

GI SPECIAL 5E17:

HOW MANY MORE FOR BUSH'S WAR? BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



Pfc. Thomas Ponce, 19, from Maui, Hawaii is wheeled to a waiting helicopter on his way to Germany for surgery, at the Ibn Sina Hospital in the Green Zone in Baghdad a day after he was injured in a rocket attack on his base in Sadr City, May 6 2007. Since the U.S. security crackdown in Baghdad, medics are seeing an increase in the number and severity of wounded American soldiers. (AP Photo/Maya Alleruzzo)

**Army Betrays Injured
National Guard Troops:
“I Lost My House. I Lost
Everything. I Don’t Even Have
My Dog Anymore”**

“The Officer Said He Believes Soldiers Are Dropped From The Rolls To Hold Down The Costs Of Caring For Them, And To Deter Them From Seeking Disability Retirement Benefits”

“What’s a guy supposed to do?” Miller said. “You get shot in the battlefield, and you pull an affidavit out of your back pocket and ask your buddies to sign it?”

He watched as the Army lost his son’s paperwork, required him to travel at his own expense to try to straighten out the administrative mess and — under what Hall said were false pretenses — locked his son into a psychiatric ward.

The family believes Mathers was locked up to see if he could be discharged under a pre-existing mental disorder.

April 23, 2007 By Kelly Kennedy, Army Times [Excerpts]

After a 2005 Government Accountability Office report showed the Army often dropped injured National Guard and reserve troops from its active-duty rolls, causing lapses in medical care and pay, Army officials thought they had the problem licked.

But now, soldiers, lawyers and an Army officer who works in the CBHCO system say National Guard and reserve soldiers on the West Coast aren’t receiving exit physicals, aren’t being referred to a medical evaluation board for a chance at disability retirement, are still being dropped from the rolls, and are not receiving specialized care for post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injuries.

And, because they are not assigned to a unit, there’s no command structure to make sure the system is taking care of them.

“After I fell off (active-duty) orders, I was screwed,” said Scott Olson, who caught his foot in a winch and tore it open in Iraq in 2004.

“I’ve been fighting this since June 2005.

“I lost my house. I lost everything. I don’t even have my dog anymore.”

Critics say they know what the problems are: the distances soldiers travel for care at their own expense; struggles to establish who has responsibility for the soldiers — the

regular Army or their state National Guard hierarchies; lack of interaction with the soldiers' units; and unclear policy.

Army officials said they can't speak about individual cases.

But they also chose not to respond to questions about the program posed by Military Times.

Olson's complaint comes just as Defense Secretary Robert Gates' Independent Review Group issued a draft report calling on the Army to "build the success of the Community Based Health Care Organization program and expand where possible."

The group also said the other services "should be encouraged to use this program."

Olson said after being in the medical holdover unit at Fort Lewis as he was treated for his injury, he entered the CBHCO program in September 2004. But after a year, his active-duty orders ran out — as they are meant to, according to policy.

But the regulation also states soldiers will not be extended past 365 days "without being entered into the physical disability evaluation system" — a key missing step in Olson's and other soldiers' cases.

"Hundreds in California ... have fallen off of orders," Olson said. "A lot of people were so fed up, they just left.

"All the Army cares about are the numbers."

"The soldiers are being truthful," said an Army officer who works within the CBHCO system and asked not to be named.

"It takes courage to change the system and change the leaders causing the problems."

The officer said he believes soldiers are dropped from the rolls to hold down the costs of caring for them, which mount each day they stay on active duty, and to deter them from seeking disability retirement benefits.

Before attaching soldiers to a home-based care unit, garrison commanders are supposed to make sure they complete the first two phases of their out-processing as active-duty soldiers — even though they'll still be considered active-duty on CBHCO.

This includes finishing their out-processing check sheet and DD 214s, their discharge papers. The unsigned DD 214 is mailed to the reservists after they've finished the CBHCO program. But soldiers say that means they aren't getting an exit physical to determine if they qualify for disability evaluation.

"I've faced dead ends since 2005," said Army National Guard Sgt. William Mathers. "I don't want anything to do with the military ever again."

Mathers, a National Guard soldier who served in Iraq with the 1498th Transportation Company out of California, said he did not receive an out-processing physical, and the

Army released him from active-duty orders before he started the medical evaluation board process to find out if he was still fit for service.

He injured his back in Iraq, but begged to stay with his unit, which he did.

When he returned home, he sought medical care. But his back surgery left him feeling worse than he did before. He was placed in CBHCO, but after a year, he called to report in and was told he was no longer on active duty.

“They released us all before we fell into the (disability retirement) process,” he said. “They messed me over, and they’re messing over a bunch of other soldiers.”

