

GI SPECIAL 4H17:

**ENOUGH:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE**



[Thanks to Mark Shapiro, who sent this in.]

**“Nobody In Command
Knew About The Abuse,
Because Nobody In
Command Cared
Enough To Find Out”**

Everybody thinks there was a conspiracy at Abu Ghraib.

Everybody thinks there was an order from high up, or that somebody in command must have known.

Everybody is wrong. Nobody in command knew about the abuse, because nobody in command cared enough to find out.

That was the real problem.

The entire command structure was oblivious, living in their own little worlds.

So it wasn't a conspiracy - it was negligence, plain and simple.

They were all fucking clueless.

The general in charge of the prison was Janis Karpinski, but that didn't mean she was ever there. To actually lay eyes on Karpinski took an act of God. She spent all her time in Kuwait or in the Green Zone Palace.

She kept her happy ass in the nice, safe places. The only time she'd come by was when a dignitary was visiting. She'd dy in a half hour before they got there, get briefed, lead the tour, and then dy back out.

Other than that, she had no idea what was going on. She did nothing but suck dignitary ass. I guess she didn't like being in an overcrowded, violent prison with constant mortar fire coming in. In the five months I was at Abu Ghraib, I only saw her twice.

You have to understand, we were the most heavily mortared compound in Iraq. From the day we got there until the day I left, nobody took more mortars than we did. Nobody.

We were taking them morning and night. It was just something you got used to. It became normal. After a while, we started having these surreal conversations while the mortars were dying. We'd hear the boom of the launch, and then we'd argue about what size it was while the shit was still coming in.

"What do you think that was? A sixty or an eighty?"

"Might have been a 120."

"No, it wasn't big enough to be a 120."

Other times, we'd hear the launch and start counting, just to see how far away it was. If you got to thirty before it blew, you knew they were 700 to a thousand meters away. But that's really all you could do - try to figure out where they were and what they were shooting at you. That, and get pissed off that nobody was shooting back.

The compound had a main prison, which was two stories high, a series of smaller prisons, an administrative building, and a small building called the Death Chamber.

That's where Saddam used to torture his prisoners. There was a room with ceramic tile on the walls, door, and ceiling so the blood would come off easily. Outside, there was a tent camp. That's where we housed the prisoners who'd committed normal crimes.

Some of them were really minor offenses that would only get a two-month sentence, but they might be housed for three years while they waited for trial. The system was that backed up.

As long as the mortars landed on a building, it wasn't a big deal - they weren't powerful enough to pierce the roof. But if one landed in the yard or in the tent camp, it could do a lot of damage.

Like, one night they got lucky and split our fuel tanker in half. Dropped a mortar right through it. It caused a fire you could see for miles, probably 4,000 gallons of burning fuel.

Another time, they dropped one in the middle of a prisoner prayer group. That was pretty bad. These guys had just been sitting in rows, facing Mecca and praying, when the mortar came in. We had fifteen to sixteen dead and a bunch more wounded. We had to dig through the bodies, put them in body bags, and take them to the processing area to check them out of the prison.

Whenever a prisoner was brought in, we would ID them with a retina scan and fingerprints, so when they died, we had to process them out the same way. Which meant that, for the rest of the day, we were digging through body bags looking for eyeballs. Sometimes there wasn't an eyeball we could use, so we'd look for a finger. You just had to tune it out. You couldn't let it get to you. You got numb.

But it catches up to you later, when you get home. Like, I slept fine while I was there, but now I have nightmares.

And a few days before my unit left Abu Ghraib, all of a sudden people started worrying about mortar attacks for the first time. It was weird. They'd be huddling against the wall together. I found myself crouched in a corner, praying. The numbness was wearing off. That's one of the things you have to keep in mind when you look at the pictures. We all got numb in different ways.

I'll say this, too: The abuse started earlier than anybody realizes.

Nobody has ever said that publicly, but there were things going on before our unit even got there. The day we arrived, back in October of 2003, we were getting a tour of the compound and we saw like fifteen prisoners sitting in their cells in women's underwear. This was day one; nobody from our unit had ever set foot in the prison.

We asked the MPs in charge - the Seventy-second, out of Las Vegas - why the prisoners were wearing panties. They told us that it was a corrective action, that these

guys had been mortaring the compound. So probably the MPs decided to mess with these guys. This stuff was going on before we arrived. After we took over, it basically just escalated.

The other thing was, there were other government agencies who would come into the prison and handle prisoners.

I can't say which agencies, but you can probably guess.

Sometimes we didn't know exactly who they were. We'd get a call at like three in the morning from the battalion commander, saying, "You have a bird coming in. You need to take prisoner such and such from cell whatever to the landing zone in fifteen minutes."

So I'd put my gear on, cuff the prisoner, bag him, go to the LZ, wait for the helicopter to land, and then hand the prisoner off to the guys inside.

I didn't know who they were. Didn't ask. When they tell you not to ask any questions, you don't ask questions. They might bring the prisoner back in a few hours, or the next morning, or two days later. You didn't ask.

Other times, they would bring a new prisoner into the compound. You didn't know who they were, or who the prisoner was, or what he had done, or what they were going to do to him. You just handed over the cellblock.

One night, this Black Hawk landed at about 4 a.m., and a couple guys came in with a prisoner and took him to tier 1, put sheets up so that nobody could see, and spent the rest of the night in there. They told us to stay away, so we did. Then a couple hours later, they came back out.

They were like, "The prisoner is dead." They asked for ice to pack him, and then they said, "You guys clean this up. We weren't here. Have a good day."

Got back on the bird and took off, left the dead body right there. Those guys can come in and kill a guy, and there's nothing you can do. There's no record of them. They were never there. They don't exist.

You've probably seen pictures of that prisoner with Graner and Harman crouching next to his dead body, giving the thumbs-up. Well, that's the guy. Everybody takes that picture at face value, but the truth is, Graner and Harman didn't kill him. And when something like that happens, it stretches the limits. Maybe Graner and Harman came away thinking, Okay, let's take it further.

The earliest pictures were from October of 2003, but I didn't discover them until January of 2004. I found the pictures on a CD that Graner had given me. To this day, I'm not sure why he gave me that CD. He probably just forgot which pictures were on it, or he might have assumed that I wouldn't care.

I was dipping through them, checking out pictures he had taken in Hilla, where we were stationed before Abu Ghraib, when all of a sudden these other pictures came up. And to

be honest, at first I thought they were pretty funny. I'm sorry, people can get mad at me if they want, but I'm not a Boy Scout.

