

GI SPECIAL 4B23:

CORNERED RAT: APPROACH WITH CAUTION



2.22.06: Bush in Golden, Colorado. (AFP/Jim Watson)

“The Crack At The End Of The Whip”

I saw the Army for what it was: a powerful militant arm of a corrupt and ruthless government; the crack at the end of the whip.

February 24, 2006 Socialist Worker

JEFF ENGLEHART is a former specialist in the U.S. Army's 1st Infantry Division. While serving in Iraq, he became an outspoken opponent of the war, communicating along with several fellow soldiers through the Internet, as the bloggers hEkLe, Heretic and Joe Public. The three earned a reputation for reporting what was really taking place in occupied Iraq, especially during the brutal U.S. siege of Falluja--on their Web log at ftssoldier.blogspot.com.

Returning from Iraq a year ago, Jeff began speaking out openly against an occupation for oil and U.S. empire. He wrote this article for Socialist Worker.

I WILL never forget the day the soles of my tan leather boots made contact with a gray tarmac runway at Ramstein Air Base, Germany. Stoically, our company marched from the C-130 plane that had delivered us from one year in Iraq.

Funny, I thought, that these first steps of closure were not taken with the cheerful excitement that normally would accompany a soldier's glorious return from war. We were not welcomed with streamers, confetti or parades. Our homecoming presented us a bitter, freezing wind, carrying flurries of snowflakes, typical of a February afternoon in Germany.

As warriors of the desert, we were not prepared for the extreme differences in weather. The winter cold sliced like a surgeon's blade through our Gore-Tex jackets and severed the thrill of being home. Like camouflaged reptiles, our senses were dulled; our joys subdued. The barren and dismal surroundings seemed to be the physical attributes to the bewilderment that everyone seemed to be feeling unanimously.

With both feet on solid ground, I knew that the journey was over. I was home, but I could not convince myself that it was true.

Only six hours ago, we were sitting in bunkers as mortar rounds impacted on Balad Air Force Base, just prior to our flight home. The concept of being in a civilized society was too surreal to understand in its entirety. The war's end seemed to be a hallucination, yet here I was at the end of the road.

My war in Iraq had proven to be excruciating.

Unlike the others in my company, I had to fight a war on three different fronts.

One was against an insurgency that proved elusive and deadly.

Another was against the Army, as I stood openly opposed to the war and became vulnerable to harassment.

The other was fought against myself, battling a conscience that longed to resist participation in an illegal occupation.

I felt tired, battered and beaten. But I had made it, barely. Many times, I had almost lost the war on each front, but had managed to fight my way through it all.

Now we were home, and the war was over. It felt good, but somehow, the cold winter day only complicated the manner of our return. For some, it was an inconvenience that could be overlooked. For me, it seemed the most appropriate ending to a long and dreary story.

Our company stood in formation under the cover of an unheated aircraft hangar, waiting for buses to take us to our Army post. I looked around at the other soldiers, wondering if

their thoughts were similar to mine. Perhaps they were looking forward to meeting their estranged families. Maybe they were contemplating how the first night at the bars would turn out. Maybe some were wondering how they could possibly make sense of the yearlong debacle.

Their emotions seemed placated as they stood with arms crossed over their bodies, staring at the ground with teeth chattering in the frosty air. No one was talking about whatever was running through their minds, including me.

As I glanced up to the hanging banner exclaiming, "Welcome Home, 1st ID!" I pondered what was next.

How have I learned from this unique experience, and how could I continue the fight to end the war that was still raging on in Iraq?

SOME PEOPLE assume that American soldiers are a faceless and mechanized fighting force, blindly following orders given to them by war hawks and profit gluttons in Washington, D.C.

These soldiers are compared to "storm troopers," marching through obliterated towns in an ever-expanding empire. Unfeeling, uncaring, their rifles aimed toward the horizon with patriotic fervor and the American flag behind them, U.S. soldiers are commonly viewed as a world police force, killing in the name of democracy.

Most think that soldiers do not contemplate the ramifications of their jobs, nor is it their place to question the mission. They have the reputation of wholeheartedly supporting their commander-in-chief and never harboring antiwar sentiments.

However, what is commonly missing from discussion is that soldiers are people, inherently capable of thinking individually, and they can easily come to despise warfare while engaged in its bloody practice.

It wasn't until after I joined the Army that I began to understand what the American soldier represents.

Early in my enlistment, I came to despise the weak and callow men of authority, hiding behind their pretentious shields of rank and prestige. I realized that I was low in the chain of hierarchy, and came to view GIs as a lowly proletariat, without a voice or a chance.

Their system was enforced by draconian rules and idiotic regulations, and held together by conformity and fear.

Individual thought was not encouraged.

Orders were passed down from higher echelons and obeyed unconditionally every step of the way. Military life, for me, was stale and rigid. I felt surrounded by stupidity and herd mentality.

To preserve a different state of mind, I began to educate myself on U.S. imperialism and its history of enforcing hegemonic control over the world.

I saw the Army for what it was: a powerful militant arm of a corrupt and ruthless government; the crack at the end of the whip.

I was just another cog in the war machine, but I knew instinctively that in their world, knowledge was power.

I was naïve when I signed an Army contract, thinking that I could do some good for myself and my country.

