

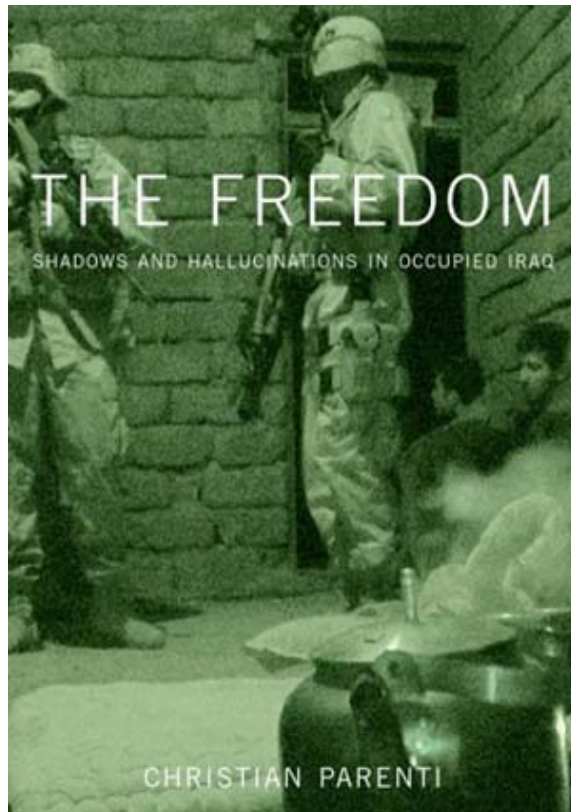
GI SPECIAL 4B5:



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

**“Sometimes We Sham,
Explains Howell. “We’ll Just Go
Out And Kick It Behind Some
Wall”**

**THE FREEDOM:
SHADOWS AND HALLUCINATIONS IN
OCCUPIED IRAQ**



“The 1st AD wants us to catch bullets for them, but won’t give us enough water, don’t let us wear ‘do rags, makes us to roll down our shirtsleeves so we look proper! Can you believe that shit?” Sergeant Sellers is pissed off

**BY CHRISTIAN PARENTI
PHOTOGRAPHS BY TERU KUWAYAMA**

The New Press, New York, November 2005
\$14.95 PB; 208 pp.
ISBN: 1-56584-948-5
212.629.8617

[Excerpts from a first hand observer; well-written and definitely recommended. T]

The young experts of the CPA live in total fear of the very cities and people they are charged with governing.

They are mocked as “occupodians” by their own praetorians: the multicultural, working-class GIs from Fresno, Philly, and the nowhere hamlets of Arkansas who guard the Green Zone palace.

Lacking experience with the real Iraq, these postmodern colonialists, the ideological anti-Arabists of the American Empire, spin wildly unhinged plans and dole out vast sums of unaudited, practically unmonitored cash to US contractors.

Meanwhile, outside the walls one hears the boom and rumble of IEDs. If the blast goes off at the top or bottom of the hour it is just the military engineers, an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) squad cleaning up a booby-trap with a controlled blast. If the blast comes at any other time it means something bad.

Another occupodian plan was to privatize all productive state assets. That scheme bogged down when potential buyers were scared away by threats and escalating violence.

Most dramatically, the manager of the state vegetable oil company started firing workers in an effort to streamline the firm, which makes cooking oils, soap and other related products, and prepare it for privatization. Verbal protests and pleas from workers went nowhere, so an unknown gunman followed up these supplications with a bullet to the manager's head.

Suddenly, members of the Iraqi Governing Council grew reticent on the issue of privatization.

In October 2003, the British charity Christian Aid alleged that \$4 billion in oil revenues that had been banked by the old Iraqi state, seized by the CPA, and earmarked for reconstruction had simply disappeared into the "opaque" bank accounts of the CPA and its friends on the Iraqi Interim Governing Council.

When confronted with these charges Bremer simply waved them away, claiming that all funds were being spent in a "completely transparent" fashion.

In late 2003 when US journalist Pratap Chatterjee went to various reconstruction project sites to compare facts on the ground with what was stated in the bills and inventories, he found that even the few projects allegedly "rebuilt" had barely been touched.

One "repaired" school was overflowing with raw sewage; a teacher at the school also reported that "the American contractors took away our Japanese fans and replaced them with Syrian fans that don't work," and billed the US government for the work.

According to Chatterjee, inflated overhead costs, Byzantine subcontracting relationships, and chronically late payment of wages and fees were the name of the game. He estimated that of Halliburton's initial \$2.2 billion in contracts only about 10 percent had gone to meeting community needs.

It is noon and the mercury hangs at 115 Fahrenheit. Garrett and I are "embedded" with Alpha Company of the 3rd Battalion of the 124th Infantry, a National Guard unit made up mostly of college students from north Florida.

The commanding officer, Captain Rodney Sanchez, assigned us to 2nd Squad, 3rd Platoon, led by Staff Sergeant Kreed Howell. "Best and the brightest," says the executive officer, Captain McClain, as he leads us to meet Sergeant Howell.

"Sometimes we sham," explains Howell. "We'll just go out and kick it behind some wall. Watch what's going on but skip the walking. And sometimes at night we get sneaky-deaky. Creep up on Haji, so he knows we're all around." We walk along this way and that, up one street, down another. An Iraqi man shouts, "When? When? When go?!" The soldiers ignore him.

The squad is looking for IEDs. But today there is no IED, only some men drinking and selling beer.

Then it's back to "the Club" to rest before another patrol.

Inside the wire and back in the relative safety of the base, the soldiers strip down to loose black shorts and lounge around in the heat trying to rehydrate. The 124th is on a water ration: only two liters of bottled water a day.

