

GI SPECIAL 4I21:

ALMOST EVERY CREATURE IN THE
ANIMAL KINGDOM IS ABLE TO
LEARN FROM ITS MISTAKES...



...ALMOST.



9/12

[Thanks to David Honish, Veteran, who sent this in.]

Petition #1

**“Nothing Could Be More Worth
Getting Soaked In The Rain For
Than To Speak With Soldiers
Who Need Our Support”**

9.19.06 By Katherine G.Y, The Military Project

On September 15th, members of the Military Project and Veterans For Peace organized another evening of outreach to soldiers of an Army National Guard unit in the New York City area which includes many veterans of combat in Iraq.

The big success of the evening was a new petition, drafted by a New York Guard member, demanding that Congress make restitution for the pay cut that huge numbers of Guard members and reservists take when they get called up to active duty and lose the income from their civilian jobs.

As they took the petitions, Guard members said over and over that it was about time something was done to right this wrong.

[The petition is right below this report: Please make copies and get to any National Guard or reserve units where you are.]

We also distributed the new issue of Traveling Soldier newsletter.

Issue 14 features material by members of the armed forces opposing the war, giving the troops new information to peruse over a weekend of drill.

The new Traveling Soldier will be posted on the web site soon (<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/>)

We gave out more copies of a new "Fight Back, Join The GI Anti War Movement" brochure inviting National Guard troops to join Iraq Veterans Against The War, created by an Iraq veteran and member of IVAW, written specially for National Guard troops.

In the two hours or so that we spent talking to soldiers and distributing the different materials, people coming to the Guard meeting were as friendly and welcoming as ever--despite the pouring rain and umbrella ripping winds.

It was clear once again that the troops appreciated us caring enough to be there for them, and were especially interested in the petition on pay because of its practical focus.

Most of the troops we meet are VERY angry that they have been dragged into something they never signed onto, do not like Bush, and do not support the war in Iraq.

People who came to do the outreach felt strongly that being of service by helping get this petition around will strengthen the developing relationship between civilians and veterans opposed to the war and soldiers who want to be actively involved in resisting the war also.

There has been an influx of soldiers from other units: now there's opportunity to meet even more new people--many of them female soldiers.

A highlight of the day was a longer conversation with one soldier who had been to Iraq and seen his fellow soldiers blown up in front of his eyes.

He told us about the indifferent bureaucracy of the VA system and how it fails to respond to soldiers needs, making them travel to hospital after hospital without being treated.

He also sincerely conveyed his concern for the son of a Military Project member currently serving near Fallujah after speaking with her and learning of her worries.

Building trust with our troops isn't rocket science: it requires respectful demeanor and dependability, and hard hitting materials that make it clear we are on their side.

It's apparent that we are friends who know that REALLY supporting the troops means organizing to BRING THEM HOME NOW.

Nothing could be more worth getting soaked in the rain for than to speak with soldiers who need our support and who want to talk about what they have been dealing with because of our government's deception and outright lack of concern for their safety, well being and standard of living.

We look forward to returning again and expanding our outreach whenever and wherever possible.

[Next is the petition, front page and back page: Enough abstract "Support The Troops" rhetoric: Get off your ass and get it around. T]

A Petition For Redress Of Grievances

We, the undersigned members of the National Guard and Reserves of the armed forces of the United States of America, do now lawfully petition Congress for redress of our grievances:

We call on the Congress of the United States to insure that when any member of the National Guard or Reserves is called to active duty, and their employer cuts off their pay, and they are forced to subsist only on the pay received from the armed forces, that the Congress, acting on behalf of the people, shall make financially whole those called to active duty, and they and their families shall suffer no decrease in income, and their present sufferings in that regard shall end forthwith.

<i>Name (Last, First)</i>	Address	Branch Of Service

This petition is your personal property and cannot legally be confiscated from you. "Possession of unauthorized material may not be prohibited." DoD Directive 1325.6 Section 3.5.1.2.

You have the right to petition a member of Congress when you have a complaint: DoD Directive 1325.6. You are not allowed to distribute copies of literature or possess more than one copy when on base. When you are not activated, and not engaged in Guard or Reserve meeting or drill, you may do what you see fit.

