

GI SPECIAL 5D19:

IRAQ VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR: December 12, 2006: San Francisco



[Photo by Jeff Paterson, Courage to Resist: jeff [at] paterson.net]

Thank You, Sgt.

[Here's a letter that came in to the Military Project mailbox April 18 with \$200 for the GI Special Fund Raising Raffle:]

Folks,

Keep up the great work.

We GIs appreciate your service in helping cope and end this war.

All the best,

Sgt. X

Iraq Veterans Condemn The War:

**“Now The Occupation Is Part Of The Problem, Not A Part Of The Solution”
“We’re Trying To Reach Out To People In The Service--To Give Them A Place To Come To If They’re Against The War”**

April 20, 2007 By ANDERSON BEAM and KEVIN PROSEN, Socialist Worker

PAUL ABERNATHY and HARVEY THARP are members of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW). At the March 17 antiwar demonstration, they talked to ANDERSON BEAM and KEVIN PROSEN about the occupation of Iraq and the future of the antiwar soldiers' movement.

CAN YOU talk about your experience in the military?

Harvey: I enlisted in the Air Force right out of high school. I was trained as an Arabic linguist and deployed to Saudi Arabia five times from 1995 to 1997, on short tours, usually 30 to 90 days. When I got out, I joined the reserves and went to Ohio State Law School, and then joined the Navy JAG Corps.

Paul: I joined the Army in 1996. I was broke, and I thought it would be a good experience. It was a different world back then. I was one of those guys who was totally gung ho, but I was never comfortable with the Iraq war.

I was with the 3rd Infantry, and our initial mission was to build up temporary structures meant to help transport tanks through the desert. We crossed into Iraq and went into Baghdad. We were there for about a month and basically were charged with pacifying the city.

There wasn't much use for my initial assignment after we took Baghdad, so after that, I spent six months in Anbar province, doing munitions recovery--basically recovering arms left over from the old Iraqi army.

Harvey: When Iraq came up, they needed people who could speak Arabic. I took the Arabic proficiency test, which was basically the same test I had taken six years previously. I put down all the same answers down and passed it.

I was in Iraq from October 2003 to 2004. For six months, I was deployed as an Arabic linguist for the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). Then I was made a projects officer in Kirkuk and worked closely with the Iraqi people, since I had Arabic language skills.

In Kirkuk, it was very tense starting from early on. Criminal gangs were on the streets, and there was lots of sectarian tension among the three main ethnic groups in the city--Sunni Arabs, Kurds and Turkomen. It always felt like a powder keg, especially since something like 40 percent of Iraq's oil is in or around Kirkuk. So control of Kirkuk really meant control of a large part of Iraq's oil supply.

A lot of times, we would be given missions that would violate rules of force protection, like needing itineraries for trips off base checked off in advance--rules that require having at least one other soldier with you on a mission. We were going on missions with no radios, no maps. If I actually followed the rules of force protection, I wouldn't have been able to leave the base a lot of the time.

After working as a projects officer, they wanted to transfer me to Signals Intelligence, which would involve more combat. After working so closely with the Iraqi people and getting to know them, I couldn't justify killing.

HOW DID you get involved with the antiwar movement?

Harvey: I was always against the war, but after I came back, it was clear that there were no weapons of mass destruction. The hardest thing for me was separating the politics--my antiwar sentiments--with feelings of personal cowardice. I didn't want to see myself, or be seen by others, as a coward.

But it's clear that the reasons for the war were fabricated--there was no threat from Saddam.

Now the occupation is part of the problem, not a part of the solution.

Paul: I had never heard of Iraq Vets Against the War or Veterans for Peace until I went to an antiwar march in Washington, D.C., in September 2005. I was wearing basically what I'm wearing now--camouflage, like a soldier--and I had this image of being this one lone guy. But then I ran into a bunch of other people dressed the same way. I basically joined at that moment.

IVAW would be much bigger if veterans knew how to get involved in the network. It's hard to get media coverage of IVAW events. The Appeal for Redress got some coverage, but it wasn't like, "Here's a movement to get involved in."

WHAT'S NEXT for IVAW and the anti-war movement?

Paul: Our main goal is to raise public awareness and educate people about the U.S. role in Iraq. The U.S. is not a stabilizing force in Iraq.

We want to teach them about Iraqi society, about the Iraqi resistance. They are resisting the occupation.

We're also trying to reach out to people in the service--to give them a place to come to if they're against the war.

We're also lobbying Congress for an end to the occupation, but also for veterans' benefits. We have guys who have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and the government finds out about it and just wants to drag them up.

Also, we want reparations for the Iraqi people. We destroyed their country, and we need to help rebuild it--but it must be rebuilt by Iraqis. We're demanding reparations, so it's not true when people tell us we're "abandoning the Iraqi people."

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 WAR REPORTS

Marine Killed By Rocket Attack On FOB At Mahmoudiya, Two More Wounded

Apr 20 April 2007

A rocket hit a U.S. military base south of Baghdad, killing one American Marine and wounding two, the military said Friday.