After that the Joes are forced to drink from the "water buffalo," a portable chlorination tank on wheels that turns the amoeba-infested dreck from the local taps into something like hot swimming-pool water.

Mix this with bright orange or green powdered Gatorade and you can wash down the famously bad MREs (Meals Ready to Eat).

The water ration is just one way in which the military treats these soldiers like unwanted stepchildren. Among the American troops in Iraq there is a two-tiered system. First class is for the regular military; Reservists and the National Guard populate second class.

During the first full year of occupation about 40,000 of the total US troop strength of 130,000 are these citizen-soldiers, the neo-draftees.

These men and women (there is a surprising number of women soldiers serving in dangerous jobs in Iraq) tend to be older and better educated than the regular army but very poorly treated.

This unit's rifles are retooled hand-me-down M-16s from the Vietnam War; most regular army units have upgraded to a similar but improved weapon called the M-4. They have inadequate radio gear, so they buy their own, unencrypted, Motorola walkie-talkies.

The same goes for flashlights, knives, and some components for night-vision sights.

The low-performance Iraqi air conditioners and fans, as well as the one satellite phone and payment cards shared by the whole company for calling home, were also purchased out of pocket from civilian suppliers.

(A study found that one in four dead GIs was killed because the military didn't provide properly armored vehicles or adequate body armor.)

To top it all off the guardsmen must endure the pathologically uptight culture of the army hierarchy.

The 3rd of the 124th is now attached to the newly arrived 1st Armored Division, and when it is time to raid suspected resistance cells it's the seasoned guardsmen who have to kick in the doors and clear the apartments.

"The 1st AD wants us to catch bullets for them, but won't give us enough water, don't let us wear 'do rags, makes us to roll down our shirtsleeves so we look proper! Can you believe that shit?" Sergeant Sellers is pissed off

The soldiers' improvisation extends to food as well. After a month or so of occupying the Club, Captain Sanchez allowed two Iraqi entrepreneurs to open shop on his side of the wire; one runs a slow-speed Internet café, the other a kebab stand where the "Joes" pay US dollars for grilled lamb on flatbread.

"The Haji stand is one of the only things we have to look forward to, but the 1st AD keeps getting scared and shutting it down."

Sellers is on a roll, and he's not alone.

Even the lighthearted Howell, who insists that the squad has it better than most troops, chimes in.

"The one thing I will say is that we have been here entirely too long. If I am not home by Christmas my business will fail."

Back in Panama City, Howell is a building contractor; he has a wife, a baby, equipment, debts and employees.

Perhaps the most shocking bit of military incompetence is the unit's lack of formal training in what's called "close-quarter combat."

The urbanized mayhem of Mogadishu may loom larger in the discourse of the military's academic journals like Parameters and the Naval War College Review, but many US infantrymen, including this unit, are trained only in large-scale open-country maneuvers: how to defend Germany from a wave of Russian tanks.

Since "the end of the war" these guys have had to retrain themselves in the dark arts of urban warfare.

"The houses here are small, too," says Brunelle.

"Once you're inside you can barely get your rifle up. You got women screaming, people and furniture everywhere. It's insane."

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Connecticut Soldier Shot

2.5.06 (AP)

A Connecticut soldier is recovering in a Baghdad hospital after being wounded in a firefight this week.

Twenty-one-year-old Jay Christopher Strobino of Kent suffered two bullet wounds when his 101st Airborne unit was hit with enemy fire on Tuesday.

His father tells the Republican-American that Strobino will likely be airlifted back to the United States for more surgery. He said his son suffered a broken leg and a collapsed lung.

Strobino was on his second tour of duty in Iraq. His unit returned from his 12-month tour in 2004.

Mom Blames Military Incompetence For Son's Death In Iraq: “He Was Going To Ft. Campbell To Ask Questions. He Can't Ask Questions Now”

2/3/2006 Deb Silverman, WCPO

The mother of a local soldier who recently died in Iraq has a lot of questions for military officials.

Susan Miller says her son, Adam Shepherd, who grew up near Somerville, should not have been sent to Iraq for a second tour of duty.

Miller says sending him there may have cost him his life.

Her son, 21-year-old Adam Shepherd, was on his second tour of duty when he died last month of heart and lung complications.

Miller says her son was in a motorcycle accident after his first stint in Iraq, and ever since then, physical stress causes his arm to go numb.

She says as a result, a military medical board determined Pfc. Shepherd shouldn't go back to the infantry in Iraq and he should be assigned another job.

Miller also says doctors determined the 21-year-old shouldn't carry more than fifty pounds and his body armor alone weights about that.

The military mom says just days before the unit left for Iraq, her son was told he's going too.

"I have four children, four boys, and a quarter of my heart is gone," Miller told 9News.

"I think my son would still be alive if he was here. If they didn't make him go over yes, He'd still be alive . I know he would be. He was supposed to be on leave at this time. He had two weeks leave. He was supposed to come home and he was going to Ft. Campbell to ask questions. He can't ask questions now," Miller added.

The Whole Mission Is For Shit: Bring Them All Home Now



Pennsylvania National Guardsman Spc. John Ricci of Nanticoke, Pennsylvania, burns shit from latrines at a base in eastern Ramadi Jan. 31. 2006. (AP Photo/Jacob Silberberg)

Soldier Says “The Freedom Fighters Were Getting Good At Their Style Of Guerilla Warfare”

30 January 2006 Fonda Fan, Berkeley.edu [Excerpt]

Fonda Fan, a sophomore English major at UC Berkeley, returned in November from a year in Iraq. Her unit was stationed in Tikrit. Since her service contract does not end until 2008, she expects to be called up again.

Convoy commanders would talk to me about bombs buried in the dirt that blew by remote control or a cell-phone signal.

