

GI SPECIAL 5A4:

NO MORE



Protesters stand near the Statehouse in Trenton, N.J., Wednesday, Jan. 3, 2007, at a rally organized by the Princeton-based Coalition for Peace Action, to protest the more than 3,000 U.S. military deaths in Iraq since the war began 46 months ago. (AP Photo/Mel Evans)

“The Military Blames It On Us”

“We Are Being Discarded As
Trash When No Longer Useful To
Them”

Soldier’s Diagnosis Of A Personality
Disorder Found To Be A Lie To Save
Government Money

During his six weeks there, doctors found to be false the original diagnosis of personality disorder, an enduring pattern of anti-social behavior usually manifesting itself in early adolescence. It would take another three months to get the discharge revised.

December 24, 2006 By Anne Usher, WASHINGTON BUREAU, Austin American-Statesman

WASHINGTON — William Wooldridge was guiding his tanker truck along a crowded highway in the Iraqi city of Hilla weeks after the U.S. invasion in 2003 when an explosion forced his convoy to a halt.

Moments later, a bus packed with people pulled alongside the truck behind him and exploded. In his rear-view mirror, he saw women and children thrown from the bus by the force of the blast.

Ordered to help protect the convoy, the 37-year-old from Arkansas said he was unable to assist dozens of injured and dying civilians. With an Iraqi in a pickup truck pointing a machine gun at him, he says, he sped away and kept moving, despite running over a young Iraqi girl. Wooldridge had been in Iraq for only a matter of hours.

In the ensuing months with the Arkansas National Guard's 1123rd Transportation Company, he would see a Marine and several others die and have a rocket-propelled grenade bounce off the hood of his truck. He remembers sitting on his truck in a quiet moment when the final blow came: a letter from home claiming that his wife was having an affair.

About a week later, he was flown out under medical orders after his commanders discovered he had hollow-pointed the tips of some of his rounds of ammunition. "I was planning on killing these people," he says of the men in his unit. "We were all ticking time bombs."

Three months after returning to Fort Polk, La., Wooldridge was discharged. His severance wasn't for psychological wounds brought on by combat-related trauma but because an Army doctor determined after having him take a survey — twice after "answering inconsistently" — that he had a personality disorder.

In February 2005, Wooldridge checked into a ward for mental patients in a hospital run by the Department of Veterans Affairs in Memphis, Tenn.

During his six weeks there, doctors found to be false the original diagnosis of personality disorder, an enduring pattern of anti-social behavior usually manifesting itself in early adolescence.

It would take another three months to get the discharge revised.

Letters sent to the VA proving his actual prognosis, necessary for him to get disability benefits, included several from doctors declaring that he was disabled by post-traumatic stress disorder stemming from his service in Iraq and one from his commander, Sgt. Les White, attesting to the convoy incident.

Wooldridge, he wrote, is an exemplary, hardworking soldier.

His regional VA office initially denied the claim, saying that despite White's letter, Wooldridge could not prove he was exposed to "a combat stressor."

Ultimately, a review board in Washington helped get his post-traumatic stress disorder claim approved.

"I was never told I had a personality disorder until I went to Iraq and fell victim to combat stress," he said from his trailer in Blytheville, Ark.

His discharge papers for a personality disorder said in part: "William is not likely to trust others. He is likely to hold grudges . . . may self-mutilate."

"If someone sees this in the civilian world, especially for a truck driver, they'll think they can't trust him with our truck," he said. "Who's gonna hire you?"

Some of the anti-social traits of post-traumatic stress disorder, such as anger and occasionally strong emotions, could be mistaken for a personality disorder.

But with the severity of symptoms such as his — which Wooldridge says prompted him to relinquish custody of his two young sons to his ex-wife and his daughter to his parents — "there's no way to confuse the issue."

He says he is absent-minded, is plagued by guilt and has a hard time organizing or remembering simple tasks.

"You can't deal with any kind of stress," he said. "The simplest little things set you off." With doctors telling him this reaction is to be expected, he wonders why he had to go to such lengths to prove he was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

"The military robbed me of the pride and prestige of being a combat veteran who served his country," he wrote in an e-mail. "We are being used as a resource, then discarded as trash when no longer useful to them. Our lives are destroyed, and the military blames it on us."

VA disability benefits are not granted for a personality disorder but can cover as much as \$2,000 a month for a veteran found to be disabled by post-traumatic stress disorder. Wooldridge said he is now receiving about \$800 a month.

For his close friend Doug Barber, Wooldridge says, "it was too little, too late."

Barber also was discharged for having a personality disorder but was later diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, documents obtained by veterans groups show.

He shot himself in January after a two-year struggle for treatment.

"The military promised we'd be taken care of no matter what," Wooldridge wrote.

"I'm here to say if he would have received (VA benefits) in a timely manner, where he could of focused on his disability, and getting help, instead of having to prove it was service connected . . . he would still be here."

Death, for Wooldridge, is an everyday thought. "But every day I find one more reason not to take my own life."

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

IED Kills Baghdad Soldier

03 January 2007 Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20070103-01

BAGHDAD – An improvised explosive device detonated near a Multi-National Division - Baghdad patrol, killing one Soldier south of the Iraqi capital Dec. 31.

