

GI SPECIAL 5E9:



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

**“It’s Almost Like The
Vietnam War. We Don’t
Know Where We’re
Going”**

**“I Want To Be Here For A
Reason, Not Just A Show Of
Force”**

**“We’re Tired Of Being Lost. Have
You Ever Been Lost And At The
Same Time Getting Shot At? It’s
Miserable”**

“We’re Working Hard And The Politicians Are Arguing. They Don’t Have Bullets Flying Over Their Heads. They Aren’t On The Front Lines, And Their Buddies Aren’t Dying”

**Under Constant Attack, Soldiers Are Sitting Ducks In Isolated Outposts:
Resistance Deploying Armored Trucks**



U.S. troops stand guard atop an outpost on the edge of Baghdad's Sadr City, where barriers of concrete, sand and barbed wire were recently installed. (Photos By Ann Scott Tyson -- The Washington Post)

“What do you want us to accomplish over here? We aren’t hearing any end state. We aren’t hearing it from the president, from the defense secretary,” Sgt. 1st Class Michael Eaglin said in a room cluttered with bunk beds, rucksacks and weapons at the Sadr City outpost.

May 8, 2007 By Ann Scott Tyson, Washington Post Staff Writer

BAGHDAD -- Nearly three months after the U.S. military launched a new strategy to safeguard Baghdad's population by pushing American and Iraqi forces deeper into the city's neighborhoods, defending their small outposts is increasingly requiring heavy bulwarks reminiscent of the fortresslike bases that the U.S. troops left behind.

To guard against bombs, mortar fire and other threats, U.S. commanders are adding fortifications to the outposts, setting them farther back from traffic and arming them with antitank weapons capable of stopping suicide bombers driving armored vehicles.

At a moonlit outpost on the edge of Baghdad's Sadr City one night last week, 1st Sgt. Donald Knapp balanced himself on a concrete barrier suspended by a crane and slowly guided a heavy slab into position. It was 3 a.m., and Knapp and a few other soldiers were working through the night to fortify their camp.

Over four days, the soldiers erected hundreds of sections of wall and reinforced them with barbed wire and 300 truckloads of sand. They pushed out the walls of the camp, known as a joint security station, and blocked approaching roads with serpentine barriers.

"When the guys get time to sit down, they sleep," said Knapp, a sniper from Milan, Ind., as soldiers in dusty T-shirts labored nearby.

Knapp's unit from the 82nd Airborne Division is redoubling security efforts as insurgents and militiamen step up attacks on their outpost, one of the dozens of small patrol bases set up as part of the deployment of tens of thousands of additional U.S. and Iraqi troops.

"There's two threats to the combat outpost . . . a huge truck bomb, and indirect fire," Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, who handles day-to-day military operations in Iraq, said in an interview at his Baghdad headquarters last week. In response, he said, U.S. troops are building more walls to shield themselves from mortars and rockets, while trying to track down insurgents firing on them.

To counter truck bombs, military engineers are gauging the structural soundness of the outposts and making sure they are well removed from traffic, Odierno said. Antitank weapons such as the bazooka-like AT-4 are also now required for soldiers on guard.

"They are now armoring these trucks, so whereas before we could shoot them and kill them, now we have to use some antitank capability against them and we're going to do that," Odierno said.

For U.S. troops living at the small camps, the constant need for vigilance -- coupled with hardship conditions and the prospect of 15-month tours -- has in some cases taken a toll on morale.

While some soldiers see advantages in living alongside Iraqi security forces inside the neighborhoods they patrol, others voice resentment over a mission they believe is ill-defined.

At the outpost in Sadr City, a volatile predominantly Shiite Muslim district of east Baghdad with about 2 million residents, scores of Iraqi police officers and U.S. soldiers live in cramped quarters in a two-story building that serves as a joint security station. They eat mostly packaged food, rarely shower, and in off-duty hours do little but sleep.

U.S. troops staff guard towers on the roof 24 hours a day and, uncertain of the loyalties of their Iraqi counterparts, also stand sentry at the American section inside.

One recent afternoon, a rocket landed nearby, followed a short while later by gunfire and then two more explosions.

“Okay, let’s find out about this explosion. I need to know right away if that was a VBIED or an IED,” Capt. Frank Fisher told the Iraqi police commander, using abbreviations for car bomb and roadside bomb, as they scanned a map in the operations center. “You need to call these checkpoints,” Fisher said, prompting the commander to get on the radio.

But U.S. troops also face a constant, nerve-racking battle against insurgents attacking with mortars, gunfire and sometimes car bombs. Every day at different times, Knapp has to vacate U.S. personnel and vehicles from different parts of the security station to avoid incoming 60mm and 80mm mortar rounds.

As Knapp and other soldiers put up barriers recently, five rocket-propelled grenades and several mortar shells were fired at Iraqi contractors lined up just outside with trucks and other equipment.

Two truck drivers were reportedly kidnapped at gunpoint, and as a result, “a very large percentage of the contractors quit” and had to be replaced, Capt. Joshua Taylor said.

In some areas, U.S. commanders are considering relocating outposts deemed overly vulnerable.

Lt. Col. Dale C. Kuehl oversees three camps set up since February in western Baghdad’s Mansour area and said he plans to move one of them to a more secure location. “I’ve never been real comfortable with the IP station,” or Iraqi police station, said Kuehl, commander of the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, who has ordered that a tank or Bradley Fighting Vehicle barricade the front at all times. “It’s been probed a couple of times,” Kuehl said, noting that there are several routes leading into the station.

U.S. troops living at the station are attacked “every couple of days,” Staff Sgt. Raymond Dias, 26, of Silver Springs, Tex., said as he checked on guards on the station roof.

Living at the outposts is “different -- it’s a risky thing,” Kuehl acknowledged. He stays most nights at another joint security station that lacks a wide perimeter and is nestled in a neighborhood where gunfire sounds sporadically throughout the night.

One recent evening, soldiers on guard unpacked new antitank weapons, shouldering the tubes that can fire armor-piercing rounds from short-range. “We don’t have 200 meters of standoff” distance, Kuehl said in his spartan room at the camp. “But they have to go through 300 meters of fire to get at us.”

Conditions at the camp are austere. "We just got port-a-potties. That was a big step up," said Spec. Peter Lahoda, 22, of Pittsburgh, recalling the "burn barrels" he had used to dispose of human waste at the base since February.

