

GI SPECIAL 4H6:



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

““Nobody Wants Us Here, So Why Are We Here? That’s The Big Question,’ Said Maj. Brent E. Lilly”

“If We Leave, All The Attacks Would Stop, Because We'd Be Gone”

While senior U.S. commanders have indicated that troops will be required to stay longer in Anbar than elsewhere in Iraq, they have already begun cutting back forces in some smaller, less strategic towns along the Euphrates.

Lilly and other U.S. officers said they were increasingly persuaded that U.S. forces could withdraw outside the city with little military impact, even with only a rudimentary local government and Iraqi security force in Hit.

Added another U.S. officer, "If the insurgents want to blow up the bridge, damn it, let them!"

August 4, 2006 By Ann Scott Tyson, Washington Post Staff Writer

HIT, Iraq

Lt. Col. Thomas Graves wasn't expecting trouble as his convoy rolled toward this embattled Euphrates River town at midday recently, on a mission to monitor Friday prayers at mosques.

Local officials had assured Graves, the top U.S. commander in the area, that Hit was "going through a period of peace and quiet," he said shortly before leaving his camp.

But just as Graves reached the edge of town, the road in front of his Humvee exploded in a cloud of dust and debris. An insurgent hiding in a nearby palm grove had detonated two buried artillery rounds, narrowly missing the colonel.

"Welcome to Hit! It's a peaceful little town -- sorta," Graves told a reporter traveling with him.

So it goes here in western Iraq's Anbar province, a center of Sunni resistance. In Hit, U.S. forces and their Iraqi counterparts are the target of most of the two dozen attacks -- road bombs, shootings and mortar fire -- each week.

Residents are quick to argue that the American presence incites those attacks, and they blame the U.S. military rather than insurgents for turning their town into a combat zone. The Americans should pull out, they say, and let them solve their own problems.

Increasingly, the U.S. military seems eager to oblige.

While senior U.S. commanders have indicated that troops will be required to stay longer in Anbar than elsewhere in Iraq, they have already begun cutting back forces in some smaller, less strategic towns along the Euphrates. In Hit, Graves's Army battalion replaced a much bigger Marine contingent; U.S. troops have been ordered recently to leave other regions in western Anbar to reinforce Baghdad.

"We want the same thing. I want to go home to my wife," Graves, of Killeen, Tex., said he told Hit officials when his unit, the 1st Battalion, 36th Infantry Regiment, 1st Armored Division, arrived here in February. The goal, Graves said, is for U.S. forces to leave Hit proper and patrol only the main highway passing by the town.

Another U.S. officer put it more bluntly: "Nobody wants us here, so why are we here? That's the big question," said Maj. Brent E. Lilly.

Lilly leads a Marine civil affairs team that has disbursed many thousands of dollars for damage claims and projects in Hit, but is still mortared almost daily. "If we leave, all the attacks would stop, because we'd be gone."

Lying 35 miles upriver from Anbar's capital of Ramadi, Hit is an ancient city known for its tar deposits and relatively educated population. But more than two years of warfare have dragged the town of 40,000 people back to the pre-industrial age.

All phone systems in Hit have been destroyed. The war has shut down industry, so at least 50 percent of the people are jobless and a quarter live in poverty. The town's bank holds no money. Fuel is scarce, and most of what is available is sold by insurgents at black-market prices, according to U.S. and Iraqi officials.

The police disbanded more than a year ago and Hit still has no officers on the job, although a new force is in training.

Conditions in the city are so bad that Hit's mayor recently asked the U.S. military to send him to Abu Ghraib prison -- "just for the summer," he told one U.S. officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the topic. "You have air conditioning, three meals a day, soccer balls. Abu Ghraib is a nice place," the mayor said, according to the U.S. officer.

Residents complain bitterly about U.S. military roadblocks and curfews, even though they are designed to prevent attacks. Seven different U.S. military units have swept into Hit conducting assaults since 2003. Major roads are routinely cut off for months, leaving some areas uninhabited except by packs of stray dogs. Hit's bridge over the Euphrates is closed to non-military vehicles, forcing residents to cross by foot or in wooden carts.

One recent afternoon, 1st Lt. Joshua Buchanan stepped out of a U.S. combat outpost perched amid mud ruins overlooking Hit's bridge. The riverfront below -- once crowded with fish restaurants, shops and homes -- is now virtually abandoned, with many of its buildings destroyed. The ground is covered with a thick layer of dust created by U.S. tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles.

Pedestrians trickled over the bridge as Buchanan led a patrol into Hit's market area. Residents looked on blankly, responding only when he greeted them in Arabic. "You try

to build a silent rapport," said Buchanan, 27, a former history teacher from Great Falls, Va. "You know you'll never be best friends."

Asked about Hit, market dwellers vented frustration with the U.S. military. "The problem is with the Americans. They only bring problems," said watermelon vendor Sefuab Ganiydum, 35. "Closing the bridge, the curfew, the hospital. It's better for U.S. forces to leave the city," he said. Pregnant women and other patients must cross the bridge to the hospital in wooden carts, he complained. At night, many are afraid they'll be shot if they go.

"Even the dead are taken by wheelbarrow," added Mohammed Hussein, 30, at his cucumber stall.

Akram Mushaan, 45, said the war has hurt business, as customers are few and many can't afford to pay. Rather than let his melons spoil, he gives them away, he said, flipping through a book filled with IOUs.

"What did we do to have all this suffering?" asked Ramsey Abdullah Hindi, 60, sitting outside a tea shop. Ignoring U.S. troops within earshot, he said Iraqis were justified to attack them. "They have a right to fight against the Americans because of their religion and the bad treatment. We will stand until the last," he said somberly.

Buchanan pressed on with the patrol, all too familiar with the gripes. "Everything's our fault. I understand that," he said.

City officials, too, are adamant that U.S. troops leave Hit. But many -- corrupt and protected by suspected ties with insurgents -- are using their positions to tap into American money as long as they can, U.S. officials say.

