

GI SPECIAL 3D44:

FILLING IN HOLES!
FUTILE EXERCISE
IMPOSSIBLE MISSION
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!



Soldiers with the 101st Airborne Division fill a hole left by an explosion on a road outside Beiji, north central Iraq, Sunday, Dec. 11, 2005.

The explosions erupt from sand piles on the shoulder of a road, or the potholes that pock the highways of Iraq.

They come from propane tanks buried under the ground that are filled with explosives, or artillery shells wired and hidden in shadows. This week, soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division found a donkey slung with a bomb, an improvised explosive device, or IED, trotting near the roadside. (AP Photo/Ryan Lenz)

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

FOUR SOLDIERS KILLED BY IED NEAR BAGHDAD

December 13, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND
NEWS RELEASE Number: 05-12-21C

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- Four Task Force Baghdad Soldiers were killed when their patrol struck an improvised explosive device northwest of Baghdad Dec. 13.

Utah Soldier Dies In Fall From Tikrit Guard Tower

December 13, 2005 U.S. Department of Defense News Release No. 1288-05

Spc. Lex S. Nelson, 21, of Salt Lake City, Utah, died in Tikrit, Iraq on Dec. 12, when he fell from a guard tower. Nelson was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 41st Field Artillery, 1st Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, Ga.

County Guardsman Is Killed In Combat

Dec 13, 2005 By P.J. Reilly, Intelligencer Journal Staff

LANCASTER COUNTY, PA - A Pennsylvania National Guardsman from Lancaster County reportedly was killed in combat Sunday in Iraq.

A 1991 graduate of Solanco High School, Bennett reportedly worked as an engineer for LSA Inc. in Lancaster before being deployed to Iraq.

Pennsylvania National Guard spokesman Capt. Cory Angell said 22 Guard members from the state have been killed in action since Sept. 11, 2001.

Bennett was the second guardsman with ties to Lancaster County killed in Iraq this month.

Rocky Mount Man Killed During Second Tour

December 13, 2005 By the Associated Press

ROCKY MOUNT, Va. -- A soldier in his second tour of duty in Iraq was killed when his armored vehicle was struck by a roadside bomb, his family said Monday.

U.S. Army Spc. Jared William Kubasak died either late Sunday or early Monday, a family representative told The Roanoke Times for a story published Tuesday.

Kubasak, 25, was serving with the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, based in Fort Carson, Colo. He was home as recently as last month to celebrate his 25th birthday, family friends said, and was scheduled to return home in March after his tour ended.

Three Roanoke Police Officers Wounded

December 12, 2005 WorldNow

Three Roanoke police officers are recovering from wounds suffered while serving in Iraq. Chris Dillon, Kevin Assenat and Shane Fletcher were all injured when their Humvees ran over a roadside bomb Saturday near Baghdad.

Explosion Heard Near Japanese Camp

2005-12-13 (AP)

An explosion was heard near the Japanese camp in the southern Iraqi city of Samawah but no troops were injured, an official at Japan's Defense Agency said Tuesday.

The blast was heard Monday evening, according to the official who declined to be named citing agency policy.

The attack followed an incident last Wednesday, in which an explosion was heard and a trace of a landed shell was found outside the camp, the official said.

Last week, Japan's Cabinet extended its troop deployment in Iraq for one year, defying rising domestic opposition to the mission.

94 % Of U.S. Troops Killed Or Wounded Since The Fall Of Baghdad

13 December 2005 By Patrick Cockburn in Baghdad, Independent News & media (UK) Ltd

It has been the strangest war. A thousand days ago, on 20 March 2003, the US and British armies started a campaign which ended a few weeks later with the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

It seemed so easy. President George Bush announced that the war was over. The American mission had been accomplished. Months passed before Washington and London realised that the war had not finished.

In fact it was only just beginning. Of the 18,000 US servicemen killed or wounded in Iraq, 94 per cent have been killed or wounded since the fall of Baghdad.

By November 2004 a serious guerrilla war was under way. The 140,000-strong US Army was hopelessly ill-equipped for such a conflict.

Once I saw an American artillery unit trying to quell a fist fight among Iraqi drivers in a queue at a petrol station. They had brought with them an enormous howitzer designed to fire a shell 30km because they had nowhere to store it.

Notes From A Lost War:

“Attacks On U.S. Forces In The Area Around Hawijah Are On The Rise”

<p>Hawijah police Capt. Saban Kalif Abid said U.S. troop levels should be cut in half. "I know thousands of people that say the same thing," he said.</p>
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December 13, 2005 By Carmen Gentile, THE WASHINGTON TIMES

HAWIJAH, Iraq -- It started with an ominous "pop" in the distance, followed by a "whoosh" that grew louder as the rocket-propelled grenade raced toward the armored Humvee.

"RPG, RPG, 12 o'clock," Spc. John Alden shouted as the rocket headed toward the driver's side of the vehicle before veering off course, hitting the pavement about 10 feet away, ricocheting and exploding.

In the distance, the source of the attack emerged through a trail of smoke. The insurgents were scrambling into their car and speeding away.

Spc. Alden gunned the 7.5-ton truck toward the car in flight and engaged in a high-speed chase through the dusty narrow streets of Hawijah, a Sunni Muslim stronghold of 70,000 in northern Iraq that has experienced more than its fair share of violence in the past few months.

Despite reports that Sunni insurgents are scaling back their violence to boost participation in parliamentary elections this week, attacks on U.S. forces in the area around Hawijah are on the rise.

Troops at Forward Operating Base McHenry were uneasy after a weekend sniper attack wounded a Humvee gunner in the neck.

Though the soldier has been stabilized and is recovering, the men and women of McHenry were frustrated with the stealthy shooter dubbed the "Hawijah sniper."

Sgt. 1st Class Pete Chambers promised his troops that they eventually would capture the sniper who has been hitting their vehicles on an almost daily basis.

"Hopefully, someone takes a shot at us because by the end of the day, that (person) is going to be dead," Sgt. Chambers said.