Lacking showers, some soldiers rely on baby wipes while others clean themselves with hand sanitizer. They eat chicken and rice most days and sleep on bunk beds in a large, dark, windowless room that they share with stray cats.

While not patrolling or on their eight to 10 hours of daily guard duty, soldiers at the base entertain themselves by playing poker or invented games.

One favorite is "Icom charades," where soldiers on radios quiz themselves on pop music bands or lines from movies.

Another is "Kevlar bowling." "We got 10 water bottles and filled them with dirt and taped them up," Pfc. Ray Queen of Fort Worth said during a break from guard duty. "Then we get an old Kevlar (helmet) we don't use and see how many we can knock over."

Morale was mixed among soldiers at the outposts -- the closest thing to a "front line" in the military's Baghdad campaign.

Some, particularly junior officers, said they accepted the risks to live closer to the Iraqi people.

Others, however, said they longed for a sense of purpose and voiced frustration at the prospect of harsh, dangerous 15-month tours for a mission they consider murky.

"What do you want us to accomplish over here? We aren't hearing any end state. We aren't hearing it from the president, from the defense secretary," Sgt. 1st Class Michael Eaglin said in a room cluttered with bunk beds, rucksacks and weapons at the Sadr City outpost.

"We're working hard and the politicians are arguing. They don't have bullets flying over their heads. They aren't on the front lines, and their buddies aren't dying," he said, echoing the sentiments of a group of soldiers around him.

"It's almost like the Vietnam War. We don't know where we're going," Spec. Adam Hamilton agreed. "We're not complaining," Eaglin said.

"We're tired of being lost. Have you ever been lost and at the same time getting shot at? It's miserable," he said.

"When you paint a car a pretty red . . . it makes you feel good inside. That's what we want with this war.

"I want to be here for a reason, not just a show of force."

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

TWO U.S. SOLDIERS KILLED BY IED SOUTHEAST OF BAGHDAD

5.8.07 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND 07-01-03C

BAGHDAD — Two Soldiers were killed and one was wounded when their vehicle was struck by a roadside bomb southeast of Baghdad today.

Gretna Soldier Killed In Iraq

May 8, 2007 AP

GRETNA, Neb. -- The family of Army Cpl. Matthew Alexander, 21, of Gretna, said that they learned that he was killed this weekend in Iraq.

Alexander got married on Valentine's Day to his wife, Kara. He also is survived by his parents, Melvin and Monica Alexander, of Gretna; and brother, Marshall Alexander, of Omaha. Alexander's family didn't have many details of the circumstances of his death.

The Gretna High School band played a tribute Monday night to the fallen soldier who graduated from the school just three years ago. Both Matthew and Kara Alexander were in the band.

At the concert, the Gretna High School band dedicated the song "Glory," a military march, to Alexander.

Oklahoman Killed In Iraq

5.8.07 KTEN

SEATTLE A soldier from Tulsa has been killed in Iraq with five other soldiers and a freelance news photographer from Russia.

Relatives say Specialist Joel Lewis of Tulsa is among those killed by a roadside bomb.

Lewis and the other soldiers were based at Fort Lewis, Washington, and were members of the Stryker Brigade. Fort Lewis spokeswoman Catherine Caruso confirms the dead were from the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division.

Lewis' mother, Gale Poindexter, told a Tacoma newspaper her son was born in Canada and moved to Oklahoma about 13 years ago and spent a year in Korea with the Army before moving to Fort Lewis.

A memorial service for the soldiers is tentatively set for next Tuesday at Fort Lewis.

EC Grad Killed In Iraq

May 1st, 2007 Bette Pearce, The Chronicle-Telegram

Sgt. Lane Tollett was hit by IED in Baghdad

ELYRIA: Friends, relatives and former classmates of Norman Lane Tollett's from Elyria Catholic High School streamed into the homes of Marti Sparks and David Tollett throughout the day Monday to offer their support and express their sympathy for the loss of their son.

Tollett, a 30-year-old Army sergeant who was known by his middle name, Lane, was killed Saturday in Baghdad. He would have been 31 on May 6.

He became the third Elyrian to be killed in Iraq, following M. Sgt. Robert H. West and Sgt. Daniel M. Shepherd.

Tollett's parents, who are divorced, were informed their son was killed by an improvised explosive device while he was on foot patrol in Baghdad. An Army chaplain and casualty officer appeared at their front doors at 8 a.m. Sunday to break the sad news.

"They arrived to tell me he had been killed almost on the hour from last Sunday when I last spoke to Lane," his mother said.

When Lane Tollett told his mother he planned to join the Army in the summer of 2003, she wasn't thrilled about his decision, she said.

"I had those typical 'mom' feelings; I didn't want him to," Sparks said. "But when he explained to me why he wanted to join, I told him I understood and supported his decision; I respected his decision but it hasn't been easy.

"He said he wanted to make a difference."

Lane hadn't planned to join the military. He had nearly completed about three years of study at Bowling Green State University, had worked a time for his father's Legacy Food Systems and for about a year as a vending machine mechanic for a company in Columbus when he decided to visit a friend in New York City in the fall of 2001.

"It during that trip, about 2:30 one morning, they decided to go visit Ground Zero," his mother said. "Lane told me later that as long as he'd live, he'd never forget the sights, the sounds and the smells he saw that night."

It was during that trip, his thoughts turned to the military. It also was about the same time that former pro football player Pat Tillman joined the Army.

Lane, an athlete through his high school years, was impressed by Tillman's statement that he wanted to be part of a bigger team, said his father, who lives on Loyola Drive in Elyria.

"Lane thought about it for about two years before he finally joined," his mother said, gently rubbing her fingers across some snapshots of her son spread across the dining room table in her home on Courtland Drive in Elyria.

"It wasn't an emotional, quick decision," she said. "He told me he wanted to do something to make a difference. And then he said, 'If I can take the place of one young husband or young father, it will make it all worth it.'"

That kind of caring, giving attitude was typical of Lane, his father said.

At age 28, Lane was older than most of the soldiers he joined for basic training in Fort Bragg, N.C. They quickly nicknamed him "the old man."

And Lane earned his fellow soldiers' respect. They chose him as honor graduate of his platoon.

