

## GI SPECIAL 5C6:



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

**“We Feel Like Sitting  
Ducks Here”  
“They Are Watching Us All The  
Time”  
“We Don’t Know What They’ll Do  
Next”**

March 5 By Ibon Villeda, (Reuters)

Barricaded in a small garrison in a Baghdad neighbourhood, U.S. soldier Aaron Larson keeps an uneasy eye on the traffic for suicide car bombers.

A mortar bomb had just landed a few metres away, shaking the sandbagged outpost where some 30 American soldiers are hunkered down with Iraqi police and army under a new security plan to rein in sectarian violence in the Iraqi capital.

**“We feel like sitting ducks here,” said Larson. “They are watching us all the time. We don’t know what they’ll do next.”**

U.S. commanders are moving troops from the relative safety of their sprawling bases and stationing them in small outposts in Baghdad’s most violent districts in a pivotal tactical shift.

Rather than launching incursions into strongholds and pulling troops back into their bases, the goal now is to set up 24-hour neighbourhood garrisons, where U.S. troops live with their Iraqi counterparts, U.S. commanders said.

From the outside, the outposts look like frontier forts.

Many of these buildings were dilapidated police stations or community halls before they were upgraded. U.S. soldiers crouch in rooftop sniper nests with views of markets and blue-tiled mosque domes. Barbed wire and cement walls protect the buildings from car bombs and rockets.

**“We are in the middle of everything,” said gunner Josh Barlow, gripping his M240 machine gun at a joint security station in the central neighbourhood of Karrada.**

**“You gotta keep your eyes open all the time. You never know if somebody is just standing or planting a bomb,” said Barlow, from Rapid City, South Dakota.**

But at the spartan joint security stations, soldiers sleep in mud-caked cots, take cold showers in crude bathrooms and eat MREs, or meals-ready-to-eat.

**“I hardly get any sleep here,” said Private Miguel Burgos, a gunner from Puerto Rico. “I can hear the blasts at night.”**

General Abdul Hamid, police chief for eastern Baghdad, said gunmen will probably sit tight until the Americans leave.

“It’s like a water balloon. You press on one side and the water goes to another side,” he said.

**[Sitting in these stupid, deadly mini-forts is what the murderous fool Petraeus calls counterinsurgency. Too bad he wasn’t in command of the French troops in Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh would have loved him. The French tried a string of forts across the north, and their soldiers got wiped out. Lesson unlearned, by the U.S. command in Iraq. But it’s the troops that will pay the price for that with their lives, not the incompetents in command. Unfortunately. It should be the other way around. T]**

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## IRAQ WAR REPORTS

# One Soldier Killed, One Wounded By IED Near Tikrit

March 5, 2007 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE  
No. 20070305-07

LSA ANACONDA, Iraq — One 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) Soldier was killed and one was wounded in an improvised explosive device attack on their M-1117 Armored Security Vehicle while traveling in a convoy south of Tikrit at approximately 9 p.m. Mar 4.

The wounded Soldier was evacuated to the 399th Combat Support Hospital at Combat Operating Base Speicher for treatment.

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**THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO  
COMPREHENSIBLE REASON TO BE IN THIS  
EXTREMELY HIGH RISK LOCATION AT THIS  
TIME, EXCEPT THAT A TRAITOR WHO LIVES  
IN THE WHITE HOUSE WANTS YOU THERE**  
That is not a good enough reason



A U.S. Army soldier from Company A of the 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment stands guard on a rooftop as an Apache helicopter passes overhead in New Baghdad, an eastern neighborhood in Baghdad, Iraq, Dec. 27, 2006. (AP Photo/Darko Vojinovic)

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# Private Jonathon Dany Wysoczan Dies In UK From Injuries Sustained In Iraq



Private Jonathon Dany Wysoczan

5 Mar 07 MOD Military Operations

It is with deep regret that the Ministry of Defence must confirm the death of Private Jonathon Dany Wysoczan in the UK on Sunday 4 March 2007.

Private Wysoczan, aged 21, from 4 Platoon, B Company, First Battalion The Staffordshire Regiment, died as a result of injuries he had sustained during a patrol in South Basra, Iraq, last week, when his vehicle was tasked to investigate a possible mortar firing point.

Private Wysoczan was on top cover, providing protection for the vehicle and those around him, when he was struck by a single round from an unobserved gunman. He was immediately taken back to his base location and then evacuated by helicopter to a specialist medical facility.

Private Wysoczan was then evacuated to the United Kingdom but despite receiving the best available care, he sadly later died.

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## West Valley City Man Killed In Iraq

March 5, 2007 By Stephen Speckman, Deseret Morning News

Army Spc. Brandon Allen Parr of West Valley City was killed March 3 in Iraq while on patrol, Army Reserve officials announced today.

Parr, who joined the Army in August, 2003, was on patrol in Baghdad when an improvised explosive device detonated near his armored vehicle. It's unknown at this time if anyone else was killed or injured in the blast, which is under investigation.