The unit was conducting a security patrol for an explosive ordnance team returning from picking up unexploded ordnance from an Iraqi Army compound when they were struck by a roadside bomb killing one Soldier.

Bellevue Soldier Killed In Iraq



Thomas Vandling

January 3, 2007 By Brian Bowling, TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Relatives and friends gathered at the Bellevue home of a soldier's parents Tuesday, after Thomas Vandling became the region's latest casualty in Iraq sometime over the weekend.

The Defense Department hasn't released an official notification of Vandling's death. It normally sends out a notice 24 hours after contacting next of kin.

Vandling's family provided a photo of him, but otherwise declined comment.

In the photo, Vandling, 26, is wearing the insignia of the U.S. Army Airborne Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command.

Vandling graduated from Northgate High School in Bellevue and majored in psychology and philosophy at the University of Pittsburgh.

Northgate Principal Bryan Kyle was a teacher at the high school when Vandling attended.

"Tom was a good kid, very friendly. I know all the kids enjoyed being around him," he said.

Vandling was on the varsity football team his senior year, Kyle said.

Greg Brown, 27, of Ross, was Vandling's friend since elementary school. He said Vandling was "just good people" who would help others, no questions asked.

He said he was sure Vandling made a good soldier.

"Like everything else he did in life, he did it the right way."

Vandling's MySpace page on the Internet said he liked playing any sport and was particularly interested in skiing and tae kwan do. His MySpace name was "Tommy Books," and he said on the site that he probably was reading too much.

The answers to a quiz on his site said that he wanted to visit Australia and wanted to be "a kid" when he grew up.

Pa. Soldier Killed In Iraq

Jan. 03, 2007 Associated Press

MARYSVILLE, Pa. - A Pennsylvania soldier whose parents abandoned him when he was 10 was killed in Iraq when a bomb exploded near a vehicle in which he was riding, according to a funeral home and friend.

As of Wednesday, the Pentagon had not confirmed the death of Army Pvt. David E. Dietrich, 21, of Marysville, but the Myers Funeral Home in Mechanicsburg said he was killed in Iraq.

R. Craig Raisner, a Marysville borough councilman, was a close friend and one of Dietrich's Boy Scout leaders. He said he received word Saturday from the mother of Dietrich's girlfriend that he was killed on Friday in Baghdad.

Dietrich had lived in several foster homes between the ages of 14 and 18, and had previously lived with his grandparents after his parents abandoned him at age 10,

Raisner said. For a few weeks at a time, he occasionally lived with friends and classmates, Raisner said.

"David was pretty much in my life for the last 10 to 12 years," Raisner said Wednesday in a telephone interview. "He constantly called us for questions and guidance, and he lived with us for a period of time."

Despite the turmoil of growing up without a permanent home, Dietrich still made the right choices in life, Raisner said.

"David has an internal compass that always pointed in the right direction," Raisner said. "That boy never missed a day of school."

Dietrich was a scout at Camp Ramadi, assigned to F Troop of the Army's 1st Cavalry Brigade, and graduated from Susquenita High School in 2004. He had enlisted in the Army less than seven months ago and had been in Iraq for less than two months, according to newspaper reports.

Boyd L. Myers Jr., supervisor of the Myers Funeral Home, said funeral arrangements for Dietrich were incomplete.

Shaffer's Family Planning Funeral

12.30.06 By Linwood Outlaw III Staff writer, Public Opinion

The parents and relatives of a Mont Alto soldier who died this week from injuries sustained during combat in Iraq last month expect to return home this weekend to finish planning the soldier's funeral arrangements.

Sgt. Edward W. Shaffer, 24, died Wednesday at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, six weeks after being severely burned by an explosion.

The soldier's father, Edward C. Shaffer, said he and his wife, Brenda, son, Timothy, and Sgt. Shaffer's uncle, Rodney Shaffer, aunt, Jody, and girlfriend, Justina Martinez, remained in San Antonio Thursday and are trying to schedule a flight to return to Mont Alto this weekend.

The family was visiting Sgt. Shaffer during the Christmas holiday.

Doctors at the medical center did an autopsy on Sgt. Shaffer's body Thursday evening, Edward C. Shaffer said.

He said the family will finalize Sgt. Shaffer's funeral arrangements once they return home. A date for the funeral has not yet been determined.

"We thought we might be getting back home tomorrow (Friday), but we might not. We might come home on Saturday," Edward C. Shaffer said via telephone.

Edward C. Shaffer said Sgt. Shaffer's funeral will be in Waynesboro. He said the soldier will be buried in Parklawns Memorial Gardens & Mausoleum, north of Chambersburg.

Sgt. Shaffer had been in critical condition in the intensive care unit at Brooke since arriving there soon after being injured on Nov. 13, when a roadside bomb exploded near his

Bradley tank during operations in Ramadi, the capital of Anbar, about 70 miles west of Baghdad.

Sgt. Shaffer had undergone at least five surgeries, during which both hands and a foot were amputated. He also had skin graft surgery.

He had been serving in Iraq for the last eight months.

Sgt. Shaffer was a member of the 1st Armored Division's 136th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Platoon, B Company. The Army conducted a ceremony in Germany -- where Sgt. Shaffer had first been hospitalized -- and presented him with a Purple Heart before flying him to Texas for treatment.

