

GI SPECIAL 4K24:



[Thanks to Z & NB, who sent this in.]

**“From What I Have Seen
Over The Last Year Is
We Could Not Have
Fucked It Up Any Worse
Than We Have If We Had
Tried”**

From: SSG XX, Iraq
To: GI Special

Sent: November 17, 2006
Subject: In Iraq

I am a Viet Nam vet who spent his 55TH birthday in Ramadi and will be spending my 56TH in Balad in a week. I feel I have a unique slant on this "war".

When people say "It's just like Viet Nam", I have to chuckle.

Apart from the fact that the politicians have involved the military in a conflict that is micro-managed to the point of being un-winable, it is nothing like Viet Nam.

I am looking at it from the point of the everyday soldier and his daily life.

It seems that they are so intent on making it so much like "Home", what with the Burger King, Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, and Subway. The cable TV and inter-net service are just ways to desensitize to what is actually happening here.

Everyone here and in the states have their knickers in a knot over a casualty count of less than 1000 a year, but you hear nothing of 6000+ 14 to 19 year olds who die in motor vehicle accidents every year. I may be jaded, but I am suspicious of the true concern over "loss of our valued youth" that comes out of the mouths on both sides of the issue.

The true crime here is what we have done to the people of Iraq. Not that I think that Saddam was great for them by any means.

But from what I have seen over the last year is we could not have fucked it up any worse than we have if we had tried.

What I fear the most is the way the American public is willing to give up so many Civil Liberties for such a cheap price.

I mean a few thousand lives, and a false sense of security is a shameful price to surrender Habeas Corpus.

The Founding Fathers are turning over in their graves.

I guess I'll get off my soap box now. I hope that our country will survive this mess in spite of ourselves.

Thanks for the chance to vent.

SSG XX
Balad, Iraq

REPLY:

First, by a lifetime of service, you have more than earned the right to say what you wish to whom you wish about whatever you wish. No exceptions. Understood here that DoD feels differently about it.

Your letter is not just “venting.” That’s mere talk to relieve pressure. Nothing wrong with relieving pressure, but your letter is much more than that.

Your letter is leadership of the most effective and courageous kind: spreading around some the truth that people need to know.

Write what you can and when you can, and stay safe, and come home safe. People need to hear the truth.

T

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 email 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 Soldier Killed In Iraq

November 24, 2006 DES MOINES, Iowa: An Army soldier from Iowa was killed in Iraq, the military confirmed Thursday.

Sgt. James Musack, 23, of Riverside, was injured in a non-combat-related incident in Samarra, Iraq, on Tuesday, according to a news release from the Defense Department.

On Wednesday, his brother Reggie Grandstaff said Musack was shot and killed.

“He was just shot and killed and that’s all we actually know,” his brother, Reggie Grandstaff, said Wednesday.

Grandstaff, 21, said he last saw his brother when he was home on leave in July. He last spoke to him about a week and a half ago.

He said Musack enlisted in the Army Reserve on his 17th birthday, later entering the regular Army. Musack was assigned to the 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Hood, Texas.

Musack was looking forward to getting out of the Army and starting a family, Grandstaff said.

“When he started, he wanted it to be a career, but after about four years he was ready to get out and live a normal life,” he said.

His brother wanted to be a firefighter, Grandstaff said.

"He just liked to help people," he said.

Saginaw Army Sergeant, 29, Killed

November 17, 2006 DEAN BOHN, THE SAGINAW NEWS

The family of U.S. Army Staff Sgt. William S. "Jack" Jackson II has decided to have him buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia, said his widow, Katie M. Jackson, 31.

The service will begin at 9 a.m. Wednesday, Nov. 29.

Jackson, a Saginaw Township resident, died in Iraq on Saturday -- Veterans Day -- with two fellow soldiers when an improvised explosive device detonated near their vehicle during combat operations.

"We will have a local memorial later, but we don't have any time or place set yet," Katie Jackson said Thursday. "We're waiting for my brother, Benjamin E. Layer, to get back from his missionary work in Poland."

The soldiers were supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom in Ar Ramadi, Iraq, as members of the 1st Battalion, 16th Engineer Battalion, 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division, headquartered in Giessen, Germany, military records show.

Jackson, who grew up in Thomaston, Maine, served in the U.S. Marines for four years -- 1998-2002 -- before joining the Army. While in the Marines, he served in Afghanistan.

He was in Iraq since the beginning of the year, Department of Defense officials said.

Besides his wife, Jackson leaves four children: Zachariah W. Jackson, 6; Levi D. Jackson, 4; Samuel M. Jackson, 2; and Hannah S. Jackson, 7 months.

