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4/20

“They Hate Us Over Here” “I Want To Come Home”

23 April 2006 By KELLY MONITZ, Standard-Speaker

Michael J. Stanley Jr. marked his 20th birthday on March 25, the same day he lost part of his right leg in Iraq.

The Hazleton man told his family he heard the click before an improvised explosive device tore into his body near Ramadi.

The last thing he remembered was yelling for help and a medic cutting off his pants leg, his aunt, Jan Fontana, said.

She talked to him two days before his unit came under heavy fire and he told her that he wanted to come home, she said.

“They hate us over here. I’m in the worst possible place you can be in this country,” he told her. “I want to come home.”

In the cruel twists of war, Stanley got his wish.

His mother, Denise Brogan, knew she wasn’t going to dissuade her middle son from joining the military after graduating.

She wasn’t happy about his decision to enlist and go to war, but knew in her heart that’s what he wanted, she said last week.

Stanley signed up for a three-year tour and began his Army training within weeks of receiving his high school diploma. His first stop was Fort Benning in Georgia and he then went on to Fort Campbell in Kentucky, his aunt said.

His unit, the 101st Airborne Division, 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry, HHC Scouts, arrived in Iraq right after Thanksgiving 2005.

Four months later, Stanley was on his way home alone.

Stanley’s older brother got the call, and took a call-back number to Mountain City Nursing Home where his mother works.

Brogan remembers she called the number and a man asked her, “Have you talked to your son lately?”

Her son wasn’t dead, but had been critically injured and they would keep in touch, she recalls the man saying.

Stanley was flown from Iraq to Germany, where he underwent surgery, Brogan said. The doctors there called her and told her the extent of his injuries.

“It was hard, but I was just glad he was alive,” Brogan said.

Stanley arrived at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., three days after the attack, and his family was at his side.

His elbow on his right arm shattered, he lost his pinky and part of his ring finger as well, his mother said. His left arm was also broken and he sustained shrapnel wounds all over his body, she said.

“He went through a lot of surgeries,” Brogan said, noting the most recent was April 14.

Now, they’re waiting for him to heal, she said. The process could take six months to a year and he’ll remain in Washington moving from the medical center to the Mologne House Hotel as he recovers, she said.

Brogan, who has taken family medical leave from work to stay with her son, is staying at the Mologne House, which she describes as a hotel setting on medical center campus, she said.

She doesn't know how long she'll remain in Washington, but intends to stay as long as her son needs her, she said.

"I try to be strong for him," Brogan said. "I'm thankful to God that he's alive and that he's even here."

She knows her son has a long road ahead of him and he's just coming to terms with losing his leg, she said.

But Stanley isn't alone.

Walter Reed is teaming with young men that lost a leg, both legs, an arm and a leg, and so on, Brogan said.

"It helps us seeing them and talking with them," she said. "They're amazing. It is amazing to see how they are."

The other amputees, those farther along in their recovery or moving on with their lives, have begun counseling Stanley, his mom said.

And like others, Stanley has good days and bad days, she said. This past week had more bad than good, Brogan said.

"He's my hero," his mom said. "All these soldiers are. He doesn't look at it that way. He just doesn't know how wonderful he is.

"I want people to know that he's a wonderful person," Brogan said. "I couldn't ask for a better son."

NOTICE

Because of four organizing meetings or events this week concerned with providing aid and comfort to troops opposed to the war, it hasn't been possible to respond to everyone who has sent in articles or letters, or to organize some terrific articles that have come in. An effort will be made to catch up Sunday. For now, please accept this expression of thanks. T

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Stryker Soldier Killed

April 26, 2006 AP

FORT WAINWRIGHT, Alaska

Another Alaska-based soldier has died in an explosion in Iraq, Army officials said Wednesday.

The soldier, based at Fort Wainwright, was killed Tuesday and three others were injured when a roadside bomb detonated near their Stryker vehicle during a routine patrol in Mosul, Iraq, officials said.

None of the wounded soldiers are considered seriously injured, officials said, adding that one of the soldiers was sent to a hospital in Iraq for treatment.

All four soldiers were assigned to the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team at Fort Wainwright.

The death is the fourth in Iraq this month for Stryker soldiers based at Fort Wainwright, Army spokesman Maj. Kirk Gohlke said.

California Soldier Killed In Mosul



Pfc. Raymond Henry, right, in Iraq, of Anaheim, Calif., stationed at Fort Wainwright, Alaska, was killed April 25, 2006, when a roadside bomb detonated near his Stryker vehicle in Mosul, Iraq. Henry was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment, 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team based in Mosul. Three other soldiers assigned to 1-17 Inf were wounded and were classified as not seriously injured. Henry, 21, was an infantryman who joined the Army in January 2005 and was assigned to Fort Wainwright in May 2005. (AP Photo/U.S. Army)

New Bedford Marine Killed In Iraq

April 27, 2006 AP

A Marine from New Bedford was killed in Iraq.