To me, that pyramid of naked Iraqis, when you first see it, is hilarious. When it came up out of nowhere like that, I just laughed. I was like, "What the fuck?! I'm looking at a pyramid of asses!"

But some of the other pictures didn't sit right with me. The ones of prisoners being beaten, or the one with a naked Iraqi sitting on his knees in front of another naked Iraqi, some of the more sexually-explicit-type stuff to humiliate the prisoners - it just didn't sit right with me.

I couldn't stop thinking about it. After about three days, I made a decision to turn the pictures in.

You have to understand: I'm not the kind of guy to rat somebody out. I've kept a lot of secrets for soldiers. In the heat of the moment, in a war, things happen. You do things you regret. I have exceeded the proper use of force myself a couple times. But this crossed the line to me. I had the choice between what I knew was morally right and my loyalty to other soldiers. I couldn't have it both ways.

I think the decision would have been harder if they had been different soldiers. But most of these soldiers I had doubts about already.

Like Sabrina Harman. She was a piece of shit from the day I met her. Before we ever got to Abu Ghraib, when we were still in Hilla, she had this kitten for three days when a dog came and killed it. So Harman decided to dissect it. She said there were no marks on the outside, so she dissected it and found some ruptured organs or something. And then she decided to mummify it. She tried different methods, but all she ended up with was the head. A damned mummified cat's head, for Christ's sake.

This rotted-out head with pebbles for eyes.

She stuck it on top of a soda can and carried it around with her everywhere. I didn't give a rat's ass what happened to her. I just tried to avoid her.

Or Ivan Frederick, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the night shift. He and I avoided each other, too. We didn't get along.

Or Charles Graner. He and I got along, but we weren't friends. Graner is one of those guys, he's got an overpowering aura about him. People just like him. But if you see the other side, you understand that he's not someone you want to get too close to.

He's manipulative. He has multiple personalities. He can be this religious guy, talking about God and the way things are supposed to be done, but he's also got this very, very dark, evil side.

We were talking in Hilla one time, before we got to Abu Ghraib. I'd been walking around smoking a cigarette, and he was working the gate to our compound, so I was talking to him for like ten minutes, and he was telling me about when he thought his wife was

cheating on him. He said that he found himself across the street from their house, up on a hill, with a loaded ride trained on the door, just waiting for them to come out. I said, "What happened?" and he said, "They never came out."

When I turned the pictures in, that's the story that stuck with me. Because I knew what this guy was capable of.

I always wanted to stay anonymous. At first, I didn't even give my name to the Criminal Investigation Division. I just burned a copy of the pictures onto a CD, typed an anonymous letter, put them in a manila envelope, and handed them to an agent at CID. I said, "This was left in my office," and walked out.

But about an hour later, this little short guy named Special Agent Pieron came to my office and started grilling me about where the pictures came from. It took him about half an hour before I gave it up. I said, "Fine, I had the pictures. I'm the one who put them in there." I said, "I'll talk to you after work."

I still didn't think it would be as big a deal as it turned out to be. I thought they would be taken off duty and tried, but I didn't think the world would ever hear about it. I never thought it would explode the way it did.

So after work, I went to Agent Pieron's office, scrolled through the pictures with him, and gave a sworn statement. A few of the soldiers in the pictures he knew, but I identified the rest and told him where the pictures were taken, that kind of thing. But while I was doing it, another CID agent was actually going out and rounding these people up.

They worked too fast. They were picking them up while I was still there! So I'm in the back room, and I start to hear voices and people's gear coming off out front. I knew right away whose voices they were. It was Graner, Ambuhl, and England. I looked at Agent Pieron, and I didn't have to say anything. He grabbed the other agent and said, "He's still in here. He is still here."

There was only one way out of the room, so there was basically no way to sneak by. One of the agents went and grabbed all of these blankets and rugs and covered me up with them, made me look like a really tall woman in some kind of ridiculous outfit. Then he told everyone in the room to turn around and face the wall, and they led me out the door and down the corridor and outside.

I couldn't see anything; they had to guide me. I was scared as hell.

The next two days, there was a lot of tension and anger in the unit. My first sergeant and my company commander knew what I'd done, and they had a big problem with it. They were pissed that I hadn't come to them first.

But the problem was, in the past, every time something came to them, it got covered up. The track record left me no choice.

We had a drug addict in the unit getting prescription drugs. He actually walked out of a military hospital and jumped into an Iraqi cab and took a hundred-mile trek to Hilla. They did nothing. There were other things, too, that I'm not going to mention. But things happened, and nothing was done about it.

Plus, Frederick was involved - he was in charge of the night shift for the prison, and he was in the damned photos.

For about three days, Graner and England and the rest of them were being questioned. Then it got even worse. Someone decided to keep them on the compound. I had expected them to be charged and taken away, but no, they were going to get new jobs. They'd be walking around with their weapons all day long, knowing that somebody had turned them in and trying to find out who.

That was one of the most nervous periods of my life. I was constantly scared. I started getting paranoid. I kept my gun with me at all times. I took it to sleep with me. All the other platoons in my company slept in one of the old prison buildings on the compound, in cells, but I slept in a closet in an old administration building, so I was one of the only soldiers who didn't have a big metal door that I could close.

In fact, there wasn't any door at all. I was totally exposed. I hung a poncho in the doorway, like an army raincoat, and I would lie there in bed with both arms behind my head and my left hand inside the pillowcase, gripping my nine-millimeter with the safety off. I would just listen.

And about four days into it, I'm lying there, and I hear the poncho go swish. I was like, Holy shit - somebody is coming into my goddamn room. And then it was quiet again. I'm thinking, Oh fuck. I tighten my grip around my weapon, and then I feel a hand on my foot. So I swing up with the nine as fast as I can and grab the guy by the shoulder, and he goes, "Jesus Christ!"

It was my friend Layton, completely blasted. He just wanted some help with his computer. Thank God he didn't remember in the morning that I had pulled a gun on him. I don't think he would've realized why I had the gun, but Layton was the type of guy that wouldn't have let me forget it. He would've teased me about it, and somebody else might have heard the story and put it together.

The day after that, I was working at my office in the Operations building when Graner came in. You could tell he hadn't slept, he's all unshaven and everything, and he's still got his weapon - an M16 with a grenade launcher. Takes it off and sets it on the desk. He just looks exhausted, and he's acting funny. He's talking to my boss, Sergeant Coville, but he keeps looking at me.

At one point, he says to Coville, "You don't know who your friends are." And then he looks at me and says, "Do you, Darb?" I froze. But then he just laughed and started talking again, and I realized then that he didn't know. He trusted me enough to believe it wasn't me.

