

GI SPECIAL 5B24:

NO MORE: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE



The casket containing the remains of 19-year-old Marine Pfc. Tarryl Hill, St. Paul Tabernacle Church in Detroit, Michigan February 16, 2007. Hill was killed in Fallujah. REUTERS/Rebecca Cook

The Gravedigger

From: Dennis Serdel
To: GI Special
Sent: February 21, 2007
Subject: The Gravedigger

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

The Gravedigger

It's cold in the morning
and he shivers
he kicks up the furnace
he turns down at night
these heating bills are killer
he puts some coffee on
trying to remember
who he buries today
these Michigan winters
freeze the ground on down
he needs some gas
in the truck
and the digger too
it's a hell of a way
to make a living
but it's steady pay
after a cup and a half
of coffee and three cigarettes
it dawns on him who's grave
he has to dig today
it's Mary and John's son
from across the tracks
the paper had his picture
he is just a boy
played football
at the old high school
a stand out star
joined the Army after that
cause all the jobs are gone.

**Troops Against The War:
Appeal For Redress Airing On "60
Minutes" TV Sunday Evening;**

More Than 1,000 Military Personnel Sign Petition Urging Withdrawal



[Thanks to Martin Smith & Fabian Bouthilet, IVAW & The Military Project, & Phil G, who sent this in.]

We would like you to know so if you are off duty and are inclined, you can spread the word among your active duty, Guard, and reserve peers about the airing, or you may be interested in hosting others in a small gathering off base, off duty, and out of uniform to watch the video.

“Just because we volunteered for the military doesn’t mean we volunteered to put our lives in unnecessary harm and to carry out missions that are illogical and immoral.” Marine Sgt. Liam Madden

From: Seaman Jonathan Hutto Sr
Sent: 22 Feb 2007
Subject: Appeal for Redress airing on “60 Minutes”

Hello, this is Seaman Jonathan Hutto Sr., founder of the Appeal for Redress, hoping that all of you are well.

I just wanted to let you know that the “Appeal for Redress” piece will be airing this Sunday on 60 Minutes at 7:00 pm. Eastern standard time.

Not everyone that was interviewed made it into the piece, but there will be some additional footage found on the web. “60 Minutes on Yahoo” that can be found at this web address (no www): <http://60minutes.yahoo.com/>

We would like you to know so if you are off duty and are inclined, you can spread the word among your active duty, Guard, and reserve peers about the airing, or you may be interested in hosting others in a small gathering off base, off duty, and out of uniform to watch the video.

If you need more information, please email me at jhutto77@yahoo.com.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Hutto Sr.

MORE:

Feb. 22, 2007 CBS, 60 Minutes Press Release [Excerpts]

They say they are not disloyal. They say they are not shirking their duty and that they do not oppose war.

But more than 1,000 active-duty and reserve members of the U.S. military are against the war in Iraq and have said so in an unusually public way — by petitioning Congress last month.

Several of them appear to explain their actions to correspondent Lara Logan this Sunday, Feb. 25, at 7 p.m. ET/PT.

“I’m not anti-war. I’m not a pacifist. I’m not opposed to protecting our country and defending our principles,” says Navy Petty Officer Jonathan Hutto, an Iraq war veteran who, along with another veteran, initiated the petition.

A 1995 law called the Military Whistleblower act enables military personnel to express their own opinions about Iraq in protected communication directly to Congress.

Hutto and others spoke with 60 Minutes while off duty, off base and out of uniform as conscientious citizens. “But at the same time, as citizens, it’s our obligation to have a questioning attitude ... about policy,” Hutto tells Logan.

Marine Sgt. Liam Madden, who helped Hutto to found the organization they call Appeal for Redress that has attracted 1,000 other military members, is more blunt.

“Just because we volunteered for the military doesn’t mean we volunteered to put our lives in unnecessary harm and to carry out missions that are illogical and immoral,” Madden says.

The petition reads: “As a patriotic American proud to serve the nation in uniform, I respectfully urge my political leaders in Congress to support the prompt withdrawal of all American military forces and bases from Iraq . Staying in Iraq will not work and is not worth the price. It is time for U.S. troops to come home.”

These GIs and others Logan spoke with expressed frustration with their efforts in Iraq and believe there is no end to the war in sight.

For The Appeal For Redress:
<http://www.appealforredress.org/>

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

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Three U.S. Soldiers Killed in Anbar

23 February 2007 Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20070223-02

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq – Three Soldiers assigned to Multi-National Force-West were killed Feb. 22 while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar Province.

**REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW**



A U.S. soldier stands guard as a helicopter prepares to take off from the headquarters of the 3rd division of Iraqi army in Mosul December 4, 2006. REUTERS/Khaled al-Mousuly

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

U.S. Soldier Dies In Bagram

February 22, 2007 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND No. 209-07

Pfc. Jason D. Johns, 19, of Frankton, Ind., died Feb. 21 in Bagram, Afghanistan, of a non-combat related injury. His death is under investigation. Johns was assigned to the 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C.