The freedom fighters were getting good at their style of guerilla warfare, too, packing more explosives, effectively seeking weak points, inventing new tricks to hide bombs from the naked eye.

They launched rockets, fired from electric lines and crowds, so that no offensive action could be taken without endangering civilians. They retreated and sniped, engaged and ran. They infuriated and frustrated. The general feel of Iraq was of hostility. As one soldier remarked sardonically, "Everything in Iraq either wants to bite, infect, shoot, or kill you."

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

“This Government Has Done Nothing”

"The new Afghan government promised us new schools, clinics, water pumps, but it has done nothing at all. People are so disappointed. At least the Taliban would grade the roads, build madras's, while this government has done nothing," said Nyamatullah, Zabul tribal leader. February 1, 2006, Mike Whitney, Uruknet.info

**“They’ve Had Time To Get Organized,” The Assistant Operations Officer Said:
“If We Left Tomorrow, Bolduc Said,
“This Place Would Implode Rather Quickly”**

“I am constantly thinking about what the enemy’s going to do next. He’s waiting to see what we’re going to do next. He’s got time on his side. I don’t.”

February 06, 2006 By Sean D. Naylor, Army Times staff writer [Excerpts]

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — For the 18,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan, the appearance of victory could be a recipe for defeat. American commanders here say they are in a high-stakes race to subdue the resurgent Taliban long enough to build up Afghan security forces so they can stand on their own.

It seems simple, but there's a catch. The Taliban forces are playing a clever waiting game.

According to Special Forces officers, the insurgents are lying low and avoiding high-profile attacks on U.S. and coalition forces in a ruse to convince military commanders and their political masters that the Taliban no longer poses a major threat to stability in Afghanistan and that it's time to withdraw U.S. forces from the country. If that happens before Afghan government forces are ready to assume full responsibility for the country's security, the officers said, a war that all commanders say they are winning could be lost.

“Among the most troubling changes was the state of the insurgency in southern Afghanistan,” states an unclassified TF 31 “memorandum for record” dated Oct. 7 and provided to Army Times.

“Exploiting the misconception that the insurgency was over, the enemy ... had expertly managed to reorganize, refit and prepare to conduct a more focused campaign against Afghan National Security Forces. Coalition forces, though more far reaching than 12 months earlier and occupying three additional fire bases in the most remote areas of southern Afghanistan, had limited themselves to locally focused operations, allowing the enemy to remain out of reach and unmolested for nearly six months.”

As a result, the Taliban forces have emerged stronger than at any time since a combined U.S.-Northern Alliance force drove them from power in late 2001, according to an SF officer here.

Conventional and Special Forces officers say the Taliban has a functioning chain of command that stretches from senior leaders in Pakistan down to foot soldiers in the provinces.

“They're a network of networks,” [Lt. Col. Don] Bolduc said. “They have cells, and each cell has a leader.”

The coalition's failure to establish a permanent security presence in any but the largest towns has allowed the Taliban to create what U.S. officers refer to as a “sanctuary” in Oruzgan, northern Helmand, northwest Zabul and northern Kandahar provinces.

“In this sanctuary area ... they develop their leadership, they foster and promulgate their ideology,” said TF 31's assistant operations officer, a captain who could not be named according to military ground rules.

The Taliban forces didn't just ignore the elections, they participated in them. The TF 31 assistant operations officer said the task force had cross-referenced the list of election candidates with the U.S. military's target list and found several matches in Oruzgan province alone.

"That demonstrated to us that these guys will attempt to build some kind of shadow government ... through the legitimate elections so that they can have people in place to take over those positions of responsibility, if and when their way of life and their way of government is reinstitutionalized by collapsing the legitimate government," he said.

Meanwhile, Taliban fighters are also taking advantage of the Afghan government's amnesty program to come down from the mountains and rejoin civil society, while secretly retaining their loyalty to the Taliban, TF 31 officers said.

If the Taliban is trying to create the impression in the coalition's minds that they are finished as a threat to Afghan stability, that raises the question of why the number of firefights and the number of U.S. casualties in Afghanistan appear to be on the rise. Twenty U.S. troops were killed in action in each of 2003 and 2004. The figure for 2005 was 66.

The consensus among Special Forces and conventional U.S. officers in Afghanistan is that there has been more fighting because the units that arrived last spring have pursued the enemy far more aggressively than those they replaced.

But despite the Taliban's losses, Special Forces soldiers said their enemy has improved markedly in several areas over the past couple of years. The Taliban forces have demonstrated a better ability to mass and then react quickly, using hand-held radios to command and control formations of more than 100 fighters.

The guerrillas are also more resolute than TF 31 soldiers had experienced on previous rotations.

For instance, during a July 24 battle at Qaleh Ye Gaz in Helmand province, "we dropped 2,000-pound bombs on them," TF 31's assistant operations officer said. "They did not break contact. Instead they fell into a compound and continued to fight from that compound. It wasn't until we dropped 2,000-pound bombs into that compound that we were able to finally end this contact."

The July 24 battle began when a combined TF 31/Afghan National Army convoy ran into the 10- to 15-man security detail of a Taliban area commander. The bodyguards alerted other nearby Taliban troops, who joined the fight. They then fought a skillful delaying action, so that even though the area commander was wounded, his men were able to evacuate him all the way to Pakistan, according to Bolduc.

The enemies' improved tactical prowess could be traced to the respite the coalition had allowed them, according to TF 31 officials. "They've had time to get organized," the assistant operations officer said.

“If we left tomorrow, Bolduc said, “this place would implode rather quickly.”

The ANA suffers from shortages of men, money and supplies.

Its units operate on a three-year life-cycle system, meaning that most troops sign up for a three-year hitch, then are free to return to civilian life or to sign up for another three years.

