GI SPECIAL 3D39:

HOW MANY MORE FOR BUSH'S WAR?
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW

The Journey Home

Marines unload the body of 2nd Lieut. Jim Cathey, 24, from a commercial flight to Reno, Nevada, as passengers watch. NOVEMBER 14, 2005 TIME INC [Thanks to John Kevin Fabiani for sending in.]

"You Forgot That Our Soldiers Are Human Beings. They Bleed And They Die"

An Open Letter To The Congress Of The United States:

These volunteers are the leaders, for it wasn't money, nor public opinion that drove them, it was a commitment to defend the constitution on which this country was founded, a commitment which you, in your need to preserve your office, have betrayed.

December 8, 2005 By Monica Benderman. Sgt. Kevin Benderman is a Prisoner of Conscience, serving a 15 month sentence at Ft. Lewis, for filing as a Conscientious Objector to war.

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…. at the exclusion of the few courageous members who are willing to stand on their own and speak the truth…with all due respect.

What are you afraid of?

That without your office you are nothing? That it is your elected office that makes you who you are, and if you lose it, you will be nothing more than a common citizen again?

Perhaps that is what has to happen, for you to realize that even in office, you are a common citizen. You are failing us; time to go back to the beginning and start again.

My husband went to war because you ALL agreed that there was no other choice. Hundreds of thousands of our American soldiers were sent to war, sent to sacrifice for what you all agreed was a significant defense of this country, to die because you all agreed there was no other option.

But that was not the truth.

It was an illusion presented, not because you felt the American people needed to believe war was needed to ensure the greatest defense of this country, but because you, almost to a letter, wanted to make sure the American people believed enough in you that they would re-elect you to another term.

Without examining all the facts, without demanding precise verifiable evidence to show that war was necessary, you voted, en masse, to send our soldiers to war.

My husband sits in a military prison because he dared to speak the truth.

This war did not need to happen. He didn't care if he had the support of the American people. He risked everything to tell the truth, his health benefits, his children's college education, his career, and everything he had worked for, including ten years of <u>honorable</u> service, and a combat tour in Iraq.

The truth was more important to him, and he was sent to prison on trumped up charges because he was not afraid to stand alone and speak it. His command presented false testimony, manipulated evidence and lost witnesses and ultimately sent him to prison, to keep him from telling the truth. BUT he persisted – and today we persist together – the TRUTH matters – and in the end the TRUTH wins.

What are you doing to tell the truth? What are you willing to risk? Not one thing.

You sent our soldiers to war to protect your elected office. You banded together because you saw the polls and you knew it was what the American people wanted. Why did they want it? Because a president, vice president, secretary of defense, secretary of state and a myriad of tongue-wagging, drooling groupies all gathered together and told them this administration could be trusted. Somewhere in the mix, people forgot – POWER CORRUPTS – and most assuredly makes those who believe they have the power forget.

You forgot that the American people put their trust in you to lead them well, as one of us – with integrity, and honesty – with the TRUTH.

You forgot that our soldiers are human beings. They bleed and they die.

You forgot that our military commanders are human beings, common citizens. They may be leading "troops" but that doesn't make them heroes, and it does not make them know how to command. They were not promoted because they were good leaders, they were promoted because they were good followers.

I can assure you – good leaders are not allowed to exist in the US military – and it is becoming more apparent by the day that good leaders are not allowed to exist in our US government either.

Good leaders are not afraid to stand alone. Good leaders don't care if they are re-elected, they care if the choice they make is the wisest choice for the country they have been elected to serve.

Good leaders remember that volunteers, such as those in our military, demand greater respect than any person who has been elected to office.

These volunteers dared to step out, to take a risk, to offer their lives for what they believed in.

These volunteers are the leaders, for it wasn't money, nor public opinion that drove them, it was a commitment to defend the constitution on which this country was founded, a commitment which you, in your need to preserve your office, have betrayed.

You all have forgotten that.

As elected officials, you must work harder to prove yourselves leaders.

You have volunteered nothing. You have sacrificed nothing. You did vote yourself a pay raise – but in my book, raises are earned. Sorry – but you all are failing.

You owe this country, and it's time to pay. We've given you opportunities, we've waited for you to show your integrity and moral courage, to speak in defense of this country and the soldiers who sacrifice for it. You have not come through.

This war is over – it shouldn't be about winning or losing. It should be about stopping the madness, and facing the truth. Winning is that no more people die at the hands of this administration, and in the name of the American people.

Winning is realizing that we know nothing about the Iraqi culture, and didn't care about it to begin with. We didn't go to war to save Iraq – we went to war to establish a presence in the Middle East, to overthrow a dictator we put in place, and could no longer control.

We went to war because we knew that a weak but defiant dictator wouldn't be around much longer, and it was better to replace him with a US friendly government than risk the alternative. Winning is knowing that trying to control that which is not ours to control fails every time.

Winning is that we do not allow members of this administration to use our soldiers to reconcile their own guilt for commitments left unfinished and promises broken.

Winning is that we, as a country, do not allow "born-again Christians" to use our sons and daughters, our money and our lives, to save their souls before the judgement day.

Winning is that we put LIFE first – not political position, not government perks – fancy offices, high-priced tickets at exclusive Christmas presentations, scripted exits from chartered jets.

Winning is that the American people turn on C-Span and hear their elected officials leading the way with the truth, in speeches that criticize, that differ, that challenge, that are recognized as original because they are spoken from the heart, with wisdom and intelligent research providing the basis for the presentation – not concern for how many votes will be garnered in the next election.

How can anyone believe an elected official who doesn't speak his own words? Speech writers??? We are not voting for the speech writers.