British 42 Commando Dies After Road Wreck

22 Feb 07 MOD Defence News

It is with deep regret that the MOD must confirm that a Royal Marine has died today, 22 February 2007, as a result of injuries sustained in a Road Traffic Accident earlier this month in Afghanistan.

The accident occurred when the Royal Marine, from 42 Commando, was driving a Pinzgauer vehicle as part of a routine convoy in Helmand province, Afghanistan on 4 February 2007.

After initial treatment in theatre, the Royal Marine was transported back to a specialist unit in the UK where, sadly, he later died.

U.S. Drone Crashes In Afghanistan

Feb 23 The Associated Press

An unmanned U.S. military aircraft crashed in eastern Afghanistan on Friday after developing a mechanical failure, U.S. military statement said.

The U.S. Air Force MQ-1 Predator unmanned drone crashed 60 miles northeast of the city of Jalalabad in a remote area.

The Predator is a medium-altitude, long-endurance, remote-controlled aircraft.

The U.S. and NATO-led troops in Afghanistan rely heavily on the use of airpower for surveillance and attacks on the resurgent Taliban and other militants in the country.

“Out Of 100 Per Cent, The British Don’t Even Control One Per Cent Of Helmand,” He Said



We filmed from a car occupied by heavily armed Taliban fighters, yet the vehicle drove straight past the compound housing the British troops based in the town. The Taliban fighters claim the British are too scared to even leave their base.

February 23, 2007 James Bays, Aljazeera [Excerpts]

Al Jazeera has uncovered evidence that Taliban fighters are now in effective control of large parts of a key province in southwest Afghanistan, despite recent claims by NATO that their bases had been destroyed.

James Bays spent two days with the Taliban in Helmand and found that the group is running schools and medical facilities, and is travelling armed and unchallenged by NATO-led forces. Here is his report:

Behind Taliban lines, we travelled with a group of fighters across the deserts of Helmand province.

These hardened men are well-armed, ready for battle - and they told me they are ready for martyrdom too.

The journeys are often at break-neck speed – because of the risk of NATO air strikes.

NATO may be the master of the skies - but the Taliban claim that they control large swathes of territory on the ground.

They took us on a trip - to show us how they operate almost unhindered in many areas.

The group operates not only in rural areas but also towns such as Sangin. We filmed along the main street, past the shopping bazaar.

There were Taliban fighters - with weapons - everywhere, and no sign of NATO or Afghan forces.

We filmed from a car occupied by heavily armed Taliban fighters, yet the vehicle drove straight past the compound housing the British troops based in the town.

The Taliban fighters claim the British are too scared to even leave their base.

The sound of aircraft can be heard - but the fighters are not afraid - they dismissively call the planes "Bush's kites".



And they claim soon they will soon be using a new anti-aircraft weapon.

One fighter said: "We are not scared of their aircraft - God is with us. We are not scared of anything."

For a time, there was confusion about our permission to film. We were detained - and our telephones and camera were taken, but we were treated extremely well.

Those the Taliban find guilty of a crime are dealt with much more harshly.

We were also shown where NATO bombs have fallen.

While we travelled around, there were times when we were not allowed to film - because the Taliban do not want NATO to see pictures of the defences inside their villages.

And when the Taliban took us to a mass rally clearly arranged for us to film, it was somewhat unnerving standing in the desert with such a large group - over 400 Taliban fighters. Some were no more than 12-years old while others carried their ammunition in UN food bags.

The district commander showed me all the land he claims is controlled by his men.

“Out of 100 per cent, the British don’t even control one per cent of Helmand,” he said.

He told me the Taliban is not just a military organisation - he said they have appointed a governor in Helmand and it is now running medical clinics and madrassas, or religious schools.

“Death To The Enemies Of Afghanistan!” “Death To America!”

23 February 2007 BBC NEWS

Around 25,000 people have rallied in the Afghan capital Kabul, calling for a proposed war crimes amnesty for former military commanders to be made law.

The protesters, who gathered in a stadium, included ex-mujahideen and several top government officials.

The protesters, waving placards with pictures of political leaders, gathered in the city’s Ghazi football stadium, where people were executed and tortured during the Taleban era.

“Whoever is against mujahideen is against Islam and they are the enemies of this country,” former fighter Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, now an influential lawmaker, told the crowd of demonstrators.

The rally was also attended by former President Burhanuddin Rabbani, as well as current Vice-President Karim Khalili and Energy Minister Ismail Khan.

Youths later marched through the streets of the city, shouting “Death to the enemies of Afghanistan!” and “Death to America!”.

TROOP NEWS

GI Who Refused Second Deployment To Iraq Gets 7 Months



AP Photo; Photo Released by Army Spc. Mark Wilkerson

Feb 22 By ANGELA K. BROWN, Associated Press Writer & BBC

A soldier who admitted fleeing from the Army rather than deploying to Iraq for a second time was sentenced Thursday to seven months in a military prison and given a bad conduct discharge.

Enlisting at the age of 17, he took part in the March 2003 invasion of Iraq but became disillusioned with the war.

Specialist Wilkerson, who served a year in Iraq, said he quit after being denied conscientious objector status.

