

GI SPECIAL 4K16:

RESISTANCE WHERE IT COUNTS:

HOW ANTI-WAR SOLDIERS WHO SERVED IN IRAQ
ORGANIZED AGAINST THE WAR ON THE FRONT LINES

JEFF ENGLEHART, JOE HATCHER and GARETT REPPENHAGEN
1st Infantry Division, Diyala Province, Iraq, 2004 - 2005



THERE HAS TO BE A POINT
WHEN WE REACH A HIGH
ENOUGH NUMBER OF TROOPS IN
OUR PEACE EFFORT THAT A
UNIFIED BOYCOTT OF ALL
MILITARY ACTION WILL HAVE
A DESIRED EFFECT

- SOLDIER X

***Find out what you can do to
support the G.I. Movement!***

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55 WASHINGTON SQUARE SOUTH, NEW YORK CITY
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2006 AT 7:00 P.M.

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MILITARY FAMILIES SPEAK OUT, TRAVELING SOLDIER, VETERANS FOR PEACE (NYC - CHAPTER 34),
AFTER DOWNING STREET, BRING THE RUCKUS (NYC), THE BROOKLYN GREENS/GREEN PARTY,
CONSUMERSFORPEACE.ORG, INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST ORGANIZATION, LEFT TURN, NOT IN OUR NAME
(NYC), RAGING GRANNIES, WAR RESISTERS LEAGUE, WORLD CAN'T WAIT - DRIVE OUT THE BUSH REGIME

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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

Two Soldiers Killed By Diyala IED

Nov. 16, 2006 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE
No. 20061116-05

TIKRIT, Iraq: Two Task Force Lightning Soldiers assigned to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, were killed Wednesday and two others were injured when an improvised explosive device detonated near the vehicle they were traveling in while conducting combat operations in Diyala province. The wounded Soldiers were transported to a coalition forces medical treatment facility.

Soldier Killed By Small Arms In Diyala

Nov. 16, 2006 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE
No. 20061116-04

TIKRIT, Iraq: A Task Force Lightning Soldier assigned to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, was killed in action Wednesday by small arms fire while conducting combat operations in Diyala province.

MNC I Soldier Killed In Baghdad

Nov. 16, 2006 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE
No. 20061116-01

BAGHDAD, Iraq: A Multi-National Corps Iraq Soldier was killed by small arms fire Tuesday while conducting combat operations in Baghdad.

**REALLY BAD IDEA:
NO MISSION;
HOPELESS WAR:**

BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



U.S. soldiers secure the scene of a car bomb attack which targeted a market in Baghdad October 23, 2006. (Mahmoud Raouf Mahmoud/Reuters)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

“There Is Nothing To Celebrate”

Nov 15, 2006 By Jim Maceda, Correspondent, NBC News: [Interview excerpts]

Monday was the five-year anniversary of the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Can you describe their resurgence?

Right, there has been a resurgence of the Taliban and there is nothing to celebrate. The Taliban are back and it's a new kind of Taliban, as well. They are younger and more radicalized. They are doing things and saying things that experts tell me the Taliban of five years ago that harbored bin Laden in Afghanistan didn't do.

But we are seeing a re-invigorated, re-loaded Taliban that has much more support today than it did two or three years ago.

What's driving that most of all is a lack of credibility on the part of the central government in Kabul.

President Hamid Karzai is simply not seen as a man who delivers. And the promises of the international community never got down to the areas in the east and the south where they need to go because those are the most difficult and volatile areas.

A lot of money has been pumped into Kabul, but it hasn't made it down to the rural poor and those people who are prey to the radical ideology of the Taliban. So, that is driving this new resurgence as well.

How is the resurgence of the Taliban affecting the morale of the U.S. troops who have now had forces in Afghanistan for over five years?

I've embedded numerous times with U.S. forces in eastern Afghanistan over the last three or four years and I'm always amazed at how committed they are.

But there are two criticisms that you will hear. One is that they are too thinly stretched, especially because of the focus on Iraq. And two is that a workable strategy — not only killing and capturing bad guys, but also winning the trust and confidence of the good people — came quite late.

They hope it's not a case of too little, too late.

How Bad Is It?

November 16, 2006 NPR

In a waiting room outside the office of Afghanistan's newly appointed chief justice, Abdul Salam Azimi, a security officer asks some judges from a remote province for identification. The judges say they don't have any.

Carrying judges' IDs would have been a death wish on the long, dangerous journey to Kabul, they explain.

TROOP NEWS

1000 From 10th Mountain Division Off To Bush's Imperial Slaughterhouse

Army Times 11.20.06

About 1,000 soldiers from 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, are deploying to Afghanistan as Task Force Boar to support NATO efforts, a division press release said.

The task force is comprised primarily of soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, but also includes 5th Battalion, 25th Field Artillery Regiment; 94th Brigade

Support Battalion; 3rd Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment; and Brigade Special Troops Battalion.

The unit cased its colors Nov. 2.

