

GI SPECIAL 5C7:



[Thanks to Mark Shapiro, who sent this in.]

“That Time Has Come Again”

“Ruling Power ... Will Never Relent
Unless It Faces Overthrow By
Democratic, Yet Undefeatable Force”

“He Fired Rounds From His AR 14
Into The Official Pictures Of Then
Republican President Ronald
Reagan”

[Thanks to James Starowicz, Veterans For Peace, who sent this in.]

Twenty-five years ago, March 14, 1981 Jim Hopkins, Marine veteran of Vietnam, born on the Marine Corps birthday of November 10, drove his army Jeep through the glass doors and into the lobby of the multi-million dollar, showcase edifice of Wadsworth VA hospital, at Los Angeles, California.

He fired rounds from his AR 14 into the official pictures of then Republican President Ronald Reagan and Ex-President Jimmy Carter.

For emphasis he then fired his .45 caliber handgun and a shotgun screaming that he was not receiving the medical attention needed.

3.5.07 By Michael O'McCarthy. Afterdowningstreet.org [Excerpts]

There is a basic right owed to the men and women who serve to protect the integrity of this nation's democratic promise. As said by the only great Republican:

"... to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations." Abraham Lincoln, second inaugural address, March 4, 1865

Twenty-five years ago, March 14, 1981 Jim Hopkins, Marine veteran of Vietnam, born on the Marine Corps birthday of November 10, drove his army Jeep through the glass doors and into the lobby of the multi-million dollar, showcase edifice of Wadsworth VA hospital, at Los Angeles, California. He did so to protest the gross, willfully negligent treatment given US veterans within the VA system. In specific, those veterans of the US war in South East Asia, aka, the Vietnam War.

He fired rounds from his AR 14 into the official pictures of then Republican President Ronald Reagan and Ex-President Jimmy Carter.

For emphasis he then fired his .45 caliber handgun and a shotgun screaming that he was not receiving the medical attention needed.

Hauled from the hospital by law enforcement, he screamed into the cameras that his brain was "being destroyed by Agent Orange."

That sent both a shock wave and a wake up call through the US and became a clarion call to thousands of veterans who felt the very same as did Hopkins.

Ron Bitzer, director and founder of the LA based Center for Veteran's Rights and I took up his case. My specialty was vets suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, (PTSD) who had come into conflict with law enforcement due to their illness.

Hopkins' case gave national voice to three major issues for vets:

1- The failure of Reagan's administration to investigate the damage caused by Dow Chemical's dioxin based defoliants spread all over Southeast Asia known as Agent Orange, Blue and other quaint names. And its refusal to treat vets and their families for its damaging effect on both, (especially the obvious appearance of birth defects of children born to the vets.)

2- The refusal to acknowledge the illness of PTSD and to investigate its damage on vets and to provide appropriate treatment.

3- The callous and insulting disrespect shown the vets by Reagan and his efforts to cut both the benefits of the vets and to close their outpatient treatment centers.

After being released from in-hospital treatment from the VA hospital where we had him transferred from the LA County Jail Hopkins went on a speaking tour to vets. Despite our best efforts to help him Hopkins died of mysterious causes on May 17.

The news of his death, now a hero to Vietnam veterans, spread across the country sparking a sit-in the same lobby by veterans. As Reagan alternately ignored and then ridiculed the veterans, as the VA proclaimed its innocence of neglect, the protest grew until it became a hunger strike led by highly decorated Vietnam combat veterans.

The hunger strike drew mass coverage by the US and world news. In the face of the aroused public, Reagan ignored calls for investigation, but held off forced eviction. When we rejected the government's poor faith negotiations, Reagan called in the Federal forces.

But we were prepared and within days were camped out in front of the White House and had forced meetings with various congressional Veteran's committees.

Fearing that any moment one of the vets would die and would trigger an armed response by the many outraged veterans across the country, Congress finally agreed to negotiate a compromise:

The veteran's strike would end after fifty-three days and Congress would over-ride Reagan so that the Vet Centers would remain funded and open; there would be scientific and medical investigations into both the effects of the dioxin defoliants and into the illness of PTSD.

However that the US government's military and VA hospitals were death suites for veterans was not news.

Five years before Hopkins' protest, Ron Kovic's BORN ON THE FOURTH OF JULY was published in 1976. Therein a true American hero and two-time combat veteran of Vietnam, permanently paraplegic as a result, characterized, in graphic literary style, the mistreatment of vets in both hospital systems.

But nothing changed.

In 1989 Oliver Stone made Kovic's book into a movie starring a remarkable Oscar winning performance with Tom Cruise playing Kovic.

But neither the Congress nor the Presidency changed the continuing ill treatment given veterans.

Then under Reagan's pet Republican successor George Herbert Walker Bush, the US launched Operation Desert Storm and its use of depleted uranium nuclear weapons. Vets came home from that US victory complaining of various kinds of poisoning, both from the depleted uranium and the suspected effects of chemical warfare allegedly used

by Saddam Hussein's forces. Its called Gulf War Syndrome and the military and the VA immediately began denying any causal relationship to the vet's complaints and those weapons.

