

GI SPECIAL 4L23:

**Betrayed:
After Two Weeks At
Home From Iraq War,
Bush Regime Traitors
Announce Plan To Send
325th Airborne Infantry
Regiment Troops Back
Now:**

**“The Quick Turnaround Has Not
Been Met Favorably By Some
Families”**

**Despicable Shitbag Liar, Maj.
Earnhardt, Says Their Morale Is
“High”**

More than 3,000 paratroopers — some of whom returned from Iraq only two weeks ago — will be in Kuwait by mid-January in an “on-call” capacity for duty in Iraq or Afghanistan.

The 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, known as the “Red Falcons” redeployed two weeks ago from a five-month tour in Iraq and will return to theater in January with the rest of the brigade, [Maj. Tom] Earnhardt said, acknowledging that the quick turnaround has not been met favorably by some families, he said.

“Obviously we’re concerned about this rapid turnaround facing these paratroopers and their families, but the soldiers are going to be committed to the mission first, and their morale is high and we don’t expect that to change,” Earnhardt said. [Stupid fuck. It “changed” when they got the news. What you “expect” and what goes down may be at considerable variation.]

“We are grateful they were able to enjoy Christmas with their families and we’re mindful that many families affected by the hardships of deployment may not understand the requirements facing the division.” [They understand all right: they understand that after a few weeks home, the politicians in Washington DC want more of them dead in a hopeless, lost war, where every death is in vain. You better believe they understand, asshole Earnhardt to the contrary notwithstanding.]

The Pentagon said today it would send about 3500 troops to Kuwait as a standby force for Iraq or elsewhere in the region.

The Bush administration is weighing force increases as it considers alternative strategies in Iraq.

That unit will serve as the "call-forward force" for the commander of US Central Command, the command group responsible for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Fort Bragg troops replace a force that was moved into Iraq this year. There are 134,000 US troops now in Iraq.

The deployment is scheduled to last through September 2007 or “until the mission is completed, whichever is earlier,” [Lt. Col. Carl S] Ey said.

MORE:

**“It’s Pretty Simple:
They Need Bodies”**

BROKEN BY WAR, AND ORDERED BACK

**Despite Being Diagnosed
With PTSD And Rated 70% Disabled By
The VA, Damian Fernandez
Has Been Called Back To Duty In Iraq;**



ARMY SPEC. DAMIAN FERNANDEZ, pictured here during his one-year deployment to Iraq, returned home to Waterbury in June 2005. Six months later he had a breakdown and was diagnosed with severe post-traumatic stress disorder. (photo: COURTESY OF FERNANDEZ FAMILY)

[Thanks to James Starowicz, Veterans For Peace, who sent this in.]

[Here it is again. Same old story. Used up, and the politicians couldn't care less. To repeat for the 3,475th 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]

December 10, 2006 By LISA CHEDEKEL, Harford Courant Staff Writer [Excerpts]

Nothing was stranger for Mary Jane Fernandez than the events of last Christmas, which had her 24-year-old son, newly returned from the war in Iraq, downing sedatives, ranting about how rich people were allowed to sit in recliners in church, and summoning the Waterbury police to come arrest him.

This Christmas may top that.

Despite being diagnosed with severe post-traumatic stress disorder and rated 70 percent disabled by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Damian Fernandez has been called back to duty and told to prepare for another deployment to Iraq.

Two weeks ago, Fernandez, who was discharged from active duty in the Army last year and was working to settle back into civilian life, abruptly received orders to report to Fort Benning, Ga., on Jan. 14.

When the FedEx letter from the Army arrived Nov. 28, he calmly told his mother and girlfriend, "I got my orders," staring hard at them with vacant eyes.

That night, he snapped. He told his girlfriend, Riella Darko, that he wanted to die and asked her to take him to the emergency room of St. Mary's Hospital, where he was placed on a suicide watch. He has since been transferred to a locked ward in the Northampton VA Medical Center in Massachusetts.

His callback orders have not yet been rescinded. Even if they are, his mother said, simply being told he must go back into combat has set back his recovery.

"I don't understand why the military would put him through this," Mary Jane Fernandez said. "He was just starting to come back to reality a little, and now he's lost again."

Fernandez is one of 8,262 soldiers who have left active duty but have been ordered back under a policy that allows the military to recall troops who have completed their service but have time remaining on their contracts. About 5,700 of those called up have already been mobilized, with Fernandez among about 2,500 ordered to report in the coming weeks.

The practice of recalling inactive soldiers involuntarily is itself controversial, with some members of Congress and veterans' advocates calling it a backdoor draft.

All soldiers have an eight-year military service obligation, but typically are released from duty after two to six years. The Army, strained by the war, announced in mid-2004 that it would begin tapping a pool of about 100,000 soldiers who had time left on their service obligations, to fill vacancies in Reserve and National Guard units.

The fact that some of those being summoned have been ruled disabled by the VA or the military, with service-connected PTSD and other medical problems, is raising alarm among veterans' advocates and families. In Fernandez's case, the 70 percent disability rating indicated the serious degree to which doctors had judged his mental state to be impaired.

Steve Robinson, director of government relations for Veterans of America, said he knew of a number of other war veterans with PTSD who had been called back to Iraq.

