

## GI SPECIAL 5D4:



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

**“Nobody Really  
Understands What’s  
Going On”  
“This Country Is Not Getting  
Any Better”  
“We’ve Just Got A Lot Of Guys  
Dying”**

[Thanks to AT, who sent this in.]

April 2, 2007 By RICHARD A. OPPEL Jr., The New York Times Company [Excerpts]

It had been a long day for Colonel Sutherland and his brigade chaplain, Maj. Charlie Fenton, who have taken it on themselves to visit every dead and badly wounded soldier in the 5,000-strong unit, the Third Brigade Combat Team of the First Cavalry Division.

But it was still not over. After arriving in Baquba, Major Fenton walked into the brigade headquarters and heard Colonel Sutherland on a loudspeaker informing officers that a soldier from another brigade had committed suicide in Muqdadiya. Then he was handed a list of nine new casualties, the dead and the wounded. At the top was Sergeant Sebban.

Four hours later, he and Colonel Sutherland climbed into another helicopter, bound once again for Balad.

**“We’ve never had to see this many at once,” Major Fenton said as he walked in darkness in helmet and body armor to the landing pad just after 11 p.m., trailed by soldiers grasping stacks of Purple Hearts in navy blue leather cases.**

The two officers have made the round trip to Balad more than 70 times since arriving in October. But on that day, March 17, the brigade suffered its highest daily toll, with two dead and 14 wounded.

**Altogether, the unit has seen 39 soldiers die in five months, more in that brief span than the number killed in any brigade that preceded it in yearlong deployments here.**

Names of the dead are written on a piece of metal affixed to a tall concrete barrier on Forward Operating Base Warhorse, near Baquba. With the death of Sergeant Sebban, the barrier ran out of space. A new barrier was just erected next to it.

More than a year ago the American military decided to cut back drastically the number of troops in Diyala.

But that plan is now in reverse, as new troops move back into Baquba, the provincial capital, trying to quell the bitter fighting as part of the plan to put more troops in Iraq.

**“We’ve just got a lot of guys dying,” said one combat soldier who did not want his name published. “This country is not getting any better. Nobody really understands what’s going on.”**

Of the hundreds of thousands of American troops who have deployed to Iraq in four years of war, more than 3,200 have been killed. But those numbers understate the mortal risk faced by those in dangerous regions like Diyala.

**The primary combat unit in Baquba since November, the 1-12 Combined Arms Battalion, has seen 21 soldiers killed in five months, out of close to 1,000. An additional 93 have been wounded. The battalion’s deployment is less than half over.**

**In some months the military hospital in Balad sees more than 500 wounded soldiers from northern Iraq alone, said Staff Sgt. Tanisha Denton.**

Sergeant Denton offered Colonel Sutherland and his soldiers a familiar admonition: "Don't take offense, but I don't want to see any of you back here for a while."

But five and a half hours later they were back. Five soldiers wounded at As Sadah arrived, as well as three from the Fifth Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment shot on patrol in Baquba.

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## **IRAQ WAR REPORTS**

### **Marine Killed In Anbar**

April 3, 2007 Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20070403-03

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq – A Marine assigned to Multi National Force-West died April 2 while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar Province.

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### **Family Says Eagan Marine Killed In Iraq**

Apr 2 MINNEAPOLIS (AP)

A Marine from Eagan was killed in Iraq, the soldier's family said Monday.

Lance Cpl. Daniel Olsen, 20, was shot Sunday in Anbar Province, his parents, Wayne and Gwen Olsen, told WCCO-TV. They said two Marines, an Eagan police officer and a chaplain told them of the death.

Daniel Olsen, a graduate of Eagan High School, enlisted in the Marines on March 15, 2005, and was deployed Jan. 28, 2007, his family said. "He was doing what he wanted to do," his father said.

Wayne Olsen said his son was on patrol in the Fallujah area with the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines Fox Company when he was killed. Though he was wearing heavy armor, he was shot in the back with small arms fire, his parents said.

A call from The Associated Press to a Marine spokesman wasn't immediately returned Monday night.

**Olsen is the 56th person with strong Minnesota ties to die in connection with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.**

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### **Oklahoma Marine Killed In Iraq**

3/27/2007 OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)

A 21-year-old Marine from Oklahoma City died in Iraq when the vehicle he was riding in hit a roadside bomb just 12 days before he was scheduled to return home, military officials said Monday.

Lance Cpl. Trevor A. Roberts died Saturday while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar province, the Defense Department said.

Roberts, who was assigned to Marine Forces Reserve's 2nd Battalion, 14th Marine Regiment, 4th Marine Division, was in the right rear passenger seat at 8 p.m. when the explosion occurred, said 1st Sgt. Scott Baker, a spokesman for Roberts' unit. Another person riding in the vehicle suffered a minor concussion.

Baker said Roberts was one of 30 people from the unit who volunteered to go to Iraq and had been in that country for seven months. The unit has since been activated and is training at Fort Sill, preparing for a July deployment.

"He was an All-American boy," Baker said. "He was brought up in a good Christian family. He was a good Marine. He volunteered to go. He felt it was his obligation to serve God, the country and the Corps."

Roberts was trained as an artillery specialist.

Rob Olmstead, pastor of Eagle Heights Church in Oklahoma City, said Roberts wanted to study anthropology or sociology in college.

"His experiences in Iraq were pretty amazing," said Olmstead, who was Roberts' pastor. "He was always aware of culture and slow to judge it and more open to learning from it."

His parents, Chuck and Twyla Roberts, had spoken to him two days before he was killed, Baker said. Roberts is also survived by a brother, who is attending college.

Baker said Roberts was the first Marine from the unit killed in the war.

He said Roberts was very involved in his church and was planning to participate in a church mission to China this summer.

Roberts graduated from Westmoore High School in 2004 and attended Oklahoma City Community College, Oklahoma City radio station KTOK reported.

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## **Rosemount Soldier Dies In Iraq**

3/30/07 by Tad Johnson, Thisweek Newspapers

Spc. Sean K. McDonald, 21, of Rosemount, died March 25 in Baghdad, Iraq, of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle, according to the U.S. Department of Defense.

