't that America?

Not to worry if you don't recognize it. Perhaps you're at a crossroads, in a financial jam, unsure of your next move. Maybe you've thought about college but can't foot the bill. Maybe you've screwed up your life so far. Well, here, at last, is a way to have it all. Everything your parents couldn't give you. Everything you ever wanted.

"What You Get" is not just a recurring theme in "Stand Ready," it's the central message. A sheeny, fast-paced, caramel-coated (it's always magic hour in the Army) shot of pure inspiration and promise, it kicks off with a seemly nod to values, front porches, fishing with your kid, mom and dad, etc., but quickly gets down to talking turkey.

As the benefits tally up on the screen, video-game-graphics style, it becomes clear that this is no mere informational tool, it's a portal to an alternative universe — a universe that kicks the butt of your civilian universe up and down.

That's how clear-cut the benefits, how negligible the sacrifices, how jealous all your friends, with their regular jobs, will be "when they realize," as one soldier's did, "that they don't have nearly as many experiences as I do."

Never mind that the Army has increasingly relied on the National Guard and Army Reserve to help maintain troop fulfillment in Iraq, or that part-timers now represent 50% of U.S. troops in Iraq. According to "Stand Ready," joining the Army Reserve means you get to go to college. You get to go to law school. You get a sense of accomplishment. You get to "stay close to home, continue your education and raise a family at the same time you serve your country."

Educational benefits include "up to \$22,000 for college while you serve, up to \$20,000 payback for qualifying existing student loans (One young woman mentions her degree from George Washington University, "a degree that would have cost me \$40,000"), up to an \$8,000 enlistment bonus and up to a \$3,000 quick-ship enlistment bonus." Quick-ship to the sorority quad, right?

If you do decide to join the active Army, you get even more, an all-inclusive lifestyle package that might be described as "Life Med." Tranquil suburban life with spouse and kids, campus-like life in the barracks, edifying world travel, jet-skiing, horseback riding, glamorous adventures just like you've seen in the movies, exciting adventures resembling video games and all the (heterosexual only, please) sex you want. You thought the Army disapproved? Not at all. Uncle Sam wants you to get some.

"One of the misconceptions about Army life is that you're not allowed to have a social life," one soldier says. "I have a boyfriend who I'm very happy with." "As an army reservist, we have the same social life as any civilian out there," another says.

"The Army takes care of their single soldiers," another says. "You get a free room, free food, you get about everything for free." (The barracks, contrary to popular opinion, are "beautiful." "They've got what's called a kitchenette." They're also "a lot like a college environment.") In fact, "being a single soldier is actually quite fun. They put a lot of events on so people can get to know each other." The great

thing is that "you're surrounded by young, active people," says a happily married soldier, in front of his wife.

Imagine a world in which getting an education doesn't leave you mired in debt, then adrift in a soft job market. A world in which you can pursue any of 120 exciting careers and actually even catch one. "Advanced Individual Training is where you learn your specific job," says a cute blond in a jaunty red beret. For instance, you can be an operating-room technician, alongside "some of the best surgeons in the world."

Or, like Tiffany, the blond in the beret, an "interrogator, Spanish linguist." What's that? "Being an interrogator is a complicated thing," she says, wrinkling her nose. "I can't really tell you a lot about the job because it's secret." Sure it is. But the camera pans so lovingly over her faraway blue eyes that I'm momentarily distracted from this thought. How bad can it be to be interrogated in Spanish by Tiffany?

The not-secret jobs sound great too. You could operate a battlefield vehicle and send instant messages from one vehicle to another, "just like a video game." **You could be in field artillery and "get to go out and blow things up."**

It's not all Army-style jobs in the Army Reserve, either. You can be a graphic designer. Or a broadcast journalist. Or a saxophone player. "You get your horns given to you, all brand-new stuff," says a soldier with a delighted chuckle. "All this and a paycheck!" But the broadest smile is a girl's. "It's a lot of fun. Heck, what other kind of job can you fire weapons in?"

Not at anyone, you understand.

It appears as if there's no bleeding involved. As one lab technician and blood banking specialist explains her job, "What we do is we go out there and if there's a situation that needs to be handled just get out there and get it done and help people."

The brief, almost incidental allusions to Iraq come later, in the segment on world travel and learning about other cultures.

"When you get deployed, it doesn't necessarily mean you'll be in the Middle East or Iraq. There are opportunities to make a difference wherever you go." Be it in Thailand building a schoolhouse, Alaska building a road, the Army lets you "see the sights" and "enjoy the culture" of places as diverse as Australia, Germany, Spain, China, Japan, Malaysia and Amsterdam!

"Tell them about Germany," the saxophonist says. "Germany was the best time I've ever spent in my life."