Thus, little changed.

When we look at the scandal of Bldg 18 where the Washington Post reported that "part of the wall is torn and hangs in the air, weighted down with black mold. When the wounded combat engineer stands in his shower and looks up, he can see the bathtub on the floor above through a rotted hole.

The entire building, constructed between the world wars, often smells like greasy carry-out. Signs of neglect are everywhere: mouse droppings, belly-up cockroaches, stained carpets, cheap mattresses..." we know that nothing has changed.

Today it is undeniable that those who mastermind those callous, destructive wars against the poor people of the world have the very same callous disregard for the health and welfare our working and poor people sent to fight their wars.

In a nation where profit rules over healthcare how can one avoid the reality that this government cares not for it people but only the power of profit? It no longer can:

The war against the people of South East Asia was a war based on a President's lie: an attack on the US in the Gulf of Tonkin that never occurred. It is in that way akin to that of the current President; based on the lies of an obviously mentally incompetent madman far more concerned with the false righteousness of his crusader's mission and as it suits his petroleum industry masters than concern for the American people.

As the great anti-war movies All Quiet on the Western Front, Paths of Glory, Johnny Got His Gun, Coming Home, and Born On The Fourth of July has proved time and time again: governments use poor and working people as their cannon fodder, discarding those that survive as they do their junk military weaponry, while the manufacturing engines of war, profit and outlive war.

For over 4 years news stories have addressed the Bush-Republican cuts in the VA budget. Simultaneously, the dollar amount spent by Bush-Republicans has risen to an extinct beyond any war ever fought, including WWII.

At the same time the profits of the military-industrial-media complex have grown exponentially with the war budget increases. Simultaneously the number of injured veterans has outgrown the VA's negligently conceived plan of treatment and as a result. This is in keeping with the malevolent attitude of Bush-Cheney...the two are married in purpose.

The calls for the impeachment of Bush-Cheney, et al, because of their malfeasance in office, deliberate lies and miss use of government services in pursuing their war of petroleum profit, (control of the Middle East resources,) their acts of war crimes, have done little to move either the cowardly congress or to drive the American people into the streets in revolt.

However, nothing has been as clear as the total and systemic neglect for the well being of the average American citizen than the outrage that continues within the military medical system and that of the VA. Why have these systems not been fixed as the politicians clamber for reform time after time? It is more than just the excrement of denial!

There is a far more profound question to be asked about this systemic maltreatment:

Why would a Congress, which functions as the chief lobbyists of a "for profit healthcare system," appropriately see to the delivery of the best example of socialized medicine?

Why is it that every time the harbingers of economic doom speak of reform they talk of cutting the social welfare programs of Medicare and Social Security?

Because the system is geared to fail; its failures hidden under the flag of patriot zeal until there is disclosure of its gross human casualty.

The truth is that Reagan Republican administration, the chief proponents of "for profit" Trickle Down Economics and its quisling Congress did not move until faced with the threat of a popular uprising led by Vietnam vets.

The conditions at Walter Reed are but symbolic of an entire system of malfeasance and mistreatment as rotten and antihuman as when we took on and defeated Reagan 25 years ago; as fetid and of ill purpose as the wars that produce them.

In virtually every appearance by any and every elected politician that speaks of the current war publicly calls out to "support for our troops" yet refuses to address that which is killing them?

The war itself.

With more war in the planning as I write this, let me suggest that ruling power, especially the reactionary power of Bush-Cheney, will never relent unless it faces overthrow by democratic, yet undefeatable force.

That time has come again.

Or again, nothing will change except this time matters will worsen.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Six 82nd Soldiers Killed, Four Wounded Near Samarra

March 06, 2007 By Kevin Maurer, Staff writer, The Fayetteville Observer

Six 82nd Airborne Division paratroopers were killed Monday in what was the deadliest single day for the division in the Iraq war.

The paratroopers from the 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment died when a bomb exploded near their vehicles during a patrol near Samarra, 82nd officials confirmed Tuesday.

Samarra is an insurgent stronghold north of Baghdad in the Salahaddin province.

Four other paratroopers were wounded in the blast.

One wounded paratrooper has returned to duty, sources said. The condition of the other three was not known.

“Our hearts and prayers are with the families right now in their time of loss, and our resolve is stronger to accomplish our mission here,” Lt. Col. Michael Donnelly, a spokesman for U.S. forces in northern Iraq, told the Associated Press.

The 82nd Airborne Division has lost 14 soldiers this year.

New Hampshire Soldier Killed



March 6, 2007: Justin Rollins, 22, a soldier serving in the 82nd Airborne Division, from Newport, N.H., was killed this week in Iraq by a roadside bomb. (AP Photo/WMUR-TV)

Three U.S. Troops Killed, One Wounded In Diyala

Mar. 6, 2007 Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20070306-07

TIKRIT – Task Force Lightning Soldiers were attacked while conducting combat operations in Diyala Province Monday.

