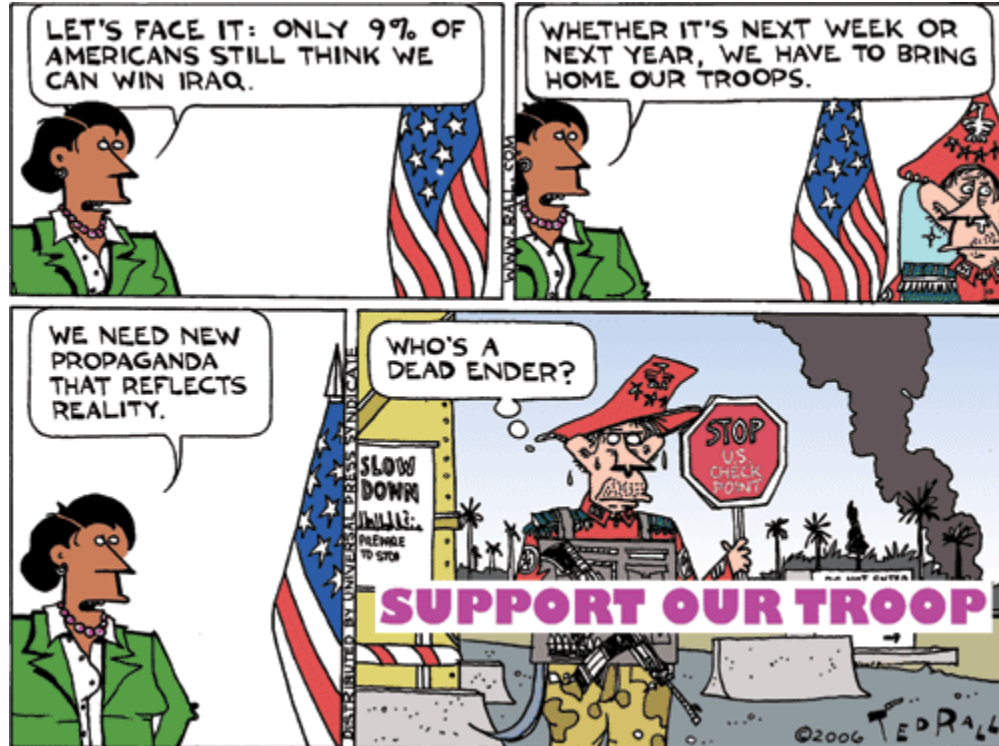


GI SPECIAL 5A1:



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

“Our Children Now Play Games Of ‘Sniper’ And ‘Jihadi’

“Pretending That One Hit An American Soldier Between The Eyes And This One Overturned A Humvee”

“3000 Americans Dead Over Nearly Four Years? Really?”

“That’s The Number Of Dead Iraqis In Less Than A Month”

[Thanks to JM, who sent this in.]

December 29, 2006 By Riverbend, Baghdad Burning, riverbendblog.blogspot.com

End of Another Year...

You know your country is in trouble when:

The UN has to open a special branch just to keep track of the chaos and bloodshed, UNAMI. Abovementioned branch cannot be run from your country.

The politicians who worked to put your country in this sorry state can no longer be found inside of, or anywhere near, its borders.

The only thing the US and Iran can agree about is the deteriorating state of your nation.

An 8-year war and 13-year blockade are looking like the country's 'Golden Years'.

Your country is purportedly 'selling' 2 million barrels of oil a day, but you are standing in line for 4 hours for black market gasoline for the generator.

For every 5 hours of no electricity, you get one hour of public electricity and then the government announces it's going to cut back on providing that hour.

Politicians who supported the war spend tv time debating whether it is 'sectarian bloodshed' or 'civil war'.

People consider themselves lucky if they can actually identify the corpse of the relative that's been missing for two weeks.

A day in the life of the average Iraqi has been reduced to identifying corpses, avoiding car bombs and attempting to keep track of which family members have been detained, which ones have been exiled and which ones have been abducted.

2006 has been, decidedly, the worst year yet. No - really. The magnitude of this war and occupation is only now hitting the country full force.

It's like having a big piece of hard, dry earth you are determined to break apart. You drive in the first stake in the form of an infrastructure damaged with missiles and the newest in arms technology, the first cracks begin to form.

Several smaller stakes come in the form of politicians like Chalabi, Al Hakim, Talbani, Pachachi, Allawi and Maliki. The cracks slowly begin to multiply and stretch across the once solid piece of earth, reaching out towards its edges like so many skeletal hands. And you apply pressure. You surround it from all sides and push and pull. Slowly, but surely, it begins coming apart- a chip here, a chunk there.

That is Iraq right now. The Americans have done a fine job of working to break it apart.

This last year has nearly everyone convinced that that was the plan right from the start. There were too many blunders for them to actually have been, simply, blunders. The 'mistakes' were too catastrophic. The people the Bush administration chose to support and promote were openly and publicly terrible- from the conman and embezzler Chalabi, to the terrorist Jaffari, to the militia man Maliki. The decisions, like disbanding the Iraqi army, abolishing the original constitution, and allowing militias to take over Iraqi security were too damaging to be anything but intentional.

The question now is, but why? I really have been asking myself that these last few days. What does America possibly gain by damaging Iraq to this extent? I'm certain only raving idiots still believe this war and occupation were about WMD or an actual fear of Saddam.

Al Qaeda? That's laughable. Bush has effectively created more terrorists in Iraq these last 4 years than Osama could have created in 10 different terrorist camps in the distant hills of Afghanistan.

Our children now play games of 'sniper' and 'jihadi', pretending that one hit an American soldier between the eyes and this one overturned a Humvee.

This last year especially has been a turning point. Nearly every Iraqi has lost so much. So much. There's no way to describe the loss we've experienced with this war and occupation.

There are no words to relay the feelings that come with the knowledge that daily almost 40 corpses are found in different states of decay and mutilation. There is no compensation for the dense, black cloud of fear that hangs over the head of every Iraqi.