McDonald was assigned to the 9th Engineer Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, based in Wiesbaden, Germany.

According to the Star Tribune, McDonald was born in Burnsville on Dec. 25, 1985, to parents Russell and Marleen McDonald.

McDonald was not married and had no children, according to Marotto. His sister, Jessica, lives in Rosemount.

McDonald attended fifth and sixth grade at Valley Middle School in Apple Valley, according to District 196 officials.

After that he moved to the Netherlands with his mother when his parents divorced, according to the Star Tribune.

He enlisted in the Army at age 18.

McDonald's death was at least the 26th suffered by the Schweinfurt-based "Dagger Brigade" since it deployed last summer to Iraq.

Marotto said a memorial service for McDonald has been scheduled for Thursday, April 5. McDonald's service will be at Ledward Chapel on Ledward Barracks.

A service will be held April 9 at Fort Snelling National Cemetery, where he will be buried, according to the Star Tribune, and at White Funeral Home in Apple Valley.

More information about McDonald will be posted on Thisweek Newspapers Web site at [www.thisweek-online.com](http://www.thisweek-online.com).

Those readers who knew McDonald are encouraged to call editor Tad Johnson at (952) 846-2033 or e-mail him at [editor.thisweek@ecm-inc.com](mailto:editor.thisweek@ecm-inc.com).

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## **U.S. Cargo Plane Down In Dalouiya**

Apr 3 DPA

A U.S. cargo plane crashed in a remote area in eastern Dalouiya, Salah al-Din province, an eyewitness said on Tuesday

The source added that the US helicopters laid down fire in the area where the plane crashed in order to prevent anyone from approaching the scene.

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## **U.S. Military Vehicle Destroyed On Kut-Baghdad Highway;**

# Casualties Not Announced

Apr 3 (VOI)

A U.S. Hummer vehicle was destroyed when an explosive charge went off near a U.S. convoy on the Kut-Baghdad highway on Tuesday, an eyewitness said

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## British Patrol Attacked South Of Basra

Apr 3 (VOI)

Basra – A British patrol came under an attack with an explosive device while conducting a search operation south of the city, where British soldiers had arrested a suspect and seized arms and ammunition, a military spokeswoman for the Multi-National Force – South said on Tuesday

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## “One Of The Newer Tactics The Resistance Is Using In Iraq”

From: [XXXX Veteran]  
To: GI Special  
Sent: April 03, 2007  
Subject: Anonymous contribution

[This comment refers to the story that appears below the comment. T]

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**This is one of the newer tactics the resistance is using in Iraq. Link to video of an attack like this:** <http://siteinstitute.org/bin/articl...s&Subcategory=0>

Mujahideen Army in Iraq Announces New Bombing Strategy in Response to American Troop Deployment, Issues Video of Bombing Two Humvees

By SITE Institute, February 6, 2007

“The Mujahideen Army (Jeish al-Mujahideen) in Iraq issued a communiqué today, Tuesday, February 6, 2007, claiming an attack in response to the strategy of U.S. President George W. Bush for additional troop deployment.

**“The group intends to “make use of the American Army’s stupidity in city battles” by planting more than one improvised explosive device (IED) in their ambushes.**

As such, they provided a one and a half minute video of such an attack targeting two Humvees in West Baghdad.”

[This is the news story referenced:]

## **6 U.S. Troops Killed Near Baghdad By Coordinated IED Attack; Two More Wounded**

April 1, 2007 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20070401-12

BAGHDAD – While conducting a combat security patrol, two MND-B Soldiers died and two others were wounded when an improvised explosive device detonated near their unit southwest of the Iraqi capital March 31.

**Four additional Soldiers were killed when a second improvised explosive device detonated near a separate unit responding to the initial IED strike southwest of the Iraqi capital April 1.**

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



U.S. soldiers from the Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion of the 12th Cavalry Regiment on a patrol through Baghdad's northwest neighborhood of Ghazaliya, April 1, 2007. (Fabrizio Bensch/Reuters)

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## TROOP NEWS

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



A hearse carrying the casket of Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Benjamin L. Sebban 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, the Department of Defense said. (AP Photo/Mike Derer)

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**“Warnings About The Programs  
Had Filtered Back To Front-Line  
Troops”**

# **“We’d Get E-Mails From People In Hold Saying The Conditions Were Terrible”**

## **“We’d Do Anything We Could To Not End Up In ‘Med Hold’”**

**After she returned from Iraq with a minor injury, Army Reservist Korrie Shivers said she faced the decision of acknowledging the problem and facing a year in medical hold or saying nothing and going home. “I know a lot of people who were hurt who didn’t say anything,” she said.**

April 03, 2007 By MICHAEL GISICK, Scripps-McClatchy Western Service

**ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. - Injured U.S. service members have become so wary of inpatient treatment programs run by the military that many consider hiding their health problems when they return from war, a group of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans told U.S. Rep. Heather Wilson.**

During a roundtable discussion in Albuquerque on Monday, those veterans also said poor record keeping by the military and a “revolving door” of doctors at the veterans hospital were hindering care.

Those programs have come under an intense spotlight following reports by the Washington Post of major problems at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, the Army’s flagship hospital in Washington, D.C.

But Trent Simpler, a staff sergeant with the Army Reserves who served in Iraq, said the problems weren’t isolated to Walter Reed.

After he suffered a foot injury, Simpler said he was sent to a medical-hold facility at Fort Benning, Georgia.

“They had 100 of us in some buildings that had been slated for demolition,” he said, adding that the building he was in lacked basic amenities and TVs.

“They had some people in tents,” he said.

**Kenny Keelin, who served in Afghanistan with the New Mexico National Guard, said warnings about the programs had filtered back to front-line troops long before they were exposed by the Washington Post.**

**“We’d get e-mails from people in hold saying the conditions were terrible,” he said. “We’d do anything we could to not end up in ‘med hold.’”**

**After she returned from Iraq with a minor injury, Army Reservist Korrie Shivers said she faced the decision of acknowledging the problem and facing a year in medical hold or saying nothing and going home.**

**“I know a lot of people who were hurt who didn’t say anything,” she said.**

Wilson, an Air Force veteran, said she’d heard the same story from other veterans.