Three Task Force Lightning Soldiers died as a result of injuries sustained following an explosion near their vehicles.

One other Soldier was wounded and taken to a Coalition medical facility for treatment.

Pennsylvania Soldier Killed In Baghdad



Spc. Luis O. Rodriguez-Contrera, of Allentown, Pa., 22, died March 2, 2007, when a roadside bomb exploded near his vehicle in Baghdad, the military said. (AP Photo/Family photo via The Morning Call)

Final Good-Byes For Valley Soldier

Mar 05, 2007 by Erica Razo, KSEE-TV

Today hundreds of friends and family members gathered at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Clovis to say their final good-byes to Pfc. Rowan Walter, a young man who they said lived by his faith.

Walter's childhood friend Michael Soldani described him as a true believer, " He was very true to his religion, his beliefs. In fact the way he led his life was basically living what he believed every single day of his life he lived exactly what he believed and what he taught other people. He was a happy person, a joyous person."

On February 23, 2007 Walter and two other medics were responding to a nearby attack when they were ambushed and killed.

His family said his ambition to help others is what inspired him to become a medic in 2005. Those who spoke with him before his deployment to Iraq said Walter wasn't afraid, and had plenty of training that would help him when he got back.

He was excited that he would learn how to be a medic and afterwards he was going to go to nursing school," Soldani said.

Texas Marine Killed In Iraq

March 1, 2007 Associated Press

RAYMONDVILLE - A Marine with ties to Houston and the Rio Grande Valley was killed during combat operations in Iraq, the Department of Defense said Wednesday.

Lance Cpl. Anthony Aguirre, 20, died Sunday in Al Anbar province, the military said.

He had been assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force in Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii.

Family and friends were gathered Wednesday at Aguirre's father's home in Raymondville, where Aguirre spent his summers growing up. He had spent the rest of the year with his mother in the Houston suburb of Channelview.

Aguirre's mother, Leticia Loa, drove to Raymondville to join Aguirre's father and other family members after learning of her son's death early Monday. They were planning a memorial service in Raymondville followed by the funeral in Houston, said Hilda Trevino, a cousin who has been acting as family spokeswoman.

"He served with pride until the very end," Trevino said. "It was his dream."

She said Aguirre wanted to be in the military since he was a little boy, and as a child liked most to show off his black bomber jacket with American flag and wings. He joined the Channelview High School ROTC and enlisted in the military soon after graduation. He was deployed to Iraq in September.

Aguirre last called his father, Arturo Aguirre, about six weeks ago and spoke about how rough things were, Trevino said.

She said people from Raymondville and other Rio Grande Valley cities had been coming to express their condolences and offer support. The veterans' group America's Last Patrol was to conduct a memorial flag raising Wednesday night.

"We've had a huge response from Raymondville and the Valley," Trevino said. "He was outgoing, he was respectable, just a fun person to be with. There's nothing we can say bad about him."

Insurgents Are Striking Back Around The Iraqi Capital As The U.S. Struggles To Secure The City; "It's Their Answer To The 'Surge' Strategy — Recoil, Redeploy And Spoil"



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

March 6, 2007 The Associated Press [Excerpts]

Insurgents are striking back around the Iraqi capital as the U.S. struggles to secure the city.

The change indicates how all sides opposed to the U.S. presence show surprising resilience and ability to switch strategies to survive.

"It's their answer to the 'surge' strategy — recoil, redeploy and spoil," Peter Harling of the International Crisis Group. "The strategy is to deploy into the vacuum left by the current focus on Baghdad."

Outside the capital, militants are trying to expand footholds to the northeast in Diyala province while hitting back hard against a U.S.-backed Sunni tribal militia in Anbar to the west.

In towns and cities of Anbar, a government presence hardly exists, according to residents.

A leader said Baghdad remains the center for "the resistance" and that they would never abandon the capital to the Americans. He spoke by telephone to The Associated Press in Amman, Jordan, on condition of anonymity for his own security.

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



U.S. soldier reads on a cot at a police station, part of the "outpost" system, in the southeast of Baghdad, February 28, 2007. REUTERS/Carlos Barria (IRAQ)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Royal Marine Killed In Kajaki

6 Mar 07 Military Operations, MOD

It is with deep regret that the Ministry of Defence must confirm the death of a Royal Marine from 42 Commando, today, Tuesday 6 March 2007, in Helmand province, Afghanistan.

The Royal Marine was killed when his unit came under fire during a deliberate clearance operation in the Kajaki area.

British Spy Reported Captured

3.6.07 Deepika Global & (Reuters)

The Taliban said they had captured a reporter spying for British troops

A Pakistani newspaper identified the Briton as John Nichol.

"He was pretending to be a journalist, but when we investigated we found he's working for the British troops," Taliban spokesman Qari Mohammad Yousuf told Reuters by satellite phone from an undisclosed location.

U.S. Occupation Forces Who Committed Mass Murder Of Unarmed Afghan Civilians Also Threatened To Kill Reporter For His Photos: “Delete Them, Or We Will Delete You”

March 4, 2007 The Associated Press.