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



U.S. military medical staff (R) treat two U.S. soldiers wounded in a roadside bomb attack at the hallway of the emergency room at a U.S. military hospital in the fortified Green Zone in Baghdad October 30, 2006. REUTERS/Thaier al-Sudani (IRAQ)

How Spc. Town Lost His Benefits: Wounded In Battle, Honored With Medals, Tricked, Lied To And Betrayed By Scum In Command;

“It’s All About Money. Think About How Much They Save On One Soldier, And Then It's 200 To 300 Guys Per Year At My Fort”

[Here it is again. Same old story. Used up, thrown away, and the politicians couldn’t care less. To repeat for the 3,484th time, there is no enemy in Iraq. Iraqis and U.S. troops have a common enemy. That common enemy owns and operates the Imperial government in Washington DC for their own profit. That common enemy started this war of conquest on a platform of lies, because they couldn’t tell the truth: this war was about making money for them, and nothing else. Payback is overdue. T]

A soldier honored 12 times during his seven years in uniform, Town has spent the last two on a painful, downward arc through disability and depression, one that reached its nadir in September, when he was booted from the military and told he would never receive disability pay or medical treatment from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

It's all in the fine print, says Paul Hanson, an outprocessor who handles discharge papers for the Army. Hanson is not the outprocessor's real name. For fear of retribution, he agreed to speak only if neither his name nor the fort he works at were revealed.

The reason for these misdiagnoses is simple, says Hanson. "They're saving a buck," he says. "And they're saving the VA money too. It's all about money. Think about how much they save on one soldier, and then it's 200 to 300 guys per year at my fort. Multiply that out times all the Army bases, for all the years these soldiers should be receiving benefits. "We're talking about billions of dollars."

By Joshua Kors, Operation Truth. *Joshua Kors contributes regularly to our Featured Vets section, and is the author of the "Through the Eyes of" series.*

The next morning Jon Town woke up, blood leaking from his ear. The Army specialist mopped up the fluid with an old T-shirt. He was in the barracks again, on the operations base in Ramadi. It had been nineteen hours since the rocket attack that knocked him unconscious, and still his hearing had not returned.

The day before Town had grabbed breakfast (M&Ms and stale veal) and was walking towards headquarters to drop off the battalion's mail. "All of a sudden I heard 'Boom ... boom ... boom.' I started running as fast as I could." When Town reached headquarters, he turned and watched. The first rocket exploded just left of the facility, the second a dozen meters in front of it. He knew, he says, there was little he could do.

He gripped the door frame and braced himself for the hit. The third rocket struck the building head-on, two feet above Town's head.

The impact punched a piano-sized hole in the concrete façade, sparked a huge fireball, and tossed the 25-year-old specialist to the floor, where he lay blacked out amongst the rubble.

"The next thing I remember is waking up on the ground, in headquarters. I woke up and they were screaming, 'Town! Town! Are you okay?' They started shaking me. But I was numb all over," he says. "And it's weird - because ... because for a few minutes you feel like you're not really there. I could see them, but I couldn't hear them. I couldn't hear anything."

"I started shaking because I thought I was dead."

Eventually the rocket shrapnel was removed from Town's neck and his ears stopped leaking. But his hearing never really recovered, and in many ways, neither has his life.

A soldier honored 12 times during his seven years in uniform, Town has spent the last two on a painful, downward arc through disability and depression, one that reached its nadir in September, when he was booted from the military and told he would never receive disability pay or medical treatment from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The 5-13 Escape

It had been 22 months since the rocket, and still the headaches would not go away. Doctors at Fort Carson, Colorado, told him whatever he wanted to hear, he says, but his left ear was still essentially useless. His right ear, his "good" ear, had lost 50 percent of its hearing.

Town says that psychologist Mark Wexler told him not to worry: he could receive an honorable discharge under Army Regulation 635-200, Chapter 5-13, "Separation Because of Personality Disorder."

Wexler, he says, told him that under Chapter 5-13, he would receive full benefits and full severance pay, and if his medical troubles persisted, he could turn to the VA for help. In July 2005, Town had reenlisted for six more years of service, for which he received a \$15,000 signing bonus. The specialist was reassured, he would get to keep that money too. All he had to do was sign on to the idea that he had a "personality disorder."

It was a tempting offer. Word had gotten out that his unit, 2-17 Field Artillery, was headed back to Iraq. Beyond the obvious appeal of steering clear of the war, Town also knew that, hobbled as he was by his hearing, the headaches and the memory problems

that had plagued him since the attack, he'd never be able to serve his unit at full capacity. For their sake, he wanted someone capable in his shoes.

There was his son too. Returning to Ramadi meant a second custody battle with his ex-wife, who wanted 5-year-old Shain back again, with her family in North Carolina.

Town took the deal.

"They told me I'd get my full benefits, full severance pay. Everyone I talked to - doctors, JAGs - they all said I wouldn't have to repay the bonus I received in Iraq," he says.

"I loved the Army and would have done 20 more years if I was able to. But after hearing that, my wife and I ... we decided to take it. We thought we'd be sitting pretty. At the least, we'd have enough to start a civilian life."

