

GI SPECIAL 4J4:



October 01, 2006: Photo from Veterans For Peace, Greater Atlanta Chapter 125

“Most Soldiers Want To Withdraw”

“Soldiers Know What's Going On Over There, And They Are Not Happy About It”

[Thanks to Kath Y, Military Project, who sent this in.]

I got an email yesterday from a soldier in Iraq who said, “I know what you're saying. I can't publicly support you, because I'm afraid of what might happen to me, but thank you for what you're doing. And I'll be walking with you in spirit.”

September 27th, 2006 Democracy Now [Excerpts]

Army reservist Sergeant Marshall Thompson spent a year in Iraq working as a military journalist. He reported from across Iraq, interviewing thousands of US soldiers. Now back home in his native Utah, he is planning a 500-mile walk across the state to protest the war and call for a withdrawal of US troops.

AMY GOODMAN: I spoke with Sgt. Marshall Thompson on Monday in Salt Lake City in his first national broadcast interview. He began by talking about why he plans the walk.

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: Well, I got back from Iraq about two months ago, and I knew I'd have to do something to make things right. And so I decided, my wife and I, that it would be a good idea to do a walk through Utah. Utah is my home state, and I love it.

It's also the reddest state in the nation. It's kind of a symbol of the last bastion of support for the war. So I thought that if I could walk through Utah in a peaceful manner and show that there's support in Utah for peace, then that just might be what turns the tide.

AMY GOODMAN: What did you do in Iraq?

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: I was a military journalist. It was a great job. I got to travel all around Iraq and interview thousands of soldiers. So I really got a good idea of what's going on over there.

AMY GOODMAN: Marshall, why did you join the military?

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: I love my country. And I really wanted to serve it.

AMY GOODMAN: When did you join?

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: I joined in 1999.

AMY GOODMAN: Before the 2001 attacks.

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: Yes. I was deployed to Kosovo during the 2001 attacks.

And I've been very proud of my service. And it's just been a hard time in Iraq, because this war is unjust. And no amount of patriotism that I have can change that.

AMY GOODMAN: How did you come to the conclusion that it's unjust?

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: Well, it happened before the war started. I was on the fence. And when Colin Powell addressed the UN, I believed him, like most people did, I think.

But then there was something in me that kept bothering me, and it was that the decision to go to war with Iraq was based on fear, fear of something that hadn't happened yet. And those are never good decisions. We can't make fear-based decisions.

So I decided that even if they had weapons of mass destruction, that I was going to be opposed to the war.

Then, years later when I went to Iraq, spent a year there, saw what happened, it was only reinforced.

And I knew that I was going to have to come home and do something to make it right for my participation in it and just because I feel more responsible for what goes on over there, having been there for one year.

AMY GOODMAN: You interviewed hundreds of soldiers?

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: Thousands.

AMY GOODMAN: Thousands of soldiers in Iraq. What is their attitude to the war?

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: Most soldiers want to withdraw. That is proven. There was a Zogby poll. 72% of recently turned Iraqi vets want to be out of Iraq by 2006.

AMY GOODMAN: 2006?

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: By 2006.

That means this year.

And my experience backs that up absolutely.

There is a lot of pressure for soldiers not to speak out. There's fear of court-martials. There's fear of their commanders getting mad at them. There's a lot of reasons why soldiers don't speak out.

But nobody should be fooled.

Soldiers know what's going on over there, and they are not happy about it.

AMY GOODMAN: What was the response when the soldier asked Rumsfeld about why they weren't being protected?

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: That was -- we loved it. We thought that, you know, score one for the little guys.

AMY GOODMAN: Did you see any kind of challenging of the supervisory officers by the lower level soldiers?

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: Absolutely.

Constant challenging, especially on the issue of censorship.

Also, like I said, a lot of people, I think, underestimate soldiers.

We know what's going on. We're smart. We read the newspapers.

And there's a lot of orders that may be unlawful that are challenged.

You don't hear about those, because those are the good examples.

And then sometimes there are unlawful orders and they're followed. And that's the biggest problem.

AMY GOODMAN: Were you able to follow up on atrocities like Haditha, like Mahmoudiya, that story of Steven Green and the other Army soldiers who went into the home of this 14-year-old girl, Abeer, and killed her and her mother, father and sister?

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: We were not able to follow up on atrocities such as those. I was able to post a blog. It kept me sane for the year, because I could print anything I wanted to on my blog.

AMY GOODMAN: How do you do that in the military?

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: I just did it.

AMY GOODMAN: What was your blog?

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: It was called chokeholdiniraq. That's my nickname in the military. It's a long story.

AMY GOODMAN: Chokehold?

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: Chokehold, yeah.

AMY GOODMAN: What's the story?

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: I was in basic training. And they picked me, because I was soft-spoken, and they picked the biggest guy in the unit. And they were going to have us wrestle. And everyone thought I was going to die. And I put him in a chokehold. And everyone thought that was really funny that I won, so they called me "Chokehold" for the rest of the time.

AMY GOODMAN: So your blog is called chokeholdiniraq.

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: Yes. And I was able to print a lot of things that I couldn't do in the newspaper. And it was very satisfying for me.

Near the end of my tour, they said, "Hey, you've got to register your blog, and we're going to have to start reviewing your articles." And that's when I stopped doing it.

AMY GOODMAN: Other soldiers were doing this?

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: Yes. Soldiers love to blog.

AMY GOODMAN: *So you're going to walk across Utah. How are you going to do this?*

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: **One step at a time.**

It's going to be 500 miles. I'll walk about 20 miles a day. Originally I planned to walk one day for every 100 soldiers who have died, so it would be 26 days. However, since we've planned this, the number has increased to over 2,700 U.S. casualties in Iraq, and so I'm going to have to add a day at the end, unfortunately.

AMY GOODMAN: And who will walk with you?

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: Well, we've got a lot of support. Anyone is invited to walk with me. We want this to be an inclusive event. So that maybe you're a conservative and maybe you like the war, but you just think that we need a plan to get out, I want those people to come walk with me, because at this point it doesn't matter why we got into the war or what the partisan politics were about. What matters is that two soldiers die every day on average.

And any way that we can end this war one day sooner is two lives saved. And I would walk 500 miles for that. I would walk 1,000 miles for that.