Mail To: The Petition; Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657

[OVER]

Cause:

Harsh Eligibility Rules Cut Most Guard And Reserve Members Out Of Financial Help

August 21, 2006 By Gordon Lubold, Army Times Staff writer, August 14, 2006 [Excerpts]

Some reservists called up for lengthy or repeated mobilizations could get extra pay under a new Defense Department program that kicks in this month.

But the eligibility rules are narrowly written and the program is not retroactive. Under those constraints, defense officials estimate the program will apply to only about 2,000 people in its current configuration.

Eligibility for the reserve income replacement program is complicated. To qualify, Guard and reserve members must be on involuntary active duty and must have:

- **Completed at least 18 months of continuous involuntary active service.**
- **Completed 24 cumulative months of involuntary active duty during any 60-month period since Aug. 1, 2001.**
- **Been involuntarily mobilized for 180 days or more within six months of a previous involuntary period of active duty of 180 days or more.**

Officials stress the program does not kick in automatically; troops must apply for the income replacement by completing the new form DD Form 2919 and submitting it to their servicing personnel office.

Effect:

When members of the National Guard or Reserves are called up to serve in active duty, in addition to facing the prospect of death or maiming for life, many of us also suffer terrible financial hardship.

Too many, unable to subsist on military pay, have been unable to make mortgage payments and have lost their homes; seen their children forced to drop out of colleges, universities or other schools where they were enrolled, lacking tuition money; been unable to keep up payments for elderly parents and/or other family members receiving full time health care from nursing homes or other caregivers; and have been unable to make other customary and necessary payments that were possible on our civilians incomes.

This inflicts great suffering on members of our families, and destroys our peace of mind and sense of security.

It is intolerable that when we respond to the call to serve, we must not only face battle overseas, but witness ourselves and our family members driven into financial misery as we do so.

[End Petition]

Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward GI Special along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, at home and inside the armed services. Send requests to address up top.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Ohio Sgt. Dead In Baghdad



Sgt. Adam L. Knox, 21, died Sept. 17, 2006 in Baghdad. He was assigned to the Army Reserve 346th Psychological Operations Company based in Columbus, Ohio. The native of Hilliard, Ohio joined the Army in July 2003, said Carol Darby, Army Special Operations Command spokeswoman. (AP Photo/U.S. Army)

MNDB Baghdad Soldier Killed By Roadside Bomb

19 September 2006 MultiNational Corps Iraq, Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory
RELEASE No. 20060919-15

BAGHDAD: A Multi-National Division Baghdad Soldier died at approximately 5:30 p.m. today after the vehicle he was traveling in was struck by an improvised-explosive device northwest of Baghdad.

Maryland Sgt. Killed In Baghdad



Sgt. David J. Davis, 32, of Mount Airy, Md. was killed Sept. 17, 2006, in Baghdad when his vehicle struck an explosive. He was assigned to the Army's 4th Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, at Fort Wainwright, Alaska. (AP Photo/U.S. Army)

U.S. Soldier Killed, Two Wounded In Mosul

8.20.06 Reuters

A U.S. soldier was killed and two were wounded on Tuesday when their vehicle was struck by a car bomber in Mosul, the U.S. military said on Tuesday.

MND Baghdad Soldier Killed By Small-Arms Fire

20 September 2006 MultiNational Corps Iraq, Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory
RELEASE No. 20060920-07

BAGHDAD: A Multi-National Division Baghdad Soldier was killed by small-arms fire at approximately 10:40 a.m. today in north eastern Baghdad.

**REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW**



9.17.06: US soldiers close to the site of a blast in Kirkuk. (AFP/file/Marwan Ibrahim)

Baghdad Soldier Dies In Non-Combat Related Incident

Sept. 20, 2006 MultiNational Corps Iraq, Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20060920-03

BAGHDAD: A Multi-National Division Baghdad Soldier died in a non-combat incident in southwest Baghdad at approximately 9 p.m. Tuesday.