Talk is cheap – and the rhetoric of today's politicians isn't worthy of being given away.

Soldiers are dying – Innocent civilians are dying. America is dying – because power corrupts.

Where are the leaders?

I know where one is.

He is sitting in a military prison because he is unafraid to give everything he has to tell the truth. So, Congress wants someone to follow, there's a man to follow.

What's it going to take? You want greatness – you want to be remembered – you want another plaque to hang on your wall – "a true servant of the people"?

A true leader doesn't respond to the will of the people. A true leader responds to wisdom, knowledge and the Highest good, knowing that at first he will stand alone, but with the courage and strength to lead others to what he knows.

Who among you has moral courage? Who among you will stand with my husband, Sgt. Kevin Benderman, and put the truth before your career?

Who among you is worthy of being called a leader?

Who among you is not afraid?

Please visit our websites at www.BendermanDefense.org and www.BendermanTimeline.com.

Monica Benderman may be reached at mdawnb@coastalnow.net

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 WAR REPORTS

MARINE KILLED BY IED IN RAMADI

December 8, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS RELEASE Number: 05-12-12C

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq – A Marine assigned to the 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), was killed in action when his vehicle was attacked with an improvised explosive device while conducting combat operations against the enemy in ar Ramadi, Dec. 7.

TASK FORCE BAGHDAD SOLDIER KILLED BY IED

December 8, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS RELEASE Number: 05-12-11C & (KUNA)

BAGHDAD, Iraq — A Task Force Baghdad Soldier was killed when a convoy struck an improvised explosive device in east Baghdad shortly after 10 a.m. Dec. 8. A second soldier was wounded.

DoD Identifies Army Casualty

December 8, 2005 U.S. Department of Defense News Release No. 1271-05

Pfc. Thomas C. Siekert, 20, of Lovelock, Nev., died in Bayji, Iraq on Dec. 6, from non-combat related injuries. Siekert was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, Fort Campbell, Ky.

New York Man Wounded

12/08/05 Dispatch

A Utica man serving with the Army in Iraq was injured Monday in an attack on his convoy as it was leaving Baghdad, according to his father.

Staff Sergeant Daniel Bennero of Utica suffered burns to his face and neck, lacerations to his face and cuts to his upper torso, his father said Wednesday. He is being treated in a Baghdad hospital and is expected to be evacuated to a hospital in Germany today.

"I received a phone call Monday night, five hours after it happened," he said. "When I got the call, I didn't have to ask what happened, I just knew. As a parent, you wonder every day what's going to happen over there."

Bennero, who serves with the 82nd Airborne Paratrooper Infantry, was riding in a vehicle with his convoy unit Monday afternoon when the vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device.

"He's wanted to be a soldier his entire life and still seems very optimistic when I talk to him." "If it were up to him, he would go right back. Thankfully, it's not up to him."

This is Bennero's third mission overseas, his father said. He already spent 10 months in Afghanistan and six months in Iraq prior to the latest deployment.

TROOP NEWS

“I Would Like To See Us At The Forefront Of The Movement”

Tomas and Brie Young

How do you see the role of antiwar GIs and vets -- people like yourself -- in the antiwar movement?

In theory, I would like to see us at the forefront of the movement. I don't mean that obnoxiously. I just think we have a more valid point of view than anyone else. However, in practice we are constantly being pushed aside by groups that have an agenda other than ending the war and bringing our soldiers back where they belong.

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

04/12/05 by Derek Seidman, Co-Editor, Left Hook, in Monthly Review [Excerpts]

Paralyzed from the chest down, Iraq war vet Tomas Young speaks out against the war and occupation. Interviewed by Derek Seidman.

Pfc. Tomas Young, 25 years old, was sent to Iraq last year with the Army's 1st Cavalry Division. He joined the military for college money to further his education and, in his own words, "to exact some form of retribution" on the perpetrators of 9/11. Two and a half weeks into his tour of duty, Young was paralyzed from the chest down after being struck

by an AK-47 round while sitting in an open truck bed. Since returning home, he has joined Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) and has become an outspoken critic of the war and occupation.

Tomas Young can be reached at Tomasyoungk@aol.com. This interview is the result of a long email exchange.

Tomas, thank you very much for doing this interview. Before we get into your story more in depth and discuss your involvement in IVAW, can you tell us the basics about your service in Iraq? When were you there, where were you stationed, and what were you doing?

I deployed to the region in mid-March of last year. I spent two and a half weeks in Kuwait and went to Sadr City in the beginning of April, where I stayed until I was shot on April 4th, going out on what I thought was a simple rescue mission.

Were you critical of the war and occupation before you were sent to Iraq?

Not only was I extremely critical of the war with Iraq, I was very critical of the entire Bush administration. I mean, he was after all partly responsible for trading Sammy Sosa from the Rangers.

So you're from Texas? Do you come from a community that is particularly pro-war?

I am actually from Kansas City, Missouri, and my community was basically on the fence about the war.

Why did you join the military?

I joined the army after 9/11 partially because I wanted to exact some form of retribution on the people that did that to us, and I also realized that neither my family nor myself could pay for college, so I joined to further my education.

Can you explain what happened to you in Iraq that left you paralyzed from the chest down?

I had been picked to go on a rescue mission to provide security for the extraction of two downed soldiers.

Twenty-five of us piled into the back of a two-and-a-half-ton truck with no canvas covering the top to provide some form of concealment, no armor to speak of, which had a maximum capacity of eighteen soldiers with gear.

We got the soldiers rescued safely and we loaded back in the truck -- to go back to the base. However, instead of going back the safe route to the base -- the way that we had come -- we decided to go through the heart of downtown Sadr City.