AMY GOODMAN: *Other soldiers, will they walk with you?*

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: Yes. There will be other soldiers walking with me.

I've received an enormous amount of support from fellow soldiers.

I got an email yesterday from a soldier in Iraq who said, "I know what you're saying. I can't publicly support you, because I'm afraid of what might happen to me, but thank you for what you're doing. And I'll be walking with you in spirit."

AMY GOODMAN: *Are you worried about walking here in Utah?*

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: You know, some people are worried.

I'm not worried. I spent a year in Iraq. And I cannot be afraid of anything in Utah. It just doesn't make any sense at this point.

AMY GOODMAN: *If people want to get more information, where do they go?*

SGT. MARSHALL THOMPSON: They can go to asoldierspeace.com.

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 or write to: The Military Project, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Iowa Staff Sgt. Killed Near Al Asad



Iowa Army National guard Staff Sgt. Scott E. Nisely, 48, of Marshalltown, Iowa was killed Saturday near Al Asad, Iraq, the Guard said in a news release. (AP Photo/ Iowa Army National Guard)

Four US Troops Killed In Baghdad Bombing

10.3.06 (AFP)

Four US soldiers have been killed by a roadside bomb that struck their vehicle in northwest Baghdad, the US military said.

The blast happened at around 6:00 pm (1500 GMT) Monday night, the same day the US military announced the deaths of six other servicemen, also mainly in Baghdad.

Two Marines Killed In Western Iraq

Oct. 3, 2006 Multi-National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20061003-01

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq: One Marine assigned to Regimental Combat Team 7 died Sept. 30 from injuries sustained due to enemy action while operating in Al Anbar Province.

Another Marine, also assigned to Regimental Combat Team 7, died Oct. 1 from injuries sustained due to enemy action while operating in Al Anbar Province.

Iowa Guard Killed Near Al Asad



Iowa Army National guard Kampha B. Sourivong, 20, of Iowa City, Iowa was killed Saturday, Oct. 30, 2006, near Al Asad, Iraq, the Guard said in a news release. (AP Photo/Army National Guard)

MND-B Soldier Killed By Small-Arms Fire

Oct. 3, 2006 Multi-National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory, Release No. 20061003-04

BAGHDAD: A Multi-National Division Baghdad Soldier died at approximately 5:30 p.m. yesterday when terrorists attacked his patrol with small-arms fire in southwest Baghdad.

“Pack All Of His Letters”

“It’s Been A Bad Couple Of Days For Charlie Company”

Marine From New Jersey Killed In Iraq Blast;

Another From Connecticut Wounded

October 3, 2006 By TOM BROWN, And DAVID FUNKHOUSER, Courant Staff Writers

A Marine from New Jersey serving with the Plainville-based Charlie Company died Sunday when a car bomb exploded at a checkpoint in northeast Fallujah, Iraq. A second Marine, from Connecticut, was wounded in the blast.

Lance Cpl. Christopher B. Cosgrove III, 23, of Cedar Knolls, N.J., died at a checkpoint where Marines from the 1st Battalion, 25th Regiment, were searching cars as they entered the city, which has been the site of some of the fiercest fighting of the war.

Lance Cpl. Jason E. Mikolajcik of Burlington was seriously injured in the same explosion, which killed two Iraqi Army soldiers and critically injured two more. Mikolajcik, 20, a 2005 graduate of Lewis Mills High School, was flown to Germany for treatment.

Charlie Company is about two weeks from wrapping up a seven-month deployment in Fallujah.

Two other Marines in the unit were seriously wounded by sniper fire on Saturday as they were finishing a foot patrol. Both were evacuated to Germany for treatment.

Sgt. Terry Rathbun Jr., 35, of East Lyme, was shot through the jaw and neck; he is in critical but stable condition, his father said Monday evening.

The sniper also hit Capt. Harry Thompson of Las Vegas. Thompson suffered a collapsed lung and is now in stable condition, according to Marines in Fallujah.

Rathbun's father, also named Terry, said he got a call about his son Saturday night. "I cried. I'm a father, I cried," the elder Rathbun said. "I feel very bad about it. It's something he wanted to do, and I respect that. My son is a damn good Marine."

In Fallujah, Marines with Charlie Company gathered around Cosgrove's bunk on Sunday to collect his effects and remember a comrade known for an ironic sense of humor and boyish grin.

"He was everyone's friend," said Sgt. Leo Robillard of Pittsfield, Mass. "He really embraced the Iraqis. He would learn their language and had regulars who frequently came through the (checkpoint) who he got to know."

Sgt. Julio Feliciano of Springfield remembered Cosgrove as a person who would do anything for anyone. "He was always there for you," he said.

Cosgrove and Mikolajcik had volunteered to work the shift for others in the unit Sunday.

His fellow Marines said Cosgrove had been planning his wedding and was designing the invitations with his fiancée. He had wanted to pursue a career in law enforcement.

The Marines said a man and a woman were in the car that exploded. The blast occurred as the vehicle was pulling into an inspection bay to be searched.

John Mikolajcik said Monday evening he had spoken by phone to his son, who told him what happened. He said Cosgrove and his son, who had been leading the inspection squad, had approached the car to help an Iraqi with the inspection when Mikolajcik noticed that the Iraqi man in the car was cringing. Then the car exploded.

The blast knocked Mikolajcik to the ground and set him afire. He got up and saw Cosgrove was also on fire. He rescued two Iraqi police officers from the vehicle and tried to save Cosgrove, but other Marines pulled him back from the burning wreckage.

Mikolajcik, who joined the Marines in 2005, suffered burns and shrapnel wounds and is scheduled to be flown to a burn center in Texas today, his father said. Mikolajcik told his father he doesn't know why he's alive.

As Robillard and other Marines carefully packed the last of Cosgrove's personal belongings into sea bags at the base in Fallujah, Staff Sgt. Keith Hanna, a tough older Marine, wiped a tear from his eye and looked over at the bunk. "Make sure you pack all of his letters from home," he said.

Terry Rathbun said his son is to be flown today or Wednesday to Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland, where his family will gather.

"We are holding on till we find out what is going on," Rathbun said, adding that it was difficult conveying the sobering news to his family.

"It was hard. It was very hard. The only thing that made it easier was that he is alive," Rathbun said.

