

GI SPECIAL 4B22:



**“Three Years Of Constant
Fighting Against The World’s
Most Advanced Military Has
Produced Very Experienced
And Capable Insurgent Fighters
In Iraq”**

“These big operations, the attack on the police commando compound and Abu Ghraib, some rock star put those together,” said Lt. Col. Shawn Weed, an intelligence officer with the 3rd Infantry Division.

February 13, 2006 By Greg Grant, Special to the Army Times [Excerpts]

While the majority of American casualties in Iraq are due to roadside bombs, complex attacks (operations displaying a high level of planning, preparation and tactical proficiency) are becoming more common.

It is a disturbing trend that indicates a Sunni insurgency that is becoming more, not less, capable and sophisticated over time, according to U.S. Army officers in Iraq.

Case in point? U.S. Marines and Iraqi troops, backed by attack aircraft, repelled a series of coordinated, daylight insurgent attacks in the Iraqi city of Ramadi on Jan. 24 that included mortars, small arms and rocket-propelled grenades.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told reporters in Washington on Jan. 25 that the fighting in Iraq has produced a "battle-hardened" U.S. military. But there is a flip side to that argument, about which officers in Iraq are beginning to voice concern:

Three years of constant fighting against the world's most advanced military has produced very experienced and capable insurgent fighters in Iraq.

Information released by U.S. military officials in Iraq showed that insurgents conducted 34,131 attacks in 2005, a 29 percent increase over the previous year's 26,496. The number of car bombs more than doubled, while the number of roadside bomb incidents nearly did, rising from 5,607 in 2004 to 10,953 last year.

When the 3rd Infantry Division arrived in Baghdad in early 2005, the division's soldiers faced hastily placed improvised explosive devices comprising a single mortar or artillery round, and dealt with occasional sniper fire from insurgents hidden in the shadows.

Over the year, the bombs got much bigger, their triggers more sophisticated.

These bombs now are often used to initiate an attack, drawing U.S. forces into kill zones emplaced with multiple IEDs, mortars zeroed on preselected locations, and supporting small-arms and rocket-propelled grenade fire, said Capt. Stephen Capehart, a tank company commander in the 3rd Infantry Division.

"The insurgency is getting more sophisticated over time," he said. "They adapt to us, and we adapt to them; it's a never-ending cycle."

Dozens of what the military calls "low-level" insurgent cells operate throughout Iraq, limiting their attacks to a specific geographic area, such as a neighborhood or a stretch of highway.

But larger, more sophisticated insurgent networks, such as Ansar al Sunna, the Secret Islamic Army and the Abu Ayman Network, their ranks made up primarily of former Iraqi military and intelligence officers, cover a larger area and are capable of pulling off large-scale, military-style operations.

They are organized along military lines, with different cells that specialize in specific tactics and methods of attack, such as a sniper cell, an IED cell or a mortar cell. An extensive support structure conducts surveillance and

reconnaissance while providing explosives, small arms, ammunition, transportation and safe houses.

On April 2, one of the most complex insurgent attacks of the past three years struck the Abu Ghraib prison compound west of Baghdad and sent shock waves through the American military command, according to military sources in Iraq.

Multiple car bombs detonated against two separate gates in an attempt to breach the heavily fortified base, while mortar fire fell inside the compound and accurate small-arms and rocket-propelled grenade fire forced Marines to abandon the guard towers. As reinforcements rushed to the scene, they were attacked by multiple IEDs laid along the routes to the prison, suffering casualties. Patrols stopped by IED attacks were peppered with small-arms and mortar fire.

As additional U.S. reinforcements and attack aircraft poured into the area, the insurgents broke off the attack. At least 44 American troops were wounded.

Total insurgent casualties were unknown, as no bodies were found on the battlefield.

Intelligence analysts pointed to the high level of coordination required to undertake 12 separate and precisely targeted attacks in under 30 minutes.

Intercepts of insurgent communications revealed that they considered the Abu Ghraib attack to have been largely successful, and U.S. military sources said it would have been even more successful if U.S. aircraft had not arrived.

The insurgents didn't wait long before using those tactics again, this time directing their efforts at Iraq's security forces.

In the early morning of June 20, a patrol from the Army's 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, rounded a corner in central Baghdad and surprised a group of insurgents setting up mortars and machine guns. They were preparing to support a large-scale attack by more than 100 fighters against a commando compound.

What followed was a running gun battle through narrow streets and alleyways between insurgents and U.S. soldiers backed by tanks, M2 Bradley fighting vehicles and AH-64 Apache attack helicopters, along with Iraqi police.

The insurgents managed to get at least one suicide car bomb into the commando compound after a breach was created in the wall by a massive car bomb. Heavy police fire forced the second car bomb to detonate prematurely, killing two commandos and wounding more than 20.

IEDs and additional car bombs had been placed at key intersections to attack reinforcements moving to support the police.

Insurgents fired on American patrols converging on the area from apartment rooftops, while mortar fire hit the targeted compounds.

The Apaches flying in support were hit by ground fire, but with U.S. tanks and armored vehicles rushing to the attack, the response proved too much for the insurgents, who broke off the attack and melted into the surrounding neighborhoods. At the end of the day, four insurgent bodies were found and another two dozen suspects were rounded up.

