

GI SPECIAL 4L26:



12-4-06

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

**“I Don’t Like The Way
They Fight, But I’d Do
The Same Thing If
Someone Was
Occupying My Country”**

December 26, 2006 By Will Weissert, The Associated Press [Excerpts]

RAMADI, Iraq — Spc. Brent Everson was just a few steps from safety.

The 22-year-old from Florence, Mont., was climbing out of a tank, near the entrance to a U.S. outpost called Sword when a sniper's 7.62-millimeter bullet hit him just above his Kevlar vest, tearing into his shoulder and through his back. He fell back into the tank — wounded but alive.

On the roof of the outpost, Army gunners returned fire. But the sniper probably already was gone.

“This guy knew what he was doing,” said Staff Sgt. Jeremy Gann, who like Everson is assigned to Company C of the Army’s 1st Battalion, 37th Armor Regiment.

“You get some guys with rifles who wake up and just want to take shots at Americans. But they don’t aim around body armor,” he said, speculating that the sniper’s gun had a telescopic sight.

Everson was taken by helicopter to a hospital north of Baghdad and survived.

He was the fourth sniper victim since September among 40 soldiers assigned to Sword, a sandbagged mansion in south-central Ramadi. All were hit within a few yards of the outpost.

A problem since the start of the war, soldiers and senior officers say the threat from snipers has intensified in recent months.

Insurgent gunmen have honed their skills and acquired better equipment, notably night-vision rifle scopes to target U.S. troops after the sun goes down.

For Marines and soldiers targeted by the gunmen, the shots chip away at their morale, one crack of a rifle at a time.

“People are just tired of this. They’re frustrated,” said Sgt. Benjamin lobst, who lives at Sword. “It’s like trying to find a fly in a forest.”

lobst said the problem in Anbar Province has become so serious that military experts recently visited Sword to study snipers in the area, in hopes of developing ways to counter the threat.

Lt. Gerard Dow, the highest-ranking soldier at Sword, said Americans usually move through Ramadi at night to minimize the risk. But now some gunmen use night-vision scopes so they can strike anytime.

“We know the best ones have it,” he said.

During a week of interviews, soldiers at Sword spoke repeatedly about the snipers outside their gates.

Subsequent discussions with Marines and commanders across Anbar revealed that the threat is widespread.

“We don’t even have snipers that good,” lobst said.

Some of the snipers learned their basic craft when they served in Saddam's army. But there's also open concern among Americans that the training of the current Iraqi army — at U.S.-operated camps — is spreading skills that are turned against U.S. forces.

“I don't like the way they fight, but I'd do the same thing if someone was occupying my country,” said Cpl. Sean J. Egger, also part of the 1st Battalion, 37th Armor Regiment.

Egger was the gunner atop a Humvee near Ramadi's defunct train station in August. The bullet whizzed past him by inches but struck his machine gun, sending shrapnel into his face.

Safety glasses spared his vision, but Egger will need surgery after he leaves Iraq to remove a half dozen pieces of shrapnel still lodged in his face.

Troops try to make themselves tougher targets for snipers by zigzagging when they walk and never standing in one place for longer than a few seconds.

But the best snipers will wait for hours, often near natural obstacles where U.S. troops might be forced to pause.

They crouch in alleys, abandoned buildings, or force their way into many homes at gunpoint, firing from holes they punch in walls or windows. They also fire from holes in cars.

One gang [translation: group of resistance soldiers] in Ramadi had vehicle with a bumper rigged so it could be lowered for the sniper inside to squeeze off a few rounds undetected.

They shoot once and vanish, picking up their “brass,” or rifle casings, and covering the holes from which they fire.

Even when they fail to kill, wounding is enough to disrupt military operations for hours, while the casualty is evacuated.

And the subsequent search for the sniper is usually an exercise in frustration, sometimes impossible to contain.

Shortly before midnight after Everson was hit, 20 Americans and six Iraqi soldiers left Sword to sweep through homes just to the east, the possible origin of the shot.

Much of Ramadi is without power after dark and the few remaining residents near Sword were huddled by candlelight in their living rooms when the angry soldiers broke down their doors.

“Yes, yes,” they breathed with terrified voices — it was all the English they knew.

In some homes, soldiers demanded information through an interpreter without doing much damage.

In others, they broke windows, overturned couches and ripped pictures off the wall as they searched. Iraqi troops casually tossed lit cigarettes onto woven carpets.

“You know when somebody comes in and shoots at us! You know who the outsiders are!” bellowed Lt. Dow. “Tell us!”

“I am a taxi driver,” stammered Wabeel Haqqay, who lives with his elderly father. “I am gone all day and know nothing.”

As is often the case, no one offered any information on the sniper and insisted insurgents come from other parts of the city.

But on the roof of an abandoned house, soldiers discovered a hole, cut into a wall and concealed by cinderblocks. It yielded a perfect view of Sword and was just big enough for a rifle and scope.

A line of soldiers kicked the crumbling brick wall until it gave way.

“Feels good, doesn’t it?” Dow grinned.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Baghdad IED Kills One Soldier, Two Wounded

30 December 2006 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory
RELEASE No. 20061230-02

BAGHDAD – An improvised explosive device detonated near a Multi-National Division - Baghdad patrol, killing one Soldier in a northwestern section of the Iraqi capital Dec. 29.

The unit was conducting a combat security patrol when a roadside bomb exploded near them, killing one Soldier and wounding two others.

