

GI SPECIAL 5C19:

IRAQ VETS LEAD MARCH ON PENTAGON



Photo by Jeff Paterson, Courage to Resist (jeff@paterson.net) Indybay.org

Led by Iraq Veterans Against the War, tens of thousands marched on the Pentagon to demand "U.S. out of Iraq now!" WASHINGTON DC March 17, 2007 Indybay.org

We Know You Have Been Betrayed

Comment: T

Add one more to the long list of betrayals connected to Bush's failed Imperial disaster in Iraq: the way major media have already dropped their exposures of how seriously wounded Iraq veterans are getting shit dumped on their heads by the pack of traitors that run the government.

What would not be understandable, or forgivable, is if supposed opponents of the war also turn their back on the mistreatment of the wounded.

There has been a curious silence about that lately from many of the usual suspects who fill the world with words from their self-appointed positions as bosses of the movement against the war.

Perhaps that will change. Probably not. These empty suits have no interest in troops at any level, wounded or not.

They have refused for years to lead the anti-war movement in face-to-face outreach to serving members of the armed forces turning against the war, so why be surprised if they continue their perfect record of turning their backs on you and their faces to the Imperial politicians in Washington DC.

They never cared about the wounded troops at Walter Reed or anywhere else. These scum simply used them as a political stick to beat Bush, and when the headlines passed, they had other priorities.

As usual, they trade in betrayal.

The honorable exceptions are Iraq Veterans Against The War, Veterans For Peace and the Military Project. These organizations have declared that direct, face to face outreach to members of the armed forces is key to stopping the war.

It would be a mistake, however, to assume other anti-war leaders are all closet Democratic Party hacks. Some just feel more social and class identity with a member of Congress than they do for any soldier. Some are simply clueless. That's why they're obsessed with the silly notion that they can convince the government to stop the war.

The Imperial government won't give up on this war because citizens send the politicians emails and show up in DC a couple times a year waving signs. The Imperial government is doing its job: fighting fang and claw to hang onto every square inch of the U.S. Empire they can. And on that cause Democrat and Republican politicians are in perfect agreement.

The good news is that there are Americans, more every day, who know you've been betrayed by the Imperial politicians and their apologists.

There are Americans, more every day, who understand it will be up to you to save yourselves, and by so doing save us all.

With support from dedicated Iraq veterans and civilians who understand that you are the people who can stop the war, everything is possible.

Anything less wastes blood and time and effort, prolonging the war.

Lest We Forget:

Walter Reed: Some Ugly History

The New Guy Got Chopped While

Gen. Kiley, The Truly Responsible

Rat, Almost Kept His Command

It is impossible to believe Kiley, now the Army surgeon general, was unaware of this sorry situation when he commanded the hospital — and if he was, one must question his competence and leadership. Evidently, he has remained either willfully ignorant or unconcerned during his tenure as surgeon general.

March 12, 2007 Army Times Editorial

Defense Secretary Robert Gates got his first big test last week and showed exactly what kind of secretary he is.

Unhappy with a week of slow-burn obfuscation and missteps as the Army tried to downplay revelations in this newspaper and others about the deplorable conditions in which injured combat troops lived at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, Gates asked Army Secretary Francis Harvey to resign.

Commanders ultimately are responsible for what happens on their watch, so it makes sense that Harvey take the fall. But while Harvey can be faulted for the Army's inadequate response, there are others far closer to the situation who likewise must go.

Harvey's resignation followed by a day the firing of Maj. Gen. George Weightman, who commanded Walter Reed.

But the troubles at the hospital — substandard housing for injured troops and a dysfunctional medical evaluation system — did not start on Weightman's watch.

As far back as 2005, service members spoke about these problems in congressional hearings. The Government Accountability Office reported on the problems last March. And the Army Inspector General has been investigating the problems for over a year.

Indeed, the GAO report traces the problems back to the tenure of Lt. Gen. Kevin Kiley, who commanded Walter Reed from June 2002 to September 2004.

It is impossible to believe Kiley, now the Army surgeon general, was unaware of this sorry situation when he commanded the hospital — and if he was, one must question his competence and leadership.

Evidently, he has remained either willfully ignorant or unconcerned during his tenure as surgeon general.

When the scandal broke, in fact, Kiley blamed the media for exaggerating the problems, rather than acknowledging his own responsibility.

The secretary was forced out because the Army mishandled its response to the troubles at Walter Reed.

But as the Army surgeon general, Kiley is ultimately responsible for not only that hospital, but the Army's slow, complex and unfair disability evaluations system.

He has failed in this role and should follow Harvey out the door.

MORE:

The Dirty Little Secrets About Walter Reed:

**Top Generals Were Warned
That Giving Contract To Bush
Buddy War Profiteers Would
Destroy Services;
Pentagon Tries To Silence Fired
Reed Commander;
“First Sergeant And Platoon Sergeants
Replaced But Several Soldiers Told
Army Times In December That Those
Were Exactly The People Who Were
Trying To Fix Things”**

Some supporters have said Weightman was a fall guy for those higher up the chain. After he was fired, the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform sought to have him testify, but Army officials refused to allow the general

to appear before the legislators, who then subpoenaed him to a scheduled March 5 hearing.

In a letter from the committee to Weightman, the members said the Garibaldi memo “describes how the Army’s decision to privatize support services at Walter Reed Army Medical Center was causing an exodus of ‘highly skilled and experienced personnel.’ ...

March 12, 2007 Army Times: By Kelly Kennedy, William H. McMichael and Gina Cavallaro - Staff writers [Excerpts]

The more than 1 million soldiers of the Army, deeply involved on two war fronts, suddenly find themselves serving under leadership tainted by scandal and in critical transition.

Army Secretary Francis Harvey is serving out the final days of command cut short, pushed out the door by his boss, Defense Secretary Robert Gates.