The attack occurred Thursday night on the Forward Operating Base in Mahmoudiya, 20 miles south of Baghdad, the statement said.

Eight U.S. Troops Wounded In Attack On Saqlawiya Checkpoint

April 20, 2007 Reuters

One civilian was killed and eight U.S. troops wounded in an attack on a U.S. checkpoint near Saqlawiya, near Falluja, 50 km (32 miles) west of Baghdad, the U.S. military said. A dump truck loaded with explosives detonated under a highway overpass, causing a large part to collapse.

Sierra Foothills Soldier Killed By Small Arms Fire In Iraq

04/20/2007 The Associated Press

PARADISE, Calif.- An 18-year-old soldier from Paradise, remembered by his high school counselor as a “deep thinker,” was killed Sunday by small arms fire in Baghdad, the Army said.

As a high school student, Steven Walberg-Riotto was active in his church youth group and excelled at math and physics.

“He was a quiet, very bright young man who liked to analyze things and enjoyed challenging himself with math and physics,” recalled Karen Olberg, his counselor at Pleasant Valley High School in Chico. “He liked trigonometry very much. He took advanced courses. I foresaw a bright future for him, perhaps as an engineer.”

But he always wanted to join the military. His aunt, Tammy Riotto, told the Chico Enterprise-Record that her nephew played soldier as a boy. Before enlisting, he trained by carrying heavy backpacks.

He was assigned to the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, based at Fort Riley, Kan.

Walberg-Riotto is survived by his mother, Karen Riotto, his father, Steve Walberg, and siblings Leanna and Jason. Funeral arrangements are pending.

Villa Hills Native Killed In Iraq

Apr 10, 2007 Posted By: Lynn Giroud, WCPO

A sailor from Villa Hills, Kentucky has been killed in Iraq. 36-year-old Gregory Billiter was in the Navy. His mission was neutralizing explosives.

On Friday, in Kirkuk, Billiter and two others in his unit were killed in combat.

Billiter was based out of Washington state. He has a wife and three-year-old son there.

But Billiter grew up in Villa Hills. He went to grade school at St. Joseph's in Crescent Springs, went on to Covington Latin High School and then to the University of Dayton.

Shortly after graduating from Dayton, he joined the Navy. His parents, Pat and Barry Billiter, of Villa Hills, say he told them joining the Navy is what he always wanted to do.

The last time they saw their son and his family was over the holidays up in Washington state, just before he left for Iraq.

"I didn't feel good about it", Pat Billiter said, "I'd worry daily, I have to admit that. I think I came home from Washington knowing that I had seen him for the last time."

The Billiters wear a copper bracelet with their son's name on it to keep him close.

They remember the last e-mail from him two weeks ago. "He said his biggest regret is missing Cooper grow up" said his mom.

Greg, who his father said, saw himself as a peacemaker, would often talk about the positive things our troops are doing for the Iraqi people. "There were roads being built," said Barry Billiter. "Schools built or refurbished, things of that nature." Pat Billiter says Greg recently told her, "I'm not making war. I'm making peace. By neutralizing bombs, I'm giving some people peace that might not know it otherwise."

Billiter's body has been flown to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware. His funeral will be held at Saint Joseph's in Crescent Springs, but plans aren't yet finalized.

Fighting Breaks Out Near Al-Bayaa' Mosque

April 20 (KUNA)

Three Iraqi Army soldiers were killed, and seven civilians were wounded in the armed clashes close to Al-Bayaa' Mosque, used by followers of the influential Shiite cleric, Muqtada Al-Sadr.

The official Iraqi Television reported that American Army gunship helicopters opened fire at the mosque. Sheikh Samir Al-Balaghi, of Al-Sadr's group, said by telephone that many worshippers were caught in the cross-fire in and around the mosque.

During the confrontations, militants boarding three cars, opened fire from automatic guns at a force of the Iraqi Army, killing three soldiers.

Witnesses said the victims were Iraqi Kurdish personnel who had been brought in to beef up the state forces in the struggle against the insurgents in the Baghdad region.

Witnesses said the targeted squad, after being fired upon, opened fire randomly killing one civilian and wounding another.

The witnesses said militants, positioned at the mosque, were also involved in the mayhem.

Miracle In Iraq: Viagra Unnecessary **[It Just Keeps Growing Longer And Longer And Longer, All By Itself]**

March 19, 2007 By Matthew Cox - Staff writer; Army Times [Excerpt]

Pentagon officials have avoided putting a timeline on the surge operation, but Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno, commanding general of Multi-National Corps-Iraq, recently indicated that it could stretch into next year.

REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



U.S. soldiers on foot patrol in Baghdad, April 7, 2007. (Bob Strong/Reuters)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Dutch Soldier Killed In Helmand Explosion;

U.S. Soldier Killed In Follow-Up Attack



Corporal Cor Strik

Apr 20 AP & Mindef & PA News & Canadian Press

A Dutch soldier was killed early Friday in an explosion in southern Afghanistan, the first fatality from hostile action among Dutch troops serving with NATO forces in the country, the Netherlands' defense chief said.