Baghdad IED Kills One Soldier, Three Wounded

30 December 2006 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory
RELEASE No. 20061230-04

BAGHDAD – An improvised explosive device detonated near a Multi-National Division - Baghdad patrol, killing one Soldier in a southwestern section of the Iraqi capital Dec. 29.

The unit was conducting battlefield circulation when a roadside bomb exploded near them, killing one Soldier and wounding three others.

West Bend Soldier Killed In Iraq

December 20, 2006 The Reporter Staff and The Associated Press

CAMPBELLSPORT — Staff and residents of St. Joseph Convent in Campbellsport are mourning the death of an employee's son killed in Iraq.

Marine Corps Capt. Kevin M. Kryst, 27, of West Bend, was killed in combat Monday in al-Anbar province, Iraq. His mother, Elizabeth Kryst, is a certified nursing assistant at St. Joseph's.

Kevin Kryst was assigned to Marine Helicopter Squadron 267, Marine Aircraft Group 39, Third Wing, First Marine Expeditionary Force in Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Funeral arrangements are pending.

Kryst was killed only weeks after beginning his second deployment there, his mother said Tuesday.

"He died from injuries due to being hit by a fragment of a mortar," Elizabeth Kryst said.

"We're proud of him," she said. "But we're at a loss without him."

Kryst was the oldest of six children. He had four younger brothers and a younger sister.

He graduated from West Bend West High School in 1997 and the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2001. He enlisted upon graduation.

Kryst's great-grandfather had been a Marine. "It was something he always wanted to do," Elizabeth Kryst said.

Kryst was first deployed in Iraq during 2004.

"He was always very active, very busy. He had a need for speed, and that's why he got flying helicopters," Elizabeth Kryst said.

Her son was part of the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, she said.

The unit's Web site had a statement posted Dec. 4, in which it said it had established its headquarters at Camp Korean Village near Rutbah and begun counterinsurgency operations to neutralize anti-Iraq forces in the province.

Patrick Gardon, West Bend West principal, issued a statement Tuesday saying that Kryst had been on the school's swimming team and part of its wind ensemble.

"He was very proud to serve his country and was a quality individual of high character, dedication and commitment, as well as an excellent student," Gardon said.

As of Tuesday, 64 military personnel from Wisconsin have died in the war in Iraq.

Funeral, Burial In Great Falls For Slain Marine

Dec 22, 2006 (AP)

GREAT FALLS, Mont. A Marine from Colorado who was killed in Iraq will be buried near his grandfathers in Mount Olivet Cemetery here on Dec. 30.

Lance Cpl. Nick Palmer, 19, of Leadville, Colo., was killed by a sniper in Al Anbar province on Dec. 16.

Brad Palmer said he knew the news was bad when two Marines in uniform showed up on his doorstep last Saturday afternoon.

"We were hoping it was just a severe injury, but he was killed instantly by one shot from a sniper," he said.

Nick Palmer was born in Great Falls, then moved to Colorado with his parents, Brad and Rachele Palmer.

He reported for boot camp in August 2005 and graduated in November, said his father. He was deployed to Iraq in July.

"He was a combat engineer, but he was running a .50-caliber machine gun on the back of a Humvee," Brad Palmer said.

"Several times he told us he was a target, and I guess he was right."

Rachele Palmer said she was shocked to learn that the bodies of 17 other soldiers were on the airplane bringing her son's body from Iraq to Dover, Del.

A rosary will be recited in Leadville, Colo., Tuesday, followed by a funeral service on Wednesday.

Then his body will be flown to Great Falls for another funeral service, at 10 a.m. on Dec. 30 at Holy Spirit Catholic Church, followed by burial near his grandfathers' plots at Mount Olivet Cemetery. "My father (Gordon A. Palmer), who was in the Navy, and my wife's father (Louis F. Hackler), who was in the Air Force at Pearl Harbor, are both buried at Mount Olivet," Brad Palmer said.

UNREMITTING HELL ON EARTH; BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



Seventh Squadron of the 10th Cavalry Regiment soldiers secure the perimeter as a Blackhawk helicopter takes off from Saba'a al-Bour, 18 miles northwest of Baghdad, Oct 28, 2006. (AP Photo/Christopher Bodeen)

Notes From A Lost War:

Insurgent Snipers Hunt Marines: “We Take One Off, There Seems To Be Another To Take His Place,’ Smith Said”

December 28, 2006 By Tony Perry, L.A. Times Staff Writer

Along MSR Mobile, Outside Fallouja, Iraq: The battle for this desolate stretch of road east of Fallouja is relentless: Twenty-four hours a day, Marines lumber up and down the six-lane freeway in 23-ton amphibious assault vehicles, looking for bombs and dodging snipers.

The shadowy gunmen are a constant menace on MSR Mobile, short for Main Supply Route Mobile, so dubbed because it serves as a main link between several U.S. bases here in Al Anbar province.

In the last two weeks, two Marines with Company B of the 2nd Assault Amphibian Battalion from Camp Lejeune, N.C., have fallen to snipers' bullets: Lance Cpl. Luke Yepsen, 20, of Brazos, Texas, and Cpl. Joshua Pickard, 20, of Merced, Calif.

Marines suspect the same sniper killed Yepsen and Pickard.

"I hope he shows up today — I'd like to blast his ass," Sgt. Clayton Chism, 26, of Prentiss, Miss., said at the beginning of a patrol involving 14 Marines and three vehicles from the battalion's Team Gator.