Another Baghdad Soldier Dies In Non-Combat Related Incident

Sept. 20, 2006 MultiNational Corps Iraq, Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20060920-04

BAGHDAD: A Multi-National Division Baghdad Soldier died in a non-combat incident in Baghdad at approximately 6 a.m. today.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Another Silly General Babbling Empty Bullshit

September 20, 2006 By Gordon Lubold, Army Times Staff writer

NATO forces in Afghanistan passed their first real test in a recent battle in the southern region of the country, but more work needs to be done before the country is safe from a resurgent Taliban force, according to the head of NATO.

Gen. James Jones, dual-hatted as the head of U.S. European Command and the Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, said as many as 1,500 Taliban fighters were killed over the course of a battle that recently ended west of Kandahar in the southern region of the country.

While the operation was a success, Jones said it remains difficult to know the speed at which Taliban forces are able to regenerate themselves, so it's hard to say how many more Taliban are out there.

[Well, let's work it out. There are 25 million Afghans. Say only half are loyal to their ancient tradition of destroying foreigners who invade and occupy their space, and fighting on until the invaders crawl away in defeat. That would leave about 12 million. Even if you assume half are kids too young to fight, that leaves 6 million active fighters and their supporters, men and women. So, what the silly General faces is simple: 1,500 down, 4,998,500 to go. How do you like *them* odds? Game over. Time to come home.]

"We have disturbed the hornet's nest and the hornets are swarming," Jones said.

[Not only a silly general, but a stupid one too. Viewing your enemies as insects betrays the kind of Imperial arrogance that should put Generals like Jones in their graves, the sooner the better, if there were justice in the world. Unfortunately, it's the poor fucks in the ranks who die first, and the Generals rarely, if ever. They retire with their pockets stuffed full of war profiteers cash. That's why the generals love the Empire so. And fuck the troops; they're merely bodies to step on going up that Pentagon career ladder leading to moneyland.]

Assorted Resistance Action

9.20.06 AP

A car bombing in the capital, Kabul, killed at least four policemen and wounded one officer and 10 civilians.

Suspected Taliban fighters ambushed police in Ghazni province on Tuesday, and provincial police chief Tafseer Khan said two police were wounded in the fight in Giro district.

In the central province of Wardak, one policeman was killed and two wounded after dozens of fighters attacked police, said Mohammed Hassan, the deputy provincial police chief.

TROOP NEWS

Italian Troops All Going Home For Christmas: No More Iraq Bullshit For Them

Sept 20 (KUNA)

Italian troops stationed in Iraq will be withdrawn before Christmas as security in Thi Qar is handed over to Iraqi authorities, said Italian Defense Minister Arturi Parisi on Wednesday.

The minister, who is en route to Iraq, told reporters that the 1,600 troops would be gradually withdrawn according to a specific timetable and that this would be completed before the end of the year.

THIS IS HOW BUSH BRINGS THE TROOPS HOME: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE



The burial service for Marine Cpl. Johnathan Benson, Sept. 18, 2006, at Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis. Benson, 21, died Sept. 9 of injuries suffered from a roadside bomb in June during his second tour of duty in Iraq. (AP Photo/Jim Mone)

U.S. Occupation Commanding General In Baghdad Says More Dead U.S. Troops Means “Things Are Getting Better”

[Time For This Piece Of Shit To Lead By Example Straight Into The Nearest Body Bag]

9.20.06 AP

The commander of U.S. forces in Baghdad said Wednesday he was pushing Iraqi leaders to start doing more about the sectarian militias responsible for killing thousands of people — most of them in the capital.

Maj. Gen. James Thurman told The Associated Press that more Iraqi troops were needed to combat what militias, which he described as the biggest threat to the country's future.

“What we’ve seen over the last few weeks is attacks against people are down. The attacks are against Iraqi security forces and the coalition,” [translation: U.S. troops] said Thurman. “That should tell you something. Things are getting better. We’re being more effective with security.”

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Definitely Time To Get The Fuck Out And Go The Fuck Home: Troops Confront Newest Enemy: Children

“U.S. Soldiers Take Cover As A Group Of Iraqi Children Throw Rocks”



U.S. soldiers take cover as a group of Iraqi children throw rocks at their position, on the edge of Sadr City, in Baghdad Sept. 18, 2006. (AP Photo/Antonio Castaneda)

September 20, 2006 By Antonio Castaneda, Associated Press [Excerpts]

Gangs of up to 100 children assemble in Sadr City, stronghold of radical anti-American [translation: politically moderate but anti-Occupation] cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and his Mahdi Army militia, and in nearby neighborhoods, U.S. officers said in interviews this week.