Gen. Dick Berlijn said the soldier was killed in the southern Helmand province while a member of a Dutch dismounted patrol less than two kilometres from Forward Operating Base Robinson in the Sangin River valley.

The victim was from Tiger Company, a Dutch airborne infantry unit operating out of the base.

Corporal Cor Strik, 21, was killed as part of Operation Achilles, launched last month by NATO to flush out militants in the opium-producing area, General said.

The deafening explosion sent a huge plume of smoke into the sky, close enough to send Canadian troops scrambling from their cots and into nearby bunkers.

Just hours later, a U.S. soldier believed to be an engineer died in an explosion that rocked the compound when a convoy responding to the first incident detonated another mine.

Capt. Chris D'Arcy of the 2nd Royal Canadian Horse Artillery said both of the explosions were likely caused by anti-tank mines.

TROOP NEWS

THIS IS HOW BUSH BRINGS THE TROOPS HOME:

BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE



The casket of Sgt. 1st Class Benjamin L. Sebban, Christ Church in South Amboy, N.J., March 28, 2007. Sebban died March 17 of wounds suffered in the city of Baqubah, northeast of Baghdad when an improvised bomb exploded near his unit. (AP Photo/Mike Derer)

**“Military Planners” Plan
Endless War In Iraq:
“U.S. Troops Will Have To Defeat
The Insurgents And Secure
Control Of Troubled Provinces”
They Give Up On Training Iraq
Collaborators;**

“Our Strategy Now Is To Basically Hold On And Wait For The Iraqis To Do Something”

Apr. 19, 2007 By Nancy A. Youssef, McClatchy Newspapers [Excerpts]

WASHINGTON - Military planners have abandoned the idea that standing up Iraqi troops will enable American soldiers to start coming home soon and now believe that U.S. troops will have to defeat the insurgents and secure control of troubled provinces.

No change has been announced, and a Pentagon spokesman, Col. Gary Keck, said training Iraqis remains important. But evidence has been building for months that training Iraqi troops is no longer the focus of U.S. policy.

Pentagon officials said they know of no new training resources that have been included in U.S. plans to dispatch 28,000 additional troops to Iraq. Defense Secretary Robert Gates made no public mention of training Iraqi troops on Thursday during a visit to Iraq.

In nearly every area where Iraqi forces were given control, the security situation rapidly deteriorated.

Military officials say there’s no doubt that the November U.S. elections, which gave Democrats control of both houses of Congress, helped push training down the priority list. The elections, they said, made it clear that voters didn’t have the patience to wait for Iraqis to take the lead.

“To the extent we are losing the American public, we were losing” in the transition approach, said a senior military commander in Washington.

“The goal was to put the Iraqis in charge. The problem is we didn’t know how to do it and we underestimated the insurgency,” said Anthony Cordesman, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

One State Department official, who also asked not to be named because of the sensitivity of the subject, expressed the same sentiment in blunter terms.

“Our strategy now is to basically hold on and wait for the Iraqis to do something,” he said.

A Foul Traitor, Maj. General Michael Barbero, Defies The American People:

He Says U.S. Troops Will Stay In Iraq “Until We Can Defeat These Forces”

[Before that happens, Barbero will be tried for treason. American have had enough of this war, will never take orders from scum like Barbero, and know well what to do with military traitors who think they can dictate to the American people. There are 20 million weapons in the hands of American citizens, and American troops, and we know how to use them on the Barbero's of the world. Let him dare try to dictate to us what will or will not happen in Iraq. T]

4.20.07 Associated Press

“We saw an initial drop in their (militants’) activity” after the start of the Baghdad security operation, said Maj. Gen. Michael Barbero, an operations official for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. “And now lately, we’ve seen an increase.”

He said the violence was likely to continue “until we can defeat these forces.”

Dumbest General Of The Year, So Far, Caught In World-Class Lie: As U.S. Military Builds A Wall In Baghdad, Maj. Gen. William B. Caldwell Says U.S. Military Not Building A Wall In Baghdad

[Thanks to John Osmand, who sent this in.]

Shiite and Sunni Arabs living in the shadow of the barrier were united in their contempt for the imposing new structure.

Several residents interviewed likened the project to the massive barriers built by Israel around some Palestinian zones. "Are we in the West Bank?" asked Abu Qusay, 48...

April 20, 2007 CBS & AP & By Edmund Sanders, LA Times Staff Writer [Excerpts]

U.S. soldiers are building a three-mile wall to protect a Sunni Arab enclave surrounded by Shiite neighborhoods.

When the wall is finished, the minority Sunni community of Azamiyah, on the eastern side of the Tigris River, will be gated, and traffic control points manned by Iraqi soldiers will be the only entries, the military said.

The concrete wall, including barriers as tall as 12 feet, "is one of the centerpieces of a new strategy by coalition and Iraqi forces to break the cycle of sectarian violence" in Baghdad.

U.S. and Iraqi forces have long erected cement barriers around marketplaces and coalition bases and outposts in Baghdad and other Iraqi cities such as Ramadi in an effort to prevent attacks, including suicide car bombs. [Right. Everybody knows how successful that idiocy was.]