Born in Bakersfield, Calif., Parr, 25, leaves behind a wife and one son, according to Lee Price of the Fort Hood Casualty Assistance Center in Texas. Price said Parr's mother also lives in West Valley City. Recently, Parr had been stationed in Bamberg, Germany, although he listed West Valley City as his home residence, according to Price.

As of today, at least 3,174 U.S. forces have died in Iraq since the U.S. invasion in 2003, according to the Web site, [www.icasualties.org](http://www.icasualties.org).

**The Web site listed 15 service members from Utah, not including Parr, who have died in Iraq since March, 2003.**

Few other details were available about the incident in Iraq or Parr's personal history. Family members have requested that media not contact them for interviews, according to Reserve spokesman Claude McKinney of the 96th Regional Readiness Command.

Parr was an active duty soldier, assigned to the 630th Military Police Company, 759th Military Police Battalion of the 89th Military Police Brigade, according to McKinney.

Funeral arrangements for Parr are pending.

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## **A Mother's Grief; "I Support Our Troops," Said Harper. "But I No Longer Support The War"**

March 02, 2007 By TEDDY SNELL, Tahlequah Daily Press

The most difficult experience in life is the death of a child. It gets even worse if you can't fulfill your dead child's final wishes.

Tahlequah resident Lavonna Harper must now deal with the reality of one, and the possibility of another.

Harper's son, U.S. Army Sgt. William J. "B.J." Beardsley, 25, was killed in Iraq Monday by an improvised explosive device while on patrol in an unarmored Humvee in Iraq. He was a member of the 260th Quartermaster Battalion, 3rd Sustainment Troop Brigade of the 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, Ga.

Harper first learned of her son's death Tuesday afternoon when his estranged wife, who lives in Indianapolis with his two children, called her by cell phone.

According to Harper's sister, Charlotte Guinn, Harper immediately fainted.

"It's a good thing she wasn't driving or something," said Guinn. "She collapsed right there in the floor of my shop."

Tuesday evening, Harper received official notification of her son's death when an Army sergeant and chaplain visited the home. She was told a military casualty assistance

officer would arrive soon to counsel her, answer questions and help her with her son's final arrangements.

Wednesday came and went with no visit, which concerned Harper.

"His (Beardsley's) wife received two visits from officers in Indiana," said Harper.

"His father, who has had nothing to do with him, received two visits from the Army in Minnesota, and his stepdad, who lives in Georgia, also received two visits from the Army.

Harper got a phone call Thursday morning from the Fort Sill casualty affairs officer, who told her any business Fort Sill had with her concerning her son would be conducted by telephone.

"They told me if he had a will, they couldn't find it, and that since his (estranged) wife is his next of kin, the body would be shipped to Indiana," Harper said.

Before deploying to Iraq, Beardsley had separated from his wife and had filed for divorce, but was unable to finalize the action before leaving the country.

Thursday morning, Harper was visibly shaken, still in shock from the news. But she firmly believes she has an important message to convey to other parents of soldiers.

"I know I'm not the only momma who's lost a baby in Iraq," said Harper. "But I don't want another parent to have to go through this. I know he wouldn't have wanted his soon-to-be ex-wife handling his funeral, but since he didn't have his divorce final and there was no will, I have no choice. It's OK, though, because he has two children, and they need to be near their daddy."

Harper's sister, Charlotte Guinn, with whom Harper has been staying, was incensed at her sister's treatment by the U.S. Army at Fort Sill.

"They (Fort Sill representatives) told my sister there's no law that says they have to make a personal visit, and the trip is 2-1/2 hours one way just to get here," said Guinn. "They told her personal visits were a common courtesy, not a law. Evidently it's not a courtesy they can pay to her."

As Guinn related the course of events, Harper began to tremble and cry, while holding photographs of her son.

"Just a phone call for the life of my son," she said. "I just hope other parents - mothers - aren't treated the way I've been treated. It's just a real slap in the face."

To add insult to injury, Fort Sill representatives told Harper the Army would pay her expenses to attend the funeral, but not those of his 21-year-old sister, Amber Graw.

"They told me she wasn't his next of kin, and would have to pay her own way to Indiana," Harper said. "She's his sister!"

According to Harper, Beardsley had already been discharged from the Army, but he re-enlisted so he could serve in Iraq.

“He was in for three years before,” said Harper.

“He really wanted to go back, so he re-enlisted and was looking forward to going to Iraq to serve his country.”

The Daily Press contacted District 2 Congressman Dan Boren’s office to ask why Harper had not received the promised officer assignment. Boren is a member of the House Armed Services Committee.

Constituent Services Representative Vivian Loving in Boren’s Muskogee office took the information and began making phone calls. By Thursday afternoon, Loving had some answers.

“This issue has been kicked up to the Pentagon,” said Loving. “They have been provided with Ms. Harper’s telephone number and are checking into why Fort Sill was reluctant to help.”

