

GI SPECIAL 5A19:



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

**“The General Feeling
Among Us Is We’re Not
Really Doing Anything
Here”**

“Same Old Bullshit”

“A Debacle”

“We’re Chasing A Ghost”

“The Iraqi Army Can’t Stand Up On Their Own” “ “They’re Kicking A Dead Horse Here”



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

"Pretty soon the Shiites will be tired of our presence, just like the Sunnis." "The general feeling among us is we're not really doing anything here," Caldwell said. "We clear one neighborhood, then another one fires up. It's an ongoing battle. It never ends."

"We're constantly being told that it's not our fight. It is their fight," said Sgt. Jose Reynoso, 24, of Yuma, Ariz., speaking of the Iraqi army. "But that's not the case. Whenever we go and ask them for guys, they almost always say no, and we have to do the job ourselves."

[Thanks to Alan Stolzer, The Military Project, who sent this in.]

Jan 12, 2007 By Sudarsan Raghavan, The Washington Post

BAGHDAD - A few hours before another mission into the cauldron of Baghdad, Spec. Daniel Caldwell's wife instant-messaged him Thursday morning. President Bush, Kelly wrote, wanted to send more than 20,000 U.S. troops and extend deployments in Iraq. Eight weeks pregnant, she was worried.

Caldwell, a tall, lean 20-year-old from Montesano, Wash., wondered whether he would miss the birth of his child. He walked outside and joined his comrades of Apache

Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, Stryker Brigade. They, too, had heard the news.

Moments before he stepped into his squad's Stryker -- a large, bathtub-shaped vehicle encased in a cage -- Caldwell echoed a sentiment shared by many in his squad:

"They're kicking a dead horse here. The Iraqi army can't stand up on their own."

The day after his speech, the soldiers of Apache Company went on a mission to the volatile neighborhood of Hurriyah that underscored the challenges confronting U.S. troops as they attempt to clear neighborhoods of sectarian fighters and keep them that way under Iraqi control.

The Stryker rolled through the mud of Camp Liberty and made its way to Hurriyah, a mostly Shiite area nestled west of the Tigris River. Apache Company's mission: to search a few houses for weapons caches based on intelligence reports.

Caldwell and his soldiers worried about the intelligence they had been given. It had come from an Iraqi army -- or "IA," in U.S. soldier lingo -- officer a week ago. They wondered whether they were being set up for an ambush.

"It's a joke," said Pfc. Drew Merrell, 22, of Jefferson City, Mo., shaking his head and flashing a smile as the Stryker rolled through Baghdad.

"They feed us what they want," said Spec. Josh Lake, 26, of Ventura, Calif., referring to the intelligence.

"I guarantee that everyone in the city knows where we're going. Because the IA told them. The only thing they don't know is how big a force we're coming with."

On this morning, 22 U.S. soldiers were in the Stryker convoy along with one Iraqi interpreter, whom the soldiers called Joey. He didn't want his real name used for security reasons.

"Pretty soon the Shiites will be tired of our presence, just like the Sunnis," said Lake, noting that the squad now makes almost daily trips to Hurriyah.

"The general feeling among us is we're not really doing anything here," Caldwell said. "We clear one neighborhood, then another one fires up. It's an ongoing battle. It never ends."

"We're constantly being told that it's not our fight. It is their fight," said Sgt. Jose Reynoso, 24, of Yuma, Ariz., speaking of the Iraqi army. "But that's not the case. Whenever we go and ask them for guys, they almost always say no, and we have to do the job ourselves."

"You do have corruption problems among the ranks," said Sgt. Justin Hill, 24, of Abilene Tex., the squad leader.

"I don't know what they can do about that. They have militias inside them. They are pretty much everywhere."

"The intel they give us and the intel we get are two different things," Lake said.

Caldwell, as he listened to the conversation, leaned his head back and said:

"I want to go back and play my PlayStation."

In Hurriyah, the convoy pulled up outside the Muheaman Mosque, a tan Sunni house of worship overlooking a dirt field with junked cars.

Lt. Dan Futrell, 23, of Santa Clara, Calif., walked into the mosque, flanked by his comrades. Unarmed, bleary-eyed Iraqi soldiers greeted him and called for their commander, Maj. Saad Khalid Fetlawi, who wore a red beret.

Futrell asked him for 10 Iraqi soldiers to help search the targeted houses. Fetlawi immediately agreed and ordered his men to report for duty.

His soldiers came out with old, rusting AK-47 assault rifles and mismatched uniforms. One soldier wore baby blue running shoes with his beige camouflage gear. Some wore black masks so they wouldn't be recognized in the community. Another soldier tucked silver shears into his chest strap.

"This is one of the more squared-away units," Hill said.

"That's something," quipped Merrell, looking at the soldier with the shears. "The Iraqis are always ready to prune a good hedge."

They walked around the corner, onto a narrow, unpaved street with two-story houses. Residents watched from their walled yards as the Iraqi soldiers politely knocked on the doors of the targeted houses. They went in, followed by the Apache Company troops.

Inside one house, an Iraqi soldier walked up to Reynoso. He had found two AK-47 magazine clips. By law, the family can own only one. The Iraqi soldier asked Reynoso what he should do.