Spc. Mark Wilkerson, who pleaded guilty to desertion and missing troop movement earlier Thursday as part of a plea deal, could have been incarcerated for up to 10 months.

Wilkerson's lawyer, Michael J. Duncan, unsuccessfully argued that his client should not be incarcerated because he suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. But the judge agreed with Duncan that Wilkerson should get a bad conduct discharge rather than a more severe dishonorable discharge.

Wilkerson said he decided to go AWOL because his conscientious objector status was denied a month before his unit was to return to Iraq in early 2005.

Since his return, Wilkerson has worked in an office at the central Texas Army post and has been allowed to leave after initially being confined to the post, although he was never in a cell, he said.

Explosive News:

“Deteriorating Safety Conditions” At Texas Nuclear Weapons Plant: “A Detonation Caused By Lightning Strikes, Solvent Fires Or Other Incidents Was More Probable Than The Energy Department Was Admitting”

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

February 22 2007 By Ralph Vartabedian, Los Angeles Times

AMARILLO, Texas - Electrical failures have shut down the plant. The roof has leaked. Decrepit machinery dates back more than 40 years.

Safety lapses led inspectors to levy fines twice within two years. And employees, under deadline pressure, complain they often are worked past the point of exhaustion.

If this factory were producing medical devices or refining gasoline, the conditions would be serious enough.

But this is where they work on nuclear bombs.

Pantex is the Energy Department's main nuclear weapons factory, a linchpin of the nation's defense for a half century. The nation no longer makes nuclear weapons, so the plant's chief roles are servicing them or dismantling them to meet the terms of disarmament pacts.

On a 25-square-mile swath of the Texas Panhandle, a series of massive white concrete domes mark where live nuclear weapons are opened up. The rituals and procedures inside those cells are supposed to be as strict as any operating room, part of a safety culture that reduces any chance of an accidental nuclear explosion to one in 100 million.

But lately, outside experts are questioning whether those safety margins are eroding. Federal investigators are trying to assess the overall safety of the plant, which employs 3,300, amid troubling safety snafus and what employees call an atmosphere of intimidation.

Energy Department officials acknowledge that the plant has fallen behind schedule on reliability testing of weapons.

They also concede the plant has maintenance problems and has violated safety procedures. But they insist there is no danger of a conventional or nuclear explosion.

"Pantex is safe, no doubt," said Marty Schoenbauer, the acting chief of the Energy Department's nuclear weapons program.

But outside experts, union officials and watchdog groups say the opposite is true -- that safety has regressed since 2000 as the most knowledgeable senior safety experts of the Cold War era retire and the plant's condition deteriorates.

"You can't run a plant on glittering platitudes and generalities and call that a safety program," said Bob Alvarez, a former deputy assistant secretary of energy and now a senior scholar at the Institute for Policy Studies, a Washington think tank. "A nuclear detonation accident is a low probability, but it is not incredible."

The backdrop to problems at Pantex is a growing concern that the Energy Department has mismanaged the nuclear weapons program.

Last year, the Defense Department bluntly said that it had lost confidence in the Energy Department, Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman has acknowledged.

The problems at Pantex came to light in the fall after Danielle Brian, executive director of the Project on Government Oversight, a Washington watchdog group, wrote two letters to Bodman complaining about safety.

The group has cited a lengthy report in 2000 by former Energy Department safety expert Frank Rowesome, who said that a detonation caused by lightning strikes, solvent fires or other incidents at Pantex was more probable than the Energy Department was admitting.

In an interview, Rowesome, who retired in 2004, said he did not want to alarm the public, but he believes Energy Department officials are so "overly confident" and "complacent" about safety that they are not alert to deteriorating safety conditions.

Meanwhile, Pantex has fallen behind schedule in performing critical surveillance tests required by laboratory scientists to certify the reliability of the bombs, Schoenbauer acknowledged. "That backlog has not affected the lab's ability to certify weapons," he said.

But Ralph Levine, who once ran the Energy Department's nuclear weapons surveillance testing, wrote a letter in 2005 asserting the backlog would allow defects in nuclear weapons to go undetected for years. As a result, he said, energy officials removed him as manager of the program and he retired last year.

John Duncan, who until four years ago headed surveillance testing at Pantex for Sandia National Laboratory, agreed that testing problems at Pantex are undermining confidence in the stockpile.

Even today, the certifications of nuclear weapons are being made with less certainty than scientists should have, Duncan and Levine said.

SENIOR CALL-UP APPROVED: Bring The Yougin's Home, NOW!



[picture by kibuyu]

1/8/2007 Veterans For Peace Discussion

A number of us Old Foggie 'Nam Vets have tried to Re-Enlist, not to mention the 'Raging Grannies.' Now with the escalation we can save the little chimp's butt, before we indict the whole bunch!

“In The 1st Cavalry Division, Some Guys Just Don't Get The Word”

[Thanks to Don Bacon, The Smedley Butler Society, who sent this in.]

In the 1st Cavalry Division, some guys just don't get the word.

“Our battle space is villages and towns, and you have to engage the people as much as you engage the enemy,” said Col. David W. Sutherland, commander of the 1st Cavalry Division's 3rd Brigade and the top U.S. officer in Buhriz, 35 miles north of Baghdad . .