Back home in Chambersburg, family and friends are mourning the loss of the beloved soldier, including his aunt, Tammi Shaffer, who is Brenda's sister.

"It's been really hard on us. He'll be greatly missed. Everybody liked him," she said. "He was always quiet. It was just his nature."

Tammi Shaffer struggled to fight back tears Thursday afternoon as she recalled her fondest memories of Sgt. Shaffer, whom Tammi and other relatives affectionately called "Buzz."

"We always called him 'Buzz.' That was our nickname for him on our side of the family," Tammi Shaffer said.

Tammi also recalled her nephew's love for pickles.

"I remember he just loved to eat dill pickles. He would always do this thing where he'd eat the whole inside of the pickle and leave nothing but the outer shell," she said. "His mom would always buy him a jar of pickles 'cause he loved them so much."

Tammi Shaffer said she got a chance to visit with Sgt. Shaffer when he returned home on leave from military duty last July.

"That was the happiest I've ever seen him. His girlfriend (Justina) was here with him and he just seemed so happy," she said. "I remember last Christmas he seemed a little nervous because he was heading back (to the military)."

Tammi's brother, Rodney, and his wife, Jody, traveled to San Antonio on Christmas Eve to visit Sgt. Shaffer. Tammi Shaffer said Rodney frequently called her and their mother, June, to give them updates on the soldier's condition.

"He (Sgt. Shaffer) was such a fine young man. I'm telling you, he really was," said June Shaffer, Sgt. Shaffer's grandmother. "He was kind of quiet. He never had too much to say."

June Shaffer said she and her grandson rarely discussed his experiences in the armed forces.

"That seemed to be something he mostly talked with his dad about," June Shaffer said.

Edward C. Shaffer said his son had no intentions of pursuing a prolonged military career.

"He wanted to get out. He wanted to settle down, get married and raise a family," Edward C. Shaffer said.

Shortly after Sgt. Shaffer graduated from Waynesboro Area Senior High School in 2002, he enrolled in Thompson Institute in Chambersburg to study computers. He enlisted in the Army in 2003.

"I'm pretty sure he wanted to do something in computers, probably," said Sgt. Shaffer's brother, Timothy.

"I know the last time he was home, he didn't really want to go back (to the Army)."

Though Sgt. Shaffer's family and friends considered him to be quiet and shy, Timothy Shaffer said his brother was very social.

"He always wanted to do stuff. When he came home, he wanted to go a lot of places," Timothy Shaffer said.

"He gave 110 percent at everything he did. He was quite the character sometimes. He had his share of mishaps," Edward C. Shaffer said of his son. "And he loved collecting baseball cards."

Friends Remember Marine

December 27, 2006 Billy Liggett, (Opelousas) Daily World

OPELOUSAS - Several friends and classmates have come forward with kind words and happy memories of Lance Cpl. Myles Sebastien, the 21-year-old Opelousas Marine who was killed in Iraq last week.

Details of Sebastien's death have yet to be released by the Department of Defense. What has been published is that Sebastien was killed by hostile fire 60 miles west of Baghdad.

Sebastien became the third St. Landry Parish serviceman to die in Iraq since the war began nearly four years ago.

He follows Sgt. Craig Davis and Staff Sgt. Jonathan Reed, who died in January 2004, and January 2005, respectively.

Lafond-Ardoin Funeral Home in Opelousas will be in charge of funeral arrangements when Sebastien's body is returned home, but no plans have been made public as far as when that will be or where the burial will be held.

Friends of the 2004 Opelousas High School graduate were still sharing their memories of Sebastien over the holiday weekend. Dana Saucier, a schoolmate of Sebastien, said she was a couple of years behind Myles, but she knew him because "he had one of those faces that you couldn't help but notice."

"He was always smiling, always happy, and always respectful," she said. "And I'm sure until his last breath, he was still smiling. My heart goes out to his wife and family."

Louisiana Army National Guardsman Blake Castille, also of Opelousas, said he's known Sebastien since they were in elementary school together. He said the two stayed in contact all the way up to his death.

"Myles was always a likeable person - laid back, and fun to be around," he said. "Between our junior and senior year in high school, we both decided to join the military. He chose the Marines. He loved his friends and often told me about how much he missed home and his friends and how he longed to be home again."

He said Sebastien was a guy who loved to barbecue and boil crawfish. He was also the kind of guy "everyone's parents liked" and was the friend "everyone needed."

"Myles was loved by many, and will be missed by many more," Castille said. "He touched many lives and mine is that much better for having known him."

Saginaw Soldier Loved Drawing

December 27, 2006 MIKE ROCHA, Michigan Live

Bobby Mejia II loved the classics -- Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck and the Road Runner.

And the Saginaw resident sought to take that joy of art and turn it into a career.

"His dream was to be an artist," his father, Bobby Mejia Sr., said Wednesday of his namesake. "He told me he always wanted to work for the Walt Disney Company. He loved cartoons and animation.

Mejia, 45, lost his only child Saturday when an improvised explosive device detonated near the vehicle that his son and two other soldiers were traveling in during combat operations in Salman Park, Iraq, the Department of Defense reported.