The Army also announced the same day Harvey resigned that Maj. Gen. Eric R. Schoomaker will become the new commanding general of Walter Reed. Schoomaker, now the commanding general of the Army Medical Research and Materiel Command at Fort Detrick, Md., is a doctor and the brother of Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker, who is retiring in April.

Eric Schoomaker replaces Army Maj. Gen. George W. Weightman, whom Harvey fired March 1. According to a statement released by the Army, service leaders had “lost trust and confidence” in Weightman’s ability “to address needed solutions for soldier outpatient care.”

Some supporters have said Weightman was a fall guy for those higher up the chain.

After he was fired, the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform sought to have him testify, but Army officials refused to allow the general to appear before the legislators, who then subpoenaed him to a scheduled March 5 hearing.

Committee Chairman Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Calif., and national security and foreign affairs subcommittee Chairman Rep. John Tierney, D-Mass., said they want Weightman to testify about a memo written in September by Garrison Commander Peter Garibaldi to Weightman.

In a letter from the committee to Weightman, the members said the Garibaldi memo “describes how the Army’s decision to privatize support services at Walter Reed Army Medical Center was causing an exodus of ‘highly skilled and experienced personnel.’ ...

According to multiple sources, the decision to privatize support services at Walter Reed led to a precipitous drop in support personnel at Walter Reed.”

The committee's letter also noted that Walter Reed awarded a five-year, \$120 million contract to IAP Worldwide Services, which is run by Al Neffgen, a former senior Halliburton official.

The committee also noted that more than 300 federal employees providing facilities management services at Walter Reed dropped to fewer than 60 by Feb. 3, the day before IAP took over facilities management.

IAP replaced the remaining 60 employees with 50 private workers.

During the year between awarding the contract to IAP and when the company started, "skilled government workers apparently began leaving Walter Reed in droves," the letter states.

"The memorandum also indicates that officials at the highest levels of Walter Reed and the U.S. Army Medical Command were informed about the dangers of privatization, but appeared to do little to prevent them."

The memo signed by Garibaldi requests more federal employees because the hospital mission has grown "significantly" during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

It states that medical command did not concur with their request for more people.

"Without favorable consideration of these requests," Garibaldi wrote, "(Walter Reed Army Medical Center) Base Operations and patient care services are at risk of mission failure."

Weightman arrived at Walter Reed as commander in August. By then, a Government Accountability Office report had already laid out the problems with the Army's medical evaluation system that occurred between 2001 and 2005, and an inspector general investigation was underway that ultimately found 87 problems with the medical evaluation system.

Those well-documented problems occurred during the tenures of Maj. Gen. Kenneth Farmer, now retired, who was at Walter Reed from 2004 to 2006, and [Lt. Gen. Kevin] Kiley, now the Army surgeon general, who served as Walter Reed chief from 2002 to 2004.

"It's clear that General Kiley, the surgeon general at the Army, knew about the conditions at Building 18," McCaskill [Senator Claire McCaskill, D-Mo.] said, referring to the facility just off the Walter Reed campus where some outpatient troops are housed.

Critics, including soldiers, lawyers and lawmakers, say the problems at Walter Reed have been known for years — through soldier complaints, congressional testimony, and investigations by the GAO and the Rand Corp.

"The chain of command knew about this," Paul Rieckhoff, director of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, told Army Times.

“There is no way they didn’t know. In 2004, we knew soldiers were carrying the paperwork through the snow. Congress needs to find out who knew and clean house.”

Army Times also reported problems with the physical evaluation board system in June, while several other papers reported problems as they wrote stories about individual soldiers.

Retired Army Lt. Col. Mike Parker also finds it frustrating. For at least two years, he has gathered thousands of pages of documents — which he shared with Army Times — and banged on doors trying to get the problems he saw fixed. He spends much of his free time trying to help soldiers through the process.

Parker also spent time alerting lawmakers and speaking before the Veterans’ Disability Benefits Commission — which has heard testimony from doctors in the disability rating system who say much needs to be done to help soldiers.

In March 2006, Parker filed a complaint with the inspector general at Walter Reed, asking for an investigation of whether the medical evaluation boards were following the law, and another complaint with the Army’s Human Resources Command.

He said the Army is supposed to rate injuries according to the Department of Veterans Affairs’ Schedule for Rating Disabilities but charged that Army officials wrote their own regulation in the mid-1990s that allows them to rate disabilities differently — and at lower percentages. No other service has such a regulation.

When Parker filed a complaint asking about the legality of that regulation, the Human Resources Command Inspector General’s Office sent him a reply stating that the issue was “not within our purview.”

“It took them 10 months ... to tell me there’s a regulation that says (the Army) can do it,” Parker said, shaking his head and laughing.

“No shit, Sherlock.”

The Army response to media coverage of the problems seems to have loosened things up — though the blame, he said, is rolling downhill.

Soldiers in Building 18 reported that their first sergeant and platoon sergeants would be replaced within a month.

But several soldiers told Army Times in December that those were exactly the people who were trying to fix things, and that they were brought in specifically to solve some of the problems in January 2005.

Pvt. Martin Jackson, of the 1st Armored Division, spent almost two years in the Medical Hold Unit recovering and waiting on paperwork. Though he complained extensively about the physical evaluation board system, he praised his noncommissioned officers.

“Now we have formations once a day, and we don’t have to hunt down our platoon sergeant,” as they had to before 2005, Martin said.

The current first sergeant is “the first one here and the last to leave. The platoon sergeants you have now? They actually care. With the new commander and first sergeant, there’s been a big turnaround.”

Spc. Karl Unbehagan, of the 3rd Infantry Division, also spent several months at Walter Reed and remembers what it was like before the new first sergeant.

“The platoon sergeant was in medical hold with mental issues,” Unbehagan said.