Mathers’ dad, retired Marine Command Sgt. Maj. James Hall, said he went to the California governor’s office, as well as to National Guard officials to try to speed up the process.

“We weren’t getting anywhere,” Hall said. “Nothing moved for a year.”

He watched as the Army lost his son’s paperwork, required him to travel at his own expense to try to straighten out the administrative mess and — under what Hall said were false pretenses — locked his son into a psychiatric ward.

The family believes Mathers was locked up to see if he could be discharged under a pre-existing mental disorder.

“We expected someone to take ownership of these soldiers,” Hall said. “There was no one.”

Sgt. Joe Baumann was in Iraq with the 184th Infantry, a Guard unit out of California, when he went on patrol to look for a sniper who had shot one of his buddies. This time, the sniper shot Baumann in the stomach.

“After Baumann got shot, I figured he was recovering and OK,” said Jesse Miller, a civilian attorney. “Then I heard about the problems he was having and offered to help. I thought it would be a few letters, but it turned into all-consuming litigation.”

Miller is also a major in the Guard; Baumann was one of his soldiers.

Miller said Baumann’s records were lost. His Army doctors said he had PTSD, but the CBHCO doctors determined he did not. His psychological exam was more about searching for his records, Miller said, as Baumann tried to prove he’d witnessed a traumatic incident.

“What’s a guy supposed to do?” Miller said. “You get shot in the battlefield, and you pull an affidavit out of your back pocket and ask your buddies to sign it?”

After watching many soldiers endure similar problems, Katie Morissette created Operation Golden Soldier. Her Web site, <http://www.operationgoldensoldier.com>, is designed to help them through the medical evaluation process. She said her phone rings “nonstop.”

She knows of these issues firsthand — her husband, Maj. Bill Morissette, was a company commander in the California Guard who entered the CBHCO program after he hurt his back.

After a year, he was dropped too, she said.

“After one year on CBHCO, he had no discharge physical — and his soldiers didn’t either,” she said. “They just kick them out.”

An Army physician diagnosed him with multiple sclerosis, but as he began the medical evaluation board process, another doctor diagnosed him with fibromyalgia — which garners a lower rating on the disability evaluation chart. Morissette paid for a civilian doctor to look at him again, who reinforced the initial Army physician’s diagnosis of multiple sclerosis because he has lesions on the front of his brain.

“The Army won’t even look at” the civilian doctor’s report, she said.

“And his command? They haven’t called in three years.”

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Air Force Staff Sgt. Killed In Baghdad



U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. John T. Self, 29, of Pontotoc, Miss., was killed May 14, 2007 by a roadside bomb in Baghdad, according to his mother, Jill Self. The Department of Defense confirmed the soldier’s death Tuesday. (AP Photo/Self Family)

Michigan Soldier Killed In Iraq



U.S. Army Pfc. Daniel Courneya, 19, a 2005 graduate of Maple Valley High School, Michigan, was killed May 12, 2007, with three other soldiers in an ambush in Iraq. (AP Photo/Family Photo via The Grand Rapids Press)

Virginia Soldier Killed Near Mahmoudiya



Pfc. Christopher E. Murphy, 21, of Lynchburg, Va. The Pentagon on Tuesday identified Murphy as one of the four soldiers killed in the May 12, 2007 ambush in Iraq near Mahmoudiya. (AP Photo/U.S. Army)

Tennessee Sgt. Killed In Iraq



Sgt. James David Connell, Jr., 40, of Lake City, Tenn., is seen at Strongpoint Inchon, where he was stationed with Delta Company, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment near Youssifiyah, 12 miles south of Baghdad, Iraq in this Feb. 2, 2007 file photo. According to family members, Connell was one of three Americans killed on May 12, 2007 in an ambush in Iraq. (AP Photo/ Maya Alleruzzo)

Indiana Soldier Killed In Iraq



Pfc. Nick Hartge

May 15, 2007 AP

ROME CITY, Ind. -- The family of a northeast Indiana soldier has been notified that he has been killed in Iraq.

The father of Pfc. Nick Hartge, 20, said the family was notified of his son's death Monday afternoon.

Dave Abbott said they were told that his son was either on patrol or taking part in a raid Sunday when his unit met with heavy resistance. Military officials were scheduled to meet with the family Tuesday to provide more details.

Hartge was a 2005 graduate of East Noble High School and lived in Rome City, about 30 miles northwest of Fort Wayne. He left for boot camp two weeks after graduation.

Hartge's family said he frequently sent videos home after being deployed to Iraq in August.

Gladwin High Graduate Killed In Iraq

May 11, 2007 By Sven Gustafson, Associated Press

DETROIT - A Minneapolis soldier who graduated from high school in Gladwin and was just three months into his tour in Iraq was killed when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle, the military said.