Army Spc. Mejia II was 20.

The three soldiers were assigned to the First Battalion 125th Infantry from Big Rapids.

Mejia II was a 2004 Saginaw High School graduate. His mother is Lovea Hernandez.

"I remember his 15th birthday. I bought him an air rifle," his father said. "We spent the day near the Cass River shooting at plastic bottles."

Mejia II is the third mid-Michigan soldier to die this year in Iraq.

Army Staff Sgt. William S. "Jack" Jackson II of Saginaw Township died last month, and Sgt. Ralph N. Porras of Merrill died in September.

In 2003, Army Spc. Richard A. Goward of Midland was the first mid-Michigan soldier to die in the war in Iraq.

It was about a year ago when Mejia saw his son for the last time. "I told him to never get frustrated, to never give up," Mejia said. "Face life, but never give up. And keep God in your life." Mejia said his son was proud to serve in the military. "To me, he made the right choice to serve his country," Mejia said. "My son died for his country. He died with honor, pride and guts."

Browne's Mortuary, 441 N. Jefferson, is handling the funeral arrangement, which are pending.

How Do You Know When Your War Is Lost? When You A) Have To Use The Air Force To Bomb The Capital Of Your Occupied Territory, And B) Fuck It Up

January 02, 2007 The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — U.S. aircraft bombed houses near the west Baghdad office of a leading member of a key Sunni political bloc at 2 a.m. Monday, killing four members of a family and wounding a guard at the house of former Shiite member of parliament, police said.

The attack hit residences near the offices of Saleh al-Mutlaq, a senior Sunni Arab politician of the National Dialogue Front, and the home of Salama al-Khafaji, a former Shiite parliamentarian who abandoned her residence after escaping an assassination attempt last year.

The wounded guard was watching her home, a police official in the Khadra district said on condition of anonymity because he feared for his safety.

Associated Press Television News pictures showed masses of rubble in the area and what appeared to be a long smear of blood where a body had been dragged across the floor of one of the buildings.

Walls in the buildings were pitted with what looked to be the impact of bullets and shrapnel.

REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



A U.S. soldier from the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team takes up position outside a closed shop in Baghdad, October 29, 2006. REUTERS/Mahmoud Raouf Raouf (IRAQ)

TROOP NEWS

1130 Arizona National Guards Off To Bush's Imperial Slaughterhouse

January 02, 2007 By Melissa Vogt, Army Times Staff writer [Excerpts]

An Arizona Army National Guard aviation unit is leaving the state Tuesday and Wednesday for its deployment to Afghanistan.

1st Battalion, 285th Aviation Regiment, is being sent to the war zone with 24 Apache Longbow helicopters and 450 soldiers, the Guard said.

The unit will depart for Southwest Asia from Fort Hood, Texas, later this month.

Another Arizona Guard unit is also headed to Afghanistan this year.

About 680 soldiers with 158th Infantry Regiment will leave Saturday for their pre-deployment training at Fort Bragg, N.C.

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



The casket of Army Pvt. 1st Class Joe Luis Baines, Newark, N.J., Dec. 26, 2006. Baines was killed in Taji, Iraq, on Dec. 16, by an improvised explosive device. He was awarded the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart posthumously. (AP Photo/Mel Evans)

***Welcome To Occupied America:* Col. [Ret'd] Arrested For Walking Against The War**

[While you're off fighting for Bush's dreams of oil and Empire, this is what's happening here at home. So much for that "democracy" bullshit. There is no "democracy" left if state police can do this because they don't like what you have to say.

[We need our troops home to protect us from the enemies domestic giving the orders to the cops to do this to citizens and veterans. The politicians hate our

freedom, and need some urgent attitude adjustment, of the kind which members of the armed forces are trained and equipped to offer. T]

January 2, 2007 by **Colonel Ann Wright (USA-Retired)**, CommonDreams

On New Year's Day, sixty peace activists organized by Codepink Women for Peace gathered on both sides of the Golden Gate Bridge to walk across one of America's great landmarks in vigil for the 3,000 US servicemen and women killed in Iraq and for the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who have died since the US invasion and occupation.

California Highway Patrol (CHP) officers blocked the pedestrian walkway on the San Francisco side of the bridge saying that we did not have a permit for a demonstration.

We responded that we were not demonstrating but only wanted to walk peacefully across the bridge to commemorate the 3,000 deaths.

Initially the CHP allowed tourists to pass through our group and begin their walk on the bridge.

We complained that this was our bridge and we could not be denied access. The CHP then stopped all walkers.

After an hour, a group of ten walkers in pink came into sight. They had come from the Marin County side of the bridge walking peacefully and respectfully to honor those who have died.

Finally after two hours CHP announced that the bridge was closed to pedestrians and we had to leave, which we did not do. Ten of us were then arrested for trespass.

In October 2005, several of us were arrested in front of the White House when the US death toll hit 2,000. Now on January 1, 2006, we were arrested to commemorate 3,000 US deaths.

It was ironic that I, as a retired US Army Colonel, was arrested on the Golden Gate Bridge in sight of the Presidio of San Francisco, a former US Army base.