"He was almost a fatherly figure to some of them," David Tollett said. "Lane was always there for everybody. He wanted to take care of people; whatever they needed, he was there.

"He was everybody's best friend. He was proud of his family, his community, his state, his country and his friends. And we are proud of him."

Lane wasn't married, but he had a girlfriend who lives in Pennsylvania. He met her at his brother Don's wedding about a year ago. Lane's brother Don, 29, lives in Delaware; brother Ryan, 26, lives in Elyria.

"Lane was an awesome brother and one of the best friends you could ever ask for," Don Tollett said.

Lane's family still does not know all of the details surrounding his death.

"They said the Army would be conducting a full investigation before they would reveal any more information," his father said, clutching an 8-by-10 photo of his son in full dress uniform.

About all the family knew by Monday afternoon was Lane's body had arrived at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware. They didn't know when his casket would arrive in Elyria.

Lane served with the Army's 82nd Airborne Division, C Company, 1504th parachute infantry regiment. He was to have been discharged from the Army in November.

An avid sports enthusiast and athlete, he was a 1994 graduate of Elyria Catholic High and a co-captain of the school's football team. He also was on the wrestling and baseball teams, and hoped to someday complete work for a degree in education and coach children in sports.

The Rev. Frank Kosem of St. Jude's Catholic Church on Poplar Street said he could still remember the days when Tollett walked through the hallways of St. Jude Elementary School.

"In general, he was a quiet person, but very faithful and very loyal," Kosem said. "I think he was connected deep down and just a good person. He was always respected by his peers and was just a good clean-cut man."

Kosem said he had not spoken with Tollett for a while, but he did meet with Tollett's mother on Sunday after she heard about her son's death.

St. Jude's likely will host a military funeral for Tollett.

"It will be the traditional military funeral with all the respect he deserves," he said. "It's a shock. It sends chills down your spine when you think about two men from the U.S. Government stopping by the house to tell his mother."

UNREMITTING HELL ON EARTH; BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



Battle at Tarmiyah: On Feb. 19, 35 soldiers faced an attack on their remote patrol base in Tarmiyah, Iraq. By the end of the four-hour battle, two of the men were dead and 29 were wounded. Soldiers inspected the ruins of the base after the battle. The truck bomb had sheared off the front of the two-story base and ignited the 2,500-gallon fuel pod in front of the building. [U.S. Army Photo]

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Foreign Occupation Soldier Killed Near Sangin; Nationality Not Announced

5/8/2007 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND 07-01-03C

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - One Coalition servicemember was killed in action when Coalition and Afghan National Army forces made contact with enemy fighters while conducting a combat patrol 25 kilometers (15.5 miles) northeast of Sangin District Center, Helmand Province this evening.

TROOP NEWS

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



The body of Lance Corporal Jesse D. Delatorre, 29 at his funeral in Aurora, Illinois, April 26, 2007. Delatorre died April 16 while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar province, Iraq. REUTERS/John Gress

DISSENT WITHIN THE RANKS

How Troops are Organizing Against the War

Do you feel betrayed, too?

More and more troops are speaking out about how this war has abused their trust.

Come learn more about what's happening and how you can be a part of it.

WHERE?

The Oasis

16 Bank Street, New London, CT 06320

WHEN?

May 20th at 1:00 p.m.

Speakers:

Jonathan Hutto

Co-Founder, Appeal for Redress, USN

Liam Madden

Co-Founder, Appeal for Redress, Iraq Veterans
Against the War (IVAW), USMC veteran

Damon Murphy

IVAW, USN veteran

Fabian Bouthillette

IVAW, The Military Project, USN veteran

About IVAW:

Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) was founded by Iraq war veterans in 2004 to give a voice to the large number of active duty service people and veterans who are against this war, but are under various pressures to remain silent. From its inception, IVAW has called for: immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces in Iraq; reparations for the destruction and corporate pillaging of Iraq so that ordinary Iraqi people can control their own lives and future; and full benefits, adequate healthcare (including mental health), and other supports for returning servicemen and women. For more information: www.ivaw.org

About the Appeal for Redress:

Many active duty, reserve, and guard service members are concerned about the war in Iraq and support the withdrawal of U.S. troops. The Appeal for Redress provides a way in which individual service members can appeal to their Congressional Representative and US Senators to urge an end to the U.S. military occupation. The first Appeal signatures were delivered to members of Congress on January 16, to coincide with at the time of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in January 2007. Appeal for Redress will continue to collect signatures until all active duty, Guard, and active reserve soldiers are out of Iraq. Nearly 2,000 troops have signed the Appeal for Redress to date. For more information: www.appealforredress.org

About the Military Project:

The Military Project was formed in 2004 to equip concerned civilians (alongside and including military family members and veterans) to reach out to anti-war troops who seek support. Members of the Military Project engage in outreach to connect with those who can strengthen the anti-war movement based on their experience and first-hand knowledge: troops themselves. The Military Project publishes GI Special, a near-daily bulletin for service members. For more information: www.militaryproject.org

for more information: contact@militaryproject.org or 860-445-5293

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

Fools And Bloody Handed Scum Protest Bush Veto Of Democrats War Bill; “I’m Sure The Grunts Will Be Grateful That Thanks To The Democrats And ‘Liberals,’ They’ll Get To Spend Another Few Years In Hell”

News coverage showed a few dozen “anti-war” demonstrators who were actually angry that Bush vetoed any future spending on the Iraq debacle.

Has hatred of Bush (or knee-jerk support of pro-war Democrats just because they’re Democrats) become so automatic and ingrained that liberals actually want the war to continue? Apparently some do.

May 3, 2007 Via Alobar, NOLA Discussion

A Cackling Grackle editorial: [Excerpts]

In the Iraq war spending bill, congressional Democrats sent Bush a better choice than he had a right to. Either accept an end to the Iraq mess in 12 to 18 months, or veto the bill and end the war now.

Bush vetoed the bill, which means funding runs out, and our troops will finally begin returning home, within the next 60 days.

Incredibly, House Democrats have desperately attempted to keep the war going by trying to override the veto, but they failed.

So imagine my disgust this morning to see local news clips of Austin liberals actually protesting the end of the war!

Yes, I kid you not.

News coverage showed a few dozen “anti-war” demonstrators who were actually angry that Bush vetoed any future spending on the Iraq debacle.

