

## **GI SPECIAL 5B3:**



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

# **“What, Exactly, Did We Almost Die For?”**

**“The More I Thought About It, The More I Realized That All The Reasons For Us Going Into Iraq Were False”**

15 Jan 07 Courage to Resist

Sgt. Cantu, 28, is a member of the First Cavalry Division stationed in Iraq and a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War.

He is currently on his second tour in Iraq and recently signed the “Appeal for Redress” a petition to Congress calling for the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq.

The appeal, currently signed by over 1,000 active duty troops, was delivered to Congress on January 16. Sgt. Cantu also started a forum called Soldier Voices to provide a place for other soldiers to speak about the Iraq war.

Sgt. Cantu continues to exercise his free speech rights within the military and continues to post to the forum, Soldier Voices.

**He has the support of his family in his courageous stand to make his voice heard.**

**“Our family supports Ronn 100% for his courage and bravery to do what he is doing. We deeply care about all the troops in Iraq. Ronn would not take these risks if he did not have the support of many, many people who believe in him in Iraq, in the United States, and other parts of the world,” said Lisa Cantu, Ronn’s sister.**

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**We’re lucky to be citizens of a country where we will probably never be occupied, but speaking hypothetically, if we were to be occupied, would we react any differently?**

10/26/2006 by Ronn Cantu, [www.ivaw.org](http://www.ivaw.org)

**I think it was after my first firefight in Iraq, I’ve forgotten the exact time and date but it was after midnight one day in April 2004, that I first asked myself, “What, exactly, did we almost die for?”**

**It seemed to me at the time that there was never a plan.**

**What was our mission exactly?**

**What was our goal?**

**What, exactly, were we there to accomplish?**

## **Why were soldiers dying?**

I had joined the Army in March 1998 as an Infantryman and served with the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum, New York from July 1998 until December 2001, or about four months after the events collectively known as 9/11. I had already been accepted to a community college near my hometown and was working on getting a “college drop” from the Army. That had been my plan for a while and, after almost four years, it felt good to finally be seeing a light at the end of the tunnel.

Still, we had just been attacked.

I asked my family whether I should stay and go with the 10th Mountain to Afghanistan (though at the time they were at an airfield in Uzbekistan) or proceed to get out of the military. There was no “stop loss” in effect for your average soldier (I think only special forces and pilots fell under “stop loss” then) and the soldiers sent from a sister infantry battalion were being rotated back to Fort Drum in order to clear and process out of the Army.

I talked to some of them and they said that the 10th Mountain was only pulling security for the airfield and that Rangers and Special Forces were doing all the fighting. That didn't sound very fun so I got out, which is what my family encouraged me to do. No surprise there.

But sometimes people leave the military thinking they could have done and/or been more and I distinctly remember talk of another war with Iraq coming up in my unit before I left.

So, I went back to school and studied Journalism. That meant having to watch the news and hear talk about Iraq and weapons of mass destruction and how much our way of life was in danger. My feelings that I had run away when my country needed me combined with the White House's panic-mongering-like certainty that Iraq was going to succeed where no country before could and wipe America clean off the map led me to signing back up.

Fast forward to where I began.

**The more I thought about it, the more I realized that all the reasons for us going into Iraq were false.**

**Weapons of mass destruction were never found, and if they were, so what?**

I didn't know how many countries were nuclear powers at the time, but I was pretty sure if Iraq did have WMD that the United States had a lot more.

**It seems to me that countries use nuclear weapons more to gain credibility in the international community than to actually use them.**

**After all, only one country has ever actually used nuclear weapons against people.**

And I thought back to high school history and tried to remember... wasn't it the United States and the Soviet Union who were on the verge of destroying half the planet (and

some say the whole planet) with the Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) policy during the Cold War?

**It seemed silly that America should fear a small, third-world country with barely any control over its own resources. Who, in all honesty, is more threatening? A dictator trying to acquire a few WMD in order to give his country credibility or a military superpower with thousands of nuclear weapons, the ability to target anywhere on the planet, and a nuclear “first strike” policy?**

**And if Iraq was such a threat, why weren't Iran and Kuwait (two countries that Iraq has actually attacked) afraid? Wouldn't Israel have done or said something?**

So then I figured that this war was justified because Saddam was an evil man, he killed hundreds of thousands of his own people and had to go.

But then I wondered what made him so much more of a priority than, for example, Kim Jong Il of North Korea? North Korea has been a known enemy of American interests for half a century.

**Also, if we were there just to oust Saddam, why did we wait?**

**Saddam killed these people over the course of 23 years.**

**Where were we and our moral high horse a quarter century ago when we could have maybe stopped him and made a difference?**

And what were we now saying to the international community? Were we setting a precedent? Was America going to clean house and get rid of all the planet's “bad” governments? Just how long are we going to be at war?

I had already come to the conclusion that the reason wasn't to establish democracy.

My unit in Iraq fired shots at drivers that wouldn't get out of our way, ran vehicles off the road, conducted cordon and searches looking for “military-age men” who could maybe be guilty of something.

