

GI SPECIAL 4G5:

AS THE IRAQ WAR CONTINUES, THE BUSHISTS SET UP GOALS—EACH ONE LESS AMBITIOUS THAN THE LAST—THEY CLAIM WILL MARK IMMINENT VICTORY. HERE'S WHAT WE HAVE TO LOOK FORWARD TO:



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

“I’d Like Your Blessing”

You do your part and serve.

I'll do my part and cover your back.

Anyone inside or outside this government who wants to criticize, harm or otherwise betray you will have to deal directly with me.

I promise.

From: Arthur Ruger

To: GI Special

Sent: July 04, 2006

Jul 01, 2006 by Arthur Ruger Arthur Ruger, Military Families Speak Out, Washington State Chapter, Bay Center, Washington, aruger@gmail.com

My generation is one in which there are still many living veterans. Furthermore, from our generation primarily come the children who make up the current blood and guts of America's military with its duty of defending the American Constitution, Country and Citizens.

If our children - or their children - come to us when considering enlistment or a commission, asking our reaction or even our blessing for their willingness to sign the bottom line, are we ready to speak honestly with them?

Have the things we've taught them about citizenship and patriotism come back to gratify us?

...or haunt us?

Just what have we tried to instill in them in terms of a civic and patriotic sense? What did we teach and model for them when they were young?

...we who were part of a generation of soldiers betrayed by a government we all wanted desperately to trust?

The letter from college arrives.

"Dear Dad.....

Dad, I'm signing on and I'd like your blessing and advice.

I'm not having too many doubts about signing on Dad. Not too many questions - but I want your support and endorsement. You've never talked much about your service and I need to know what's in your mind before I leave."

Very well then....

Dear daughter,

As you know, you do not come from a family of warriors.

Your Grandfather was drafted.

Your uncle and I joined up in the 1960's because it was that or the draft. Our national leadership had failed us badly because of their misguided and exaggerated fear of communist enemies;

Of foes who had never proven themselves capable of toppling continents nation-by-nation, domino-like, let alone conquering the world based on military or economic power.

As a result of those years, the extremely poor choices made by politicians we trusted and elected left us with a powerful legacy not previously seen so powerfully in this country ... acceptance of dissent as a patriotic act.

To this day, that concept has not been refuted. More so, this current government has tragically demonstrated again just why it is vital that citizens hold government accountable.

Viet Nam legitimized a permanent change in civic thinking. That's why a large segment of today's society sustained by legitimate baby-boomer wisdom remains willing to question the motives and speak out against the administration ... and with greater empowerment to resist being isolated and marginalized by pseudo-patriotic politics.

Our perspective is much more legitimate than it was in the 60's and 70's. We as citizens are duty bound to take and hold the ethical and moral high ground in this country rather than trust broadcast blowhards and pretend political geniuses.

The party officials, cheerleading TV networks and pundit blowhards don't have a monopoly on patriotism, daughter. Those are - every one of them - the least qualified to tell you or me what it means to be patriotic. They are the cut-and-run actors from my generation who have never served and have never justifiably spoken for the troops and veterans in today's world.

You are going to join an all-volunteer military force that has the same commission given the military services during World War II. The big difference today is that the bulk of the troops back then were drafted. Your choice is voluntary - signing a contract offered by the Pentagon.

When you sign, remember that we who are not military members make up - along with you - the citizenship that expects you to honor that contract you endorse.

Citizens of this country expect total fealty from you which means loyalty to the United States, to the Constitution, and to the Flag. Citizens of this country expect the same from our elected leadership. They all owe us that same fealty, loyalty to the United States, to the Constitution and to the Flag.

Citizens also expect of our soldiers the highest honesty, integrity and honorable behavior of which they are capable. Military behavior that is dishonest, lacks integrity and dishonors troops, citizens and country is a betrayal of all that America has traditionally stood for.

The same is absolutely true and equally vital of our elected and appointed leaders.

Citizens do not expect that our fully trained and capable military members are so brainwashed to fight and kill that they have transitioned to a place of shame. While desiring that our military children develop instinctive and effective military and combat skills, we do not expect our children to be turned into mindless killing machines devoid of conscience or the ability to make a moral choice.

Arguments insisting that combat training must teach instinctive hate, bigotry, racial profiling and cultural inferiority in order to create armies and soldiers capable of efficient killing and destruction of enemies are not legitimate reasons for why we fight.

Nor do they hold out a possibly for what we hope the end result of a national military objective will look like.

Citizens want and expect that our troops are warriors of honor who instinctively act and react with exceptional valor;

...warriors who reflect national ethics, a positive national morality, compassion and respect.

If those things are lacking in the leadership, a way to intervene before a corrupt leadership can poison the military is vital.

The nation cannot abide armies of failed or corrupted warriors.

If those values are lacking in the country, it is the citizens who have failed the military.

Military service is and should always be thought of as an honorable profession where men and women serve with honor;

... are treated with honor by a grateful nation.

If you are joining the military, I expect you to have a career of honor.

I fear for you but will keep those fears managed in my own heart.

It is your life, not mine, and I do not pretend to dictate your choices.

Nor is it a life that belongs specifically to a General, a Secretary of Defense, a President or a Political Party.

You are not to be a tool of helping a party focus national priorities in such a way as to win elections.

There is no military code of silence or submissive loyalty to the Commander-in-Chief that requires that you do not seriously consider the legality and morality of orders given you regardless of their source.

I of course hope that your own sense of civic and moral integrity is honed sufficiently strong as to allow you to perceive almost instantaneously whether or not an order is illegal.