Two weeks earlier, Vice President Dick Cheney told Larry King in an interview on CNN that he believed the insurgency in Iraq was "in the last throes."

"These big operations, the attack on the police commando compound and Abu Ghraib, some rock star put those together," said Lt. Col. Shawn Weed, an intelligence officer with the 3rd Infantry Division.

"Those were complex, professional-style attacks, militarily thought-out, planned and resourced operations."

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Guardman In Lawrence Company Killed

February 22, 2006 The Lawrence Journal-World

A Lawrence-based member of the Kansas National Guard was killed in a bomb attack in Iraq on Monday, officials said Tuesday.

Spc. Jessie Davila, 29, of Greensburg, was a member of Company A in the 2nd Battalion, 137th Infantry.

The 120-member Company A is based in Lawrence.

State Rep. Dennis McKinney, D-Greensburg, said Davila had entered the Marines upon graduating from Greensburg High School, then returned after his Marine enlistment to Greensburg and joined the Guard.

Other Greensburg residents said Davila attended St. Joseph Catholic Church; church members were unavailable for comment Tuesday.

Funeral services were pending.

The 500-member battalion, with headquarters in Kansas City, Kan., and another company based in Wichita, deployed to Iraq in August. The unit was given the mission of operating the Joint Visitors Bureau near Baghdad and providing security for high-level visitors entering Iraq.

Davila is the 25th Kansan to die in Iraq and the fourth member of the Kansas National Guard.

Marine Wounded By Kirkuk IED;

Feb 22 (KUNA)

An explosive device went off on Wednesday while multi-national forces patrol was passing in Kirkuk's Cornish street, causing the injury of a US Marines serviceman who was rushed to hospital for treatment, an Iraqi police source said.

Also unanimous gunmen aboard a car abducted an Iraqi citizen in the same street today, the same source added.

FUTILE EXERCISE: NO HONORABLE MISSION: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!



A Blackhawk helicopter lands to extract troops following a 'knock and search' mission near Tikrit, February 17, 2006. REUTERS/Bob Strong

Danish Soldiers Under Attack

February 22, 2006 By Cihan News Agency, Copenhagen

The Danish soldiers clashed with an unidentified armed group near the Danish base in Basra, Iraq.

The Danish soldiers who were on patrol in the north of Basra were fired upon by four masked guerrillas last Tuesday afternoon.

The Danish soldiers returned fire in the fighting and called on the assistance of local Iraqi security forces, however, the Iraqi police summoned to the scene failed to find the perpetrators.

TROOP NEWS

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



Connie Piper sits amid soldiers beside the casket of her husband, U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Christopher Piper, in Marblehead, Massachusetts June 27, 2005. Piper died of wounds suffered earlier in the month serving with the U.S. Special Forces in Afghanistan. REUTERS/Brian Snyder

No Ammo For Training

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
2.13.06

I am continually frustrated by the lack of training we in the California National Guard receive on the most basic of all infantryman's tools, the M16 rifle.

Granted, the weapon system is basic as far as maintenance. But as far as firing it, we are always held just short of being comfortable handling it.

We average being able to shoot maybe twice a year. When a qualification drill comes up, due to lack of ammunition, we are sometimes told we won't be shooting. Not a real good way to teach infantry soldiers how to do what they do.

On the off chance we do get to shoot, we are given only the bare minimum of rounds to qualify. Again, not a good way to teach infantry troops how to do their job.

Pilots get to fly at drill. Maintenance troops get to work on vehicles. Infantry soldiers in the California National Guard get to sit all weekend wishing they could shoot.

How are we supposed to go to a possible hostile situation, at home or abroad, and not be comfortable with our most basic of tools?

Is the ammunition that expensive?

Sgt. Devin Sorensen
Modesto, Calif.

You're Invited!
To our panel discussion of:

“A Soldiers' Movement Against The Iraq War”

**A part of the annual Left Forum (formerly Socialist Scholars
Conference) co-sponsored by Citizen Soldier and Iraq Veterans
Against the War (New York City chapter)**

**Cooper Union, Third Ave and 7th St.,
New York City
2:00 pm, Sunday, March 12, 2006**

Participants include:

Tod Ensign, Moderator, Director, Citizen Soldier, a GI/Veterans Advocacy organization

Geoff Millard, Iraq combat veteran, 8 year Army vet, recently participated in World Forum, Venezuela

Aidan Delgado, Iraq war vet, stationed at Abu Ghraib prison, won CO claim while serving in Iraq.

Jose Vasquez, Army Reservist, Iraq war refuser, CUNY graduate student

The conference, held on March 10th-12th, offers dozens of other panels covering a broad range of political topics. For more information see www.leftglobal.org

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.

Sometime Dreams Come True

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

A group of Marines came upon a heavily wounded Iraqi soldier laying on the right side of the road between Baghdad and Basra; he was unconscious and unable to talk. On the left side of the road there was a wounded American soldier that was hurt bad but could speak.

