

GI SPECIAL 4B10:

**THIS IS HOW BUSH BRINGS THE TROOPS HOME:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW**



The casket of Marine Staff Sgt. Kenneth Pospisil during burial Friday, Dec. 23, 2005 in Anoka, Minn. Pospisil was killed when a bomb went off near Al Ramadi in Iraq Dec. 14. Pospisil was the 31st Minnesotan to die in connection with the Iraq war. (AP Photo/Jim Mone)

**“I Know That The War
Was Not Worth Fighting.**

**“I Know, Because I
Fought There”
(An Open Letter To Bubba)**

[Will Charlie Anderson be a lead speaker, with other Iraq Veterans, at the Spring rallies against the war being organized by UFPJ and ANSWER? Or will he and other veterans be kicked to the curb again, and the Iraq Veterans Against The War be used for so much window dressing again, but denied the leading role again, as happened on 9.24 in Washington DC? Stay tuned. T]

By Charlie Anderson, Iraq Veterans Against the War. Posted on the IVAW web site at: www.ivaw.net

I've seen you around. I've seen you driving your gas guzzling SUV with the "Support Our Troops" ribbon on the back.

I've seen you wearing your pro-war/pro-bush t-shirts as you walk right past me in my Iraq Veterans Against the War t-shirt as if I don't exist.

And I've seen you at anti-war rallies and meetings where I often speak, as you wave your American flag and call me a traitor.

In this country we have freedom of speech. But you owe me and every other veteran of this war the respect of listening to our experience.

Your magnet says "support our troops," but what have you done for us?

You say that I am not supporting the troops when I say that they should come home. But I am, because I know that there was no threat to our nation from Saddam Hussein, I know that had no weapons of mass destruction, and I know that we were not welcomed in as liberators.

I know that the war was not worth fighting. I know, because I fought there. You say I'm confused. But what do you know about? You've never been there.

You have the audacity to claim that by not supporting the president, I don't support the troops. Yet, the president chose to send over 160,000 of us to unprepared and without a defined mission.

We had no body armor, no vehicle armor, and poor supplies of ammunition.

Our families spent thousands of dollars that they did not have to supply us, while President Bush did nothing. In fact he didn't even scold his Offensive Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, when he told our forward deployed troops, "you go to war with the army you have, not the army you wish you had."

Moreover, the mission was originally about weapons of mass destruction, but there were none. Then it was making a democracy, but yet the "insurgency" worsens. Now the president has decided that in order to honor those who died for nothing, more must die for nothing.

At present, 2,241 of my brothers and sisters in arms have died. In some way, they may be the lucky ones.

Over sixteen thousand others have been wounded in this war, thousands more than planned.

The term wounded sounds sterile, bland, and inoffensive. But, in reality, many of them have been so horribly damaged that medical science had to create a new word to describe their wounds: polytrauma.

These people would have died in earlier wars, but because of the gallant efforts of brave doctors and medics, they get to live.

They get to live with teams of ten or more doctors just trying to get their broken, mangled bodies through another day, as their families look on in horror.

They get to live in a physical and emotional hell, not able to recover and not able to voice the pain they feel or the psychological demons they face. All the while suffering with a Veterans Administration underfunded by nearly three billion dollars and unable to care for them in the manner they deserve.

So which one of us supports the troops?

You, who has never set foot in Iraq and wants to leave my brothers and sisters there until they complete whatever the undefined mission of the week is, or me, the veteran of this war who has seen the carnage of battle, the rampant indifference of my countrymen, and just wants to bring my brothers and sisters home alive and care for them when they get here?

Keep coming to the rallies. Maybe I'll get through your thick skull eventually.

But remember I waved my flag in Baghdad, so you can sit down, shut up, and listen to me.

The IVAW Mission Statement



Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) is a group of veterans who have served since September 11th, 2001 including Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

We are committed to saving lives and ending the violence in Iraq by an immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces.

We also believe that the governments that sponsored these wars are indebted to the men and women who were forced to fight them and must give their Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, and Airmen the benefits that are owed to them upon their return home.

We welcome all active duty, national guard, reservists, and recent veterans into our ranks. Confidentiality can be assured. To join IVAW please send an email to ivaw@ivaw.net.

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MORE:

“This Is Not The First Time I Have Experienced This In The Peace Movement”

From: Mike Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: October 11, 2005
Subject: Passing Of The Baton

To G.I. Special:

I was at the march in Washington, D.C. on September 24, 2005, and the two days that followed.

I was also disappointed that veterans did not have a stronger voice in what happened during that historic gathering.

As a veteran, this is not the first time I have experienced this in the peace movement.

As far as I am concerned, the most powerful and threatening voice in America against the war in Iraq, are the Iraq veterans who know this war to be a lie.