"I am not going to tell you what to do," Reynoso said, clearly trying to wean the soldier from depending on him. "It is against the law, but it is up to you to decide."

The Iraqi soldier smiled. Then, he handed back the magazine clip to a member of the family.

In another house, an Iraqi soldier asked whom he should take orders from, the Americans or his Iraqi squad leader.

"I'll tell your squad leader what to do, and he will tell his squad what to do," replied Sgt. Justin Mongol, 25, of New Market, Va., as Joey translated.

After nearly a half-hour, the soldiers had not unearthed a single weapon.

Futrell asked Joey to see whether they were near Mahanara School, as the informant had told them. They weren't. They were near Imam Ali School.

The houses they were meant to search were in another section of Hurriyah.

Some of the American soldiers were angry. They had wasted their time and put their lives at risk.

"Are we even in Hurriyah?" Mongol demanded.

"We're chasing a ghost," Hill said.

They returned to the mosque and asked Fetlawi for a map of Hurriyah.

"I have no map of the place. I came here two days ago," he said.

Still, Fetlawi made a call and was able to find the correct school. He dispatched a pickup truck with his men to guide the U.S. soldiers.

Inside the Stryker, Lake fumed: "A debacle," he declared.

"Same old bullsht," Caldwell said, using an expletive.

The Stryker stopped along a main street in Hurriyah.

The soldiers walked into a compound, the base of the Iraqi army unit in charge of a nearby checkpoint. The targeted house was across the street.

And Futrell needed the help of Sgt. Ahmed Faisal. He needed some of his men to help raid the house.

Faisal refused.

"Our duty is only at this checkpoint, not inside the sector," Faisal said. "We can't send any men with you. I can't work without orders."

So the Americans crossed the street and searched the two-story house. They examined a red trunk on the roof and dug through a pile of sand.

No weapons. "I think it's a dry hole," Mongol said, with disappointment.

Inside the Stryker, as it headed back to the base, the soldiers of Apache Company wondered whether they had been given false information by their Iraqi army contact.

"They know things we don't," Lake said, repeating what he had said on the way to Hurriyah.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Texas Soldier Killed In Ramadi



U.S. Army Spc. Collin R. Schockmel, from Richwood, Texas, was killed Jan. 16, 2007, when his unit was attacked with grenades in Ramadi. Schockmel was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division at Fort Carson. (AP Photo/U.S. Army)

IED Kills Baghdad Soldier, Three Wounded

19 January 2007 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20070119-04

BAGHDAD – A Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldier died when an improvised explosive device detonated on a patrol in a northwest section of the Iraqi capital Jan. 18.

The patrol was conducting a convoy escort mission when the roadside bomb detonated, killing one Soldier and wounding three others.

Boston Soldier Killed In Iraq

January 19, 2007 The Boston Channel

BOSTON -- A soldier from Boston has been killed in Iraq.

Sgt. Gregroy A. Wright, 28, died on Saturday in Muqadadiyah, Iraq, of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle during combat operations, according to the Department of Defense.

Wright was assigned to the 1st Engineer Battalion, 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division in Fort Riley, Kan.

Wright was originally from Jamaica and later lived in Boston, the Army said. He joined the Massachusetts National Guard in 1999 and went on active duty in the Army in 2004

He is survived by a daughter and an ex-wife, the Army said.

Fort Riley said a service was held at the post chapel on Thursday in Wright's honor.

Fallen Texas Soldier Had “Tremendous Sense Of Duty”



January 2, 2007 KWTX

Friends and family will remember Army Spc. Dustin Donica as more than a grim statistic of the US war in Iraq.

Donica, 22, of Spring, was the 3000th member of the US military to die in Iraq since the start of the war.

Donica, who was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Airborne Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division from Fort Richardson, Alaska, was killed by small arms fire three days after Christmas in Baghdad.

Donica grew up in Houston and was a 2002 graduate of Klein High School.

He joined the Army in December of 2003, while attending the University of Texas.

He received the airborne wings of an Army paratrooper after completing basic training at Fort Benning, Ga.

In a written statement released to reporters, his father, David Donica, said, "Dustin had a tremendous sense of duty, both to his family, and his country. He will be missed by his family, and all those that knew him."

A red, white and blue ornamental banner with a yellow ribbon was in the yard of his family's home in the Houston suburb.

Six British soldiers Wounded When Basra Base Attacked

19 Jan 2007 The Scotsman

SIX British soldiers were wounded in attacks on their base in southern Iraq, the Ministry of Defence said today.

The Basra Palace camp in Basra city came under fire from a mixture of mortars, rockets and small arms three times last night.

One soldier was seriously wounded and five others sustained minor injuries.

UNREMITTING HELL ON EARTH; BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



U.S. soldiers wind up barbed wire in central Baghdad's neighborhood Karradah Oct. 31, 2006 (AP Photo/Hadi Mizban)

What A Surprise!

