

GI SPECIAL 4A18:



***Harassed By Command?* ArchAngels' Basic Self-Defense Survival Guide**

[This is a reply from ArchAngel to a letter from a soldiers' wife about problems they are having. See excerpts from her letter reprinted below. Originally in GI Special 4A14: 1.22.06: copy of that issue available on request. T]

From: ArchAngel1BL@aol.com

To: GI Special

Sent: January 22, 2006

Subject: Re: Saw your GI Special and hoped you could get the word out

It sounds as if they didn't take extra measures as to make copies of all that paperwork.

All I can say right now is that to keep GI Rights [<http://www.objector.org/girights/>] informed, and to get one of those little digital recorders and a phone that has speaker phone on it.

With these items, start making some phone calls and record them. Also to record the phone calls between her husband and whom ever else calls for proof reasons.

She needs to relay to her husband to start keeping a journal or something and it wouldn't hurt for her to do the same. Write down anything of importance to what was said, who said it, time date and if possible, in his journal, witnesses to any incident that occurs.

This may take a month if not a little longer, but she needs to contact her local State Rep. so as to start a congressional.

The reason why it will take so long is because they will want his signature on a permission request form. If they can't mail one to him, then have one mailed to her and then she mail it to him.

Word of advice, some commands are know to look through the mail for certain names. If a letter comes in with the return address from a congressman or senator, they like to pretend it never showed up if you know what I mean.

A good friend of mine had trouble getting letters to and from her husband, and she found the best way to get things thru was by care packages.

If she needs anything else, I will try to help. All she needs to do is contact me.

I am going to say this again in hopes that it will help others in the future.

When it comes to military issues and medical issues, the Soldier/Troops need to make copies of everything. Keep one copy for themselves, and give the other to, if married, their spouse, other family member or a trusted friend. The reason is because sometimes things get lost and having a backup helps out.

Anything that is noted on paper, request a copy of it.

<p>Take note, sometimes they will tell you that you can't have a copy of your medical records or that you can't take them out of the facility. This is not true. All Soldiers/Troops have a right to obtain a copy of their medical records don't let them tell you otherwise. This has been tried before, but I was quick to respond.</p>

Soldiers/Troops know that most of the time they can't say a word, but when it comes to a spouse etc., they can say anything because there is nothing the military can do.

They will try to tell you, you can't do that or this, when in fact yes you can.

Recording conversations help a great deal as well, and even a witness on the side helps.

Last but not least, a power of attorney, though the government doesn't accept them when it comes to a Soldier's/Troop's affairs, it's best to have one just in case.

I hope this helps T, like I said it's all I can do right now.

But that is what ArchAngel is about to help if we can despite the fact that we are not doctors or lawyers.

We are former military, and military family members.

[To contact, use the email address above. T]

Letter From Soldiers' Wife [Excerpts]

From: GI Special 4A14: 1.22.06

My husband and I met with his commanding officer and told him our concerns and what effect it was having on our children and our marriage. The CO suggested that we file for a hardship discharge. However, after doing so, the CO denied it.

After it went through the ranks, it was denied.

When I spoke with JAG the guy there said that we couldn't appeal it, and that I would just have to suck it up, deal with the fact that my husband was going to Iraq no matter what.

My husband was then advised, by GI rights, that with our beliefs and what was going on, that my husband should file for a conscientious objection status. Long story short, they denied the packet 2 days ago.

They told him he has 10 days to file an appeal.

However, the army has all his paperwork in Iraq, and me and our lawyer are here in the states.

On top of that, the commanders are continually shutting down the internet and phones for a week at a time.

<p>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.</p>

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Marine Killed In Al Karmah

January 25, 2006 MNF Release A060125a

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq: A Marine assigned to 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), was killed in action by small-arms fire while conducting combat operations against the enemy in al Karmah, Jan 24.

Family Will Lay Soldier To Rest In Philippines: “He Was Not Happy About Returning To Iraq”



Waipio resident Nick Garcia held a photograph yesterday of his grandson Chief Warrant Officer Ruel Garcia, who was killed Monday in Iraq while piloting an AH-64 Apache helicopter. JAMM AQUINO / JAQUINO@STARBULLETIN.COM

January 19, 2006 By Gregg K. Kakesako, Honolulu Star-Bulletin

The family of one of two Army attack Apache helicopter pilots killed Monday in Iraq plans to bury the soldier in the Philippines, which he left nearly two decades ago to pursue his dream to fly.