Fear of things so out of ones hands, it borders on the ridiculous- like whether your name is 'too Sunni' or 'too Shia'. Fear of the larger things- like the Americans in the tank, the police patrolling your area in black bandanas and green banners, and the Iraqi soldiers wearing black masks at the checkpoint.

Again, I can't help but ask myself why this was all done? What was the point of breaking Iraq so that it was beyond repair?

Iran seems to be the only gainer.

Their presence in Iraq is so well-established, publicly criticizing a cleric or ayatollah verges on suicide. Has the situation gone so beyond America that it is now irretrievable? Or was this a part of the plan all along? My head aches just posing the questions.

What has me most puzzled right now is: why add fuel to the fire? Sunnis and moderate Shia are being chased out of the larger cities in the south and the capital. Baghdad is being torn apart with Shia leaving Sunni areas and Sunnis leaving Shia areas- some under threat and some in fear of attacks. People are being openly shot at check points or in drive by killings... Many colleges have stopped classes. Thousands of Iraqis no longer send their children to school- it's just not safe.

Why make things worse by insisting on Saddam's execution now?

Who gains if they hang Saddam? Iran, naturally, but who else? There is a real fear that this execution will be the final blow that will shatter Iraq.

Some Sunni and Shia tribes have threatened to arm their members against the Americans if Saddam is executed. Iraqis in general are watching closely to see what happens next, and quietly preparing for the worst.

This is because now, Saddam no longer represents himself or his regime. Through the constant insistence of American war propaganda, Saddam is now representative of all Sunni Arabs (never mind most of his government were Shia).

The Americans, through their speeches and news articles and Iraqi Puppets, have made it very clear that they consider him to personify Sunni Arab resistance to the occupation. Basically, with this execution, what the Americans are saying is "Look - Sunni Arabs - this is your man, we all know this. We're hanging him - he symbolizes you."

And make no mistake about it, this trial and verdict and execution are 100% American. Some of the actors were Iraqi enough, but the production, direction and montage was pure Hollywood (though low-budget, if you ask me).

That is, of course, why Talbani doesn't want to sign his death penalty - not because the mob man suddenly grew a conscience, but because he doesn't want to be the one who does the hanging- he won't be able to travel far away enough if he does that.

Maliki's government couldn't contain their glee. They announced the ratification of the execution order before the actual court did.

A few nights ago, some American news program interviewed Maliki's bureau chief, Basim Al-Hassani who was speaking in accented American English about the upcoming execution like it was a carnival he'd be attending. He sat, looking sleazy and not a little bit ridiculous, his dialogue interspersed with 'gonna', 'gotta' and 'wanna'... Which happens, I suppose, when the only people you mix with are American soldiers.

My only conclusion is that the Americans want to withdraw from Iraq, but would like to leave behind a full-fledged civil war because it wouldn't look good if they withdraw and things actually begin to improve, would it?

Here we come to the end of 2006 and I am sad. Not simply sad for the state of the country, but for the state of our humanity, as Iraqis. We've all lost some of the compassion and civility that I felt made us special four years ago. I take myself as an example.

Nearly four years ago, I cringed every time I heard about the death of an American soldier. They were occupiers, but they were humans also and the knowledge that they were being killed in my country gave me sleepless nights. Never mind they crossed oceans to attack the country, I actually felt for them.

Had I not chronicled those feelings of agitation in this very blog, I wouldn't believe them now.

Today, they simply represent numbers.

3000 Americans dead over nearly four years? Really?

That's the number of dead Iraqis in less than a month.

The Americans had families? Too bad. So do we.

So do the corpses in the streets and the ones waiting for identification in the morgue.

Is the American soldier that died today in Anbar more important than a cousin I have who was shot last month on the night of his engagement to a woman he's wanted to marry for the last six years?

I don't think so.

Just because Americans die in smaller numbers, it doesn't make them more significant, does it?

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

3000 Gone

From: michaelw
To: 'Thomas F Barton'
Sent: Sunday, December 31, 2006 2:04 PM

The DoD just released the name of a soldier killed by small arms fire in Baghdad on the 28th, this death had not been previously reported. This announcement brings the total of U.S. deaths to 3000.

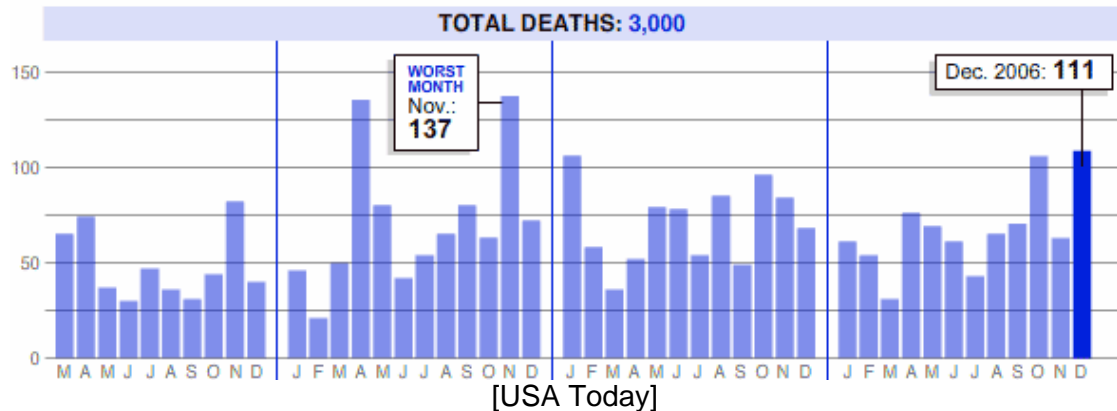
Regards,

Michael S. White
<http://icasualties.org/oif/>

[This web site <http://icasualties.org/oif/> is the most carefully prepared and documented source of information about all casualties, military and civilian. It is maintained by one individual who does it while also holding down a full time job. Check it out, and send along a donation to help keep this invaluable and unique source of information up and running. T]

U.S. troop deaths in Iraq

Deaths since the war began, according to the Defense Department and AP (as of Dec. 31, 2006):



Baghdad Soldier Killed By IED, Another Wounded

31 December 2006 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory
RELEASE No. 20061231-05

BAGHDAD – An improvised explosive device detonated near a Multi-National Division - Baghdad patrol, killing one Soldier in a southeastern neighborhood of the Iraqi capital Dec. 30.