**“(It) may be encouraging people not to report health problems,” Wilson said.**

Several of the veterans complained of long waits for appointments at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Albuquerque and said they’d repeatedly been shuffled between doctors.

Donald Norman, an Iraq war veteran, said he was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder while on active duty with the Army. But after returning to New Mexico, he said, he went to the local VA hospital and was told he’d have to wait six months for an appointment with a psychiatrist.

**Army Staff Sgt. Michael Chamberlain, who suffered knee and back injuries while working with military intelligence in Iraq, said he’d been told older vets were facing even longer waits at the local hospital.**

**“I don’t like people telling me they have to bump back Vietnam and World War II vets to make room for me,” he said.**

Chamberlain and others also complained about what he called a “revolving door” of doctors.

**“You meet with one, and two weeks later you go back and they’ve left,” he said.**

**The parents of Tyler Wilson, a New Mexico soldier who was partially paralyzed by a gunshot wound in Afghanistan in 2005, said their son had received outstanding care at Walter Reed and blamed the media for blowing the problems there out of proportion.**

**But, they said, their son nearly died of an overdose on Oxycontin because of an error by a nurse.**

**“It just seems like they don’t have enough help. They’re always short-staffed,” Joanna Wilson said.**

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**“An Entire Generation Of Veterans  
Who Have No Faith In Our VA”**

# **“A Disability Claim Under The Best Of Circumstances Takes An Average Of Four Months”**

March 26, 2007 Army Times; By Rick Maze – Staff writer

Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans are warning Congress that a new generation of disabled veterans feels shortchanged by the government because of delays in processing claims and a sense of unfairness in how services and benefits are provided.

Brady Van Engelen, a wounded Iraq war veteran and associate director of Veterans for America, said veterans and their families suffer because the VA simply isn't fast enough in processing claims.

“We may end up with an entire generation of veterans who have no faith in our VA because those running it — as well as those overseeing it — were unable to hold up their end of the bargain,” he told the House Veterans' Affairs disability assistance subcommittee.

VA officials admitted at the hearing that despite years of effort, the backlog of disability claims is growing.

Ronald Aument, VA deputy undersecretary for benefits, said processing a disability claim under the best of circumstances takes an average of four months, and that priority is being given to claims for the most severely disabled combat veterans who served in Iraq or Afghanistan.

The average processing time is 177 days, which the VA wants to cut to about 145 days, he said.

The VA handled 774,000 claims last year but received 806,382. The number of veterans receiving disability benefits has climbed from about 2.3 million in 2000 to 2.7 million in 2006.

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## **VA Patient Has Wrong Testicle Removed; “The Vet's Healthy Testicle Is Removed Instead Of The Potentially Cancerous One”**

April 4, 2007 By Mary Engel, L.A. Times Staff Writer [Excerpts]

Benjamin Houghton had fewer reasons than most to fear the surgery he'd scheduled at the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center to remove his potentially cancerous left testicle.

For one thing, the 47-year-old Air Force veteran and father of four already knew that he could function normally with a single, healthy testicle.

For another, he was getting his surgery in a system that has prided itself on its pioneering efforts to prevent medical errors. One top VA official said the VA's approach to safety is considered "a benchmark by healthcare organizations throughout the world."

But in Houghton's case, the hospital missed the mark. Last June 14, doctors mistakenly removed the right testicle instead of the left, according to medical records and a claim filed by Houghton and his wife Monica, 39.

Now the couple are seeking about \$200,000 for future healthcare costs outside the Department of Veterans Affairs system and an undisclosed amount in damages. Their claim is pending.

**Houghton was left deprived of the testosterone the healthy testicle produced, setting him up for potential health complications including sexual dysfunction, depression, fatigue, weight gain and osteoporosis.**

"At first I thought it was a joke," said Houghton, who recalls being told of the mistake immediately afterward, while he was in recovery. "Then I was shocked. I told them, 'What do I do now?'"

Dr. Dean Norman, chief of staff for the Greater Los Angeles VA system, has formally apologized to Houghton and his wife. But Houghton, who has received care through the VA since his discharge in 1989, wants nothing more to do with a system that he believes failed him.

The surgery Houghton went in for that day was not urgent. He had first been diagnosed with metastatic testicular cancer in 1989. He declined surgery at that time and retired after chemotherapy at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland.

There had been no sign of the cancer's recurrence, but his left testicle was atrophied and painful, and there was a chance that it could harbor cancer cells.

