

GI SPECIAL 5A3:

**LIAR
TRAITOR
TROOP-KILLER
DOMESTIC ENEMY
UNFIT FOR COMMAND**



(AFP/File/Nicholas Kamm)

**“Let The Iraqis Decide”
[This Is What Bush Will
Not Allow]**

We need to hold an election in Iraq to let the Iraqis vote on whether American forces should stay or leave.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

IED Kills Baghdad Soldier, 3 Wounded

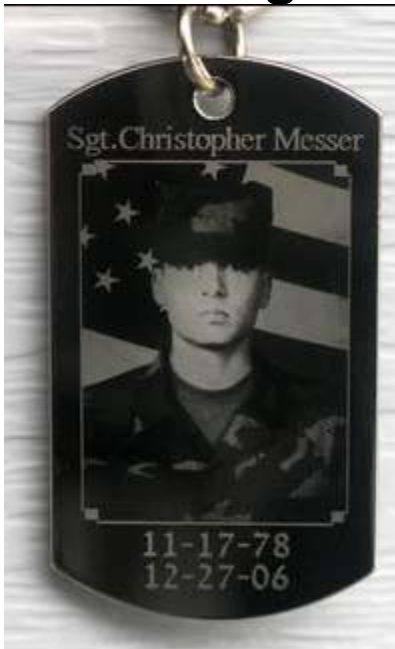
02 January 2007 Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20070102-11

BAGHDAD – An improvised explosive device detonated near a Multi-National Division - Baghdad patrol, killing one Soldier southwest of the Iraqi capital Jan. 1.

The combined patrol was moving through a village south of Baghdad.

As the patrol conducted their mission, a roadside bomb exploded near one of their vehicles, killing one Soldier and wounding three others, including an interpreter.

Monroe County Soldier's Death In Iraq Bombing Devastates Friends; “Instead Of Sending More Troops In, They Need To Bring More Home”



A friend of Army Sgt. Christopher Messer had this dog tag made in his memory. (THE BLADE/JEREMY WADSWORTH)

January 2, 2007 By ERIKA RAY, BLADE STAFF WRITER

PETERSBURG, Mich. - Ricky Perkey, Jr., considers just a handful of people his best friends, and one of them is Army Sgt. Christopher P. Messer.

So when he heard the news that Sergeant Messer, 28, died Wednesday in Baghdad, he was devastated.

"He was just very outgoing and one of the nicest people you're ever going to meet," Mr. Perkey said.

Sergeant Messer, a resident of Raisinville Township in Monroe County and father of one, was assigned to 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, Fort Drum, N.Y.

He died of wounds from an improvised explosive device while serving his second tour in Iraq, military officials said.

Sergeant Messer grew up on Lowe Road in Dundee Township next door to the Perkey family, and became fast friends with Mr. Perkey, now 27.

The two were virtually inseparable while growing up, said Mr. Perkey's mother, Brenda Perkey, 51.

"When you saw one you saw the other. He was like another son, really," she said yesterday, wiping away tears that trickled down her face.

Mr. Perkey said he never would have gotten married in October, 2005, if Sergeant Messer wasn't standing beside him as a groomsman. "I wasn't going to get married until he came back from his first tour," he said.

When the boys were together as kids, they were often seen with another neighborhood friend, Tim Howe, who thinks of Sergeant Messer as a brother.

"We've been best friends ever since we were kids," said Mr. Howe, 29, of Point Place. "What's eating me up is that when we hung out the last time before he went over there, we talked about hunting and fishing. I said, 'Maybe when you get back, we'll do some more.'"

Mr. Messer graduated from Ida High School in 1997. He joined the Army shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

After he returned home from his first tour, it was hard to find him without his wife, Amie, and his daughter, who will be 3 years old in March.

"They were inseparable," Mr. Perkey said. "Every time you saw Chris after he came home, he had his baby in his arms."

Sergeant Messer resisted going back to Iraq for his second tour because of his family. "He wanted to be with his wife and kid. It was harder for him to go back," Mr. Perkey said.

Sergeant Messer died on his third wedding anniversary.

Because he started his second tour of duty in August, Sergeant Messer never lived in the home that he and his wife recently built in Raisinville Township, just south of Maybee, Mich., Mrs. Perkey said.

Family members at the house declined to comment. A U.S. flag flew at half-staff outside.

Family members at the Dundee Township home where Sergeant Messer grew up also declined to comment.

But Mr. Perkey's father, Richard, 51, said he saw Sergeant Messer's older brother, Jeremy, a few days ago while he was out in his yard.

"He just looked so distant and said he was lost," Richard Perkey said. "I just hugged his neck because there's nothing you can say."

The Perkeys said funeral arrangements have not been made.

At least 3,000 U.S. troops have died since the start of the Iraq war in March, 2003.

Of those troops, 111 were killed in December, making it the deadliest month of 2006 for U.S. troops, military officials said.

Bombs caused about two-thirds of U.S. deaths in December.

The improvised explosive devices, which are capable of ripping through thick armor plating, are often hidden in trash or embedded in the road and can be triggered remotely or set to go off when the vehicles pass.

The American death toll reached 1,000 in September, 2004, and 2,000 in October, 2005.

"These boys over there, they need to be honored because they are over there giving their life for us," Mrs. Perkey said. "Instead of sending more troops in, they need to bring more home."

Fontana Man Killed By Roadside Bomb In Iraq

December 26, 2006 By DUANE W. GANG, The Press-Enterprise

Growing up in Fontana, Fernando S. Tamayo never had an enemy but had many friends.

Now, his family and friends are mourning his loss.

Tamayo, a 19-year-old Marine Corps lance corporal, was one of three Marines and a sailor to die Thursday while conducting combat operations in Iraq's Al Anbar Province, the Pentagon announced Tuesday.

"It is very tragic for his family," said Marine 1st Sgt. Bill Toves, a family spokesman. "He was well loved. He never had an enemy growing up."