January 19, 2007 By David Cloud and John O'Neil, The International Herald Tribune

The three Iraqi brigades that Mr. Maliki promised have not yet arrived in Baghdad.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Assorted Resistance Action

January 18, 2007 Xinhua & 19 January, 2007 Gulf Times Newspaper

A bomber targeted a convoy of Afghanistan National Army (ANA) in the country's eastern Paktika province Thursday, leaving one soldier dead and wounding three others, military sources said.

"The incident occurred in Paktika's provincial capital Sharana this morning. As a result, one Afghan soldier was killed and three officers were wounded," a senior military officer in the region Murad Ali Murad told Xinhua.

The bomber was also killed in the attack, the official added. However, he failed to elaborate on the bomber's identity.

An Afghan district governor survived an assassination attempt blamed on Taliban insurgents yesterday, while an attacker blew himself up near an army patrol, killing a soldier.

The attacker detonated explosives strapped to his body as he walked up to Afghan soldiers on foot patrol in the capital of the southeastern province of Paktika, provincial governor Mohamed Akram Khepelwak said.

One soldier killed and three other soldiers and two civilians were wounded.

In the eastern province of Nangarhar, meanwhile, a bomb ripped through a vehicle carrying a district chief, police said, then guerrillas opened fire just after the blast.

Mohamed Ali, the chief of Kama district, and his driver were wounded, provincial police spokesman Ghafor Khan said.

SOMALIA WAR REPORTS

Another Surprise:
**As Bush Orders Military Attack On
Somalia, Democrats In Congress
Make No Objection;**
**“The Bush Administration Could Not
Tolerate The Existence Of An Islamist
Regime It Could Not Control”**

January 16, 2007 by Stephen Zunes, CommonDreams.org [Excerpts]

The U.S.-backed Ethiopian invasion of Somalia and subsequent U.S. air strikes and naval blockade against that east African country mark another dangerous chapter in the Bush administration’s war against Islamic nations.

And, despite no authorization from Congress for the United States to become engaged in that country’s civil war and despite the failure of President Bush to consult with Congress as required by the War Powers Act, the new Democratic leadership in Congress has apparently not raised any objections to this dangerous and illegal escalation.

The renewed U.S. military involvement in Somalia must be understood within the context of the U.S. role in Somalia during the cold war, which helped sow the seeds of that country’s subsequent chaos. Like the ill-fated 1992-94 U.S. military intervention, the current U.S. and Ethiopian attacks have done little to bring peace or stability to this impoverished country.

In 2004, after protracted talks in Kenya, the main warlords and politicians signed a deal to set up a new parliament, which later appointed a president. The fledgling administration, the fourteenth attempt to establish a government since 1991, became known as the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), headquartered in the town of Baidoa.

Though strongly backed by the United States and recognized by the UN, the TFG had little credibility among the Somali people. Not only did it have no civil service or government buildings, it consisted of the very warlords that had wreaked such havoc on the country over the previous fourteen years.

As with Afghanistan, which suffered from similar chaos following the ouster of its Communist government in 1992, stability came through puritanical Islamist elements.

The system of Islamic courts had become increasingly popular since they – unlike the TFG or anyone else – had brought peace and stability in areas where they ruled.

This past summer, they came together to form the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) and set up a government.

Unlike the Taliban, however, which was heavily influenced by al-Qaida and hard-line elements of Pakistani intelligence, the ICU was a purely homegrown movement.

While it included some extremist elements that may have indeed had some affinity with radical jihadists, U.S. charges of al-Qaida affiliation appear to have been grossly exaggerated. They were also not nearly as repressive in their interpretation of Islam as the Taliban, such as barring women from employment, education, or health care. Within months, they controlled most of the country outside the Baidoa region.

The ICU limited civil liberties -- such as strongly discouraging Western dancing, music, and films – but it also disarmed militias and banned the widespread and debilitating use of the narcotic qat.

It publicly executed two convicted murderers, though this was just one-twelfth of the number of people executed in Texas in 2006.

Indeed, the ICU was not nearly as repressive or as extremist in its interpretation of Islam as the U.S.-backed government of Saudi Arabia. And despite the dangerous intentions and connections of some of its leadership, the ICU had finally brought stability and peace to a country that had suffered the loss of over one million people over the past sixteen years of violent chaos.

The Bush administration could not tolerate the existence of an Islamist regime it could not control, however.

The United States began arming, training, and financing the armed forces of the Ethiopian dictatorship in preparation for an invasion of Somalia, despite the fact that such an act of aggression is a clear violation of the UN Charter, which – as a signed and ratified international treaty – both Ethiopia and the United States are obliged to uphold.

After weeks of clashes on Somali territory, Ethiopian forces launched a full-scale invasion on December 24. Four days later, Ethiopian forces advanced to Mogadishu, installing the TFG in government offices.

Since that time, violence and lawlessness have returned to the Somali capital. Fighting between various armed factions has reignited, roadblocks manned by various militias have sprung up to extort money from passing motorists, and the peace enjoyed under ICU rule has come to an end.

As ICU forces retreated southward, the U.S. Navy tightened its blockade of the Somali coast.