The unit was conducting a security patrol in their assigned area of operations when a roadside bomb exploded near them, killing one Soldier and wounding two others.

DoD Identifies Army Casualty (Previously Not Reported)

December 31, 2006 U.S. Department of Defense News Release No. 1334-06

The Department of Defense announced today the death of a soldier who was supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Spc. Dustin R. Donica, 22, of Spring, Texas, died Dec. 28 in Baghdad, Iraq, of wounds received from small arms fire while conducting combat operations. He was assigned to 3rd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Airborne Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Fort Richardson, Alaska.

**REALLY BAD IDEA:
NO MISSION;
HOPELESS WAR:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW**



A U.S. soldier from the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team gestures to motorists at a checkpoint in Baghdad, October 29, 2006. REUTERS/Mohammed Ameen (IRAQ)

December The Deadliest Month For U.S. Troops

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

12.30.06 BY LAUREN FRAYER BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP)

Three more Marines and a soldier were killed in battle in Iraq, the military said Friday, making December the year's deadliest month for U.S. troops with the toll reaching 108.

Their deaths pushed the toll past the 105 U.S. service members killed in October.

December was shaping up to be one of the worst months for Iraqi civilian deaths since The Associated Press began keeping track in May 2005.

Through Thursday, at least 2,139 Iraqis have been killed in war-related or sectarian violence, an average rate of about 76 people a day, according to an AP count. That compares to at least 2,184 killed in November at an average of about 70 a day, the worst month for Iraqi civilians deaths since May 2005. In October, AP counted at least 1,216 civilians killed.

The AP count includes civilians, government officials and police and security forces, and is considered a minimum based on AP reporting. The actual number is likely higher, as many killings go unreported.

TROOP NEWS

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



The casket of Marine Lance Corporal Brent E. Beeler following Beeler's funeral in Jackson, Michigan December 19, 2006. Beeler was killed in combat near Falluja, Iraq. REUTERS/Rebecca Cook (UNITED STATES)

Sgt. Jennifer Hartman: KIA

“The Army Recruiter Promised Them That She Would Not Be Sent To Iraq”

December 31, 2006 By Donna St. George, Washington Post Staff Writer [Excerpt]

Sgt. Jennifer Hartman

The story about 21-year-old Jennifer Hartman mentions her roots in Pennsylvania and her enthusiasm for riding snowmobiles and ATVs. She is pictured in uniform and with her younger brother and sister.

Her mother, Bernice Hartman, said the Army recruiter promised them that she would not be sent to Iraq, saying the Army "would take someone off the street before they take your daughter."

Bernice Hartman said the words had haunted them.

"We would have never signed," she said, her voice breaking.

Since Jennifer Hartman's death, her father has been unable to sleep. Bernice Hartman has so many questions, about how it happened, about the two soldiers who died with her. "It just seems like everything you want to know, they can't tell you," she said.

Army Discovers Brilliant New Way To Fuck Over Troops

January 01, 2007 By Karen Jowers, Army Times Staff writer [Excerpt]

The Army's move to privatize its lodging program could leave travelers paying a larger chunk of their government per diem allowances for higher room rates, according to a recent report from the Government Accountability Office.

If the Army privatizes its lodging facilities, the cost to the government would rise by about \$75 million per year, the GAO found in a study released Dec. 15.

The report also questions what ripple effect such a move could have on Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps temporary lodging facilities, which operate somewhat like hotels.

Because privatization could cost the government more, room rates would increase. The GAO estimates that travelers to Army posts would pay, on average, 75 percent of their per diem rate to stay in these facilities, compared to an average of 57 percent now.

German Army Orders Dead Dog To Report For Pre-Induction Medical

1.1.07 Army Times

There might be a lesson from Germany for U.S. politicians talking about reinstating a military draft to provide the armed forces with a cross-section of society in the ranks. Germany has compulsory military service, and its recent round of orders to report for pre-service medical examinations included a notice for Tommy Jakob to show up with his swim trunks and identification.

The notice was sent to the home of Helga Koehlke, a 53-year-old whose pet dog, Tommy Jakob, a Pekingese, was not able to report as ordered. Besides the whole being-a-dog thing, Tommy Jakob died in 2002.

"I thought it was a joke, but then I saw the official stamp," Koehlke said, noting that even if Tommy were still alive, he might not have been much use to the German army because "he was almost completely blind."

German army officials said it was all a mail mix-up and are looking for the two-legged Tommy Jakob so he can get his pre-induction physical.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action

30 Dec 2006 Reuters & 31 Dec 2006 Reuters & (VOI)

A bomber with explosives strapped to his body wounded four policemen in the northern city of Tal Afar, police said.

A car bomb in the southern Baghdad neighbourhood of Saidiya wounded two policemen, an Interior Ministry source said.

The Iraqi police said on Saturday angry insurgents attacked and burnt out a police station and a court building in Garma district near Falluja.

"Gunmen attacked today a police station and a court building in central Garma, 10 km east of Falluja, keeping policemen indoors at gunpoint," the source told the independent news agency Voices of Iraq (VOI). They later left the scene after they burnt out the buildings of the police station and court with no reports of casualties, the source added.