“It’s like a militia operation. They’ll mass rocks on the last or second-to-last vehicle” in a U.S. patrol, said Capt. Chris L’Heureux, 30, of Woonsocket, R.I.

Al-Sadr’s followers insist they are not organizing attacks by children.

“Such behavior by Iraqi children is spontaneous and the natural reaction from innocent children who are witnessing horrible deeds committed by the occupation forces in Iraq,” Ali al-Yassiri, an aide to al-Sadr, told The Associated Press.

The incidents have seemed to increase since U.S. soldiers moved their security crackdown into Shiite neighborhoods surrounding eastern Baghdad’s Sadr City. The U.S. crackdown in the capital is aimed at curbing the power of the Mahdi Army and other sectarian militias.

At one checkpoint, soldiers said hundreds of rocks rained down on their vehicles as they sealed off a neighborhood during a house-to-house search for weapons and militants.

Attackers are becoming even more brazen: Children recently have begun hurling bottles of oil and even a homemade firebomb at U.S. vehicles, soldiers say.

One child recently jumped on a passing convoy and untied the straps on a load of supplies. Another young boy ran alongside a moving Stryker vehicle before throwing a rock at a soldier.

No serious injuries have been reported in the attacks by children, although one platoon commander was hit in the face with a rock.

Since firing back is considered out of the question, U.S. soldiers have resorted to other methods to control the children.

On a major road leading into Shaab, a Shiite neighborhood in eastern Baghdad, U.S. soldiers stopped all civilian vehicles and pedestrians to pressure adults into dispersing a group of children that were attacking American vehicles.

“If you can’t control your kids, you can’t use this road,” yelled Sgt. 1st Class Eric Sheehan, 33, of Jennerstown, Pa. One pedestrian responded: “But they’re not from this neighborhood.”

Some adults eventually persuaded the children to leave, for at least a few hours.

“They’re gone,” Sheehan said. “For now.”

Assorted Resistance Action; Baghdad Police Hq Blown Up

September 19, 2006 NOOR KHAN, Associated Press Writer & By ELENA BECATOROS, Associated Press Writer & AFP & September 20, 2006 ASSOCIATED PRESS & Reuters & Santa Barbara News-Press

Guerrilla fighters struck in Baqouba, 35 miles northeast of Baghdad, opening fire on a police patrol near the city's prison, killing one policeman and wounding three others.

A truck bomb slammed into a police headquarters building in Baghdad Wednesday morning, destroying the building and killing seven policemen, police said.

Another five police were wounded in the attack in the southern Baghdad neighborhood of Dora, said police Capt. Jamil Hussein.

A roadside bomb targeting an Iraqi Army patrol exploded in Mahaweel, 75 km (50 miles) south of Baghdad, wounding one soldier, police said.

A policeman was killed when a mortar round landed near a patrol in northern Baghdad, police Lt. Bilal Majid said.

The mutilated body of a policeman was turned in to the morgue in Kut, about 100 miles southeast of Baghdad, after being found in the al-Falahiya district east of the city in the morning.

The body of Mahmoud Hassan Mohammed was found blindfolded with his arms and legs cuffed, and he was shot in various place and showed signs of torture, morgue official Mamoun Ajeel Al-Rubai'ey said.

Hameed al-Hilaly, a member of Kerbala's governorate, escaped an assassination attempt when militant fighters ambushed his car in central Kerbala, south of Baghdad, police said. Two of his bodyguards, including his son, were wounded in the third attack on his life, they added.

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Building An Empire Over The Coffins Of Millions Of People



From: Mike Hastie, Vietnam Veteran
To: Thomas F Barton
Sent: September 20, 2006
Subject: Building An Empire Over The Coffins of Millions of People

"We are walking with our coffins in our hands."

Mohammand al-Hayawi

Owner of the Renaissance book store

on Mutanabi Street in Baghdad

September 2006

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)

A Sky Full Of Eyes

From: Dennis Serdel

To: GI Special

Sent: September 20, 2006

Subject: A Sky Full Of Eyes

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

A Sky Full Of Eyes

As a RN in Chu Lai in 1968, Patsy had held too many hands and felt the life of a young man drift away.