But if you need time and have time, then I expect you to take that time and make up your own mind. Whatever decision you make - if informed by your own study, searching and wisdom - is all anyone can ask of you.

Blind obedience in a combat moment is not the same as blind obedience when you are not in a combat moment. Rather in a moment of moral or ethical questioning when a different kind of instinct takes over, if you have a strong sense of ethics and honor, you will not be helplessly tempted to shame yourself, your unit, or your country.

You have a right to expect and function under the integrity and honor of the commander in chief of the military.

You have a right to expect and demand the Commander In Chief's honesty, honor, skill, wisdom and understanding of all reasons when and why military citizens are to be placed in harm's way.

I in turn have a right to expect that you pay attention - for me, for your family and for your country - to whether or not your Commander in Chief is being honest, honorable and legal.

The Commander-in-chief is hardly going to order me to do something illegal or immoral.

If he gives an illegal or immoral order there's a greater risk he will give it to you whom he might see as bound to obey blindly and without question.

So your father, your family and your country are at the mercy of your ability to discern and act on that discernment.

You are then left at the mercy of your father's, your family's and your country's ability to discern the acts of our President, to hold him accountable and take action - if necessary - to make sure he is accountable.

You must trust me to be willing and supportive in making sure the leadership does not waste your vital blood, devotion and patriotism in pipe dreams, self-interested agenda's and ideologies.

In closing, my adult child, I express my pride in you and your willingness to act on your desires only after you've given them serious thought and consideration.

I accept and endorse your decision as I trust it is your own.

You do your part and serve.

I'll do my part and cover your back.

Anyone inside or outside this government who wants to criticize, harm or otherwise betray you will have to deal directly with me.

I promise.

**Love,
Dad**

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

FUTILE EXERCISE:

BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE!



6.21.06 A UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter readying to take to the air after inserting soldiers from 2nd Platoon, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division on an objective in the desert somewhere north of Baghdad to conduct a search for suspected insurgents and weapons caches. (AFP/US Army-HO/Spc. Charles W. Gill)

“The Prettiest Young Man We Ever Loved” Killed Near Diwaniyah



Sgt. Brent Koch, 22, of Morton, Minn., died June 16 near Diwaniyah, Iraq. Photo courtesy of CENTCOM

June 23, 2006 By Anita Powell, Stars and Stripes, LOGISTICAL SUPPORT AREA ADDER, Iraq

Sgt. Brent Koch was a boisterous, handsome 22-year-old who loved farming, fishing, motocross racing, hunting, golfing, and a variety of other sports including, as his friends like to joke, chasing women.

The young charmer and Minnesota Army National Guardsman was also, in the words of his platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Hjelmstad, 37, “the prettiest young man we ever loved.”

“He was known for his pretty eyes and he had a striking smile,” explained Koch’s platoon leader, 2nd Lt. Jason Rehn, 31. “He was very photogenic.

“I’ll say it,” he said, drawing snickers from the other soldiers. “He was a very good-looking young man.”

Koch, of Morton, Minn., died June 16 near Diwanayah when a roadside bomb hit his armored cargo truck, killing him and wounding the truck’s other two passengers, Sgt. William Puckett, 29, and Pvt. Gregory Brown, 19, both of Litchfield, Minn.

Koch is the second soldier from 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division to die this month. On June 9, Spc. Benjamin Slaven, 22, was killed, also near Diwanayah, when his Humvee was hit by a roadside bomb. Both men were gunners.

Koch, like Slaven, was posthumously promoted and given the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star and the Combat Action Badge. He was also awarded the Army Achievement Medal for a prior achievement.

Less than a week after his death, Koch’s colleagues from 2nd Platoon, Company E, 136th Infantry Combined Arms Battalion recounted three of his great loves: beer, bikes and babes.

Koch’s roommate, Spc. Matthew Larson, 23, said Koch loved racing motorcycles, farming in his native Minnesota and watching NASCAR racing. He dreamed of buying a Chevy pick-up truck upon his return home.

A lifelong Minnesotan, Koch also professed an affinity for the native brew.

“Before each mission we would say a prayer,” said 2nd Lt. Jason Rehn, 31, Koch’s platoon leader. “And every time it was Brent’s turn, he’d say, ‘Dear God, please keep us safe and keep the beer cold. Amen.’ ”

While Koch was single and had no steady girlfriend, friends say he had many female admirers.

“There was some serious debate about whether to put in his eulogy that one of his hobbies was chasing women,” Hjelmstad said. “But it wasn’t a derogatory thing. He just liked girls.”

Koch also drew flack for his name, which is pronounced “cook.” Rather than wrestle with the hard-to-pronounce name, Larson said, friends playfully called him Cookie.

They also teased him for his taste in music. "He listened to rap all the time and we'd make fun of him for it," said Spc. Brandon Kottke, 24.

But friends and colleagues praised Koch for his hard work, generosity and dedication.

"He loved (his job)," Kottke said. " 'It's where the action is,' he would say."

"I think Brent would want us to go back out there," said Spc. Matthew Borkenhagen, 23.

"He came to us as a friend and soldier," Larson said. "He left us a brother and hero."

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Combat Medic Remembered At Emotional Service At Wiesbaden

June 30, 2006 By Matt Millham, Stars and Stripes

As a combat medic, Staff Sgt. Heathe N. Craig understood that, sometimes, saving people means risking your own life.

Sometimes, the risk doesn't pay off.

Craig, a member of the 159th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) based in Wiesbaden, Germany, and another soldier died the night of June 21 during a rescue mission near Naray, Afghanistan.

The night started off peacefully enough.

Craig had just gotten done chatting with his wife and playing peek-a-boo with his 1-year-old daughter, Leona, over a Web camera when the call came. Three 10th Mountain Division soldiers were critically wounded in a firefight near Naray.