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

Mother Of KIA Soldier Shuts Up Imperial Democrat Politicians In DC



[USA Today/AP]

January 3, 2007 By Mark Leibovich, the-caucus.blogs.nytimes.com

Representative Rahm Emanuel was starting to address about 70 media types who had waited patiently for him to emerge from a meeting of the House Democratic Caucus on Capitol Hill. He wished everyone a Happy New Year, apologized for being late — -45 minutes, if you're counting at home — and was promptly drowned out by a group of anti-war protestors.

“De-escalate. Investigate,” chanted the group, which was led by the ubiquitous Cindy Sheehan, whose son was killed in Iraq. “Troops home now.”

Mr. Emanuel and incoming Majority Leader Steny Hoyer consulted briefly and decided to leave their lectern and return later. “Looks like we're taking a little break,” Mr. Hoyer said as he and Mr. Emanuel rushed away.

Ms. Sheehan, meantime, was happy to take over the Democratic microphone, not to mention the captive audience of reporters. She called for a greater role for the peace movement in the new Democratic majority, which she said is ignoring the people who put them in power. She called for an end to financing the war.

“And these are not requests,” said Ms. Sheehan, whose son was killed in Iraq. “These are demands.”

The Democratic leaders did, later on, return to the microphones. Ms. Sheehan, who first emerged as a prominent protester against President Bush at his Crawford ranch, vowed to be around all week.

Spc. Suzanne Swift Released From Military Prison, Supporters Rally At Ft. Lewis



Banner over Interstate I-5 [by Jeff Paterson, Courage To Resist Jan 3rd, 2007]

Jan 3rd by Jeff Paterson, Courage To Resist

Supporters of Spc. Suzanne Swift rallied outside Fort Lewis, Washington this morning to welcome the news that Swift had been released from military prison.

On December 14 Swift was convicted by a summary court martial for missing movement and being AWOL. She was sentenced to spend 30 days in confinement and must stay in the military until 2009. She was released this morning with time off for good behavior.

"Suzanne faced her court martial with strength and respect. I was more than proud of her," said Sara Rich, Suzanne's mom, following her court martial last month.

Swift's case had garnered national attention since she was arrested at her mother's home in June 2006. Swift had gone AWOL just before her military police unit was to redeploy to Iraq in January 2006. During her previous tour of duty in Iraq in 2004 and 2005, Swift was sexually harassed and assaulted by superiors.

"Every Death In Iraq Is Murder"

“The Response From The Community Which Is Usually Conservative Was So Positive And Supportive”



Courtesy of Thomas Good, NLN Photo Gallery

[Thanks to Debra Anderson for posting this report. In her posting to Veterans For Peace, she writes:]

We held two events, one on Sunday, December 31st, we had 60 people in attendance in front of Congressman Vito Fossella's Office. We were on both sides of the streets, with 2 or 3 of us in the intersection holding signs 3,000 dead with the faces of the fallen. We had many visual pictures of combat boots (printed from AFSC) lining the sidewalk, 3,000 DEAD in huge poster boards, chanting no more war, troops home now, NO MORE DEPLOYMENTS.

The response from the community which is usually conservative was so positive and supportive, with passerby's honking their horns in solidarity, giving us the thumbs up.

Tonight we held another vigil which was a solemn candlelight memorial, reading the names of the Dead, we were a smaller group of about 15 at the same location.

We each took turns reading the names of soldiers who were killed in this senseless war.

I cried, cried for my husband's comrades who were lost, cried for each person who had or has a son or daughter who was sent off to kill or be killed in this illegal, immoral war, and for those still in harms way, for those who will still be sent off in the next troop deployment.

We can't let that happen, this has got to end.

January 02, 2007 By SALLY GOLDENBERG, STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

Americans who oppose the war in Iraq and want a swift withdrawal of troops came out in force across the country yesterday with protests and candle-light vigils scorning the increasingly unpopular war that has cost the United States 3,002 lives.

The news on the last day of 2006 that the American death toll in Iraq exceeded 3,000 with the demise of a Texas soldier energized Staten Island groups to hold two vigils outside the Eltingville office of Rep. Vito Fossella, an Island Republican who supports President Bush's pursuit in Iraq.

"We're here to say enough is enough," said West Brighton resident Debra Anderson, a member of the nascent Island chapter of Military Families Speak Out.

While she has symbolically battled the war since it began nearly four years ago, Mrs. Anderson said news of the 3,000th death creates a chilling symbol with which Americans can identify, and thus prompted her to stage a vigil Sunday afternoon that was host to at least 40 people, and another last night attended by a dozen Islanders.

"It means 3,000 too many, that's what it means; 3,000 on a war based on lies," she said.

Like many anti-war activists, Mrs. Anderson cited the dangers in Iraq for both Americans and 16,273 Iraqis reportedly killed since the invasion. "There's too much devastation on both sides. We're losing too many soldiers."

Mrs. Anderson's husband spent one year fighting in Iraq with the 69th Infantry Division, and has been emotionally distressed since his return, she said.

Another man at the vigil said anti-war Islanders should hold Fossella partially responsible for the war. "Vito has a vote in Congress," Larry Mayer, a member of Peace Action Staten Island. "For at least six years (Bush) has had a rubber stamp in Congress, and Vito's part of that rubber stamp."

