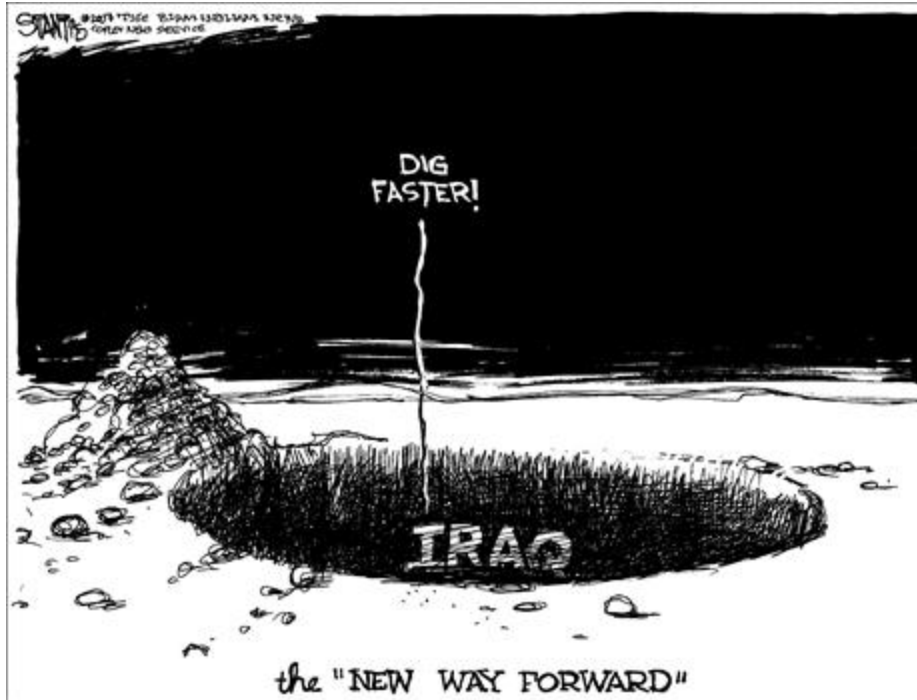


GI SPECIAL 5D29:



the "NEW WAY FORWARD"
[Thanks to Mark Shapiro, who sent this in.]

Dishonorable Scum In Command Betray Hurt Soldiers:

**“Brigade Commanders, In
Desperate Need Of More Troops
For The Surge Were Willing To
Deploy Broken Soldiers”**

“Military Commanders “Could Care Less About The Soldier’s Physical And Mental Welfare, As Long As They Can Shoot Straight, Smart Said”

[Here it is again. Same old story. Used up, thrown away, and the politicians couldn’t care less. To repeat for the 3,497th 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]

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

“Our military is stretched to its breaking point,” he added. “Commanders are being backed into a corner in order to produce units that on paper are ready to deploy. They are casting the moral and ethical implications – and soldiers – to the side.”

April 9, 2007 By Mark Benjamin, Salon Media Group, Inc. [Excerpts]

WASHINGTON – On March 9, Army Spc. Thomas Smith was ordered to board a plane from Fort Benning, Ga., to deploy back to Iraq, even though he was known to be suffering from chronic post-traumatic stress disorder from a previous tour there.

Only weeks prior, military doctors determined that Smith should not be allowed around weapons because of his PTSD symptoms, which included bouts of sudden, extreme anger. Smith’s medical records, obtained by Salon, also show that doctors had “highly recommended” that Smith not be deployed because of his condition.

But that did not stop Smith’s commanders from ordering him to Iraq as his unit, the 3,900-strong 3rd Brigade of the 3rd Infantry Division, was rushing to move out as part of President Bush’s so-called surge plan for securing Baghdad.

“I was told to have my bags in at midnight that night,” for the flight, Smith said. “I was sitting there looking at these letters in my hand from my doctors,” he recalled in a telephone interview. In order to follow the doctors’ recommendations, Smith said, “I had to check myself into the hospital.” He avoided the flight by just a few hours. Smith’s condition was serious enough that the doctors there kept him hospitalized for nearly two weeks.

It remains unclear how many injured troops from the 3rd Brigade were deployed last month. But others continue to come forward who, like Smith, had serious medical problems and narrowly avoided being shipped back to Iraq.

The concern of these soldiers is not only that they could worsen their injuries by being deployed, but that they could also be a danger to themselves and the soldiers around them.

Their stories add new evidence to accusations that brigade commanders, in desperate need of more troops for the surge were willing to deploy broken soldiers.

Hunter Smart, who until recently was a captain in the 3rd Brigade, has experience preparing unit status reports. These detailed accounts showing how many soldiers in a unit are able to deploy to a war zone, make their way up to decision makers in the Pentagon.

Smart says he believes brigade commanders were manipulating the reports and pressing injured soldiers to deploy to Iraq. “The unit status report is a big deal,” Hunter explained in a phone interview.

“You list by name and number the number of soldiers that are hurt and non-deployable,” he said. “There was a concerted effort to keep those numbers down.”

Smart was caught up in those efforts himself.

He had suffered a back injury during a previous tour in Iraq when his Bradley Fighting Vehicle crashed, and his injuries were so severe, the Army finally allowed him medical retirement last month, after determining he was no longer fit to serve.

But to his astonishment, Smart’s commanders pushed to deploy him in March, even as the paperwork for his medical retirement was working its way through the bureaucracy. “They were definitely wanting me to be deployed,” Smart said. “Up until a few weeks ago, I was set to go on a plane,” he said.

Smart saved an e-mail exchange in which his battalion commander, Lt. Col. Todd Ratliff, suggests that if the paperwork for Smart’s medical retirement was not complete when the unit deployed, Smart might be forced to come along.