Army Spc. Robert J. Dixon, 27, died May 6 in Baghdad, the Defense Department said Wednesday. He was assigned to the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division at Fort Riley, Kan.

Dixon was born in Portland, Ore., but moved to Gladwin in 1992, said Irene Dixon, who said she and her husband Daniel were Robert Dixon's legal guardians. In high school, Robert was a running back for the football team, set the school record in the 100-meter dash and also wrestled, his mother said.

"He especially enjoyed family activities," Irene Dixon told The Associated Press on Thursday. "We did a lot of family activities. He hunted, he paintballed, he snowboarded. We went camping, snowmobiling.

"If you ever knew Bobby, you'd love him. Every time we got a report from a teacher it couldn't have been any better. We got a call from a commander who said everybody there (in Iraq) loved him."

After graduating from high school, Dixon attended Olivet College for a year and later was briefly enrolled at Northwood University in Midland.

Dixon joined the Army in the summer of 2005, shortly after he moved to Minneapolis in search of work, his mother said.

"He wanted to further his education, and he always had a desire to be in the Army," she said. "He had planned to make it his career."

Dixon said she last heard from her son last Friday, when he called during a funeral for her uncle to express his condolences.

Robert Dixon is survived by his wife of 1 1/2 years, Rusty Rose-Dixon, and two children. Funeral arrangements were incomplete but were likely to take place at the Gladwin High School gymnasium.

"I can't even convey to you how we're going to miss not having him here," his mother said. "But I also know that he is a Christian and he is with the Lord now."

Brenham Soldier Served To Make A Difference

May 8, 2007 Reporter: Pachatta Pope, KBTX

As she looked at a portrait of her son, Private First Class Larry I. Guyton, Andrea McDonald said the photo captured his strength and confidence.

"He looked like a man. He wasn't that little boy I sent off, he was a man," McDonald said.

Guyton's parents, siblings, and other family members have started gathering together to remember that man. Knowing the danger he could face, McDonald said her son felt compelled to make a difference in his life and in the lives of others, so he joined the Army.

Apprehensive about his decision, his mom and dad said his commitment to serve helped them to accept what he wanted.

"I said O.K., you know, I'm accept this if this is what you want to do, I support you 100 percent," McDonald said.

"As he signed up and stuff I kind of, you know the idea was kind of O.K. with me 'cause that's what he wanted to do," Larry Guyton said.

As her young brother was stationed in Baghdad, Debbie Rogers said she was proud to think of him over there protecting his entire family.

"With being the big sister, I feel like he was going over to protect me and my little girl and my family and stuff," Rogers said.

An Improvised Explosive Device that detonated near the vehicle he was riding in cut short Guyton's service. In the wee hours of Saturday morning, his family learned he did not survive injuries he had sustained.

"My heart just sunk," McDonald said. "I mean it just sunk and I have not been myself."

The family now recalls Guyton's childhood and special moments. His brother, Lamont Roberts replays what his older brother asked him to do for if he did not return home.

“He told me he loved me and take care his kids if anything was to happen to him,” Roberts said.

Guyton's father said his fallen son can be assured his two small sons will know the character and integrity he possessed--that made him a man of great worth to his family and his country.

“We gonna miss him,” Larry Guyton said of his son.

Funeral services for Private Guyton are pending.

IED Hits U.S. Convoy In Kamalia; Truck Burning; Casualties Not Announced

May 15, 2007 (CBS/AP)

A roadside bomb apparently hit a U.S. convoy in the Kamalia area of southeastern Baghdad. Associated Press TV video showed one of the convoy's trucks burning and two U.S. Black Hawk helicopters circling overhead. Later, when the fire went out, Iraq men and young boys were shown on the footage looting what remained of the truck.

**As Security In The Green Zone
Has Deteriorated, Civilian
Occupiers Whine And Moan:
“My Life Should Be Worth More
Than Achieving This
Government’s Agenda”
“We Don’t Belong Here”
“What Responsible Person And
Responsible Government Would Ask
You To Put Yourself At Risk Like That?”**

“They want to say everything is fine. But if I’m asked I’m not going to lie,” he said. “It’s my life and it would be my grave and it would be my body flying back to my family.”

May 14, 2007 By Leila Fadel, McClatchy Newspapers

BAGHDAD, Iraq - U.S. Embassy employees in Iraq are growing increasingly angry over what they say are inadequate security precautions in the heavily fortified Green Zone, where recent mortar and rocket attacks have claimed the lives of six people, including two U.S. citizens.

In spite of the attacks, embassy employees complain, most staff members still sleep in trailers that one described as “tin cans” that offer virtually no protection from rocket and mortar fire. The government has refused to harden the roofs because of the cost, one employee said.