"He always had missions that came up," Craig's wife, Judy Craig, said. "And that's what happened. A mission came up, and he was ready." The couple also have a 4-year-old son, Jonas.

Craig's dustoff crew had been called to rescue the wounded. By the time Craig and his air ambulance arrived at the pickup point, one of the soldiers already was dead.

It was past dark at takeoff, and the terrain where they were headed made it impossible for the Black Hawk rescue helicopter to land.

That meant Craig would have to be lowered into the combat zone by a hoist. It was one of his least favorite things to do, said Capt. Angela Wagner, the rear detachment commander for the 159th Medical Company.

The battlefield still wasn't secure, but Craig plunged in anyway. He secured the first soldier and got him safely into the hovering ambulance. That troop would make it out of Afghanistan alive.

But as Craig and the second patient were being lifted in the helicopter, the hoist malfunctioned.

"On the second try, I lost him," Sgt. James Ramey, the helicopter's crew chief, said in a letter that was read at Craig's memorial ceremony Thursday.

Craig and the soldier he was rescuing, Pfc. Brian J. Bradbury, both died. Craig grew up in Virginia. Bradbury was from Saint Joseph, Mo.

"He gave his life saving another," Wagner said.

Sgt. Krendra Jackson, one of Craig's close friends, couldn't keep herself from crying as she talked about her fallen comrade during the memorial service at Wiesbaden Army Airfield's chapel.

She told how Craig, even after back surgery, would work tirelessly, laboring beyond his body's limits, afraid that he might come off as a slacker. Jackson remembers telling him to take it easy. "He would look at me with those blue eyes and say, 'My name's not worthless.'"

Few in attendance could hold back their tears as Jackson recounted her friendship with Craig. "Judy, you once told us we acted like brother and sister. He was my brother," she said. "He was our brother."

Bomb Detonated 100 Yards From Presidential Palace

7.4.06 AP & by Waheedullah Massoud, AFP

Two bombs exploded in Afghanistan's capital, wounding around five people in the city which sees relatively little of the insurgency-linked violence gripping the south.

There are casualties following an explosion 100 yards from the heavily fortified official residence of President Hamid Karzai.

The bigger of the blasts in Kabul Monday struck a busy and heavily fortified part of the city that takes in the presidential palace, several government ministries and a five-star hotel.

The explosives were carried on a metal wheelbarrow and detonated near the justice ministry about 100 metres (yards) from the palace of President Hamid Karzai who is visiting Japan.

At least four people were wounded in the explosion, which struck after noon when the area was packed with people, police said.

The force of the blast blew out windows of the justice ministry and damaged two cars.

The earlier blast was caused by a remote-controlled bomb that exploded around 7:00 am near a police bus in the east of the city. "Only one policeman was slightly injured and taken to the hospital," the ministry of interior said.

[The Following Is Not A Parody:]

The NATO-led security force that patrols the capital said Tuesday's relatively minor blasts did not seem to indicate a deterioration of security in the city and added that the last month had been "relatively quiet".

"ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) patrols have not seen any form of attack directed against them lately," ISAF spokesman Major Luke Knittig said.

"We have seen some isolated incidents targeting the police but their response has been up to the task. We are talking about a big city."

Five Killed In Attack On U.S. Base Supply Convoy

Jul 4, 2006 By Yousuf Azimy, KABUL (Reuters) & AP

Five Afghan laborers bringing construction supplies to a U.S. military base in Afghanistan have been killed in an ambush.

The labourers worked at a U.S. base in the eastern province of Kunar on the Pakistani border.

"Gunmen stopped their vehicle, took them out and opened fire. Five were killed and one wounded," said Abdul Jalal Jalal, chief of police in the eastern province of Kunar.

TROOP NEWS

THIS IS HOW BUSH BRINGS THE TROOPS HOME:

BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE



Burial ceremony for Marine Lance Cpl. Nicholas J. Whyte at Long Island National Cemetery in Farmingdale, N.Y., June 30, 2006. Whyte, 21, of Brooklyn, died June 21 after being hit by sniper fire while on patrol in Ramadi, Iraq. (AP Photo/Ed Betz)

“The April Revolution” **Generals Blocked Bush Regime Nuke Iran Scheme**

7.6.06 SEYMOUR M. HERSH, *The New Yorker* [Excerpt]

In late April, the military leadership, headed by General Pace, achieved a major victory when the White House dropped its insistence that the plan for a bombing campaign include the possible use of a nuclear device to destroy Iran’s uranium-enrichment plant at Natanz, nearly two hundred miles south of Tehran.

The huge complex includes large underground facilities built into seventy-five-foot-deep holes in the ground and designed to hold as many as fifty thousand centrifuges.

"Bush and Cheney were dead serious about the nuclear planning," the former senior intelligence official told me. "And Pace stood up to them. Then the world came back: 'O.K., the nuclear option is politically unacceptable.'"

At the time, a number of retired officers, including two Army major generals who served in Iraq, Paul Eaton and Charles Swannack, Jr., had begun speaking out against the Administration’s handling of the Iraq war.

This period is known to many in the Pentagon as "the April Revolution."

"An event like this doesn't get papered over very quickly," the former official added. "The bad feelings over the nuclear option are still felt. The civilian hierarchy feels extraordinarily betrayed by the brass, and the brass feel they were tricked into it," the nuclear planning, "by being asked to provide all options in the planning papers."