“He’d answer your questions between slugs of Cold Duck. If it weren’t for our (current) direct chain of command, I wouldn’t have gotten anything done.”

MORE:

“We Got In Gen. Kiley’s Face On A Regular Basis”

March 7, 2007 By Seth Stern, Congressional Quarterly

Senior Republicans who knew about problems at Walter Reed Army Medical Center while their party controlled Congress insist they did all they could to prod the Pentagon to fix them.

But C.W. Bill Young, R-Fla., former chairman of the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee, said he stopped short of going public with the hospital’s problems to avoid embarrassing the Army while it was fighting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

He described repeatedly confronting the hospital’s then commander, Gen. Kevin C. Kiley, about patients who, they discovered, had received poor care.

Young said his wife, Beverly, found one Walter Reed patient lying in his hospital bed without sheets or blankets, having soiled himself.

Another, who suffered from a battlefield brain injury, had fallen out of his bed three times, even after Young had told Kiley about the problem, the lawmaker said.

And he said a third patient, who had an aneurysm, died after a respiratory therapist ignored family warnings about the patient’s fragile condition and treated him anyway.

“We got in Gen. Kiley’s face on a regular basis,” Young said, adding that he even contacted the commander of the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda in the hopes of getting better care there for the patient with the aneurysm, though doctors at Walter Reed declined to transfer him.

He placed the blame for the hospital's substandard conditions on Kiley, who now serves as the Army's surgeon general, its top-ranking uniformed doctor.

MORE:

“Screwing The Vets Isn’t Incompetence; It’s A Trade Off” “If Someone Gets The Gravy, Someone Gets The Shaft”

March 10, 2007 By Conn Hallinan, Portside [Excerpts]

Harvey was brought in by Rumsfeld specifically to reduce the federal work force and, as he said in a speech last year, ‘improve efficiency.’

A former executive for the one of the nation’s leading arms producers, Westinghouse, Harvey hired IAP Worldwide Services-run by two former Halliburton executives-which promptly reduced the number of people providing service at Walter Reed from 300 to 60.

In contrast are the way the ‘Big Five’ arms companies, Lockheed Martin, Northrup Grumman, Boeing, General Dynamics, and Raytheon are treated. The first three of the above ‘Five’ will corner one out of every four dollars in the \$481.5 billion military budget.

In turn, the companies pony up tens of millions in contributions by Election Day. Since 2000, Lockheed Martin, Northrup Grumman and General Dynamics have poured \$62.5 million into the election cycles, favoring Republicans at a rate of a little more than two to one.

When veteran advocates complained about the disability issue, Pentagon spokesperson Marine Major Stewart Upton responded with the verbal equivalent of the ‘fog of war’: ‘We are in the midst of a business-process review that will generate improvements to the program effectiveness, including timeliness goals for processing cases and standard definitions of start and end points as well as other metrics to ensure that progress can be accurately measured over time against common metrics.’

Screwing the vets isn’t incompetence; it’s a trade off. If someone gets the gravy, someone gets the shaft.

MORE:

“A Man Goes To War For His Nation, And When He Comes Home He Has

To Go To War To Get His Benefits And Is Treated Like A Criminal”

[Thanks to Elaine Brower, The Military Project, who sent this in.]

March 07, 2007 Joe Galloway, Military.com [Excerpts]

It was a perfect storm of a week for the White House as the tidal wave of righteous indignation over the treatment of wounded troops from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan swept over Washington.

One Army private first class was medically retired after he received traumatic brain injuries in two explosions in Iraq, and he's suffering from severe post-traumatic stress disorder.

He wrote that he was judged 40 percent disabled and sent home to support his wife and two children on \$700 a month.

He has, he wrote, been waiting five months to get enrolled at the nearest Veterans Administration hospital for further treatment.

“It is a shame that a man goes to war for his nation, and when he comes home he has to go to war to get his benefits and is treated like a criminal,” the former soldier wrote. “You know what his crime is: He got wounded fighting for his country.”

Unable to work and nearing bankruptcy, the soldier said he was “suicidal.”

The Surgeon General of the Army, Lt. Gen. Kevin Kiley, was the commander at Walter Reed for three years.

With his appointment as the top medical officer, he now lives across the street from the infamous Building 18 at Walter Reed, where wounded soldiers lived in rooms blackened with mold and infested with rats and insects.

Kiley told the congressional hearing that he'd never visited that building and it wasn't his job to do inspections.

Although the online magazine Salon first blew the whistle on Walter Reed some two years ago, he said he first learned of problems with outpatient soldiers there when he read about them in The Washington Post last month.

The representatives also heard that maintenance and repairs at Walter Reed had been farmed out to a private firm under a \$120 million contract.

The contractor replaced 300 government workers with 50 of its own maintenance workers.

They call it “privatization,” and under the leadership of former Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, it became the answer to all questions and all problems.

The money men at the Pentagon, headed by Assistant Secretary of Defense David Chu, obsess over the human costs of war and the fallout of all those wounded and disabled who must be cared for, along with military veterans and retirees.

Those “entitlements” eat up money that they think should be spent instead on new technology, more expensive weapons systems needed and unneeded, and the defense contracting firms that are reliable contributors to political campaigns.

They’re right to call these benefits entitlements.

Our troops and the veterans of our wars ARE entitled.

They’re entitled to the best medical care.

They’re entitled to their disability pensions.

They’re entitled to all a grateful nation can provide for them, or for their survivors.

Those who’d cheat them of their entitlements are entitled to fair hearings and, depending on the results, fast dismissals from their government or military jobs.

Any future medical care of those failed bureaucrats and politicians should be performed at Walter Reed Hospital’s Building 18, before the whitewash is slapped on and the roach motels are put out.