"The city council survives because they work on issues that affect everyone, like water. Insurgents need water, too," explained Lilly, a Marine reservist and a financial analyst in Detroit.

"If I want to say something to the insurgents, I just say it to the city council. I know they'll get the word."

In an abandoned classroom lined with dusty books and plaster models of body organs, Lilly sits at the head of a table, going through a stack of reconstruction proposals as Hit officials look on.

"We're not going to purchase ambulances because there's no phone system. No one can call," he said. "We're not going to repair the gas station because it had a weapons cache." Next he scolded Hit's water manager, Usama Abdul Rahman Jameel, for trying to get \$4,000 for a \$2,000 water project.

"It's my lucky day," Jameel replied sarcastically.

"He's corrupt, but at least he's honest about it," Lilly said later of Jameel. "He's like, 'Yeah, I'm taking as much as I can off you.'"

Soon after the city officials left, a mortar round pounded Lilly's compound. He threw on his body armor, grabbed his rifle and rushed to the roof. Lilly, an Arabic speaker and Muslim known around Hit as "Abdul Rahman," is disconcerted by how often he takes fire. "I'm the guy doing the good stuff and I get shot at all the time!" he said later in his office, ignoring more mortar blasts.

"Nobody is pro-American in this city. They either tolerate us or all-out hate us."

In an effort to win cooperation, Graves has tried softer tactics. Raids are still frequent -- Graves has sent 130 people from Hit to prison -- but his soldiers avoid using stun grenades, after a city official complained that they made him afraid to make love to his wife at night.

Lilly and other U.S. officers said they were increasingly persuaded that U.S. forces could withdraw outside the city with little military impact, even with only a rudimentary local government and Iraqi security force in Hit.

While the Iraqi army contingent in Hit has shrunk to about 400 men, 60 percent of its strength, police officers recruited from outlying tribes are undergoing training.

"If we do leave, the city will be a lot better and they'll build it a lot better," Lilly said.

Pulling out U.S. forces would also mean reopening the Hit bridge to civilian traffic. American troops have held the bridge for more than a year since insurgents attacked it with a car bomb. "We don't really gain anything from it," said Maj. Michael Fadden, of Dayton, Ohio, the battalion's operations officer.

Added another U.S. officer, "If the insurgents want to blow up the bridge, damn it, let them!"

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Woodlake Soldier Killed; Army Infantryman Was Stop-Lossed In Iraq

July 20, 2006 By David Castellon, Staff writer, Tulare Advance-Register, Tulare, CA

WOODLAKE: Manuel Holguin thought the knock at his door early Saturday evening meant that yet another driver had gotten lost on the rural country road near his home north of Woodlake.

But when he opened the door, Holguin found himself facing two Army National Guard members in uniform. They were there to inform him that his 21-year-old son, Manuel Joaquin Holguin, an Army infantryman on his second tour of duty in Iraq, had died in combat.

"I don't know if there is any kind of preparation for it," Holguin said Wednesday.

Certainly, the senior Holguin and his wife, Lydia, had thought this day might come. Manuel Holguin said his son, who preferred to go by his middle name, had spoken to him about life insurance and other matters should he die overseas.

But none of that readied him for the devastating news.

"Was I prepared for this? Honestly, no," he said.

Manuel Holguin said Army officials told him that his son died Saturday in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad. Joaquin Holguin was on foot, responding to a suicide bomber, when he came under fire, the officials told the father.

A Defense Department report states that Joaquin Holguin died of injuries sustained after his unit came under small-arms attack that included an improvised explosive device. Manuel Holguin said his son died after the explosive went off.

As of this morning, the Defense Department listed the total number of U.S. military deaths in Iraq at 2,554.

Joaquin Holguin was a member of the 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division based in Baumholder, Germany. His father, an assistant principal of student services at Mt. Whitney High School in Visalia, said Joaquin Holguin joined the Army in 2002 while still a senior at Woodlake High School.

Joaquin Holguin's first tour in Iraq lasted 16 months. Manuel Holguin said he and his wife were overjoyed that their son had escaped death or serious injury.

But last year, Joaquin Holguin received new orders for a second, open-ended tour in Iraq.

He left Nov. 11, about the time his enlistment would have ended if not for the Defense Department's "Stop-Loss" policy, which allows military branches to keep soldiers from leaving as a means of preventing shortages.

Manuel Holguin said his son, who was single, had planned to pursue a career in law enforcement. "He wasn't whining or crying about (his return to duty)," Manuel Holguin said. "He was an honorable young man." Besides, his fellow soldiers were counting on him. "The bottom line was, he wasn't going to forget his buddies," Manuel Holguin said.

Joaquin Holguin's brother, Javier, 19, said his older brother joined the Army in part to see the world. But that's not the only reason, he said. "He felt it was his duty, I guess," Javier Holguin said.

The Holguins won't know until today at the earliest when their son's body, currently at Dover Air Force Base, Del., will be flown home.

Meanwhile, the Holguins have been busy fielding phone calls and receiving visitors. On Wednesday, pots of flowers and sympathy notes lay on the family's front porch and inside the house. More than once, Manuel Holguin had to excuse himself to answer the phone or the door.

Word of Joaquin Holguin's death has spread throughout the Woodlake area. City Administrator William Lewis said that's typical in such a small community.

Lewis said that as far as he knows, Joaquin Holguin is the first military member from the Woodlake area to be killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"You read about this in the paper all the time," he said, "but you never think it's going to hit home."

Jose Palomo, a Woodlake High School Spanish teacher who coached Joaquin Holguin on the school's soccer team, said the Holguins are a "really respected family" in Woodlake. "I'm still having difficulty believing it, just taking it in," he said.

Palomo said he spoke to Joaquin Holguin last summer and asked him what it was like in Iraq.