There we were, crammed in the back of the truck, like the sardines are in the cliché, trying to focus our weapons outside the vehicle but not having the elbow room to personally move our gun barrels very well. I also had my legs crossed Indian-style to make room. I personally did not fire a shot due to the fact that all I saw were women and

children. I'm not criticizing my buddies who were shooting, and I did also see men with AK-47s falling to the ground, but I'm sure my buddies were just too scared to know the difference.

All of a sudden I went completely numb.

It was like my body had fallen asleep, like legs sometimes do. I also dropped my M-16 when it happened. I tried to pick it up, but it seemed as though my hands had forgotten how to work. There were another two or three wounded soldiers in the truck, and I was considered the least critical because there was no blood visible at that point. The mission was finally scrapped, I believe.

As we rushed back to base, the truck we were in overheated (as it had been doing a lot of), and it was supposed to be with the mechanics instead of out on patrol. Luckily, another soldier jumped out and commandeered an Iraqi bus to get us back to base.

It was there that we got loaded into Blackhawks, and they airloaded us to Kuwait and safety.

Other soldiers have told me similar stories of neglect by the military -- of being given plywood as armor for their vehicles, of having expired bullet-proof vests, and so forth. Where do you place the blame for your paralysis?

I place it in two places. First of all, I blame the Bush administration. Although I know they didn't pull the trigger, they were the people responsible for not waiting at least until the military was fully combat-ready. I also place the blame on my commanders appointed above me for sending a vehicle that was far more poorly equipped than any other vehicle allowed to leave the FOB (Forward Operating Base).

There have been complaints about inadequate care that injured soldiers have received after returning home. How do you feel about the medical care you've received since you were shot? Has it been adequate?

The care I've gotten has been spotty -- good at times, peppered with moments where I just went "what the hell is going on here?"

How would you describe the treatment of you and other soldiers by your commanders? What was their general attitude towards you?

I would say that they treated us not necessarily as equals, but they were definitely friendlier to us there than they were back here at home. I mean, they had to worry about angry soldiers throwing grenades into tents.

You said you were initially opposed to the war and occupation, but what was it that actually made you want to take a more active stance against them? Many soldiers just want to get home and forget about what they saw.

I was watching C-Span one day (really, I was) and I saw that the House was debating a $82 billion appropriations bill to help fund the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. A

Democratic congresswoman introduced an amendment to the bill that would remove just $2 billion dollars to improve VA hospitals, some of which are in quite bad shape. When it came time to vote on the amendment and the bill, every Democrat and one Republican voted in support of the $2 billion, but all the Republicans (THE PARTY THAT CLAIMS TO SUPPORT THE TROOPS THE MOST) voted it down. The bill passed, by the way, and with it was enough pork to feed Sally Struthers' African village many times. One example is the new stadium for the Washington Nationals in 2008, which is why I want to round up some vets and protest it opening day that year.

So, are you saying that government negligence of the troops is one thing that motivated you to take a public stance against the war? Has anything else motivated you to do this?

I was also motivated by the fact that I did not want any more of my fellow soldiers be used unnecessarily.

When did you join Iraq Veterans Against the War? How did you hear about IVAW?

I joined in early September of this year. My mother told me about them. She was messing around on the internet and found Military Families Speak Out (MFSO).

Why did you join IVAW?

Because they were fellow Iraq vets who felt like me.

Was it a difficult decision to join?

No, it was quite easy.

Other IVAWers I've talked to said it was a bit harder for them, because initially they just wanted to try to forget about what they experienced and try to get back to life as usual. You didn't have any of this hesitation? Why was the decision so easy for you?

One of the primary triggers of my PTSD symptoms is watching the things that go on as far as the government is involved, and it calms me down to do something about it, so I jumped at the opportunity to help in a big way.

Other soldiers have said similar things -- that working with other vets with similar experiences to call out the war-makers is therapeutic.

It's cathartic when you can take the things about the war that are either screwed up generally or that conspired to screw you up personally and focus that anger into something you feel is important.

What do you think of the counter-recruitment movement that has arisen amongst antiwar activists and vets?

I'm totally for counter recruitment because the military recruiters will only tell you one side of the story. All we want to do is present the full truth to potential recruits before they decide.

What do you think of the civilian antiwar movement? Do you have any criticisms of it?

I appreciate the civilian antiwar movement, although I think it should stay just that. Yes, the other things are important, but I think its wrong to use the war in Iraq as a way to get your foot in the door, so to speak, to discuss other topics (like the environment, New Orleans, Palestine, and many other examples). In doing this, I believe you are helping to dilute the message we are trying to get out about ending the war.

How do you see the role of antiwar GIs and vets -- people like yourself -- in the antiwar movement?

In theory, I would like to see us at the forefront of the movement. I don't mean that obnoxiously. I just think we have a more valid point of view than anyone else. However, in practice we are constantly being pushed aside by groups that have an agenda other than ending the war and bringing our soldiers back where they belong.

Have your experiences changed the way you think about war more generally?

No, I've always thought that war is a necessary resort as long as it's the last feasible resort and all diplomatic resources have been completely exhausted.

When I first asked you to do this interview, you told me you'd gladly do it because you wanted to get the "truth" out to people. If you could say anything to the American people about the war and occupation, based on your own thoughts and experiences, what would it be?

I can really think of only one thing: how can you say that you support the troops if you support the false ideas they may die for?

www.ivaw.net

As Dimwitted As American Teenagers Are, They're Not Stupid Enough To Fall For The Crap We're Selling

01-07 December, By Saul Landau, Progreso Weekly [Excerpts]

"As dimwitted as American teenagers are," a Mexican-American army recruiter confessed to me in June in Pomona California, "they're not stupid enough to fall for the crap we're selling to get them to go to Iraq or Afghanistan. Don't quote me."