MORE:

“They Fired The Wrong Guy” “They Needed A Fall-Guy”

March 09, 2007 "The Online Campaign"

From: Jeanette Kidd (mailto:jkidd11@verizon.net) [Excerpts]

To all my Friends and Relatives,

I have been silent for the past week about the terrible injustice that has taken place this past week and I can no longer restrain myself.

I am talking about the firing of Major General George Weightman at Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC).

George Weightman is my brother-in-law and I am more proud of him today than I ever have been in the past. I have known him for over 34 years. He is one of the most honorable men I have ever known in my life.

He took command at WRAMC at the very end of August, 2006. By my count that has only been six months.

Did he know about ALL the things wrong at WRAMC? My guess is “no”; how could he? But he was aware of most of the problems and was in the process of correcting them.

The problems cited by the Washington Post were documented over the last two years.

George inherited this mess.

He requested and just got funding for improvements at WRAMC on February 4th!!

They fired the wrong guy. They needed a fall-guy.

Well, I am really angry about this.

This is the man who walks home from the Metro station in Washington DC, up Georgia Avenue, where the police wear flack jackets while on duty. When I asked him why he would do this, he told me his soldiers do it, why shouldn't he. He's no better.

This is the man you NEVER saw on TV glad-handing the politicians for personal glory.

When his Units were to be recognized, he let his subordinates take the fame.

Where was he on Thanksgiving Day when the “big-wigs” visited WRAMC? He was consoling the families at the airport where the caskets were returning from IRAQ.

Never once, through the IRAQ war, did he appear on TV—even though, he was the Commander of ALL the medical units for the Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force. Others gladly took the fame.

I am furious over this public execution of George.

I am furious over the distortion of his quotes by the Washington Post. I am furious that the Army would not stand by him and give him the chance to do his job.

He has proved over the last thirty years that in any assignment given him, his performance has been outstanding.

Now, because of the intense media exposure, the Army caves in and offers him as a sacrifice.

This is his reward?

I for one, have lost faith in our government. I hate politics. That is all this is.

I am going to send a version of this letter to all of my Congressional representatives and to the President of the United States.

I am not asking you, but if you should feel inclined to forward my e-mail to anyone, please do so.

The following letter was written by my husband, Doug. You may forward his also.

Jeanette

“The Political Necessity Was That The Army Had To Show It Was Doing Something, So What Better Way Than To Cut Off The WRAMC Head As A Way Of Playing To The Baying Wolves Of The Press”

Dear Sir or Madame,

As someone who is close to Major General George Weightman, it may not seem appropriate to make public statements on his behalf, especially since they were not solicited either by yourself or by General Weightman. I am General Weightman's brother-in-law and have known him for almost his entire adult life.

We served in the same infantry unit in the 25th ID. George took over my platoon as I moved on to a new assignment. Since then, I left the military and George embraced it as a career.

Our families are close and even though George's duties took him all over the world, we stayed as close as we could and took advantage of the times when he and his family were stationed close by to get together and share our experiences.

The theme of this letter is “the Army got the wrong guy”.

I am not in a position to say who the right guy is, because I am not qualified to make that assessment. I am a very practical person who knows that someone who has just recently been assigned to a position, must have some time and leeway to assess the situation, plan and execute a strategy to fix the problems identified and then to build an attitude of continuous improvement into an organization.

Major General Weightman was not given this opportunity in my humble opinion.

Why do I say this? I can say this because I know him. I know him as a man, a soldier, a doctor, a father, a loving husband, and as a brother. What is it that I know? I know his career and his absolute devotion to the Army and to serving his country for over thirty four years since his graduation from West Point in 1973.

No one was more qualified than he to be in the position he held for such a short time at Walter Reed AMC. Anyone can look up his record -- something maybe the two reporters from the Washington Post should have done before making the judgments they made about his performance at WRAMC. So too should the Secretary of the Army looked closer before his knee jerk action last week.

Both parties should have asked the question as to who would be better to make WRAMC better at serving our soldiers than MG Weightman.

The political necessity was that the Army had to show it was doing something, so what better way than to cut off the WRAMC head as a way of playing to the baying wolves of the press.

Let me provide some highlights about MG Weightman's career. He served five years in the infantry before completing the Infantry Officer's Advanced Course. It was then that he decided that he had a higher calling to medicine. He applied to and was accepted to the University of Vermont.

He and his wife and infant son moved to Burlington and lived a bare existence while he attended and later graduated as an MD. He re-entered the Army and after his residency at Ft. Gordon, he was re-assigned to West Point to run the family practice clinic there. After three years there, he was selected to become the Division Surgeon for the 82d Airborne Division. While in the 82d, he made a night-time combat jump into Panama and later was on the first plane to arrive in Saudi Arabia at the start of Operation Desert Shield.

Upon returning from Iraq in 1991 he moved to become the Chief Resident at the Army Medical Center at Ft. Bragg. One day when both the hospital commander and deputy commander were away from Ft. Bragg, a military plane crashed at nearby Pope AFB, inundating an entire Infantry Battalion of nearly 600 men with burning aviation fuel and wreckage.

Then Major Weightman, took charge of the triage at the hospital and was credited with leading the heroic efforts there in saving the lives of many soldiers.

Later, he volunteered to lead a hospital deep in the jungles of Central America in support of Delta Force in clandestine operations. He returned with Delta Force respect and malaria, which he still suffers from today.

In 1997 he took command of the Army's largest tactical Medical unit, the 30th Medical Brigade supporting all of the troops in Europe. This assignment took him into Kosovo and the surrounding area many times during his two years there. He was home only a few years when he was promoted to Brigadier General and was selected to organize, train and command the Medical Support Brigade for Operation Iraqi Freedom. He spent almost a year prior to the invasion in Kuwait coordinating and later commanding the nearly 12,000 Army, Navy, Marine and Air Force medical support for the invasion effort.

