

GI SPECIAL 5A22:



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

65 % Of Americans Oppose Sending More Troops To Iraq

**“Two-Thirds Say War A Mistake,
The Highest Negative Response
So Far”**

**“51 % Now Strongly Disapprove Of His
Performance In Office, The Worst Rating
Of His Presidency”**

Nearly two-thirds of Americans say it was a mistake to go to war there, the highest negative response since the war began.

Jan 22, 2007 Dan Balz and Jon Cohen, The Washington Post [Excerpts]

Iraq dominates the national agenda, with 48 percent of Americans calling the war the single most important issue they want Bush and the Congress to deal with this year. No other issue rises out of single digits.

The Post-ABC poll shows that 65 percent of Americans oppose sending more troops to Iraq; it was 61 percent immediately after the president unveiled the plan on Jan. 10 in a nationally televised address.

59 percent of all Americans, including more than a quarter of Republicans, want Congress to try to block the president's plan to send more troops.

Bush's overall approval rating in the new poll is 33 percent, matching the lowest it has been in Post-ABC polls since he took office in 2001. Sixty-five percent say they disapprove.

Equally telling is the finding that 51 percent of Americans now strongly disapprove of his performance in office, the worst rating of his presidency. Just 17 percent strongly approve of the way he is handling his job.

More broadly, Bush will be speaking on Tuesday night to a nation that is deeply pessimistic, with just 26 percent of Americans say the country is heading in the right direction and 71 percent saying the country is seriously off track. That is the worst these ratings have been in more than a decade.

Just 29 percent approve of Bush's handling of the Iraq war, which is only one percentage point off his career low recorded a month ago, and 70 percent disapprove.

Nearly two-thirds of Americans say it was a mistake to go to war there, the highest negative response since the war began.

Similarly, Bush's approval rating on handling terrorism is at a near-low, with just 46 percent giving him positive marks and 52 percent negative.

And 55 percent of Americans now say the president has not made the country safer, the first time a majority of the country has reached that conclusion.

And another first time majority, 52 percent, would prefer to see U.S. forces withdrawn from Iraq to avoid further casualties rather than leaving them until civil order is restored. The poll did not ask about a timetable for such a withdrawal.

The poll also highlights a major disconnect between the priorities of the American people and the White House over Iraq policy.

More than three-in-five said that it is better to seek a solution to the Iraq conflict through diplomatic and political means, but three-in-four said they believe Bush is relying mostly on military means.

Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward GI Special along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, at home and inside the armed services. Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Project, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

One Soldier Killed, Four Wounded In Ninewa

Jan. 22, 2007 Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20070122-05

TIKRIT, Iraq – A Task Force Lightning Soldier assigned to 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, was killed Monday when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle while conducting combat operations in Ninewa province.

Four other Soldiers were wounded and transported to a Coalition Forces' medical treatment facility.

Tri-State Soldier Dies In Iraq



U.S. Army Sgt. Phillip McNeill
(WCPO/WCPO.com)

1/22/2007 Deb Haas, WCPO

A Cincinnati native was killed in Iraq on the deadliest day for the military there in two years.

Army Sergeant Phillip McNeill was from Kenwood and still has family in the Tri-state.

Sgt. McNeill was just 22 years old when he died Saturday after a roadside bomb exploded outside his humvee.

Another Oregon Soldier Killed In Iraq



Army Sgt. Sean Fennerty of Portland was killed in action in Iraq on Saturday. (Photo provided by Oregon Military Dept.)

Jan. 22, 2007 KTVZ

SALEM - U.S. Army Sgt. Sean Fennerty of Portland has been killed in combat in Iraq, the Oregon Military Department said Monday.

Fennerty, 26, died Saturday in Al Anbar Province when the vehicle he was in was struck by a roadside bomb or IED (improvised explosive device), officials said.

Fennerty was an airborne soldier stationed at Fort Richardson, Alaska with the 25th Infantry Division.

Fennerty grew up in Tucson, Arizona, and Portland. He graduated from Jesuit High School in Portland in 1999 and Oregon State University in 2004 as a history major.

According to a list kept by Gov. Ted Kulongoski's office, Fennerty is the 78th soldier from Oregon or with close Oregon ties to die in the Iraq war.

Sean is survived by his mother Mo, father Brian, two sisters, Kelly of Seattle and Colleen of Chicago, IL, and brother Conor of Washington D.C.

Local Soldier Killed In Iraq



By: Evan Axelbank

1/22/2007 By: Evan Axelbank, TWEAN News Channel of Syracuse

Shawn Patrick Falter, a son, a brother, a high school athlete, and, now, a fallen soldier -- Cortland County's first in the Iraq War.

"He was just one of the nicest nicest kids you'll ever want to meet in your life," said Village of Homer Mayor Mike McDermott.

The member of Homer High's Class of '99, Private Falter, 25, was ambushed in the City of Karbala on Saturday and killed, along with four of his American comrades. Everyone seemed to love Falter.

"He was the type of kid that you'd hope your daughter would bring home, he was such a nice kid," said McDermott.

Determination defined Falter's life. In high school, he wowed people by stepping onto the basketball court, even with severe ankle problems.

"He did everything he could to overcompensate for any difficulties he was dealt. He would not accept the fact that something was, oh, you can't do that," Larry King, Falter's JHS Principal.

It was his dream to serve and follow his brothers, also service members, into battle. As Homer makes plans to honor Falter, its pride was on display on its marquee for everyone to see.

"The community, and us, we will all miss him," King said.

Shawn Patrick Falter, a nice kid from Homer, now an American Hero taken in the City of Karbala.