Later Thursday, Nick Choate, Boren’s press secretary in Washington, D.C., indicated changes were being made to accommodate Harper.

“According to officials at Fort Sill, (Harper) was not designated as a person to receive benefits in her son’s paperwork,” said Choate.

“However, she has since been assigned a casualty assistance officer out of Tulsa who, if he hasn’t already, will be in touch with her shortly.”

Thursday evening, Guinn confirmed her sister will be receiving help.

“It’s just amazing how much has happened just this afternoon,” said Guinn. “Fort Sill contacted us and immediately apologized for the way Lavonna had been treated, and arranged for an officer to come here to the house at 6:30 this evening.”

Guinn indicated military officials had also located Beardsley’s will in his personal belongings in Iraq.

“They told us they’d put a hold on the body at Dover,” said Guinn.

“The will is supposed to arrive in a sealed case in Georgia Saturday, and nothing is going to happen to the body until then. I expect there may be a lot of changes after Saturday.”

Harper hopes those serving and parents of children in the military will take necessary precautions to have proper legal documentation in place before deploying.

Guinn agrees. “There needs to be some sort of reform to protect soldiers who have legal issues pending when they deploy,” said Guinn.

“Just like B.J. was trying to get divorced. The military should provide legal services for soldiers who get shipped out in the middle of something like that. They should make all soldiers have wills in place before they leave.”

Harper and Beardsley communicated often via e-mail. She indicated although he had initially been eager to serve, he had become unhappy with the situation in Iraq.

“He said after a while, it got to be monotonous,” said Harper.

“They’re there, doing what they’re told, fighting against a brick wall for people who lay down roadside bombs so kids like my son can run over them.”

Despite Harper’s loss, she continues to sport red, white and blue ribbons, as well as yellow ribbons on the front of her Nissan truck to show support.

“I support our troops,” said Harper. “But I no longer support the war.”

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## **U.S. Base In Al-Saqlawiyah Mortared**

March 5, (VOI)

An eyewitness told VOI that three mortars were fired onto the U.S. army base in al-Saqlawiyah district, 15 km northwest of Falluja, on Monday at 2:00 pm. There was no immediate comment from the U.S. army on the shelling incident.

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## **AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS**

# ***Great Moments In U.S. Military History:*** **U.S. Occupation Air Attack Slaughters “Nine People From Four Generations Of An Afghan Family Including A 6-Month-Old”**





Afghan villagers stand in front of one of the houses bombed by a U.S. air strike on Jabar village in the Nijrab district of Kapisa province, north of Kabul, Afghanistan March 5, 2007, killing nine people from four generations of an Afghan family. (AP Photo/Musadeq Sadeq)

**Mohammad Akbar, a resident, said he heard a rocket fired from a mountain behind his village toward a hilltop U.S. base. After that, U.S. mortars were fired on the village, two helicopters flew overhead, and then a warplane dropped the two bombs, destroying one home and damaging another nearby, he said.**

Mar 5 By AMIR SHAH and RAHIM FAIEZ, Associated Press Writers & ABC News

**A coalition airstrike destroyed a mud-brick home after a rocket attack on a U.S. base, killing nine people from four generations of an Afghan family including a 6-month-old, officials and relatives said Monday — one of the latest in a string of civilian deaths that threaten to undermine the government.**

**It was the third report in two days of U.S. forces killing civilians.**

The airstrike took place late Sunday in Kapisa province north of the capital, some 12 hours after U.S. Marines opened fire on civilian cars and pedestrians following a suicide bombing in eastern Nangahar province.

**In the other incident, an American convoy in the southern city of Kandahar — where suicide attacks have become commonplace over the past year — opened fire Monday on a vehicle that drove too close, killing the driver, said Noor Ahmad, a Kandahar police officer who said he witnessed the shooting.**

**President Hamid Karzai condemned the bombing, "which caused the American forces to fire on civilians," and a statement said relatives of the dead wanted the "perpetrators" brought to justice.**

"These incidents will make people unhappy and upset with the international forces as well as the government of Afghanistan," said Zalmay Mujadedi, head of a parliamentary committee on domestic security.

**"The incidents in Nangarhar and Kapisa will make the people's confidence in the Afghan and international security forces even lower than before."**

The political fallout could resonate widely among Afghans, analysts said.

**The bombs left a large crater of twisted lumber and chunks of mud and killed four women, four children between the ages of 6 months and 5 years, and an 80-year-old man, said Gulam Nabi, a relative of the victims.**

Sayad Mohammad Dawood Hashimmi, Kapisa deputy governor, confirmed the nine deaths.

**Among those killed were Gulam Nabi's parents, his sister, two female relatives by marriage and four of the extended family's youngest children.**

**Mohammad Akbar, a resident, said he heard a rocket fired from a mountain behind his village toward a hilltop U.S. base. After that, U.S. mortars were fired on the village, two helicopters flew overhead, and then a warplane dropped the two bombs, destroying one home and damaging another nearby, he said.**

"It's just a problem of being a foreign army in any country where you are fighting an insurgency," said Barnett R. Rubin, a leading expert on Afghanistan.