**Just a note, I like to tell soldiers to put themselves in the average Iraqi's place.**

**What would we, as Americans, do if our police engaged in any of these activities against us?**

**Would we take pot shots and set traps and, in effect, become “insurgents” too?**

**We're lucky to be citizens of a country where we will probably never be occupied, but speaking hypothetically, if we were to be occupied, would we react any differently?**

**Were we liberators or occupiers?**

**This was back in 2004.**

**The war had been going on for a year, which is not too long, and we were told we were liberating the people of Iraq.**

**How?**

**By getting rid of their dictator and replacing him with about 150,000 troops who were not trained to handle insurgencies, who are ordered to fire if they feel threatened, who are put in situations where their lives are going to be threatened, and who want nothing more than to just survive their deployment?**

**We can certainly call ourselves liberators, but if the Iraqi people call us occupiers, then we're occupiers.**

**Only the citizenry can make that judgment.**

Like I said, I was an infantryman, but I was in charge of my battalion's ammunition. I was in the Support Platoon and was on the road almost every other day and it seemed to us that all we were doing was sustaining and defending ourselves.

We would drive to FOB Warhorse, pick up roughly two days worth of food and anything else we needed and head back to FOB Normandy and, in two days, repeat. We got shot at and had improvised explosive devices go off quite regularly, though some months were quieter than others.

Now, at the time I did see a difference for the better. It did end up getting quiet – not through diplomacy, but through use of force. We were told to “make a statement” every time we were fired upon or exploded. That made us happy. As long as they weren't shooting at us, our odds of making it home improved.

But! Were the Iraqis focused on the same fact that the troops were? That in roughly a year we would rotate back to civilization? Were the “insurgents” being good, but just biding their time until a new unit would rotate in and then renew their fighting?

The violence definitely seems to be highest during troop rotations which lends credibility to this idea.

**It's the cycle of violence. We get shot at, so we shoot anything and everything, thus creating more people with a vendetta against us and who, in turn, shoot at us giving us a reason to shoot everything all over again.**

**We can repeat this cycle until either 1, everyone is dead or 2, we wise up and realize that we're not entirely without guilt and end the cycle.**

**Some soldiers, myself included, say that the media focuses on the bad and doesn't report the good. For example, Iraq had their first democratic election in January 2005... and has since collapsed to the verge of civil war.**

**Oh, and here's some more democracy, 70% of the population of Iraq wants us out.**

I know it's easy to point out problems and not offer solutions, but that's going to be another essay.

Now, this may entirely just be my own experience, but the pro-Iraq-War people I meet seem to fall into two major categories, 1, those who think that all Iraqis are automatically guilty for 9/11 or 2, those who think all Muslims are guilty for 9/11. I remember seeing cartoons depicting a body of water labeled "Lake Afghanistan," though the sentiment seems to be that you can easily substitute Iraq.

Actually, both of those categories can be lumped into one "kill them all" category.

When I first got to Iraq, I felt that the quickest way to end the war was to do just that. Kill them all.

Remember, the Iraq War was my reason for going back on active duty. I bought into the fear, the hype, and the propaganda hook, line and sinker.

I'm not going to waste any more time on those arguments.

Anyone who speaks in absolutes like that is completely self-deluded. I'm only going to say that the war was described as a "crusade" ever so briefly in the very beginning and that the "kill them all" mentality is called genocide when other countries do it. I'm just saying.

So I had one person say something to me, and this was the rationalization I finally decided on for the remainder of my tour. He said, "We have not been attacked since the Iraq War started."

I'm going to say true but add that it's not due to lack of trying. I seem to remember a shoe bomber being stopped in an airplane in December 2001 and something about a plot to use liquid explosives being uncovered just this past August, so it certainly seems like terrorism is being thwarted in other places. Imagine if the Department of Transportation was getting the money that is, instead, going to cleaning up our mess in Iraq. Maybe we could have that security at airports, seaports, borders, and what have you.

But hey, if all we need for perpetual safety in the United States is perpetual war in Iraq, well, all I want to say to the parents reading this is that you can sign a waiver and have your son and/or daughter in the military at age 17.

That's worth it, right? Hell, the Army will take them without a high school diploma, such as yours truly.

I work every day with soldiers and a lot of them want to see this through because it's hard for them to think of their buddies as having died for nothing.

This is a noble way of thinking and I empathize, I really do.

**But again, going back to that cycle of violence. We went to Iraq to avenge the 2,948 who died on 9/11. Three-and-a-half years later we're still avenging those 2,948 plus the additional 3,145 (as of today, 26 October 2006) troops who have died since in the war on terror.**

**Meanwhile, the “insurgents” are trying to avenge the unknown (estimates between 45-50 thousand, same date) number of dead they have sustained. Again, when does it end?**

**Finally, I know we weren't there for the oil. Our government told us so.**

It's too late to say we should have never started this war and I can only appeal to one's sense of humanity when I say that if we don't start making changes, we will never stop running out of dead to avenge.

Will the future judge the war in Iraq as one of the biggest mistakes in our country's short history? We can only wait and see. The past has already judged the war to be a mistake, but the future must wait until the present is done judging the war as a mistake.

When will that be?

Hopefully soon.

Soldiers are dying while we try to figure it out.

I've heard Iraq being compared to Vietnam.

I'm 28 years old and have no idea what Vietnam was like.

I hear it was a quagmire which seems to be the consensus regarding Iraq.

**I'm still in uniform and talk to soldiers every day and one thing hasn't changed, what you can and can't expect a soldier to be willing to die for.**

**Unfortunately, the only ones qualified to tell us whether Iraq was worth dying for will never be able to do so.**

I'll be back in Iraq before Christmas of this year and I still haven't found the answer to my question.