Has hatred of Bush (or knee-jerk support of pro-war Democrats just because they're Democrats) become so automatic and ingrained that liberals actually want the war to continue?

Do they actually want more US troops to die in Bush's quagmire?

Apparently some do.

Let there be no confusion - thanks to Bush's veto, direct US military involvement in Iraq now does in fact "end in 60 days."

That is, unless the congressional Democrat majority actually votes to give him more money to continue the slaughter. Indications are that they're intending to do just that.

So, you want to protest, liberals?

Fine.

Then we need to physically occupy and shut down the local and DC offices of any Democratic congressperson who casts a vote to give Bush more funding for his illegal war.

Thanks to Bush's veto, the only people who can keep the carnage going are the Democrats.

And, given the hearty support for continued war funding that the "protesters" were expressing, it looks like the Dems are actually going to get away with reviving the funding that Bush vetoed!

Gee, thanks a lot.

I'm sure the grunts will be grateful that thanks to the Democrats and "liberals," they'll get to spend another few years in hell.

Humvee Doors Death Traps For Troops

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

May 08, 2007 United Press International

WASHINGTON - Doors that jam shut during an attack are an unintended consequence of the Pentagon's effort to add armor to Humvees transporting U.S. troops in Iraq.

Due to the jamming problem, records show the Army must fix the doors of some 18,000 armored Humvees that serve as the main troop transport vehicle, USA Today reports.

Air Force Fleet Falling Apart Because Of Heavy Use In Iraq And Afghanistan

[Thanks to Elaine Brower, The Military Project, who sent this in.]

May 08, 2007 USA Today

LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, Va. - The Air Force's fleet of warplanes is older than ever and wearing out faster because of heavy use in Iraq and Afghanistan, according to the service's top combat commander.

Gen. Ronald Keys, who leads the Air Combat Command, points to cracked wings on A-10 attack planes and frayed electrical cables on U-2 spy planes.

Compared to 1996, the Air Force now spends 87% more on maintenance for a warplane fleet that is less ready to fly, Air Force records show.

They also show that as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continue, Air Force and other military aircraft are flying more missions in harsh environments.

Arcing wires near fuel tanks recently forced the Air Force to ground its fleet of 33 U-2 spy planes in March for at least a day, Keys said.

There are 356 A-10s in service. The plane is often used to support ground forces in close combat. The A-10 carries missiles and bombs, but its cannon is particularly effective in strafing.

In the past week, A-10s have attacked enemy forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. The planes shot at and bombed Taliban rebels in Afghanistan; in Iraq, A-10s performed a variety of reconnaissance missions to find and stop insurgents from burying roadside bombs.

Fighting Them Over There So We Don't Have To Save People Over Here

[Thanks to Phil G, who sent this in with the headline, and David Honish, Veteran]

May 7, 2007 By Carey Gillam

OVERLAND PARK, Kansas (Reuters) - A shortage of trucks, helicopters and other equipment -- all sent to the war in Iraq -- has hampered recovery in a U.S. town obliterated by a tornado, Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius said on Monday.

“There is no doubt at all that this will slow down and hamper the recovery,” Sebelius, a Democrat, told Reuters in Kansas where officials said the statewide death toll had risen to 12 on Monday.

“Not having this equipment in place all over the state is a huge handicap,” Sebelius said.

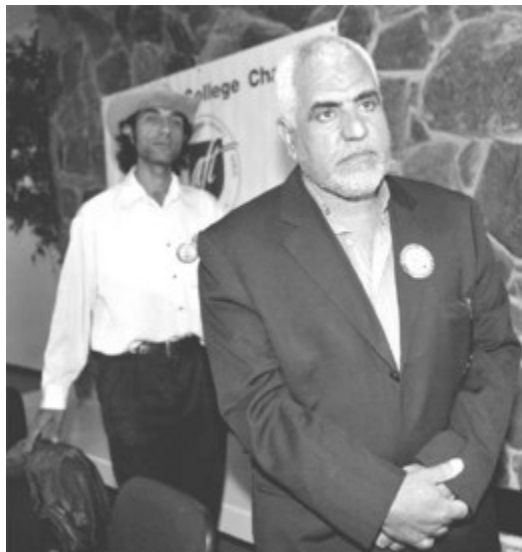
The tornado that devastated Greensburg, 110 miles west of Wichita, started a weekend of violent weather in Kansas, a state in the heart of the central United States region known as “Tornado Alley.”

The twisters were accompanied by widespread flooding on Sunday and Monday that required more than 200 water rescues and closed many roads and shuttered several schools in another part of the state.

“We’re getting pounded in Kansas. We have the need for National Guard in two different parts of our state now. This is really going to be a problem,” Sebelius said.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Iraqi Oil Workers Will Strike Over Privatisation Law Thursday; “The Oil Law Does Not Represent The Aspirations Of The Iraqi People”



Hassan Jumaa Awad al Assadi [pww.org/]

From: Ewa Jasiewicz
To: GI Special
Sent: May 08, 2007

May 8th 2007 For Immediate Release

Iraq's largest oil workers' trade union will strike this Thursday, in protest at the controversial oil law currently being considered by the Iraqi parliament. The move threatens to stop all exports from the oil-rich country.

The oil law proposes giving multinational companies the primary role in developing Iraq's huge untapped oilfields, under contracts lasting up to 30 years. Oil production in Iraq, like in most of the Middle East, has been in the public sector since the 1970s.

The Union, representing 26,000 oil workers, has held three previous strikes since 2003, each time stopping exports, for up to two days at a time. The announcement of the strike has spurred negotiations with the Ministry of Oil, which are ongoing.

Imad Abdul-Hussain, Federation Deputy Chair of the IFOU said: "The central government must be in total ownership and complete control of production and the export of oil".

He warned against the controversial Production Sharing Agreements favoured by foreign companies, saying other forms of co-operation with foreign companies would be acceptable but not at the level of control and profiteering indicated in the current Oil Law.

Federation President Hassan Jumaa Awad al Assadi said: 'The oil law does not represent the aspirations of the Iraqi people.

"It will let the foreign oil companies into the oil sector and enact privatisation under so called production sharing agreements. The federation calls for not passing the oil law, because it does not serve the interests of the Iraqi people."

The Union is not alone in its' condemnation of the current oil law. Opponents of the law also include all of Iraq's other trade unions, a number of political parties, and a group of over 60 senior Iraqi oil experts.

