

GI SPECIAL 4D30:



4.29.06: Iraq Veterans Against The War march in a huge anti-war rally in New York. Over 200,000 demonstrated against the war in Iraq and the policies of US President George W. Bush. (AFP/Don Emmert)



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Republican Poll Finds 1% Of Iraqis Trust U.S. Occupation Troops

April 29, 2006 Bruce Wallace, Washington Post

Baghdad: A majority of Iraqis say their country is in dismal economic shape and getting worse, with 3 of 4 respondents also describing security in the country as poor, according to a new poll conducted by a conservative American think tank.

Only 1 percent said they trust U.S.-led coalition forces for their personal protection.

The poll reveals a population with little optimism about its economic future. The findings show that Iraqis believe jobs are harder to find, electrical service is poorer, and corruption has increased dramatically since last year.

The results were culled from 2,804 face-to-face interviews from across the country by the International Republican Institute in Washington.

Fifty-two percent think the country is moving in the wrong direction, the most since the institute's polls have been conducted, with 30 percent saying it is going in the right direction, the lowest percentage since the polling began.

Asked if they would be willing to "accept a small increase in the price of fuel in exchange for a large reduction in Iraq's international debt, an increase of several hundred thousand new jobs for Iraqis and significantly improved government services for the poorest Iraqis," 61 percent of those polled said "no."

When asked why they would not accept the price increase, 55 percent said it is because they are unemployed.

Notes From A Defeated Occupation:

**[You Want Some Reality Instead
Of Lying Bush Bullshit, Read
This:]
U.S. Troops Have To Threaten
"Their" Local Collaborators
With Prison To Make Them Go
On Patrol:**

And They All Hate The Occupation:

One U.S. Officer Gets It:

“Sometimes I Think We Just Give Them Something To Shoot At. When We Leave, All That Might Just Go Away”

"Tell your guys, if they refuse to ride in the Humvees, they will go to jail for 10 days. It's not a choice," said Lt. Aaron Tapalman, 23, the patrol leader.

April 29 By Jonathan Finer, The Washington Post & (UPI)

HAWIJAH, Iraq

U.S. troops training Iraqis in policing and security measures are encountering trainees who use their new skills to attack them, The Washington Post reports.

Most recently in the predominantly Sunni Muslim town of Hawijah, 175 miles north of Baghdad, a U.S. convoy discovered a fishing line strung across a road linked to an old Russian artillery shell. Not far off were four U.S.-trained Iraqi policemen who claimed they knew nothing about it, the report said.

“There's two kinds of Iraqis here, the ones who help us and the ones who shoot us, and there's an awful lot of them doing both,” said Staff Sgt. Jason Hoover, 26. [London Times, July 4, 1778: “There’s two kinds of Americans here, the ones who help us and the ones who shoot us, and there’s an awful lot of them doing both,” said Sgt. Geoffrey Mason, of His Majesty’s Royal Fusiliers.]

"Yes, it's frustrating. But we can't just stop working with them."

Last week, a raging fire erupted nearby from a sabotaged oil pipeline 50 feet from a police checkpoint. And earlier this month, a U.S. sniper team caught 14 policemen placing roadside bombs in the nearby town of Riyadh.

U.S. military police say more than 60 other police officers are on a watch list of suspected insurgent collaborators.

A city of about 40,000, Hawijah is nestled in the verdant pastures that straddle the Zab River, about 175 miles north of Baghdad. Its streets are pockmarked with craters from roadside bombs and lined with canals of pungent, green sewage.

Graffiti on walls and sidewalks hails the exploits of the group known as Hawijah's Heroes, the local insurgents whose videotaped attacks on U.S. troops are bestsellers in the city's markets.

Since the 1st Brigade Combat team arrived six months ago to police the Kirkuk region, 11 of its soldiers have been killed. Ten were assigned to the battalion based in Hawijah. At least 64 of the battalion's soldiers have been wounded, nearly 1 in 10 stationed here. And Hutson, the battalion commander, has had his convoy struck by roadside bombs 10 times, including six times on his own Humvee, a remarkable number for a senior officer.

"In some places they hide the fact that they don't like you. They don't hide it here," said Hutson, who stops by his base's medical station periodically for a shot of Toradol to soothe a shoulder injured when his vehicle flipped during one of the attacks.

"It's like the Chicago police department in the 1920s, so infested with mobsters that even the good ones are corrupt because they don't want to get killed," said Staff Sgt. Ryan Horton, 28, a military policeman from Dallas who works closely with the Iraqi police.

"They all live in the community with the terrorists, and so do their families. They are very, very intimidated." **[Another clueless cop. Perhaps, maybe, possibly, he might get some faint grip on the obvious someday: all the Hawijah Iraqis are the "terrorists" he babbles about. All the Iraqis want him dead because they are patriots, and for some odd reason, think that living under a military dictatorship run by George W. Bush is worse than giving up their lives fighting for freedom. Let's put 75,000 Iraqi troops in Dallas and see how he feels about that. Maybe some part of his brain would finally switch on. But then, that's expecting a lot from a cop, civilian or military.]**

Horton said he gives Iraqi officers just minutes' notice when bringing them on a mission, and never tells them exactly where they will be going to prevent them from tipping off insurgents.

"I've seen them laughing when we come back in with a vehicle destroyed by a bomb," he said. "I've seen them stand 10 feet away and do nothing but watch when we are in the middle of a firefight."

Over sweet tea in a grubby police station at the center of Hawijah last week, the station commander, Maj. Ghazey Ahmed Khalif, assured Horton and his team that things were quiet in town that day. But when Horton asked some Iraqi officers to accompany him on a drive through town, Khalif discreetly whispered something into a translator's ear.