“Buhriz embodies the new counterinsurgency plan, which tells us: ‘Clear, hold, build,’” said Sutherland, 45, from Toledo, Ohio.

Major General Joseph Fil is the commanding general of the Multinational Division in Baghdad, as well as the 1st Cavalry Division, and Colonel Sutherland's superior officer. At a recent Pentagon news briefing he said: **“This new plan involves three basic parts: clear, control and retain.”**

***It's Better Than The M4, But You
Can't Have One;
Delta Force Gets The Best;
Grunts Get Worthless Piece Of
Shit;
The Army Brass Says That Giving
Troops The Best Would Cost Too
Much Money
[So Let The Fuckers Die]***

[Here it is again. Same old story. The DoD politicians couldn't care less. To repeat for the 3,489th time, there is no enemy in Iraq. Iraqis and U.S. troops have a common enemy. That common enemy owns and operates the Imperial government in Washington DC for their own profit. That common enemy started this war of conquest on a platform of lies, because they couldn't tell the truth: this war was about making money for them, and nothing else. Payback is overdue. T]

Feb 20, 2007 By Matthew Cox, Army Staff writer [Excerpts]

Delta Force worked with a gun maker to come up with a better weapon. The 416 is now considered in many circles to be the best carbine in the world, but the regular Army is sticking with the M4 and M16.

March 4, 2002. An RPG tore into the right engine of an MH-47 Chinook helicopter loaded with a quick-reaction force of Rangers in the Shahikot Mountains of eastern Afghanistan. The Chinook crashed atop Takur Ghar, a 10,000-foot peak infested with al-Qaida fighters.

Enemy fire poured into the fuselage, killing Rangers even before they got off the aircraft. Capt. Nate Self crawled out.

“As soon as I got off the ramp, a burst of rounds fired right over my head,” he recalled.

He joined a handful of his men in the open, exposed to enemy fire. An RPG exploded within a few feet of their position.

“We got up and started firing and moving to some boulders 15 meters away,” he said.

Once behind cover, Self tried to fire again, but his weapon jammed.

Instinctively, he tried to fix it with “immediate action,” a drill he’d practiced countless times.

“I pulled my charging handle back, and there was a round stuck in the chamber,” he recalled.

Like the rest of his men, Self always carried a cleaning rod zip-tied to the side of his weapon in case it failed to extract a round from the chamber.

“There was only one good way to get it out and that’s to ram it out with a cleaning rod,” he said. “I started to knock the round out by pushing the rod down the barrel, and it broke off. There was nothing I could do with it after that.”

The Rangers were fighting for their lives. Self left his covered position and ran under machine-gun fire to search for a working weapon.

“I just got up and moved back to the aircraft because I knew we had casualties there. I threw my rifle down and picked up another one.”

Self was awarded a Silver Star for his actions that day.

When even highly trained infantrymen like Self have problems with their M4 it is a sign there might be a problem with the weapon, not the soldier.

The problems had become obvious enough that at the time of the Afghanistan battle, members of the Army’s Delta Force had begun working on a solution.

Today, Delta Force is fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan with a special carbine that’s dramatically more reliable than the M16s and M4s that the rest of the Army depends upon.

Members of the elite unit linked up with German arms maker Heckler & Koch, which replaced the M4’s gas system with one that experts say significantly reduces malfunctions while increasing parts life. After exhaustive tests with the help of Delta, the H&K 416 was ready in 2004.

Members of the elite commando unit — formally known as 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta — have been carrying it in combat ever since.

The 416 is now considered in many circles to be the best carbine in the world — a weapon that combines the solid handling, accuracy and familiarity of the M4 with the famed dependability of the rugged AK47.

For the foreseeable future, however, the Army is sticking with the M4 and M16 for regular forces.

The Army plans to buy about 100,000 M4s in fiscal 2008. For this large a buy, each M4 without accessories costs about \$800, Colt Chief Executive Officer William Keys said. As part of the contract, though, each M4 comes with a rail system for mounting optics and flashlights, a backup iron sight, seven magazines and a sling — additions that raise the price for each M4 package to about \$1,300, according to Defense Department budget documents.

The price of each 416 “will range anywhere from \$800 to \$1,425 depending on volume and accessories,” said H&K’s CEO John Meyer Jr.

To Col. Robert Radcliffe, the man responsible for overseeing the Army’s needs for small arms, the M16 family is “pretty damn good.”

It’s simply too expensive, he said, to replace it with anything less than a “significant leap in technology.”

[You just read two paragraphs above that the cost is roughly the same. Now Col Robert Rat comes out with this empty, meaningless bullshit to defend using a weapon that fails in combat and thereby kills troops. OK, stick his worthless ass out in Ramadi or Falluja with his M4, so he can illustrate how well it works. Surely after all those boring days at the Pentagon, and all those hours spent being important and talking to reporters, and “overseeing” things, he must be just aching to test his preferred weapon himself, personally, in real desert combat, right? I mean, he’s not some coward sitting safe back home and insisting the troops use a defective weapon, while he faces nothing more dangerous than getting stuck with a fork in the Pentagon dining room, right? Why any day now, he’s going to just demand to go to combat with his very own personal M4, right?]