"It's been a bad couple of days for Charlie Company," said company commander Maj. Vaughn Ward, speaking to Marines in Fallujah.

Cosgrove's death comes on top of three other recent deaths in the unit: Cpl. Jordan C. Pierson, 21, of Milford, was killed Aug. 25; Lance Cpl. Philip A. Johnson, 19, of Enfield, died Sept. 2; and Pfc. Nicholas A. Madaras, 19, of Wilton, was killed Sept. 3.

Soldier From Beaver Falls Killed In Iraq

Sep. 27, 2006 The Associated Press

PITTSBURGH: A soldier from western Pennsylvania killed in Iraq was serving his second tour in Iraq, his family said.

Army Sgt. Allan R. Bevington, 22, of Beaver Falls, died of injuries sustained Thursday when a roadside bomb exploded near him during combat operations in Ramadi, the Defense Department said in a statement Monday.

"He died a hero," his mother, Beverly Bevington, said. "He died doing what he thought was right. There's a lot of good going on over there."

Bevington joined the Army upon graduating from Beaver Falls High School in 2002. His brother Chuck was an Army combat engineer from 1986 to 1993.

Chuck Bevington, of Ellwood City, said his brother loved hunting and fishing.

Allan Bevington was serving his second tour in Iraq and survived at least two other IED explosions, Chuck Bevington said.

"My mother talked to his lieutenant," he said. "(Allan) was very well respected. There was never a job that he didn't run out to do instead of somebody else."

Bevington was a combat engineer who had the dangerous job of disarming improvised explosive devices, said Army spokesman Maj. Nathan Banks. Bevington was killed when a device exploded while he was cordoning off an area, said Banks, who could offer no other details.

Bevington had been assigned to the 40th Engineer Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, of the 1st Armored Division in Baumholder, Germany.

East Lyme Marine Seriously Hurt Just Days Before Ending Iraq Duty



Sgt. Terry Rathbun Jr. of East Lyme by Sean D. Elliot

10/3/2006 By Kyn Tolson, The Day Publishing Co.

Just a day or two away from finishing his war duty on the streets of Fallujah, Iraq, Sgt. Terry Rathbun Jr. was seriously wounded Friday while on patrol there, according to his father.

Rathbun, a 35-year-old whose family lives in Niantic, was in stable condition Monday in Germany with a life-threatening wound after being shot in the face, according to a Marine spokesman.

The details of the shooting and his injury were unavailable Monday, but Rathbun's father, Terry Rathbun Sr., said by telephone from his Seacrest Avenue home that his son will likely be airlifted to Bethesda Naval Hospital by today or Wednesday.

Rathbun Sr. said he knows only that the bullet entered his son's right cheek and exited his neck. He plans to travel to the hospital in Maryland after his son arrives there.

Rathbun Jr. is a squad leader of about a dozen infantrymen with the Marine Reserves of Charlie Company, home-based in Plainville. The company of some 200 men is part of the 1st Battalion, 25th Marines, which has been in Fallujah since early April. Charlie Company and the rest of the battalion are due back on the East Coast by late October, but most of the men have already turned over their duties to replacements.

The news of his son's injury comes at a particularly trying time for his family, Rathbun Sr. said, because his wife, Diane, has been taken to hospitals twice in the last 10 days for emergency conditions related to a heart condition and diabetes. The 60-year-old woman suffered a mild heart attack at the Hospital of Saint Raphael in New Haven on Sept. 23 and has been home only since Thursday, said Rathbun Sr.

Then, just Monday morning, she was taken to the emergency room at Lawrence & Memorial Hospital in New London for a few hours for diabetes-related problems.

While his mother has been suffering from her heart condition in recent months, Rathbun Jr. learned only recently that she was scheduled for surgery on Oct. 16 to have a pacemaker implanted, according to his father.

"I kinda held off telling him for a while, because I didn't want him to be worried," he said. "He would be worried, because it's his mother, and they're close."

After a telephone conversation with his son last Wednesday, Rathbun Sr. had decided he would put in a request through the American Red Cross that his son be allowed to come home about two weeks early so that he could be here for his mother's operation.

"I called Red Cross on Saturday morning," he said. "Then, Saturday night the lieutenant colonel called at about 9:30, telling me he'd been wounded. He said, 'We have him stabilized.' He was taken to Balad (in Iraq) and then to Germany."

Rathbun Jr. is married, and his wife, Shawn, lives in southeastern Connecticut. She did not want to comment Monday, saying only she plans to travel to Bethesda.

When word comes of his son's arrival in the United States, Rathbun Sr. said, he will likely drive down to Maryland with his best friend, Leon Brown of Clinton. Diane Rathbun is too ill to travel and will stay home, he said.

Rathbun Sr. and his wife share the family home with their grown daughter, Lynn Dean, her husband and their two children.

Along with Terry Jr., who goes by the family nickname "TR," the elder Rathbuns have another son, Frederick, who lives next door with his wife and baby boy.

"TR is going to be the godfather when he gets back," said Rathbun Sr.

Rathbun Jr. graduated from East Lyme High School in 1990. Before joining the Marine Reserve, he was on active duty for more than five years and was in Somalia in 1993 and Haiti soon after. While with Charlie Company, he served in Japan and Bahrain in 2003. He has been a diver and a scout sniper with the Marines.

As a civilian, he has worked in carpentry and as a diver.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

TWO U.S. SOLDIERS KILLED, THREE WOUNDED IN PECH

10/3/2006 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 06-01-03CS

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan: Two U.S. Soldiers and an Afghan soldier were killed and three U.S. Soldiers were wounded during fighting with enemy combatants in the Pech District of Kunar Province on the evening of Oct. 2.

The soldiers were operating as part of a combat patrol that made contact with enemy extremists. The unit engaged the insurgents with small arms and artillery fire.

All U.S. and Afghan wounded Soldiers were medically evacuated to a U.S. treatment facility in Asadabad, where they remain in stable condition.

“The Taliban Enjoy Grassroots Support Within Afghanistan”

“The Taliban Are Becoming Synonymous With Afghan Resistance”

Sep 30, 2006 By M K Bhadrakumar, Asia Times [Excerpts] M K Bhadrakumar served as a career diplomat in the Indian Foreign Service for more than 29 years, with postings including ambassador to Uzbekistan (1995-98) and to Turkey (1998-2001).