In the meantime, the ANA does not have the strength to secure the rural villages under the sway of the Taliban. That job, said both ANA and U.S. Army officers, should really be done by the ANP.

Unlike the nationally recruited ANA units, the ANP in each government district is locally recruited. In theory, therefore, the police officers’ local knowledge should give them the edge over the ANA when it comes to rooting out insurgents.

But the ANP is viewed by all as weak, poorly trained and equipped, and, in many cases, hopelessly corrupt.

The ANP’s weakness leaves “a big vulnerability” in Afghanistan’s security structure, Kamiya said, noting that the ANP forces are “the first line of resistance” against not only the Taliban but the drug cartels and other organized criminal gangs that plague Afghanistan.

As a result of the ANP’s inability to handle local security matters, the lines between the roles and missions of the ANA and the ANP have blurred, as the ANA takes up the local security tasks traditionally handled by an armed police force in a counterinsurgency.

Money, or the lack of it, is at the root of many of the ANP’s problems, according to Afghan and U.S. sources.

The ANA’s pay system is under U.S. or coalition oversight and functions well, said one of Bolduc’s A-team leaders. The ANP’s pay is run by the Afghan government and channeled through provincial and police force leaders, a corrupt disbursement chain, he said.

The cops who don’t leave for other jobs are more likely to turn to crime for subsistence, he said. And they are left short on vehicles, weapons, uniforms and other job necessities.

While the U.S. State Department and coalition members are working to provide more training for the police, the government in Kabul will need to find the money to attract and retain the right people.

“That’s just the reality of the situation,” Bolduc said.

The best-paid, best-trained, best-equipped and most highly motivated Afghan troops fighting the Taliban go by the name of the Afghan Security Forces, or ASF, and they work exclusively for, and are paid by, the Special Forces A-teams.

The organizational descendants of the militia forces hired by the Central Intelligence Agency and trained by SF troops in late 2001 and early 2002, the ASF function as the security force for the A-teams at their firebases and on some combat missions.

Bolduc said that he was not permitted to reveal the exact number of ASF men employed by TF 31, but he is authorized to contract for up to 100 per firebase.

The ASF troops are better paid than the ANA troops they fight beside when on missions with the A-teams. The average ASF fighter makes \$125 to \$150 per month, whereas a junior enlisted ANA soldier makes \$62 to \$70 per month, plus \$2 extra for every day he is deployed away from his home base.

Because the ASF represent the most lucrative option for any adventurous young Afghan man looking to earn a living with an assault rifle, the force is a drag on recruitment for the ANA and the ANP, as well as the smaller highway police and border police forces.

For that reason, plans are in place to demobilize the ASF this year, giving each ASF fighter the option of joining one of the Afghan government security forces. Ninety percent of the ASF are projected to take up that option, Bolduc said.

Fixing the Afghan government's forces before higher authorities call time on their mission here has become the central focus of U.S. commanders.

Owens said he was hesitant to predict when the ANA would be capable of independent action, but he acknowledged the strategic dilemma facing the Americans.

"The United States Army doesn't have any staying power here," he said. "We have enormous mobility, enormous firepower, a lot of resources and wherewithal, but we can't just stay here and do their job.

"We can serve as a bridge. We can set ideal conditions of security and infrastructure," he said, "but the long-term staying power has to be performed by the ANP and ANA, or we're doomed to failure."

It was that lack of staying power that concerned Bolduc, too.

"The Afghan national security forces are getting better and better every day, but they're not capable of taking over the counterinsurgency fight at this point in time," he said.

"I am constantly thinking about what the enemy's going to do next. He's waiting to see what we're going to do next. He's got time on his side. I don't."

Resilient Insurgency: "Fighters Have Simply Slipped Away And Found New Hiding Places"

1.30.06 Washington Post

Every time U.S. troops have managed to seize a portion of Uruzgan province, a remote, ruggedly beautiful region of south-central Afghanistan, enemy fighters have simply slipped away and found new hiding places among its endless craggy hills and hollows.

TROOP NEWS

19,000 Fewer Young Soldiers Than In 2001: Without Stop-Loss, The Force Could Evaporate

'When stop loss is finally stopped and people held over are allowed to leave, there are another 10,000 to 16,000 that are almost going to disappear overnight,' he told UPI. 'Once stop-loss is over, the Army is going to be short 30,000 junior enlisted men they had in September 2001.'

Jan 28, 2006 By Pamela Hess
WASHINGTON, DC, United States (UPI)

Since September 2001, the number of junior enlisted soldiers, the bulk of the Army, and on whose shoulders rest most of the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, has declined by nearly 20,000 total, according to Defense Department statistics.

And despite Army efforts to add soldiers to its payroll and historically high retention rates, the active duty force actually shrunk by 6,800 from 2004 to 2005.

These declines come as the Army is trying to increase its force to 512,400 soldiers, up from a baseline of about 480,000 in 2001.

But from November 2004 to November 2005, the number of active duty soldiers declined by nearly 6,000, almost entirely in the enlisted ranks, according to Defense Department statistics. In November 2004, there were 497,584 soldiers, 412,895 of them enlisted. By November 2005, there were only 491,542, with 407,118 enlisted.

At the same time, the Army announced that it had missed its fiscal year 2005 recruiting goal of 80,000 by about 6,700 recruits. Even if it had recruited the full 80,000, the Army would not have increased its size.

According to a report issued Wednesday, and confirmed by the Army, the Army has about 19,000 fewer privates compared to the number on the payroll in September 2001, before either the Afghan or Iraq wars began. In 2001 there were 124,513. Now there are 106,374.

