

GI SPECIAL 4E14:



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Iraq war veteran David Adams of Carbondale, Ill., talks about the death of a comrade, which prompted him to oppose the Iraq War, during an anti-war demonstration, May 13, 2006 in Washington. Other members of Iraq Veterans Against the War console him. (AP Photo/Lauren Victoria Burke)

Bush Approval Rating Sinks Into The 20s: 56% Say Going To War In The First Place Was A Mistake:

May 11, 2006 Washington Wire & ADAM NAGOURNEY and MEGAN THEE, The New York Times

President Bush's job-approval rating has fallen to its lowest mark of his presidency, according to a new Harris Interactive poll.

Of 1,003 U.S. adults surveyed in a telephone poll, 29% think Mr. Bush is doing an "excellent or pretty good" job as president, down from 35% in April and significantly lower than 43% in January.

Approval ratings for Congress overall also sank, and now stand at 18%.

Roughly one-quarter of U.S. adults say "things in the country are going in the right direction," while 69% say "things have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track." This has been the trend since January, when 33% said the nation was heading in the right direction.

The poll showed a further decline in support for the Iraq war, the issue that has most eaten into Mr. Bush's public support.

The percentage of respondents who said going to war in Iraq was the correct decision slipped to a new low of 39 percent, down from 47 percent in January. Two-thirds said they had little or no confidence that Mr. Bush could successfully end the war.

More than two-thirds said the war in Iraq was to blame for at least some of the increase in gasoline prices.

Seventy-one percent said they believed that oil companies were profiting from higher prices, and a majority said oil companies were much closer to the Republican Party than to the Democratic Party.

On Iraq, two-thirds of poll respondents said they disapproved of how the president had handled the war.

Fifty-six percent said going to war in the first place was a mistake, up from 50 percent in January.

And 60 percent said things were going "somewhat or very badly" in the drive to stabilize the country. Sixty-three percent disapproved of Mr. Bush's handling of foreign policy in general.

Mr. Bush's political strength continues to dissipate. About two-thirds of poll respondents said he did not share their priorities, up from just over half right before his re-election in 2004. About two-thirds said the country was in worse shape than it was when he became president six years ago.

Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward this E-MAIL along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service

friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, at home and inside the armed services. Send requests to address up top.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Baghdad Roadside Bomb Kills MND B Soldier

May 13, 2006 MULTI-NATIONAL DIVISION BAGHDAD 4th Infantry Division Press Release A060513a

BAGHDAD, Iraq: A Multi-National Division Baghdad Soldier was killed May 13 at approximately 4 a.m. when his vehicle was struck by a roadside bomb in south Baghdad.

“They Killed My Son”

May 4, 2006 By Bill Hess, Herald Review

It was not a new tape, but one of him speaking to her in 1991 from the desert during the first Gulf War. She smiled and laughed at his antics, of the part-travelogue showing the austere amenities.

“He was a funny guy,” Jennifer said of then Spc. Bobby Mendez.

Sitting near her on a sofa in her living room was 13-year-old daughter Thyiena, who Jennifer called her Saudi baby, conceived after Rob returned.

Thyiena had a soft slight smile on her face. A wet smile, as tears flowed down her cheeks.

Jennifer said the family was waiting for him to come home after his second tour in Iraq ended later this year.

Rob is coming home but not to sit down and joke with his family, to make them laugh, to be funny.

Sometime today, 1st Sgt. Bobby Mendez will arrive in Sierra Vista.

And, instead of his family seeing him as he walks up to the front door of their home, they will have to go to the Hatfield Funeral Home, where they will see husband, father, son, brother and uncle resting in a casket.

Last Thursday, April 27, the intelligence analyst was killed in action in Baghdad when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle.

That same day, the family had gone out to watch younger daughter Chyanne, 7, play ball and to celebrate Quentin's 12th birthday.

Not long after returning home, there was a knock on the door.

When it was opened, Fort Huachuca soldiers were standing there. Their uniforms telegraphed that Jennifer was about to receive bad news, the type families dread.

It was an emotional punch to the head, the stomach. It is almost an automatic reflex when such news is given.

"Quentin is still upset that his father died on his birthday," the mother said. The boy did not wish to talk for this story. A call was made to Florida, where Rob's mother, Gladys Acre, lives.

Rob's mother arrived Tuesday night with her daughter Ivette Muniz and granddaughters Melissa, 13, and Victoria, 8. When the mother-in-law was called, it was after midnight in Florida.

There was initial disbelief, "then came that scream," Jennifer said.

Ivette said Gladys then called her and said in Spanish, "They killed my son."

The daughter didn't believe it, saying she told her mother, "You're lying."

Living in the same complex in Florida, Ivette and her children ran to Gladys' apartment while wearing their night clothes.

It is still difficult for Gladys to accept the reality of Rob's death. What she is hoping is that the body in the casket will not be his. "I'm hoping it's a mistake," Gladys said. "He promised me he would come home. But not like this."

A small woman, Rob's mother remains defiantly hopeful. "I will not believe it until I see him," she said, as a heavy flow of tears fell from her eyes, indicating in her heart she already knows the truth.

Thyiana also cannot accept the fact and will not until she gets to see her dad.

For Chyanne, the news has not yet been absorbed into her young mind. She got up from the couch and went to the kitchen to play with her cousin Victoria.

Jennifer said the days since the notification have been long. Yes the days are still 24 hours, but those seconds, minutes and hours seem to creep along, exhausting the family.

Sunday's visitation will be hard.

But, Monday's funeral service on the fort and the symbolic farewell, with the 21-rifle volley, folding of the flag and sounding of Taps at the post cemetery will be the ultimate down day, Jennifer said.

On a coffee table in front of the couch were a number of photos of Rob.

They are memories of the time of him being in the Army and with the family.

"Army units are close-knit families," Jennifer said.

But the most important family unit in a military organization is a soldier, wife and children, she said.

The photos were to remind her, and others, of the times they traveled, the promotions, the barbecues and other events caught on film.