After the rocket attack, troops doggedly pursued the insurgents' vehicle for blocks past blind alleys where other shooters or triggermen for roadside bombs could have been lurking.

When the car made a sharp right and disappeared from view, the barreling Humvee arrived moments later to find it abandoned, with the attackers nowhere in sight. Then, as the troops secured the site, sniper fire rang out again. Black Hawk helicopters circling overhead located a suspect, who was detained for questioning.

Though disappointed that the perpetrators escaped, the troops were elated to find a cache of weapons and incriminating evidence, including a video camera with which the insurgents had recorded their attack on the Humvee.

U.S. forces have encountered stiff resistance in this city with an estimated 98 percent Sunni population, some of whom adamantly support the continuing insurgency and even the return of Saddam Hussein to power. U.S. troops have torn down posters along Hawijah's busiest thoroughfares that praised Saddam as the "savior of Iraq."

Even some Iraqi police who work alongside U.S. forces and receive training at McHenry would like to see fewer soldiers deployed to this volatile area.

Hawijah police Capt. Saban Kalif Abid said U.S. troop levels should be cut in half.

"I know thousands of people that say the same thing," he said.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Welcome To Liberated Afghanistan:

Jailed Publisher Faces Possible Execution For Advocating Women's Rights

In his magazine, Nasab suggested that a woman's testimony in court should be given the same weight as a man's, rather than half. He also questioned whether cutting off the hands of thieves was too severe a penalty. Finally, he argued that it was up to God, not to man, to punish Muslims who convert to another religion.

December 11, 2005 By Griff Witte, Washington Post Foreign Service

KABUL, Afghanistan -- When Ali Mohaqeq Nasab returned to Afghanistan last year after a long exile, he thought the atmosphere had opened up enough to raise questions about women's rights and the justice system in his country's nascent democracy.

But now the magazine publisher's provocative essays have put him at the mercy of that system -- imprisoned on blasphemy charges and facing possible execution.

His offense, according to the Afghan courts and conservative clerics, was to contravene the teachings of Islam by printing essays in his monthly magazine, Women's Rights, that questioned legal discrimination against women, harsh physical punishments for criminals and rigid intolerance of Muslims who abandon their faith.

The essays, published in May, attracted the belated attention of a prominent Muslim cleric, who delivered a sermon several months later denouncing Nasab as an infidel.

Nasab reported the incident to Afghanistan's justice system, but instead of receiving the protection he had expected, he was arrested, put on trial and sentenced to two years in prison.

Nasab, 47, has appealed to a higher court, but so have the prosecutors. They contend the two-year sentence was far too lenient, and that unless he apologizes, he should hang.

"According to sharia law, if he does not repent and if he does not return to his religion, he should be executed," Abdul Jamil, who heads the public security division of the attorney general's office, said, referring to Islamic law.

In an interview last week in his cell, Nasab, a short, soft-spoken man with a graying beard, said he had no intention of repenting and that he could not return to a religion he never left.

"I haven't committed any sin to repent for. If I'm not a sinner, then why should I repent?" he said. "I'm a Muslim, and what I mentioned in my magazine doesn't have a single conflict with my religion. I'm more of a religious person than they are."

In his magazine, Nasab suggested that a woman's testimony in court should be given the same weight as a man's, rather than half. He also questioned whether cutting off the hands of thieves was too severe a penalty. Finally, he argued that it was up to God, not to man, to punish Muslims who convert to another religion.

Nasab, who studied Islam at a university in Iran, ran afoul of the government there after he published a book questioning its religious authority. After returning to Afghanistan, he began writing increasingly controversial articles based on views he said were supported by a careful reading of the Koran and shared by other Islamic scholars.

But some Afghan religious leaders disagreed vehemently, and several campaigned for his arrest this fall. Turning to the judiciary for help, Nasab walked into a Kabul courthouse Oct 1. -- and was promptly handcuffed.

Just two weeks later, he was put on trial for blasphemy. The outcome was never in doubt, according to Ahmad Nader Nadery, who heads the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission.

"The way the trial was conducted, it was very obvious that there was an intention that . . . without respect to rules and procedures, they were going to punish him," Nadery said, noting that Nasab was not allowed to choose an attorney and was shouted down by prosecutors and judges when he tried to speak.

Indeed, Nasab's essay in May amounted to a challenge of the very justice system that is now prosecuting him. Nevertheless, one of the judges said Nasab got a fair hearing and that his sentence offered "a great chance" for him to reconsider and apologize.

"We listened to him very carefully," said Alhaj Ansarullah Maulavi Zada, who heads the public security court. "We listened to him a lot. We gave him a three-day trial. But he couldn't answer the court. He was not showing any kind of remorse. He still said changing your religion is forbidden but it is not a crime."

After Nasab's conviction, the Supreme Court issued a religious edict, or fatwa, saying he "should be given the harshest punishment, so he will be a lesson to others."

A group of 200 religious scholars and clerics in the southern city of Kandahar recently issued a fatwa that said he should be given three days to repent or be hanged.

"It is up to the central government whether they execute him," said the group's leader, Maulavi Ghulam Mohammed Gharib. "We have simply sent our message." Gharib said he had not read Nasab's magazine but had seen him interviewed on television.

"I made one mistake. When I heard there was democracy in my country, I came back because I'm an educated person and I wanted to help," Nasab said. "I didn't know that still there was no democracy, still there was the influence of the Taliban and still there is the culture of the Taliban regime."

TROOP NEWS

“Occupation Breeds Resentment,” Marine Commander Says: “When You Have A Boot On Someone's Neck, They Don't Appreciate It”

He has harsh words for the Bush administration and its policies in the Mideast as well as for the yellow-ribbon crowd that refuses to question U.S. leadership.

Dec 12, 2005 ADAM PARKER, The Posts And Courier [Excerpt]

Within the first days of the invasion in 2003, the U.S. military dropped leaflets in Iraq: "Surrender and be part of the new Iraq."

"It was a brilliant success," said Nathaniel Fick, a former Marine commander who participated in that first campaign.