She had wiped too many brows only to find later, open blue, green, hazel and brown eyes staring upward to the Southern Cross lifeless.

She had awakened too many times to make a decision as to who goes to surgery and who doesn't stand a chance and soon dies eyes open.

One Vietnam morning orange and hazy sunrise, the helicopters one after another seemed to fly from the heart of the sun appearing as black locusts descending upon the pads.

A Company had been over-run in the blackness of the night. The dead on arrival were slung out and dragged aside frantically, mangled, red blood mapping the cement.

On days end, a little Vietnamese girl with shiny black hair was left at the door, shot in the back and when Patsy turned her over, the little girl's dark eyes told her that this was criminal.

She lifted the child to take her inside, but the child died in her arms eyes open.

She shook her head and began to weep over the child,

war was not supposed to be like this.
It was supposed to be noble, about the chivalry of men
fighting men, defending, freeing people, killing evil.
She carried the dark war across the Pacific Ocean
to California where she would awake screaming
in the blackness and all these eyes would be looking at her
instead of the stars.

“The Blood For Oil Thesis Loses Sight Of What Oil Ultimately Stands For In The Present Moment”

21 April 2005 London Review Of Books: Retort

This essay was written by Iain Boal, T.J. Clark, Joseph Matthews and Michael Watts. *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War*, which deals with many aspects of post-September 11 global politics, is due from Verso this summer.

Retort, a ‘gathering of antagonists to capital and empire’, is based in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Capitalism presents itself, Marx said on more than one occasion, as an ‘immense accumulation of commodities’.

In a full-scale commodity producing economy, what comes to matter about each separate article is not so much its constellation of uses as its value as an item of exchange, its function as a ‘material depository’ (Marx again) of exchange value. The commodity’s value is generated from its shifting place in a complex, self-contained world of money equivalents.

So that finally the usefulness of petroleum presents itself as merely the outward and accidental aspect of something more basic: the article’s price.

For all the talk lately about the emergence of a post-industrial economy – in which ‘information’ or ‘services’ are displacing the authority of any single material resource – the last few years have been an object lesson in just how vital to capitalist dreams of the future the control of a few strategic commodities still is.

They are the motors of production, the ultimate hard currency of exchange.

For that very reason they are subject to deep mystification.

Oil is a 'curse', commentators say, it 'distorts' the natural course of development and encourages an economy of hyper-consumption and excess: golf courses in the Saudi desert, bloated shopping malls in Dubai and Bahrain.

Democracy is 'hindered' by oil (as if cobalt promoted constitutional government), which brings about despotic rule and patrimonialism rather than statecraft and capitalist discipline.

There is some truth in this, but it is a shallow view of things because it substitutes a narrow commodity determinism for the larger truths of primitive accumulation: the deadly complicity of guns, oil and money.

If a single political thread tied the anti-war demonstrations of February and March 2003 together, it was the refrain 'No Blood for Oil'. On every march a flotilla of signs carried variants on the idea, and in San Francisco it was the Chevron building that goaded the marchers to their most vocal dissent.

And with good reason.

The American addiction to cheap petroleum has shepherded the brokers, carpetbaggers and hustlers of the oil business directly into political office.

Five 'supermajors' (Exxon-Mobil, Royal Dutch-Shell, BP-Amoco, TotalFinaElf and Chevron-Texaco), elephantine oil corporations with wells, pipelines, refineries and subsidiaries in almost every country on earth, and collective sales revenues of more than \$500 billion (almost twice the GDP of sub-Saharan Africa), have scaled the walls of the White House.

In a bullish five years in the 1990s as CEO of Halliburton, the world's largest oil and gas services company, Dick Cheney drew \$44 million in salary from an outfit that on his own Brechtian admission saw war as offering 'growth opportunities'. Millions of dollars more in 'deferred compensation' were earmarked to tide him over during his time in government.

In December 2003 the administration trotted out the Bush family consigliere, James Baker, the consummate oilman, as special presidential envoy to restructure Iraq's \$130 billion debt. Baker's law firm represents Halliburton; Baker Hughes, his oil-services company, was promised the contract to restore second-tier oilfields in Iraq.