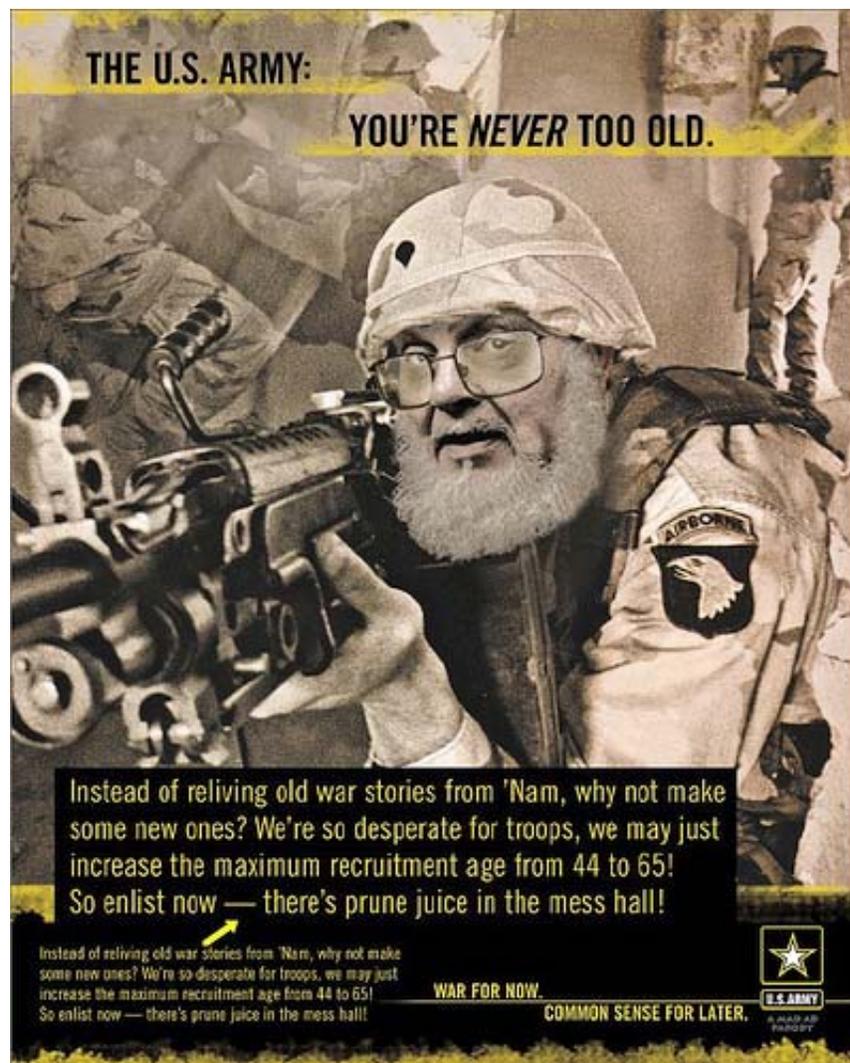
The VA surgeon, fifth-year UCLA medical resident John T. Leppert, was supposed to remove Houghton's left testicle and perform a vasectomy on his right side for birth control purposes, according to medical records that Houghton and his attorney gave The Times.

In medical parlance, what happened instead was a "wrong site surgery," a category that includes operating on or removing the wrong limb or organ, doing the wrong procedure or treating the wrong patient. It is a rare, if often devastating, occurrence. The mistake resulted from a series of missteps along the way, a classic pattern long recognized by safety experts.

By its own guidelines and those of national hospital regulators, the VA hospital was required to obtain informed consent from the patient for the surgery, mark the operation site and take a "timeout" in the operating room to double-check that doctors were targeting the correct site, doing the correct procedure and operating on the correct patient.

According to Houghton's medical records, something appears to have gone awry at all three of these steps.

The consent form, prepared the day of surgery, stated that the right testicle was to be removed and a left vasectomy performed, when it should have said the opposite. The records do not say who prepared the form. Both Leppert and Houghton signed it, Houghton said. Houghton did not have his glasses so could not read it, his wife recalled.



[Thanks to Phil G, who sent this in.]

# **IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP**

## **Assorted Resistance Action**

4.2.07 Reuters & 03 Apr 2007 Reuters & News Limited & German Press Agency & (VOI)

Five Iraqi soldiers were wounded when their patrol was the target of a roadside bomb in the Baghdad district of Adhamiya, near the Abu Hanifa mosque.

Iraqi and U.S. forces arrested at least 50 suspected insurgents, including the mayor of Dour.

The motorcade of the deputy Interior Ministry for police affairs came under fire near al-Nidaa mosque in northern Baghdad, police said. He was unharmed but two of his guards were seriously wounded.

A roadside bomb exploded near the motorcade of Aamir Abdul-Hadi, the mayor of Balad, on Monday, wounding him along with five guards near the town of Ishaqi, 100 km (60 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

Nine workers for a provincial electrical company were captured on their way home from work on Monday near the Shiite town of Khalis.

Guerrillas captured Judge Khaled Fadaam in the area of Aazim in northern Baquba, Diyala province, independent Voice of Iraq reported, citing an Iraqi police source. Aazim, 150 kilometres north of Baghdad, is a dangerous area where armed groups are active and wage attacks on security forces and civilians.

An explosive charge went off near a Kirkuk emergency police patrol, wounding two policemen and a civilian, an official security source said on Tuesday

The mayor of Balad, Salah al-Din province, was wounded along with five of his body guards after an explosive device went off, a medic from the Balad public hospital said on Tuesday

The bodies of five policemen were found by an Iraqi National Guard patrol on the main street, north of the district of Hibhib, Diala province, an Iraqi police source said on Tuesday

The police chief guard in Salah al-Din province survived an assassination attempt in eastern Tikrit, while one of his guards was killed and another wounded, a security source in Tikrit said on Tuesday

Guerrillas shot dead one policeman in an eastern district of the northern oil city of Kirkuk, another in Kut, south of Baghdad, separate police sources said.

In Kut, 170 kilometres south-east Baghdad, an Iraqi policeman was killed and three others wounded Tuesday when an explosive device targeted their patrol near the US Delta base, Voices of Iraq reported, quoting an Iraqi police source.

A roadside bomb targeting an Iraqi army patrol killed two soldiers and wounded three others on Tuesday in an area west of Kut, 170 km (100 miles) southeast of Kirkuk, police said.

Insurgents opened fire on a minibus carrying power plant workers in a predominantly Sunni area west of Kirkuk on Wednesday, killing five, an army commander said.

The ambush occurred at 6 a.m. in Manazlah, about 20 miles west of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, as the bus was taking the employees to work at the Mullah Abdullah power station, Maj. Gen. Anwar Mohammed Amin said.

The attackers were in two cars and sprayed the bus with bullets as they sped by it.

The five killed were engineers and other plant workers from the surrounding Beiji area, Amin said, citing information from soldiers at the site.

A roadside bomb targeting the motorcade of the head of police in Mosul, Major General Wathiq al-Hamadani, wounded two of his guards, police said. Hamadani was not harmed.

A roadside bomb targeting a police patrol killed a police major and wounded a civilian in the northern city of Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATION</b></p>
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## **FORWARD OBSERVATIONS**

**“We Have To Make Every Effort To  
Reach Out To Active Military  
Personnel And Work Toward  
Supporting And/Or Expanding The  
Resistance Movement Within The  
Military Itself”**

April 02, 2007 By Ken Dalton, New Jersey Veterans For Peace [Excerpts]

Well it looks like the “spineless” Democrats caved into the “evil” Republicans and approved more money for the war in Iraq. It’s no surprise to me. They’re afraid of being called “not supporting the troops.”