The mission on the road linking Fallouja to Baghdad could be seen as a microcosm of the Marine mission in Al Anbar: nothing likely to be made into a Hollywood war movie, just a "persistent presence" to wear down the insurgency.

But there are moments of adrenalin-pumping drama. On this day, the Marines shot an Iraqi spotted planting a roadside bomb. When Lance Cpl. William Shaw was lifting the wounded Iraqi into a vehicle to be taken to a field hospital, the Marine was shot in the back by a sniper.

The round struck the back plate in the flak vest worn by the 22-year-old from Fort Bend, Texas. A few inches lower, and Shaw might have been killed or his spine severed.

The explosive ordnance detail was called to examine the bomb. It was fake.

Fake bombs are a recent wrinkle in the insurgents' game plan. The strategy, apparently, is to fire at Marines who arrive to neutralize the devices.

Navy trauma doctors who have treated wounded Marines say the snipers have also learned how to find vulnerable spots not covered by protective plates.

"We're not bionic men," said Gunnery Sgt. Justin Smith, 32, of Boston.

Several sniper shootings have taken place nearby. Marines suspect that insurgents use low-slung buildings parallel to the freeway as a staging ground and a place to make bombs.

The Marines raided the buildings recently and detained dozens of Iraqis. Some Marines had hoped to get permission to demolish the buildings, but that was denied by upper authority.

"It's like being in the U.S. and having a public park being used by drug dealers," said Capt. Eric Dominijanni, 34, of New York, commander of B Company. "Not everybody there is a drug dealer, and you can't destroy the park."

Chism's three-vehicle convoy arrived to provide additional security for the Marines. Inside one vehicle, nicknamed "Event Horizon," after a sci-fi movie, three Marines waited to respond if the searchers were attacked.

Protecting MSR Mobile is sometimes boring.

For four hours, they waited. "It was a good day: not much action," said Cpl. Dennis Bryant, 21, of Kodiak, Alaska. "Everybody came back OK."

Navy corpsman Raymond Casas, 35, of Victoria, Texas, was hit by a sniper round in the upper chest while on a mission just off the freeway. The bullet hit his M-16 and then the fabric of his protective vest, leaving Casas with a deep gouge in his Grim Reaper tattoo.

Casas said he felt a sharp sting in his chest and immediately went on the radio to report he'd been hit. "I was more mad than hurt," he said. He knows that if the bullet hadn't been deflected by his M-16, he'd be dead. "I was lucky, I guess."

Although the sniper thought to have killed Yepsen and Pickard is still at large, the Marines here have killed and captured numerous snipers and bombers.

"We take one off, there seems to be another to take his place," Smith said.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Estonian Soldier Wounded In Afghan Insurgent Attack

Dec 29 AFP News

An Estonian soldier was hurt in Afghanistan's troubled southern Helmand province as insurgents attacked troops from the Baltic state who are part of the NATO-led ISAF force, officials said.

"The Estonian soldiers came under handgun and mortar fire attack Wednesday evening in Helmand province when a unit was returning to base from escorting a convoy," the Estonian defence forces said in a statement issued in Tallinn.

"The life of the soldier is not in danger," the statement said on Thursday.

<p>OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME NOW!</p>
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TROOP NEWS

“The Troops Are Coming To The Conclusion Their Blood Is Being Spilled To Support The Multinational Oil Companies”

[Thanks to Bunkie, Veterans Against The Iraq War, who sent this in. She writes: i know this father. we will be hearing a lot more from him! good thing cause only he, relatives and the troops can share the truth with us all! peace, Bunkie]

December 30, 2006 By L. (Father-In-Law Of Soldier), Veterans Against The Iraq War

I got this right from the horse's mouth so to speak.

One of my sons-in-law is a Major serving in Baghdad. He's home on leave and has been volunteering a lot of information about what life is really like over there. It is frightening to say the least.

The troops are coming to the conclusion their blood is being spilled to support the multinational oil companies.

This is a big change from last year, when he told me they were fighting for liberty and freedom, US and Iraqi.

He also told me that instead of killing Saddam, They should have put Saddam back into power. Yes, he was a horrible dictator but the country was safe and prosperous for the vast majority of Iraqis. It is not like that today. The country is so torn apart socially and so destroyed physically it will take decades to recover if it ever does.

He's been there for 1.5 years and has at least another 6 months to go. They threatened him into staying beyond his one-year original tour by telling him if he came home at the end of the first year he would lose his job in the Green Zone and be sent back within 6 weeks as an infantry commander. Some choice.

What the Neocons are doing is an absolute crime. I hope the German courts prosecute, convict, and hang them.

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

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



The coffin of Nicaragua-born U.S. army soldier Roger Suarez Gonzales during his funeral service in Boaco city, Nicaragua December 21, 2006. Suarez was killed in Iraq. REUTERS/Oswaldo Rivas (NICARAGUA)

Third Time's The Harm: Soldier In Chicago Refusing To Report For 3rd Tour In Iraq

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

"I find it appalling that two days prior to my final exams, two years after any formal training, and with two tours of combat duty served, the U.S. military would even consider reactivating myself or any soldier," he said. "To ask that of any veteran is crazy."

December 28, 2006 BY DAVE NEWBART Staff Reporter, Chicago Sun-Times

After two tours of duty in Afghanistan, Steven Henderson says his latest callup 'not to exceed 545 days' in Iraq is asking too much.