Three ministerial-level meetings of NATO have taken place within the space of the past month alone, specifically with the intent of ascertaining how troop strength in Afghanistan can be augmented.

US Marine Corps General James Jones, NATO's supreme commander of operations, has admitted that the fierce resistance put up by the Taliban and the burgeoning insurgency has taken the alliance by surprise.

NATO forces have realized that an all-out war is at hand, rather than the peacekeeping mission that was imagined earlier.

British commanders in southern Afghanistan have been given clearance to use the army's controversial Hydra rockets, which can target large concentrations of people with tungsten darts. The commanders are also permitted to resort to air strikes on suspected Taliban formations, conduct preemptive strikes and set up ambushes.

Yet a British commander has been reported as telling the media, "The intensity and ferocity of the fighting is far greater than in Iraq on a daily basis."

The fatality rate of the 18,500-strong NATO force averages about five per week, which is roughly equal to the losses suffered by the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Indeed, in withering comments to The Sunday Telegraph newspaper last weekend, Soviet commanders who oversaw Moscow's disastrous campaign have predicted that the NATO forces will ultimately be forced to flee from Afghanistan.

General Boris Gromov, the charismatic Soviet commander who supervised the withdrawal in 1989, warned, "The Afghan resistance is, in my opinion, growing. Such behavior on the part of the intractable Afghans is to my mind understandable. It is conditioned by centuries of tradition, geography, climate and religion.

"We saw over a period of many years how the country was torn apart by civil war ... But in the face of outside aggressions, Afghans have always put aside their differences and united. Evidently, the (US-led) coalition forces are also being seen as a threat to the nation."

A comparison with the 1980s is in order.

The 100,000-strong Soviet army operated alongside a full-fledged Afghan army of equal strength with an officer corps trained in the elite Soviet military academies, and backed by aviation, armored vehicles and artillery, with all the advantages of a functioning, politically motivated government in Kabul.

And yet it proved no match for the Afghan resistance.

In comparison, there are about 20,000 US troops in Afghanistan, plus roughly the same number of troops belonging to NATO contingents, which includes 5,400 troops from Britain, 2,500 from Canada and 2,300 from the Netherlands.

Nominally, there is a 42,000-strong Afghan National Army, but it suffers from a high rate of defection.

General Jones has asked for 2,500 additional NATO troops. In actuality, it is questionable whether 2,500 more troops would make any significant difference in a country of the size of Afghanistan and with such a difficult terrain.

Distinguished British soldier-politician Sir Cyril Townsend wrote in Al-Hayat newspaper this week, "A realistic military appreciation of the situation would be that to gain the upper hand against the Taliban and al-Qaeda, and to start winning over the southeast of the country, will require deployment of at least 10,000 extra, highly trained professional and well-equipped troops with matching air support."

Clearly, a huge crisis is shaping up for NATO. Its credibility is at stake.

Sir Cyril does not foresee that the alliance will come up with the required military resources "to beat the Taliban on its own ground".

No wonder Lieutenant-General David Richards, commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan and former assistant chief of the general staff of the British army, ominously warned in a recent television interview, "We need to realize we could actually fail here."

Most observers have pointed a finger at the developing crisis in Afghanistan almost exclusively in terms of the shortfalls in achieving a rapid, high-tech military victory over the Taliban. In the ensuing blame game, there is the recurrent criticism that Washington did not commit enough forces.

Some say that the Iraq war turned out to be an unfortunate distraction for the US administration from wrapping up and following up on the ouster of the Taliban regime in 2001. Others put the blame on the European member countries of NATO - that the Europeans are far too timid and self-centered to fight wars in faraway lands, even if it is for their ultimate good.

Widening somewhat the gyre of the blame game, almost everyone acknowledges that opium is eating away the vitals of the Afghan state as counter-drug operations have been a dismal failure.

And, of course, there is the perennial accusation that US regional policy during the administration of George W Bush has been on the whole negligent about "nation-building" and that Washington has been tardy in earmarking enough material and financial resources for Afghanistan's reconstruction (in comparison with East Timor or Bosnia-Herzegovina).

All such criticism may contain elements of truth.

But germane to the crisis in a fundamental sense is the hard reality that no matter the oft-repeated factor of a reasonably secure cross-border sanctuary in Pakistan, the Taliban have indeed staged a comeback in essence as an indigenous guerilla force capable of waging a long-term struggle.

That is to say, the central issue is that the US has simply failed to come up with a winning political and military strategy in Afghanistan.

First and foremost, there is the highly contrived nature of the US intervention in Afghanistan.

In the immediate aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the US, in an international environment where "we are all Americans", as Le Monde famously wrote, no one asked any hard questions as to whether Washington's decision to attack Afghanistan was justified or not. The international community simply acquiesced.

Conceivably, Washington decided that only a spectacular military operation would assuage the US public, which was traumatized by the September 11 attacks, and highlight the decisive leadership in the White House in safeguarding national security.

Arguably, Afghanistan would also have been viewed by the Bush administration as a laboratory where Washington could test its doctrines of preemptive military strike, the "coalition of the willing", unilateralism, etc - doctrines that provided the political underpinning for the subsequent invasion of Iraq.

Or, in the medium and long term, Washington estimated that short of a military presence inside Afghanistan and without a client regime installed in Kabul, the US would be unable to ease other regional powers from the Afghan chessboard and reorder the geopolitics of the region as part of its global strategy.

At any rate, the stratagem aimed at exploiting the Afghan problem to seize geopolitical advantages was not so apparent at the beginning.

But it didn't take long before it became clear that the US agenda was to exploit the "war on terror" for establishing a client state in Afghanistan, and for gaining a sought-after military presence in Central Asia. And in the event, the US military presence incrementally paved the way for creating a base for NATO in the region.

There was a high degree of sophistry in the US military operations in October 2001 as well. In the initial stages, an impression was created deliberately that the US intervention would be confined to air operations and the induction of a limited number of special forces specifically for the purpose of advising and guiding the Northern Alliance militia.

Thus the Northern Alliance furiously protested when it first came to know of the sudden arrival of US ground troops at Bagram airport in early November 2001, in the wake of the overthrow of the Taliban government.