**"When you kill civilians, which inevitably happens; it breeds hatred, resentment, and recruits people to the insurgency," Rubin said.**



Newly buried graves of those bombed by a U.S. air strike on Jabar village in the Nijrab district of Kapisa province, north of Kabul, Afghanistan March 5, 2007, killing nine people from four generations of an Afghan family. (AP Photo/Musadeq Sadeq)

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## Lance Bombardiers Ross Clark And Liam McLaughlin Killed In Afghanistan



LBdr Ross Clark (left) and LBdr Liam 'Paddy' McLaughlin  
[Picture: MOD]

5 Mar 07 Military Operations MOD

It is with deep regret that the Ministry of Defence has confirmed the deaths in Afghanistan of Lance Bombardier Ross Clark and Lance Bombardier Liam McLaughlin, both 29 Commando Regiment Royal Artillery.

The two soldiers, who were friends and colleagues, died during a rocket attack in the Sangin area of Helmand province on Saturday 3 March 2007.

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## Occupation Staff Member Killed

03/02/07 Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

Geraldine Marquez kept telling her family that she was in no danger.

As a civilian contractor at heavily defended Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan, she mainly did paperwork on supply shipments.

Marquez was among 23 people killed Tuesday by a bomber at the main gate during a visit by Vice President Dick Cheney.

Marquez, who had lived with family members in Ontario and Victorville, worked for Lockheed Martin. She was an Air Force veteran.

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## TROOP NEWS

# Connecticut Stands Up! “Endorsed By Iraq Veterans Against The War”

**The SOUND FACTORY PRESENTS**  
**rap against the war in iraq**  
A Peaceful March down Main St. in Willimantic, Starting at the Frog Bridge/Jillson Square Green and ending at:  
**WRENCH IN THE WORKS**  
861 Main St. Willimantic, CT  
**20 LOCAL HIP-HOP ARTISTS AND SPEAKERS**  
**SATURDAY MARCH 10TH**  
**MARCH - 4PM**  
**SHOW - 5PM-10PM**

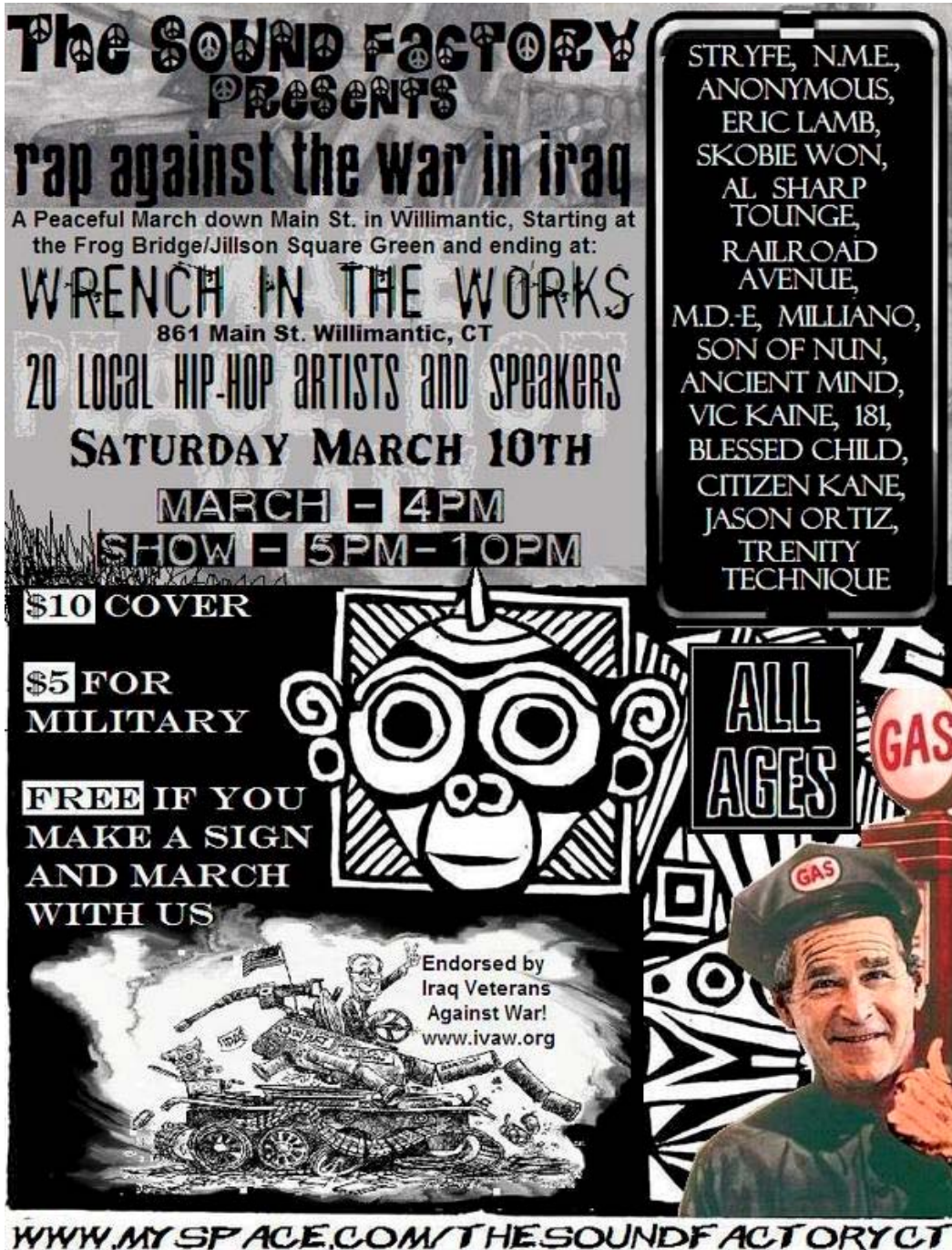
**\$10 COVER**  
**\$5 FOR MILITARY**  
**FREE IF YOU MAKE A SIGN AND MARCH WITH US**