Hassan Jumaa went on to say: "The federation calls on all unions in the world to support our demands and to put pressure on governments and the oil companies not to enter the Iraqi oil fields."

Union members are also demanding an improved salary structure and a distribution of land for building homes.

Ewa Jasiewicz of Naftana - the UK Support Committee for the IFOU said: 'The Iraqi Federation of Oil Unions, like any union, has the right to engage in collective bargaining over issues important to their members. In this case, the issue of who controls Iraq's oil and the economic future of the country is an issue which is important to all Iraqis.

"The Union has repeatedly called for civil society inclusion in the drafting of the oil law and has been ignored. They are now asserting their right to have a voice in the decision

making process affecting their industry and Iraq's economic future - their courage and commitment to democracy should be supported'.

Instead of the union's participation being welcomed, leaders have been accused of jeopardizing security and threatened with legal action.

Farouq Al-Asadi, the Federation's Secretary said: 'The Oil Minister chooses to forget that the right to strike is guaranteed by the constitution - we have chosen the legal path'.

Union leaders have already received a number of death threats which they are taking seriously.

"As soon as the federation called for the strike, many of our members and officials were physically threatened by parties active in the political process, with the aim of thwarting the strike and undermining the message of the strike organisers."

Contacts

Hassan Jumaa Awad Al Assadi, President of the Iraqi Federation of Oil Unions 00964 7801 001 196 or 00964 7804 114 619 www.basraoilunion.org

Sami Ramadani, lecturer and writer and member of Naftana - UK Support Committee for the IFOU 0044 7863 138 748 sami.ramadani@londonmet.ac.uk

Ewa Jasiewicz, Naftana UK Support Group for the IFOU and Hands Off Iraqi Oil Campaign 0044 7749 421 576 freelance@mailworks.org www.handsoffiraqioil.org

Notes

The IFOU is an independent trade union representing workers across 4 southern provinces in Iraq: Misan, Dhi Qar, Basra and Mauthanna in nine oil and gas related companies.

The Union has been organizing since April 2003 and has stopped oil exports and production over wages and workers rights in the past. It has also held protests against oil smuggling, former regime bosses and what the union sees as the deliberate neglect and degradation of the industry in order to justify private investment.

Union members have carried out reconstruction work on drilling rigs, port equipment, pipelines and refineries since the invasion with minimal, mostly local resources.

The Union is not linked to any political party in Iraq but has members which belong to various parties.

The Union enjoys the support of trade unions and civil society organizations around the world including the International Confederation of Energy, Mining and General Workers Union (ICEM), the AFL-CIO in the US, and the Trade Unions Congress (TUC) in the UK including the NUJ and TGWU. The union is partnered with UK development charity War on Want, the 3 million strong US Labor Against War in the USA, and Italian NGO Un Ponte Per.

Please fwd widely, solidarity actions TBA...

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Racism And The Military

[Thanks to Michael Letwin for sending this in.

[He writes: *"I wrote this twenty-five years ago, but it I think it contains some useful info."*]

October 10, 1982 By Michael Letwin

The military is racist in three related ways.

First, it is used to violently maintain the economic, political and social domination of the U.S. government and the system it represents over nonwhite people internationally and at home.

Second, nonwhite young people are forced into the military where they are discriminated against and used as cannon-fodder.

And third, massive military spending drains the resources of society away from programs for human need and the economy, the burden of which falls most heavily on nonwhite people who are disproportionately and overwhelmingly working class and poor.

Nothing demonstrates this racism more clearly than the Vietnam era.

In Vietnam, the U.S. government used the military to prop up a brutal and corrupt regime in Saigon which enjoyed no support within the country. It attempted to destroy the national liberation movement by waging war against the population as a whole, which it correctly saw as opposing the U.S.

Using "strategic hamlets," "free-fire zones," torture, napalm, Agent Orange and saturation bombing, the U.S. and the regime it represented were responsible for the death of approximately two million Vietnamese and many others in neighboring Cambodia and Laos.

One Black G.I. described a typical operation against a Vietnamese village:

"The M.60 (machine gun) was set up outside the hootch . . . A Marine with his M.16 went in and forced these people out of the hootch at gunpoint . . . Just running them out and into the fire of the .60 . . . A complete slaughter. Every single one of those Vietnamese people were cut down. Not one had a chance to escape. That took care of most of the adult inhabitants of the village. The rest of that day was spent burning the hootches, killing anyone who was left and looking for Charlie's (the guerrillas) supplies. We never found any." (Terry Whitmore, Memphis-Nam-Sweden, Garden City, 1971, p. 62.)

Military training encouraged a racist view of Vietnamese so that G.I.s would more readily carry out their orders. As Ron Armstead, a Black Vietnam vet counselor in Boston, explained, "[t]he Vietnamese became less than human. They were called "dinks," "slopes," "gooks." They were dehumanized in the war." (Michael Letwin, "Reflection's on a 'Noble Cause'," Wavelength Magazine, U. of Mass./Boston, Spring, 1982.)

Nonwhite G.I.s found that they were victims of the same racism used against the Vietnamese. The Department of Defense reported in the mid-1960s that Blacks were more likely than whites to be drafted, sent to Vietnam, serve in high-risk combat units and be killed or wounded in battle. In fact, between 1961-66, 25% of the Army's casualties in Vietnam were Black, although Blacks made up only 11% of the population between nineteen and twenty-one. (Martin Binkin and Mark J. Eitelberg, Blacks and the Military, The Brookings Institution, Washington, 1982, p. 32.) The same general pattern continued throughout the war.

Those Black G.I.s who did return from Vietnam have suffered from exposure to Agent Orange (which among other things causes cancer), and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (fastbacks and trauma) at a rate 20% higher than that of white vets (Center for Policy Research, Inc., "Legacies of Vietnam: Comparative Adjustment of Vietnam Veterans and Their Peers," March 1981.)

Black vets came back to a racist society in which they, along with Latinos, Asians and Native Americans still faced segregation, the worst jobs, rotten housing and police brutality.

When these grievances exploded into ghetto revolts between 1964-68, the military was called in to suppress them.