There is no other anti-war group in America, that has this kind of power.

As a Vietnam veteran, it is time to pass the baton, and that baton is the microphone.

I met numerous Iraq Veterans in Washington, D.C. over that weekend, and without exception, everyone of them can hold their own.

They are as bright and articulate as any veteran I have ever met, and that includes Korean and WWII veterans. They are the next generation of Veterans, who will blow the whistle on the U.S. Government.

The more they speak, the stronger they will become, and the end result will be that more Iraq Veterans will come out of the woodwork to join them. They know the war in Iraq like the back of their hands.

And, the only thing they need is a microphone in their hands.

The truth they hold in their hearts, will be the truth that steps forward to bear witness.

As a Vietnam veteran, my job will be to help them find a venue to speak. I would love to introduce them to the audience, and then it is time for me to sit down. The rest will be history.

Mike Hastie
Vietnam Veteran
October 11, 2005

Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward this E-MAIL along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, at home and inside the armed services. Send requests to address up top.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

TWO MARINES DIE FROM FALLUJA AREA IED

2/10/2006 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 06-02-01C & KUNA

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq: Two Marines assigned to 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), died as a result of wounds received when their patrol was attacked with an improvised explosive device while conducting combat operations near Fallujah, Feb. 9.

The statement said the two soldiers were seriously wounded with shrapnel of the explosion, and that the pair succumbed to the critical injuries shortly after the deadly incident on Thursday.

Kent Man Wounded



Spc. Jay Strobino

February 10, 2006 By John Pirro, STAFF WRITER, New Milford Spectrum

A 21-year-old soldier from Kent will be back in the United States in a few days after being wounded in a Jan. 31 firefight in Iraq, his parents said this week.

Spc. Jay Christopher Strobino, the son of Jay and Susan Strobino of Camp Flats Road, sustained two bullet wounds when his 101st Airborne unit came under fire.

He called his parents from a Baghdad hospital Saturday night and told them he should be transferred to Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington, D.C., later this week.

"He's doing well, and he's coming back in a few days," his mother told The News Times, sister publication of The Spectrum, on Sunday afternoon.

"As soon as we get the word he's coming stateside, we'll be there," Mrs. Strobino said.

Spc. Strobino, a graduate of Kent Center School and Housatonic Valley Regional High School in Falls Village, enlisted in the Army shortly after graduating from high school.

Mrs. Strobino said the family got the news in a phone call Saturday morning from a fellow soldier who'd been with their son when he was wounded.

"[Jay] was alert and conscious enough to tell his friend to call his parents before the Army did," she related.

Spc. Strobino was shot twice and suffered a broken leg and a collapsed lung, according to Mrs. Strobino.

"You try and prepare yourself," Mrs. Strobino said. "We understand the dangers, but you never really are prepared for that.

"He was doing his job, and with his job comes danger," she commented. "Fortunately, he will recover."

Spc. Strobino called his parents later on Saturday, and he sounded to be in good spirits, Mrs. Strobino said.

The young soldier told his family he would shortly be transferred to an Army hospital in Germany and would probably be there a day or so before coming back to the United States.

Mrs. Strobino said word about their son spread quickly, and the family has received a steady stream of calls from well-wishers.

"The support has been monumental, from in town and out of town," she related. "People have really been there for us."

“On Average Every Camp Gets Hit With Three Mortar Rounds, Three To Six Mortar Rounds Every Night”

9 February 2006 Reporter: Hamish Fitzsimmons, PM [Excerpt]

Reporter: Hamish Fitzsimmons, interviewing Malcom Nance, a former US Navy officer who's spent 20 years in the intelligence community and conducted anti-terrorism operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Nance: But the people who are actually carrying out the day to day insurgency, on average 60 to 70 attacks per day of improvised explosive devices and small weapons attacks, those are the guys who are killing two American soldiers per day.

And the types of attacks they're doing besides the IEDs on the road is, you know, shooting rockets into the camps at night, or mortars: on average every camp gets hit with three mortar rounds, three to six mortar rounds every night.

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



A US military patrol inspects the damage from a car bomb Feb. 3, 2006, in eastern Baghdad. (AP Photo/Khalid Mohammed)

TROOP NEWS

**FORUM:
America's Military Today:
The Challenge of
Militarism**

**Thursday, February 16
7 PM
CUNY Graduate Center
34th Street and 5th Avenue Room 5414
New York, New York**

SPEAKERS:

Tod Ensign, Executive Director of Citizen Soldier, author of America's Military Today (New Press, 2005)

Job Mashariki, Black Veterans for Social Justice

Jim Murphy, Veterans for Peace

Jose Vasquez, Iraq Veterans Against the War

SPONSORS (in formation):

Citizen Soldier

Brooklyn Parents for Peace

Veterans for Peace

Iraq Veterans Against the War

Black Veterans for Social Justice

Solidarity

Campus Anti-War Network

New York City Labor Against the War

International Socialist Organization

New Politics

Democratic Socialists of America

Freedom Road Socialist Organization

GI Special

The Military Project

Iraq Veterans Against The War Member Tomas Young To Be Featured On “60 Minutes” Sunday Night

[Thanks to James Starowicz, Veterans For Peace, who sent this in.]