Although he said the vigil would not likely influence Fossella's stance, he called it a "symbolic" gesture to mourn the deaths outside the congressman's headquarters.

Fossella could not be reached for comment last night.

Most recently, the congressman said he was "encouraged" that the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, while critical of the war, did not call for an immediate withdrawal of American troops from the country.

The demonstrators lit candles that flanked a chain of papers naming New Yorkers killed in Iraq. On each sheet laid on the ground and covered in plastic was a black depiction of military boots and the name of a deceased American.

Then, with candles in hand, they took turns reading the names of the New Yorkers killed in Iraq, which they pinned at 139.

As she read and heard the staccato sound of names she recognized from her husband's military life, Mrs. Anderson broke down in tears.



Courtesy of Thomas Good, NLN Photo Gallery

Bush's Guantanamo Concentration Camp: Guilty Unless Proven Innocent, And Rigged So That's Impossible;

“We Learned Pretty Early On That These Were Kangaroo Courts”

The prisoners have no right to a lawyer, or to see classified evidence, or even to know the identity of their accusers. What has been less visible, however, is what many officials describe as a continuing shortage of information about many detainees, including some who have been held on sketchy or disputed intelligence.

31 December 2006 By Tim Golden, The New York Times [Excerpts]

Guantánamo Bay, Cuba - At one end of a converted trailer in the American military detention center here, a graying Pakistani businessman sat shackled before a review board of uniformed officers, pleading for his freedom.

The prisoner had seen just a brief summary of what officials said was a thick dossier of intelligence linking him to Al Qaeda.

He had not seen his own legal papers since they were taken away in an unrelated investigation.

He has lawyers working on his behalf in Washington, London and Pakistan, but here his only assistance came from an Army lieutenant colonel, who stumbled as he read the prisoner's handwritten statement.

As the hearing concluded, the detainee, who cannot be identified publicly under military rules, had a question. He is a citizen of Pakistan, he noted. He was arrested on a business trip to Thailand. On what authority or charges was he even being held?

"That question," a Marine colonel presiding over the panel answered, "is outside the limits of what this board is permitted to consider."

Under a law passed by Congress and signed by President Bush in October, this double-wide trailer may be as close to a courtroom as most Guantánamo prisoners ever get.

The law prohibits them from challenging their detention or treatment by writs of habeas corpus in the federal courts. Instead, they may only petition a single federal appeals court to examine whether the review boards followed the military's own procedures in reviewing their status as "enemy combatants."

But an examination of the Guantánamo review boards by The New York Times suggests that they have often fallen short, not only as a source of due process for the hundreds of men held here, but also as a forum to resolve questions about what the detainees have done and the threats they may pose.

Some limitations have long been evident.

The prisoners have no right to a lawyer, or to see classified evidence, or even to know the identity of their accusers. What has been less visible, however, is what many officials describe as a continuing shortage of information about many detainees, including some who have been held on sketchy or disputed intelligence.

Behind the hearings that journalists are allowed to observe is a system that has at times been as long on government infighting and diplomatic maneuvering as it has been short on hard evidence. The result, current and former officials acknowledged, is that some detainees have been held for years on less compelling information, while a growing number of others for whom there was thought to be stronger evidence of militant activities have been released under secret arrangements between Washington and their home governments.

Administration officials also emphasize that the reviews are more rigorous than the battlefield tribunals that have traditionally been used to determine the status of wartime prisoners under the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

But the Geneva tribunals were established to answer questions about the identities of soldiers and spies from regular armies. Sorting through the identities and past actions of suspected participants in a shadowy global terrorist network, military officials said, has proved far more complex.

Still, a recent study of the review process found that detainees arguing their innocence were routinely denied witnesses they tried to call, even when the witnesses were other prisoners at Guantánamo.

Lawyers for the detainees complain that the government has made almost no effort to have the panels consider information they have gathered and has often blocked their attempts to learn the accusations against their clients.

"We have tried again and again to have a say in the process," said Barbara Olshansky, a lawyer who has coordinated much of the work of the detainees' lawyers for the Center for Constitutional Rights.

"But we learned pretty early on that these were kangaroo courts."

Many of the detainees appear to have given up on the reviews as a way to win their freedom. In the latest round of annual hearings, which were completed this month, only 18 percent of the prisoners chose to attend.

More than a week after the hearing for the Pakistani businessman accused of ties to Al Qaeda, a Washington lawyer who had been trying to help him told a reporter that he had not even known the session had taken place.

"There is no hint of any kind of due process in this," said the lawyer, Gaillard T. Hunt.

"He's got no right to an investigation.

"But substantively, it really doesn't matter, because they can always just say they have this classified information that he can't see."

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

No More Silent Vigils; "The Last Thing The Antiwar Movement Needs Is Silence"

The antiwar movement is already self-destructing by identifying itself with Democrats who plan to continue funding the war for another two years despite the will of the American people".

January 2, 2007 John A. Murphy, New American Independent [Excerpts]

Chester County -- PA

John Murphy, the 2006 independent candidate for House of Representatives in the 16th Congressional District stood outside the Chester County Courthouse on the evening of January 1st with other concerned citizens to mourn the passing of the 3,000th G.I. to die in Iraq.