22-Year-Old From Prairieville Among Latest War Dead

January 22, 2007 The Advertiser

A U.S. soldier from Prairieville is among the latest to die in Iraq, his mother said.

Bryan Chism, 22, who "liked anybody and everybody," was one of five U.S. soldiers killed in Karbala, Iraq, on Saturday, his mother, Elizabeth Chism, said Sunday.

An LSU fan and Boy Scout, Bryan Chism graduated from St. Amant High School and enjoyed sky diving and rock climbing. He accumulated 21 hours in college and then joined the Army, said his mother, an East Ascension High teacher.

He became an artillery specialist. He was on his first tour of duty in Iraq when he died.

Chism, who had been in the service since June 2005, was due to come home for two weeks of rest and relaxation in February, his mother said.

Five U.S. soldiers were killed Saturday night when militia fighters attacked a provincial headquarters in the Shiite Muslim holy city of Karbala, the military said in a statement.

Washington National Guard Soldier Killed



January 17, 2007 By Nick Perry, Seattle Times staff reporter

James Riekana never hesitated when a longtime friend told him over the phone that she was in severe pain.

He ran to Mary Wright's office, carried her down the stairs and drove her to a nearby hospital. There, he sat and held Wright's hand for most of the day, until she was admitted for emergency surgery.

That was last winter, soon after Spc. Riekana, an Eagle Scout and member of the National Guard, returned from a year in Iraq. By the fall, Spc. Riekana, 22, had volunteered for a second tour of duty.

Though his Idaho unit, the 145th Brigade Support Battalion, was remaining stateside, Spc. Riekana offered to bolster the ranks of the short-staffed Puerto Rico National Guard, said Lt. Col. Stephanie Dowling, spokeswoman for the Idaho Guard.

Spc. Riekena was killed Sunday in Baghdad, when an improvised explosive device blew up near his Humvee, according to the Army.

At least 70 soldiers with roots in Washington state have died since the Iraq war began nearly four years ago.

Wright, 19, credited Spc. Riekena with bravery and perhaps even saving her life the day she went into surgery.

"I'm really thankful for what he did. He's always there for you or anyone," Wright said. "I'm very grateful that I've had him in my life."

Tuesday, friends and family said that Spc. Riekena loved literature and writing, and hoped to attend college to become an English teacher. His writing skills were shown in a letter to his grandparents during his first Iraq tour:

"It's such an odd place. My heart aches at the sight of how they live, though from it, as all things in life, I continue to learn. Respect and appreciation for all that I have. To really cherish the smallest of things I never did before. Another lesson is that again of hope — to keep hope for a people and place where it seems all hope is lost."

His grandmother, Sharon Riekena, of Missoula, Mont., said her grandson sometimes shared his thoughts about Iraq with her because she lived in Baghdad for three years as a teenager while her father was an agricultural adviser there.

In an e-mail sent Thursday, Spc. Riekena told his close-knit family he was keeping fit by running every day, was enjoying a couple of days off and would see everyone soon, his grandmother said.

Spc. Riekena was born in Missoula and moved to Redmond with his family in 1993. He dedicated most weekends to scouting.

After graduating from Redmond High School, Spc. Riekena moved to Post Falls, Idaho, where he worked installing fences and joined the Guard.

"I think he felt kind of lost. He was away from his friends and he needed to find out who he was," said close friend Justin Nelson. "He saw the National Guard as the way to go.

"He wasn't too worried about it, because that unit hadn't been to war for 20 years or something. But a month after he joined, he got called in. Then it turned into a whole new thing for him."

Nelson said Spc. Riekena loved his job and believed he was meant to be a soldier.

Although he had difficulty accepting the political aspects of the war, Spc. Riekena believed strongly he was helping others overcome their hardships, Nelson said. He found new truth in the meaning of war and freedom.

When Spc. Riekena returned from his first tour, he moved back to Redmond to be close to his four siblings, said his sister, Jaime Riekena, 18.

“He was really close to all of us,” she said. “He wanted to always keep the family together and would help you with any problem you had.”

Ark. Soldier Dies In Helicopter Crash In Iraq

1.22.07 The Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK: An Arkansas soldier was among the twelve U-S soldiers killed when a Black Hawk helicopter crashed Saturday in Iraq. That word is from the family of Captain Michael Taylor of North Little Rock. Taylor's father-in-law, Sandy Sanders, says Taylor was piloting the helicopter when it went down northeast of Baghdad.

Sanders says the 40-year-old Taylor had been in Iraq for several months and was to return to Arkansas for a family visit in February. He says the family had no other details about the crash. Taylor, who was in the Army Reserves, also served in Desert Storm.

Taylor and his wife, Wendy, have two children, ages eleven and five. Sanders says Taylor worked in the computer business, and previously worked for the Veterans Administration.

Sanders says his son-in-law loved duck hunting and appreciated life.

Prairie Village Soldier Dies

January 17, 2007 Kansas City Star

The day before her husband died was one of the best days that Suzanne Anderson had with her young Army husband, despite that they were living in Mosul, Iraq.

It was their last day together.

Sgt. Ian C. Anderson, 22, from Prairie Village, was killed Monday morning, along with three other soldiers. A bomb blew up near their Humvee.

His wife, Suzanne Anderson, 21, who is also in the Army, has left Iraq. She's traveling home to Kansas, but bad weather is making her journey home even longer.

Both Andersons served in the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, out of Fort Bliss, Texas.

Ian Anderson just turned 22 the week before he died. This was his second deployment; he'd already spent a year in Korea. He entered the Army from Prairie Village on Oct. 23, 2002.