This Sunday night February 12, 2006, CBS's "60 Minutes" will present a segment called "Wounds of War" which their website describes this way:

"WOUNDS OF WAR: Many of today's soldiers who are severely wounded in combat are returning home thanks to body armor and improved medicine. Several of them tell Mike Wallace their stories. Robert Anderson is the producer."

Among those who will be featured on this segment will be Tomas Young, the son of MFSO Member Cathy Smith of Missouri. Tomas is Cathy's eldest son; he served with the Army's 1st Cavalry Division in Iraq. On April 4, 2004 he was struck by an AK-47 round; he is now paralyzed from the chest down.

Tomas is a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War.

Cathy Smith's middle son is currently serving with the Army in Iraq.

Tomas has traveled the country speaking out against the war and has been a powerful voice for Iraq Veterans Against the War. His mom Cathy has been a powerful voice for Military Families Speak Out.

If you get a chance, tune in on Sunday night (check local listings for time). We look forward to seeing how 60 Minutes will portray this very important and too often un-told story.

In Peace and Solidarity,
Nancy Lessin and Charley Richardson for Military Families Speak Out
www.mfso.org
www.bringthemhomenow.org

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP



(Graphic: London Financial Times)

ASSORTED RESISTANCE ACTION

Feb 10 (KUNA) & Aljazeera & Reuters

The Iraqi security arena witnessed fresh violence over the past hours with three government troops being killed and brother of a member of the legislative council taken as hostage.

A security source said on Friday that three members of the National Guards were killed and two others were wounded in a bomb blast that targeted a military patrol in the district of Al-Mshahedah in the capital, late on Thursday.

In a separate blast, five members of the force were wounded in Al-Ghazaliah area in the city.

Also late on Thursday, guerrillas captured the brother of the member of the Iraqi National Assembly, Rajaa Daoud, in the capital's district of Al-Karradah. They forced the man, named Adel, into their car at gunpoint before speeding off.

A policewoman, Nidthal Mohammad, was killed by gunmen wearing Iraqi army uniforms who broke into her house in Baquba, 65 km (40 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

Guerrillas ambushed two policemen, killing one and wounding another as they headed to work in Baquba, police said.

In a separate incident, one Iraqi soldier was killed and another was wounded when resistance fighters in a car opened fire on them, police said.

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

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

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

**BLINDING FLASH OF
THE OBVIOUS:
"If An Elected Official Doesn't
Call For An Immediate**

Withdrawal Of The Troops, Then That Official Is Pro-War

[And any candidate who does not call for an immediate withdrawal of the troops is "Pro War" and any political figure who supports the election of any candidate who does not call for an immediate withdrawal of the troops is "Pro War," and that is not rocket science. Duh. T]

09 February 2006 By Cindy Sheehan, Truthout Statement [Excerpts]

The last Senate vote for increased funding for the killing was 99-0.

How about cutting off the President's means for killing? It is not that difficult.

It is not "enough" to say that one is critical of the war in Iraq.

If an elected official voted for the war, votes for the funding of the war, and doesn't call for an immediate withdrawal of the troops, then that official is "pro-war," no matter what he or she says.

We in America are fed up with rhetoric, and if the actions don't match the rhetoric, then we are not buying what they are selling anymore.

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.

Fascism

Comment: T

If we had a fascist government, you would not be reading this.

The argument that Bush and Co. are fascists is often used by people who go on to say:

"So vote for John Kerry or (fill in the blank). Yes, he may be pissed Falluja hasn't been attacked already, and wants 40,000 more troops to go to Iraq, or (fill in the blank) but at least he's not one of those fascists! THEY HAVE TO BE STOPPED, SO VOTE FOR THE DEMOCRATS!"

Of course, if those in power really were fascists, there would be no voting for Democrats.

What many people have no grip on is that within a given capitalist society, the political elite is quite capable of installing bloody military or political dictatorships that have nothing whatever to do with fascism. Blathering about fascism is just a way some people deny the reality of what capitalism is all about. Oh, if only some nice liberal politicians could replace those mean old "fascist" politicians, everything would be OK.

All this yowling about fascism does carry a most terrible risk.