British Soldier Killed In Basra

24 November 2006 BBC NEWS

A British soldier has died after an operation in the southern Iraqi city of Basra.

The soldier, who was a member of the Parachute Regiment, was carrying out a "search and detention" operation.

He was shot during the manoeuvre and was taken to a nearby military hospital, where he later died.

The death takes the total number of UK troops killed in operations in Iraq to 126. Four soldiers were killed in Basra City on 12 November.

**THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO
COMPREHENSIBLE REASON TO BE IN THIS
EXTREMELY HIGH RISK LOCATION AT THIS
TIME, EXCEPT THAT A CROOKED
POLITICIAN WHO LIVES IN THE WHITE
HOUSE WANTS YOU THERE, SO HE WILL
LOOK GOOD**

That is not a good enough reason.



U.S. soldiers from 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team at a checkpoint in Baghdad October 26, 2006. REUTERS/Namir Noor-Eldeen (IRAQ)

***Great Moments In U.S. Military
History:***
Helicopter Attacks Funeral Procession

24 Nov 2006 Reuters

A U.S. helicopter fired on a funeral party in Baghdad, one of dozens taking place after Thursday's devastating bombings in Sadr City, in response to ritual shooting, the Iraqi Interior Ministry said.

A ministry official said two people were wounded in Friday's air strike.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Occupation Soldier Wounded In Kandahar Province

Nov 24, 2006 Reuters

One soldier from the U.S.-led coalition force was wounded in the battle on Friday in Kandahar province in the south which involved artillery, mortars and close air support, the U.S. military said in a statement.

Rocket Attack Rattles Canadians In Kandahar

November 24, 2006 Canadian Press

PANJWAI, Afghanistan: Canadian troops in southern Afghanistan got a scare Friday as insurgents fired a rocket near their forward observation post in Panjwai district, west of Kandahar City.

The suspended rocket landed within 50 metres of post just moments before the troops were to head out on a foot patrol.

There was a tremendous explosion, a big plume of smoke and lots of rattled nerves -- but no casualties.

Canadian troops rushed out of their tents to return fire in the direction the rocket is believed to have come from. But the rockets are typically fired from several kilometres away.

It's the second such attack in a week, and Canadian commanders say they expect Taliban rebels to step up attacks during the next month before winter sets in.

Arbroath Sergeant Says Afghan Marines Lack Ammo And Armored Vehicles

24 November 2006 Evening Telegraph

British troops fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan are short of essential equipment, according to a marine with Arbroath's 45 Commando Group (writes Andrew Jarret).

Royal Marine Sergeant Stephen Brown said his men were lacking ammunition and needed better-armoured vehicles.

Repeated requests for extra kit have not been met, he is reported to have told journalists in Lashkar Gar.

Sgt Brown commands the unit which included Gary Wright (21), who was killed by a suicide bomber while on patrol in Helmand last month.

According to Sgt Brown, his troops are short of Wimiks: stripped down and heavily armed Land Rovers.

He apparently did not suggest such a vehicle would have saved Marine Wright's life, but insisted it could have prevented injuries to Dundee Sergeant Gary Ellis (35), also caught up in the incident.

Sgt Ellis is still recovering at a military hospital in England from the severe injuries he suffered in the attack.

"We need different vehicles and more weaponry," Sgt Brown said.

"Everything could be improved. It's the lack of kit that needs to be addressed. Countless times we have in requests for what we need extra, and it has not arrived."

Sgt Brown said his men did not have enough thermal imaging sights, which register body heat and could allow them to spot a suicide bomber's explosives against his body.

"These units will save people's lives," he added. "They allow you to look at the potential threat and see him coming, but having to pass them around by hand and pick up your weapon: by that time he's on top of you."

The officer also complained they needed more grenades which could be launched from rifles.

Sgt Brown's claims came as an independent report issued by the National Audit Office today revealed the MoD has "shown improvements in controlling cost increases in the equipment programme by taking sensible measures to ensure it lives within its means".

Angus MP Mike Weir said, "These comments are deeply troubling and reflect some other concerns that have been raised regarding equipment.

"We are asking our troops to risk their lives in a difficult and dangerous mission. It is essential they have all the equipment they require.

"To ask them to operate in such a situation with inadequate gear is morally repugnant, especially if it is being done on grounds of cost.

"The Prime Minister has said the troops can have everything they need. It is time he lived up to his word. I will be pursuing this matter further."