"All of a sudden he remembers he got a tip about an IED," said Horton, using the military acronym for improvised explosive device, or roadside bomb. "If we hadn't asked his guys to come, put them at risk, no way he tells us about that."

Soldiers working with the Iraqi army here report similar problems. Iraqi soldiers have been reprimanded for selling their government-issued ammunition in local gun markets and for hocking their boots, only to turn up for duty in leather loafers.

Before a highway patrol to search for roadside bombs last week, an Iraqi unit accompanying U.S. soldiers refused to ride in American Humvees, which provide far better protection from bomb attacks than the unarmored pickup trucks normally used by Iraqi forces.

Shaking his head and staring at the ground, Sgt. Ghazi Esa Muhammad, 25, explained that a local cleric had decreed that Iraqis killed in an "occupier vehicle" would not go to heaven.

"Tell your guys, if they refuse to ride in the Humvees, they will go to jail for 10 days. It's not a choice," said Lt. Aaron Tapalman, 23, the patrol leader. "They want to be able to claim they are not associated with us," said Tapalman, after the Iraqi sergeant relented and told his men to mount up.

About an hour later, the patrol came across a white bag on the roadside that Tapalman suspected might contain a bomb. When he asked some Iraqi soldiers to move it off the road, their commander balked, saying it wasn't his job.

"It is your job to protect the people," Tapalman said, increasingly exasperated. "I can go and move it myself, and you know what? I will, but don't you think your people should see you doing that kind of stuff. Someday we're not going to be here anymore."

The Iraqi soldier declined again, apologetically, and drove away.

While maintaining that their troops are improving, Iraqi commanders acknowledge that their charges' loyalties are often divided at best.

"There is sensitivity among the soldiers about the occupation," said Lt. Col. Abdul Rahman Sekran, 42, the executive officer of the 1st battalion, 4th Iraqi Army division.

Ill will runs in both directions.

After U.S. forces detained some police a few weeks ago, other officers posted a large white banner on a well-traveled bridge downtown.

Written in both Arabic and English, the English one read: "Al-Hawijah police reject to accompany the coalition forces in the mutual patrol in Al-Hawijah because police is existed to protect people and not to protect coalition soldiers."

Local political leaders have also bridled at American calls for cooperation in improving the security situation. Hawijah-area representatives recently launched a boycott of the provincial council in Kirkuk.

Addressing a roomful of mayors and council members last week, Col. David R. Gray, the 1st Brigade Combat Team commander, announced he had agreed to fund 15 reconstruction projects worth nearly \$3 million. But establishing a secure enough environment to execute them, he said, was partly the residents' responsibility.

"Many of you told me the attacks are the work of foreigners," said Gray, 48, of Herscher, Ill. "Gentlemen, my conclusion is that the problem is not foreigners, but a problem within your tribes. And if the problem is within your tribes, the solution lies with all of you in this room."

When the colonel quickly left for another meeting, the room erupted in anger.

"Always, the Arabs are accused of being part of the terrorists," said Sami al-Assi, a local tribal leader, tapping his finger against the podium for emphasis as his colleagues nodded their approval.

"All you do is come over to our area and arrest the police and soldiers," said Ruhan Sayyid, the meeting's chairman. "How are they going to fight the insurgents if that's how they are treated?" Hutson, serving as Gray's proxy after his departure, warned, "If I have a report of a policeman who's in the wrong line of work, who's acting as an insurgent, I will arrest him."

Gray and Hutson said they had considered bringing to Hawijah an Iraqi army battalion from Kirkuk, where security forces are composed primarily of Kurds. The move, they acknowledge, would be intensely provocative for a population already furious about Kurds' intention to bring more territory under the control of their semiautonomous northern region.

"It would be a disaster," said Sekran, the Iraqi army battalion executive officer. "The population would refuse this with violence, and it would cause a civil war."

Other American officers said a better path is withdrawing all outside troops and leaving the city to the local security forces.

"Sometimes I think we just give them something to shoot at. When we leave, all that might just go away," Tapalman said. "But then they'd be in charge." [They already are in charge. Duh.]

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

2400 U.S. Dead

4.29.06 Associated Press

PENTAGON: The Pentagon says the American death toll in Iraq since the start of the war has topped 24-hundred.

The military puts the figure at 2401.

The number includes all U-S military deaths in Iraq since the March 2003 invasion, plus seven civilians working for the military.

The number of Iraqis killed in the war is believed to be in the tens of thousands.

IED Kills One U.S. Soldier Southwest Of Baghdad

April 29 (Reuters) & AP

A U.S. Army soldier died Saturday when a roadside bomb hit his convoy near Baghdad, the military said.

The attack occurred southwest of the capital at about 4 p.m., the military said.

With at least 72 deaths, April has been the bloodiest month for U.S. forces in Iraq since November.

Waukegan Marine Killed In Iraq

April 29, 2006 BY DAN MORAN News Sun

Edward Davis III had been a Marine since September 1999, serving as a firearms range instructor and crew leader of an amphibious assault vehicle. Earlier this year, the Waukegan native told his father he volunteered for a tour of duty in Iraq.

"I talked to him about it, and I said, 'Why are you going over there?' He said to me, 'Dad, this is what I do. This is what I am. I'm a Marine,'" Edward Davis Jr. recalled Friday. "The last thing I said to him before he left was, 'Come home to us,' and he said, 'Don't worry, Dad, I will.' "

Early Friday, the Davis family received word that Sgt. Edward Davis III, 31, had been killed in action in Iraq late Thursday.