A second official called it “criminally negligent” not to reduce the size of the embassy staff, which a year ago was estimated at 1,000, in the face of the increasing attacks and blamed the administration’s failure to respond on concerns that doing so might undermine support for President Bush’s Iraq policy.

“What responsible person and responsible government would ask you to put yourself at risk like that?”

We don’t belong here,” the employee said, adding, “They’re not going to send us home because it’s going to be another admission of failure.”

Embassy employees have been ordered not to talk about security concerns or precautions with reporters, but three State Department employees in Baghdad discussed the issue with McClatchy Newspapers. All three asked not to be identified for fear that they’d lose their jobs.

The officials also complained that important security precautions appeared to have been set aside during highly publicized official visits.

During a March 31 visit from Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., a high-profile presidential candidate, the embassy lifted a requirement that bulletproof vests and helmets be worn at all times. When a rocket landed outside the U.S. Embassy while Vice President Dick Cheney and several reporters visited last week, no warning sirens were sounded.

“Where were the sirens then?” one official asked.

“We don’t belong here, and people are afraid to say it.”

The Green Zone, which is home to the U.S. Embassy and many Iraqi government offices and officials, has long been touted as an oasis of relative peace amid the chaos of Baghdad.

But in the past several months, security in the zone has deteriorated.

Rocket and mortar attacks also have become more frequent since the U.S. began a surge of additional American troops into Baghdad - and they've also become more accurate.

On March 27, a rocket that landed behind the embassy killed an American security contractor and a U.S. soldier. On May 3, a rocket attack killed four foreign contractors who worked for the U.S. government.

Another rocket blasted a chunk of concrete from the facade of Saddam Hussein's Republican Palace, which now houses the U.S. Embassy.

Last week, Sen. Olympia Snowe, R-Maine, told reporters in Washington after a visit here that conditions inside the zone were "infinitely worse" than she'd experienced during a visit last year.

On May 3, the embassy warned Green Zone residents to keep outdoor travel to a minimum and "remain within a hardened structure to the maximum extent possible and strictly avoid congregating outdoors." The message ordered individuals "whose place of duty is outside a hardened structure or traveling a substantial distance outdoors" to wear bulletproof vests and helmets "until further notice."

But those precautions haven't calmed nerves inside the Green Zone, according to the three State Department employees, who complained bitterly about security measures in interviews with McClatchy Newspapers.

The three said rising anxiety was evident during recent town hall meetings, where several speakers demanded increased protection.

One speaker asked for blankets made of bullet-resistant Kevlar to protect himself from shrapnel and debris in case a rocket or mortar round struck nearby.

The employees said their trailers have been surrounded with sandbags, but that nothing has been done to reinforce the roofs to withstand a rocket or mortar hit. When some employees asked during the meeting if they could move into a hardened structure, they were told to wait for the completion of a new embassy that's still under construction.

"In any other embassy, we would have been evacuated," one of the employees said.

"As always, the U.S. government is reactive, not proactive. They are going to wait until 20 people die, then the people back in Washington will say we have a problem." Unlike the U.S. military, U.S. Embassy employees are volunteers and can ask to leave if they feel unsafe at any time.

"I can't shake my fist at Uncle Sam and say, 'Why am I here?'" one official said. "We're all volunteers." But people are afraid to leave out of fear that such a request would hurt their careers, one of the officials said.

"I can't sleep, I can't eat," another official said.

"My life should be worth more than achieving this government's agenda."

Two of the people who spoke with McClatchy said the conditions also have affected experienced diplomats' willingness to serve in Baghdad and that the holes are being filled by young and inexperienced volunteers and contractors. "We're like a patchwork quilt," the official said.

One of the U.S. officials expressed anger that embassy employees were told not to talk to reporters.

"They want to say everything is fine. But if I'm asked I'm not going to lie," he said. "It's my life and it would be my grave and it would be my body flying back to my family."

MORE:

5 U.S. Embassy Mercenaries Wounded By Resistance Attack On Green Zone

May 15, 2007 The Associated Press

BAGHDAD: At least one mortar or rocket slammed into the U.S.-controlled Green Zone on Tuesday, wounding five American Embassy contractors, a spokesman said. The explosion occurred at 3:59 p.m. (1159 GMT), U.S. Embassy spokesman Lou Finton said.

Iraqi police said earlier Tuesday that mortar rounds had struck the Green Zone, also known as the International Zone, and a central Baghdad street being reopened to the public on the other side of the Tigris River.

"At least one round of indirect fire impacted the International Zone. The nature of the indirect fire remains under investigation," Finton said.