A new life is precisely what Town needed.

After the rocket attack in October 2004, the specialist was examined and deemed fit for further duty. He served six more months in Ramadi, followed by a year at Fort Carson, racking up numerous awards in the process, including two Good Conduct medals and an Expert Rifle badge, in addition to the Purple Heart.

But the strain of serving after his injury became too much to handle. Town noticed how his body and mind were degenerating.

So did everyone else. There were the simple things: Kristy Town, Jon's wife of four years, says that since returning from Iraq, he can't watch TV unless the volume's full-blast, can't use the phone unless it's set to high. One Fort Carson official said that even face-to-face, he practically had to scream at the specialist to get him to hear.

"When there are other noises in the room, he has trouble filtering them out," Kristy says. "Not even loud noises, just simple background noise like people talking or TV." He doesn't like to talk about it, she says, but he did confide in her that he's taken to reading lips. "The truth is, I don't think he can even hear himself very well. When he talks to me now, he talks much louder than he used to."

Town says his hearing's a nuisance. He's more disturbed by how his memory has eroded. Since being hit by the rocket, the specialist has struggled to retain new information. "Like, I'll be driving places, and then I totally forget where I'm going," he says. "Numbers, names, dates - unless I knew them before, I pretty much don't remember."

Town's wife says she tried to dismiss his memory issues as simply the follies of a forgetful husband. With a strained chuckle, she tells of coming home from the factory to find the dog still unfed or that Town had forgotten about both their dinner date with friends and the conversation that morning meant to remind him.

It became clear soon enough something serious was wrong. Town had returned to his desk job at Fort Carson, but he was struggling now to remember the Army's

regulations, a lapse that sparked a whole new set of problems. "People were like, 'What are you, dumb?' And I'm like, 'No, I'm probably smarter than you. I just can't remember stuff," he says, his melancholy suddenly replaced by anger. "They don't understand - I got hit by a rocket."

Physicians at Fort Carson took a CAT scan of Town and told him they found nothing that would cause memory problems. But the specialist and his wife both insist, he never had these issues prior to the war. As Town says, "I was never like this before I got blown up in Iraq."

Town's memory and hearing are secondary issues anyway, says his wife. The most disturbing change in her husband has been the radical alteration in his demeanor.

"He used to be so happy, a real goofball," she says. "He'd do funny voices and faces - a great Jim Carrey imitation. When the kids would get a boo-boo, he'd fall on the ground and pretend he got a boo-boo too. Now his emotions are all over the place. He'll get so angry at things, and it's not towards anybody. It's toward himself. He blames himself for everything." He has a hard time sleeping. And he doesn't spend as much time with the kids. "They get rowdy when they play, and he just has to be alone. It's almost like, his nerves can't handle it."

Kristy begins to cry, pauses, before forcing herself to continue. She's been watching him when he's alone, she says. "He kind of ... zones out, almost like he's in a daze."

In May 2006 Town tried to electrocute himself, dropping his wife's hairdryer into the bathtub. The dryer short-circuited before it could electrify the water. Fort Carson officials put Town in an off-post hospital that specializes in suicidal depression. Town had been promoted to corporal; he was stripped of that rank and reduced back to specialist.

When Dr. Wexler floated the idea of an honorable 5-13 dismissal, no one had to explain its appeal to Town. The chance to return to his Ohio hometown and start fresh once again, bolstered by his signing bonus, disability pay, and medical support from the VA - agreeing to label his problems a "personality disorder" seemed like a small price to pay.

Town didn't realize that signing the 5-13 dismissal actually meant that he'd be returning to Ohio with none of those things.

The Fine Print

Under Chapter 5-13, a personality disorder is a pre-existing condition. Thus, by agreeing to label his wounds a "personality disorder," Town was actually signing on to the idea that he had been suffering from hearing loss, headaches and psychiatric problems before joining the military.

That puts Town's problems outside the realm of VA assistance. The organization is only required to treat wounds sustained during service.

With a 5-13 dismissal, soldiers can't obtain disability pay either.

To receive those benefits, a soldier must be evaluated by a medical board, who must confirm that he is wounded and that his wounds stem from combat. The process takes several months, in contrast to a 5-13 discharge, which can be wrapped up in a few days.

The final blow for Town came when he found out that, despite assurances from Wexler and other Fort Carson officials, the specialist would indeed have to give back the bulk of his \$15,000 signing bonus. At the time of his dismissal, Town had served one year of his six-year contract. Under 5-13's regulations, he was allowed to keep one-sixth of his bonus.

It's all in the fine print, says Paul Hanson, an outprocessor who handles discharge papers for the Army. Hanson is not the outprocessor's real name. For fear of retribution, he agreed to speak only if neither his name nor the fort he works at were revealed.

Still, he says, he had to speak up because he's disgusted at the way 5-13 dismissals are being used.

"The doctors, they're saying this will get you out quicker, and the VA will take care of you. To stay out of Iraq, a soldier will take that in a heartbeat. But what they don't realize is, those things are lies," Hanson says. "The soldiers, they don't read the fine print. They don't know to ask for a med board. They're taking the word of the doctors. Then they sit down with me and find out what the 5-13 really means - they're shocked."