KABUL, Afghanistan -- Afghan journalists covering the aftermath of a suicide bomb attack and shooting in eastern Afghanistan Sunday said U.S. troops deleted their photos and video and warned them not to publish or air any images of U.S. troops or a car where three Afghans were shot to death.

[16 unarmed civilians were killed, and over 30 others shot and wounded.]

Afghan witnesses and gunshot victims said U.S. forces fired on civilians in cars and on foot along at least a six-mile stretch of road in Nangarhar province following a suicide attack against the Marine convoy.

A freelance photographer working for The Associated Press and a cameraman working for AP Television News said a U.S. soldier deleted their photos and video showing a four-wheel drive vehicle in which three people were shot to death about 100 yards from the suicide bombing. The AP plans to lodge a protest with the American military.

The photographer, Rahmat Gul, said witnesses at the scene told him the three had been shot to death by U.S. forces fleeing the attack. The two AP freelancers arrived at the site about a half hour after the suicide bombing, Gul said.

"When I went near the four-wheel drive, I saw the Americans taking pictures of the same car, so I started taking pictures," Gul said. "Two soldiers with a translator came and said, 'Why are you taking pictures? You don't have permission.'"

It wasn't clear why the accredited journalists would need permission to take photos of a civilian car on a public highway.

Gul said the U.S. troops took his camera, deleted his photos and returned it to him. The journalists came across another American, showed their identification cards, and he agreed that they could take pictures.

A Western military official who asked not to be identified because he was not authorized to release the information said the troops were Marine Special Operations Forces.

"The same soldier who took my camera came again and deleted my photos," Gul said. "The soldier was very angry ... I told him, 'They gave us permission,' but he didn't listen."

Gul's new photos were also deleted, and the American, speaking through a translator, warned him that he did not want to see any AP photos published anywhere. The American also raised his fist in anger as if he were going to hit him, but he did not strike, Gul said.

Khanwali Kamran, a reporter for the Afghan channel Ariana Television, was in a small group of journalists working alongside Gul. Kamran said the American soldiers also deleted his footage.

"They warned me that if it is aired ... then, 'You will face problems,'" Kamran said.

Taqiullah Taqi, a reporter for Afghanistan's largest television station, Tolo TV, said Americans were using abusive language.

"According to the translator, they said, 'Delete them, or we will delete you,'" Taqi said.

A freelance cameraman for AP Television News said that about 100 yards from the bomb site, a U.S. officer told him that he could not go any closer to the scene but that he could shoot footage. The cameraman asked not to be named for his own safety.

"Then I started filming the suicide attack site, where there was a body and U.S. soldiers, and farther away, there was a four-wheel drive vehicle in which three people were shot to death," he said.

As he was filming, he said, a U.S. soldier and translator "ordered us not to move." The cameraman said they were very angry and deleted any footage that included the Americans, as well as part of an interview from a demonstration. Hundreds of Afghans had gathered to protest the violence.

Reporters Without Borders condemned the actions of the U.S. forces, saying they dealt with the press poorly.

"Why did the soldiers do it if they don't have anything to hide?"

TROOP NEWS

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



U.S. soldier who was wounded in Iraq at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington February 9, 2007. REUTERS/Yuri Gripas

Hundreds More Sign Appeal For Redress After TV Report; “The Widening Of Open Opposition To The Iraq War Within The U.S. Military Itself”



Jonathan Hutto and Liam Madden at anti-war rally in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 27.
[WW photo: John Catalinotto]

[Thanks to Max Watts, who sent this in.]

Feb 28, 2007 Workers World [Excerpts]

CBS's news magazine "60 Minutes" coverage in late February of the GI "Appeal for Redress" reflected the widening of open opposition to the Iraq War within the U.S. military itself.

The Appeal for Redress is a statement directed at Congress that includes this important phrase: "It is time for U.S. troops to come home."

The publicity had its impact. Hundreds more active-duty GIs signed.

Workers World spoke a day later with Petty Officer Hutto, who said: "It was a new breakthrough for the Appeal for Redress. It cemented the appeal, making it clear that it was a legal activity that every active duty member of the U.S. armed forces has the right to participate in. Even for those who don't agree, it made it clear that we had the right to do it."

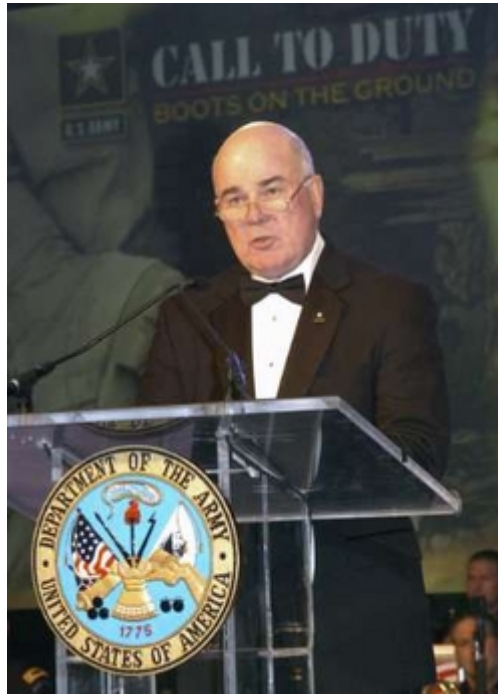
"On Thursday (Feb. 22), we had 1,278 signatures reported on our site. Now, on Monday night, Feb. 26, there are 170 more, or 1,448. It is clear that when GIs know about the Appeal and they know it is legal, they sign."