Then, as the operation began to heat up, the military dropped "humanitarian rations," which did not include pork or chemical heater packs, which some in Afghanistan had ingested to their great peril. The rations came in bright yellow boxes so they could be seen easily.

This won the hearts of many, Fick said.

Then the military began dropping cluster bombs, some of which failed to explode upon impact. They came in bright yellow packages, too.

"Wires get crossed, with unintended consequences," Fick said.

Those consequences - the erosion and eventual loss of trust in American forces and American policy - were the subject of a recent lecture Fick offered College of Charleston students and faculty when he stopped here as part of a book tour. He is the author of "One Bullet Away," a memoir of his experience as a commander in the Marines' elite 1st Reconnaissance Unit.

Fick was one of the first to respond to the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, as part of the invasion force into Afghanistan, and he helped lead the charge into Iraq about two years later. His book recounts his prewar training and experience in two conflicts as a captain of an infantry platoon.

His perspective is said to be unique because he was a Marine who straddled the historical line between pre-9/11 and post-9/11 America. His Dartmouth University education and degree in classics make his an especially articulate first-person account of battle.

But Fick is no yes-man.

He has harsh words for the Bush administration and its policies in the Mideast as well as for the yellow-ribbon crowd that refuses to question U.S. leadership.

"Occupation breeds resentment," he said. "When you have a boot on someone's neck, they don't appreciate it."

Re-Enlistment Falls As War Grinds On

December 12, 2005 By Robert Burns, ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

WASHINGTON — The Army exceeded its recruiting goal in November, the sixth consecutive on-target month, but it has fallen off the pace for meeting its re-enlistment goal for the year, the Pentagon said yesterday.

Army officials have said they expect this to be an extremely difficult year for recruiting, in part because of the Iraq war. In the budget year that ended Sept. 30, the Army fell more than 6,600 recruits short, or about 8 percent below its target of 80,000, although it pointed to strong re-enlistment as a sign that young soldiers find their work rewarding amid speculation that war-time duty is putting too much stress on soldiers.

Re-enlistment has sagged somewhat since September, however. In October the active-duty Army met 91 percent of its retention goal and in November it got 94 percent, for a combined two-month shortfall of almost 1,000 soldiers.

The recruiting results for November were mostly positive, although the Army set a substantially lower goal than in November a year ago. The active-duty Army signed up 5,856, compared to its goal of 5,600. In November 2004 it signed up 6,838 against a goal of 6,800.

“Now Hunt Is Planning A Funeral, Not A Wedding”

December 4, 2005 By Tony Perry and Sara Lin, L.A. Times Staff Writers

TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. — Just a week ago, Marine Lance Cpl. Robert Martinez had called his mother from Iraq with exciting news.

"He said, 'Mom, go to Zale's and buy a carat-and-a-half diamond — I'm coming home,' " said Kelly Hunt.

Martinez, 20, planned to propose to his longtime girlfriend as soon as he got home to Splendora, Texas, maybe as early as January.

Now Hunt is planning a funeral, not a wedding.

Martinez and nine others from the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment were killed Thursday outside Fallouja by the blast of a bomb cobbled together from artillery shells.

It was the largest one-day loss of the Iraq war for Marine units from Twentynine Palms and the largest overall among American troops in almost four months.

The battalion has been in Iraq since July, its third deployment to the war zone. The bombing, which occurred while the men were on foot patrol, pushed the death toll from the sprawling Twentynine Palms base in the Mojave Desert to 75.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action

December 13, 2005 By PATRICK QUINN, Associated Press Writer & (Reuters) & (Xinhuanet)

A member of the interim Iraqi parliament escaped an assassination attempt on Tuesday when a roadside bomb struck his convoy south of Baghdad, wounding one of his bodyguards, an Interior Ministry source told Xinhua.

"Jalal al-Dien al-Saghier, a cleric, escaped unhurt when a roadside bomb hit a car in his convoy on the way to Baghdad from Najaf," the source said on condition of anonymity. One of Saghier's bodyguards was wounded in the attack, which took place near the town of Latifiyah, some 30 km south of Baghdad, he said.

Saghier, a candidate on the Shiite United Iraqi Alliance [collaborator] list headed by Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, returned from an election campaign tour to the Holy Shiite city of Najaf, some 160 km south of Baghdad, ahead of Thursday's parliamentary polls, the source said.

A leading Sunni Muslim Arab politician was shot dead in Iraq on Tuesday just two days before the nation votes for a new parliament.

Mizhar al-Dulaimi, head of the Free Progressive Iraqi Party, was killed while campaigning in the center of Ramadi, capital of the restive Anbar province in western Iraq, police said. Three of his bodyguards were wounded.

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

From Soldier X To Reservist Patricia Arndt

From: Soldier X [Iraq Combat Veteran]
To: GI Special
Sent: December 12, 2005
Subject: Pat Arndt

What is Patricia Arndt planning on doing? [As IRR Single Parent Called Up, Her Kid Says: "My Father's Not Here, You're Not Here, Why Should I Be Here?"]

A few of my buddies were called up and they never went.

Soon after the orders were dropped and they were told they didn't have to come in. I think they are over calling soldiers and just take them as they come.

"First come first serve" literally.

One of my buddies went and joined the Air Force Guard and became a cargo loader for air planes. He got out of his MOS and got out of deployment, but has to serve longer. He also is close to his wife and still can work his regular job.

It was a way to undercut the system.

She might try that?

Or get a really good lawyer?

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.