The Marines asked the American soldier what had happened. He replied that he had been heavily armed and walking down the road, and had encountered a heavily armed Iraqi insurgent coming the other way.

**The American soldier had shouted "Saddam Hussein is a piece of camel dung!"
The Iraqi soldier had shouted "GWB is a horse's ass!"**

He continued, "We were in the middle of the road shaking hands and a truck hit us."

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.

“There Are Very Few People Who Are Willing To Stand Up And Raise A Hand To A Two-Star General And I Took That Chance Because Morale Is So Bad”

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

The wounded came not from engaging the enemy, but from scores of workplace injuries that increased as the war intensified. The low morale was measured in rises in drunken driving and domestic abuse, discrimination complaints and lost productivity. Most dramatic were the suicides, double the national rate in 2004, and murders on the base, the first in Robins' 65-year history.

Feb 21 By Gregg Zoroya, USA Today [Excerpts]

This sprawling airbase in the swamps of central Georgia sits 6,500 miles from the nearest battlefield in Iraq. But it hasn't escaped the death and injury brought on by war.

The situation at Robins, where thousands of workers repair military aircraft, is a case study on how the war overseas has affected those serving on the home front. Here, a different kind of strain and battle fatigue has surfaced, often in startling ways.

The wounded came not from engaging the enemy, but from scores of workplace injuries that increased as the war intensified. The low morale was measured in rises in drunken driving and domestic abuse, discrimination complaints and lost productivity. Most dramatic were the suicides, double the national rate in 2004, and murders on the base, the first in Robins' 65-year history.

Maj. Gen. Mike Collings, who has spearheaded the effort to cure the ills here, is convinced that the Pentagon needs to take note of what happened at Robins: the problems and the efforts to address them - as the military tries to reinvent itself while fighting a protracted war.

When Collings came to the base in 2004, he says workers were cutting corners, compromising safety and focusing on war production at all costs. "Morale," he says "was in the pits."

"People felt that they were being asked to do more and more and more and more and nobody necessarily worried about giving them the right training and making sure that they did their job correctly," he says.

"Whether you're talking about the soldier in the field who's getting ready to take the next bunker, the fighter pilot, the maintainer who is turning wrenches on the flight line, the engineer doing software development here or Ronnie who works in the paint shop," Collings says, "if you don't have their heart and their belief that you are leading them in the right direction, it's a non-starter."

Robins covers 13 square miles. Its 26,000 employees make it one of the largest employers in the state.

At its core are the almost 15,000 workers of the Air Logistics Center under Collings' command. The center is tasked with keeping America's fleet of heavy transport aircraft flying supplies, troops and missions into Iraq and Afghanistan. Air Force C-130s, C-17s and massive C-5 jets, the largest cargo aircraft in the U.S. arsenal, are in various states of repair across the base. The center also does maintenance on Air Force F-15 fighter planes.

Many are keenly aware of the role they play in the war. "I find myself trying to see if I can recognize a serial number on TV (war coverage) of an airplane from work," says Greg Horton, 39, a sheet metal worker on C-130 aircraft.

Beginning with the Persian Gulf War of 1990-91, through operations in Bosnia and Serbia during that decade and the monitoring of no-fly zones over Iraq, the base has been on a near-continuous war footing. The fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq made the situation all the worse.

Repair schedules were accelerated. Departments merged and then were re-organized; workers answered to new bosses.

The strain of war combined with the changes created a "perfect storm of events" that worsened stress and undercut morale, says George Falldine, the base's longtime planning director.

Grease board messages reminded workers when they fell 20, 30 or 50 days behind schedule on an airplane.

Delays grew particularly severe with older model C-5A cargo jets. When base closings brought the regular overhaul of C-5 aircraft to Robins in 2000, repair work slowed from roughly 250 days per jet to nearly 400. The average time for overhauling C-130H cargo planes has been longer than the 135-day target for each of the past four years.

"It just seems like you're in a steady state of change. And yes, that does add stress," says Barry Shepherd, 46, a hydraulic mechanic who works on C-130 aircraft. "And of course the war does add more because you have to be able to run these aircraft out much quicker."

Across the base, there were signs the workforce was fraying.

Informal discrimination charges by civilian employees were at record levels in 2000 and 2001, and formal written complaints peaked in 2002. More than 1,000 union grievances were filed in 2000. A year earlier, 136 unfair labor practice complaints were filed, a 20-year high. Unfair labor complaints rose again to 111 three years later.

In June 2003, Robins had the highest number of lost workdays due to injury of any U.S. military installation of its size anywhere in the world.

Cases of child abuse among the base's 6,000 military personnel more than tripled - from 25 in fiscal year 2001 to 83 in FY 2004. Incidents of spousal abuse increased from 41 in FY 2001 to 63 three years later. The base began tracking drunken driving arrests in 2003 among military personnel. The arrests increased from 63 that year to 73 in 2004.

When he became head of occupational medicine at the base in 2004, Sanford Zelnick recalls weeks when at least one distraught employee came to him for counseling each day. Their problems included conflicts with co-workers or a supervisor, or concerns about work assignments. "I would see people in here who were crying," he says.