MORE:

SOME ITEMS NOT IN SHORT SUPPLY



A Canadian soldier uses a marijuana plant for camouflage cover as he guards the area while Canadian engineers use bulldozers to clear the vegetation from the area while building a road to connect their forward bases in the Kandahar province of Afghanistan Nov. 23, 2006. (AP Photo/David Guttenfelder)

German Government Tells Occupation Command To Fuck Off

11.24.06 Los Angeles Times

NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said he was counting on German troops to operate in any volatile part of Afghanistan if the need arises, and not just in the more peaceful northern sector.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel had made it clear Wednesday that Berlin did not plan to deploy troops to the south.

“Some Afghans Who Welcomed The U.S.-Led Troops Five Years Ago Now Resent Them” “If This Is All They Are Going To Do For Us, Is Kill Us, They Should Get Out”

Today, local officials say, most of Zabul province is under Taliban control. In Kandahar and Helmand provinces in southern Afghanistan, government influence is restricted to the capital cities and a few district headquarters, according to Najibullah, a career police officer who asked that his full name not be used, for fear of being disciplined.

11.24.06 By KATHY GANNON, AP

Until the Taliban were driven from power, Mullah Ehsanullah was an intelligence official, enforcing the militia's Islamic orthodoxy in eastern Afghanistan.

Five years later, he is again busy in the Taliban ranks, shepherding recruits through the guerrilla training camps hidden in the rugged terrain here and in Pakistan's tribal regions across the border.

He says a new generation is learning tactics such as suicide bombings and remote-detonated explosives that have had devastating effect in Afghanistan.

These recruits have contributed to the average of 600 attacks launched each month this year against government officials, NATO and U.S. soldiers, the Afghan National Army and police.

The religious militia is capitalizing on the anger and frustration of Afghan civilians against their foreign-backed government, seen as deeply corrupt and slow to bring improvements or even basic security to the more remote regions of the country, Ehsanullah and others say in interviews.

"The people in the beginning were saying that, 'OK the war is finished, we want stability. It is time for peace. It is over,'" Ehsanullah said.

But government help hasn't reached many Afghans, and much of the country has returned to the same 1990s anarchy and lawlessness that gave rise to the Taliban's iron-fisted rule.

Taliban fighters defend villagers against criminal gangs which often are linked to the government, he said. They don't perform the arbitrary arrests and searches that are conducted by the Western troops who occasionally patrol the region. Also boosting their ranks are Western air strikes that often kill civilians along with combatants.

"If this is all they are going to do for us, is kill us, they should get out," shouted Ghulab Shah, a middle-aged man from Ashogho in southern Kandahar after nine of his neighbors were killed as they slept when a NATO bomb blasted their home.

Kandahar governor Asadullah Khalid shares the frustration. "How are we supposed to bring security to the country with this kind of thing happening?" he asked.

The government, he said, can replace the houses destroyed in the raids. "But who do you build a house for if they are all dead?"

The Taliban defeat in 2001 provoked a backlash against their harsh rule and a surge in support for the new government.

From Zabul province in southeast Afghanistan, 2,000 young men went to Kabul to sign up for the new national army or police forces. All returned, police officials say, frustrated by poor salary or perceived ethnic bias in the new government. All but four joined the Taliban, they said.

And to the common people, criminal gangs abetted by the police and military are as big a threat in many areas as the fundamentalist militia, said Noor Mohammed Paktin, Zabul's police chief.

"Many times when they say Taliban attacked cars on the highway, it is thieves, sometimes ... with the help of the police," Paktin said in his office in Zabul's provincial capital, Qalat.

Roads through the province are dangerous. Even the highway between Kabul and Kandahar, built with U.S. money and hailed as a symbol of Afghanistan's post-Taliban rebirth, is normally empty by early afternoon because of checkpoints run by the Taliban, thieves or rogue police.

Paktin said he has tried to weed out corruption, but complained that his officers earn only \$60 a month, and haven't received even that in the past three months. He said his letters to the Ministry of the Interior asking what happened to the money have gone unanswered.

Corruption is so widespread, he said, that in some villages people have quit dealing with officialdom and turned to Taliban councils to resolve disputes.

On top of bribery and extortion among security forces, some top government officials tolerate Afghanistan's thriving drug trade, the police chief said. "I am trying my best to control drug traffickers," he said. "But inside the government, I am getting trouble. The drug mafia has its links inside the government."

Today, local officials say, most of Zabul province is under Taliban control.

In Kandahar and Helmand provinces in southern Afghanistan, government influence is restricted to the capital cities and a few district headquarters, according to Najibullah, a career police officer who asked that his full name not be used, for fear of being disciplined.

Rather than try to defend the village of Musa Qalat in Helmand Province, Najibullah said, British soldiers and their Afghan army allies pulled out in mid-October. They handed villagers 200 rifles and, in essence, wished them luck.

"In Musa Qala the government is there only in name," Najibullah said.