“We think that somewhere around 2010, we should have enough insight into future technologies to take us in a direction we want to go for the next generation of small arms,” said Radcliffe, director of the Infantry Center’s Directorate of Combat Developments at Fort Benning, Ga. **[Right. That’s what’s so neat about being a Pentagon brass-kisser. No hurry. Never mind dead troops. Can’t rush things. Can’t buy a weapon now that works now. When you read below what troops think of his precious M4, you might reasonably conclude that the “direction” they “want to go” is up his ass with it.]**

“We will have M4s and M16s for years and years and years and years,” he said.

“We are buying a bunch of M4s this year ... and we are doing it for all the right reasons, by the way. It’s doing the job we need it to do.”

But many soldiers and military experts say this mind-set is off target now that soldiers are locked in a harsh desert war with no end in sight.

“We are not saying the (M4 and M16 are) bad,” said former Army vice chief of staff retired Gen. Jack Keane. “The issue for me is do our soldiers have the best rifle in their hands.”

Before retiring in late 2003, Keane launched a campaign to modernize individual soldier gear after ground troops fighting in Afghanistan complained that they were ill-equipped for the current battlefield.

As part of that campaign, Keane backed another effort to give soldiers a better rifle — the XM8, a spinoff of the OICW — only to see it sink last year in a sea of bureaucratic opposition.

“If we are going to build the best fighters, and put the best tanks on the ground, don’t our soldiers deserve, absolutely hands down, the best technology for a rifle?” Keane said. “Not good enough, but the best.”

Ever since the Army’s adoption of the M16 in the mid-1960s, a love-hate relationship has existed between combat troops and the weapon known as the “black rifle.”

It’s accurate and easy to shoot. Plus, the M16’s light weight and small caliber helped soldiers carry more ammunition than ever before into battle.

The M16, however, has always required constant cleaning to prevent it from jamming. The gas system, while simple in design, blows carbon into the receiver, which can lead to fouling.

The Army has decided to replace most of its M16s with the newer M4 carbine. The Army started buying M4s in the mid-1990s but mainly reserved them for rapid-deployment combat units. Its collapsible stock and shortened barrel make it ideal for soldiers operating in vehicles and tight quarters associated with urban combat.

Experts, however, contend that the M4 in many ways is even less reliable than the M16.

Special Operations Command documented these problems in a 2001 report, “M4A1 5.56mm Carbine and Related Systems Deficiencies and Solutions: Operational and Technical Study with Analysis of Alternatives.”

The M4 suffers from an “obsolete operating system,” according to the report, which recommended “redesign/replacement of current gas system.”

It describes the weapon’s shortened barrel and gas tube as a “fundamentally flawed” design and blames it for problems such as “failure to extract” and “failure to eject” during firing.

“The current system was never designed for the rigors of SOF use and training regimens — the M4 Carbine is not the gun for all seasons,” the report concluded.

In the 30 years following the Vietnam War, the Army existed mainly as a peacetime force. The 1991 Gulf War was an armor-dominated fight, lasting only 100 hours. Most soldiers put their rifles to little or no use. But after Sept. 11, 2001, soldiers found themselves fighting protracted shooting wars in the harshest regions on the planet.

M16 rifles and newer M4 carbines no longer were stored in clean arms room racks.

They were now a soldier's constant companion, exposed to the super-fine dust and sand that blow across the desert landscapes of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Still, the Army is quick to blame most M16 family malfunctions on soldiers not cleaning weapons properly. [Right. When the weapon turns out to be a piece of shit, blame the troops.]

Delta Force Gets The Best: The 416

The key to the 416's reliability lies in its gas system. It looks like the M4 carbine on the outside, but on the inside, H&K has replaced Colt's "gas-tube" system with the short-stroke piston system.

This eliminates carbon being blown back into the chamber, which leads to fouling problems, and greatly reduces parts wear created by super-heated gases used to cycle the weapon. The result, experts say, is that the 416 is more reliable, easier to maintain and has a longer parts life than the M4.

"It was a phenomenal gun," said former Delta member and current H&K consultant Larry Vickers. "In my opinion it has the best gas system on the market for a shoulder-fired autoloading weapon. It's lightweight, very efficient; it's clean and has minimal heat transfer."

Vickers retired as a master sergeant in 2003 after serving 15 of his 20 years on active duty with Delta. He played a major role in the development of the 416 while working as weapons research and development sergeant for Delta.

Vickers has stayed connected with the special operations community as a weapons trainer since his retirement.

He remembered that Delta leaders were so happy with the 416 they bought the first 500 to come off the assembly line.

It was in Iraq in no time, but not before H&K and Delta put "a quarter-of-a-million rounds through it," Vickers said. "It had the right kind of testing — endurance firing to 15,000 rounds with no lubrication. It runs like a sewing machine."

Like Colt's CEO, the head of H&K is a career military man with combat experience.

Meyer, a retired Army major general, said he thinks that the fact that soldiers are fighting with basically the same weapon he used four decades ago as a military police captain in Vietnam shows the Army places a low priority on small arms.