On January 8, the United States launched a series of strikes in southern Somalia. Despite initial claims by U.S. officials that the air strikes killed senior al-Qaida officials implicated in several notorious terrorist attacks in East Africa, it now appears that the scores of people killed were primarily civilians, along with some ICU militiamen. The attacks have set off waves of anti-American anger in Mogadishu and elsewhere.

By January 12, the last ICU stronghold had fallen. To have the first government that brought any semblance of stability to Somalia in seventeen years ousted by military operations of its historic rival Ethiopia and the United States, both predominantly Christian nations, will likely play into the hands of radical Islamists who hope to stir up religious hatreds.

The recent interventions by the United States and Ethiopia have only made matters worse.

TROOP NEWS

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



The casket of Army Sgt. Thomas E. Vandling Jr., 26, of Bellevue, Pa. at the Church of the Assumption in Bellevue, Pa., Jan. 12, 2007. Vandling died of injuries after an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle while he was on combat patrol in Iraq. (AP Photo/Gene J. Puskar)

A Grim Milestone: 500 War Amputees



New England Journal of Medicine

Jan. 18, 2007 By MICHAEL WEISSKOPF, WASHINGTON, Time

The giant transport planes unload their sad cargo at Andrews Air Force Base near Washington, the first stop home for the most seriously injured Americans of the Iraq war. Arriving virtually every Tuesday, Friday and Sunday nights for the past four years, the parade of wounded warriors may be one of the most predictable events in an otherwise unruly conflict.

Last Tuesday marked another grim milestone: the arrival of the 500th amputee.

Army officials said the victim, a 24-year-old corporal, lost both legs in a roadside bomb explosion on January 12. He was treated at the military hospital in Landstuhl, Germany, before landing at Andrews and being taken to Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Limb-loss has occurred twice as often in Iraq as in any conflict of the past century, except for Vietnam, for which there are no good statistics.

The 500 major amputations — **toes and fingers aren't counted** — represent 2.2% of the 22,700 U.S. troops wounded in action. But the number rises to 5% in the category of soldiers whose wounds prevent them returning to duty.

As U.S. Troops Fight And Die, The Suits Yuk It Up At Tallil



US Defense Secretary Robert Gates and General George Casey, the US commander in Iraq, have a good laugh before a meeting at Tallil Air Base in south central Iraq. (AFP/Jim Mannion)

More Iraq Veterans Go To DC; Oppose Escalation Of War: “This Is, Frankly, Ridiculous” “How Many More Men And Women Have To Lose A Limb Or A Life?”

The group’s leader implored lawmakers to listen to people who have been in the fight and “not those draft-dodgers down the road,” an apparent reference to President Bush and Vice President Cheney.

Jan 18, 2007 By Rick Maze, Staff writer, Army Times [Excerpts]

Just days after a group of active-duty service members pressed Congress to end the war in Iraq, another group of veterans of that conflict is calling on lawmakers to oppose President Bush's plan to send additional troops into the fray.

The group's leader implored lawmakers to listen to people who have been in the fight and "not those draft-dodgers down the road," an apparent reference to President Bush and Vice President Cheney.

Nine veterans, all affiliated with the increasingly partisan VoteVets.org, made the rounds of the Senate to drum up support for some legislative action that would prevent an increase in U.S. troops in Iraq. It was Jon Stolz, an Army Reserve captain who served in Iraq in 2003, who made the jab at Bush and Cheney. Bush served in the National Guard during the Vietnam War but did not deploy, while Cheney received multiple draft deferments and never served.

Stolz, national chairman of VoteVets.org, has been involved in forming a new umbrella group, Americans Against Escalation in Iraq, that involves veterans, anti-war groups, MoveOn.org Political Action and other groups.

Stolz said the veterans include Democrats, Republicans and independents who all agree that sending more troops to Iraq is a mistake.

"We are here to meet with senators on both sides of the aisle," he said. "We are here to tell them why this is, frankly, ridiculous."

Indiana Army National Guard veteran Sam Schultz, another of the veterans, called the Bush plan "delusional," while Army Spec. Robert Loria, who lost his hand in Iraq in 2004, said he also disagreed with the plan.

"How many more men and women have to lose a limb or a life?" Loria asked.

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

Retired Generals Slam Bush's Iraq Plan: A Fool's Errand"

[Thanks to Pham Binh, Traveling Soldier, who sent this in.]

Jan 18, 2007 (CBS News)

The President's troop build-up -- already taking political fire from both Democrats and Republicans -- came under withering attack on Thursday from a panel of retired generals on Capitol Hill, CBS News national security correspondent David Martin reports.

"The proposed solution is to send more troops and it won't work. The addition of 21,000 troops is too little and too late," former Marine Gen. Joseph Hoar said.

Hoar once commanded all American forces in the Middle East and has nothing good to say about the war.

"This administration's handling of the war has been characterized by deceit, mismanagement and a shocking failure to understand the social and political forces that influence events in the Middle East," Hoar said.

Retired Gen. Barry McCaffrey, who commanded a division in the first Gulf War and was consulted by the president in drawing up the new Iraq strategy said, "They're going to try to muscle this thing out in the next 24 months with an urban counterinsurgency plan that I personally believe, with all due respect, is a fool's errand."