**If anyone can shed any light on if Iraq is worth dying for, please tell me at [shocked.awed@gmail.com](mailto:shocked.awed@gmail.com).**

**I know of a precious few soldiers who could use some reminding.**

**Feel free to distribute this to anyone. We need all the motivation we can get!**

**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

## **U.S. Copter Shot Down In Mashhada: 2 Killed**

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

Feb 2 By KIM GAMEL, Associated Press Writer & Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory & German Press Agency

**A U.S. helicopter went down Friday in Iraq for the fourth time in two weeks, killing two soldiers on board, and America's top general acknowledged that its aircraft were increasingly in danger from ground fire. The Multi-National Division-Baghdad helicopter went down at approximately 7:20.**

The wreckage from one aircraft had been found near a fuel storage complex in the rural area of Mashhada, near Taji.

A Pentagon official said it was an Apache attack helicopter.

Another Apache was shot down Sunday during heavy fighting near Najaf, also killing two soldiers.

Iraqi police and witnesses said the latest crash occurred about 7:30 a.m. as two Apaches were flying along a well-established air route near Taji, a major U.S. base about 12 miles north of Baghdad.

**One helicopter was struck by heavy machine gunfire but continued flying, the witnesses said. The other helicopter banked sharply and flew back toward the source of fire, apparently to attack the target.**

**But that helicopter was also struck by ground fire, exploded in a ball of fire and crashed, the witnesses said. The other helicopter flew away, they said. The witnesses spoke on condition of anonymity, fearing for their own safety.**

**Witnesses and local police said two helicopters were flying together when gunmen opened fire, sending one of the aircraft crashing to the ground, smoke trailing behind it, near Taji, an air base just north of Baghdad.**

Apaches carry multiple high-tech defenses, including long-range sensors, radar jammers and an infrared jammer for countering incoming missiles.

**However, the Apaches, which were designed to fight the Soviet Union on the plains of central Europe, have proven vulnerable to intense ground fire.**

During the 2003 invasion of Iraq, more than 30 Apaches had to break off an attack after suffering heavy damage in fighting with the Iraqi Republican Guard. One helicopter crashed but the two crew members survived.

**Gen. Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Friday that clearly, “ground fire ... has been more effective against our helicopters in the last couple weeks.”**

The comments marked the first time a military official has publicly acknowledged the recent crashes were caused by ground fire.

Any new threat to helicopters would be a serious challenge to the military as it gears up for a major crackdown against Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias in Baghdad.

**Helicopters are always vulnerable to ground fire, said Stephen Trimble, Americas bureau chief for Jane's Defence Weekly. “A well-placed bullet can pretty much take down any helicopter,” he said.**

Protecting helicopters from attack is significantly more complicated than defending against roadside bombs, Trimble said.

“What you would do with a Humvee is up armor it,” he said. But helicopters can't support a significant increase in weight.

**The U.S. military relies heavily on air transportation in Iraq to avoid roadside bombs and insurgent ambushes and the recent spate of losses has raised questions about whether insurgents may have stepped up attacks on helicopters or may have received new supplies of shoulder-fired anti-aircraft weapons.**

Insurgents are already known to have anti-aircraft weapons as well as rocket-propelled grenades and heavy machine guns.

Since May 2003, the U.S. military has lost 54 helicopters in Iraq, about half of them to hostile fire, according to figures compiled by the Brookings Institution.

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## **Two US Soldiers Die In Traffic Accident At Camp Liberty**

Feb 2 (KUNA)

The American army announced today the death of two of its soldiers in a traffic accident north of Baghdad on Thursday.

A statement by the US army in Iraq on Friday said “Two soldiers of the multi-national forces in Iraq died yesterday as a result of a traffic accident at Camp Liberty in Iraq.”

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## Texas Soldier Killed In Taji



Army Cpl. Timothy A. Swanson, 21, of San Antonio, was killed Jan. 27, 2007 in Taji, Iraq. He was assigned to the 2nd battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas. (AP Photo/Family photo, Keith Howard)

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## U.S. Soldier Dies In Vehicle Rollover In Iraq

February 2, 2007 BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) & (KUNA)

The military command says the Army soldier died from injuries suffered yesterday in a vehicle rollover in Tikrit north of here.

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## Roosevelt High Graduate Killed In Iraq

02/02/2007 By Harry Levins, ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

A Roosevelt High School graduate has been killed in combat in Iraq, his widow says.

The victim was Army Cpl. Milton Gist Jr., 27.

In a telephone interview this morning from Topeka, Kan., his widow -- Raheisha Gist -- said an Army representative had told her of the death. But she had few details. "We're still finding things out," she said.

The family confirmed a report on KTVI-TV that Gist had attended Webster Groves High School and had been graduated from Roosevelt High School in 1998. He joined the Army in 2003, his widow said.

Gist was the father of a girl, 4, and a boy, 1.

His widow said that Gist had been assigned to Headquarters Company of the 1st Battalion, 77th Armor, a part of the Germany-based 1st Infantry Division.

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## Jacksonville Soldier Killed In Baghdad



Army Spc. Joshua Rechenmacher

January 21, 2007 News4Jax.com

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. -- The violence in Iraq recently hit home in Jacksonville, where a mother is making plans to bury her son who was killed in action.