“This will sound parochial but I’m also an ex-soldier and I think it’s very shortsighted that we have a weapon that we are using now for 42 years,” Meyer said.

Meyer concedes H&K has a potential stake in any Army decision to replace its main personal weapon, but said his company’s position is “don’t buy HK, just have a competition ... and if that 42-year-old weapon beats out all the competition, you will never hear a complaint from HK.”

The Army, however, isn’t interested in the 416 or any other current rifle technology.

“We will hold on trying to replace the small-arms fleet, and we will search for technologies that might give us significantly greater capabilities in ... the next 10 years or something like that,” Radcliffe said. **[Yeah, he actually said that.]**

Benning Command Caught Lying About What Troops Think

Fort Benning officials maintain soldiers are happy with the M16 and M4, according to “post combat surveys,” in which Army small-arms officials routinely interview soldiers on how their weapons have performed in combat.

Benning officials would not release the survey data, but said the results showed no negative trends in the performance of soldier weapons.

Army Times has requested the information through the Freedom of Information Act.

Army Times obtained a copy of Project Manager Soldier Weapons Assessment Team’s July 31, 2003, report, a similar survey that Infantry Center officials participated in along with other members of the Army’s small-arms community.

The executive summary said that M16s and M4s “functioned reliably” in the combat zone as long as “soldiers conducted daily operator maintenance and applied a light coat of lubricant,” the summary stated.

The report also stated, “While keeping the weapon clean in this environment was a continuous requirement, it was not considered to be a difficult one.”

The stack of anonymous soldier comments that accompanied the report paints a different picture.

Though there were plenty of positive comments about the M16 and M4, soldiers weren’t shy about criticizing the weapons’ reliability.

A 3rd Infantry Division soldier wrote, “The weapon malfunctions in rough conditions/hard to keep clean.”

Another 3rd ID soldier wrote, “I know it fires very well and accurate clean. But sometimes it needs to fire dirty well too.”

A 25th Infantry Division soldier wrote, “The M4 Weapon in the deserts of Iraq and Afghanistan was quick to malfunction when a little sand got in the weapon. Trying to keep it clean, sand free was impossible while on patrols or firefights. Sometimes we spend more time cleaning the weapon than firing it.”

An 82nd Airborne Division soldier wrote, “The M4 is overall an excellent weapon, however the flaw of its sensitivity to dirt and powder residue needs to be corrected. True to fact, cleaning will help. Daily assigned tasks, and nonregular hours in tactical situations do not always warrant the necessary time required for effective cleaning.”

Elite forces also had similar criticisms of the M4.

A member of the 75th Ranger Regiment wrote, “Even with the dust cover closed and magazine in the well, sand gets all inside; on and around the bolt. It still fires, but after a while the sand works its way all through the gun and jams start.”

Self, the former 75th Ranger Regiment officer who had his weapon jam in Afghanistan, told Army Times that his unit routinely kept its M4s covered in a tent to protect them from dust and sand.

“I think it’s the sand” in Afghanistan, he said. “It’s a big problem.”

Infantry Center officials label these criticisms as purely anecdotal, and argue that there is no statistical data that shows reliability problems with the M16 or the M4.

That’s not exactly accurate, according to the Marines.

The M4 suffered significant reliability problems during Marine Corps testing in late summer 2002.

According to briefing documents, Marine officials said the M4 malfunctioned three times more often than the M16A4 during an assessment conducted for Marine Corps Systems Command at Quantico, Va.

Malfunctions were broken down into several categories, including “magazine,” “failure to chamber,” “failure to fire,” “failure to extract” and “worn or broken part,” according to the briefing documents. During the comparison, the M4 failed 186 times across those categories over the course of 69,000 rounds fired. The M16A4 failed 61 times during the testing.

The Army conducted a more recent reliability test between October 2005 and April 2006, which included 10 new M16s and 10 new M4s. Testers fired 35,000 rounds through each weapon in laboratory conditions.

On average, the new M16s and M4s fired approximately 5,000 rounds between stoppages, according to an Army official who asked that his name not be released.

By comparison, the 416 fires 10,000 to 15,000 rounds between stoppages in similar test conditions, Vickers said.

In addition to Delta, experts say the 416 is also in use by other specialized Army units, including the Asymmetric Warfare Group, as well as the Navy's elite SEAL Team 6.

There It Is: Never Mind Dead Troops, It's The Money That Matters:

Replacing the M16 family right now would cost too much money, Benning officials say.

"The truth is, to change out a fleet takes a tremendous amount of money," Radcliffe said, referring to the task of outfitting a million soldiers with new weapons.

Experts say it would cost approximately \$1 billion to replace the Army's M16s and M4s with an "off-the-shelf" weapon like the 416. [So what? Bush Buddy war profiteers have pocketed many billions. But then they're important. Can't waste a billion on an effective weapon.]

One of the benefits of the 416's piston rod design is it saves money on spare parts over time. SOCOM found that it doesn't blow heat into the receiver as the M16 family's gas system does. Heat dries out lubricants quickly and inflicts extreme wear on weapon parts.