Rob enlisted in the Army in 1987 and met Jennifer in 1989, when he was stationed in Frankfurt, Germany.

Jennifer described herself as a military brat. She married Rob in Brooklyn. They returned to Germany where her soldier husband served in that country for many years.

"When I met him he had no stripes.

He was always in trouble and getting Article 15s," she said with a smile, followed by a returning laugh.

Gladys said her son promised her he would do well in the Army to make her proud of him. "He did," she said.

Rob straightened out and went on to achieve high rank. At the time of his death he was a master sergeant serving as a first sergeant.

His death in Iraq was his second tour in that country since 2003 and his third deployment since 1991 to that troubled part of the world, Jennifer said.

He served with the 4th Infantry Division in Iraq from April 2003 to early 2004 and went back with the unit's 2nd Special Troops Battalion of the 2nd Brigade in November 2005. He was assigned to Fort Hood, Texas, in January 2002.

He has been awarded a number of military decorations, including the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal and Army Commendation Medal.

Rob spent from 1997 to 2001 as an instructor at the Noncommissioned Officer Academy on Fort Huachuca, a post where he took his initial intelligence training in the late 1980s. In 2001 he went to Korea.

Jennifer said he was supposed to return to Fort Huachuca at the end of his current deployment.

When he returned he planned to put in his retirement papers, ending his Army career next year, she said.

Outside the Mendez home an American flag flies.

In the living room window facing the street is a simple indicator that a person in the home is serving in combat, the red and white cloth with a single red star. Soon, the red star will turn to a gold one, signifying the death of the GI member of the Mendez family.

There have been some hard decisions Jennifer has had to make. She will honor his request to be cremated.

That will happen after Monday's events. But the cremains will not be immediately put into the old cemetery on Fort Huachuca.

They will be kept at the home. "My kids need to be with their dad for awhile," Jennifer said.

And, she with her husband.

**UNWELCOME
UNWANTED
NO MISSION
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW**



A U.S. Marine gets the hairy eyeball from citizens in Karmah April 26, 2006. (AP Photo/Jacob Silberberg)

TROOP NEWS

“Bring My Daughter Home NOW”



Denise Thomas, from Georgia, joins protesters during an anti-war rally and march on the National Mall, May 13, 2006, in Washington. Thomas has a daughter in the Army reserve who has already done one tour in Iraq and expects to go back. (AP Photo/Lawrence Jackson)

Possible DU Health Effects On Soldiers Will Be Studied: U.S. House of Representatives Passes McDermott Amendment

2006-05-11 By Mike DeCesare, Communications Director, Rep. Jim McDermott (D-WA)
[Excerpt]

After years of relentless and unwavering efforts, including speeches, interviews, news conferences, working with groups like Physicians for Social Responsibility, and even appearing on a song in a newly released Punk Rock album, in order to raise public awareness, the House of Representatives today passed legislation (DoD Authorization) that includes an amendment by Rep. Jim McDermott (WA-D) ordering a comprehensive

study on possible health effects from exposure to depleted uranium on U.S. soldiers and their children.

Rep. McDermott has spent several years working to get the House to study DU. He explained the reason behind his passionate advocacy for the issue in this way:

“For me, this is a personal, not political, quest. My professional life turned from medicine to politics after my service in the U.S. Navy during the 1960s, when I treated combat soldiers returning from Vietnam.

“Back then, the Pentagon denied that Agent Orange posed any danger to U.S. soldiers who were exposed. Decades later, the truth finally emerged. Agent Orange harmed our soldiers. It made thousands sick and some died. During all those years of denial, we stood by and did nothing while soldiers suffered. No more Agent Orange!

“If DU poses no danger, we need to prove it with statistically valid, and independent scientific studies. If DU harms our soldiers, we all need to know it, and act quickly as any doctor would, to use all of our power to heal the sick. We owe our soldiers a full measure of the truth, wherever that leads us.”

The amendment to undertake a comprehensive study of possible health effects to soldiers from exposure to depleted uranium was contained in the Department of Defense Authorization Bill, which passed the House on Thursday evening.

Depleted uranium is a by-product of the uranium enrichment process. Because it is very dense, the U.S. military uses DU for munitions like armor-piercing bullets and tank shells, and as a protective shield around tanks. When used in munitions, DU pulverizes into a fine dust upon impact; it can hang in the air, be inhaled or seep into the soil.

During the Gulf War, the U.S. military used approximately 300 metric tons of DU as munitions. To date in the Iraq War, approximately 150 metric tons have been used. During conflicts in Bosnia, Kosovo, Serbia, and Montenegro, about 12 metric tons were used. (A metric ton is slightly more than 2,200 pounds.)

In addition to its own use, the United States has provided or sold DU and DU munitions to several other nations.

“Secret Service; “Untold Stories Of Lesbians In The Military” Named Finalist In Book Contest

May 13, 2006 Mike Varady (by way of Tom Condit)

March 15, 2006 From Veterans' CARE, an lgbt group promoting rights for veterans:

"Secret Service: Untold Stories of Lesbians in the Military" by Zsa Zsa Gershick has been named a finalist for the ForeWord Magazine 2005 Book of the Year Award, gay and lesbian nonfiction category.

ForeWord, the Publisher's Weekly of independent presses and booksellers, yearly acknowledges and recognizes excellence in publishing from indie presses. This year, the seventh annual, more than 1,500 books were considered for 55 categories.

Winners of Gold, Silver and Bronze will be determined by ForeWord's readership of booksellers and librarians.

An indictment of America's pointless and destructive policy barring gays and lesbians from serving in the military, "Secret Service" was recently featured on C-SPAN's "Book TV" and was an NPR Summer Reading Pick.

The Advocate says, "In probing interviews ... Gershick uncovers shocking stories of sexual assault, harassment, and witch hunts - an atmosphere made more toxic, not less, by "don't ask, don't tell."