Army Spc. Joshua Rechenmacher, 24, returned home from one tour of duty and volunteered to return for a second tour. He was patrolling the streets of Baghdad when a bomb hit his Humvee.

"He knew the risks were higher this time. He was more scared this time, but he still served with honor," said Rechenmacher's mother Joanne Gutcher. "Every picture that I have from over there he has a smile on his face."

The former Forest High School student joined the Army when he was 17 years old. His mother said he had wanted to serve his country since he was toddler.

"When he was about 2 or 3, he loved Top Gun. We went through three Top Gun tapes because he would constantly play it over and over. He would sit there and get his dad's motorcycle helmet and plunger and pretend he was flying the plane -- that's what he wanted to do," Gutcher said.

Rechenmacher served for seven years. "I am so proud of him. He died doing what he wanted to do -- serve his country and protect his family," Gutcher said. "He loved being a soldier. When he went to Forest, he was in ROTC and he loved it."

She is preparing to have her son's best friend and fellow soldier bring her son's body home, where she plans to have a funeral service for him.

“All a parent wants is for their child to grow up and be what they want to be and be happy,” Gutcher said.

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## **Annapolis National Guard Soldier Killed In Iraq**



Command Sgt. Maj. Roger W. Haller

Jan 24, 2007 Richard Sher, Reporting, (WJZ/AP)

Baltimore: A high-ranking soldier in the Maryland Army National Guard who taught classes at the guard's training facility at Camp Fretterd was one of 12 soldiers killed when a Black Hawk helicopter crashed northeast of Baghdad, family members said Tuesday.

As WJZ's Richard Sher reports, Command Sgt. Maj. Roger W. Haller, 49, of Annapolis, was the second-in-command of the guard's HQ 70th Regiment (LDR), where he trained soldiers in a variety of disciplines including ethics, personnel management and military history.

His family was notified Sunday that he was killed in Saturday's crash, said his daughters, Morgan Haller and Kathryn Haller, both of Cambridge.

“Besides us, the military was next in his life that he was all proud about,” said Morgan Haller. “He's been wanting to go for four years now, to go overseas and he's been harping at his bosses to let him go and finally he got a chance to go,” she added.

Maryland National Guard officials declined to confirm or deny reports of Haller's death, which the Department of Defense had not announced as of early Tuesday afternoon.

Haller worked in construction and as a plumber before returning to the guard full-time.

He begged his superiors to be deployed overseas before he was finally shipped shortly after Thanksgiving to Afghanistan, Morgan Haller said in a phone interview from her mother's home.

“He was so excited. He still asked us if it was OK. I said, 'It's something you love, I'm not going to tell you no,’” she said. “We knew what the consequences were in him being over there. When you grow up in a military life your whole life, you know those things can happen, and you're better prepared for it than most people.”

Haller's son, Sgt. Daniel Haller, served tours in Afghanistan and Iraq and came home shortly before his father was deployed, Morgan Haller said.

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## **Bomb Kills Keizer Soldier On His First Tour In Iraq**

January 24, 2007 DAVID AUSTIN, The Oregonian –

A 20-year-old soldier from Keizer died Saturday in Iraq, one of two Oregonians to perish in a spate of violence that broke out over the weekend in the war-torn nation. Army Pfc. Ryan J. Hill was killed when an improvised explosive device detonated near his Humvee in Baghdad.

Hill, who attended McNary High School, was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, based in Schweinfurt, Germany, according to a U.S. Department of Defense announcement Tuesday.

His mother, Shawna L. Hill, was too broken up to speak about her son's death, according to a family friend who gave his name only as "Scooter." He provided no other details about Ryan Hill.

**Hill was on his first tour in Iraq when he was killed. He is the 78th military member with strong ties to Oregon or Southwest Washington to be killed in Iraq.**

Sgt. Sean Patrick Fennerty, 25, of Portland also was killed Saturday; his death was announced Monday. Fennerty, a 1999 graduate of Jesuit High School and a 2004 graduate of Oregon State University, was in a Humvee that was struck by a roadside bomb in Anbar province.

A Mass of Christian burial for Fennerty will be at 11 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 27, in the Knight Center at Jesuit High School.

On Hill's account at MySpace, an online social networking Web site used mostly by young people, the soldier wrote almost exclusively about his family life and friends. According to his page, he grew up with his mother and sister and attended McNary High. He wasn't sure what he wanted to do with his life, so he joined the Army.

**About being in Iraq, he wrote: "It is walking on that thin line between sanity and insanity. That feeling of total abandonment by a government and a country you used to love because politics are fighting the war . . . and it's a losing battle . . . and we're the ones ultimately paying the price."**

He spoke of his love for his fellow soldiers and his family and of the several kinds of music he liked.

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# Ferris Graduate Killed In Iraq

January 23, 2007 Jody Lawrence-Turner, Staff writer, Spokesman Review

A U.S. Marine killed in Iraq over the weekend was a 2004 Ferris High School graduate.

Darrel J. Morris, 21, was one of two Marines killed Sunday in separate attacks in the Anbar province west of Baghdad.

The attack was part of an especially deadly weekend for Americans in Iraq. Twenty-five U.S. troops were killed Saturday – the third deadliest day since the war started in March 2003.