I always said the two party system is nothing but a con job and is as legitimate as professional wrestling.

So what do we in the anti war community do now? Some ideas I had are as follows.

**First, we have to make every effort to reach out to active military personnel and work toward supporting and/or expanding the resistance movement within the military itself.**

The soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines are the lubricant which keeps the war machine running.

**When they refuse to obey orders and fight, the war will end. That’s what happened during the Vietnam war years when we didn’t have an Internet. All we had in those days were the coffee house and underground press movements. With that and courage, we prevailed!**

Second, we in the peace movement, the IVAW, VVAW, VFP, MFSO, GSFFP and many others, have enough numbers and contacts nationwide to form a new movement and possibly a new political party or flock to the Green Party, who opposed the Iraq war right from the get go.

Since both major parties eat out of the same trough, we cannot expect things to change no matter who gets elected. “K Street”, which has the money, is calling the shots and buying off our “leaders”. Whether it’s from the Israeli, pharmaceutical industry or defense lobbies, the will of the people is being trumped by big money.

**In closing, bitching does nothing except give you a warm feeling for a while.**

**Let’s start a revolution and change this whole corrupt system.**

Remember, when I say revolution, I’m not talking about killing people and destroying property. I’m talking about following in the foot prints of people like Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and others throughout history who have made prolific changes without firing a shot.

**I can remember Boris Yeltsin standing on a tank in Moscow imploring soviet soldiers not to fight but join the people. Had his efforts failed, he would have most likely landed up in the notorious Lubyanka prison with a bullet in his head. But with courage (and maybe a little vodka) he prevailed!**

So don’t let these recent events in Congress discourage you.

Have courage and perseverance and keep up or expand your efforts.

Peace and Solidarity  
Ken Dalton

**“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**

**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**

**“In Many Ways, The U.S. Army Is In Revolt Against The Bush Administration”**

**“This Revolt Is Breaking Very Much Into The Public Domain, And That Will Further Cripple The Credibility Of The Bush Administration”**

[Thanks to Joel Geier, who sent this in.]

Mar 13, 2007 By George Friedman, Stratfor Geopolitical Intelligence Report [Excerpts]

**U.S., Iranian and Syrian diplomats met in Baghdad on March 10 to discuss the future of Iraq. Shortly afterward, everyone went out of their way to emphasize that the meetings either did not mean anything or that they were not formally one-on-one, which meant that other parties were present.**

**Such protestations are inevitable: All of the governments involved have substantial domestic constituencies that do not want to see these talks take place, and they must be placated by emphasizing the triviality.**

Plus, all bargainers want to make it appear that such talks mean little to them. No one buys a used car by emphasizing how important the purchase is. He who needs it least wins.

**These protestations are, however, total nonsense.**

**That U.S., Iranian and Syrian diplomats would meet at this time and in that place is of enormous importance.**

It is certainly not routine: It means the shadowy conversations that have been going on between the United States and Iran in particular are now moving into the public sphere.

**It means not only that negotiations concerning Iraq are under way, but also that all parties find it important to make these negotiations official. That means progress is being made. The question now goes not to whether negotiations are happening, but to what is being discussed, what an agreement might look like and how likely it is to occur.**

Let's begin by considering the framework in which each side is operating.

### **The United States: Geopolitical Compulsion**

**Washington needs a settlement in Iraq. Geopolitically, Iraq has soaked up a huge proportion of U.S. fighting power.**

**Though casualties remain low (when compared to those in the Vietnam War), the war-fighting bandwidth committed to Iraq is enormous relative to forces.**

**Should another crisis occur in the world, the U.S. Army would not be in a position to respond. As a result, events elsewhere could suddenly spin out of control.**

Except for the use of airstrikes -- which, when applied without other military measures, historically have failed either to bring about regime change or to deter powers from pursuing their national interests -- the United States has few military options in the region.

Air power might work when an army is standing by to take advantage of the weaknesses created by those strikes, but absent a credible ground threat, airstrikes are merely painful, not decisive.

And, to be frank, the United States simply lacks capability in the Army.

**In many ways, the U.S. Army is in revolt against the Bush administration.**

**Army officers at all levels (less so the Marines) are using the term "broken" to refer to the condition of the force and are in revolt against the administration -- not**

**because of its goals, but because of its failure to provide needed resources nearly six years after 9/11.**

**This revolt is breaking very much into the public domain, and that will further cripple the credibility of the Bush administration.**

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**The “surge” strategy announced late last year was Bush’s last gamble.**

It demonstrated that the administration has the power and will to defy public opinion -- or international perceptions of it -- and increase, rather than decrease, forces in Iraq.

**The Democrats have also provided Bush with a window of opportunity: Their inability to formulate a coherent policy on Iraq has dissipated the sense that they will force imminent changes in U.S. strategy.**

**Bush’s gamble has created a psychological window of opportunity, but if this window is not used, it will close -- and, as administration officials have publicly conceded, there is no Plan B.**

**The situation on the ground is as good as it is going to get.**

Leaving the question of his own legacy completely aside, Bush knows three things.

First, he is not going to impose a military solution on Iraq that suppresses both the Sunni insurgents and the Shiite militias.

Second, he has successfully created a fleeting sense of unpredictability, as far as U.S. behavior is concerned.

**And third, if he does not use this psychological window of opportunity to achieve a political settlement within the context of limited military progress, the moment not only will be lost, but Russia might also emerge as a major factor in the Middle East -- eroding a generation of progress toward making the United States the sole major power in that region.**

**Thus, the United States is under geopolitical compulsion to reach a settlement.**

### **Iran: Psychological and Regional Compulsions**

The Iranians are also under pressure. They have miscalculated on what Bush would do: They expected military drawdown, and instead they got the surge.

This has conjured up memories of the miscalculation on what the 1979 hostage crisis would bring: The revolutionaries had bet on a U.S. capitulation, but in the long run they got an Iraqi invasion and Ronald Reagan.