GayWired.Com calls Secret Service a "... sobering and eye-opening book chronicling the difficult life of lesbians in the military. A must-read for everyone who has ever thought about joining the military. For everyone who has served, and everyone who hasn't."

New York's Gay City News says, "Secret Service" demonstrates why lifting the ban would benefit the U.S. armed forces ... and makes it obvious that "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," far from being a consistent policy, is whimsically and capriciously enforced."

The winners will be announced Friday, May 19, at a special program at BookExpo America, in Washington DC.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action

May 13, 2006 (AP) & (KUNA) & (Reuters)

A police officer died in an explosion at his home near Hillah.

Up to three Iraqis were wounded Saturday in an explosion targeting a patrol for the Multi-National Forces in the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk.

An Iraqi police source in Kirkuk said that an explosive device blew up as a patrol for the multi-national forces was driving by along Baghdad Road near a mosque in Kirkuk during which three civilians were wounded and damages occurred to several vehicles.

Militants ambushed and killed two policemen and wounded two others in the city of Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

Three policemen and three civilians were wounded when a roadside bomb exploded near their patrol in eastern Baghdad, police said.

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Death Row At The “Castle”: Inside The U.S. Military’s Judicial System

As Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky wrote many years ago in his History of the Russian Revolution, “An army is always a copy of the society it serves; with this difference, that it gives social relations a concentrated character, carrying both their positive and negative features to an extreme.”

Military justice has never been about “justice”—that is, the most elementary efforts to protect the rights of the individual, the presumption of innocence, a jury of one’s peers, or a fair and speedy trial.

It has always been about one thing: discipline, the power of the officer corps to command and control soldiers, which has been upheld by the Supreme Court time and time again. Chief Justice Earl Warren said the military was “an enclave beyond the reach of the civilian courts.” This “enclave” has had a predictable record of injustice.

This article appears in the May–June issue of the International Socialist Review. Joe Allen is a member of Teamsters Local 705 in Chicago and a long-time member of the

International Socialist Organization. He can be reached at joeallen705@hotmail.com. Footnotes are available in the ISR print edition.

By JOE ALLEN

IN LATE January, the Department of the Army issued a set of regulations governing the U.S. military's use of the death penalty.

"This publication is a major revision," said Sandra Riley, an administrative assistant to the secretary of the army. "This regulation establishes responsibilities and updates policy and procedures for carrying out a sentence of death as imposed by general courts-martial or military tribunals."

This "little-noticed move," as the Reuters news service described it, is the first public announcement by the military of a policy that it has been quietly implementing for several years, slowly placing soldiers on its version of death row.

While the civilian death penalty is coming under greater scrutiny and several states are considering a moratorium on executions, the U.S. military is gearing up to carry out its first execution since 1961.

The death penalty was restored in the U.S. military in 1984, but it is only recently that death sentences for American soldiers related to the war in Iraq have been imposed. In March 2005, Sgt. Hasan Akbar was sentenced to death for the "fragging" death of two officers in Kuwait on the eve of the Iraq War in March 2003.

National Guard Sgt. Alberto Martinez also faces a possible death sentence in another fragging case stemming from the death of two officers in Iraq in June 2005. The military is clearly testing the waters to see what it can get away with.

The totalitarian world of "military justice" would even shock opponents of the civilian death penalty.

Last year, Irene Khan, secretary general of Amnesty International, described the treatment of Arab and Muslim prisoners at the U.S. naval base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, as "the gulag of our time." A similar gulag also exists for rank-and-file soldiers who get entangled in the spider's web of the military justice system, especially for those facing the death penalty. The shrouded world of American military injustice needs to be exposed for all to see.

The "Castle"

For millions of Americans just hearing the word Leavenworth jolts something in the back of the brain, producing an uncomfortable feeling of dread.

For the many thousands of soldiers, who have been incarcerated over the years at the military prison at Fort Leavenworth, it is known by the nickname the "Castle." Castles, of course, have dungeons full of hideous instruments of torture.

The military's death row is located in the basement of the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks (formerly known as the U.S. Military Prison) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. While hanging was the preferred form of execution for most of its history, lethal injection is now the method employed.

The Castle is the only long-term prison operated by the Department of Defense, as distinct from prisoner-of-war (POW) camps that were meant to operate only during wartime. The prison was established by an act of Congress in 1874 and has been in continuous operation since 1875, when the Castle was built by prisoners from gray stone blocks cut from the bluffs above the Missouri River.

A new modern prison was completed in 2002. It incarcerates members from all branches of the armed forces—the U.S. Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and the Coast Guard.

The last prisoner to be executed at the Castle was African American Army Private John Bennett, by hanging, in 1961.

The last American soldier executed during wartime for desertion was Private Eddie Slovik, shot by a firing squad in Europe in 1945.

In both cases, the hero of that war and beloved president, Dwight D. Eisenhower, signed the death warrants—the first time as the supreme allied commander in Europe and the second time as president of the United States.

There is a perception that Slovik was the only American soldier executed during the Second World War, but there were dozens of others. One hundred thirty-five soldiers have been executed by the U.S. military since 1916.

Currently there are eight men on death row at the Castle: six African-Americans, one white, and one Asian of Filipino descent. There are no women on military death row.

These numbers are all the more stark when it is recalled that Black men make up 6 percent of the entire U.S. population, and that Blacks as a whole make up 30 percent of enlistees. The only white inmate on death row is the former senior airman Andrew Witt convicted last October for the double murder of two people in the summer of 2004. To say that racism plays a role in who gets death in the military justice system is an understatement.

While some may argue that the small number on the Castle's death row doesn't allow us to draw any definitive conclusions about the role of race in sentencing, the numbers parallel racial disparities in sentencing outside the military and are no accident.

As Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky wrote many years ago in his History of the Russian Revolution, "An army is always a copy of the society it serves; with this difference, that it gives social relations a concentrated character, carrying both their positive and negative features to an extreme."

