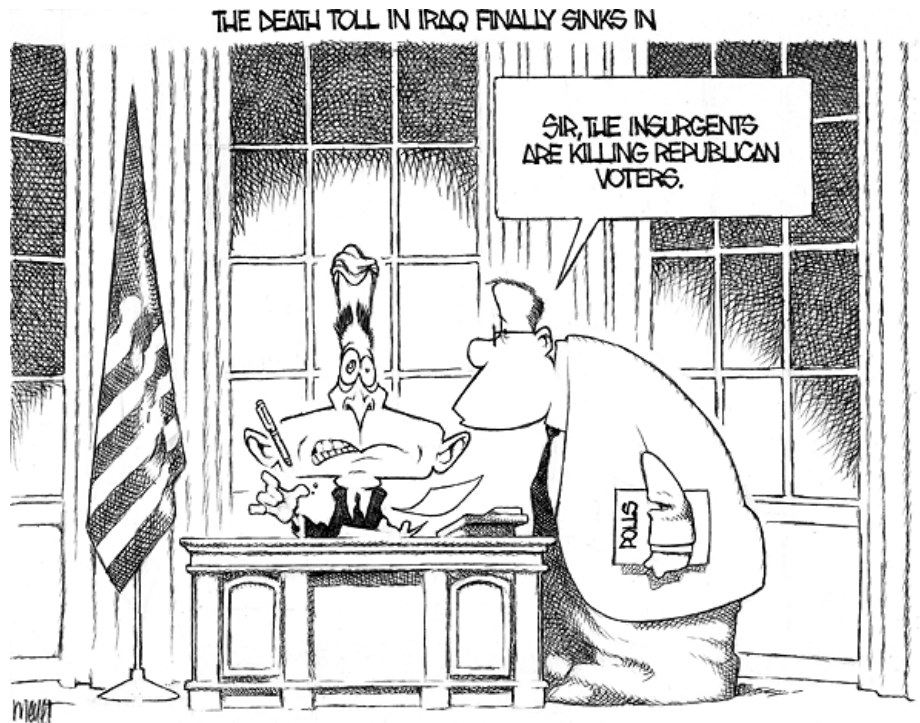


GI SPECIAL 5D18:



**“My Colleagues Call It
The ‘Wal-Mart Greeter
Test,’” Engle Said:**

**“If You Could Be A Greeter At A
Discount Store, You Don’t Qualify
For More Than 10 Percent”**

**[Avoid Getting Injured In Combat:
The Army Will Fuck You If You Do]**

[Here it is again. Same old story. Used up, thrown away, and the politicians couldn't care less. To repeat for the 3,498st 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]

April 16, 2007 By Kelly Kennedy - Staff writer, Army Times [Excerpts]

The Army disability retirement system stacks the deck against injured soldiers by forcing them to prove they have post-traumatic stress disorder, demanding physical evidence for traumatic brain injuries, and restricting access to rules and regulations they need to make their cases, said an Army lawyer who helps soldiers appeal their claims.

"I think the problems are systemic," said Steven Engle, head legal counsel for soldiers going through the disability physical evaluation system at Fort Lewis, Wash.

"The rules are inequitable."

In some cases, he said, they may even be illegal.

And the cases that are coming to define the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan — traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder and musculoskeletal injuries — are the ones most affected by unfair or unclear rules coming from the service's top-level Physical Disability Agency, Engle said.

The most troublesome cases involve injuries that can't be proven with medical evidence, Engle said. One major issue: soldiers with PTSD must prove they witnessed a traumatic event.

In its guidance for preparing psychiatric reports on soldiers going through the physical evaluation board process, the Physical Disability Agency cites various ways soldiers can prove they have had a PTSD-level "traumatic stressor": statements from a commander or from fellow soldiers, awards with citations, statements from the soldier's family showing behavior changes, police reports and sworn witness statements.

"Where a data source includes information based only on what the soldier has related," the guidance states, "you should not use this data source as supportive collateral information."

That seems to contravene the Army's own regulations. AR 635-40 states that if there is no proof against a soldier's claim, "reasonable doubt should be resolved in favor of the soldier."

Engle said decisions on PTSD ratings should be based on the same information as all other mental disabilities — a psychiatrist's formal diagnosis.

Putting the burden of proof for PTSD on the soldier, he said, "is grossly unfair."

In one case, he said, a soldier watched a buddy die in Iraq and has since suffered nightmares, played the event over in his mind continuously, and remains hyper-alert to possible danger.

To help prove he had PTSD, the soldier was told to contact the family of his dead friend to get documentation that the friend had died. Then, Engle said, he was told to prove he witnessed the death.

“He just couldn’t ... do it,” Engle said.

According to the guidance for psychiatrists, even if a soldier proves he witnessed a traumatic event and afterward develops PTSD symptoms, it may not be PTSD, but rather strong emotional reactions to other stressors — contentious relations with a commander, marriage problems, financial difficulties, a history of poor job adjustment, significant personality problems or disciplinary action.

The guidance also suggests psychiatrists should be alert to the possibility that a soldier’s “current mental disorder began or existed prior” to joining the military.

In such cases, soldiers with less than eight years of service are discharged with no severance check, no medical benefits, and no access to care from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

In one case documented by Military Times, a soldier with a brain tumor was considered to have a pre-existing condition even though there was no medical evidence to prove it. Because he had been in for less than eight years, he received no disability benefits from the Army.

Soldiers with traumatic brain injuries face a similar situation: If they can’t prove with medical evidence that damage was done, they may be rated as only 10 percent disabled, well below the threshold required to earn lifetime medical retirement.

“Those cases are terribly under-rated,” Engle said. “I think there’s great confusion on how to rate it.

“There’s an inherent skepticism built into the rules if you can’t see an injury or measure it with a tool.”

Jeannette Mayer recently took her husband, Staff Sgt. DeWayne Mayer, to the Elks Rehab Hospital in Boise, Idaho, where he was diagnosed with traumatic brain injury in February.