“If for some reason you are still around when we deploy there is a chance we may take you to support us in Kuwait,” Ratliff wrote in an e-mail to Smart on Feb. 16.

Smart fought against his redeployment, using the resources available to him as an officer to carefully shepherd his medical retirement papers through the Army bureaucracy just in time.

But the experience left him worried about injured enlisted soldiers who were not so lucky – and left him furious at those in charge.

Military commanders “could care less about the soldier’s physical and mental welfare, as long as they can shoot straight,” Smart said.

“Our military is stretched to its breaking point,” he added. “Commanders are being backed into a corner in order to produce units that on paper are ready to deploy. They are casting the moral and ethical implications – and soldiers – to the side.”

Smith, the enlisted soldier who was hospitalized, began noticing symptoms of his PTSD within months of returning from Iraq in January 2005, a tour that included significant time in Ramadi, a hotbed of the insurgency.

On Feb. 8, several military doctors completed a “report of mental status evaluation” on Smith. “It is highly recommended that patient be placed on non-deployable status and have no access to weapons,” the doctors wrote. On Feb. 20, another doctor circled “violence risk” on another of Smith’s health-assessment forms.

But two weeks after that violence-risk notation, Smith found himself just hours away from stepping on to a plane to Iraq.

[Col. Wayne W.] Grigsby, the 3rd Brigade commander, said in an interview last month that the well-being of his soldiers was among his top priorities.

He did not deny deploying injured troops, but he asserted that the injured soldiers who were deployed were to be confined to relatively safe jobs.

But one injured soldier who was deployed to Iraq in March wrote in an e-mail to Salon that her back condition has worsened significantly.

“Now my left leg has started to go numb and they are telling me to double up on my meds, which I can’t,” she wrote. “They are not putting us in safe jobs at all. I still wear all of my gear and by the end of the day the pain is more than unbearable,” she added. “I break my profile pretty much on a daily basis. At this point I will either go back in a wheel chair or paralyzed or worse.”

“Do what you can,” she pleaded in the e-mail, “for the (injured soldiers) that come after me.”

As Salon revealed in a second report on March 26, the commanders of the 3rd Brigade shipped dozens of injured soldiers to Fort Irwin, Calif., in January as the brigade conducted a month of desert-warfare training. The injured soldiers were put up in two large tents, doing odd jobs and biding their time. Some military experts said they believed commanders were attempting to artificially boost manpower statistics by making it appear that a healthier percentage of the brigade was out in the desert training for Iraq deployment.

Both Smith and Smart were among the dozens of soldiers who spent weeks in those tents. Neither could properly train. Smith had already been diagnosed with PTSD at that time, and would awaken at night agitated by the sound of mortars going off in the desert

that were used for training. Neither Smith nor Smart was treated for his medical problems while in the desert.

In Smart's case, that went directly against the recommendations of his doctors. "I believe taking a month off from his treatment plan will be detrimental to his condition," one chiropractor wrote in Smart's file in late December. "Lack of treatment for this prolonged period of time could cause a setback in his condition that may be difficult to recover."

Military families are angered by the treatment of injured soldiers based at Fort Benning. Janie Smith, Thomas' mother, says she was horrified that the Army tried to send her ailing son back to Iraq, which prompted her to contact the media about his predicament.

She described him as an outgoing, personable boy. But the 26-year-old man who came back from Iraq is quiet, withdrawn and sometimes suddenly, frighteningly angry, she says. In a restaurant, he sits facing the door, ready to confront an enemy at any moment. His hands constantly shake. "He is an entirely different person," Janie explained in a phone interview.

Janie said she was glad when her son first joined the Army. "I was really proud of him," she recalled.

But while she is still proud of her son, her feelings for the Army have changed.

"They don't care," she said. "I don't know what I'm going to do now."

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Three U.S. Soldiers Killed, One Wounded By IED Southeast Of Baghdad

April 28, 2007 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE
No. 20070428-31

BAGHDAD – Three Task Force Marne Soldiers were killed and one was wounded when their patrol was struck by a roadside bomb southeast of Baghdad today.

Three Soldiers, Two Marines Killed In Anbar

April 28, 2007 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE
No. 20070428-30

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq – Three Soldiers and two Marines assigned to Multi National Force-West were killed April 27 while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar Province.

U.S. Soldier Killed, Two Wounded BY IED South Of Baghdad

April 28, 2007 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE
No. 20070428-33

BAGHDAD – A Task Force Marine Soldier was killed and two were wounded when their patrol was struck by a roadside bomb south of Baghdad April 28.

Family Remembers Granite Falls Man Killed In Iraq

April 18, 2007 WSOCTV

GRANITE FALLS, N.C. -- The mother of an Army sergeant killed by a roadside bomb in Iraq says her son was "just a joy," while a lifelong friend was impressed by how much he matured in the military.

"He was just a joy to watch grow up," Barbara Braswell said. "I'm very proud of him. I loved him so much."

Larry "Robby" Bowman, 29, of Granite Falls was killed April 13 in Baghdad. He was returning to Kuwait after dropping off supplies when his vehicle struck a roadside bomb, said his sister, Angela Sigmon.

Bowman was assigned to the 513th Transportation Company, 57th Transportation Battalion, 593rd Corps Support Group at Fort Lewis in Washington state. He was on his second tour of duty in the Middle East.

His friend, Richard Steer, remembered Bowman as being adventurous from the age of 5.

"He was always exploring in every direction," Steer said. "He would come up with new and creative ways (for us) to entertain ourselves."

Steer, 29, and Bowman lost touch as they reached high school, but that changed when Bowman returned from Tikrit and asked Steer to be in his wedding.

Bowman and his wife, Michelle, eloped in April 2005 but had a formal ceremony a year later. Steer was a groomsman at that wedding.