Tamayo, the youngest in his family, was a driver of a Humvee that was hit by a roadside bomb, Toves said.

He was a member of the 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, or I MEF, based in Twentynine Palms.

One of Tamayo's brothers was to be married in Mexico the day he died. Another brother is a former Marine, Toves said.

When Toves went to notify the family, he said, neighbors told him Tamayo's parents were in Mexico for the wedding. Toves contacted the embassy in Mexico, which sent a colonel to the brother's home there, but Tamayo's parents already were on their way back to Fontana.

At 1:30 a.m. Friday, Toves finally made contact with the family, he said.

"The mom is taking it terrible, and rightfully so," Toves said. "The dad, you can tell he is the foundation of that family."

Funeral services have yet to be arranged, Toves said.

Marine Who Hoped To Be Home Soon Dies In Iraq

December 29, 2006 ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAK RIDGE, Tenn. -- Marine Lance Cpl. William Craig Koprince Jr. was looking forward to completing his second combat tour in Iraq, coming home to Tennessee and starting college, his parents said.

But the 24-year-old Michigan native, known as Billy, died Wednesday while on foot patrol in Anbar province, killed by a roadside bomb, William and Bernice Koprince said.

"He was always trying to reassure us that he wasn't in danger," Bernice Koprince said.

Billy Koprince was born in Southgate and grew up in Lenoir City, Tenn., where he moved with his parents at age 10. He graduated from Lenoir City High School in 2001.

He enlisted in the Marines in September 2003. "I tried to convince him to go across the hallway to the Air Force recruiter," his father said. "But he wanted to be the best. He wanted to be a Marine."

Billy Koprince spent his first tour of duty in Iraq from March to October of 2005, helping to guard the border with Syria along the Euphrates River. He returned to the United States last fall, then went back to Iraq this summer for what he hoped would be the last time.

He had been stationed with the 3rd Battalion of the 2nd Marine Regiment near Habbaniyah in central Iraq since July. He'd planned to come home in February.

The Koprinces and their son e-mailed and talked occasionally on the phone. The parents kept each e-mail, all short and to the point.

"He was a guy of few words," his father said. "When he called, he knew there were guys with wives and kids who were waiting for the phone. He wanted them to be able to talk with their families."

They talked about his plans to study landscaping in college. He joked sometimes about the weather, the boredom and the things he missed -- especially good steak.

His last e-mail was on Christmas Eve. "Not much to pass here, but Santa did visit last night," he wrote. "Three weeks or so, then we are outa here!!!"

His parents said they take comfort and pride in the life their son lived.

"He did his best," his father said. "That's what he chose. That's what he wanted to do."

At least 117 service members with known Michigan ties have died in Iraq since 2003.

Soldier Dies After Assuring His Father

December 28, 2006 By Hector Gutierrez, Rocky Mountain News

Young Moon received one of the best Christmas gifts a father could receive from a son stationed in Iraq.

His son, Jae, had been badly wounded by a roadside bomb on Dec. 14 while helping direct a patrol in Baghdad, but on Christmas Eve a relieved Moon heard his son's voice on the phone.

"I was talking to him, and he called me around 7 p.m., and he said, 'I'm OK, Dad. I'm busy. I'm a leader now, and I have a lot of soldiers. I'm taking care of them. Don't worry about me, Mom and Dad,'" Moon recalled.

"That's why I was very happy. It was a Christmas present for me."

But less than 10 hours later, Moon's Christmas joy vanished. Sgt. Jae Moon, 21, succumbed to his injuries on Christmas Day.

Jae Moon was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team of the 2nd Infantry Division at Fort Carson.

Jae Moon was born in Inchon, South Korea, on June 18, 1985. His family moved to Pennsylvania when he was 2, his father said. He graduated from high school in Levittown, Pa., in 2003, and enlisted in the Army.

At 6 feet, 3 inches tall, and just under 200 pounds, Jae Moon joined the Army to serve his country and wanted to use his military service as a springboard to pursue a career with the FBI, his father said from the family home in Levittown.

"He was really handsome," Young Moon said of his son.

After basic training, his son was sent to his native country for his first assignment and served in the region's demilitarized zone between South and North Korea. In October 2004, Jae Moon was assigned to Iraq, where he fought in the Sunni Triangle, his father said. He stayed in Iraq for a year before returning to the United States.

In September he returned with his unit to the Persian Gulf. Young Moon said his son received numerous medals for his Army service during his brief career.

"I remember he said, 'I want to be strong people,' " his father said.

In addition to his father, Jae Moon is survived by his mother, Ki, and his sister, Crystal.

"I hope there's not any more of this kind of sad story in the United States," Jae's father said.

The Fort Carson Army base also said that a second soldier, Spc. Elias Elias, 27, of Glendora, Calif., was killed on Saturday in Baghdad after a roadside explosive detonated near his vehicle while on patrol. Elias was assigned to the 3rd Squadron, 61st Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team of the 2nd Infantry Division.

Family Remembers North Texas Soldier

January 2, 2007 Internet Broadcasting Systems, Inc.

FORT WORTH, Texas -- A North Texas father said he will begin every year remembering his son.

An explosion killed Rich Smith, 20, on New Year's Eve. Smith had only been in Iraq for three months.

"Rich felt a call to duty ... said God called him to duty. We are proud of Rich and he died doing what he loved," said James Smith, Rich's father.

Smith was a graduate of Mansfield High School and has family in Frisco and Arlington.

Smith leaves behind a wife, who is six months pregnant with their first child.

Vancouver Soldier Critically Wounded In Iraq



Jeremiah Johnson (Courtesy Johnson family)

January 02, 2007 By DEAN BAKER, Columbian Staff Writer

A former Prairie High School baseball star was reported in critical condition and on life support Tuesday after a Dec. 26 accident in Baghdad.