In 2004 he was promoted to Major General and given Command of Ft. Sam Houston, the home of the Army Medical Corps. He commanded over 50,000 soldiers at Ft. Sam Houston and was responsible for developing a high level of performance at Brooks Army Medical Center (BAMC) and the support system located there.

Ironically, many of the conditions cited by the two Washington Post reporters at Ft. Sam Houston as being superior and exemplary ways to care for and treat our returning wounded were planned and implemented while MG Weightman was the Commander there, prior to moving back to the Washington DC area as Commander of WRAMC August 29, 2006.

The practical person in me has seen that everywhere George Weightman has served, he has made those around him better and the units to which he was assigned better at achieving their mission of medical support to the soldier and his family. Rational thought would indicate that his background and accomplishments at his other critical assignments would directly lead to making WRAMC better at accomplishing its mission when he was done there. In fact, he already was moving forward with improvements there. However, his plan and progress were largely discounted by both the Post reporters and it seems Secretary Harvey.

His sense of duty, honor and country has permeated his family and has had direct positive impact on me and family. His two sons, one a West Point graduate is serving a second tour of duty in Baghdad as an Infantry Officer in a combat unit. The other son, a recent graduate of University of Virginia is now a Lieutenant attending the US Military Medical School at Bethesda and will become an Army Doctor on completion of his studies.

I am just sorry to see that the current leadership of the US Army has robbed itself of one of its most capable leaders in the Medical field. In the end, the soldiers and families for whom George Weightman has cared for in combat and in peacetime for 30 years are the biggest losers.

I am biased, but I am also keenly aware of just how talented a person George is and how devoted to serving his country through providing the best care possible for our soldiers wherever he has been. He has turned down job offers to run hospitals and health organizations that would have made him rich. He has remained loyal to the Army and to his own sense of purpose.

It is unseemly that the Army has rewarded him by designating him as their scapegoat in this tragic situation at WRAMC when he is probably the best person in the Army to actually fix it -- if he had been given the time.

In closing, I must say that George and his wife have both asked that we in the family not speak on his behalf publicly.

I, nor any of us who really know him, will not obey that request.

I ask that you reserve judgment until all the facts are known, listen to what he has to say and then you need to help George get his good name back. If that is possible in this media centric environment in which we live.

Respectfully,
Douglas Kidd

MORE:

Of Course It Was About The Money; Former Halliburton Execs Held Contract For Walter Reed MC Services

[Thanks to Paul D'Amato, who sent this in.]

MARCH 03, 2007 Desertbeacon.blogspot.com

Almost lost in the discussions of the squalid and red-tape bound situations at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center is this item from the Washington Post "...The committee also released an internal Army memorandum reportedly written in September in which the Walter Reed garrison commander, Col. Peter Garibaldi, warned Weightman that "patient care services are at risk of mission failure" because of staff shortages brought on by the privatization of the hospital's support workforce."

And, when one starts turning over rocks what should come into view but an A-76 military contract with IAP Worldwide Service, (IAP) which took a \$120 million contract to run portions of the WRAMC services for facilities management. Immediately after the awarding of the contract the facilities management staff was reduced to 50 privately employed workers.

The CEO of IAP Worldwide is Al Neffgen, who previously served as COO of Government and Infrastructure for the Americas Region of Kellogg Brown and Root.

The President of IAP Worldwide is Dave Swindle, formerly the vice president of Business Acquisition and National Security Programs at the Halliburton subsidiary KBR. Charles F. Dominy, IAP vice president in charge of government affairs, formerly served as the manager of Halliburton's Government Affairs Office in Washington, D.C.

Last March employees at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center lost their final administrative appeal of a decision to outsource base operations work as the result of a public-private job competition.

The Army Dispute Resolution Administrative Appeals Board denied their challenge of the Army's decision to outsource the work that had been done by 350 Walter Reed employees.

Here we go again.

The Department of Defense signs a contract with a spin off firm from Halliburton to privatize services for Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

The company lays off employees, and provides inferior service.

Now, where have we heard this before?

MORE:

**“He Said He’s Glad He Didn’t Have To
Figure Out On His Own How To
Navigate The VA’s Web Site”
““You Could Spend Hours There And
Not Learn A Thing,’ He Said”**

March 18, 2007 By Julian Pecquet, Tallahassee Democrat STAFF WRITER [Excerpt]

Pfc. Trueman Muhrer-Irwin, a Florida State University student, lost part of his left foot when a bomb exploded in Iraq near his Humvee in 2003.

His friend, Tallahasseean Spc. Robert Wise, died in the attack. Muhrer-Irwin was discharged from the Florida National Guard because of the injury and lost his tuition waiver. But he lobbied state legislators so troops decorated for their injuries would get the tuition waiver; that bill was passed last year.

Thanks to medical breakthroughs, more troops are likely to survive today’s war. But many veterans are finding out that the long-term attention they’re getting at home isn’t keeping up with the quality of care they received on the battlefield. As a result, veterans are taking action to make sure their needs are met.

[Marine Sgt. Jeremy Clements] credits his Marine unit with helping him transition to civilian life and sign up for medical and other benefits.

He said he’s glad he didn’t have to figure out on his own how to navigate the VA’s Web site.

"You could spend hours there and not learn a thing," he said.

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.



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

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

IED Hits U.S. Convoy In Baghdad; Two Soldiers Killed, One Wounded

March 20 (Xinhua) & Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory
RELEASE No. 20070320-06

Two MND-B Soldiers died when an improvised explosive device struck the unit's vehicle during a combat security patrol in a southern section of the Iraqi capital, wounding another.

"A roadside bomb detonated at about 8:00 a.m. (0500 GMT) near a passing U.S. convoy on the Jadriyah bridge in southern Baghdad, damaging a U.S. Humvee, killing and wounding the soldiers aboard," a police source told Xinhua on condition of anonymity.