Perhaps the most well-known incident of M16s failing in battle involves the 507th Maintenance Company in 2003 during the opening days of the ground invasion of Iraq.

Enemy forces ambushed 507th soldiers outside Nasiriyah, killing 11 and capturing six, when the unit became separated from a supply convoy.

Several of the 507th soldiers later complained that their M16s, and other weapons, failed them during the March 23 ambush.

What's not so well known is how then-Pfc. Patrick Miller earned a Silver Star for keeping his M16 from jamming long enough to take out an enemy mortar position.

"We were taking fire from everywhere," Sgt. Miller recalled in a recent Army Times interview.

Enemy fire had knocked out his five-ton truck, forcing him to fight on foot.

He dove for cover behind a dirt berm and spotted an Iraqi soldier manning a mortar position across the road.

"It looked like he was trying to drop the shell in the tube. That is when I fired the first shot and the guy went down."

When he pulled the trigger again, nothing happened.

“After the first shot, the round ejected. When the next round went to go in, it froze up,” he said. “It didn’t feed all the way into the chamber.”

Miller pounded on the forward assist, a tiny plunger on the M16’s receiver designed to manually push the weapon’s bolt into the chamber.

He fired his rifle once more, and it jammed again. Miller tried the immediate action drill he learned in Basic Combat Training — he slapped the bottom of the magazine to reseal it, pulled the charging handle back to look into the chamber. When he released, the bolt wouldn’t chamber the next round.

Changing magazines didn’t work either.

“After the third magazine I decided it took longer to change mags than to beat on the forward assist,” he said.

That worked, but his weapon would only fire a single shot and jam again.

“I was beating that thing with the palm of my hand four or five times for each round,” he recalled.

Miller managed to fire about eight times using this frantic sequence under enemy fire.

It was a valiant, but futile, effort. His fellow soldiers were trying to fight, but their weapons failed them as well.

Miller turned around and shot at a target behind him.

“When I turned there were about 40 Iraqis that had moved up on the road” approaching his position, he said. “At that time there was not much else I could have done.”

Miller put down his rifle and surrendered.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

**Resistance Attacks On Oil
Installations Cost Occupation
Billions Of Dollars;
“About One Attack Every Other Day”**

February 20, 2007 By Mohammed Hameed, Azzaman

Iraq is losing up to 400,000 barrels of oil a day due to attacks targeting its oil infrastructure, a senior oil ministry official said.

Assem Jihad, the ministry's spokesman, said at current high prices on international markets the loss is massive as it amounts to billions of dollars a year.

Jihad said there were 159 major attacks on oil installations in 2006, about one attack every other day.

Most of the attacks targeted the country's pipelines, he said.

There were 116 attacks on pipelines mainly those leading to refineries or export terminals in the north.

"These attacks have forced the country's refineries to operate at nearly 50% of capacity," he said.

There is no special force to guard the pipelines and the ministry relies on Iraqi security forces which have been engaged in ferocious city fighting against rebels.

The government has earmarked \$2.5 billion for the reconstruction of the oil sector this year.

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

**"I Honor People For What They Did, Not
For Who Is Rotting In The Ground Close
By"**

February 26, 2007
Letters To The Editor
Army Times

Dishonor among the honor

I read "Murderer interred at Arlington to be removed: President signs new law closing burial loophole" (Jan. 8), regarding the removal of Russell Wayne Wagner's remains from Arlington National Cemetery.

Why do this? Are we punishing Mr. Wagner? His family? Who?

Certainly he committed a heinous crime, but did he not earn the right to be buried there by his honorable service in the Army? Apparently he did OK while he was subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

The bill reads, "The inclusion among the honored dead ... brings dishonor to those honored dead."

Give me a break. I honor people for what they did, not for who is rotting in the ground close by.

Staff Sgt. Ralston Long (ret.)
Uniontown, Ala.

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

OCCUPATION REPORT

Charging \$19 Million For A \$2 Million Job: As Troops Died Cheney's Corporate Buddies Were Hard At Work Thieving

February 22, 2007 Bill Sizemore, The Virginian-Pilot [Excerpts]

NORFOLK, Va. - A two-year investigation has finally begun to shed some light on the trail of taxpayer dollars that paid for Blackwater USA's famously ill-fated security mission in Fallujah, Iraq, in March 2004.

Blackwater's contract was less than a month old when four of its security operatives were ambushed and killed, some of their bodies mutilated and hung from a bridge in an incident that changed the course of the Iraq war.

Blackwater was at the bottom of a four-tiered chain of contractors. The Moyock, N.C.-based company says it billed the next company up the chain \$2.3 million. At the top of

the chain was KBR, a subsidiary of Vice President Dick Cheney's former employer, Halliburton Co.

Now the Pentagon has calculated that by the time KBR got around to billing the government, the tab to the taxpayers for private security work had reached \$19.6 million. The government is moving to take that money back, charging that it was improperly spent.

Last week, federal investigators identified \$10 billion they said has been squandered in the war because of contractor overcharges and unsupported expenses. More than a quarter of that amount, \$2.7 billion, was charged by Halliburton.