Chief Warrant Officer Ruel Garcia lived with grandfather Nick Garcia in Waipahu in 1987 because he wanted to be a military pilot, Nick Garcia said. Garcia now lives in Waipio.

Family friend Benny Quiseng said the younger Garcia had graduated from a college in Manila with a degree in electrical engineering. Once in the United States, he had to start all over again.

Nick Garcia said during the five or six years his grandson lived with him, he attended the adult high school at Waipahu at nights to get a U.S. high school diploma.

With that in hand, Nick Garcia said his grandson was able to get into the Air Force in 1992, where he served for four years. After he became a naturalized citizen, he switched to the Army to attend helicopter flight school.

On Monday, Ruel Garcia, 34, was killed when his AH-64 Apache attack helicopter crashed north of Taji. It was his second combat tour in Iraq.

He and the other crew member, also a pilot who was killed, belonged to Task Force Ironhorse, part of the 4th Infantry Division from Fort Hood in Texas. There have been reports that the copter might have been shot down.

Although there has not been official confirmation of Garcia's death by the Pentagon, Nick Garcia said one of his daughters called from Long Beach, Calif., telling him his first grandchild from his other daughter, who lives in the Philippines, had been killed in Iraq.

"She was crying when she called," said Nick Garcia, 80, "and I started crying, too, like a baby."

Garcia said his grandson loved to play tennis. "When he was living in the Philippines, he wrote to me asking for a tennis racket, so I made him several and sent them to him."

Garcia said his grandson married a girl from the Philippines three months ago and bought a 1-acre home in Texas.

In October the younger Garcia called his grandfather, telling him he was going back to Iraq for the second time.

"I advised him not to go out alone and be careful because there are so many roadside bombs," the elder Garcia said. "He told me, 'Yes, Grandpa, I will be very careful.'"

Quiseng also received a call from Ruel Garcia before he left, and he was not happy about returning to Iraq.

"He told me, 'It can't be helped,'" Quiseng said. "I'm a pilot, and I am doing this for my country."

Garcia is also survived by his parents, Resendo and Cynthia Garcia, who live near Manila; wife Apple, of Texas; brother, Ramisis, also of the Philippines; sister Eden; and step-grandmother Gloria.

Nick Garcia said funeral services will be held in early February in the Philippines, where his family and friends live.

Southwest Ohio Soldier Dies

January 21, 2006 WHIO

FORT CAMPBELL, KY -- The Pentagon says a southwest Ohio soldier has died in Iraq from an illness.

The Army says the death of Private First Class Adam Shepherd of Somerville wasn't related to combat. He died Tuesday in Baghdad.

The Pentagon didn't disclose his illness and says an investigation is continuing.

Shepherd was 21 and was assigned to the Army's Second Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, Second Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division.

Preble County Shawnee school officials say Shepherd attended high school there until he withdrew in 2002. He earned his degree through a computer-based charter school and joined the Army in January of 2003.

Somerville is about 35 miles southwest of Dayton.

Salisbury Firefighter Posthumously Awarded Silver Star

January 19, 2006 WBAL

BALTIMORE -- The Army has awarded a Silver Star posthumously to a Salisbury firefighter who was fatally wounded on Christmas Eve rescuing a fellow soldier in Iraq.

Sgt. Michael McMullen, who will be buried with military honors in Arlington Cemetery on Friday, also received a posthumous promotion to Staff Sergeant, the Maryland National Guard said Wednesday.

McMullen, 25, was wounded near Ramadi when a homemade explosive device went off near his unit, the Baltimore-based 243rd Engineering Company.

He died last week at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

McMullen was originally from Pennsylvania but had lived on Maryland's Eastern Shore for many years. He had no children and was unmarried.

In addition to the Silver Star, McMullen received the Purple Heart, the Army Commendation Medal and the Good Conduct Medal.