Army Spc. Jeremiah Johnson, 23, suffered traumatic brain injuries when his Humvee rolled into a ditch and he was pinned under water for at least 10 minutes, said his mother, Elizabeth Johnson of Vancouver. She spoke by telephone from Germany where Johnson is a patient at the U.S. Army's Landstuhl Regional Medical Center.

With her are her husband, David, and Jeremiah's wife, Gale, 23.

The three family members are staying next door to the hospital in the Army's Fisher House hotel.

The young couple's two children, Isaiah, 4, and Rya, 2, are being cared for in Anchorage, Alaska, by Gale's mother, Katherine Hanes, who flew from her home in Vancouver to be with them. Before Jeremiah's unit was deployed to Iraq in October, he and Gale and their children were living at his home base, Fort Richardson, Alaska.

The parents said the Humvee rolled while on a night patrol, but the cause is under investigation. "We don't think it was a bomb," said the soldier's mother.

“There’s some hearsay that an axle broke, but we don’t know,” said his father.

Two soldiers died in the accident or soon after. The Department of Defense identified them as Army Spc. Joseph A. Strong, 21, of Lebanon, Ind., and Spc. Douglas Logan Tinsley, 21, of Chester, S.C. All three men were assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division from Fort Richardson. Elizabeth Johnson said Strong was David’s best buddy.

All three men were pulled from the dirty water by the crew of a Humvee following them.

Johnson suffered hypothermia. His wounds were infected by the dirty water in the ditch.

“Jeremiah was completely underwater for 10 minutes, and massive brain damage was done to my wonderful son,” said Elizabeth Johnson.

“We’ll have another test tomorrow to check, but all that is left is just a little bit of brain activity in the brain stem, just for automatic breathing and heartbeat. We’re just trying to go one day at a time. This time is a blessing for us.”

Jeremiah Johnson graduated from Prairie High School in 2001, where he played center field on the baseball team and was honored as defensive player of the year. He also played Ryder Baseball for two years after turning 16. At Prairie, he played a year of football and took part in the Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps for two years.

“He’s had two dreams in his life,” said David Johnson. “His first dream was to be a professional major league baseball player, and his second dream was to be in Special Forces. That’s why he joined the Army in the first place, and he received Special Forces training, but then went into the airborne infantry.”

He and Gale married right after high school. Jeremiah worked for a roofing company and for a grocery store before entering the Army.

David Johnson is a rural mail carrier. Elizabeth does food and beverage service and ground work for Horizon Air. They have four other children: Naphtali, 21; Lauralee, 20; Zachary, 17; and Tim, 15. They are members of the Salmon Creek Foursquare Church. “Thousands of people are praying for us,” said Elizabeth Johnson, who noted that Jeremiah’s story is on the Web site www.caringbridge.org.

She said neighbors and their employers are helping them in every way.

“The Army has taken remarkable care of us — passports, flights overseas, housing and food and phone cards,” said Elizabeth Johnson. In Vancouver, church members have been providing dinners, gift cards, transportation to school and groceries for the children. “We don’t have to worry about anything,” she said.

“We’ve had a lot of support. It’s tough, because in all likelihood, things will not improve. If anything, they are likely to deteriorate. We are asking God for a miracle of full recovery, but maybe God has a different plan than we do. We’ve got life decisions that have to be made. His wife will have the say.”

Christmas With The 423: “It’s Going To Be A Long Night”

January 02, 2007 BY Lee Wang, WGBH Educational Foundation

Stacey Masters looks like she's got the holiday spirit. She's swapped her Army issued fleece hat for a furry Santa cap and she's spent the afternoon grilling hamburgers and hot dogs with her buddies from the 423, a transportation company that specializes in escorting truck convoys on some of the most dangerous roads in Iraq. But the outfit is a game face.

"It doesn't feel like Christmas. It just feels like another day." Masters tells me, her cheeks pink from hours of grilling. "I guess we're just doing the best we can, especially us NCOs [non-commissioned officers] just trying to keep everyone's spirits up."

Masters is a Sergeant in the third platoon of the 423, a company better known as the roadrunners whose motto is "Have guns, will travel." On any given night the roadrunners have someone on the road. Tonight is different though. It's Christmas and the company commander has given everyone the day off. For once, they're all home.

Home, for now, is several rows of windowless steel containers surrounded by a perimeter of 12-foot concrete blast walls. This neighborhood of the base is known as the Hilton because the containers here are a little bigger than most, but the place has as much character as a prison yard. The soldiers have done what they can to personalize it; there are jerry-rigged satellite dishes and porches which are actually just wooden pallets dressed up with carpeting and plastic lawn furniture.

"Can you call the guys from third platoon?" Masters asks one of her friends, as she tends to the burgers. "Tell them the food's getting cold."

The food is not actually getting cold. Most of it is still cooking, but Masters knows what it will take to lure the rest of her company out of their containers and into the cold. It may be Christmas, but for a lot of people on this base, it's not a day to celebrate. It's a day to sleep.

The base dining hall is serving an elaborate Christmas dinner tonight: pot roast, turkey, glazed ham, mashed potatoes, turnips, sparkling apple juice, and a VIP visit from a general. But most of the company is hiding out in their containers. Those that venture out are huddling around three small grills set up between the side of a container and a long wall of concrete.

The 423 lives in the southwestern corner of Q-West, a tiny US military base about 40 miles south of Mosul. Surrounded by miles of empty desert, Q-West feels like an outpost in this war. The landscape reminds me of northern New Mexico; the landscape flat lines to the horizon and the sky feels enormous. Like many of the US bases in Iraq, this one used to be an Iraqi military base under Saddam.

The landscape is dotted with reminders of that past -- crumbling single story buildings made of clay and stone, pyramid-shaped bunkers and a small mosque that sits across from the Army's PX, a convenience store that stocks everything from Dove soap to the latest DVDs.