Death Before Dishonor

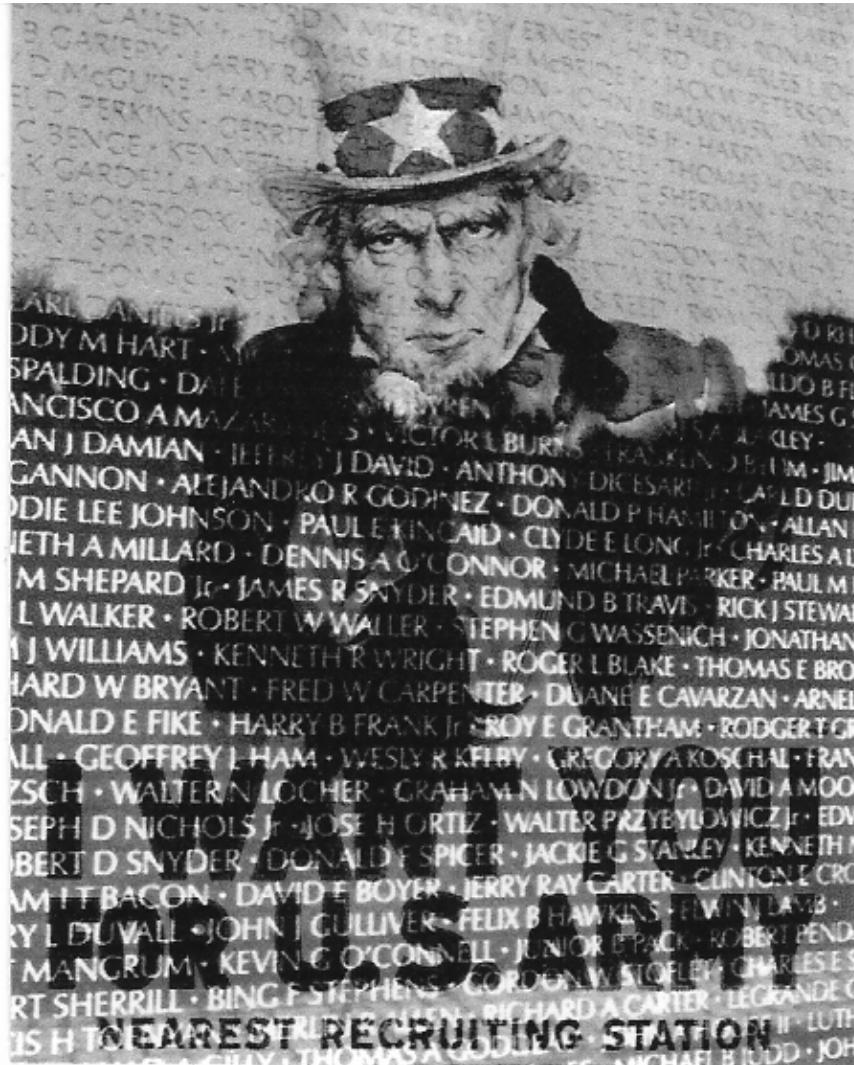


Photo from the I-R-A-Q (I Remember Another Quagmire) portfolio of Mike Hastie, US Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71. (For more of his outstanding work, contact at: (hastiemike@earthlink.net) T)

From: Mike Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: December 13, 2005
Subject: Death Before Dishonor

During the entire year I spent in Vietnam, I never once had a conversation with another American soldier about the merits of being in Vietnam.

It simply never came up.

I remember one day going into graves registration to view the body of a teenage American soldier. I unzipped the body bag, and saw where he had taken a pistol and shot himself in the forehead.

I never once had a conversation with another American soldier about the merits of being in Vietnam.

Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
December 13, 2005

“Sgt. Kevin Benderman Stands For Everything That Should Be Right In This Country”

Peace takes work; does anybody know what that means? Peace takes passion. Peace requires that we allow ourselves to feel – pain, hurt, agony, loss, heartache, rage, hate. Peace requires that we act on those feelings with control, and patience. Peace requires that we never let our enemy know we’re coming.

From: Monica Benderman
To: GI Special
Sent: December 13, 2005

Sgt. Kevin Benderman is a wrongfully confined as a “prisoner of conscience” for refusing to participate in war. Please visit www.BendermanDefense.org and www.BendermanTimeline.com to learn more about his actions. His wife, Monica may be reached at mdawnb@coastalnow.net

The Regional Corrections Facility at Ft. Lewis, Washington is vintage World War II. The windows are cracked and can’t be closed. It’s below freezing on most nights now.

I could go on – but what good will it do in this country of warmongers, idealistic pacifists, and evangelicals? Nothing like love for a cause, any cause, as long as it’s impersonal enough that everyone can remain detached, can share their emotions through the war cries and protest chants, staring out into a field of people whose gazes are just as vacant as the featured speaker of the day.

The military prison is filled with the usual criminal element, narcotics and alcohol abusers, thieves, and child molesters. It has been said that the best chance of parole from this facility is for the child molesters – tells you a lot about our society – the society that professes such a high moral standard that we can dare to invade other countries to bring that same standard to their shores.

In among the criminals, sleeping on a three inch thick mattress, sitting in plastic chairs staring at the walls all day, and waiting for months at a time to have his request for a call to his attorney fulfilled, is one who is furthest from the criminal element, a man the Anti-War movement lovingly refers to as a “Prisoner of Conscience.”

Labels, always the labels. Sgt. Kevin Benderman stands for everything that should be right in this country. This man stands for liberty, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, FREEDOM to be himself and live as he chooses.

This “Prisoner of Conscience” is jailed because we have been told that we must fear him, just as we fear those who have committed crimes against society, the rapists, molesters and thieves who victimize with their lack of moral principles.

Our government has told us we must fear the Conscientious Objectors because they have stood against an illegal war of aggression. Our government, threatened by Sgt. Benderman’s moral stand to defend humanity and our constitution, has imprisoned him in the hopes that the slamming of the rusty, mildewed bars will silence his message of truth.

I know I will get letters, and I know I will anger many. To quote a rather public common citizen of this country, I say “Bring It On.” It’s time for America to face what it has refused to see: itself in its death throes.

War will never bring peace. War will only bring one more generation who will seek war as a solution. We hear repeatedly that victory must be achieved in this war for us to move closer to peace, and that victory means the end to all those who are our enemy now fighting against us. Where is the victory in killing? We are only creating more enemies, and the time without war that will follow will not be a time of peace.

That time will be a time of regrowth, when the wounds of the generations to come out of this war lay quiet and fester. When the anger at the crimes of humanity suffered at our hands is fed with the education of lessons learned in this most recent battle. In time, when we least expect it, the fetid smell of a people no longer willing to live with the guilt of the atrocities they allowed us to commit on their lives, will creep across the oceans and slither across our shores.