If the real thing comes along, complete with semi-military mass movements of the poor marching in the streets to beat the shit out of anybody and everybody their paymasters tell them to, which is how you know it's really fascism, then warnings about it will be taken as just more rhetorical excess by people who have been crying wolf for twenty years, thereby making the job of mobilizing people to exterminate a fascist movement by physical force in the streets more difficult.

Here's some news:

It wasn't fascists that started the war against Mexico and grabbed half their country; or took and held the Philippines, Cuba and Puerto Rico in 1899; or invaded and occupied Vietnam; or came up with the sanctions against Iraq that killed millions.

It wasn't fascists that sent Gene Debs and thousands of others to prison for opposing World War I, put the Japanese in concentration camps in World War II, or kept racist segregation in place for 100 years after the Civil War. It wasn't fascists who organized the killing of strikers at Ludlow, Colorado, or ordered them massacred at Republic Steel and elsewhere in the 1930's.

Just good old free enterprise suits and their political and military business associates.

The Chilean dictator Pinochet in the 1970s is a classic example.

No, he was not a fascist. He built no mass movements to kill those on the left. He didn't have to. It was unnecessary. The left never saw him coming. Although Chile was in a revolutionary crisis, most of the left did not lift a finger to reach out to the soldiers of Chile and try to win them over before Pinochet could use them to slaughter anybody who opposed him and destroy their movement: the same mistake the left makes here, now.

General Pinochet was just a good old fashioned traditional dictator defending capitalism in Chile in a good old fashioned traditional way: the mass murder of those opposed to capitalism in Chile: forty-thousand executed is a conservative estimate.

You don't have to be a fascist to do that.

Guess what. Military dictatorship is what capitalists reach for when their class rule is threatened from below. The mask of "democracy" comes off and they

organize to slaughter people opposed to them. In the overwhelming number of instances this has happened down through history, "fascism" had nothing to do with it.

And that's the reality a lot of people run away from. Just like they run away from reaching out to our troops today, who could stop a reactionary movement, including one organized by their own officers.

If people think fascism could be coming, but won't reach out to our troops today, who could protect us in a crisis, one must conclude they wish to Bring It On, however much heavy breathing and sweaty pointing with alarm about it they do.

OCCUPATION REPORT

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



U.S. Marines with the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) detain a group of Iraqi citizens near the western Iraq city of Hit, February 3, 2006. REUTERS/Bob Strong

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

[Those Iraqis are sure a bunch of backward primitives. They actually resent this help, have the absurd notion that it's bad their country is occupied by a foreign military dictatorship, and consider it their patriotic duty to fight and kill the soldiers sent to grab 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? You'd want that in your home town, right?]

More Civilians Killed By Occupation Troops

Feb 10, 2006 Baghdad (dpa)

Two Iraqi civilians were killed on Friday by US military gunfire following an attack on the latter's patrol in al- Karma village in the vicinity of Fallujah, 70 kilometres west of Baghdad, a police source said.

Ahmed Mahawesh, an Iraqi policeman, told Deutsche Presse-Agentur dpa the random bullets fired by American soldiers killed an elderly man and a 17-year-old driving in a civilian car after an army patrol vehicle was set ablaze in attack by gunmen.

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

“The Scale And Intensity Of The Corruption And Fraud Perpetrated By The Occupation Is Unprecedented In Modern History”

February 9, 2006 By Dave Whyte, Socialist Worker (UK) [Excerpts]

The looting of Iraq's oil wealth is unprecedented in the history of corporate crime, writes criminologist Dave Whyte. Dave Whyte is a lecturer in criminology at the University of Stirling.

The neo-liberal transformation of Iraq is portrayed as a humanitarian venture. Western corporations and occupying governments now talk of the liberation of Iraq from the "tyranny of Saddam's planned economy".

On the day that major hostilities were declared over, Tony Blair told the Iraqi people, "Saddam Hussein and his regime plundered your nation's wealth. While many of you live in poverty, they have the lives of luxury. The money from Iraqi oil will be yours, to be used to build prosperity for you and your families."

This has turned out to be another shameless lie.

Saddam's regime was undoubtedly corrupt, in the sense that he established a system of patronage and rewards for the elite that remained closest to him. But the scale and intensity of the corruption and fraud perpetrated by the occupation is unprecedented in modern history.

The largest part of the money spent by the US-British occupation was not US or international donor funds, but oil revenue that belongs to the Iraqi people. During the period of direct rule the US spent, or committed to spend, around £11.3 billion, most of which was disbursed to US corporations.

Of this expenditure, £5 billion is unaccounted for.

From the available evidence we know that much of it has vanished into the hands of corporations, corrupt public officials and elite Iraqi deal fixers.

During 14 months of its existence the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), the body set up to rule Iraq and headed up by Bush favourite Paul Bremer, issued 100 legal orders by decree.

The explicit aim was to promote fast entry into Iraq's oil rich economy.