Former Soldier Charged With Rape And Murders In Iraq

July 03, 2006 By Kelly Kennedy, Army Times staff writer [Excerpts]

A former soldier with the 101st Airborne Division has been charged with murdering three Iraqi family members – including a child – as well as raping and then murdering an Iraqi woman, according to charging documents filed in U.S. District Court in the Western District of Kentucky on Friday. He is identified in the documents as having been a member of 1st Platoon, Bravo Company of the 1/502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team.

According to the three witness reports, four soldiers allegedly drank alcohol, changed into dark clothing so they would not be seen, then went to the family's home 200 meters away from their traffic-control checkpoint, the charging documents state. Green covered his face with a brown T-shirt, a witness told investigators.

Two witnesses told investigators that Green went into a bedroom with three family members to "keep the rest of the family there," charging documents state. Another soldier threw the woman who was later raped to the floor in the main room, the documents state.

One soldier stood guard outside the home. Next, two witnesses heard gunshots from the bedroom. They told investigators that Green came out of the bedroom and said, "I just killed them; all are dead," according to the charging documents.

Another soldier, who investigators said later confessed his involvement, then raped the woman in the main room, court documents allege. Green also had sex with her, and then shot the woman "two-to-three" times in the head, allege statements from two witnesses. Green then allegedly ordered one of the soldiers to dispose of the AK-47 he had used to shoot the family, the statements state.

Another soldier, who said he did not go to the home, told investigators that three soldiers, including Green, were conducting traffic duties 200 meters from where the family lived on March 11 and 12. The witness said Green and three other soldiers talked about raping the woman, and then asked the witness to monitor the radio while they went to her house, charging documents state.

Green and the three others returned with blood on their clothing, the witness told investigators, which they then burned. One of the participants told the witness the four

men used an AK-47 to kill the family, and that the witness was never to discuss the case, the charges allege.

The witness asked who committed the murders, and one of the men replied, "Everyone who was there," the documents state.

Two witnesses said Green and another soldier had visited the murdered family's home before the night of the murder, the documents state.

Photographs taken at the crime scene after a family member reported the murders to U.S. troops corroborate the details given by the witnesses, the documents state. The photos also show "the burned body of what appears to be a woman with blankets thrown over her upper torso," the documents state.

Green was arrested in North Carolina Friday by FBI agents. He had been honorably discharged from the Army for a personality disorder, according to the document.

If convicted, he faces the death penalty for the four counts of murder, as well as life in prison for aggravated sexual assault.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

New Shia Resistance Group Declares War On The Occupation

July 2 (Reuters)

A previously unknown Shi'ite Muslim group said it was behind "recent attacks" against U.S.-led forces in Iraq but vowed not to target Iraqis, according to a videotape aired on Lebanese television on Sunday.

The militant group, calling itself the Muslim Resistance in Iraq, said in a statement accompanying the video that its attacks aimed "to free Iraq from foreign occupation".

It said the United States, Britain, and their allies "have occupied our land, looted our wealth and shed our blood".

Privately owned New TV did not say how it obtained the video, which shows attacks against U.S. troops, with a song praising the Shi'ites' courage in the background.

One scene shows wounded soldiers lying on the ground after a bomb attack against their tank. Another shows the group aborting an attack to avoid casualties among Iraqi civilians.

"We have been patient enough and we have given the political process a chance," the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, Abbas Brigades said in a statement that accompanied the tape Sunday.

It was the first public appearance by a Shiite group claiming a role in an insurgency.

The statement, read by a TV announcer, said U.S. troops came to Iraq under the pretext of overthrowing Saddam Hussein's government but are now "building bases, looting our resources, interfering in everything, sowing sectarian sedition between Sunnis and Shiites, Arabs and Kurds."

Appearing in the corner of the footage is a palm of a hand, a Shiite symbol, and a picture of what appeared to be one of Iraq's Shiite shrines, a golden-domed mosque with a red flag.

Assorted Resistance Action

04/07/2006 AFP & (AP) & (Reuters)

Guerrillas in camouflaged uniforms captured Iraq's deputy electricity minister along with 19 of his bodyguards in eastern Baghdad on Tuesday, security officials said.

They stopped Raed al-Hares' convoy in the Shiite neighborhood of Talbiya, then forced the official and his bodyguards into their vehicles, said police Lt. Ahmed Qassim.

Insurgents killed an employee in the ministry of culture's office in southwestern Baghdad, a source in the Ministry of Interior said.

Two police were killed and four others wounded when a roadside bomb struck near a police checkpoint in eastern Baghdad, police said.

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

“The Oil is Ours” Iraqi Oil Union President Visits UK

July 03, 2006 By Ewa Jasiewicz, Naftana [Excerpts]

The leader of one of Iraq's most powerful trade unions will arrive in Britain this Wednesday.

Hassan Jumaa Awad al Assadi is the President of the General Union of Oil Employees (also known as the Iraqi Federation of Oil Unions). The GUOE organises over 23,000 oil and gas workers across the south of Iraq.

New Oil Minister Hussein Al Shahrastani has stated that an energy law will be drafted within the next two months, and passed through parliament by the end of this year. The new law will decide the future of investment and development of Iraq's oil and gas supplies.

No public consultation or debate has been held regarding the new law.

The union has vowed to ensure the failure 'no matter what the cost be' of any promulgation of an energy law which promotes privatisation and foreign corporate control of Iraq's oil sector.

International oil companies, supported by the British government, have lobbied for long-term contracts to be signed which would give them control over Iraq's oil for the first time in more than three decades. The US government - which also favours such contracts - has also increased its embassy's efforts to influence the energy law.

The GUOE is opposed to the military occupation of Iraq and to the privatisation of the oil and industrial sectors of Iraq.

Hassan Jumaa Awad will be speaking at the Marxism 2006 event in London on Thursday 6th and Sunday 9th July.