"If you have a war-related injury that you're being compensated for," he said, "to be sent back into a situation that might exacerbate the problem just doesn't make sense."

Paul Sinsigalli, 30, of Andover, was just starting the fall semester at Manchester Community College when he received a letter ordering him back to duty Nov. 5.

Two years ago, he served a rough tour in Baghdad, where he conducted house-to-house raids and witnessed a group of women and children being blown up by a suicide bomb. He has since been diagnosed with PTSD and a degenerative disk problem in his back.

After sending the Army his medical and college records, he was granted a two-month delay and now must report to Fort Jackson, S.C., by Jan. 7 or risk criminal prosecution, as the call-up orders warn.

"I've tried really hard to adjust to being out. I thought, 'They won't call me back - I'm disabled,'" said Sinsigalli, who receives compensation for his PTSD, which the VA has deemed 10 percent disabling.

"If I have to go back, obviously I'm going to do whatever it takes to get my head back into it. But it's hard - I'm pretty shook up," he said.

"The thing that gets me is, if I tried to re-enlist, they wouldn't even take me unless I waived my disability."

Lt. Col. Bryan Hilferty, an Army spokesman, acknowledged that recalling inactive soldiers - many of whom have settled into jobs or college and have had no association with the military in recent years - was a last resort.

Hilferty said veterans can seek exemptions from being recalled and receive medical screenings before being deployed.

But he said a physical or mental disability, including PTSD, was not "an automatic exemption" from serving. [What is an 'automatic exemption' from being sent to Iraq is being Lt. Col Hilferty, Army spokeman. Let's ship his worthless ass to Ramadi. Perhaps it would induce an attitude adjustment.]

"Clearly, many soldiers are disabled in some way after war," he said. "Many of them remain on active duty."

"You may request a delay or exemption only under circumstances of extreme hardship or physical inability," the recall notices say.

To date, about 24 percent of the 10,917 soldiers who have received mobilization orders have been granted exemptions, Army figures show.

Mary Jane Fernandez said she already has notified the Army about Damian's chronic PTSD, and is stunned that he has not been excused.

She said a friend of Damian's, who also has severe PTSD, has opted to go back to Iraq because "he misses killing people," the friend told her.

A veterans' counselor familiar with the case confirmed that account.

Mary Jane said she cannot picture Damian, whose symptoms include paranoia and hallucinations, back in a war zone.

"I don't trust him taking out the garbage, let alone watching someone's back on the battlefield," she said.

Army and Defense Department officials acknowledged to The Courant earlier this year that they were redeploying soldiers with PTSD - even though medical standards for enlistment in the armed forces disqualify recruits who suffer from PTSD.

Last month, Assistant Secretary of Defense William Winkenwerder Jr. issued a new policy that steps up psychological screening of troops, after a Courant series detailing gaps in mental health care brought pressure from Congress for improvements.

Among other things, the policy deems PTSD a "treatable" condition, but directs that troops with psychiatric disorders should be sent to war only if they are stable and "without significant symptoms" for at least three months prior to deployment.

Because the policy is new and still allows military clinicians broad discretion in deciding which mental conditions should preclude deployment, its impact is uncertain.

Before he received his recall orders, Damian Fernandez's PTSD symptoms had just begun to subside, his mother and girlfriend said.

Riella Darko, 24, recently learned that she was pregnant, and Damian's outlook had brightened slightly at the prospect of becoming a father. At a baby shower last month, "He actually looked a little happy," Riella said.

"Happy" hasn't been in Damian's emotional repertoire since he arrived home in June 2005 from a year in Iraq, Riella and Mary Jane said. The once-upbeat soldier who went club-hopping with friends, enjoyed writing and drawing and talked of becoming a state cop never made it back from Iraq. The man who returned in his place, they barely recognized.

"I used to have to track him down on his cell all the time," said Mary Jane, who shares a two-family house with her son. "Now, I never have to call him because I know where he is - upstairs."

Damian had spent most of the last 18 months upstairs, playing video games or drinking himself to sleep, Mary Jane and Riella said. He attended community college classes for a few weeks, but abruptly quit after an incident in which he

mistook a noise outside for a gunshot and flew into a panic because he could not find his gun, they said.

A simple "What do you want for dinner?" can ignite his temper.

"He throws things a lot. We have holes in just about every wall," Riella said.

Mary Jane, who is widowed, said she worries that the war has "broken" her only child. When he first came home from Iraq, his car stereo - a prized possession - was stolen. He was despondent for weeks, she said.

"He asked me, 'These are the people I fought for?'" she recounted, choking up.

Although Damian has not spoken much about his experiences in Iraq, he told Mary Jane and Riella about a day a school bus exploded on a bridge, and children's body parts fell from the sky.

"He said he accidentally stepped on a kid's insides - the liver or something," Riella said.

After Damian fell apart last Christmas, Mary Jane said she convinced him to go to the VA to get help. He was diagnosed with PTSD and placed on an antidepressant. This September, he was admitted to a three-week inpatient program at the Northampton VA. His discharge records say: "Suicidal ruminations resolved. Otherwise unchanged from admission."

The recall orders drove him back to the same facility.

Mary Jane and Riella said that while Damian had worried about being sent back to Iraq someday, he had begun to relax in recent months. That changed when the letter arrived.