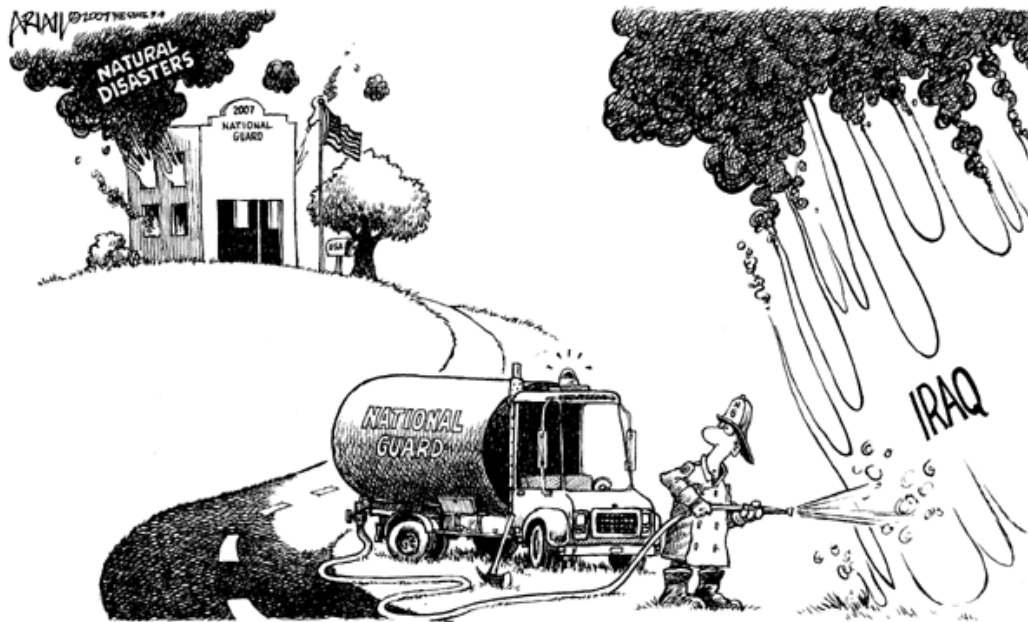
It's unclear what groups have been responsible for the recent attacks. Some barrages have been launched from Shiite-dominated areas in eastern Baghdad, but the Green Zone is also within range of Sunni militant strongholds to the south.

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



5.14.07: US soldiers at the site of a car bomb in the Karrada district near Baghdad city center. (AFP/Ahmad al-Rubaye)

TROOP NEWS



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

World Class Idiocy, As Usual:

After Blocking Troops' Access To YouTube, Iraq Command Tells Troops To Watch YouTube



Iraqi Soldiers prove their worth



RAMADI — Iraqi Soldiers patrolled the Nazer Canal for weapons caches independent of Coalition support last Monday. According to Iraqi Army Maj. Ani, an intelligence officer of 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, 7th Iraqi Army Division, the mission to find weapons caches was a demonstration of the Iraqi Army's capability of hunting down the weapons caches of insurgents attacking Ramadi.

[See upper right corner]

[Thanks to Pham Binh, Traveling Soldier, who sent this in.]

5.15.07 Iraqslogger.com

One day after the Pentagon banned US military personnel worldwide from accessing the wildly popular YouTube Web site via DoD computers and networks, the weekly electronic newsletter of the US-led Multi-National Forces-Iraq (MNF-I) today makes a banner appeal for US forces and others to watch MNF-I's new YouTube channel.

Oops.

Unless the Department of Defense lifts (or doesn't fully apply) its YouTube ban, US military personnel won't be able to watch their own Iraq-focused YouTube channel unless they do so on non-DoD computers and via non-DoD Web connectivity.

Yesterday, the Pentagon began enforcing a ban prohibiting DoD computers and computer networks from accessing YouTube, MySpace, and 10 other popular Web sites, saying military personnel using the Web sites were hogging precious DoD computer network bandwidth and posing operational security risks.

The MNF-I YouTube channel has garnered more than a million video viewings -- many surely from US military personnel who are featured on the channel, whose contributions to the channel are sought by commanders, and who as of yesterday are banned from accessing YouTube via their DoD computers and DoD Web connections.

The Pentagon says military personnel can access YouTube via non-DoD computers, but many forward-deployed DoD personnel have access to the Internet only via DoD computers or DoD Web networks.

So will the US military permit its personnel to watch the MNF-I YouTube channel but nothing else on YouTube?

And, aside from the dozen Web sites announced banned by the DoD yesterday, what about the countless other video, music, and social networking sites in cyberspace?

Are they not a real or potential drain on bandwidth, or an operational security risk, or both?

Will they all be banned on DoD computers and networks?

This is a slippery slope.

If this is truly about operational security risks, forward-deployed US forces would and should lose all uncensored means of communications.

But we're four years into the war in Iraq and nearly six years into the war in Afghanistan, and there's been no need for draconian, sweeping censorship of US forces.