Eventually, after about a month, somebody finally had the sense to take them off the compound. That was a huge relief, but I still wanted to make sure nobody found out what I'd done.

One of the things you have to understand is the mentality of where I grew up, in western Maryland. It's a small town, and there's not a lot of work. So most people are either in the military, in the Reserves, or they're related to somebody who is. They're good people, but I knew they weren't going to look at the fact that these guys were beating up prisoners.

They were going to look at the fact that an American soldier put other American soldiers in prison. For Iraqis. And to those people - who basically are patriotic, socially programmed people who believe whatever they're told - the Iraqis are the enemy, and screw whatever happens to them.

So I knew if I wanted to go back to my civilian life, if I wanted to integrate back home, nobody could know what I'd done. They'd never forgive me. And I was assured by the army that nobody would know. I would remain anonymous.

Well, it didn't work out that way.

About a month after Graner and the rest of them left Abu Ghraib, we were up in Camp Anaconda, and I was sitting with ten other guys from my platoon in the dining facility.

It's a big facility, packed with like 400 other soldiers, and I'm sitting there eating when Donald Rumsfeld comes on during the damned congressional hearings. It was like something out of a movie. I'm sitting there, and right next to me there's a TV, and Rumsfeld is on it when he drops my damned name.

Almost nobody in my unit knew what I'd done until he dropped my damned name. On national TV. I was sitting midbite when he said it, and I was like, Oh, my God. And the guys at the table just stopped eating and looked at me. I was like, Fuuuuuck. And I got up and got the hell out of there.

After my name got out, I knew I had to get home. The media was swarming all over the house like vultures. They were taking pictures every time my wife came in and out, the phone was ringing nonstop, and they were coming to the door one after the other with presents and dowers, even after she told them to go away.

Most of the neighbors didn't support her, either.

Some did, like the postmaster - he's a Vietnam vet, and he told my wife that he understood.

But as soon as somebody else walked in, even he stopped talking to her.

Because a lot of people up there view me as a traitor. Even some of my family members think I'm a traitor. One of my uncles does, and he convinced my brother not to talk to me anymore. So my wife had to hide in a relative's house, and when the media tracked her there, she had to be taken into military custody. I still have a lot of bad feelings toward the press.

I was stuck in Iraq, powerless to help her. I needed to get home. I asked for emergency leave, and at one o'clock in the morning they came to my room with a two-hour warning. They said, "Get out of bed, get what you need, turn in your dak vest. You're getting out of the country."

So I grabbed everything I could fit into two duffel bags, gave my weapons to a friend, and went down to wait for the plane. It's a long flight, and I managed to sleep for most of it. Finally, we land in Dover, Delaware. We're taxiing on the runway when all of a sudden, the plane stops. You can hear the hissing of the hydraulics, and the plane door is opening up.

But we're still on the runway. The loadmaster of the plane looks at me and says, "What the hell are we doing?" And then these three guys in suits come on, and they point at me and they're like, "Let's go."

There was a van sitting there on the runway, and I was saluted by a colonel, who said, "Your family's waiting. We'll take you to them." I couldn't believe it when I walked through the doors and saw my wife. I had no idea she was actually going to be in the airport. I was just hugging her and crying. Then they took us to a house on the post for the night, and after a while, I went outside to talk to Major Chung, the provost marshal for my unit based in Cumberland. He asked me what I wanted to do, and I said, "I just want to go home." And he said, "You can't go home. You can probably never go home."

He was right. I never went back to my home.

I've only been back to my town twice: for my mother's funeral and for a wedding. Even then, I was only in town as long as I needed to be.

I'm not welcome there. People there don't look at the fact that I knew right from wrong. They look at the fact that I put an Iraqi before an American.

So we've relocated, and I've been working as a military mechanic for the past two years. My orders were extended through the trials, so I have now served ten years on an eight-year contract.

My last day in the military is August 31. I'm done. I have a job lined up, working for a medical-equipment company. It's a nice job, a lucrative job. At first it might be hard for me to adapt to civilian life. You hear this from everybody who's out of the military - if you're a supervisor over a civilian, you can't bark at them like you do in the military, so you have to learn to do things different. I always treated my soldiers well, but if I wanted something done, it better be done now. It'll be different in civilian life.

But I don't regret any of it.

I made my peace with my decision before I turned the pictures in. I knew that if people found out it was me, I wouldn't be liked.

That's why I wanted to be anonymous. I knew what the mentality is up there.

But the only time I have ever regretted it was when I was in Iraq and my family was going through a lot.

Other than that, I never doubted that it was the right thing.

It forced a big change in my life, but the change has been good and bad. I liked my little quiet town, but now I have a new place, with a new job and new opportunities. And I'm going to live my life like anyone else, and raise my family.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



U.S. soldiers arrive at the site of a car bomb attack in Kirkuk, July 26, 2006.
REUTERS/Slahaldeen Rasheed

**In Western Iraq, Insurgency Is
Gaining;
“U.S. Commanders Have Said Privately
That A Military Solution To The
Insurgency In Anbar Is Impossible”**

[Thanks to Garrett Reppenhagen, Iraq Veterans Against The War, who sent this in.]

"It's like pushing on a water balloon, if you will. When you apply pressure to Fallujah, they squirt elsewhere," Cooling said. "Wherever you do not apply a significant amount of pressure, that's where the enemy is going to go."

Aug 16, 2006 By ANTONIO CASTANEDA, AP

Daily attacks against U.S. and Iraqi forces are on the rise, and there is little sign of progress in persuading the population to support the national government. U.S. commanders acknowledge they are locked in struggle with insurgents for the allegiance of Iraq's youth.

"We're in a recruiting war with the insurgency," said Brig. Gen. Robert Neller, the deputy Marine commander in western Iraq.

U.S. commanders have said privately that a military solution to the insurgency in Anbar is impossible, and what's needed is a political deal between the Sunni Arabs and the other religious and ethnic communities.

U.S. commanders say few insurgents have shown a willingness to meet with them, much less hold meaningful talks.

The top U.S. commander in Haditha went so far as to ask local leaders to spread the word that Marines wanted to know which reconstruction projects would be safe from sabotage. But insurgents never responded.

"We asked, 'Is there anything we can allow the community to do that won't hurt their political cause?'" Lt. Col. Norm Cooling, commander of the 3rd Battalion, 3rd Regiment, said.

One government official in Haditha, who asked that his name not be used for fear of reprisal, said the situation was only getting worse. City council members here won't admit to being part of the government, and officials frequently resign after insurgent threats.