CPA Order 12, implemented a month after George Bush declared major hostilities over, suspended customs and duty charges on goods entering the country.

Within a few days of the order being passed, mass produced chicken legs were dumped on the Iraqi economy by US companies, forcing the market price of chicken down to 71p a kilogram, below the cheapest price that Iraqi producers could sustain.

Those chicken legs were surplus to the US market because the average American prefers breast meat. Before the invasion, those chicken legs would have most likely been sold as pet food.

The biggest scandal involves reconstruction contracts.

In one period between 2003 and 2004, more than 80 percent of prime contracts were given to US firms, with the remainder split between British, Australian, Italian, Israeli, Jordanian and Iraqi firms. One source estimates the total received by Iraqi firms during the CPA's rule at around 2 percent.

The CPA managed to concentrate funds in the hands of US firms by issuing non-competitive bids. From records of expenditure we can estimate that around 66 percent of contracts between April 2003 and April 2004 were issued non-competitively to hand-picked favourite companies.

The restructuring of the Iraqi economy is best characterised as a "smash and grab" operation.

The "smash" involved the imposition of a set of administrative instruments which established US and other western contractors as the prime agents of reconstruction thus marginalising and undermining Iraqi capital.

The appropriation (the "grab") of Iraq's oil wealth ensured that the rapid entry of foreign capital was underwritten by Iraqi revenue. It has been executed with a guarantee of immunity.

On the same day that the CPA came into being, Bush signed Executive Order 13303 which exempted the Development Fund for Iraq (DFI), the agency set up to distribute reconstruction contracts, from all legal proceedings and judicial oversight. The order effectively granted the CPA immunity from prosecution and judicial interference.

The CPA kept no list of companies it issued contracts to, and it had no system for metering the oil that it exported and sold. Officials were authorised to disperse revenue with little or no adequate system of monitoring or accounting.

Very deliberately the US delayed the establishment of auditing bodies and then refused to cooperate with their inquiries.

A full 11 months after the CPA took control of the Iraqi economy, they appointed Stuart Bowden, a close associate of Bush, to audit the authority. Bowden served Bush in the Texas governor's office in the early 1990s and latterly as a White House official.

Despite the fact that the dice was loaded in favour of the CPA, the US and UN audit reports that eventually appeared still read like a textbook of corporate accounting fraud.

Iraqi oil revenue was flown in to the CPA in \$100 dollar bills, shrink wrapped in \$100,000 (£57,000) bundles of "cash bricks". One CPA official has described how cash was distributed to contractors from the back of a lorry.

The use of cash payments enabled the CPA to distribute the reconstruction funds without leaving a paper trail.

One review found that a payment made by the CPA to the Kurdish regional government for £794 million was entered under the budget heading "transfer payments".

The Kurdish authorities insisted that the money was not spent but could not provide any evidence to support this. It was widely reported that this payment was delivered by Blackhawk helicopters to a courier in the Kurdish city of Erbil who subsequently disappeared.

Apparently no one even bothered to record the courier's name.

One audit found 37 contracts totalling more than £105 million for which no contracting files could be located. It noted a case where an unauthorised advance of almost £1.7 million was paid out by a CPA senior advisor, and a case in which the CPA appointed head of the ministry of health could not account for £346,000 worth of spending under his direct control.

A total of £5 billion of Development Fund for Iraq funds cannot be properly accounted for.

Iraqi business people report that they had to pay "middle men" substantial bribes even to be allowed to bid for contracts.

The routine kickbacks and bribes demanded by the CPA officials fuelled a culture of corporate corruption.

In one of the most reported cases, the private military firm Custer Battles collected £8.5 million to provide security for Iraq's civilian airline.

Custer Battles was one of hundreds of firms that were set up specifically to get a slice of the war spoils. This company was established by Mike Battle and Scott Custer, reputedly a descendant of general George Custer of Little Big Horn fame.

One CPA official giving evidence to a US senate committee, told Custer Battles to "bring a bag" to pick up their cash.

He produced a picture of two company officials smiling to the camera as they loaded up duffel bags with over £1.1 million of Iraqi oil money.

Custer Battles never did the job they were contracted for, but ran off with the cash, using it instead to set up barrack accommodation for cheap imported labourers that they hired out to other Western firms.

Over-charging was routine in reconstruction contracts.

An audit of Kellogg, Brown and Root's (KBR) contract to restore Iraqi oil fields found £61 million in "unresolved costs" (spending that had not been properly accounted for).

In one incident KBR charged the US army more than £15.3 million for transporting £46,500 worth of fuel from Kuwait.

The firm implicated in the Abu Ghraib tortures, CACI International, was accused by the US General Accounting Office of billing for inflated employee hours and falsely upgrading job descriptions to inflate the wage bill.