Twisted Freak In Command Braggs That 98% Of Battlefield PTSD Cases Sent Right Back Into Combat

January 17, 2007 USA Today [Excerpts]

An experienced Navy psychologist warns that the U.S. military does not have enough mental health professionals to meet the growing number of emotionally damaged war veterans.

Moreover, Navy Cmdr. Mark Russell says, many of the mental health professionals on staff lack formal training in core therapies for post-traumatic stress syndrome.

Russell predicts a "perfect storm" of dire health care consequences.

Klam says the Army and Navy have emphasized providing mental health counseling in war zones at an unprecedented level. [Navy Capt. Warren Klam, a psychiatrist and senior medical officer for mental health at the Naval Medical Center in San Diego and a member of the Mental Health Task Force.]

As a result, he says, the military has a record of returning more than 98% of troops with emotional issues back to their units.

[It's moments like this that bring on the thought that it's a pity fragging has gone out of style. And then one realizes that the last place a piece of shit like Klam is be found would be on any battlefield anywhere, ever.]

SSG Demands End Of Cuba Travel Restriction

Jan 18, 2007 By Rick Maze, Staff writer, Army Times [Excerpts]

An Army National Guard staff sergeant who was denied the opportunity to visit his children in Cuba during a two-week break from the war in Iraq has appealed to the House Hispanic Caucus for help.

Carlos Lazo, who addressed the congressional caucus Thursday, was a medic serving in Iraq in 2004 when the Bush administration changed its policies to no longer allow annual trips back to Cuba to visit family members.

He discovered the change while on leave from the war zone when he flew to Miami with plans to make a trip to Cuba to see his two teenage sons. New rules that took effect June 30, 2004, allowed only one trip every three years — with no exceptions.

“They said if they made an exception for me, they would have to make exceptions for everything,” Lazo said. “Before, you could visit every year — one trip a year — and more often for humanitarian reasons. I wasn’t able to see them, and I went back to Iraq.”

After his tour in Iraq ended, Lazo said he still couldn’t make a trip to see his sons because he had last visited in 2001 and three years had not passed.

Lazo arrived in the U.S. in 1992. He became a U.S. citizen, moved to Seattle and joined the National Guard in 2001. In November 2003, he was mobilized and deployed to Iraq, where he said he was assigned as a medic in support of Marine operations in Fallujah.

At a minimum, the military medic — who, as a civilian, is a counselor for the disabled for Washington state — wants an exception to allow Cuban Americans with family in Cuba to visit them before, during and after a deployment. What he would really like is for the Bush administration to drop the once-every-three-years travel rule.

Lazo acknowledged there are not very many Cuban-American service members who face exactly the same situation, but he said he felt it was important for everyone to have the policy changed.

“As it is right now, your mother could die, and if you have visited Cuba in the last three years, you would not be allowed to go to the funeral,” he said.

Pissing In The Wind

1.19.07 Los Angeles Times

The steadily rising cost of the Iraq war will reach about \$8.4 billion a month this year, Pentagon spokesmen said, as the price of replacing lost, destroyed and aging equipment mounts.

DoD Admits Report About Evil Canadian Spy Coins Was Raving Bullshit

1.19.07 Los Angeles Times

Reversing itself, the Defense Department says its espionage report that warned about Canadian coins with tiny radio frequency transmitters was not true.

The Defense Security Service said it never could substantiate its own published claims about the mysterious coins, and it has begun an internal review to determine how the false information was included in a 29-page report about espionage concerns.

The service had contended since late June that such coins were found planted on U.S. contractors with classified security clearances on at least three occasions between October 2005 and January 2006 as the contractors traveled through Canada.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action

19 Jan 2007 Reuters & United Press International

An Iraqi soldier was shot dead by a sniper in Falluja, police said.

A traffic policeman who was captured on Thursday was found dead in Ramadi, west of Baghdad, police said.

Guerrillas killed a top Iraqi tourism official outside his Baghdad home.

A truck driver ferrying supplies to U.S. troops was captured in north Baghdad.

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

“America Is Playing With Fire And Our Patience Is Beginning To Fade”



Iraqis chant slogans denouncing the arrest of Abdul-Hadi al-Darraji, a prominent media spokesman for the movement of cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, during a demonstration in Kut, January 19, 2007. (Jaafer Kut/Reuters)

[Thanks to Pham Binh, Traveling Soldier, who sent this in.]

January 19, 2007 By KIM GAMEL, Associated Press Writer & By David Cloud and John O'Neil, The International Herald Tribune

U.S. and Iraqi forces swooped into a mosque complex in east Baghdad on Friday and detained a top aide to radical anti-American cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, the latest in a series of operations aimed at eviscerating the leadership of the Mahdi Army militia.

The raid drew immediate criticism from the Iraqi government, which complained it had not been consulted.

"There was no coordination with the Iraqi political leadership and this arrest was not part of the new security plan," Sadiq al-Rikabi, the al-Maliki adviser, told Al-Arabiya television.

"Coordination with the Iraqi political leadership is needed before conducting such operations that draw popular reactions."