" 'You know, it's really hectic,' " Palomo remembers the soldier saying. " 'It's really dangerous because you really don't know who you're fighting.' "

Palomo said Joaquin Holguin's death has made him think of other former students who are now in Iraq. There are many of them, he said. "You hope for their safety," he said.

Bloomfield, Neb. Native, Rick Cordes, Wounded

08/05/06 Yankton. Net

Marine Chief Warrant Officer Rick Cordes, 39, son of Mr. and Mrs. LeRoy Cordes of Bloomfield, was wounded July 22 when an improvised explosive device (IED) went off on roadside in Baghdad. Cordes was on patrol at the time.

[THIS IS NOT A PARODY] General Abizaid Can "Imagine" Winning Baghdad

[Thanks to PB, who sent this in. He writes: ABIZAID SEES IRAQ WAR AS WINNABLE BECAUSE HE CAN IMAGINE (!) TAKING BAGHDAD FROM THE RESISTANCE]

Aug 3 By ANNE PLUMMER FLAHERTY, Associated Press Writer

"Iraq could move toward civil war" if the violence is not contained, Gen. John Abizaid, the top U.S. commander in the Middle East, told the Senate Armed Services Committee.

"It's possible to imagine some reductions in forces, but I think the most important thing to imagine is Baghdad coming under the control of the Iraqi government," Abizaid said.

FUTILE EXERCISE: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!



US troops at the scene of a roadside bomb, July 12, 2006, in northern Baghdad. (AP Photo/Karim Kadim)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Canadian Soldier Killed In Crash Near Kandahar

05 Aug 2006 CBC News

A Canadian soldier was killed and three others injured, one of them seriously, on Saturday in a traffic accident in southern Afghanistan, military officials said.

Master Cpl. Raymond Arndt, a reservist with the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, died in the accident.

The Canadian soldiers were travelling in an armoured vehicle called a G-wagon on a road 35 kilometres southeast of Kandahar when they collided head-on with a local truck, officials told CBC News.

They were delivering medical supplies to an outpost near the Afghan-Pakistani border when the collision occurred.

Jared Gagnon, a reservist with the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, is listed in very serious condition. He was to be flown to a military hospital in Germany.

Assorted Resistance Action

08-05-2006 KANDAHAR (AFP)

Two police officers were killed and eight others wounded in a roadside bomb aimed at a district governor in Afghanistan's troubled south, an official spokesman has said.

Shadi Khan, the governor of Mianshin district in Kandahar province, was on his way to Kandahar city when his vehicle was struck by a roadside bomb in the Shawali Kot area, provincial spokesman Daud Ahmadi said Saturday.

"Two police guards were martyred and eight others were wounded in the roadside bomb blast, but fortunately the district governor survived," he told AFP.

In a separate incident, Taliban attacked a police patrol in southern Ghazni province overnight which left an intelligence official and a rebel killed and two police wounded, provincial police chief Tafsir Khan said Saturday.

The Lights Are Going Out In Kabul

8/5/06 By Benjamin Sand, VOA, Kabul

Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, faces a crippling energy shortage with basic electricity only available six hours a day. Officials say demand is soaring, but international support for the city's energy needs is being cut and widespread power outages are expected throughout the coming winter.

Abdur Rahim, 23, uses a metal crank to help kick start the old Russian generator he keeps behind his leather shop in downtown Kabul.

He says the city only provides electricity from six in the evening to midnight. During business hours, he says, the only way to run his shop is to generate the power himself.

The Afghan energy ministry predicts the situation will get worse in the months ahead.

Mohammed Amin Munsif, Afghanistan's deputy minister for energy says Kabul does not have the budget to purchase fuel for its massive diesel generators.

Without that additional support, he says, the entire city faces energy cuts during the bitterly cold winter.

"We will be faced with a lot of problems," he said. "The people will be too cold and the people are too poor. All the children and the eldest men and women they [could] die from this weather."

Electric outages are already becoming more frequent throughout the ancient city.

Kabul's international airport is now running almost entirely on backup generators. Even the Ministry of Energy is in the dark most of the day.

The city's business leaders warn the problem is spiraling out of control.

TROOP NEWS

Fly the Flag, Forget the Dead

[Thanks to Phil G, who sent this in.]

03 August 2006 By Stacy Bannerman, Truthout Report

"Open the casket. We need to see what's inside."

Carlos Arredondo spends most of his days traveling up and down the East Coast with a flag-draped coffin. He takes it to parades and protests, schools and state fairs.

Today it's in front of the Russell Senate Building, next to 78 pair of combat boots representing the number of US troops killed since June 15, when Congress voted to "stay the course" in Iraq. One week later, Military Families Speak Out launched Operation House Call on the front steps of the Cannon House Building.

This week we moved to the Senate side, where two Capitol Hill police have spent the past twenty minutes going over our event permit and making calls to headquarters. The flag-draped coffin passed the security checkpoints on the National Mall, and got an initial "OK." Now that it has come to rest at the entry of the building where Senator John

Warner (R-Va.), chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, has his office, the casket is a problem.

Ten military family members, including three Gold Star parents, are gathered around the coffin, which has a photo of Carlos's son, Alex, on the lid. Alex was killed in Iraq in August of 2004. We watch as Carlos methodically removes his boy's boots from the lid and hangs his son's uniform, bedecked with the Bronze Star and Purple Heart, on the crossbars of the Operation House Call sign.

We know Alex's body isn't in the glossy wooden box, but we still hold our breath when Carlos lifts the lid. The two officers observe stoically as he pulls out Alex's soccer ball, followed by two of his favorite childhood toys. When Carlos retrieves a fuzzy Winnie the Pooh bear in camouflage, one of the cops loses his composure, and removes his mirrored aviators to drag a hand across his eyes.

I cannot bring myself to look at Gold Star parent Al Zappala and newly-minted member Gilda Carbonaro, who watched a box like this being lowered into the ground of Section 60 at Arlington National Cemetery on May 23rd, 2006.