I was ignorant when I traded indentured service for college money and a chance to see the world. I enlisted prior to September 11th and did not expect war in the foreseeable future.

What a fool I was! That contract would send me to Iraq three years later.

But in the long run, this mistake would prove to be a valuable lesson. Military service and live combat is an education that one cannot buy in college.

I saw firsthand the depraved condition of power and greed and the detriment of a corporate-driven war waged on innocent people.

Ultimately, it was the war in Iraq that single-handedly forged my strong antiwar beliefs.

While some may argue that soldiers do not, or should not, question the mission, I know from personal experience that not only is it possible to develop antiwar sentiments during warfare, but very probable.

As soldiers are faced with death, destruction and deep personal guilt during their role as occupiers, more and more of them will begin to question the reasons for such madness, and eventually grow to resent and oppose the nature of war itself.

I made it a personal resolution to speak out against war the very moment I arrived in Iraq.

It did not take long for me to feel convinced that the war was wrong. As a gunner in a cavalry scout platoon, my view of what was going came from behind the perspective of a truck-mounted machine gun.

Upon our arrival, we conducted missions in Humvees that lacked even a shred of armor. The truck doors were made of plastic, and the windows could be shattered by a well-aimed rock. Gunners were the most susceptible, and the only form of protection was the trigger.

Daily, we raced down the streets of Baquba, trying to avoid direct contact with roadside bombs. Our missions primarily consisted of counter-mortar operations, house raids, combat patrols and escorting KBR-Halliburton convoys from one base to another. With time and strong words from congressmen, our trucks received adequate armor, but the mission never changed.

Many soldiers began to question our purpose in Iraq.

We worked long hours at any given time, but did not see the Iraqi population ever warm to our presence. Despite many promises from our government to rebuild the Iraqi infrastructure, there was nothing but conflict. Schools were not being built, civilian populations continued without electricity or running water, and hospitals were desperately ill equipped.

Our military came to Iraq to build nothing more than a police state, setting up roadblocks and vehicle checkpoints, and storming random houses, based on bad intelligence.

After these tasks became too dangerous for our forces, we began to utilize subservient Eastern European militaries and U.S.-trained Iraqi paramilitaries to do the dirty work. While the Bush administration was boasting of success back home, we soldiers felt that we were involved in an endless game of cat and mouse.

AS MY own personal frustration became unbearable, I began to feel the need to speak out against the war. I found the best way to vent these frustrations was to write about what I saw and how I felt on the Web site "Fight To Survive," which I shared with two like-minded friends.

In writing about the war, I felt that I was making the best of a bad situation, by informing the outside world of the real conditions of Iraq. Writing also helped me to atone for the guilt I felt in being involved in a malicious war.

By writing antiwar/anti-government material, I placed myself in great personal danger from a disapproving chain of command. I used the pen name "hEkLe" to hide my true identity. But as the Web site gained more readers, anonymity no longer protected the site from leering eyes.

Eventually, the command uncovered the source of writings and singled out the authors. Drastic punishments were to be expected for such dissidence. Harassment soon followed. During this time, I began to feel as though I had an enemy on both sides of the wire: The insurgents who were out to kill me as an American, and the Army that was out to crucify me for sedition.

Luckily in the end, Army intelligence and the Criminal Investigation Department could find no wrongdoing as far as leaking classified information. We were only guilty of speaking our minds. No punishments were issued, although we received the occasional browbeating and discrimination.

Soldiers have a very limited freedom of speech; one that hardly exists at all. The ironic aspect is that soldiers go to war to protect this freedom, which they can never have themselves.

This type of hypocrisy catalyzed my desire to speak out against all hypocrisies that Americans are faced with at home. It became a personal goal to return home and help the public to understand the truth. However, as I departed from the Army and returned home, I began to discover the difficulties of challenging the status quo in a massively divided nation.

While being stationed in Europe for four years, I had only been home for one two-week leave. So when I returned home in 2005, I felt as though I hadn't been home in ages. Being overseas for that long had alienated me from American customs and social demeanors. I did not know the latest popular trend, the favorite actor or best TV show, or how I would react to new rules placed on American citizens. When I found myself stepping off a jetliner, I had no idea of what to expect.

Suddenly, I had discovered that, much to my dismay, the America I had left in 2001 had changed drastically for the worse. The Bush regime, the USA PATRIOT Act, a thriving police apparatus, a dismal economy and incredible social unrest: these traits marked bad times and worse to come. This was the New America.

Despite the odds of opposition, I submerged myself in a progressive antiwar scene. I met with other veterans of wars, both past and present, and attended gatherings, protests and demonstrations. I worked in solidarity with groups like Veterans For Peace and the new fledging Iraq Veterans Against War. Together, we were present when Camp Casey was erected in Crawford, Texas, and when thousands marched at the peaceful protest in Washington, D.C., during September 2005.

We were met with scorn and rule-crazy cops every inch of the way. However frustrating this may have been, we continued the drive for peaceful solutions at every obstacle we encountered.

The struggle thus far has been a matter of give and take. Protesting goes only so far, especially in a new society filled with "free speech zones" and unlawful arrests for citizens exercising their First Amendment rights.

Other problems exist within the movement itself. There is an incredibly large portion of society that feels disenfranchised by the current trend and forms into many groups of opposition.