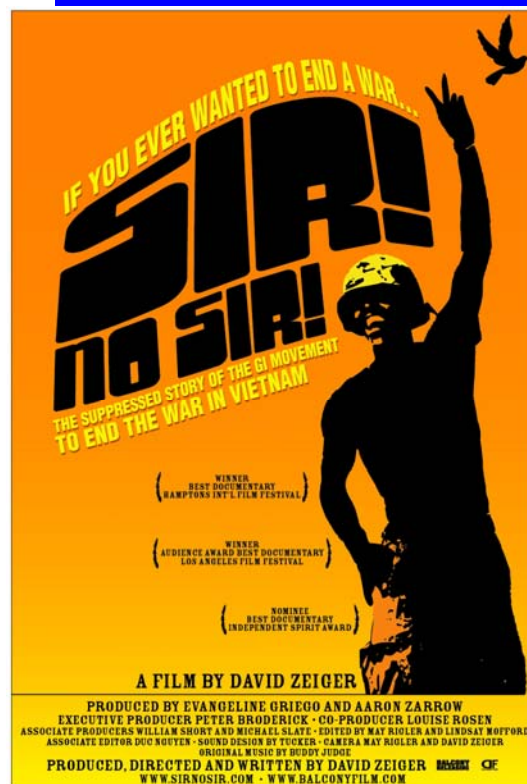
“U.S. forces rushed and cordoned off the area and raided some houses nearby,” the source said. The source said they were in cars that carried portraits of the former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein.

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

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

Sir! No Sir!:
At A Theatre Near You!
To find it: <http://www.sirnosir.com/>



**The Sir! No Sir! DVD is on sale now, exclusively at
www.sirnosir.com.**

Also available will be a Soundtrack CD (which includes the entire song from the FTA Show, "Soldier We Love You"), theatrical posters, tee shirts, and the DVD of "A Night of Ferocious Joy," a film about the first hip-hop antiwar concert against the "War on Terror."

**“The U.S. Has Not And Is Unlikely
To Be Able To Repress The
Guerrillas”**

**“They Hate Us, Folks. They Don’t
Want Us There”**

12/26/06 By Juan Cole, Information Clearing House [Excerpts from list of 10 myths.]

Myth number one is that the United States "can still win" in Iraq.

The Iraqi "government" is barely functioning. The parliament was not able to meet in December because it could not attain a quorum.

Many key Iraqi politicians live most of the time in London, and much of parliament is frequently abroad. Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki does not control large swathes of the country, and could give few orders that had any chance of being obeyed.

And the blindly arrogant assumption that it can win is calculated to get more tens of thousands of Iraqis killed and more thousands of American soldiers and Marines badly wounded or killed.

2. "US military sweeps of neighborhoods can drive the guerrillas out."

The US put an extra 15,000 men into Baghdad this past summer, aiming to crush the guerrillas and stop the violence in the capital, and the number of attacks actually increased.

This result comes about in part because the guerrillas are not outsiders who come in and then are forced out. The Sunni Arabs of Ghazaliya and Dora districts in the capital are the "insurgents."

The US military cannot defeat the Sunni Arab guerrilla movement or "insurgency" with less than 500,000 troops, based on what we have seen in the Balkans and other such conflict situations.

The US destroyed Falluja, and even it and other cities of al-Anbar province are not now safe!

In 2003, 14 percent of Sunni Arabs thought it legitimate to attack US personnel and facilities. In August, 2006, over 70 percent did. How long before it is 100%?

Winning guerrilla wars requires two victories, a military victory over the guerrillas and a winning of the hearts and minds of the general public, thus denying the guerrillas support.

The US has not and is unlikely to be able to repress the guerrillas, and it is losing hearts and minds at an increasing and alarming rate.

They hate us, folks. They don't want us there.

"Iraq is the central front in the war on terror."

There are probably only about 1,000 foreign fighters even in Iraq, and most of them are first-time volunteers, not old-time terrorists.

Al-Qaeda is mainly a boogey man, invoked in Iraq on all sides, but possessing little real power or presence there.

"Setting a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq is a bad idea."

Bush and others in his administration have argued that setting such a timetable would give a significant military advantage to the guerrillas fighting US forces and opposed to the new government.

Even Sunni politicians cooperating with the US make this demand. They are disappointed with the lack of movement on the issue.

How long do they remain willing to cooperate?

In addition, 131 Iraqi members of parliament signed a demand that the US set a timetable for withdrawal. (138 would be a simple majority.) It is a major demand of the Sadr Movement. In fact, the 32 Sadrist MPs withdrew from the ruling United Iraqi Alliance coalition temporarily over this issue.

Think Progress points out that in 1999, Governor George W. Bush criticized then President Clinton for declining to set a withdrawal timetable for Kosovo, saying "Victory means exit strategy, and it's important for the president to explain to us what the exit strategy is."

As The U.S. Empire Weakens, Nationalist Forces Put On Religious Masks To Make A Grab For Local Wealth And Power

[Underneath the silly blathering about religion, and what the reporter misses completely, is that all over the world, nationalist forces run by leaderships eager for more wealth and power, wearing various masks, religious and non-religious, are combining in opposition to U.S. Imperial domination, and the Empire is too weak to resist the growing nationalist pressures. T]

December 9, 2006 By ANDREW HIGGINS, Wall Street Journal [Excerpts]

AYTAROUN, LEBANON -- Ibrahim Sayid was raised a Muslim, but he put his faith in class struggle, not Allah. He joined the Lebanese Communist Party at the age of 16. As a medical student in the Soviet Union in the 1980s, he cursed Mikhail Gorbachev as a "traitor" for jettisoning Marxism.

Today, back in his home village just a few hundred yards from Israel, Dr. Sayid, 44, still has little time for Islam. He is married to a Christian and shuns the local mosque, badly damaged when Israeli troops stormed into Lebanon this summer.

Instead of communism, he has embraced a new cause: Hezbollah, the militia and social movement rooted in Shiite Islam. The Party of God, as it is translated into English, is led by turbaned clerics and aided by the Islamic Republic of Iran, which has ruthlessly persecuted communists.

"We all have the same goals," explains Dr. Sayid, who now works in a Hezbollah clinic. The first of these goals is "resistance" against Israel, which during the summer war battled Hezbollah militiamen just outside Dr. Sayid's village.

He says resistance also has a broader target: America, its allies in the Arab world and beyond, and global capitalism.