'The steep decline in the Army's three lower enlisted grades are the result of a steady decline in the number of recruits entering the Army ... contrary to the popular perception created by the Army's insistence that it was achieving its recruiting goal,' [Dave] McGinnis states. [A retired Army and Pentagon analyst and now private consultant who carefully tracks Army personnel numbers.]

'Even though they've been making their recruiting goal they have not been recruiting enough people,' he said.

The Army is already feeling the pinch: In March 2005, Stars and Stripes reported the service automatically put 19,000 qualified corporals and specialists on the promotion list for sergeant, rather than waiting for them to be recommended for promotion by a commander. Not all 19,000 would be promoted, but the Army was finding commanders had not recommended enough junior enlisted to fill all the sergeant jobs.

McGinnis believes the goals have been set artificially low to make them achievable. For instance, the recruiting goal for October 2005 was 4,700, which the Army exceeded by recruiting 4,925. But in October 2004, the goal was 6,935. In November 2005, the Army also exceeded its goal but recruited about 1,000 fewer than it did in November 2004.

McGinnis also warns there is another looming problem the Army is not talking about: stop-loss. Stop-loss is a policy that prevents soldiers who complete their service obligations from leaving the Army until their units redeploy from Iraq and Afghanistan. According to McGinnis, between 10,000 and 16,000 soldiers now deployed to Iraq, and soon to return, will leave the Army almost en masse.

He bases that estimate on the number of soldiers who left the Army after the first deployed units returned from Iraq in late 2003.

'When the first rotation came back, the Army fell more than 10,000, from about 309,000 to 297,000 (junior enlisted) in the course of three months, October to December,' McGinnis said.

'There is a hidden time bomb sitting there.

'When stop loss is finally stopped and people held over are allowed to leave, there are another 10,000 to 16,000 that are almost going to disappear overnight,' he told UPI. 'Once stop-loss is over, the Army is going to be short 30,000 junior enlisted men they had in September 2001.'

New Pentagon Policy:

If It Can Breathe And Drool, Promote It: “Basically, If You Haven't Been Court-Martialed, You're Going To Be Promoted To Major”

[Sent to Vietnam Veterans Of American by HC, who writes: Gee, if we'd stayed in we would all be chief master sergeants or generals: of course we'd have had to have fought/supported all the "adventures" since Nam.]

Army officers are getting out of the military at the highest rate since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, shrinking the pool of officers eligible for promotion.

January 30, 2006 By Mark Mazzetti, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON: Struggling to retain enough officers to lead its forces, the Army has begun to dramatically increase the number of soldiers it promotes, raising fears within the service that wartime strains are diluting the quality of the officer corps.

Last year, the Army promoted 97% of all eligible captains to the rank of major, Pentagon data show. That was up from a historical average of 70% to 80%.

Traditionally, the Army has used the step to major as a winnowing point to push lower-performing soldiers out of the military.

The service also promoted 86% of eligible majors to the rank of lieutenant colonel in 2005, up from the historical average of 65% to 75%.

The promotion rates "are much higher than they have been in the past because we need more officers than we did before," said Lt. Col. Bryan Hilferty, an Army spokesman.

The Army has long taken pride in the competitiveness of its promotions, and insists that only officers that meet rigorous standards are elevated through its ranks.

But the recent trends in promotions have stirred concerns that the Army is being forced to lower its standards to provide leaders for combat units that will be deployed overseas.

"The problem here is that you're not knocking off the bottom 20%," said a high-ranking Army officer at the Pentagon. "Basically, if you haven't been court-martialed, you're going to be promoted to major."

The officer spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to publicly discuss the issue.

Army officers are getting out of the military at the highest rate since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, shrinking the pool of officers eligible for promotion.

According to Army data, the portion of junior officers (lieutenants and captains) choosing to depart for civilian life rose last year to 8.6%, up from 6.3% in 2004. The attrition rate for majors rose to 7% last year, up from 6.4% in 2005. And the rate for lieutenant colonels was 13.7%, the highest in more than a decade.

They say that with many officers in line for a third yearlong combat tour in Iraq, it is inevitable that a growing number would choose to leave the military to relieve strain on their family lives.

"The demands for Army ground-force deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq are not likely to decline substantially any time soon," said the report by retired Army Lt. Col. Andrew F. Krepinevich of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. The service "risks having many of its soldiers decide that a military career is too arduous or too risky an occupation for them and their families to pursue."

“Our Troops Are Being Betrayed” “It's About Contractor Profits”

2.2.06 Ralph Peters, New York Post

Instead of beefing up the U.S. forces that do the actual fighting, the Pentagon self-justification process known as the Quadrennial Defense Review is about to call for increasing the buy of the F/A-22, a pointless air-to-air fighter with a \$280-million-per-copy price tag, while acquiring high-tech destroyers designed to defeat a vanished Soviet navy.

"Your tax dollars are being squandered while our troops are being betrayed. It isn't about combat effectiveness. It's about contractor profits."

Nearly Half Of Troops Refused Anthrax Vaccine Since April '05

January 29, 2006 Mideast Stars and Stripes

Since anthrax vaccinations became optional for U.S. troops in April 2005, slightly less than half have refused to get the shots, the Military Vaccine Agency said.

<p>Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward this E-MAIL along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in</p>
--

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.

Japanese Gov't Tells Rumsfeld To Fuck Off

January 29, 2006 wsj.com

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld explored the possibility during a meeting in January with Japanese Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga of Japan using its Self-Defense Forces for security operations in Iraq and to train Iraqi forces, according to diplomatic sources quoted by Kyodo News.

Nukaga rejected the idea as "difficult" under existing Japanese law, Kyodo said.

Congressional Rat Lewis Breaks The Rules On Use of Military Aide

February 2, 2006, The Hill

The staff member who tracks defense appropriations for Rep. Jerry Lewis, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, is a military officer on the Pentagon's payroll, an apparent violation of House rules and a possible conflict of interest.