She said the injury should have been obvious much earlier to Army physicians, and that he should have been rated for it at his physical evaluation board.

Between May and October of 2005, DeWayne Mayer suffered at least five concussive head injuries, his wife said — three from being close to roadside bomb blasts, one when his Humvee flipped, and one when American troops blew up a downed U.S. helicopter that he was guarding before he had gotten clear.

“There are times when he is totally confused,” his wife said. “He doesn’t understand what you’re saying to him. If you try to get his attention, he gets violent.”

He suffers migraines, slurs his speech, shuffles his feet, and has been diagnosed with short-term memory loss.

As he recuperated at Fort Lewis, she said she asked doctors again and again if it could be a traumatic brain injury. She said he was never seen by a traumatic brain disorder specialist, and that his physical evaluation board gave him three disability ratings of 10 percent each for short-term memory loss, cognitive disorder and a neck injury.

“They told me the TBI program was not for people with short-term memory loss,” she said. “That was a different diagnosis.”

Engle said it may not have mattered. In another example of seemingly conflicting rules, the guidance for psychiatrists on mental disorders says soldiers should be evaluated based on their ability to work in a civilian setting — even though the physical evaluation board’s stated task is to determine if soldiers are still fit for their military jobs.

The guidance tells doctors to determine if a soldier has an “acceptable level of attention and concentration” to allow him to be civil with co-workers, make simple work decisions, ask simple questions and request help.

“My colleagues call it the ‘Wal-Mart greeter test,’” Engle said. “If you could be a greeter at a discount store, you don’t qualify for more than 10 percent.”

Engle also said getting Army rules, regulations and guidance from the Physical Evaluation Board is often difficult, and that those documents are not stored in a central location.

In March, Engle said he received an e-mail from the PEB with disability ratings guidance for musculoskeletal issues and neurological and convulsive disorders — dated 2005. Engle did not know the changes existed.

He believes more soldiers need to challenge the system by appealing their initial, informal board decisions.

“Dozens and dozens” of clients have told him medical evaluation board members have said soldiers can be rated for only one disability, and that’s not true, he said. Soldiers should be rated for all injuries that affect their ability to work.

Data provided by the Army shows that about 80 percent of injured soldiers at Fort Lewis accept the decision of their initial, informal evaluation board, while the remaining 20 percent appeal.

About half of those who decide to appeal eventually choose not to follow through after consulting with legal counsel, the Army said.

That means only 10 percent of injured soldiers entering the disability system at Fort Lewis ever go before a formal evaluation board for their conditions.

Engle has recommendations of his own, starting with lowering the time-in-service threshold for pre-existing conditions from eight years to three.

He also said the Army should more closely follow Defense Department guidance and policy in rating injuries.

Critics say the Navy and Air Force do so — which may be one reason why their average disability ratings and payments are higher than the Army's, even though the Army has many more serious injuries coming out of the war zones.

“It boggles my mind to see higher ratings in the Air Force with so many traumatic injuries coming through the Army,” Engle said.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

IED Kills Two U.S. Soldiers North Of Baghdad, One Wounded

April 19, 2007 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20070419-03

BAGHDAD — Two MND-B Soldiers died and one other was wounded when their vehicle was struck by an improvised explosive device north of Baghdad April 18. The unit was returning from a combat patrol in the area when the attack occurred.

Two British Soldiers Killed In Iraq On 19 April 2007

19 Apr 07 Ministry of Defence

It is with great sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm the deaths of two soldiers from the Queen's Royal Lancers in south-east Iraq at approximately 1120 hours local time on Thursday 19 April 2007.

Both were killed by an improvised explosive device in Maysaan Province. The soldiers were on a routine patrol in a Scimitar armoured vehicle when they were hit by the blast. Three further soldiers were injured, one of them very seriously.

All casualties were taken by helicopter to Tallil airbase in Dhi Qar Province where they are receiving the best possible medical care.

U.S. Soldier Killed By Baghdad Small Arms Fire

April 19, 2007 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20070419-04

BAGHDAD — An MND-B Soldier died when a combat security patrol was attacked with small arms fire in a southwestern section of Baghdad April 18.

David A. Mejias Dies Of Injuries From I.E.D.



April 08, 2007Iraqnam.blogspot.com

Staff Sgt. David A. Mejias, 26, was a military police noncommissioned officer assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion.

A native of San Juan, Puerto Rico, Mejias enlisted in the Army in October 2001 and trained at Fort Sill, Okla., to be an artilleryman.

In March 2002, he was assigned to 1st Battalion, 6th Field Artillery at Warner Barracks, Germany. He was reassigned to Fort Drum in March 2006.

While assigned to Germany, he deployed to Yugoslavia from November to December 2002.

Mejias' military education includes the Warrior Leader Course, Unit Armorer Course and the Combat Lifesaver Course.

His awards and decorations include the Purple Heart, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Valorous Unit Award, Army Good Conduct Medal, National

Defense Service Medal, Kosovo Campaign Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, NATO Medal, Combat Action Badge and the Driver Badge.

He is survived by his wife and daughter, of Fort Drum, and his parent, who live in Puerto Rico.

Burley Native Killed While Defusing Bombs In Iraq

April 10, 2007 By David Chircop, The Daily Herald

EVERETT, Wash. - Petty Officer 2nd Class Curtis Hall, 24, of Burley was the type of man you might expect to volunteer to defuse bombs, to save people.

The towering 6-foot-7-inch former high school basketball player "was like a ray of sunshine," said his sister, Brenda Thibeault, 37. "He loved to tease and play, but knew where the line was. He always knew how just to have fun."

He was already a hero long before he died Friday in Iraq, while assigned to defusing and detonating bombs. Hall was probably killed by an improvised explosive device, or IED, although no specifics have been released, said a spokeswoman for Navy public affairs at the Pentagon.