Steven Henderson served his country during two tours of duty as an Army sergeant in Afghanistan -- repeatedly coming under enemy fire and seeing fellow soldiers maimed and U.S. helicopters gunned down.

The Chicago native is back home now after being honorably discharged 20 months ago. He's married and working toward a college degree -- but the Army has called upon him again.

A letter he received two weeks before Christmas orders him to report to Fort Benning, Ga., by Jan. 14. Under the order, he is required to fight in Iraq for a period "not to exceed 545 days."

But this time, Henderson says he will not serve his country.

"It would take a miracle for me to put on a uniform again and to carry a weapon in Iraq," he said. "I have no intentions of going to Iraq."

Henderson, 34, mailed off an appeal to the military Wednesday in hopes he can get out of the obligation.

He already completed four years of active duty, including 17 months in operations all over Afghanistan.

He received several commendations and even appears in Not a Good Day to Die, a book about Operation Anaconda, a U.S.-led assault in eastern Afghanistan in 2002. The book recounts an operation where Henderson and another soldier survived heavy enemy fire. "That was the longest 18 hours of my life," he recalled.

Henderson married a woman from Ecuador, and she is awaiting a visa to come to the United States with a child from a previous relationship.

He's also currently studying business at Northern Illinois University and hopes to eventually go to law school.

"I find it appalling that two days prior to my final exams, two years after any formal training, and with two tours of combat duty served, the U.S. military would even consider reactivating myself or any soldier," he said. "To ask that of any veteran is crazy."

But it's allowed under the contract all enlistees sign. Soldiers can be called into active duty anytime within eight years of signing up, said Bryan Hilferty, an Army personnel spokesman at the Pentagon.

Since the involuntary mobilizations started in the summer of 2004, about 11,000 soldiers have been called back into duty, more than in any previous war, Hilferty said. But 4,600

have been granted delays or hardship exemptions, and only 6,000 have been deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan.

At her Olympia Fields home Wednesday, Henderson's mother, Kathleen White, teared up when thinking that her only son could end up back in harm's way.

His stepfather, Herbert White, who relies on his stepson for help around the house as he awaits a liver transplant, said he was worried about his son going abroad for potentially the third time.

"How many chances does he have before something really bad happens? I'm afraid this will be the third strike."

“Bear Silent Witness Of Honor To Another Troubling Milestone, The Number 3000th Military Death”

Dec 30, 2006 By James Starowicz, Veterans For Peace, Dailykos.com

A number of Groups, in coalition, are calling for us to Bear Silent Witness of Honor to another troubling milestone, the number 3000th Military Death in this War in Iraq, and to make a statement of **"Not One More Death, Not One More Dollar,"** you can click on that link <http://www.afsc.org/3000/> to find an already planned event near you or add your own event so others in your area can find the location and join in. You can find Resources and Event Ideas **HERE: <http://afsc.org/3000/resources.htm>**

We must bear witness to this tragic milestone, even though many people are already beginning their celebrations of the New Year.

And when we do take action on this occasion, we must remind others that hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children, women and men have also died in this outrageous war and occupation.

Our call to end this war and to bring all the troops home now must be heard in every corner of the country!

The killing must stop.

What I would like to see, though I probably will not stay up, is at the Stroke of One Second Past Twelve Midnight tomorrow night that Huge Portions Of, or the Whole Time Square Crowd 'FALL SILENT' with Lite Candles, in Silent Prayer or Thought, of Peace and Respect for the Deaths and Maimings We Have Caused In Iraq To The Iraqi People

and Our Own Military Personal because of the Greed and Wants of a Handful of Extremely Misguided Group which will cause this Nation and the World long lasting Extremely Negative Results!!

Saddam Is Dead, Was All This, And Continuing, Worth That????

MORE:

**Tuesday January 2, 2007, 6:00 to 7:30
PM:
Vigil At Grand Army Plaza, Brooklyn
As The 3000th U.S. Soldier Dies In
Iraq**

December 30, 2006 Brooklyn Parents for Peace

Come together with us in sorrow and anger to mourn the loss of all lives, American and Iraqi, civilian and military, in this senseless and wasteful war.

National demonstrations marking this grim milestone, coordinated by American Friends Service Committee.

RSVP to let us know you'll be coming, or just show up.

Invite your family and friends.

We'll provide signs with names of Iraqis and Americans who have died, candles, and black armbands.

For more information, e-mail iraq@brooklynpeace.org or call 718-624-5921.

**“My Hunt For Bin Laden”
“We Cannot Beat Guerilla Fighters
Who Are Fighting For Their Homes
And Their Ancient Cultures”**

December 23rd, 2006 by Michael Cuzzort, SGT, IWR, ivawdeployed.org,
Michaelmoore.com

Let me start off by saying that I am an Afghanistan Veteran, but it was never my job to find bin Laden.

I use this title to show the naivety of the average soldier.

When I signed up for the Army Reserves at seventeen, in 1999, I couldn't help but to fantasize about serving my country in a war one day. Then, years later, as I was standing on an Afghan mountaintop in 2002, I couldn't help but to fantasize about actually seeing bin Laden and capturing or killing him.

I imagine that this thought went through the heads of thousands of Joes in this most unpleasant country. This was less than a year after 9-11 and we had our entire country and most of the world supporting us. bin Laden was public enemy number one. At least that is what the media told us.