It's quiet here. There hasn't been an attack on the base in months. The public affairs staff tells me that's because the US and Iraqi Army have managed to keep up good relations with the surrounding villages. Those villages are also incredibly small. The nearest one has a population of about 150 and is a good 20-minute drive from the perimeter.

The soldiers have nicknamed this place Sleepy Hollow. After a couple days in Baghdad, I'm grateful for the sleepiness. But the name is misleading because many of the soldiers here don't have very quiet lives. They're spending more time outside the wire, on the road, than they do on base.

Q-West's primary business is transportation and the base is in many ways like one big truck stop. Convoys come in from the north from Turkey, or from the south from Baghdad and Tikrit. Chains of trucks 20-80 trailers long snake their way in and out of the Q-West gate at all hours of the night.

The schedule means that soldiers are often either hyper wired or dazed when you see them on base, depending on whether they're returning from a mission or waking up from a nap.

"There is no rhythm. Our rhythm is no rhythm," says Master Sergeant Robert Brostoski, head of the 423's third platoon.

The convoys run mostly at night, which means that the soldiers of the 423 have to sleep all day before a mission so that they can stay awake behind the wheel. On their drives, they maintain a steady diet of energy drinks and snacks -- chicken jerky, Doritos, Hot Pockets -- and keep up the chatter.

As long as they're all talking, they know that they're all awake. But staying alert mile after mile in the darkness is tough, in large part because there's no telling how long they'll be on the road. A typical trip to Camp Speicher down near Tikrit can take anywhere from three to 12 hours. It all depends on how much goes wrong.

Back at the barbeque at the 423's Hilton, Sergeant Masters is multi-tasking the meats: turning the hot dogs, flipping racks of already charred ribs and opening a new bag of frozen hamburger patties. She's one of the organizers behind the barbeque and she's taken on the role of hostess.

"They call me Mama Regulator. Someone's got to take care of them," Masters says.

At 25, Masters outranks most of the guys here. She's been in the Army for eight years already and spends most of her nights commanding gun trucks, the heavily armored humvees that escort trucks through roads pockmarked by IEDs. Her job is to scan the road for anything out of the ordinary -- a pile of rocks, a dead dog, a trip wire, anything that she hasn't seen on the road before.

For someone who spends her nights looking for IEDs in Iraq, Masters is remarkably sunny. In the civilian world, she'd make a great elementary school teacher -- warm and persistent, the kind of teacher who always manages to make you try harder. It turns out the Sergeant is studying to be a massage therapist back in Wyoming.

Before she got called up, she was working at Home Depot and planning on opening her own massage therapy practice. It's a strange match, a massage therapist in the seat of a humvee. But the more I talk to people, the more I realize that I have no idea who would make a good match for this kind of work.

As the sun fades out, the frost sets in. It's high desert and once the sun goes down, the temperature seems to drop 20 degrees. Everyone is gravitating towards the grills and a small bonfire is starting to blaze up in a steel drum set up near the concrete wall. A few spare pallets are broken down to feed the fire.

Private First Class Michael Sjaardema is part of the circle warming up by the bonfire. He's standing alone chain smoking when I ask him how his family is spending Christmas back home in Colorado.

"My family is probably getting ready to go to my aunt's house now," he says. "All 150 of us pack into this one little house. It's great."

"This is my first Christmas away from home," he adds. "It sucks."

Michael tells me that he called home earlier to talk to his family and his mom cried, again.

"Every time I call she cries," he says with a half smile.

There is no shortage of Christmas events on base. A lot of people seem to be working overtime to keep the holiday spirit up. There is a candlelight Christmas ceremony, a Christmas play written and directed by a soldier, carolers singing on the back of a flat bed truck. The KBR contractors who staff the Morale, Welfare and Recreation center are giving out stockings stuffed with candy to everyone who walks through the door. But the 423 seems to prefer to keep their holiday within the family, which for now, means their unit.

"It's all the rest of the guys that make it bearable," Specialist Charles Kelly says holding a yellow plastic plate with a half eaten hot dog on it.

Kelly is standing in a corner in his grey and blue Army PT uniform, basically a tracksuit in Army colors. The fourth platoon is his family now, Kelly says. He has a five year-old son back home in Montana. He missed his son's last birthday and is going to miss the next one too. But Kelly only has three months left and he's focused on getting home.

A few months ago he was riding behind a couple of friends on a convoy mission when they hit an anti-tank mine.

"Me and my (truck commander) were playfully arguing and I looked forward and saw a bright flash. The semi truck hopped in the air and turned on its side," he says.

"Sometimes you want to freeze up. But your friends keep you talking. Everyone puts on a big show and it's good, because what if the guy next to you broke down and started crying? So everybody else keeps you going. Everyone's smiling."

It's pitch black out. The moon is just a sliver in the sky and the only light flickers up from the flames of the bonfire. One of the guys in fourth platoon pulls out his harmonica and starts blowing out strains of "Tis the Season to Be Merry." As the last of the hot wings are finished off and the last of the cigarettes are smoked, someone calls out, "Fourth Platoon!"

Everyone stops what they're doing and forms a tight circle around the platoon sergeant who has just arrived to deliver orders for the next mission. They're headed out on the road again tomorrow.

As the sergeant lays out the details, there are no grumbles, just nodding heads, and finally a resounding "Hooah!" as the platoon breaks out of their huddle.

As the guys of the fourth platoon wander away from the glow of the bonfire and back to their containers, someone mumbles, "It's going to be a long night."

THE WHOLE FUCKING WAR IS STUCK IN THE MUD; BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!



U.S. Army soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 17th Field Artillery Regiment work to get a Humvee released from the mud in Baghdad Jan. 1, 2007 (AP Photo/Darko Vojinovic)

**THIS ENVIRONMENT IS HAZARDOUS TO YOUR
HEALTH;
BRING THEM ALL HOME, NOW**



A U.S. soldier from the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team guarding a street in Baghdad, October 29, 2006. REUTERS/Mohammed Ameen (IRAQ)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Assorted Resistance Action

January 02, 2007 Xinhua

Anti-government militants took over the control of Khak-e-Safid district Sunday.