'They were in the same unit together,' said Suzanne's mother, Debby Mason of Prairie Village. 'She was determined to join after he did. She wanted to be with him.'

The two attended Shawnee Mission East High School, but they didn't know each other then, Debby Mason said. Her daughter met Anderson after they'd left high school through their brothers, who are friends.

The Masons heard the terrible news early Monday morning, when their phone rang at 3:30 a.m. Their daughter told them. 'She's doing well,' said Debby Mason. Her daughter 'is a strong woman.'

His son-in-law was 'a really good guy,' said Terry Mason. 'I couldn't have asked for a better one He was a super, good guy.'

He was the handsome boyfriend, standing 6 feet tall, who asked his girlfriend's parents permission to marry their daughter, marrying at the Johnson County Courthouse wearing his dress uniform.

He was the husband who didn't want his wife to join the Army, but supported her when she did.

He was the father who loved his family so deeply that he trusted his most precious gift -- the couple's 3-year-old daughter, Lillian -- to the care of his in-laws for at least their one-year deployment, knowing Lillian would be loved and cherished the same way his wife was.

'We don't know what to say to Lillian,' said Debby Mason, as the toddler was gurgling and laughing in the background. 'Suzanne told us to let her do it.'

The grandmother sighed. 'She's a great mom, and she'll handle it the right way.'

The grandparents grow sad when they think about what to tell their granddaughter when she asks about her daddy.

'I'll tell her that he was a really great guy,' said Terry Mason. 'Gosh, I had a crush on him too, he was so great.'

And he laughs, one of the few between his tears.

Debby Mason said she's hugging her granddaughter a little tighter, a little longer.

'And there's only one more thing I really need to do,' she said.

'I want my daughter home in my arms. ...I just want her home.'

'This is so unreal.'

Resistance Attackers In Karbala

Wore U.S. Uniforms & Badges

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

Jan 22, 2007 Ernesto Londoño, the Washington Post & By Leila Fadel and Laith Hammoudi, McClatchy Newspapers

BAGHDAD, Jan. 21 -- The armored sport-utility vehicles whisked into a government compound in the city of Karbala with speed and urgency, the way most Americans and foreign dignitaries travel along Iraq's treacherous roads these days.

Iraqi guards at checkpoints waved them through Saturday afternoon because the men wore what appeared to be legitimate U.S. military uniforms and badges, and drove cars commonly used by foreigners, the provincial governor said.

Five American service members were killed in a hail of grenades and gunfire in a breach of security that Iraqi officials called unprecedented.

The attack lasted roughly 20 minutes.

After arriving at the Provincial Joint Coordination Center in Karbala, 60 miles southwest of Baghdad, the attackers detonated sound bombs, Iraqi officials said. "They wanted to create a panic situation," said an aide to Karbala Gov. Akeel al-Khazaali, who described the events with the governor's permission but on condition of anonymity because he fears reprisals.

The men then stormed into a room where Americans and Iraqis were making plans to ensure the safety of thousands of people expected to visit the holy city for an upcoming holiday.

"They didn't target anyone but the American soldiers," the governor's aide said.

After the attack, the assailants returned to their vehicles and drove away. It was unclear how many people participated, and the men's identities and motive remained unclear [Gee, the motive isn't rocket science: kill the foreign occupiers, which over 60% of Iraqis are in favor of doing], but the attack was particularly striking because of the resources and sophistication involved, Iraqi officials said.

Saturday's attack appeared to present a new danger to authorities in Iraq: assailants who disguise themselves as officials and travel in convoys.

"The way it happened and the new style, the province has not seen before," said Abdul al-Yasri, head of the provincial council in Karbala.

"And this will make us insist on carrying on the security procedures even on official delegates and diplomats when they are coming to Karbala province."

[Meaning any resistance fighters who have infiltrated the army or police now have a perfect justification to open fire on U.S. officials and command officers traveling quickly in SUV convoys. Duh.]

One man who was apprehended near Hilla after the attacks told police that “high officials” had aided in the attack, according to a police official who asked not to be named because he wasn’t authorized to release details of the investigation.

Command Admits Black Hawk Shot Down

Jan. 22, 2007 By JONATHAN KARL, ABC News

In a troubling development that may signify a new vulnerability for U.S. troops, the Black Hawk helicopter that crashed northeast of Baghdad Saturday appears to have been brought down by a shoulder-fired surface-to-air missile, a senior military official tells ABC News.

Russian-made surface-to-air missiles are plentiful in Iraq but have only rarely succeeded in taking down American aircraft. U.S. helicopters are equipped with countermeasures designed to protect them from such missiles.

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



A U.S. soldier during a curfew in Baghdad November 5, 2006. REUTERS/Mahmoud Raouf Mahmoud

TROOP NEWS

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



Graveside services in Houston for Specialist Dustin Donica, a U.S. soldier killed in Iraq January 8, 2007 for. Donica has been widely reported in the US media as the 3,000th American soldier killed in the Iraq war. REUTERS/Richard Carson

**“A Vietnam Vet Who Works At Ft.
Drum And Helps Different
Drummer Told Ensign Under
Condition Of Anonymity That
Mental Health Services On The
Base Are Overrun”**

January 10, 2007 By Matt Pascarella, Independent.org [Excerpts]

Fort Drum, N.Y. is one of the largest military bases in the northeast United States. This installation has the highest per-capita deployment of soldiers as well as the highest re-enlistment rate of any U.S. base.