Police morale is low, he said, and officers have not been paid in months. About 70 of his 350 men have quit.

"Why am I fighting?" Najibullah said. "Because I am a career military man and I should defend the government. But I know that from the ministers right down to the soldiers they are all thieves."

Some Afghans who welcomed the U.S.-led troops five years ago now resent them.

Even after years of operating in Afghanistan, Najibullah said, NATO and U.S. forces still get caught in the middle of tribal feuds and ancient grudges, raiding homes or attacking villages on dubious tips.

Najibullah said that he saw two women and two children killed this fall when coalition troops fired on their vehicle. He was discouraged from reporting the incident up the chain of command, he said. Of the incident, NATO spokesman Luke Knitting said, "Not an easy one to dig out. Will see what I can do" but was unable to provide information about it.

"The mistake of the foreign forces is they are bombing and killing, and then the people they are going with the Taliban and not with us," Najibullah said. "Day by day the government will become weaker and weaker. Every hour, not even every day, but every hour the situation gets worse."

Encounters between the Western militaries and Afghans are tense. Mohammad Sharif, a tribal leader near Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan, sought help from coalition troops in finding a detained relative this year. What he got, he says, was a series of humiliating searches.

"Five times they searched me and found nothing," he said. "But when we spoke they had their pistol in their hand...That means they don't see us as their friend, but only as an enemy. People who come without trust, how can they rebuild our country?"

The Taliban have also made an ally of Afghanistan's endemic poverty.

They recruit many disaffected and unemployed young men within Afghanistan and in places like the Qari Jangel refugee camp in Pakistan's remote southern Baluchistan province, said Christopher Alexander, deputy special representative of the U.N. secretary general in Afghanistan.

Pakistani authorities ordered the camp closed in April, but it remains open. Local officials say the order comes from the United States, and they refuse to enforce it.

Alexander called cross-border support for the Taliban "very strong."

He said only a few of the fighters in southern Afghanistan are ideologically committed Taliban, or foreign jihadists.

Most, he said, are simply Afghan villagers drawn to the movement by tribal honor, frustration or the need for a job.

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

TROOP NEWS

***JUSTICE FOR ALL AGENT
ORANGE VICTIMS!***

**“My Government Killed Me In
Vietnam And I Didn't Even Know
It”**

“The Hidden Casualties Of The Vietnam War Continue To Grow But The Struggle Continues As Well”



American veterans delegation (l-r) David Cline, Ralph Steele, Joan Duffy, Frank Corcoran, Dan Shea behind Mrs. Vietnam 2005, Doan Thi Kim Hong, performing songs for Agent Orange affected children at hospice near Cu Chi.

The Veteran, Vietnam Veterans Against The War, Fall 2006

Speech given by David Cline to the International Conference of Agent Orange Victims held in Hanoi, Vietnam on March 28-29, 2006.

First let me thank the Vietnam Association of Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin for organizing this international conference and to the Agent Orange Vets from Korea, Australia, New Zealand and Canada who have traveled here to participate.

The US delegation I am leading is made up of Agent Orange vets Frank Corcoran, Joan Duffy, Ralph Steele and Dan Shea.

I was an infantryman with the 25th Infantry Division in Cu Chi and Tay Ninh in 1967 and was wounded 3 times but do not suffer from dioxin related health conditions myself.

When I came back from the war, I had knowledge of the use of Agent Orange from having seen sprayed areas and knew that they destroyed nature, but had no knowledge of the negative effects these defoliants had on human beings.

I remember in 1969 a veteran I knew named Jeff Sharlett died of cancer at age 27 in the Miami, Florida Veterans Hospital and thinking it was strange that someone so young had cancer.

Over the years other friends of mine got sick or had deformed children or sometimes died. Mike Keegan and John Miffin who died and John and Rena Kopystenski who had several children with birth defects are among them. So this issue has always been personal to me.

In 1977, a woman who worked as a claims representative at the Chicago Veterans Administration named Maude DeVictor was the first person to really put two and two together when she witnessed the VA higher-ups denying veterans claims and covering up their health problems and the connections to dioxin exposure.

The next year, 1978, a veteran name Paul Reutershan who was sick with cancer got on television and said "my government killed me in Vietnam and I didn't even know it".

He began a lawsuit against the chemical companies who manufactured Agent Orange, Blue, White, Purple etc. but he never lived to see that lawsuit completed because he died within the year.

The reason that this lawsuit was started was because the VA was denying veterans claims for medical treatment and compensation and according to US law, citizens cannot sue the government for these type of claims.

From 1978-1984 the lawsuit continued and was eventually settled, although many veterans opposed the settlement for millions of dollars.