The Bowmans met at the Skylite Skating Rink in Hudson 14 years ago. She fell for him right away. "From the second I saw him from across the room, I knew he was the one," Michelle Bowman said. "It just took me awhile to reel him in."

Bowman excelled during his four-year Army career, family and friends said.

"I was amazed at the level of maturity he reached," Steer said. "He was talking about having a family."

Carson Soldier Dies In Explosion In Iraq



Kyle G. Bohrsen was a Montana native who loved to hunt.

April 13, 2007 By Tillie Fong, Rocky Mountain News

Kyle G. Bohrsen loved to go bow hunting for elk and snowmobiling in his home state of Montana.

Bohrsen, 22, of Philipsburg, Mont., died Tuesday of wounds he suffered when his vehicle hit an improvised explosive device in Baghdad.

The private first class was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division at Fort Carson.

Born in Missoula, Mont., he graduated from Granite County High School in Philipsburg, Mont., in 2003. He played football for the school.

Bohrsen attended college in Helena, Mont., before enlisting in the Army on Feb. 22, 2006.

Bohrsen was deployed to Iraq last October, but kept in touch with his family through e-mail, voice mail and Webcam. His last contact was on Easter.

Services are tentatively scheduled for April 21 at the Granite County High School gym, with burial at Granite County Cemetery.

Bohrnsen is survived by his parents, Geoffrey and Elizabeth Bohrnsen, of Philipsburg; a sister, Danielle Bohrnsen, of Philipsburg; paternal grandparents Norman and Coreene Bohrnsen, of Philipsburg; and maternal grandparents, Jim and Peggy Fleming, of Rio Rancho, N.M.

The family asks that contributions be made to the Kyle -Bohrnsen Scholarship Fund c/o Flint Creek Valley Bank, P.O. Box 10, Philipsburg, MT 59858.

Marshall Grad Killed In Iraq

April 19, 2007 By ERICA FACER, Marshall News Messenger

"Carpe Diem" was the motto Spc. Ryan A. Bishop lived by, said his former college roommate.

Bishop, a 1992 Marshall High School graduate, was on patrol south of Baghdad Saturday when his unit was hit by an improvised explosive device. Bishop, an infantryman assigned to Company C, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, was killed in the explosion.

Marshall alumnus Ted Storie, lived with Bishop in Tyler during their college years.

"He was always excited about everything, that's the kind of guy he was," Storie said. "He was the most intense person I ever met."

Storie recalled one day in class Bishop said, "The only Latin you need to know is right here" and pointed to his shirt that read "Carpe Diem" — meaning seize the day.

"He lived by it," Storie said, "I'm sure a lot of people remember that shirt."

Bishop was a 1996 Tyler Junior College graduate and a 1992 graduate of Marshall High School where he was a member of the 1990 State Football Championship team.

Bishop's family lived in Marshall for about seven years before moving to Tyler a year after his high school graduation according to his older brother, Paul Bishop.

The 32-year-old native of Euless joined the Army in February 2005 and completed basic and advanced individual training at Fort Benning, Ga.

Paul Bishop said his brother was looking for a change and was inspired by a co-worker who was in the army. He was working as a land surveyor at the time.

His wife Melanie told the Tyler Morning Telegraph, "He believed deeply in what he was doing and he just wanted to do his part," Ms. Bishop said. "He was very loyal and he was just a blast to be around."

"He felt pretty strongly that it was something he had to do for his country and for himself," Paul Bishop said.

In June 2006 he was assigned to Fort Drum, N.Y. and joined the 'Polar Bears' of 4-31 Infantry. He deployed with his unit to Iraq in August 2006.

Bishop's awards and decorations include the Purple Heart, National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Combat Infantryman Badge and the Expert Infantryman Badge.

Storie was not aware that Bishop had joined the Army, but said, "He had strong convictions, and it sounds like something he would do."

"I can't believe he actually went but he believed in it and that's all that mattered."

Storie said he has been receiving e-mails from all over the country since Bishop's death. "He had friends everywhere," he said.

Bishop is survived by his wife, Melanie and father, Charlie Bishop, both of Tyler.

Funeral arrangements are pending.

NEW GENERAL ORDER NO. 1: PACK UP GO HOME



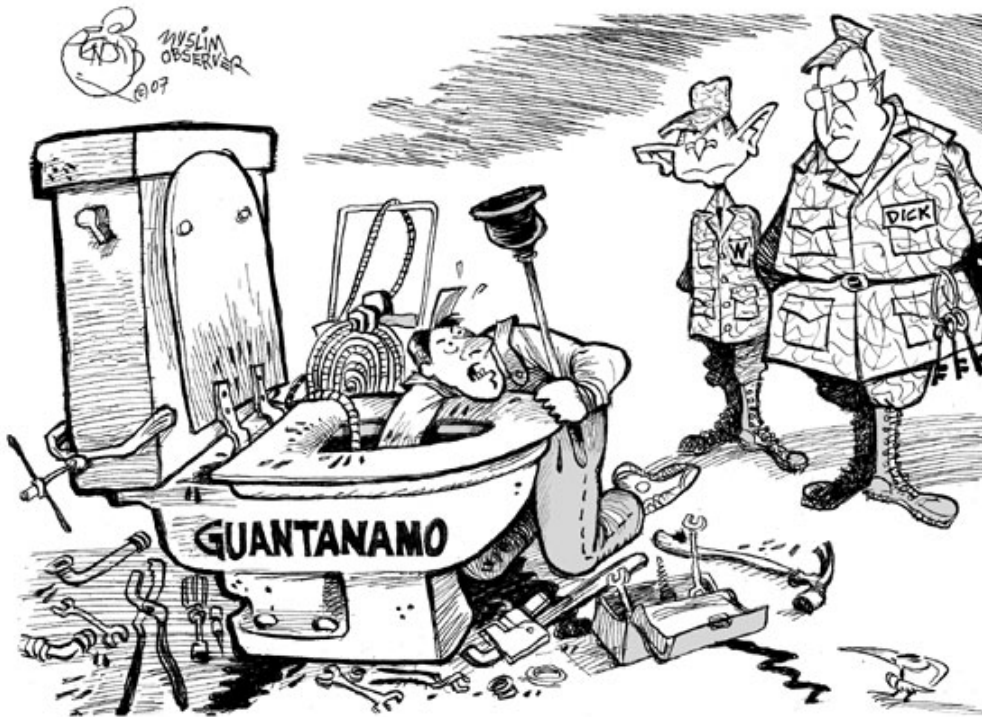
Soldiers pass through a maze of concrete barriers at Camp Striker in Baghdad April 26, 2007. AP Photo/Maya Alleruzzo)