A witness at the scene, Ghassan Ali, said he saw a U.S. Humvee caught fire while the U.S. troops blocked the roads and cordoned off the area.

"Two U.S. helicopters landed at the scene to evacuate the casualty," he added.

2nd Van Buren Co. Native Killed In Iraq



Jim Arnold

March 19, 2007 WOODTV

MATTAWAN -- An entire Van Buren County town is mourning the loss of a second native who has been killed while fighting the war in Iraq.

Pfc. Jim Arnold, 21, of Mattawan, a soldier with the US Army Infantry, died Thursday. There aren't many details yet about how he died.

He graduated from Mattawan High School in 2004 and was a member of the school's hockey team.

Many say Arnold was the kind of guy you would have been friends with in high school, no matter who you are. Everyone knew him.

"Jimmy" is remembered as an enthusiastic hockey player, with school spirit to spare. He helped start the "Blue Crew" to cheer at events. The school's principal calls Arnold a natural leader that other kids looked to for guidance.

Although he graduated when the current seniors were only freshmen, Arnold is well-remembered to students in a small town where everyone knows everyone else.

"When it comes down to it, we're all Wildcats, we're all part of Mattawan, and we all come together to support one another in difficult times," Colin Ripmaster told 24 Hour News 8. "And I've seen that today as students gather around tables, as they talk in the hallway, and this is about kids who graduated four years ago."

This is the second death of a Mattawan graduate in Iraq this year. Arnold's classmate, 20-year-old Marine Lance Cpl. Luis Castillo, was killed in January.

Some students are already asking about creating a tribute to honor Arnold. Hockey players want to retire his number - #3 - or begin an award in his name, much as wrestlers did in honor of Castillo.

Marine From Newport Killed In Iraq Shooting

March 15, 2007 The Associated Press

PORTLAND - A Marine from Oregon was killed during combat in Iraq, the military announced Wednesday.

Lance Cpl. Nathaniel D. Windsor, 20, died in Anbar Province, according to the Defense Department. Windsor was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force in Twentynine Palms, Calif.

Windsor's father, Robert Windsor of Gladstone, told The Oregonian that his son was shot in the neck while questioning detainees last weekend, and later died at a military hospital.

According to a list compiled by the governor's office, Windsor was the 82nd person from Oregon or with close Oregon ties to die in Iraq or Afghanistan

Windsor graduated from Newport High School in 2005 and then worked at a Safeway store before joining the military. His foster mother while in high school, Bambi Henderson, told the Newport News-Times that Windsor wanted to go to college, but didn't have enough money for tuition.

The newspaper reported that Windsor was on the wrestling team while in high school and also involved in the video production program.

"He was one of those kids who was fun to be around; he always had a smile on his face and a positive attitude," Ollie Richardson, the high school's video production instructor, told the News-Times. "He liked to be in the leadership role, taking charge and making sure everything was running smoothly."

A community memorial service for Windsor is scheduled at 6 p.m. Thursday at Newport High School.

Pa. Marine Killed In Iraq Had Son, Upcoming Wedding

Mar. 10, 2007 The Associated Press

JESSUP, Pa. --A Marine reservist killed in combat in Iraq died within two weeks of his scheduled journey home, when he planned to bond with his 14-month-old son and make arrangements for his wedding, his family said.

Lance Cpl. Dennis J. Veater, 20, of Jessup, Pa., died Friday in Iraq's Al Anbar province, the Defense Department announced Saturday.

Veater's girlfriend, Angalene Snipes, said she was preparing for a day of dress fittings with her bridal party when three Marines showed up at her door Friday to inform her that her fiance was dead.

"I said I'd never date someone from the military. I said I wouldn't, and I ended up falling in love," Snipes said while cradling their son, Dominick.

Snipes said she and Veater learned of her pregnancy the day before he left for boot camp. Their wedding was set for May 26.

Veater's father, Donald Veater, a retired Marine sergeant major now living in Clarks Summit, said his son knew of the risk he was taking by enlisting.

"He expected he would be going to Iraq. ... You can't be a Marine and not go help your buddies," Donald Veater said.

Portland Soldier Wounded In Iraq



March 19, 2007 KRIS

PORTLAND - A Portland family has learned their son may never walk again. A soldier from Portland was seriously injured in Iraq recently, and now he's headed to a San Antonio hospital for treatment.

Last week, Greg Hinojosa Sr. got the call he's dreaded. His 26-year-old son, Army Specialist Greg Hinojosa III, had been wounded in Iraq.

"In our minds we understood that it could happen, we were hoping it wouldn't and it did he got injured," he said. Hinojosa said his son's unit was helping another unit that was under attack. He said Greg was inside a tank that was rocked by an explosive. "He doesn't know if he ran over one of those improvised explosive devices or if they shot at him, whatever the fact he said he was in the hospital." Hinojosa still doesn't know if his son will be able to walk again.

Greg suffered a neck fracture, broken leg and received lots of shrapnel wounds on his arms and legs. While in Germany he underwent several operations.

Greg will be flown to an Army hospital in San Antonio for treatment. His parents have already prepared a room for Greg and his wife so they can help care for him.

"I'm glad and praise the Lord that he's coming back alive, and he is a hero because that's his second tour in Iraq," Hinojosa said.

Hinojosa said he's seen many soldiers come home in caskets, and while he's sad his son is wounded, he's grateful he's alive.

“They Didn’t Want Us There” Wounded Marine Says “90% Of The Residents In That Province Were Pro-Saddam And Anti-American”

March 19, 2007 BY MARY KLAUS, Of The Patriot-News

When Brandon Hervey was growing up in Oberlin, he used to play Army games with his friends.

Later, as a firefighter for the former Citizens Fire Company of Oberlin, he faced danger when battling blazes.