I'm quoting him, but omitting his name and rank. His parents came from Sinaloa and settled in San Bernadino, where he grew up and decided to make an army career after he dropped out of high school. "It pays OK and I don't work too hard. I'd rather be here than in Iraq or Afghanistan. I'll tell you that."

His partner, a young woman with sergeant stripes on her sleeve whispers to him in Spanish. "Are you crazy? Don't say anything else. Don't screw yourself cabron." He laughs.

Mexicans and those of Mexican descent make up more than half of the approximately 110,000 Latinos mostly, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Central Americans currently serving in the U.S. military. In addition, almost 25,000 other Mexicans have enlisted as a means of obtaining U.S. citizenship.

Coyotes smuggled some of these Mexicans into the country as children who never had any "legal" documents. The recruiters target high schools with heavy population of Mexican descent. The Marines have had particular success in their forceful publicity campaign. They claim that youth of Mexican origin make up 13% of the Corps. But that high percentage of Latinos also shows up in the high dead and wounded count.

Even before the bloody November 2004 battle of Fallujah which exacted a heavy toll, Mexican families began to feel the pain of war. The dead, the legless, armless, eyeless and brain dead wounded began to come home. On both sides of the Rio Grande, Mexican parents shared a common anguish. One hundred twenty-two Latinos were among the first 1,000 U.S. casualties in Iraq. Seventy of them were of Mexican descent.

On December 24, 2004, the day before Christmas, Sergio Diaz Varela died in Ramadi. His family and friends attended his funeral in Guadalajara, where "armed troops from Fort Hood, Texas led by General Ken Keene accompanied the young soldier to his final resting place, and U.S. ambassador Tony Garza commended the boy's soul to God" (John Ross, Counterpunch, Feb 21, 2005).

Similar funerals took place in San Luis de la Paz, Guanajuato and in the Altos de Jalisco. On the invasion day, the first GI killed was Mexican American. Fernando Suarez del Solar, father of Jesus, a resident of Escondido, California, spoke in Spanish. The 48-year-old man, slight of build, said he had emigrated from Tijuana 1997. He now worked as cashier at a convenience stores and delivered newspapers.

He began hesitatingly in Spanish. "Today I demand the immediate return of our troops," he told a student audience at the California State Polytechnic University in California. "I lost my son, my Aztec warrior, Jesus Alberto, because of negligence from the American command in Iraq in this illegal war full of lies by President Bush."

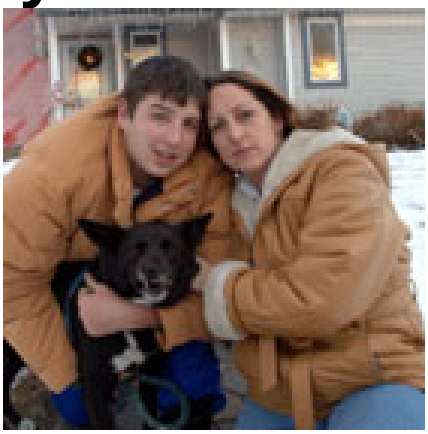
As he spoke he seemed to gain confidence and strength. "You know that my son died when he stepped on a 'friendly' grenade, a grenade put there the previous night by the Army who never advised my son's unit and gave them the order to advance and since my son was the explorer he stepped on one of them and he waited almost three hours to receive medial attention until a helicopter arrived with help. This is a death from our invincible army? This is a death from the protection that our kids are given?" A tear of grief or rage or both fell onto his cheek.

He got no answers from the Pentagon. So, he traveled to Iraq to find the truth about his son's death. He joined Military Families Speak Out. With other relatives of dead and wounded servicemen and women, he speaks and organizes against the war.

Fernando Suarez does more than ask God for help.

"Señor Bush," he shouted to a California student group in the Fall of 2004. "How many sons of ours does he need to fill his gasoline tank? How many dead American sons does he need to stop this war full of lies? I do not want any more dead sons of fathers, husbands. Stop this now!!! Señor Bush, I hope that God forgives you, because I can't."

As IRR Single Parent Called Up, Her Kid Says: “My Father’s Not Here, You're Not Here, Why Should I Be Here?”



Patricia Arndt with her son (Newsday Photo/ Ken Sawchuk) Dec 7, 2005

As Christmas nears, Arndt, 43, is trying to sell the Medford home she says she will not be able to keep on an Army salary of approximately $60,000 a year, and is searching for someone to care for her 13-year-old son, Shane. She expects to train for an 18-month tour of duty that could take her to Iraq or Afghanistan.

[Thanks to Alan S., who sent this in.]

December 8, 2005 BY MARTIN C. EVANS, STAFF WRITER, Newsday

While most of her friends and neighbors are amusing themselves with Christmas decorations and holiday gifts, Patricia Arndt is fretting over far more serious matters.

The single mother from Medford has been unexpectedly pulled from the inactive Army reserve and ordered to report for active duty by Feb. 5.

As Christmas nears, Arndt, 43, is trying to sell the Medford home she says she will not be able to keep on an Army salary of approximately $60,000 a year, and is searching for someone to care for her 13-year-old son, Shane. She expects to train for an 18-month tour of duty that could take her to Iraq or Afghanistan.

She said she never saw her return to active duty as a possibility. "Never in a million years," she said.

"This is a very hard thing for me," she said. "I absolutely love my country. I feel I owe it to the Army and my fellow soldiers, because I wouldn't be here without them.