Unfortunately, what we are faced with is a lack of solidarity among these groups. Much like what was seen at the September protest in D.C., different affinity groups collided into one appearance and seemed to compete for media coverage, while critical antiwar fronts like Iraq Veterans Against War went largely misrepresented and ignored.

Another unfortunate setback for the current movement is the vulgar hierarchical setup of these organizations. While centralized leadership may work to help to

collect an initial movement of individuals, its presence in organizing actions tend to make a group sluggish, lethargic and willing to bow to the institutions to which it is opposed.

Furthermore, this centralized hierarchy robs a group of what should be its fundamental function: that of absolute democracy.

When members of a group feel that their voice is no longer heard, it creates a disaffection that could very well extinguish the flames of resistance. So while there are many outside antagonistic forces to deal with head-on, there are many improvements within the scene that must be made if any achievements are to come.

Other major issues need to be addressed as well. A huge problem that activist groups need to confront immediately is the lack of ingenuity and general malaise. Too often, these groups gather and plan for weeks at a time, but fail to make an impressive appearance in the public eye.

Perhaps the true meaning of “direct action” has been lost. Most confuse direct action with direct violence. On the contrary, an effective direct action must be peaceful, but must also completely disregard conventional authority. Direct action can come in the form of a massive act of civil disobedience. The movement should be reluctant to fight fire with fire, but it should not shy away from authorities either.

One has to wonder where civil rights would be today if not for protesters of the 60s who were willing to confront the authorities on the front lines. Not only did they take to the streets in enormous numbers, but they were also willing to sacrifice personal safety in the form of abuse by water hoses and billy clubs.

One should also acknowledge the antiwar movement during the Vietnam War, where protesters and veterans alike marched to the steps of Congress and demanded to be heard.

Direct action was even utilized by Vietnam soldiers in the fashion of sabotage and massive combat refusals to literally destroy the functions of the war machine. Even in recent years, direct action and civil disobedience were used when thousands of protesters successfully shut down the proceedings of the World Trade Organization in 1999.

Of course, this type of resistance cannot happen overnight, but must be pursued through hard work and perseverance.

The only question is: How long will it take for millions of agitated Americans to hit the streets and challenge this oppressive system?

PERHAPS THE most dangerous scoundrel we are faced with today is outright apathy. A crucial shortcoming of any progressive movement is the lack of concerned individuals acting together in solidarity.

There are many reasons for this widespread apathetic disease. Some people are simply blinded by what our government wants us to believe. Upon my return to the United States, I noticed that now, more than ever, people are distracted by the hyper-capitalist lifestyle, of which they are victims. These “casualties of society” are led to believe that success is measured by the amount of goods and services owned and consumed.

Freedom is only the freedom to shop. We are duped into believing in the spectacle of the perfect American Way of life. The citizenry becomes overwhelmed by false expectations of happiness. The government takes advantages of these shortcomings through the use of rhetoric and propaganda. Uncle Sam guides the blind down the dark path of ignorance into a dominion of xenophobia and constant fear. The perturbed citizenry desperately turns to these exploitive forces for protection, only to fall in line with a war-crazed and hysterical jingoism. More desperation leads to more apathy.

Some individuals become exhausted attempting to resist this ugly transformation, but ultimately feel helpless. They resort to apathy only after realizing that the world is doomed, but feel nothing can be done to prevent the growing catastrophe.

For example, when global antiwar demonstrations were held just prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, it was an enormous voice of dissent went completely ignored by the sadistic powers who orchestrate war. It was a serious blow for individuals who honestly cared.

However, as we are now approaching the third year of a bloody and disparaging war, it is extremely important that we do not give up.

Apathy has always been an illness in large societies, but in these menacing times, an educated and sensitive populace is more imperative than ever. A widespread response is now more than possible, as the pendulum seems to be swinging the other way.

The Bush administration is being exposed for the liars and criminals that they are. George Bush’s impeachment is being openly discussed in America. While this may seem to be quite inefficient in light of the horrible travesties committed against humanity and true freedom, it is a huge step in the right direction. It means that people all over the world are beginning to awake from their slumber and place guilty parties responsible.

At this crucial time, the antiwar movement has a huge responsibility to kick their efforts into high gear. Our solidarity must exceed national boundaries. We must continue to stand opposed to war and global oppression. Through peaceful direct action and civil disobedience, we can demand a more rational society. It is no longer a matter of fighting for a utopia of ideas, but rather a fight for survival as human beings.

The turning point in this struggle will surely come among Iraq War veterans. Already, more and more veterans are beginning to question their roles in a crusade for oil profits and corporate domination of the Middle East. And as they slowly return home, their experiences in this war will only be confounded by an America that is left in shambles.

Veterans will begin to ask themselves, “What good is a war that kills innocent Muslims when the real enemies are at home?”

Their glorious return will be welcomed by corrupt officials in the White House, who neglect the best interests of their friends and family in their communities. America will open her arms to these soldiers with slim job prospects and a future of struggling poverty.

They will walk down the streets of their hometown, only to engage in more combat against an unruly police force, one example being Iraq veteran Elio Carrion who was horrifically shot by a trigger-happy pig while on leave in his hometown in California

(<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=8907384305326268846&q=cop+shooting>).