When Town sat down with Fort Carson's outprocessor, he saw the details of his own discharge for the first time. He'd receive a \$500 closing allowance, \$1500 for leave he didn't take, and \$6,000 of separation pay. But his 5-13 dismissal also meant returning to the military \$12,000 of his 2005 signing bonus.

The result: Town packed up and left Fort Carson without a penny. In fact, he now owed the Army close to \$4,000.

"We had this on our heads the whole way, driving home to Ohio. They made me these promises, and the final day, we find out, none of it was true. It was a total shock," says Town.

"I felt like I'd been betrayed by the Army."

"Not Who He Used To Be"

Town's case is particularly troubling because there are serious questions about his diagnosis. Army regulations give extremely specific descriptions of what can and cannot be classified a "personality disorder." According to those regulations, Town's psychiatric problems had to exist before he joined the military. And they needed to match the "personality disorder" described in the Diagnostic and

Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV), the national standard for psychiatric diagnosis.

A cursory examination of his case casts grave doubt as to whether Town fits either criterion.

Town's wife, for one, laughs in disbelief at the idea that her husband was suffering from mental illness before he headed to war. The Jon Town she knew was relaxed and carefree. "He had a real happy-go-lucky attitude, if you know what I mean," she says.

It was after Iraq that everything changed. "That's when he started with these outbursts of anger, road rage. He gets upset at loud noises. His emotions are all over the place. In an instant he gets so angry, so frustrated, almost like he can't control it. Don't get me wrong," she says, "everybody has their ups and downs. But this is not normal emotion."

"When he came back, I tried to be the same," she says. "He just can't. He's definitely not the man he used to be."

Town's parents also notice the radical contrast between the warm, playful son who left for Iraq and the detached, angry one who came home. Even Town himself recognizes how dramatically he has changed. Nowadays he has a hard time sleeping, he says. His dreams keep taking him back to Ramadi, to the death of a good friend who'd been too near an explosion, taken too much shrapnel to the face, requiring Town to be there, night after night, to soak up the blood.

Town stops his description for a rare moment of levity. "Sleep didn't use to be like that," he says. "I used to sleep just fine."

How the Army determined, then, that Town's behavioral problems existed before his military service is unclear. Army officials didn't interview any of his family or his friends, nor did they speak with any of his coworkers at the restaurants he worked for before joining the Armed Forces. It's unclear whether officials even questioned his fellow soldiers in 2-17 Field Artillery, or his superiors at Fort Carson, both of whom could have testified to his stability and award-winning performance prior to the October 2004 rocket attack.

Even stranger, the DSM-IV says that a pattern of erratic behavior cannot be labeled a "personality disorder" if it's the result of a head injury. Here Town's case seems clearly at odds with the Army-required definition. Town asserts that his physical issues, his headaches, hearing and memory loss, all began with the rocket attack that knocked him unconscious. The specialist's emotional problems - depression and suicidal tendencies - also followed that head injury.

His struggles appear to be classic symptoms of traumatic brain injury (TBI), a result of the rocket's impact on his skull, and not, as Dr. Wexler diagnosed, a behavioral disorder.

Wexler did not return repeated phone calls seeking comment. **[Perhaps some Iraq combat vets could have a word with him up close and personal.]**

Outprocessor Hanson says that at his fort, he's seen hundreds of cases like Town's. "It's getting worse and worse every day," he says. "The numbers started out normal. Now it's up to three or four people each day. It's like, suddenly everybody has a personality disorder. Either that or they're misdiagnosing people."

A second military official who also demanded anonymity says there's no doubt most of these soldiers are misdiagnosed. He has spent the last several months studying cases of 5-13 dismissals and says each one he's studied is clearly misdiagnosed. He laughs at the idea that they're not.

"Can you imagine? These are people who have been in four, five years - many of them with top-secret security clearances - and now they're saying they were too dysfunctional to serve," he says. "What would that say about the people we have in our Army? What would that say about the people we're recruiting?"

The real tragedy, says this official, is that many of these soldiers would not have been labeled a "personality disorder" and been booted out under 5-13 if they hadn't gone to the psychiatric unit for help. "Other soldiers see that," he says, "and it keeps them from seeking help."

The reason for these misdiagnoses is simple, says Hanson. "They're saving a buck," he says. "And they're saving the VA money too. It's all about money. Think about how much they save on one soldier, and then it's 200 to 300 guys per year at my fort. Multiply that out times all the Army bases, for all the years these soldiers should be receiving benefits. "We're talking about billions of dollars."

Hanson adds that 5-13ing a soldier has a second benefit for the Army: it's faster and less risky. "To put a guy out with a personality disorder, it takes about five days - compared to a medical board, which is about three months," he says. "Then if the board finds he has a disability, they have to pay his disability. And his bonus."

It's much easier, he says, for Army doctors to diagnose a disorder and be done with it.