The extreme racism, sharp class divisions, and corrupt judicial system of U.S. society are starkly reflected in the American military today. Currently, 75 percent of federal

death row prisoners are non-white, while 43 percent on death row nationally are African American. It's not surprising, then, that the racial disparity on military death row is far greater.

Last Man Executed

This becomes abundantly clear when looking at the last man executed by the U.S. military: Private John A. Bennett. He was executed at the Castle in 1961 for rape, a crime that is no longer punishable by the death penalty in civilian courts. Bennett's case is a stark example showing the wrong then and now of the death penalty, in civilian life and in the American military.

Bennett came from an extremely poor Black Virginia sharecropping family; he dropped out of school at an early age. His family had a long history of mental illness—his grandfather and great-uncle were both institutionalized, and his first cousin committed suicide. Bennett was later diagnosed with epilepsy. Throughout his life he complained of dizziness, chronic headaches, and blackouts. He joined the army in the early 1950s and was assigned the dirtiest, hardest, and most dangerous jobs, which Blacks were traditionally given in the military, working first as an ammunition handler and then as a truck driver.

According to the few documented accounts of his life, John Bennett had no trouble in the army until December 1954, when he was charged with raping an eleven-year-old white girl in Austria, where he was stationed. Because Bennett was an active duty GI, and because of treaties signed by the Austrian and U.S. governments, the U.S. Army tried him rather than the Austrian courts. Such treaties have been the focus of protest and opposition wherever American forces occupy a country. Had Bennett been tried in an Austrian court, he would certainly not have faced death, the death penalty having been outlawed there in 1950.

While the evidence presented against Bennett seemed overwhelming, he always claimed he had been forced to confess at gunpoint. What is not in dispute is that his court-martial, held in Austria, lasted only five days.

His defense counsel didn't put up much of a fight, issues of mental illness were dismissed as irrelevant, and the jury deliberated for just twenty-five minutes before finding him guilty. He was eventually sentenced to death by hanging and moved to the Castle to await execution.

The issues surrounding Bennett's conviction come into sharper focus when his fate and those of other Black defendants are compared to white defendants charged with similar or worse crimes during the Eisenhower era. According to Los Angeles Times reporter Richard Serrano:

During the six years between (Bennet's) trial and death, eight other soldiers were executed, all of them Black. Six white prisoners were on death row during those years. Some had killed little girls or had killed more than once. None were executed. President Dwight Eisenhower commuted the sentences of four. Two were spared by the courts.

“In the 1950s,” explains Serrano, “black soldiers routinely were hanged while whites were spared. Between the passage of the Uniform Code of Military Justice in 1950 and the suspension of military executions in 1961, eight of the nine soldiers put to death were black; one was white.”

The military was one of the few integrated institutions in 1950s America, and because of this was held in relatively high regard by many African Americans. During the Vietnam War, however, the racist treatment of Black soldiers by the military’s judicial system would become a major political controversy.

A last-ditch effort was made to get clemency for Bennett from the newly elected Democratic President John F. Kennedy. Despite the opposition to the death penalty by key Kennedy advisers and pleas from Bennett himself, his family, and the family of his victim, Kennedy allowed the execution to go ahead in April 1961.

For a president who had been labeled a civil rights supporter, his inaction may seem odd, but after several foreign policy failures, his new administration was already seen as weak. Even more importantly, Southern supporters of Jim Crow dominated his party. Kennedy wasn’t going to open himself to further attack by taking a courageous stand in the Bennett case.

His handling of the Bennett case may remind many of a political controversy in 1992, when the then-governor of Arkansas and Democratic candidate for president Bill Clinton, allowed the severely brain-damaged Ricky Ray Rector to be executed, to prove that he wasn’t “soft on crime.”

Who Gets Death In The Military?

“It is one of the ironies of patriotism,” declares Robert Sherrill in the opening of his searing 1970 book *Military Justice is to Justice as Military Music is to Music*, “that a man who is called to the military service of his country may anticipate not only the possibility of giving up his life but also the certainty of giving up his liberties.”

The Bill of Rights doesn’t exist in the military.

Military justice has never been about “justice”—that is, the most elementary efforts to protect the rights of the individual, the presumption of innocence, a jury of one’s peers, or a fair and speedy trial.

It has always been about one thing: discipline, the power of the officer corps to command and control soldiers, which has been upheld by the Supreme Court time and time again. Chief Justice Earl Warren said the military was “an enclave beyond the reach of the civilian courts.” This “enclave” has had a predictable record of injustice.

During the First World War, millions of Americans for the first time served in the various branches of the armed forces, including a large number of Black soldiers who were stationed in Southern military bases near large cities.

At Fort Bliss in Texas, Black soldiers protested the constant harassment by the white officers and soldiers. In 1917, several Black soldiers protested their condition by not reporting to a drill formation and were court-martialed for mutiny, found guilty, dishonorably discharged, and sentenced to ten to twenty years in Leavenworth.

A full-scale rebellion broke out in late August 1917, in Houston. Over one hundred Black soldiers from the highly decorated Third Battalion of the Twenty-fourth Infantry marched with their weapons on a police station holding imprisoned comrades, believing them to have been beaten or killed by the police.

In the battle that ensued, fifteen whites (five of them cops) and four Black soldiers were killed. In December 1917, sixty-three Black soldiers were court-martialed with forty-eight sentenced to long prison terms and thirteen sentenced to death.

According to Luther West, veteran military lawyer and critic, “Two days after the completion of the trial, and some four months before their records of trial were received in Washington, D.C., for ‘appellate’ review, the thirteen Blacks sentenced to die were executed.”

During the Second World War, the same backward, racist, and arcane system of justice prevailed in the U.S. military.

Alvin “Tommy” Bridges, a military policeman during the war and a future police chief, recounted his very bitter memories of “military justice” to Studs Terkel in the Good War: “They shot some of those same guys up there that were—if you’d go to a municipal court, they’d dismiss the case. Depending a lot upon the commanding officer.”