Blaming the absence of police for the fall of the district to militants, Defense Ministry Zahir Azimi added only five policemen were on duty when the rebels overran Khak-e-Safid. The takeover occurred during Eid al-Adha holidays.

Eid al-Adha, the biggest annual religious festival, began Saturday and the government employees enjoy three-day holidays.

TROOP NEWS

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



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

Australia's Top Military Prosecutor Says Treatment Of Guantanamo Prisoner Is "Abominable"

[Thanks to Max Watts, who sent this in.]

January 2, 2007 Cynthia Banham, Defence Reporter, The Sydney Morning Herald

THE woman appointed the nation's first director of military prosecutions to the new Australian Military Court has described the treatment of David Hicks as abominable.

Brigadier Lyn McDade was made director of military prosecutions in July. She is a former Northern Territory deputy coroner with a defence force career spanning 23 years.

The establishment of her job was one of the key reforms made by the Federal Government to the military justice system following the damning 2005 Senate inquiry.

It means for the first time the responsibility for determining whether to prosecute military personnel will be concentrated in the one office, and will be completely separate to the chain of command.

In her first interview as director, Brigadier McDade told the Herald her independence as the country's top military prosecutor was "something that I hold quite sacred".

Asked about the treatment of Mr Hicks, who has been held at Guantanamo Bay for more than five years and is not currently charged with any offences, she did not hesitate. "Abominable," she said.

"Quite frankly, I think it's wrong. I don't care what he's done or alleged to have done. I think he's entitled to a trial and a fair one and he is entitled to be charged and dealt with as quickly as is possible. As is anybody."

As for the military tribunals the Americans have set up to deal with Mr Hicks, the Brigadier said: "Maybe they should have a good look at us."

Her comments follow remarks by the former prime minister Malcolm Fraser yesterday that the Australian Government had "totally deserted" Mr Hicks.

They also come as the Prime Minister, John Howard, was reported at the weekend as having shifted his rhetoric on Mr Hicks, with his remark that "the acceptability of him being kept in custody diminishes by the day".

Brigadier McDade said she was "not chuffed" about having to move to Canberra, where her office will be based, believing the Australian Military Court should have been established in the north, where most of the personnel are based.

But she took the job because she believed in what Defence was trying to achieve - namely, an improved military justice system.

The biggest change the reforms to the military justice system introduce is the establishment for the first time of a permanent court. This means that, as occurs with civilian courts, the Australian Military Court will have court lists and a registrar - preventing the long delays in bringing on legal proceedings that plagued the military justice system in the past.

She is still setting up the office, and by the end of January hopes to have in place 12 prosecutors, in addition to herself, ranging in rank from brigadier down to captain.

She said she was optimistic that the changes would go far enough to counter the criticisms of the military justice system that had hounded the defence force in the past.

"I don't know that we will achieve nirvana and I don't know that we necessarily want to, but what we want to achieve is a fair and competent military justice system," she said.

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 RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action

1.1.07 (Reuters) & AP & 02 Jan 2007 Reuters & ANI

Insurgents shot dead Ali Majeed Salbokh, a member of the Diyala provincial council, along with three of his aides, 20 km (12 miles) east of Baquba on Monday, police said.

A roadside bomb in eastern Baghdad injured three policemen. The bomb was hidden in a pile of garbage in the Camp Sarah neighborhood, a mixed area, police said.

A roadside bomb exploded near Mahmudiya, about 30 km (20 miles) south of Baghdad, near an Iraqi army patrol, killing one soldier and wounding three, police said.

Prisoners in a jail near Mosul in northern Iraq smashed cell doors, burned furniture and broke cameras during a riot that left at least seven guards and three inmates injured before Iraqi police and army ended the fighting, a witness and prison authorities said.

An Iraqi worker for the Algerian Embassy in Baghdad was shot dead, police said.

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

OCCUPATION REPORT

IRAQI SOLDIER FATALLY WOUNDED BY MARINE

1/2/2007 Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory Release Number: 07-01-02P

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq - An Iraqi soldier was fatally wounded during an altercation with a Marine at a post at the Fallujah Government Center Dec. 30.

The Marine, assigned to 1st Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 5, has been assigned to administrative duties.

The Iraqi soldier was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division.

The Marines and Iraqi soldiers from both units have manned combined security posts since arrival of the Marine unit several months ago.

"Marines and Iraqis from the two units continue to live, eat, and fight alongside each other," said Coalition spokesman Marine Lt.

[He means "fight with each other."]

The Lawless U.S. Military Dictatorship That Rules Iraq: When Iraqi Court Orders Prisoners Released, The U.S. Command Takes Them To Their Own Prisons; Bush's Scumbags Call This "Due Process"

Even though the American military helps to prosecute cases in the court, it does not always release detainees whose cases are dismissed, officials acknowledged in interviews. Maj. Gen. John D. Gardner, the commander of American detainee operations, orders those defendants held if the military believes they remain a threat. American officials said that within the confines of the nascent Iraqi justice system they were striving to protect American troops, while promoting due process.

12.17.06 By MICHAEL MOSS, The New York Times [Excerpts]

BAGHDAD — In a cavernous room that once displayed gifts given to Saddam

Hussein eight men in yellow prison garb sat on the floor facing the wall, guarded by two American soldiers.

Among them was Abdulla Sultan Khalaf, a Ministry of Industry employee seized by American troops who said they found 10 blasting caps and 100 sticks of TNT. When his name was called, he stood, walked into a cage-like defendant's box and peered over the wooden slats at a panel of three Iraqi judges of the central court.

The judges reviewed evidence prepared by an American military lawyer — testimony from two soldiers, photographs and a sketch of the scene.