According to his father, Sgt. Davis' wife was informed around 2 a.m. Friday that his Humvee was struck by a bomb while on patrol, possibly near the Euphrates River.

Edward Davis Jr. said he received a call at work around 11 a.m. from a family member who told him "Little Eddie" was gone.

"They killed my son," Davis said, his eyes filling with tears.

Sgt. Davis, a 1993 graduate of Warren Township High School, leaves behind his wife, Preena, daughters Priscilla, 11, and Alicia, 4, and his 2-year-old son, Edward Davis IV. Along with his parents and a stepmother, he had two brothers and three sisters.

Davis completed basic training at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego after spending his post-high school years working as a truck driver and a steelworker, according to his father.

"He excelled at everything he did," his father said. "I just want the people of Lake County and Waukegan to know that Waukegan lost one of its very own. . . . He was born here, and Waukegan lost one of its own."

Davis is the first Lake County native to die in Iraq this year and the third from Warren High School to die since combat operations began more than three years ago.

Five U.S. Troops Wounded In Yusufiyah Raid

April 28, 2006 By Sean D. Naylor, Army Times staff writer [Excerpt]

The raids in Yusufiyah, 20 miles southwest of Baghdad in the heart of the Sunni Triangle, were the latest battles in a small, vicious war being waged largely in the shadows of the wider counterinsurgency effort.

Five U.S. troops were hurt in the raid, but they have either returned to duty or are expected to shortly. **[Or not. Given all the happy talk that characterizes the rest of the command propoganda in the report, it may be prudent to be skeptical about that.]**

Two U.S. Convoys Attacked: Casualties Not Reported

4.30.06 AP

A roadside bomb hit a U.S. military convoy in central Tikrit, police Maj. Ahmed Awad said. He said the blast set a Humvee ablaze, causing U.S. casualties, but the U.S. command could not immediately confirm that.

A roadside bomb exploded near a U.S. convoy in Rawah, 175 miles northwest of Baghdad, witnesses said, but casualties were not immediately reported.

Metz Wounded In Iraq, But Expected To Make Recovery

April 29, 2006 By COURIER STAFF, The Ark City Traveler

A Winfield High School graduate wounded in Iraq is expected to make a full recovery from his injuries, his family said.

Scott Metz, 31, was struck in the upper hamstring muscle by sniper fire as he patrolled in Baghdad April 3. Metz is a 1994 graduate of WHS.

He is a member of the Army's First Armored Division.

His mother, Karen Metz, visited her son as he was undergoing treatment in Germany. He is being treated as an outpatient and is expected to return to action as soon as he is fully recovered.

"He received the Purple Heart while he was in the hospital in Baghdad," Karen Metz said.

Scott Metz is a 1999 graduate of Southwestern College.

His grandparents are James R. and Joan Conrod of Winfield and Delores Metz and the late Kenneth L. Metz of Winfield.

Metz had been in Baghdad for about three weeks when the incident occurred, his mother said.

Resistance Uses “Motorized Rail Cart” In Successful Attack

April 27, 2006 By Phillip Schladweiler, Pierce County Herald [Excerpts]

Feb. 22, 2006, the day that I was injured with two other soldiers Specialist Perry and Specialist Fisher.

I am the only sergeant in 3 South, which leaves me in charge if the stuff hits the fan. But that day started out like a regular rotation to 3 south, nothing out of the usual. We had gone through four hours of our normal five-hour shift when the attack occurred. I remember seeing an explosion about 5 to 10 feet to the west of our position.

The next thing that I remember is gagging on a respirator tube and seeing nothing but black. Later, I come to again laying on my back strapped in and am on a C-130 in route to Walter Reed Medical Center. I ask the crew taking care, “Where are Perry and Fisher” and they look around and point to Perry right across from me, but they didn’t know of any Fisher.

From there, I start the rest of my treatment to recovery because a lot was done in Ballad, Iraq and in Germany. My injuries are severe brain trauma, which they had to crack my

skull to relieve pressure, loss of sight in the right eye, complete facial reconstruction to my right face, random shrapnel to the face, shrapnel in my left shoulder and right middle finger.

SPC Perry receives severe brain trauma, worse than mine, to the point where he didn't remember going to Iraq, larger amounts of shrapnel to the left side of the face, and left eye damage, but still useable.

About a week later, I find out that Fisher was fine and back home at Fort Campbell, Ky., going through recover for left body burns and shrapnel. All three of us can still not remember what exactly happened; it's all black to us.

After receiving a call from Fisher a month after the attack, he told us what our rear-detachment captain at Fort Campbell tells him the official report was.

We were getting attacks for the northwest, north, northeast, starting with AK-47 fire. During the AK fire, 4 to 5 RPG's hit directly onto our sandbag position and three 170mm IED's attached to a motorized rail cart slams into the eastside of the position, causing the position to collapse on us and starts us on fire.

All three of us still continued to fight, even when we were blacked out. Perry and Fisher and I all fired off all seven of our 30 round magazines and I also called in a fire mission for artillery.

Three Mercenaries Killed, Seven Wounded

Three people have died in an attack on a private security convoy south of Baghdad, the UK Foreign Office said.

One British civilian was hurt in the attack, but there are no details of the injuries.

The three people killed were not Britons, and the nationality of a second injured person was unknown.

Meanwhile, the British military said two British civilians had been hurt on Saturday in a bomb blast near Basra, in southern Iraq.

The pair were part of a contractor convoy that was struck by a roadside bomb 40km northwest of the city.

The injured Britons were taken by helicopter to the British military base in Shaibah, south of Basra.