Ghost armies of employees are everywhere in Iraq and payrolls are inflated as a matter of routine.

Institutionalised corruption in occupied Iraq has been, purely and simply, a technique of neo-liberal domination.

The economic occupation has used fraud and corruption to underwrite the economic occupation in precisely the same way that torture and assassination have been used to perpetuate the military occupation.

The invasion of Iraq was a brutal act of criminal violence on the part of Bush and Blair.

This war crime has been sustained by the systematic economic criminality of the occupying governments and their corporations.

The largest part of the billions of dollars in reconstruction funds were disbursed to the US prime contractors.

The prime contractors include Kellogg, Brown and Root (a subsidiary of Halliburton), Parsons Delaware, Fluor Corporation, Washington Group, Bechtel Group, Contrack International, Louis Berger and Perini.

The prime contractors act as "gatekeepers", controlling entry into the Iraqi market.

Almost all of the foreign delegates at the Rebuild Iraq 2005 conference held in Jordan were doing business with US prime contractors rather than with Iraqi firms.

According to the British delegations, not one deal was tied up with an Iraqi business over the four days.

When William Lash, the US undersecretary of state for commerce, finished his presentation to the 2005 conference, he was confronted by Assad al-Khudhairi, the head of the Iraqi Contractors Federation.

Al-Khudhairi castigated the occupation for the damage done to the economy and complained that "product dumping" had forced 25,000 local businesses to the wall.

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

New Basketball Rules In The Middle East

8 February 2006 Yasser Jordan, BNN's Sports Editor [Excerpts]

The International Basketball Federation (FIBA) has directed its Middle East commission to implement fifteen new rule changes from March 1.

The statement said rule changes proposed by the Technical Commission in December 2005 were accepted by FIBA Central Board.

Following are the rule changes:

Rule 1: Israelis have the right to play on both sides of the court, whereas Palestinians can only play on their own side.

Rule 2: For security reasons Palestinians do not have the right to pass the ball between players, the ball could hit an Israeli player.

Rule 3: There will be no basket on the Israeli side.

Rule 4: Israel is allowed to shoot at any time even during time-outs.

Rule 5: Palestinians are not allowed to have supporters. Only Israelis should be supported.

Rule 6: Israel selects the sports press writers and what they report:

Rule 7: Israel encourages Palestinians to shoot into the Palestinian basket. Players who refuse will be nominated as terrorists and will not be allowed to play.

Rule 8: Palestinian players are allowed to leave the field, but cannot return. One exception: A Palestinian can be replaced by an Israeli.

Rule 9: Israel selects and instructs the referees, and tells them when to look away.

Rule 10: Israel selects the captain of the Palestinian team.

Rule 11: Israeli faults and Palestinian good plays will not be shown on TV.

Rule 12: Israel takes the money which sponsors pay to Palestinians clubs.

Rule 13: Only Israeli players get refreshments.

Rule 14: Palestinians are required to play, when and where designated by Israel.

Rule 15: Rules only apply to Palestinians. Israelis may change the rules during the game and are not required to advise the Palestinians of the changes.

Israel Plans To Build 'Museum Of Tolerance' On Muslim Graves

[Thanks to Michelle, Veterans For Peace]

09 February 2006 By Donald Macintyre in Jerusalem, Independent News and Media Limited

Skeletons are being removed from the site of an ancient Muslim cemetery in Jerusalem to make way for a \$150m (£86m) "museum of tolerance" being built for the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Centre.

Palestinians have launched a legal battle to stop the work at what was the city's main Muslim cemetery. The work is to prepare for the construction of a museum which seeks the promotion of "unity and respect among Jews and between people of all faiths".

Israeli archaeologists and developers have continued excavating the remains of people buried at the site, which was a cemetery for at least 1,000 years, despite a temporary ban on work granted by the Islamic Court, a division of Israel's justice system.

Police have been taking legal advice on whether the order is legally binding. The Israeli High Court is to hear a separate case brought by the Al Aqsa Association of the Islamic Movement in Israel next week.

The project, which a spokesman said had been conceived in partnership with the Jerusalem municipality and the Israeli government, was launched at a ceremony in 2004 by a cast of dignitaries ranging from Ehud Olmert, who is currently the acting Prime Minister, to the governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger.

The Israeli branch of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre declined to comment yesterday and has had no role in the project.

Durragh Saif, the lawyer who brought the Islamic Court petition on behalf of three Palestinian families, Al Dijani, Nusseibeh and Bader Elzain, all of whom have members buried at the cemetery, said: "It's unbelievable, it's immoral. You cannot build a museum of tolerance on the graves of other people.

"Imagine this kind of thing in the States or England. And this is the Middle East where events are sensitive. If this goes ahead in this way it is going to cause the opposite thing to tolerance."