Near the end of his narrative, Bridges makes clear the extent of summary “justice” and who was responsible:

“Eisenhower says that’s the only guy (Eddie Slovik) that was ever executed for it (desertion). That’s what burns me up, when a gross of them that I know were executed for probably more minor things than what Slovik was. They said he was the only one. We had to make a show of it. The son-of-a-bitches.”

Eddie Slovik was a Polish working-class kid from Detroit who had a minor criminal record and spent some years in a youth reformatory. His draft classification was originally 4-F (unfit for military service) and therefore not eligible to be drafted. He married and got a decent paying job in the auto industry, whereupon he was reclassified 1-A.

The army was then drafting anybody it could get its hands on in preparation for the invasion of Europe. It was also clear that Slovik couldn’t kill a living thing and was terrified of combat. In his “confession” after he deserted he said, “I’ll run away again if I have to go their.” (He misspelled “there,” and by “there” he meant going into combat).

Over 40,000 other deserters tried by lesser courts-martial were punished by confinement to disciplinary centers or dishonorably discharged. Another 2,864 were tried by general courts-martial. Most were sentenced to long terms in

prisons (many left prison soon after the war was over), but forty-nine were sentenced to death. All the sentences for desertion were commuted except Slovik's.

Slovik's story is recounted in William Bradford Huie's book *The Execution of Private Slovik*.

Why Slovik?

It seems likely that the reason Slovik was singled out was because he deserted at the time of stiffening German resistance in late 1944, when the Allied forces came dangerously close to collapsing on the Western front. Yet, curiously, the army never publicized his execution beyond his company, never told his wife, and buried him in a secret cemetery.

It would be nearly a decade after Slovik's death before Huie began investigating the strange circumstances surrounding it. Despite the efforts of many people, Slovik's wife never received the paltry \$10,000 plus interest she asked for in GI life insurance. Slovik's remains were finally returned to the U.S. in 1987, to be buried beside the grave of his deceased wife.

While many people believe that Slovik was the only American soldier executed during the war, that is not true.

Many were executed on charges other than desertion, and African American soldiers once again bore the brunt of these executions.

During the war, the United States virtually occupied Great Britain, and the Visiting Forces Act (VFA) gave exclusive power to the American military to prosecute American soldiers for criminal acts committed in Britain. Among the criminal acts that could be punished by death was rape, which was not a capital crime in Britain.

Authorities and vigilantes in the Jim Crow South used the charge of rape in particular to persecute and terrorize Black men. Most charges of rape by white women against Black men were fabrications. Guilty or not, Black men were lynched or sent to the gallows or electric chair, while few white men suffered the same fate. Of the sixty-two men executed by the state of Georgia for rape between 1930 and 1977, for example, only four were white, and the rest (94 percent) were Black.

Jim Crow segregation was transferred to Britain during the war by the U.S. military, replete with segregated bars, clubs, theaters, barracks, even whole towns.

When Black heavyweight champion Joe Louis toured Britain in early 1944, he was told he had to sit in a "special" section: colored only. Louis exploded, "Shit! This wasn't America, this was England.... The theatre manager... knew who I was and apologized all over the place. Said he had instructions from the Army."

The U.S. military carried out seventy executions from 1942 to November 1945 in Europe, and of these fifty-five were Black, 79 percent of those executed.

Eighteen of those executions took place in Great Britain, with nine convicted of murder, six of rape, and three of both. Of the eighteen executed, eleven were Black, three were Latino, and four were white. Yet Blacks made up only 8 percent of U.S. military forces stationed in Europe during the war.

According to historians Robert Lilly and David Thomson, the sentencing disparities were based on class as well as race:

Whites represented 27.8 percent of the executed soldiers, with African-Americans accounting for 55.56 percent, and Mexican-Americans the remaining 11.1 percent of the 18 cases...soldiers of color are selected far beyond their share of the ranks for this ultimate sanction.

The executed men were overwhelmingly from the lowest rank(s)...many of them uneducated, and suffering from a mental disorder or other mitigating factors.

No man above the rank of corporal was executed. This suggests that the military do not punish randomly, but selectively, especially to its lowest ranks, and most socially disadvantaged.

Things actually got worse after the war was over. "After President Truman ordered an end to the armed forces' segregation in 1948," according to journalist Dwight Sullivan. "This racial disparity actually increased. The military carried out 12 executions from 1954 until the most recent one in 1961. Eleven of the 12 executed service members were African-American."

Why?

One can only speculate, but the answer may be that it was one way that the officer corps of the U.S. military expressed its opposition to desegregation by deepening the persecution of Black soldiers in its ranks.

Out of the clamor came the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), which Congress passed into law in 1950.

The separate services would no longer each have their own judicial system but one that would govern all. The code still included capital punishment. While there were changes, such as the defendant's right to a trained lawyer, or a civilian lawyer, a jury, the presence of enlisted men on courts-martial, and a right to appeal court-martial verdicts, the content remained the same.

As the case of John Bennett and the increase in the proportion of Black soldiers executed shows, these changes meant very little. It was still a system dominated by the officer corps.

As veteran army lawyer and critic, Luther West, put it,

"The military commander was still in charge...He still decided what charges to prosecute, what offenses were to be investigated, and what offenses were to be covered up. He still picked military juries...also picked the prosecution and defense lawyers as well as the military judge."

These issues, however, virtually disappeared from public sight for a decade-and-a-half until the U.S. invaded Vietnam in 1965.

The “Mere Gook Rule”

One major political issue that arose during the Vietnam War was the sharp contrast in the treatment of American soldiers accused of killing their officers versus those who murdered Vietnamese civilians.

The starkest contrast was between the case of Lt. William Calley, who was accused and convicted of the murder of Vietnamese civilians, and that of Pvt. Billy Dean Smith, an antiwar GI, whom the army attempted to frame for the murder of two of his officers. While they were not the only cases of their kind, they illustrate the hypocrisy and racism of the military judicial system.