As a lanky 14-year-old Boy Scout, he was credited with saving his father's life in a rafting accident in the rapids along the Salmon River.

A fierce windstorm worked a boulder loose from a cliff. A chunk split off, hitting Hall's father in his arm and head, breaking his arm and knocking him unconscious.

He plunged face down into the water.

Even though the teen himself was hit on the arm and injured by another chunk of rock, he jumped out of the raft in an attempt to save his father.

But he couldn't flip him over on his own.

One of Hall's older brothers, Randy, 16 at the time, jumped in after them, and together the boys grabbed their father and swam him to shore.

The young men were awarded the Boy Scout's Honor Medal, for unusual heroism and skill in saving a life at considerable risk to themselves.

Their story was featured in Boys Life, the official magazine of the Boy Scouts of America.

Years later, the brothers would join the Navy, both serving in combat in Iraq.

Randy Hall was wounded in Iraq in 2003 when his Humvee was attacked, killing a sailor beside him. He is now attending college in Dillon, Mont. The Navy has agreed to fly him to a military mortuary in Dover, Del., this week to escort his brother's body to their family home in Idaho.

Thibeault, 37, said saving their father's life was characteristic of her fallen brother, who would later volunteer for the dangerous job of dismantling bombs in the Navy.

Hall earned three medals as a specialist in defusing and exploding bombs underwater, a Pentagon spokeswoman told the Times-News on Monday.

He was the youngest of five children from a family in Burley.

After hearing the news, neighbors of Hall's parents and the Boy Scouts lined their cul-de-sac with 67 American flags.

Hall enjoyed shooting guns, riding his Harley-Davidson motorcycle, driving Jeeps and running around in his new snowmobile, Thibeault said.

Chukk Fogel, 24, of San Diego, became friends with Hall in Florida where the two were training to be explosive ordnance disposal technicians.

They became fast friends and spent many nights hanging out together, Fogel said.

"He loved the outdoors," he said. "He loved to go up in the mountains and go (four-wheeling) with his Jeep. He had a huge Jeep with huge tires."

He also had a more artistic side, learning to play guitar, piano and trombone, Thibeault said. He also was family oriented, always taking time to visit his siblings.

He called his mother, Pam, who is an elementary school teacher, on her birthday Thursday, the day before he was killed. It was his second tour of duty in Iraq.

During his first tour, Hall, a certified diver, trained dolphins to locate and clear mines.

Between tours, Hall visited his family for Christmas, and bought the snowmobile he kept in his parent's garage.

Thibeault said her family is still numb and in shock, trying to cope with the loss of the young man who always seemed so full of joy.

She said her family has turned for comfort to leaders at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, where they attend.

"My parents don't blame anyone, the war, or the Navy," she said. "But in some ways, they don't feel it's fair because he was such an amazing person. It's not fair to take somebody like that, but there's a reason for everything, and someday we'll know that reason."

One of Hall's older brothers, Michael, died of a mysterious illness in 2003.

Shortly before his death, he posted a tribute on the Web to his brothers, who were both in the Navy at the time.

"My younger brothers are heroes," he wrote. "Not only to me and my family but to the whole community of Burley, Idaho."

Iraq War Victim Was Pueblo Grad

04.11.2007 By Carol Ann Alaimo, Arizona Daily Star

To his teachers at Pueblo Magnet High School, Damian Lopez Rodriguez was a picture of happiness, especially after joining the Army.

To students — in particular, fellow drummers on his high school drum line — he was a king of comedy, a master of wisecracks and wacky antics.

And at home, Rodriguez, the baby of his family, was said to be devoted to his mother.

All were left reeling when they learned the exuberant young infantryman had been killed in action in Iraq at age 19.

"It's just crushing," said Nora Ford, Pueblo's band director during Rodriguez's senior year. Ford spent much of Tuesday comforting shaken students.

Rodriguez, a 2005 Pueblo graduate and an Army private, was one of three soldiers who died in Baghdad on Good Friday when a homemade bomb went off under their Humvee.

Friends said he joined the military for college money and was fiercely proud of his decision to enlist.

He is the 30th service member with Southern Arizona ties to be claimed by the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the first Pueblo graduate killed.

The South Side school had counselors standing by Tuesday to assist those who were grieving.

"Some of our teachers were hit hard by this," school Principal Patricia Dienz said.

Ford, the band director, said Rodriguez sometimes posed as a tough guy, but he actually was softhearted and lived with great gusto for someone so young.

"He loved the drums, he loved his family, and he loved the Army. He seemed to live every moment to the fullest," she said. "He was unique. He didn't let anyone tell him who or what or how to be."

Besides playing in the band, Rodriguez was active in MEChA, a Chicano civil-rights group. The letters stand for Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán.

"We lost a good one," said Sandi Baker, a Pueblo science teacher who taught Rodriguez during his senior year and visited his family's home on Tuesday.

Army officials said the family didn't want to speak to the media. Baker said the family was having a hard time coping, especially the soldier's mother.

Baker said one of the first things she noticed in Rodriguez's bedroom was the dark blue tassel from his Pueblo graduation cap hanging on the wall. On his bed frame was a recruiting sticker bearing the slogan "An Army of One." Rodriguez was so thrilled to be a soldier that before he left for Iraq, he paid a visit to his old high school to show off his uniform to the office staff. "He was very proud to be serving his country," said Gloria Zamorano, Pueblo's attendance secretary.

"I had a bad feeling, so I hugged him extra hard," Zamorano recalled of the soldier's school visit last summer. "I was thinking, 'Don't go.' "

In high school, the soldier was known as Damian Lopez. The Army news release announcing his death added the name Rodriguez. It wasn't immediately clear when or why the soldier began using a new surname.

Pueblo drum line members spent several hours Tuesday trading funny stories about their friend.