Our new generation, lulled to sleep with the false sense of peace brought on by an illusion of superiority, will find itself shocked and awed that the security we thought we had was nothing more than a blanket now burning at the foot of a 100 story building built to represent success at the edge of the ghettos we drive home to each night.

We cannot win at war. No one wins in war. Calling Sgt. Benderman a “coward” because he refuses to be a mercenary for men who do not have the courage to defend themselves, does nothing except show a person’s true colors. Relying on someone else to die so that people can sit on their sofas and grow fat on beer and chips, justifying their right by claiming they pay taxes to this country, is about as worthless an excuse as “men” can have.

Pacifism without a commitment will not achieve peace; it is a cop-out, no different than those evangelicals who go to church each week waiting in prayer believing that someone is coming to save them.

Protest marches on weekend afternoons that have been planned for months so that those we speak against will be prepared with cleverly scripted comebacks, are not the way to achieve Peace.

Singing the praises of the “prisoners of conscience” who wait in cells for someone to finally see the light, but not demonstrating our commitment to their stance in our own lives, is not the way to achieve Peace.

The songs may be great for morale, but whose? Who benefits by songs for a cause when we forget that the “cause” has men like Sgt. Benderman as its foundation. This man speaks the truth so strongly because he is a soldier who has been to war, and yet sits behind bars for the fear he instills in the administration when he says he will no longer be party to their destructive ways. How can we fight to end a war, and not fight as strongly to end the wrongful imprisonment of a man who dares to speak the truth for all of us?

Sgt. Benderman is wrongfully imprisoned, not for doing great things, but for doing the right thing, and for standing against a corrupt system whose administration fears the statement his actions speak.

He is imprisoned because his country has done so little to demand that the principles of our constitution be upheld. He is imprisoned because the citizens of this country have shirked their responsibility by believing the work of Peace was not their job. The citizens of this country have failed, by NOT demanding that moral conscience be the foundation of all of our actions.

He is told how great a stand he is taking and encouraged to continue, and to know that the difficulties he is facing are worth the struggle for the manner in which he is leading others to the truth, all the while people on both sides take full advantage of their “freedom”, taking for granted exactly what the word freedom really means.

Peace takes work; does anybody know what that means? Peace takes passion. Peace requires that we allow ourselves to feel – pain, hurt, agony, loss, heartache, rage, hate.

Peace requires that we act on those feelings with control, and patience. Peace requires that we never let our enemy know we’re coming.

Peace requires that we fight the terrorist tactics of those who would claim that war is the answer by using every passionate means we have to keep ourselves from acting on the pain, the hurt, the agony and the rage with anything less than absolute moral courage.

Peace requires a trust in knowing that rifles and tanks are no match for an adherence to strong ethical principles, the weapons of moral courage that bear NO resemblance to loaded guns.

Peace requires that we look into the eyes of another and see their pain, but also feel their love. Peace requires that we know ourselves, that we look in the mirror and see who we are, our strengths and our weaknesses.

Peace requires that we ACT: that WE act, not that we rely on the actions of another to represent what we would do if we had the courage. Peace requires that we act as a non-violent, yet aggressive consensus against what our government has done in our name.

Peace requires that we all have the courage to face the reality of this dying country, and nurture its goodness in the ways that haven't been for generations, so that its spirit knows we care enough to fight for its soul, its heart, and defend its life by living up to the ideals on which it was founded, each of us in our individual lives.

Peace requires that we look at those men and women so impersonally labeled as "prisoners of conscience" and know their names, and know what they are fighting for. Peace requires that we know in our hearts that we must give with as much passion for life as they have, and not in words alone.

Can you bear the cold to be honestly free? Can you bear a Christmas without the warmth of a Yule log, without the comfort of a family around you, without the voices of angelic carolers at your door?

Can you dare to look at your enemy square in the eye, lay down your loaded weapon and honor life, putting your enemy's life above death, trusting your strength enough to know that you can lead him to Peace?

If you cannot, then you do not deserve to say that you fight for Peace, and the strength of the "Prisoners of Conscience" will indeed be something to fear.

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Send to contact@militaryproject.org. Name, I.D., withheld on request. Replies confidential.

OCCUPATION REPORT

The Great Iraqi Troop Training Fiasco Rolls On:

“It's Going To Be A Long Time Until We Get These Guys Working Decent”

Dec 13, 2005 Jill Carroll, The Christian Science Monitor

Often, marines run their operations and Iraqi soldiers essentially tag along. "They go on patrol, they pick up their food at night and don't pay any attention. It's going to be a long time until we get these guys working decent," said Sgt. Don Rueger, Detroit, Mich. of the Iraqi soldiers he was working with at the moment, a letdown after an earlier, more capable group.

At a Marine base called Khe Sahn, "We got shot at twice and some hid in the bunker and some others refused to shoot," says Pfc. Tyler Krueger, Orlando, Fla.

During most patrols, marines lead and Iraqis are grouped together in the rear. Commanders say that's to help Iraqis develop small-group leadership and operate more independently. But many marines prefer the separation, concerned that the Iraqis' inexperience is dangerous.

"We ... don't let them get mixed in with us," says Krueger after shoing an Iraqi soldier to the back of a night patrol. "They're not exactly up to par. They are a little jumpy. They didn't get as much training as us; they shoot when they don't need to."

The Iraqi soldiers cycle through each posting for about three weeks, then take a week off before heading to a different posting. But from the Iraqi soldiers' point of view, 25 years of near-constant war and conscription have given them most of the training they need.

"We had so many wars," says Sajid, a veteran of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war and vicious battles in Fallujah a year ago. "We just need training in street fighting. We just need equipment and a strong government," and Iraqis could take over security.

His government-issue pickup truck has a bullet hole from the Fallujah battle in the windshield, and he uses a screwdriver to turn the ignition. The job pays \$400 a month, but like many soldiers, Sajid says he joined because it was the only work around.