On March 16, 1968, the soldiers of Charlie Company of the Americal Division, led by Capt. Ernest Medina and Lt. William Calley, entered the village of My Lai. During a four-hour period the soldiers of Charlie Company massacred around 400 unarmed, elderly men, women, and children, including babies. A cover-up followed involving as many as thirty officers, including the future secretary of state Colin Powell.

Despite the cover-up, the massacre became public in the fall of 1969. Eventually, four members of Charlie Company were indicted, but only Calley was found guilty—of killing twenty-two civilians.

The court sentenced him to life in prison at hard labor. During the time of his arrest and trial, Calley was under “house arrest” at his apartment on base at Fort Benning, Georgia. He had the run of the base and was treated as something of a celebrity. After his conviction, President Richard Nixon ordered Calley released from the stockade and returned to his apartment. Nixon eventually pardoned him.

In sharp contrast, Army Pvt. Billy Dean Smith, a Black soldier from California, was accused of killing or fragging two officers and held in solitary confinement for a year before his trial.

Fragging refers specifically to the killing of an officer or non-commissioned officer by throwing a fragmentation grenade into his tent, an event that happened usually at night. **Fragging was almost always directed at officers who sent into combat soldiers who no longer wanted to fight. In 1969, the Associated Press reported that the army investigated ninety-six alleged fraggings, and 209 in 1970, totaling 101 deaths.**

The number of fraggings actually grew as the U.S. rapidly drew down troop numbers after 1970. Not all fraggings were expressions of antiwar sentiment; some had to do with covering up criminal activity (drug dealing in particular) or personal vendettas, another sign that the army was disintegrating.

On March 15, 1971, at Bien Hoa, a U.S. Army base in South Vietnam, a fragmentation grenade exploded; this time in an officer's barracks for an artillery unit, killing two lieutenants and wounding a third. All were white.

The unit commander Captain Rigby and First Sergeant Willis decided they knew who did it: Billy Dean Smith. Smith was an outspoken critic of the rampant racism in the army and particularly objected to the segregated bars and clubs in Vietnam. Without any evidence, Smith was charged with two counts of murder, two counts of resisting arrest, one count of assault, and two counts of attempted murder. Smith proclaimed his innocence and pled not guilty to all the charges. If found guilty he would have faced the death penalty.

Smith's lawyer, civilian Luke McKissack, went to Vietnam and investigated the situation, and petitioned to have the trial moved to Fort Ord in California. After a change in venue was granted, McKissack wrote directly to the president complaining of the treatment of his client.

"I wrote a letter to (then President Richard) Nixon asking him to intervene on Billy's behalf and also asking why Calley (who had been convicted of 22 counts of murder by this time) was living it up in a bachelor type pad while my guy, who hadn't been tried yet, was confined to a 6 x 9 cage, seeing daylight one hour a day. I asked if it was because Billy was Black and Calley white, because Billy was an enlisted grunt and Calley an officer, and then I invoked the 'mere gook rule.' My guy had allegedly killed white people, Calley had blown away 'mere gooks.'"

McKissack was stunned when he received a reply from a Nixon aide agreeing with him. "As you pointed out in your petition, the issues of Private Smith's case are in no way similar to the issues inherent in Lieutenant Calley's case," wrote Nixon aide General Lawrence Williams.

The only "evidence" the army had against Smith was that he had hand grenade pins in his pocket when arrested. "I put G.I. after G.I. on the stand who not only said they routinely carried around grenade pins, but that they also saw what they felt was an ongoing need in their unit for drastic actions like fragging," said McKissack.

After McKissack's vigorous defense and a campaign organized by G.I.s and antiwar activists, Smith was acquitted on all charges.

After he left the military, Smith became an organizer for the American Servicemen's Union (ASU), one of the most serious attempts at organizing a trade union for military personnel. There were many more Calley-like cases, such as the Green Beret murder case and the Son Thang massacre.

What is true in all of them is that if an American soldier murdered Vietnamese civilians, they were far less likely to be punished, or punished very severely, for their crimes.

The War In Iraq And Capital Punishment

The last soldier to be executed by the U.S. military was a mentally ill Black soldier from a very poor family. The first soldier to be sentenced to death during the Iraq War is a mentally ill Black soldier from a very poor family, who also suffered religious persecution during his time in the army. In the forty years since the last military execution nothing has changed.

Sgt. Hasan Akbar was found guilty in March 2005 of murdering two officers and wounding fourteen others on the eve of the invasion of Iraq; he was sentenced to death.

Akbar was born Mark Fidel Kools, but his parents changed his name after the family converted to Islam. Like many, Akbar enlisted in the army to help defray his college loan payments after he graduated with an engineering degree from the University of California at Davis. But from his earliest teenage years Akbar felt the heavy weight of poverty, racism, and religious bigotry on his shoulders. It is even possible that he was sexually abused as a child.

According to statements made to the press by Akbar's family, his problems seem to have gotten worse after he joined the Army in the late 1990s, exacerbating his loneliness and withdrawal symptoms that were noticed at a young age, including, as revealed in his diary, his harboring of homicidal thoughts.

John Akbar, his father, testified during the court-martial that his son claimed that other members of his platoon wore Nazi, KKK, and Confederate-flag tattoos. "They would mock him while he prayed," the father said.

Akbar, according to testimony at his court-martial, suffered racist insults by soldiers who denigrated his fellow Muslims on the eve of the invasion of Iraq, and after the war and occupation of Afghanistan.

His brother Bilal left the air force soon after 9/11 for similar reasons.

After Akbar was arrested, the military police claim he voiced his fear that American forces were going to rape and kill Muslim women in Iraq. These very justifiable fears seem to have pushed Akbar over the edge. "He's mentally ill," said Maj. Dan Brookhart, one of Akbar's defense lawyers. His lawyers argued that Akbar should not have been in the army, much less in an army invading a country whose population is predominately Muslim.

Army prosecutor Lt. Col. Michael E. Mulligan's closing arguments are what anyone would call thinly veiled religious bigotry. Mulligan declared, "He is the enemy," calling his murders "Akbar's war," and that "this is the hatred that lies in his heart."