There was the time when Rodriguez threw one of them in the lake at Kennedy Park during a band picnic, the time he launched a shaving-cream fight, and all the times they caught him in the band room watching Disney's "Aladdin," his favorite movie.

"I asked him why he was going to Iraq, and he said, 'So I can put lowrider rims on the tanks,' " said drummer Vicente Samaniego, 16, a Pueblo junior. "He was confident he would come back alive."

Rodriguez is survived by his mother, Ana Rodriguez; his father, Rafael Lopez; and two siblings, said South Side resident Jessie Pallanes, who described herself as a friend of the family.

He was overseas with the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, based in Schweinfurt, Germany.

**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**



Thanks to Kevin Ramirez, CCCO. He writes: Pics showing what happens when US bases get mortared/rocketed. Obviously taken by a GI. I found them online, and don't know who took them.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

A Canadian Soldier Dies in Afghanistan

APRIL 18, 2007 CCNMatthews

A Canadian soldier working with Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan died in a non-combat related incident earlier today. The soldier was working on a communications tower when the accident occurred.

TROOP NEWS

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



A horse-drawn carriage carries the casket of U.S. Army Private First Class John Landry Jr. to a cemetery in Wilmington, Massachusetts March 27, 2007. Landry Jr., a 2005 graduate of Lowell Catholic, was killed by a roadside bomb in Iraq on March 17. REUTERS/Brian Snyder

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

***Iraq Veterans Against The War
Say:***

**"The Vast Majority Of
Servicemembers Know The
Mission Is A Farce"**

**"Active Duty Are Getting Sick And
Tired Of Getting Sent Over There"**

**"Active Duty Soldiers Will Need Our
Support, They Will Need To Know**

That Should They Decide To Resist, We Will Stand By Them” [Excerpts]



IRAQ VETS LEADING MARCH ON PENTAGON 3.17.07

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

We care more about the lives of these people serving more than anyone- certainly more than their commander in chief. We want them home and alive this very minute!

I would argue that its about domination, imperialism and control the decisions and resources in that reason so the US can stay on top.

Its bad over there, getting worse, and its no wonder that people don't like to be invaded and live under a martial law and foreign military regardless of how the public relations and politicians spin it.

Date: Apr 11, 2007 8:14 AM

To: GI Special

From: Ron Jacobs

When I was in high school, I lived on a military base and socialized and worked with GIs opposed to the war in Vietnam. These guys weren't very different from me--we liked rock and soul music and we liked to get high--yet most of them had experienced war.

That was something I was not interested in doing, and was but one of many reasons that I opposed the war. Many of today's GIs are in the same boat as my GI buddies back then. They are just like their countrymen and women--except they've experienced war.

A group of antiwar vets who did time in Iraq and Afghanistan have been making their presence known for the past couple of years in the US and, like their predecessors that organized Vietnam Veterans Against the War, these men and women have formed an antiwar group known as Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW).

According to an article in a publication titled North Carolina at War published by the Institute for Southern Studies, IVAW has members in at least 41 states and on some military bases overseas.

I recently got in touch with some of its members.

What follows is a transcript of a hopeful and occasionally heartrending exchange I had with these three folks.

Ron

Ron: If you don't mind, can you provide your name, and what branch and where and when you served in the military. And what you're doing now (besides working with IVAW)?

Adrienne Kinne, US Army (1994-1998), US Army Reserves (1998-2004, activated 10/01-10/03), Arabic linguist (military intelligence). I now work for the VA in White River Junction as a research health science specialist (MS in psychology).

Cpl Matt Howard. Served with 1st Tank Battalion 1st Marine Division during the initial invasion Basra to Baghdad and a year later transferring equipment from Kuwait to Fallujah. I'm currently looking at schools to Study Oriental medicine.

My name is Drew Cameron. I served from August 2000-04 on active duty in the US Army as a field artillery soldier out of Fort Sill, OK. After that I re-enlisted into the Vermont National Guard for two years as a patient administration specialist and ended my time there in August 2006.

I served in Iraq from April-Dec 2003 and our base of operations was Camp Anaconda. Since I got out of Active duty I started going to school full-time, I recently transferred to the University of Vermont where I study forestry. I am on the board for the Vermont Peace and Justice Center and run a small artist collective called the Green Door Studio here in Burlington, Vermont. I make paper and books, and host openings, get the occasional small commission, it helps ya know.

Ron: What caused you all to take the step and join IVAW? Was it an easy choice or a difficult one for each of you? How many sympathizers would you guess you have in the military?

Adrienne: I had heard about IVAW a couple of years ago. Though I supported what they stood for, I didn't really think that I would have a place in IVAW because I served my entire enlistment stateside, and I'd been out of the military for a while by then. Instead I was active with other organizations. I signed petitions, donated, and had just started to get more active last election cycle (Get Out the Vote calls, etc.).

Matt: I joined IVAW the second I found out about it. It was hardly a choice – more of a moral imperative.

And I take comfort in knowing that for every one of us speaking out, there are hundreds who share our views but have not yet found their voice.

Drew: The choice wasn't an easy one for me, after I got out of active duty, really after I got back from Iraq I just wanted to forget about everything and move on. The problem I didn't understand is that one can't reconcile and deal unless you approach and work through it.

So I spent two years of being numb, distant and sometimes self-destructive or angry. I used to get anxiety, like a wave of anxiety for no reason, but mostly didn't really connect with anyone even my girlfriend.

After awhile it came to a point where I wanted to do something, so I went to a protest in January 2006 and met another veteran, he told me about IVAW and what it was all about.

It really blew me away the immediate connection and friendships that comes from talking truthfully about what we did and being active towards ending the repression of military servicemembers who are being used by the warmakers.

I know that there a lot of folks that feel the same way, I have met so many of them. Both my buddies from the Army and veterans that I meet at different events, they know what's up, they know that there is no justification for being over there, but its a conflicting feeling to be open and public about it.

We have a right to do so, after all we are the ones who are paying the highest price over there, us and the people of Iraq.