"If I were a reservist assigned to a unit, I'd have been trained and informed of the possibility that I would be called. I'm not prepared for this."

U.S. Army officials said Arndt is not being treated unfairly. "Single parents are treated no differently than any other soldier, and are expected to have a family care plan at all times," said Army spokeswoman Lt. Col. Pamela Hart.

[Fine. Send Lt. Col. Pamela Hart to Iraq and see how well she likes it. She didn't bother to tell the reporter that thousands of IRR members have simply refused to report for duty in this fucked up evil, hopeless war for oil and Empire, and absolutely nothing has been done to them.]

Arndt, a respiratory therapist at Brookhaven Memorial Hospital Medical Center and a small-business owner, has been called back to active status after 20 years as a reservist.

She spent four years of active duty in the Army in the 1980s based in Germany prior to becoming "an individual mobilization augmentee reservist" -- which required her to fill in for regular duty soldiers called to overseas duty.

Last year, she said, she was transferred to another category called the Individual Ready Reserve, which made her eligible for a combat assignment. She is to report to Fort Jackson, S.C.

Her return to active duty will leave her teenage son without a parent for 18 months, she said, and cost her more than $100,000 in income during that time.

As the U.S. Army has lagged in meeting recruiting goals, Arndt's story is another indication of how the ongoing war in Iraq is forcing bigger responsibilities onto the shoulders of a relatively small number of military personnel.

Officials have said that many of the 172,000 troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan are on their second or third tours of duty.

Increasingly, the military has turned to so-called stop-loss orders -- preventing some military personnel from retiring -- and to National Guard soldiers or older reservists to fill the ranks.

According to Army officials, approximately 110,000 Army personnel are listed in the Individual Ready Reserve. By law, they may be called up for as long as two years to fill vacancies. But because they are not attached to any unit, they may go years without the training and supervision needed to transition back to active duty, officials said.

The Army has traditionally not sent IRR soldiers into battle.

The war in Iraq, now 21/2 years old, has changed that. Currently, more than 6,500 ready reservists have been called back to active duty, including Chief Warrant Officer Margaret Murray, 56, of Schenectady. While receiving training at Fort Jackson last year, Murray told Newsday that she hoped she would not be sent into combat. If she is sent, she said, "I'll do the best I can."

Pentagon officials say soldiers who volunteered for the reserves knew they could be called up at any time.

"Why I got activated and called, I have no idea," Arndt said. "People have no idea what this is doing to families."

Almost half of IRR members who have been reactivated have asked to have their recalls delayed or eliminated, officials said. Of those requests, one quarter were from single parents or other soldiers with family problems arranging for the care of a child or other dependent. The remainder were for medical reasons, financial hardship or other difficulties.

Arndt, who is also appealing her orders, is far from alone. Almost 8 percent of all current Army personnel -- and 13.8 percent of female soldiers -- are single parents, the officials said.

Arndt, who never married, at first arranged to have Shane live with her sister. But those plans are in danger of falling through, she said, because of family problems. She said her son's emotional well-being worries her the most.

"He says, 'My father's not here, you're not here, why should I be here?'" Arndt said. "His life as he knows it is gone."

“The World Champion War Profiteer”
[How To Make Millions Killing U.S. Troops]

“Oh, wow, someone wants to endanger my life for a few bucks?” Sounds like the entire war.

“So the soldiers get paid poorly, on occasion shell out there own few bucks to buy gear, lose a year of their life, lose their sanity, lose their limbs, lose their lives, and a very few, very select group closely connected to our government get very, very rich.”

01 Dec 2005 By Anthony Lappé, Gnn.tv [Excerpts]

According to United for a Fair Economy, Brooks and Co. have made a tidy profit outfitting our nation’s fighting men and women in body armor that allegedly couldn’t take a hit from a 9mm round:

David H. Brooks, CEO of bulletproof vest maker DHB Industries, earned $70 million in 2004, 13,349% more than his 2001 compensation of $525,000.

Brooks also sold company stock worth about $186 million last year, spooking investors who drove DHB’s share price from more than $22 to as low as $6.50. In May 2005, the U.S. Marines recalled more than 5,000 DHB armored vests after questions were raised about their effectiveness. By that time, Brooks had pocketed over $250 million in war windfalls.

According to a government memo uncovered in an eight-month investigation by the Marine Corps Times, the company’s vests, made by DHB subsidiary Point Blank Body Armor, failed tests when they suffered “multiple complete penetrations” of 9mm pistol rounds and other ballistics. In the memo, government ballistics expert James MacKiewicz said his office “has little confidence in the performance” of the body armor.

The Marines later disputed the results of the tests.

Nevertheless, the Marines recalled 5,277 of the company’s “Interceptor” vests in May.

“It’s shocking to see a guy who has no shame like this. He may be the world champion war profiteer,” said the Institute for Policy Studies’ Sarah Anderson, who co-authored the “Executive Excess 2005” report. “The shareholders are up in arms over the defective equipment, the military is up and arms, and he’s out partying.”

Indeed, Iraq war veterans are not pleased. Paul Rieckhoff, an Iraq war veteran and founder of Operation Truth (and my frequent radio partner), told me, "It is already disturbing that anyone can live the high-life as a result of the booming war business, but it is particularly disheartening to hear about someone having their own private Lollapalooza, in part from the sale of defective equipment that put our troops in harm's way. America must take a long, hard look at the idea of profit on the battlefield."

Another OpTruth Iraq vet, Bobby Yen, had a darker take, "I guess it just goes to show the state of affairs and the state of mind of this tired, old (of mind) veteran that when this story came up it didn't even make me blink.