TRISTE REGRESO A CASA: “Éste Expresó Su Descontento Con La Guerra”



“Me quedé esperándolo”, dijo Rosaly mientras sostenía con tristeza una foto de ella junto a su esposo Jason del día de su boda. (Lino M. Prieto)

1.10.06 Por Cynthia Lopez Cabán, Nuevo DIA

Jason López Reyes planeaba sorprender a su familia con una visita inesperada el 12 de enero. Quería celebrar su cumpleaños junto a sus seres queridos. La fecha del encuentro se mantiene, sólo que no será sorpresa. Tampoco llegará haciendo bulla como solía hacerlo para anunciar su entrada.

Regresa en silencio y sin vida.

El soldado de 29 años, quien nació y se crió en el barrio Pajuil de esta Hatillo, murió en la víspera del Día de Reyes. Realizaba su última misión en Bagdad cuando se formó un

motín y un artefacto casero “del tamaño de una uña” estalló cerca del vehículo militar en el que viajaba, arrebatándole la vida en segundos, indicó su hermana menor, Zoraima López.

Otros cuatro soldados fallecieron en el incidente.

Así López Reyes se convirtió en el primer soldado puertorriqueño que muere en Irak en el recién comenzado año.

Esta semana López Reyes cumplía su año en el convulso país. Se preparaba para reportarse al Fuerte Stewart en Georgia. Después tenía en agenda viajar a la Isla donde pretendía celebrar su cumpleaños el 22 de enero.

Tras una estadía de 15 días, regresaría a Georgia a extinguir los últimos meses de su contrato con el Ejército de Estados Unidos, que culminaba en marzo. Formó parte de la milicia durante ocho años.

Con su muerte, se elevan a 47 los soldados puertorriqueños que han ofrendado su vida en el Medio Oriente desde que comenzó la llamada guerra contra el terrorismo.

“Estaba loco por salir de Irak porque veía cosas horribles. Me decía que después de las elecciones las cosas se estaban poniendo peor”, comentó Zoraima, quien sostenía en sus manos una fotografía de su hermano.

Jason no tenía apodos, pero desde pequeña Zoraima lo bautizó “Manguay”. Dijo que era un joven alegre y vivaracho que disfrutaba de los deportes y los buenos guisos.

Además era un aficionado del tradicional Festival de Las Máscaras, que se celebra en Hatillo en el mes de diciembre. El año pasado antes de partir a Irak formó parte de una comparsa, que lució trajes alusivos a las marcas deportivas.

“Yo era su consentida y él era mi vida”, indicó Zoraima, quien conocía a su hermano como la palma de su mano.

“Cuando mentía se le abrían los boquetes de la nariz”, narró entre sollozos.

Relató que la última travesura que le hizo fue llevarle -durante las navidades pasadas- una parranda con “cinco gatos” porque su único fin era despertarla.

Explicó también que su hermano ingresó al Ejército en busca de mejores condiciones de vida y por todos los “sueños” que le venden los reclutadores militares.

La noticia de la muerte de Jason causó tal impresión en su madre, doña Gladys Reyes, que tuvo que ser llevada de emergencia al Hospital Regional de Arecibo, donde recibió atención médica para la alta presión y su condición del corazón.

Su esposa, Rosaly López, contuvo el llanto y conversó.

La mujer, de 25 años, recordó que en la última llamada que recibió de su esposo éste le envió besos y le aseguró que se verían pronto. También le envió cariños a su hijo

Jayriell de dos años. López Reyes tenía otro hijo de cuatro años -Jahel-, de una unión anterior.

“Me quedé esperándolo”, apuntó Rosaly, quien sostenía en sus manos una foto del día de su boda.

Indicó además que en las múltiples conversaciones que sostuvo con su esposo éste expresó su descontento con la guerra.

“Me decía: aquí lo que hay es oro y eso es lo que busca ese presidente (George W. Bush)”, apuntó López.

En la habitación contigua, un familiar anotaba en una libreta los mensajes que llevarían las camisetas que lucirán los familiares durante las exequias fúnebres. “Era un hombre de detalles que no perdía la ocasión para regalarme una flor”, señaló entre sollozo

Otro atributo de Jason era su temperamento. Siempre estaba de buen humor y bromeando, según su cónyuge. “Para él una comida sin tostones no era comida”, agregó sobre los detalles que lo hacían especial.