U.S. Maj. Gen. William B. Caldwell, the top spokesman for coalition forces in Iraq, was quoted as saying Wednesday that he was unaware of any effort to build a wall dividing Shiite and Sunni enclaves in Baghdad and that such a tactic was not a policy of the Baghdad security plan.

"We have no intent to build gated communities in Baghdad," Stars and Stripes, the U.S. Department of Defense-authorized daily newspaper, quoted Caldwell as saying. "Our goal is to unify Baghdad, not subdivide it into separate (enclaves)."

The construction work by the U.S. military involves flatbed trucks carrying concrete barriers weighing 14,000 pounds. Operating under bright lights, the cranes lift the barriers into place while being protected by U.S. tanks.

Some predicted the new wall would become a target of militants on both sides. Last week, construction crews came under small-arms fire, military officials said.

Shiite and Sunni Arabs living in the shadow of the barrier were united in their contempt for the imposing new structure.

"Are they trying to divide us into different sectarian cantons?" said a Sunni drugstore owner in Adhamiya, who would identify himself only as Abu Ahmed, 44. "This will deepen the sectarian strife and only serve to abort efforts aimed at reconciliation."

Several residents interviewed likened the project to the massive barriers built by Israel around some Palestinian zones. "Are we in the West Bank?" asked Abu Qusay, 48, a pharmacist who said that he wouldn't be able to get to his favorite kebab restaurant in Adhamiya.

Residents complained that Baghdad already has been dissected by hundreds of barriers that cause daily traffic snarls. Marwan lives in a mostly Shiite area adjoining the wall, but works in Adhamiya. Since the wall was begun, he has had to walk to work rather than drive.

Najim Sadoon, 51, was worried that he would lose customers at his housewares store. "This closure of the street will have severe economic hardships," he said. "Transportation fees will increase. Customers who used to come here in their cars will now prefer to go to other places."

Majid Fadhil, 43, a Shiite police commissioner in a neighborhood north of the wall, said flatly, "This fence is not going to work."

"I don't think this wall will solve the city's serious security problems," said Ahmed Abdul-Sattar, 35, a government worker. "It will only increase the separation between our people, which has been made so much worse by the war."

Walter Reed:
**"These Events Are In Stark Contrast
To All Of The 'Support The Troops'
Rhetoric Pouring From The Mouths
Of Our So-Called Leaders"**

Space
Letter To The Editor
Army Times
3.19.07

I have purposely waited to comment so that I could closely observe what the Army's attitude would be in the wake of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center scandal and what corrective action would be taken.

I was not surprised by the defensive "It is all the media's fault" attitude.

Further, the actions taken against those responsible parties were much too little, much too late and much too shallow. All of those who were even remotely connected with this fiasco must be relieved of their duties.

If this problem were new, I might feel more merciful. It is not new.

My son was a patient at Walter Reed in the mid-'80s. The facilities and administration were substandard then and, sadly, they remain so.

An outstanding medical staff can only do so much in an atmosphere of decay and bureaucratic lethargy.

I fear it's the same old Army mentality: Paint rocks bright enough and hope that no one sees the deficiencies. This is all indicative of the Army's leadership being out of touch with the events that continue to spin out of control around them.

With all of the problems the Army has in resetting the equipment lost or damaged in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is apparent that they have completely ignored the problems of resetting the human element of the force.

Without soldiers, who are assured that their basic human needs will be met, the Army is just a collection of useless junk.

These events are in stark contrast to all of the “support the troops” rhetoric pouring from the mouths of our so-called leaders.

I am not mad. I am furious.

Considering that Walter Reed is a figurative stone’s throw from the Pentagon, it makes one wonder what else is yet to be revealed. The defense of “I didn’t know” holds about as much water as “I was only following orders.”

Lt. Col. Charles W. Treese (ret.)

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action



High officers of the pro-occupation Iraqi military and security forces taken prisoner by an insurgent coalition are seen April 19, 2007. The coalition reports they have been executed as traitors. (AP Photo/Intel Center, HO)

April 19, 2007 By LAUREN FRAYER, Associated Press & By Hussein Kadhim, McClatchy Newspapers & April 20, 2007 (CNN) & Reuters & (KUNA)

A bomber breached Baghdad’s heavy security presence again today. Two Iraqi soldiers were among the fatalities.

Today's bombing hit hours before U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates arrived on an unannounced visit.

Guerrillas opened fire on a police patrol, killing two policemen and wounding another eight in Baquba 65 km (40 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

Two policemen were killed and three wounded when they were attacked by guerrillas on Thursday in the northern Baghdad district of Waziriya, police said.

Six security guards were wounded Thursday night when gunmen ambushed the convoy of a top Shiite leader's son, said Haytham al-Hussaini, a spokesman for the office of Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, the head of the [collaborator, Pro-Bush] Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, or SCIRI.

Al-Hussaini said Ammar al-Hakim was unharmed after his convoy was struck in southern Baghdad's Dora neighborhood.