Tens of thousands of Army and National Guard troops were used across the country in dozens of cities to "restore order." In Newark, for example, 3,000 National Guard troops were responsible, together with the police, for the death of more than 20 Black citizens on July 14, 1967. (Robert L. Allen, Black awakening in Capitalist America, Garden City, 1970, p. 134.)

Scores of Black people were killed in other cities (Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, New York, 1968; Keesing's Research Report 4, Race Relations in the U.S.A. 1954-1968, New York, 1970.) Later, U.S. troops were also used against other nonwhite people, as when Native Americans occupied Wounded Knee in 1973.

Throughout this period, the much-heralded "War on Poverty" gave way to ever escalating intervention in Vietnam. Poverty programs became increasingly smaller and insignificant when compared with the cost of the War.

How much has changed?

The U.S. military continues to be used against revolutions and in favor of right-wing dictatorships in the Third World. U.S. troops are now stationed in Lebanon. They prop up the brutal government in South Korea.

At least 50 U.S. military “advisors” are stationed in El Salvador where 35,000 people have been killed in the last three years, nearly all of them by the U.S.-backed government. The military is also training Honduran troops and Nicaraguan exiles for an impending invasion of Nicaragua.

The Rapid Deployment Force is being prepared for places like the Middle East and southern Africa. The list goes on and on.

And who will fight these wars?

Working class people in general, but especially Black and other nonwhite North Americans.

In 1981, there were 410,000 Black enlisted personnel in the U.S. armed forces, 20% of the total military, although Blacks are only 11-12% of the population (Binkin, p. vii.) Black recruitment in 1979 hit an all time high of 37% of total enlistments (Binkin, p. 43.) Two out of five eligible young Black men now enter the military. (Binkin, p. vii.)

These Black “volunteers” have been conscripted by the Poverty Draft.

Facing an urban youth unemployment rate of 60% and more, wages that are too low to live on, the elimination of job programs, and the prospect of no real future, Black and other nonwhite youth feel they have no choice but the military.

As the Brookings study concluded, “Race discrimination figures prominently in explaining the high unemployment rate of young blacks . . . youth unemployment explains why so many have turned to the armed forces.” (Binkin, pps. 70-71.)

Black young people who join the military to get the job training the recruiters promise soon find out that Blacks are disproportionately placed in nonmechanical “soft” jobs where training is minimal and advancement slow. They are over-represented in administrative, clerical, unskilled and supply handler jobs, as is the tradition of the military. For example, while Black enlisted men are 50% of the cannon and missile crews, they hold only 16% of the computer programmer and analyst jobs (Binkin, pps. 55-7.) Blacks still make up only 5.3% of the officer corps in the military, and those who are officers are concentrated in the lower ranks, where they are over-represented in supply procurement and administration (Binkin, pps. 61, 59.)

All that Black soldiers can hope for in the military is what they got during Vietnam: the front lines. Blacks are concentrated mostly in the Army and Marines where they make up 33% and 22% of the enlisted force respectively (Binkin, p. 6.) Black membership in combat-ready units is much higher. In one such unit, the 197th Infantry Brigade, one artillery battery is 59.9% Black and 2.7% other nonwhite. In one of the Brigade’s infantry companies, Blacks make up 55% and other nonwhite 2.4% (Binkin, p. 181.) The result,

says the Brookings study, is that Blacks are likely to suffer between one-third and one-half of the initial combat fatalities in the next war (Binkin, p. vii.) "If that happened," it concluded "the 20 percent casualty rate of Blacks that provoked charges of racial genocide in the mid-1960s could appear small" (Binkin, p. 78.)

Of particular interest to those law students considering the JAG Corps is the workings of the military "justice" system.

For example, 0.14% of Black troops receive dishonorable discharges from the military, as compared with 0.03% of white soldiers (Binkin, p. 170.) As recently as 1978, there was only 1 Black Army judge out of a total of 46. Four percent of Army lawyers and 13% of military police were Black (Binkin, p. 54.) In light of this situation, it is no surprise that in 1979, 51.2% of Army prisoners were Black, 1.6 times their numbers in the Army. (Binkin, pps. 53-4.) To top all of this off, the military has seen a major increase in Ku Klux Klan activity in recent years. (Binkin, p. 107.)

Even more so than during the Vietnam era, Blacks and other nonwhite people are paying for the military with the destruction of job programs, housing, transportation, food stamps, and welfare, as the military budget soars above the \$200 billion mark. And there is every reason to believe that if they resist, the military will once again be used against them.

It is for all of these reasons that the Black Movement of the 1960s resisted the military.

As early as December 31, 1964, Malcolm X told a group of Black teenagers in McComb, Mississippi, that, "they want to draft you and put you in the army and send you to Saigon to fight for them--and then you've got to turn around and all night long discuss how you're going to get a right to register and vote without being murdered." (Robert W. Mullen, Blacks in Americans Wars, New York, 1973, p. 65.)

The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee endorsed draft resistance and coined the phrase "Hell No, We Won't Go!" (Michael Ferber and Staughton Lynd, The Resistance, Boston 1971, p. 33.) One SNCC field worker summed this sentiment with the comment, "You know, I just saw one of those Vietcong guerrillas on TV. He was darkskinned, ragged, poor, and angry. I swear, he looked just like one of us. (Mullen, p. 70.)

Martin Luther King, Jr., declared, "I would be a conscientious objector. I would not even serve as a chaplain." (David Lewis, King: A Biography, 2d ed., Chicago, 1978, p. 360.)

Black opposition to the war was most actively expressed in Vietnam among Black G.I.s who saw each other, poor white and Latino G.I.s and the Vietnamese killed and maimed, all despite the fact that, as the popular slogan went, "No Vietnamese Ever Called Me Nigger."

Especially after the Tet Offensive and the assassination of King in 1968, Black G.I.s led Latinos and whites in their own antiwar movement. By the early '70s, antiwar and Black countercultures, AWOLs, desertions, fraggings (blowing up officers and lifers with hand grenades), avoidance of combat and outright and sometimes large scale mutiny, along with an extensive G.I. movement around the world, had made the American ground forces militarily unreliable.

As one historian concluded, “The plague of disaffection and defiance within the ranks, most dramatically evidenced in fragging, crippled the infantry and left the once-proud American Army helpless - more a liability than an asset to U.S. purposes.” (David Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, Garden City 1975, p. 47.)