In Karabilah, Cpl. Ian Gray of Gainesville, Fla., stood on a freezing rooftop on an overnight patrol. "The old ones know what they are doing. The young ones don't, but that's true with any military," says Corporal Gray of the Iraqi soldiers he has worked with.

A few floors below, four Iraqi soldiers have been put on watch duty, guarding the front door. But past experience has taught the marines to keep an eye.

"You can't let them stand post by themselves," says Lance Corp. Rodrigo Gutierrez of Orlando, Fla., after going to check on the soldiers who ask if they can stand watch on the roof instead. "They say they want to go on fire watch but they try to get as much sleep as they can."

But Cpl. Mathew Black of Wellsville, N.Y., the squad leader in charge of the night patrol, says they hope the Iraqi soldiers will be trained well enough in a few weeks to take over such watch duties.

A few hours later, the four Iraqi soldiers were asleep at the door.

“Of 209 Iraqi Soldiers On Leave Or Vacation At The Time Of The Attack, 49 Have Not Returned To Duty”

Although some Iraqi units in the province are touted as nearly ready to operate independently, U.S. soldiers give more cautious assessments of the new battalion in Adhaim. One Iraqi soldier accidentally shot himself in the chest as he was exiting his vehicle days after the ambush.

Dec. 13, 2005 ANTONIO CASTANEDA, Associated Press

ADHAIM, Iraq - A week after a sophisticated ambush killed 19 Iraqi soldiers, U.S. and Iraqi commanders are fighting back hard: They are rushing to complete a base for hundreds of Iraqi soldiers here and have warned the local police chief and mayor to cooperate or get out.

But the Dec. 3 ambush - the deadliest attack on Iraqi soldiers in months - has proved a rude cautionary tale, indicating just how entrenched the resistance to Iraqi forces is in parts of the country.

It has also exposed the nascent Iraqi army's continuing need for substantial U.S. support - and the dangers of putting newly trained Iraqi troops into tough combat situations before they are fully tested.

In this religiously and ethnically mixed province of Diyala, more than 75 Iraqi troops have been killed since Sept. 1 alone, according to security and hospital officials.

"(The insurgents) wanted to make a statement that this was their town, their ground, and they weren't going to let the Iraqi Army come in," said Lt. Col. Oscar J. Hall, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 34th Armored Regiment. His soldiers moved into the area about 60 miles north of Baghdad to help out the Iraqis after the attack.

Desertion has now become a problem too: Of 209 Iraqi soldiers from their battalion on leave or vacation at the time of the attack, 49 have not returned to duty since, Hall said.

The untested Iraqi soldiers attacked that day, mostly Shiites who had just relocated from a relatively peaceful area south of Baghdad, were scouting places to build a base in this

Sunni Arab-dominated area that serves as a region to smuggle stolen goods from nearby cities.

The ambush came as no surprise to some: the roadside shops that usually sell refreshments to passing drivers were closed that day, a sign something might be up. Four of the soldiers were briefly kidnapped during the ambush, Hall said, only to have their throats slit as U.S. helicopters arrived at the scene.

Hidden insurgents had planted bombs and waited along the road - all within full sight of the local police headquarters and mayor's office - until the Iraqi patrol approached, then triggering the bombs and firing their machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades.

After the ambush, the highway that runs through this town of about 2,000 people was ablaze, littered with at least six burning trucks and corpses of Iraqi soldiers.

Although some Iraqi units in the province are touted as nearly ready to operate independently, U.S. soldiers give more cautious assessments of the new battalion in Adhaim.

One Iraqi soldier accidentally shot himself in the chest as he was exiting his vehicle days after the ambush.

Adhaim previously had just 10 police officers and no soldiers in the town. Many insurgents are believed to originate from small villages to the west of Adhaim, so the military recently destroyed bridges to block their ability to flee after launching attacks on the highway.

How It Is

December 13, 2005 By KIRK SEMPLE, New York Times

As a reflection of the continuing threat of violence in Anbar, electoral officials anticipate opening only 154 of 207 planned polling places in the province, according to Safwat Rashid Sidqi, a member of the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq. "The reason is security, only security," he said in an interview.

Quislings Living It Up

From: Z
To: GI Special
Sent: December 13, 2005
Subject: quislings living it up

13 December 2005 Kim Sengupta, Independent News and Media Limited

Mohammed had opposed the war. "But I admit saying last year that it will get better in the next two years. I thought with the elections things would settle down and there would be a new start. The reverse has happened."

The couple say that corruption is worse than it was during Saddam's time. "People in power are out to get as much as they can for themselves," said Mohammed, "There are people who are making an awful lot of money out of the occupation."

Some of them can be seen at the Hunting Club, a select private establishment with high walls and armed guards which is the only relatively safe place where the middle and affluent classes of Baghdad can meet in public. Started by Saddam and his Baath party colleagues the club included academics as members - including Nadia and Mohammed's parents.

On a recent visit some two thousand members were present at the club in celebration of Eid to use the open-air restaurants, bars, tennis courts and swimming pools. Among them were politicians and businessmen with their bodyguards.

"We used to get members of the regime coming here in the old days," said Mohammed. "They were hardly nice people but their bodyguards either stayed outside or they were more discreet with their guns. Even now you have to be quite careful, you simply do not know who is listening."

U.S. Command Says Collaborator Politician Lying About Torture Of Prisoners

December 13, 2005 By KIRK SEMPLE, New York Times & December 12, 2005 By Ellen Knickmeyer, Washington Post Foreign Service

The Iraqi Interior Ministry insisted Monday that none of the 625 prisoners discovered last week in an Iraqi detention center had been tortured or abused, despite assertions by American officials to the contrary.

The exact nature of the maltreatment of the 13 hospitalized prisoners remained unclear. In an interview, Sami al-Anbagi, director general of the Interior Ministry, said there had been "no mistreatment or torture."

"Only a few guys were slapped on their faces," Mr. Anbagi said. "The prisoners who were taken to the hospital didn't have any serious injuries. They suffered from headaches only."