But the deaths, particularly in 2004, prompted base leaders to focus on the work environment and culture.

The first murders in base history occurred on July 5, 2004. Senior Airman Andrew Witt, dressed in camouflage and armed with a combat knife, attacked and stabbed to death another airman and his wife. Witt, 23, is awaiting execution at a prison in Fort Leavenworth, Kan. Witt had been feuding with the couple after trying to kiss the wife two days before the murders, according to trial testimony.

A month later, Senior Airman Gregory Class, 24, was arrested and accused of beating to death a 17-month-old boy he was babysitting. His trial is pending.

And six people committed suicide that year, all in a period of seven weeks.

From 2002 to 2005, at least 24 deaths involved workers or residents of the base, including 15 suicides and six homicides blamed on airmen.

The most recent suicide was James Sturdivant, 43, a former civilian worker who had hurt his back on the job and was struggling to get worker's compensation for corrective surgery. On July 22, he walked into base headquarters, sat at the personnel director's desk and shot himself in the mouth with a 9mm pistol.

Another was Airman 1st Class Jeremy Monat, 24, a member of Robins' honor guard. He was anguished by a troubled marriage, a boss he considered overbearing and the constant pressure to perform better at work, says his mother, Mary Keller, of Lewiston, Mich.

When his tearful call to her ended abruptly the night of June 2, 2004, Monat wrapped a belt around his neck and hanged himself in his kitchen.

"He hated that base," Keller says bitterly.

Many unit commanders are reluctant to blame the homicides or suicides on conditions at Robins.

After the murders, suicides and the death of an airman who fell 50 feet while changing a light bulb in a hangar, base leaders took action. Chaplains were already busy with grief counseling, but suicide prevention classes were expanded. A "wingman" program, designed to encourage civilians to look out for each other, grew.

In a series of addresses to base workers, Collings began promoting what he described as a work environment that "puts people first."

He urged civilian workers to embrace Air Force military values of integrity and service before self. He promoted his concept through the slogan, "People First, Mission Always." He introduced a fitness program for civilians that allowed them three hours a week to work out. A new gymnasium for civilian workers is under construction. Days off became rewards for improvement.

And early this month, more than 800 lower-ranking aircraft mechanics were offered the chance to earn immediate promotions with annual raises of \$4,000.

Most dramatic, Collings gained permission from Air Force headquarters to bring in about 250 veteran airmen from around the country in late 2004 to spend three months scrutinizing base operations. The concept was to learn where training and practice had gone awry and reverse the trend.

In a scathing report issued last year, the investigative team found 1,635 problems ranging from minor procedural errors to life-threatening hazards.

The 155 most serious wrongs included:

Mismanagement of a maintenance shop where an aircraft part made of depleted uranium was stored. Workers were neither educated about the risks of radiation nor monitored for exposure levels. No complete inspection of the facility had been done since 2001.

A grenade-launcher firing range that was nearly 200 yards too short. As a consequence, buildings used for training and portions of an obstacle course were susceptible to wayward explosives.

Cases in which police working on the base sped and ran stop signs when there was no emergency.

This year, Collings says he will use the findings to begin a series of training sessions for civilian and military workers. He says his efforts and emphasis on workers and their morale are paying off.

Even so, all is not perfect. Only about 10 percent to 15 percent of the civilian workforce is exercising, base officials say.

And during one of Collings' troops talks last November, Leslie "Geri" Rogers, an inventory management specialist, complained about poorly trained supervisors and unhappy employees in an office that manages testing equipment.

"There are very few people who are willing to stand up and raise a hand to a two-star general and I took that chance because morale is so bad," Rogers says.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action

02/22/06 New Kerala & Toronto Star & Reuters

Guerrillas killed two first lieutenants working for the police at Baquba, 60 km east of the capital, as the men, who were brothers, were on their way to work, said security sources.

A judge was seriously injured and four of his bodyguards killed when militants fired at his car on the outskirts of Muqdadiyah, a town about 100 km north of Baghdad.

Guerrillas ambushed an Iraqi army patrol on Tuesday, killing two soldiers and wounding two in Kirkuk, said police colonel Sarhat Qadir.

Four policemen were wounded by a roadside bomb while travelling on a road in the town of Hasswa.

Three Iraqi contractors working for the U.S. army were captured by insurgents in the town of Falluja, said police major Omar Mohammed.

The head of the Criminal Court of Diyala province survived an assassination attempt by guerrillas in al-Ahmer village, 40 km (25 miles) east of Baquba, but four of his bodyguards were killed, police said.

<p>IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATION</p>

WORKERS STRIKE AT BASRA OIL TRANSPORTATION COMPANY:

“Long Live The Word Of The Iraqi Working Class”

February 22, 2006 posted by Ewa Jasiewicz at 8:28 PM, Basra oil union.org/

The below is a translation of a statement released by the union yesterday regarding strike action by workers at the Oil Transportation Company in Basra. More news and updates will follow shortly.

A one day strike took place on the 21/2/2006 organised by union members in the Oil Transport Company in Basra. The strike took place for the following reasons:

1: In Protest at the deliberate targetted neglect of this company by the ministry of oil and the government.