The coffin contained the remains of her son, Sgt. Alessandro Carbonaro, a Marine in the Second Reconnaissance Battalion. Sgt. Carbonaro was serving his second tour of duty in Iraq when he was hit by an IED, which caused severe burns on over 60% of his body. Gilda was at the military medical center in Landstuhl, Germany, holding her boy in her arms when he died.

The Capitol police inform us that Carlos and his coffin have got to go. Now. It's not listed on the permit and apparently the "stay the course" strategy applies here, too, because they tell us they can't make any changes or exceptions.

But when I ask the officer if we can keep the large American flag that was added to our vigil this morning, he flip-flops and says, "That's not a problem."

"Are you sure? Because I know it's not on the permit either."

"Yeah, well, it'll be fine."

The policy on the Hill: fly the flag, forget the dead.

Israeli Reservist Soldier Who Refused Orders To Kill Lebanese Says “The Majority Don’t Want To Be Involved In This War”

[Thanks to Max Watts, who sent this in.]

August 05, 2006 EXTENSIVE INTERVIEW WITH REFUSER AMIR PESTER [Excerpts]

The following interview, available only in Hebrew, was translated from Yediot Aharonot of by Adam Keller.

Even before going to serve his 28 days in prison, Reserve Captain Amir Pester had to confront an intransigent family front. His father, his general uncle Danny Mat and his brother who is a Battalion Doctor are all angry at his act.

Despite all this, and despite the rain of missiles falling on his home city of Haifa, Pester has no regret: "It is unacceptable to retaliate for every missile hitting Haifa with ten missiles which would kill 54 people in Lebanon" he said yesterday on the way to Military Prison 6. "As far as I am concerned, to participate in this war is to commit a war crime".

"I am sure our pilots are swell guys, wonderful people full of values, kibbutzniks and everything", even when they push the button and take out a building full of children.

In fact, I know that they have a divided opinions among themselves, too."

Didn't your comrades from the battalion, who did board the bus, call you a coward?

These people do reserve service with me for many years, and they know I am no coward. It is also likely that my personal risk in this war would not have been that high. I have joined the army in the first Intifada, I have been shot at, had a washing machine thrown at me, what not. The risk is not motive, conscience is. I just feel that this time it would not be right to do this tour of reserve duty.

I am sure that 99% of the reservists in my battalion would have done the same if they just could. Some ten soldiers which I know, from all the three divisions which were mobilized, told me explicitly that they would have done like me but they don't have the guts.

Do you believe them?

Reserve duty is not what it was twenty years ago. Some people enjoy it as a kind vacation from their wives and/or jobs. there are a few idealists.

But the majority don't want to be involved in this war.

As a reservist I am certainly concerned when I hear Olmert say he would not conduct negotiations for return of the captured soldiers.

Tomorrow it could be me. So, are they not going to conduct negotiations to return me?

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action

August 04, 2006 AFP & August 5, 2006 (Xinhua) & Reuters

In the town of Al-Hadrah, a bomber ploughed an explosives-laden car into group of police protecting a football match, killing three officers and seven civilians, police said. Nine police were wounded.

Unidentified militants shot dead an Iraqi policeman in a northern district of Baghdad. The policeman was killed in the Azamiyah neighborhood, where insurgents were active against U.S. and Iraqi forces, said the source.

Five Iraqi army soldiers died and one was injured when guerrillas opened fire on their checkpoint southwest of Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad, an army source said.

Near the town of Madaen, south of Baghdad, insurgents attacked Iraqi security forces. Three policeman were killed and four are missing.

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

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)

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Here Rests In Betrayal An American Soldier Known But To God



From: Richard Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: August 05, 2006
Subject: Here Rests In Betrayal An American Soldier Known But To God

**What they should put in this casket is the American flag,
because that is what is dying. The magnetic ribbon on
the car should read, "God Save America."**

**Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
August 5, 2006**

**"Those who do not know history,
are destined to remain a child."
Marcus Cicero**

Photo and caption 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)

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.

“The Lie Of Israel As ‘Victim’ Has Been Destroyed Completely”

August 3, 2006 William Bowles, www.williambowles.info [Excerpt]

I think we can safely say that the invasion and destruction of Lebanon as part of the strategy for a US transformation of the Middle East is a failure, for not only has it failed to trigger some kind of Lebanese rejection of Hizballah, it has also opened up the possibility of a wider, regional opposition to US plans and even more importantly, revealed the vulnerabilities of the US client states in the region who now fear that the adventurist policies of the US/Israel threaten their own power.

And, the longer the destruction continues, the greater the anger of the mass of Arab peoples' who can see quite clearly that Israel is no more than a local imperialist gendarme for the US.

Moreover, the lie of Israel as 'victim' has been destroyed completely, an achievement that Israel inflicted on itself.

No wonder the media mavens are trying to figure out a way of turning a defeat into a victory.

OCCUPATION REPORT

“One U.S. Army Officer Responded In An Email: ‘There's A Maliki Government? Since When?’”

“A Pentagon Official” Unsure The Green Zone Can Be Held For The Occupation

The move reflects genuine concern in Washington about the stability of the weak government of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki--even whether the secure Green Zone that houses the new Iraqi government and U.S. officials can hold, according to a Pentagon official would speak to the media only if he were not quoted by name.

July 31, 2006 By Michael Hirsh, Newsweek

While the world has focused on Lebanon, Iraq has been sliding downhill fast. U.S. officials battling the counterinsurgency who were positive six months ago are now far more skeptical that the center can hold.

The evidence of those fears emerged last week when President Bush announced that 3,700 U.S. troops--the 172nd Stryker Brigade--would be shifted to Baghdad from the northern Iraqi city of Mosul.

The move reflects genuine concern in Washington about the stability of the weak government of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki--even whether the secure Green Zone that houses the new Iraqi government and U.S. officials can hold, according to a Pentagon official would speak to the media only if he were not quoted by name.