When the Cold War ended a decade and a half ago with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Mr. Sayid and others like him around the world mourned the apparent triumph of U.S. military, economic and ideological might. Many Americans rejoiced, with some embracing the theory that the demise of Marxism marked "the end of history," a period when ideological conflicts would give way to a world united in acceptance of a model typified by the U.S.

Political Islam was seen as a grave threat but seemed limited in its appeal by its dependence on religious zeal. Such assumptions are now under strain as secular rebels, antiglobalization militants and other strains of revolt rally to the banner of "resistance" offered by Islamist groups such as Hezbollah.

Causes that a few years ago seemed moribund or at least passé -- socialism, Third World solidarity, strident anti-Americanism -- have been injected with the fervor, though rarely the actual faith, of Islamic radicalism.

"We are all here to fight American hegemony," Naim Qassem, Hezbollah's deputy chief, told hundreds of secular activists from around the world who gathered last month in a Beirut conference center. They were there to celebrate his Islamic movement's "divine victory" over Israel this summer and cheer a broader battle against America's vision for the world. Mr. Qassem was dressed in flowing robes and a cleric's turban. Many in his audience wore T-shirts or badges featuring portraits of Che Guevara, clenched fists and other emblems of secular radical chic.

Adding to its revolutionary cachet, Hezbollah is now battling to oust Lebanon's pro-American government. Along with assorted allies, the Islamist group staged a huge peaceful rally in central Beirut Dec. 1 and is the driving force behind a mass sit-in near the offices of Prime Minister Fuad Siniora, a pro-business former banker. The protesters, encamped in tents for a week now, vow to stay until the government falls. Stoking fears the showdown may spiral into serious violence, Hezbollah has called for another mass demonstration Sunday.

Some of Hezbollah's biggest fans are in Europe. There, the hard left, demoralized by the collapse of communism, has found new energy, siding with Islamist militants in Lebanon, in Iraq and in a wider campaign against what they see as an American plot to impose unrestrained free-market capitalism.

"We are all Hezbollah now," read posters carried through London this summer during an antiwar protest march. Earlier, London Mayor Ken Livingston, once known as "Red Ken," invited a controversial Egyptian cleric to the British capital, arguing that his views have been distorted by the West.

In deeply Roman Catholic Latin America, Hugo Chávez of Venezuela has become the exemplar of a new populism that sees common cause with Iran and Hezbollah. Mr. Chávez, re-elected in a landslide last Sunday, has met Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad several times and this summer was given the Islamic Republic Medal, Iran's highest honor. Amid the rubble of Beirut's southern suburbs, a Hezbollah stronghold, portraits of Mr. Chávez now hang alongside pictures of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. Hezbollah put them up after Mr. Chávez denounced President Bush as the devil in a September speech to the UN. "Gracias Chávez," they say.

Africa, too, is boarding the bandwagon. A summit of the 53-nation African Union this summer in Gambia featured two special guests: Mr. Chavez and Mr. Ahmadinejad.

With America's reputation badly blemished across much of the globe, widespread anger at Washington's foreign policy is fusing with local grievances in an unstable mix of discontent. The result is a motley assemblage rife with contradictions and competing agendas. The Islamist-led protest movement has none of the central organization once

provided by the Comintern, the body set up by Vladimir Lenin to coordinate global communism. Nonetheless, it is giving voice and a sense of common cause to those opposed to America's plans.

Leading the way in embracing it are mostly fringe groups with names redolent of the 1960s: The Global Peace and Justice Coalition, The Socialist Workers Party, The League for the Fifth International.

Mainstream left-of-center parties still generally shun Islamists but chunks of their support base don't. Mr. Blair in Britain, for example, has come under fire within his own Labour Party for supporting President Bush's troubled Middle East policy, which critics say demonizes Islamist groups. In Spain, the socialist prime minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, has reached out to Muslims, propounding what he calls "an alliance of civilizations" and voicing sympathy for Hamas and Hezbollah. He has good relations with Mr. Chávez, Fidel Castro of Cuba and Bolivia's populist leader, Evo Morales.

At the Beirut conference last month, a Mexican Marxist denounced America for "colonizing" New Mexico. A South Korean foe of free trade raged against American beef. A Turk fumed about American military bases. A Frenchman denounced American genetically engineered foods and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. There were even a few Americans. One thundered against big business, another against the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

A big part of Hezbollah's appeal is simply that, unlike other tarnished icons of revolt, it can point to successes. It has defied Israel's military, by far the region's most powerful. It prodded Israel to end its 18-year occupation of southern Lebanon in 2000 and unexpectedly bloodied Israeli troops in clashes this summer.

Hezbollah shows that "resistance," whether fuelled by religion or secular zeal, "can break governments and roll back the American project," says John Rees, a former editor of the journal International Socialism and a leader of Britain's anti-Iraq war movement.

Hezbollah, he says, isn't a terrorist outfit but a social movement seeking better living conditions for its supporters. "It is better to think of it as an AFL-CIO with guns," he says.

An American who traveled to Beirut in November to cheer Hezbollah, who identified himself as Bill Cecil, summed up the appeal of Islamism to non-Muslims: "Your enemy is our enemy; your victory is our victory," he told a conference. Mr. Cecil, an activist for a radical group in New York, later appeared as a guest on the breakfast show of Hezbollah's television station, al-Manar.

America, he told a veiled female presenter, is "not a democracy ... but a dictatorship of giant corporations." America "needs a government that provides for the people like Hezbollah helps people here."

Nowhere is the Islamist-leftist axis more potent than in Lebanon. The three-day Beirut jamboree, which featured fiery anti-American oratory and field trips to buildings bombed by Israel, was hosted jointly by Hezbollah and the Lebanese Communist Party, once-bitter enemies now united by what they proclaim as common goals.

Responsible for working out what this might mean is Ali Fayad, a political science lecturer and head of Hezbollah's in-house think-tank, the Consultative Center for Studies and Documentation.