He displayed, according to media accounts, excerpts from Akbar's thirteen-year-old computer diary on two screens along with pictures of his victims. "Caucasians, I will kill as many of them as possible," Akbar wrote in 1992. In 1996, Akbar wrote: "Anyone who stands in front of me shall be considered the enemy and dealt with accordingly," and "destroying America was my plan as a child, and as a juvenile and in college. Destroying America is my greatest goal."

Compare Akbar's case to white soldiers who committed similar crimes but with victims of different ranks and races. This year Sgt. Aaron Stanley was sentenced

to life in prison on two counts of premeditated murder for the deaths of Staff Sgt. Matthew Werner and Specialist Christopher D. Hymer in 2004 at Stanley's farmhouse in Clay Center, Kansas, about thirty miles west of Fort Riley. "These were extraordinarily violent and senseless murders," according to Maj. John Hamner, lead prosecutor.

Army Capt. Rogelio Maynulet was found guilty of the "mercy killing" of an Iraqi civilian. In May 2004, when U.S. troops were pursuing suspected militiamen supporting Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr near the Iraqi city of Najaf, Maynulet and others fired on a car, wounding the driver and a passenger. Maynulet said he then shot the driver. "He was in a state I didn't think was dignified. I had to put him out of his misery," Maynulet said. Maynulet's victim was a local rubbish collector. "He was sentenced with dismissal from the United States Army...there will be no confinement time," a military spokesman said.

On January 21, 2006, Chief Warrant Officer Lewis Welshofer, a U.S. Army interrogator, was convicted of causing the death of Iraqi Major General Abed Hamed Mowhoush during a round of questioning in November 2003. Welshofer killed him by putting a sleeping bag over the head of the Iraqi general, sitting on his chest, and covering his mouth. A court-martial jury of six officers decided the officer was not guilty of murder but of negligent homicide. He was fined \$6,000, given a letter of reprimand, and confinement to base for six months.

Can there be any doubt that Akbar has been given a death sentence because he is Black, a Muslim, and a self-proclaimed hater of the U.S. Army? That his victims were officers insured a death sentence.

Lifting The Veil On Military Injustice

Over the past several years, support for the death penalty has begun to wane in the United States. A Gallup poll last fall showed that support for the death penalty has fallen to 64 percent, from a high of 80 percent in 1994. When life without parole is offered as an alternative, support for the death penalty drops to 50 percent.

There are many reasons for this important shift in public opinion, not the least of which has been the release of more than 100 innocent people (some who came dangerously close to execution) from death row since 1976. There have also been frightening revelations of police torture, judicial corruption, frame-ups, and bad forensics. The whole machinery of death is under more scrutiny than it has been in a generation.

For the still relatively small number of anti-death penalty activists in the United States, the long hard work of many years has begun to payoff. This doesn't mean that the supporters of the death penalty are in an irreversible retreat. The execution of Stan "Tookie" Williams by California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in December 2005, despite significant support for clemency, is one example of this. Another is the pledge by one Republican candidate for governor of Illinois to lift the moratorium on executions that former Governor Ryan decreed in 2000.

The fact that the U.S. military is gearing up for its first execution in over forty years contradicts the trend, but it also represents something deeper—the huge strain the war and occupation of Iraq is having on the U.S. military.

Military justice has always been first and foremost about disciplining the troops.

The U.S. military is facing its biggest crisis since the Vietnam War, with thousands of troops deserting, going AWOL, and wounding themselves in order to avoid combat.

It is no accident that, facing this crisis of command, the military wants the death penalty restored as a regular feature of military punishment.

Antiwar activists, advocates for soldiers' rights, and anti-death penalty activists have an opportunity to work together, linking the criminal occupation of Iraq with the military's unjust treatment of the men and women whom they have spent billions of dollars turning into professional killers.

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 PALESTINE

Zionist Soldiers Shoot Two International Peace Activists In The Head At Occupied Bil'in: Eleven Palestinians Have Been Killed By Soldiers During Non-Violent Demonstrations Against The Apartheid Wall.



May 12th, 2006 Posted in Press Releases, Bil'in Village, Video, ISM Media Alerts, Photos

At today's Bil'in demonstration, Israeli soldiers shot seven Palestinians with rubber bullets.

One Australian and one Danish demonstrator were hospitalised after being shot in the head with rubber bullets at close range.

AFP Cameraman Jamal Al Aruri was shot in the hand with a rubber bullet while he was filming two of his fingers were broken. Adeba Yasin (65) was hit by a rubber coated bullet under her eye while she was sitting on the balcony of her home.

Phillip Reiss (25) from Sydney, Australia was shot as he was running away: he had been filming the demonstration. BJ Lund (21) from Ry, Denmark was also shot as he was standing near army jeeps. Both Phil and BJ are currently in Tel Hashomer hospital in Tel-Aviv.

The bullet caused a hemorrhage to Phil's brain, though he is now conscious. BJ required stitches to the head.

Abed Al Karim Khatib (60) was hit by a rubber coated bullet in his private parts, Abed Albased Abu Rahme (15) was hit on his thigh by a rubber coated bullet and Waleed Mahmoud Abu Rahme (20) was hit in his abdomen by a rubber coated bullet. Mohammad Ahmad Issa was hit in the leg with a rubber bullet. Wajdi shokut (18) was hit by a rubber coated bullet in the hand

Ashraf Muhammed Jamal (24) was hit by a tear gas canister aimed at his head.

Abdullah Abu-Rahme (35 and the Co-ordinator of the Bil'in Popular Committee Against the Wall), Muhammad Al Katib (32, also from the Popular Committee) and Akram Al Katib (34) were beaten.

The demonstration of about 300 people had marched, singing, chanting and waving flags to the gate in the apartheid barrier.

This week, the gate had been locked open, so the Israeli soldiers relied on their jeeps and barbed wire to stop the people of Bil'in from walking into their land. After a while, some of the demonstrators started to open the barbed wire.