The evidence went largely unchallenged, because Mr. Khalaf had no lawyer. The judges appointed one, but Mr. Khalaf had no chance to speak with him.

Mr. Khalaf told the judges that the soldiers were probably chasing a rogue nephew and denied that the explosives were his or ever in his house. "Let me examine the pictures," he insisted. The judges ignored him.

His lawyer said nothing, beyond declaring Mr. Khalaf's innocence. The trial lasted 15 minutes.

The judges conducted six trials of similar length and depth before lunch, then deliberated for four minutes. Five defendants were found guilty; one was acquitted. "The evidence is enough," Judge Saeb Khorsheed Ahmed said in convicting Mr. Khalaf. "Thirty years."

The United States established the Central Criminal Court of Iraq three years ago, envisioning it as a pillar of a new democracy. But like the faltering effort to create effective Iraqi security forces, the system for detaining, charging and trying suspects has instead become another weak link in the rule of law in Iraq, according to an examination of the justice system by The New York Times.

The stakes are rising. The court has begun sentencing American-held detainees to death by hanging, 14 this year.

Almost every aspect of the judicial system is lacking, poorly serving not just detainees but also Iraqi citizens and troops trying to maintain order.

Soldiers who have little if any training in gathering evidence or sorting the guilty from the innocent are left to decide whom to detain.

The military conducts reviews to decide whom to release, yet neither Iraqi detainees nor defense lawyers are allowed to attend, according to military documents and interviews.

At the same time, detainees are held for long periods by the Americans without being charged, in some instances for as long as two years.

Even detainees who are formally charged and brought to the Iraqi court have little ability to develop a defense against evidence collected by American lawyers and soldiers.

One American lawyer said that in 100 cases he handled, not one defense lawyer had introduced evidence or witnesses.

The central court resembles the narrow end of a funnel crowded with suspects captured by American and Iraqi forces.

No figures are available on prisoners held by Iraqis, but the Americans have held about 61,500 over the past three years and are now holding 14,000, military officials say. Roughly 3,000 have been charged and tried in the Iraqi court.

Even though the American military helps to prosecute cases in the court, it does not always release detainees whose cases are dismissed, officials acknowledged in interviews.

Maj. Gen. John D. Gardner, the commander of American detainee operations, orders those defendants held if the military believes they remain a threat.

American officials said that within the confines of the nascent Iraqi justice system they were striving to protect American troops, while promoting due process. "Our goal is to balance detaining the people who are the real threats, and releasing those who are not, and that's a fine line," General Gardner said.

The justice system is most troubling for people like Intisar Jaafar. Her 29-year-old son, Laith al-Ani, was taken from his home in Baghdad by American troops in October 2004 in a search for weapons his mother said they never found. The military said he was a "security detainee" but would not elaborate.

Mr. Ani, a women's clothing merchant, is being held at Camp Bucca in the desert of southern Iraq, his relatives said. They have made the daylong trip to visit him, but it brought them no more information about when he might be charged, released or brought to court.

In a recent letter he drew a caged heart reaching out to his wife and two children, and wrote, "I hope I can be dust in the storms of Bucca so that I can reach you."

At 9 a.m. on a recent Monday, two United States Army trucks guarded by seven Humvees pulled to a halt in central Baghdad, just outside the protected Green Zone.

The soldiers fanned out with their rifles ready as a man in a black hood and yellow prison garb emerged, followed by more than 30 others, their hands and feet shackled.

The men shuffled down two flights of stairs into the Central Criminal Court.

Security concerns have effectively closed proceedings to the public. Court records are not kept on computers, but mostly in paper files held together by yarn. And the daily proceedings, observed by a reporter, are hardly a model of deliberative justice.

That day's defendants came from two American detention camps and from sundry Iraqi jails.

Shortly past 10 a.m., two American soldiers escorted Hussan Lotfi Abdulla upstairs to a judge's office for a preliminary hearing. Mr. Abdulla, who had been in detention for nearly two years, sat next to his court-appointed Iraqi lawyer, whom he had never met.

Facing them in front of the judge's desk was Capt. Lisa Gorog, a military lawyer who had come to Baghdad to help the military unit that runs the American detention operations in Iraq.

The unit is doubling its legal staff to more than 100 lawyers and aides, drawn largely from the military and prosecutor's offices throughout the United States.

Even for experienced prosecutors, identifying strong cases among the mass of detainees is difficult given the quality of the evidence.

Capt. Matt McCall, who focuses on men like Mr. Abdulla who have been detained in the volatile Anbar Province in western Iraq, said he had to sift through the files of 50 detainees to find 2 that he thought could be convicted.

The rest were left in detention either because the soldiers who captured them were not readily available as witnesses or because the evidence was too weak, he said.

The case against Mr. Abdulla presented its own challenges. The one-page case summary prepared by Captain Gorog for the judge said Mr. Abdulla was detained on Jan. 27, 2005, when American soldiers grew suspicious of the taxi in which he was riding. When they forced it to stop, a man got out and tossed a grenade, which did not explode. They killed the man, and searched the taxi where they said they found rocket-propelled grenades, launchers and armor-piercing ammunition.

In the hall later, Mr. Abdulla's lawyer, who asked not to be identified for fear he would be killed, said he had been given the case just moments before the hearing and would have liked to have met with Mr. Abdulla, "to know how to defend him."

But he said lawyers had stopped asking to meet with American detainees because judges had denied their requests.

"They said it's the Americans who don't allow this," the lawyer said. "It's in order that we don't dictate what they say."

Although Iraq has an inquisitorial system in which judges are empowered to investigate, question witnesses and elicit evidence, defendants have a constitutional right to a lawyer. "We can't imagine a fair judiciary system without a defense lawyer where he can practice his duty," said Diya al-Saadie, who until this month ran the Iraqi Bar Association.

Karen Hanrahan, an international law expert who was the State Department's rule-of-law coordinator in Iraq until recently, devised a plan to create a public defender system to train and pay defense lawyers.