Why shouldn't we be able to speak truthfully and dissent? The whole military mission-first mindset is a hard one to relinquish even once you get away from it and can take a breath.

Adrienne: When I heard that Bush was going to escalate the US force level in Iraq this January, part of me just snapped to be honest. I couldn't believe that after the elections, and all that had happened, he could just go so brazenly against the will of the people.

I was fortunate to get on a (Burlington, VT.) Peace and Justice Center bus, and I headed to DC for the January 27th March on Washington, my first rally.

I decided to wear my desert uniform, which was also a first for me (it felt really odd too, wearing my uniform out of uniform, by myself until I got to DC, but it seemed right).

When I got to DC, I headed over to the area where I knew veterans would be forming up, and I saw the IVAW table, and I signed up that day.

Someone asked me where I was from, and I said Vermont, and he said, hey, here's another Vermonter. I looked up, and saw Matt and Drew, and that was the beginning for me on pretty much every real level.

I have no idea how many sympathizers we have in the military. That there are more soldiers resisting, and choosing jail over service is telling. That there are 3,000-5,000 estimated AWOL soldiers is also telling.

I think this is the beginning of active duty soldiers standing down and resisting. Time will tell.

Ron: How do you think active duty GIs and Marines perceive the organization?

Matt: The military is organized insanity.

I think an organization like IVAW gives service members inspiration that they are not alone in how they feel. That alters the reality they now find themselves in is, in fact, (and reminds them that that reality is) not normal.

Drew: I think that active-duty guys think that it may be a bit too radical for what they are used to. I remember looking at the website when I was still in and getting all worried that it was illegal or something.

There is this huge false perception that you can't have political views or free speech in the military, that is totally not true under UCMJ. People have a right to do what they want, remember we are supposed to be protecting the constitution, right?

So that misperception definitely plays a part, and of course the Hooah!

Like getting all amped up for a tour is a way to deal with it, but more and more active duty are getting sick and tired of getting sent over there.

They've been there, more than likely already twice and know that another year out there is a heavy burden that they'd rather see end. So if we are struggling to end it, I bet some folks hope we succeed.

The interesting part is that people on active duty are part of it too, they are the ones that are about to go back to hell.

Some of us in IVAW face re-activation but we talk about what we did, I don't even want to know what it feels like to be about to go again.

They are facing an increasingly dire situation, unjustly occupying and waiting to get hit, and the vast majority of servicemembers know the mission is a farce, its just about taking that next step and saying "No, I won't die for your lies."

Drew: It's been really great to meet a lot of organizers and activists that were struggling to stop this war when I was over there. Here they are still working to end this injustice, now more critically than ever with escalation on the mindset of the Bush regime. It's such a resounding feeling of encouragement to be a part of the movement and all of the diverse groups and individuals, including students, who are involved. I wouldn't be here if it weren't for these great people, I owe my friends, my fellow peacemakers a huge debt of gratitude.

It's funny too they say the same thing about the vets who are speaking out.

Matt: Everywhere I go I get absolutely great responses, but it's a weird place to be. Because at the end of the day, I am getting this positive attention for ultimately participating in something extremely negative. One day I hope to live in a world where we don't need veterans to tell people violence never brings about peace. Having said that, the support has been overwhelming.

That has meant a lot, because I was worried at first at being perceived as the enemy. After all, I took part in something very wrong. There is a clear distinction between government policy and the people on the ground in the movement.

This of course is abused by the war mongers who say we don't care about the 'troops'. We care more about the lives of these people serving more than anyone—certainly more than their commander in chief. We want them home and alive this very minute!

Matt: I am opposed to all war. Violence only begets more violence. These wars are living proof of that. We can talk policy and motives until we are blue in the face, but it all boils down to the cyclical nature of violence. A Marine's buddy dies right next to him, so the next time they are hit with an IED he sprays machine gun fire in every direction. Now we have dead Iraqis. They pick up arms to avenge the loss of innocent life. And it just goes on and on and on.

An occupation has never been 'won'. We can't be fooled by the 'good war' propaganda either. Go back and look at the history of Afghanistan, look at our policy decisions. It's about empire - money and power.

And no, that country is not better off. Far from it.

Adrienne: I was in the reserves when 9/11 happened. I remember hearing about the news from one of my professors and not believing him. I drove home and was glued to the tv for the next few weeks. I was waiting to be activated (which came October 3rd). I remember having a hollow pit in my stomach every time Bush came on TV, and started talking about invading Afghanistan.

I remember thinking that it wasn't the people of Afghanistan who attacked us on 9/11, so why should they be made to suffer. In the end, part of me could understand the fact that we sent troops into Afghanistan (if it was really to find bin Laden, but it wasn't).

Drew: Definitely, they are two fronts on the same war, the same agenda and plan to dominate the Middle East.

What would have happened if the government would've actually tried to identify the reasons that people would be so compelled to send a desperation cry over how they are being treated by US foreign policy. What if, instead of war, the US gave them peace, inclusion and a place at the decision making table?

Not Al Qaida, but the people of Afghanistan, those are the ones who have been killed and bombed and subjugated and tortured, right along with the people of Iraq. The whole idea about building democracy is a farce.

If the US government was determined to establish democracy than why won't they listen to the people?

I would argue that its about domination, imperialism and control the decisions and resources in that reason so the US can stay on top.

Its bad over there, getting worse, and its no wonder that people don't like to be invaded and live under a martial law and foreign military regardless of how the public relations and politicians spin it.

Ron: Despite the fact that our culture is very military inundated--you know flyovers at baseball and football games, Army sponsorship of NASCAR teams, Rolling Stone and other such magazines running ads for the military next to their editorials about how screwed up the war is--why does it seem like enlisted men and women are viewed as somehow different (if not outright outcasts) by many citizens? Or is your experience different?