Germany, of course, is the home of the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, which has treated nearly 10,000 soldiers from Iraq and Afghanistan. And it would seem like a great time, after all that difference-making.

“5000 Accused Sex Offenders In The Army, Including Rapists, Have Avoided Prosecution”

September 20, 2005 Posted by Vietnam Veterans Against the War.
Excerpts from an article by Martin Donohoe, MD, FACP, Medscape.com

Although data are not available for the other branches of the military, nearly 5000 accused sex offenders in the Army, including rapists, have avoided prosecution and the possibility of prison time since 1992.

Between 1988 and 1993, approximately 80% of abusers who left the military received honorable discharges. Of those who remained in the military, 54% were promoted (compared with 65% of the overall military population). Over the past 10 years, twice as many accused Army sex offenders were given administrative punishment as were court-martialed.

[M]ore than 100 incidents of rape and sexual assault, perpetrated by male US soldiers, had been reported by US women soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Many victims did not receive even the most basic medical care, such as emergency contraception, rape evidence kits, testing for sexually transmitted infections, prophylactic treatment or testing for HIV, and rape crisis counseling.

Prosecution of these crimes was often delayed indefinitely, and many servicewomen continued to serve in the same unit with their assailants

“The Reality Ben Knows In Iraq Today Is Very Different From The Made-Up Version That The Bush Administration Tries To Shove Down Our Throats”

November 28, 2005 by Dexter J. Kamilewicz, Common Dreams [Excerpts]

Last February, I wrote a column for the Portland Press Herald about the conflict I felt as my son, Ben, was preparing to go to a war I don't support.

I was worried that he might be killed, but I knew that he would also be put in the position of killing others. I questioned why we were at war in Iraq, and I was angry at those who voted for it and supported it.

The reality Ben knows in Iraq today is very different from the made-up version that the Bush administration tries to shove down our throats.

The Iraqis do not want us to occupy their country. They are angry at us for devastating their country, for killing and maiming their citizens and for destroying their economy.

Ben has come close to being killed a number of times, and he has killed. He is shot at and mortared constantly, and he has had to pick up a dead friend. The stress on him is unrelenting and mind-numbing.

Why are he and tens of thousands of our soldiers being subject to that kind of treatment for a year or more at a time? Why are we really at war in Iraq?

'STOP LOSS' EQUALS SERVITUDE

I recently met with Sen. Olympia Snowe and asked her if she understood "stop loss," the term for the military's authority to hold onto troops after their enlistments are up, a virtual license to enslave soldiers. She said she knew the term.

I asked her if troops were being asked to serve multiple terms in combat because recruitment numbers have plummeted. She said that the soldiers had contracts that allowed that practice and since we have a volunteer military, it was up to the Pentagon to deal with that.

Do Americans really believe that it is OK to recycle our soldiers and subject them to the daily cruel brutality of war for multiple tours just to protect their own sons and daughters from such heartless treatment?

Why won't Sen. Snowe hold public meetings on the war in Iraq to find out how we feel about the sadistic treatment of our soldiers and the justification for it?

'ADDICTED TO RE-ELECTION'

Rep. Tom Allen is proud of voting against the war in Iraq. He blames the Republicans who control government for avoiding an inquiry into the Bush administration's stated justifications for the war in Iraq.

Unfortunately, Allen has supported the war by voting for the supplemental budget requests to finance the war ever since, and he has done this in virtual silence. Why doesn't Allen recognize that the war in Iraq isn't just a Republican or Democratic problem?

Why isn't Allen sponsoring a series of public meetings on the war in Iraq and the horrible future we have in store for us when the demand for payment comes due?

Why doesn't he vote against financing the war now?

President Bush is literally the kiss of death in Iraq and at home, and our elected politicians are sitting on the sidelines letting it happen. There is no leadership, no plan and certainly no public discussion on the war in Iraq.

Our politicians are avoiding public discussion. Our politicians are addicted to re-election more than they are to public service.

Our politicians are disconnected to what happens to ordinary citizens and seem to favor the rich and powerful.

It is time to make changes. Why should my son die or have his mind reduced to Jell-O because of the silence and inaction of our politicians?

For that matter, why should that happen to your loved one or any other citizen of the world?

Dexter Kamilewicz is a resident of Orr's Island, Maine.

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.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action

Nov. 29 (Xinhuanet) & (Reuters) & By ROBERT H. REID, Associated Press Writer & By CHRIS TOMLINSON, The Porterville Recorder

Two fuel tankers were ablaze near Balad after two roadside bombs exploded when a convoy of Turkish trucks, escorted by the US troops, passed by, the source added.

BAGHDAD - Bashar Shnawa Gaber, a senior member of the Shi'ite Dawa [collaborator] party, was shot dead in Baghdad on Monday, his party said.