2: To demand an improvement of workers' living conditions

3: **To demand that money owed to workers by the ministry of oil which be paid. This money should have been paid but has not, despite the continuous demands from the company and continuous unfulfilled promises by the ministry.**

We are on strike today to send the message to the government that there are employees whose rights are being wasted/violated.

In a statement to the press, the President of the Union demands that the ministry meets its promises, and that structural changes be made within the company as we (the union) believe there are some executives that haven't served the company right.

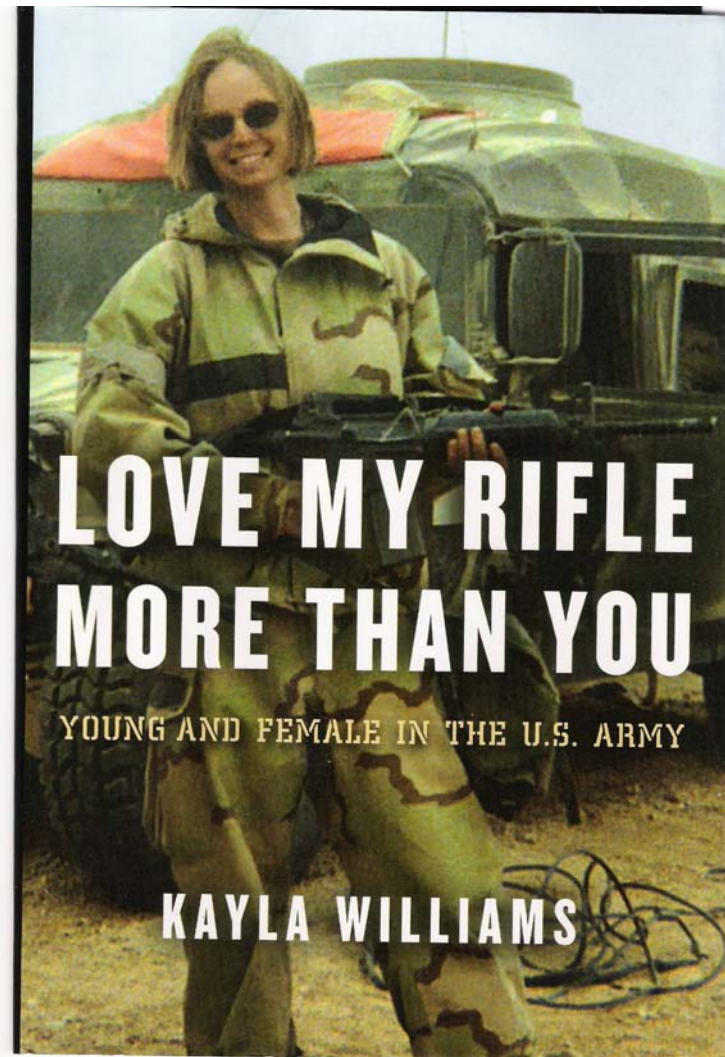
This sit-in will be the beginning of a long journey of struggle.

Long live the word of the Iraqi working class under a democratic, free union organization!

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

“The More We Know About What Brought About This War In The First Place, The Harder And Harder It Gets”

“And What The Fuck For? What Was It All About?”



[W.W. Norton & Co., NYC; 2005 and worth every penny.]

[Excerpts]

The night I got home, I got in touch with Shane Kelly. He had returned to Fort Campbell in January after three months at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. And after that first night, we hung out together all the time.

I was incredibly happy to be back in America. But for the longest time, I did not want to be around non-Army people. And I kept having feelings of wanting to be back there.

When you come home, you spend a lot of time talking about how you want to get back to Iraq. You feel this guilt for not being with your brothers. For not being with your people. The people in your unit. You feel like you're still supposed to be there.

You're not done.

I remembered that when I spoke to anybody who took mid-tour leave, they had expressed similar feelings. And now I felt them, too.

There was culture shock.

Everyone in America was fat. Everyone was on some stupid diet. How could a diet encourage you to eat bacon and forbid you to eat bananas? It made no sense to me. I felt like people didn't understand anything. That they were selfish and didn't appreciate what they had.

I came home, and the only things people were interested in were things just beyond my comprehension. Who cared about Jennifer Lopez? How was it that I was watching CNN one morning and there was a story about freaking ducklings being fished out of a damn sewer drain, while the story of soldiers getting killed in Iraq got relegated to this little banner across the bottom of the screen?

Ducklings getting pulled out of a sewer. How was this important to our country?

I was not understanding what was going on. I was not grasping anything.

How was I willing to go and die for these fucking people who wear sweatshirts with little kittens on them? Or these people with sequins who bump into me with their carts at the supermarket and then look at me like I'm an asshole?

It's a very strange country we live in.

I felt thoroughly out of place.

I felt this jarring sense of I do not belong here.

Soon after my return I visited my father and stepmother in North Carolina. The big talk on their block was the glorified mobile home that was being put in their gated community. The neighbors were up in arms over this. Oh my God! The world is coming to an end! This prefab home does not meet the ideal standards of life in the community!

Everyone was aghast. "What about property values?"