Adrienne: It's very odd, the public's relationship with the military. In the south (I was stationed in Georgia my entire military career outside of training), they were supportive on the one hand because there are so many large posts down that way. The military is a part of their way of life. On the other hand, it was very transparent support. Support based on the idea of patriotism, and not the reality of what we were doing in Iraq or Afghanistan.

In Augusta and Savannah, Georgia, in the year after 9/11, soldiers were invited to make appearances in various places, hockey games, Irish festivals, etc., always in uniform, marching with flags, singing the anthem, rappelling from the ceiling of the hockey rink as they unraveled an American flag draped from on high. Quite the spectacle of support, but really, it was so meaningless. All show and very little substance.

Matt: Well it's hard for many who feel this war is wrong to identify with those involved. Like, who would do that? Its hard for myself sometimes to believe that I did that.

I think its important to realize that there are a lot of good people in the military caught in a horrible situation.

And also maybe because the military is just so fundamentally different. What passes for normal human behavior in the military would absolutely not be tolerated in your average work setting - obviously in combat but in garrison too. Its a completely different world.

Drew: I never felt like an outcast, just like I knew a big secret that I could never explain no matter how hard I tried. I would say that its more of a curiosity and misunderstanding, not judgment.

Matt: I miss the people I served with. It's a tough process to go through, realizing that some days you can miss something you hated so much. As time goes on, some of the better memories have returned. I had a blast in Japan - but that was always far, far from base. Yet even that was tainted. Imagine if another country had military bases in the US. I always felt bad for being there in that capacity.

Adrienne: Yes. I most miss the camaraderie of the military, the sense of belonging. I joined the Army when I was 17, and so I kind of grew up in the military. I suppose I work at the VA now because part of me needed to maintain that connection somehow. To be honest, I loved the Army, for the first two years I was on active duty. I wanted to make it a career, and I was very certain about it.

My illusions concerning what it meant to be a soldier were somewhat shattered soon after I reached my first duty assignment, when I realized that the military doesn't really care about its soldiers. The bottom line is always, do they have enough bodies to fill the positions, period.

Barracks quality, food quality, health care quality, it mattered little.

We worked shift work, and they didn't care that rotating between days and mids every week for over two years was basically turning us all into insomniacs and wreaking havoc on our bodies.

In 1997-1998, I counted down the days of my last year on active duty (as did most of my unit, retention was atrocious). Nonetheless, part of my still wanted to stay in. I even decided to sell back my 60 days of annual leave, instead of getting off active duty 2 months early, because it was so hard to let go and say goodbye to my friends and what had been my purpose in life for the past 4 years, even though I hated it.

I reasoned that maybe it was just my unit that sucked, maybe the rest of the Army was different, so I decided to hedge my bet and I joined the reserves instead of just ditching the whole thing.

In 2002, I volunteered for a second year of mobilization, instead of just ditching the whole thing then and there. My eight year contract was up, so I think I would have been off scotfree (though there was still a stop-loss, so I probably would have been reactivated three months later with the other reservists that chose not to volunteer for the second year - they were sent to Iraq).

I was very unhappy with what our country was doing under Bush's "leadership." Every time I heard the phrase "shock and awe," it made me want to puke.

But I chose to stay for that second year, how screwed up is that? I just couldn't let my fellow reservists down. I couldn't let our soldiers stationed in Kuwait and Iraq down. I chose to stay, because part of me still thought we had to make the most of the situation Bush had thrown us into. Hell, I even tried to reenlist in the reserves at the end of our

second year (2003), but when my unit had problems finding the proper paperwork, I took that as a sign that I wasn't meant to stay in. Thank god for small miracles.

Drew: Yes, there were certain aspects that were rewarding, but mostly frustrating and seemingly wasteful.

I did like having a tight platoon, you know a team that could perform our missions really well, whether it be in training or in combat. Basically the sacrifices far outweigh the benefits for an individual, for a family, for a community. I mean what other "job" rather lifestyle would have you put into the situation to have you sent to far away lands to be violent for peace?

To get treated like an idiot and always being told what to do, all the way down to when to eat, sleep, work, rest, go, jump, die.

Adrienne: We've been doing a lot in Vermont, going to the State House, trying to get a word with any of our representatives who will listen. We've driven to the war resisters cafe outside of Ft. Drum, and we're trying to maintain an active connection with that. We went to DC in January and March.

We had a large group of IVAWers here for the rally in Burlington, and we're trying to strengthen our connection with other IVAWers in the Northeast region.

I've been trying to spread awareness to my hometown in Utica, NY. Utica is very conservative (as is a lot of upstate NY), and there isn't a very strong anti-war presence there yet that I'm aware of, but I think it's growing.

So the last few trips out that way I wore my IVAW t-shirt everywhere, a small gesture, but I received a lot of positive feedback. I guess I have to start somewhere.

I even wore my IVAW t-shirt to a somewhat fancy charity wine tasting event out that way last weekend. That got me a lot of odd looks, but it also started a few very interesting conversations - only one guy was negative towards me, and he apologized later on. So, that was a fairly successful outing in my book.

I handed out IVAW flyers at a coffeeshop, and I've been raising awareness with my family, passing out bumper stickers and keeping them informed of what's going on in Vermont. Actually, I've been emailing everyone I know all over the country about what's been going on in Vermont and what IVAW is all about.

Drew: The biggest success has been with establishing and building the VTCAN , Vermont Campus Anti-War Network, There are eight schools that are a part of this and we collaborate, activate and build for actions and events. Most recent was a large demonstration in Burlington, VT on the 24th of March. We had the largest IVAW contingent in VT ever, seven of us, all of the represented schools and community members, over four hundred came out for that, its huge for Vermont.

In my recent travels over the past few months, we have been around Vermont, every time there is always an overwhelming number of people who are interested to hear and listen to our messages, sure there are pro-war folks as well, but their arguments turn to personal attacks and denigrating our service.