The Iraqi government recently froze the GUOE's bank accounts in Iraq and Jordan.

Contact:

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Greg Muttitt, Researcher with PLATFORM and Specialist in Iraqi Oil Policy and the UK Agenda 00962 7992 51257 (Jordan mobile until July 5th) 07970 589 611

Hassan Jumaa is in the UK from July 5th -14th

The GUOE represents over 23,000 oil workers across four provinces in nine state oil and gas companies. It is independent of all trade union federations in Iraq.

Many of the Union's activists fought against and were persecuted by, the Baath regime. Hassan himself was jailed three times by the regime.

The Union has organised strikes, export interruptions and protest actions over foreign corporate interference (Kellogg Brown and Root was expelled from workplaces by union activists in 2003), unpaid wages, slashed wages, deliberate degradation of industrial assets, oil smuggling and corruption.

The union has also reconstructed war-damaged drilling rigs, refineries, port equipment and pipelines.

Naftana (Arabic: 'our oil') was set up by UK activists after contact with the GUOE. We are in regular contact with the leadership of the union.

See www.basraoilunion.org for statements from the union

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Soldiers In Pill Bottles #2



From: Richard Hastie

To: GI Special

Soldiers In Pill Bottles

"PTSD" In the field

"FTA" Fuck The Army

**Bring The Troops Home Now,
Before There Is Only Remains.**

Mike Hastie

Vietnam Veteran

July 4, 2006

Photo from the I-R-A-Q (I Remember Another Quagmire) portfolio of Mike Hastie, US Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71. (For more of his outstanding work, contact at: (hastiemike@earthlink.net) T)

OCCUPATION REPORT

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



Foreign fighters from the U.S. armed forces occupying an Iraqi citizens home in Ramadi, June 28, 2006. (AP Photo/Jacob Silberberg)

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

[Those Iraqis are sure a bunch of backward primitives. They actually resent this help, have the absurd notion that it's bad their country is occupied by a foreign military dictatorship, and consider it their patriotic duty to fight and kill the

soldiers sent to grab their country. What a bunch of silly people. How fortunate they are to live under a military dictatorship run by George Bush. Why, how could anybody not love that? You'd want that in your home town, right?]

"In the States, if police burst into your house, kicking down doors and swearing at you, you would call your lawyer and file a lawsuit," said Wood, 42, from Iowa, who did not accompany Halladay's Charlie Company, from his battalion, on Thursday's raid. "Here, there are no lawyers. Their resources are limited, so they plant IEDs (improvised explosive devices) instead."

Anatomy Of A Checkpoint Execution: "He Wanted Action" "It Will Further Increase The Resistance And The People's Hatred Of Americans" U.S. Soldier Says "I'm Ashamed Of Everything That Went On Over There"

Romero's military career would end in bitter controversy and a 14-month jail term. He was tried and convicted just a few days before the 256th left Iraq. This was not for the shooting -- but for the possession and distribution of drugs.

He says he hated the Americans then, "Not just for that day, but for what they are doing daily." "They're proving daily that they're occupiers. Their objective is to get rid of us. They do not want to bring democracy in the wake of the dictator Saddam. I hope that Saddam and his entire dictatorship returns. He at least kills people far from our view."

June 23, 2006 All Things Considered, NPR [Excerpts]

Staff Sgt. Joe Romero shot and killed Dr. Yasser Salihee on June 24, 2005.

The U.S. Army found the shooting justified under the rules of engagement. Iraqi witnesses saw it as murder.

For the people closest to the shooting -- the soldiers and Iraqis on the street that day, the shooter and the victim's family -- this one incident had a profound impact.

Joe Romero, 33, grew up in Lafayette, La. Romero grew up to become an elite Army Ranger and sniper. He briefly left the Army, but after Sept. 11, he wanted to serve his country again. He joined the Louisiana National Guard, 256th Combat Brigade, and arrived in Iraq in October 2004.

"When you looked at him, you could just tell he was a man," said Pvt. Corey Prince, who served under Romero in Baghdad.

"And he was intimidating ... this guy would make you do more pushups than any drill sergeant you ever had. If something's wrong with you, he's gonna fix it. And he's going to make sure you remember to fix it the next time."

But Romero's military career would end in bitter controversy and a 14-month jail term. He was tried and convicted just a few days before the 256th left Iraq. This was not for the shooting -- but for the possession and distribution of drugs. He is still in military prison and is appealing his sentence.

Yasser Salihee, 30, was a Sunni physician at Baghdad's Yarmouk Hospital. He sported wire-rim glasses and a buzz cut, and was married to a fellow doctor; they had a two-year-old daughter, Danya. But when the chance came to translate for foreign journalists -- including NPR -- he jumped at it. His first translating assignment was in fall 2003.

At the time of his death, Salihee was working for Knight-Ridder newspapers and was receiving solo bylines, a rarity in the Iraqi press corps.

His widow, Dr. Raghad Wazzan, says that Salihee felt he was helping people by being a journalist. "He told me many times, 'I hate medicine. I love being a journalist. I love making all the world know the truth of what is happening inside Iraq. If I stay a doctor, I'm doing just one job when an explosion occurs. If I do both jobs, I'm saving lives and telling people the truth,'" she recalls.

June 24, 2005

The Salihee's moved to Amiriyah in Western Baghdad, a former stronghold for the regime. Neighborhood walls were painted with black slogans calling for the killing of Americans. Then came the morning of June 24, 2005. It was a Friday, the Muslim day of rest.