Ultimatum

Stunned by the unexpected consequences of his 5-13 discharge, when he returned home, Town contacted his congressman, Rep. Michael Oxley (R-OH). Town never got a chance to speak with Oxley, but he did explain his situation to Oxley caseworker Jodi Bash.

"She was almost in tears when I finished my story. She was like, 'I can't believe they did this to you.'" Bash told Town that Oxley's office would send a letter to the Pentagon on his behalf.

On Sept. 25, a Pentagon official called Town. "He was like, 'You owe \$3,000, and I understand why: You didn't serve the last four years.' And I was like, 'Well, I didn't voluntarily leave the Army.'"

"At that point he gave me an ultimatum: I could just accept things as they were and pay back the bonus, or I could file a Department of Defense form that would erase the debt. But I said, 'That doesn't fix the situation. That just covers it up for your guys.' So he said, 'Well ... I'm going to send a letter back to the congressman saying I talked to you, and I tried to give you advice.'"

Frustrated by the Defense Department's refusal to reconsider the conditions of his dismissal, and with Oxley's apparent inability to correct the 5-13 problem, Town contacted the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), a New York-based soldiers rights group. IAVA tried repeatedly to contact the congressman. Oxley did not return calls; caseworker Bash declined to comment.

Then, in early October, Bash contacted Town and told him a check would soon be coming his way. On Oct. 10, Town received a U.S. government check for \$8,976, an amount that doesn't match any of the totals owed to the specialist. Bash did not clarify how that figure was reached.

On the more pressing issue of Town's disability and medical benefits, Bash said simply that Oxley's office was working on it. "My dad said they were sending me the check to keep things quiet until the election comes, and then they'll say, 'Sorry, that's all we can do.'" But the specialist said he will keep the money. To him, the check means "they know they did something wrong," an admission which may open the door to correcting his 5-13 status.

Findlay / Washington

Today Town is home, with no job, doing his best to take care of the kids. He and Kristy, his 5-year-old son Shain and their 2-year-old daughter Hailey are living with his parents, in the home he grew up in, in small-town Findlay, Ohio. He's not sure what's next.

In the meantime, Kristy Town is working to keep food on the table. She's holding down an assembly line job at Filtech, a local oil filter manufacturer. Her husband, meanwhile, is just trying to keep it together.

He says his nightmares have been waning in recent weeks, but most of his problems persist. He's thinking of going to a veterans support group in Toledo, 45 miles north of Findlay. There will be guys there who've been through this, he says, vets who understand.

Town hesitates, his voice suddenly much softer. "I have my good days and my bad days," he says. "It all depends on whether I wake up in Findlay or Iraq."

Is This General An Idiot Or A Traitor?

Answer: Both:

- 1. Says Troops “Excited” To Be Back For Second And Third Tours;**
- 2. Says He Works For President, Not The American People**

Nov. 15, 2006 By AARON KATERSKY, ABC News [Excerpts]

The Army's 1st Cavalry Division assumed primary responsibility for Baghdad's security from the 4th Infantry Division during an official handoff ceremony at Camp Liberty.

Commanding General Maj. Gen. Joseph Fil noted that this was the second time the unit had been here since the war began.

He said his troops were "excited" to be back again. Many are on their second or third tour.

"We sense that there's a window here. ... There is a clock here, and it's time for things to move forward." **[That adds up to a clock in a window.]**

He said, "We can't continue just to continue," noting both Iraqis and Americans "expect some success."

Asked about the political shifts at home, Fil said that he recognized them but that he felt no added pressure.

"We work for the president of the United States."

["Political shifts" is this reporter's mealy mouth way of saying that in the election the overwhelming majority of voters repudiated Bush and the war, and want no more of either.]

**She Survived Iraq,
Then Shot Herself At Home;**

“If Somebody Needs Paxil In A Combat Zone, Then That’s Not The Place For Them To Be”

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

November 13, 2006 By Greg Mitchell, Editor and Publisher [Excerpt]

NEW YORK: Her name doesn't show on any official list of American military deaths in the Iraq war, by hostile or non-hostile fire, who died in that country or in hospitals in Europe or back home in the USA. But Iraq killed her just as certainly.

She is Jeanne "Linda" Michel, a Navy medic. She came home last month to her husband and three kids (ages 11, 5, and 4), delighted to be back in her suburban home of Clifton Park in upstate New York. Michel, 33, would be discharged from the Navy in a few weeks, finishing her five years of duty.

Two weeks after she got home, she shot and killed herself.

"She had come through a lot and she had always risen to challenges," her husband, Frantz Michel, who has also served in Iraq, lamented last week.

Now he asks why the Navy didn't do more to help her.

Michel's story has now been probed by reporter Kate Gurnett in today's Albany Times-Union. It's headlined, "A casualty far from the battlefield."

And yet, in many ways, not far at all.

Why did it happen? "Like thousands of others returning from Iraq, her mental state was fractured," Gurnett explains. "And it went untreated. Within two weeks, Linda Michel would become a private casualty of war. Re-entry into the world of peace can be harder than deployment, experts say. Picking up where you left off doesn't just happen. ...