The leader's son was headed to Baghdad from Najaf when his convoy came under attack.

in a car bomb attack in northern Falujah Friday, while US Defense Secretary Robert Gates was visiting the Iraqi capital, two bombers blew up the car they were riding near Saqlawiya police station killing three policemen and the injuring seven others.

The car blast caused damages to the police station and nearby shops, said the source.

“The Sunni And Shia Fighters Struck A Temporary Truce And Turned Their Weapons Against The Americans Instead”

April 16, 2007 By PHILIP SHISHKIN, Wall St. Journal [Excerpt]

By that point, the violence had spilled over into a street battle in Iskandariyah, where a band of Shiite gunmen based out of a nearby shrine laid siege to a Sunni mosque down the street. Sunni fighters were shooting at the attackers from inside.

When a U.S. patrol rolled into the area, an announcement went out from the loudspeaker mounted on the minaret of the Sunni mosque: Americans are in the area, attack them, recalls First Lt. Joshua Rongitsch, who led eight of his men into the fight. The company's Iraqi interpreter lingered long enough to translate the announcement, and then ran away.

The Sunni and Shia fighters struck a temporary truce and turned their weapons -- including machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades -- against the Americans instead.

“Both groups directed their fire against us, something they both could agree on,” Lt. Rongitsch recalls.

MORE:

“United States Troops Have Increasingly Become The Target Of Both Sunni Insurgents And Shiite Militias”

April 20, 2007 by Mike Shuster, NPR [Excerpts]

American soldiers are increasingly caught in the middle of the violent struggle for Baghdad, at times facing resistance from the very government they are in Iraq to defend.

Despite the addition of more United States troops to Baghdad in a security push over the last two months, soldiers have increasingly become the target of both Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias in the Iraqi capital.

Initially, both Sunnis and Shia refrained from directly confronting the growing number of American troops as they took up posts across the city. But the pause in attacks was brief, as several hundred U.S. combat troops have learned at their post on the south side of Baghdad.

The Americans have taken over an abandoned judo academy in the Ummal neighborhood of southwest Baghdad, renaming it Combat Outpost Attack. There they sleep on cots in the gymnasium, eat food trucked in from a nearby U.S. base, bathe in cold water, and on most days, fight the militia men of the Mahdi Army.

Throughout April, the militia has attacked the outpost regularly, and other spots where the company has positioned troops.

A mile southeast of Combat Outpost Attack is south Baghdad's Doura neighborhood, an insurgent stronghold in the past.

American trainers are at the main Doura police station. They met with Gen. Pittard along and the Iraqi police commander, Gen. Ghazwan ar-Rawi, who acknowledged how difficult it has been to gain control of the area.

“Right now, I think it's the last phases in their attacks here,” he said through an Arabic translator. But after a little prodding, Gen. Ghazwan concedes the scope of the problem he's facing. His police force of 2,000 has suffered 67 deaths and nearly 400 wounded. He can put only 1,000 police on the streets.

“I need 3,000 active on ground,” he Ghazwan said.

Twenty police checkpoints in the neighborhood have slowed traffic to a trickle. As a U.S. convoy passes, Iraqis stare blankly through their automobile windows.

Back at Combat Outpost Attack, Maj. Alex Stephenson says the presence of the police in his neighborhood isn't always a positive force.

“We're having some leadership issues with Col. Yusuf, the battalion commander,” Stephenson said.

GET THE MESSAGE? Writings On The Coffins Reads: 'The Security Plan' And 'Maliki Government'



Iraqis carry empty coffins during a demonstration in Baghdad April 20, 2007. The writings on the coffins reads: “The security plan” and “Maliki government”.
REUTERS/Mahmoud Raouf Mahmoud

“Let The Government See What The Occupiers Are Doing To Our People”

4.20.07 Associated Press

In the holy city of Kufa, 100 miles south of Baghdad, Abdul Hadi al Mohamadawi, a sheik loyal to nationalist political leader Muqtada al-Sadr, used his sermon at the Kufa mosque to condemn U.S. forces.

“American forces are conducting an offensive on a mosque in al- Baiyaa, and martyr worshippers are falling,” he said.

“Let the government see what the occupiers are doing to our people.”

V FOR VICTORY: GET THE MESSAGE?



An Iraqi soldier stands guard near an insurgent arrested during a raid in Baghdad, April 20, 2007. (Thaier al-Sudani/Reuters)

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

And Now, For A One Way Ticket Home From Iraq, Guess The Right Answer:

The quote that follows is from:

A British soldier occupying Boston, 1776

An American soldier occupying Vietnam, 1969

A Russian soldier occupying Hungary, 1956

A U.S. soldier occupying Iraq, 2007

A German soldier occupying Poland, 1944

A French soldier occupying Algeria, 1954

Here's the quote:

"I wish we could do more for the people, but they don't want to cooperate," he said. "There's not much we can do without their help."

Correct answer:
All of the above.