They will arrive only to see the Constitution being torn to pieces by the very men who sent them to defend it in the name of freedom and democracy. The oath to “defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic” is a solemn one, and with eyes wide open, these veterans will.

Someday, all the soldiers will come home from this war, and when they do, their stories and sentiments will follow.

One year has passed since that cold winter day in Germany. As I look back, I begin to realize that it wasn't the frigid air that froze my reasoning into shock. Instead, it was the realization that I had somehow survived through the madness and insanity of an entire year of conflict. The battlefield was limitless, but then again, it always is.

I discovered that we are all tied to this war in one way or another. Every day, we pay the price to fight a war based on ideals that are against ourselves and others across the globe.

When understanding this price, the conclusions are truly petrifying. We can try to omit the details of horror, or we can pursue this fight under the guise of false banners, but in the end, we will only destroy ourselves.

Some argue that war is a basic human attribute, and consequently, there will always be strife. I do not believe this to be true. Even in the urban combat zones of Iraq, I saw people who were not my enemy, but people who believe in love and beauty and life, like anyone else in the world.

Human beings were never meant to wage war against each other. It is only the forces of corrupt power that persuade the masses to sacrifice their lives to the jaded exaltation of God and empire.

Modern man has certainly developed the intelligence and conscious capacity to find peaceful solutions to any problem, but only if that effort is made to the fullest.

The responsibility to ensure peace and justice in the world lies with all of us. No longer should we trust in fraudulent politicians to lead us into prosperity, nor pass the liability onto others or that of future generations.

No matter if we're veterans, activists, punks, peace-freaks, tree-huggers, commies or conservatives, the walls of social differences must be removed, and a broader task undertaken.

This is our world, and by all means, we should fight to take it back.

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

Four U.S. Soldiers Killed by Hawijah IED

2/23/2006 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
Release Number: 06-02-02C

TIKRIT, Iraq: Four Soldiers from 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division were killed near Hawijah Feb. 22 when their vehicle struck an improvised explosive device.

The Soldiers were on a combat patrol at the time of the incident.

THREE SOLDIERS KILLED BY IED NEAR BALAD

2/23/2006 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
Release Number: 06-02-02CM

TIKRIT, Iraq: Three Task Force Band of Brothers Soldiers from the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division were killed when their vehicle struck an improvised explosive device northeast of Balad Feb. 22.

Soldier From Kokomo Killed

Feb. 23, 2006 Associated Press, KOKOMO, Ind.

A 21-year-old soldier from Kokomo was killed in Iraq, his family said.

The family of Sgt. Rickey Jones, a 101st Airborne Division soldier, said they were notified Wednesday evening about his death.

Ronnie Jones, the soldier's grandfather, said his grandson was a loving person and the pride of his family. He said the family received few details of the soldier's death.

"So far we ain't found out too much, period. All we know is that four of them were in a humvee and they got killed over there," Jones said through tears.

"He was just one hell of a good soldier."

Jones, a 2002 graduate of Kokomo High School, is survived by his mother Tenia Rogers and grandparents Ronnie and Margaret Jones, all of Kokomo.

The sprawling Army post straddles the Kentucky-Tennessee border.

Including the four, there have been 128 soldiers from Fort Campbell killed in the Iraq war.

Including Jones, since February 2003, 54 Indiana military personnel have died after being sent to the Mideast for the war in Iraq.

Japanese Occupation Operations Room Attacked

Feb. 23 Japan Economic Newswire Via Thomson Dialog NewsEdge

A rocket landed near the Muthana provincial government building in central Samawah, southern Iraq, on Thursday, where hundreds of Japanese ground troops are stationed in a noncombat reconstruction mission, local police said.

There were no injuries, the police said.

The police are investigating damage caused by the apparent attack, cordoning off the area around the provincial government building, which houses a joint operation room of Iraqi police and multinational forces.

4th ID Taking 41 Resistance Attacks Per Day: Up 33% From Last Month

02/23/06 By Emily Baker, Killeen Daily Herald [Excerpts]

An average of 41 attacks, mostly roadside bombs and small arms fire, are aimed at the divisions soldiers per day [4th Infantry Division] throughout their 17,000-square-mile battle space. That's up from 31 attacks per day on average last month.

At least 32 soldiers 18 of whom were based at Fort Hood and one Marine attached to the division have been killed, Maj. Gen. James D. Thurman said.

At least 126 soldiers of Multinational Division-Baghdad which includes the 4th Infantry, brigades from the Fort Campbell, Ky.-based 101st Airborne Division and the 10th Mountain Division from Fort Drum, N.Y., Iraqi brigades and soldiers from eastern Europe have been injured, and 91 have been returned to duty, Thurman said.

REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



Marines with 2nd platoon, Lima Co., 3/25 climbing over walls in Karabilah during Operation Spear. (AFP/HO-USMC)

Great Moments In U.S. Military History: Another Iraqi Family Slaughtered

Feb 23, 2006 By DPA

Five Iraqis attempting to enter conflict-ridden Samarra, 110 kilometers north of Baghdad, were killed by a US army patrol on Thursday after a security cordon was placed on the city.