TROOP NEWS

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



The casket of U.S. Army Private First Class John Landry Jr. goes to a cemetery in Wilmington, Massachusetts, March 27, 2007. Landry Jr. was killed by a roadside bomb in Iraq March 17. REUTERS/Brian Snyder



SO FAR, I'VE FISHED OUT THE REMAINS OF TWO KORANS, ONE BILL OF RIGHTS, A GENEVA CONVENTION, A HABEAS CORPUS....YOU GUYS EVER HEARD OF TOILET PAPER?

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

“Iraq Veterans Against The War Will Kick Off A Summer Bus Tour Visiting Military Bases And Their Surrounding Communities”



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

IVAW will kick off a summer bus tour visiting military bases and their surrounding communities to recruit new IVAW members and inform servicemen and women about their rights and ability to oppose the Iraq war. A 2006 Zogby poll of the troops in Iraq showed 72% supported withdrawal within a year.

April 26, 2007 Iraq Veterans Against The War ENewsletter [Excerpts]

Dear IVAW Supporter,

IVAW Will Launch New Strategy to End the War in Iraq

After months of intensive planning and training of over one hundred of our members nationwide in a series of strategy retreats, IVAW is preparing to launch our “Bring the War Home” campaign – a series of actions that will galvanize the national movement to end the war and convince everyday Americans that to support the troops, we must end the war now. IVAW members, along with the invaluable help of our allies, have the unique power to debunk the myth that to support the troops, you must support the war.

We will be organizing within the military and veteran communities to send a message loud and clear: Members of the military are not supporting the war in Iraq.

Our “Bring the War Home” campaign consists of the following elements:

IVAW will support active duty men and women who refuse orders to deploy to Iraq. We will put ourselves on the line to protect these brave men and women of conscience and use the media to dramatize their decision not to go to Iraq. The Pentagon estimates that there are 40,000 soldiers who have gone AWOL since September 11th, 2001.

IVAW members will bring our truth-in-recruiting campaign to military recruiting centers, schools and college campuses around the country to let potential recruits know about the realities of military service and the Iraq war. Thousands of recruits don’t know they can change their mind even after signing their military contract.

IVAW will kick off a summer bus tour visiting military bases and their surrounding communities to recruit new IVAW members and inform servicemen and women about their rights and ability to oppose the Iraq war. A 2006 Zogby poll of the troops in Iraq showed 72% supported withdrawal within a year.

We Found a New Office – Your Financial Support Desperately Needed!

IVAW is growing faster than ever. We receive on average 10 new members each week, and we have developed 4 new IVAW chapters in a little over one month.

IVAW held 4 strategy retreats between January and early April and are preparing to launch a compelling series of highly publicized actions this summer. And all of this from a tiny 9 foot by 19 foot shoebox of an office!

As you can imagine, it has become physically impossible for our 4-person team to function effectively in these tight quarters. We have finally secured a new larger office that can accommodate our need for growth, but we won’t be able to make this move without knowing we have the funds to pay rent.

IVAW is Growing Fast – 4 New Chapters in 5 Weeks!

We are happy to announce the formation of our first chapter on an active-duty military base – Ft. Drum, NY. Other recently formed chapters include Philadelphia, PA; Burlington, VT; and Denver, CO. This brings the total number of IVAW chapters to sixteen.

IVAW Members Use Art to Tell Their Stories

Last weekend, IVAW members participated in the Warrior Writers project which brings together Iraq vets to do creative writing about their military and war experiences. The project was launched at the opening of an art exhibit at Green Door Studio in Burlington, VT which featured an exhibit of work by and about IVAW members. For photos and interviews from this event, check out this link:
www.sevendaysvt.com/features/2007/peace-talks.html.

Also, IVAW has been invited by the band, Rage Against the Machine to appear at the Coachella Music Festival, where Rage will re-unite for the first time in seven years. IVAW will speak from the stage and have a table set up in Rage's tent, reaching a potential audience of the over 180,000 people expected to gather for this annual three-day event in Indio, CA.

As always, I thank you for your on-going support. As friends and allies of IVAW, you are the ones truly supporting the troops.

Warmest Regards,

Kelly Dougherty
Former Sergeant, Army National Guard
Executive Director
Iraq Veterans Against the War

Go to <https://secure.groundspring.org/dn/index.php?aid=11951> to help Iraq Veterans Against The War with a contribution.