Double-billing by security contractors is another concern of congressional investigators. A January 2005 audit of a different Blackwater contract, with the State Department, found that Blackwater was charging the government separately for "drivers" and "security specialists," who were in fact the same people.

The audit also found that Blackwater was improperly including profit in its overhead costs, resulting "not only in a duplication of profit, but also a pyramiding of profit because, in effect, Blackwater is applying profit to profit."

<p style="text-align: center;">OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME NOW!</p>
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DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Bush: I'll Bring Troops Home On JetBlue; Britain And Denmark Join "The Coalition Of The Leaving"

February 23, 2007 The Borowitz Report

Under increased pressure to announce an exit strategy from Iraq, President George W. Bush revealed plans today to bring U.S. troops home on the budget airlines JetBlue.

Mr. Bush received praise for his decision to withdraw American troops, but his choice of JetBlue to transport them raised more than a few eyebrows.

According to most official estimates, with its recent spate of scheduling problems and flight delays, JetBlue could take up to seven years to bring U.S. troops home, and possibly ten years in the event of inclement weather.

But at a press conference at the White House today, the president argued that the selection of Jet Blue was “crucial” to the success of his latest exit strategy.

“Setting an exact timetable for a withdrawal from Iraq would be playing right into the enemy’s hands,” Mr. Bush said. “By going with JetBlue, our enemy will have no idea when we’re leaving.”

To emphasize his point, Mr. Bush added, “And neither will we.”

Across Iraq, U.S. GIs were hopeful that the news about JetBlue meant that they would be home by Christmas, or at least by Easter 2012.

At JetBlue headquarters in Forest Hills, New York, CEO David Neeleman said that it was “flattering” to be chosen to play such a critical role in President Bush’s new exit strategy, but wondered if his embattled airlines has what it takes to bring troops home from Iraq.

“We’re still having a hard time getting people home to Fort Myers,” Mr. Neeleman said.

Elsewhere, Britain and Denmark announced that they were joining “The Coalition of the Leaving.”

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)



[Thanks to Z, who sent this in.]

CLASS WAR REPORTS

Welcome To Occupation USA: Beaten To Death By LA's Killer Cowards In Blue

February 23, 2007 By Kurt Krueger, Socialist Worker

LOS ANGELES police in riot gear numbering around 100 converged into the eastside Ramona Gardens housing project February 6--to disperse a makeshift carwash intended to raise funds for the funeral of their latest victim.

Mauricio Cornejo was the latest person to die in the custody of the LAPD. He stopped breathing in a holding cell at the Hollenbeck police station--after, witnesses say, police beatings where he was arrested and at the station.

According to the police, Cornejo was stopped for a broken taillight, and was initially cooperative, but then walked away from them. Cornejo allegedly got rid of a handgun, and then "turned and confronted" one of the officers who followed him.

The officer says he ordered Cornejo to stop--then pulled out an expandable baton and struck him in the arm and leg. The beating continued as more officers arrived. Cornejo seemed "impervious" to the blows, the police say--although witnesses described Cornejo as pleading for help. "This was not pretty," Capt. William Fierro later summarized. "However, it was necessary."

At least three witnesses paint a very different picture. Norma Picasso said she saw officers hitting Cornejo in the head and body after he had been handcuffed. Another witness, Yolanda Puente, saw police kick Cornejo in the head and ribs and hit him with batons. A cell phone video of the incident also shows police delivering the blows.

A third woman said the assault continued in the holding cell at the police station. She told a reporter she saw officers drag Cornejo down a hallway, and while he was handcuffed, kick him at least twice. She said she could hear someone say, "He's dying."

Police say they noticed that Cornejo was having trouble breathing and called paramedics, but it was too late. Cornejo was pronounced dead while in the holding cell.

Spokespeople for the LAPD have been quick to point out Cornejo may have been a member of Big Hazard, a gang near Ramona Gardens that they claim has targeted their officers.

But residents of Ramona Gardens--the city's oldest remaining housing project, made up of Second World War-era barracks-like masonry buildings--say that their neighborhood has long been neglected by the city, but not the LAPD.

"Growing up here is as close as you're going to get to living in a police state," Jose Navarro, a college student who grew up in the project, told the Los Angeles Times.

Residents say police will stop them for no reason and issue jaywalking tickets to teenagers heading home from school. One told the Times that an officer recently ticketed him for "looking like a gang member"--although he had never been in a gang and has never been arrested.

Navarro, who says he was a close friend of Cornejo, told the Times that the police use the gang label to "dehumanize" young people in the neighborhood. "There's little difference," he said, "between me and the so-called gang members."

For residents of Ramona Gardens, Cornejo's death is history repeating itself. In 1991, a sheriff's deputy shot and killed an unarmed gang member, leading to a tense standoff with residents. In 1992, two Black families were targeted with firebombings in a community that is otherwise almost entirely Latino. In 1996, an angry crowd confronted police after a gun battle left a suspected gang member dead and an officer wounded.

No one should accept the LAPD's excuse of cracking down on gang violence as justification for another murder.

GI Special Looks Even Better Printed Out

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