Expediency Council Chairman Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani already has warned the Iranians not to underestimate the United States, saying it is a "wounded tiger" and therefore much more dangerous than otherwise.

In addition, the Iranians know some important things.

The first is that, while the Americans conceivably might forget about Iraq, Iran never can.

Uncontrolled chaos next door could spill over into Iran in numerous ways -- separatist sentiments among the Kurds, the potential return of a Sunni government if the Shia are too fractured to govern, and so forth. A certain level of security in Iraq is fundamental to Iran's national interests.

Related to this, there are concerns that Iraq's Shia are so fractious that they might not be serviceable as a coherent vehicle for Iranian power. A civil war among the Shia of Iraq is not inconceivable, and if that were to happen, Iran's ability to project power in Iraq would crumble.

**Finally, Iran's ability to threaten terror strikes against U.S. interests depends to a great extent on Hezbollah in Lebanon.**

**And it knows that Hezbollah is far more interested in the power and wealth to be found in Lebanon than in some global -- and potentially catastrophic -- war against the United States.**

The Iranian leadership has seen al Qaeda's leaders being hunted and hiding in Pakistan, and they have little stomach for that. In short, Iranian leaders might not have all the options they would like to pretend they have, and their own weakness could become quite public very quickly.

Still, like the Americans, the Iranians have done well in generating perceptions of their own resolute strength.

First, they have used their influence in Iraq to block U.S. ambitions there.

Second, they have supported Hezbollah in its war against Israel, creating the impression that Hezbollah is both powerful and pliant to Tehran.

In other words, they have signaled a powerful covert capability.

Third, they have used their nuclear program to imply capabilities substantially beyond what has actually been achieved, which gives them a powerful bargaining chip.

Finally, they have entered into relations with the Russians -- implying a strategic evolution that would be disastrous for the United States.

**The truth, however, is somewhat different.**

**Iran has sufficient power to block a settlement on Iraq, but it lacks the ability to impose one of its own making.**

**Second, Hezbollah is far from willing to play the role of global suicide bomber to support Iranian ambitions.**

**Third, an Iranian nuclear bomb is far from being a reality.**

**Finally, Iran has, in the long run, much to fear from the Russians: Moscow is far more likely than Washington to reduce Iran to a vassal state, should Tehran grow too incautious in the flirtation. Iran is holding a very good hand. But in the end, its flush is as busted as the Americans'.**

Moreover, the Iranians still remember the mistake of 1979. Rather than negotiating a settlement to the hostage crisis with a weak and indecisive President Jimmy Carter, who had been backed into a corner, they opted to sink his chances for re-election and release the hostages after the next president, Reagan, took office.

**They expected gratitude. But in a breathtaking display of ingratitude, Reagan followed a policy designed to devastate Iran in its war with Iraq. In retrospect, the Iranians should have negotiated with the weak president rather than destroy him and wait for the strong one.**

**Rafsanjani essentially has reminded the Iranian leadership of this painful fact. Based on that, it is clear that he wants negotiations with Bush, whose strength is crippled, rather than with his successor.**

<p><b>Not only has Bush already signaled a willingness to talk, but U.S. intelligence also has publicly downgraded the threat of Iranian nuclear weapons -- saying that, in fact, Iran's program has not progressed as far as it might have.</b></p>
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**The Iranians have demanded a timetable for withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq, but they have been careful not to specify what that timetable should look like. Each side is signaling a re-evaluation of the other and a degree of flexibility in outcomes.**

As for Syria, which also shares a border with Iraq and was represented at Saturday's meetings in Baghdad, it is important but not decisive.

**The Israelis, for their part, have no interest in bringing down the al Assad regime: They are far more fearful of what the follow-on Sunni regime might bring than they are of a minority Alawite regime that is more interested in money than in Allah. The latter they can deal with; the former is the threat.**

### **Essential Points**

**If the current crisis continues, each side might show itself much weaker than it wants to appear.**

**The United States could find itself in a geopolitical spasm, coupled with a domestic political crisis. Iran could find itself something of a toothless tiger -- making threats that are known to have little substance behind them.**

The issue is what sort of settlement there could be.

**Troops Invited:**

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

## Two Classic Military Fuckups

From: Max Watts, March 30, 2007

I WAS IN CUBA JULY-OCTOBER 1964 AND SPENT SOME TIME WITH "PEDRO ? MIRETTE" (NAME FROM MEMORY) AT THE TIME COMMANDER IN CUBAN ARTILLERY. (I THINK HE HAD PROBLEMS SUBSEQUENTLY)

FROM HIM (AND PERHAPS OTHERS) I REMEMBER A COUPLE OF STORIES RE A/ APRIL 1961 AND B/ OCTOBER 1962

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[The Bay Of Pigs: Kennedy's attempt to invade Cuba: April 1961]

A/ THE CUBAN AIR FORCE STILL HAD 3 HAWKER SEA-FURIES, BRIT JET FIGHTERS.

THESE WENT UP AND DECIMATED THE B-26 MARAUDERS - A FAST WW 2 MEDIUM BOMBER, BUT NO MATCH FOR JETS. B-26S GO DOWN IN FLAMES

THE GUSANOS AND CIA SCREAMED BLOODY MURDER. TO KENNEDY. "WE MUST GET RID OF THESE CUBAN JETS. NEED F-84S"

KENNEDY (SO I'M TOLD) IS RELUCTANT. BUT CEDES, SAYS: ONE INTERVENTION. ONCE.

SENDS IN F-84'S - FROM ? CARRIER IN ATLANTIC. AT 1 PM (13:00 HOURS).

WHEN SEAFURIES COME UP TO SHOOT DOWN THE MARAUDERS, ALSO TO ATTACK AT 12:55, F-84S WILL POUNCE, ELIMINATE THEM.

SO, THE F-84'S SCRAMBLE, ARRIVE, WAIT . NO MARAUDERS. NO SEA-FURIES YOU CANNOT PARK A FIGHTER JET. AFTER A WHILE THEY (F-84'S) GO HOME.