We talk about the truth and its hard for people to accept sometimes, its really horrible what the government is doing to people.

Ron: If you could bend the ear of the antiwar movement, what would your suggestions be for the next several months? How do you think we can move the apparent anger and frustration at the continuation of the war to a point where the warmakers and their enablers have to listen? I don't know about you, but I am pretty tired of every effort to end the war NOW ending up with another check being written by Congress to continue the damn thing.

Matt: I don't have all the answers. It seems we have exhausted all political routes. We have a Congress that got to power because they said they would end the war. And like you said, the checks just keep on coming.

So where does this leave us? Mass civil disobedience? I don't know.

Adrienne: I've been very frustrated as well. I thought that Vermonters voting for impeachment on town meeting day would mean something. I thought Vermont's State reps would have done something by now to take it to the next level, vote on their own resolutions maybe. I expected Vermont Congressman Peter Welch to stand up and start impeachment in DC.

I'm very sick of Congress's failure to act more decisively. Bush has used our soldiers to spy on Americans and to torture.

He has lied to the American public to get Americans to support an illegal and immoral war, which I believe makes him guilty of the murder of all of our fallen soldiers and Iraqi civilians.

I believe that he needs to be held accountable for his actions. I believe that Congress needs to stop whining about Bush's threats to veto their withdrawal bills. They are using Bush as an excuse for their failure to act and get us out of Iraq, when they could be impeaching him right now. It's all related.

We need to support our troops by getting rid of their corrupt commander-in-chief and getting them out of this winless situation.

We aren't even supposed to win in Iraq, Iraqis should be the winners, it's their country for crying out loud. We're the invaders. And that situation needs to be brought to the public's attention.

Ron: What's next for IVAW?

Adrienne: Organizing, trying to get the word out to soldiers and veterans, attending events.

Drew: We continue to build, advocate and speak truth. One main reason that I am doing all of this is to reach veterans like I was embraced. So we can make sense of all of this, it comes from reconciliation, together, and working to make sure nobody ever has to be put through this again, war is failure and the costs are too heavy to bear.

Adrienne: I would encourage all soldiers to question everything they have taken for granted as being the truth as told to them by their unit, their president, and their country/media and to start thinking for themselves.

I would also suggest that they shouldn't let some abstract feeling of loyalty to the military override their own morals and consciences. I would encourage them to watch the Ground Truth and other related documentaries, and to start reading books such as Anthony Arnove's, "Iraq: the logic of withdrawal," or Howard Zinn's, "A People's History of the US," or former Marine Major General Smedley Butler's short book, "War is a Racket" (available for free here: <http://www.lexrex.com/enlightened/articles/warisaracket.htm>).

I would also encourage soldiers to start talking to one another, really talking, about their experiences. I've been listening to soldiers who were over there for the past few months, and even though I knew it was bad, until I heard their stories, I had no idea how truly godawful the situation has become.

It's very hard for soldiers to break free of the hold the military has over us - the military's had centuries to perfect its methods of manipulation. But in order to make the transition from soldier/veteran to resister/activist, we all have to be open to the concept that everything we thought we knew about reality could be wrong or only half-truths. This has been very hard for me to deal with over the past few months, especially with things happening so quickly over a very short period of time.

I consider myself to be very fortunate to have found the IVAW and to have found my way back to the Northeast (and specifically in Vermont) at this stage of the game.

Active duty soldiers will need our support, they will need to know that should they decide to resist, we will stand by them. It is very crucial for the movement to make its support of our soldiers felt by them.

Drew: Its impossible to deal with this alone, you know that things are different and its hard to even identify why. Coming together with other vets that feel the same way makes you realize so overwhelmingly how we are all still connected, and always will be. What we remember, our stories and ideas that we share with each other is really empowering, because you realize that you are not alone.

Things can get better, but you have to come out of the woodwork, come out and talk with other vets, its an important part of the process to remember and resolve, you know, and listen, like friends are supposed to.

Matt: (All I would say is), just be honest with yourself.

Ask yourself what would you do if this occupation was going on in our country?

The state of affairs in Iraq, does this really make you proud? The truth can hurt, but it must be faced.

Ron: Thanks, y'all.

Troops Invited:

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to 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.

**How Angry, Honorable Anti-War
Vietnam Veterans Were
Redefined As Mental Cases:
“Protest Was Thus Pathologized”
“For Them, It Was The Country
That Had Gone Wrong And
Needed Healing, Not They”**

In the early 1970s, the story of their "badness" began to be rewritten, with the discourse of psychological trauma supplied by mental health professionals displacing the more political discourse of pacifism and anti-imperialism that had characterized the anti-war veterans' movement.

The ultimate tragedy may have been that what was their finest hour for many veterans, namely, when they found the courage to speak out against the war they had fought, was turned against them as evidence of further damage done to them by that war.

From: THE SPITTING IMAGE: MYTH, MEMORY, AND THE LEGACY OF VIETNAM; by Jerry Lembcke; New York University Press; New York; 1998

Charlie Clements: The "Right Stuff" Gone Wrong

Charlie Clements ... personal story became known through his book Witness to War (1984)

Clements graduated second in his class from the Air Force Academy in 1967.

In the fall of 1969 he was assigned to duty in Vietnam as a C-130 pilot. In Vietnam, he experienced the deceit and self-delusion that were, as he put it, "the order of the day."

Seeing at first hand the bombing of Cambodia while listening to the Nixon administration's denial that the war had been extended to that country was more than Clements could abide. He took a leave and, while in the States, spoke at his first anti-war rally and renewed a relationship with an Air Force Academy classmate who had since declared himself a conscientious objector.

When Clements returned to duty he asked for reassignment to nonflying status.

The colonel who denied his request referred him to a psychiatrist.