An Iraqi police told Deutsche Presse-Agentur that members of an Iraqi family were trying to get through one of the northern gates of the city when US troops opened fire on them and killed them.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

German Soldier Wounded

Feb. 22 (Bloomberg)

A bomb attack on a convoy of the International Security Assistance Force in the Afghan city of Kunduz today left one youth dead and a number of people injured, including a German soldier, Germany's armed forces said.

"The attack was targeting three German ISAF vehicles," Spiering said. "The German soldier only suffered light injuries but an Afghan youth died," he said.

The German soldiers were on a trip to buy goods in the city, Spiering said. Germany has more than 2,000 soldiers in Afghanistan, most of them in the capital, Kabul.

The vehicles involved in the attack were manned with four German soldiers and two Afghans, one of them an interpreter, ISAF spokeswoman Sue Eagles said in a telephone interview from Kabul.

TROOP NEWS

Hearing Becomes Casualty in Iraq

2.21.06 Newhouse.com

The new Army study suggests that thousands of U.S. troops sent to Iraq have suffered serious hearing damage from bombs, rocket explosions and other combat noise.

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



The coffin of U.S. Army Cpl. Sergio Antonio Mercedes Saez who died recently in Iraq, at his funeral in San Pedro de Macoris, Dominican Republic, Feb. 20, 2006. (AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa)

Japanese Paratrooper Shoplifts To Avoid Going To Iraq

February 24, 2006 Zee News Limited

Tokyo, Feb 23: A Japanese sergeant with an elite parachute regiment was so desperate to avoid a tour of Iraq that he shoplifted in the hope of being grounded, media reports and an official said.

The stunt appeared to have succeeded for the time being as the soldier, who was not named, was caught red-handed and grounded for 40 days from yesterday, a spokesman for the ground self-defence force, Japan's De Facto Army, said.

"He stole a handbag and other goods worth a total of 11,000 yen (USD 93)" from a store in Chiba prefecture east of Tokyo, he said.

Kyodo news agency quoted the paratrooper, 38, as saying, "I did it because I did not want to go to Iraq".

About 170 members of the first airborne brigade, Japan's only paratroopers, had been called up on the latest rotation for deployment to southern Iraq, starting in late January, and he was on the reserve list, Kyodo said.

A Candidate For Immediate Withdrawal From Iraq

From: Bill Scheurer
To: GI Special
Sent: February 23, 2006
Subject: Almost There! Iraq War On 2006 Ballot

Thanks for your note.

I support, and will work for, and vote for, all of the proposals pending before Congress to withdraw U.S. military forces from Iraq.

This includes those that call for staged withdrawal, and those that call for immediate withdrawal, while working harder to give preference to those calling for immediate withdrawal.

I also require that the U.S. remain committed to the people of Iraq with non-military support, including mediation, reconciliation, peacebuilding, and reconstruction.

Yours,
Bill

Bill Scheurer
The Peace Majority Report
www.PeaceMajority.org

Bill Scheurer for Congress
www.BringOurTroopsHome.com



Fellow Citizen,

Help us put the Iraq War on the 2006 ballot. We're almost there! Only \$15,000 more!

Bill Scheurer is running for Congress under the "Bring Our Troops Home" party name.

The "Bring Our Troops Home" party name will appear with 25,000 petition signatures this spring, on 270,000 ballots this fall, and in millions of Chicago newspapers before the election.

You can help in 2 easy ways:

- 1) Contribute from \$1 to \$2100 to this campaign.
- 2) Forward this email to everyone you know who opposes the Iraq War, and ask them to keep forwarding it to others.

The Republican and Democratic candidates both support the war, so the choice is clear.

Voters will have a mandate -- right here in the heartland -- to bring our troops home, and take care of them when they get here.

Please visit our www.BringOurTroopsHome.com website to contribute and to learn more.

Thank you,

Citizens for Bill Scheurer
387 Northgate Rd
Lindenhurst, IL 60046-8541
www.BringOurTroopsHome.com

OOPS: Russian Honors Its' Navy With Billboards Of Battleship Missouri

[Thanks to JM, who sent this in.]

February 23, 2006 Tom Parfitt in Moscow, The Guardian

Surf foaming at its bow, the great grey battleship seemed a potent symbol of Russian military might.

Yet officials in Moscow were licking their wounds yesterday after putting the ship on 20 giant billboards across the city to congratulate the military on its annual Defenders of the Fatherland day.

War veterans gearing up for the holiday today were incensed to see the ship was clearly the famous second world war American battleship the USS Missouri.

"Did they want to insult us?" Captain Vladimir Zakharov asked a local journalist as he passed one of the billboards opposite the White House, home to the Russian cabinet. "Like, you don't have any of your own hardware left, so take a look at someone else's?"

Despite its crumbling military, an intense pride is maintained in Russia's fighting prowess. The Missouri appeared next to a Russian Sukhoi jet and the slogan: "Happy holiday, warriors of Russia."

A spokesman for the Moscow government's advertising committee said the mistake was a "simple technical error" and officials were telephoning veterans' groups to apologise.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Sadr Orders Mehdi Army To Protect Sunni Mosques

23 February 2006 (AFP), NAJAF, Iraq

Moqtada Sadr has ordered his Mehdi Army to protect Sunni mosques in majority Shiite areas in southern Iraq, an official from his office said on Thursday.

"Moqtada Sadr has ordered the Mehdi Army to protect Sunni mosques and religious places in Basra and in other regions" where his movement is influential, Saheb Al Amiri told AFP.