"Women experience stronger forms of post-traumatic stress disorder and have higher PTSD rates, experts say. In response, the Veterans Affairs Department launched a \$6 million study of female veterans.

Seeking treatment -- seen by some as a weakness -- may be even tougher for women, who still feel the need to prove themselves to men in military service."

In fact, this past August, three veterans in New York's Adirondack region committed suicide within three weeks, according to Helena Davis, deputy director of the Mental Health Association in New York.

Michel has served under extremely stressful conditions at Camp Bucca in southern Iraq, a U.S.-run prison where guards shot four inmates dead in a 2005 riot -- and an episode of female mudwrestling drew headlines.

Michel was treated for depression and prescribed Paxil, but they took her off that medicine when she returned home. Her husband was not informed.

"I just wish the Navy would have done some more follow-up, instead of just letting her come home," Frantz, who is on the division staff of the Army National Guard, told the reporter.

"If somebody needs Paxil in a combat zone, then that's not the place for them to be. You either send them to a hospital or you send them home and then make sure that the family members know and that they get follow-up care."

He has pressed the Navy for answers: "Why wasn't she sent to a facility to resolve the issues? Not keep her in Iraq and give her some antidepressant medication and then just send her home. So those are the answers that I don't have. Which makes me a little angry because I know what is supposed to occur."

MORE:

“Studies Have Linked Paxil To Adverse Effects, Including Suicide”

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

November 13, 2006 By KATE GURNETT, Staff writer, Times Union [Excerpts]

Clifton Park-- Last month, Jeanne "Linda" Michel came home from Iraq. Back in the suburbs, she tried to feel normal.

She'd been homesick for months. She couldn't wait to see her kids, ages 11, 5 and 4. Between her husband's deployment and her own, the children had been with just one parent for nearly three years.

She was 33, with a bright smile and stubborn determination. Reuniting should be easy. In another month, she'd be discharged from the Navy after five years of service.

"She had come through a lot and she had always risen to challenges," her husband, Frantz Michel, said last week.

Two weeks after she got home to Clifton Park, Linda Michel shot herself to death, stunning her colleagues and family.

Linda went to Camp Bucca in southern Iraq, the largest U.S. military prison there and the site of a 2005 riot that saw four prisoners killed by guards.

Inevitably dubbed "Doc" by her patients, she worked hard "doing her part to accomplish a mission many people said the Navy could not do," Rob Hallmark of Virginia Beach, Va., wrote in her on-line memorial guest book. "She was always a bright shining light in such a dark, dark place."

"She was more than 'Just in the Navy' or just a 'Corpsman' or 'Sailor,' she was there for us," added Linda's Camp Bucca roommate, Tammy Cartwright, of Anchorage, Alaska. "She was the one that helped me get out of bed every morning when all I wanted to do was give up and go home."

But in private, Michel faced demons. She saw a Navy doctor and was diagnosed with depression. The doctor prescribed Paxil.

Frantz Michel knew his wife's days were long and grueling. But he didn't know about the Paxil.

Studies have linked Paxil to adverse effects, including suicide, sparking an FDA warning in May.

When Linda came home, the Navy discontinued her medication. Again, Frantz Michel wasn't told.

Linda Michel was given a full military funeral Oct. 23 and buried in the Gerald B.H. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery. Friends donated to a fund for the Michels' three children.

Shortly before she died, Linda attended a Navy weekend drill. Fellow reservist Robert Stanziano saw her there, and waved, but never got a chance to talk.

When she was mobilized "we were extremely proud ... and sent them care packages from time to time," he wrote in her memorial guest book. "We couldn't wait for them to return. Now she is gone and I'll never get the chance to ask her how it was over there.

"She was a great sailor, soldier, hospital corpsman, mom and a great woman of war for our country," he wrote in her memorial guest book.

"Shipmate, I never had a chance to say this to you. Well done! Goodbye and farewell shipmate, you will be dearly missed."

“Captain Scorpion” Officer Provokes Attack By Scorpion He Spent Months Warning Others To Avoid

Army Times 11.20.06

The irony stung worse than the scorpion. An officer who studies dangerous wildlife recently got attacked by one of the scorpions he spent months warning others to avoid.

Capt. Stephen Garvin, an entomologist with the 981st Medical Detachment supporting Third Army/U.S. Army Central in Kuwait, made a routine latrine trip Oct. 5 when he felt something crawling on his right ankle.

Thinking it was a fly, he smacked the offending insect with his left foot and ground it against his ankle.

That's when he felt the sting.

The fat-tailed scorpion is one of the three deadliest in the world, capable of killing a person in seven hours.

Garvin suffered extreme nausea, dizziness and a ;10-day migraine.

Although half of scorpion stings result in little or no venom spread to the victim, soldiers who are stung by a scorpion have a 50 percent chance of sharing Garvin's experience, said Maj. Dennis Kilian, a force health prevention officer.

Of the six stings reported at Camp Buehring during the past year, Garvin was the only one to suffer the effects of the venom.