So it's unlikely the operational security risk is the genuine driving force in the DoD banning its personnel from using its computers and computer links to access certain Web sites.

Now if this is about DoD Web pipe bandwidth challenges, the Pentagon should ban access to all high-bandwidth sites -- video and otherwise -- including its own pentagonchannel.mil site, which streams 24/7 and provides video clips on demand.

MORE:

“The Pentagon Blocked Their Access To Websites Including YouTube And MySpace” “It Will Bring Morale Down”

May 15, 2007 Stephen Farrell in Baghdad and Tim Reid in Washington, The Times

US soldiers in Iraq reacted with dismay yesterday after the Pentagon blocked their access to websites including YouTube and MySpace, used widely to send and receive messages and pictures to loved ones at home.

One sergeant from Arizona, speaking to The Times in Baghdad, said: “It will bring morale down. This is how a lot of people keep in touch with family and friends.

“Not every soldier has their own personal laptop, and not every FOB has commercial access to the internet. It will affect them mostly.”

***While Wounded Troops
Suffered:
Thieving, Lying V.A. Top Brass
Were The Committee That
Recommended Their Own Millions
Of \$ In Bonuses;
[And Came Up With Fraudulent
Reasons For Stuffing Their Own
Pockets]***

The documents show that 21 of 32 officials who were members of VA performance review boards received more than half a million dollars in payments themselves.

5.15.07 By HOPE YEN, Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON - Nearly two dozen officials who received hefty performance bonuses last year at the Veterans Affairs Department also sat on the boards charged with recommending the payments.

Documents obtained by The Associated Press raise questions of conflicts of interest or appearances of conflicts in connection with the bonuses, some of which went to senior officials involved in crafting a budget that came up \$1.3 billion short and jeopardized veterans' health care.

The documents show that 21 of 32 officials who were members of VA performance review boards received more than half a million dollars in payments themselves.

Among them: nearly a dozen senior officials who devised the flawed 2005 budget. Also rewarded was the deputy undersecretary for benefits, who manages a system with severe backlogs of veterans waiting for disability benefits.

Deputy undersecretaries who sit on the review boards, which are appointed by VA Secretary Jim Nicholson, also had input on bonus recommendations involving

themselves, fellow members and spouses that made questionable performance claims and neglected agency problems.

In one case, Michael Walcoff, associate deputy undersecretary for field operations who sits on two of the review boards, and his wife, Kimberly, a VA director, received a package of bonuses totaling \$42,000.

“This is a scandal in the making,” said Paul C. Light, professor of public service at New York University who specializes in government reform. He said the VA bonuses pointed to possible “featherbedding” and other favoritism.

Following reports this month by the AP of the \$3.8 million in bonuses, groups such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America have called on Nicholson to explain why officials involved in budget foul-ups would be rewarded.

Annual bonuses to senior VA officials last year averaged more than \$16,000, the highest average in government.

According to guidance by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, performance boards must ensure that bonuses are given based not only on individual accomplishments cited by supervisors, but also the department’s overall success.

However, 2006 bonus proposals obtained by the AP show that senior officials who received top payments of \$33,000 were sometimes credited for achievements that were questionable, if not inaccurate.

Also, no mention was made of agency-wide problems.

Rita Reed, deputy assistant secretary for budget: “Demonstrated the ability to design and implement strategies that maximize employee potential and foster high ethical standards in meeting the organization’s mission and goals.”

While touting her role in launching programs to “leverage the VA’s buying power” as well as collecting \$5.1 million in erroneous payments, the proposal does not mention Reed’s lead role in crafting the VA’s flawed 2005 budget.

Months prior to her bonus award, GAO investigators determined the VA had used misleading accounting to justify health cuts, claiming false savings in part by double-counting savings from volume purchasing in government contracts from year to year.

William Feeley, deputy undersecretary for health for operations and management: “Made numerous contributions to veterans and the Veterans Health Administration in his role as deputy undersecretary.” It said he also led systemwide improvements that resulted in a 2.2 percent decrease in wait times for primary care.

Feeley received a top bonus and is credited for yearlong achievements even though he did not take the job until February 2006, nearly halfway into the fiscal year. Previously, he was a VA regional director who played a role in the flawed 2005 budget.

Regarding veterans' wait times to see doctors, a 2005 report from the VA inspector general found that VA schedulers routinely put the wrong requested appointment dates into the system, which made reported wait times appear shorter than they really were. The IG has said problems lingered in 2006 despite VA promises.

Ronald Aument, deputy undersecretary for benefits: "His knowledge of VBA programs and operations and his breadth of experiences across VA have contributed greatly to VBA's progress in improving services to veterans."