The move follows attacks against dozens of Sunni mosques nationwide after the bombing in Samarra on Wednesday of one of the holiest Shiite shrines.

Assorted Resistance Action

02/23/06 AFP & (KUNA) & Reuters & (Xinhuanet)

Three Iraqi policemen were injured Thursday by a blast in Baghdad's northern suburb.

In a press statement, a police source said the blast was caused by a roadside bomb that targeted a passing by police patrol.

One policeman was killed and four wounded by a road side bomb in Iskandariya, south of Baghdad, police said.

A bomb targeting an Iraqi army foot patrol kills eight soldiers and wounded another four soldiers in the city of Baquba, an army source says. The colonel commanding the patrol as it walked through a busy city-centre market was among the dead. A pushcart packed with explosives detonated.

The Mujahideen Council, an Iraqi militant grouping including Al Qaeda, is claiming responsibility for the attack.

The convoy of Iraq's minister of housing and reconstruction stoned in Samarra, police say.

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

OCCUPATION REPORT

**“This Is A Small Part Of A Bigger,
More Ominous Plan...”**

**“What Has Everyone Most Disturbed Is
The Fact That The Reaction Was So
Swift, Like It Was Just Waiting To
Happen”**

February 23, 2006 Riverbend, Baghdad Burning [Excerpts]

There was an explosion this morning in a mosque in Samarra, a largely Sunni town. While the mosque is sacred to both Sunnis and Shia, it is considered one of the most important Shia visiting places in Iraq. Samarra is considered a sacred city by many Muslims and historians because it was made the capital of the Abassid Empire, after Baghdad, by the Abassid Caliph Al-Mu'tasim.

We woke up this morning to news that men wearing Iraqi security uniforms walked in and detonated explosives, damaging the mosque almost beyond repair. It's heart-breaking and terrifying. There has been gunfire all over Baghdad since morning. The streets near our neighborhood were eerily empty and calm but there was a tension that had us all sitting on edge. We heard about problems in areas like Baladiyah where there was some rioting and vandalism, etc. and several mosques in Baghdad were attacked.

I think what has everyone most disturbed is the fact that the reaction was so swift, like it was just waiting to happen.

There's so much talk of civil war and yet, with the people I know, Sunnis and Shia alike, I can hardly believe it is a possibility.

Educated, sophisticated Iraqis are horrified with the idea of turning against each other, and even not-so-educated Iraqis seem very aware that this is a small part of a bigger, more ominous plan...

Several mosques have been taken over by the Mahdi militia and the Badir people seem to be everywhere.

Tomorrow no one is going to work or college or anywhere.

People are scared and watchful. We can only pray.

MORE:

Come On Guys, Get The Cover Story Straight

February 22, 2006 Imad Khadduri, Free Iraq, abutamam.blogspot.com [Excerpt]

The news about the contemptible bombing of Iraq's revered Shiite shrines in Samara is puzzling.

"A police officer, who declined to give his name, said armed men, with at least one wearing a uniform, broke inside the shrine before sunrise and seized the five policemen responsible for guarding the site." Blast damages Iraq Shia shrine February 22, 2006

Yet,

The Interior Minister has issued a statement (In Arabic) stating that "the terrorist unit controlled the shrine on Tuesday night, February 21, 2006 at 7:55 p.m. (local time)" but that "the two bombs exploded on Wednesday morning, February 22 at 6:40 a.m." while stating that "the shrine is guarded by 35 police guards".

We await confirmation of the Interior Minister's statement.

MORE:

Bad News For The Occupation

23 February 2006 CNN News

Southeast of Baghdad, both Sunnis and Shiites joined to protest the bombing and reprisal attacks Thursday in the town of Kut, police said. Thousands of demonstrators marched through the streets saying that they are "all Iraqis."

**“Finally A SUV Drove By And Loaded
A Bunch Of Injured People In It And
Drove Off”**

**“And So Did We Looking For More
People To Kill”**

Army Documents (released by the Government 11/9/2005, released by the ACLU 02/12/06: More Torture Documents Released Under FOIA)

Documents of AR 15-6 Investigation into abuse
DOD044984-DOD045029

Investigation into (1) whether SFC (Redacted) ordered soldiers to fire an MK-19 on unarmed civilians and whether civilians were wounded or killed in the incident;

(2) whether members of BRT, 2nd Brigade placed detainees on top of a Humvee, between brushguard and hood during transportation to Brigade holding area;

(3) whether members of BRT, 2d Brigade stole property from the homes of Iraqi citizens and the property of detainees.

Findings: (1) allegation is unsubstantiated;

(2) No proof that allegation is true;

(3) uncorroborated.

Soldier's statement says that on a mission, the platoon decided to set up an ambush and kill a civilian who had a weapon instead of driving up to him and taking the weapon, as has been standard practice for the platoon.

The platoon waited until the civilian was next to the vehicle and opened fire. The civilian ran away and took cover in a field. "After the man ran into the field for cover we waited close to a minute and there was never any fire returned. That's when my (Platoon Sergeant) told his gunner to spray the field with M-19 rounds...

After the M-19 explosions all you heard was women and children screaming."

The gunner said he saw no weapons in the house nearby. When a single shot came from a distance of well over 500 meters away, the Platoon Sergeant said "F*** it, and light them up.