Abdul-Hadi al-Darraji was captured in the early morning raid and his bodyguard was killed in what Abdul-Zahra al-Suweidi, a senior al-Sadr aide, called a "cowardly act." Al-Sadr's office said al-Darraji was media director for the cleric's political movement and demanded his immediate release.

"America is playing with fire and our patience is beginning to fade," said Abdul-Razzaq al-Nidawi, an al-Sadr aide in the Shiite holy city of Najaf. "This savage barbarian act will not pass peacefully."

The American military announced that it had seized a suspect it called "a high-level illegal armed-group leader" and two other suspects during a raid in eastern Baghdad, conducted by American troops and special forces from the Iraqi army.

Abdul Razzaq al-Nedawi, a Sadr aide in the southern city of Najaf — denounced the arrest of Mr. Darraji, calling it "part of a series of provocations by the Americans."

In an interview with the Italian newspaper La Repubblica, Mr. Sadr said that his militias would not fight back during the Muslim holy month of Muharram, which starts this weekend, The Associated Press reported.

"Let them kill us. For a true believer, there is no better moment than this to die," Mr. Sadr was quoted as saying. "After Muharram, we'll see."

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

“The Alleged ‘Surge’ In U.S. Troop Numbers Is Meaningless In Military Terms”

[Thanks to Pham Binh, Traveling Soldier, who sent this in. He writes: "New" Strategy = Same Old Shit]

Jan. 15, 2007 By GWYNNE DYER, The Japan Times Ltd. [Excerpts]

LONDON -- Repeat after me: There is no new U.S. strategy in Iraq. The allies are the same, the enemies are the same, the tactics are the same, even the new American force strength lies within the range that has prevailed since 2003.

We are only being told that there is a new strategy because U.S. President George W. Bush had to say that he was doing something differently after the Republicans' stunning defeat in the mid-term Congressional elections two months ago.

As for the tactics, it's the same mix as before: block-by-block "clear and hold" operations in Baghdad (last tried unsuccessfully last summer); a major offensive against the Mahdi Army (tried twice without success in 2004); and nothing much beyond trying to keep the roads open in Anbar province in western Iraq, the heartland of the Sunni Arab insurgency.

There are no surprises, no new approaches -- and the alleged "surge" in U.S. troop numbers is meaningless in military terms. The extra 21,500 American troops amount to a mere 16 percent increase in U.S. strength in Iraq.

If 132,000 U.S. troops have not delivered "victory" in Iraq (in a war that has now lasted longer than American participation in World War II), then 153,500 American troops are not likely to do so either.

Indeed, the total number of U.S. troops in Iraq was actually higher than that at the end of 2005, and it didn't make the slightest bit of difference.

This "new strategy" that isn't new is not about Iraq, nor American interests either. It is a public-relations gesture by a proud man who understandably refuses to admit that the centerpiece of his presidency was a ghastly mistake from the start, and one that he cannot now fix.

Bush is not really playing "double or nothing" in Iraq, as so many critics allege, because he cannot: He lacks the ground troops to double his bet.

OCCUPATION REPORT

U.S. OCCUPATION RECRUITING DRIVE IN HIGH GEAR; RECRUITING FOR THE ARMED RESISTANCE THAT IS



An Iraqi citizen inspects damage inside the Hussainiya mosque in central Baghdad, following a raid by US troops. (AFP/Ahmad al-Rubaye)

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

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

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

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

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Genocide From Belsen To Gaza; “The People Of Gaza Were Beginning To Starve To Death”

January 17, 2007 By John Pilger [Excerpts]

A genocide is engulfing the people of Gaza while a silence engulfs its bystanders.

"Some 1.4 million people, mostly children, are piled up in one of the most densely populated regions of the world, with no freedom of movement, no place to run and no space to hide," wrote the senior UN relief official, Jan Egeland, and Jan Eliasson, then Swedish foreign minister, in Le Figaro.

They described people "living in a cage", cut off by land, sea and air, with no reliable power and little water and tortured by hunger and disease and incessant attacks by Israeli troops and planes.

Egeland and Eliasson wrote this four months ago as an attempt to break the silence in Europe whose obedient alliance with the United States and Israel has sought to reverse the democratic result that brought Hamas to power in last year's Palestinian elections.

The horror in Gaza has since been compounded; a family of 18 has died beneath a 500-pound American/Israeli bomb; unarmed women have been mown down at point-blank range. Dr David Halpin, one of the few Britons to break what he calls "this medieval siege", reported the killing of 57 children by artillery, rockets and small arms and was shown evidence that civilians are Israel's true targets, as in Lebanon last summer.

A friend in Gaza, Dr Mona El-Farra, emailed: "I see the effects of the relentless sonic booms and artillery on my 13-year-old daughter. At night, she shivers with fear. Then both of us end up crouching on the floor. I try to make her feel safe, but when the bombs sound I flinch and scream ..."

The historian Ilan Pappé has documented that "the genocidal policy is not formulated in a vacuum" but part of Zionism's deliberate, historic ethnic cleansing.

Gideon Levy and Amira Hass are reporters on the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz.