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ANONYMOUS,  
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AL SHARP  
TOUNGE,  
RAILROAD  
AVENUE,  
M.D.E, MILLIANO,  
SON OF NUN,  
ANCIENT MIND,  
VIC KANE, 181,  
BLESSED CHILD,  
CITIZEN KANE,  
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**ALL AGES**  
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Against War!  
[www.ivaw.org](http://www.ivaw.org)

[WWW.MYSPACE.COM/THE.SOUNDFACTORYCT](http://WWW.MYSPACE.COM/THE.SOUNDFACTORYCT)



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



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

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***“A Grim Portrait”***

**“Families Sliding Into Debt As VA  
Case Managers Study Disability  
Claims Over Many Months”**

**“The Seriously Wounded Requiring  
Help From Outside Experts Just To  
Understand The VA’s Arcane System  
Of Rights And Benefits”**

[Thanks to Clancy Siegel, who sent this in.]

**Tonia Sargent, whose husband, Kenneth, nearly died in a sniper attack in Najaf in 2004, says no one ever sat her down and explained the benefits and how to access them. Her husband's brain injury made him often incapable of understanding his own care. Key decisions fell to her alone. It's a "don't ask, don't tell system," she says.**

March 5, 2007 By Dan Efron and Sarah Childress, Newsweek [Excerpts]

The issue of veterans' care jumped into the headlines last week when The Washington Post published a series about Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

But it is just one part of a vast network of hospitals and clinics that serve wounded soldiers and veterans throughout the country.

A NEWSWEEK investigation focused not on one facility but on the services of the Department of Veterans Affairs, a 235,000-person bureaucracy that provides medical care to a much larger number of servicemen and women from the time they're released from the military, and doles out their disability payments.

**Our reporting paints a grim portrait of an overloaded bureaucracy cluttered with red tape; veterans having to wait weeks or months for mental-health care and other appointments; families sliding into debt as VA case managers study disability claims over many months, and the seriously wounded requiring help from outside experts just to understand the VA's arcane system of rights and benefits.**

Yet, as the number of veterans continues to grow, critics worry the VA is in a state of denial. In a broad sense, the situation at the VA seems to mirror the overall lack of planning for the war. "We know the VA doesn't have the capacity to process a large number of disability claims at the same time," says Linda Bilmes, a Harvard public-finance professor and former Clinton administration Commerce Department official.

**As it is, for some veterans the wait can be agonizing.**

**Patrick Feges was on hold for 17 months until his first disability check from the VA came through.**

An Eagle Scout from Sugar Land, Texas, Feges enlisted in 2003 and found himself in Ramadi a year later.

**In October 2004, a mortar exploded on his base about 50 yards from him, spraying him with shrapnel, slicing his intestines and severing a major artery. Feges lost consciousness and was flown to Walter Reed, where he underwent surgery. Long scars trail down his legs and midsection.**

**At the hospital a fellow Texan came to visit: President Bush stood by his bed and chatted with him.**

Feges is a polite 22-year-old with a military manner. He addresses strangers by last name and an honorific, even when prodded to drop the formality. "I was brought up right, sir," he explains.

**But his voice rises slightly when he describes his ordeal with the VA.**

**A case officer in Houston processed Feges's request for disability in September 2005, then lost his application. Feges was summoned to repeated medical evaluations at the Houston center, but a year later he was still waiting for a check. By then, Feges had been accepted to culinary school in Austin and did not want to put off his studies. His mother, an elementary-school teacher, took a second job at a local McDonald's to help support him.**

**The review process can be complicated. It requires veterans to prove, through documents and sometimes through the testimony of fellow soldiers, that their afflictions are a result of their time in the military.**

Feges listed on his application all the ways he'd been affected by the wounds: he'd lost mobility in his ankles and knees, he suffered regular stomach cramps from the intestinal wound, he lost sensation in his hands and legs, he had trouble standing for long periods.