According to Mr. Murphy "everyone in this country now realizes that the Democrats and Republicans lied to us about the reasons for invading Iraq. Both the Democrats and the Republicans wanted this invasion because both old parties are driven by the same neoliberal economic model which of necessity dictates an imperialist foreign policy.

"While any 12-year-old with a modem could've told you that all the weapons of mass destruction, provided to Iraq courtesy of the Reagan administration, were gone or accounted for by 1998; both old parties supported yet another invasion of a sovereign nation in order to control it politically, militarily and economically.

"It is time for the antiwar movement to end the practice of 'silent vigils'. The last thing the antiwar movement needs is silence.

The antiwar movement is already self-destructing by identifying itself with Democrats who plan to continue funding the war for another two years despite the will of the American people".

According to Murphy, members of the local antiwar movement are actually going to Washington with Joe Sestak who is on record as promising to continue to fund

the war for another two years, increasing the bombing of Iraq and "redeploying" our troops throughout the region instead of bringing them home.

Automobiles with bumper stickers saying "Chester County Peace Movement" also bear bumper stickers saying "Obama for President". Obama has been calling for surgical missile strikes on Iran for two years.

"I urge every Pennsylvanian who considers himself or herself opposed to war and the destruction of our civil liberties through the USA Patriot Act and the Military Commissions Act, supported by both corporate owned parties, to change their voter registration to 'not affiliated'(NA). Thanks to the Democrats and Republicans and their ballot access laws, as of 2006 all of the other parties -- the Constitutional, the Green and Libertarian Parties have all been outlawed. It is time for Americans to reclaim their democracy and their nation as the people have done in one South American country after another. The time for silence is over; it is now time for action.

"The mainstream media", continued John Murphy, "helped the ruling elite turn the death and burial of Gerald Ford who ordered the slaughter of 200,000 innocent men, women and children in East Timor in 1975 into a royal spectacle. The rest of the world saw this event for what it really was; a carnival.

"While this mass murderer who deprived our nation of the justice it needed after Watergate is laid to rest in regal splendor, the body of the 3,000th G.I. will be shipped home in the cargo hold of an Air Force transport and unloaded at Dover Air Force Base hidden from the eyes of the public; receiving no honor, no parades, no common decency.

"Let us begin by protesting further outrages to our sensibilities; by protesting the deification of mass murderers like Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan and let us begin by protesting the Democratic Congress which now promises to urinate on the hopes and desires of the people who elected them.

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.

Fix Or Repair Daily

From: Dennis Serdel
To: GI Special
Sent: January 02, 2007
Subject: Fix Or Repair Daily

By Dennis Serdel, Vietnam 1967-68 (one tour) Light Infantry, Americal Div. 11th Brigade, purple heart, Veterans For Peace 50 Michigan, Vietnam Veterans Against The War, United Auto Workers GM Retiree, in Perry, Michigan

Fix Or Repair Daily

Oh Oh OOOH OOOOh
The men at work were mad at Ford
when he gave amnesty to the kids that crossed
into Canada to get
out of the Vietnam War
They looked at Jimmy D. who served
one year in Nam with a Purple Heart
that showed he wasn't a clerk in Saigon
or just hanging around smoking pot
Jimmy D. told the men it was all OK
he wouldn't want anybody to go
through the useless hell that he did
but it didn't help, the men were mad
said it wasn't fair said it wasn't right
Jimmy D. said Spiro Tricky Dick
should have both been impeached
and Ford is a cheating lying scum
a snake that should have his head cut off.
But Jimmy D. was into drugs
and he didn't see the damage done
that his fellow workers did everyday
he didn't All come back
like the Canadian kids
to the USA.
Oh No OohNoo OoohNOoo

**“We Are Often Told That The Path
To Political Change Winds
Through The Halls Of Congress”
“The Path To Change May Wind Instead
Through The Halls Of Our Military
Barracks, And Within The**

Consciousness Of Our Military Community And Military-Age Youth”

Political party programs mean very little; President Nixon spent more on social programs than President Carter, not because he intended to, but because there were marches in the streets creating fear within the elite.

January 1, 2007 By ZOLTAN GROSSMAN, Veterans For Peace Discussion [Excerpts]

We are often told that the path to political change winds through the halls of Congress and the halls of justice. Although legislative and legal strategies can bring about political shifts, it is almost always based on begging someone more "powerful" to support our cause.

But who really has "power" in this society when it comes to questions of war and peace?

The path to change may wind instead through the halls of our high schools and the halls of our military barracks, and within the consciousness of our military community and military-age youth. Some people have political "power" far out of proportion to their numbers, but most of them don't realize it yet.

Active-duty GIs, reservists, veterans, and military families together make up the military community. Just as women are the best people to organize women, and immigrants are the best people to organize other immigrants, the best people to educate and organize GIs are members of this military community--now organized in groups such as Iraq Veterans Against the War, Veterans for Peace, Military Families Speak Out, and many more.

“It Is The Kiss Of Death For Any Movement To Drop Issue-Based Organizing For Sake Of A Temporary Fix In The Next Election”

Many progressives, disheartened by Bush's two election "victories," assume that change is only possible through a new president.

One reason for the lethargy in the peace movement is that so many antiwar people put their eggs in the Kerry basket in 2004, and still can't get over that election. Some young people (who have only known Bush as president) even idealize Democratic administrations.