Since then, he's received nicknames such as "Captain Scorpion" and "The Scorpion King."

It's "like being something between a celebrity and a circus freak," Garvin said.

He preserved the crushed scorpion that stung him and said he plans to use it teaching troops the dangers they face in the Middle East.

No Courts-Martial For Naked Soldiers

Army Times 11.20.06

Female Kentucky National Guard soldiers who posed nude before being sent to Iraq will face nonjudicial administrative sanctions rather than courts-martial, the Army said.

The women were not suspended, Army spokesman Maj. Jay Adams told The Courier-Journal of Louisville. The allegations were reported before the 410th Quartermaster Company shipped out for Iraq on Aug. 26.

The Courier-Journal said it had obtained a compact disc containing 232 photographs of at least a half-dozen nude and seminude women posing with military rifles.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action

Nov 16 (KUNA) & Reuters

Iraqi ministry of Interior said Thursday that 41 policemen were killed by insurgents throughout the previous week.

The report carried on by saying that 156 policemen were injured.

A roadside bomb targeted police commandos, killing one and wounding another near the national stadium of al-Shaab in eastern Baghdad, an Interior Ministry source said.

Guerrillas attacked the convoy of the Governor of Mosul, Duraid Kashmula, and killed one of his guards and wounded four others in Mosul, police said. The governor was not in the convoy.

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

“My Question Is...”

From: D
To: GI Special
Sent: November 15, 2006
Subject: A professional army

After a conversation I had with a service member, debating whether it was ok for troops to refuse to deploy as an expression of opposition to the war...

I've been wondering, how much room is there for “reforms” that give more power to the rank and file service members, specifically, “of a major imperialist nation”?

Or, to put it perhaps more clearly, with an example:

How much democracy can you argue for within the military before you necessarily have to make an anti-imperialist argument, entirely questioning the legitimacy of the whole system--”when talking to service members”, those who (I'm not sure how to put this exactly) are more conservative, believe strongly in the importance of a “professional

army" (where service members cannot be openly political, particularly in an organized form, and who have to follow orders in a top-down hierarchy).

It seems like militaries of smaller nations have more room to be flexible because they're role is often more of internal public works programs, disaster relief, policing, unless they're actively courting larger imperialist armies like the various "coalition partners" in Iraq, or fighting to repress an internal uprising.

For a major military, giving soldiers more democratic rights has to --at a certain point-- undermine the ability of that imperialist nation's army to "actually be" an imperialist force, or at least an effective one.

That said, I think it's clear that extensive civil rights can be extended without directly challenging the imperialist nature of a major military, like abolishing "don't ask, don't tell," discriminatory policies against women, etc.

My question is, what type of changes could be put forward as a way of, one, improving the lives of service members, but also, two, of creating more openings, of course taking into account a favorable political climate of radicalization, for the possibility of a real challenge when as Goff said, "their troops become our troops?"

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



"Fighting Terrorism Since 1492"

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

OCCUPATION PALESTINE/LEBANON



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

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

**Poll:
Highly Intelligent U.S. Citizens
Don't Believe Democrats Have
Any Plan To Get The Fuck Out Of
Iraq**

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

Nov 14, 2006 By JIM KUHNHENN (AP)

More Americans rank Iraq as the top priority of the new Democratic-controlled Congress, but nearly three out of five say the party does not have a plan to deal with the war.

While voters in Election Day surveys said corruption and scandal in Congress was one of the most important factors in their vote, the postelection poll showed that 37 percent of all adults said the war in Iraq should be at the top of the congressional agenda during the next two years.

Though voters apparently embraced the Democratic mantra of changing course in Iraq, a majority of the public did not detect a clear Democratic blueprint for ending the war.

Fifty-seven percent of all adults in the AP-Ipsos poll said Democrats do not have a plan for Iraq; 29 percent said they do.

No doubt, the election results have put Democrats in something of a box, said Stephen Biddle, a defense policy expert at the Council of Foreign Relations.

"It's a very, very awkward thing to run a war from the Congress," he said. "The public wants them to do something. And they don't want to go into 2008 and be accused of being the do-nothing 110th Congress."

For now, Democrats appear willing to wait for the recommendations of a bipartisan Iraq study group led by former Secretary of State James A. Baker III and former Democratic Rep. Lee Hamilton.

The group's findings are expected within the next few weeks. The Senate Democratic leader, Harry Reid of Nevada, also wants a bipartisan congressional summit to debate Iraq.

"Iraq has to be done on a bipartisan basis," Reid said Tuesday. "This is not a time for threatening the president with anything. We're going to see how we can work with him to change course in Iraq."

[How about sending Reid and the rest of this pack of corrupt scum to Iraq and staking them out in Ramadi? Maybe they could figure out something then. Why, they might even want to leave Iraq. Imagine that.]

“The Role That People Like Kucinich Play In Trying To Tie The Anti-War Movement To A Pro-War Party”

[Thanks to Phil G, who sent this in. He writes: Tough words from Kucinich until he's asked about the plans of the Democratic leadership to increase the military budget, when he ducks the question.]