Our postal address is
Iraq Veterans Against The War
PO Box 8296
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19101
United States

“The single largest failure of the anti-war movement at this point is the lack of outreach to the troops.” Tim Goodrich, Iraq Veterans Against The War

Double Standard:
He [Lt.] Wins Praise And Acclaim
For Showing What He's Got;
She [SSgt.] Gets Kicked Out Of
The Airforce Doing The Same



U.S. Navy Lt. Andy Baldwin, 30, is a doctor, triathlete and volunteer and will be "The Bachelor" next season. COURTESY OF TIM MANTOANI December 21, 2006, Honolulu Star Bulletin

[The writer of the letter below points to the double standard quite correctly. However, it's none of the military's fucking business what photos people do or do not choose to appear in when off duty, and the writer is dead wrong to say both should be kicked out of the services. Neither should be. What they do or do not do in a photo or TV studio has nothing whatever to do with how they perform their on-duty work. T]

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
4.30.07

I was offended to see an ad on a major broadcasting network in reference to a naval officer, Lt. Andy Baldwin, flaunting his body in the new show "The Bachelor: Officer and a Gentleman." ("Paging Dr. Love: ABC lands lieutenant-physician as next 'Bachelor'," Navy Times, Feb. 12)

I am curious as to how this case is any different than that of former Air Force Staff Sgt. Michelle Manhart, who was relieved of her duties because of a nude photo shoot in Playboy ("Sgt. Playmate reprimanded," Frontlines, Feb. 26, and "The 2 sides of Michelle Manhart," April 16).

They both are using the military for profit. They both are flaunting their body and uniform as a way to make it in the outside world.

The only difference is that the military seems to be OK with Baldwin on ABC but not with Manhart in Playboy. What is the difference?

The naval officer should fall under the same disciplinary action as the Air Force NCO and be relieved of his role as an officer. To blatantly misuse his rank is offensive.

Warrant Officer 1 William Jones
Fort Rucker, Ala.

MORE:

Thrown Out Of The Air Force After Posing In Playboy: Now, She's Fighting Back; "Look, We All Know The Air Force Handled This Wrong" "They Should Have Made Her A Recruiter"



Fighting for back pay and unpaid leave? Forget it, she says.

“I don’t want to deal with this crap anymore,” Manhart says. “It’s obvious someone is trying to sabotage this.”

April 16, 2007 By Patrick Winn – Staff writer, Army Times

SAN ANTONIO — Something about that swish of dirty blond makes the airman’s eyes flicker. Is it her?

She’s cruising slow, windows down, through a flat stretch of Lackland Air Force Base. Steering the black pickup with her left hand, the other tapping cell phone digits with a glossy fingernail.

He’s roadside. Draped in service-issue physical training gear, walking exhausted.

Under the Texas sun, he squints. Still unsure of it. She rolls nearer, close enough to make out her face, and his mouth gapes into a goofy smile.

Oh, it’s her all right.

That Air Force training instructor.

Who got demoted.

For posing nude in February’s Playboy.

When the year began, Michelle Manhart was the brash blonde whose throaty commands could make young trainees cry.

Now she is the married mom whose Playboy dreams shredded a 13-year Air Force career.

To hear Manhart tell it, she expected a dust-up, never a demotion, for the fleshy spread titled “Tough Love.” Her critics wonder how she could have been so I.

Regardless, Manhart’s punishment gave her sudden celebrity, setting off a media blitz, online debates, talk show spats and more.

“Some people say, ‘She had her 15 minutes of fame. Now shut up,’” Manhart says. “Some say, ‘Girl, take it for all its worth.’”

Manhart says she does not plan to shut up. She is hustling to spin her high-profile punishment into a lasting celebrity career. In days, she’ll go to her next high-profile modeling gig, with People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. Manhart will pose wearing only an American flag for the group’s “I’d Rather Go Naked than Wear Fur” national campaign.

But today, on this clear blue late March afternoon, Manhart is headed to a different sort of photo shoot.

She’s no longer an active-duty airman. And that calls for a new military picture ID.

Nowhere does her infamy burn brighter than at Lackland. Yet Manhart walks the base with Playboy written all over her.

Literally.

Her white cotton Playboy long-sleeve T-shirt fits snug. Her lipstick-pink Playboy bunny pendant jingles when she walks. Her flip-flops glitter. Ask for her ID, out comes the metallic Playboy business card holder Manhart uses as a wallet.

At Lackland, she gets lingering looks. Looks that say, "I know who you are." Looks that Manhart can't always peg to disapproval or embarrassed curiosity.

"When I go on base and people recognize me, they're very apprehensive," she says. "I never know how to approach it."

Manhart's decision has divided service members. Waves of letters to the editor, online rants and a string of editorials have scolded her for disgracing the uniform, taken the Air Force to task for demoting her — or deemed her an embarrassing setback to military women. Montel Williams, a former naval officer, even ripped Manhart face-to-face on his daytime talk show.

It's different around San Antonio, where Manhart is the city's newest celebrity. The autograph requests come in gas stations, supermarkets and airport terminals, from men and women alike. She never leaves the house without Magic Markers.

Manhart says she has adored the attention since her Playboy issue debuted. That morning, her Sharpie squeaked out its first post-Playboy autograph, and two blushing airmen left a Barnes and Noble bookstore mumbling thank-yous.

"She's a big deal in San Antonio," says Freddy Hernandez, a local comedian who hosted one of Manhart's recent appearances at a downtown club.

"Most people are saying, 'Hey, can you believe what they did to that chick? After she fought overseas, after she fought for our country?'"

What they did to Manhart was issue a letter of reprimand, demote her from staff sergeant to senior airman and, finally, drop her from active duty. She was reassigned to the Iowa National Guard, though Manhart has not lived in Iowa for years.

Fighting for back pay and unpaid leave? Forget it, she says.

"I don't want to deal with this crap anymore," Manhart says. "It's obvious someone is trying to sabotage this."

Back at Lackland, her errand has Manhart in a bureaucratic holding pen, a bare-walled room where military IDs are issued. The ambiance is DMV.

An overhead screen flashes Manhart's number. She approaches the counter. Signs a few forms with her husband. Positions her face before a backdrop.