His gunner shot about 304 M-19 rounds into the front yard and everyone else shot M-16s...

2 men were injured. One of them had his arm half blown off ...

Finally a SUV drove by and loaded a bunch of injured people in it and drove off.

And so did we looking for more people to kill.

The R.O.E. (Rules of Engagement) for us over there was to engage and capture the enemy, seize all weapons, and give medical attention to anyone hurt.

The R.O.E. was not followed because there were no ene(mies) or weapons."

(DOD044988-90).

Soldier recounts putting detainees on Humvees.

"We would also take POWs and there wasn't anyone to come pick him up so we would put the POW on top of the HumV with the gunner until one tried to throw up.

After that we would hog tie them and stuff them in between the hood and the brush guard of the HumV.

I asked at least tie his leg to the brush guard so he don't fall off and my NCO would say who cares, if he falls off we just ran him over and one less one to worry about."

(DOD044991).

(Other soldiers confirm that detainees were put on top of Humvee to transport them, but not between brush guard and hood.)

Soldier states they would steal money and items from Iraqis' houses. (DOD044991).

"They would drive down the road and see a car pull into a nice house and say the car was running from them to search the house and see what they could get."

(DOD044991).

Soldier states that a unit called Section A of the Platoon "lost control on a Iraqi and beat him half to death bad enough that the whole hood of the HumV was covered in blood."
(DOD044991).

Gunner confirms in sworn statement that Platoon leader ordered him to fire into field but did not fire at the civilians. (DOD044996).

Another platoon member confirmed shots fired into the field and near house and injured civilians. (DOD044998).

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

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

U.S. Funded West Bank Playground Demolished By Zionist Troops



[Thanks to JM who sent this in. She writes: Something else suffering the fate of things built by foreign aid, The IDF seems to enjoy destroying anything that gives pleasure to children traumatised by the occupation.]

[The Gaza zoo was bulldozed months ago. The zoo keeper broke down because his beloved animals were bulldozed with it. Those that weren't killed escaped and the local children went wild trying to catch the big cats that could have attacked them but didn't seem to.]

22 February 2006 Aljazeera

The Israeli occupation army has bulldozed a US-funded public park, including a children's playground and swimming pool, in a West Bank village, witnesses and officials said.

The bulldozer, protected by a force of Israeli soldiers, demolished the park in Azzun, close to the northern town of Qalqilya on Wednesday, on the grounds that it had been built without permission of the Israeli authorities in the occupied territory.

Construction work on the park had begun in November and was almost completed, the mayor of Azzun, Ihsan Abdul Latif, said.

He said that the project, which cost around \$120,000, had been financed by the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

"I can confirm that the park that was destroyed today was funded by USAID," a spokeswoman for the agency, Anna-Maija Litvak, told AFP.

The spokeswoman added that USAID had contributed around \$80,000 towards the cost.

The army also destroyed two houses built without permission in two other villages in the Qalqilya area on Wednesday, according to Palestinian security sources.

Also on Wednesday, a four-year-old Palestinian boy was seriously wounded when he was hit in the face by fragments of an Israeli shell in the Gaza Strip, medical sources and witnesses said.

Ismail Shueider was being treated in Gaza's Shifaa hospital after a shell hit an apartment block in the town of Beit Hanun which is situated close to an area which was recently declared a "no-go zone" by the Israeli military.

If Hamas Must Renounce Violence, So Should Israel

Obviously the Palestinians failed to understand the subtle nuances of Western "democratic concepts." Just because the West urges them to elect a government doesn't mean they're free to elect a government the West considers unacceptable.

Feb. 19, 2006 LINDA MCQUAIG, Toronto Star [Excerpts]

"We are stumped by the failure of our democratic concepts to gain a foothold in the Arab world," wrote Michael Bell, a former Canadian ambassador to Israel, in the Globe and Mail last week.

I wonder which "democratic concepts" Bell had in mind: apparently not the concept that people are free to elect the government they choose.

This is the most basic democratic concept of all. And it's clearly gained a foothold among Palestinian Arabs, who last month exercised their democratic rights by rejecting a corrupt government that had failed to advance the peace process, and electing the militant Hamas party.

Obviously the Palestinians failed to understand the subtle nuances of Western "democratic concepts." Just because the West urges them to elect a government doesn't mean they're free to elect a government the West considers unacceptable.

The New York Times reported last week that the "United States and Israel are discussing ways to destabilize the Palestinian government so that newly elected Hamas officials will fail and elections will be called again."

If only the Palestinians would get it right the first time, it wouldn't be necessary for the West to intervene in their democratic process.

Ottawa also made clear last week that Canada would withdraw financial support unless Hamas renounced violence, recognized Israel and accepted previous Israeli-Palestinian peace agreements.

At first glance, this seems reasonable.

But why are these demands placed only on Palestinians?

Shouldn't Israel also have to renounce violence?

As the World Council of Churches recently argued: "If violence is incompatible with democracy and with peace, it is incompatible for both the Israeli and Palestinian authorities."

Rather than belittling others for allegedly failing to grasp our "democratic concepts," we could begin by showing we grasp these concepts ourselves.