He is a member of the politburo of the Carlyle Group, in which it is estimated he owns equity of \$180 million – a sliver of their \$17.5 billion portfolio. Baker's mission, we now know, was less about debt-forgiveness than about cutting a deal for the Carlyle Group, which was to receive a \$1 billion investment from Kuwait as a quid pro quo for restructuring Iraq's liabilities, thereby guaranteeing Kuwait – and various oil companies – billions of dollars in war reparations, still due from Iraq following the 1991 Gulf War. Good business if you can get it.

Given all this, how could it be doubted that the war against Saddam was to be fought essentially for possession of petroleum, and that the subsequent occupation would aim to give the US permanent control of a crucial spigot?

The essence of the Blood for Oil argument aspires to an economic explanation of history, but is locked inside a 'hero-and-villains' vision of the way the world works. It substitutes the facticity and malign power of a single commodity for the more complex and partly non-factual imperatives of capital accumulation.

Almost invariably, this line of argument turns on a plotting of personal connections, Big Oil business networks, and the revolving door of government-corporate power: the kindred houses of Bush and Saud; the Carlyle Group and its ties to bin Laden family assets; the influence in Washington of the Saudi ambassador, Prince Bandar; no-bid contracts; and so on.

But there is no need for conspiracy theories: never has a conspiracy been less interested in concealment.

The report of the Energy Task Force led by Dick Cheney, which was crafted early in the Bush presidency by oil lobbyists and executives and issued from the White House in May 2001, appeared to provide an explicit set of justifications – predictions, even – for the shedding of blood for oil.

It estimated that US oil consumption (in 2000, this was more than 1100 gallons of petrol per capita, over a quarter of global output) would rise by over 30 per cent by 2020. No more than a quarter of that increase, the report reckoned, was likely to come from a new round of domestic production. Drilling in Alaska would hardly make a dent in the problem. The contribution of the Middle East to global oil output was projected to grow from 25 per cent to about 60 per cent.

Saddam Hussein's destabilising influence – his 'demonstrated willingness to threaten to use the oil weapon' – raised the possibility of a 'need for military intervention'.

A top secret National Security Council document directed staff to co-operate fully with the Energy Task Force, one main aim of which was the 'melding' of two policy arenas: 'the review of operational policies toward rogue states' and 'actions regarding the capture of new and existing oilfields'.

Why did Iraq figure so prominently in the Energy Task Force's calculations?

A number of developments – political turbulence within the House of Saud, centring on the succession of King Fahd; insurgent Wahhabism in the kingdom (with a direct line to the 11 September attacks); signs of a Saudi-Iranian rapprochement; the new assertiveness of other OPEC powers; the dismal findings of the Simmons Report, spelling out the declining yields of major Saudi oilfields – had placed in doubt the Saudi role as a reliable 'swing producer', which could turn the taps on or off whenever it was in America's strategic interest.

The US government has, in its 'special relationship' with the House of Saud, expected the Saudis to maintain sufficient unused capacity to compensate for any short-term market tightening or price volatility. It was Saudi Arabia that released oil to stall the

OPEC price rises in 1973 and during the 1990-91 Gulf War. Within 24 hours of September 11, nine million extra barrels of Saudi oil were released to keep prices stable. The other pillar of postwar US oil policy – Iran – had long been lost to revolutionary Islam.

Now Saudi Arabia had become a dangerous mess.

According to the Arab Human Development Report (2002), the kingdom ranked last in the region on all key indicators of 'democracy' and 'social achievement': no mean feat, given the competition. Per capita income in 1981 had been \$28,000 a year; by 2002 it had plummeted to \$8000. The population had quadrupled since 1970: a quarter of a million young men enter the inhospitable labour market each year. Actual conditions cannot be determined with any precision; officially, unemployment is around 10 per cent, but it may be as much as three or four times that among the young. More than half the high school curriculum consists of religious instruction, and half the country's youth say they are planning to emigrate.

The country has no secular charities, no non-religious NGOs, and no political parties. If free elections were held tomorrow, so one Western ambassador has it, Osama bin Laden would win hands down.