Nearly three months ago, author and activist Tod Ensign, along with volunteers from Citizen Soldier and Veterans for Peace, opened a coffeehouse for GIs a few miles from Ft. Drum. The Different Drummer café is similar to those that sprang up during the Vietnam War to provide off-duty soldiers with a place to hang out, listen to music and become politically active.

I ask Ensign how many soldiers have been coming into Different Drummer since its opening.

“Some soldiers come into the coffeehouse when we have an event – like live music. They’ll hang out, they’ll dance, and then they might check out the books, look around curiously but that’s it. So far we have not been able to attract more than a few soldiers.”

Ensign’s café is the first of its kind since the Vietnam era and aside from “getting the word out” about the café, he faces deeper challenges. “The conditions of service and who serves in the military today are much different than during Vietnam,” he tells me. Cultural differences are significant, too. The counter-cultural movements of the 1960s appealed to a lot of young soldiers who served at that time.

“During the GI movement there was a sense of identification with this larger movement – anti-war, anti-imperialist, women’s movements, black movements” and a culture of music, sex and drugs that coexisted with those politics, which soldiers could access and be a part of when going to coffeehouses. This sense of connection to a larger movement doesn’t seem to exist today.

Another crucial difference, he tells me, is how people access information today. “The coffeehouses thrived on the publishing of newspapers. There were 250 papers and newsletters – some of which lasted a few issues and some of which lasted a few years. Today, I can’t see any evidence of that. We’ve tried to get something going up there, to have a blog and have people write about their experiences, and so far we haven’t had any luck.

“Bookstores were also an important part of the GI projects. Yet, from what I can see, young people don’t seem to be drawn to books or pamphlets. We have a whole bookstore there, racks of books, some of which we give away for free and we are hardly able to even give them away. “

The use of writing and engagement around publishing doesn’t seem, so far, to be a draw at all. No one comes in and says, ‘I wrote this poem, I’m back from Iraq.’ ‘I wrote this rap, I’m back from Iraq.’” As for printing it, “that hasn’t happened so far.”

“Soldiers don’t come in where it’s going to be a discussion, where there’s going to be dialogue and to maybe hear their views on uranium weapons, or their views on whether they should be sent back for a third tour.” Therefore, many of the events at Different Drummer feature either live music or film screenings, including a Saturday afternoon film series.

“We’re in a testing period now,” Ensign says; “We are trying different methods, different approaches and we’re trying to outreach in different ways.” The ultimate goal, he says,

“is to figure out ways to get the trust of people and make them see our coffeehouse as a social space that is open to whatever they want to work around, organize around.”

A Vietnam vet who works at Ft. Drum and helps Different Drummer told Ensign under condition of anonymity that mental health services on the base are overrun.

Using this knowledge, along with the fact that a high percentage of soldiers returning from combat are already likely to suffer posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Ensign and his team have put an emphasis on “providing neutral information” on these issues.

The café is planning an event in February featuring a specialist on PTSD and is hoping to have personnel from the Veterans’ administration medical services attend. This information will also be available at the café’s St. Patrick’s Day event, which will welcome home the 3rd Brigade, nearly 6,000 troops, from Iraq.

Aside from the psychological effects of war, Ensign says soldiers at Ft. Drum face basic quality-of-life issues.

Different Drummer is looking at housing problems, which force some soldiers to be bussed nearly 30 miles to get home from the base, and family pressures on soldiers facing multiple deployments as potential areas to offer support.

In terms of convincing soldiers that enough is enough, Tod believes there is a lot of work to do, but the tipping point may be nearing.

“It is a conjuncture of events: It’s falling public support, it’s doubts within the military itself about the enterprise, it’s the toll that it takes on them with post-traumatic stress, with their families, their children, the injuries – and I have to believe that at some point it’ll begin to erode and crack. When that happens we have to be in a place where we can connect to them.”

The first GI coffeehouse popped up near Ft. Jackson, S.C., in January 1968 and was jokingly called “UFO” – its name a play on the military’s clubs known by the acronym USO. It was the only integrated place in the city, its regulars consisting not just of blacks and whites, but also students from the local university and GIs.

Within a year, more than 20 similar coffeehouses opened near military bases throughout the United States, attracting a large number of GIs against the war.

By 1970, more than 50 underground newsletters were being clandestinely circulated on military bases throughout the country – including publications like Fed Up!, Bragg Briefs, Helping Hand and About Face.

The cafés became small centers for dissenting soldiers while serving domestic assignments. They fed not only underground publications and served as places to plan actions on the bases.

The first coffeehouse, UFO, was closed by a court order that declared it a “public nuisance.” Some of the other cafés were targeted by firebombs and by local police. Following the end of the war, many closed.

Responses

a Says:

January 15th, 2007 at 11:58 pm

Can we get some contact info????

I've been wondering when this would happen...but damn, why are these people so out of touch with the youth.?

no coffee? no alcohol? no smoking?

no myspace profile?

i can see videos and bands being good, but you gotta give the people what they want...

Pentagon Rats Fire Workers Who Advocated For Wounded Troops: “They Did A Fabulous Job For These Families” “No Other Organization Helped Service Members And Their Families Like They Did”

Jan 20, 2007 By Karen Jowers - Staff writer Army Times [Excerpts]

Defense Department officials have laid off most of their case workers who help severely injured service members, sources said.

The case workers for the Military Severely Injured Center serve as advocates for wounded service members who have questions or issues related to benefits, financial resources and their successful return to duty or reintegration into civilian life — all forms of support other than medical care.

The center officially opened in February 2005, with its primary offices in Arlington, Va., but also hired advocates at hospitals around the country.