[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

Imperial Democrats Want Troops To Stay In Iraq Until At Least 2007: Idiot Reporter Calls That A "Quick Withdrawal"

[Thanks to PB who sent this in. He writes: This is a trick they are pulling out in time for the mid-term elections.]

[What it means concretely is that troops will *definitely stay* until the end of 2007.

[The American-created "Iraqi" army will forever be in "training," and its time to "stand up so that American forces can stand down" will always be sometime in the future, like the South Vietnamese armed forces four decades ago.

[The choice isn't between keeping the troops there for the time being and "staying the course" - it's between bringing them home now ALIVE or keeping them there forever.]

February 20, 2006 By Rick Klein, Boston Globe Staff

WASHINGTON: After months of trying unsuccessfully to develop a common message on the war in Iraq, Democratic Party leaders are beginning to coalesce around a broad plan to begin a quick withdrawal of US troops *and install them elsewhere in the region, where they could respond to emergencies in Iraq* and help fight terrorism in other countries.

The concept, dubbed "strategic redeployment," is outlined in a slim, nine-page report coauthored by a former Reagan administration assistant Defense secretary, Lawrence J. Korb, in the fall. It sets a goal of a phased troop withdrawal that would take *nearly all US troops out of Iraq by the end of 2007, although many Democrats disagree on whether troop draw downs should be tied to a timeline.*

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.

FBI & Homeland Security Traitors Harass Gold Star Mother

2006-02-21 By Nadia McCaffrey, Gold Star Mother, Afterdowningstreet.org/

My daughter in law was "introduced" to one FBI Agent who appeared at the front door of our Tracy home last week, while I was conveniently doing a presentation, and was out of town.

She is concerned by this strange visit.

The questions asked were senseless and meaningless, and of course I wasn't there!!!

The purpose is clearly to establish a fearful daily environment. The Agent parked her car in front of the house, and stayed part of the afternoon, watching.

This is the third episode of intimidation that my family and I have been exposed to.

The second time was actually more threatening and frightening.

We had, on three different days, helicopters circling above the house, at very low altitude for up to 4-5 minutes each time. The first 2 times, I was out of town, my daughter in law was very scared when the helicopters showed up for the second time.

The third weekend, I was home working on the computer.

Sure enough 2 noisy choppers appeared above the house and started to circle.

I ran out and stood on the front land watching them, one came lower and stood still just above the large tree that we have across the street, nose down, I could very clearly see the pilot, that must have lasted 3 minutes... the 2 copters finally took off to the south and disappeared.

I asked various people what this was about, I described the appearance and color of the choppers to government people.

Nothing seemed to fit the description and color, except for the new "Homeland Security".

The first encounter with G people happened overseas.

Stupidity Squared

2.23.06 Boston Globe, February 23, 2006

A government defense plan for nuclear power plants assumes an attack would come from less than half the number of Sept. hijackers, and would not be armed with RPGs or other weapons used by terrorists overseas.

CLASS WAR REPORTS

“This Is The Continuing Story Of The Rich Getting Richer”

Feb 23 By MARTIN CRUTSINGER, AP Economics Writer

After the booming 1990s when incomes and stock prices were soaring, this decade has been less of a thrill ride for most American families.

The gap between the very wealthy and other income groups widened during the period.

The top 10 percent of households saw their net worth rise by 6.1 percent to an average of \$3.11 million while the bottom 25 percent suffered a decline from a net worth in which their assets equaled their liabilities in 2001 to owing \$1,400 more than their total assets in 2004.

"This is the continuing story of the rich getting richer," said David Wyss, chief economist at Standard & Poor's in New York. "Clearly, the gains in wealth are going to the top end."

Received:

A Few Bad Apples?

From: Ron Ruiz
To: GI Special
Sent: February 23, 2006 2:29 PM
Subject: A Few Bad Apples?

I thought you might interested (as well all our Military Project comrades) in this documentary being shown by the CBC, and it can also be viewed online.

A Few Bad Apples? (Friday February 24 at 10pm ET/PT on CBC Newsworld)

“They were the photos that shocked the world. Detainees in Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison attacked by dogs, made to crawl on all fours while on the end of a leash, hooded with electrical wires attached to limbs. This humiliation, even torture, was carried out by their guards, members of the American military.

“President Bush and his government wanted the public to believe that this was the work of just a few bad apples.

“But, an investigative team from the fifth estate, led by reporter Gillian Findlay, takes us inside one of these notorious images, talks to the American soldiers who were there, and finds a markedly different story.”

THE FIFTH ESTATE ; <http://www.cbc.ca/fifth/badapples/index.html>

Solidarity,

Ron

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>

GI Special distributes and posts to our website copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available in an effort to advance understanding of the invasion and occupation of Iraq. We believe this constitutes a "fair use" of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law since it is being distributed **without charge or profit** for educational purposes to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for educational purposes, in accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107. **GI Special has no affiliation whatsoever with the originator of these articles nor is GI Special endorsed or sponsored by the originators. This attributed work is provided a non-profit basis to facilitate understanding, research, education, and the advancement of human rights and social justice** Go to: www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml for more information. If you wish to use copyrighted material from this site for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use', you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

If printed out, this newsletter is your personal property and cannot legally be confiscated from you. "Possession of unauthorized material may not be prohibited." DoD Directive 1325.6 Section 3.5.1.2.