Los restos de Jason descansarán en el cementerio municipal de Hatillo.



Resistance Attacks U.S. Positions In Ramadi

Jan 25 (KUNA)

Using mortars and light machineguns, unidentified guerrillas attacked two government buildings where American troops were present in central Ramadi city earlier today, eyewitnesses said, American troops fought back. American helicopters and artillery were called in to assist.

Silliest Bullshit Of 2006, So Far: 30% Increase In Resistance Attacks? “The Increased Number Of Attacks Was Just A Response To Our Successes”

January 25, 2006 Al Hilal Publishing & Marketing Group

Violence in Iraq rose dramatically last year compared with the year before, said a report released by the US military. According to US military statistics, 34,100 insurgent attacks mostly targeting US and Iraqi troops were recorded last year, up from about 27,000 in 2004, representing an increase of almost 30 per cent.

US military spokespeople, however, insist that the recorded increases do not indicate a weakening of government control or evidence of an empowered insurgency.

'These numbers can't be taken as a reference for anti-occupation operations, because we're succeeding in our work and Iraqis are getting more control each day, despite such attacks,' an IRIN report quoted US military spokesman Tim Keefe as saying in Baghdad.

'These numbers aren't significant when compared to all the development inside the country in 2005,' he said in the IRIN report.

Hussein Al Garawi, a senior Interior Ministry official, said 'These are just numbers, but the reality is very different,' Al Garawi said in the report.

'The increased number of attacks was just a response to our successes in targeting the insurgents.'

'The bombings are just a way for the insurgency to vent its anger over our efficiency,' he added.

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)

IMPOSSIBLE MISSION FUTILE EXERCISE BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!



U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Brandon M. Mitchell, from New London, Wisconsin, and other combat engineers with the 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment sweep for weapon caches in Lake Tharthar village in Iraq January 8, 2006. REUTERS/ Cpl. Adam C. Schnell/Handout

TROOP NEWS

“You See These Horrible Things In War. You Just Killed People”

"You see these horrible things in war. You just killed people," he says. "A lot of my friends that came back say they would have preferred to die out there."

Jan. 25, 2006 Macarena Hernandez, Dallas Morning News

Jesus Bocanegra left Iraq more than a year ago, but the war never left him.

The 24-year-old cavalry scout spent a year in Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's hometown, beating down doors, raiding homes, searching for the enemy.

When his tour was up in 2004, Bocanegra returned home to South Texas. He began to have head-splitting flashbacks, paralyzing panic attacks and painfully vivid nightmares.

He enrolled at the local community college, eager to transition into civilian life. He dropped out after two months. He spent a couple of months as a produce inspector but had to quit, irritable and unable to concentrate.

A door would shut, he'd jump. A stranger would approach, he'd panic.

"When I was in Iraq, if a stranger walked up to me, he was either going to blow up himself or throw a bomb at me," he says. That, he believes, explains his hyper-alertness and why he prefers to be at home in his "bunker," his cocoon.

In the combat zone, his mind and heart raced.

The Department of Veterans Affairs deemed Bocanegra completely disabled upon diagnosing his post-traumatic stress disorder.

He fears life will never be the same.

Today, Bocanegra feels abandoned. He sees a psychiatrist for about 10 minutes every three months. He takes one pill for anxiety and another for depression.

The doctor, he says, "just tells me, 'Take your medication.'"

After nearly five years in the military, he feels like someone else's problem now. If he needs an eye exam or a dental visit, he must drive four hours to San Antonio to the nearest VA hospital.

Today, Bocanegra can still hear children's screams and see the fear in the faces of the women he sighted down the barrel of his weapon.

"You see these horrible things in war. You just killed people," he says. "A lot of my friends that came back say they would have preferred to die out there."

“Spoof The Spooks!”
Northeast Ohio Anti-War Coalition
Organizing “Spy-In” At Federal
Building:

NOAC Spy-In
January 30, 2006; 7:30 a.m.
Federal Building, 1240 East 9th Street, Downtown
Cleveland

You've heard of sit-ins, sleep-ins, and die-ins. Well, now you are invited to do your patriotic duty and join us for a "spy-in."

The Feds (specifically the Department of Defense) in November, 2004 spied on the Northeast Ohio Anti-War Coalition (NOAC).