Morris' sister, a senior at Ferris, told school officials of her brother's death Monday morning. Staff and faculty were notified via e-mail.

“No old teacher should outlive his student,” said Bill Christianson, who taught Morris in Ferris' Distributive Education Club of America program, more commonly known as DECA, for three years.

Morris led the school's Relay for Life team and worked at the DECA store, school district spokeswoman Terren Roloff said.

Morris and Christianson stayed in touch after graduation.

“He sent e-mails every couple weeks,” Christianson said. “Darrel sent an e-mail just last week.” He was at the school last June to recruit students into the military, Christianson said.

Morris enlisted in the Marines in 2004, said Sgt. Charles Foster, a Marine Corps recruiter in Spokane. After being shot by a small firearm during his first deployment to Iraq, Morris received a Purple Heart.

After his injury, Morris temporarily returned home. He did “recruiter assistance” while he was in Spokane, Foster said. The date when Morris returned to Iraq was unavailable.

Morris was supposed to be coming home this spring, Christianson and Foster said.

He was a good guy, Foster said.

Christianson said Morris was raised by an aunt and uncle.

During his senior year, Morris qualified for a state DECA competition, which led to a weeklong marketing conference in New York.

While in the Big Apple, he and friends had a bet about who could find the cheapest deal on a suit, Christianson recalled. “So they spent much of their time in New York shopping.”

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# Mililani Graduate Dies In Iraq Attack

January 24, 2007 By Mary Adamski, Honolulu Star-Bulletin

A former Mililani resident died Saturday in Iraq, one of four soldiers killed when an improvised explosive device detonated near their Army Humvee in Karma.

**Army Spc. Toby Olsen, 28, a 1997 graduate of Mililani High School, is the 128th person with Hawaii ties to be killed in Iraq since the war began in March 2003.**

He was based in Fort Richardson, Alaska, and deployed to Iraq in October with the 3rd Battalion, 509 Infantry (Airborne) Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division.

Olsen's death came 13 days after he returned to the war zone from a two-week holiday visit with his family in Germany, said his uncle, Robert Olsen of Mililani. Toby Olsen's father, Army Col. James "Mike" Olsen, is an ophthalmologist at the U.S. Army Hospital in Heidelberg. It was the first time Toby, his father, mother Lis and sister Tanya were together since he joined the Army in late 2005, said Robert Olsen.

In a message to his family before he returned to war from his Christmas leave, Toby Olsen wrote that he planned to pursue his dream of being an artist, saying, "I now conform to ideas instead of imagine, and destroy instead of create."

He had "a newfound level of respect for the freedoms I once had," he wrote. "Hope I live long enough to enjoy them again."

Robert Olsen said: "Toby was here for junior high and high school, then he went off to school at the Savannah College of Art (and Design) in Georgia. He definitely intended to return to Hawaii to teach art.

"He was reserved, but when he knew you, a friendly, witty guy. He was more of an artist, poet, philosopher," said Robert Olsen. "We couldn't understand him taking the path (the Army). He was trying to make ends meet; it was something to give him a further education."

Robert Olsen said his nephew's best friend, a member of the same Alaska-based unit, was killed while Toby was on holiday leave, the 3,000th American victim of the Iraq war. He was Spc. Dustin Donica, 22, of Spring, Texas.

Toby Olsen is the grandson of John C. and Hiroko Olsen of Wahiawa. His survivors include uncles Robert of Hawaii and John of Texas, and aunt Sharla Beil of San Francisco.

The Army announcement of the Jan. 20 deaths listed Olsen as a resident of Manchester, N.H. Also killed in the explosion were Sgt. Sean P. Fennerty, 25, of Corvallis, Ore.; Sgt. Phillip D. McNeill, 22, of Sunrise, Fla.; and Spc. Jeffrey D. Bisson, 22, of Vista, Calif.

Army Spc. Toby Olsen wrote about his desire to return to a creative life as an artist. In a message to relatives when he returned to the Iraq battle zone, he wrote:

“Happiness, in the broadest scope of the word, encompasses the feelings which personally give us as individuals fulfillment and joy to that which just takes the pain away for a little while. I believe in life, you need contrast too. I think you can't be truly happy until you have been truly unhappy.

“I am an artist, I strive to create and enjoy almost nothing more than to sit having all the time and freedom in the world and create. I hit a point in life where though my art wasn't fulfilling anymore, it felt empty. I suddenly had too much freedom and too much time, so took the most opposite direction I legally could with my life: I joined the Army.

“Now my time is run by the minute; there is almost no room for creativity.

I now conform to ideas instead of imagine, and destroy instead of create. The contrast thus far has led to a strong resurgence of my former drives and desire to create, as well as a newfound level of respect for the freedoms I once had.

“Hope I live long enough to enjoy them again.”

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



U.S. soldiers in Baqouba Nov. 18, 2006. Fierce fighting between insurgents and U.S. and Iraqi forces sent many residents fleeing inside as the sound of machine gun fire and rocket-propelled grenades rocked the city. (AP Photo)

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## **SOMALIA WAR REPORTS**

# How It Begins

2.1.07 Wall St. Journal

Mortar rounds hit an Ethiopian base in Somalia's capital. Backers of an ousted Islamic militia protested plans to field a peacekeeping [translation: occupation] force.