A shutter clicks. A machine spits out an orange ID card.

The old one read “STAFF SERGEANT.” The new one reads “RELATIONSHIP: SPOUSE.”

Manhart is the everyman’s Playmate, a beer-with-the-guys type who prefers jeans to evening wear. She is chirpy and funny and treats strangers like friends.

She is feminine, but never dainty. Her backbone is titanium. Talk slick, she’ll give it back. She’s the girl next door — who could put you in a headlock.

She’s also a talker and something of an open book. But for most of last year, Playboy was her secret.

An amateur model since 13 — one who later added nudes to her portfolio — Manhart showed up at Playboy’s San Antonio casting call in early 2006. The magazine was curious about her nails-tough job: Breaking down and building up young Air Force recruits as a training instructor.

“The photographers found out Michelle was in the military,” Playboy publicist Theresa Hennessey said. “That was very intriguing to them.”

They arranged to photograph Manhart in April at a private home in The Dominion, an elite San Antonio hideaway for celebrities and the super rich. Manhart had zero assurance that Playboy would ever run the photos.

So she kept quiet, fearful of giving backbiters easy bait: a mother of two, nearing 30, whose Playboy dreams burnt out before taking off.

“Just me and my husband knew,” she says. “I talked to my family before I shot the photos. After that, we never talked about it again. I didn’t want to go out and look like an idiot.”

In early January, before the magazine hit racks, Playboy gave her the word. Manhart says she quickly told her supervisor. The supervisor told her captain, who told her commander.

“At first, they said, ‘Don’t worry. You’re not in trouble, and you’re in our best interest,’” Manhart said. **“We just need to notify the correct people.”**

She said their tone darkened in a matter of hours.

“They told me to pack my desk and turn in my hat.”

The Uniform Code of Military Justice doesn’t explicitly forbid posing nude.

The military’s response to her Playboy nudes came in three waves.

Manhart first received an official letter of reprimand citing Article 92 and Article 134, according to her attorney during active duty, Maj. Christopher Brown.

The first charge speaks to failures of military regulation.

The second is a catch-all for service members who discredit the armed forces. It specifically mentions misuse of a uniform.

Manhart, fully clothed in uniform, appears to be screaming at a male trainee in one of her Playboy photos. In a more provocative shot, she's glistening on an exercise machine wearing dog tags (which now hang from her Toyota Tacoma's rearview mirror).

Next, Manhart was administratively demoted from staff sergeant to senior airman. This measure, Brown says, is most commonly used against airmen who repeatedly fail fitness requirements.

"It's for poor performance over an extended period of time," Brown says. Given Manhart's clean file, he says, "it's really a misuse of the demotion."

Manhart, saying her patience was depleted, filed resignation papers in early February. Officials responded by canceling her enlistment and bumping Manhart down to her last military affiliation prior to active duty: the Iowa National Guard.

Before settling in San Antonio in 2005, Manhart spent four years stationed in Des Moines, Iowa, where she studied pre-law and earned a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Northern Iowa.

Naturally, she wants out — of the Air Force, of the National Guard, of the military period. Manhart turned in her second resignation, this one to the Guard.

Her honorable discharge — citing reasons of personal convenience — was issued 10 days before she was expected on base. Manhart's last official military tie was cut.

"I've finally gotten out from underneath it," Manhart says. "I feel like my life is finally in my own hands."

At a dining table somewhere in San Antonio's never-ending suburbs, Manhart and her children are a 2007 Norman Rockwell portrait.

Aunika, 11, has just walked home from school with her brother, Travis. He's 6.

They are yes, ma'am, no, ma'am kids. They are freckle-faced. They are hunched over the dining room table completing homework, an afternoon ritual that precedes outdoor play.

Manhart is shoulder-to-shoulder with her daughter explaining simple math. When she slips away to the kitchen for a moment, Aunika asks without a hint of shyness:

"Mom, can you give me a signed picture of you?" Manhart looks back screw-faced. Huh?

"It's for a kid. At school."

No chance. But this is how Playboy is discussed with her children. No secrets, no shame.

Manhart, daughter at her side, has gone through her Playboy spread page by page. The human body is beautiful, she explained, and nothing to be afraid of.

“She didn’t jump for joy all excited, and she didn’t hate the idea,” Manhart says. Aunika says she would rather her mom pose with clothes on. “But,” the fifth-grader adds, “I like that she followed what she wanted and got it.”

Manhart sneaked her first Playboy peeks when she was roughly her daughter’s age. Someday, she thought, I’m going to be one of those women.

“At the time, I didn’t see it as Playboy,” Manhart says. “I just thought, ‘Wow, this is the best magazine for models.’”

Manhart grew up with divorced parents in Northern California. Money was scarce, she says. She bounced between the towns of Chico and Susanville, briefly living in her mother’s truck after their home caught fire.

In high school, she was not quite a tomboy, not quite a jock, she says. In an early mark of defiance, Manhart fought for and won a place on Chico’s Pleasant Valley High School wrestling team, after first being told she couldn’t join.

At 16, Manhart graduated early. She joined a military lineage threaded by her retired Navy father, retired Marine Corps stepfather and retired Army Air Corps grandfather. She enlisted so young that her mother had to sign a release form.

“I was 16 when I signed up, so I didn’t know anything. I owe so much to the” Air Force, Manhart says.

“I don’t miss the negativity. I miss the family. I miss the uniform,” she says. “I don’t really miss getting up every day and going to work. But I miss the whole picture. Almost 13 years of my life is there.”

The military is still entrenched in Manhart’s life. San Antonio, a four-base city, is heavily populated with active-duty and retired service members. So is her neighborhood.

Manhart is also married to a husband she describes as a “blue-all-the-way” airman. They wed more than a decade ago.