Israeli bombs destroyed Mr. Fayad's offices, so his center now works from new premises in a half-built apartment block. Well-versed in Western economic and political theory, he runs a staff of more than a dozen researchers and has led the militant group's outreach to foreign supporters.

Part of Hezbollah's appeal lies in its tactical flexibility. Unlike many Sunni Muslim radical groups such as al Qaeda, which denounce non-Muslims and even many fellow Muslims as heretics who must be shunned or punished, Hezbollah's Shiite leadership doesn't care if its allies include atheists, Mr. Fayad says. "That is their problem not ours," he says, so long as "we have the same political position."

Mr. Fayad still sees Islam derailing America's ambitions. Hezbollah's success in Lebanon, the debacle in Iraq and the victories of populist anti-American politicians in Latin America, he says, show that "it is now the end of 'the end of history.'"

A recent article by Richard Haass, former director of policy planning at the U.S. State Department, has strengthened his conviction that America is in retreat, Mr. Fayad says. Writing in the U.S. foreign-policy journal *Foreign Affairs*, Mr. Haass declares that America's post-Cold War hopes for the Middle East have failed and that the region's "American era...has ended." Mr. Fayad is in no doubt about what comes next: "It is an Islamic era in the Middle East."

Among those grappling with this new perception of reality is Joseph Samaha, a secular Christian, former radical socialist and one of Lebanon's most-thoughtful intellectuals. Over the summer he became editor in chief of *Al Akhbar*, a new newspaper sympathetic to Hezbollah.

He scoffs at Westerners who cheer radical Islam as "naïve." But he concedes that Islamists now represent the only viable alternative to corrupt, authoritarian regimes in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. "It is sad, but it is like that," he says.

The ideological reshuffling marks a curious reprise: Russia's early Bolshevik leaders, many of them Jewish, worked hard to cultivate Muslims, seeing them as a useful ally against Britain and other European colonial powers then ruling over large Muslim populations, notably in India and Indonesia.

For much of the 20th century, however, the left and Islam were bitter enemies. Spain's right-wing dictator, Gen. Francisco Franco, recruited Moroccan Muslims to fight Soviet-backed foes in the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s.

Islamic groups in Indonesia joined in an army-led mass slaughter of communists. Anticomunist fervor reached its peak in the 1980s, when thousands of Muslims flocked to Afghanistan to battle the Soviet occupiers.

Much the same enmity existed in Lebanon. When Dr. Sayid, the surgeon, first joined the Lebanese Communist Party in the late 1970s, Mr. Nasrallah, now Hezbollah's leader,

also was getting into politics -- partly out of disgust at the spread of atheistic communism.

In an autobiographical account of his early years published in an Iranian newspaper, Mr. Nasrallah recounts how his own village was "turning into an area for the activity of intellectuals, Marxists and especially supporters of the Lebanese Communist Party." He left the village and joined a group called Amal, a Shiite organization.

Iran's Islamic revolution of February 1979 and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of that year soured communist-Islamist relations further, provoking often-bloody clashes in Lebanon and elsewhere.

Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 accelerated the rise of Islamist groups. It uprooted Yasser Arafat's secular Palestine Liberation Organization, which had bases in Lebanon, and left Hezbollah as the main force of "resistance."

Hezbollah's reputation was boosted by its fierce resistance to Israel and its provision of medical care and other services.

In its first public manifesto issued in 1985, Hezbollah declared itself hostile to "both the USSR and the U.S., both capitalism and communism, for both are incapable of laying the foundations for a just society."

Though focused on the struggle with Israel, the manifesto also sought a wider audience, addressed to "all the Oppressed of Lebanon and the World."

Amid the unraveling of the Soviet Union, few outside Lebanon paid much attention to the global pretensions of Hezbollah. Then came the al Qaeda attacks on America of 2001. Washington, traumatized, launched a "war on terror" against what it viewed as a small group of homicidal religious zealots.

As anger at the U.S. mounted in 2003 ahead of the invasion in Iraq, the snowballing antiwar movement took on a curious aspect, particularly in Europe: an alliance of forces that previously loathed each other.

Mr. Rees, the British radical who attended last month's Beirut conference, played a big role, allying his own organization, the Socialist Workers Party, with the Muslim Association of Britain, a group that says it wants to bridge Muslim and non-Muslim communities yet is accused by critics of siding with radical Islamic groups.

The two organizations spearheaded the antiwar campaign in Britain. Today, Mr. Rees says he has reservations about some of his Islamic allies' views, particularly those regarding women and homosexuals.

"If there were a level playing field, I might choose different allies," he says. But he says America's own policies left him with no choice: "I find myself on the same side as Hezbollah, as Chávez. I didn't choose them. America did."

At a big Islamic festival this summer supported by London's mayor, Mr. Livingston, Islamist activists and left-wing politicians declared their solidarity. "Muslims and the left

must and can come together, because we face the same enemies -- imperialism, colonialism and racism," said Redmond O'Neill, a senior aide to Mr. Livingston.

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

OCCUPATION REPORT

90% Iraqis Say Life Was Better Before US/UK Invasion

Dec. 29 (UPI)

About 90 percent of Iraqis feel the situation in the country was better before the U.S.-led invasion than it is today, according to a new ICRSS poll.

The findings emerged after house-to-house interviews conducted by the ICRSS during the third week of November. About 2,000 people from Baghdad (82 percent), Anbar and Najaf (9 percent each) were randomly asked to express their opinion. Twenty-four percent of the respondents were women.

Only five percent of those questioned said Iraq is better today than in 2003.

While 89 percent of the people said the political situation had deteriorated, 79 percent saw a decline in the economic situation; 12 percent felt things had improved and 9 percent said there was no change. Predictably, 95 percent felt the security situation was worse than before.

The results of the poll conducted by the Iraq Centre for Research and Strategic Studies and shared with the Gulf Research Center, has a margin error of +/- 3.1 percent.

Nearly 50 percent of the respondents identified themselves only as "Muslims"; 34 percent were Shiites and 14 percent, Sunnis.