The aide's service appears to violate two provisions of the House members' congressional handbook: that detailees are supposed to serve committees for only one year and that they are not allowed to be assigned to members' personal offices.

Israel Drafts Llamas After Mule Mutiny

February 3, 2006 JERUSALEM (AP)

It can't shoot and it can barely follow orders, but it's the newest recruit to the Israeli military: The llama.

According to the Yediot Ahronot newspaper on Friday, two elite units recently began using the llamas in exercises and operations on Israel's northern border to navigate heavy loads of 60 kilograms (132 pounds) or more through difficult terrain.

The military tried using mules for similar tasks, but although they could carry heavier loads than the llamas, they behaved badly, at one point, staging a "mutiny" and fleeing, the newspaper said.

According to Brig. Gen. Itzik Ben-Tov, llamas are well-disciplined and move quickly.

They also have highly developed senses of smell and hearing, are nimble, and only eat once every two days.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action

February 5, 2006 AP & Reuters

Three guerrillas shot dead two policemen in the northern city of Kirkuk, and a roadside bomb in Madain wounded two policemen, which targeted a passing police convoy.

An Iraqi soldier was killed and two others wounded when a roadside bomb exploded near their patrol in the city of Falluja, 50 km (25 miles) west of Baghdad, police said.

Two policemen were killed and seven people wounded, including two policemen, when a car bomb exploded near a police checkpoint in Salman Pak, about 65 km (40 miles) southeast of Baghdad, police said.

The assistant manager of a prison in the southern city of Basra was killed by insurgents.

Guerrillas killed two Iraqi policemen in Kirkuk, 250 km (150 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

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

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

Assholes At Work

[Thanks to PB for sending this in. He writes: What a bunch of assholes. I'm tired of liberals complaining that these countries are so much "enlightened" than we are.]

Feb 1 By ANGELA CHARLTON, Associated Press Writer

French and German newspapers republished caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad on Wednesday in what they called a defense of freedom of expression, sparking fresh anger from Muslims.

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.

Hamas Withdrawing Troops From Iraq & Afghanistan

[February 02 Via Grant, Anti-Allawi-group]

30 January 2006. A World to Win News Service.

The casual interstellar traveler with only a superficial knowledge of what's happening on Earth could easily be forgiven for making the following mistake.

Imagine that our traveler listened to the BBC World Service news this Monday (30 January) and heard that an international conference of European Union foreign ministers was being held for the purpose of ensuring that no country anywhere would have anything to do with the newly-elected Hamas government, "so long as it refused to renounce the use of violence".

Our traveler then thinks, Right: at last! At last these Earthlings are beginning to make a little progress!

How right that Hamas should have to pull its thousands of troops out of the 140 countries where they are stationed around this planet. How right that they should be compelled in particular to pull out of poor undeveloped countries like Afghanistan and Iraq that they are occupying so brutally with tens of thousands of their soldiers.

And it's about time that they have to cease trampling on international law with their "extraordinary renditions" and Guantanos and their whole international network of prison camps where people simply disappear into black holes.

And isn't it long past time that they're forced to finally stop their relentless build-up of nuclear arms that poses such a danger to the people of the whole planet. And all this without even speaking of the routine, hidden violence that the profit-making dynamics of this system inflict on millions of people around the world, in needless deaths every day.

At long last these Earthlings seem to be coming to their senses and making a little progress towards curbing the biggest perpetrators of mass violence that their little planet has ever seen.... Maybe there's hope for them yet!

And who's going to explain to our well-intentioned but woefully confused traveler that, no, the high-powered conference of the great leaders of European civilisation is not going to be doing any of this, that "Hamas" is not the way you pronounce "US", and that the target of all this outraged attention, far from being the biggest perpetrator of violence in human history, a veritable 21st century empire, is instead a tiny occupied poverty-stricken territory whose total organized firepower wouldn't even come close to that of the police force in any mid-sized city in the US.

OCCUPATION REPORT

So Much For That "Reconstruction" Bullshit: 180 Clinics Promised; Four Built

2.2.06 USA Today

The centerpiece of a \$786 million plan to modernize Iraq's health care system has stalled amid spiraling costs and insurgent threats, jeopardizing one of the country's most ambitious reconstruction projects.

Initial plans called for completing 180 medical clinics by December 2005, but only four are finished.

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



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. stands guard while an Iraq citizen is forced to stand with his hands bound in a corner during a home invasion raid by foreign occupation soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division in Ramadi Feb. 1, 2006. AP Photo/Jacob Silberberg)

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

[Those Iraqis are sure a bunch of backward primitives. They actually resent this help, have the absurd notion that it's bad their country is occupied by a foreign military dictatorship, and consider it their patriotic duty to fight and kill the soldiers sent to grab their country. What a bunch of silly people. How fortunate they are to live under a military dictatorship run by George Bush. Why, how could anybody not love that? You'd want that in your home town, right?]

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

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Zionist Border Crossing Closure Will Kill Palestinians

[Thanks to JM, who sent this in. She writes: This is monstrous. Steal the taxation money and seal the borders so nothing can get in or out. Exports rotting. Imports of medicine, food, and international aid, prevented entry. Will the world do something now or let the population start to die of starvation and treatable illness. If this happens it will be genocide. Some right wing Israelis have advocated genocide as the simplest solution to their problems.]

03 February 2006 By Laila El-Haddad in Gaza, Aljazeera

The continued closure of Gaza's commercial lifeline is causing a humanitarian and economic crisis in the Gaza Strip, UN, Palestinian and Israeli human rights organisations say.

The crossing, known as Karni or al-Muntar, is Gaza's only commercial outlet to the outside world.