I spent six months in Qatar, from February to August 2002, and two weeks in Afghanistan in June during Operation Anaconda.

I went on civil affairs patrols with Coalition Joint Civil Military Operations Task Force. This was hailed to be the civil affairs of modern warfare, and civil affairs would go on patrols with infantry and Special Forces. But what this really was was a fast-food approach to reconstruction.

Civil affairs would blaze through villages as fast as the infantry units and, basically, pay off warlords to rebuild their villages. Since there was no thorough check-ups, many warlords obviously took the money for damaged schools, wells, etc. and spent it on guns and bombs, thus the resurgence of the Taliban. One school that we were checking up on still had no electricity, no floors, no windows, no books and the out-house was rancid.

When I returned to Qatar, I moved to a base that was sending huge shipments of military vehicles and war machines to Kuwait. This was in June 2002. I was told that the vehicles were being sent there for inspections, but there were full-time mechanics working on those vehicles for over a decade.

Not to mention the fact that there was an entire section of the base that required a security clearance to enter. Inside there was a large Special Forces unit that was planning the shipping operations. The base was used since Desert Storm as an equipment storage site and this was nine months after the invasion of Afghanistan.

After nine months of our troops dying, they are finally just getting the vehicles sent for inspection? When I was in Afghanistan, we went on a convoy with one confiscated Taliban truck and an old Army CUT-V, which is an OD green Ford Bronco, and here are all of these vehicles on their way to Kuwait. Things were not adding up.

When I returned home, all of the media attention seemed to be focusing more and more on Saddam Hussein. There did not seem to be very much debate allowed on mainstream media in defense of Iraq, even though there was the biggest world-wide protest in human history.

I started to think about the soldiers in Afghanistan. I wondered how this made them feel. I know that it made me very depressed, and I had only been to Afghanistan for two weeks and that was almost a year before the invasion of Iraq.

I started to wonder, if I had died in Afghanistan, what would be the point? Then I wondered, what would be the point of dying in Iraq?

I came to the conclusion that there was no point. This was hard for me because I had decided in Afghanistan that I would be willing to die for my country. I just thought that something good would come from it.

Since I've come to this conclusion, there have been hundreds of thousands of deaths that all seem so senseless.

There seemed to be so much promise in 2002. I planned on going back to Afghanistan in five years to see all of the progress that we helped make. Unfortunately, I don't think that there will be much progress by June 2007.

I was willing to die for my country in Afghanistan before we started an illegal war in Iraq. Now I realize that even the Afghanistan War is pointless.

We cannot beat guerilla fighters who are fighting for their homes and their ancient cultures.

We could have done more to help rebuild Afghanistan with economic aid than bombs. We could have stopped terrorist training there by giving people hope for a decent life. We could have had Afghans searching for bin Laden to pay us back for helping them. But in order to seek out a disgustingly greedy agenda in Iraq, we gave up the hunt for bin Laden.

Michael Dean Cuzzort, Jr.
SGT, IWR
www.ivawdeployed.org



**“I Am A Veteran Of The War In Iraq
And I Want To Thank You Very Much
For What You Are Doing”**

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

From: Sally Davison, Veterans For Peace
Sent: December 29, 2006

From Nancy Nygard, whose son is serving in Afghanistan:

Just a short note to let you know, at our vigil this past Wednesday, in front of the Teaneck Armory, we were doing our usual thing and the cars were honking, as usual, when a police car pulled up and turned his flashing lights on and stopped.

I thought, as did most of us, oh no, what did we do wrong?

The officer turned on his loudspeaker system and said, "I am a veteran of the war in Iraq and I want to thank you very much for what you are doing".

He then sped away!!!

We all stood there with our mouths open not believing what he just said.

We then realized and started yelling and laughing and even crying!!

It was one of the highlights of our year and a half standing out on the corner trying to bring attention to our "nation at war".

That one moment has made it all worth it.

Peace, Nancy

MORE:

A Soldier Says It Too

This is another one:

Yesterday, Dec. 29, Robert Maslansky, the M.D. from my clinic at Bellevue Hospital, treated the whole clinic staff to a fine Holiday dinner at a New York City restaurant on 23rd St. He does this every year.

New York City doesn't allow smoking inside buildings, so about 6 p.m. I went out to the sidewalk for a smoke. I was wearing an Iraq Veterans Against The War t-shirt, and no coat, the weather being unusually warm for December.

A young man stopped and stared at me, real hard and serious. He looked to be in his 20s. I had no idea what this was about.

He said, "I'm in the Army; thank you for wearing that t-shirt." Before I could gather my wits, he was gone down the street.

Poll Finds Military Leadership Shifting Against Bush And The War

The results should not be read as representative of the military as a whole; the survey's respondents are on average older, more experienced, more likely to be officers and more career-oriented than the overall military population.

[Thanks to Ward Reilly, Veterans For Peace, who sent this in.]

December 29, 2006 By Robert Hoderne, Military Times Senior managing editor
[Excerpts]

The American military — once a staunch supporter of President Bush and the Iraq war — has grown increasingly pessimistic about chances for victory, according to the 2006 Military Times Poll..

For the first time, more troops disapprove of the president's handling of the war than approve of it. Barely one-third of service members approve of the way the president is handling the war.

When the military was feeling most optimistic about the war — in 2004 — 83 percent of poll respondents thought success in Iraq was likely. This year, that number has shrunk to 50 percent.