"He feels guilty that if doesn't go back, he'll be deserting his buddies," Mary Jane said of her son, who received commendations for prior tours in Korea and Africa. "But if he does go back, he's afraid he won't be able to do his part.

"He's all torn up now."

Because the Army has no policy exempting soldiers with PTSD from returning to war, counselors at the New Haven Vet Center have been unable to offer Damian assurances he will be excused.

Mary Jane said one counselor suggested that Damian's best bet might be to stay "locked up" in the hospital through January.

Still, Donna Hryb, team leader at the Hartford Vet Center, said she would be surprised if the Army deploys a soldier as severely impaired as Damian.

"It would be counterproductive for the unit and for him," she said.

Hilferty, the Army spokesman, acknowledged that redeploying soldiers with "severe" psychological problems could jeopardize other troops' safety.

Robinson and other veterans' advocates said the Defense Department and the VA should be sharing medical records, so that the call-ups are targeted to healthy soldiers, not those with psychiatric disorders.

Because many veterans are not even aware that they can be summoned to active duty, the orders alone can cause panic, the advocates said.

Paul Sinsigalli said he has had trouble sleeping and concentrating since his orders arrived. Only recently had he gotten comfortable driving again, without worrying that every stray object on the side of a road might be a bomb. Now, he wonders if he ever should have let down his guard.

He has put off plans to apply to the University of Connecticut's nursing program and he has moved up his wedding date.

"I'm going to go down there (to Fort Jackson) with all my medical records, but I know when I get there, they're going to try to get me to go over," he said.

"It's pretty simple: They need bodies."

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

2 Latvian Soldiers Killed, 3 Wounded

12.27.06 (AP)

Two Latvian soldiers were killed and three were wounded in Iraq on Wednesday when a roadside bomb exploded under their Humvee, the Defense Ministry said.

Ministry spokesman Uldis Davidovs said the explosion occurred when soldiers were out on patrol, but he did not know where it happened.

MARINE KILLED IN AL ANBAR

12/27/2006 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE 06-01-02CE

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq: One Marine assigned to Regimental Combat Team 5 died today from wounds sustained due to enemy action while operating in Al Anbar Province.

Second Baghdad Soldier Dies Of Injuries Sustained In Vehicle Rollover

27 December 2006 Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20061227-10

BAGHDAD: A second Multi-National Division Baghdad Soldier died of injuries received when a High Mobility Multi-Purpose Wheeled Vehicle rolled over along a dirt canal trail during a combat reconnaissance mission south of the Iraqi capital Dec. 26.

13th SC(E) Soldier Dies In Iraq

27 December 2006 Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20061227-03

BALAD, Iraq: A 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) Soldier died as a result of non-combat related injuries on Logistics Support Area Anaconda Dec 23.

***Just Another Day In Baghdad* Stryker Blown Up, Two Wounded; Base Hit By Rocket Attack; “American Soldiers Acknowledged Many Aspects Of Iraqi Life Have Gotten Worse Since The U.S. Led-Invasion”**

December 27, 2006 WILL WEISSERT, Associated Press Writer [Excerpts]

Some U.S. soldiers patrolling Baghdad's dangerous streets Wednesday cheered news of the execution order for Saddam Hussein, but others worried his trip to the gallows could spark a surge of insurgent attacks.

Based in Fort Lewis, Wash., the soldiers went house-to-house in a largely Shiite section of eastern Baghdad for the fourth consecutive day Wednesday, searching for insurgent leaders and weapons.

A pack of children trailed behind, begging for money and candy as soldiers trudged down muddy, unpaved roads past donkey carts, and entered houses where families keep chickens out front. At one point, a pair of quacking ducks waddled across a bustling road.

The troops completed their sweep without making arrests or finding any major weapons.

But on the way back to the U.S. outpost where they are staying, a roadside bomb exploded underneath a Stryker armored vehicle, wounding two soldiers - neither critically.

Two hours later, a series of explosions from rockets shook the outpost and soldiers were confined to their quarters after at least two people on the ground were injured.

American soldiers acknowledged many aspects of Iraqi life have gotten worse since the U.S. led-invasion.

"When (Saddam) was here a lot of people were better off, especially with the basics like water and sewage," said Spc. Will Tucker, 22, of Fort Worth, Texas. "We are working on improvement programs, but they are taking awhile."

Bomb Blast Injures Seven UK Troops

December 27, 2006 Guardian News

Seven British servicemen have been hurt after a roadside bomb exploded north of Basra.

An MoD spokeswoman said the men, who were taking part in a routine patrol, received minor injuries.

They were checked over by medics, but nobody was admitted to hospital.

She said: "We can confirm that an IED (improvised explosive device) went off in an area north of Basra.

She added that there had been "a number" of armoured vehicles in the patrol when the bomb exploded.

U.S. Patrol In Baghdad Hit By IED; Humvee Burning, Casualties Not Announced

Dec. 27 (Xinhua)

A roadside bomb went off near a U.S. patrol in eastern Baghdad on Wednesday, damaging a U.S. military vehicle, an Interior Ministry source said.