NEWSWEEK presented the VA with the names and details of the veterans whose stories are told here, but a spokesman for the agency declined to comment on individual cases, citing doctor-patient confidentiality.

**[And that is bullshit, stupid bullshit too. Any patient, including at the VA, has the right to read and copy his or her own medical records, and give them to whoever the patient wishes. And any patient has the right to sign a statement releasing their medical information to any third party they see fit. The VA snowed the reporters. T]**

Still, a jump in disability claims in recent years has created a bottleneck.

Daniel Cooper, the VA's under secretary for benefits, confirmed his department was coping with a backlog of 400,000 applications and appeals; 75 percent of them were still within a "reasonable" reviewing time frame, he says. Yet, most of those claims were filed by veterans of previous wars (a veteran can file or appeal a claim even decades after discharge). As more servicemen and women return from Iraq, the backlog is likely to increase.

**Cooper says the average waiting time for a benefits claim is about six months. NEWSWEEK turned up a number of veterans who'd waited longer. Keri Christensen, a National Guard veteran and a mother of two, says the VA in Chicago took 10 months to process her application. Rory Dunn, who nearly died in an IED attack outside Fallujah, says his application was delayed because, among other things, the VA mixed up his file with that of a Korean War veteran.**

Feges's claim was finally approved last month: after NEWSWEEK and the advocacy group Veterans for America began looking into his case, he got a call from a VA official in Waco, Texas, with the news that his money would come through. Last week he received back pay to the date of his application.

The compensation is not huge.

A veteran with a disability rating of 100 percent gets about \$2,400 a month — more if he or she has children.

**A 50 percent rating brings in around \$700 a month.**

**But for many returning servicemen burdened with wounds, it is, initially at least, their sole income. “When I started school, that’s when it became really hard not to have that money,” says Feges.**

Two such survivors are Albert and Connie Ross. Albert lost a leg when a rocket-propelled grenade landed close to him in August 2004 while he was on patrol in Baghdad. Connie lived through a 2004 suicide bombing in Mosul but suffered multiple fractures and burns.

When the two met in a hallway at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas, Connie thought she noticed a certain swagger in Albert’s walk. “He had this weird dip in his walk, so I asked him, ‘Why are you pimp-walking in a hospital?’ And he said: ‘I’m not pimp-walking, I’m an amputee.’ I was so embarrassed.” The two married earlier this year and are expecting a child.

**Though he’s been in the VA system for more than two years now, Albert still doesn’t have a primary-care doctor.**

Without one, getting appointments with specialists can be difficult. “You’re supposed to be assigned one right away,” says Albert, who now lives in San Antonio.

**“I’m not frustrated so much as worried—worried if and when something does go wrong, something will happen with one of my legs ... They (primary-care doctors) are the ones who have to fill out a work-order form; it’s impossible to do anything without them.”**

One thing Albert desperately wants to do: get a new prosthetic. He’s one of the early African-American amputees of the war. But the fake limb he’s been given matches the skin tone of a Caucasian. It so embarrasses Albert that he always wears a sock over it—even if he’s in sandals. “He’s very self-conscious about it,” says Connie. “It really bothers him.”

Even when veterans get to the right doctors, understanding how to leverage what they need from the system can be mind-bending.

**Tonia Sargent, whose husband, Kenneth, nearly died in a sniper attack in Najaf in 2004, says no one ever sat her down and explained the benefits and how to access them. Her husband’s brain injury made him often incapable of understanding his own care. Key decisions fell to her alone.**

It’s a “don’t ask, don’t tell system,” she says.



Kenneth is a Marine master sergeant who'd been in the Corps for nearly 18 years. He was on his second tour in Iraq when a sniper bullet ricocheted off the metal hatch on his vehicle and hit him directly below the right eye, grazing the front of his brain and exiting near his left ear.

Among other things, he was diagnosed with traumatic brain injury, which has become the signature wound of the Iraq war.

Tonia had to fight the Marine Corps to keep him from being discharged, figuring he'd get better medical care if he remained in active service. But some of his treatment has been outsourced to the VA.

**One of the tricks she learned early on was to demand photocopies of her husband's records — every exam, every X-ray, every diagnosis — and personally carry the file from appointment to appointment. "I don't know if there is a more formal protocol for transferring documents, but I know that what I brought ... was definitely put to use."**

When Sargent was transferred to the VA's lauded Polytrauma Center in Palo Alto, Calif., doctors there encouraged her to go home to Camp Pendleton near San Diego and treat his stay at the hospital as if it was a deployment.

**"After two weeks, they asked me how long I was planning to stay with my husband," she says. "They said it was his rehab, not mine. But I needed to learn how to care for him, and he suffered from extreme anxiety without me." She pushed back, staying in Palo Alto until he completed his care.**

How can the system improve? Bilmes, who authored the Harvard study, proposes at least one drastic change—automatically accepting all disability claims and auditing them after payments have begun. (The VA says that would be an irresponsible use of taxpayer money.)