Terry Whitmore, a highly decorated Black Marine, finally concluded, “Nobody can ever tell me that the war in Vietnam is not immoral. It was disgusting and I’m none too proud that I was once a part of killing women and their children . . . NO more of that shit for me, Jack (Whitmore, p. 169.)

OCCUPATION REPORT

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



Iraqi citizens huddle together after foreign occupation soldiers from U.S. Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division forced their way into the women’s home in Mosul, May 3, 2007. (AP Photo/Maya Alleruzzo)

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.

The women and children were moved into a room, where they huddled together in silence. The men had been forced down onto their knees wherever they were apprehended, their hands secured behind their backs with plastic handcuffs and their eyes covered by makeshift blindfolds. YOCHI J. DREAZEN, Wall St. Journal, 3.12.07

[There's nothing quite like invading somebody else's country and busting into their houses by force to arouse an intense desire to kill you in the patriotic, self-respecting civilians who live there.

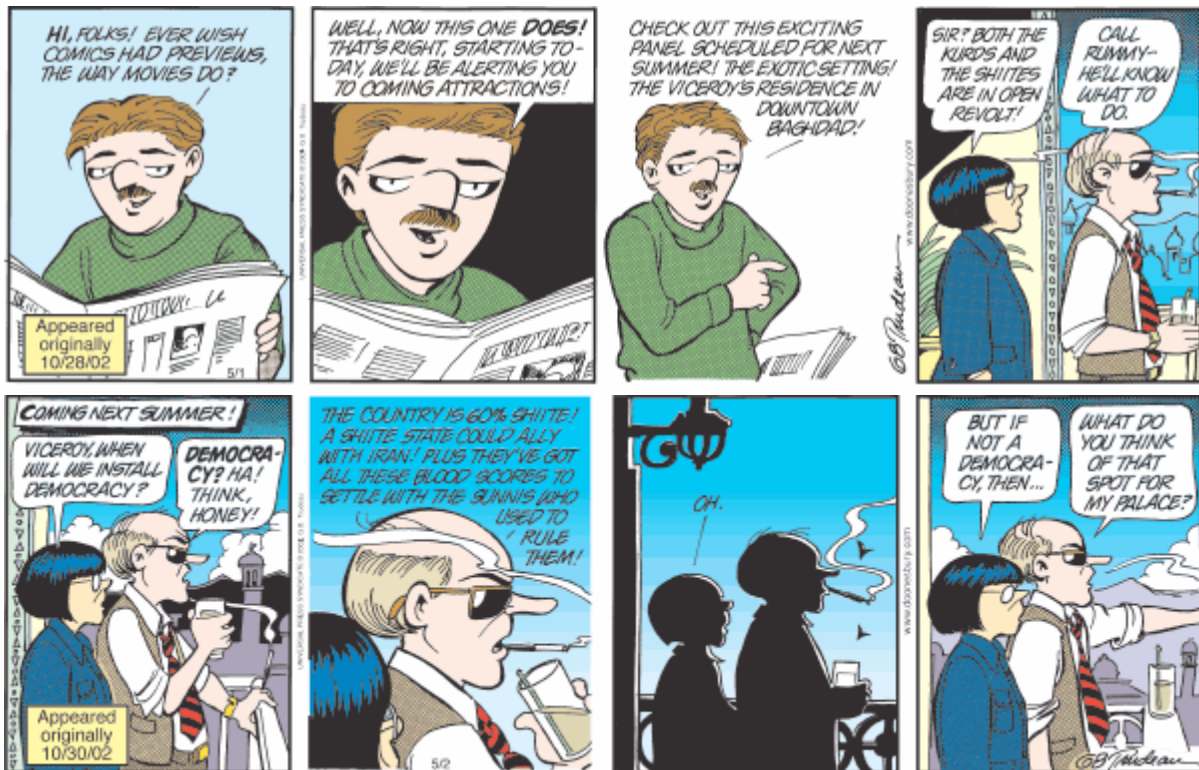
[But your commanders know that, don't they? Don't they?]

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



[Thanks to NB, who sent this in.]



[Thanks to Phil G, who sent this in. He writes: History foretold.]

A Fair And Balanced Look At The Democrats And War Funding: Lies And The Lying Liars That Tell Them

All of this noise about non-binding resolutions and withdrawal schemes attached to war spending bills is just posturing for the 2008 race for the White House.

May 3, 2007 By PHAM BINH, CounterPunch

Yesterday President Bush vetoed the bill Congress sent to him to fund the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq because it included deadlines for the withdrawal of combat troops from Iraq, calling it "a prescription for chaos and confusion." Apparently, the authority to create chaos and confusion in Iraq belongs to Bush and Bush alone.

Now the Democrats face a stark choice: to fund, or not to fund the war? That is the question.

And we already have the answer.

House Democratic Majority leader Steny Hoyer has said in response to the veto “We are going to fund the troops, we are not going to leave our troops in harm’s way without the resources that they need.”

In all likelihood, Democrats in Congress will pass a bill funding the bloodshed in Iraq and Afghanistan that requires Bush to certify that the Iraqi government is meeting “benchmarks” to warrant the continuation of the war as well as political support for and financial aid to the Iraqi government.

How anyone can spin this as a “course correction” in Iraq is beyond me - Bush has been touting “progress” in Iraq ever since his “Mission Accomplished” speech on May 1, 2003. How the U.S. is losing despite uninterrupted progress in Iraq also remains to be explained.

Anti-war sentiment propelled the Democrats into power last November. Since then they have done zero, zip, zilch, nada to end the war.

To cover their asses, Democrats have come up with pathetic excuses as to why they haven’t lifted a finger to stop Bush.

Basically their argument is: “we can’t cut off funding for the war because that would mean depriving the troops of equipment, food, water, and weapons they need to defend themselves. President Bush, the Commander-in-Chief, can veto our bills and there aren’t enough Republicans to help us override that veto.”

The not-so-subtle-subtext is: vote for us in ‘08. Only when a Democrat is in the White House will we have the power to end the war.

That’s a lie.

They have the power to stop the slaughter right now. It only takes one Senator to filibuster and kill the war funding bill in the Senate. All it would take is one well-timed, long, boring, verbose speech by a Senator to save the lives of literally thousands of Americans and hundreds of thousands of Iraqis.

Senators John Kerry and Joe Biden love to give those kinds of speeches to mostly-empty Senate seats and C-SPAN cameras, so why don’t they do it when it counts?