I thought: Who are you people?

You people are all rich. You have electricity. You have phones. I just came back from a place where people wanted my cardboard boxes for flooring. What the fuck is wrong with you?

My parents were supportive. They were fine.

But everywhere we went, it was always the same.

“This is my daughter. She just got back from Iraq.”

“Oh, thank you! Thank you!”

And then it was always the same question. “What was it like?”

I understood people were saying this to be nice. But what could I say? What was I supposed to say?

“Well, when I was in Mosul, this sergeant major and his driver got pulled out of their vehicle by a mob and their bodies were literally torn apart. So how’s your year been?”

What am I supposed to say?

“Oh, yeah. I watched a guy bleed to death. And I smelled burning shit all the time. It was super.”

I didn’t know how to deal with people.

No more apologies.

That’s what being in the Army has taught me when all is said and done.

I used to be this girl, like so many girls; I mean studies have been done on this, if you don’t want to take my word for it; we *qualify* everything we say. This was me:

“I kinda think maybe I’d like sorta to do X or Y. I’m not sure. You decide.” With a guy I was the same way. Maybe he’d just fucking lied to me. And maybe I’d just caught him at it. But it was still me saying: “I’m sorry.” Girls do this all the time. I did it all the time.

I also remember clearly that before I went to Iraq, I always made statements that sounded like questions.

When I first arrived at Fort Campbell, for instance, I went into my platoon’s office and said: “Um, I think we have formation?” (Though of course I knew we had formation). And people didn’t get up and go to formation. They went and checked. I spoke like that all the time, and it pissed me off at myself. I should have been more assertive. I also should have been less embarrassed about being smart. Less ashamed of my ability to do things well.

When women are good at what they do, they are not characterized as assertive.

They are accused of being ballbusters or bitches.

This is a struggle that is magnified in the military because it is still such a male environment: a weird little microcosm of society on steroids.

In a combat zone I couldn't be hesitant. I had to be assured. I couldn't just quit. If you decide to quit in a combat zone, you will probably die.

I had to keep going. I had to do it.

And all of a sudden I realized that the mind is incredibly powerful. I could do it. I could do almost anything

I could keep going in situations that I certainly imagined before would have broken me. In Iraq I figured out there was no option for me to do anything else but push myself. And keep pushing.

Which I did. Which I've done.

Sometimes now I end up around a bunch of soldiers who were also in Iraq, and we can talk about what it was like. We can bond pretty easily.

But when I meet random civilians, I feel like they don't understand things.

Sometimes I feel I have failed horribly. Even here. Even now. With this hook. I have somehow failed to express what life in war was like for us.

There are so many things that are still really tough for me to discuss. And I keep trying to put my finger on why.

Even though we, the troops today, are supported like the Vietnam vets were not, we now know it took lies to get us deployed. (WMDs? What WMDs?)

And all the problems that are still going on. People trying to kill us all the fucking time.

The conflict that continues of how to deal with being there with a spoon in one hand and a gun in the other. Falluja's a complete disaster. The mess hall in Mosul where Zoe and I ate chow twice a day has now been bombed, more than twenty soldiers were killed and dozens more were injured. Tal Afar has blown up. Since the 101st left, it's been a total mess.

The more we know about what brought about this war in the first place, the harder and harder it gets. It was a year of my life. And what the fuck for? What was it all about? Not having an answer for that makes it hard. Makes it feel dirty. It was hard enough to go.

Even after several operations, Shane still has shrapnel in his head. His traumatic brain injury causes him severe headaches and wicked depressions. He has trouble with his memory, and the medications have not helped much.

At Campbell no one could provide him the care or treatment he really needed. They threw pills at him, but nothing worked. Everything was fucked up. Finally, in the late fall of 2004, he moved back to Walter Reed so he could receive better medical care. But there are still tons of problems; the bureaucracy he has to negotiate to get therapy programs has been horrible.

This is a man who almost made the ultimate sacrifice for his country. Now he has to fight for everything. What is going to happen to Shane? Does the Army expect a man with a traumatic brain injury to advocate on his own behalf for the care and treatment he deserves?

There are days he can barely get out of bed in the morning, the pain is so intense.

Watching how shabbily the Army treats Shane, not to mention so many other seriously wounded veterans of this war, has been the deepest disillusionment for me.

Lauren will go back with the Rakkasans to Iraq for another year. She knows it. She's been promoted to corporal and now has her own team; they gave her a team as soon as they could so it would have more cohesion by the time they're deployed. She's training them now. In the meantime we've become very close friends, sharing an occasional night out and a weekly Sunday brunch.

Not long ago, I met her parents for the first time. Afterward Lauren said: "I wish you were coming back with me. I wish we were going back together."

It's so hard. So difficult. I feel guilt about it.

I know the mission is not over.

I still have the desire to go back. Finish what we started. But I need to move on. I need my life not to be on hold anymore.

So it's a terrible conflict for me. I want to be free to do what I please, go where I please, live where I please.

I don't want to have to file a mileage waiver form every time I travel more than 250 miles from base. I want to visit Europe. Go to museums in Washington, D.C., and take the train up to New York City. Not live in Clarksville, Tennessee.