"A roadside bomb detonated around 1:30 p.m. (10:30 GMT) on the al-Qanat road in eastern Baghdad, leaving a U.S. Humvee ablaze," the source told Xinhua on condition of anonymity.

It was not clear whether there was any casualty among the U.S. soldiers as the U.S. troops cordoned off the area preventing police from approaching the scene, the source added.

Notes From A Lost War:

**“Compliance With U.S. Troops
Turns To Hatred”
“Every Time A Window Is Broken, A
Bedroom Is Trashed Or Husbands
Are Questioned, The Glares Become
Harsher”**

Roadside bombs have become too powerful for the troops to feel safe in Bradleys or tanks. Patrols are almost all on foot.

December 27, 2006 by Andrea Bruce, The Washington Post [Excerpts]

The soldiers of Combat Outpost Iron set out to help one Ramadi neighborhood get back to normal. The troops tried to learn local tribal politics. Passed out Beanie Babies. Drank tea. Attempted Arabic.

Braithwaite's unit, the 1st Battalion, 36th Infantry Regiment, has been in the capital of western Iraq's Anbar province since June. Most of the guys here can remember the moment when their frustration killed their empathy. When they no longer felt guilty about knocking down doors. No longer cared to hand out candy.

"Hearts and minds," the soldiers shrug. They joke like this often. The few Iraqis still living in Ramadi have had their homes raided and streets patrolled for three years now.

Every time a window is broken, a bedroom is trashed or husbands are questioned, the glares become harsher.

Compliance with U.S. troops turns to hatred.

They are only trying to get the people who lay roadside bombs and find the material used to produce them. No other goal is ever mentioned.

Roadside bombs have become too powerful for the troops to feel safe in Bradleys or tanks. Patrols are almost all on foot.

This day, they walk through the garbage dump, once a farmer's field. A plank takes them across sewage, and they head toward the first house.

Bracing the weight of their gear, they run with bent knees. They hop the walls that separate the houses to avoid the streets. Roadside bombs -- a soldier lost both legs to one while crossing the intersection here a few days earlier. The ladder they carry is worthless. So they tear many of the walls down. Home to home. It takes time. They are slow.

In their first few months in Iraq, mind-numbing boredom created an itch for action. They went out to dare fire.

But now they feel done, as one medic puts it. They heft on full combat gear just to step outside to relieve themselves.

Many seem to have lost their taste for TV.

It shows them the news of Iraq -- which is all about the fighting in Baghdad these days. Not much is mentioned of Ramadi.

THIS ENVIRONMENT IS HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH; TIME TO COME HOME, NOW



10.28.06: US soldiers man a checkpoint setup around Sadr City in Baghdad.
(AFP/Wissam al-Okaili)

TROOP NEWS

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



The casket of Marine Lance Cpl. Clinton 'C.J.' Miller after the funeral ceremony at Nodaway Valley High School in Greenfield, Iowa, Dec. 20, 2006. Miller was killed by an improvised explosive device in Iraq's Al Anbar Province Dec. 11. (AP Photo/Kevin Sanders)

Afghanistan War Veteran Prefers Death By Cop To Iraq Deployment

[Thanks Pham Binh, Traveling Soldier; Elaine Brower, The Military Project, and to Eric Ruder, who sent this in. **He writes: a KIA that won't get counted.**]

December 27, 2006 By Megan Greenwali, Washington Post Staff Writer

Army Reservist James E. Dean had already served 18 months in Afghanistan when he was notified three weeks ago that he would be deployed to Iraq later this month.

The prospect of returning to war sent the St. Mary's County resident into a spiral of depression, a neighbor said.

Despondent about his orders, Dean barricaded himself inside his father's home with several weapons on Christmas, threatening to kill himself.

After a 14-hour standoff with authorities, Dean was killed yesterday by a police officer after he aimed a gun at another officer, police said.

Wanda Matthews, who lives next door to Dean's father and said she thought of the younger man as a son, described him as a "very good boy."

"His dad told me that he didn't want to go to war," Matthews said. "He had already been out there and didn't want to go again."

Dean, 29, was shot once after a confrontation with officers that began when a member of Dean's family asked police to check on him about 10 p.m. Monday, police said. Dean stated his intention to kill himself several times late that night and yesterday morning and had fired at officers multiple times, St. Mary's County Sheriff Tim Cameron said. A handful of bullets hit police cars, but no officers were injured.

Cameron said special law enforcement units spent the night trying to negotiate with Dean to come out of the house.

"He was asked to come out and refused repeatedly," Cameron said. "We threw a phone in the window and he threw it back out."

About noon, tactical teams from the Maryland State Police and St. Mary's, Calvert and Charles county sheriffs' offices began pumping tear gas into the home to force Dean out, Cameron said.

Police said Dean stepped outside his front door and pointed a firearm at an officer. Another officer on the scene, believing his colleague was in danger, shot Dean in the chest, they said.

Cameron did not reveal the department affiliation of the officer who shot Dean. The St. Mary's County Bureau of Criminal Investigations, which comprises officers from the sheriff's office and state police, will investigate the shooting, he said.

Dean's father, Joseph L. Dean Jr., was not home during the standoff, authorities said, and his phone number had been disconnected yesterday afternoon. Neighbors were evacuated from the surrounding homes when police responded to the scene.