Mr Saif said he had written to the Israeli State Attorney, Menachem Mazuz, seeking police enforcement of the original order. He said on a visit to the site he had entered three out of five tents where excavations were being carried out. "I was shocked to see open graves and tens of whole skeletons there," he said.

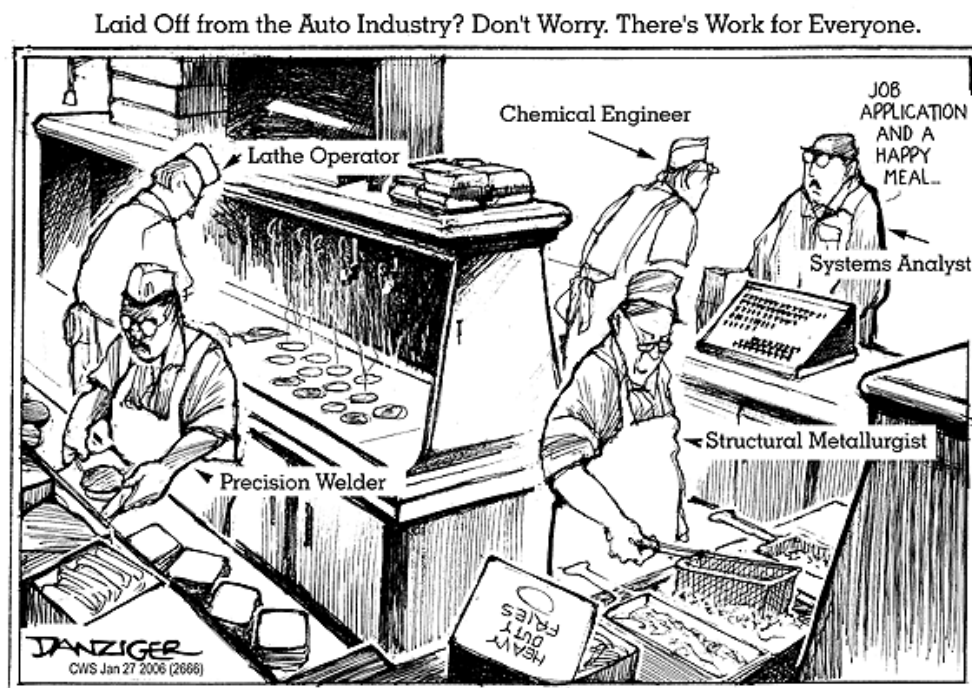
Ikrema Sabri, the Mufti of Jerusalem, demanded a halt to the excavations and said the Muslim religious authorities had not been consulted on the dig. Saying that the cemetery was in use for 15 centuries and that friends of the Prophet Mohamed were buried there, the Mufti declared: "There should be a complete cessation of work on the cemetery because it is sacred for Muslims."

Osnat Goaz, a spokeswoman for the Israel Antiquities Authority, which is carrying out the excavations, said it was common in Jerusalem to build on cemeteries. Adding that in

such cases the bones were reburied, she said: "Israel is more crowded with ancient artefacts than any other country in the world. If we didn't build on former cemeteries, we would never build."

[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



[Thanks to David Honish, Veterans For Peace, for sending in.]

Falluja And New Orleans: Bush Scores Two For Two

09 February 2006 By Linton Weeks, The Washington Post

In the air there is a scent of temporariness. Gone is the putrid aroma of post-Katrina mud and sludge, yet the sour stench of stale French Quarter libations has not fully returned. On the calendar, the city sits at a midway point between hurricane seasons.

With calliope music blaring from a tour boat on the nearby Mississippi River, ticket seller Suzi Cobb, 59, provided a tragicomic description of the puzzling purgatory that post-Katrina New Orleans has become: "We're caught in a circle."

Tourists aren't coming to New Orleans, she explained, because they can't find a place to stay. They can't find a place to stay because the hotels are full of federal relief workers, construction crews and evacuees, many of whom have no homes. Evacuees who do still have houses can't begin to fix them up because they have no jobs or income. And until they get out of the hotels so that tourists will have a place to stay, Cobb said, there will be no tourists and therefore no jobs for the workers.

There are so many symbols of Limbo Land: Vast sections of the city are still without utilities.

Without electricity, businesses can't open their doors; without open businesses, electric bills can't be paid.

Of an estimated 50 million cubic yards of hurricane and flood debris, about 6 million has been picked up, the city's Web site reported.

Countless cars litter the landscape, rendered useless by the floodwaters.

Ridership on buses and streetcars operated by the Regional Transit Authority has fallen from 855,000 rides per week before Katrina to 60,000 or fewer, according to a mid-January situation report by the Bring New Orleans Back commission.

Only 17 of 122 public schools have reopened.