“It’s now the yellow zone, not the Green Zone,” says Andrew Krepinevich, the Washington-based defense expert whose “oil spot” plan for securing Baghdad has now been adopted by the Pentagon.

One U.S. Army officer who is working on police and military training in Iraq, when asked about the prospect of a collapse of the Maliki government, responded in an email: “There’s a Maliki government? Since when?”

He went on: “Ultimately, I think the deterioration of the Baghdad security situation gives the lie to the U.S. effort. We’ve stood up X Iraqi army battalions and Y Iraqi police stations, and yet, Baghdad (and much of the contested provinces like Diyala and Anbar) continues to get worse.”

Until recent events, the American and Israeli armies were generally judged the most advanced in the world. In the Arab world they were seen as all but invulnerable. Today the failures of those armies against Islamist guerrillas in Iraq and Lebanon have conveyed the very opposite of the message Bush wanted to send.

If the current situation continues, with America bogged down in Iraq and Israel mired in its fight against Hizbullah, then the presumption of U.S.-Israeli military invincibility--which has kept Arab extremists in place for decades--will be exposed as a myth.

OCCUPATION PALESTINE/LEBANON

“Here In The Gaza Strip, The Only Taste Is Of Fear Under The Israeli Occupation”



Fatima Jadallah, 55, killed by Israeli bullets while in her own home in Rafah Refugee Camp

3 August 06 RAFAH TODAY

Here in the Gaza Strip, the only taste is of fear under the Israeli occupation.

As a mother, you would, of course, worry what to feed your family for the next day. As a father, one might wonder what to do with the school and university tuitions. A child might think about where to go to play that would be safe. As a student one might look for the safest way to get to school without being killed or injured.

But even the “safest” route may bring death or injury.

Life in Palestine is full of troubles wherever one goes, and here the Palestinians are paying the cost by being hit by Israeli helicopters and US-made rockets and artillery shells.

If you would ask any child who got injured or even paralyzed by a US made rocket how they felt, what do you expect the answer to be ... complaining?

Appealing to Americans to stop the war? Or even crying and begging them to put pressure on Israel or what?

It's enough to say, "THANK YOU AMERICA!!"

This is the most simple thing that a Palestinian child can say, who, a few hours before went to buy some falafels for his mom but failed to bring them home. Instead of falafels, she heard a voice on the phone from the hospital saying, "Your 8 year old child, Samer, got injured and is in the hospital now."

Then the mother would have to run to the hospital and all she would find was her child lying down in a comma with a critical injury to his leg.

Shall we ask her what she thinks? Or how she feels when she knows that her son got injured by a US made rocket? I guess that would not be the right time to ask her these questions, even though we all know what her answers would be!

Over the past few hours, north of Beit Hanoun, two civilians were killed and four others wounded as Israeli F16 fighters hit a civilian car northern Gaza Strip town of Beit Hanoun area.

Medical sources at Kamal Adwan hospital said that Ahmed Abu Qoaideh 15, and Mervat Abu Sharkh 24, were killed and four others were wounded in the bombarding of the car.

The war is still going on. Large numbers of people and casualties are being hospitalized as a result of the daily attacks on Gaza Strip by the Israeli Occupation Troops!

Right now in Rafah, I have seen people and children who had been bleeding for 12 hours, laying on the ground, while ambulances are no longer able to evacuate their bodies.

The attack is still ongoing in the last 15 hours and so far more than 12 people were killed and over 40 were injured. the attack is still going on up till now, and the numbers of victims is increasing minute by minute.

People in Rafah are appealing to the world and all humans who have hearts and mind to stop Israeli from killing and targeting people inside their houses.

Rafah has turned into a hell as a result of the incursion which seems to be a very heavy with a number of 70 tanks and bulldozers as well as the Israeli helicopters and F16s hovering all over the night and bombing all related to humans.

No water, no electricity in most of the areas in Rafah, as most of the families have evacuated to the schools runs by UNRWA in Rafah refugee camp, but so far and the number of the victims is increasing and many of the people whom injured and killed were very close to Abu Yousef Al Najjar hospital, which is the only hospital and when it comes not to be safe for a medical worker to get into the area or a journalist to get into the spot, then here we can say that this is the end of the most democratic country in the world!

[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."]

Zionist Forces Enter Rafah And Butcher More Palestinians; 171 Killed, Including 34 Children, Since The June 2006 Invasion Of Gaza

03 Aug 2006 Palestinian Centre for Human Rights

The IOF have continued using excessive and disproportionate force against Palestinian civilians, resulting in the killing and injuring of dozens of civilians.

Just today, the IOF killed 8 Palestinians in Rafah, increasing the number of Palestinians killed since the beginning of the Israeli aggression against Lebanon to 106. The total number of Palestinians killed since the beginning of the Israeli military operation in Gaza code-named "Summer Rains" has reached 171, including 33 children under the age of 18.

A further 21 Palestinians were reported injured, 8 sustaining critical injuries.

According to Al Mezan's fieldworkers, at approximately 3:00 am on the same day, the IOF opened fired on ambulances and medical personnel who had rushed to Zalata area close to Shawka Municipal Council to transfer Abu Mour and Abu Sneima's corpses to the morgue.

Only seven hours later did the IOF allow ambulances to enter the area.

Yousef Is No Longer There

August 02, 2006 By Rami Almeghari in Gaza, The Palestine Chronicle

“Yousef, Yousef, Yousef”, Aziza Mughari of the Alburaj refugee camp, first reacted when news of her son's death spread in her local community.

A son who was being treated in the Israeli hospital of Ekhelof in Tel-Aviv (a hospital where, because it is inside Israel, his mother was not allowed to go to see her dying son) for critical wounds he sustained during an Israeli army invasion into the nearby refugee camp of Maghazi almost 10 days ago.

"Who will bring me my medicine, who will do errands for me?? Son, where are you? I don't believe you are dead, they are liars", Aziza, a sick mother, called again on Yousef...but Yousef is no longer there!!!