Matthews said Dean enjoyed hunting and fishing but had lost much of his enthusiasm for life when he found out that he was being deployed to Iraq.

She said that she had not spoken to him since he was notified but that his father was extremely worried about Dean. "He was a good country boy," she said.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Thousands March To Condemn U.S. Command's Execution Of Nationalist Anti-Occupation Leader; “U.S. Forces Stormed Amiri's Home At Dawn On Wednesday And Killed Him In Front Of His Wife And Children”



Iraqis carry the coffin of Sahib al-Amiri, a top aide to anti-occupation nationalist Muqtada al-Sadr, during his funeral procession in the holy city of Najaf, Dec. 27, 2006. Al-Amiri was murdered by U.S. troops Wednesday, an Iraqi lawmaker said. (AP Photo/Alaa al-Marjani)

Dec 27, 2006 By Khaled Farhan (Reuters)

NAJAF, Iraq

Thousands of supporters of anti-American [translation: pro-American but anti-occupation nationalist] Muqtada al-Sadr marched through the holy Iraqi city of

Najaf in an angry funeral procession after a senior Sadr aide was killed by a U.S. soldier on Wednesday.

Chanting "No to America" and carrying placards decrying U.S. occupation, mourners, including black-robed clerics, carried the coffin of Saheb al-Amiri through the streets.

Members of Sadr's group accused the Americans of provoking a confrontation and demanded a government inquiry.

Sadr officials said U.S. forces stormed Amiri's home at dawn on Wednesday and killed him in front of his wife and children. They said Amiri was a lawyer who headed a charity for orphans and the poor and was not part of the Mehdi Army.

"What happened was a crime. It comes on top of other crimes committed by occupation forces in Iraq," Nassar al-Rubaei, head of the Sadr bloc in parliament, told reporters in Baghdad.

In Najaf, Sheikh Abdul-Razzes al-Malawi, a member of Sadr's office, said: "U.S. forces want to drag us into a confrontation, but we won't be dragged into it. However, we promise them there will be a reaction at the appropriate time."

A Pentagon report this month said Mehdi Army militias were the biggest threat to Iraq's security [translation: threat to the Bush military dictatorship running Iraq].



(AP Photo/Alaa al-Marjani)

Assorted Resistance Action

27 Dec 2006 Reuters & Aljazeera & By Ali al-Nashi (VOI)

Clashes broke out in Sadiya after guerrilla soldiers attacked police checkpoints in the area, residents said. It was not immediately clear if there were any casualties.

A roadside bomb targeting a police patrol wounded three policemen in Camp Sara district in eastern Baghdad, an Interior Ministry source said.

Guerrillas attacked a bus carrying employees of the Ministry of Higher Education and wounded two of them in a drive-by shooting in Yarmouk district in western Baghdad, an Interior Ministry source said.

A roadside bomb targeting an Iraqi army patrol killed three soldiers in the town of Suwayra, 40 km (25 miles) south of Baghdad, an army source said.

Militants killed a policeman on Tuesday night in Kut, 170 km (100 miles) southeast of Baghdad.

Unknown armed fighters shot and killed on Wednesday morning a district mayor along with his driver in Karbala, Karbala acting governor said.

“Gunmen in a car shot dead today morning the mayor of Hussayniah district Hamid al-Shuraifi, while leaving his house heading for work,” the Karbala acting governor Jawad al-Hasnawi told the independent news agency Voices of Iraq (VOI).

Al-Shuraifi’s driver was also killed in the attack, the source added.

“The assailants fled the scene after the attack,” al-Hasnawi said.

Hussayniah district is 10 km north of the Shiite province of Karbala, 110 km southwest of Baghdad

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Death

From: Dennis Serdel
To: GI Special
Sent: December 27, 2006

Subject: Death

By Dennis Serdel, Vietnam 1967-68 (one tour) Light Infantry, Americal Div. 11th Brigade,
purple heart, Veterans For Peace 50 Michigan, Vietnam Veterans Against The War,
United Auto Workers GM Retiree, in Perry, Michigan

Death

Harry doesn't like this picture
blood and guts but no glory all over
death is thick in the air
it is black like gun powder
It is consuming Harry
how the hell can he get out of here
Fear is rising up from the streets
fear is an IED
They rarely fight like a man
instead they are hiding in the people
their hard eyes and cloths everywhere
Where will you go after death
Is it a dark cave you walk into
????????????????
How many question marks died today
????????????????
Who is trying to kill you
Why are they trying to kill you
????????????????
If you are religious
you go to some kind of heaven
some kind of hell
or some kind of in-between
If you are an atheist
you simply cease to exist
there is only here and if you are not here
then you are dead
All that's for sure is that your body
begins to decay, flesh falls off
leaving bones for a long time
Harry has learned what death looks like
before it is buried
or burned to ashes inside a vase
Harry still needs answers
how to get out of this place
how to just tell his Captain
he doesn't want death like this

Harry doesn't want to cause death
he chooses life instead
He doesn't want to die
or kill anymore
Is that too much to ask?
????????????????

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.

“It Is Past Time For Congress To End This SNAFU By Refusing To Appropriate Military Funding For Iraq”

From: David Honish [Veteran]
To: The Denton Record
Sent: December 27, 2006

Editor:

The President said he wanted to take the time to consider options and not rush to judgment on The Iraq Study Group's report. A shame he didn't think like that in 2003.