"So some rich guy somewhere who made tons of money selling defective bulletproof vests to the military has a filthy rich party for his daughter's Bat Mitzvah.

"Oh, wow, someone wants to endanger my life for a few bucks?" Sounds like the entire war.

"So the soldiers get paid poorly, on occasion shell out there own few bucks to buy gear, lose a year of their life, lose their sanity, lose their limbs, lose their lives, and a very few, very select group closely connected to our government get very, very rich.

"OK, if that's what the American people want. If that's what they voted for."

According to the company's 2004 annual report Brooks earned around $3 million in salary and "other compensation." But he also pocketed an additional $69,930,000 in cash from exercising stock options. This does not include a $186 million sale Brooks made of DHB stock, which is under investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

On November 21, the Army Times reported, "The Army and Marine Corps are recalling more than 18,000 body armor vests because they failed ballistic requirements when they were manufactured in 1999-2000.

"Many of those vests may now be in the war zone. The Nov. 16 recall order is the second in six months for the Marines. The Corps recalled more than 5,000 vests in May. All of the vests involved were produced by the same manufacturer, Point Blank Body Armor Inc. of Pompano Beach, Fla., under contract to the Marine Corps."

Army Settles Birth-Defect Claim For $3.25 Million

December 08, 2005 Associated Press

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — The Army has agreed to pay $3.25 million to settle a lawsuit filed by a soldier who said a son born at an Army hospital suffered severe developmental problems.

Danna Braswell gave birth to Corey at Evans Army Community Hospital at Fort Carson in September 2002. She said Corey's umbilical cord was wrapped around his neck, cutting off oxygen.

In a lawsuit filed last year, she alleged negligence led to her son's brain damage and other problems.

Braswell, 24, told The (Colorado Springs, Colo.) Gazette on Wednesday night that her pregnancy was fine until the day she gave birth.

"I remember they were struggling to get him out. When I saw my child, he was all purple. The face was blue. He looked dead," she told the newspaper. "Right there I just panicked and started praying."

Braswell was released from the military in 2003 because of her son's medical needs. She and her son now live with her mother in Avon Park, Fla.

She said her son has limited vision and cannot talk, crawl, walk or eat solid foods. He requires constant care and receives occupational, speech and physical therapies.

Part of the money from the settlement will be used to establish a trust fund to ensure lifetime care for Corey.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

(Graphic: London Financial Times)

Assorted Resistance Action

8/12/2005 Xinhua & IOL & (KUNA)

"Armed men opened fire at the convoy of Col. Hussein Abdul Wahid, in command of police in Rasafa area, the eastern part of Baghdad, in the capital's al-Baya'a district as he was heading to work," the source said on condition of anonymity.

Abdul Wahid was seriously wounded in his neck, and three of his bodyguards were also injured, the source said.

The bodyguards traded fire with the gunmen and one civilian passenger was killed and three others wounded in the cross fire, he added.

Iraqis stormed on Thursday an office belonging to the Iraqi National Reconciliation Movement headed by former premier Iyad Allawi and set it ablaze.

Witnesses said they attacked Allawi's office in Western Karbala, 100km south of Baghdad, fired shots and torched the building.

Three Iraqi soldiers were killed and another two injured when armed men in two vehicles opened machinegun fire at a patrol in Dur al-Sud quarter near Iskan district west of Baghdad, an Iraqi journalist told Aljazeera.

IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE
END THE OCCUPATION

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

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

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

OCCUPATION REPORT

Their War, My Memories

December 4, 2005 Patrick J. McDonnell, L.A. Times Staff Writer [Excerpts]

For two years, Patrick J. McDonnell saw Iraq through the eyes of many. There were those who wanted him and other Westerners killed and those who protected him. Either way, he can't get them out of his mind.

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The Throw-Away People

The coffee shop girl signaled a greeting from her hospital bed, her face a pointillist palette of wounds, one eye forced shut, the other gazing off into a void. Nahrain Yonaan offered her one functioning hand; the other was swathed in gauze, a mangled claw.

She seemed cheered to think that I came to visit from the U.S. Army base in southern Baghdad where she served coffee and soft drinks to the troops, a place she had become fond of, where each day she stepped into a life comfortably apart from the deepening despair of Iraq outside the gates. She had encouraged her melancholic younger sister, Narmeen, to find work with the Americans as well.

I allowed her to embrace the illusion, propagated by her mother, that a certain captain had made the trip to the squalor of Kindi Hospital in an act of solidarity.

Nahrain took my hand. She was blinded and maimed. And she did not yet know the worst: Narmeen and an aunt had been killed in the drive-by shooting and subsequent bombing that mutilated the body of this once-vivacious 25-year-old. Nahrain survived the fusillade and escaped from the targeted minivan after pretending she was dead. But in one of those acts of valor and imprudence so prevalent in wartime, she slipped back to the bullet-ridden vehicle and—in a bid to save her sister and aunt—tried to remove the bomb deposited there by attackers who were keen to finish off the victims. It exploded in her face. "Nahrain was the light of my family," her mother, shattered, confided to me.

The lamentable fact was that no one had come from the base, nor would the Army do anything to help this broken young woman.

Masked gunmen had attacked the minivan she was traveling in because it ferried her and others to jobs at the U.S. camp. The assassins had stalked the vehicle from the base, a frequent scenario in the Iraqi killing grounds. She and her fellow commuters were the latest victims of a grisly but effective guerrilla strategy: eliminate any Iraqi who was "collaborating" with U.S. forces, even if their role was no more significant than serving beverages in a base cafe or cleaning the floors.