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## TROOP NEWS

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



A hearse carrying the casket of Command Sgt. Maj. Roger W. Haller, of Annapolis, Md., leaves a memorial service at Sailwinds Park in Cambridge, Md., Jan. 31, 2007. (AP Photo/Kathleen Lange)

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***It's Magic!***

# Pentagon Makes 16,164 Non-Fatal War Casualties Vanish Overnight

[How do you know your war is lost? When command panics and has to start playing games with the casualty reports. Baghdad Bob must be green with envy.]

February 2, 2007 By Denise Grady, The New York Times

**Statistics on a Pentagon Web site have been reorganized in a way that lowers the published totals of American nonfatal casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan.**

Michael Kilpatrick, deputy director of force health protection and readiness at the Defense Department, said the previous method of tallying casualties was misleading and might have made injuries and combat wounds seem worse and more numerous than they really were.

**On Monday, the bottom line of the Defense Department's Web page on casualties in Iraq listed a total of 47,657 "nonmortal casualties."**

**By Tuesday, the same page no longer showed a total for nonmortal casualties. The bottom line is now "total - medical air transported," and the figure is 31,493.**

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## IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

### Assorted Resistance Action

Feb 2 By KIM GAMEL, Associated Press Writer & German Press Agency & By BASSEM MROUE, Associated Press Writer

Guerrillas assassinated the Sunni chairman of the Fallujah City Council, Abbas Ali Hussein. He was the third council chairman assassinated in Fallujah this year as insurgents target those willing to cooperate with the U.S. and its Iraqi partners [translation: collaborating traitors].

Six more troops were killed Thursday, two in fighting in Anbar province, one of an apparent heart attack and three in vehicle accidents.

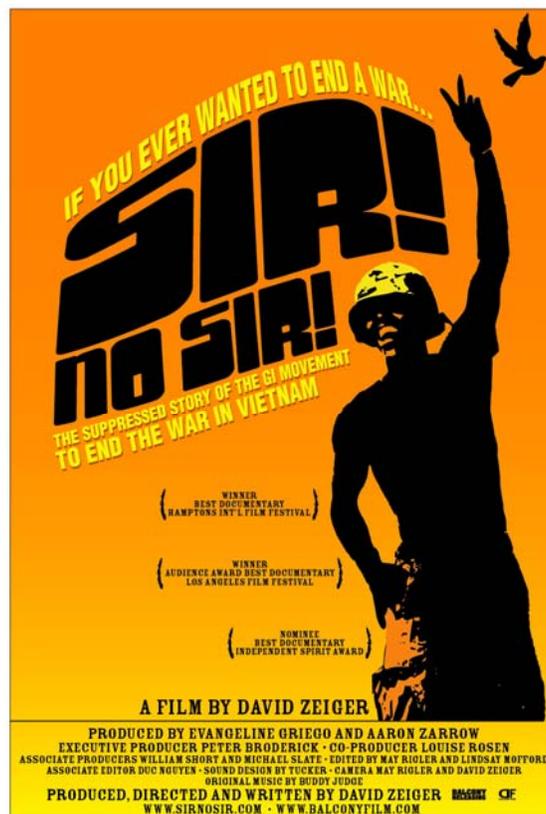
Friday a roadside bomb struck a police patrol in the northern city of Mosul, killing one officer, police said.

Iraqi authorities extended Friday the curfew imposed on the holy city of Najaf after armed clashes broke out between militants and Iraqi national forces.

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

## **FORWARD OBSERVATIONS**

When the hour... has come, the infection flashes like an electric spark over hundreds of miles.... The message goes through the air, and, in the one thing that counts all men are suddenly of one mind even if only in a blind conviction: **Things must change.** JACOB BURCKHARDT (Swiss historian), "The Crises of History," 1869, Force and Freedom: An Interpretation of History, edited by James H. Nichols, 1943



**The Sir! No Sir! DVD is on sale now, exclusively at  
[www.sirnosir.com](http://www.sirnosir.com).**

Also available will be a Soundtrack CD (which includes the entire song from the FTA Show, "Soldier We Love You"), theatrical posters, tee shirts, and the DVD of

**"A Night of Ferocious Joy," a film about the first hip-hop antiwar concert against the "War on Terror."**

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

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

## **The War Came Home**

From: Dennis Serdel  
To: GI Special  
Sent: February 01, 2007  
Subject: The War Came Home (part One) (part Two)

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 War Came Home (part One)**

**Capitalists drafted them so heavy in Michigan  
if they could not beat the Unions,  
they would kill their sons off in a war in Vietnam.  
But those Union kids were raised with shotguns  
in their hands, they shot the deer and pheasants  
in Michigan, they loved Michigan.  
Although many Union kids were killed and wounded,  
still too many came back from the war.  
Now those Union kids are retired  
and the Capitalists want to kill them again  
by  
taking away their Healthcare, so there is another war,  
but it is in Michigan, good old Michigan.  
But those Capitalists better remember,  
those Union boys they sent off to the war in Vietnam,  
could shoot a 22 rifle from their hips  
and hit a Coke bottle thrown into the sun,  
in Michigan,  
with a little bit of practice, they could do it all again.  
"When you ain't got nothing, you got nothing to lose,"**

Dylan said that, or Woody Guthrie,  
Steinbeck, one of them.  
If they do not have their Healthcare,  
then the Capitalists will not have theirs,  
like an old Coke can thrown into the sun  
shot full of holes from an old shotgun.