By the next evening, the number had grown to 1,615, that is, over 150 in one day.

The Appeal For Redress:
Appealforredress.org

“Scare Tactics Are Used Against Soldiers Who Will Write Sworn Statement To Assist Fellow Soldiers For Their Medical Needs”

**ONE DEAD RAT IS NOT ENOUGH;
TIME TO CLEAN OUT THE NEST**



Rat Secretary of the U.S. Army Francis Harvey has resigned after reports that troops wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan were being poorly treated at the Army's top hospital, Walter Reed Medical Center. REUTERS/Christopher Paul/Defense Department/Handout

[Thanks to Katherine GY, The Military Project & Phil G & Clancy S, who sent this in.]

[Here it is again. Same old story. Used up, thrown away, and the politicians couldn't care less. To repeat for the 3,489th time, there is no enemy in Iraq. Iraqis and U.S. troops have a common enemy. That common enemy owns and operates

the Imperial government in Washington DC for their own profit. That common enemy started this war of conquest on a platform of lies, because they couldn't tell the truth: this war was about making money for them, and nothing else. Payback is overdue. T]

Nearly 4,000 outpatients are currently in the military's Medical Holding or Medical Holdover companies, which oversee the wounded. Soldiers and veterans report bureaucratic disarray similar to Walter Reed's: indifferent, untrained staff; lost paperwork; medical appointments that drop from the computers; and long waits for consultations.

March 5, 2007 By Anne Hull and Dana Priest, Washington Post Staff Writers [Excerpts]

Ray Oliva went into the spare bedroom in his home in Kelseyville, Calif., to wrestle with his feelings. He didn't know a single soldier at Walter Reed, but he felt he knew them all. He worried about the wounded who were entering the world of military health care, which he knew all too well.

His own VA hospital in Livermore was a mess. The gown he wore was torn. The wheelchairs were old and broken.

"It is just not Walter Reed," Oliva slowly tapped out on his keyboard at 4:23 in the afternoon on Friday.

"The VA hospitals are not good either except for the staff who work so hard. It brings tears to my eyes when I see my brothers and sisters having to deal with these conditions. I am 70 years old, some say older than dirt but when I am with my brothers and sisters we become one and are made whole again."

Oliva is but one quaking voice in a vast outpouring of accounts filled with emotion and anger about the mistreatment of wounded outpatients at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Stories of neglect and substandard care have flooded in from soldiers, their family members, veterans, doctors and nurses working inside the system.

They describe depressing living conditions for outpatients at other military bases around the country, from Fort Lewis in Washington state to Fort Dix in New Jersey.

In just two weeks, the Army secretary has been fired, a two-star general relieved of command and two special commissions appointed; congressional subcommittees are lining up for hearings, the first today at Walter Reed; and the president, in his weekly radio address, redoubled promises to do right by the all-volunteer force, 1.5 million of whom have fought in Iraq and Afghanistan.

But much deeper has been the reaction outside Washington, including from many of the 600,000 new veterans who left the service after Iraq and Afghanistan.

Wrenching questions have dominated blogs, talk shows, editorial cartoons, VFW spaghetti suppers and the solitary late nights of soldiers and former soldiers who fire off e-mails to reporters, members of Congress and the White House -- looking, finally, for attention and solutions.

On top of all that, America had believed the government's assurances that the wounded were being taken care of.

Across the country, some military quarters for wounded outpatients are in bad shape, according to interviews, Government Accountability Office reports and transcripts of congressional testimony.

The mold, mice and rot of Walter Reed's Building 18 compose a familiar scenario for many soldiers back from Iraq or Afghanistan who were shipped to their home posts for treatment.

Nearly 4,000 outpatients are currently in the military's Medical Holding or Medical Holdover companies, which oversee the wounded. Soldiers and veterans report bureaucratic disarray similar to Walter Reed's: indifferent, untrained staff; lost paperwork; medical appointments that drop from the computers; and long waits for consultations.

Sandy Karen was horrified when her 21-year-old son was discharged from the Naval Medical Center in San Diego a few months ago and told to report to the outpatient barracks, only to find the room swarming with fruit flies, trash overflowing and a syringe on the table.

"The staff sergeant says, 'Here are your linens' to my son, who can't even stand up," said Karen, of Brookeville, Md. "This kid has an open wound, and I'm going to put him in a room with fruit flies?" She took her son to a hotel instead.

"My concern is for the others, who don't have a parent or someone to fight for them," Karen said. "These are just kids. Who would have ever looked in on my son?"