Now it's time we spied back!! Dress in spy gear (trench coats, black suits/fedoras, sunglasses, etc.) Bring toy cameras, notepads, binoculars, magnifying glasses, telescopes.

Why aren't the Feds investigating their own: those who lied about going into Iraq, those who say they don't need to get approval from anyone to spy on U.S. citizens, those taking illegal campaign "contributions" from lobbyists??

Why can't we sit in on THEIR planning meetings, THEIR discussions, take pictures of THEM going in and out of the Federal Building; after all, they are paid with our tax dollars and are ultimately accountable to US?

Is this action ridiculous?

Sure it is!

But, so is the Pentagon spying on citizens and groups (not to mention illegal) who have no history of violence or threats to anyone. Our intent is to spoof the spooks!

For more information: 216-736-4176

Take Careful Aim At Foot:
Open Fire

1.25.06 By Lolita C. Baldor, Associated Press & New York Times on the Web

Hundreds of officers and health care professionals have been discharged in the past 10 years under the Pentagon's policy on gays, a loss that while relatively small in numbers involves troops who are expensive for the military to educate and train.

Many were military school graduates or service members who went to medical school at the taxpayers' expense; troops not as easily replaced by a nation at war that is struggling to fill its enlistment quotas.

“You don't just go out on the street tomorrow and pluck someone from the general population who has an Air Force education, someone trained as a physician, someone who bleeds Air Force blue, who is willing to serve, and that you can put in Iraq tomorrow,” said Beth Schissel, who graduated from the Air Force Academy in 1989 and went on to medical school.

Schissel was forced out of the military after she acknowledged that she was gay.

Late last year Army officials acknowledged in a congressional hearing that they are seeing shortfalls in key medical specialties.

“What advantage is the military getting by firing brain surgeons at the very time our wounded soldiers aren't receiving the medical care they need?” said Aaron Belkin, associate professor of political science at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

Overall, the number of discharges has gone down in recent years.

“When we're at war, commanders know that gay personnel are just as important as any other personnel,” said Nathaniel Frank, senior research fellow at the Center. He said that in some instances commanders knew someone in their unit was gay but ignored it.

The overall discharges peaked in 2000 and 2001, on the heels of the 1999 murder of Pfc. Barry Winchell, who was bludgeoned to death by a fellow soldier at Fort Campbell, Ky., who believed Winchell was gay. About one-sixth of the discharges in 2001 were at that base.

Officials did not provide estimates on the cost of a military education or one for medical personnel. However, according to the private American Medical Student Association, average annual tuition and fees at public and private U.S. medical schools in 2002 were \$14,577 and \$30,960, respectively.

Early last year the Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress, estimated it cost the Pentagon nearly \$200 million to recruit and train replacements for the nearly 9,500 troops that had to leave the military because of the policy. The losses included hundreds of highly skilled troops, including translators, between 1994 through 2003.

Opponents of the policy are backing legislation in the House sponsored by Rep. Marty Meehan, D-Mass., that would repeal the law. But that bill, with 107 co-sponsors, is considered a longshot in the Republican-controlled House.

Boom Times For War Profiteers

1.25.06 Wall Street Journal

Defense contractors posted higher earnings for the fourth quarter, including Northrop Grumman Corp, where earnings went up nearly 22% for the quarter.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action



A bomber's attack on an Iraqi police patrol in Tahrir Square, in Baghdad Jan. 25, 2006. wounded three policemen and one civilian. (AP Photo/Karim Kadim)

01/25/06 AP & (CNN) & Reuters

In Baghdad's Sadr City, guerrillas shot dead a police sergeant as he drove to work, said police Lt. Laith Abdul-Aal.

In Baquba, to the northeast, guerrillas killed two police officers and an employee of the Water Resource Ministry in separate attacks Tuesday, an official with the Diyala Joint Coordination Center told CNN.

A motorcycle rigged with explosives detonated near a police patrol in central Baghdad Wednesday, wounding at least two police officers, authorities said. The blast in busy Tahrir Square damaged a number of storefronts and several civilian vehicles, according to emergency police.