Sadly many veterans got very little of that money since the army of lawyers who got involved got a good portion of it in legal fees.

I have been a member of Vietnam Veterans Against the War since 1970 and that organization played a critical role in launching the movement for justice for Agent Orange vets, supporting Maude DeVictor who became the godmother of the movement, recruiting veterans to joining the lawsuit and raising general public awareness of this issue.

But we always believed that while the chemical companies had responsibility and should be held liable, the primary responsibility lay with the US government which ordered and continued to use these poisons after they were becoming aware of the negative effects on people.

Instead of changing course, they covered up the facts and kept using them until 1971. After that they gave their remaining supplies to the former Army of the Republic of Vietnam who continued to use them until 1975 when that regime ceased to exist.

In VVAW, our demand has always been Testing, Treatment and Compensation for Agent Orange Victims. We never thought the lawsuit against the chemical companies was the answer, but rather a way to continue putting pressure on the US government.

Finally progress was made on that front when in 1991, Congress passed the Agent Orange Act, acknowledging several conditions as being dioxin related for purposes of medical treatment and disability compensation. It also established a mechanism for the National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine to review new studies and make recommendations to the Secretary of the Veterans Administration for expanding the recognized conditions.

Currently there are thirteen conditions acknowledged by the VA including two conditions among veterans children but over 27 conditions have been rejected since there was a finding by the IOM of not enough scientific research to indicate a connection to dioxin exposure.

So many veterans are still not being treated with any fairness. And how does someone give justice to all those who have died? The hidden casualties of the Vietnam War continue to grow but the struggle continues as well.

And today we need to talk about the other side of the coin, not just American, Korean, Australian, New Zealand and Canadian veterans but the people of Vietnam as well.

Remember also that these chemicals were also used in parts of Cambodia and Laos as well as along the DMZ in Korea and in Panama.

In the United States we began the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign to support the efforts of VAVA and join with concerned veterans and people in other countries to demand Justice for ALL Agent Orange Victims!

While the Campaign is sponsored by Veterans For Peace, it is made up of war veterans, Vietnamese-Americans, peace activists, environmentalists and other friends of Vietnam. We are supporting the international petition drive in support of the VAVA lawsuit and recently sponsored a 10 city speaking tour by 4 VAVA members.

We are also planning to encourage sympathetic representatives and senators to introduce legislation in Congress for the US government to step up to the plate and provide compensation and medical assistance, if not for political reasons, then for moral and humanitarian purposes. It is time to really heal the wounds of that war, not to ignore them or let them fade into history.

Let me make one last point.

This is a struggle to expose and end the use of chemical weapons by all nations but especially by my government. This is not just about something that happened over 30 years ago. Today the Bush administration has led our country and the world into another invasion and occupation, this time in Iraq and is now using Depleted Uranium that will in time poison US troops and Iraqi citizens.

They have also used White Phosphorous bombs against whole cities like Fallujah.

It is time for humanity to demand an end to these weapons as part of our efforts to abolish war. That is what Veterans For Peace is pledged to work for. That will only come through the determined efforts of all of us, throughout the world.

The great American abolitionist Fredrick Douglass said:

"If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without the thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.

This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never has and it never will"

With that as our watchword, lets make this conference a call to all the people of the world. JUSTICE FOR ALL AGENT ORANGE VICTIMS!

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



Members of the Congers fire department bow their heads as the casket of Army Spc. Justin Garcia leaves St. Paul's Church, Nov. 22, 2006 in Congers, NY. Garcia died Nov. 14 in Baghdad, Iraq, of injuries suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle during combat operations. He is survived by his six month pregnant wife, Michelle. (AP Photo/Mary Altaffer)

“We Never Dreamed She’d See Real Action”

[Thanks to NB, who sent this in. He writes: This is the true price of "punching above our weight" in foreign affairs.]

19 November 2006 By Gill Smith, Sunday Mirror (UK)

SHE'S 18, unemployed and has only been abroad twice in her life, on holiday to Spain. Yet last week teenager Ashley Taylor was sent to the front line in Iraq as part of the largest Territorial Army call-up since World War Two. [The Territorial Army in the UK is a rough parallel to the U.S. National Guard. T]

Evidence, if any more was needed, of the scale of the "overstretch" of the British armed forces.

Yesterday Ashley's mother Helen admitted she was aghast at the thought of her little girl heading to war. She revealed how Ashley only joined the part-time TA to relieve the boredom of being on the dole.

Helen, 34, says: "When she joined I never ever thought for one minute that she'd end up Iraq. And nor did she. It's terrifying.

She's only 18 and, in my eyes, still a kid. "It's only because she couldn't get a job that she joined in the first place. It was something to do to give her a bit of pride back and something to fill her time. She never thought she'd go to war."