Aument helps manage a disability claims system that has backlogs of 400,000 to 600,000 veterans. The waits average 177 days, two months short of the VA's strategic goal of 125 days to process claims. Nicholson has called the delays unacceptable.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action

May 15, 2007 (CBS/AP) & Reuters & The Associated Press

Unidentified militants killed Iraqi army Col. Raed Ahmed Shihab in Baghdad as he drove in the city, police said. He had worked for the Iraqi ministry of defense.

Police found the bodies of Basim Abdul-Ilah, a director in the Iraq Industry Ministry, and two of his bodyguards in Baghdad, the ministry said in a statement. They had been captured by insurgents.

A policeman was killed when guerrillas attacked a police checkpoint near Tikrit, 175 km (110 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

Four Iraqi soldiers were wounded in an attack by a car bomber on their checkpoint near Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, an Iraqi army spokesman said.

An Iraqi soldier was killed and four others, including two civilians, were wounded when guerrillas attacked an Iraqi army checkpoint on Monday night in Iskandariya, 40 km (25 miles) south of Baghdad, police said.

Guerrillas killed an Iraqi army colonel working for the ministry of defense.

<p>IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATION</p>

Happy Iraqis Celebrate: Danish Soldier Killed, Five More Wounded In Al Hartha Ambush



Iraqis celebrate next to a burning Danish military vehicle near Basra, May 14, 2007. A Danish soldier was killed and five other soldiers and one interpreter were wounded in an ambush in Al Hartha. (AP Photo / Nabil al-Jurani)

Iraqi Marxist Insurgent Group Declared

[Thanks to Pham Binh, who sent this in.]

May 15, 2007 By ZEYAD KASIM, Healingiraq.blogspot.com

An unknown left-wing group calling itself the Iraqi Armed Revolutionary Resistance distributed leaflets in the Mid-Euphrates area around Najaf, Hilla and Karbala calling for “resistance against American, British and Zionist occupiers in

order to liberate Iraq and form a free socialist, democratic alternative,” according to the Al-Badeel Al-Iraqi website.

The group, which described itself as a “movement of Iraqi Communists and Marxists experienced in armed struggle, leftist Iraqi nationalists, and their supporters,” claimed responsibility for an attack against U.S. troops at the Khan Al-Nus area between Najaf and Karbla on Sunday.

The leaflets, which carried a photo of Cuban Marxist revolutionary Che Guevara, announced the launch of the resistance in the Mid-Euphrates and condemned the “puppet government, the so-called Council of Representatives, terrorist Salafis, militias, the Interior Ministry, Iraqi traitors who came on American tanks, the American and British mercenaries, contractors, and their servants from the South Lebanese Army.”

Printed in both Arabic and English, the statement said car bombs and roadside bombs killing Iraqis are planted by the above groups to damage the reputation of Iraqi resistance groups.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

**“Conflict Is Not Between Shi’ites
And Sunnis But Between
Separatists, Backed By The U.S.,
And Nationalists”**

**“The Separatists Want Us To Stay, Of
Course, While The Nationalists Want
Us Out”**

**“We Should Back The Nationalists And
Get Out”**

[Thanks to Pham Binh, Traveling Soldier, who sent this in.]

May 15, 2007 by Charley Reese, Anti-War.Com

Gen. David Petraeus, touted by the Bush administration as the potential savior of the Iraq debacle, is like a lot of officers these days, a four-star general with relatively little combat experience.

He led the 101st Airborne Division during the initial invasion of Iraq and later was posted with it in the Kurdish area – by far the most peaceful area in Iraq.

Other than that, his experience has all been peacetime duty, with a lot of that as an aide to various officers.

No doubt about it, Petraeus is a bright man. Courtesy of the taxpayers, he holds a master's degree and also a doctorate from prestigious universities. He graduated from West Point. Lately, the press has credited him as the author of the Army's Field Manual on counterinsurgency. Actually, he co-authored it with Marine Lt. Gen. James Mattis.

Furthermore, Petraeus is unlucky.

During a live-fire exercise, one of his soldiers tripped and accidentally shot Petraeus in the chest. Later, while sky diving, his parachute tangled, and he broke his pelvis.

His other Iraq assignment was to reorganize and train the Iraqi army. Obviously, he didn't do such a hot job, because three years later, it is still unable to defend the country.

Now as the top field commander, he's in charge of what the Bush administration calls a "new strategy."

This consists of posting Americans with Iraqis in various little outposts around Baghdad.

The idea is to provide security for what the Army calls the "good guys." Problem is, to qualify as a good guy, you have to rat out your neighbors.

Other Iraqis see these good guys as just traitors and collaborators.

Insurgents, as has been the case historically, will simply go to ground while American forces are around and will cause mischief in other places.