"We'll see what we can do," the major at the base, known as Camp Cuervo, told me later when I inquired whether Nahrain could be transferred to a military hospital, where perhaps her vision and limbs could be saved. "She was very popular. But we have a lot going on right now."

I saw Nahrain Yonaan one last time before I left Iraq.

We arranged to meet at a mutual friend's house. At this point, I dared not go into her neighborhood in Baghdad's southern Doura district, a hotbed of insurgent activity and rebel checkpoints. Nahrain looked drained, lacking the vitality I had sensed even when she was half-conscious in that hospital bed more than a year earlier. She had lost her left eye, her right eye was close to sightless, her hearing was disintegrating and several toes and fingers were mangled or missing. Pain was constant and shrapnel remained in her body—the result of pitiable medical care.

The frequent gunshots in her neighborhood terrified her; she feared insurgents might return to finish her off.

"Everyone was nice to me during my time with them," she said, still befuddled that the Army had not offered medical assistance. "I was shocked to be ignored by them."

Nahrain and her sister were on their way to Amman, Jordan, looking to start fresh in a new place. Their dream was to acquire U.S. visas, but the sisters had little hope of ever being granted the prized documents, despite relatives in America who were willing to sponsor them.

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Fallouja 2003: "Could It Possibly Be, I Wondered, That The War Was Already Lost?"

This was in a place called Fallouja, the so-called city of mosques, an insular town west of Baghdad that before long would become infamous as the symbolic heart of the Iraqi insurgency. But at this point, in July 2003, it was still a place where Western journalists could venture and even be received with traditional Arab hospitality, though lines were being drawn.

The late imam's extended male family—he came from a prominent tribe—greeted us along a canal amid the date palm-fringed ribbon of green that caresses the Euphrates. The men sat in the shade of the mourning tent, sipping tea and fingering beads. Sheikh Laith's father and uncles, all dressed in traditional tribal headdresses and robes, spoke with deep pride of the precocious scholar who now, indisputably, rested in paradise. Later, a longtime acquaintance, Ahmed Jasim, marveled at his friend's passing.

"He has had a wonderful death," Jasim told me. "We are all hoping to have a similar end, to be martyrs like Sheikh Laith."

At the time, U.S. authorities—notably L. Paul Bremer III, the U.S. administrator and de facto proconsul—were dismissing the mounting attacks as desperation acts by "bitter enders" who would soon be annihilated by superior U.S. forces. But it never felt like that in Fallouja or elsewhere in western Iraq, where anger was building, arms and munitions were abundant and there was no shortage of volunteers—many unemployed young men gravitating in their discontent to militant mosques—to take on the U.S. troops.

The people of Sunni Arab Iraq, long divided by tribe and region of origin, had found a common enemy.

After the imam's wake, we drove into the town of Amriya to visit some of the dead man's followers, who had gathered at the house of an elderly and half-blind sheik. Abandoning caution, he began to complain that U.S. troops had arrested several area "boys" who had been transporting arms from the south.

The young militants in the room quieted him and wondered aloud whether Suheil and I were intelligence agents. We quickly changed the subject to the imponderables of Sufist philosophy and then made an apologetic exit.

"That was a very perilous moment, Mr. Patrick," Suheil advised me as we sped back toward Fallouja and its crown of minarets, our eyes on the rearview mirror.

It was becoming apparent—with every new ambush and roadside bombing, with most every interview I conducted—that this was going to be a long and bloody fight.

Could it possibly be, I wondered, that the war was already lost?

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Baghdad Airport 2005: “They're Getting Closer”

I bade farewell to Iraq in mid-July, hoping for the best as we careened down the airport road, past the bomb-gouged potholes and the unlucky spots where so many had been blown up.

Abruptly, the sky cleared and the Royal Jordanian jet that was to extract me and a motley assemblage of security contractors and assorted Iraqis approached the airport on its delayed run from Amman.

As if on cue, an explosion shook the terminal. A mortar landed harmlessly about 100 yards away, drawing a glance from the seen-it-all security men also waiting for the flight. "They're getting closer," commented an Aussie contractor, who looked out the terminal window and watched the reddish-brown earth erupt as the mortar struck the desert.

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)

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

U.S. soldiers from Charlie Company 2nd Battalion 22nd Infantry regiment patrol Sadr-city in eastern Baghdad December 7, 2005. (Laszlo Balogh/Reuters)

[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, aim their weapons at little kids, 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!

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Bush Caught In Still Another Stupid Lie About Iraq:
His Example Of Success "A Chaotic Mess"

12.8.05 New York Times

President Bush cited a teaching hospital in Najaf as perhaps the top example of a successful rebuilding project in Iraq.

Since the American-led attack against local militias leveled large portions of Najaf in August 2004, however, the hospital has been most notable as a place where claims of success have fallen far short of reality. A late summer visit revealed that critical medical equipment was missing and the upper floors remained a chaotic mess.

RUMSFELD: WAR IN IRAQ GOING WELL ON EARTH II
Reports Significant Progress In Parallel Universe

December 7, 2005 The Borowitz Report

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld today announced that despite the steady drumbeat of bad news about the war in Iraq, the war is actually going very well in the parallel universe known as Earth II.

Secretary Rumsfeld made his comments about Earth II in a press briefing at the Pentagon, where he blasted the press for "not reporting all of the good news coming out of Earth II."

With that, the defense secretary unfurled a map of Earth II, showing a terrain more familiar to science fiction fans and video game enthusiasts than to the general public.

According to the defense secretary, on Earth II Iraqi troops are being trained at a rate much faster than anticipated and the insurgency is "on the verge of crumbling."

Additionally, Iraqis have embraced democracy, causing freedom to flower in such neighboring countries as "Iran II, Egypt II and Saudi Arabia II."