The majority of Iraqi soldiers are Shiite or Kurdish, while young Sunni Arabs make up most of the insurgency. The Americans would like to redress that imbalance and bring more Sunnis into the ranks.

But efforts to recruit more Anbar Sunnis into the army have faltered, either because of intimidation by insurgents or genuine support for their cause.

Even in calmer Fallujah, which remains under tight U.S. and Iraqi control, several prominent leaders have been killed including the city council chief, a senior cleric and the deputy police chief. The mayor also recently fled the city.

Some commanders said the insurgents have grown adept at shifting away from areas targeted by U.S. troops, turning up elsewhere. For example, some Marines

attributed a recent spike across the region to increased U.S. military operations in Ramadi.

"It's like pushing on a water balloon, if you will. When you apply pressure to Fallujah, they squirt elsewhere," Cooling said. "Wherever you do not apply a significant amount of pressure, that's where the enemy is going to go."

The U.S. military has pinned its hopes on the development of Iraqi forces. Thousands of Iraqi soldiers have flowed into Anbar over the past year and are expected to soon take over key terrain such as Fallujah.

But commanders say it's a struggle to keep soldiers stationed in Anbar: Thousands have deserted after being given orders here or shortly after arriving.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

6 Canadian Soldiers Injured In Jalai

Aug. 16 (Xinhua) & (KUNA)

Six Canadian soldiers were injured as rockets fired by militants hit their base in Afghanistan's southern Kandahar province Tuesday night, a spokesman of the troops Captain Edward Stewart said Wednesday.

"The attack occurred at 6:40 p.m. local time in Jalai district, and as a result six Canadian soldiers were wounded, one of them seriously," Stewart told newsmen in Kandahar.

He said they did not know from where the rockets were fired. The injured were shifted to hospital.

Assorted Resistance Action

8.16.06 RFE & (KUNA)

Militants killed five police -- including a local police chief -- in an August 14 attack in Afghanistan's western Farah Province.

Local officials say the attackers ambushed a two-vehicle police convoy in the Gulistan district of Farah. At least three other police officers were wounded in the ambush.

At least four Afghan policemen were killed in two attacks by Taliban in the same region on Tuesday night.

In the neighboring province of Ghazni, Taliban attacked a police vehicle killing three constables last night and injuring three others. A security official, on condition of anonymity, said the policemen were intercepted in Andar area. They were asked to step down from their vehicle, disarmed and then sprayed with bullets, he said.

However, police chief of the province, Tafseer Khan, said the cops were killed when Taliban attacked a construction company in the area.

In a separate attack in the same province, one policeman was killed and another wounded on their way to secure the last night fighting site, in which three policemen were killed by Taliban.

Security chief of the province Abdul Wakil said the team was on way to Andar area when it came under attack from the insurgents. One policeman was killed on the spot while the other was wounded and taken to hospital, he added.

TROOP NEWS

A New Billboard Comes To Hackensack, New Jersey 8.16.06



[Thanks to Elaine B, who sent this in.]

War Profiteers Cleaning Up [Everything But The Blood]

8.14.06 Orlando Sentinel

The nation's war-time spending has been a boon for defense-contracting behemoths such as Lockheed Martin. It hasn't been bad for smaller concerns, either, although some smaller firms have been unable to cash in on the Pentagon's spending splurge.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

No Sweat; Just Another Rocket Attack On The Green Zone

17 August Bushra Juhi, Associated Press

An Iraqi militant group yesterday released a video showing a Katyusha rocket purportedly fired at the US-controlled Green Zone in a gesture of solidarity with Lebanon's Hezbollah.

The footage obtained by The Associated Press showed several masked men casually setting up a launcher in a parking lot containing a number of burned out buses before firing the rocket, which streaked across the sky out of view.

As they prepared to fire the weapon, the militants showed little concern that they might be discovered by a ground or aerial security patrol.

Welcome To Amariyah; Have A Nice Day

Aug 16, 2006 By VIJAY JOSHI, AP [Excerpt]

Some 12,000 Iraqi and U.S. troop reinforcements are pouring into Baghdad as part of the new security crackdown that began this month amid a surge in Sunni-Shiite violence and fears of a civil war.

On Sunday night, it was Amariyah's turn to be sealed up in a cordon-and-search operation.

Shootings and kidnappings have been common. Many of the victims were Iraqi security personnel gunned down at checkpoints and civilians considered as U.S. collaborators. Scurlock said many of the killings in the area are aimed at intimidating people Shiites and Sunnis alike who support the government.

The killings are carried out with impunity.

Earlier this year a pair of killers walked into the office of a businessman who supplied construction material to the U.S. military, told him to rest his forehead on the desk and shot him in the back of the head before driving away.

Assorted Resistance Action; The Soldiers Ran Off And The Attackers Stole Their Weapons

16 August 2006 By Alister Bull (Reuters) & Voices of Iraq & 17 August Bushra Juhi, Associated Press

Resistance fighters attacked an Iraqi Army check point near Hilla, 100 km (62 miles) south of Baghdad. The soldiers ran off and the attackers stole their weapons, police said.

Insurgents attacked the city council and governor's office in Iraq's second largest city, 550 km (340 miles) south of Baghdad, and exchanged heavy machinegun fire with Iraqi army and police, a Reuters reporter on the scene said.

Basra Governor Mohamed Alwaili said they were mainly from the powerful Bani-Asad tribe and police sources said they were avenging the killing of a leader.

Aqil al-Furaiji, a member of the Shi'ite-led governing council, said one policeman was killed and five wounded. Television pictures showed Iraqi forces exchanging heavy fire while two British armored personnel carriers passed by.

The British military said up to 180 British soldiers and 16 Warrior armored personnel carriers had been dispatched to back up Iraqi troops and police on the ground.

The fighting lasted about 1-1/2 hours.

Four policemen were wounded on Wednesday by a bomb in a roadside market in east Baghdad, interior ministry and police sources said.

An Iraqi policeman was wounded in a roadside bomb blast in Beladroz, Diala province when an explosive charge went off at a police patrol

Two policemen wounded late on Tuesday by a roadside bomb targeting their patrol near a cemetery in Kut, 170 km (105 miles) southeast of Baghdad, police said.

Three Iraqi soldiers were killed and four wounded late on Tuesday by a roadside bomb near their patrol in the small town of Jbala, near Mussayab, 60 km (40 miles) south of Baghdad, police said.

A policeman was killed and three were wounded when a roadside exploded near their patrol in the religiously mixed city of Baquba, 65 km north of Baghdad, police said.