Washington also gave different impressions to different interlocutors in the region regarding the nature of the post-Taliban regime it had in mind. Certainly, the mostly non-Pashtun Northern Alliance leadership was led to believe that the overthrow of the Taliban would automatically result in its return to the seat of power in Kabul from where it was evicted by the Taliban in 1996.

Conceivably, regional powers such as Russia, Iran and India, too, were persuaded to fancy that such an outcome was in the cards and that the transfer of power in Kabul to the Northern Alliance leadership would ultimately work to their advantage, given their past material, financial, political and diplomatic backing of the alliance as the spearhead of the anti-Taliban resistance during the period 1996-2001.

On the other hand, Islamabad was given assurances by Washington that a Pashtun-majority government in Kabul was in the making and that incrementally there would be a political accommodation of erstwhile Taliban elements in the emergent power structure. Islamabad no doubt sought and gained an assurance from Washington that under no circumstances would the Northern Alliance be allowed to grab power in Kabul in the post-Taliban phase.

All this while, Washington seemed to have had Abdul Haq, the famous mujahideen leader with long-standing links with US intelligence, as its first choice to assume the leadership in Kabul after the overthrow of the Taliban.

But in the event, Haq was assassinated by the Taliban, most likely with the connivance of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence, which got wind of Washington's hidden agenda and feared that Haq wouldn't be amenable to Islamabad's persuasions once he was ensconced in power in Kabul.

Meanwhile, the Northern Alliance outwitted its US mentors. Contrary to the tacit understanding between alliance commanders and their American mentors to the effect that after the Taliban's ouster Kabul would initially remain a neutral city under United Nations control, the alliance militia occupied the capital and its leadership unilaterally installed itself in power. These leaders hoped (optimistically, as it turned out) that the US would have little choice but to accept the fait accompli.

Thus when the Bonn conference got under way in December 2001, Washington had a two-point agenda, namely to project a credible substitute for the late Haq as the leader of the new setup and, second, to do some arm-twisting to cajole the Northern Alliance to give up its leadership role in Kabul.

Nonetheless, when the US brought up Hamid Karzai's name in Bonn, there was widespread opposition by Afghan groups. In the perceptions of the Afghan participants at the Bonn conference, Karzai simply didn't have enough standing as a political leader in the Afghan scene, having sat in exile in the US for the past several years, and being at a serious disadvantage insofar as he did not belong to a major Pashtun tribe.

But the United States pressed ahead regardless with Karzai's name, given his closeness to the US establishment and his total dependence on US support.

The US brought immense pressure to bear on Afghan groups present at Bonn to accept Karzai's leadership. It was with extreme reluctance that the Northern Alliance leader, president Burhanuddin Rabbani, finally handed over the levers of power to Karzai.

While abdicating from power in Kabul in early 2002, Rabbani said he hoped that it was the last time the proud Afghan people would be bullied by foreigners.

Anyone familiar with Afghan ethos and character could foresee at that juncture that Karzai would find it next to impossible to consolidate his grip on power, let alone establish his authority over the entire country. Indeed, that is exactly what has happened over the past five years.

The repeated and brazen manipulations by the US during the past five years, especially during the parliamentary and presidential elections in Afghanistan held under election rules that were tailor-made for predictable results, failed to ensure that Karzai commanded respect in the Afghan bazaar.

US attempts to consolidate a Pashtun power base for Karzai have virtually failed. Equally, the episodic attempts to create dissension within the Taliban have also not worked.

In turn, these failures led to large-scale Pashtun alienation.

US efforts to marginalize the Northern Alliance and to enlarge the ethnic-Pashtun representation in Karzai's cabinet have not had the desired effect of meaningfully tackling Pashtun alienation, either. Arguably, they may have created latent resentment among Northern Alliance leaders, which lies below the surface for the time being.

In other words, there is a fundamental issue of the legitimacy of state power that remains unresolved in Afghanistan.

At a minimum, in these past five years there should have been an intra-Afghan dialogue that included the Taliban. This initiative could have been under UN auspices on a parallel track.

The inability to earn respect and command authority plus the heavy visible dependence on day-to-day US support have rendered the Kabul setup ineffective. Alongside this, the Afghan malaise of nepotism, tribal affiliations and corruption has also led to bad governance. It is in this combination of circumstances that the Taliban have succeeded in staging a comeback.

What lies ahead is, therefore, becoming extremely difficult to predict. Even with 2,500 additional troops it is highly doubtful whether NATO can succeed in defeating the Taliban.

For one thing, the Taliban enjoy grassroots support within Afghanistan. There is no denying this ground reality.

Second, the Taliban are becoming synonymous with Afghan resistance.

The mindless violations of the Afghan code of honor by the coalition forces during their search-and-destroy missions and the excessive use of force during military operations leading to loss of innocent lives have provoked widespread revulsion among Afghan people.

Karzai's inability to do anything about the coalition forces' arbitrary behavior is only adding to his image of a weak leader and is deepening his overall loss of authority in the perceptions of the Afghan people, apart from strengthening the raison d'etre of the Afghan resistance.

Third, it is a matter of time, if the threshold of the Taliban resurgence goes unchecked, before the non-Pashtun groups in the eastern, northern and western regions also begin to organize themselves.

There are disturbing signs pointing in this direction already.

If that were to happen, NATO forces might well find themselves in the unenviable situation of getting caught in the crossfire between various warring ethnic groups.

Fourth, at a certain point it becomes unavoidable that regional powers will get drawn into the strife. The fact remains that all Afghan ethnic groups enjoy a contiguous presence across the borders in neighboring countries. There is considerable misgiving among regional powers already over Washington's hidden long-term agenda to bring Afghanistan, which has been historically a neutral country, under the NATO flag.

No amount of pious homilies about NATO's role and objectives can obfuscate the geopolitical implications of the Western alliance's occupation of a strategically important country far away from the European continent, which lies at the crossroads of vast regions that are becoming the battleground for global influence.

Without doubt, in the perceptions of regional powers, NATO's defeat in Afghanistan can only mean the scattering of the US blueprint of domination of Central Asia, South Asia and the Persian Gulf.