But I'm not kidding myself.

I know the Army can call me back.

It's not over. I'm not really done.

When I signed my contract in the spring of 2000, it was five years active and then three more years IRR. Inactive ready reserve. If I'm not stop-lossed, and I do get out of the Army in April 2005, I must still keep them informed of my whereabouts.

They need to be able to reach me.

I can still get a letter. Telling me to come back.

This does happen. I know a girl with my military occupational specialty on IRR who got the letter to come back.

So it's not over, I'm not completely safe until 2008.

I could be in graduate school. I could have a job I love. And the letter could come.

Tomorrow. Next week. Next month. Next year.

No, it's not over: Not for a long while yet.

The Dems Voted For This Conceptual War Without End And They Keep Voting To Fund It: "Take A Stand Outside The Two Party System"

February 21, 2006 By Lucinda Marshall, ZNet Commentary [Excerpts]

The Dems really are a sorry lot. During the Alito hearings Senator Diane Feinstein mumbled on about how she didn't feel that a difference of opinion was sufficient reason to vote against Alito. Earth to Senator Feinstein: Concerns about separation of powers, civil rights and upholding the Constitution are more than ample reasons.

The list of nominations for the "If I Only Had A Spine Award" are endless.

How many chest beatings have we heard from those who claim they were misled by faulty intelligence about the Iraq war? With all due respect, how is it that myself and millions of people all over the world could grasp that it was a crock of brown stuff and we didn't even have access to any 'intelligence' besides the brains that we were born with.

And then there are the House Dems, including Nancy Pelosi, who knew about the domestic spying program several years ago and chose not to blow the whistle. Like I said, it really is a long list.

The party faithful are fond of telling me that you have to be practical, pick your battles, compromise, yada yada. But there is no excuse for not standing up for truth and doing

what is right. As Audre Lorde pointed out many years ago, silence does not protect you. Or us. Or Democracy.

The bottom line is that the Dems voted for this conceptual war without end and they keep voting to fund it.

Earlier this year in a bizarre act of pretzel logic, a delegation of Congressional Democrats, including media darling Barack Obama, solemnly warned Iraqi leaders that the U.S. commitment to Iraq is dependent on Iraqis getting their act together. That would be the same act our elected officials have consistently voted to destroy.

They didn't filibuster the nomination of John Roberts or Samuel Alito to the Supreme Court and it is all but assured they will vote to extend the Patriot Act.

If we want to reclaim our country, if we truly believe in democracy, it is time to take a good hard look at our own complicity and take a stand outside the two party system. If we don't, we have only ourselves to blame.

Just Asking!!

February 22, 2006 By Raja Chemayel, Anti-Allawi-group

Briefly ,

The UAE is bidding to take over the management of 3 X USA ports and many are complaining "for security reasons"..... the UAE being Arab!! (or at least is Arab capital)

I wonder, how many remember that the 911 hijackers boarded the plane from an Airport which has had its passenger security control done by an Israeli company!!! and did anyone complain??

Just asking!!

Raja

OCCUPATION REPORT

“God Is Great, Death To America Which Brought Us Terrorism”

“Thousands Of Shiites, Some Brandishing Kalashnikov Rifles, Marched Through The Streets Shouting Anti-American Slogans”

February 22, 2006 AP & By ZIAD KHALAF, AP & AFP

SAMARRA, Iraq: A large explosion Wednesday heavily damaged the golden dome of one of Iraq's most famous Shiite shrines, sending protesters into the streets and triggering reprisal attacks against Sunni mosques. It was the third major attack against Shiite targets in as many days.

Waving the green flags of Islam and the national Iraqi colours, thousands of Shiites had earlier taken to the streets of Samarra, 125 kilometres (80 miles) north of Baghdad, vowing to punish those responsible for the attack.

Shops closed and muezzins recited prayers from the loudspeakers of nearby mosques and blamed the United States for the turmoil, saying "God is Great, death to America which brought us terrorism."

Major Sunni groups also joined in the condemning the attack. The Sunni clerical Muslim Scholars called the bombing a "criminal act," and a Sunni political alliance blamed "evil people" for trying to divide Iraq.

The Sunni Endowment, a government organization that cares for Sunni mosques and shrines, condemned the blast and said it was sending a delegation to Samarra to investigate what happened.

Other major Sunni groups joined in the condemning the attack. The Sunni clerical Association of Muslim Scholars called the bombing a "criminal act."

Protesters in Najaf, Kut and Baghdad's Shiite slum of Sadr City marched through the streets by the hundreds and thousands.

In Baghdad's Sadr City, thousands of Shiites, some brandishing Kalashnikov rifles, marched through the streets shouting anti-American slogans.

About 3,000 people marched the Shiite city of Kut, chanting anti-American and anti-Israeli slogans and burning U.S. and Israeli flags.

MORE:

Yes, But Whose Conspiracy? **U.S. Ambassador Condemns Militias; Next, Mosque Blown Up And Collaborators Say Explosion Proves Their Militia Should Be More Powerful, Not Less**

02.22.2006 By ZIAD KHALAF, AP & AFP

"We are facing a major conspiracy that is targeting Iraq's unity," said President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd. "We should all stand hand in hand to prevent the danger of a civil war."