A roadside bomb exploded near an Iraqi Army patrol north of Hillah, killing three soldiers and wounding four, police 1st Lt. Osama Ahmed said.

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

“Growing Tension Between US- Backed Security Forces And Increasingly Confident Shiite Militias” “A Warning To Prime Minister Nuri Al- Maliki's Government”

08-16-2006 KARBALA, Iraq (AFP)

A day of violent clashes with militiamen loyal to a local Shiite cleric left at least 18 people dead.

The Karbala skirmishes, which also spread to a second Shiite city, were seen as a sign of growing tension between unofficial militias and government forces.

Checkpoints were thrown up around Karbala, with only local people allowed in or out, after Ayatollah Mahmud al-Hasani called on his supporters to converge from around Iraq and confront government security forces.

Hasani spokesman Dhia al-Musawi said the militia was switching to passive resistance. "Followers from Hilla and Basra are going to come to Karbala. They will hold a sit-in wherever they are stopped by the police," he said.

One policeman was killed and another injured in Karbala itself and another officer was shot dead in an ambush by Hasani's supporters overnight in Kut, 150 kilometres (80 miles) away, police said.

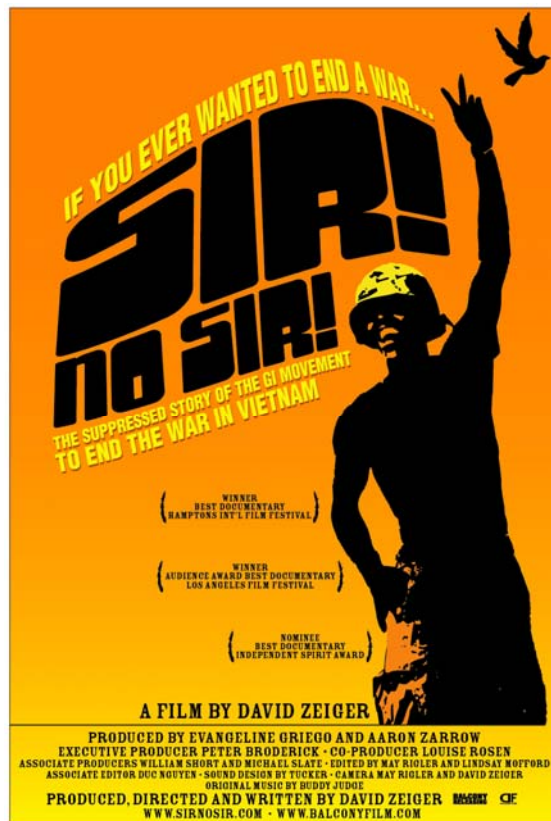
During Tuesday's fighting, Hasani's militia killed three Iraqi soldiers and three civilians, an official at the city medical directorate said.

The clash reflects growing tension between Iraq's US-backed security forces and increasingly confident Shiite militias, some of them followers of local preachers, others linked to parties in the fragile coalition government.

Hasani is a minor figure, with essentially local influence, but the violence triggered by the police's attempt to crack down on his group is a warning to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's government.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

“A GI Anti-War Movement That Has Been Buried For All These Years”



My mother used to say, "If you want something done right, do it yourself."

Given the actions of some of the draft-age kids during the Vietnam years, their moms apparently said it too.

Although my parents were squarely against the war in Vietnam, I was a tad clueless; too young to throw myself into the anti-war movement, but too old not to care. My school had one sit-in against the war, and I sat. That's about it.

Meanwhile, soldier- and nurse-age sons and daughters created a do-it-yourself anti-war movement to protest the war.

Last month, I attended a packed Saturday morning screening of the amazing documentary, "Sir! No Sir! The Suppressed Story of the GI Movement to End the War in Vietnam," at a KPFFK Pacifica Radio fundraiser at the Laemmle theater in Old Pasadena.

The audience sat in rapt attention as we watched a GI anti-war movement that has been buried for all these years. I spoke with director/writer/producer David Zeiger by phone and asked which reactions that he's gotten most surprised him.

"Two things. Even though I knew this part of our history has been forgotten, I've been surprised by how thoroughly our history has been erased. Even the people who were involved with the anti-Vietnam War movement had forgotten. I was of an age that I carry a deep memory with me. I was involved with the Oleo Strut Coffee House."

The Oleo Strut Coffee House is featured in "Sir! No Sir!" and was a venue where GI anti-war dissent was encouraged.

"The second thing is how much the young audiences relate to the film. They don't see it as some boring old history. That was one of our big goals we had in the making of this film," Zeiger said.

Indeed, his own spouse, Maryann Nielsen, is an American history teacher at South Pasadena High School, her alma mater, and she's shown the film to her class. She's been heartened at the response among these students, most of them 16 and 17 years old, an age group not famous for loving history.

"Even before I showed the film ... 10 to 12 students went to see the film on their own. I didn't offer any incentive, like extra credit. That was pretty amazing. When I showed it in my class, all I can say is that they were riveted. They picked up on the parallels to the current war themselves without me having to make the connections for them," Nielsen said.

I asked if there was anti-war sentiment in her class.

"An anti-war sentiment is certainly bubbling up," she said. "Not with everyone, of course, but with most. They are upset about the war. They don't trust the government and they are cynical. They understand the power behind oil. ... They were also fascinated by the courage and bravery of soldiers standing up and fighting for getting out of Vietnam."

It's heartbreaking to see these young men - there were also young women who resisted the war - risking charges of mutiny and insubordination that would follow them for the rest of their days.

What is so profound about "Sir! No Sir!" is that it was far more important to these GIs to be able to live with themselves and their consciences than it was to obey orders blindly. Wasn't that the lesson of Nuremberg?

If victors really do write history, as the old saw goes, weren't these young soldiers and nurses the victors? Yes and no.

They were victorious insofar as we eventually got out of Vietnam. They were victims, however, of a collective amnesia in which Americans seem to have forgotten who these kids were and how bold they were in standing up against the war.

Now, with war raging in Iraq and Israel fighting with Hezbollah along the Lebanese border, making this film available becomes even more vital. We need to learn how to wage peace.

Zeiger said that while there's not a specific screening set up for Pasadena or the San Gabriel Valley right now, he and Nielsen have been working to set up new mechanisms for people to create a grassroots anti-war movement.

Visit www.sirnosir.com. Then click "Storefront," go to the button for "Educational, nonprofit and government institutions," or "Set up an Activist Screening" where you can set up an event.

My mama used to say, "If we're going to end war, we're going to have to end it ourselves."

"Sir! No Sir!" is an important tool in our anti-war do-it-yourself kit.