However, this particular one is from a soldier in 2nd Platoon, C Company, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry, Adhamiyah, Iraq, quoted by Michelle Tan, Reporter, Army Times, 3.19.07

OBITUARY: KURT VONNEGUT His Novels Expose The Absurdity Of The Idea That Those Who Enjoy Wealth And Power Have Any Special Talents;

His Sympathies Were With Working People And Their Capacity To Do The Right Thing In A World That Constantly Does The Wrong One

His disgust with the rich and powerful extended to the U.S. political system. As much as he despised Republican maniacs from Richard Nixon to George Bush Jr., Vonnegut was no less contemptuous of two-faced Democrats.

April 20, 2007 ALAN MAASS, Socialist Work

KURT VONNEGUT'S life and art were shaped by personal tragedies. His mother committed suicide. His sister and her husband died within days of each other, leaving three children. One of his sons suffered from schizophrenia.

But Vonnegut's writing also reflected his connection to some of the most terrible public tragedies of the 20th century.

Like the characters in his novel *Slaughterhouse Five*, Vonnegut survived the firebombing of the German city of Dresden during the Second World War. Captured during the Battle of the Bulge, he and a group of fellow prisoners were put to work there, shortly before British and U.S. warplanes dropped wave after wave of incendiary bombs on a city with no military targets.

More than 130,000 people were burned alive or asphyxiated in the inferno that Dresden became, but the story of this war crime remained mostly untold until Vonnegut wrote about it.

Dresden left Vonnegut with a hatred of war--up to and including the latest U.S. interventions in the Middle East, which he opposed with his typical rage, despite failing health.

The world of Vonnegut's novels can be grim -- full of world-ending catastrophes like the frozen doom of *Cat's Cradle*. His most sympathetic characters are often traumatized by the world's cruelties and stricken by a sense of powerlessness--something encapsulated in the famous phrase "So it goes" from *Slaughterhouse Five*, a gesture of resignation that follows every mention of a death.

But as despairing as his vision of the world was, Vonnegut was also bitterly opposed to the class of people who benefited from society's disasters--who justified and even welcomed them.

His novels *Breakfast of Champions* and *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* expose the absurdity of the idea that those who enjoy wealth and power have any special talents.

And woven into the plots of these and other books are retellings of U.S. history that puncture the myths about America taught in school and reinforced by the media. Near the start of *Breakfast of Champions*, Vonnegut writes:

“[T]eachers of children in the United States of America wrote this date on blackboards again and again, and asked the children to memorize it with pride and joy: 1492. The teachers told the children that this was when their continent was discovered by human beings. Actually, millions of human beings were already living full and imaginative lives on the continent in 1492. That was simply the year in which sea pirates began to cheat and rob and kill them.

“Here was another piece of evil nonsense which children were taught: that the sea pirates eventually created a government which became a beacon of freedom to human beings everywhere else...”

Actually, the sea pirates who had the most to do with the creation of the new government owned human slaves. They used human beings for machinery, and, even after slavery was eliminated, because it was so embarrassing, they and their descendants continued to think of ordinary human beings as machines.

Like his hero Mark Twain, Vonnegut was hilarious in his writing and speaking--but absolutely merciless in showing up the greedy, narrow-minded and ignorant.

His disgust with the rich and powerful extended to the U.S. political system. As much as he despised Republican maniacs from Richard Nixon to George Bush Jr., Vonnegut was no less contemptuous of two-faced Democrats.

Imagining himself a “visitor from another planet” in one of several books of essays, *Wampeters, Foma & Granfaloon*s, Vonnegut wrote, “The two real political parties in America are the Winners and the Losers. The people do not acknowledge this. They claim membership in two imaginary parties, the Republicans and the Democrats, instead. Both imaginary parties are bossed by Winners. When Republicans battle Democrats, this much is certain: Winners will win.”

By contrast, Vonnegut’s sympathies--and what hopes he allowed himself--were with working people and their capacity to do the right thing in a world that constantly does the wrong one.

This led Vonnegut to celebrate the socialist tradition in the U.S.

As Joel Bleifuss, editor of *In These Times*--the left magazine that Vonnegut kept up a correspondence with in recent years--pointed out, the two people Vonnegut was most likely to quote were Jesus and Eugene V. Debs.

The world got less interesting, as *The Daily Show*’s Jon Stewart put it, with Kurt Vonnegut’s death.

But his voice remains, calling out for sanity and decency in an insane and obscene world that needs to be changed.

OCCUPATION REPORT

60% Of Iraqis Want U.S. Troops Dead: Big Surprise



A Iraqi citizen after his pickup truck, which he used to make his living, was run over and wrecked by foreign occupation troops from the USA in a military vehicle in central Baghdad April 11, 2007. Several cars were damaged and two civilians hurt when a US military convoy pushed their way through morning rush hour.
(AP Photo/Hadi Mizban)

[U.S. sponsored polls reported recently that 60% of Iraqis favor killing U.S. troops. After seeing this, it would take a drooling idiot not to understand why. Iraqis feel about U.S. troops trampling them in the dirt the same way Americans felt about British troops trampling them in the dirt in 1776. They are right to resist. T]

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

***The Great Iraqi “Reconstruction”
Fiasco Rolls On:
“Suspects Believed To Have Ties To
Insurgent Groups Are Regularly
Released Because There Is No Place
To Put Them On Trial”
[Local Iraqis Outsmart The Clueless
U.S. Col. And Figure Out How To
Keep Things That Way]***

April 19, 2007 By YOCHI J. DREAZEN, Wall St. Journal [Excerpts]

TIKRIT, Iraq -- A few weeks ago, Lt. Col. James Foster strode through a newly renovated courthouse here, and cursed loudly.