Like countless other "weekend warriors" Ashley has learned the hard way that signing up for part-time military training can have unforeseen consequences. On Wednesday she flew to Basra as part of the largest mobilisation of TA soldiers from one unit since World War Two - 120 people called away from ordinary lives and sent to the frontline. Now Ashley must adapt to being in one of the most dangerous environments in the world.

She has been told she will initially be working in the Army stores - but may have to go out on patrol on the city's lawless streets.

Helen, a cleaner, says: "She's been to Magaluf a couple of times, but this is a whole different ball game. I am very proud of her but I'm also scared for her because I don't know what she's going to face out there.

“I don't agree that the TA should be there in the first place. The TA soldiers have done just three months of training. And it's not the kind a regular soldier goes through.”

Ashley, from Dundee, and her colleagues - from the 51st Highland, 7th Battalion of the Royal Regiment of Scotland - flew out from RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire just three

days after four British servicemen were killed in a bomb attack in Basra on Remembrance Sunday.

She joined the TA just over a year ago after being invited to an open day by her older brother Joseph, 21, who was himself a member. Joseph had already persuaded Ashley's barman fiancé Robert D'Cruz, 21, to join up and, after seeing what it entailed, Ashley decided to sign up too.

For Ashley, who left school at 16, it gave her something exciting to do at weekends. She had spent many hours in her local library desperately looking for jobs, sending off dozens of application forms. But each day Ashley - who lives with her mother and father Joseph, plus her 10-year-old sister Abbie in a council house in the rundown Kirkton area of Dundee - became more and more disillusioned as she failed to land a position.

She filled her days taking her dog Tai for walks, visiting friends or going to bingo with her mum. In the evenings she'd go to a bar with Robert and sing karaoke songs.

Helen says: "She had been applying for jobs but wasn't getting anywhere. She got to know a bit about the TA, signed up and enjoyed it.

"She never ever missed a night and she loved the training weekends away."

Helen says it was Joseph and Robert who were first asked if they wanted to go to Basra. Robert didn't hesitate but Joseph was worried about losing his job as a packer if he went.

Territorial volunteers usually combine occasional weekend military training with full-time jobs completely unconnected to the Army.

"Ashley wasn't sure if she was going to go or not," says Helen. "Before Joseph made up his mind I worried I would have the two of them over there.

"But Joseph made his decision by coming out of the TA altogether and the next thing we knew Ashley had decided to go.

"She makes up her own mind - she's very headstrong. Robert going obviously helped as well."

Helen knows that Ashley is in for the shock of her life in Basra. "She's been told she'll start in the stores but that could change very quickly - so she could be out there under fire. I think she's got what it takes to stick it out though. "At least she's doing something now that she can be proud of. There are few people living in this area who can say that."

'We never dreamed she'd see real action.'

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Resistance Tactics: Kill U.S. Troops [Duh]

11.24.06 Los Angeles Times

Iraqi insurgents are shifting their tactics away from roadside bombs and face-to-face battles to ambushing U.S. patrols, Marines say.

Some of the attacks are "spray and pray" assaults from concealed positions, with insurgents firing AK-47s or Soviet bloc machine guns.

Other cases are classic sniper assaults—one shot, one kill—from hundreds of yards away, accomplished with high-power scopes and Chinese- or Russian-made sniper rifles. In both instances, the insurgents' apparent primary aim is not to win battles but to inflict casualties, in hopes of undercutting the morale of troops in the field and the American public.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation's ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. Frederick Douglas, 1852

**“Imagine A Steer In The
Stockyards Hollering ‘We Need A
Phased Withdrawal From The
Slaughterhouse, Starting In Four
To Six Months’”**

**“When Kissinger Says A War Is Lost,
You Can Reckon That It Is”**

November 23, 2006 By ALEXANDER COCKBURN, CounterPunch [Excerpts]

Imagine a steer in the stockyards hollering to his fellows, "We need a phased withdrawal from the slaughterhouse, starting in four to six months. The timetable should not be overly rigid. But there should be no more equivocation."

Back and forth among the steers the debate meanders on.

Some say, "To withdraw now" would be to "display weakness".

Others talk about a carrot and stick approach.

Then the men come out with electric prods and shock them up the chute.

The way you end a slaughter is by no longer feeding it.

Every general, either American or British, with the guts to speak honestly over the past couple of years has said the same thing: the foreign occupation of Iraq by American and British troops is feeding the violence.

There is no Iraqi government.

It's been a steep price to inflict on the Iraqi people for the pleasure of seeing Saddam Hussein die abruptly at the end of a rope.