“The Hell Of Saddam Is Better Than The Paradise That Maliki Promised Us”

“What Did We Gain From Him Being Gone?”

December 31, 2006 By Nancy Trejos, Washington Post Staff Writer [Excerpts]

BAGHDAD, Dec. 30 -- Former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein had been dead no more than 11 hours, but to Um Noor, he might as well have died three years ago.

"We've forgotten about him," Noor said late Saturday afternoon, as she stood in the jeans store she owns in central Baghdad.

"Everything is worse," Noor said. "What did we gain from him being gone?"

Zahara Jasim, 24, sat inside a women's clothing store in Karrada rubbing her hands together by a space heater to stay warm. She said she was happy to see Hussein die. She blames him for the death of her father, who fought in the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s.

But she doesn't blame him for her current problems. That, she said, is the Americans' fault.

"They haven't done anything," she said. "There's no oil. There's no kerosene. There's no electricity. If they really wanted to make things work, they would."

Adnan Mizher, 34, a former army officer from Diyala province, northeast of Baghdad, said his brother was executed by Hussein's government. Still, he said, life was better under Hussein. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, he said, has done nothing for Iraqis.

"Today, there are killings, murder, kidnappings and displacement of people on sectarian grounds," he said. "Life under Saddam was much better than now. The hell of Saddam is better than the paradise that Maliki promised us."

“I Cannot Forgive Or Forget That My Son Was Executed, But As An Iraqi Nationalist I Cannot Accept To See The President Of My Country Put To

Trial In Such A Ridiculous Way By Invaders And Their Tails”

[Thanks to JM who sent this in. She writes:

I've been reading comments on Saddam's execution. Even people who wanted him executed are unhappy with the way it was done.

"I hate Saddam and always wished him the death he deserved for his attitude against my Kurdish nation," Sardar Herki from Sulaymaniya in northern Iraq told IPS on phone shortly before the execution.

"I still wish him death -- but together with his successors who killed half the population of Iraq and arrested the other half."

The teacher said. "His time was certainly not a golden time, but Iraqis felt proud of his policies against Iranian and American arrogance and greed. He managed to feed his people and provide them with security and basic services despite all the wars they fought, and the UN sanctions against Iraq."

"I was an opponent of Saddam and his policies, but I support putting him through a real national court away from occupation influence.

"I cannot forgive or forget that my son was executed, but as an Iraqi nationalist I cannot accept to see the president of my country put to trial in such a ridiculous way by invaders and their tails."

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

OCCUPATION PALESTINE/LEBANON

Zionist Regime Imprisoned 2,700 Palestinians Without Trial This Year

December 27, 2006 The Associated Press

A top military judge disclosed that 2,700 Palestinians have been detained without trial this year, criticizing the military prosecution for not filing charges against some of them.

Colonel Shaul Gordon, chief justice of the army's West Bank appeals court, told the soldiers' weekly "Bamahane" that 2,000 of the detainees filed appeals, and their

detention was shortened in many cases. He said even the ones who do not file appeals are reviewed.

The practice of administrative detention has been harshly criticized by Palestinians and human rights groups, who say that if the military has evidence against suspects, it should put them on trial. The military has responded that sometimes evidence is too sensitive to submit to a trial.

Gordon, who is leaving his post after six years, backed the critics in some cases. "Sometimes we get the impression that with a bit more effort in the investigation, an indictment could have been brought, because that is the best way," he told the weekly.

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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

Poll: When People Were Asked To Name The Candidate For Villain That First Came To

Mind, Bush Far Outdistanced Even Osama Bin Laden

December 28, 2006 NBC 30

WASHINGTON -- Bad guy of 2006: President George W. Bush. Good guy of 2006: President George W. Bush.

When people were asked in an AP-AOL News poll to name the villains and heroes of the year, Bush topped both lists, in a sign of these polarized times.

Bush won the villain sweepstakes by a landslide, with one in four respondents putting him at the top of that bad-guy list.

When people were asked to name the candidate for villain that first came to mind, Bush far outdistanced even Osama bin Laden, the terrorist leader in hiding; and former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, who is scheduled for execution.

The president was picked as hero of the year by a much smaller margin. In the poll, 13 percent named him as their favorite while 6 percent cited the troops in Iraq.

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

CLASS WAR REPORTS

Ruined New Orleans Citizens Food For Corporate Predators: The Cruel, Stupid, Ugly Face Of Capitalism At Work

Dec 25th by blksista, Boomantribune.com [Excerpts] & January 1, 2007, by Michael Tisserand, The Nation

People are trickling back home, but it's a daunting process. Some wonder whether it's worth it.

Those who are home are still fighting to stay home.

Protests in front of Nagin's house and mounting outcries from desperate citizens have forced Bush to reopen some public housing units 'temporarily' that were originally slated for demolition

I know about my own family members.

My 75-year-old stepdad and his wife have an appointment in New Orleans later this week with representatives from The Road Home Program, which is to assist New Orleans homeowners in rebuilding after Hurricane Katrina. My dad is living in Dallas with his daughter, her husband and her two kids, while his wife 'holds the fort,' as it were, back in what is left of the Crescent City. They want to fix up the house where he grew up in Central City (and where as a young man, he lived upstairs with his drum kit in the converted attic), and later, rent it out for income.

When I heard my dad talk about the program, of course, I was excited for him. It sounded too good to be true. So I did some research online between book chapters.

"Housing and Urban Development Secretary Alphonso Jackson today (May 30, 2006) announced he is approving a \$4.6 billion plan proposed by the State of Louisiana to create The Road Home Program.

"Louisiana intends to use funding provided through HUD's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program to offer up to \$150,000 to certain eligible homeowners whose primary residences were destroyed or severely damaged following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Jackson made today's announcement during a news conference with Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco and New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin."

So far so good, right?

Only on paper.