Yet it was Jimmy Carter who declared an "energy war," established the Central Command in the Middle East, accelerated the nuclear arms race, and revived draft registration.

It was Bill Clinton who repeatedly bombed Iraq, enforced draconian sanctions on the Iraqi people, and bombed Serbia and a few other countries.

The new crop of candidates include many familiar faces - Hillary, Kerry, Clark - who backed those wars, or who voted for the Iraq War.

As we approach the 2008 races, some activists are deciding whether to join electoral campaigns. It is the kiss of death for any movement to drop issue-based organizing for sake of a temporary fix in the next election.

Many progressive activists attack "mainstream" people as nothing but consumers and TV watchers, without recognizing that people are passive because they feel powerless, and feel they have limited choices in their lives.

The occupation of Iraq has been going on for more than three long years, run by a president who has prevailed in two elections. Civil liberties have been limited, and with each terrorism scare, state repression and media hysteria grow more intense.

In the face of these seemingly unshakeable realities, many progressives either throw up their hands in despair, become obsessed with the backlash they face when they speak out, or assume that a greater amount of repression will generate a greater amount of public resistance.

Yet elsewhere in the world (and in other periods of U.S. history), political organizers faced far greater obstacles and far greater repression, yet persevered by not letting it limit their resistance.

In the Philippines, for example, dissenters during martial law faced media censorship, torture, disappearances, and a rubberstamp parliament-the Patriot Act pales in comparison. Yet by creatively organizing at the grassroots, and focusing not just on ending repression but on more positive, inspiring visions of the future, they formed powerful issue-based movements.

I saw activists repeatedly winning victories against the dictatorship-stopping nuclear plants and hydro dams, and eventually closing huge U.S. military bases. I

Any successful movement should expect repression, and defend everyone's civil liberties. The worst mistake to focus only on the repression of one part of society, such as academics. It is elitist to assume that academics have an "escape clause" that other activists do not have, or that white activists should be protected from government abuses that have long targeted activists of color.

As the Native American poet John Trudell once summed up the situation: "When I go around in America and I see the bulk of the white people, they do not feel oppressed; they feel powerless. When I go amongst my people, we do not feel powerless; we feel oppressed."

“The Fear Of Social Instability Is What Causes The Elites To Shift Their Thinking, Not Petitions From A Tamed, Loyal Opposition”

George W. Bush is crashing and burning. Not only are his poll numbers at the lowest ever, but 73 percent of U.S. troops in Iraq told the Zogby Poll that they want a complete withdrawal within one year.

The U.S. peace movement often underestimates its own potential. The movement (and GI resisters) helped to shorten the Vietnam War, by recognizing that our military could not defeat the Vietnamese.

Why are the grassroots movements such a challenge to the empire? Because they talk about democracy not simply as an exercise in voting, but as increasing our direct control over our economy, our culture, our land, our daily lives.

Because instead of simply begging political officials to change their minds, they initiate change themselves at the base of society, within culture and consciousness.

Political leadership does not create this change; it is generally the last to be affected by it. The movement starts the snowball rolling in order to create the avalanche, and then politicians and judges take credit for the very avalanche they are buried in.

Political party programs mean very little; President Nixon spent more on social programs than President Carter, not because he intended to, but because there were marches in the streets creating fear within the elite.

The fear of social instability is what causes the elites to shift their thinking, not petitions from a tamed, loyal opposition.

“Even The Progressive Notion Of ‘Justice’ Implies That Someone Else Holds The Power

Just as the Roman Empire became militarily overextended, the American Empire is winning its battles but losing its war to dominate the world economic and political system. It may not collapse as dramatically as the Soviet Union, but may end up looking more like Britain—a former imperial lion now licking its wounds.

Even the progressive notion of "justice" implies that someone else holds the power, and we want him or her to decide matters in a just way. We should start thinking rather about other people gaining the power to make those decisions.

Grassroots organizations can begin to think of themselves less as pressure groups to influence government, and more like parallel institutions that function as the real representatives of our communities. That is the real meaning of "people power."

At the same time as we "tear it down," we can also begin to build a different community and a better world.

OCCUPATION REPORT

OOPS



U.S. Army soldiers from the 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment *throw open a door in an empty house* during a predawn sweep of a neighborhood in southern Baghdad, Iraq, Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2007. (AP Photo/Darko Vojinovic)

**CHECK THE CAPTION ABOVE;
THEN CHECK THE DOOR ABOVE;
THEN CHECK THE DOOR BELOW:
SAME HOME, DIFFERENT ROOM**



U.S. Army soldiers from the 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment question a man while searching his home during a predawn sweep of a neighborhood in southern Baghdad, Iraq, Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2007 (AP Photo/Darko Vojinovic)

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

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

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

3000 DEAD: AND THE TRAITORS WANT MORE



January 3, 2007: Bush, Gates and Rice contaminate the White House as they plan to send thousands more U.S. Troops to die in Iraq. REUTERS/Kevin Lamarque (UNITED STATES)

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces. Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces. If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers.

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/> And join with Iraq War vets in the call to end the occupation and bring our troops home now! (www.ivaw.net)

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