And 11,000 of 15,000 people working in the city's cultural positions lost their jobs, the commission noted. Without musicians and chefs, there will be no traditional music and food; without music and food, there will be no distinctively New Orleans culture.

Harry Anderson, magician and former star of sitcoms "Night Court" and "Dave's World," also lives in Limbo Land. Anderson opened a speakeasy, Oswald's, in May 2005. Crowds were flowing in, and so was the money. He was really looking forward to the Labor Day weekend. Then Katrina hit. Now Oswald's is dark most nights because there are just not enough tourists for his original scheme. "We are bleeding cash," Anderson said.

The city is anything but the Big Easy, he said. It is small and struggling.

"Nobody is doing any business," said Charles Nelson, a commercial-transactions lawyer. "We don't have a lot of commerce." Nelson has an office in the Central Business District. But clients are not able to come and go freely. And without clients, a lawyer has a tough time.

HEAVEN OR HELL: DUBYA CHOOSES

[Thanks to C for sending in.]

While walking down the street one day, George "Dubya" Bush is shot by a disgruntled NRA member. His soul arrives in heaven and he is met by St. Peter at the Pearly Gates.

"Welcome to heaven," says St. Peter. "Before you settle in, it seems there is a problem: We seldom see a Republican around these parts, so we're not sure what to do with you.

"No problem, just let me in; I'm a believer," says Dubya.

"I'd like to just let you in, but I have orders from the Man Himself: He says you have to spend one day in hell and one day in heaven. Then you must choose where you'll live for eternity."

"But, I've already made up my mind; I want to be in heaven."

"I'm sorry, but we have our rules." And with that, St. Peter escorts him to an elevator and he goes down, down, down, all the way to hell.

The doors open and he finds himself in the middle of a lush golf course; the sun is shining in a cloudless sky, the temperature a perfect 72 degrees.

In the distance is a beautiful clubhouse. Standing in front of it his dad and thousands of other Republicans who had helped him out over the years: Karl Rove, Dick Cheney, Jerry Falwell.

The whole of the "Right" is here, everyone laughing, happy; casually but expensively dressed. They run to greet him, hug him, and reminisce about the good times they had getting rich at expense of the "suckers and peasants." They play a friendly game of golf, then dine on lobster and caviar.

The devil himself comes up to Bush with a frosty drink and says, "Have a Margarita and relax, Dubya!"

"Uh, I can't drink no more, I took a pledge," says Junior, dejectedly.

"This is Hell, son: you can drink and eat all you want and not worry, and it just gets better from here!" says the devil.

Dubya takes the drink and finds himself liking the devil, who is a very friendly guy who tells funny jokes and pulls hilarious nasty pranks, kind of like a Yale Skull and Bones brother with real horns.

They are having such a great time that, before he realizes it, it's time to go.

Everyone gives him a big hug and waves as Bush steps on the elevator and heads upward.

When the elevator door reopens, he is in heaven again and St. Peter is waiting for him. "Now it's time to visit heaven," the old man says, opening the gate.

So for 24 hours Bush is made to hang out with a bunch of honest, good natured people who enjoy each other's company, talk about things other than money, and treat each other decently.

Not a nasty prank or frat boy joke among them; no fancy country clubs and, while the food tastes great, it's not caviar or lobster. And these people are all poor; he doesn't see anybody he knows, and he isn't even treated like someone special!

Worst of all, to Dubya, Jesus turns out to be some kind of Jewish hippie with his endless 'peace' and 'do unto others' jive.

"Whoa," he says uncomfortably to himself, "Pat Robertson never prepared me for this!"

The day done, St. Peter returns and says, "Well, then, you've spent a day in Hell and a day in Heaven. Now choose where you want to live for eternity."

With the 'Jeopardy' theme playing softly in the background, Dubya reflects for a minute, then answers, "Well, I would never have thought I'd say this; I mean, heaven has been delightful and all, but I really think I belong in hell with my friends."

So Saint Peter escorts him to the elevator and he goes down, down, down, all the way to hell.

The doors of the elevator open, and he finds himself in the middle of barren, scorched earth covered with garbage and toxic industrial waste, the sky dark with smog...kind of like Houston. He is horrified to see all of his friends dressed in rags and chained together, picking up the trash and putting it in black bags.

They are groaning and moaning in pain, faces and hands black with grime. The Devil comes over to Dubya and puts an arm around his shoulder.

"I don't understand," stammers a shocked Dubya. "Yesterday I was here and there was a golf course and a clubhouse and we ate lobster and caviar and drank booze. We screwed around and had a great time. Now there's just a wasteland full of garbage and everybody looks miserable!"

The Devil looks at him, smiles slyly, and says, "Yesterday we were campaigning. Today you voted for us."

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)

GI Special Looks Even Better Printed Out

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