This was in the early hours of Monday July 31, 2006, when Yousef Sa'dy Mughari, 20, was announced dead after battling with his deadly wounds for ten days in that Israeli hospital, with only his uncle Najeeb Mughari, allowed to be by his side as he died.

Tears and more tears – this was the reaction among Yousef's brothers, sisters, father, uncles and friends, when they all heard about his death that morning.

The 20 years-old dead young Palestinian, was a loved and handsome young man, with a smile always imprinted on his face.

"Yousef has been loved not only by his close associates, but also by everybody", a number of his friends recalled.

His 49 year-old father, an ordinary poor Palestinian refugee, who used to work as a tailor at Karni crossing before it was closed by the Israeli authorities, said only a few words in reaction to his beloved dear son's death, "I ask God's mercy on him, wishing him to rest in peace. May God take revenge on those who killed him."

From the early morning up till the evening hours, dozens of relatives, neighbors and friends were awaiting his arrival in a special condolence ceremony. When his coffin finally arrived, the waiting relatives could wait no longer...

As the body was taken to a local hospital for routine checks, they all rushed to the hospital, with loudspeakers playing national songs, praising the young man's 'martyrdom' on the path of freedom.

“No Matter Where Apartheid Israel Attempts To Invade Southern Lebanon, The Organized, Armed Resistance - Under The

Leadership Of Hizbullah - Seems Able To Challenge Them”

August 3, 2006 John Brown, Savage Justice [Excerpts

While Apartheid Israel's attack on Dar Al-Hikmeh hospital in the Bekaa Valley was indeed audacious, it apparently backfired, representing yet another defeat for the Zionist invaders.

In an interview with a Hizbullah spokesperson given to Palestine Today, Ma'an reports that: "At 11.04 on Tuesday evening, an Israeli Apache was trying to airdrop elite Israeli commando soldiers of the Golani unit near Ba'albak hospital."

The Hezbollah fighters had abducted an Israeli who had taken part in the planning of the airdrop, making him confess details of the operation, and had prepared their traps for the invading unit.

The source confirmed that "the Israeli soldiers were not able to move in the area and were forced to find shelter in a nearby house after half an hour of confrontations. Then the soldiers abducted three of the house's residents and withdrew after at least three of them were injured. That operation was a success for Hezbollah, thanks to God and to the violation of the Israeli intelligence by Hezbollah."

Once the Zionist invaders landed near Baalbek, the occupier army tried to support them but were turned away due to heavy fire from Resistance fighters.

AFP reports: *An Israeli helicopter made a brief landing near the eastern city of Baalbek as battles raged between Israeli air forces and guerrillas of the Lebanese Shiite militant group Hezbollah late Tuesday, police said.*

Gunships hovering at low altitude tried to land on hilltops overlooking Baalbek, a main Hezbollah stronghold, but faced fierce resistance from Hezbollah guerrillas who opened up with anti-aircraft batteries, they said.

One helicopter landed for a few moments on Ain Jawzeh hill, east of Baalbek, but was forced to flee because of intense Hezbollah fire.

While the hospital attack removed the focus temporarily from the ground war, fierce resistance Apartheid Israel's efforts to invade Lebanon across the country's Southern border continue unabated.

The Daily Star reports on Thursday:

Five Israeli soldiers were wounded in clashes with Hizbullah fighters in South Lebanon on Wednesday, the army said. Three of the soldiers were wounded, including one seriously, in fighting near the village of Mhaibib, an army spokesman said. The other two were wounded near the border village of Aita al-

Shaab, where three Israeli soldiers were killed and 25 wounded in clashes with Hizbullah the previous day.

Like Bint Jbeil, the city of Ayta Ash Sha'ab has become a graveyard for the Zionist land-grabbers.

A day earlier, Ha'aretz reported that, "Three IDF soldiers were killed in battles with Hezbollah fighters in Ayta a-Shab on Tuesday. Twenty-five soldiers were also lightly wounded."

On Wednesday, the pro-Apartheid Jerusalem Post provided a detailed account of the trap set by Hizbullah in there:

Dozens of Hizbullah gunmen, the IDF said, surprised a force from the brigade's Battalion 101 as it moved through the small town just over the hill from the Israeli community of Shtula, in the central sector. Once home to 5,000 Shi'ites, Aita al-Shaab was believed by the IDF to be a Hizbullah stronghold, one of many in which soldiers were operating on Tuesday as the IDF geared up for an effort to push Hizbullah north to the Litani River.

Led by Lt.-Col. Ariel Yohanon, commander of Battalion 101, the troops moved quietly through the narrow alleys in the small village with some troops taking up positions in homes vacated by their owners who fled north in anticipation of the expected incursion.

Suddenly, IDF officers recalled, a wave of anti-tank missiles, RPGs and heavy gunfire hit a group of troops in one of the homes. Two soldiers were killed during the initial clashes and a third was killed in a later rocket attack.

The battle lasted for several hours and the wounded soldiers were treated at the scene under heavy gunfire, as an evacuation was deemed almost impossible...

The idea, a senior officer said, was to stay in the village for up to 24 hours, to kill as many Hizbullah gunmen as possible and then to move on to the next village with the ultimate goal of pushing the Hizbullah as far north as deemed necessary even beyond the Litani. A total of five brigades were operating in the region, and heavy gunfights involving light machine guns and rockets were reported.

A report in Ma'an on Tuesday adds additional details to the operation in Ayta Ash Sha'ab as well as news of other successful resistance operations that turned back Zionist advances elsewhere, including Kafr Kila and 'Adasiyya:

Three Israeli soldiers have been killed in battles with Hezbollah fighters in the town of Ayta Ash Sha'ab close to the Israeli border. The Hezbollah fighters announced that they have destroyed an Israeli military tank and a bulldozer in fierce battles near that town.