In one ominous sign of how Shiites may react, Iraq's top Shiite cleric and the country's vice president hinted that local armed militias might play a bigger role in security in future, if the government can't protect such holy shrines.

Some Shiite political leaders already were angry with the United States because it has urged them to form a unity government in which nonsectarian figures control the army and police.

After the attacks, one top Shiite political leader accused [U.S. Ambassador] Khalilzad of sharing some responsibility for the bombing of the shrine because of that stance.

Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim, head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, cited Khalilzad's statement at a press conference Monday that America would not continue to support institutions run by sectarian groups with links to armed militias.

Khalilzad, who enraged Hakim Monday with his warning the United States would curtail funds if Iraq was run on a sectarian basis.

"These statements ... gave green lights to terrorist groups. And, therefore, he shares in part of the responsibility," said the official, Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim, head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq and the former commander of its militia.

Al-Sistani, the top Shiite cleric, sent instructions to his followers forbidding attacks on Sunni mosques, especially the major ones in Baghdad.

He called for seven days of mourning, his aides said.

But he later hinted, as did Iraqi Vice President Adil Abdul-Mahdi that religious militias could be given a bigger security role if the government is not capable of protecting holy shrines.

Welcome To Liberated Iraq: After Prisoners Are Tortured, Painkillers For Sale

Feb. 27, 2006 Michael Hastings, Newsweek [Excerpt]

Can Iraqis trust the Ministry of Interior to put a stop to it? Interior is one of Iraq's most dishonest ministries, according to Judge Rahdi Hamza al-Rahdi, director of the government's top anti-corruption agency, the Commission on Public Integrity. Roughly 400 MOI officials are currently under the commission's scrutiny.

The fears are underscored by the way the MOI runs its detention facilities.

Bribery is said to be so rampant that a standard list of under-the-table fees has apparently evolved.

Mohammed Abid, a defense lawyer in Baghdad, says clients describe prices that range from 30,000 Iraqi dinar (about \$21) for one minute on a mobile phone to \$40,000 in U.S. currency for release from custody. Those rates are independently confirmed by an Iraqi police officer who has spent two years working at Al Hakimiya and does not wish to be named, out of fear and shame. "I'm coming forward for reasons that are between me and Allah," he says. "I have done things. I needed to tell someone."

He says torture and beatings are part of the daily routine, creating an eager market for guards who sell painkillers to the inmates.

<p>OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME <u>NOW!</u></p>

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Big Surprise:

Rumsfeld Caught Lying Again

21 February, 2006 ROBERT BURNS, AP Military Writer

WASHINGTON: Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld was mistaken when he said last week that the U.S. military had stopped the controversial practice of paying to plant stories in the Iraqi news media, a Pentagon spokesman said Tuesday.

"I don't have knowledge as to whether it's been stopped. I do have knowledge it was put under review. I was correctly informed. And I just misstated the facts," Rumsfeld said at a Pentagon news briefing.

Rumsfeld had said in a speech in New York last Friday and in a television interview the same day that the controversial practice had been stopped.

Earlier Tuesday, Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman said Rumsfeld had been incorrect in saying on Friday that the practice of paying for positive stories in the Iraqi media had been halted in the wake of negative publicity in the United States.

He said that Gen. George Casey, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, was reviewing the practice. Previously, Casey has said he saw no reason to stop it.

Received:

"I Would Suggest That You Get Out Of Iraq Before The Iraqis Skewer You Like A Piece Of Shiskabob Meat"

[This refers to an AP story 2.21.06 by Robert H Reid: "Straw's comments followed a blunt warning Monday by U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad that Iraqis risk losing international support if key ministries end up in the hands of politicians with ties to militias. "We are not going to invest the resources of the American people and build forces that are run by people who are sectarian" and tied to the militias, Khalilzad said.]

From: C
Sent: February 21, 2006 5:51 PM
Subject: advice

"We are not going to invest the resources of the American people and build forces that are run by people who are sectarian" and tied to the militias, Khalilzad said.

Response from a Son of Liberty: No one wants what you're selling, khalilzad.

My best advice to you sir, is to shut your hole and work harder at paying out the reparations that are long overdue.

I would suggest that you get out of Iraq, and start mailing out lots of money for every innocent person your regime has murdered, and for every bit of infrastructure that your regime has destroyed; and I would suggest that you start shelling out the reparations real soon, before the Iraqis skewer you like a piece of shiskabob meat.

When you are gone from Iraq and your bills are paid, any sectarianism in Iraq will likely fade into a future of great prosperity for all Iraqis.

If anyone wants your help after that, I'm sure they'll give you a call.

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

The following have posted issues; there may be others:

http://robinlea.com/GI_Special/, <http://gi-special.iraq-news.de>,

<http://www.williambowles.info/gispecial/2006/index.html>

http://www.traprockpeace.org/qi_special/, <http://www.uruknet.info/?p=-6&l=e>,

<http://www.albasrah.net/magalat/english/qi-special.htm>

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