Only 35 percent of the military members polled this year said they approve of the way President Bush is handling the war, while 42 percent said they disapproved.

The president's approval rating among the military is only slightly higher than for the population as a whole. In 2004, when his popularity peaked, 63 percent of the military approved of Bush's handling of the war.

Just as telling, in this year's poll only 41 percent of the military said the U.S. should have gone to war in Iraq in the first place, down from 65 percent in 2003.

That closely reflects the beliefs of the general population today — 45 percent agreed in a recent USA Today/Gallup poll.

Professor David Segal, director of the Center for Research on Military Organization at the University of Maryland, was not surprised by the changing attitude within the military.

"They're seeing more casualties and fatalities and less progress," Segal said.

Whatever war plan the president comes up with later this month, it likely will have the replacement of American troops with Iraqis as its ultimate goal. The military is not optimistic that will happen soon.

Almost half of those responding think we need more troops in Iraq than we have there now.

But while they want more troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, nearly three-quarters of the respondents think today's military is stretched too thin to be effective.

The results should not be read as representative of the military as a whole; the survey's respondents are on average older, more experienced, more likely to be officers and more career-oriented than the overall military population.

Among the respondents, 66 percent have deployed at least once to Iraq or Afghanistan. In the overall active-duty force, according to the Department of Defense, that number is 72 percent.

While President Bush always portrays the war in Iraq as part of the larger war on terrorism, many in the military are not convinced. The respondents were split evenly — 47 percent both ways — on whether the Iraq war is part of the war on terrorism. The rest had no opinion.

Pentagon's "New" Surge Ideas For Iraq Just So Much Left Over 3 Year Old Bullshit

12.29.06 Washington Times

The Army is studying a number of options for surging troops into Iraq if President Bush picks that approach as his centerpiece for a new war strategy, military officials said. One official who was sent the briefing slides for various surge options said he was struck with the lack of new ideas after an intense three-month review process inside the Bush administration.

"Some of this stuff is what the old Coalition Provisional Authority looked at," said the official, referring to the U.S. government organization that ran Iraq from 2003 to 2004.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

**GUESS WHO DOESN'T NEED U.S.
MILITARY "ADVISORS" TO TELL HIM
WHAT TO DO OR BILLIONS PISSED
AWAY ON HIS TRAINING:**



Armed anti-occupation fighters driving in a car on the outskirts of Baqouba, 60 kilometers (35 miles) northeast of Baghdad, Iraq, Dec. 28, 2006.

Dozens of masked gunmen paraded in the Gatoun district of Baqouba, a city that often has considerable amounts of insurgent activity. (AP Photo)

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Iraq University

From: Dennis Serdel
To: GI Special

Sent: December 30, 2006
Subject: Iraq University

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

Iraq University

**After the first wound heals
Dave goes back to his Company
he now knows it can happen to him.
It's not like before when Dave was thinking
the other guys will get it
but it won't happen to him.
After seeing all the soldiers in the hospital
he knows most of them will not return.
When he is back it is great
to see his buddies but some are missing
Now Dave is not so gung-ho
now Dave has grown older
another bullet or mine is waiting for him
what would cause it to miss.
He is not so special and naïve
his young perfect body is scarred
and he blames the United States
for getting him in this jam.
One scar on his arm can be seen
if he wears a short sleeved shirt.
He thought maybe if it would tan some
then nobody would notice
but the first doctor had slashed it
and it looked like he used an axe.**

**George Washington Understood
George Bush Perfectly:
Imperial Arrogance “Founded Equally
In Malice, Absurdity And Error”**

12.29.06 Los Angeles Times

A historian and Joseph J. Ellis, the author of "His Excellency, George Washington" writes that at Valley Forge, Washington recognized that he did not have to win the American Revolution. Time and space were on his side.

And no matter how many battles the British army won, it could not sustain control over the countryside unless it was enlarged tenfold, at a cost that British voters would never support.

Eventually the British would recognize that they faced an impossibly open-ended mission and would decide to abandon their North American empire. Which is exactly what happened.

"No man in American history understood those lessons better than Washington, who viewed them as manifestations of British imperial arrogance, which he described as 'founded equally in malice, absurdity and error.'

"If dropped into Baghdad, he would weep at our replication of the same imperial scenario."

“Most Young Men From Prosperous Families Were Able To Avoid The Draft”

[This one is for the fools out there yapping about how bringing back the draft is a good idea because that will encourage the rich and powerful to oppose the war because their kids will get drafted. Pro-draft propagandists serve the Empire and its government by laying the groundwork for a return to conscription. T.]

From: WORKING CLASS WAR, by Christian G. Appy, U. Of North Carolina Press, 1984 [Excerpts]

Vietnam, more than any other American war in the twentieth century, perhaps in our history, was a working-class war.

The institutions most responsible for channeling men into the military -- the draft, the schools, and the job market – directed working class children to the armed forces and their wealthier peers toward college.

Most young men from prosperous families were able to avoid the draft, and very few volunteered.

Thus, America's most unpopular war was fought primarily by the nineteen-year-old children of waitresses, factory workers, truck drivers, secretaries, firefighters, carpenters, custodians, police officers, salespeople, clerks, mechanics, miners, and farmworkers:

people whose work lives are not only physically demanding but in many cases physically dangerous.