Partially because of these gains, Mr. Rumsfeld said, President Bush's approval rating on Earth II currently stands at 89 percent.

Secretary Rumsfeld brushed aside a reporter's question about escalating violence in Iraq, saying that his new policy was to answer "no questions whatsoever" that involve Earth I.

"The press would be better served if they would get off the planet they're on and start living in a parallel universe, like all of us in this Administration do," Mr. Rumsfeld said.

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.

CLASS WAR REPORTS

Tire Giant Firestone Hit With Lawsuit Over Conditions At Rubber Plantation: "Most Of The Workers Do Not Even Know Slavery Has Been Abolished"

[Thanks to Z, who sent this in.]

December 8, 2005 by Haider Rizvi, OneWorld.net

UNITED NATIONS - Firestone, a multinational rubber manufacturing giant known for its automobile tires, has come under fire from human rights and environmental groups for its alleged use of child labor and slave-like working conditions at a plantation in Liberia.

Recently, the International Labor Rights Fund (ILRF), a Washington, D.C.-based advocacy group, filed a lawsuit charging that thousands of workers, including minors, toil in virtual slavery at Bridgestone's Firestone rubber plantation in Liberia.

According to the complaint filed in the United States District Court in Venice, California, Firestone, which has operated in the West African country since the 1920s, largely depends on poor and often illiterate workers to tap tons of raw latex from rubber trees using primitive tools exposing them to hazardous pesticides and fertilizers.

At Firestone, "all of the workers are poverty-stricken Africans, enduring extremely inhuman conditions under the constant guard of American and now Japanese overseers who live in the finest houses in Liberia, looking down on the field hands from their verandahs and the company's private golf course," the group says.

By contrast, "most of the workers have never been off of the plantation and do not even know that the world has moved on and slavery has been abolished."

"I have seen six people living in one room, without any toilet, electricity, or running water," Jerome Verdier, an environmental lawyer from Liberia, told OneWorld. "The company has no justification whatsoever to keep on exploiting those people."

Verdier and others say thousands of workers at the plantation cannot meet daily harvesting quota without unpaid aid, requiring them to put their own children to work or face starvation.

In many cases, activists say, Firestone overseers not only know about the massive use of child labor, but also compel it. "Workers are told that if they can't make their daily quota, they should put their children to work," the lawsuit charges.

According to the ILRF, each official worker at the Firestone plantation is required to deliver 450 pounds of latex per day to meet quota, an amount many adult workers fail to produce.

"They work for $3.19 a day and work close to 20 hours every day," Verdier told a news conference at the U.N. headquarters in New York Wednesday.

Most plantation workers, according to the lawsuit, remain "at the mercy of Firestone for everything from food to health care to education. They risk expulsion and starvation if they raise even minor complaints, and the company makes willful use of this situation to exploit these workers as they have since 1926."

The 240 square-mile plantation has an official workforce of 6,000, out of which at least 4,000 are reportedly facing extremely inhumane conditions.

Received:

“There Are Things That Are Extremely Suspect About These Hostage Takers”

From: A
To: GI Special
Sent: December 08, 2005

Dec 8 By ROBERT H. REID, Associated Press Writer

Another group, the Swords of Righteousness, has set a Saturday deadline, threatening to kill four Christian humanitarian workers abducted two weeks ago, including an American, two Canadians and a Briton. A French aid worker and a German citizen are also being held by kidnappers.

There are things that are extremely suspect about these hostage takers.

It is my current understanding, that NO ONE knows who they are. If you couple that with what they are saying, something is very much wrong.

I do not have the ability to go into all of the details here but, I strongly suspect that these hostage takers are very much related to the people who were previously blowing up Shia mosques; and they are dragging this out now for maximum media exposure, so all the prominent anti-war icons can be tricked into public renunciation, before the hostages are slaughtered in front of the camera...

This is very similar to what happened with Margaret Hassan. Margaret Hassan was not killed by anyone even considering themselves to be Muslim.

I know this last assertion for fact, and you have my word on it.

Received:

PUT BUSH INTO LANDSTUHL?

From: max watts
To: GI Special
Sent: December 08, 2005 11:17 PM

better v late than never? well, it did happen in 1789, so...

re BASTILLE see below:

From: A
To: GI Special
Sent: June 21, 2005

Z's letter on Potemkin was good, especially the quote from that manifesto.

He also mentioned the Bastille. I've actually heard that the freeing of prisoners from there was incidental, and that actually people stormed the Bastille because it was an armory and they needed weapons.

NO, THE BASTILLE WAS A PRISON. BUT I BELIEVE ONLY 7 PRISONERS INSIDE AT THAT PARTICULAR MOMENT.

THE ARMORY WAS "LES INVALIDES". A HUGE COMPLEX ON THE SOUTH (LEFT) BANK OF THE SEINE (BASTILLE IN NORTH EAST)

LES INVALIDES WERE STORMED BY THE PEUPLE OF PARIS ON THE 13TH JULY, 1789. THE DAY B4 THE BASTILLE. AND THEY GOT THE WEAPONS THERE. 25,000 MUSKETS, I'VE BEEN TOLD. I WASN'T THERE. AND SOME CANNONS.

LES INVALIDES WERE ALSO A HOSPITAL, V.A., FRENCH. OLD SOLDIERS' HOME. COMBINED WITH ARMORY. NOW THEY PUT NAPPY (BUONAPARTE) (WELL, HIS COFFIN) IN THERE, AFTER ALL HE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR FILLING IT UP, WITH WOUNDED VETS..

PUT BUSH INTO LANDSTUHL?

MAX

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