ISHAAQI: A roadside bomb attack on the convoy of army Brigadier Shuja'a al-Saadi killed five of his bodyguards and wounded two others in the town of Ishaqi, 130 km (80 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATION

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Beware Hysterical Blathering

January-March 2006 Rick Jahnkow, Draft Notices [Excerpts]

One thing the Army has done to temporarily try to keep the recruiting crisis from snowballing is lower its recruiting quotas for the early part of fiscal year 2006 (33% less than the same period in 2005). This and the acceptance of larger numbers of less qualified recruits have allowed it, so far, to claim success in meeting its quotas; but it is really only a temporary public relations move, since the reduced numbers will have to be made up later in the year.

All of this is important for the peace movement to understand because it corrects the simplistic assumption often made on the Left that Bush, Cheney and the neocons are totally in control and will have their way.

As this view holds, the occupation of Iraq will last at least a decade, Iran and Syria will be attacked, we'll probably have a draft, and, on the extreme side, some even say fascism will be the inevitable result.

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

OCCUPATION REPORT

***Killing The Messengers:* Already More Dead Press Workers Than In 22 Years Of The Vietnam War**

January 25, 2006 Ghali Hassan, Globalresearch.ca [Excerpt]

According to Reporters without Borders (RSF), a total of 76 (85 as of May 2005) journalists and media staff have been killed since the U.S. unprovoked aggression against Iraq March 2003. That was more than the 63 reporters killed in the 1955-1977 conflict in Vietnam, the group said, citing figures from U.S.-based press advocacy group Freedom Forum.

Iraq was the world's deadliest place for media members for the third consecutive year since the invasion, said RSF.

The BBC anchor, Nick Gowing said recently: "The trouble is that a lot of the military particularly the American military do not want us there. And they make it very uncomfortable for us to work. And I think that this...is leading to security forces in some instances feeling it is legitimate to target us with deadly force and with impunity".

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

While Soldiers Died, Bush Buddies In Iraq Looted Millions

[Thanks to Anna Bradley, who sent this in.]

"It does not surprise me at all," said a Defense Department official who worked in Hilla and other parts of the country, who spoke anonymously because he said he feared retribution from the Bush administration.

He predicted that similar problems would turn up in the major southern city of Basra and elsewhere in the dangerous desert wasteland of Anbar province. "It's a disaster," the official said of problems with contracting in Anbar.

25 January 2006 By James Glanz, The New York Times & Reuters

A new audit of American financial practices in Iraq has uncovered irregularities including millions of reconstruction dollars stuffed casually into footlockers and filing cabinets, an American soldier in the Philippines who gambled away cash belonging to Iraq, and three Iraqis who plunged to their deaths in a rebuilt hospital elevator that had been improperly certified as safe.

Tens of millions of dollars went into and out of the region's cash vault with no record-keeping whatsoever, it found.

Agents from the inspector general's office found that the living and working quarters of American occupation officials were awash in shrink-wrapped stacks of \$100 bills, colloquially known as bricks.

One official kept \$2 million in a bathroom safe, another more than half a million dollars in an unlocked footlocker.

One contractor received more than \$100,000 to completely refurbish an Olympic pool but only polished the pumps; even so, local American officials certified the work as completed.

More than 2,000 contracts ranging in value from a few thousand dollars to more than half a million, some \$88 million in all, were examined by agents from the inspector general's office. The report says that in some cases the agents found clear indications of potential fraud and that investigations into those cases are continuing.

But much of the material in the latest audit is new, and the portrait it paints of abandoned rebuilding projects, nonexistent paperwork and cash routinely taken from the main vault in Hilla without even a log to keep track of the transactions is likely to raise major new questions about how the provisional authority did its business and accounted for huge expenditures of Iraqi and American money.

"It does not surprise me at all," said a Defense Department official who worked in Hilla and other parts of the country, who spoke anonymously because he said he feared retribution from the Bush administration. He predicted that similar problems would turn up in the major southern city of Basra and elsewhere in the dangerous desert wasteland of Anbar province. "It's a disaster," the official said of problems with contracting in Anbar.

No records were kept as money came and went from the main vault at the Hilla compound, and inside it was often stashed haphazardly in a filing cabinet.