Other critics have focused on raising the VA's budget, which has been proposed at \$87 billion for 2008. More money could go toward hiring more claims officers and more doctors, easing the burden now and preparing the VA for the end of the Iraq war, when soldiers return home en masse.

**But veterans' support groups and even some former and current VA insiders believe there's a reluctance in the Bush administration to deal openly with the long-term costs of the war.**

(All told, Bilmes projects it could cost as much as \$600 billion to care for GWOT veterans over the course of their lifetimes.)

**That reluctance, they say, trickles down to the VA, where top managers are politically appointed.**

**Secretary Jim Nicholson, a decorated Vietnam War veteran who was chosen by Bush in 2005, tends to be the focus of this criticism.**

**The senior VA manager who did not want to be named criticizing superiors told NEWSWEEK: “He’s a political appointee and he needs to respond to the White House’s direction.”**

**Steve Robinson of Veterans for America levels the accusation more directly. “Why doesn’t the VA have a projection of casualties for the wars? Because it would be a political bombshell for Nicholson to estimate so many casualties.”**

As is often the case in America when government institutions falter, however, community groups are already stepping into the void. Veterans of Foreign Wars has advocates helping vets negotiate the VA bureaucracy, much the way health facilitators in the private sector help consumers get the most from their health insurance. Robinson, of Veterans for America, has pulled together teams of volunteers—physicians, psychologists, lawyers—who give vets free services when the local VA branch falls down. At his office recently, he was coordinating a traumatic-brain-injury screening with a private doctor for a veteran who’d been denied access to VA care.

**The fact that Americans are coming forward doesn’t absolve the VA of its obligation to provide first-rate care for veterans.**

**Most of the wounded’s problems just can’t be solved by private citizens and groups, no matter how well meaning.**

But it does serve to remind us that we should take better care of veterans wounded in the line of duty as they make their way home, and try to remake their lives.

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## **IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP**



(Graphic: London Financial Times)

## **Assorted Resistance Action**

3.4.07 Reuters & 05 Mar 2007 Reuters & VOI

Police found bodies of two policemen in Mosul, police said.

Insurgents wounded four policemen on Sunday in Ishaqi.

Militants killed five policemen in a drive-by shooting in the town of Ishaqi, 100 km (60 miles) north of Baghdad.

A car bomb targeting a police patrol killed a policeman and wounded another in the western Adel district of Baghdad.

Guerrillas killed a policeman while he was driving in the city of Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad.

An Iraqi soldier was killed and two others were wounded on Monday when an explosive charge went off allegedly targeting their patrol near Falluja city, a security source said.

"An explosive charge was detonated this afternoon near an Iraqi army vehicle patrol in al-Garma district, 10 km east of Falluja, killing one soldier and wounding two more," the source, who asked not to be named, told the independent news agency Voices of Iraq.

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

## **DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK**



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

**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

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

## **CLASS WAR REPORTS**

# **How The Other 1 Percent Lives; “The Richest 1 Percent Of Households Hold 30 Percent Of Total Assets”**

February 9, 2007 Socialist Worker Editorial

**TWO ASTONISHING numbers grabbed headlines earlier this month.**

**One was ExxonMobil's earnings for 2006 of \$39.5 billion--the highest corporate profits in world history.**

In other words, ExxonMobil was making \$4.5 million--in profits--for every hour of every day of the last year.

**The other number was the personal savings rate for 2006--negative-1 percent.**

**That means the average U.S. household spent every penny of its after-tax income--and then some more, by dipping into savings, if it had any, or more likely, by racking up credit card and other forms of debt.**

The only other years that the personal savings rate has fallen into negative territory was 2005 and two years during the worst of the Great Depression.

And because this government statistic makes no distinction between rich and poor households, it disguises just how dire the situation has become for many people in the U.S.

On the one hand, the young and poor find themselves struggling the most to keep their heads above water.

Some 42 percent of those between the ages of 18 to 49 said they are likely to spend more than they can afford, and 45 percent of those with household incomes below \$30,000 reported the same.

On the other hand, people like Rex Tillerson, the CEO and chair of ExxonMobil, have a hard time spending even a portion of what they made in 2006.

**Tillerson took home \$18.5 million last year--raking in more in an hour than a minimum-wage worker makes in a year.**

In short, the households with the debt are different than the households with the cash, according to economic analyst Stephanie Pomboy.

**The richest 1 percent of households hold 30 percent of total assets and 7 percent of total debt, while the bottom 50 percent of households have just 6 percent of assets and a staggering 24 percent of the debt.**

The obscene gap between rich and poor even merited a mention from George W. Bush during his recent trip to Wall Street.

Bush was greeted like a rock star when he walked onto the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, but his words of caution about skyrocketing CEO pay met with tepid applause.