AT 2 PM THE MARAUDERS ARRIVE, THE CUBAN SEA-FURIES TOO, SHOOT THEM DOWN.

END OF STORY??

THE GUSANOS WERE FLYING FROM GUATEMALA, ?? I THINK NICARAGUA ? AND ON CENTRAL AMERICAN TIME, 1 HOUR LATER THAN THE F-84'S

NO ONE HAD FIGURED THAT OUT UNTIL AFTERWARDS.

WELL, SI NON E VERO, E BENE TROVATO.

\*\*\*\*\*

[The Cuban Missile crisis, October 1962]

B/ AND THIS ONE DEFINITELY FROM PEDRO? MIRETTE. (WHAT DID HAPPEN TO HIM ?)

I TELL HIM "WE HAVE PROBLEMS WITH SEISMIC WORK IN CUBA (I WAS WORKING WITH A CUBAN TEAM IN ? SANTA CLARA, SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE OF ISLAND)"

"THE COWS IN FIELDS COME AND MUNCH ON OUR SEISMIC CABLES, THEY LOVE THE SALT IN THE SWEAT WHICH GOES ON CABLES WHEN LAY THEM."

PEDRO: "DON'T I KNOW THAT ! IN OCT 1962 WE WERE EXPECTING ARMAGEDDON ANY SECOND.

"OUR FORWARD ARTILLERY (I THINK HE MAY HAVE SAID NEAR GUANTANAMO, BUT THAT WASN'T THAT FAMOUS YET..) USES GROUND-LAID TELEPHONE CABLES, NO RADIO, THE YANKEES CAN HEAR EVERYTHING WE BROADCAST.

"AND OUR ORDERS WERE TO SHOOT IMMEDIATELY IF ATTACKED, SEE THEIR MUZZLE FLASHES, THE YANK CRUISER WAS STANDING OFF-SHORE WITH GUNS POINTING... AND SUDDENLY WE LOSE CONTACT.

"I HAVE TO GIVE ORDERS TO FIRE, OR NOT? HAVEN'T HEARD BANGS, ..... HOLD OFF, SEND RUNNER, TEL CABLE HAS BEEN CHEWED BY COW.

"THAT COW COULD HAVE STARTED WORLD WAR 3.... "

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## **OCCUPATION REPORT**

# ***Good News For The Iraqi Resistance!!***

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



As a distraught Iraqi woman covers her face, a foreign occupation soldier from U.S. Delta company, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment searches her house during a raid in Baghdad's northwest neighborhood of Ghazaliya March 30, 2007.  
REUTERS/Fabrizio Bensch

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!**

## **The Regrets Of The Man Who Brought Down Saddam: Saddam, He Says, “Was Like Stalin. But The Occupation Is Proving To Be Worse” “Worse Than The Dictatorship”**

March 19, 2007 Audrey Gillan, The Guardian [Excerpts]

His hands were bleeding and his eyes filled with tears as, four years ago, he slammed a sledgehammer into the tiled plinth that held a 20ft bronze statue of Saddam Hussein. Then Kadhim al-Jubouri spoke of his joy at being the leader of the crowd that toppled the statue in Baghdad’s Firdous Square. Now, he is filled with nothing but regret.

The moment became symbolic across the world as it signalled the fall of the dictator. Wearing a black vest, Mr al-Jubouri, an Iraqi weightlifting champion, pounded through the concrete in an attempt to smash the statue and all it meant to him.

**Now, on the fourth anniversary of the US-led invasion of Iraq, he says: “I really regret bringing down the statue. The Americans are worse than the dictatorship. Every day is worse than the previous day.”**

The weightlifter had also been a mechanic and had felt the full weight of Saddam’s regime when he was sent to Abu Ghraib prison by the Iraqi leader’s son, Uday, after complaining that he had not been paid for fixing his motorcycle.

He explained: “There were lots of people from my tribe who were also put in prison or hanged. It became my dream ever since I saw them building that statue to one day topple it.”

Yet he now says he would prefer to be living under Saddam than under US occupation. He said: “The devil you know better than the devil you don’t. We no longer know friend

from foe. The situation is becoming more dangerous. It's not getting better at all. People are poor and the prices are going higher and higher."

Saddam, he says, "was like Stalin. But the occupation is proving to be worse".

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## OCCUPATION HAITI

# **The Government Of Brazil: A Pack Of Rats; "They Came Here To Terrorize The Population" "I Don't Think They Really Killed Any Bandits, Unless They Consider All Of Us As Bandits"**

[By way of Tom Condit]

March 31 / April 1, 2007 By Ben Terrall, CounterPunch. {Excerpts} Ben Terrall is a freelance writer whose work has appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle, In These Times, Counterpunch, Lip Magazine, and other publications. He has visited Haiti four times since the February 29, 2004 coup which forced out the democratically-elected Aristide government.

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When Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, better known as 'Lula', visits Washington on March 31, he will likely spend most of his time with President Bush discussing ethanol, a relatively safe subject for the two leaders. Brazil, unlike the U.S., has spent thirty years developing its ethanol technology, and is producing a surplus of a sugar-based version of that fuel.

Lula has been criticized for following the Bush Administration on foreign trade policy, but he may be in even more hot water for following Bush on a foreign military adventure.

**When President Lula relieved U.S. Marines in Haiti by having Brazil take the lead of the UN peacekeeping mission (MINUSTAH) in early 2004, he got Bush, whose troops were spread thin, out of a tight spot. Lula also earned brownie points for Brazil's bid for a permanent seat on a potentially-expanded UN Security Council.**

But all this came at a price. MINUSTAH was the only UN peacekeeping mission in history deployed without a peace agreement.

**Its true purpose was to consolidate a February 29, 2004 coup against the democratically-elected government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide.**

This genesis put MINUSTAH in a quandary from the beginning.

**In order to fulfill its mission of supporting the illegitimate, unpopular and brutal Interim Government of Haiti (led by a Bush supporter flown in from Florida), MINUSTAH was forced to join the dictatorship's attacks on poor neighborhoods that would never accept the overthrow of their democracy.**

In August 2006, the British Medical Journal The Lancet published a mortality study that concluded 8,000 people were killed in the first 22 months of the coup.