Wazzan remembers how the day started. She and Yasser awoke at 10 a.m. and ate breakfast. Then they got ready to go swimming at Al Alawiyah club. At the last minute, Salihee decided he wanted to shave his hair. He said he'd be back in 10 minutes. An hour went by.

About the same time that morning, a platoon with the 256th's Bravo Company, along with soldiers from the Iraqi army, rolled into Amiriyah.

Staff Sgt. Romero volunteered to go along. He said snipers were not in demand in Baghdad, so he had been stuck in a headquarters company.

He wanted action.

"I enjoyed going to work. I enjoyed doing my job. I enjoyed going out there. I lived for that rush to be out there. That's what I wanted to do," Romero said, speaking from a military prison in Ft. Lewis, Wash.

Four other members of that patrol who were contacted by NPR say they were edgy that morning. Just one day earlier, another soldier from the unit, and a friend of Romero's, had been seriously wounded by a sniper's bullet at a major intersection. When the patrol reached that same intersection that morning, another shot rang out. The platoon dismounted in haste and most of them headed into a nearby building.

Romero and his partner, Christian Jones, positioned themselves so they could keep watch on the street outside. Iraqi soldiers took up position across from them and quickly stopped one car with hand signals and shouting.

Speaking on the phone from military prison in Ft. Lewis, Romero explained what happened next.

"Another car was approaching," Romero said. "We could see it way down the road. It was coming straight at us. We could tell it was coming at a rapid rate of speed. We started waving and pointing weapons to get it to stop. At that time, it didn't stop and I started making out the driver."

Romero noted that it was a single man driving a white vehicle, fitting the profile of a suicide car bomber.

According to Iraqi and American witnesses interviewed by NPR, the car was going 30 to 40 miles an hour and was about 100 meters away. Romero now had about six seconds to make a life and death decision.

Romero says that he and his partner, Jones, stepped into the middle of the street and fired warning shots.

"I know I shot toward the hood of the vehicle and in the front. Jones shot the tire," Romero said. "The vehicle is still coming at a high rate of speed. I make eye contact with the driver, he looks like he's crouching down, his hands weren't up, looked like he was hiding, vehicle kept coming. At this point, it's 30 to 25 meters from me when I had to fire my last shot and I took a shot at his head," Romero said.

The rules governing contact with civilians call for a gradual escalation in force: a warning shot, a disabling shot, and finally, the lethal shot.

Romero says he never saw Salihee hit the brakes after the warning shot. He says that when the car rolled past him, he saw blood as the driver's hand dropped away from his head. Air was hissing from the tire shot out by Jones.

Stores line the intersection in Amiriyah and shopkeepers have challenged Romero's version of events.

The Witnesses:

Ice-seller Majeed Mahmoud Aboud, 24, told NPR that Jones and Romero took up positions next to his tiny metal kiosk on the corner.

He and at least one other Iraqi witness say that the very first shot was the lethal shot.

"My mind is not like a computer but I can remember this," Aboud said.

"We were waiting, it was a hot day and the Americans came in and they took the saw I used to cut the blocks of ice. I was chatting with the other shopkeepers when I saw the driver coming fast. There were four Iraqi national guards on the street.

"When the driver saw the guy, he tried to stop. But as he hit the brake, he was shot. In one or two meters, he stopped."

Clothing-store owner, Bahjat Adnan, 47, also witnessed the shooting.

"There were two kids in the middle of the street and they said 'Stop! The Americans are in the street and they will shoot you,'" Adnan told NPR. "This is what got my attention and made me turn around and look. The kids were about 10 or 12 years old.

"I heard three shots. The first one was when the car tries to stop. The car screeched to a halt. I know that it was just a civilian guy who got shot and I don't know why he got shot except that he was coming very fast."

A bullet distorted by the heavy windshield glass crushed the bones around Salihee's eye and made a gaping wound on right side of his head.

Others thought an Iraqi soldier might have fired the deadly shot, but Romero had no doubt that the bullet was his.

NPR retrieved the bullet from an Iraqi police station and hired an independent expert, who concluded that the bullet came from an M-14, the type of weapon Romero said he was using.

Members of the patrol say they searched the car, took pictures, and found no weapons or explosives -- only Salihee's press credential and his cell phone.

"They just left the body in the car and after 10 minutes, the whole unit left," store-owner Adnan said.

Romero and other platoon members say they were ordered to leave the scene, even after the platoon commander questioned the decision. Salihee's body was left behind in his car when the temperature was soaring above 100 degrees.

"We left the guy there like a piece of meat ... like a bad guy," Romero said. "I didn't like it, I didn't understand it, I didn't believe it and I definitely didn't agree with it. That's probably one of the worst commands I've ever seen given."

Platoon members say that the order to leave the scene was given by a battalion commander whose code name was Bandit Six.

Lt Col. Daniel McElmore was the battalion commander that day. He says he does not recall giving the order.

"That does not sound like the way we conducted business in Baghdad," McElmore said.

At the scene, one of the eyewitnesses picked up Salihee's cell phone and started making phone calls. Dr. Raghad Wazzan, Salihee's widow, was the first to arrive. Aymen Salihee, his brother, was also summoned.

"When I saw the car surrounded by, I think, two Iraqi police vehicles, I just knew that Yasser is gone," Aymen Salihee said. "And I run to the car ... Two guys try to throw me out and I pushed them away and I saw him ... I couldn't open the door because they just stopped me. Everything changed in my mind and I couldn't think and I couldn't see my way. I think it's over for me because Yasser is everything for me. He's not just my brother."

After an hour or two, Iraqi police arrived. They made a rudimentary sketch, noting a skid mark on the road behind the car.

The shooting received international publicity. As in all serious incidents involving death or injury or major property damage in the 256th, an investigator was appointed.