A family member told NBC 10 that Michael Ford was killed Wednesday in an explosion. Ford, 20, had been in Iraq for one month.

Ford was a 2005 graduate of the Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School, where he studied culinary arts.

The Department of Defense said Army Pvt. Michael Bouthot, 19, was one of four soldiers killed Saturday in Baghdad when a bomb went off near their Humvee during combat.

Bomb Blast At Italian Base In Iraq Kills Three Italian Soldiers, One Romanian



A damaged vehicle part of a Italian convoy which was caught in a bomb blast in Nasiriyah, April 27, 2006. A bomb blast rocked an Italian convoy at a base in southern Iraq on Thursday, killing four people, three Italians and one Romanian, the Italian Defense Ministry said in a statement. The ministry identified the Italians killed as Nicola Ciardelli, a paratrooper with the Italian Army; and Franco Lattanzio and Carlo De Trizio, warrant officers with the Carabinieri paramilitary police. Romania's Defense Ministry confirmed the death of the Romanian soldier, but said the soldiers were killed when an explosives-laden car drove into the armored vehicle. (AP Photo/AP Television News)

4.27.06 By MARIA SANMINIATELLI, Associated Press Writer & AFP

A roadside bomb killed three Italian soldiers and one Romanian in southern Iraq on Thursday, the Italian defence ministry said.

The ministry said two Italian troops and the Romanian died on the spot while the third Italian soldier died in hospital.

A fourth Italian soldier was seriously wounded in the deadliest attack suffered by Italian troops in Iraq since a 2003 suicide bombing killed 19 Italians, mostly military, in the city of Nassiriya.

Italy has some 2,600 troops in Iraq, the fourth largest foreign contingent, which it plans to withdraw by the end of this year.

The bombing targeted a four-vehicle convoy on its way to relieve troops at the local Iraqi police station in the city of Nasiriyah, the ministry said in a statement. One of the vehicles was destroyed.

The convoy was carrying an Italian Army officer, 15 troops with the Carabinieri paramilitary police and the Romanian, the Defense Ministry statement said. An Italian convoy was the target of another bomb attempt five days ago, but it did not cause any damage, ANSA reported.

The Romanian Defense Ministry identified the Romanian soldier as corporal Bogdan Hancu, a 28-year-old military policeman from the eastern city of Iasi.

Hancu is Romania's first combat casualty in Iraq. Last month, a Romanian peacekeeper died after shooting himself in the head.

Romania has 860 troops in the country as part of the multinational force.

Fort Bragg Soldier Killed In Baghdad

Apr 27, 2006 The News & Observer

An Army Special Forces soldier based at Fort Bragg was killed in Baghdad.

Sgt. 1st Class Richard J. Herrema died Tuesday when he came under fire during combat, according to a Defense Department news release.

U.S. Occupation Forces Attacked In Ramadi

4.27.06 By THOMAS WAGNER, Associated Press Writer

In Ramadi, 70 miles west of Baghdad, U.S. forces exchanged fire with insurgents who attacked with small arms and shoulder-fired rockets from a former train station and a nearby building.

Lt. Col. Ronald Clark, commander of the 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, said a U.S. jet fired two laser-guided missiles at the buildings and U.S. forces returned fire with mortars and rockets, killing eight of the attackers.

In a separate incident in Ramadi, one Iraqi soldier was killed during a fire fight with insurgents, army officers said.

Resistance Gets Some Help From U.S. Troops

April 27 (Reuters)

U.S. forces killed four Iraqi police commandos by mistake on Wednesday in Samarra, 100 km (62 miles) north of Baghdad, a joint U.S. and Iraqi military centre said.

**REALLY BAD IDEA:
NO MISSION;
HOPELESS WAR:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW**



Marines Lance Cpl. Jared Eversoll and Lance Cpl. Michael S. Rodriguez search rooms during a home invasion operation in a small Iraqi town in western Al Anbar province March 29, 2006. The small town is adjacent to Ar Rutbah, 25,000 people, 60 miles east

of the Iraqi-Jordanian border. Both Marines are scouts with the Twentynine Palms, Calif. based 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, which recently traded one desert for another when they deployed to Iraq's western Al Anbar Province. REUTERS/Cpl. Graham A. Paulsgrove/U.S. Marines/Handout

[There's nothing quite like invading somebody else's country and busting into their houses by force to arouse an intense desire to kill you in the patriotic, self-respecting civilians who live there.

[But your commanders know that, don't they? Don't they?]

TROOP NEWS

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



The casket of Army Pfc. George Roehl Jr., April 24, 2006, at the state Veterans Cemetery in Boscawen, N.H. Roehl, 21, was killed April 21 when a bomb exploded near his Bradley Fighting Vehicle in Taji, Iraq. (AP Photo/Jim Cole)

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.