Antonio Maria Costa, head of the UN Office of Drugs and Crime, stated in testimony at the House International Relations Committee of the US Congress in Washington last week: "Foreign pressures are making Afghanistan the turf for proxy wars. The country is being destabilized by an inflow of insurgents and weapons and money and intelligence. There is collusion from neighboring countries, and this is a problem in itself."

TROOP NEWS

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



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

“We Brought The Work Of A Senate Office Building To A Standstill, And Made Loud And Clear Our Demand That The Occupation Of Iraq Must End”

9.28.06 By Gordon Clark, Afterdowningstreet.org [Excerpts]

Even for these now veteran activist eyes, it was a glorious and inspiring sight to see.

On Tuesday, September 26, more than 100 nonviolent activists took over the central lobby and atrium of the Hart Senate Office Building, and staged a protest of the war in Iraq while dozens and dozens of Senate staffers looked on. For one hour, at least, American opposition to the war in Iraq became the central focus for these offices of the U.S. Senate, and 71 individuals were arrested for making this happen.

The action was organized by the National Campaign for Nonviolent Resistance (formerly the Iraq Pledge of Resistance), as part of the week of anti-war actions around the country organized by the Declaration of Peace campaign.

The action started that morning with a rally and interfaith service at Upper Senate Park.

At the end of the rally and service we formed a procession to go by the Capitol building and then on to the Senate office buildings. Police stopped us after three blocks, telling us that the large procession constituted an unpermitted demonstration and that we would not be allowed to continue. It was at this point that one affinity group broke away, and crossed police lines and Constitution Ave., carrying a coffin to the steps of the Capitol. Sixteen were arrested for that act of nonviolent witness.

The remaining 200 or so of us, however, were suddenly left without any police presence at all, since literally every one of their offices had followed the coffin.

As our goal was to get to the offices of the U.S. Senate, we decided to simply turn around and head back up Constitution Ave. to the Senate office buildings, which we did without incident until some of the police realized their mistake, came roaring back and set up a line to stop us in front of the Russell Senate Office Building, one block short of our ultimate goal.

A small group of us conducted negotiations with an officer of the Capitol Police for 15-20 minutes. Although they continued to assert that our procession was illegal and could not continue - if we wanted to visit our Senators, they said, we had to return to Upper Senate Park (where we did have a permit), leave all our signs and banners behind and break up into small groups - the officer in charge was a model of courtesy, and in fact, an extremely friendly fellow.

When their "final" decision was made, our decision was to stay put. We intended to proceed as a group, no matter what, and if they felt compelled to arrest us they would have to do it right there.

The police gave a five minute warning, but that five minutes passed and nothing happened.

Ten of our number managed to cross the police line and get to the Russell building entrance, where they were promptly detained and arrested. Others called their senators' offices to demand to know why weren't being allowed in to see them.

A giant Gandhi puppet, carrying a sign that said "Be the change you want to see in the world," came rolling down Constitution Ave. and evoked a huge cheer from our crowd, all the more so because the same puppet had earlier been stopped by police who refused to allow it near the Capitol complex. Interestingly, Gandhi was now being given an entire lane of traffic on Constitution Ave.

While all this was happening, Rick Ufford-Chase continued to negotiate with the police. Rick is a pretty darn friendly guy himself, and apparently a heck of a negotiator, since after another 15-20 minutes it was announced that if we left our large banners behind, we would be allowed to proceed as a group, enter the Hart Senate Office Building, and reassemble after passing through security.

Rick had re-emphasized our commitment to nonviolence, and had patiently explained that our planned action in the Hart atrium would be a respectful, interfaith-led protest of

the war in Iraq. The police explained that if we did that, we would likely be arrested inside the Hart building.

When this agreement was announced, it was immediately apparent how remarkable and unprecedented it was.

The Capitol police would allow us to continue what they considered an unpermitted demonstration, and then enter a Senate office building for the express purpose of carrying out another illegal demonstration. (The charge given those arrested inside was "unlawful assembly.")

While a number of us continued a protest outside, more than 100 of us entered the Hart building. For those not familiar with it, the Hart Senate Office Building is really quite beautiful and unlike any other Congressional office, in that it is designed around a giant, open, building high-lobby and atrium, with senate offices lining the seven stories facing on to the atrium.

If you control the atrium, you essentially control the entire building.

And that is precisely what we did.

With some reading the names of the dead or holding up peace signs on the balconies surrounding the lobby, a large group assembled in a circle on the first floor for our nonviolent witness against the war. As it went on, the balconies filled with onlookers, until finally all seven stories, on all four sides, were lined with senate staffers and visitors watching the protest and eventual arrests.

Several applauded and gave thumbs up. The protest also garnered the front page and a full inside page spread of the following day's Roll Call newspaper, meaning that every office on Capitol Hill knew about it within 24 hours.

I have often heard "this is what democracy looks like" chanted during street marches and protests. Standing in this august senate office building, with our protest being watched by a majority of the people working there, I had the profound feeling that this is exactly what democracy should look like.

If our elected leaders refuse to heed the will of the people, then we the people will take over their offices until they do.

It happens in other countries around the world, usually to our great approval, so why not here in the U.S. as well? Truly, this was democracy in its purest and finest form.

People will peacefully arrested, and led away. They joined their colleagues from the previous arrests, and had by all accounts a time of great community and fellowship during the several hours it took the police to process and release them all. Those of us waiting outside the police station heard frequent outbursts of laughter and applause.

The police officer in charge sought me out at the end to thank me several times over, and stated plainly that they were glad they were able to help us accomplish what we wanted to do that day.

Just as important, though, is the fact that many of these police, possibly even the large majority of them, actually agree with us and support what we're doing.

They have privately told our activists this on many, many occasions.

They have brothers and sisters and buddies in the military, and lost some of them, and they are just as sick of this war as we are.

Above all, though, we achieved our goal, and for a least one hour on a Tuesday in September, we brought the work of a Senate office building to a standstill, and made loud and clear our demand that the immoral, illegal and unjust occupation of Iraq must end.

If we can continue to ramp up our actions in this way, including the extremely important electoral work for this fall, we can and will compel members of Congress to heed our demand.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action



Two oil tankers burn after two roadside bomb attacks near Samara, 96 km (60 miles) north of Baghdad October 2, 2006. REUTERS/ Nuhad Hussin (IRAQ)

02 October 2006 Aljazeera & 10.3.06 Reuters

Three Afghan soldiers have been killed and three others injured by a roadside bomb in the eastern province of Paktia.