So when you hear Petraeus or the Bush administration brag about the surge strategy working, just remember the one question they've never answered is, "What happens when the U.S. forces leave?"

The other unanswered question is, "How long do you intend to keep combat soldiers in Baghdad?"

In short, Petraeus' counterinsurgency strategy is the same one we used in Vietnam, where it failed miserably.

The only counterinsurgency campaign that I can recall being successful was one carried out by the British in Malaysia. That took about 10 years, and the British were aided by the fact that most of the insurgents were Chinese, who were not especially liked by the other citizens.

The insurgents in Iraq are mainly Iraqis.

We are viewed as a foreign occupational army.

The Iraqis want us out.

Every time our guys kick in a door, shoot somebody or arrest a “suspect,” we simply create more enemies. Polls taken by the University of Maryland consistently show that regardless of what sectarian or ethnic group is polled, a majority wants us out.

Interestingly enough, 144 members of the Iraqi parliament signed a petition demanding that the U.S. set a timetable for withdrawal. For some reason, American news organizations paid little attention to it. The man who made the announcement said that it will be presented to the speaker and then will be put up for a vote.

It also appears that conflict, at least within the parliament, is not between Shi'ites and Sunnis but between separatists, backed by the U.S., and nationalists, who want a strong central government in charge of Iraq's plentiful oil supply.

The separatists want us to stay, of course, while the nationalists want us out.

We should back the nationalists and get out.

Troops Invited:

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

“One Tale, From The ‘French War.’ The Late 1940's”

From: Max Watts
To: GI Special
Sent: May 15, 2007
Subject: READING THIS REMINDED ME...

READING THIS REMINDED ME...

[From GI Special]

Sitting in these stupid, deadly mini-forts is what the murderous fool Petraeus calls counterinsurgency. Too bad he wasn't in command of the French troops in Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh would have loved him. The French tried a string of forts across the north, and their soldiers got wiped out. Lesson unlearned, by the U.S. command in Iraq. But it's the troops that will pay the price for that with their lives, not the incompetents in command. Unfortunately. It should be the other way around. T

It was late 1972.

We were driving across France, from Paris to Cannes, a thousand clicks. Before the Autoroute. We had to make it in a day, we had four Vietnamese, who wanted to bring their films, shot in Southern Vietnam, under the ground, under the bombs, to a film festival.

I had to stay awake. So we talked.

Captain Ho Nam, from Hue, sitting next to me, told me tales of his wars, against the French, 1947 to 1954.

Now, the American war...

I learned a lot.

One tale, from the "French War". The late 1940's.

"The French put up these little forts.

(No, these were not across the North, we fought them where-ever, this was near Hue).

"One day, a French officer, a major, but he was on our side, there were some... he remembered he'd been fighting the Nazis in occupied France, he was disgusted occupying Indochina, Vietnam... he let us know there was 75 mm cannon, being sent out on a train...

"We ambushed the train. Captured the cannon, ammunition. Dragged it up, into our safe regions, the French were rabid, furious. Dropped parachutists to recapture the cannon, we fought them off, we lost many men, but we kept the cannon. Dragged it on..

"For the very first time, we had a cannon.

"But we had no one who knew how to use it. And we had only a few shells, didn't dare waste them, learning. So we sent a man, of course on foot, way up north, to learn. He came back. Taught.

"With that cannon we took out all these little Forts, cleared our country. Took it back."

Captain Ho told me many other stories from the French, the American, wars.

“We won the first time, it was harder. Then my soldiers didn’t know how to read. Now they do. We will win this one too.”

He was right. They did.

Max Watts

OCCUPATION REPORT

Good News For The Iraqi Resistance!!

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



Foreign occupation soldiers from U.S. Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division search an Iraqi citizens’ home they invaded without consent during the night hours in Mosul, Iraq, May 3, 2007. (AP Photo/Maya Alleruzzo)

[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



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

“The Democratic Party Is Not About To End This War” “They Seek To Organize And Formalize The Occupation”

May 14, 2007 By Justin Raimondo, Anti-War.Com [Excerpts]

The Democratic Party is not about to end this war.

Far from ending it, they seek to organize and formalize the occupation.

Their “compromise” spending bill signs them on to constructing a viable colonial administration based on a two-tiered system of administration – with the Iraqi legislature rubber-stamping decisions made in Washington and the money flowing in at the same speed as the Iraqis carry out their orders.

Four years after “mission accomplished,” the nature of the mission – the carving out of an American province in the heart of the Middle East – is all too apparent.

Democrats are in favor of all sorts of warning labels on products, right?

I propose a warning label be placed over Democratic Party headquarters in Washington, especially directed at antiwar voters, which simply says “ABANDON ALL HOPE, YE WHO ENTER HERE!”

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

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/)

CLASS WAR REPORTS



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