Somebody Finally Noticed:

Resistance On The Offensive: “A Spate Of Worrisome, Large-Scale Direct Attacks”

April 30, 2006 By Thomas E. Ricks, Washington Post Staff Writer [Excerpt]

The fundamental fact of Iraq is that insurgent attacks on Iraqi police and army troops continue essentially unabated, said Jeffrey White, a former Defense Intelligence Agency analyst of Middle Eastern security issues.

"There are peaks and valleys," he said Friday at a seminar of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

"It goes up and down, but it seems to grow over time."

Also, he said, lately there has been on Iraqi police stations and army outposts, some involving as many as 50 fighters.

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



A U.S. Marine from the 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment aims his rifle at suspected insurgents from a sandbagged guard tower at Government Center April 17, 2006 in Ramadi. Insurgents attacked several U.S. Marine positions with car bombs and rocket propelled grenades during a 90 minute skirmish Monday. (AP Photo/Todd Pitman)

TROOP NEWS

**THIS IS WHAT THE COWARDLY
TRAITOR BUSH WON'T LET
AMERICANS SEE:
THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT IS NOT
AFRAID TO OPENLY HONOR THEIR
WAR DEAD WHEN THEY COME HOME**



Italian soldiers and the Carabinieri carry the flag-draped coffins of three personnel killed in Iraq, on their arrival at Ciampino airport near Rome April 29, 2006.
REUTERS/Giampiero Sposito

Dogs In Command At Ft. Bragg Get Muzzle Award

4.24.06 Army Times

Among recipients of the Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression's 2006 Muzzle Awards was the command of Fort Bragg, N.C., for requiring journalists covering the court-martial of Sgt. Hasan Akbar to sign an agreement that they wouldn't speak to other soldiers on base or talk with media analysts about the case's possible outcome.

Since 1992, the Jefferson Muzzles have been announced each year on or near April 13, Jefferson's birthday, "to draw national attention to abridgments of free speech and press," the center says.

1.4 Million Military Personnel: Only 65,000 Infantry In Army & Marines Combined: Today's Warfighting Requires "Intelligent Grunts" *Shit Brained Officer Says: That's Almost A Contradiction.*

Out of 1.4 million military personnel on active duty, according to retired Maj. Gen. Robert Scales, who was an Army War College commandant, "at last count, there were 65,000 infantrymen in the Army and the Marine Corps, combined. They wouldn't fill FedEx stadium!"

April 24, 2006 By Sydney J. Freedberg Jr., National Journal, [Excerpts]

War is driving change across the U.S. Army and Marine Corps, and nowhere more so than in the oldest military specialty of all, the often-neglected foot soldiers of the infantry.

While air forces evolved from biplanes to stealth bombers, and navies from gun turrets to cruise missiles, the "poor bloody infantry" stayed mostly the same from the First World War to the Persian Gulf War: helmets, grenades, rifles, a few light machine guns, and leather boots. The decades added awkward flak vests that could sometimes stop shrapnel, but not bullets.

Today, however, the soldiers at Fort Benning are visibly different from their predecessors of just three years ago. They wear Kevlar jackets reinforced with rigid breast and back plates, 16 pounds per man, the first mass-produced bulletproof armor in history and all but unknown in the U.S. military before the invasion of Iraq.

The soldiers carry rifles with sophisticated optical sights, tools that, before the insurgency, were reserved for snipers and commandos. They practice treating casualties

with a new first-aid kit -- tourniquet, gloves, and an Israeli-developed pressure dressing -
- that was derived from last year's battlefield lessons.

And these are just the tools, the visible surfaces of far more fundamental changes in how human beings are being taught to fight. "When I went through basic training, it was about four hours of 'here's a pressure dressing,' " recalled Sgt. 1st Class Michael Clay, a Benning instructor who first fought Iraqis in 1991. "Now we have two days dedicated to that alone." And trainers reinforce the first-aid skills, working casualty drills into other exercises, to make sure soldiers know how to quickly and efficiently treat a wounded comrade.

Those exercises are more demanding than they used to be. Privates practice leading squads and teams of fellow recruits -- normally an experienced sergeant's job -- and under close supervision, they devise and execute their own plans for practice missions.

They move swiftly from sterile shooting ranges to live-fire drills like the one Sgt. Williams took his recruits through, a jolting truck ride down dirt roads, with targets popping up on either side. It was a simulated ambush of a simulated convoy -- to which the recruits responded with bursts of real bullets, fired first from their lurching, moving vehicles and then as they leapt out to counterattack on foot.

"I didn't do half of this," said Lt. Col. Ricardo Mitchell after he and the recruits finished the exercise. Mitchell did his basic training in the peacetime Army of the 1980s.

Today, as commander of one of Benning's training battalions, he said, "We are teaching things to privates comparable to what, five or six years ago, we were asking lieutenants to do."

A revolution is under way in the American infantry. After 9/11, "the box opened up," said Staff Sgt. Timothy Howell, a Benning instructor. In the 1990s, the Army's mantra was, "'The book says -- the book says,'" he recalled. "Now it's, 'What's your experience in Iraq?' "

Survey teams went to Baghdad shortly after the city fell in 2003 to get feedback from troops on their equipment. "I'm still amazed at all the changes that have been made -- body armor, knee pads, helmet chin straps, even these boots," Howell said, "because a soldier said, 'This would be better,' and somebody listened. Now the Army is actually listening."

The institutional Army still struggles, however, to treat foot soldiers with the same focused seriousness that it treats tanks. "It's difficult because it requires us to make changes in how we fund items," said Col. Robert Radcliffe, director of Combat Developments at Fort Benning's Infantry Center.