The attack came as Afghan troops patrolled a remote mountain pass on Monday, according to General Murad Ali of the Afghan National Army.

A suspected Taliban member on a motorbike had killed two policemen and wounded two others in Gereshk district.

Militants attacked a rail station, killing an employee and wounding two others late on Monday in the oil refining city of Baiji, 180 km (115 miles) north of Baghdad.

Guerrillas attacked a police checkpoint late on Monday, killing a police officer and wounding a policeman in Dour, near Tikrit, 175 km (110 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.



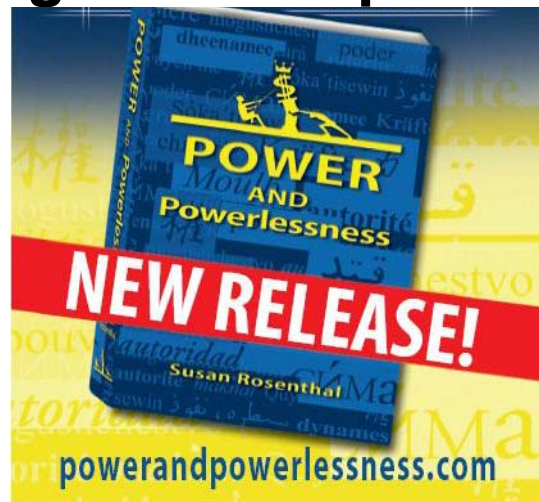
A destroyed police vehicle after a car bomb attack targeted a police patrol in Baghdad, October 2, 2006. (Faleh Kheiber/Reuters)

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

**“Soldiers And Anti-War Activists
Have A Common Interest”**

“Both Want To End The War And Bring The Troops Home”



Excerpts from *Power and Powerlessness*, Susan Rosenthal, Trafford, 2006.
www.powerandpowerlessness.com

War is Peace: The soldier betrayed:

The army has total control over its soldiers and should be held accountable for their behavior. Shay explains how officers encourage soldiers to turn their grief into revenge, yet, superiors take no responsibility when grief-stricken soldiers go berserk and lose their restraint, their morality, and their humanity.

In 2005, Spc. Charles A. Graner Jr. was sentenced to 10 years in a military prison for torturing prisoners at Iraq's Abu Ghraib Prison. Graner was condemned as a "torture ringleader," while the top officers who supervised the prison system were cleared of any responsibility.

Meanwhile, the mastermind of U.S. torture policy, Alberto Gonzales, was rewarded with the top job at the Department of Justice. Betrayal doesn't come any bigger than that.

While the people in power promote war as necessary for peace, prosperity, and security; peace never comes, only the wealthy prosper, and life becomes increasingly insecure.

The ordinary American, the American soldier, and the people they are supposed to hate — all are victimized by the powerful people who call the shots.

Losing humanity:

Every war comes home. Methods developed to subdue foreign populations are inevitably used domestically. As a military policeman in Vietnam, Jon Burge was trained to torture suspects. Back in America, he joined the Chicago police force and found a new use for his skills.

In 1993, Burge was fired for supervising the systematic torture of more than 100 Black men over a period of more than 20 years.

Thirteen of these men had been sentenced to death on the basis of confessions obtained through beatings, burnings, suffocations, electric shock, and mock executions.

A 2004 New York Times' investigation found that prisoners in the United States were being treated much the same as prisoners in Iraq. This is no coincidence. Prison officials with experience torturing American inmates were selected to run Iraqi prisons and train Iraqi prison guards.

In An Open Letter to GIs in Iraq, Stan Goff describes his experience in Vietnam.

"We had to dehumanize our victims before we did the things we did. We knew deep down that what we were doing was wrong. So they became dinks or gooks, just like the Iraqis are now being transformed into ragheads or hajjis. People had to be reduced to 'niggers' here before they could be lynched.

"No difference...so long as they were human beings, with the same intrinsic value we had as human beings, we were not allowed to burn their homes and barns, kill their animals and sometimes even kill them. So we used these words, these new names, to reduce them, to strip them of their essential humanity..."³

Goff's warning to soldiers stands as a warning to us all. When you take away the humanity of another, you kill your own humanity. You attack your own soul because it is standing in the way.

Their gain, our pain:

You tell me the truth. You tell me that my son died for oil. You tell me that my son died to make your friends rich. You tell me my son died so you can spread the cancer of imperialism in the Middle East. You tell me that. Cindy Sheehan

In 1995, when 60 Minutes host Lesley Stahl asked Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, "We have heard that a half a million children have died (because of the sanctions against Iraq). I mean, that is more children than died in Hiroshima. And, you know, is the price worth it?" Albright replied, "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price, we think, is worth it."

Ten years later, President George W. Bush claimed that the mounting death toll in Iraq was worth it. Most parents of dead Iraqis and dead American soldiers would not agree. The elite reap the power and profit that are paid for with other people's lives and other people's suffering.

It is commonly believed that ordinary Americans benefit from U.S. imperialism. This is not true. What the U.S. capitalist class takes from the poor people of the world does not "trickle down" to American workers. On the contrary, this surplus is invested in extracting more wealth from all workers, including those in the United States. While U.S.

oil companies were reaping billions in oil profits from the war, ordinary Americans were paying record high prices at the gas pumps.

The U.S. tax dollars being spent to conquer Iraq represent a transfer of wealth from the American working class to a few wealthy U.S. corporations and individuals.

When Hurricane Katrina slammed into the Gulf Coast, most of the Louisiana and Mississippi National Guard were deployed in Iraq, along with essential equipment like high water vehicles and refueling tankers and generators.

A nearby army brigade from Fort Polk was not mobilized to help the flood victims because it was preparing to go to Afghanistan.

By March of 2006, Congress had appropriated more than \$245 billion for the Iraq war, while hundreds of thousands of Americans displaced by Hurricane Katrina remained homeless.

One anti-war demonstrator made the connection when she held up a sign, "No Iraqi left me on a roof to die."

Whether they live in the invading or the invaded country, ordinary people pay for war with their blood. The people in power do not send their children to war; they send the children of the working class.