Retired Generals Say Active Duty Officers Want Rumsfeld Out Now

April 24, 2006 By Sean D. Naylor, Army Times staff writer [Excerpts]

The recently retired generals found a sympathetic ear in Paul Van Riper, who retired from the Marine Corps as a lieutenant general in 1997 but stays close to today's senior officers. "I think Secretary Rumsfeld should have been fired three years ago," Van Riper said. "He is professionally incompetent."

The retired Marine said the recent criticisms echo the disgust with Rumsfeld that he hears from currently serving officers, up to and including four-star generals, and that these senior officers have urged him to speak out against Rumsfeld.

"They absolutely abhor what they see coming out of the Defense Department, and particularly the secretary, and they only continue to march because they're good soldiers, sailors, Marines and airmen," he said. Pressed on how many such critics he could name among today's serving flag officers, he replied, "About 25."

An Army general who retired earlier this decade and keeps in close contact with his peers in uniform said the active-duty generals' view was that it would be better for the country if Rumsfeld left.

"This opinion is equally shared among both active-duty and retired" generals, he said.

"It's a universal sentiment."

Asked how many active generals he could name who felt this way, he replied: "I probably rub shoulders routinely with about a dozen. ... Virtually all of them are pretty visceral in their response."

[Marine Lt. Gen. Greg] Newbold, who wrote that he was speaking out "with the encouragement of some still in positions of military leadership," also took aim at senior military leaders who held office as the Iraq war plan took shape.

"When they knew the plan was flawed, saw intelligence distorted to justify a rationale for war, or witnessed arrogant micromanagement that at times crippled the military's effectiveness, many leaders who wore the uniform chose inaction," he wrote.

"The consequence of the military's quiescence was that a fundamentally flawed plan was executed for an invented war, while pursuing the real enemy, al-Qaida, became a secondary effort."

Van Riper also accused Rumsfeld of seeking out senior military leaders he knows will be "compliant."

**LIAR
TRAITOR
SOLDIER-KILLER
DOMESTIC ENEMY
UNFIT FOR COMMAND**



CORNERED RAT

(AFP/File/Brendan Smialowski)

MORE:

**More Top Brass Blast Rumsfeld:
“Frankly, I Think This Is The Gag
Reflex Kicking In”**

[Thanks to Alycia Barr, who sent this in.]

Apr. 25, 2006 By Mark Follman, Salon.com

Two retired generals and an admiral denounce his leadership, and say he's protected by a handpicked ring of high-ranking yes men.

In mid-April, under fire from a half-dozen retired U.S. generals for broad failures in Iraq, the Bush White House dispatched Donald Rumsfeld to the front lines of the American heartland. The secretary of defense appeared on talk radio host Rush Limbaugh's

nationally syndicated show to fight back against the decorated military commanders who called for his resignation.

"The sharper the criticism comes, sometimes the sharper the defense comes from people who don't agree with the critics," Rumsfeld told Limbaugh during the April 17 interview. He dismissed the barrage of reproach, suggesting that "the same kinds of criticism" had come and gone during all major American wars, from the Revolutionary War to Vietnam. "This, too, will pass," Rumsfeld said.

But the sharp disapproval aired by the retired generals is, by many counts, extraordinary. Among the charges leveled at Rumsfeld was Maj. Gen. Paul Eaton's conclusion that the defense secretary was "incompetent strategically, operationally and tactically, and is far more than anyone responsible for what has happened to our important mission in Iraq." Maj. Gen. John Batiste, who led the 1st Infantry Division there, said he "served under a secretary of Defense who didn't understand leadership, who was abusive, who was arrogant, who didn't build a strong team."

Maj. Gen. Charles Swannack, the former commander of the elite 82nd Airborne Division in Iraq, stressed that culpability for abuses at Abu Ghraib prison leads "directly back to Secretary Rumsfeld."

In interviews with Salon, several retired military commanders said that the unusual revolt against Rumsfeld is both well-founded and increasingly pervasive.

From the broad strategic problems in Iraq to Rumsfeld's role in the calamity of sanctioned prisoner abuse, they say the case for his resignation is indisputable, and has the support of many other retired senior officers.

One retired commander suggested that the generals' censure of Rumsfeld is especially important because the defense secretary has achieved unprecedented control over selecting the top brass who surround him at the Pentagon.

"Considering the level at which these generals operated, the things they've been saying are a real indictment," said Brig. Gen. David R. Irvine, an Army Reserve strategic intelligence officer who taught prisoner interrogation and military law for 18 years at the Sixth Army Intelligence School before retiring in 2002.

"It's not the responsibility of military commanders to decide when the nation goes to war. But these guys are experts -- some of them have direct experience executing the war plans that Rumsfeld developed. So when they say there are serious problems, I would think that Congress and the White House ought to pay attention.

"I don't think I've seen anything like it in my 40 years of service," Irvine added. "Over the last several months I've had conversations with dozens of retired flag officers -- one, two, three stars. I have yet to talk to anyone who is a Rumsfeld fan. The level of disapproval is significant."

Rear Adm. John D. Hutson, the former judge advocate general of the Navy, believes the criticisms of Rumsfeld by the retired generals are not only appropriate, but necessary.