Hundreds of soldiers contacted The Washington Post through telephone calls and e-mails, many of them describing their bleak existence in Medhold.

From Fort Campbell in Kentucky: "There were yellow signs on the door stating our barracks had asbestos."

From Fort Bragg in North Carolina: "They are on my shit like a diaper. . . . there are people getting chewed up everyday."

From Fort Dix in New Jersey: "Scare tactics are used against soldiers who will write sworn statement to assist fellow soldiers for their medical needs."

From Fort Irwin in California: "Most of us have had to sign waivers where we understand that the housing we were in failed to meet minimal government standards."

Soldiers back from Iraq worry that their psychological problems are only beginning to surface. "The hammer is just coming down, I can feel it," said retired Maj. Anthony DeStefano of New Jersey, describing his descent into post-traumatic stress and the Army's propensity to medicate rather than talk. When he returned home, Army doctors put him on the antipsychotic drug Seroquel. "That way, you can screw their lights out and they won't feel a thing," he said of patients like himself.

"By the time they understand what is going on, they are through the Board and stuck with an unfavorable percentage of disability" benefits.

VA hospitals are also receiving a surge of new patients after more than five years of combat.

At the sprawling James J. Peters VA Medical Center in the Bronx, N.Y., Spec. Roberto Reyes Jr. lies nearly immobile and unable to talk. Once a strapping member of Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry, Reyes got too close to an improvised explosive device in Iraq and was sent to Walter Reed, where doctors did all they could before shipping him to the VA for the remainder of his life. A cloudy bag of urine hangs from his wheelchair. His mother and his aunt are constant bedside companions; Reyes, 25, likes for them to get two inches from his face, so he can pull on their noses with the few fingers he can still control.

Maria Mendez, his aunt, complained about the hospital staff. "They fight over who's going to have to give him a bath -- in front of him!" she said.

Reyes suffered third-degree burns on his leg when a nurse left him in a shower unattended. He was unable to move himself away from the scalding water. His aunt found out only later, when she saw the burns.

Among the most aggrieved are veterans who have lived with the open secret of substandard, underfunded care in the 154 VA hospitals and hundreds of community health centers around the country. They vented their fury in thousands of e-mails and phone calls and in chat rooms.

"I have been trying to get someone, ANYBODY, to look into my allegations" at the Dayton VA, pleaded Darrell Hampton.

"I'm calling from Summerville, South Carolina, and I have a story to tell," began Horace Williams, 62. "I'm a Marine from the Vietnam era, and it took me 20 years to get the benefits I was entitled to."

The VA has a backlog of 400,000 benefit claims, including many concerning mental health.

For years, politicians have received letters from veterans complaining of bad care across the country.

Sgt. William A. Jones had recently written to his Arizona senators complaining about abuse at the VA hospital in Phoenix. He had written to the president before that. "Not one person has taken the time to respond in any manner," Jones said in an e-mail.

From Ray Oliva, the distraught 70-year-old vet from Kelseyville, Calif., came this: "I wrote a letter to Senators Feinstein and Boxer a few years ago asking why I had to wear Hospital gowns that had holes in them and torn and why some of the Vets had to ask for beds that had good mattress instead of broken and old. Wheel chairs old and tired and the list goes on and on. I never did get a response."

Oliva lives in a house on a tranquil lake. His hearing is shot from working on fighter jets on the flight line. "Gun plumbers," as they called themselves, didn't get earplugs in the late 1950s, when Oliva served with the Air Force. His hands had been burned from touching the skin of the aircraft.

All is minor compared with what he later saw at the VA hospital where he received care.

"I sat with guys who'd served in 'Nam," Oliva said. "We had terrible problems with the VA. But we were all so powerless to do anything about them. Just like Walter Reed."

MORE:

Bush Buddies At Work; Fucking Over Veterans, As Usual; “A Large Contract To Run Walter Reed Under Suspicious Circumstances”

[Thanks to Katherine GY, who sent this in.]

March 5, 2007 By PAUL KRUGMAN, The New York Times [Excerpts]

When Salon, the online magazine, reported on mistreatment of veterans at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center two years ago, officials simply denied that there were any problems. And they initially tried to brush off last month's exposé in The Washington Post.

We know from Hurricane Katrina postmortems that one of the factors degrading FEMA's effectiveness was the Bush administration's relentless push to outsource and privatize disaster management, which demoralized government employees and drove away many of the agency's most experienced professionals. It appears that the same thing has been happening to veterans' care.

IAP Worldwide Services, a company run by two former Halliburton executives, received a large contract to run Walter Reed under suspicious circumstances: the Army reversed the results of an audit concluding that government employees could do the job more cheaply.

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;



An Iraqi army jacket arranged together with a sheep skull and parts of a damaged Iraqi army vehicle left after a car bomb attack in west Baghdad March 6, 2007. The car bomb went off Monday in west Baghdad's Jamiaa neighborhood, targeting an Iraqi army patrol. (AP Photo/Asaad Mouhsin)

03/06/07 AP & Xinhua & Reuters &

A roadside bomb planted near an Iraqi army checkpoint in the al-Ma'amil area in Baghdad's eastern neighborhood detonated in the morning, killing five soldiers and wounding another

Another police convoy was hit south of Baghdad, killing a commander and wounding four guards, police said.