But the Marine lance corporal said nothing in Oberlin prepared him for the war in Iraq, where he was wounded six weeks ago in a grenade attack.

"I thought I was ready to go to war," he said this month as the Swatara Twp. Board of Commissioners honored him for his service. "But you're never really completely ready. I was in the Marines 21/2 years before being sent to Iraq for seven months."

While the passage of time has brought sharp disagreement in the U.S. over what should be done in Iraq, Hervey said he has no qualms about returning.

"I kind of want to go back," Hervey, 21, said. "We have to finish our job."

The 2004 Central Dauphin East High School graduate was wounded when Iraqi insurgents attacked his unit as it was trying to protect a highway. He underwent surgery, has recovered and will return to duty April 9.

"I was working as an infantry rifleman in the Fallujah area," he said. "Our job was to bring stability, but a lot of the people were fighting us."

He said that 90 percent of the residents in that province were pro-Saddam and anti-American.

"People blamed us for invading their country and capturing Saddam," Hervey said. "They made money when he was in power. When we invaded Iraq, we messed things up for them. They didn't want us there. They were upset when Saddam Hussein was hanged because they considered him a hero."

Hervey said a few people acted respectfully to the Marines, with one family making them chai tea and pita bread with lamb.

"We were in danger because snipers shot at us from cars or rooftops," Hervey said. "We lost five guys out of 120 in my company, three to a roadside bomb on the same day as they were patrolling. That was hard to take. The oldest was 24. It could have been me."

On Feb. 1, Hervey and five other Marines were patrolling a bridge over a highway when insurgents threw grenades at them and laid down heavy machine-gun fire. "We didn't know where they were firing from, so we laid low trying to identify where they were," he said.

"Five of us got shrapnel in our legs, buttocks, fingers and head," he said. "I took shrapnel in the right of my face, in my right thigh and right calf. It hurt, but my adrenaline was pumping, and I could still do my job. I called the base, told them we were under serious fire and had casualties and asked for backup.

"The backup came in about four minutes. Then the insurgents drove off and it got quiet."

Within four hours, Hervey was in surgery, where "the doctors fixed my face and pulled shrapnel out of my leg. I was there two weeks, then went to an American military hospital in Kuwait for physical therapy."

The five wounded Marines recovered and received Purple Hearts on March 6 in a ceremony at Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Swatara Twp. Commissioner Douglas Goff, who fought fires with Hervey, praised his friend.

"Brandon volunteered to be a firefighter in the community," Goff said. "Then, right out of high school, he volunteered to serve our country in the military. We're all proud of him."

Hervey said it's good being home, where "you live in the 21st century and you don't worry about someone shooting you or blowing you up."

"It's good to visit my family and hang around with my friends," Hervey said. "A lot of people appreciate what we are doing over there."

TROOP NEWS

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



The casket of Staff Sgt. Paul Latourney of Roselle, Ill. at Arlington National Cemetery March 14, 2007. Latourney was killed earlier this month in Baghdad when a roadside bomb exploded near his vehicle. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

Wounded Iraq Veteran Speaking Against The War At “Bring The Troops Home” Rally

3.21.07 The Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. A National Guardsman who was wounded in Iraq will be the featured speaker at a peace rally in Lincoln today.

Terry Ricketts was wounded in 2005 when his unit was ambushed by Iraqi insurgents.

The "Bring the Troops Home" rally begins at 1 p-m on Centennial Mall North at 15th and P streets, just north of the Federal Building.

Other scheduled speakers at today's rally include Susan Emanuel, the mother of a Nebraska National Guardsman; the Reverend Doctor Rebecca, pastor of East Lincoln Christian Church; and poet Cathy Lohmeier.

The march and rally marks Tuesday's fourth anniversary of the U-S-led invasion of Iraq, which ousted longtime leader Saddam Hussein.

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, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Project, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action



Iraqi police inspect a collapsed highway overpass near 14th of July bridge (suspension bridge) in Karrada neighborhood downtown Baghdad after they detonated a truck full of explosives after spotting it parked near the Finance Ministry building in northern Baghdad, March 21, 2007. One civilian was killed and seven were wounded in the blast. (AP Photo/Adil al-Khazali)

20 Mar 2007 Reuters & Deutsche Presse-Agentur & By Laith Hammoudi, McClatchy Newspapers

Eight policemen were killed and 17 wounded in clashes with guerrillas in the town of Amiriya about 5 km (3 miles) south of Falluja,

Police said they found the body of a policeman, stabbed with a knife in Kirkuk and guerrillas killed a policeman on a main road near the northern city of Kirkuk, police said.

A bomber detonated a car bomb inside an Iraqi military checkpoint in Jamaa district in western Baghdad killing a soldier and injuring another, an Iraqi police source said.

A police LC and several members of the police force of Al Shirqat town (120 km north of Tikrit) were injured when a road side bomb targeted them today.

On Monday night Samara guerrillas attacked a police checkpoint at the main entrance of the city. Police managed to kill one of the attackers who was identified as a Saudi citizen. One policeman was killed and two were injured.

2 policemen were injured when guerrillas opened their guns fire targeting police patrols in Mahdiya area, a part of Doura neighborhood south Baghdad at 9,55 am.

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

OCCUPATION REPORT

The Great Iraqi Collaborator Farce Rolls On:

**“The Battalions Out Here Are About
50 Percent”**

**“U.S. Baghdad Command Estimates
Less Than 70 Percent Of Interior Ministry
Personnel Are Present For Duty”**

March 20, 2007 AP

More than three years and \$15 billion into the U.S. effort to rebuild Iraqi forces, “ghost soldiers” still help fill Iraq’s army ranks and no one knows how many trained policemen remain on the job, the Pentagon and U.S. government investigators report.

The Government Accountability Office says the most serious problems lie in the logistics — supplies, maintenance, transport — of Iraqi security forces.