"The captain goes down with the ship. He's in charge, and he's held accountable. This is a proper and important military tradition," said Hutson, who retired from service in 2000 and is now the president and dean of Franklin Pierce Law Center in Concord, N.H.

"The lack of accountability up the chain of command has bothered a lot of people for a long time. Frankly, I think this is the gag reflex kicking in. At some point things get bad enough that you have to have a change."

Hutson sees a "spontaneous combustion" behind the firestorm of criticism, rather than a coordinated attack by the generals on Rumsfeld.

"A number of leaders seem to be coming to the same conclusions at the same time about how poorly the war is going," he said.

"We're allocating precious assets to it that are needed elsewhere, and there is no clear end in sight. In some sense, this is even more fundamental than the torture issue, where a lot of people have had concerns for a long time now. This is about how the whole war is being waged. This war wasn't planned right, and it hasn't been executed right."

Irvine first called for Rumsfeld's resignation two years ago after the ghastly images from Abu Ghraib surfaced.

Though much of the retired generals' criticism this month focused on the strategic quagmire in Iraq, he believes prisoner abuse remains at the heart of the battle against Rumsfeld.

"I sense a great deal of distress among senior military officers over what's happened with prisoner treatment," Irvine said.

"I believe the abuse is playing a significant part in how these generals are feeling and why they're speaking out. There's an understanding that whatever we're doing at Guantánamo and elsewhere constitutes license for others to do to us when our soldiers are taken prisoner in the future. There's the realization that we've pretty much trashed the high ground along with the Geneva Conventions."

On April 14, Salon revealed that Rumsfeld was personally involved in directing the harsh interrogation of a prisoner at Guantánamo Bay, according to a sworn statement by an Army lieutenant general who investigated prisoner abuse at the U.S. base in Cuba.

Other critics note that the Pentagon has controlled all of the investigations to date into prisoner abuse.

"It's extremely difficult to believe that what happened at Guantánamo and Bagram and Abu Ghraib is all coincidental," said retired Brig. Gen. Jim Cullen, who served as the chief judge (IMA) of the U.S. Army Court of Criminal Appeals. "We need a much more extensive investigation into what went wrong and who at the top was responsible. With Rumsfeld continuing at the top that's not possible."

Cullen, who currently practices law in New York, has provided counsel in a lawsuit against Rumsfeld on behalf of prisoners abused in U.S. custody, and is one of 22 high-

level retired military leaders who have urged the Bush administration to ban torture unequivocally.

"Personally, I don't believe the torture memos originated with Rumsfeld, but with Vice President Cheney and his top aides," Cullen said. "But Rumsfeld was quite willing to carry out those policies with enthusiasm. They were offensive to military culture -- a departure from the rule of law at the very core of military discipline. When you compromise that discipline and permit wrongdoing in the field, you have lost control of your forces, and you have compromised the mission."

The level of disapproval among active-duty commanders is more difficult to gauge. Direct criticism of one's superiors is a punishable offense under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. And under the current leadership, even dissenting views on strategy or policy can exact a heavy price.

"Everyone knows what happened to Eric Shinseki," said Irvine, referring to the Army general who resigned from the military in 2003 after clashing with Rumsfeld and his deputy Paul Wolfowitz over the number of troops needed for Iraq.

There is another reason active-duty commanders may be less likely to dissent these days, according to Irvine.

"All of the people currently in positions at the two-, three- and four-star level have been extensively interviewed and handpicked by Rumsfeld. Some people would say there's nothing unusual about that, but I think there is."

Historically, Irvine said, the top generals are selected by military promotion boards. "Yes, they are political positions, and the defense secretary has final say in the appointment. But in the past there has been more deference to the boards.

"I don't know that there has been this level of politicization of the generals' officer corps under any prior administration."

"John Batiste is one very impressive commander," said Irvine. "It was particularly striking that he turned down a third star because he no longer wanted to work under Rumsfeld. There are not many guys in that position, and I have great respect for what he did."

Hutson, the former head judge advocate general of the Navy, said he is troubled by the status quo.

"I have never seen Rumsfeld demonstrate self-awareness or the ability to admit mistakes," he said. "Unfortunately, I think that means we can expect things to go the same from here, with no end in sight."

"In a way, the response from the White House is understandable," said Irvine. "Iraq is President Bush's war. If the criticism of Rumsfeld is seen as valid, then responsibility for what has happened doesn't stop at Rumsfeld's desk. It goes across the Potomac."

Wildly Enthusiastic Troops Greet Rumsfeld In Iraq



Rumsfeld, center, sits down to have lunch with U.S. military troops at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Prosperity in Baghdad April 26, 2006. (AP Photo/Jim Watson, Pool)

Incompetent Idiots In Command: Injured Troops Tormented By Collection Agencies, Have Their Credit Ruined & Utilities Shut Off

[Thanks to Lou Plummer, Veterans For Peace, who sent this in.]