A tank is designed, tested, and fielded as a package: "It's got a weapon, it's got communications, it's got armor. But we've never treated a soldier as a system," Radcliffe said. "We've got a rifle that's got its own funding line and a radio that's got its own funding line. As we develop equipment, we give it to the soldier, never paying much attention to how these pieces of equipment interact."

The Army has developed more than 300 individual items that a soldier could potentially wear or carry (not counting heavy equipment). Many are incompatible. Until a 2004 redesign, the standard helmet snagged on the back plate of the new body armor when a soldier looked up sharply.

Fort Benning now teaches recruits a new way to hold their rifles because the rigid chest plate restricts their arm movement. The standard night-vision sight can unbalance the helmet so much that it makes some soldiers' heads bob. A squad has to haul nine different kinds of batteries. All told, the average infantryman carries 65 to 90 pounds of equipment into combat.

This summer, the Army will issue the first set of gear designed as an integrated ensemble, called "Land Warrior," on a trial basis to more than 400 troops at Fort Lewis, Wash. The product of a difficult decade-long development process, Land Warrior incorporates not only body armor, radios, and night vision but also a tactical computer network -- all running off compatible batteries. If the soldiers like it, they will deploy with it to Iraq.

But new technology and training can help only so much. Human flesh remains terribly fragile. In an era of stealth jets, cruise missiles, and satellite-guided bombs, the world's high-tech superpower still depends on infantrymen willing to walk into harm's way.

Out of 1.4 million military personnel on active duty, according to retired Maj. Gen. Robert Scales, who was an Army War College commandant, "at last count, there were 65,000 infantrymen in the Army and the Marine Corps, combined. They wouldn't fill FedEx stadium!

"With the exception of Kosovo" -- a campaign waged entirely by air strikes -- "in every war this nation has fought, we have run out of infantry. What we've had was airpower and artillery that was able, to some degree, to make up for the deficiencies of the infantry with firepower. So what have our enemies done lately? They've found ways to avoid firepower."

The insurgency began in Iraq when the ragtag guerrillas of the Saddam Fedayeen survived a U.S. onslaught that destroyed Saddam Hussein's best-armored tanks.

M1 tanks and M2 armored transports built for the plains of Cold War Europe have proven to be effective city fighters, spearheading assaults into Baghdad and Falluja. But someone still has to walk alongside to keep insurgents from sneaking up in the juggernauts' blind spots. And no tank or spy plane can search the inside of a house.

So in Iraq, technically trained troops such as artillerymen and engineers often park their heavy equipment and pull double duty as infantrymen. And with no demarcated front line in Iraq, mechanics and supply clerks and other rear-area troops end up defending their base areas and convoys.

"It didn't matter what your military specialty was," said Staff Sgt. Howell. "If you were a truck driver, you were a truck driver as long as you were behind the wheel, but as soon as that truck stopped, you were an 11-Bravo" -- the Army code for combat infantry.

Howell is a drill sergeant in Fort Benning's Basic Combat Training Brigade, which is intended to give every new private core combat skills. "We've got a radiology technician," Howell said, gesturing at one of his recruits. "He's still digging holes and doing the battle drills."

Just like the future full-time infantrymen in the more intensive Infantry Training Brigade, the future support troops in the Basic Combat Training Brigade carry their rifles all day and take turns guarding them at night, Howell said, "just like they will in Iraq." And like all military personnel who venture off base in Iraq, they wear full body armor.

For the first time in 400 years, since the perfection of the musket, the technology of protecting the infantryman had caught up, almost, to the technology of killing him. World War II troops wore no armor except a steel "pot" helmet.

The Vietnam era produced flak jackets that could stop some shrapnel, but not bullets. But with SAPI, said Arthur Durante, a developer of infantry manuals at Fort Benning, "I've got photographs of guys holding the flattened bullet that hit them in the chest: It knocked them down, but they got up and shot the guy that shot them."

So while troops in Vietnam routinely ditched their sweltering flak jackets, troops in Iraq do not. "Once, we ended up pushing 5 kilometers or so, north of Haditha," said Capt. Christopher Conner, who now teaches new Marine lieutenants at The Basic School in Quantico, Va. "It was probably 110 degrees. Not one single time did one single marine break the seal on his flak jacket."

Army Capt. Eric Hillerson, an instructor at Fort Benning, agreed. "We saw that it did work," he said. "We didn't go out the gate without our helmets and vests on. It's hot and heavy, but the protection is worth it."

Body armor has kept the G.I. death toll down in Iraq. But with the military issuing more add-on armor to cover the gaps where troops get wounded -- thighs, groin, shoulders, beneath the armpit where the flak jacket fastens -- the weight of the full kit has doubled, from 16 to 33 pounds.

"The newer SAPI plates, if they're optional, a lot of guys won't wear them, because there's so much weight," said Maj. Brett Clark, a Marine Corps veteran of Falluja now on loan to Fort Benning as an instructor in the Army infantry captain's course. "At what point do we stop piling on that weight? Is the armor going to slow you down enough that you're easier to hit?"

Equipment officials are racking their brains. "The armor is one of those places where a hard choice had to be made," said Maj. Cashman, now the infantry capabilities officer for the Marine Corps Combat Development Command at Quantico. "We are at the technological limit for ceramic plates right now."

Designers are transforming today's optional add-ons that cover the shoulders, neck, and thighs into a working ensemble. Researchers are building electronic items, issued today as separate gear, into the helmet and the body armor, whose frame picks up radio signals like an antenna.