If the US is scheduled for any role, beyond swift withdrawal, it certainly won't be as "honest broker", lecturing fractious sectarians on how to behave properly, like Teacher in some schoolhouse on the prairie.

It was always been in the US interest to curb the possibility of the Shia controlling much of Iraq, including most of the oil. By one miscalculation after another, precisely that specter is fast becoming a reality. For months outgoing ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad tried to improve the Sunni position, and it is clear enough that in its covert operations the US has been in touch with the Sunni resistance.

As Henry Kissinger said earlier this week, the war is lost.

This is the man who -- if we are to believe Bob Woodward's latest narrative -- has been advising Bush and Cheney that there could be no more Vietnams, that the war in Iraq could not be lost without humiliating consequences for America's status as the number # 1 bully on the block.

When Kissinger says a war is lost, you can reckon that it is.

Democrats, put in charge of Congress next January by voters who turned against the war, are now split on what to do. The 80 or so members of the House who favor swift withdrawal got a swift rebuff when Steny Hoyer won the House Majority leader position at a canter from Jack Murtha, humiliating House majority whip Nancy Pelosi in the process.

Next came Senator Barack Obama of Illinois, who never opens his mouth without testing the wind with a supersensitive finger to test the tolerance levels of respectable opinion.

In Chicago on Monday he said there are no good options left in Iraq, but that it "remains possible to salvage an acceptable outcome to this long and misguided war."

This time Obama plumped for the "four to six months" option for "phased redeployment", though the schedule should not be "overly rigid", to give--so the senator said -- commanders on the ground flexibility to protect the troops or adapt to changing political arrangements in the Iraqi government.

Then there followed the familiar agenda for America as stern, disinterested broker: "economic pressure" should be applied to make Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds sit down and forge a lasting peace. "No more coddling, no more equivocation."

It sounds great as a clip on the Evening News, provoking another freshet of talk about Obama as presidential candidate. Substantively it means absolutely nothing. What "economic pressure" is he talking about, what "coddling", in ruined, looted Iraq? It's all the language of fantasy.

The only time reality enters into Obama's and Democrats' foreign policy advisories is when the subject of Israel comes up. Then there's no lofty talk about "No more coddling", but the utterly predictable green light for Israel to do exactly what it wants-- which is at present to reduce Gaza to sub-Chechnyan levels and murder families in Beit Hanoun: this is a Darfur America really could stop but instead is sponsoring and cheering on, to its eternal shame.

The Palestinians are effectively defenseless, even as the US Congress cheers Israel on. What political Washington cannot yet quite comprehend is that Iraq is not Palestine; cannot be lectured and given schedules.

America is not controlling events in Iraq.

If the Shia choose to cut supply lines from Kuwait up to the northern part of the country, the US forces would be in deep, deep trouble.

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.

OCCUPATION REPORT

“The Americans Are Arousing Us To Fight Against Each Other”

11.24.06 BAGHDAD (AFP)

The Iraqi capital has been locked down by an indefinite curfew after more than 200 people were killed by a wave of bombings in a Shiite slum in by far the deadliest attack since the war in 2003.

"The government has been unable to protect us, while the Americans are arousing us to fight against each other," one angry Sadr City Shiite said.

U.S. Occupation Forces And Collaborator Militia Cooperate To Attack Sadr Movement Office

24 Nov 2006 Reuters

Gunmen blew up an office of radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's movement in the town of Baquba, north of Baghdad, after U.S. troops raided the building to arrest Sadr supporters inside, police said.

They also reported sporadic clashes and said the situation was tense in the religiously mixed town which has been a frequent scene of sectarian violence.

***Wow! Here's A Huge Surprise!* Iraq's Forces Unready To Fight: Number Of Battalions That Don't Need U.S. Support Declines**

11.19.06 Richmond Times-Dispatch

President Bush's policy of replacing U.S. troops with Iraqis has a major flaw. During the past two years, the number of Iraqi battalions ready to fight insurgents and militias without U.S. assistance has plummeted.

In June 2005, the Pentagon said three Iraqi battalions of approximately 800 soldiers each were ready to take on the enemy by themselves. By the fall of 2005, that had dropped to one battalion.

By February 2006, that number had fallen to zero units, and by last June no more than one unit was capable of fighting without U.S. help. Now, after millions of dollars spent training Iraqi forces, once again not a single Iraqi military unit is able to fight without American assistance.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

As Imperial Democrats And Republicans Unite To Kill More U.S. Troops And More Iraqis, “There Are Signs Of A New Stage In The Resistance To The War Among Active-Duty Soldiers And Veterans”



Senate Armed Services Committee heads US Senator John Warner(R), R-VA shakes hands with Senator Carl Levin, D-IL, on 15 November 2006. (AFP/Getty Images/File)

Unfortunately, many leading organizations of the antiwar movement put a high priority on mobilizing a vote for the Democrats, and they are claiming the result as a vindication of their strategy of trying to build alliances with Democratic Party politicians. Yet during their post-election interviews with the media, Democratic leaders took every opportunity to pour cold water on the hopes placed in them by their liberal supporters.