One example: The police have more than 1,000 U.S.-made trucks whose computerized systems are beyond the skills of the Iraqi mechanics who repair them.

In its latest quarterly Iraq report, the Pentagon said 328,700 Iraqis have been trained for the security forces, including 136,400 soldiers — more than double the numbers of two years ago.

But it added in the next sentence that the “actual number of present-for-duty soldiers is about one-half to two-thirds of the total due to scheduled leave, absence without leave, and attrition.”

Many Iraqis go on authorized leaves for days to deliver their cash pay to their families. The Pentagon said Iraq’s defense and interior ministers also are aware of “ghost” soldiers and policemen who exist only on paper — a fraudulent device by which units can receive additional per capita resources, and corrupt officials can collect nonexistent recruits’ pay.

American commanders in the field attest to the impact of deserters, nonexistent soldiers and other attrition on Iraqi army battalions’ strength.

“The battalions out here are about 50 percent,” Col. William B. Crowe, a U.S. regimental commander in the embattled western province of Anbar, told reporters in January.

On the police side, under the Interior Ministry, the Americans don’t know “what percentage of the 180,000 police thought to be on the payroll are coalition trained and equipped,” [Joseph A.] Christoff testified.

Police ranks have lost many trained men — killed, wounded or simply departed out of fear for their lives or families — and local authorities have replaced them with men who haven’t gone through U.S.-overseen training. Even then, the U.S. Baghdad command estimates less than 70 percent of Interior Ministry personnel are present for duty on an average day, according to the March 14 Pentagon report.

The GAO agreed with the Pentagon assessment that logistics represents “the most significant shortcoming.”

Among other problems, it cited illiteracy among troops to be trained in supply, maintenance and related work, a lack of skilled trainers, and a shortage of spare parts for the army’s motley motor pool — 21 types of utility vehicles, for example, from Chevrolets and Nissans to Czech Honkers.

A network of supply depots, key to weaning Iraqi forces off dependence on the Americans for fuel, uniforms and other goods, has lagged behind schedule.

The target date for completing garrison-level depots was moved from last December to next December, Solis reported.

He quoted an unidentified senior U.S. official as saying that what was to have been a national depot north of Baghdad is “a depot in name only.”

Solis predicted Iraqi reliance on U.S. logistics will extend into 2008.

Good News For The Iraqi Resistance!!

U.S. Occupation Commands’ Stupid Terror Tactics Recruit Even More Fighters To Kill U.S. Troops



A U.S. army soldier from the 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment gives orders to an Iraqi citizen after wrecking his home in western Baghdad's neighborhood of Ghazaliyah, March 21, 2007. (AP Photo/Marko Drobnjakovic)

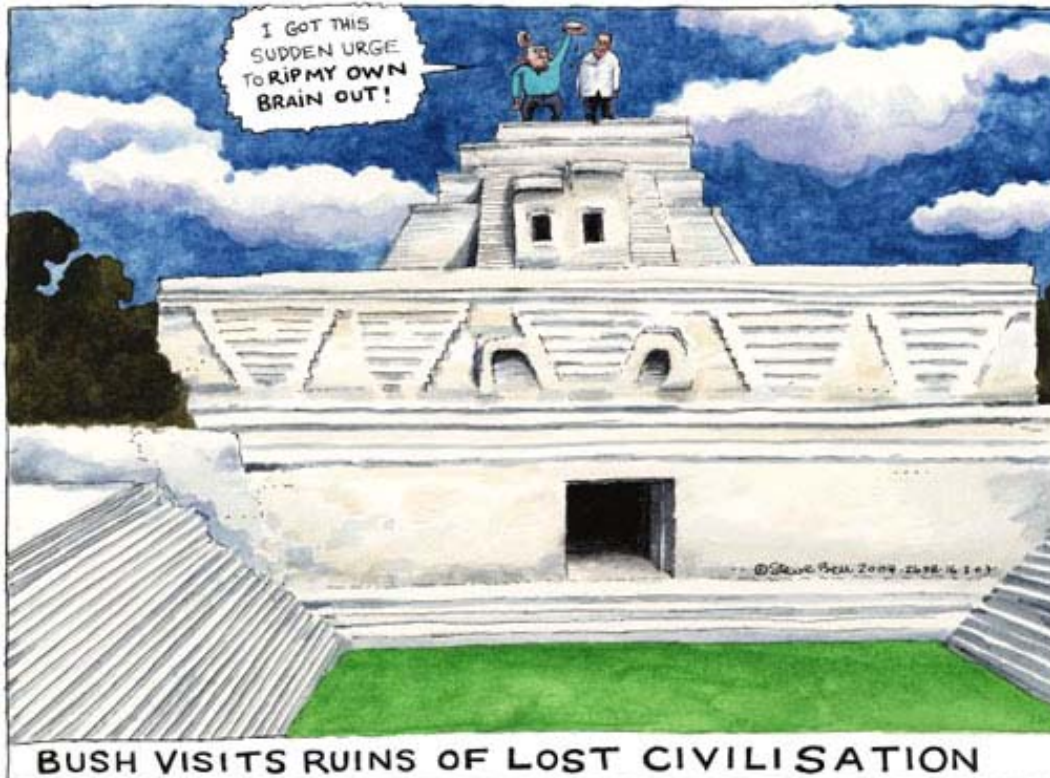
[There’s nothing quite like invading somebody else’s country and busting into their houses by force to arouse an intense desire to kill you in the patriotic, self-respecting civilians who live there.

[But your commanders know that, don’t they? Don’t they?]

“My sons and wife were very terrified,” complained Muhannad Mihbas, 30, who said his brother and six cousins were taken in the sweeps. “Does the security plan mean arresting innocent people and scaring civilians at night?” BRIAN MURPHY, AP, Feb. 27, 2007

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



[Thanks to NB, who sent this in.]

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