April 27, 2006 By Henry Cuningham, Military editor, The Fayetteville (NC) Observer
[Excerpts]

The Fort Bragg finance battalion overpaid about 232 sick or injured reservists \$218,000 in hostile-fire pay but later reclaimed the money out of their paychecks, a report says.

The report from the Government Accountability Office says the overpayments caused the soldiers to have to deal with pay and debt problems in addition to their injuries.

In some cases throughout the Army, soldiers who were overpaid because of government errors were referred to debt-collection and credit-reporting agencies, hurting their ability to buy a house, take out a loan or get a job. Some had utilities turned off.

The GAO report says: "Fort Bragg did not carry out its responsibilities to ensure that the Army Guard and Army Reserve soldiers assigned to the Fort Bragg MRPU (Medical Retention Processing Unit) received accurate pay."

The report looked at problems at Fort Bragg from April 2003 to June 2005.

"Several soldiers experienced large, unexpected deductions — as much as \$1,172 from a single paycheck — for repaying the debt resulting from the Army's failure to stop the overpayments," the report said.

A separate report looks at military-debt problems of battle-injured soldiers Armywide.

"They return home wounded only to be hit by financial friendly fire," said a statement from the U.S. House Committee on Government Reform.

The committee today will ask Pentagon, Army and Fort Bragg officials how it happened, especially after Fort Bragg was earlier advised about improving pay procedures.

"When I learned of these allegations that Guard and Reservists at the Medical Retention Processing Unit at Bragg were being overpaid and that this was sometimes resulting in their referral to debt collection agencies, I was outraged," [U.S. Rep. Robin] Hayes said in a statement released through his office.

"Unfortunately, I was to learn that this Army problem is not specific to the base in my district, but was also occurring at the 21 other sites for medical in-processing. That is why the Government Accounting Agency investigation and this hearing are so very important."

Some soldiers told the GAO that they contacted the Fort Bragg finance battalion in attempts to stop the overpayment and avoid mounting debt. The battalion took 14 to 203 days to stop overpayments, the report said.

Some soldiers who never deployed received hostile-fire and hardship-duty pay.

Cases cited at Fort Bragg include:

A North Carolina sergeant who suffered a spinal-cord injury in a car accident in Iraq received \$2,050 in overpayments.

A North Carolina sergeant first class who was diagnosed with depression in Iraq and sent back to Fort Bragg received \$1,300 in overpayments.

A Maryland specialist who remained at Fort Bragg while his unit deployed got \$848 too much.

A California lieutenant colonel who had heart problems in Iraq was overpaid \$553.

The GAO report says: "Had the Fort Bragg finance battalion followed Army guidance when the Army's revised procedures were instituted in June 2004, the finance battalion may have identified overpayments of unearned entitlements more quickly for those sick and injured soldiers."

“The Recent Flap Over Six Retired American Generals Publicly Calling For The Secretary Of Defense To Resign, Also Brought Out Opinions, Via The Internet, From Lower Ranking Troops”

[Thanks to Felicity H for sending this in.]

This is all uncharted territory. There's never been an army before where all the troops were so well connected with each other. So far, the benefits have outweighed any liabilities. But no one is sure where it will go next, and the public is largely unaware of the impact, because the mass media has not grasped nature and extent of the changes.

April 25, 2006 Strategypage.com/

The recent flap over six retired American generals publicly calling for the Secretary of Defense to resign, also brought out opinions, via the Internet, from lower ranking troops (active duty, reservists and retired.)

The mass media ran with the six generals, but got shot down by the troops and their blogs, message board postings and emails. It wasn't just a matter of the "troop media" being more powerful. No, what the troops had going for them was a more convincing reality.

Unlike the six generals, many of the Internet troops were in Iraq, or had recently been there. Their opinions were not as eloquent as those of the generals, but they were also more convincing. Added to that was the complaint from many of the troops that, according to the American constitution, it's the civilians (in the person of the Secretary of Defense) that can dismiss soldiers from service, not the other way around.

While the six generals were only expressing their opinions (which only active duty troops are restricted from doing, because of the different military legal system they operate under), it rubbed a lot of people (military and civilian) the wrong way because of the constitutional angle.

Naturally, the details of this media battle didn't get a lot of coverage in the mass media. Makes sense. Who wants to discuss a defeat, by a bunch of amateurs no less. But the mass media has been missing an even larger story about the military and the Internet.

The military has become a lot more responsive to "what the troops want" in the last decade, since the Internet became widely available.

What happened was simple.

The troops got on line, found each other and have been sharing opinions and experiences, getting to know each other, and doing it all very quickly.

The most striking example of this is how it has changed the speed with which new weapons and equipment get into service. Troops have always bought superior commercial equipment, usually from camping and hunting suppliers. And a lot more of that gear has been available in the last decade. Because the word now gets around so quickly via the net, useful new gear is quickly purchased by thousands of troops.