The only case workers that have not been laid off are at three hospitals: Brooke Army Medical Center, Texas; Tripler Army Medical Center, Hawaii; and Naval Medical Center San Diego, sources said. But those case workers will not be allowed to work with soldiers and must refer them to the Army Wounded Warrior program.

The laid-off workers were told Wednesday to finish up their case work with severely injured troops, and that Friday would be their last day.

“I’m just livid about this,” said Janice Buckley, Washington state chapter president for Operation Homefront.

She was notified that the two case workers at Fort Lewis were given short notice that their jobs were ending, but she has no further information.

“They did a fabulous job for these families,” Buckley said. “The kind of work they do for these families who are hanging by a thread ... no other organization helped service members and their families like they did.”

The MSIC case workers provided the wounded service members with contacts and referrals to other organizations and agencies, ranging from the Department of Veterans Affairs to the Social Security Administration, depending on their individual needs. Operation Homefront often helps with the families' emergency financial needs.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action

22 Jan 2007 (Reuters) & MARC SANTORA, New York Times & By KIM GAMEL
Associated Press Writer

A roadside bomb targeting a police patrol killed three policemen and wounded two policemen, in the northern town of Tal Afar, 420 km (260 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

A car bomb targeting an Iraqi army patrol wounded four people, including two soldiers, on Sunday in the northern city of Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said. Two more soldiers were killed when troops went to the scene to retrieve the casualties.

The mayor of Baquba was captured, according to a police official there. State television reported that guerrillas attacked the mayor's office, ransacking the building and setting off explosives that damaged the structure. Khaled al-Sanjari a local government official. Was taken while he was on his way to work.

Guerrillas killed police Major Amer Fadhil in a drive-by shooting near Shaab stadium in western Baghdad, police said.

<p>IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATION</p>

Interview With Moqtada al Sadr:

“A Secret Army Is Against Us, But The Shi’is Will Know How To Resist”

Is it possible that there is nothing but bloodshed in the future of Iraq?

“If the future is a country divided in three, it does not seem to me that there are alternatives. That’s what Bush wants in order to control us better -- certainly not what the Iraqis desire. In my opinion, there is only one means to arrive at a solution: the immediate American withdrawal.”

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

(19 January 2007) by Renato Caprile, Monthly Review

BAGHDAD -- He feels hunted and is lying low. He never sleeps in the same bed for more than one night. A few of his most faithful have already turned against him. He has even transferred his family to a secret location.

Moqtada al Sadr feels that the end is near. Too many enemies, too many infiltrators among his people. Nevertheless, he doesn't have it in for al Maliki, whom he considers little more than a puppet, as much as for Iyad Allawi, the former premier, on whom he believes the Americans would never give up on betting.

Allawi, in his view, would be the real director of the operation aimed at wiping him and his Mahdi army off the face of Iraq.

How is that al Maliki, in whose government until recently six ministers of your political current actually served, has suddenly become aware that the religious militias, and yours above all, are the true problem to be solved?

“Between me and Abu Assara (the 'father of Assara', the name of Maliki's daughter -- ed.) there never was any deep feeling. I always suspected that he was manipulated, and I never trust him. We met only on two occasions.

On the last one, he said to me, 'You are the backbone of the country,' and then he confessed to me that he was being 'obliged' to fight against us. Obligated, understand?”

The fact remains that an iron fist is about to be unleashed against your people.

“It is already unleashed in the meantime. Last night, they already arrested more than four hundred of my people. It is not us that they want to destroy, but Islam. We are only an obstacle. For the time being, we will not make a stand.”

Does it mean that you will surrender the weapons?

“During the muharram (the sacred month during which the martyrdom of Hussein, which happened more than six centuries ago, is commemorated -- ed.), the Qur'an prohibits us from killing. May they also kill us, then. For a true believer, there is no better moment to die than this: the Paradise is assured. But God is generous: not all of us will die. After the muharram, we'll talk about it again.”

Some claim that the army and police are widely infiltrated by your militia and that the Marines alone will never be able to make it disarm.

“The exact opposite is true: it is our militia that teems with spies. On the other hand, it doesn't take much to infiltrate into a people's army. And it is these very infiltrators who, by disgracing themselves with dishonorable deeds, have discredited the Mahdi army.

There are at least four armies ready to unleash themselves against us. A “shadow” army about which no one speaks, trained in great secret in the Jordanian desert by the American military. And then there is that private army of Allawi, an infidel who will soon succeed Maliki, which is being trained at the former military airport of Muthanna. Then, there are Kurdish peshmerga, and finally the regular American troops.”

If what you say is true, you do not have any hope of resistance.

“We are many also. We represent the majority of the country who do not want, contrary to what Allawi dreams, Iraq to become a secular state, a servant of the Western powers.”

For a week you have officially been in the crosshairs. The government holds that without their leaders the religious militias are militarily weaker.

“I am aware of that. For this reason, I have transferred my family to a secure location. I have even made my will, and I move continuously, so that few would know exactly where I am. But even if I had to die, the Mahdi would continue to exist. Men can be killed -- faith and ideas cannot.”

It is said that you were also in the middle of the crowd present at the execution of Saddam. Is that true?

“That is utter nonsense. If I had been there, they would have killed me, too. As for Saddam, I certainly did not cry for the man who massacred my family and my people by tens of thousands. But I would have executed him in a public square so all the world could see.”

If you were not there, do you deny that there were many of your men in that room?

“No, they were not my men. They were people paid to discredit me. In order to make me appear to be the one who was really in charge of that hanging.