The investigator was Maj. Andre Vige, and his first duty was to offer condolences to the family.

"The tension was so thick, you could cut it with a knife. The elders of the family, I think they were not sympathetic towards what happened but I think they were sympathetic towards me for having to be the one to go there," Vige said. "And of course everyone wants to look at blame and place blame and that's understandable. I guess in a sense, you're looking for a magical answer to give them to make everything OK. But there is nothing. There's nothing that you can do. I mean we're human," he said.

Wazzan remembers the visit.

"When he come, he start to cry," she recalled. "He said, 'I'm sorry for what's happening. I'm sorry. I know your husband is so young.' He said, 'I'm so sorry for what's happening but what can I do?'"

Wazzan was not happy with the compensation paid for her husband's death: \$2,500, the same amount the Army paid her for the car.

"They represent Yasser as a car," she said. "They represent him as a machine! I'm telling them, 'He's a father. He's a son. He's a husband. He's a doctor. He's a journalist.'"

Yet Vige found that the shooting was justified, and the only person at fault that day was Yasser Salihee.

In a letter sent to NPR, Vige wrote, "I will state for the record that Mr. Salihee would still be alive if he had been more attentive and in tune with his environment. Tragic as it may be and with the sympathy I hold for his family, I must admit that he was not very wise in his decision-making process on the day of the shooting. Mr. Salihee would still be alive and with his family if in fact he had been more alert."

[Well, he has some good points here. Iraqis who have been "wise in their decision making process" and are "in tune with their environment" have joined the armed resistance to Bush's occupation of their country and are fighting to free it. They are right to do so and they are indeed "alert." And every time a Vige comes up with a stupid, condescending, dismissive line of lame bullshit like this, more do so.]

Vige's report did fault the unit for leaving the scene; saying it "couldn't have had a positive impact on the local populace."

He was right.

Mahmud Salman, 48, is a watch repairman whose shop was just beside Salihee's car.

"The Americans left the body in the car, and it seemed to us that that was cold-blooded," Salman said. "Watching it, based on my experience, when they left the body this way, it will further increase the resistance and the people's hatred of Americans."

Eyewitness Khalid Eider, 27, watched from his shop as soldiers left Salihee behind, slumped behind the wheel of his car.

He says he hated the Americans then, "Not just for that day, but for what they are doing daily."

"We welcomed them, because we thought they would build our country," Eider said.

"They have not built, but they have harmed us. They're proving daily that they're occupiers. Their objective is to get rid of us. They do not want to bring democracy in the wake of the dictator Saddam. I hope that Saddam and his entire dictatorship returns. He at least kills people far from our view."

Aymen Salihee, frustrated with the U.S. Army, did his own investigation. He interviewed witnesses, visited the morgue and photographed the bullet. He says that Vige's report, which he received several months later, is a cover-up.

"The American soldiers are protected by law and do whatever they like," Aymen Salihee said.

In particular, he said that Vige should have mentioned in his summary that Vige's own diagrams show Romero standing off to the side of the road, where he might not have been visible to someone coming up the street.

Vige's investigation included interviews with three Iraqi eyewitnesses; their names are redacted. Two of those accounts match what Iraqis told NPR: Yasser Salihee "stopped" his car, but the Americans fired on him anyhow.

One witness said the driver "was not paying attention" when Iraqi soldiers tried to stop him. Aymen Salihee -- and most of the neighborhood -- believes his brother did stop.

For his part, Romero remains confident that he did the right thing, and not one of his fellow soldiers or commanders that NPR interviewed has questioned his judgment on that day.

"I think about it every once in awhile," he said. "But I can live with myself. I didn't murder the guy. I could have blatantly shot the guy. I don't know how I would have lived with myself. He has a family, you know? But I can come to terms with it because I did what I needed to do at the time."

[Right. And he wasn't really "looking for action." He just said that for no reason at all. Before he started in the illegal drug racket of course.]

[Now the quote at the opening of this article has a whole different look. Remember? "And he was intimidating ... this guy would make you do more pushups than any drill sergeant you ever had. If something's wrong with you, he's gonna fix it. And he's going to make sure you remember to fix it the next time."]

According to Maj. John Dunlap, the chief law officer for the 256th, the brigade investigated about 40 serious incidents involving injury or death to innocent Iraqi citizens during its year in Iraq.

The most publicized 256th case was the wounding of Italian journalist Giuliana Sgrena. She had just been released from captivity as a hostage and was being transported to the Baghdad airport when American soldiers fired on the convoy, killing an Italian intelligence officer. In another case, a family in a white pickup was shot, killing the parents. In late August, an Iraqi Reuters soundman was killed and a cameraman was shot.

In all cases, the 256th found that the rules of engagement were properly followed and no disciplinary action was taken. "You don't want to create an environment where every time a soldier pulls the trigger, they think there's going to be an investigation," Dunlap said.

He said it's important to understand that these investigations were carried out only to determine whether the rules of engagement were followed and to capture lessons learned. They were not criminal investigations.

But the impact these killings have is not just on Iraqi civilians. Platoon Sgt. David Reith, who was on the street that day, says the memories of killing innocents, like Yasser Salihee, will always be with him.

"It happens a lot," Reith said. "I think it was one of the hardest things I had to deal with, physically shooting somebody, not a bad person. You know he just did the wrong thing. That's the hardest thing to deal with."

Another soldier in the 256th, who didn't want to be identified for fear of retaliation from command, says he is still trying to cope with killing noncombatants.

"It's a real hard situation to face. You know, sometimes you'll be in a firefight with two people and there's hundreds of people around them, which happened to myself and Sgt. Romero. ... There's times when I felt I couldn't take being involved in one more innocent civilian being killed. You know, it tears you up inside every time it happens. And I still don't deal with it.