**In almost half of the reported deaths, the perpetrators were identified as security agents of the coup government, former soldiers or armed anti-Lavalas groups.**

**No murders were attributed to Lavalas members.**

**Although the government and its paramilitary allies did the lion's share of the killings, MINUSTAH participated as well.**

**In a July 6, 2005 raid, MINUSTAH soldiers shot 22,000 bullets (by its own count) into the thin walls of the poor Cite Soleil neighborhood. Up to 60 civilians were killed, dozens more wounded, but none received help from the "peacekeepers."**

**Although a democratic government was inaugurated last May, MINUSTAH continues to kill civilians.**

In the early morning of December 22, 2006, 400 Brazilian-led MINUSTAH troops in armored vehicles carried out a massive assault on the Bois Neuf and Drouillard districts of Cite Soleil in Port-au-Prince. The military operation, which claimed the lives of dozens of area residents, took place near the site of the July 2005 raid.

**"They came here to terrorize the population," resident Rose Martel told Reuters, referring to UN troops and police. "I don't think they really killed any bandits, unless they consider all of us as bandits."**

The president of the Human Rights Commission of the Haitian Senate described the December 22 operation as "a crime against humanity." The Bureau des Avocats Internationaux, a Haitian human rights group, documented more than 20 killed, including children and elderly.

Once again, the UN showed little interest in its "collateral damage." UN spokesperson Sophie De la Combe could not offer information on Haitians killed or wounded, just that "no one was killed on our side."

**When journalists and human rights groups asked MINUSTAH head Edmond Mulet about the killings, he attacked the messengers, writing, “I am appalled to see how some people support criminal, violent, human-rights violation activities in Haiti and oppose the rule of law. Gangsters, killers, kidnappers, rapist of young girls should and will be brought to justice.”**

But if the UN operation was intended to uphold the rule of law or bringing alleged criminals to justice, there should have been valid warrants authorizing MINUSTAH and Haitian Police to make arrests, as required by Haiti’s constitution and international law.

**Mulet presented no indication of such warrants, or any evidence that the victims, including an elderly man killed while en route to work and a pregnant woman who lost her fetus, were gangsters, killers, kidnappers or rapists.**

Human rights activist Seth Donnelly, who investigated the July 6, 2005 Cite Soleil assault, told me, “Mulet’s (statement) echoes the response I received when I interviewed Lt. Gen. Augusto Heleno and Colonel Morneau just days after the July 6 massacre.

“They told me that a handful of ‘bandits’ had been killed and that the UN fired only after they had been fired upon.

“These statements were contradicted by evidence provided by Doctors Without Borders staff at the hospital that treated the July 6 victims. The MINUSTAH claims were also contradicted by eyewitness testimony we gathered in affidavits.

“Among the survivors we spoke to was a young woman who also lost her baby and a father who witnessed the killing of his wife and two young children.”

In early January, Brazilian Major General Carlos Alberto Dos Santos became the fourth commander of the UN force in Haiti (consisting of 8,360 total uniformed personnel, as of 30 November 2006).

Dos Santos said, “We are going to work in the same way as we have worked before. Nothing has changed about our mission or our obligations.”

**Since Dos Santos made that commitment, UN military operations have killed seven-year-old Stephanie Lubin, four-year-old Alexandra Lubin, and nine-year-old Boadley Bewence Germain, all guilty of living in the crossroads of George W. Bush’s foreign policy.**

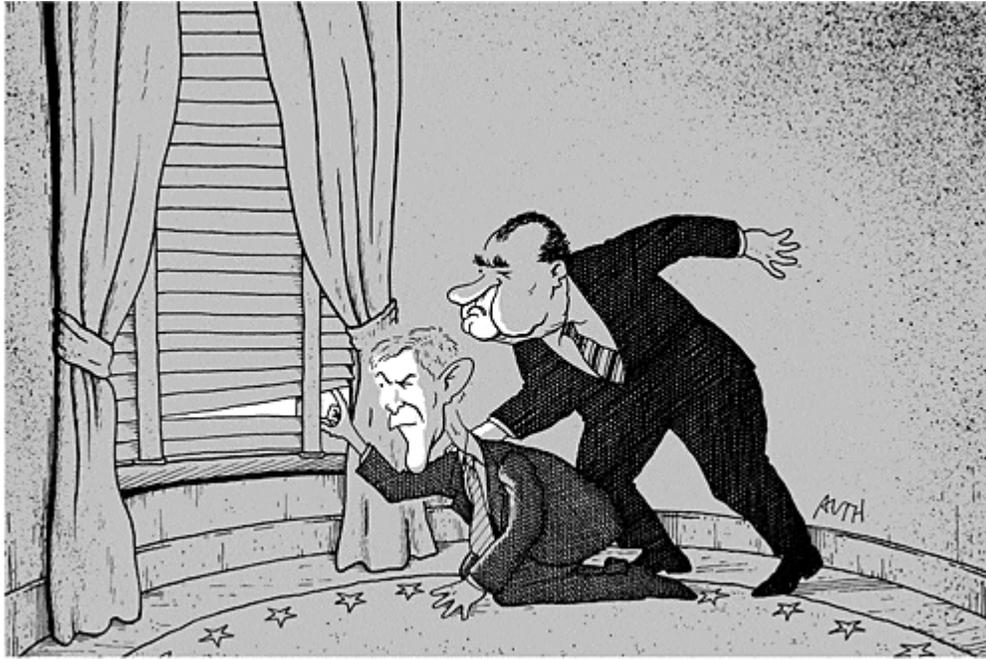
More and more Brazilians are appalled at their country’s role in MINUSTAH.

On February 7 of this year, 6,000 protesters, mostly youth, marched through Rio de Janeiro’s city center to demand the immediate withdrawal of Brazil’s troops from Haiti.

By continuing to do Bush’s dirty work in Haiti, Lula has tied his country’s destiny to a sinking ship.

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# DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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

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