In related news, sources in the Lebanese resistance confirmed that an Israeli division, which tried to infiltrate the Lebanese village of Kafr Kila on Monday evening, was forced to back off.

Earlier, the resistance had announced that they prevented another Israeli force – the Golani Battalion - from advancing near 'Adasiyya. The Israelis admitted that two of their soldiers were injured and claimed that they had killed 20 Hezbollah fighters.

Hezbollah denied this figure, instead offering their condolences to the families of three fighters killed in battle: Hussain Ali Korani, 21; Muhammad Hussain Ja'far, 23; and Muhammad Wafiq Daqiq.

Ma'an reported elsewhere that in Tayba and Mitsfai Biar, too, the Resistance successfully halted the Zionist stampede:

Three Israeli soldiers from the 'Golani Brigade' (Infantry Brigade No. 1) had been injured on Wednesday morning. One of the soldiers was seriously injured in the clashes in the eastern area of the Lebanese borders adjacent to the Israeli village of Mitsfai Biar

Reports also said that two other soldiers had been injured on Wednesday morning in confrontations in the Lebanese village of Tayba, after Hezbollah fighters targeted their tank with an anti-tank missile. Two further soldiers were injured at Ayta ash Shab. **The Jerusalem Post reported Thursday on an attack against Zionist invaders in the village of Rajamin. Two soldiers belonging to "an armored battalion of the 188th Brigade... were killed and two more were seriously wounded in clashes with Hizbullah guerrillas in the village of Rajamin in the western sector of south Lebanon on Thursday. A short time later, one of the wounded was succumbed to his wounds at Rambam Hospital in Haifa, raising the number of IDF dead to three."**

Ze'ev Schiff, Amos Harel and Aluf Benn wrote a combined report in Ha'aretz on Thursday that covered more of the fighting taking place in the city of Farajin:

Three Israel Defense Forces soldiers were killed and another seriously wounded Thursday in heavy fighting with Hezbollah guerillas in south Lebanon.

The four soldiers were hit by an anti-tank missile fired by guerillas in the village of Farajin. The wounded soldiers were evacuated to Rambam Hospital in Haifa.

And it yet another piece, Ma'an reports that Apartheid Israel has renewed its campaign to conqueror Bint Jbeil. "Ground confrontations continue between the Lebanese resistance and the Israeli military in Bint Jbeil, with Hezbollah announcing the destruction of several Israeli tanks crossing the border."

No matter where Apartheid Israel attempts to invade Southern Lebanon, the organized, armed Resistance - under the leadership of Hizbullah - seems able to challenge them. And to this point, the Zionist invaders have had no response to either the guerrilla resistance or to the rocket attacks.

With reports of such steadfast resistance on the part of Hizbullah and it allies, one should hardly read with surprise the data from the just released poll by the Beirut Center for Research and Information.

Based on interviews with 800 Lebanese citizens, 86.9 per cent of respondents support the Lebanese-backed resistance against Israel. 70.1% agreed with the

capture of the two Israeli soldiers, and 63% believe that Israel will never defeat Hezbollah.

Hizbullah Leader Mocks “Stupid, Massive And Ignorant Israeli Military Machine” Says Zionist Leader Is “An Incompetent Moron”

August 04, 2006 By Leila Hatoum, Daily Star staff [Excerpt]

"Our fight with the Israeli Army is based on the tactic of street fights against an organized army. This means we hit and run without holding our positions," [Sayyed Hassan] Nasrallah said.

"The Israelis claimed they had heavy clashes with our fighters resulting in the taking over of a Hizbullah post in the southern town of al-Abbad. The truth is our fighters had left the post when the aggression first started three weeks ago. I don't know with whom the Israelis had heavy clashes there."

Nasrallah also described Israeli Premier Ehud Olmert as "an incompetent moron."

"In an attempt to identify himself with former Israeli leaders such as Sharon and Rabin and Began, he succeeded in matching their accomplishments in committing massacres and killing civilians, women and children, but failed miserably in proving himself as a political leader," Nasrallah said.

He also mocked the "stupid, massive and ignorant Israeli military machine."

MORE:

Guess What; He's Right: Olmert Really Is An Incompetent Moron

[Thanks to D, who sent this in.]

August 3, 2006 By JOHN KIFNER and WARREN HOGE, New York Times Company
[Excerpts]

In interviews on Wednesday, Mr. [Prime Minister Ehud] Olmert said that Hezbollah's infrastructure had been "entirely destroyed" and that some 770 command and control centers had been taken out of action.

As he spoke, Hezbollah fighters, flitting between villages and underground bunkers, were showering Israel with the biggest barrage of rockets in the 21-day-old war.

Mr. Olmert said in several interviews that the offensive was severely degrading Hezbollah's military capacity.

But in Lebanon, an expert on the militia said Mr. Olmert's description of a traditional, formal military structure did not fit with the way Hezbollah was organized.

"The command structure of Hezbollah; show me one," said Timor Goksul, a longtime adviser to the United Nations peacekeepers in south Lebanon and now a university professor here.

"They don't work that way. There are three regional commands that have full autonomy, and under them districts and then cells in villages, with a maximum of 20 men. "They know their job," he said.

"Their uniforms, their weapons are in a cave somewhere. They do their jobs and then they're home watching television."

Mr. Olmert said the Israeli attacks had isolated Hezbollah from the rest of the Lebanese population by inflicting widespread damage for which its radical tactics would be blamed.

There was initial criticism by many Lebanese, but this appears to have subsided because of the havoc caused by the Israeli attacks.

In an event that would have been unthinkable a few months ago, in this country where politics is locked into religious lines, the Maronite Catholic patriarch, the spiritual leader of the most pro-Western populace, convened a meeting this week of religious leaders of other communities, Shiite and Sunni Muslims and several varieties of Christians, resulting in a statement of solidarity and photographs in Wednesday's newspapers.

Their joint statement, condemning the Israeli "aggression," hailed "the resistance, mainly led by Hezbollah, which represents one of the sections of society."