Iraq, by contrast, is awash with low-cost oil. As yet only 15 of its 74 fields have been developed; known reserves are 112 billion barrels, but once new technologies for subsurface exploration can be employed, Iraqi holdings might turn out to exceed 300 billion barrels (perhaps a quarter of global reserves) over the coming decade.

With recovery rates of 50 per cent (a conservative figure) and reserves of 250 billion barrels (an equally cautious reckoning), Iraqi oil would be worth more than \$3 trillion. To this can be added the bonus of 110 trillion cubic feet of natural gas – sufficient to supply the US for ten years or more – and the fact that compromised fields in Kirkuk and Rumaila, and the degradation of the basic oil infrastructure which occurred during sanctions (more than \$60 billion of repairs are necessary, the industry has estimated), promised bottomless state contracts for the likes of Bechtel, and Kellogg, Brown and Root.

The US Overseas Private Investment Corporation delicately called it the 'next Klondike'; in 2003, Halliburton's Iraq contracts represented 22 per cent of its total revenues.

Providing, of course, that a pliant and stable Iraq could be installed to administer the no-bidding.

The war promised a return to the good old days of OPEC: oil prices kept low enough to lubricate American capitalism and satisfy the US consumer, but high enough to feed oil company profits; oil quotas sufficient to line the pockets of petro-oligarchies around the world; and, once again, an obedient swing producer willing and able to respond to the exigencies and volatilities of the earth's most strategic commodity.

The 2001 Baker Institute report, Strategic Energy Policy Challenges for the 21st Century, noted the disturbing run-down in spare capacity worldwide: OPEC's unused sources of supply had amounted to 25 per cent of global demand in 1985; by 2001 they

made up no more than 2 per cent. The earth, it concluded, was 'precariously close to utilising all of its available global oil production', thereby 'raising the chances of an oil supply crisis'. The occupation of Iraq promised a resolution to all this. And more. It offered the rosy prospect of 'privatisation by occupation'. Whether or not existing French and Russian contracts with the Baathist state would be honoured was of less consequence to the oil supermajors than the prospect of a neo-liberal assault, led by Rumsfeld and Cheney, on Iraq's nationalised oil industry, a staple of all Third World petro-states and a sector that had in general escaped the fate of neo-liberal privatisation.

The patchwork of foreign concessions and informal state-company alliances that dominated the first part of the 20th century – the era of 'free-flowing oil' – had been ripped apart by insurgent nationalisms during the post-1945 period, with Venezuela and Iran leading the charge.

US oil companies had turned, not unexpectedly, to the state for support: they were duly provided with foreign tax credits to compensate for rising royalty payments in the world at large, with tariffs on the importation of cheap overseas oil, with exemptions from anti-trust prosecution, and, most dramatically, with a CIA-backed coup to topple the Mosadeq government in Iran.

But all this, in a sense, proved futile. The new geography of oil cartels, and the founding of OPEC in 1960, marked a historic politicisation – and ultimately a global restructuring – of the oil business.

None of this, of course, meant the collapse of profitability for the likes of Shell and Amoco.

Quite the reverse: the new 'limited flow' arrangement was predicated, as Sheikh Yamani, the Saudi oil minister and one-time head of OPEC, put it, on not wanting 'the majors to lose their power'. For every dollar that the price of crude increased during the 1970s, the majors increased their net profits by 7 per cent.

Nevertheless, they were now compelled to live with a new international oil system, accepting 'upstream' nationalisation and an effective Third World cartel as unpleasant facts of life. In response, the majors moved 'downstream', operating joint ventures with national oil firms, and consolidating their power at other points in the supply chain to compensate for the loss of direct control of reserves. Between 1953 and 1972 their share of concession areas fell from 64 per cent to 24 per cent.

Even after the mergers of the late 1990s, the supermajors directly produced only 35 per cent of their sales and controlled only 4 per cent of world reserves.

Iraq was to be made an example: it would provide the stage for a new attempt at the radical denationalisation of oil.

By creating an 'emerging market' from a decrepit state-owned petroleum industry, the war would lay the foundations for something dear to the hearts of the Washington cabal: an end to (other people's) economic nationalism and producer cartels.

In this ideological universe, oil figured centrally, since oil had remained one of the Third World's most effective bulwarks against the neo-liberal attack.