He did not elaborate on that point but added: "What do you want policemen to do after their colleagues have been attacked? Policemen die everyday because of those guys."

A spokesman for the American command disputed Mr. Anbagi's account, saying the physical condition of the prisoners who were hospitalized was worse than what Mr. Anbagi had described.

"These were very real medical conditions that needed immediate attention," said the spokesman, Lt. Col. Barry Johnson. "There were U.S. forces that provided medical attention on the scene and that transported them to the hospital."

An Iraqi official with firsthand knowledge of the search said that at least 12 of the 13 prisoners had been subjected to "severe torture," including sessions of electric shock and episodes that left them with broken bones.

"Two of them showed me their nails, and they were gone," the official said on condition of anonymity because of security concerns.

The abuse alleged at the prison found this week appeared to have been more severe. Asked specifically what types of torture were found in the commandos' prison, the official cited breaking of bones, torture with electric shock, extraction of fingernails and cigarette burns to the neck and back.

OOOPS: Document Surfaces Confirming Collaborator Government Running Death Squads

Pressed for more details, Khalaf said: "The minister is very upset. *He wants to know how such a document slipped out of the ministry.*"

12 December 2005 By Tom Lasseter, Knight Ridder Newspapers

A document obtained by Knight Ridder appears to reveal the existence of an Interior Ministry death squad.

A memo written by an Iraqi general in the ministry operations room and addressed to the minister's office says on its subject line: "Names of detainees." It lists 14 men who were taken from Iskan, a Sunni neighborhood in western Baghdad, during the early morning hours of Aug. 18. It also marks the time of their detention: 5:15 a.m.

The bodies of the same 14 men were found in the town of Badrah near the Iranian border in early October. Hussein Sayhoud, a doctor at Baghdad's main morgue who

examined the bodies and signed one of the death certificates, said that most of the men had been killed by single gunshots to their heads.

"I remember when they brought in the whole group," Sayhoud said. "They were so badly decomposed we couldn't identify any marks of torture."

The general who signed the Interior Ministry memo, Brig. Gen. Abdul Kareem Khalaf, confirmed its authenticity. But despite a heading that reads "Names of the detainees in the Iskan District," Khalaf maintained that insurgents, not Interior Ministry police, had abducted the men.

It's unclear, however, why an Interior Ministry general would refer to men who'd been kidnapped by Sunni insurgents as "detainees" in an official government document, or how the general knew the exact time of the abduction.

Pressed for more details, Khalaf said: "The minister is very upset. He wants to know how such a document slipped out of the ministry."

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



Iraqi men wait as U.S. soldiers from Charlie Company 2nd Battalion 22 Infantry Regiment search their car in Sadr City in eastern Baghdad December 8, 2005. REUTERS/Laszlo Balogh

[Fair is fair. Let's bring 150,000 Iraqis over here to the USA. They can harass 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?]

“Col. Joseph DiSalvo Said It Would Be All But Impossible For The American Military To Defeat The Militias”

"The coalition forces cannot enforce it (the law forbidding militias). We cannot negate the militias. It would be like having a 2 million-man tribe, and all of a sudden saying, 'Tribe, you do not exist,'" DiSalvo said. "You'd have to have more manpower than is feasible."

12 December 2005 By Tom Lasseter, Knight Ridder Newspapers

Col. Joseph DiSalvo, who commands a brigade of the U.S. Army's 3rd Infantry Division in eastern Baghdad, where there's a heavy Shiite militia presence, said it would be all but impossible for the American military to defeat the militias.

The largest neighborhood in DiSalvo's area of operations is Sadr City, home to 2.5 million to 3 million people. It was the site of fierce clashes last year between al-Sadr's militia and U.S. forces.

"Sadr City is probably our most secure zone because of the de facto militia presence ... the Mahdi militias doing their neighborhood patrols," DiSalvo said. "And you also have Badr patrols where you have SCIRI enclaves."

There've been reports of several instances in DiSalvo's area of Sunni men being rounded up by vehicles with Interior Ministry markings, then found murdered.

"The coalition forces cannot enforce it (the law forbidding militias). We cannot negate the militias. It would be like having a 2 million-man tribe, and all of a sudden saying, 'Tribe, you do not exist,'" DiSalvo said. "You'd have to have more manpower than is feasible."

OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION

BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME NOW!

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

UNCONQUERED. UNCONQUERABLE.



PICTUREPEOPLE-L@LISTSERV.DFN.DE

[Thanks to John Gingerich, Veterans For Peace, for sending in.]

[To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation by a foreign power, go to: www.rafahtoday.org The foreign army is Israeli; the occupied nation is Palestine.]

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Public Approval Of Bush War Policy Drops Again

13 December 2005 Bloomberg

In the U.S., public approval of Bush's handling of the 32-month conflict has dwindled, at 39 percent in a USA Today/CNN/Gallup Organization poll released yesterday, down from 42 percent in January and a high this year of 50 percent in February.

CLASS WAR REPORTS

The Government Of California Murders Tookie Williams

December 13, 2005 By PHIL GASPER, CounterPunch

The scene outside San Quentin last night was amazing. People had started arriving at the prison gates in the early afternoon, soon after Governor Schwarzenegger announced that he was denying clemency for Stan Tookie Williams. By the time I arrived, shortly after 8:00 pm, the crowd had swelled to 1500, and for the next four hours, people kept coming. Two thousand, three thousand-after that it was impossible to keep count.

Young and old, blacks, whites, Latinos and Asians, Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, socialists, and just plain outraged, all made the long trek to protest the legal lynching of an African American man who had atoned for the crimes that he did commit and who was being killed for those that he did not. A handful of right-wing provocateurs, hoping to provoke a clash with their message of racism and hate, were surrounded and quickly pushed to the margins, where they could not disrupt the rally.

There was great sadness that the fight to save Stan's life and prevent another senseless death had been lost. But unlike most other executions I've protested outside San Quentin, the mood was not somber but angry and defiant.

One electric speaker after another addressed the crowd. Joan Baez sang and declared, "Tonight is a planned, efficient, calculated, antiseptic, cold-blooded murder." Angela Davis praised Stan and Mumia Abu Jamal as the most eloquent voices against the death penalty and placed them in the context of black radical struggles.