After September 11, 2001, with a war on, having the best gear was seen by more troops as a matter of life and death. This quickly got back to politicians, journalists and the military bureaucrats responsible for buying gear for the troops. The quality of the "official issue" gear skyrocketed like never before because of the Internet pressure.

But the troops also exchanged information on tactics and techniques, as well as anything else they knew that could help keep them alive in combat. This alarmed the Department of Defense, which put some restrictions on active duty bloggers. The troops did not fight back, as, once reminded, they understood that, in public forums, anyone could read what they were saying, including the enemy. So a lot of this information continued to be exchanged email and private message boards. The military got into the act by establishing official message boards, for military personnel only, where useful information could be discussed and exchanged. All this rapid information sharing has had an enormous impact on the effectiveness of the troops, something that has largely gone unnoticed by the mass media.

The brass have not tried to discourage all this communication, because the officers use it as well, for the same reasons as the troops. Most junior officers grew up with the Internet, and many of the older ones were using the Internet before it became popularized in the 1990s. Even the generals of today, have experience with PCs when they were young, so have no trouble getting into this new form of communication. The military is eagerly building a "battlefield Internet" for use during combat, and parts of this are up and running and heavily used in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This is all uncharted territory. There's never been an army before where all the troops were so well connected with each other. So far, the benefits have outweighed any liabilities. But no one is sure where it will go next, and the public is largely unaware of the impact, because the mass media has not grasped nature and extent of the changes.

Canadian Government Imitates Bush Regime: Dishonors Their War Dead Too; Afraid To Let The Public See The Cost Of Empire

"I think Canadians need to see this, every Canadian. It says we care about these soldiers," Leger said, as tears rolled down his face.

26 April 2006 AP

The Conservative government has banned the media from showing live images of the flag-draped coffins of four Canadian soldiers when their bodies return from Afghanistan.

This has provoked anger among political opponents and some family members.

A roadside bomb blast killed the four men on Saturday in southern Afghanistan in the deadliest attack against Canadian troops by hostile forces since they deployed there in 2002.

The remains of Corporal Matthew Dinning, Bombardier Myles Mansell, Corporal Randy Payne and Lieutenant William Turner were to arrive at the Canadian Forces base in Trenton, Ontario, on Tuesday.

The media were banned from the evening ceremony, a move that mirrors US policy that generally bars coverage of returning US coffins since the beginning of the Iraq war in 2003.

The uncle of Dinning told the CBC that the family believes the government is trying to cover up the growing casualties in Afghanistan and was disturbed that family members were not informed of the unilateral decision by the government to cancel a public ceremony.

Richard Leger, father of Sergeant Marc Leger, who was killed in Afghanistan in April 2002, told the CBC on Tuesday that the nationally televised return of his son's coffin helped his family to heal.

Leger was one of four Canadian soldiers killed by a US pilot who mistook their live-ammunition exercise for a hostile attack.

"I think Canadians need to see this, every Canadian. It says we care about these soldiers," Leger said, as tears rolled down his face.

"It's hard for me to explain it, because it's in my heart. You're going to be removing that for the other families and I don't think that's right."

Liberal defence critic Ujjal Dosanjh called the media ban "absolutely un-Canadian" and accused Harper of acting more like a US president than a Canadian prime minister accountable to parliament.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP



(Graphic: London Financial Times)

Resistance Offensive Opens In Baquaba Area

4.27.06 Reuters & By THOMAS WAGNER, Associated Press Writer & AFP

Policemen and a civilian were killed when insurgents attacked four Iraqi police checkpoints in Baquba, 40 miles north of Baghdad on Thursday, police said.

"Armed men came in many vehicles and sprayed the checkpoint with bullets, killing six soldiers," the source said Thursday.

The attack occurred in the evening at a village called Deli Abbas, 40 kilometers (25 miles) north of Baquba, he said, adding four of the attackers were killed as soldiers returned fire.

The raids, including mortar fire, lasted several hours and the rebels were only repelled when U.S. forces came to the aid of the police.

The dead included six policemen, and six police and two civilians were wounded.

Assorted Resistance Action

4.27.06 & By THOMAS WAGNER, Associated Press Writer

A sister of Iraq's new Sunni Arab vice president was killed Thursday in a drive-by shooting in Baghdad, a day after the politician called for the Sunni-dominated insurgency to be crushed by force.

Mayson Ahmed Bakir al-Hashimi, 60, whose brother, Tariq al-Hashimi, was appointed by parliament as vice president on Saturday, was killed by unidentified gunmen in a BMW sedan as she was leaving her home Thursday morning with her bodyguard in southwestern Baghdad, said police Capt. Jamel Hussein. The bodyguard, Saad Ali, also died in the shooting, Hussein said.

It was the second recent killing in Tariq al-Hashimi's immediate family. On April 13, his brother, Mahmoud al-Hashimi, was shot while driving in a mostly Shiite area of eastern Baghdad.