[There couldn't be a clearer illustration of the role that people like Kucinich play in trying to tie the anti-war movement to a pro-war party.]

November 15th, 2006 DemocracyNow.org [Excerpt]

REP. DENNIS KUCINICH: I want to say that there's one solution here, and it's not to engage in a debate with the President, who has taken us down a path of disaster in Iraq, but it's for Congress to assume the full power that it has under the Constitution to cut off funds. We don't need to keep indulging in this debate about what to do, because as long as we keep temporizing, the situation gets worse in Iraq.

We have to determine that the time has come to cut off funds. There's enough money in the pipeline to achieve the orderly withdrawal that Senator McGovern is talking about. But cut off funds, we must. That's the ultimate power of the Congress, the power of the purse. That's how we'll end this war, and that's the only way we're going to end this war.

AMY GOODMAN: Senator Harry Reid, who was just elected the new Senate Majority Leader, Congressman Kucinich, said one of the Democrats' first priorities is to increase the US military budget by \$75 billion. Your response?

REP. DENNIS KUCINICH: Well, you know, we must have a total review of spending. I mean, we're seeing the amount of money that's being wasted right now by this government in Iraq, the waste, fraud and abuse that takes place. We see the same thing throughout the Pentagon budget. We stand strong for those who serve our country. But let's face it, the system is being gamed by people who are in the defense contracting industry who create newer generations of weapons, when we haven't even seen the utility of the first generation.

We have to take a whole new approach. We're spending over \$400 billion a year, money that's also needed for healthcare, for education, for job creation, for seniors. We have to take a new look at this. We need to be a strong country, but strength isn't only military. Strength is also the economic strength of the people, their chance to have good neighborhoods. We spend more money than all the countries of the world put together for the military.

It's time for us to start to shift our vision about who we are as a nation, because if we don't do that -- we're borrowing money right now to wage the war in Iraq. We're borrowing money from China. We're not looking at our trade deficit. We're not looking at conditions, where people are going bankrupt trying to pay their hospital bills. We need to shift our direction, and the direction has to be away from the continued militarization of the United States society.

[Gee, how all that brave talk about cutting off the money to stop the war vanished in an immense cloud of mealy mouthed bullshit.]

Scientists Demote Bush Presidency to Dwarf Status:

White House Joins Pluto in New Classification

11.15.06 The Borowitz Report

An international group of scientists who demoted the planet Pluto to dwarf status three months ago met in Oslo, Norway today and reclassified the Bush White House as a dwarf presidency.

In the aftermath of the midterm elections, in which the president's party lost control of both the House and the Senate, the scientists called an emergency meeting in Oslo to determine if the Bush administration in fact still qualified as a presidency.

But with the president's approval rating in a free fall, it became clear even before the scientists convened that some sort of reclassification along the lines of the Pluto demotion was in order.

"When the president's approval rating fell below Kevin Federline's, that was the last nail in the coffin," said Dr. Hiroshi Kyosuke of the University of Tokyo.

According to Dr. Kyosuke, one of the seventy scientists who gathered in Oslo to reassess the Bush presidency, dwarf status means that Mr. Bush is "less than a president, but more than a mayor."

In another troubling sign that Mr. Bush may be a has-been, White House spokesman Tony Snow revealed today that the president had signed on to make an appearance on the ABC series "Dancing with the Stars."

ABC spokesperson Carol Foyler confirmed that the president was slated to appear, but added that Mr. Bush was far from the network's first choice.

"We wanted Nancy Pelosi, but she said she was too busy," Ms. Foyler said.

U.S. Bombards Insurgents With Negative Ads: 'Operation Relentless Smear' Is Launched In Iraq

11.16.06 The Borowitz Report

In a bold change of strategy in the war in Iraq, President George W. Bush announced today that the U.S. had begun bombarding Iraqi insurgents with negative ads in the hopes of bringing the insurgency to its knees.

At a White House briefing today, spokesman Tony Snow said that the new military campaign, called Operation Relentless Smear, would focus on attacking the personal missteps and hypocrisies of key Iraqi insurgents on a twenty-four-hour basis.

"This new strategy is playing to our strengths," Mr. Snow told reporters. "The insurgents are good at blowing things up and creating chaos, but no one is better than we are at creating negative ads."

According to Mr. Snow, Operation Relentless Smear will re-deploy thousands of negative ad producers, directors, and voiceover artists who were momentarily idle at the conclusion of the U.S.'s midterm election campaign.

Masterminded by the White House's top political strategist Karl Rove, the bombardment of negative ads began at midnight Wednesday, interrupting all local Iraqi programming with a nonstop diet of half-truths, corrosive accusations and character assassination.

By Thursday morning, there were already signs that Operation Relentless Smear was working, as Iraqi insurgents in such key cities as Baghdad and Tikrit appeared worn out by the onslaught of slickly produced attack ads.

"The air strikes and the curfews were one thing," said Hassan El-Medfai, an insurgent who is based in Baghdad's Sadr City district. "But this is messing with my TV."

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)

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

GI Special Looks Even Better Printed Out

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