The proof lies in the fact -- just play back the audio -- that in reciting my prayer they omitted some key passages. A mistake that even a child in Sadr City would

never have made. The objective was to make Moqtada seem like the true enemy of the Sunnis. And the results are here.

In the past I was received with all the honors in Saudi Arabia. But immediately after that staged performance under the gallows, my spokesman, al Zarqani, who was on pilgrimage to Mecca, was arrested. An all too explicit way to give me to understand that I was no longer on the list of friends.”

In any case the war between you and the Sunnis continues.

“It is true that we are all Muslims and all sons of the same country, but they must first distance themselves from Saddamists, radical groups, Bin Laden's men, in addition to confirming their “no” to the Americans. It would be enough for the ulema to accept our conditions hereof. They have not done so yet.”

Is it possible that there is nothing but bloodshed in the future of Iraq?

“If the future is a country divided in three, it does not seem to me that there are alternatives. That's what Bush wants in order to control us better -- certainly not what the Iraqis desire. In my opinion, there is only one means to arrive at a solution: the immediate American withdrawal.”

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





At: http://www.sirnosir.com/home_dvd_storefront.html

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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."

**"It Was 1967, But Howard Sherpe
Had Already Decided That The War
In Vietnam Was Pointless, That**

The Dead Man Before Him Had Died For Nothing” “He Thought The Song Was About The Chain Of Command And How It Was Going To Break”

January 22, 2007 By Shankar Vedantam, Washington Post Staff Writer [Excerpts]

Another Saturday night and I ain't got nobody/
I've got some money 'cause I just got paid/
Now, how I wish I had someone to talk to/
I'm in an awful way . . .

It came to him unbidden, that song from his college days. Only now it meant something completely different.

There was a man on a stretcher before him, draped in a poncho. Blood dripped off the end of the stretcher, the only sign of life from a lifeless body.

It was 1967, but Howard Sherpe had already decided that the war in Vietnam was pointless, that the dead man before him had died for nothing.

Sherpe felt lonely, but not the same way he felt back in college when he didn't have a date on a Saturday night. He felt alone, existentially alone. In his mind, he heard Sam Cooke's voice, but the lyrics were different.

Another Saturday night and I ain't got nobody/
I got all bloody and feel some pain/
I just want to get the hell out of here/
I'm in an awful way. . . .

Nearly 40 years later, Sherpe needs to hear only a few bars of the song to be transported back to Vietnam, where he served as a medic attached to the 4th Infantry Division. The music brings the sights and sounds and smells roaring back. He can even see a cigarette in his hand that is splotched with blood -- the dead man's blood.

“What I feel is the sense of all of this was in vain, it was for nothing,” said Sherpe, 62, of Madison, Wis. “That sense of loss. . . .”

Credence Clearwater Revival was always popular with vets, as was that old sailor's anthem, the Beach Boys' "Sloop John B." Martha and the Vandellas' hit, "Nowhere to Run," and the Rolling Stones' "Gimme Shelter" were others.

As with Sherpe and Sam Cooke's "Another Saturday Night," the vets often took away their own meanings from songs. The lyrics of "Sloop John B"

-- why don't they let me go home/
this is the worst trip/
I've ever been on
-- came to be about wanting to leave Vietnam.

Aretha Franklin's "Chain of Fools" was about a relationship gone bad –

five long years I thought you were my man/
but I found out I'm just a link in your chain.

But for many vets, especially blacks, it became a song of disillusionment after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

Why, these soldiers asked themselves, were they being asked to fight for freedom in a distant land, when their own country had allowed a leader who fought for their freedom to be murdered?

The lyric is, 'one of these mornings, the chain is going to break.'

One guy said he thought the song was about the chain of command and how it was going to break.

One day while I was in a bunker in Vietnam, a sniper round went over my head. The person who fired that weapon was not a terrorist, a rebel, an extremist, or a so-called insurgent. The Vietnamese individual who tried to kill me was a citizen of Vietnam, who did not want me in his country. This truth escapes millions.

Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
December 13, 2004

OCCUPATION REPORT

**SO MUCH FOR THAT
SOVEREIGNTY BULLSHIT PART
7,189;**

Iraqi PM “Suggested” Bush To Withdraw US Troops From Baghdad

[Thanks to Pham Binh, Traveling Soldier, who sent this in. He writes: SO MUCH FOR THAT SOVEREIGNTY BULLSHIT PART 7,189]

Jan 21 (AFP)

Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki proposed to President George W. Bush in November to withdraw US troops from Baghdad and let the Iraqi government take over security in the capital, a US newspaper reported.

Citing interviews with several unnamed administration officials, the Washington Post wrote that Maliki made the suggestion in a presentation to Bush on November 30 in Amman, Jordan.

But soon after, Bush rejected the idea, the paper said.

Instead, the president opted for a strategy announced this month to deploy an additional 21,500 US troops to Iraq, focusing on quelling sectarian violence in Baghdad and the western al-Anbar province.

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

OCCUPATION HAITI

The UN Occupation Of Haiti: An Exercise In Looting Rape, Murder And Terrorism In General

The study also found that, “The most commonly identified perpetrators of death threats, besides criminals, were UN troops. Of the UN troops identified, half were from Brazil or Jordan. Brazilian or Jordanian troops were also noted by respondents for issuing the majority of physical threats and threats of sexual violence by foreign soldiers.”

By Ashley Smith, Nov.-Dec. 2006, International Socialist Review. Ashley Smith is on the editorial board of the IS

THE PRESTIGIOUS British medical journal, the Lancet, released a devastating study in late August of human rights violations under the UN occupation of Haiti.