On Thursday, two of the vice president's brothers, one an army officer, raced to the scene to recover the body of their sister, Hussein said. She had worked on the government's audit commission and was married with two grown children.

The television station Baghdad, owned by the vice president's Iraqi Islamic Party, showed home photos of Mayson al-Hashimi, wearing an orange headscarf, and footage of her bullet-riddled white SUV, while playing mournful music.

On Wednesday, Tariq al-Hashimi called for Iraq's insurgency to be put down by force.

A roadside bomb in Baghdad hit an Iraqi army patrol, killing a soldier, police said.

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

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

Mike Hastie

“Don’t Call It Civil War”

04/25/06 By Mike Whitney, Information Clearing House [Excerpts]

The civil war storyline is intended to divert attention from the bloody subjugation of the Iraqi people by a foreign military.

This is the real story of the Iraqi conflict.

The current malaise in Iraq is reducible to three bullet-points; occupation, occupation, and occupation. Any departure from this essential narrative is simply false.

The rationale leading up to the war was a lie. The justification for the ongoing occupation as a fight against terrorism (al Zarqawi) was a lie. The fairy tale about an Iraqi civil war is a lie.

And, presumably, all the future stories diverting attention from America’s bloody occupation will be lies.

Don’t call it civil war.

“It Is The Unwelcome Presence Of The Occupation Forces That Is Promoting Conflict”

April 26, 2006 Simon Cunich and Katie Cherrington, Green Left Weekly [Excerpt]

US and Australian supporters of the occupation claim that the presence of the foreign troops is all that is preventing a civil war between Iraq’s Shiite majority and Sunni minority.

But it is the unwelcome presence of the occupation forces that is promoting conflict.

The US is using the Iraqi security forces as proxies to wage a war against opponents of the occupation. The “official” repression by the security forces and US troops is backed by a covert program of assassinations and terror.

“Take Our Country Away From The Liars And Killers Who Govern It”

In the history of secrets, withheld from the American people, this is the biggest secret: that there are classes with different interests in this country.

April 2006 By Howard Zinn, The Progressive [Excerpts]

We have been led to believe that, from the beginning, as our Founding Fathers put it in the Preamble to the Constitution, it was "we the people" who established the new government after the Revolution.

When the eminent historian Charles Beard suggested, a hundred years ago, that the Constitution represented not the working people, not the slaves, but the slaveholders, the merchants, the bondholders, he became the object of an indignant editorial in The New York Times.

Our culture demands, in its very language, that we accept a commonality of interest binding all of us to one another.

We mustn't talk about classes. Only Marxists do that, although James Madison, "Father of the Constitution," said, thirty years before Marx was born that there was an inevitable conflict in society between those who had property and those who did not.

Our present leaders are not so candid. They bombard us with phrases like "national interest," "national security," and "national defense" as if all of these concepts applied equally to all of us, colored or white, rich or poor, as if General Motors and Halliburton have the same interests as the rest of us, as if George Bush has the same interest as the young man or woman he sends to war.

Surely, in the history of lies told to the population, this is the biggest lie.

In the history of secrets, withheld from the American people, this is the biggest secret: that there are classes with different interests in this country.

To ignore that; not to know that the history of our country is a history of slaveowner against slave, landlord against tenant, corporation against worker, rich against poor; is to render us helpless before all the lesser lies told to us by people in power.

If we as citizens start out with an understanding that these people up there; - the President, the Congress, the Supreme Court, all those institutions pretending to be "checks and balances" - do not have our interests at heart, we are on a course towards the truth.

Not to know that is to make us helpless before determined liars.

A more honest estimate of ourselves as a nation would prepare us all for the next barrage of lies that will accompany the next proposal to inflict our power on some other part of the world.

It might also inspire us to create a different history for ourselves, by taking our country away from the liars and killers who govern it, and by rejecting nationalist arrogance, so that we can join the rest of the human race in the common cause of peace and justice.

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

OCCUPATION REPORT

2003: Sowing The Wind 2006: Reaping The Whirlwind



U.S. soldiers block former Iraqi soldiers and officers as they protest outside former Saddam Hussein's Presidential Palace Monday June 2, 2003 in Baghdad.

The protesters are demanding payment of wages for the past three months and urged the U.S. not to dissolve the Iraqi Army. (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)

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

Pentagon Says Iraq Forces Not Ready For Prime Time: [And The Earth Is Round]

27 April 2006 Reuters

WASHINGTON: Even though 250,000 Iraqi forces have been trained they are not ready to take control of Iraq's security and a timeline cannot be set for United States troop withdrawal, the Pentagon said.

In a congressional hearing marked by sniping and sarcasm, Democratic lawmakers said it was incomprehensible why some of the more than 130,000 US troops in Iraq could not start coming back if a quarter of a million Iraqi security forces had been trained, as claimed by the Bush administration.

[72% of troops in Iraq think they should be out by 12.12.31, and 29% are for immediate withdrawal. They will set their own timeline, and fuck the politicians.]