Her fans might not have noticed. Manhart’s husband prefers to stand just outside her corona of public attention. He dodges the camera flash. He doesn’t do interviews and definitely doesn’t do Hollywood.

At a Playboy mansion visit, surrounded by glitz and L.A. high-society, he felt most comfortable around the wait staff. (The exception: Too Short, California rap legend and fellow Oakland native.)

Manhart’s husband is also stationed at Lackland. And his reluctance to share his wife’s spotlight is partly at her urging.

“He hasn’t gotten in trouble for anything I’ve done yet,” Manhart says. “He shouldn’t. And I don’t want him to.”

It’s ruby-purple dawn over a generic grid of San Antonio-area strip malls and gated neighborhoods. At this early hour, so dark cars still burn headlights, Manhart sweats inside one of the city’s priciest one-on-one fitness studios.

Her trainer is the bald and brawny Boyd Myers, three years out of a decade-long Air Force career. Worth roughly \$100 per hour, he says.

Manhart is walking low and ducklike across the carpet, a 15-pound beam held taut across her shoulders and forearms. It looks like a hazing ritual. Myers says it’s strengthening her hips.

“Michelle’s got weak hips,” Myers says. “We’ve got to work on that.”

“Weak hips? Child-bearing hips!” Manhart counters.

This has replaced Manhart’s 14-hour stints training Lackland airmen. Keeping her model body fit. Signing and returning Playboys that appear in her post office box.

She fields roughly 200 messages per day on MySpace, the premier online social network and de facto marketing platform.

“In an average day, I spend a lot of time working on my future goals now that I don’t have the Air Force as an everyday positive employment, so to speak,” she says.

Manhart won’t reveal how much Playboy paid. The magazine, Hennessey confirmed, made her sign a contract promising she’d keep quiet. Safe to say it’s five figures, but less than the \$25,000 disclosed figure Playboy pays each issue’s Playmate of the Month cover model.

To Manhart, her future is already written. It’s not whether her entertainment career takes off. It’s when.

“Of course it will,” she says. “Why wouldn’t it?”

Now Manhart is belly-down on a rubber mat, limp on the training center floor. Myers kneads her calf. He finds a knot and digs in with meaty fingers. Manhart’s face crinkles.

Myers, a former staff sergeant, is remembering basic training. He recalls who he was surrounded by. Young men in their late teens and early 20s.

Does Manhart really believe those guys, after peering over her glowing curves in an adult magazine, could cede her the authority that job demands?

Absolutely, she says. But Myers has to wonder.

“It’d be tough,” Myers says. Then he clarifies. “Honestly, I’m not sure she would have been treated the same, ever, in any career.”

“Look, we all know the Air Force handled this wrong,” says Myers, grinning down at his sore client, still prone on the carpet.

“They should have made her a recruiter.”

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Angry Iraqis In Karbala “Stormed The Provincial Government Offices And The Governor's House, Burning Part Of It”

[Thanks to Pham Binh, Traveling Soldier, who sent this in. He writes: Shia are running out of patience. They stormed a governor's house and see the quotes below.]

4.29.07 By KIM GAMEL, Associated Press Writer

A car bomb exploded Saturday in the Shiite holy city of Karbala as the streets were packed with people heading for evening prayers, killing at least 58 and wounding scores near some of the country's most sacred shrines.

With black smoke clogging the skies above Karbala, angry crowds hurled stones at police and later stormed the provincial governor's house, accusing authorities of failing to protect them from the unrelenting bombings.

Crowds stormed the provincial government offices and the governor's house, burning part of it along with three cars and scuffling with guards. Security forces detained several armed protesters, said Ghalib al-Daami, a provincial council member.

"I did not expect this explosion because I thought the place was well protected by the police," said Qassim Hassan, a clothing merchant who was injured by the blast. "I demand a trial for the people in charge of the security in Karbala."

Hassan, who spoke to a reporter from his hospital bed, said his brother and a cousin were still missing.

"I regret that I voted for those traitors who only care about their posts, not the people who voted for them," he said.

The nationalist Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr launched a strong attack earlier Saturday on President Bush, calling him the "greatest evil" for refusing to withdraw American troops from Iraq.

"Here are the Democrats calling you to withdraw or even set a timetable and you are not responding," al-Sadr's statement said.

"It is not only them who are calling for this but also Republicans, to whom you belong."

"If you are ignoring your friends and partners, then it is no wonder that you ignore the international and Iraqi points of view," he added.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

“Most Of The Opposition To Our Occupation Of Iraq Is Simply Iraqis Who Don't Want Foreigners Occupying Their Country”

April 28, 2007 by Charley Reese, Charley Reese Archives [Excerpts]

President George Bush's claims about what will happen if we pull out of Iraq is almost word-for-word identical to Richard Nixon's speech explaining why we must not pull out of Vietnam.

A "precipitate withdrawal" would result in a bloodbath, destabilization of Southeast Asia, would embolden our enemies and result in more war not less, Nixon said. And that is what Bush is saying, if you substitute "Middle East" for "Southeast Asia."

Nixon succeeded not in winning the war in Vietnam, but in prolonging it until 21,000 more young Americans died in the jungles and rice paddies. Then we withdrew, and none of Nixon's predictions came true.

To draw a further parallel, we got into the Vietnam War because the people who put us there: (1) didn't know the history; (2) didn't speak the language; (3) didn't understand the culture; and (4) arrogantly assumed that American firepower and technology could overcome any and all obstacles.

The Vietnamese were able to defeat us, despite our superiority in firepower and technology, because it was their country and we were foreign invaders. The people were on their side, not ours.

They knew they could wear us down. They were willing to lose millions of people, and we weren't.