Israeli forces unilaterally shut down the crossing on 14 January based on "intelligence alerts of impending attacks", according to the Israeli Army.

According to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the closure is costing Palestinians up to \$500,000 a day.

Dairy products, baby formula, sugar, rice are amongst items dwindling on the supermarket shelves in Gaza.

In addition, 90 containers of humanitarian supplies, including food and aid, belonging to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), are stuck at Israeli ports, says the group.

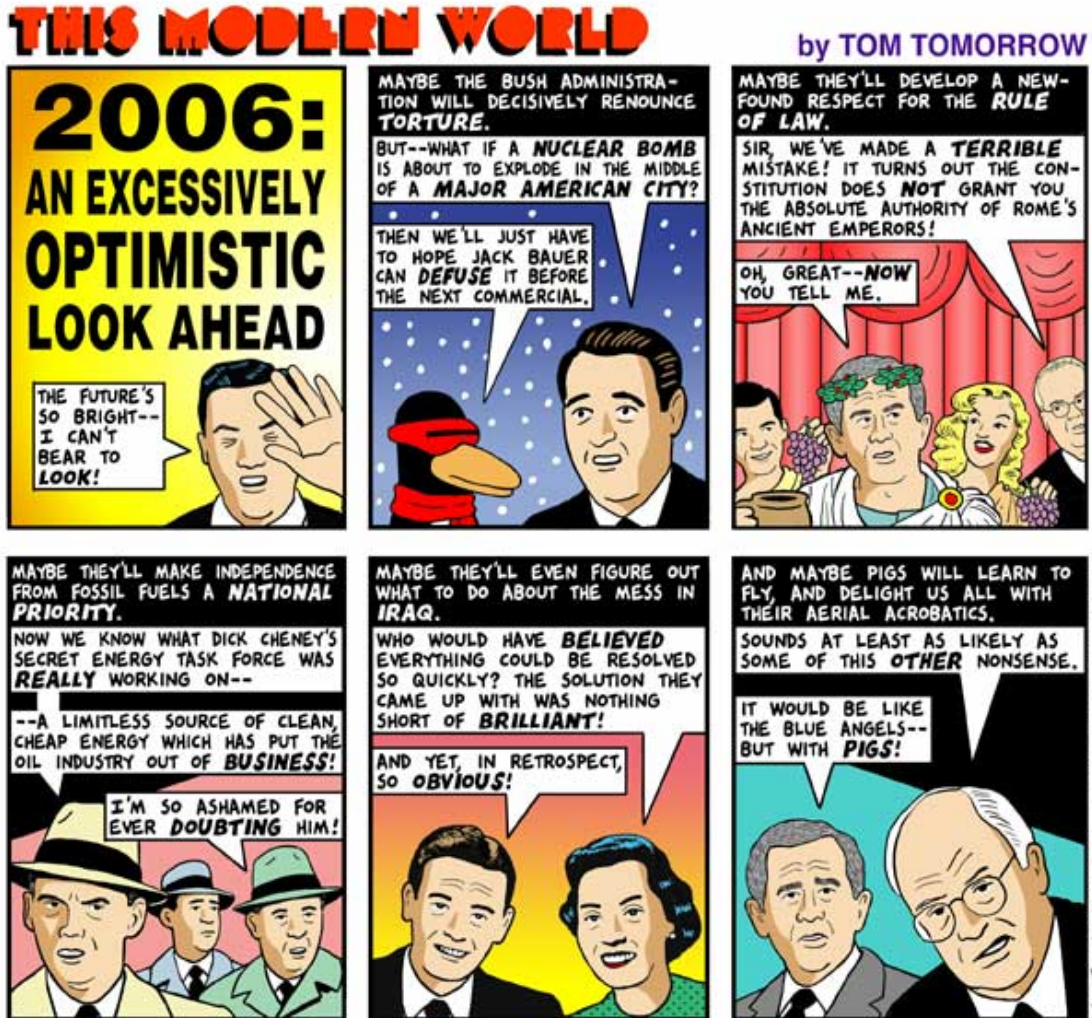
The UN agency says there is also a shortage of construction materials and medicines including vital children's vaccinations.

"The Palestinian Ministry of Health is running short on medical supplies and has to rely on emergency stocks. Drugs for anaesthetic use are in particular short supply," said the report.

Gaza's main hospital is also facing a shortage of a solution used for hundreds of kidney dialysis patients.

[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



While Kerry Dithers, Rex Gets It Right

01 February 2006 By Michael Scherer, Salon.com [Excerpt]

Massachusetts' John Kerry appeared particularly challenged by one passage from the president: "We must keep our word, defeat our enemies, and stand behind the American military in its vital mission."

Kerry froze, looking unsure of whether to stand or sit during the applause. Should he show his support for the troops? Would that mean he was endorsing the president's pledge to stay in Iraq? He resolved the dilemma by standing, after a moment's contemplation, while moving his lips to repeat the president's pledge to "stand behind the American military."

Up in the bleachers, a few rows behind first lady Laura Bush, a single member of the audience decided to lie down throughout the speech.

Rex, the bomb-sniffing dog, earned an invitation because his handler, Sgt. Jamie Dana, had survived an improvised explosive device in Iraq.

Rex, who lay next to Dana, was meant to represent the enduring bonds that survive the horrors of war. But by all appearances, the dog wasn't particularly taken by the symbolism or the speech. It was a pose that seemed somehow wise in retrospect.

Not Rumsfeld's Last Words [Unfortunately]

Feb 03, 2006 Daily Kos

"It's not knowable what a war or conflict like that is going to cost.

You don't know if it's going to last two days or two weeks or two months. *It's certainly not going to last two years*, but it's going to cost money," Donald Rumsfeld, late 2002.