That casual arrangement led to a dispute when one official for the provisional authority, while clearing his accounts on his way out of Iraq, grabbed \$100,000 from another official's stack of cash, according to the report. Whether unintentional or not, the move might never have been discovered except that the second official "had to make a disbursement that day and realized that he was short cash," the report says.

Outside the vault, money seemed to be stuffed into every nook and cranny in the compound. "One contracting officer kept approximately \$2 million in cash in a safe in his office bathroom, while a paying agent kept approximately \$678,000 in cash in an unlocked footlocker in his office," the report says.

The money, most from Iraqi oil proceeds and cash seized from Saddam Hussein's government, also easily found its way out of the compound and the country.

In one case, an American soldier assigned as an assistant to the Iraqi Olympic boxing team was given huge amounts of cash for a trip to the Philippines, where the soldier

gambled away somewhere between \$20,000 and \$60,000 of the money. Exactly how much has not been determined, the report says, because no one kept track of how much money he received in the first place.

In another connection to Iraq's Olympic effort, a \$108,140 contract to completely refurbish the Hilla Olympic swimming pool, including the replacement of pumps and pipes, came to nothing when the contractor simply polished some of the hardware to make it appear as if new equipment had been installed. Local officials for the provisional authority signed paperwork stating that all the work had been completed properly and paid the contractor in full, the report says.

The pool never reopened, and when agents from the inspector general's office arrived to try out the equipment, "the water came out a murky brown due to the accumulated dirt and grime in the old pumps," the report says.

Sometimes the consequences of such loose controls were deadly.

A contract for \$662,800 in civil, electrical, and mechanical work to rehabilitate the Hilla General Hospital was paid in full by an American official in June 2004 even though the work was not finished, the report says. But instead of replacing a central elevator bank, as called for in the scope of work, the contractor tinkered with an unsuccessful rehabilitation.

The report continues, narrating the observation of the inspector general's agents who visited the hospital on Sept. 18, 2004: "The hospital administrator immediately escorted us to the site of the elevators. The administrator said that just a couple days prior to our arrival the elevator crashed and killed three people."

In the case of the elevator crash at al-Hillah hospital, the contractor had been paid in full, even though 20% of the work was not complete, which meant there was no way to hold the contractor accountable.

More than 160 vehicles worth about \$3.3 million disbursed by the South Central region could not be traced because there was no proper documentation, the report said.

Officials also paid for ammunition and weapons to be used by personnel working for the reconstruction effort, but did not keep detailed records on who received the weapons, it said.

Another project, a \$473,000 contract to install internet service in Ramadi was cancelled because officials realised that they could not oversee it, despite payments to the contractor.

In an internal document, dated April 2005, officials said: "There is no way to verify this project was ever completed, because we don't even know where exactly in Ramadi it was supposed to take place. It appears the contractor was paid."

MORE:

The Biggest Theft Of All

January 27, 2006 Socialist Worker, Editorial [Excerpt]

THE STORIES of unscrupulous contractors stealing Iraq blind seldom make it into the news.

But what's never reported is the theft that's taking place under the so-called rule of law.

U.S. rule, that is. It's considered a crime when someone picks your pocket, but if that someone is the U.S. government, and they've invaded your country to steal your oil, that's different.

The malfeasance was easy to see when it was revealed during the early stages of the occupation that Vice President Dick Cheney had pulled strings to win his friends at Halliburton and Halliburton subsidiary Kellogg, Brown & Root lucrative contracts in Iraq. The same went for other big campaign contributors, like construction corporation Bechtel, which were eager to grab the spoils in post-invasion Iraq.

This is about making the Bush administration's friends in Corporate America happy, but that's not all it's about.

The invasion and occupation of Iraq means that the U.S. controls the country with the second-largest proven oil reserves in the world, multiplying its clout around the world.

And like any swindler, the U.S. used a web of lies to justify its scam: from Saddam Hussein's nonexistent "weapons of mass destruction" to its claims of bringing "democracy" and "liberation."

MORE:

<p>Reconstruction in Iraq? Maybe the Americans came to Iraq to show us how corruption, embezzlement and thievery are the guiding principles of democracy. January 25, 2006, Truth About Iraqis blogspot.com</p>
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Imperial Democrats Demand Bigger Army

January 25, 2006 By Rick Maze, Army Times staff writer

A Democratic advisory group led by former Defense Secretary William Perry issued a report Wednesday that concludes the strain of deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan is endangering the nation.