The current president, who really does seem to occupy a state of denial, has always refused to accept the fact that most of the opposition to our occupation of Iraq is simply Iraqis who don't want foreigners occupying their country.

He has always tried to blame the resistance on outsiders – al-Qaeda or Iran or Syria.

There are some outsiders in Iraq, but they wouldn't survive two days if it were not for the American occupation.

So President Bush will accomplish the same thing Richard Nixon accomplished. He will get more Americans killed, and eventually we will pull out of Iraq.

It's not just the casualties that will drive us out; it is the enormous expense, the wear and tear on the Army, the necessary neglect of important domestic problems, and the political divisions at home, which will only grow more exacerbated.

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 to contact@militaryproject.org. Name, I.D., withheld on request. Replies confidential. Same to unsubscribe.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Notes From A Lost War:

***The Great Collaborator Troop
Training Fiasco Rolls On:***

**“Subordinates And Peers Who Are
Actively Working For Any One Of
Several Enemies”**

**“A Broken Logistics System” And “A
Battalion That Never Has More Than 40**

Percent Of Its Authorized Strength Present For Duty”

April 30, 2007 By Sean D. Naylor, Military Times [Excerpts]

BAGHDAD — At first glance, Lt. Col. Rahim Katham al-Badry makes for an unlikely hero. The squat, pot-bellied commander of the Iraqi army’s 3rd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Infantry Division, is 41 but looks at least a decade older. With his bulbous nose, bushy black moustache and eyebrows, and graying hair dyed jet black, he would never pass for a U.S. light infantry battalion commander.

But no U.S. battalion commander ever has to face the myriad challenges with which Rahim must contend daily: a battalion that never has more than 40 percent of its authorized strength present for duty; subordinates and peers who are actively working for any one of several enemies; fanatical foes who pose a constant threat to the lives of his closest relatives; a broken logistics system that has yet to deliver a single part for his battalion’s vehicles; and an absence of space and time to train his soldiers.

Despite Rahim’s ongoing efforts to rid his battalion of corruption, doubts about the loyalty of Iraqi soldiers make it impossible to conduct planning or rehearsals for missions.

The Americans brief Rahim on a mission the night before it takes place. The rest of the battalion is kept in the dark until they assemble prior to the mission on Saddam’s former parade ground in the Green Zone, famous for the pairs of massive crossed swords at each end.

The battalion commander has his own way of doing things.

He is disdainful of the large operations preferred by the Americans, in which hundreds of Iraqi and U.S. soldiers sweep through block after block, searching every house.

In his view, packing that many soldiers into a small neighborhood risks alienating the people, because it takes only one offensive gesture or action to lose the good will Rahim has painstakingly earned through hours of diplomacy with neighborhood leaders.

This fear is not entirely misplaced.

Despite strenuous efforts to prevent such episodes, over the course of five days in April, Rahim and Norrie received several complaints about the behavior of U.S. troops on the sweeps, including allegations that an American soldier on a search team blew kisses to Iraqi women in a home; that a soldier tried to steal a \$10,000 wad of bills; and that a soldier for no reason verbally abused a family, one of whom spoke English.

Good News For The Iraqi Resistance!!

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



An Iraqi citizen is forced to kneel down on the floor of his own home during a home invasion by foreign occupation soldiers from the U.S. in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, 23 April. (AFP/Mauricio Lima)

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.

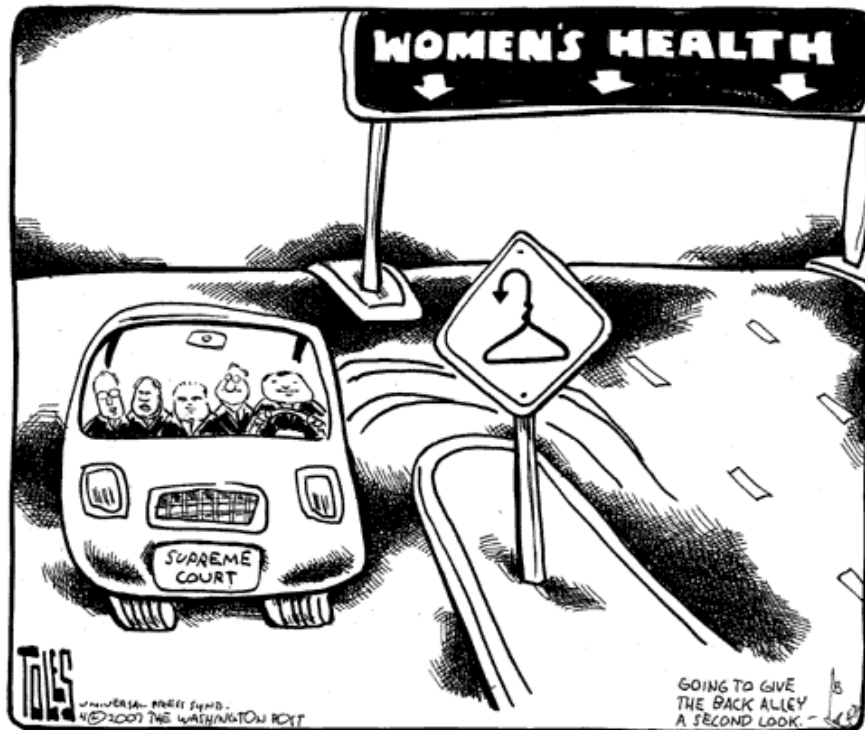
[Fair is fair. Let's bring 150,000 Iraqi troops over here to the USA. They can kill people at checkpoints, bust into their houses with force and violence, butcher their families, overthrow the government, put a new one in office they like better and call it "sovereign," and "detain" anybody who doesn't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

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

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

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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

Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward GI Special along, or send us the address if you wish and we’ll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Project, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657

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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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