The Israeli soldiers started hitting people with clubs.

A few rocks were thrown from a small group of youth who were away from the main demonstration in front of the jeeps.

The soldiers then started firing on the peaceful demonstrators at near point-blank range as they were running away; they were a maximum distance of 10 meters away when shot. According to Israeli Human Rights group B'Tselem, Israeli Military Regulations stipulate that "the minimum range for firing rubber-coated steel bullets is forty meters.

The Regulations emphasize that the bullets must be fired only at the individual's legs, and are not to be fired at children"

Israeli soldiers fire rubber-coated steel bullets at Palestinian children during the Bil'in demonstration every week. Israeli demonstrator Matan Cohen was recently shot in the eye during a demonstration in Beit Sira. He now has only partial sight in that eye.

The Israeli military usually uses rubber bullets during demonstrations when Israeli and international activists are present. When Palestinians demonstrate on their own the military uses live ammunition or rubber coated steel bullets.

Two of the demonstrators that were shot from close range were filming the demonstration.

British attorney general, Lord Goldsmith confirmed on the 6th of May he was considering whether to seek the extradition and prosecution of an Israeli soldier who shot dead British cameraman James Miller in Gaza, after a jury in a British inquest unanimously agreed that “Mr Miller was indeed murdered”

Eleven Palestinians have been killed by Israeli soldiers during non-violent demonstrations against the apartheid wall.

On Sunday, May 14, the Israeli Supreme Court will hear Bil'in's legal challenge over the theft of their land by the illegal wall.

Bil'in villagers have been protesting the wall nonviolently for the last 15 months and have become a symbol of Palestinian-Israeli-International cooperation.

The route of the wall in Bil'in is designed to annex the settlement of Modi'n Elite and it's outpost, Matityahu Mizrah, to Israel along with the land belonging to Bil'in so that these illegal settlements can continue to grow.

[To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation by a foreign power, go to: www.rafahtoday.org The foreign army is Israeli; the occupied nation is Palestine.]

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

***Welcome To The Occupied
USA:
Bush Motorcade Points Assault
Rifles At Protesters In Florida;
Bush Told “How Dare You Point A
Weapon At Civil Protesters”***

[Thanks to David Honish, Veterans For Peace, who sent this in.]

May 12, 2006 by Susan S, Daily Kos

Narrative re: Bush's visit to SCC on May 9, 2006 from Barbara Nicholson

We stood with about 50 others on rte 674 and when the motorcade came by there was assault rifle OUT the window pointing at ALL of us and the cars all looked like I remember seeing in the Hitler motorcades in the movies when I was a child, all boxy and black and one had the Pres seal and American flag on the sides.

It was absolutely chilling!

I worked the inner city for 15 years with gangs and even with kids and families of the Bloods and Crips and have never had an assault rifle pointed my way.

In my 75 years I have seen many Pres motorcades and shook many pres hands and seen many pres elects and their entourage but never anything like this with the motorcycles, big black cars and rifles were just the very last straw.

It wasn't the rifle that was scary it was knowing that this madman is so insecure and scared and psychotic that this is how he must travel. AARRRRRGH!

USA, Banana Republic for sure.

Then to know our tax money paid for this photo op and for the fundraising luncheon at the Renaissance Club is truly the icing on the cake which will kill us all.

Very depressing to say the least.

From an intern for Congressional candidate John Russell (FL-5):

Here is my full story, with everything correct.

As you know I am interning with John Russell, a candidate in District 5 running against Ginny Brown-Waite.

We went to the protest to make sure bush heard about the problems with Medicare Part D. As the President drove by John was delivering his message to the President, who was looking at us out the window.

I don't remember if it was before or after the President's car, but inside on of the black SUV's was a man holding, what looked to be, an automatic rifle out the window.

It was pointed at the protesters.

I am glad to hear that the people on the other side of the street saw this too.

Those of us on the corner I was on couldn't believe that this had occurred, and John proceeded to tell President Bush as he got out of the motorcade, 'how dare you point a weapon at civil protesters' among other things.

It was a very interesting day for me, being the first time I have ever seen the President, and the first time I have been directly threatened by the President.

hopefully this helps in lining up the stories. Please send this out to everyone, and keep the talk growing. I want to know if this is standard operating procedure for the Bush motorcade, or a one time thing.

Nic Zateslo
Intern for John Russell, Candidate for Congress District 5

And from Kossack boofdah:

Mary, Nic, and I were there as well; and yes, it went down exactly as Barbara and John have said below. I don't think I've ever felt such a sense of foreboding in my life as when I saw that automatic rifle pointed at us, peaceful protesters.

At the time September 11th happened, I worked at a military base near where I used to live before we moved to FL.

Immediately after 9/11, our base was at Threatcon D, meaning that the military personnel guarding our base had to be armed.

Yeah, I saw sharp-shooters and automatic rifles; but I took some kind of comfort in the notion that these measures were meant for the "bad guys."

On Tuesday, the message that the sniper hanging out the window with his automatic weapon had for us was that we peacefully-protesting Americans were the "bad guys."

And that thought alone gave me the chills.

More details from another protester attending the event on Tuesday:

Please, please, please get this right.

The weapon was not fully sticking out the window in a pointed position towards any of us. It was how ever raised up and the person holding it had right hand in trigger position it was in the direction of our group.

It was indeed an assault rifle and the man in the car was dressed full swat.

I covered television news so I have seen these SWAT members before. I was the first in our group to see it so I want to make sure this is clear. It still was an amazing sight and scary too!

Thanks, Mary

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



(AP Photo/Charles Dharapak)

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.

**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)

Wrong: Police Have Millions Of Suspects

May 12, 2006 NBC 6

NORTH MIAMI BEACH, Fla.: North Miami Beach police want to know who pasted two pictures of President George W. Bush on the walls of the post office.

Police said the culprits also spray painted the word "tyrant" next to the pictures.

Workers quickly cleaned the walls of the post office.

Police have no suspects.

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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