In November, Levy described how the people of Gaza were beginning to starve to death ... "there are thousands of wounded, disabled and shell-shocked people unable to receive any treatment ... the shadows of human beings roam the ruins ... they only know the (Israeli army) will return and what this will mean for them: more imprisonment in their homes for weeks, more death and destruction in monstrous proportions."

Amira Hass, who has lived in Gaza, describes it as a prison that shames her people. She recalls how her mother, Hannah, was being marched from a cattle-train to the Nazi concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen on a summer's day in

1944." (She) saw these German women looking at the prisoners, just looking," she wrote. "This image became very formative in my upbringing, this despicable 'looking from the side'."

"Looking from the side" is what those of us do who are cowed into silence by the threat of being called anti-Semitic.

Looking from the side is what too many western Jews do, while those Jews who honour the humane traditions of Judaism and say, "Not in our name!" are abused as "self-despising".

[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

Senate Imperial Democrats Hide Authorization To Attack Iran In Fake "Anti-War" Resolution; U.S. "Anti-War Movement" Collaborators Piss Pants With Delight

[The Senators are just doing their job: defending the Empire. What's disgusting is all the collaborators they have pissing their pants with delight over this new war resolution. These collaborators include most of the leadership of the "anti-war" movement, who never cease to acclaim the politicians who never cease to plan new ways to kill our troops. T]

Jan 18, 2007 Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) [Excerpts]

The Senate is expected to vote in the next two weeks on the bipartisan, non-binding resolution, sponsored by Democratic Senators Joe Biden (DE), Carl Levin (MI), and Republican Senators Olympia Snowe (ME) and Chuck Hagel (NE), that puts Congress on record against an escalation of the Iraq war. This legislation could become an important first step in building a bipartisan consensus against the escalation of the war and starting a congressional movement to stop funding for the war.

But the Biden, Levin, Snowe, and Hagel legislation, as currently drafted, contains a potentially dangerous provision that could be interpreted as authorizing U.S. military action against Iran.

The legislation states that "... main elements of the mission of United States forces in Iraq should transition to helping ensure the territorial integrity of Iraq, conduct counter terrorism activities, reduce regional interference in the internal affairs of Iraq, and accelerate training of Iraqi troops." In the context of the recent statements by President Bush about Iran, the provision could be read as a new authorization for the use of U.S. military force.

The provision says the U.S. military is authorized to "reduce regional interference in the internal affairs of Iraq." President Bush might assert that this new provision -- non-binding though it is -- signals that Congress supports his option to attack Iran. The point is, at least, ambiguous, and Congress should not give the president such an opening.

House Imperial Democrats Introduce Resolution To Keep Killing U.S. Troops For At Least Another Six Months: Politicians Propose Loony Plan That Hired Mercenaries From Other Countries Take Their Place After That

18 Jan 2007 Progressive Democrats Of American

Yesterday, Reps. Lynn Woolsey, Barbara Lee and Maxine Waters introduced H.R. 508: The Bring the Troops Home and Iraq Sovereignty Restoration Act, taking up the President's challenge to come up with a plan for Iraq.

Thirteen additional members have already signed on as co-sponsors.

The bill would bring our troops home in six months.

[Not now of course. That would stop the killing. And not for at least six months after their bills passes, which it won't. And they know it: just so much posturing bullshit aimed at the next election, two years away.]

[The Bill would also: "Authorize, if requested by the Iraqi government, U.S. support for an international stabilization force. Such a force would be funded for no longer than two years, and be combined with economic and humanitarian assistance."

[These politicians who are completely opposed to bringing our troops home now, alive, while they stay safely in Congress in Washington DC are cowards and the scum of the earth, and so are those who go around hailing and promoting them as people to be looked to the stop the war. T]

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.

Piece Of Shit Pelosi Promises To Keep U.S. Troops In Harm's Way: Won't Cut Off War Money Needed To Kill More U.S. Troops

Jan. 19, 2007 ABC News

There may be a growing battle between Congress and President Bush over the Iraq War strategy, but new House Speaker Nancy Pelosi says she won't block funding for additional troops.

Pelosi's position, revealed in an exclusive interview with ABC News' Diane Sawyer, comes days after a group of senators announced a bipartisan resolution condemning the Bush administration's plan to increase U.S. forces in Iraq by more than 20,000 troops.

The Parrot

From: David Honish [Veteran]
To: GI Special
Sent: January 18, 2007

Laura Bush bought George a parrot for his birthday.