She said it was never financed in part because judicial planning was dominated by American prosecutors who took a dim view of defense lawyers.

American lawyers have been brought in to help prosecute cases.

Charles W. Larson Sr., the United States attorney for the Northern District of Iowa and an adviser in Iraq in 2004 and 2005, said his team was mindful of defense lawyers but chose to focus on helping judges because “it is a judicially driven system.”

By late morning, the courthouse halls bustled with court personnel, private security guards, Iraqi police, American soldiers and their detainees.

At 11:30 a.m., Judge Saeb Ahmed, the chief judge, entered a large courtroom and took the middle of three seats at the dais. Behind him, the scales of justice had been painted on the wall. Black Hawk helicopters passed outside the windows. Explosions could be heard in the distance.

Judge Ahmed and his colleagues had a full docket, but they worked quickly.

The first two men to stand trial were detained by Iraqi security forces on Jan. 3, 2005, in connection with several Baghdad attacks, one on a hospital.

Their families had hired a lawyer, Abdul Ami Ali, for \$2,500, and with a flourish he told the judges that he had learned that one of the alleged attacks never occurred. He produced a letter from the hospital administrator to prove it. Judge Ahmed added the letter to the defendants’ file, ended the trial and called the next case.

After four more trials, each lasting about 15 minutes, the judges adjourned and cleared the courtroom. It was 1:05 p.m.

At 1:09, they reopened the doors and announced their verdicts and the sentences.

The judges issued a string of long sentences, including 30 years for Mr. Saleh in the hand grenade case, and 30 years for the hospital attackers.

The defendants’ lawyer was devastated, saying he figured that the hospital administrator’s letter would have at least prompted the judges to investigate. Judge Ahmed declined to discuss any of that day’s trials or make available any court records. But The Times obtained the judges’ one-page written decision in the hospital attack case. It made no mention of the administrator’s letter.

The judges dismissed the case against a man accused of joining an armed group after the Iraqi prosecutor told them there was not sufficient evidence.

He smiled as his verdict was read, but he did not leave the courthouse a free man. All the American-held detainees were taken back to the detention center.

When the insurgency took hold, the trickle of petty thieves turned into a torrent of people suspected of being terrorists and captured fighters. By the time the Abu Ghraib abuse scandal was disclosed in the spring of 2004, the Americans were holding about 7,500 people.

Largely unnoticed, the flood of detainees has only increased since then. But neither the Americans troops, who were fighting an insurgency for which they were not prepared, nor the newly reconstituted Iraqi police, had a comprehensive plan for handling them.

The development of the American detainee operation in Iraq runs contrary to the Pentagon's practice of avoiding the role of jailer in a foreign country and instead, working to speedily transfer prisoners of war to allies. Maj. James F. Gebhardt, a retired Army historian, said this doctrine stemmed from the Korean War when murderous gangs and infiltrators ravaged the American detention camps.

But in Iraq, where detainees were seen as potential sources of intelligence on the insurgency, the military built its own detention facilities and then put a team in charge that had little experience handling long-term detainees. After the Abu Ghraib scandal in 2004, a new detention unit — Task Force 134 — was formed, but it started with a staff of just five to manage facilities holding 5,000 detainees. By the following summer the number had doubled to 10,000.

With the closing of Abu Ghraib in August, the Americans are holding its detainees mainly in two prisons that at times have been filled beyond capacity: Camp Bucca, a sprawling complex in southern Iraq, and Camp Cropper near the Baghdad airport.

Officials have sought to tighten the evidentiary standards used in deciding whether to detain suspects. Last year, for example, Maj. Gen. William H. Brandenburg, then the task force commander, became concerned about a swipe test that soldiers used on suspects to detect gunpowder. The test was so unreliable that cigarette lighter residue and even a common hand lotion would register as gunpowder.

Military officials have another reason to thin their camps. The longer people remain in detention, the more likely they are to be hardened by the experience, officials say.

"We know that inside the compounds, individuals are trying to recruit and promote a fundamentalist network, and we are trying to mitigate that by fighting a small counterinsurgency," General Gardner said. In an effort to thwart recruitment, detainees are grouped by level of ideology and are given moderate Arab newspapers.

The release of detainees is such a concern for Americans that the military has put the onus on soldiers to act like police officers and collect evidence. An instructional guide warns that without "sufficient evidence for prosecution, the detainee will be released" and "may attempt to attack soldiers again."

The guide instructs soldiers to take witness statements, document tests for explosives and record serial numbers of contraband weapons. It also tells soldiers how to use photographic evidence to its best effect.

When suspects are caught away from or fleeing a crime scene, like a bomb or a weapons cache, the guide tells soldiers to take pictures of the suspects at the scene. For example, the guide lays out this chain of events: "Your squad conducts a raid on a house, in the house you find 2 adult males. 50 meters from the house you find a large weapons cache buried 2 feet underground."

Among the instructions: "Take pictures of the individuals with the cache."

On May 12, 2005, a car bomb exploded near a market in southern Baghdad, killing at least 17 people, and the Wolf Brigade flexed its might.

The brigade, an Iraqi commando unit, stormed a neighborhood in eastern Baghdad and arrested four men. By the next day, Iraqis could see results for themselves.

The four men appeared on "Terrorism in the Grip of Justice," a prime-time television show broadcast by Iraqiya, which featured commando interrogations. They confessed on the air.

But one year later, the four men, who were held in Iraqi detention and faced death by hanging, walked out of the central court, with all charges dismissed.

Their story, pieced together through interviews and court records, is one of a narrow escape from Iraq's fractured system of justice. It is also the story of an unlikely civil rights lawyer who beat the system for the four men and a handful of others.

Faraj Mahmoud, 42, a grocer, was not totally shocked when he and his two brothers were arrested that night, with a friend.

Their families had emigrated from Palestine after the 1948 war, and like other Sunni refugees had been favored by Mr. Hussein over Iraq's own Shiite peoples.