Sir! No Sir!:
At A Theatre Near You!
To find it: <http://www.sirnosir.com/>

**The Sir! No Sir! DVD is on sale now, exclusively at
www.sirnosir.com.**

Also available will be a Soundtrack CD (which includes the entire song from the FTA Show, "Soldier We Love You"), theatrical posters, tee shirts, and the DVD of "A Night of Ferocious Joy," a film by me about the first hip-hop antiwar concert against the "War on Terror."

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.

SKY PILOT

From: Dennis Serdel
To: GI Special
Sent: August 16, 2006

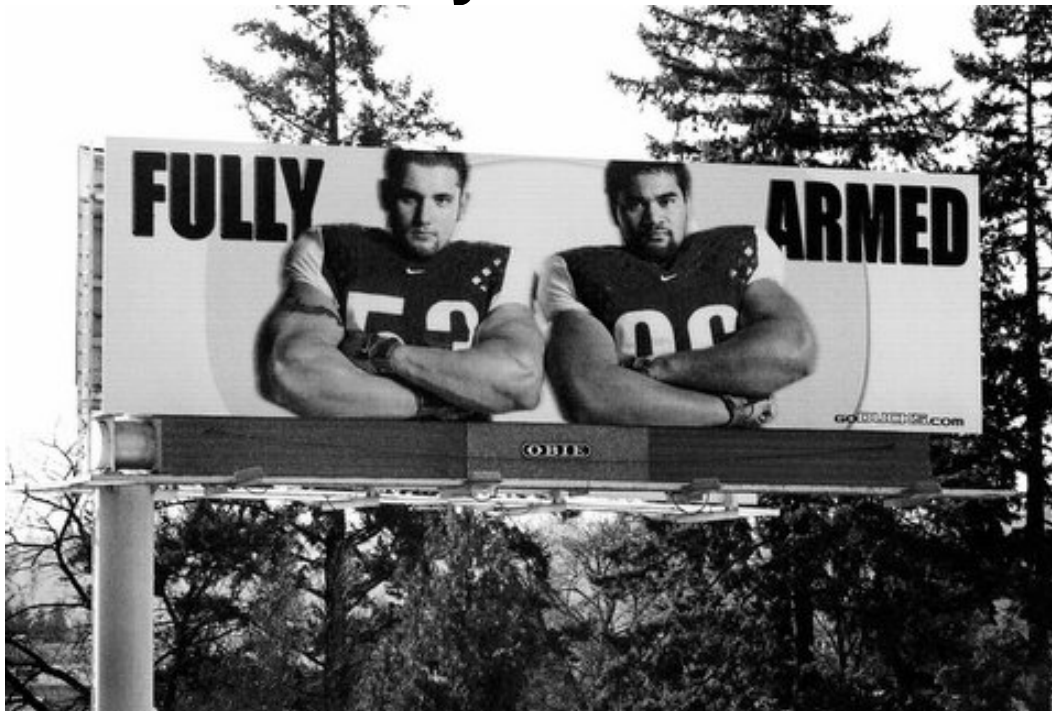
Written by Dennis Serdel, Vietnam 1967-68 (one tour) Light Infantry, Americal Div. 11th Brigade, purple heart, Veterans For Peace, Vietnam Veterans Against The War, United Auto Workers GM Retiree, in Perry, Michigan

SKY PILOT

**Sitting at the Officer's Club
with a melted whiskey on ice,
Father Tom's faith
was being tested too.
He knew he had lost many good Christian kids
to the war-like ways of drunkenness, whores,
cigarettes and drugs, but that happens
in every war.
He was more concerned about the kids
who gave him false smiles
with steel, icy eyes
as they walked by.
He knew they had become animals,
killers who had lost their humanity.
He also felt anger because of this
long long bastard war.
He was soiled, entwined in the jungle mind
with leeches sucking on his blood,
with a piece of paper and a pencil, crossing out
erasing, XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX-ing
his first paragraph.
He was ordered to give a speech
on Memorial Day, two days away.
"He's still out there," sneered Rat
to the boys in the bunker.
"Yeah, well, it's the best fucking thing he's done**

since he's been here," growled Jonesy,
a black kid from Chi-town.
Father Tom's speech that Memorial Day
in Vietnam, was simply reading off the names,
rank and unit of the men who were killed
during the time he had been there, nothing more.
Invisible tears were running down his face,
dripping off his chin into a pool
of Holy Water at his feet.
He had been out there over an hour now,
some of the Officers wanted Father Tom's
mike turned off,
but the Colonel just shook his head
and stared down at his own feet.

Fully Armed



From: Richard Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: August 15, 2006
Subject: Fully Armed

Comparing Football to war, is like comparing a county jail to a concentration camp.

If there is any one truth that imprisons the American people more, it is their total lack of knowledge about what their government does behind closed doors.

For this reason, I have to bear witness about the insanity of the Vietnam War--not only from my perspective, but through the eyes of countless Vietnam Veterans I have met over the past 37 years.

In football, when the play is blown dead, the players get back up.

In war, they are just dead.

What George Bush and Dick Cheney know about war, remains in a casket.

They are skidrow war pimps.

They are hit and run mobsters.

They are fully armed, destroying America, and the Iraqi people.

**Mike Hastie
Vietnam Veteran
August 15, 2006**

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Send to contact@militaryproject.org. Name, I.D., withheld on request. Replies confidential.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Even Collaborators Say Bush Happy Talk So Much Bullshit

Miami Herald, August 16, 2006, Pg. 1]

Many Iraqi politicians are challenging the optimistic forecasts of governments in Baghdad and Washington, with some worrying that the rosy views are preventing the creation of effective strategies against the escalating violence.

Bold New Bush War Aim In Iraq Declared:

Not To Fail “Catastrophically”

August 16, 2006 By Ann Scott Tyson, Washington Post Staff Writer [Excerpts]

The Iraqi army has grown more capable in Diyala, and took over a large portion of the province last month. But the decision to add American troops underscored the limitations of their Iraqi counterparts, particularly the police, who must overcome mistrust fostered by the sectarian tensions.

"Our mission is not to let them fail catastrophically," one U.S. officer, speaking on condition of anonymity, said of the Iraqi troops.

Unsure of the loyalties of Iraqi forces, U.S. officers sometimes lie to Iraqi army commanders about where they are going on joint missions and require Iraqi soldiers to give up their cellphones before leaving camp. Police are distrusted even more.

His soldiers vary in skill from expert scouts to privates who barely know how to hold a weapon, and accidental discharges have wounded several fellow soldiers, U.S. military advisers say.