The Iraqi police who worked on the building had torn holes into several walls haphazardly, leaving piles of broken bricks and debris on the floor. In a room meant to become a judge's office, water spilled from a broken sink. The building's entrance hall was crammed with Iraqi police recruits, who had turned it into a makeshift barracks.

Col. Foster, a reservist temporarily assigned to a State Department team, called over the Iraqi engineer running the project and told him to redo the shoddy repairs.

“We can't build this for you,” he snapped.

That point is at the core of the latest American vision for rebuilding Iraq, and of tension within the Bush administration over how to do it.

In hopes of finding a new way, the State Department in late 2005 began setting up small teams assigned to work in individual Iraqi provinces and coordinate small projects that are funded by the Iraqi government and carried out by Iraqi companies.

“What we want to do is change the mind-set that the U.S. will solve every problem for them,” said Stephanie Miley, who was head of the team working on the courthouse, and Col. Foster's boss, until March 30. “We don't want the Iraqis to wake up and see that their sewage doesn't work and have their first thought be, ‘The coalition will fix this for us.’ We want them to do it themselves.”

The provincial reconstruction teams, or PRTs, have been hampered by security problems and difficult relations with Iraqi officials, some of whom are corrupt or incompetent.

As a result, the joint U.S.-Iraqi projects proceed fitfully, if at all.

Ms. Miley and other senior State Department officials argue that the provincial teams can lead reconstruction projects in areas of Iraq that are too dangerous for private-sector Western contractors to operate in. They also say the provincial teams can get more bang out of the remaining reconstruction funds by hiring Iraqi firms to carry out the work, rather than relying on more expensive U.S. and European companies.

After arriving in Salahaddin last April, Ms. Miley and her colleagues ran into an immediate problem: Most of the Iraqi officials they were supposed to work with wanted nothing to do with them.

The local U.S. military commander, Army Col. Michael Steele, a Special Forces veteran, had tense relations with local Iraqis because of his aggressive use of military power, which is a central focus in the ongoing criminal trial of four of his men for allegedly murdering three Iraqi detainees. [“Tense relations;” sort of like between Attila The Hun and whoever he was killing at the moment?]

The Iraqis greeted Ms. Miley and her colleagues with skepticism and outright hostility.

“All the doors were shut to us, we couldn’t get any meetings, and Iraqis went out of their way to ignore us,” said Lt. Col. John Bayer, a member of the PRT.

Over time, the provincial governor, Hamad Hamoud al-Shakti, took a strong personal liking to Ms. Miley, who he said reminded him of his wife, Amira al-Rabei, a prominent doctor here.

The two women quickly became friends. But last July insurgents detonated a bomb in Dr. Rabei’s medical office, killing her instantly. “Her death was devastating to me,” Ms. Miley said. [It wasn’t so great for Dr. Rabei either. Looks like being Ms. Miley’s buddy leads to a very short life expectancy.]

Ms. Miley’s connection to Mr. Shakti has helped open doors, but security concerns still frustrated efforts to get projects going.

Impromptu meetings with Iraqis have proved all but impossible; visits to project sites are complicated by the need for military protection.

Ms. Miley’s personnel can only venture into Tikrit and other nearby cities a few times a week, and they always travel in convoys of at least three armored Humvees protected by heavily armed U.S. military personnel.

Trips are regularly scrapped at the last-minute because of gunfire or roadside bombs, and several military members of the team have been wounded in insurgent ambushes.

Due to safety concerns, many of the team's Iraqi counterparts spend extended periods of time out of the country.

Mr. Shakti, for instance, speaks defiantly of never bowing to the insurgents who killed his wife. He says insurgents have tried to assassinate him 16 times. But U.S. officials say he spends at least as much time in Dubai and Jordan as he does in Iraq.

The security restrictions have hampered provincial teams across Iraq.

An October audit by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, Stuart Bowen, found that just four of the State Department's 13 main and auxiliary PRT offices then in operation were "generally able" to function effectively and recommended closing the offices in the bloody Basra and Anbar provinces entirely.

Ms. Miley's PRT has also faced criticism from U.S. military commanders.

While Ms. Miley has been trying to build a courthouse, the military has been building a string of new greenhouses across the province. The greenhouses are to include adjacent plots of land where Iraqi farmers can experiment with different types of crops.

The idea for the greenhouses originated with Iraqi agricultural officials, but the Army isn't relying on the Iraqi government to fund or manage the project. Instead, the greenhouses are being purchased with American money, and the 82nd Airborne Division is in charge of hiring the Iraqi contractor and overseeing the actual construction work.