***Big Surprises:* Iraq Oil Inspector General Says Collaborator Regime A Pack Of Corrupt Scum And That Resistance Attacks Frighten Off Foreign Investors**

"Actually it (the rebel campaign) has increased. They have always succeeded in attacking very sensitive sites," Ali al-Alaak told Reuters in an interview. "Every time we fix the problems because of those attacks, the next day or a few days later

they can attack the same site." Asked if rebels had crippled Iraq's energy industry, he said: "Yes".

Apr 25 By Michael Georgy, Reuters

The inspector general of Iraq's oil ministry released a grim report on oil smuggling on Tuesday, calling for an urgent government crackdown on what he said was the biggest threat to the economy.

It also accused the government of collusion with a vast smuggling network and criticized authorities for failing to implement legal measures to combat the illegal trade.

A raging insurgency and sectarian bloodshed has kept foreign investors away from Iraq's battered oil sector.

Now widespread corruption threatens to make them think twice about pumping billions of dollars into oilfields, even if guerillas let up on pipeline sabotage and suicide bombs.

"The government and members of the community strongly facilitate smuggling," said the inspector general's report.

Insurgents have succeeded in crippling Iraq's energy industry and the government has ignored calls for help in the battle against corruption and smuggling, the oil ministry's inspector general said on Tuesday.

"It has been going on for two or three years now without stopping. Actually it (the rebel campaign) has increased. They have always succeeded in attacking very sensitive sites," Ali al-Alaak told Reuters in an interview.

"Every time we fix the problems because of those attacks, the next day or a few days later they can attack the same site."

Asked if rebels had crippled Iraq's energy industry, he said: "Yes".

"We have taken these problems to the highest authorities and nothing was done. Perhaps they were busy with other problems," he said. "I have sent them reports three or four times. There have been no changes."

Iraq's oil industry is locked in a vicious cycle where rebel bombings of pipelines and refineries force the state to import oil products, which are then smuggled on their way in and sold in a vast black market.

"We are really losing billions," said Alaak, who was appointed by the oil minister in 2004 for five years and said he was not linked to any political party.

Alaak, who said he received several death threats from insurgents, stressed that a lack of reliable forces and technology to protect pipelines was contributing to the turmoil.

"We have a force of about 100,000. How many of them are reliable? I don't know," he said in his office on the first floor of the Ministry of Oil, a concrete structure sealed off from traffic by concrete barriers against bombs.

"When we increase our production in the south we cannot push more through that pipeline because it can't handle the pressure."

Even if imported oil products get past smugglers, moving fuel across a violent land with roaming insurgents and criminal gangs is highly risky. Some transport companies are eager to exploit the mayhem, Alaak said.

"We were checking for six months last year and we found that 50 million litres (of fuel) were missing that had been shipped from the south but never reached anywhere in Iraq."

Pondering what lies ahead if the new government fails to tackle problems plaguing the energy sector, especially guerrillas and graft, he said: "It will be very dark for Iraq."

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)

The Great Collaborator Commando Training Fiasco Rolls On: "Unfortunately, They Don't Like To Go To Where There's A Lot Of Activity"

For example, the intimidated commandos rely too much on checkpoints and often find excuses to skip out of foot patrols where they could confront insurgents: and

gain the trust of residents. [That's called stand still and evade, and it tends to preserve life.]

Apr 24 By ANTONIO CASTANEDA, Associated Press Writer

[Thanks to PB, who sent this in.]

Gaining public acceptance of the Interior Ministry commandos, recently renamed the "National Police," has become a priority for U.S. forces. American commanders plan eventually to hand over counterinsurgency operations in large swaths of Baghdad and other cities, including Samarra, to the Interior Ministry as part of the broad effort to move U.S. troops into a background role — and eventually out of Iraq.

During a recent patrol in Dora, one commando turned on his cell phone to proudly display an image of Muqtada al-Sadr, *the radical anti-American cleric* [translation: the nationalist political leader who is opposed to Bush and the Imperial occupation of his country].

Some U.S. trainers of the Iraqi police say the Interior Ministry force is on track to do independent patrols by the fall.

But many American soldiers say much work needs to be done.

For example, the intimidated commandos rely too much on checkpoints and often find excuses to skip out of foot patrols where they could confront insurgents: and gain the trust of residents. [That's called stand still and evade, and it tends to preserve life.]

"Unfortunately, they don't like to go to where there's a lot of activity," said 1st Lt. Chuck Williams of Laurel, Miss. "I don't press the issue so much because I don't think they're prepared." [Well, that just about says it all right there.]

The commandos are also hampered by equipment shortages, including weapons and body armor. They regularly travel on roads strewn with roadside bombs but lack armored vehicles.

"This is supposed to be the year of the police, but they keep asking when they're going to see this stuff," said Marine 1st Lt. Chance Puma of Norfolk, Va. [Never. Period. The collaborator politicians stole the money. End of discussion.]

GI Special Looks Even Better Printed Out

The following have posted issues; there may be others:

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