Notes From A Lost War:

“Optimism About The U.S. Efforts To Train Iraqi Forces Largely Begins And Ends With The Top Brass And Bush Administration Officials Back In Washington”

Much of the Marines' gear was substandard.

The doors of their dilapidated Humvees didn't close properly and had inch-wide gaps at the top of them -- potentially deadly in a sector rife with roadside bombs.

At the beginning of my embedded tour I had noticed that all of the Marines at the public affairs office at Camp Fallujah had been outfitted with the latest fire-retardant combat uniforms -- but McCollough's Marines were all wearing less-protective cotton uniforms, despite an order from on high that all Marines in Iraq have the new ones.

Aug. 14, 2006 By David J. Morris (former Marine), Salon.com [Excerpts]

Back in March, Marine Maj. William McCollough, the commanding officer of a small team of U.S. military advisors training an Iraqi army battalion in the volatile Anbar province, found out that his team had failed to receive a supply of 40 mm grenades.

They were crucial munitions: Since the 15-man team of Marines had arrived in late January in the al-Jazirah region, an insurgent hotbed between Fallujah and Ramadi, the small compound they shared with their Iraqi counterparts had been attacked almost every night.

In one of their first major engagements, the Marines simply lined up on the roof of their barracks and poured grenades into a nearby tree line until the enemy fire stopped. For an isolated advisor team living among foreign troops of questionable dependability, a supply of grenades could mean the difference in whether it could stop insurgents from overrunning the perimeter.

The missing supply of grenades was another in a string of shortfalls McCollough's team had experienced since arriving, and the major had had it. He sent a letter to the Marine high command in Iraq, stating that the Iraqi 1st Battalion they were training would have to cease operations due to the lack of logistical support. According to McCollough, a general on the receiving end of the letter "scorched some earth," and his team started to get more of what they needed.

I spent five days in July living and patrolling with this group of Marines and the Iraqis they were training. Initially, the prospect of embedding with what appeared to be a team of military baby sitters was uninspiring. But I soon realized it would provide an extraordinary look inside what strategists consider to be perhaps the last, best hope to salvage stability from the U.S. occupation of Iraq as it spirals toward full-blown civil war.

In a nationally televised speech in June 2005 at Ft. Bragg, N.C., President Bush made an announcement that has been repeated many times since: "As the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down." McCollough's team of advisors, known as a Military Transition Team, or MiTT, is at the center of that strategy.

Comprising 10 to 15 U.S. servicemen drawn from across the armed forces, each MiTT lives with Iraqi forces for months at a time, providing them with training, oversight and operational support. More than 200 MiTTs are operating in Iraq, according to the Pentagon. The training and deployment of autonomous Iraqi forces is seen as critical to securing the country, handing it over to the fledgling Iraqi government, and bringing U.S. troops home.

But according to more than a dozen Marine and Army officers I spoke with, since its launch approximately a year ago, the MiTT program has been dogged by bureaucratic mismanagement, inadequate training, and an astonishing shortage of equipment and supplies -- the latter a predicament I witnessed firsthand with McCollough's team.

Many servicemen assigned to the MiTTs are distraught by this state of affairs.

One disillusioned lieutenant I spoke with said that despite his intense love of the Marine Corps, he would be leaving the service because of what he has observed during his advisory tour. A frustrated team leader told me, "Thirty years from now, when historians are trying to figure out how we lost this war, they'll look to the MiTT program."

Across the Euphrates River from Fallujah, al-Jazirah is a lush patchwork of palm groves and grass fields, bisected by dikes and dotted by the occasional farmhouse. Thickly vegetated and shockingly green, it is marvelous guerrilla country -- much more like Vietnam in appearance than anyone wants to admit.

When McCollough and his team arrived, the area was largely in the hands of hard-core Iraqi insurgents and foreign jihadis. The main road that connected the web of villages in al-Jazirah, dubbed "Route Duster" by the Marines, was virtually undrivable due to the constant threat of ambush. Mortar and small-arms attacks on the Marines compound became so commonplace through the spring that unless it was a sustained barrage, the Marines simply noted the time and went about their business.

One afternoon I watched in amazement during an intense 120 mm mortar attack as one of McCollough's lieutenants stomped out of the team's barracks in nothing but shorts and flip-flops to get a closer look at the barrage. Marching back in, he declared, "It ain't that close" and went back to tinkering with the team's laptop computer.

McCollough's team is known as MiTT 3/5, because its members hail primarily from the 3rd Battalion of the 5th Marine Regiment. Embedding with them meant incurring a startling degree of danger. At one point McCollough showed me a calendar he kept inside his journal, on which a circled date indicated enemy contact.

Beginning in early February, almost every date was circled. During one stretch, McCollough's team had either been shot at, mortared, RPG'd or hit by a roadside bomb on 37 out of 40 days. Nearly half of his team had been wounded, one member three times.

They were some of the most skilled soldiers I've seen, from my own service in the Marines to trips into Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein.

Yet, as I would learn during this trip, optimism about the U.S. efforts to train Iraqi forces largely begins and ends with the top brass and Bush administration officials back in Washington.

By most accounts, McCollough's team is a model one. A Marine officer I spoke with in Ramadi described it as "exceptional." But that is telling in its own right: Even MiTT 3/5 is undermanned and grievously undersupplied, and it was given only skeletal preparation for its pivotal mission.

A survey of the MiTT compound revealed that much of the equipment had been acquired by scrounging or borrowing from other American units.

The team's two generators -- without which the team would have no electricity, air conditioning or access to the U.S. military's tactical intranet -- were obtained by the

team's logistics officer, who twisted the arm of a friend stationed at a nearby Marine supply depot.

Much of the Marines' gear was substandard.

The doors of their dilapidated Humvees didn't close properly and had inch-wide gaps at the top of them -- potentially deadly in a sector rife with roadside bombs.

At the beginning of my embedded tour I had noticed that all of the Marines at the public affairs office at Camp Fallujah had been outfitted with the latest fire-retardant combat uniforms -- but McCollough's Marines were all wearing less-protective cotton uniforms, despite an order from on high that all Marines in Iraq have the new ones.

In a document distributed to commanders after the MiTT program was launched, Lt. Gen. John Sattler, the head Marine general in Iraq, identified the advisor teams as "the main effort" -- an official designation that should have given them head-of-the-line privileges for supplies, ammunition, communication equipment and all the sundry items that a combat unit needs to function in the field.

However, when the logistics officer assigned to MiTT 3/5 first submitted support requests, he told me, the response from Marine supply officers was, "Who are you? What unit are you with? What's a MiTT?" The disconnect between them and the larger American military apparatus drove the Marine advisors crazy -- "the main effort" was the punch line to many jokes told by McCollough's team while I was with them.