A bomb targeting an Iraqi army checkpoint killed four soldiers and wounded one civilian in eastern Baghdad's Ubaidi district, police said.

A roadside bomb exploded next to a fuel tanker in north Baghdad's Sarafiyah neighborhood, killing two people and wounding four others, police said.

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

Resistance Storms Mosul Prison, 140 Inmates Freed

Mar 7 Pty Ltd & By BRIAN MURPHY, Associated Press Writer

Dozens of guerrillas stormed an Iraqi jail in the northern city of Mosul and freed up to 140 prisoners in one of the biggest prison breaks since the US-led invasion in 2003, police said.

Militants attacked Mosul's northwestern Badoush prison just after sunset and overwhelmed police, who were forced to call the US military for backup.

Local security officials said the attackers were insurgents.

The prison has a poor security record.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

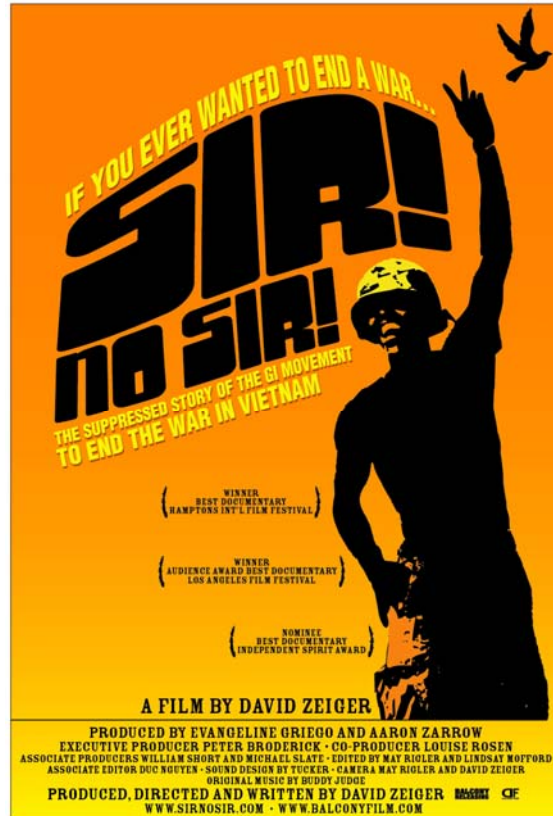
March 6, 1967: Honorable Anniversary



Carl Bunin Peace History

Muhammad Ali was ordered by the Selective Service to be inducted into military service. He refused, citing his religious beliefs that precluded him from killing others.

"I ain't got no quarrel with those Vietcong."



Sir! No Sir!:
At A Theatre Near You!
To find it: <http://www.sirnosir.com/>

The Sir! No Sir! DVD is on sale now, exclusively at www.sirnosir.com.

Also available is a Soundtrack CD (which includes the entire song from the FTA Show, "Soldier We Love You"), theatrical posters, tee shirts, and the DVD of "A Night of Ferocious Joy," a film about the first hip-hop antiwar concert against the "War on Terror."

Custer Stayed The Course



From: Mike Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: March 04, 2007

Custer Stayed The Course

And
died
for
the
sins
of
Empire.
When I came back from Vietnam,
one word defined me:
Rage.
When you can define Betrayal,
you realize you fought on the wrong side.
I quit going to confession a long time ago,
because my ancestors are finally free.
Sitting Bull and I ride on the same side.
What a fool I once was.

Mike Hastie

U.S. Army Medic
1st Squadron 10th Cavalry
Vietnam 1970-71
March 4, 2007

Photo and caption from the I-R-A-Q (I Remember Another Quagmire) portfolio of Mike Hastie, US Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71. (For more of his outstanding work, contact at: (hastiemike@earthlink.net) T)

Troops Invited:

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

March 7, 1965: Anniversary **The First March From Selma:** **A Day That That Shook The World**



Alabama police attack Selma-to-Montgomery marchers

Carl Bunin Peace History; Americaslibrary.gov [Excerpts]

March 7, 1965

When 525 people started a planned march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, on Sunday March 7, 1965, it was called a demonstration. When state troopers met the

demonstrators at the edge of the city by the Edmund Pettus Bridge, that day became known as "Bloody Sunday."

In Selma, African Americans made up almost half the population, but only two percent were registered voters. Discrimination and intimidation tactics aimed at blacks kept them from registering and voting. The demonstrators marched to demand fairness in voter registration.

The sheriff warned the people that they had two minutes to break up the march, but the deputies attacked sooner. The demonstrators were tear-gassed, clubbed, spat on, whipped, trampled by horses, and jeered by others for demanding the right to register to vote.

Television and newspapers carried pictures of the event that became known as "Bloody Sunday."