The Army needs an active-duty increase of 30,000 people, which would provide 48 brigade combat teams rather than the 42 currently envisioned. Congress already approved such an increase, but only as a temporary measure. The report recommends it be made permanent.

General Michael Hayden: Idiot Traitor Publicly Lies About What The Constitution Says

25 January 2006 By William Rivers Pitt, Truthout Perspective [Excerpt]

Bush and the boys have taken to the road this week to defend the indefensible. To wit: spying on American citizens without a warrant is fine and dandy, because the President can do whatever he wants, because laws are meaningless in the main, because Osama may be under your bed sharpening his cutlass. The road trip started in Kansas and will wend its way hither and yon, spreading bad information and flat-out lies at every whistle-stop.

A defining moment of glittering idiocy took place on this road trip during an exchange with reporters on Monday. General Michael Hayden, Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence and former director of the National Security Agency, was tapped to be the responsible face of the intelligence community for this junket. The façade didn't hold up for long.

Jonathan Landay, a reporter with Knight-Ridder, queried General Hayden about the central issue behind the recent revelations that Bush authorized the National Security Agency to spy on thousands of American citizens.

"My understanding," began Landay, "is that the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution specifies that you must have probable cause to be able to do a search that does not violate an American's right against unlawful searches and seizures."

That's as far as Landay got. Here is the remainder of the exchange:

Gen. Hayden: No, actually: the Fourth Amendment actually protects all of us against unreasonable search and seizure. That's what it says.

Landay: But the measure is probable cause, I believe.

Gen. Hayden: The amendment says unreasonable search and seizure.

Landay: But does it not say probable ---

Gen. Hayden: No. The amendment says unreasonable search and seizure.

There you have it.

The fellow who used to run the NSA, the agency whose very charter places the Fourth Amendment in greatest peril simply by dint of its ability to peek through windows, does not think the Fourth Amendment requires probable cause.

Let's have a look at the text in question, just for the sake of clarity:

“The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, **but upon probable cause**, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.”

Bush Traitors Admitted Their Spying Was Illegal And Unconstitutional

25 January 2006 By Steven Aftergood, FAS

The Bush Administration rejected a Congressional initiative in 2002 that would have lowered the legal threshold for conducting surveillance of non-US persons under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act from "probable cause" that the target is a terrorist or agent of a foreign power to "reasonable suspicion."

Administration officials said at the time that the legislative proposal was unnecessary and possibly unconstitutional.

Yet in a speech this week on the NSA domestic surveillance program, Deputy Director of National Intelligence Gen. Michael V. Hayden indicated that the executive branch had unilaterally adopted a similar "reasonable suspicion" standard.

Deep Shit

[Thanks to Ken, who sent this in.]

A little boy goes to his dad and asks, "What is Politics?"

Dad says, "Well, son, let me try to explain it this way:

I am the head of the family, so call me The President.

Your mother is the administrator of the money, so we call her the Government.

We are here to take care of your needs, so we will call you the People.

The nanny, we will consider her the Working Class.

And your baby brother, we will call him the Future.

Now think about that and see if it makes sense."

So the little boy goes off to bed thinking about what Dad has said.

Later that night, he hears his baby brother crying, so he gets up to check on him. He finds that the baby has severely soiled his diaper.

So the little boy goes to his parent's room and finds his mother sound asleep.

Not wanting to wake her, he goes to the nanny's room. Finding the door locked, he peeks in the keyhole and sees his father in bed with the nanny.

He gives up and goes back to bed.

The next morning, the little boy say's to his father, "Dad, I think I understand the concept of politics now."

The father says, "Good, son, tell me in your own words what you think politics is all about."

The little boy replies,

"The President is screwing the Working Class while the Government is sound asleep.

"The People are being ignored and the Future is in deep shit."

GI Special Looks Even Better Printed Out

The following have posted issues; there may be others:

<http://gi-special.iraq-news.de>, <http://www.notinourname.net/gi-special/>,
www.williambowles.info/gispecial, http://www.traprockpeace.org/gi_special/,
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