"We have a very responsive enemy," Brandler said, "and as we provide certain levels of protection, they up the threat."

No amount of armor can make a man into a walking tank. The infantryman's first line of defense is his eyes, his ears, and his own quick thinking -- which intense training, and select technology, can sharpen.

When he went through basic training just 10 years ago, recalled Staff Sgt. Howell, the drill sergeants' mantra was, "Put your head down and walk!" Now an Iraq veteran and drill sergeant himself, Howell said, "the No. 1 thing I stress for these soldiers is, you have to look around. You have to know what's normal. That way you can know what's abnormal. So if you come down the road one day and there's no kids playing where there used to be kids, you get that feeling in your stomach and tell someone, before the attack."

Today, "Know the normal" is the infantryman's mantra. "He needs to look for the absence of the normal, as opposed to the presence of the abnormal," said Maj. Clark, the Marine officer, unconsciously echoing the Army sergeant. "Children on the street -- trash on the street -- the slightest change. He is himself an intelligence-gathering device."

While awareness begins with training, technology can augment it. Some of the American infantryman's most powerful tools are the least obvious. Look past their bulky body armor to their handheld radios and headsets, the scopes on their rifles, and the ungainly black attachments on their helmets -- "night- optical devices," a little revolution in themselves.

"We had 'starlight scopes' in Vietnam," recalled retired Maj. Gen. Waldo Freeman, "but they were so maintenance-intensive that a typical company" -- 50 to 135 men, depending on casualties -- "would have maybe three that worked."

The foot-long, telescope-like devices were too bulky to use on the move, in any case, he said: "When we actually had to move after dark, you'd walk all night and get maybe 3 kilometers."

Today, it is U.S. troops who run convoys and launch attacks under cover of darkness. "We did the majority of our missions in limited visibility," said Capt. Scott Thomas, an Iraq veteran now teaching young officers at Fort Benning. "We had the ability to see at night when the enemy couldn't."

"Five years ago," said Maj. Glenn Dean, chief of small arms for the Directorate of Combat Developments at Fort Benning, "we were an 'iron sight' army," trained to aim just like every rifleman since the 19th century: Squint and shoot, carefully aligning the post at the front of the barrel with the notch at the back (the "iron sights").

Today's optics let troops throw their rifles to their shoulders, both eyes open, for a quick, accurate shot on a fleeting target. Combat battalions which used to have no optical sights, except for those carried by their snipers, now give them to every soldier.

Today, compact electronics -- and a military chastened by sergeants buying Motorola walkie-talkies out of their own salaries -- allow each squad of six to 13 troops to carry at least one radio. Personal radios and even hands-free headsets are proliferating.

Technology plus training can make infantrymen more effective. Technology without training can get them killed. The situations that soldiers face on the streets of Iraq, or elsewhere, and the tools they use are getting more complex. But the emerging revolution in American infantry is not making the role of the infantry any less demanding.

"The vast responsibility that is pushed down to the lower levels, the combat power that is pushed down to the lower levels, the larger areas of operation, as well as the technology, requires better trained, tactically savvy, intelligent leaders," said Maj. Clark, looking at his young officer-students a few yards away.

"Intelligent grunts: That's almost a contradiction. But it's definitely a thinking man's game."

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action

29/04/2006 Evening Echo & AFP & (Reuters) & (AP) & Apr 30 AFP

In the town of Jurf al-Sakhar, 43 miles south of Baghdad, insurgents kidnapped a Sunni policeman and his brother from their home early this morning, lined them up outside and shot them dead.

About the same time, a roadside bomb targeting an Iraqi police patrol exploded in Ghazaliyah in west Baghdad, killing one policeman and wounding two.

Two Iraqi army soldiers were killed and six others wounded when insurgents opened fire on their convoy in Suwera, southeast of Baghdad, an interior ministry official said.

A police commando was also killed in another attack.

Two police officers died when a roadside bomb hit a convoy carrying the police chief of Baiji, an oil refinery town in the north, police said.

Five policemen were also wounded in the attack, apparently targeting police chief Sufian Mustafa, who escaped unscathed.

Three policemen were wounded when a car bomb detonated near an Iraqi army base south of the town of Qaim near the Syrian border, Qaim police colonel Jamal Shihab said.

In Ghazaliyah in west Baghdad, a roadside bomb targeting an Iraqi police patrol killed one policeman and wounded two, said police Lt. Mohammed Hanoun.

Elsewhere in the capital, a drive-by shooting killed two Iraqi brothers who worked for a foreign contracting company and were walking through the eastern neighborhood of New Baghdad, said police 1st Lt. Ali Abbas.

Two policemen were wounded in a roadside bomb attack on their patrol on the highway between Tuz and Kirkuk, while two more police were hurt in a similar attack in Baghdad's western Yarmuk district.

An Iraqi policeman shot dead on his way to work in the northern town of Samarra.

In Ramadi, 70 miles west of Baghdad, unknown persons attacked three policemen traveling in a car carrying the salaries of police in Fallujah, killing one, wounding another, and kidnapping the third with the bag of money, police said.

Sunday two roadside bombs targeting separate Iraqi police patrols exploded within a half hour of each other in two areas of western Baghdad, wounding two policemen and a civilian driving nearby, police said.

NO FLOWERS TODAY



Photos : THE CHILDREN OF IRAQ

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

The Bush Regime: Government Of, By And For The Oil Industry

April 25th, 2006 Democracy Now [Excerpt]

Antonia Juhasz, visiting scholar at the Institute for Policy Studies. For years, she was Project Director at the International Forum on Globalization.