For six weeks, the psychiatrist probed Clements's feelings on a variety of issues but showed particular interest in one incident that Clements felt was only tangentially connected with his decision to stop flying. The incident was the death of a friend. "Though saddened and sickened by the experience," recalled Clements, "I had not been overly traumatized. The psychiatrist suspected otherwise and questioned me very closely about the impact of the incident on my thinking."

Six months later, Clements found himself in a psychiatric ward.

Had the concept of post-traumatic stress disorder been in play in 1970, Charlie Clements would undoubtedly have been a candidate for the diagnosis.

The inability to express grief over the loss of war buddies was said by psychiatric workers to be a prevalent symptom among those who would eventually be labeled as PTSD sufferers.

Yet, Clements was admitted to Wilford Hall Hospital at Lackland Air Force Base with the diagnosis "Depressive: Acute, Severe." His time in the hospital might have been a chapter out of Ken Kesey's "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," but it was clear, as Clements wrote, that the Air Force held all the cards:

"If I attempted any legal challenge to my incarceration, they could instantly declare me fit for duty and assign me back to Vietnam. When I refused, as I would, it would be a clear case of disobeying orders. I might fight it all the way to the Supreme Court, but the end, without a doubt, would be a stretch in Leavenworth. . . . I was, after all, the "right stuff" gone wrong."

Clements got out of the hospital after four months, and in the spring of 1971 he was given a psychiatric discharge.

In 1980, he graduated from medical school.

During the 1980s Clements became famous for his work providing medical aid in the liberated zones of El Salvador, spending many months on the ground with the men, women, and children who were under siege by that country's U.S.-backed military dictatorship.

As an officer and distinguished graduate of a military academy, Clements was, as he said of himself, a special case of the right stuff gone wrong.

But on another level his case is instructive, in that it represents the experience of the entire generation of Vietnam veterans in microcosm.

War veterans were, by definition, supposed to be made of the "right stuff." They were supposed to be the country's finest, and when a whole generation of them decline their assigned role they were said to have "gone wrong."

Such deviance can be treated as a criminal matter or as a medical and psychological problem.

In the early 1970s, the story of their "badness" began to be rewritten, with the discourse of psychological trauma supplied by mental health professionals displacing the more political discourse of pacifism and anti-imperialism that had characterized the anti-war veterans' movement.

Quite literally, mental health professionals reinterpreted GI and veteran opposition to the war to fit their own paradigm.

Writing in the American Journal of Orthopsychiatry in July 1973, Chaim Shatan provided an acute example of this tendency: "By throwing onto the steps of Congress the medals with which they were rewarded for murder in a war they had come to abhor, the veterans symbolically shed some of their guilt. In addition to their dramatic political impact, these demonstrations have profound therapeutic meaning"

In the context of the times, anti-war veterans would surely have been surprised to know that their actions against the war were a form of therapy.

For them, it was the country that had gone wrong and needed healing, not they.

But they weren't the ones telling the story.

The ultimate tragedy may have been that what was their finest hour for many veterans, namely, when they found the courage to speak out against the war they had fought, was turned against them as evidence of further damage done to them by that war.

Poignant protest was thus pathologized.

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 REPORT

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



Iraqi women under armed guard are forced to stand aside as foreign occupation soldiers from U.S. Baker Company 2-12 Infantry Battalion search their personal possessions during a home invasion in the al-Dora neighbourhood of southern Baghdad. (AFP/David Furst)

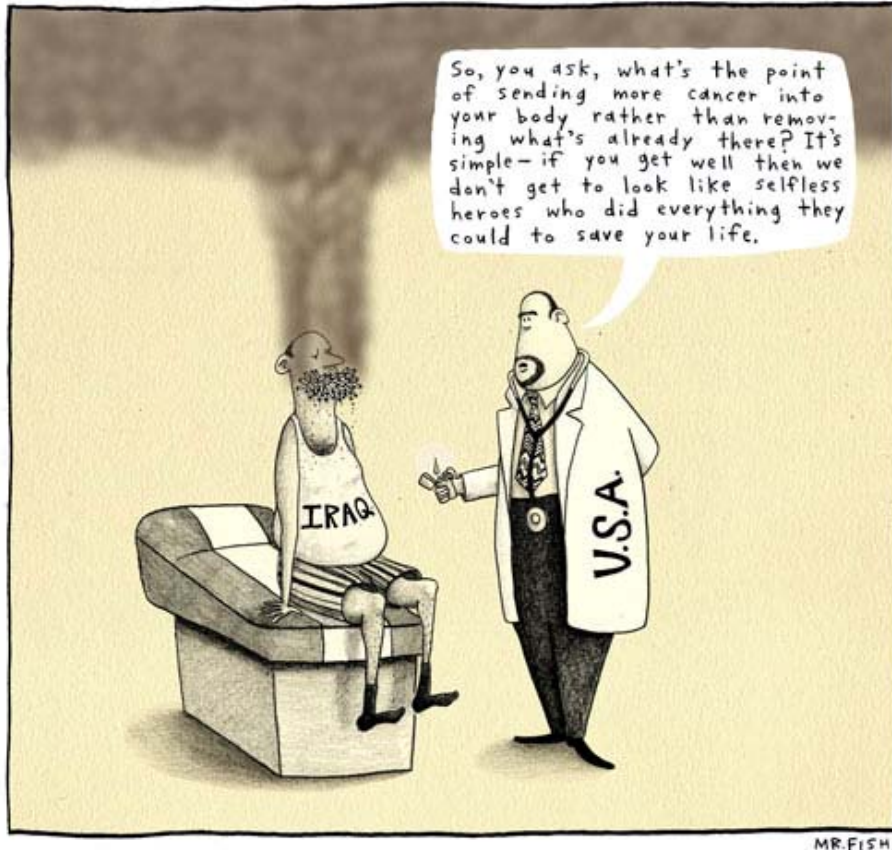
Iraqi citizens have no right to resist home invasions by occupation soldiers from the USA. If they do, they may be arrested, wounded, or killed.

[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?]

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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

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

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.org/)

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