### The War Came Home (part Two)

By the way, how much money you going  
to pay and benefits too  
to support our troops  
when they come home from the war?  
From the war,  
looking for a job or is it screw them too?  
Yes, you better watch out for those boys  
fighting in Iraq, they are quicker,  
they are stronger, they know how to attack.  
We will tell them who to oust and the way it used to be  
making \$25 + an hour  
and benefits for your family.  
Surround those Japanese factories  
in the good old USA.  
Tell them to sell them to their own people  
and that is where they should stay.  
If they call the National Guard,  
tell them that is who you are.  
If they call the Military,  
tell them that is who you are too.  
We will tell them we do not need  
their "Competition."  
We like our Chevys and Fords  
and when Chrysler gets rid of Daimler,  
we will like them even more.  
Then we can get rid of Capitalist thinking,  
and all relax , go out fishing,  
go out hunting and live like  
all good Americans do  
in Michigan. Yes, All Michigan  
in Spirit  
across the USA.

### Troops Invited:

What do you think? Comments from service men and women,  
and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to The Military  
Project, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or  
send email [contact@militaryproject.org](mailto:contact@militaryproject.org):. Name, I.D., withheld

unless you request publication. Replies confidential. Same address to unsubscribe.

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



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 chimps butt, before we indict the whole bunch!

**MORE:**

**Apocalypse Again -- Call Up The  
Vietnam Vets;  
Where Else Can Bush Get 21,500 Trained  
Soldiers For His 'Surge'?**

January 21, 2007 By Paul Whitefield, L.A. Times [Excerpts]

LISTENING TO President Bush's speech on Iraq earlier this month, my first thought was: "Where the heck are we going to get 21,500 more soldiers to send to Iraq?" Our Reserves are depleted, our National Guard is worn out, our Army and Marine Corps are stretched to the limit.

Then it hit me: Re-up our Vietnam War veterans and send them.

**They're trained. They're battle-hardened. Many already have post-traumatic stress disorder. Also, some have their own vehicles — Harleys mostly, which are cheap to run, make small targets and are highly mobile. I'll even bet that lots of these guys still have guns (you know, just in case).**

**OK, some vets are a bit long in the tooth (or don't have teeth — because of Agent Orange?). Or their eyesight isn't what it was. Or their reflexes have slowed. But with today's modern weaponry, how well do you have to see?**

Too out of shape, you say? Listen, if Rocky Balboa can step back into the ring at age 60, all these Vietnam War vets need is a little boot-camp magic and they'll be good to go. I mean, who doesn't want to drop a few pounds?

Don't want geezers fighting for us? Well, let's face it, our young people have greater value right here. Most of us want to retire and collect our hard-earned Social Security, and we need those youngsters here, working and paying taxes — lots of taxes.

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## **Those Ingrate Iraqis: President Bush Is Right: Americans Deserve Gratitude For Cutting Iraqis' Energy Consumption And Tackling Their Overpopulation Problem**

January 19, 2007 Rosa Brooks, L.A. Times

'HOW SHARPER than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child!' complained Shakespeare's King Lear. But Lear didn't know from ingratitude.

Think it stings to have a thankless child? Just try the sting of a thankless occupied nation!

President Bush on Sunday shared his lamentations on "60 Minutes," the modern equivalent of the storm-swept heath.

**Assuming the time-honored role of Fool, CBS' Scott Pelley asked the president, "Do you think you owe the Iraqi people an apology for not doing a better job?"**

**Bush retorted: "That we didn't do a better job, or they didn't do a better job?.... We liberated that country from a tyrant. I think the Iraqi people owe the American people a huge debt of gratitude.... We've endured great sacrifice to help them.... (Americans) wonder whether or not there is a gratitude level that's significant enough in Iraq."**

Well, yes. I have wondered about that.

Frankly — I'm talking to you, Iraqis! — a few flowers and ticker-tape parades wouldn't be amiss, even at this late stage.

Remember, we got rid of Saddam Hussein for you — with a little help from his executioners, to be sure, who sent him to his death amid enthusiastic chants in praise of Shiite militia leader Muqtada Sadr. But that's just a detail.

Anyway, that's not all we've done for Iraq.

**We also introduced the Iraqis to basic principles of energy conservation.**

**Before the U.S. invasion, the feckless residents of Baghdad used 16 to 24 hours of electricity each day. Today, thanks to us, they thriftily make do with about six hours of electricity a day.**

Under our tutelage, the Iraqis are also conserving fossil fuels: Oil production is still well below prewar levels!

And — recognizing that auto emissions are a major contributor to global warming — a symbolically important number of Iraqis has gone from driving their cars to detonating their cars. Now that's dedication.

**We've also helped the Iraqis address the problem of urban overcrowding.**

**With 34,452 Iraqi civilians killed in 2006 alone, according to the United Nations, and another 2 million opting to leave the country, the war has reduced the Iraqi population by nearly 10%!**

OK. But you're probably still wondering: What constitutes the "great sacrifice" we Americans have made to give these gifts to the Iraqis?