Wayne State University researchers Athena Kolbe and Royce Hutson, who conducted the study in Haiti in 2005, found that UN troops, paramilitaries, and criminal gangs were involved in widescale intimidation, rape, and murder of Haitians.

In the aftermath of the February 2004 coup that removed Jean Bertrand Aristide from power, the U.S. installed a puppet interim government of Haiti (IGH) led by former Florida resident, Gerard Latortue, and placed the country under UN military occupation.

Corrupt IGH officials have squirreled away hundreds of millions of dollars; and along with the UN forces they utterly failed to aid the country's population when tropical storm Jeanne destroyed the entire city of Gonalves in 2004, killing at least 1,500, and leaving hundreds of thousands homeless.

Under the UN's watch and with its complicity, the IGH and its associated death squads have also unleashed a reign of terror on the impoverished urban masses of Port-au-Prince who had repeatedly elected Aristide and his Lavalas Party.

The new Lancet study, "Human rights abuse and other criminal violations in Port-au-Prince, Haiti: a random survey of households," found that over a twenty-two-month period, 8,000 people have been murdered (an average of twelve people a day) and more than 35,000 women have been raped. Over 50 percent of those raped were girls under the age of eighteen.

On top of those violations, the researchers found evidence of rampant intimidation: 40,000 people threatened with death, 69,000 threatened with physical injury, and 27,000 threatened with sexual assault.

Contrary to many U.S. government and media allegations, the researchers found that very few of these human rights abuses were the work of the parry of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide; his party Lavalas, or their associated "gangs."

In fact, the study proves that the majority of murders, for example, were committed by the Haitian National Police and other state security forces (21.7 percent), ex-soldiers from the disbanded Haitian army (13 percent), armed anti-Lavalas groups (13 percent), and criminal gangs (47.8 percent).

The study also found that, "The most commonly identified perpetrators of death threats, besides criminals, were UN troops. Of the UN troops identified, half were from Brazil or Jordan. Brazilian or Jordanian troops were also noted by respondents for issuing the majority of physical threats and threats of sexual violence by foreign soldiers."

The study also notes that the IGH detained 13,000 prisoners without granting them their constitutional right for a judicial hearing within the first forty-eight hours of detention.

They arrested former Aristide allies and Lavalas politicians and activists and held them on the flimsiest of evidence. They detained the standing prime minister, Yvonne

Neptune, a potential Lavalas candidate and priest, Father Gerard Jean-Juste, and Lavalas activist, So Anne.

With the election of Rene Preval as president - an Aristide ally whom the Haitian people chose in defiance of the coup regime - many hoped and expected that things would dramatically change. However, Haiti remains under UN occupation, which backs the IGH reactionaries.

The Lavalas movement itself is splintered, confused, and demoralized. And Preval comes into office shackled with a massive debt of \$1.4 billion, looking to the very powers that overthrew Aristide to help him get out of the crisis.

Preval has not vowed to abandon the neoliberal policies that Aristide agreed to implement, he has not removed the reactionary judges imposed on the judiciary by the IGH, and has done little to reform the murderous Haitian National Police. \

Preval has gotten many political prisoners like Jean-Juste and others released, but several thousand still languish in jail under the thumb of the police and reactionary judiciary. Activist Kevin Pina described the case of Rene Civil who was arrested in 2005. He comments,

“I think Rene is in imminent danger in prison and we need to hold the Haitian government and the U.N., who are overseeing this nightmare, accountable. Many viscerally hate Civil because he is a conscious and eloquent symbol of resistance to Haiti’s elite and the coup the U.S., France and Canada supported in Feb. 2004. People of conscience should demand Civil’s human rights be respected and that he be unconditionally released from prison.”

A UK-based leader of a Haitian support organization has charged that Kolbe is “biased” because in 1995 she had done volunteer service for an orphanage run by Lavalas.

Despite the media’s repetition of these accusations of bias, Kolbe insists that her report was based on scientific sampling techniques.

Moreover her findings are confirmed by several other studies conducted by the Miami University School of Law, the New York University School of Law, the National Lawyers Guild, and Amnesty International -all of which found paramilitary forces and the IGC guilty of extra-judicial killings and rapes.

Since the report was published, moreover, Athena Kolbe has received a dozen death threats from unidentified callers.

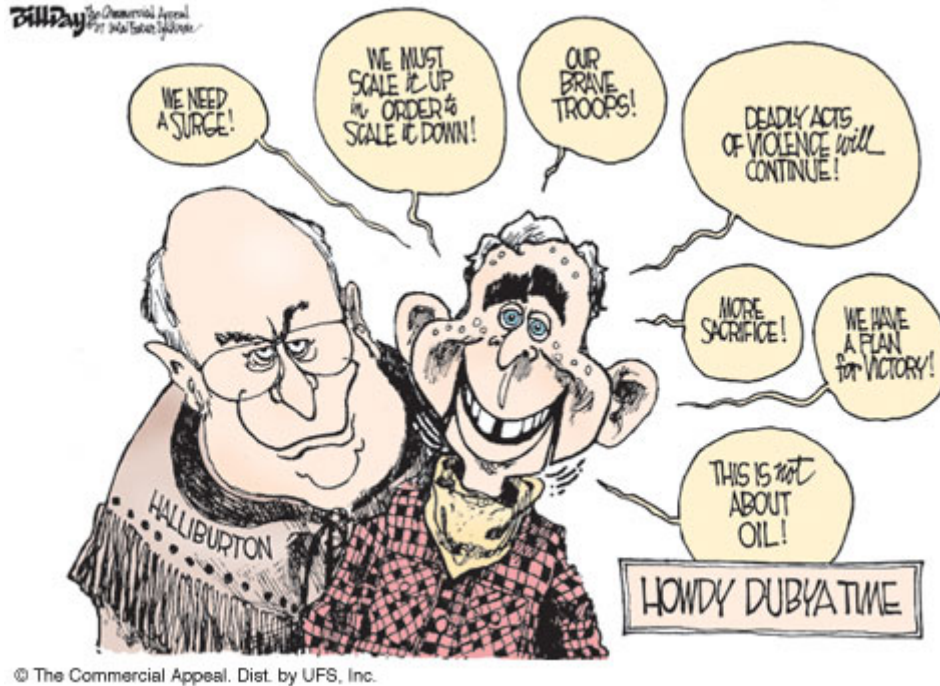
NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