We speak with Antonia Juhasz about her new book, "The Bush Agenda: Invading the World, One Economy at a Time." The book tracks the radical neo-liberal economic program the Bush administration has tried to impose on Iraq, which threatens to leave Iraq's economy and oil reserves largely in the hands of multinational corporations.

ANTONIA JUHASZ:

The Bush administration is the most beholden administration probably in American history to the oil and gas industry.

This is the first time in history that the President, Vice President and Secretary of State are all former energy company officials. In fact, both Bush and Rice have more experience as energy company officials than they do as government leaders.

Cheney outbeats them. He's spent 30 years working for government. However, his five years at Halliburton have been so profitable that you might say that his Halliburton years outweigh their oil years, because Bush was a very bad oil company executive. But their links to the oil sector are deep.

The oil industry provided more than 13 times more money to the Bush-Cheney ticket in the first round of elections than it did to his competitor, nine times more in the second. And this industry has been absolutely coddled by the Bush administration: enormous tax subsidies, deregulation, and, I would argue, a war waged on their behalf.

At the end of Saddam Hussein's tenure, he had signed about 30 contracts with companies from all around the world to give them access to Iraq's oil sector. None of those contracts were with the United States or U.S. oil companies.

The Cheney Energy Task Force, that met at the very beginning of the Bush administration, mapped out foreign suitors to Iraqi oil, listed all of the companies, all of the countries, the fields that they had access to, within a document that said we need -- the U.S. needs to get greater access to Middle East oil.

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.

“My Government Killed Me In Vietnam And I Didn’t Even Know It”

JUSTICE FOR ALL AGENT ORANGE VICTIMS!

March 29, 2006 Speech by Dave Cline, Vietnam Veteran, in Vietnam; Veterans For Peace

First let me thank the Vietnam Association of Victims of Agent Orange/dioxin for organizing this international conference and to the Agent Orange Vets from Korea, Australia, New Zealand and Canada who have traveled here to participate.

The US delegation I am leading is made up of Agent Orange vets Frank Corcoran, Joan Duffy, Ralph Steele Dan Shea.

I was an infantryman with the 25th Infantry Division in Cu Chi and Tay Ninh in 1967 and was wounded 3 times but do not suffer from dioxin related health conditions myself.

When I came back from the war, I had knowledge of the use of Agent Orange having seen sprayed areas and knew that they destroyed nature but had no knowledge of the negative effects these defoliants had on human beings.

I remember in 1969 a veteran I knew named Jeff Sharlet died of cancer at age 27 in the Miami, Florida Veterans Hospital and thinking it was strange that someone so young had cancer.

Over the years other friends of mine got sick or had deformed children or sometimes died. Mike Keegan and John Miffin who died and John and Rena Kopystenski who had several children with birth defects are among them. So this issue has always been personal to me.

In 1977, a woman who worked as a claims representative at the Chicago Veterans Administration named Maude DeVictor was the first person to really put two and two together when she witnessed the VA higher-ups denying veterans claims and covering up their health problems and the connections to dixon exposure.

The next year, 1978, a veteran name Paul Reutershan who was sick with cancer got on television and said "my government killed me in Vietnam and I didn't even know it". He began a lawsuit against the chemical companies who manufactured Agent Orange, Blue, White, Purple etc. but he never lived to see that lawsuit completed because he died within the year.

The reason that this lawsuit was started was because the VA was denying veterans claims for medical treatment and compensation and according to US law, citizens cannot sue the government for these type of claims.

From 1978-1984 the lawsuit continued and was eventually settled, although many veterans opposed the settlement for millions of dollars. Sadly many veterans got very little of that money since the army of lawyers who got involved got a good portion of it in legal fees.

I have been a member of Vietnam Veterans Against the War since 1970 and that organization played a critical role in launching the movement for justice for Agent Orange vets, supporting Maude Devictor who became the godmother of the movement, recruiting veterans to joining the lawsuit and raising general public awareness of this issue.

But we always believed that while the chemical companies had responsibility and should be held liable, the primary responsibility lay with the US government which ordered and continued to use these poisons after they were becoming aware of the negative effects on people.

Instead of changing course, they covered up the facts and kept using them until 1971. After that they gave their remaining supplies to the former Army of the Republic of Vietnam who continued to use them until 1975 when that regime ceased to exist.

In VVAW, our demand has always been Testing, Treatment and Compensation for Agent Orange Victims. We never thought the lawsuit against the chemical companies was the answer, but rather a way to continue putting pressure on the US government.

Finally progress was made on that front when in 1991, Congress passed the Agent Orange Act, acknowledging several conditions as being dioxin related for purposes of medical treatment and disability compensation. It also established a mechanism for the National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine to review new studies and make recommendations to the Secretary of the Veterans Administration for expanding the recognized conditions.

Currently there are thirteen conditions acknowledged by the VA including two conditions among veterans children but over 27 conditions have been rejected since there was a finding by the IOM of not enough scientific research to indicate a connection to dioxin exposure.

So many veterans are still not being treated with any fairness. And how does someone give justice to all those who have died? The hidden casualties of the Vietnam War continue to grow but the struggle continues as well.

And today we need to talk about the other side of the coin, not just American, Korean, Australian, New Zealand and Canadian veterans but the people of Vietnam as well.

Remember also that these chemicals were also used in parts of Cambodia and Laos as well as along the DMZ in Korea and in Panama.

In the United States we began the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign to support the efforts of VAVA and join with concerned veterans and people in other countries to demand Justice for ALL Agent Orange Victims!