“‘The Aggression Gives Birth To Resistance,’ Abu Ali Said”

“We’ll Never Submit To Oppression, Whatever The Force Applied, Whatever The Time It Takes”

"On the ground, face to face, we're better fighters than the Israelis," said Hajj Abu Mohammed, a bearded, 44-year-old militiaman in the small village of Srifa, whose walkie-talkie crackled and cellphone rang with a Hezbollah anthem.

"We're now fighting a war against America, not just Israel," he said. "We see these are American decisions being carried out." Asked what that meant, he paused, then answered: "There are no borders to our self-defense."

August 3, 2006 By Anthony Shadid, Washington Post [Excerpts]

JWAYYA, Lebanon, Aug. 2

There were no cars in the winding streets of this southern Lebanese village. Not many people, either. The signs of life were the buzz of Israeli surveillance drones overhead and, below, a gaggle of Hezbollah loyalists, sitting in a small storefront along an abandoned street. There was a walkie-talkie, bottles of water and, according to the half-dozen or so men, patience.

"We are waiting," said Jamal Nasser, a burly man in civilian clothes. "We are here, and we're not going anywhere."

Three weeks into its war with Israel, Hezbollah has retained its presence in southern Lebanon, often the sole authority in devastated towns along the Israeli border. The militia is elusive, with few logistics, little hierarchy and less visibility.

Even residents often say they don't know how the militiamen operate or are organized. Communication is by walkie-talkie, always in code, and sometimes messages are delivered by motorcycle. Weapons seem to be already in place across a terrain that fighters say they know intimately.

"On the ground, face to face, we're better fighters than the Israelis," said Hajj Abu Mohammed, a bearded, 44-year-old militiaman in the small village of Srifa, whose walkie-talkie crackled and cellphone rang with a Hezbollah anthem.

Hezbollah admits to having suffered losses, but in the fighting so far, it has demonstrated its detailed planning since the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000, ending an 18-year occupation. Fighters appear to exercise a great deal of autonomy, a flexibility evident along the region's back roads: ammunition loaded in cars, trucks in camouflage, rocket launchers tucked in banana plantations.

"We'll never submit to oppression, whatever the force applied, whatever the time it takes," one of the group gathered in Jwayya said Tuesday. "You won't find any

difference between 21 days and 121 days. The difference is solely a matter of time."

Village after village south of the Litani River, the region of Lebanon that Israel has threatened to invade, are like ghost towns. Traffic rarely plies roads that pass often spectacular destruction, rubble spilling into sun-drenched streets. In Sidiqin, the wall of a home was sheared off to show a table still set with dishes, as if the family had fled in a moment.

In Srifa, where villagers say 35 bodies remain buried under rubble from a bombing in the war's first week, the wiry Abu Mohammed was one of the few people left.

"We're in a defensive position," he said, wearing a black shirt and black pants and standing on a curb at a warehouse where tobacco was drying.

The smell of decomposing bodies hung in the air. Overhead were the contrails of Israeli jets.

"There will still be a lot of big surprises," he said.

On the ground, its fighters appear eager to draw Israel deeper into the country, stretching supply lines, or to see troops hunkered down in villages where they would be more vulnerable to the guerrilla tactics that Hezbollah used in Bint Jbeil, where eight Israeli soldiers were killed in an ambush.

Israeli forces seem wary of falling into a trap and have, so far, moved exceedingly slow through Lebanese territory -- on the ground, just a few miles inside the country.

"They are trying to get Hezbollah to come out and meet them, and Hezbollah is trying to lure them deeper into Lebanon," said Timur Goksel, a former spokesman and senior adviser to the U.N. force in Lebanon and an expert on Hezbollah.

"From now on, it depends on who's more patient," he added.

Among the fighters and grass-roots loyalists of Hezbollah -- especially on the ground level, in villages where they are often defending their homes -- views are hardened and expressed bluntly. They contend that Israel was planning the attack long before two of its soldiers were seized last month. To them, it fits seamlessly into their narrative of Israeli ambitions in Lebanon -- invasions in 1978 and 1982 and campaigns against Hezbollah in 1993 and 1996.

Even Lebanese critics remark on the devotion of Hezbollah's fighters, sometimes with a sense of awe.

The men in Jwayya, a small town in the hinterland above Tyre, gathered around a small plastic table, sitting on white chairs. They deferred to an older man they addressed as Sayyid Abu Ali, who smoked a cigarillo. Cars passed by occasionally, and a few terse words were exchanged. The rest of the time conversation revolved around their confidence about a war that, at least for now, Hezbollah believes it is winning. While the war outside may have inflated the rhetoric, no one seemed to have any doubts.

"The aggression gives birth to resistance," Abu Ali said.

Another man nodded. "Every civilian killed, his children, when they get older, will join the resistance," he said.

The 1982 Israeli invasion often comes up in conversations. Then, thousands of Palestinian fighters were forced to evacuate Lebanon, and an ill-fated agreement was signed with Israel.

Whether or not Israel plans to advance deeper into Lebanon than it already has, the men here boasted that they had scored a victory by simply keeping its forces close to the border so far. They were unlike the Palestinian fighters Israel faced then; they said they had popular support and were fighting in villages where they grew up.

"In 1982, Israeli tanks arrived all the way to Beirut, basically in safety. It didn't face resistance," one of the men said.

"Israel is not able to play the game of geography that it played in 1982," another added.

But Abu Ali framed this struggle in broader terms, drawing on the deep anger among many in southern Lebanon over lack of support from Arab governments and, more sharply, the perception that the United States has encouraged the Israeli attacks.

"We're now fighting a war against America, not just Israel," he said. "We see these are American decisions being carried out." Asked what that meant, he paused, then answered: "There are no borders to our self-defense."

Along the streets into Jwayya, the destruction was everywhere -- from cratered roads to collapsed buildings.

"They'll destroy, and we'll rebuild," he said.

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