By 2005, over 2,000 American soldiers had been killed in Iraq, and tens of thousands were disabled with horrible injuries. The proportion of U.S. soldiers in Iraq suffering from depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder is approaching the one-in-three ratio suffered by Vietnam veterans.

Soldiers and their families get shabby treatment in return for their sacrifice. For months at a time, active-duty soldiers are paid late or not at all. The General Accounting Office found the Defense Department's payroll system to be "so primitive and error-prone that few people fully understand it."

Many returning soldiers have lost their jobs, homes, and families. According to the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, nearly 200,000 veterans are homeless on any given night and more than half a million are homeless over the course of a year.

More than one out of every three homeless males in America is a veteran.

While the military gets billions of dollars to develop new weapons, the Department of Veterans Affairs is starved of funds to treat the sick and wounded.

Soldiers and anti-war activists have a common interest; both want to end the war and bring the troops home.

The ruling class dreads such an alliance.

The film, *Sir! No Sir!*, documents the scale and heroism of the soldier's revolt that forced the U.S. defeat in Vietnam.

To keep soldiers out of the anti-war movement, war mongers attack anti-war activists as traitors who despise their own soldiers and root for the enemy. (They just as falsely portray all soldiers as gung-ho for war and hostile to the peace movement.)

The myth that anti-war activists spat on soldiers returning from Vietnam is pure PR. Vietnam veteran Jerry Lembcke, author of *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam*, insists that “stories of spat-upon Vietnam veterans are bogus.”

“The Veterans Administration commissioned a Harris Poll in 1971 that found 94 percent of Vietnam veterans reporting friendly homecomings from their age-group peers who had not served in the military. Moreover, the historical record is rich with the details of solidarity and mutuality between the anti-war movement and Vietnam veterans. The real truth, in other words, is that anti-war activists reached out to Vietnam veterans and veterans joined the movement in large numbers.” 4

3. Goff, S. (2004). An open letter to GIs in Iraq: Hold on to your humanity. *International Socialist Review*, No.33, p.36. January-February.

4. Lembcke, J. (2003). Spitting on the troops: Old myth, new rumors. *The Veteran*, Vol. 33, No. 1, p.22.

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Send to contact@militaryproject.org or write to: The Military Project, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657. Name, I.D., withheld on request. Replies confidential.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT THE NEW 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)

OCCUPATION REPORT

Good News For The Iraqi Resistance!!

U.S. Occupation Commands' Stupid Terror Tactics Recruit Even More Fighters To Kill U.S. Troops As Soon As Possible



Foreign troops from U.S. Alfa company 1-17 regiment of the 172nd force Iraqi citizens and their babies to sit on a corner of their kitchen floor in their own home as other foreigners search through the rest of their home in eastern Baghdad, Oct. 3, 2006.

They are not allowed to see what the other troops are doing or what they take. The foreigners do this without any search warrant. They are ordered to break down doors if not immediately admitted to citizens' homes. 61% of Iraqis are in favor of killing U.S. soldiers, according to a new poll. How surprising. (AP Photo/Darko Bandic)

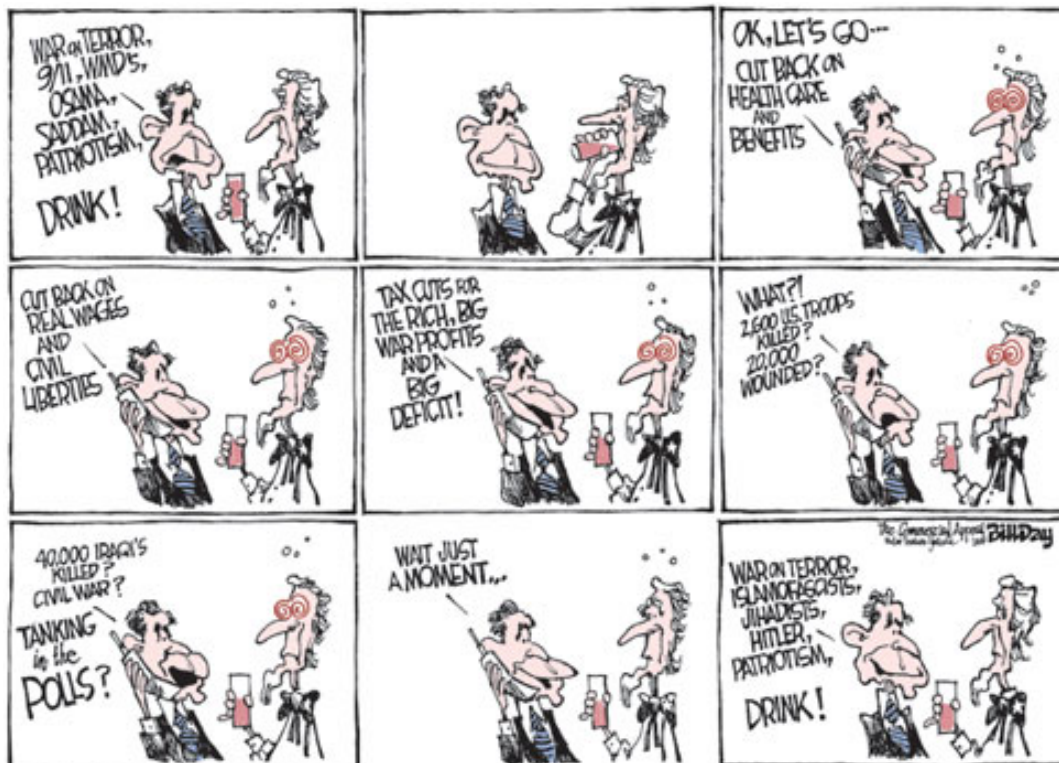
[Fair is fair. Let's bring 150,000 Iraqis over here to the USA. They can kill people at checkpoints, bust into their houses with force and violence and terrorize their kids, butcher their families, overthrow the government, put a new one in office they like better and call it "sovereign," and "detain"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

[Those Iraqis are sure a bunch of backward primitives. They actually resent this help, have the absurd notion that it's bad their country is occupied by a foreign military dictatorship, and consider it their patriotic duty to fight and kill the soldiers sent to grab their country. What a bunch of silly people. How fortunate they are to live under a military dictatorship run by George Bush. Why, how could anybody not love that? You'd want that in your home town, right?]

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

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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

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