The commander in Iraq said additional troops were not needed and would only create more problems. Predictably, he was asked to retire and is being replaced with a guy who will bend to Whitehouse pressure for a troop increase.

The President says he wants to increase the military by 70,000? What does he not understand about three years of recruiting shortfalls? Even with relaxed standards for age, intelligence, and criminal records they cannot recruit enough warm bodies.

Colin Powell said, "So if it's grave and deteriorating and we're not winning, we are losing." Whom shall we believe on military judgment? A former chairman of the Joint Chiefs, or a former Lt. who deserted his Air National Guard unit?

Will Rogers said, "When you find yourself in a hole, stop digging." Too bad the President has not read Will Rogers. I guess reading comprehension is not the strong suit of a guy who continued to read a children's book for 9 minutes after being told of the WTC attack on 9/11?

It is past time for Congress to end this SNAFU by refusing to appropriate military funding for Iraq.

David Honish
Denton, Texas

December 28, 1971 “Members Of The Vietnam Veterans Against The War Leaving The Statue Of Liberty, Which They Had Occupied For Two Days”



(Source: Photograph Collection of the American Museum of Immigration, Liberty Island, U.S. Department of the Interior, NPS)

[This comes from the weblog maintained by James Starowicz, Veterans For Peace: imagineaworldof.blogspot.com] [From the history of the Statue Of Liberty, by the National Park Service, www.cr.nps.gov]

Tim McCormick of New Jersey and fourteen other members of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, on the afternoon of December 26, 1971, arrived on Liberty Island by the Circle Line boat along with other tourists.

But, when the last return ship to Manhattan sailed that evening, the veterans were not aboard. Instead, just before closing time, they hid among the exhibit partitions, building materials, and storage closets which were lying about the monument's base while work was being finished on the American Museum of Immigration.

When NPS personnel made their 7:30 evening check-up of the statue, they found that the veterans had seized control of the landmark and barricaded the three ground floor entrances.

The men inside refused to speak to or admit any Park Service people, but on the door they posted a typewritten statement addressed to President Richard M. Nixon:

"Each Vietnam veteran who has barricaded himself within this international symbol of liberty has for many years rationalized his attitude to war. . . . We can no longer tolerate the war in Southeast Asia. . . . Mr. Nixon, you set the date (for leaving Vietnam), we'll evacuate."

On December 27, twenty-one National Park police flew to Liberty Island from Washington where they were joined by New York City police and Coast Guardsmen. These security forces stood by while the government attempted to reach a peaceful compromise with the occupiers. They were told that they would be permitted to picket and protest on the island if they would simply vacate the statue, allowing it to reopen to visitors.

The veterans rejected the offer, flew the United States flag upside down from the statue's crown, and waited.

Law enforcement officers also waited. During that day thousands of disappointed tourists were told at the Battery that they could not go out to the statue. Congresswoman Bella Abzug (Democrat-New York) sent a telephone message of support to the demonstrators.

Meanwhile, United States Attorney Whitney North Seymour, Jr., went before District Court Judge Lawrence Pierce to request an injunction directing the veterans to open the doors, leave the statue except during regular visiting hours, and permit Park Service personnel and tourists to enter.

On the morning of December 28 Judge Pierce issued a temporary restraining order, instructing the protestors to leave the statue "forthwith."

Two hours later, after conferring with their lawyers, the veterans removed the barricades from the entrances and emerged with "clenched fists raised."

They had cleaned up their debris and caused no significant damage to the property. The monument was reopened to the public, with the first ferry-load of visitors arriving at 2:15 that afternoon.

Tim MacCormick issued a statement to the press explaining why they had picked this particular target:

“The reason we chose the Statue of Liberty is that since we were children, the statue has been analogous in our minds with freedom and an America we love.

“Then we went to fight a war in the name of freedom. We saw that freedom is a selective expression allowed only to those who are white and maintain the status quo.

“Until this symbol again takes on the meaning it was intended to have, we must continue our demonstrations. . . . “

MORE:

A Vietnam Veteran Who Occupied The Statue Of Liberty Remembers; An Iraq Veteran Against The War Understands

December 24, 2006 By Tim Blangger Of The Morning Call

Nestled in a corner of a tiny Carbon County hollow, between an unnamed hill and an unnamed stream, Paul Fichter's home sits in quiet, exurban isolation. His lawn, a collection of lush ferns scattered among mature pine trees, is calming, meditative.

But climb the steps of Fichter's simple wooden porch and the mood changes. Next to the door, a three-foot-long Air Force missile pierces the weather-worn trailer's side at combat-ready angle, its fin end exposed.

Granted, Fichter's eccentric outdoor inventory includes a miniature Arc de Triomphe model encased in a backyard terrarium, twin Buddha-like statues, an Allentown fire hydrant and one of the city's discarded Call Box emergency telephones, the last two bought at auction.

But the missile ...

The ordnance helps Fichter disguise damage a falling tree did to his trailer several years ago. The outside of the trailer looks fine, but inside, the damage is more apparent. The roof still leaks.