From 1961 to 1972, an average of 14,000 American workers died every year from industrial accidents; the same number of soldiers died in Vietnam during 1968, the year of highest U.S. casualties. Throughout the war, moreover, at least 100,000 people died each year from work-related diseases.

Combat may be more harrowing and dangerous than even the toughest civilian jobs, but in class terms there were important commonalities between the two.

In both cases soldiers and workers did the nation's "dirty work" --one group abroad and the other at home -- and did it under strict orders with little compensation.

Soldiers in Vietnam, like workers at home, believed the nation as a whole had little, if any, appreciation for their sacrifices.

“Where were the sons of all the big shots who supported the war?”

“Not in my platoon.

“Our guys' people were workers. . . . If the war was so important, why didn't our leaders put everyone's son in there, why only us?”

Steve Harper (1971)

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.

Happy Anniversary December 31, 1970 The Day The Lie Was Repudiated

Peace History December 25-31 By Carl Bunin

The U.S. Congress repealed the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, which in 1964 authorized a dramatic increase in U.S. military involvement in Vietnam in response to an attack on U.S. forces that was later revealed to be fictitious.

Happy Anniversary December 31, 1948; Honor To The 60,000

Peace History December 25-31 By Carl Bunin

Sixty thousand Puerto Rican men refused to register for the draft. Eight were prosecuted.

In Somalia, Bush Starts Another Reckless, Stupid War; He Backs Warlords Who Killed U.S. Troops In 1993

[Thanks to JM, who sent this in.]

December 26, 2006 Salim Lone, International Herald Tribune. [Excerpts] Salim Lone, who was the spokesman for the UN mission in Iraq in 2003, is a columnist for The Daily Nation in Kenya. This Global Viewpoint article was distributed by Tribune Media Services.

NAIROBI: Undeterred by the horrors and setbacks in Iraq, Afghanistan and Lebanon, the Bush administration has opened another battlefield in the Muslim world.

With full U.S. backing and military training, at least 15,000 Ethiopian troops have entered Somalia in an illegal war of aggression against the Union of Islamic Courts, which controls almost the entire south of the country.

As with Iraq in 2003, the United States has cast this as a war to curtail terrorism, but its real goal is to obtain a direct foothold in a highly strategic region by establishing a client regime there.

The Horn of Africa is newly oil-rich, and lies just miles from Saudi Arabia, overlooking the daily passage of large numbers of oil tankers and warships through the Red Sea.

General John Abizaid, the current U.S. military chief of the Iraq war, was in Ethiopia this month, and President Hu Jintao of China visited Kenya, Sudan and Ethiopia earlier this year to pursue oil and trade agreements.

The U.S. instigation of war between Ethiopia and Somalia, two of world's poorest countries already struggling with massive humanitarian disasters, is reckless in the extreme.

Unlike in the run-up to Iraq, independent experts, including from the European Union, were united in warning that this war could destabilize the whole region even if America succeeds in its goal of toppling the Islamic Courts.

An insurgency by Somalis, millions of whom live in Kenya and Ethiopia, will surely ensue, and attract thousands of new anti-U.S. militants and terrorists.

With so much of the world convulsed by crisis, little attention has been paid to this unfolding disaster in the Horn. The UN Security Council, however, did take up the issue, and in another craven act which will further cement its reputation as an anti-Muslim body, bowed to American and British pressure to authorize a regional peacekeeping force to enter Somalia to protect the transitional government, which is fighting the Islamic Courts.

The new UN resolution states that the world body acted to "restore peace and stability." But as all major international news organizations have reported, this year Somalia finally experienced its first respite from 16 years of utter lawlessness and terror at the hands of the marauding warlords who drove out UN peacekeepers in 1993, when 18 American soldiers were killed.

Since 1993, there had been no Security Council interest in sending peacekeepers to Somalia, but as peace and order took hold, a multilateral force was suddenly deemed necessary — because it was the Islamic Courts Union that had brought about this stability.

Astonishingly, the Islamists had succeeded in defeating the warlords primarily through rallying people to their side by creating law and order through the application of Shariah law, which Somalis universally practice.

The transitional government, on the other hand, is dominated by the warlords and terrorists who drove out American forces in 1993. Organized in Kenya by U.S. regional allies, it is so completely devoid of internal support that it has turned to Somalia's arch- enemy, Ethiopia, for assistance.

If this war continues, it will affect the whole region, do serious harm to U.S. interests and threaten Kenya, the only island of stability in this corner of Africa.

Ethiopia is at even greater risk, as a dictatorship with little popular support and beset also by two large internal revolts, by the Ogadenis and Oromos. It is also mired in a conflict with Eritrea, which has denied it secure access to seaports.

The best antidote to terrorism in Somalia is stability, which the Islamic Courts have provided.

The Islamists have strong public support, which has grown in the face of U.S. and Ethiopian interventions. As in other Muslim-Western conflicts, the world needs to engage with the Islamists to secure peace.

A Congo Lesson For Bush

December 22, 2006 By Adam Hochschild, L.A. Times. [Excerpts]

ADAM HOCHSCHILD is the author, among other books, of "King Leopold's Ghost: a Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa." It was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

Your interview in the Washington Post made headlines across the country Wednesday because you continued to talk about "victory" in Iraq — a hint that you may increase the number of American troops there.

But it caught my eye for a different reason.

In it (after expressing some "befuddlement" at the suggestion that you do not read books), you explained that the most recent book you read was "King Leopold's Ghost," about the plundering of Congo a century ago.