The firm ICF Emergency Management Services was contracted to administer the program in June. By the time the holiday season began to hit its stride, however, the pace of grant awards on top of the jaw-dropping meagerness of the payouts began to make headlines in the Times-Picayune.:

While more than 90,000 homeowners have applied for a Road Home grant in the past four months, as of last Thursday just 94 families had received money. ICF has until July (2007) to complete the awards process.

Tempers reached full boil on Dec. 15, when the state House of Representatives voted 97-1 to approve a resolution demanding that Gov. Kathleen Blanco cancel ICF's three-year, \$756 million contract. Lawmakers repeatedly questioned the company's competence, while the bill's sponsor, Rep. J.P. Morrell, D-New Orleans, called ICF's performance "morally reprehensible."

ICF seems to be just another confidence game set up to disappoint and bamboozle New Orleans residents.

(And what could they have expected from the likes of Alphonso Jackson in the first place, who's just--like a low level Nazi--following orders?) No, it's not just a black thing here in New Orleans. The middle class, the elderly, the homeowners, the public housing dwellers --most residents who applied for grants were in revolt.

Saul and Mildred Rubin were seeking hope for the future from the state's Road Home program, a grant that would compensate them for the loss of their Lakeview home, which flooded when the federally built levees collapsed during Hurricane Katrina.

But the Road Home program didn't deliver hope to the Rubins. Instead, the elderly couple -- both in their 90s -- got a kick in the face: a paltry \$550 award offer for a home that represented most of their savings.

Blanco hasn't moved yet to implement the Morrell bill, preferring to pressure the firm into hiring more people and demanding that it comes up to speed.

But her self-preserving standoffishness and histrionics has gotten her into trouble once more with her constituents, because ICF's contract is already nearly half over.

Indubitably,

"[...] the contract has been very good for ICF. After the company went public, it distributed \$2.7 million in one-time bonuses to 30 of its top managers.

"Byrne said he was not one of the recipients, but he declined to reveal his salary or say what any other executives in charge of the Road Home contract are making.

"It is private information and we won't disclose that," ICF spokeswoman Gentry Brann said. "It wouldn't be fair to the employees."

Yeah, right.

"They wouldn't dare offer me something like that," my dad growled over the phone, when I told him how little the elderly couple was offered. "They wouldn't dare, dragging me back there to take that little bit of money."

I fell silent. I didn't want to upset the old man, beyond asking him to check to see whether he still had an appointment. But you couldn't put it past bureaucracy to pull a dirty trick like that. They sure as hell would dare. They're that cruel these days.

Crime? Well, as David Byrne once sang, same as it ever was AND worse in certain respects, even with fewer people. Amazing, isn't it?

The bountifully less charitable were praising the Almighty that He finally cleansed the city of the so-called lawless and chronically poor out of the housing projects.

But as one of the witnesses in Spike's film pointed out, why did they think that crime would dwindle once the project class was gone from the city?

Not only is crime in new locations, (N.O. Police Superintendent) Riley says, there are new perpetrators.

"Some of these shootings, under normal circumstances, wouldn't have been shootings," he says.

He cites the Nov. 5 shooting deaths of a 47-year-old man and a 53-year-old woman, found in a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) trailer. The suspect, who was the woman's husband, had recently sought psychiatric help, Riley says. His doctor was unable to find a bed for him, he says. With the city's large public hospital shut down since the storm, beds for mentally ill patients have been scarce.

"People's lives have been turned upside down," Riley says. "They are stressed, frustrated and anxious, he says. And, "they have nowhere to turn."

And speaking of the overcrowded, even FEMA trailer residents are being tossed out of their temporary homes without warning.

Wynaen Walker, living in a trailer in Baker, Louisiana, lost all of her belongings, including a \$1,200 ring, when she was locked out.

Another family was unaccountably assigned to her trailer.

Evacuees maintain that these incidents occur more often than not, because there aren't enough trailers or apartments.

A judge ruled last month that FEMA's inconsistencies about providing permanent housing amounted to a denial of due process. "Judge Richard J. Leon of Federal District Court [...] ordered FEMA to clarify the eligibility requirements and "immediately restore" many families to the program."

Once again, as usual FEMA sidestepped and footdragged, and appealed the order.

Federal dollars are flowing to corporate bailouts and disaster profiteers, not to affected citizens, revealed an August analysis by CorpWatch, a San Francisco-based organization that previously investigated profiteering in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Stafford Act and other federal regulations are resulting in inhumane living conditions in evacuee shelter parks, including the notorious "Renaissance Village" in the town of Baker, near Baton Rouge, where entertainer Rosie O'Donnell spent the past year battling red tape just to establish a community center for the park's thousands of inhabitants. "Even in prisons, they have running tracks," O'Donnell told Nightline.

Another sign that Katrina is an ongoing disaster: Too often the only recourse for flood victims and activist groups is to go to court. In November a federal judge ordered the Bush Administration to continue to provide housing to evacuees,

calling the Federal Emergency Management Agency's notification system "Kafkaesque"-- only the latest indication that Homeland Security chief Michael Chertoff should be sent down the Rumsfeld road for his mishandling of Katrina.

Reality Check; Halliburton And Chavez

December 24, 2006 By Joseph P. Kennedy II, Boston Globe [Excerpt]

While conservative interests in this country don't like him, US businesses don't mind his money and his marketplace.

Otherwise, why would General Motors and Ford sell more than 300,000 cars a year in Venezuela?

Why would Chevron Texaco, Exxon Mobil, Shell, and other major corporations -- including Vice President Cheney's old firm, Halliburton -- invest and earn billions every year off of petroleum exploration, production, refining, and transportation in the country?

Why would US insurance companies, banks, telecom firms, entertainment conglomerates, and consumer product manufacturers flock to our Latin American neighbor?

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)

GI Special Looks Even Better Printed Out

GI Special issues are archived at website <http://www.militaryproject.org> .

The following have posted issues; there may be others:

<http://www.williambowles.info/gispecial/2006/index.html>;

<http://imagineaworldof.blogspot.com/>; <http://gi-special.iraq-news.de>;

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

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