For those who know Fichter, the missile also recalls the Vietnam War and the effect it had on him. He was one of 15 veterans who occupied the Statue of Liberty for three nights and two days over the Christmas holiday 35 years ago, starting on Christmas Eve.

Fichter looks good for a 61-year-old. He's stopped drinking but still smokes. He ties his long, silver-gray hair in a ponytail. When he thinks, he sometimes strokes his substantial gray beard. The war, that war, for good or bad, plays a big part in who he is.

A star football player at Emmaus High School — he was starting offensive end on the 1962 team that shared a league championship with football powerhouse Northampton that year — he was drafted after he failed to register for classes at Moravian College, which he attended for a year.

After a year in the Army, he decided to volunteer for duty in Vietnam, in part, he says, because he liked the anti-authoritarian air the veterans returning from the war displayed. He wasn't very political or even all that upset about being drafted, he remembers

But the year Fichter spent in Vietnam turned out to be a traumatic experience. When he talks about it today, his voice changes, takes on a once-removed quality. "You just didn't know who the enemy was," he says, haltingly.

Friends of Fichter's from Emmaus also served in Vietnam. But Bill Trotter, his football teammate, thinks the experience especially affected Fichter.

"He was always a very intelligent, very introspective guy. I think he had much more of a difficult time adjusting," says Trotter, now a partner in the Hotel Bethlehem. "He thought about a lot of things and I saw that intensified when he came back. He thought a lot about his experiences and it had a deep impact on him."

The decision to become part of the anti-war movement was a slow process for Fichter.

When he came home, he decided not to marry or have children. "I was in no condition to marry anyone. I knew of the problems, of what happened when guys tried," he says.

"I came to realize that, basically, I came home to a parade, which is to say Emmaus in 1968 was an environment that was still in favor of the war. I received slaps on the back and handshakes and 'Nice job; well done, lad' for what had been the most morally abominable thing I had ever done or ever hoped to do."

One night in the spring of 1971 — he remembers it was a Monday, for some reason — Fichter caught bits of a national news report from Washington, D.C., where an anti-war group, the Vietnam Veterans Against The War, was camping on The Ellipse and returning war medals.

The vets sardonically called their non-violent "assault on Congress," as Fichter puts it, Dewey Canyon III, a reference to Dewey Canyon II, the military code name given to a secret operation in Laos, Vietnam's neighbor, which began earlier that same year.

Fichter was moved by what he saw in the coverage of that event, especially images of Vietnam Vets and Gold Star mothers, women who lost sons in the war, being turned away from the iron gates of the Arlington National Cemetery, where they had wanted to hold a demonstration.

"I came to a rapid conclusion," he recalls. "If I was going to be involved in any capacity beyond an individual effort, this would be the organization."

The next day, he arranged for a leave of absence from his construction job and drove to Washington to join the Dewey Canyon vets.

That trip began his involvement with the group, which included attending dozens of gatherings, conventions and protests.

Almost by chance, he came to be among the veterans who occupied the Statue of Liberty.

He first learned of the planned action at a peace encampment at Valley Forge, outside of Philadelphia.

"I was quietly approached and told that if I wanted to take part, I should be at a certain time and place the next day," Fichter recalls. Once they were there, the group still wasn't told of its final destination, although Fichter says at least a few of the veterans knew the details.

He believes the secrecy had much to do with a widely held belief among the vets that the government had spies inside the anti-war movement.

"There was a general expectation that we were going to spend some significant time in prison for our actions," Fichter says. The vets feared the Nixon administration would bring down the full weight of the federal government on them, he says.

The Statue of Liberty occupation coincided with other veteran actions around the country, including a protest in which several veterans chained themselves to the fence near the Betsy Ross house in Philadelphia.

Fichter's group stopped at a home in northern New Jersey — Fichter isn't sure exactly where — and the group made sandwiches, which they stuffed into the pockets of their jungle fatigues. Then they drove to Manhattan and boarded the last ferry of the day to Bedloe's Island.

The 15 men ascended the Statue of Liberty then hid in the arm, which was undergoing repairs, and waited until the staff of the National Park Service left the island.

"We wanted to stay in the statue until the war ended, but we knew that was fairly optimistic," he says. One of the vets, armed with a roll of dimes, went to the pay

phone in the statue's lobby and began calling media outlets. Within hours, the occupation was national news.

The event itself was actually uneventful. The vets didn't want to damage the statue, just draw attention to their opposition to the war.

The vets ate sandwiches and drank instant coffee, which they found in the canteen area of the statue.

They held a news conference and discussed the occupation with officials from the National Park Service.

Bill Garvin, one of Fichter's best buddies, took an American flag from the lobby and climbed out onto the statue, hanging the flag upside down — an international symbol of distress. The image made many newspapers the following day.

"We tried to keep a focus," Fichter says. "We weren't against the American people or the people who worked for the National Park Service. We showed that we were some human beings who were trying to end the war."

The vets negotiated with park officials and, after three days, they left as a group, returning on a ferry to Manhattan. They had taken up a collection among themselves and left the money for the coffee they drank. They also left a note apologizing for any inconvenience they might have caused park workers.

No charges were filed.

In the end, says Fichter, there was no "mindless cheering and shouting." A few other vets met the occupiers as they returned and there was a press conference at a local restaurant. Mostly, the protestors were hungry.