This pleased me because I wrote that book.

Sometimes college history classes that read "King Leopold's Ghost" invite me in for a seminar. Before you ask Karl to call me, however, let me just say that I regret that I'm not going to be able to do that in this case. The Christmas season is a busy time, after all, and I'm going away for a while. Instead, let me just raise a few follow-up questions with you here.

First, as you now know, the long effort by King Leopold II of Belgium to bring Congo under his control was driven by his avid quest for a commodity central to industry and transportation: rubber. Does that remind you of anything?

What's more, the king justified his grab for Congo's natural resources with much talk about bringing philanthropy and Christianity to darkest Africa. Now what did that remind you of?

Leopold cleared at least \$1.1 billion in today's dollars during the 23 years he controlled Congo, and his businessmen friends made additional huge sums. Much of the money flowed into companies with special royal concession rights to exploit the rain forest.

Final question, for extra credit: Do those companies remind you of anything? If you mentioned Halliburton or DynCorp, you're right again.

As a reader of history, you must have been interested, I'm sure, in something else in the Congo story: the case of another world leader facing his own Abu Ghraib scandal.

As you noticed, Mr. President, King Leopold II was a master of public relations. He was really his own Karl Rove — which saved money on staff salaries at the royal palace in Brussels.

For years the press at home and abroad dutifully praised his efforts to bring "civilization" to Africa; a whole shipload of Belgian journalists went to Congo in 1898 to enthuse about the opening of a new railroad.

But, like you, he got into big trouble through photographs.

These were mainly taken by a British missionary named Alice Harris, and they showed Congolese being whipped, chained as hostages and with their hands cut off by Leopold's soldiers. Through the efforts of a British journalist named Edmund Dene Morel, whom the king liked about as much as you like Seymour Hersh, these photos were splashed on front pages all over the world.

Statues of Leopold in Congo have long been toppled, one in Belgium was recently mutilated, and streets named after him there are having their names changed.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Genghis Khan Ran Iraq Better Than George W. Bush

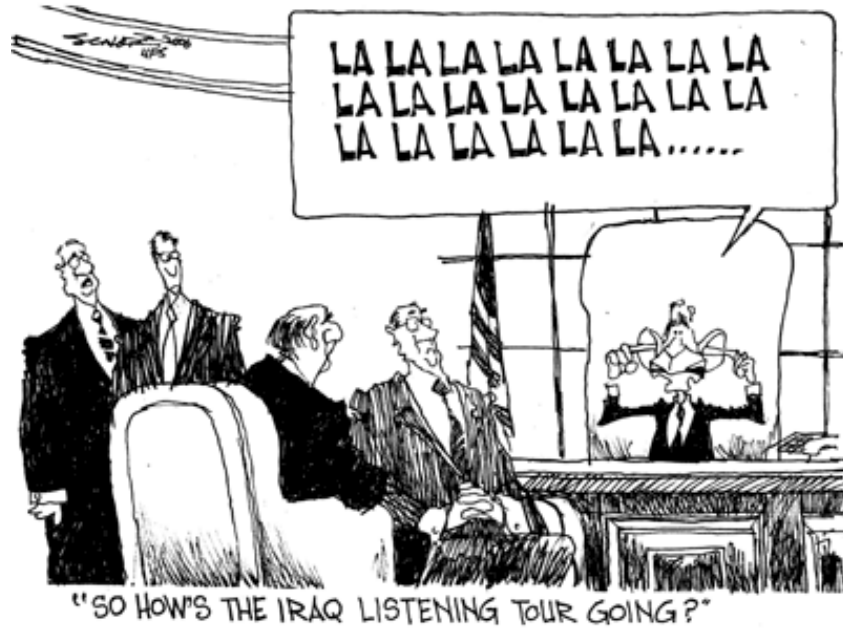
December 29, 2006 Army Times Early Bird Brief, Jack Weatherford

The author of "Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World" writes that in his final televised speech to the Iraqi people in 2003, Saddam Hussein denounced the invading Americans as "the Mongols of this age," a reference to the last time infidels had conquered his country, in 1258.

But the comparison isn't very apt-unlike the Mongols, the Americans don't have the organizational genius of Genghis Khan.

Under the Mongols, Iraq enjoyed a century of peace and a renaissance that brought the region to a level of prosperity and cultural sophistication higher than it enjoyed before or after.

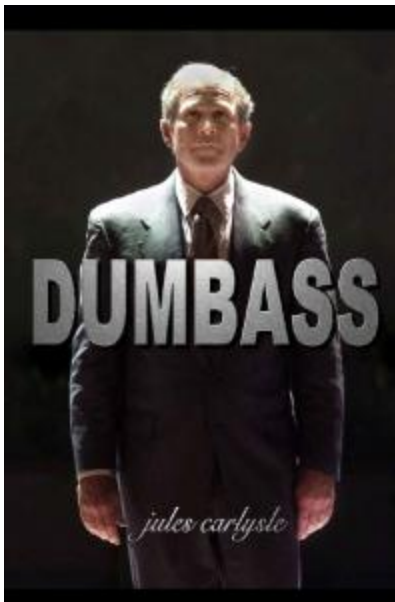
DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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

Received:

The Common Enemy



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

From: JP
To: GI Special
Sent: December 28, 2006

So right Mr T the Iraqi People and the American People have a common enemy.

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)

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