While the Campaign is sponsored by Veterans For Peace, it is made up of war veterans, Vietnamese-Americans, peace activists, environmentalists and other friends of Vietnam. We are supporting the international petition drive in support of the VAVA lawsuit and recently sponsored a 10 city speaking tour by 4 VAVA members.

We are also planning to encourage sympathetic representatives and senators to introduce legislation in Congress for the US government to step up to the plate and provide compensation and medical assistance, if not for political reasons, then for moral and humanitarian purposes. It is time to really heal the wounds of that war, not to ignore them or let them fade into history.

Let me make one last point. This is a struggle to expose and end the use of chemical weapons by all nations but especially by my government.

This is not just about something that happened over 30 years ago. Today the Bush administration has led our country and the world into another invasion and occupation, this time in Iraq and is now using Depleted Uranium that will in time poison US troops and Iraqi citizens. They have also used White Phosphorus bombs against whole cities like Fallujah.

It is time for humanity to demand an end to these weapons as part of our efforts to abolish war. That is what Veterans For Peace is pledged to work for. That will only come through the determined efforts of all of us, throughout the world.

The great American abolitionist Fredrick Douglass said:

"If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without the thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.

This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never has and it never will"

With that as our watchword, lets make this conference a call to all the people of the world.

JUSTICE FOR ALL AGENT ORANGE VICTIMS!

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.

DOWN WITH THE ROMAN HELICOPTER

September 02, 2005 **By Max Watts, co-author of: LEFT FACE, Soldier Unions and Resistance Movements in Modern Armies, By DAVID CORTRIGHT AND MAX WATTS; Contributions in Military Studies, Number 107; GREENWOOD PRESS, New York; Westport, Connecticut; London**

Years ago Erka and I read a book. In it a young Roman Woman slept with a German soldier, and conceived. The soldier was whisked away – to North Africa, by helicopter, and never returned. In 1940.

There were no helicopters in Rome in 1940.

We don't remember much else from that book, but whenever we note a careless anachronism, or something making little sense, we look at one another and say: Another Roman Helicopter!

Now, I'll be the first to admit that it's not very important – to history, literature, or politics – whether one minor author invents non-existent helicopters in 1940 Rome. When Italy declared war against defeated France. Now, if they were to write that there were no helicopters in Vietnam in 1975, nor even mentioned them – at all - in that American defeat, would that be – unimportant? Impossible !

Who can forget the dramatic scenes of the last helicopter taking off from the US Embassy rooftop in Saigon, knocking the fleeing clingers off the skids? Or the GI's scrambling off the Hueys into combat against the Vietnamese ? Can't be done, to wipe that out of history, into the Memory Hole ..

We don't, here and now, have Orwell's Ministry of Truth, the daily rewrites of the past, changing yesteryears papers to conform with today's, this year's or decade's, correct line!

But sometimes I wonder whether that is necessary.

Somehow the past is adapted, fit to print, at least emptied of – essential – content. Thirty years down the track, an anniversary, I read scores of articles about "the loss" of Saigon – (Who lost, who found, it? Mox nix, never mind about that.)

None, but really none! even mentioned the Resistance Inside The American Army. RITA.

Was RITA, like the Roman Helicopter, a non-existent figment of some author's imagination? Did nothing to end the Vietnam war?

Fortunately.... I take out my DVDs, my videos, of FTA, that murdered Film.

Lazarus-like, it's back, alive !

Shows tens of thousands of Resisting GI's, cheering Jane Fonda, dissing the war.

And I go on to SIR NO SIR!

Yes, Rita happened. And – it may be, so far unsung, happening again right now.

If want more, check:

FILMS: FTA, SIR NO SIR! Winter Soldier

Books: Soldiers In Revolt, Left Face; G.I. Resister...

Electronic Paper: GI Special

And for history buffs: How come the GI's went home from the Philippines, rather than to China, in 1945.

Max Watts, rosiek@bigpond.com

OCCUPATION REPORT

Occupation Command Thieves At Work:

\$147 Million Bought 11,000 Local Oil Guards And 3000 Automatic Rifles, Maybe

APRIL 30, 2006 By JAMES GLANZ The New York Times

Late Friday, the [Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction] also released an audit report on a \$147 million United States-led program to train and equip thousands of Iraqis to protect oil pipelines, electrical transmission lines and hundreds of key installations in both sectors.

Begun in September 2003, the effort, called Task Force Shield, was so disorganized that the auditors were never able to determine basic facts like how many Iraqis were trained, how many weapons were purchased and where much of the equipment ended up, the report says.

Of 21,000 guards who were to be trained in protecting oil equipment, for example, probably only about 11,000 were, the report says.

And of 9,792 automatic rifles purchased for those guards, auditors were able to track just 3,015.

MORE:

Good News From Iraq: There's A Successful Reconstruction Project!!

April 30, 2006 By FRANK RICH, NY Times Op-Ed [Excerpt]

The only building project on time and on budget, USA Today reported, is a \$592 million embassy complex in the Green Zone on acreage the size of 80 football fields.

Symbolically enough, it will have its own water-treatment plant and power generator to provide the basic services that we still have not restored to pre-invasion levels for the poor unwashed Iraqis beyond the American bunker.

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces. Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces. If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers.

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/> And join with Iraq War vets in the call to end the occupation and bring our troops home now! (www.ivaw.net)

GI Special Looks Even Better Printed Out

The following have posted issues; there may be others:

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

http://robinlea.com/GI_Special/; <http://imagineaworldof.blogspot.com/>; <http://qi-special.iraq-news.de>; http://www.traprockpeace.org/qi_special/;

<http://www.uruknet.info/?p=-6&l=e>; <http://www.albasrah.net/magalat/english/qi-special.htm>

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