"We hadn't won. The question was, did we do anything? We had tried. That was our perspective," says Fichter.

Fichter continued to work with Vietnam Veterans Against the War but eventually came to realize he had to stop.

"I began to burn out," he says. "I continued with local actions, but the torch was being passed. I was no longer able to function that well. I had encountered too much."

A few weeks after the occupation, Fichter says, the Allentown office of the FBI called, leaving a message with his mother, Muriel, an English teacher at Emmaus High School. They wanted to interview Fichter — "interview being an interesting euphemism," he says.

They didn't ask about the statue occupation, Fichter says, but wanted to know about his involvement in the veterans' peace group.

The interview "contributed to the hastening of my psychological decline," Fichter says.

Vietnam began his descent, but it wasn't until 40 years after his return that he took steps to arrest it.

Three years ago, at the start of direct U.S. involvement in Iraq, Fichter sought help from the Veterans Administration for the first time.

Fichter says the Iraqi war may have contributed to his mounting emotional problems. He can't say for sure. Doctors told him to stop following the news because doing so might upset him.

He was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress syndrome and began taking medication. He makes a point of praising his VA doctors and the help he's received.

He is now semi-retired from his landscaping and handyman jobs, collecting disability benefits.

Fichter's delayed reaction to his post-traumatic stress syndrome doesn't surprise veteran Michael Hoffman, also from Emmaus, who experienced a similar, if not quite so delayed, reaction from his Iraqi tour of duty.

"At first I was happy to be back, but slowly, I started having problems," says Hoffman, 26, who now lives outside of Philadelphia. "I started drinking continually and started having nightmares. I realized something was wrong. I was never for the war, but I had the usual soldier's mentality. I had orders. I followed the orders, and then I got to go home."

Reluctantly at first, Hoffman started speaking out against the war, then the 1997 Emmaus High School grad became one of the founding members of Iraqi Veterans Against The War.

Veterans from both Vietnam and the Iraq conflict have made strong connections, Hoffman says. "So many of the Vietnam Vets devoted their lives after Vietnam to making sure it didn't happen again. Now, they're watching my generation fight a war they swore they would never allow. It is literally killing them inside. I'm seeing Vietnam Vets who were clean and sober for years go back to drinking. Iraq is making them relive Vietnam."

Less than four years into the Iraq war, Iraqi veterans are speaking out against it, says Frank Corcoran, a Vietnam veteran who volunteers for Veterans for Peace, a Philadelphia-based group opposed to the Iraq war.

The Iraqi Veterans Against the War held national planning sessions last January in Philadelphia. A series of informational meetings, to get their word out, followed, says Corcoran.

"Most of our members are out of the service and actively speaking out," says Corcoran. "We're a lot of ex-Marines, ex-medics, folks who were deep into" the war.

That Iraqi vets are voicing their opposition to the war doesn't surprise Ted Morgan, a political science professor at Lehigh University, who teaches courses on the Vietnam war.

Opposition to the war among Vietnam vets was a "historically unprecedented movement in the military. It took an enormous breaking through of people's consciousness. Before Vietnam, there was a very strong consensus in the country that the United States could do no wrong overseas." Vietnam Veterans were part of changing public opinion, Morgan says.

"Vets in the (Vietnam) war, whether they were in the VVAW or not, were not viewed as anti-war people but as really important voices in the movement. They had super credibility for what they were saying because they had been there, engaged in combat and had seen it first hand."

In a storage room in his trailer, Fichter keeps a box of booklets and flyers from his days in Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and he has been thinking about looking through it for the first time since he ended his involvement.

"Those were some good times," he says. "I'd like to work on the differences between the VVAW in big cities and smaller towns. A lot of the vets from the bigger cities were socialists. Guys like me from the smaller towns, we worked at Bethlehem Steel. We didn't want to end capitalism. We wanted to end the war."

Fichter is also slowly working his way back. He's happy in his home — "Hovel, Sweet Hovel," a sign near his door reads — calmly talking about this being where he wants to settle for the rest of his life. A small stream runs behind the property and a series of landscaping lights flicker off the water at night.

He watches the stream from a window, sitting in a barber's chair in his living room, between two bookcases. One holds books about Vietnam and a few war mementoes, including a helmet Fichter wore when he served as a military policeman. The other bookcase has a Civil War theme. "I guess I was looking for something, a war that had some meaning," Fichter says of his interest in the 19th-century war between the states.

A third bookcase, the largest of the three, holds hundreds of dusty folk recordings, mostly on long-playing, 331/3 records. The large television near the chair is dark and silent. Folk music from a satellite radio station floats in the background.

At last, Paul Fichter may have found his peace.

OCCUPATION REPORT

U.S. OCCUPATION RECRUITING DRIVE IN HIGH GEAR;

RECRUITING FOR THE ARMED RESISTANCE THAT IS



An Iraqi child is forced out of his home into the street while foreign occupation soldiers from Company A of the 5th Battalion, 20th U.S. Infantry Regiment guard the exterior gate. Other soldiers search through his family's belongings inside their home in New Baghdad, Dec. 27, 2006. (AP Photo/Darko Vojinovic)

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

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

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

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

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<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)

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