A car bomber killed eight Iraqi soldiers and wounding five more when he drove into an army patrol Tuesday in Tarmiyah, 30 miles north of Baghdad, police Lt. Ali Hussein said.

A Sunni cleric was assassinated as he left a mosque.

Sheik Hamza Abbas, the Sunni cleric who was assassinated Tuesday, had made contacts with the Americans during the siege of Fallujah last year and had been denounced as a collaborator, residents said.

**IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE
END THE OCCUPATION**

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

“Johnson Knew He Was A Prisoner In The White House, But Bush Has No Idea”

29 November 2005 By William Rivers Pitt, Truthout Perspective [Excerpt]

Journalist Seymour Hersh, in a recent New Yorker article titled 'Up In the Air,' described the administration's view of the spiraling madness taking place in Iraq.

He recounts the comments of a former defense official who served in Bush's first term. According to Hersh, "The President is more determined than ever to stay the course," the former defense official said. "He doesn't feel any pain. Bush is a believer in the adage "People may suffer and die, but the Church advances.""

"He said that the President had become more detached," continued Hersh, "leaving more issues to Karl Rove and Vice-President Cheney."

"They keep him in the gray world of religious idealism, where he wants to be anyway," the former defense official said. Bush's public appearances, for example, are generally scheduled in front of friendly audiences, most often at military bases.

Four decades ago, President Lyndon Johnson, who was also confronted with an increasingly unpopular war, was limited to similar public forums. "Johnson knew he was a prisoner in the White House," the former official said, "but Bush has no idea."

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

U.S. OCCUPATION RECRUITING DRIVE IN HIGH GEAR; RECRUITING FOR THE ARMED RESISTANCE THAT IS.



US soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment blindfold a handcuffed Iraqi man alongside his parents during a night raid southwest of Baghdad. (AFP/Muricio Lima)

[Fair is fair. Let's bring 150,000 Iraqis over here to the USA. They can kill people at checkpoints, bust into their houses with force and violence, overthrow the government, put a new one in office they like better and call it "sovereign" and "detain" anybody who doesn't like it in some prison without any changes being filed against them, or any trial.]

[Those Iraqis are sure a bunch of backward primitives. They actually resent this help, and consider it their patriotic duty to fight and kill the soldiers sent to occupy their country. What a bunch of silly people. How fortunate they are to live under a military dictatorship run by George Bush. Why, how could anybody not love that?]

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

HOW BAD IS IT?

November 27, 2005 Peter Beaumont, foreign affairs editor, The Observer

Human rights abuses in Iraq are now as bad as they were under Saddam Hussein and are even in danger of eclipsing his record, according to the country's first Prime Minister after the fall of Saddam's regime.

He added that he now had so little faith in the rule of law that he had instructed his own bodyguards to fire on any police car that attempted to approach his headquarters without prior notice, following the implication of police units in many of the abuses.

Welcome To Liberated Iraq: Policemen Thrown In Jail For Not Voting

15-Nov-05 By Wirya Hama Tahir in Kelar (ICR No. 152)

Dozens of policemen and government employees in Sulaimaniyah province have been reprimanded, fired or imprisoned for not voting in the constitutional referendum.

Civil servants and police officers said they had no idea their decisions not to vote in the October 15 poll might cost them their jobs or land them in jail. They cried foul, noting that the punishments violated democratic principles and their civil rights.

Kurdish officials and a police chief admitted they punished government employees for not voting, saying they had a democratic duty to go to the polls.

In Kelar province, about 35 officers in the Garmian police department were interrogated – and some jailed for five to six days – because they did not participate in the ballot.

Kelar, which is home to around 200,000 people, lies approximately 140 kilometres south of Sulaimaniyah in northeastern Iraq.

"I did not believe in the constitution so I didn't vote," said one officer who'd been questioned. "How can a human being be punished for his opinions and beliefs?"

"On TV, they say there is democracy in our country. I don't vote, and this is democracy."

Another policeman said he couldn't vote because he was working and his polling station was far from the station - but was given a jail sentence, nonetheless.

"They knew I was on duty," he said. "This imprisonment is unfair and is a human rights violation."

"This is the military," said Colonel Salam Rasul Qadir, head of the Garmian police department. "There is no democracy."

He admitted that policemen who didn't vote has been interrogated and punished. He said they wanted to raise their awareness of the political process.

"These are hicks," he said. "They do not know what the constitution is and the benefits it offers."

According to regulations issued by the Independent Electoral Commission in Iraq, officials cannot question or punish citizens and government employees about their voting preferences. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which Iraq adopted, protects the right of citizens to vote.

Jamal Abdulla, the Sulaimaniyah government's media and public relations director, defended ministries that punished employees for not voting.

"Ordinary citizens have the right to vote or not," Abdulla said. "But government employees have a responsibility and should vote for the sake of public interest.