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)

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



CLASS WAR REPORTS

More Hell Hits The Katrina Survivors; New Orleans Tenants Face Eviction; How You Can Help

January 22, 2007 Linda G. Richard, cawi@yahogroups.com {Excerpts}

A friend of mine called last night from New Orleans; he and several other people are occupying apartments in the St. Bernard Housing Development, which the Housing Authority of New Orleans plans to demolish and redevelop, leaving thousands of tenants homeless.

The city of New Orleans plans to get an injunction against the residents returning to their apartments, as well as against the occupation, as early as tomorrow.

For background, you can go to survivorsvillage.com or neworleans.indymedia.org or commongroundrelief.org.

Please call or email the following RIGHT AWAY, and request that the city deny the injunction that makes it illegal for the tenants and their guests to occupy these apartments; and to allow the public housing residents of New Orleans--specifically the St. Bernard Housing Development tenants--to return to their homes:

Mayor Ray Nagin's office: 504-658-4900

O.M. Thomas, President of City Council: omthomas@cityofno.com

Arnie Fielko, City Council: AFielko@cityofno.com

Ronald J. Pursell, Chief of Staff, New Orleans City Council: rjpursell@cityofno.com

Friends of St. Bernard Housing Development in New Orleans are currently occupying several apartments there in an effort to stave off the demolition and redevelopment of these buildings. They intend to stay until the scheduled demolitions are cancelled or until the residents are satisfied that their demands have been met.

The occupation began on Monday, January 15, and residents have been able to go in and out to work on their homes all week.

HUD's own cost analysis reveals that their plan to demolish and rebuild will waste taxpayers' money.

A recent motion for summary judgment filed in a current suit to reopen the development (available at: justiceforneworleans.org) cites HUD documents that show the demolition and redevelopment of public housing "will end up costing over \$175 million more than extensively modernizing the developments, and upwards of \$450 million more than simply repairing them would cost."

**“400 Immigrants Are Incarcerated
In This Hellish Place, And At Least
Half Of The Prisoners Are
Children”**

January 19, 2007 CINDY BERINGER, Socialist Worker. Beringer reports on a Texas jail where immigrant families--men, women and children--are locked up. [Excerpts]

THE FOREBODING white multi-story structure--trimmed in concrete and tall, barbed-wire-topped fences--has undergone a name change. The former T. Don Hutto Correctional Center is now called the T. Don Hutto Residential Center.

"You can call it what you want," said one person at a rally outside the building. "Just look at that ugly thing--it's a prison."

A crowd of approximately 100 people gathered last month outside the privately owned detention center near the small town of Taylor, Texas. They were protesting the incarceration of immigrant families and children.

Texans United for Families, a coalition of community, civil and immigrant rights groups, organized the protest.

According to the Austin American-Statesman, "The Taylor jail began holding immigrant families in the summer under a contract with the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency. It is owned and operated by Corrections Corporation of America."

Texans United for Families reports approximately 400 immigrants are incarcerated in this hellish place, and at least half of the prisoners are children.

Many of the immigrants -- who are limited to places other than Mexico -- have made requests for asylum in the U.S. For an indefinite period and without any charges, they await deportation hearings.

Immigration attorney John Gibson represents two Palestinian families, including a pregnant woman and five children ranging in age from 2 to 17. After the families were detained in early November, the fathers were separated, and the women and children sent to the Hutto jail. A 2-year-old was put in foster care. Gibson says that the Palestinians entered the country legally, but have been denied asylum.

The prison flag of Corrections Corporation flies proudly next to the U.S. and Texas flags--as if locking up children were something to be proud of.

What goes on behind the flags is horrific.

Johnson-Castro says that the "prisoners" are kept in their cells for 22 hours a day. They receive an hour of English instruction and an hour of recreation, mostly indoors.

The media are not allowed inside, he added, and attorneys are not allowed to observe the conditions.

Children have had their education interrupted and little medical care is available. Everyone wears prison uniforms bearing their names and numbers.

Adela Medina came from Houston to protest. She said she had been able to visit her niece who is inside, but had to speak to her on a telephone through a glass wall. Her niece's daughter was refusing to eat because the food was so bad.

Attorney Frances Valdez said that “detainees have reported receiving substandard medical care, and becoming ill from food served at the jail.”

The Taylor jail and a smaller one in Pennsylvania are the only facilities in the U.S. that lock up immigrant families and their children on non-criminal charges. But Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff wants to open more jails for families.

As University of Texas student and organizer Luissana Santibanez told the crowd at the protest, “The prison system is out of control in this country. We need to start a campaign to shut this thing down.”

Troops Invited:

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 email contact@militaryproject.org:. Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Replies confidential. Same address to unsubscribe.

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