The MiTT program is strained by other fundamental issues.

Historically, the mission of training indigenous troops has been handled by U.S. Army Special Forces, made up of experienced soldiers who have undergone years of specialized linguistic and culture-specific training. But with the military stretched thin by the Bush administration's far-reaching war on terror, there simply aren't enough Special Forces troops to go around, so the military has been forced to draw upon less seasoned troops from across the armed forces.

Despite an admirable track record in combating the insurgency in al-Jazirah, McCollough's team had a less-than-auspicious beginning.

Formed around a few handpicked officers and sergeants, a number of the men who joined the team had been assigned against their wishes and on short notice from other noncombat units within the Marine Corps.

The team's second in command came from the traffic-management office at Camp Pendleton and had never served in an infantry unit before. Only a third of the team had training in the foreign weapons the Iraqis use.

A senior enlisted Marine on the team described their mission preparation as "a joke."

The entirety of it consisted of a week's lectures at Camp Taji, a forward operating base north of Baghdad. Most of the classes were hastily assembled slide presentations. One covered Iraqi radio equipment and was given by an instructor who had never seen the gear before. The sector-specific training consisted of a one-hour briefing given by an officer who had visited al-Jazirah only once.

One recent after-action report I saw, written by a MiTT team leader from elsewhere in Iraq, concluded that the Pentagon has "given lip-service to the importance of advisors but has not allocated resources (time, funding and command attention) to the training and equipping of the advisors."

In Washington, the message about the MiTT program remains upbeat. "The (Iraqi) army has been improving by leaps and bounds in the eight months we've been here," Army Col. Brian Jones, a commander in the Diyala province bordering Iran, said during a Pentagon press briefing on Aug. 4. "And truly I think we're starting to see the evolution of a professional force."

But McCollough's team expressed concern about the long-term prospects for the Iraqi forces they've been training. Soldiers continue to desert, and the battalion is never at full strength because Iraqis expect to have at least one week of leave per month in order to ensure that their families are safe and provided for.

Several of the Marines said they've seen some progress with the Iraqis. Yet, despite the Marines' continual hectoring, the Iraqis' field discipline leaves much to be desired.

A gunnery sergeant told me that, with few exceptions, the Iraqis were poor shots. The Marines were happy to have at least curtailed the infamous "death blossom" -- the Iraqis' indiscriminate spraying of bullets into the air. But many moments were frustrating for Marines accustomed to working with well-disciplined troops.

A prime example occurred in June: In the middle of an extended gun battle, the Marines were flabbergasted to discover some of the Iraqi soldiers relaxing and eating watermelon instead of manning their weapons.

A number of veteran U.S. military advisors I spoke with believe that the training under way essentially will last only as long as American officers are physically present and directly supporting the Iraqi army units.

[Through all this very long account, how can it be that the writer never one time speaks to the key question: why is it that the resistance movement has no problems motivating their soldiers? The British never could get a grip on that in 1776 either.]

In addition to the challenges posed by the Iraqi trainees, the Marine advisors have run into some galling problems with the U.S. military itself.

In February, when the Iraqi 1st Battalion began taking casualties, the Marines took them to a U.S. medical facility at Taqqadum, a sprawling logistics base a few miles to the south -- and were initially turned away.

"Iraqi soldiers aren't allowed on this base," they were told. After wrangling with the gate guards, they were eventually able to get the wounded Iraqis treatment, but it was an incident that none of the Marines forgot. The American attitude, according to McCollough, is frequently one of "Well, they're only Iraqi casualties" -- not something to get too worked up over.

There is an almost mind-boggling gap between the Marine advisors' daily reality and life on the large, relatively plush forward operating bases that support many U.S. troops in Iraq.

This is a point of irritation for the Marine advisors, who refer to the other troops as "Fobbits," a derogatory term denoting those who never leave the safe environment of the large bases.

At Taqqadum, American personnel dine on prime rib and enjoy Baskin-Robbins ice cream. In one of the chow halls there, I spotted a 4-foot-tall Statue of Liberty sculpted out of butter.

In contrast, McCollough's men subsisted mostly on Iraqi army chow, Top Ramen noodles, Spam and junk food sent to them by family members back home.

Combined with the relentless pace of operations in al-Jazirah, the poor rations resulted in major weight loss among some members of the team. One gunnery sergeant told me he'd shed almost 40 pounds over the course of the deployment.

While at Taqqadum, which increasingly resembles the "Little America" bases that became emblematic of the bloated U.S. war effort in Vietnam, I also noticed fliers for aerobics and salsa-dancing classes. There were weekly jazz concerts. When McCollough's team first arrived in Iraq, he told me, they went hunting at the Taqqadum post exchange for felt-tipped markers and protractors for their field maps. They were disgusted to discover that while there was thong underwear, hair care products and other luxury items available, they could not find some of the combat-essential items they needed.

As the U.S. military increasingly has dug in with large bases like Taqqadum, the trail of logistics and supplies supporting them has grown longer. As one particularly frustrated Army captain at Camp Ramadi put it, "We're chasing our own tail over here."

Yet, out on the bleeding edge of the war, the MiTT Marines took an unmistakable pride in their situation. They saw themselves as the magnificent bastards of the Corps, far away from the flagpole, and while they felt the burn of neglect from higher headquarters, the war seemed to retain an adventure-like feel for them. They had an unbelievable nonchalance toward danger. It seemed miraculous that none of them had been killed, which McCollough attributed in part to dumb luck.

In spite of the doubts hanging over the MiTT program, over time many of the Marines had developed a sentimental attachment to their Iraqi counterparts. And despite the Iraqis' mixed feelings about the American occupation, good will developed in the other direction as well. On my last day with McCollough's team, he told that he had recently taken the Iraqi 1st Battalion's executive officer, Lt. Col. Jafra, to the U.S. hospital at

Taqquadum to have his leg looked at. Jafra, a Shiite from the Sadr City neighborhood of Baghdad, had taken some shrapnel in his ankle from an American artillery shell during the Gulf War. At one point Jafra said to McCollough, "I prefer to think that you shot me, Major McCollough, because that way, if it was a fellow soldier I respect who shot me, then there is no anger."

During my time with McCollough's team, I was heartened by the camaraderie between the Marines and the Iraqis.

But that couldn't obscure the feeling that the MiTT program appears headed the way of many aspects of this war -- another casualty of poor planning, attention and execution by U.S. leaders.

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

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)

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