"You need to grab the low-hanging fruit," said Capt. Dan Cederman, a civil-affairs officer for the 82nd Airborne Division. "You need to knock down some short, quick goals to show the Iraqis they have something to gain."

During a recent meeting in a heavily fortified building here with an Iraqi agricultural official, Capt. Cederman said he was thinking of hiring a new local contractor for the project because the current contractor was moving too slowly. "I really want to get the ball rolling on this," Capt. Cederman told the Iraqi official.

"The PRT folks -- with the best of intentions -- see the long-term goal, but don't really know the steps to get there," Capt. Cederman says after the Iraqi left the room.

"Iraqis are out of patience, and who can blame them?"

Members of the State Department's provincial teams acknowledge the risks of focusing on long-term solutions to Iraq's manifold problems. But they argue that the military's approach runs the risk of deepening the Iraqi government's dependence on the U.S.

Ms. Miley said that the military may end up building schools or health clinics that the Iraqi government has no intention of supporting with money of its own for staff salaries, supplies, and other operating expenses.

In a nearby town, a U.S. civil-affairs team built a water-treatment plant in September 2003. But the provincial water ministry, because the plant had been

built without its approval, refused to provide certain chemicals and spare parts for the facility, U.S. officials said.

When the military went back to the town in December 2006, it found that the plant had fallen into disrepair. Military officials say repairing it will now cost at least \$80,000 in new U.S. money.

“I’d love to just snap my fingers and get things as fast as possible,” said Ms. Miley, who remains in Iraq. “But the projects won’t work unless the Iraqis have bought into keeping them alive.”

PRT personnel acknowledge, however, that even firm commitments from the Iraqi government are not always enough to ensure that projects are completed.

The new courthouse for terrorism-related cases, for instance, has been in the works for half a year. The idea originated last October with Col. Foster and Andrew Norman, a federal prosecutor from Baltimore who is part of Ms. Miley’s team.

The Salahaddin province desperately needs the new courthouse.

Suspects believed to have ties to insurgent groups are regularly released because there is no place to put them on trial.

Still, it took Col. Foster and Mr. Norman months to persuade local Iraqi politicians to go along with the project and agree on a workable location.

[Gee, why do you suppose the Iraqis were so reluctant to build something that would mean the “insurgents” wouldn’t get out of prison any more? Can you make a big big guess?]

In the end, the U.S. and Iraqi officials settled on an unused portion of an Iraqi military facility housed here, which was already fortified by several walls and guarded by Iraqi security personnel.

In December, the Iraqis promised to cover the costs of renovating the decrepit buildings into workable courtrooms, pretrial detention cells, and judges’ chambers. In exchange, the U.S. agreed to buy new furniture and computers. In late February, however, the Iraqis reversed course and asked the U.S. to also pay for the electric work at the site.

When the U.S. personnel visited the site a few days later, Col. Foster discovered much of the repair work was poorly done.

Hunched over the hand-drawn blueprints for the site, Col. Foster pointed to a long series of mistakes, from doorways that were bricked in for no apparent reason to a wall that was left up even through it was supposed to have been torn down.

[During World War II, German prisoners put to forced labor building bombs for Hitler deliberately sabotaged the work. Hmmm. Let’s keep that thought in mind.]

The Iraqi engineer overseeing the work nodded his head, and said he will ensure the work is done correctly. "It will take maybe two days to start again, with no more problems," he told the Americans.

After the Iraqis left, Col. Foster pulled a colleague aside and told him that he has little confidence in the Iraqis.

"They tell you what you want to hear, and then they drag their feet," he said. "It's one of the little games they play."

[Poor, stupid, clueless Col. Foster. Of course the thing isn't getting built. Why should any Iraqi want to see the project succeed? Remember the line above you just read: "*Suspects believed to have ties to insurgent groups are regularly released because there is no place to put them on trial.*"

[And, from the point of view of every patriotic Iraq, that's how it should be. And silly Co. Foster thinks that's a "game." No, it's called resistance and non-cooperation with the occupier, and is simply one more dimension of how Iraqis fight against the occupation and for their national liberation from Bush's military dictatorship. Duh.]

PRT personnel are now considering abandoning the building and finding a new site for the courthouse. [And, meanwhile, "insurgents" will continue walking away from prison to fight another day. "*Suspects believed to have ties to insurgent groups are regularly released because there is no place to put them on trial.*"

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Virginia Tech Tragedy: President Bush Expresses Shocked Outrage Over Brutal Massacre He Did Not Authorize

[Headline from "WHITEHOUSE.ORG"]

ENEMY COMBATANTS:

FIGHT THEM HERE, SO YOU WON'T HAVE TO FIGHT FOR THEM OVER THERE



(AFP/POOL/File)

Bush Confirms His War Is Evil

“SOME CALL this civil war; others call it emergency--I call it pure evil.” George W. Bush, Washington, D.C., March 28, 2007

“PURE EVIL”



(AFP Photo/Tim Sloan)

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.

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