Hillary Clinton promises she’ll end the war in Iraq if she’s elected, but why wait until January of 2009?

What about liberal wet-dream Barack Obama? He wants voters to believe that he’s different, that he’s an outsider to the dirty and corrupt business of Washington politics, why not prove it?

Senator Reid says “this war is lost” - so why doesn’t he move to end it?

This reminds me of the scene in Fahrenheit 9/11 when members of the Congressional Black Caucus begged a Senator, any Senator, to sign onto their objections regarding the massive disenfranchisement of black voters in Florida where Bush Jr’s bro was governor.

Doing so would have prevented Bush and his gang of incompetent neo-con nut-jobs from taking office in the first place. Not one Democratic Senator gave a damn about black voters enough to sign on, even though it would have put a Democrat into office for the next four years. After they were unable to get the support of a John Kerry, a John Edwards, or a single one of their colleagues, Al Gore (who as Vice President also served as the President of the Senate) out-shouted, overruled, and shut down Caucus speakers.

Since taking Congress, the Democrats have passed a non-binding resolution against Bush's surge. Then they voted unanimously for the men Bush picked to implement the surge they voted to oppose, Gen. Petraeus who is the top general in Iraq and Admiral Fallon who heads all U.S. forces in the Middle East. This was "I voted against it before I voted for it" squared.

After that, they passed a war funding bill they knew Bush would veto that had dates for the withdrawal of combat troops from Iraq. (60,000 out of 140,000 troops in Iraq are combat troops, meaning 80,000 troops would still be in Iraq even if Bush signed the bill into law.)

All of this noise about non-binding resolutions and withdrawal schemes attached to war spending bills is just posturing for the 2008 race for the White House.

They want to look like they are doing everything they can to get out of the hole while handing Bush all the shovels he needs to dig deeper.

They have a big incentive to keep the disaster in Iraq going until November of next year so that they can repeat their victory of last year.

As one Democratic strategist explained to a journalist from the New York Review of Books: "We don't want to own this war. It's Bush's war, and we want him to keep owning it."

It gets worse.

After a few minutes of research on Google, I found that the Democratic chair of the House Appropriations Committee, David Obey of Wisconsin, included funding for the construction of permanent bases in Iraq in the war funding bill that Bush just vetoed.

This is the same guy that called an anti-war military mom a "liberal idiot" for wanting to cut off funding for the war in Iraq on YouTube.

His idiotic response to the demand of "liberal idiots" to cut off funding for the war was "we don't have the votes to get it through." Obey didn't have the votes to pass the bill that funded the wars and the construction of bases that Bush just vetoed either, but it didn't stop him from trying.

Of course, Obey's bill doesn't refer to the four enormous military installations that are being built in Iraq as "permanent bases." Over the course of the last few years, they've morphed from permanent bases, to enduring bases, to contingency operating bases. Contingency has a very temporary sound to it - the contingency being that if Iraq

unexpectedly runs out of oil, they'll close those bases and the tens of thousands of troops stationed in them can come home.

Both sides of the aisle in Washington are angling to stay in Iraq permanently in one form or another.

The difference is that the Republicans are open about it, while the Democrats are trying hard to fool us into thinking they want out of Iraq ASAP.

Fortunately, people are taking action to hold the Democrats to their (false) promises. Student activists in the Campus Antiwar Network held a sit-in at Wisconsin Democratic Senator Herb Kohl's office demanding an immediate withdrawal from Iraq, full funding for veterans health care, reparations to the Iraqi people, banning the use of depleted uranium munitions, and money for jobs and education and not occupation.

Militant activism by grassroots activists like this is the only hope for ending this war.

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

“The Democratic Leadership In Congress Is Once Again Gearing Up For A Great Sell-Out On The Iraq War”

[Thanks to Katherine GY, The Military Project, who sent this in.]

May 1, 2007 By Jeremy Scahill, Tomdispatch.com [Excerpt]

The Democratic leadership in Congress is once again gearing up for a great sell-out on the Iraq war.

While the wrangling over the \$124 billion Iraq supplemental spending bill is being headlined in the media as a "show down" or "war" with the White House, it is hardly that.

In plain terms, despite the impassioned sentiments of the anti-war electorate that brought the Democrats to power last November, the Congressional leadership has made clear its intention to keep funding the Iraq occupation, even though Sen. Harry Reid has declared that "this war is lost."

For months, the Democrats' "withdrawal" plan has come under fire from opponents of the occupation who say it doesn't stop the war, doesn't defund it, and insures that tens of thousands of U.S. troops will remain in Iraq beyond President Bush's second term. Such concerns were reinforced by Sen. Barack Obama's recent declaration that the Democrats will not cut off funding for the war, regardless of the President's policies. "Nobody," he said, "wants to play chicken with our troops."

As the New York Times reported, "Lawmakers said they expect that Congress and Mr. Bush would eventually agree on a spending measure without the specific timetable" for (partial) withdrawal, which the White House has said would "guarantee defeat."

In other words, the appearance of a fierce debate this week, Presidential veto and all, has largely been a show with a predictable outcome.

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/)

GI Special Looks Even Better Printed Out

GI Special issues are archived at website <http://www.militaryproject.org> .

The following have chosen to post issues; there may be others:

<http://www.williambowles.info/gispecial/2006/index.html>;

<http://imagineaworldof.blogspot.com/>; <http://gi-special.iraq-news.de>;

http://www.traprockpeace.org/gi_special/; <http://www.uruknet.info/?p=-6&l=e>;

<http://www.albasrah.net/magalat/english/gi-special.htm>

GI Special distributes and posts to our website copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available in an effort to advance understanding of the invasion and occupation of Iraq. We believe this constitutes a "fair use" of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law since it is being distributed **without charge or profit** for educational purposes to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for educational purposes, in accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107. **GI Special has no affiliation whatsoever with the originator of these articles nor is GI Special endorsed or sponsored by the originators. This attributed work is provided a non-profit basis to facilitate understanding, research, education, and the advancement of human rights and social justice.** Go to: www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml for more information. If you wish to use copyrighted material from this site for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use', you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

If printed out, this newsletter is your personal property and cannot legally be confiscated from you. "Possession of unauthorized material may not be prohibited." DoD Directive 1325.6 Section 3.5.1.2.