The Wolf Brigade, an Interior Ministry unit made up mostly of poor, young Shiites from Sadr City, had developed a reputation for singling out Palestinians and using torture to extract confessions. The unit's commander, Abu Walid, who questioned the men on the show, has denied the charges.

In recent interviews, the four men, who have fled Iraq, said they had been tortured in a variety of ways. " 'We will beat you until your meat is cooked,' " one of the men, Amer Mahmoud, 27, an auto mechanic, said an interrogator had told him.

Faraj Mahmoud, who had married six days before he was captured, said he was stripped and hanged from the ceiling. An electric prod applied to his genitals made his body bounce off the walls, he said. Hania Mufti, a Human Rights Watch official with extensive knowledge of Iraq's jails, said other prisoners had described similar abuses.

The men said their captors also threatened to fetch their families, and they saw naked women and girls being walked through the jail. That is when they all signed confessions.

Among those watching the television show the night the men confessed was Abdul Razzaq, a 31-year-old Iraqi lawyer, and he agreed to take the case without a fee.

Mr. Razzaq handled mostly divorces before the war. After the invasion he began representing mostly criminal defendants. It took him two and a half months to find the four men in the Iraqi detention system. A jailer demanded \$50 to lead him to their cell, he said. It smelled so bad that the jailer wore a mask. "All four of us started to cry," Amer Mahmoud said. "The lawyer started to cry. We didn't want to let him go."

Mr. Razzaq picked apart the case. For starters, one of the Mahmoud brothers had confessed to hiding 600 pounds of TNT beneath the backseat of a car, an Opel, that has no space for such a load.

The lawyer found 14 witnesses who he said could provide alibis for the men. He got statements from the police saying that a string of other attacks to which the men confessed had never taken place.

He also went after the man who had directed the Wolf Brigade to his clients. The court eventually agreed that the man, who had confessed as well, was mentally incompetent.

Along the way, Mr. Razzaq said, the Central Criminal Court was typically frustrating. Clerks asked for money to hasten the preparation of judicial orders, a practice that other lawyers have also alleged. The judge who held the preliminary hearing grew impatient, ordering the four men returned to jail for more questioning, he said.

The trial was still months away when Mr. Razzaq received a note, signed by the families of victims of the car bombing: "This is the last notification to you, for you will be a victim and a cheap sacrifice goat for terrorists. Do not defend those atheistic Palestinian criminals and their followers (the worshipers of the atheist, Saddam), or else your destiny shall be death for sure."

On May 21, 2006, a three-judge panel ordered the release of all four men and their accuser. Citing their confessions at the hands of the Wolf Brigade, the judges wrote, "If it is assumed that the initial confession was correct, it was not supported by any convincing evidence."

Faraj Mahmoud said: "We couldn't believe our feet were touching the ground. It seemed like there were a thousand people at home, singing. No one expected us to get released."

Two days later, the men and their families fled Iraq. Mr. Razzaq then won an acquittal for a Syrian truck driver detained for not having a passport. But the man was kidnapped as he emerged from the prison with three other freed prisoners and was never seen again, Mr. Razzaq said.

He blames himself. "If I had not gotten him out of prison, he would still be there, alive," he said. Discouraged about practicing law in Iraq, Mr. Razzaq fled the country in October.

The gravity of the cases is increasing as the central court imposes more death penalties. Ten of the 14 American-held detainees sentenced to hang have been convicted since September, and all 14 are awaiting transfer to Iraqi executioners pending an automatic review by Iraq's court of appeals. Mr. Hussein, who has been sentenced to die, was convicted in a special tribunal.

Also awaiting death is Mohammad Munaf, a 54-year-old man born in Iraq who became an American citizen in 2000. He was convicted on Oct. 12 of helping to arrange the kidnapping of three Romanian journalists, who were released unharmed.

Given the state of the justice system in Iraq, however, using the death penalty concerns even one of the American prosecutors who helped bring cases against detainees.

“There are a lot of bad guys out there trying to kill U.S. troops and I want nothing more than to stop those guys,” said Mr. Waller, the Colorado deputy district attorney and Air Force Reserve major. But he said the Iraqi court system needed safeguards to prevent innocent defendants from being sent to the gallows.

“If I had the right guy and I had the right case I think I’d be O.K. with that,” Mr. Waller said. But, today in Iraq, he said, “I don’t think that situation would present itself.”

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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

Bush Babbles More Meaningless Bullshit About Body Counts

12.18.06 Washington Post

President Bush reminded the country that last week "the enemy has also suffered" in Iraq. In just the past three months, he said, "we have killed or captured nearly 5,900 of the enemy."

But the Iraqi insurgency seems to have a fairly robust capacity to replace those killed or captured with fresh recruits, so it is not clear what insurgent losses mean in terms of progress toward victory.

Political scientist William Boettcher puts it this way: "You say 5,000 insurgents died and last week you said there were 15,000 insurgents, so that means there are 10,000 left. But three months later, there are still 15,000 insurgents."

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.

CLASS WAR REPORTS



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://qi-special.iraq-news.de>;

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

<http://www.albasrah.net/magalat/english/qi-special.htm>

GI Special distributes and posts to our website copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available in an effort to advance understanding of the invasion and occupation of Iraq. We believe this constitutes a "fair use" of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law since it is being distributed **without charge or profit** for educational purposes to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for educational purposes, in accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107. **GI Special has no affiliation whatsoever with the originator of these articles nor is GI Special endorsed or sponsored by the originators. This attributed work is provided a non-profit basis to facilitate understanding, research, education, and the advancement of human rights and social justice.** Go to: www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml for more information. If you wish to use copyrighted material from this site for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use', you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

If printed out, this newsletter is your personal property and cannot legally be confiscated from you. "Possession of unauthorized material may not be prohibited." DoD Directive 1325.6 Section 3.5.1.2.