The images sickened, outraged, and electrified people throughout the country.

Within 48 hours, demonstrations in support of the marchers were held in 80 cities. Many of the nation's religious and lay leaders, including Martin Luther King, flew to Selma. After one more failed attempt, King led a peaceful march from Selma to Montgomery. Congress responded to these events by enacting the Voting Rights Act of 1965.



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)



"Sit up, join up, get on line, get in touch, find out who's raising hell and join them. No use waiting on a bunch of wussy politicians." Molly Ivins [From Carl Bunin Peace History]

“If Democrats Don’t Act To End The Iraq War, It’s Because They Don’t Want To”

By LANCE SELFA, International Socialist Review Issue 51, January–February 2007
[Excerpts]

Since the election, the public’s desire to see the end of the Iraq war has only increased. Almost six in ten Americans support a “timetable for withdrawal” from Iraq and 73 percent of Americans said the U.S. should withdraw from Iraq within a year if the Iraqis wanted it, according to an early December poll conducted for the University of Maryland’s Program on International Policy Attitudes.

In fact, a September 2006 poll of Iraqis—conducted by the same pollsters—found that 71 percent of Iraqis want the U.S. out in a year.

So the majority of Iraqis and Americans agree: the U.S. must leave Iraq—the sooner, the better.

If Democrats were clearly committed to do what their most committed supporters want them to do — that is, to end the war in Iraq — they could use their power over financing of the war to force Bush’s hand. However, pigs would fly before Democrats countenanced that.

Moreover, one has only to look at the line-up of congressional leaders to get a hint of where the Democratic Congress will stand.

Incoming House Majority Leader Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) supports the war. He defeated war critic Rep. Jack Murtha (D-Pa.) by a more than 2-to-1 vote in the Democratic House Caucus, a margin that should give an indication of where the majority of Democrats stand on the war.

The two leading Democratic spokespeople on foreign affairs will be, in the House, Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), and in the Senate, Sen. Joe Biden (D-Del.). Lantos is one of the most fanatical Zionists in the Congress and a virtual neoconservative when it comes to just about every issue related to the Middle East, from invading Iraq to bombing Iran's nuclear facilities.

And Biden, in addition to being in love with the sound of his own voice, is a champion of the U.S. right to unilaterally invade any country it deems to be a threat. Until recently, he was flogging a plan to partition Iraq into three ethnic zones.

So rather than seeing congressional pressure to end Bush's disaster in Iraq, we are likely to see a proliferation of timetables, exit strategies, multi-layered conditional plans for "redeployment," and so on.

All of them will be designed to "change course" in Iraq, while prolonging the illegal U.S. occupation.

Democrats may try to excuse themselves with the argument that they can't really do anything in Iraq because Bush controls the White House and the Pentagon, but this is merely an alibi.

If Democrats don't act to end the Iraq War, it's because they don't want to.

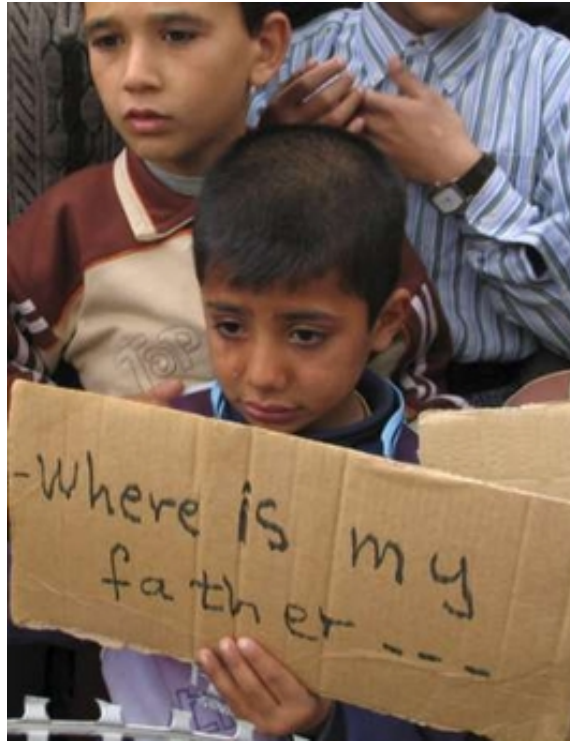
Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward GI Special along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance 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!**

OCCUPATION REPORT

**U.S. OCCUPATION RECRUITING
DRIVE IN HIGH GEAR;**

RECRUITING FOR THE ARMED RESISTANCE THAT IS



A boy weeps while holding a placard during a rally near Kirkuk March 4, 2007. The boy joined the protest to ask for the release of his father, who protesters said was among those arrested during a U.S. military raid two days ago. REUTERS/Slahaldeen Rasheed (IRAQ)

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

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

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

HAPPY IRAQIS GREET THEIR LIBERATORS



U.S. soldiers of the 3rd Squadron 61st Cavalry Regiment patrol the market of the city of Salman Pak, south of Baghdad, March 5, 2007. REUTERS/Fabrizio Bensch

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

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