"The government sees voting as a social responsibility. That's why the interrogations are justified."

Hussein Ali, a civil servant in the Sulaimaniyah public works and reconstruction ministry, disagreed. He said his boss reprimanded him for not voting, calling him a traitor and threatening to fire him.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Delusional Rumsfeld Babbles More Incoherent Bullshit: General Pace Contradicts Him On Stopping Torture

[Thanks to PB and AH, who sent this one in.]

Nov 29 By ROBERT BURNS, AP Military Writer

More than 2 1/2 years into the Iraq war, Donald H. Rumsfeld has decided the enemy are not insurgents.

"This is a group of people who don't merit the word `insurgency,' I think," Rumsfeld said Tuesday at a Pentagon news conference.

He said the thought had come to him suddenly over the Thanksgiving weekend. "It was an epiphany."

"I think that you can have a legitimate insurgency in a country that has popular support and has a cohesiveness and has a legitimate gripe," he said. "These people don't have a legitimate gripe." Still, he acknowledged that his point may not be supported by the standard definition of `insurgent.' He promised to look it up.

Webster's New World College Dictionary defines the term "insurgent" as "rising up against established authority."

Even Gen. Peter Pace, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who stood beside Rumsfeld at the news conference, found it impossible to describe the fighting in Iraq without twice using the term `insurgent.'

After the word slipped out the first time, Pace looked sheepishly at Rumsfeld and quipped apologetically, "I have to use the word `insurgent' because I can't think of a better word right now."

At another point in their news conference, Rumsfeld and Pace had an unusual exchange in which Rumsfeld corrected his senior military adviser, only to have Pace gently insist that it was the defense secretary who was wrong.

A reporter asked Pace what U.S. commanders in Iraq are supposed to do if they find Iraqi forces abusing prisoners. Pace replied that if inhumane treatment is observed it is a service member's duty to stop it.

"I don't think you mean they have an obligation to physically stop it — it's to report it," Rumsfeld said, turning to Pace.

Replied the general: "If they are physically present when inhumane treatment is taking place, sir, they have an obligation to try to stop it."

CLASS WAR REPORTS

The Bankrupt Empire

September 19, 2005 Frederic F. Clairmont, clairmont.info [Excerpts]

The extent of US indebtedness to the rest of the world is seen in its net international investment position (NIIP).

This has rocketed from \$320bn (1995) and is slated to scale \$3.7 trillion by the end of 2005, or a compound growth rate of 28%.

What is no less unmanageable is the US total debt financing requirements, which stood at \$827bn in 2004 and which have grown yearly at a compound rate of over 50%.

The imperial economy is floundering in a turbulent ocean of debt, living off borrowed time and parasitically off foreign borrowed money, markedly so in the case of Asian central banks.

The term "mendicancy" aptly depicts its grasping addiction to foreign handouts. Outstanding national public debt at end-March 2005 was \$7.7 trillion, slightly more than two-thirds of GDP, soaring on an average of \$2.3bn daily since 30 September 2004. More than \$600bn than last year.

In the 1990s, \$2.8 trillion of new debt was created that dwarfed the national debt prior to 1990. A further \$1.6bn was piled on in 2002-2004.

What we are witnessing is a lethal spiral of the external deficit that's gone bonkers, with devastating geo-political and economic implications, as the CAD advances relentlessly day by day, week by week, month by month to stand at more than 6% of GDP, up briskly from 4.3% one year ago.

The voraciously debt-addicted empire needs \$2.9bn every working day to plug this hole. In just the first three months of 2005, the average annualized trade deficit was \$33bn higher than the corresponding period of 2004. Excluding oil prices the deterioration is striking. One devastating number alone encapsulates its dilemma: imports outpace exports by 60%, which means that US exports must grow 60% faster than US imports just to keep the trade deficit stable.

There's no stratagem that the caste oligarchy can deploy to wiggle out of this stranglehold. Particularly at this strategic juncture when capitalism's manufacturing base, the once legendary Smokestack America, is quivering at its industrial and financial roots.

Over the 35-year time frame 1970-2005, factory employment plunged from 33% to less than 14% today. Nor can currency manipulation and the greenback's hyper-devaluation redress the CAD.

In sum: The decline and fall of empires, as Edward Gibbon said, is never imputable to a single cause but to a concatenation of inter-related strands. A statement that is no less true when applied to the ongoing implosion of the world's first mega-terrorist empire. Indubitably historians will come to regard the colonial invasion of Iraq as one of the tilting points in the debacle of empire.

It conforms to the central doctrine of Hegel's philosophy of history: "Out of the actions of men comes something quite different from what they intend and directly know and will." A point that bears analogy with Hitler's greatest crime with its self-destructive reverberations: the assault on the Soviet Union.

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