Republicans and Democrats are now united that a “change of course” is needed in Iraq, but they also agree that this “change” should be restricted to rearranging the occupation of Iraq and intervention in the Middle East, not ending them.

However heated it becomes, the discussion among U.S. political leaders will be about how to repackage the Iraq war.

For those who want to end the war, our job is to take advantage of the new opportunities opened up by the election to build an antiwar struggle from the grassroots.

The reason the U.S. war in Iraq failed under the Bush-Cheney strategy wasn't the strategy, but the character of the war itself.

It is a war of conquest to plunder Iraq's oil wealth and promote U.S. imperial power, which inevitably sparked a resistance fighting to throw out the occupiers.

The talk from both parties about “changing course” is about shifting tactics in order to protect U.S. interests, leaving the character of the war, and thus its fundamental injustice and immorality, unchanged.

LEFT TO themselves, the Democratic Congress, still less the new-look Bush administration, won't produce meaningful change in Iraq or the Middle East. Whatever their differences over tactics, both mainstream parties are committed to the same imperialist priorities--securing corporate interests and promoting U.S. power around the globe.

Unfortunately, many leading organizations of the antiwar movement put a high priority on mobilizing a vote for the Democrats, and they are claiming the result as a vindication of their strategy of trying to build alliances with Democratic Party politicians.

Yet during their post-election interviews with the media, Democratic leaders took every opportunity to pour cold water on the hopes placed in them by their liberal supporters.

At the same time, it would be wrong to dismiss the outcome of the 2006 election as no more than a new face on the same old policy of war and occupation.

Certainly the bipartisan Washington establishment hopes the Democrats will help salvage U.S. imperialism from the Iraq disaster. Nevertheless, the scale of the rejection of the Republicans has changed U.S. politics from top to bottom.

Most obviously, for millions of people who felt, because of the bluster of the White House, the failure of the media to question its lies and the cowardice of the Democrats, that they were isolated in their opposition to the war, the election result proved they aren't.

The overwhelming vote will give people confidence that they were right all along: a feeling that, in turn, can lead to more active opposition.

If existing antiwar movement organizations relate to the desire to do something more than vote against the war, so much the better, but this sentiment is likely to find an expression in any case.

Already, there are signs of a new stage in the resistance to the war among active-duty soldiers and veterans.

For example, in October, an Internet petition for active-duty service members to call for rapid withdrawal from Iraq had hundreds of signers less than a week after it was initiated by a Navy seaman.

This shows the potential for galvanizing an activist opposition to the war, which will be the key to any real advances in the struggle to end U.S. occupations in the Middle East.

The weaknesses of the antiwar movement over the past three-and-a-half years won't be overcome overnight, but the stage has been set for a revitalized struggle.

For millions of people, the 2006 election holds out the promise of ending the war. But that promise that won't be realized unless we organize to struggle for real change.

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)

CLASS WAR REPORTS

Nazi Scum Chased Away In Austin, Texas

11.17.06 By Robert McDonald, Socialist Worker

AUSTIN, Texas: Some 15 Nazis were surrounded and shouted down by 500 protesters at their November 11 rally on the state Capitol grounds in Austin. About 150 cops, many in riot gear, protected the Nazis in the National Socialist Movement (NSM).

The protest started at a nearby park, and marched through downtown to the Capitol with chants like “No Nazis, No KKK, No fascist USA!”

The NSM, who did not even have a permit to rally on Capitol grounds, came out in full Nazi regalia, spouting “Seig Heils” and tearing apart Mexican flags.

The police legitimized the Nazis’ actions by barricading out the anti-fascists and allowing the Nazis to parade about in the open space between them. In addition, there were more news media surrounding the hate group than there were members of it.

The chants from the protesters were spirited, while the Nazis could offer only feeble fascist salutes. When finished with their hate rally, the Nazis prepared to parade back around the Capitol from where they came.

The protesters sprang into action and began moving that way as well, so the Department of Public Safety officers escorted the Nazis inside the Capitol and through underground exits.

Although the anti-Nazi activists circled the Capitol, attempting to find them, the Nazis were too scared to show their faces again.

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http://www.traprockpeace.org/gi_special/; <http://www.uruknet.info/?p=-6&l=e>;

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