**When Jim Lehrer of PBS' "NewsHour" suggested to Bush that "the volunteer military ... and their families (are) the only people who are actually sacrificing anything at this point," the president demurred.**

**"A lot of people are in this fight," he insisted. "I mean, they sacrifice peace of mind when they see the terrible images of violence on TV every night."**

In addition to that, I've heeded the president's call to fight terrorism through my "continued participation and confidence in the American economy."

When my president calls on me to “go shopping more,” I hop to it! I’ve walked the malls until my boots were as worn as those of any Marine after a hard slog through the Iraqi desert.

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## **Draftee Wisdom**

[Thanks to Alberto Jaccoma, The Military Project, who sent this in.]

Fifty-one years ago a North Carolina mountain man, was drafted by the Army. On his first day in basic training, the Army issued him a comb. That afternoon the Army barber sheared off all his hair.

On his second day, the Army issued him a toothbrush. That afternoon the Army dentist yanked seven of his teeth.

On the third day, the Army issued him a jock strap. The Army has been looking for him for 51 years.

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## **OCCUPATION REPORT**

# **Wow! Big Surprise!! National Intelligence Estimate Says “The Situation In Iraq Is Very Bad And Getting Worse”**

Feb. 2, 2007 by Mary Louise Kelly, NPR

The situation in Iraq is very bad and getting worse.

That's the judgment of a new National Intelligence Estimate that represents the views of all 16 U.S. spy agencies. The report also says that Iraqi leaders will be "hard pressed" to stabilize the country by the middle of 2008.

**[And in only took 16 spy agencies to figure it out.]**

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



Foreign occupation soldiers from Delta Company, 4th Battalion, U.S. 31st Infantry Regiment lead an arrested Iraqi citizen past his family at his home near Youssifiyah, 12 miles south of Baghdad, Feb. 1, 2007. The foreigners can arrest any Iraqi citizen at any time for any reason, and may wound or kill any who resist. (AP Photo/Maya Alleruzzo)

**[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, butcher their families, overthrow the government, put a new one in office they like better and call it "sovereign," and "detain" anybody who doesn't like it in some prison without any charges being filed against them, or any trial.]**

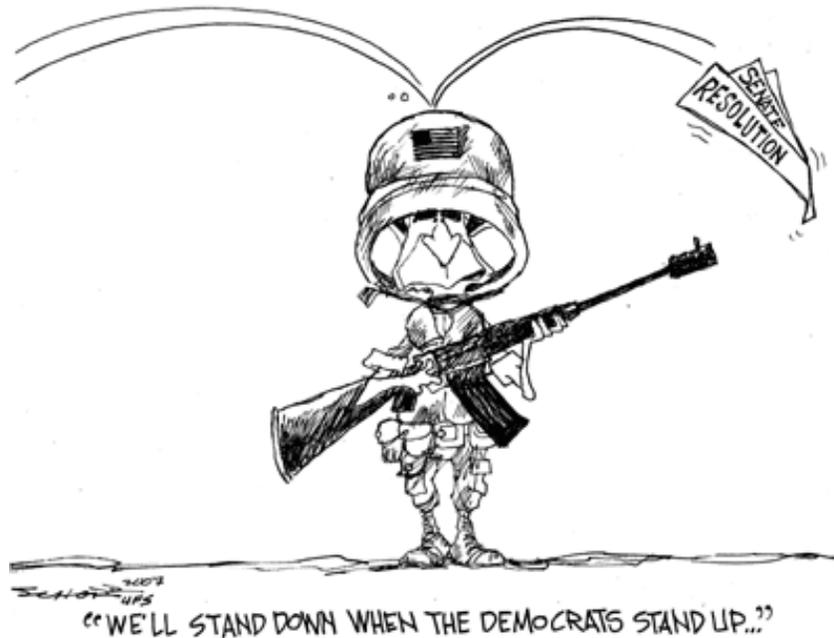
**[Those Iraqis are sure a bunch of backward primitives. They actually resent this help, have the absurd notion that it's bad their country is occupied by a foreign military dictatorship, and consider it their patriotic duty to fight and kill the soldiers sent to grab their country. What a bunch of silly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

**"In the States, if police burst into your house, kicking down doors and swearing at you, you would call your lawyer and file a lawsuit," said Wood, 42, from Iowa, who did not accompany Halladay's Charlie Company, from his battalion, on Thursday's**

raid. "Here, there are no lawyers. Their resources are limited, so they plant IEDs (improvised explosive devices) instead."

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

**DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK**



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

**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](http://www.ivaw.net))

# CLASS WAR REPORTS

## GET THE MESSAGE



Filipino protesters burn U.S. flags to commemorate the 108th anniversary of the U.S. occupation of the Philippines during a demonstration outside the U.S. embassy in Manila February 2, 2007. The protesters said in a statement on Friday that U.S. military intervention and aggression in the Philippines, Southeast Asia, Iraq and elsewhere are a form of U.S. imperialism. REUTERS/Romeo Ranoco

### **GI Special Looks Even Better Printed Out**

GI Special issues are archived at website <http://www.militaryproject.org> .

The following have chosen to post issues; there may be others:

<http://www.williambowles.info/qispecial/2006/index.html>;

<http://imagineaworldof.blogspot.com/>; <http://qi-special.iraq-news.de>;

[http://www.traprockpeace.org/qi\\_special/](http://www.traprockpeace.org/qi_special/); <http://www.uruknet.info/?p=-6&l=e>;

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

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