The appointment of the former Shell executive Philip Carroll to run the Baghdad energy ministry was logical, given Paul Bremer's belief that the Iraqi Governing Council's attachment to oil nationalisation 'had to be changed'. Bremer's first act as proconsul, after all, had been directed at the 190 state-owned companies and their 650,000 employees: he fired half a million of them.

What followed was not simply a state liquidation sale but a raft of laws – lowering corporate tax rates, permitting wholly owned foreign subsidiaries, welcoming foreign banks – even more radical than those introduced in Eastern Europe in the 1990s ('getting Iraq ready for Wal-Mart' as the former Bush-Cheney campaign manager put it; notably, all of Saddam's laws concerning labour rights, or the lack of them, were left intact).

The occupation, everyone agrees, has not gone as planned.

Doling out the spoils of war amid the chaos of a radical insurgency has turned out to be almost impossible – of 2390 projects planned for the period between 2004 and 2008, only 164 are underway.

But who is to say that Bremer and Exxon are not slowly but surely getting what they came for?

Twenty per cent of all congressional aid to Iraq has been devoted to oil infrastructure: in effect, a \$1.6 billion subsidy to the oil industry. On 22 May 2003 the Bush administration tried to accelerate corporate investment in the Iraqi oil sector by means of Executive Order 13303, which granted non-Iraqi companies blanket immunity from criminal or civil prosecution in relation to any action – however corrupt, illegal, abusive or costly to the environment – undertaken with a view to oil exploration, production or sale.

Such efforts were born partly of desperation. Iraqi oil is still flowing, but at a dribble. In 2003, sabotage reduced output to 1.33 million barrels per day, down from 2.12 million bpd the previous year.

The occupying armies are incapable of maintaining security in and around the refineries and pipelines. And the extent of the ruin of the oil infrastructure has now become clear.

There is much less talk now of the oil-financed imperialism – seven or eight million bpd was once a common estimate – which not so long ago was the darling of the military accountants.

But even taking into account the present difficulties, the story we have told seems to amount to a solid confirmation of the Blood for Oil argument: the Iraq invasion was, the Wall Street Journal said, 'one of the most audacious hostile takeovers ever'.

Perhaps, but the argument is multi-layered and sometimes inconsistent.

Blood for Oil could mean that the war was a response to oil shortage, or to machinations by the petro-industrial complex within the White House, or that it was the military

privatisation of a last bastion of Third World economic nationalism, or intended to restore corporate profitability, or to create a more reliable swing producer.

In our view, the Blood for Oil thesis loses sight of what oil ultimately stands for in the present moment: that is, neo-liberalism mutating from an epoch of 'agreements' and austerity programmes to one of outright war; the plural and unstable relations among specific forms of capital, always under the banner of some apparently dominant mass commodity; and those periodic waves of capitalist restructuring we call primitive accumulation.

However the argument is presented, Blood for Oil misdescribes what a single commodity – despite oil's unique political weight – can actually represent in relation to larger structural imperatives.

[To be continued]

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



[Thanks to David Honish, Veteran, who sent this in.]

Bush Accuses Saddam Of Poisoning America's Spinach:

Calls Vegetables The New Front In War On Terror

September 19, 2006 The Borowitz Report [Excerpt]

In a nationally televised address last night, President George W. Bush accused former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein of poisoning America's spinach supply and called vegetables the new front in the war on terror.

While offering no direct evidence linking Saddam to the recent tainting of American spinach with E coli, Mr. Bush said that intelligence sources indicated that "trying to destroy America by poisoning its spinach is just the kind of thing that Saddam Hussein would try to do, if given half a chance."

He added that he would take action to maintain an uninterrupted flow of spinach by releasing America's Strategic Spinach Reserve, millions of tons of spinach stored in huge underground salt caverns along the coastline of the Gulf of Mexico.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

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

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

Received:

RE: Ft. Carson Was A Powderkeg

From: J

To: GI Special

Sent: September 19, 2006

Subject: Re: GI Special 4119: "Ft. Carson Was A Powderkeg"

You can say that again about Ft. Carson - I ETS'd out of there in 1975 and it was still the same.....

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.**

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