MORE:

The Stupid Shithead Still At It

2.2.06 Washington Times

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said that he does not think Iraq will be a "long war." But he declined to give a timeline or predict what the U.S. troop level will be at the end of the year.

CLASS WAR REPORTS

Take From The Poor, Pass Along To The Rich; “Every Year, The Federal Government Doles Out Hundreds Of Billions Of Dollars In Corporate Welfare”

December 31, 2005 By Michael Parenti, Zmag.org [Excerpts]

In December 2005, the reactionaries who are running the government and ruining the country decided to cut about \$42 billion from the human services budget over the next few years. Most of the cuts will come out of the hides of the very poorest among us. The victims include persons afflicted with disabling diseases who already have trouble trying to live on a monthly federal pittance.

But there is another side to this Scrooge story. There are others among us who are treated most handsomely by Washington. I am referring, of course, to Corporate America.

A central function of the corporate capitalist state is to maintain and advance the capital accumulation process. This it does by (a) taxing the many to subsidize the few; and (b) privatizing the public wealth, specifically the land, airwaves, mineral deposits, and other natural resources that are nominally the property of the American people.

It is variously estimated that every year, the federal government doles out hundreds of billions of dollars in corporate welfare, in the form of tax exclusions, reduced tax assessments, generous depreciation write-offs and tax credits, price supports, loan guarantees, payments in kind, research and development grants, subsidized insurance rates, marketing services, export subsidies, irrigation and reclamation programs, and research and development grants.

The government leases or sells at a mere fraction of market value billions of dollars worth of oil, coal, and mineral reserves. It fails to collect hundreds of millions of dollars in royalties, interest, and penalties. And it sometimes gives the companies the right to purchase the land title for a nominal fee.

The government pays out huge sums in unnecessarily high interest rates on the billions it has borrowed from private creditors (the national debt). It permits billions in public funds to remain on deposit in private banks without collecting interest.

It lends out billions at below-market interest rates. It tolerates overcharging by firms with whom it does business, and provides long term credits, and tariff protections to large companies. It pays out billions to reimburse big corporate defense contractors for the costs of their mergers.

The government gave away the entire broadcasting spectrum valued at \$37 billion (in 1989 dollars), instead of leasing or auctioning it off-thereby giving the big networks nearly five times the broadcasting space they previously controlled.

Every year, the federal government loses tens of millions of dollars charging "ranchers" below cost grazing rates on over twenty million acres of public lands. These "ranchers" include a number of billionaires, big oil companies, and insurance conglomerates.

Over the past five decades, at least \$100 billion in public subsidies have gone to the nuclear industry and many billions worth of federally funded research and development has passed straight into corporate hands without the government collecting a cent in royalties.

The U.S. Forest Service has built almost 400,000 miles of access roads through national forests, many times the size of the entire federal interstate highway system. Used for the logging operations of timber companies, these roads contribute to massive mud slides that contaminate water supplies, ruin spawning streams, and kill people.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (AID), spent over \$1 billion in taxpayer money over the past decade to help companies move U.S. jobs to cheaper labor markets abroad. AID provided low interest loans, tax exemptions, travel and training funds, and advertising to the corporate outsourcers. AID also furnished blacklists to help companies weed out union sympathizers from their work forces in various countries.

In any one year, many billions in subsidies go to agribusiness producers of feed grain, wheat, cotton, rice, soy, dairy, wool, tobacco, peanuts, and wine, with relatively little going to small agrarian producers. Subsidies to big commercial farms encourage wasteful water practices and increased toxic runoffs into rivers and bays from pesticides, herbicides, and chemical fertilizers.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) estimates that agribusiness uses legal loopholes to circumvent subsidy limits, thereby collecting more than \$2 billion in unjustified payments each year.

The federal government subsidizes the railroad, shipping, and airline industries, along with the exporters of iron, steel, textiles, tobacco, paper, and other products. It doles out huge amounts in grants and tax incentives to the big petroleum companies to encourage oil exploration.

Numerous medications marketed by the pharmaceutical industry have been paid for in whole or part by taxpayers,-who sometimes then cannot afford the high prices charged.

Whole new technologies are developed at public expense nuclear energy, electronics, aeronautics, space communications, mineral exploration, computer systems, the internet, biomedical genetics, and others only to be handed over to industry for private gain.

Thus, AT&T managed to have the entire satellite communications system put under its control in 1962 after U.S. taxpayers put up the initial \$20 billion to develop it. The costs are socialized; the profits are privatized.

Under corporate capitalism the ordinary citizen pays twice for most things: first, as a taxpayer who provides the subsidies and supports, then as a consumer who buys the high priced commodities and services. Overall, federal spending represents an enormous upward redistribution of income.

As the Bible says (Matthew 13:12): "To them that have shall be given, and from them that have not shall be taken even what little they have." If this is the way we bring God back into public life, then let's hear it for atheism.

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)

Received:

“The Have Arrived”

From: A
To: GI Special
Sent: February 05, 2006
Subject: **RE: GI Special 4B4: U.S. Command Marches To Defeat With Heads Firmly Implanted Up Asses**

Why are they still marching? They have arrived.

Received:

Mission To Be Accomplished

From: L
To: GI Special
Sent: February 05, 2006
Subject: Mission to be Accomplished

Many thanks for the opening graphic in GI SPECIAL 4B4! FYI, I shared it with my e-mail A (about fifty good people in the U.S. and a few other places)



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.notinourname.net/gi-special/>, www.williambowles.info/gispecial,
http://www.traprockpeace.org/gi_special/, <http://www.uruknet.info/?p=-6&l=e>,
<http://www.albasrah.net/maqalat/english/gi-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.