Exonerated California death-row inmate, and former Black Panther, Shujaa Graham drew the parallels between his life and Tookie's, and explained how he had escaped execution in spite of the system, not because of it.

Derrel Meyers, whose own son was murdered on the streets of San Francisco, spoke powerfully against the death penalty, placing the blame for violent crime first and foremost on a system in which poverty and racism are endemic.

Oakland teacher Jessie Muldoon related how Stan's words and the movie about his life, *Redemption*, connect with the inner-city kids in her classes. Several young people told the same story from their own first-hand perspective, talking about the impact of Stan's message on their lives and reading from his books.

Every execution, whether of the guilty or the innocent, creates new victims, but none more so than this one, in which the voice of a man who has spent the last twelve years speaking out against gang violence, successfully persuading thousands of kids to leave or stay out of gangs, was silenced.

The tortured logic of Schwarzenegger's "Statement of Decision" attempts to deny this. According to the Governor, "the continued pervasiveness of gang violence leads one to question the efficacy of Williams' message"-which is like denying the efficacy of aspirin because people still get headaches. Predictably, he ignored the thousands of messages from parents, teachers, teens and younger children, testifying to the positive impact of Stan's writings and their life changing influence.

The rest of Schwarzenegger's statement is even worse. It claims that there are no "significant doubts" about Stan's guilt because his case has been fully reviewed by the courts. But a recent examination of the evidence by the San Francisco Chronicle showed that significant doubts are certainly possible.

The prosecution's case was based on circumstantial evidence and the testimony of witnesses "whose credibility was highly suspect," U.S. District Judge Stephen Wilson wrote in 1998. He noted that there were no eyewitnesses to the shotgun murders of three people at a Los Angeles motel and that the only testifying eyewitness to the killing of a convenience store clerk was "an accomplice who had a strong motive to lie."

Four years later, the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals voiced similar qualms, saying the prosecution had relied on witnesses with "less-than-clean backgrounds and incentives to lie" to win lenient treatment for their own crimes.

In the days leading up to the execution, new evidence that Stan was framed emerged and was simply ignored.

Having dismissed questions about the conviction, the Governor then concludes that since Stan will not apologize for crimes he has always denied committing, "there can be no redemption."

Even more outrageous, however, is the following passage:

The dedication of Williams' book "Life in Prison" casts significant doubt on his personal redemption. This book was published in 1998, several years after Williams' claimed redemptive experience. Specifically, the book is dedicated to "Nelson Mandela, Angela Davis, Malcolm X, Assata Shakur, Geronimo Ji Jaga Pratt, Ramona Africa, John Africa, Leonard Peltier, Dhoruba Al-Mujahid, George Jackson, Mumia Abu-Jamal, and the countless other men, women, and youths who have to endure the hellish oppression of living behind bars."

The mix of individuals on this list is curious. Most have violent pasts and some have been convicted of committing heinous murders, including the killing of law enforcement.

But the inclusion of George Jackson on this list defies reason and is a significant indicator that Williams is not reformed and that he still sees violence and lawlessness as a legitimate means to address societal problems.

Of those convicted of "committing heinous murders" on this list, two (Geronimo Ji Jaga Pratt and Dhoruba Al-Mujahid) were later found to have been wrongfully convicted after serving a combined forty-six years behind bars, and four (Assata Shakur, John Africa, Leonard Peltier and Mumia Abu-Jamal) have always proclaimed their innocence and are widely believed to have been framed.

George Jackson, who Schwarzenegger apparently regards as the epitome of "violence and lawlessness" was convicted of stealing \$71 in 1960 at the age of 18, sentenced to an indeterminate sentence of 1 year to life, became a Black Panther and political leader in prison (which Schwarzenegger equates with forming a gang), charged but never convicted of killing a prison guard, and assassinated by guards in 1971.

It seems that Stanley Williams' real mistake was choosing to honor the wrong people.

The system loves those who advocate peace and nothing more, but not those who believe that genuine peace is ineradicably tied to justice.

Since Stan, by the company he placed himself in, was implicitly challenging the status quo, his claims to be a peacemaker and to have undergone redemption could be rejected out of hand. Thus in a very real sense, his fate was decided, at least in part, by his politics.

It was also decided by the Governor's cynical calculation that denying clemency was the best way to shore up his political fortunes, and in particular to mend bridges with the far right of the California Republican Party.

In the days leading up to the execution, the media was full of sensational reports predicting riots if clemency was not granted. But as one Los Angeles activist responded, "Everyone is so worried that Black and brown people are going to riot if Williams is executed. I'm not. I'm more worried that white people are going to start a riot when he's given clemency." That was the sentiment to which Schwarzenegger was responding.

None of this was lost on those protesting outside San Quentin on Monday night and into the early hours of Tuesday. There was mourning (and fury) at the announcement of Stan's death.

But there was also hope that out of the failed struggle to save his life a new movement to oppose the racist death penalty in California was being born. That is something that Stan would have been proud to know.

Phil Gasper is Professor of Philosophy at Notre Dame de Namur University in California and a member of the Campaign to End the Death Penalty. He nominated Stanley Williams for the Nobel Peace Prize five times. He can be reached at pgasper@ndnu.edu.

Received:

Tom Keefe's Mom

From: John Gingerich Veterans For Peace
To: GI Special
Sent: December 13, 2005
Subject: Tom Keefe's mom

I collect old political items and this notice came through the hobby grapevine...

Date: 12/13/05 3:24:40 PM
Subject: Tom Keefe's mom

Brian: FYI, there was an AP item in Sunday's newspaper detailing that Joan Keefe, 84-year old mother of APIC member Judge Tom Keefe (Albany) is on trial today after her August arrest for distributing anti-war leaflets in a shopping mall outside the Army recruiting office inside.

She and another WWII veteran were chased away. A week later, she came back and continued leafleting.

The Mall had her arrested. They are making a free speech issue out of this.

God bless her!
Mark

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