“The salaries and bonuses of CEOs should be based on their success at improving their companies and bringing value to their shareholders,” Bush declared.

But the president ultimately had reassuring words for his audience, saying that the government shouldn’t set limits on CEO pay--and that it’s best to “respond to the income inequality we see with policies that help lift people up,” instead of “tear others down.”

Don’t hold your breath waiting for that plan to “lift up” workers’ pay.

**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](mailto:contact@militaryproject.org):. Name, I.D., withheld on request. Replies confidential. Same to unsubscribe.**

## **Severe Poverty In USA At 32 Year High;**

**“The Number Of Severely Poor Americans Grew By 26 Percent From 2000 To 2005”**

**“The Share Of National Income Going To Corporate Profits Has Dwarfed The Amount Going To Wages And Salaries”**

**“Deep Poverty At The Highest Rate Since At Least 1975”**

[Well, what’s really important is that the war profiteers are raking in the billions, right? Thanks to James Starowicz, Veterans For Peace, and Phil G, who sent this in.]

**With the exception of Mexico and Russia, the U.S. devotes the smallest portion of its gross domestic product to federal anti-poverty programs, and those programs are among the least effective at reducing poverty, the study found. Again, only Russia and Mexico do worse jobs.**

Feb. 22, 2007 By Tony Pugh, McClatchy Newspapers [Excerpts]

WASHINGTON - The percentage of poor Americans who are living in severe poverty has reached a 32-year high, millions of working Americans are falling closer to the poverty line and the gulf between the nation’s “haves” and “have-nots” continues to widen.

A McClatchy Newspapers analysis of 2005 census figures, the latest available, found that nearly 16 million Americans are living in deep or severe poverty. A family of four with two children and an annual income of less than \$9,903 - half the federal poverty line - was considered severely poor in 2005. So were individuals who made less than \$5,080 a year.

**The McClatchy analysis found that the number of severely poor Americans grew by 26 percent from 2000 to 2005. That’s 56 percent faster than the overall poverty population grew in the same period.**

McClatchy’s review also found statistically significant increases in the percentage of the population in severe poverty in 65 of 215 large U.S. counties, and similar increases in 28 states. The review also suggested that the rise in severely poor residents isn’t confined to large urban counties but extends to suburban and rural areas.

Worker productivity has increased dramatically since the brief recession of 2001, but wages and job growth have lagged behind.

**At the same time, the share of national income going to corporate profits has dwarfed the amount going to wages and salaries. That helps explain why the median household income of working-age families, adjusted for inflation, has fallen for five straight years.**

**These and other factors have helped push 43 percent of the nation's 37 million poor people into deep poverty - the highest rate since at least 1975.**

The share of poor Americans in deep poverty has climbed slowly but steadily over the last three decades. But since 2000, the number of severely poor has grown "more than any other segment of the population," according to a recent study in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine.

That was the exact opposite of what we anticipated when we began," said Dr. Steven Woolf of Virginia Commonwealth University, who co-authored the study.

**"We're not seeing as much moderate poverty as a proportion of the population. What we're seeing is a dramatic growth of severe poverty."**

The growth spurt, which leveled off in 2005, in part reflects how hard it is for low-skilled workers to earn their way out of poverty in an unstable job market that favors skilled and educated workers. It also suggests that social programs aren't as effective as they once were at catching those who fall into economic despair.

About one in three severely poor people are under age 17, and nearly two out of three are female. Female-headed families with children account for a large share of the severely poor.

Nearly two out of three people (10.3 million) in severe poverty are white, but blacks (4.3 million) and Hispanics of any race (3.7 million) make up disproportionate shares.

**Blacks are nearly three times as likely as non-Hispanic whites to be in deep poverty, while Hispanics are roughly twice as likely.**

**As more poor Americans sink into severe poverty, more individuals and families living within \$8,000 above or below the poverty line also have seen their incomes decline. Steven Woolf of Virginia Commonwealth University attributes this to what he calls a "sinkhole effect" on income.**

**"Just as a sinkhole causes everything above it to collapse downward, families and individuals in the middle and upper classes appear to be migrating to lower-income tiers that bring them closer to the poverty threshold," Woolf wrote in the study.**

The Census Bureau's Survey of Income and Program Participation shows that, in a given month, only 10 percent of severely poor Americans received Temporary

Assistance for Needy Families in 2003 - the latest year available - and that only 36 percent received food stamps.

Many could have exhausted their eligibility for welfare or decided that the new program requirements were too onerous.

But the low participation rates are troubling because the worst byproducts of poverty, such as higher crime and violence rates and poor health, nutrition and educational outcomes, are worse for those in deep poverty.

**With the exception of Mexico and Russia, the U.S. devotes the smallest portion of its gross domestic product to federal anti-poverty programs, and those programs are among the least effective at reducing poverty, the study found.**

**Again, only Russia and Mexico do worse jobs.**

## **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))

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

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