"You know I've dreamed of being in the military since I was a little kid, like a lot of little boys, but honestly, I'm ashamed of everything that went on over there."

But Vige, the man who investigated the Salihee shooting, says the nature of the war in Iraq makes close-call shootings like Salihee's inevitable.

"Now we can go back and we could hash it out from now until the end of time. It's not going to change that this guy is dead," Vige said. "If he would have maintained full situational awareness, he would still be alive."

"That's part of the bad part of war," Vige added. "Innocent people -- children, women, fathers, mothers, daughters -- are going to die. That's what war is all about. Can't change it."

In the aftermath of this shooting, the lives of those closest to Romero and Salihee have changed profoundly.

Romero remains in prison until August. He was convicted of possession and distribution of drugs. **He has maintained his innocence and is appealing his case. [Perfect. He's innocent of everything, isn't he? Everybody else lies, everybody else is doing bad things, but not him, oh no, he's just a poor victim of circumstances.]**

He doesn't know what the future holds.

"I would probably go back to Iraq as a civilian contractor or I was going to teach at sniper school for the National Guard," he said from his prison cell. "But with the charges I have on me, I don't know what I'm going to do ... I've spent 12 years of my life in the military so I don't know what I'm going to do." **[He has no "charges on me." Hello? Charges all gone. Get it? He's been convicted. He's a fucking convicted criminal, locked up for drug dealing. But psychopaths are never guilty of anything at all, ever. It's all just one big misunderstanding after another.]**

Aymen Salihee, the victim's brother, went to Mecca with his grieving parents, where he met foreign fighters from Tunisia and Pakistan. He turned down offers to avenge his brother's death.

Iraqis should fight their own wars, he says, including the one against U.S. soldiers. But he doesn't want to join the fight.

"I'd like to get out of this f---ing place, because I hate this place. I just lost everything. My future is not here," Aymen said.

Dr. Wazzan is raising her daughter and coming to terms with her husband's death. Yasser, she says, is at peace.

"I think that he is very happy now, because I saw him many times in my dreams, in paradise," Wazzan said. "He is with me and Danya everywhere I go."

MORE:

General Suffers From Acute Attack Of The Obvious [Three Years Too Late]

Jun. 26, 2006 By Nancy A. Youssef, Knight Ridder

The death of civilians at the hands of U.S. troops has fueled the insurgency in Iraq, according to a top-level U.S. military commander, who said U.S. officials began keeping records of these deaths last summer.

"We have people who were on the fence or supported us who in the last two years or three years have in fact decided to strike out against us. And you have to ask: Why is that? And I would argue in many instances we are our own worst enemy," Chiarelli said.

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

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

A Terror Organization Called Israel Occupies Palestine

02 July 2006 By Gideon Levy, Haaretz [Excerpt]

A black flag hangs over the "rolling" operation in Gaza. The more the operation "rolls," the darker the flag becomes.

The "summer rains" we are showering on Gaza are not only pointless, but are first and foremost blatantly illegitimate. It is not legitimate to cut off 750,000 people from electricity.

It is not legitimate to call on 20,000 people to run from their homes and turn their towns into ghost towns. It is not legitimate to penetrate Syria's airspace. It is not legitimate to kidnap half a government and a quarter of a parliament.

A state that takes such steps is no longer distinguishable from a terror organization.

[To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation by foreign terrorists, go to: www.rafahtoday.org The occupied nation is Palestine. The foreign terrorists call themselves "Israeli."]

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



By Martin Rowson 2006 [Thanks to NB for sending in.]



The Traitor Bush Set Up Spying On American Citizens Before 9/11

June 30 (Bloomberg)

The U.S. National Security Agency asked AT&T Inc. to help it set up a domestic call monitoring site seven months before the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, lawyers claimed June 23 in court papers filed in New York federal court.

The allegation is part of a court filing adding AT&T, the nation's largest telephone company, as a defendant in a breach of privacy case filed earlier this month on behalf of Verizon Communications Inc. and BellSouth Corp. customers. The suit alleges that the three carriers, the NSA and President George W. Bush violated the Telecommunications Act of 1934 and the U.S. Constitution, and seeks money damages.

"The Bush Administration asserted this became necessary after 9/11," plaintiff's lawyer Carl Mayer said in a telephone interview. "This undermines that assertion." [That's polite lawyer talk for "We just caught the shit-eating traitors in another one of their stupid lies."]

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces. Our goal is for Traveling

Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces. If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers.

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

Received:

**COUNTER-PROTEST:
No To The Minutemen!
No To Racism!
Defend Immigrant Rights!**

11:30 am, Saturday, July 8

@ Mexican Consulate, 204 S. Ashland, Chicago

The Paul Revere Riders, a pro-Minutemen, racist anti-immigrant "outfit," is bringing their motorcycling tour of hate to Chicago. They are planning to protest the Mexican Consulate in Chicago (at 204 S. Ashland) at 12pm, Saturday, July 8th.

This racist far-right organization (which is endorsed by the immigrant bashing Rep. Tom Tancredo) is, according to their website, targeting the Mexican Consulate to "protest Mexico's policy of sending their problems (people) to the United States."

These racists (who see people as a "problem") can't be allowed to go unopposed in the middle of Chicago; a multi-racial city of immigrants.

Join us in defending immigrant rights—and opposing the far right this Saturday!

Sponsored by: Chicagotra, Chicagoland Student Network for Immigrant Rights, The International Socialist Organization (list in formation)

To Sign On Contact: clsnir2006@yahoo.com

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