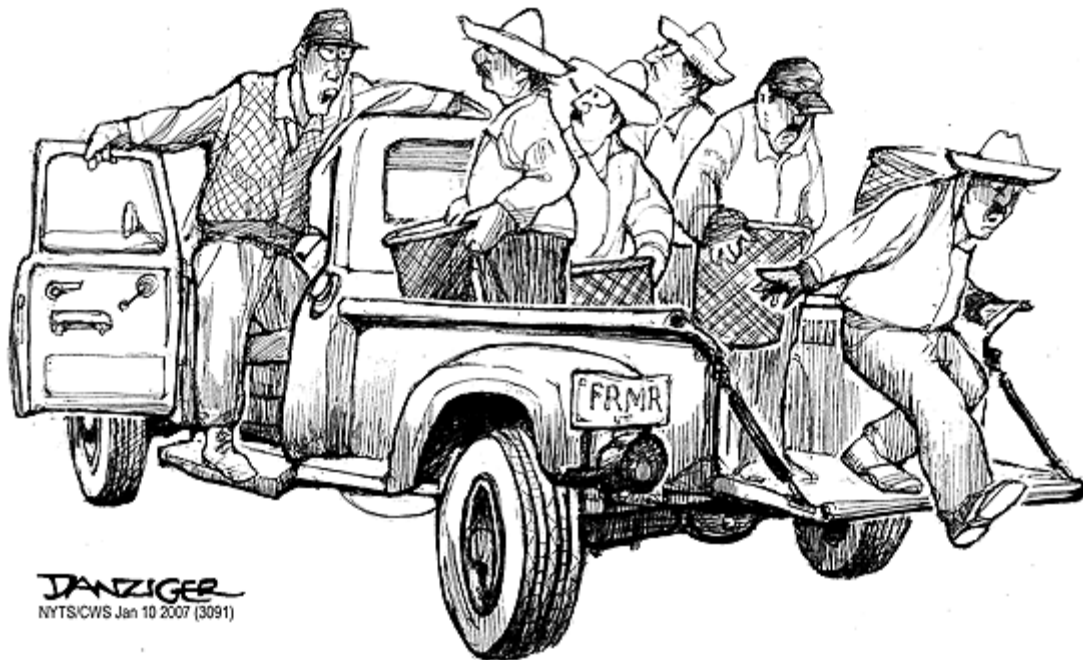
She told Dick Cheney, "The bird is so smart! George has already taught him to mispronounce over 200 words!"

"Wow, that's pretty impressive," Cheney said. "But you realize that he just says the words. He doesn't understand what they mean".

"That's okay," Laura replied. "Neither does the parrot".

CLASS WAR REPORTS

REMEMBER, IF ANYONE ASKS YOU, YOU'RE NOT ILLEGAL ALIENS..
YOU'RE JUST PART OF A "SURGE."



Bolivia: **The Rat Morales Betrays Workers And Poor Of Cochabamba; They Defy Him And Fight Back**

January 19, 2007, By Sarah Hines, Socialist Worker

SARAH HINES reports from Bolivia on new confrontations between left- and right-wing forces.

AFTER WEEKS of escalating tensions, clashes in Bolivia between supporters and opponents of Cochabamba's ultra-right-wing Gov. Manfred Reyes Villa left at least two dead and more than 200 injured last week in the city of Cochabamba.

The confrontation was precipitated by the Reyes' call for a new referendum on the question of regional "autonomy," despite the fact that 63 percent of the state's residents rejected the proposal last June. "Autonomía" is the demand of the oligarchy in the gas- and oil-rich eastern departments known as the Media Luna (Half Moon). If achieved, it would give these departments a larger share of oil and gas revenues.

Reyes jumped on the autonomy bandwagon in December in a move that has helped propel him to the lead of the right-wing opposition to President Evo Morales, the country's first indigenous president and leader of the Movement Towards Socialism party.

Protests were first called by Cochabamba's Regional Workers Center (COD), but a majority of the protesters are indigenous peasants and cocaleros (coca growers) from the department's rural provinces, who converged in Cochabamba over the course of more than a week of protests and confrontations that turned bloody last week.

According to eyewitness accounts, the violence began when members of Youth for Democracy--which, despite its misleading name, is a semi-fascist group of wealthy youths with ties to the governor--rushed through police lines to attack cocaleros and indigenous women with two-by-fours, lead pipes and baseball bats. The right-wingers screamed racist insults--one protester reported hearing, "You are not from Cochabamba, go back to your pueblo indios de mierda." By the end of the night, at least one cocalero and one Manfred supporter were dead.

The Morales government has refused to support the social movements' demand for Manfred's resignation, instead urging the movements to allow him to finish his term. Morales' response to the recent violence was to call for "dialogue" and tell protesters to lift their blockade of the city and go home.

Nevertheless, the following day, Morales felt compelled to introduce legislation that would allow for referendums to recall a governor, mayor or president. Reyes announced he would withdraw his proposal for a new referendum on regional autonomy.

While these results show that the protests had some effect, the struggle is far from over. As Claudia, a Cochabamba resident and participant in the protests, said in an interview, "We almost died in this struggle, and still the government refuses to support our demands."

There are two very important dynamics at play in this struggle that will have an impact on the future direction of Bolivian politics. One is the battle of the oligarchy against the government and the left.

The other concerns the relationship between the social movements and the government, which very clearly tried to demobilize the movement against Manfred Reyes.

Despite the government's call for the end of protests and blockades, as Socialist Worker went to press, leaders of the COD and indigenous, cocalero and peasant organizations were vowing to continue their protests until Manfred resigns, and several roads into the city remained blockaded.

It will take further mobilization to defend the Morales government from increasingly organized and aggressive right-wing forces--and to achieve the social movements' demands for a restructuring of Bolivian society in the interests of workers, peasants and the poor.

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>;

<http://www.albasrah.net/maqalat/english/gi-special.htm>

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