

GI SPECIAL 5G18:

**BEEN ON THE JOB TOO LONG:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW**



Pfc. guarding a post taken from insurgents, while across town his comrades battled Iraqi police officers. Chris Hondros/Getty Images

Yes!

**From: [Soldier, Iraq]
To: GI Special
Sent: July 20, 2007
Subject: can you add....**

[XXXX@XXXX]

that email address to your distro?

thanks, its my mother and she enjoys reading gi special.

im just getting tired of forwarding every email

keep up what your doing

[Soldier, Iraq]

REPLY:

Honored to be of service and action taken as instructed.

Anybody out there in the armed services who wishes to have GI Special sent to friends or relatives, or others serving, will get instant attention and action.

That's what we're here for.

Also comments on what's going on, opinions about the wars, reports of troops getting fucked over, or requests for supplies needed are welcome, and will be promptly published, with all identifying information removed to protect writers from the unwelcome attention of BushBuddies.

Come home safe.

Respect,

T,
[On behalf of the Military Project]

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

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

U.S. Soldier Killed In Diyala

July 21, 2007 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE
No. 20070721-02

TIKRIT, Iraq – One Task Force Lightning Soldier died as a result of injuries sustained from an explosion near his vehicle while conducting operations in Diyala province, Friday.

A Life Recruited At 17, Taken At 18;

“A Mission To Eradicate Weapons Of Mass Destruction That Turned Out Not To Exist, And In Retribution For The Sept. 11 Attacks, Which The Iraqis Had Nothing To Do With”

July 18, 2007 By JIM DWYER, The New York Times

[Thanks to Chris Lombardi, The Military Project, & Phil G, who sent this in.]

A little more than a year ago, Le Ron A. Wilson, not yet 18, walked into the military recruiting center on Jamaica Avenue in Queens and signed up to serve in the Army. He had the kind of brains and drive that make a good soldier, the persistence that wears down parents. His mother, Simona Francis, gave her permission.

Yesterday, not far from the recruiting center, the short, happy life of Le Ron Wilson was recalled at a funeral Mass in Christ the King Church.

Twice named soldier of the month in his platoon, a specialist in the repair of weapons, a correspondent with scores of friends on his MySpace page, Private First Class Wilson and another soldier were killed on July 6 by a roadside bomb.

Many of those in the church yesterday wore buttons with his image. The pictures that show him fresh-faced do not lie.

He was born on Nov. 16, 1988. He was not yet 13 during the attacks of Sept. 11 and never voted for a president. He barely had to shave.

He is among the youngest soldiers killed in Iraq.

Of more than 3,600 soldiers who have died in the war, about 30 have been 18.

Tens of thousands of Iraqis young and old have also lost their lives.

In the pews, his classmates from Thomas Edison High School dabbed their eyes.

“Me and Danielle, one of our friends, tried to talk him out of it,” said Lilibel Araullo, 19, recalling when he enlisted. “A few others signed up. Justin. Derrick. I went to see him down in Savannah, before he left.

“Last time I heard from him was in June, a phone call, he was telling me it was hot over there,” she said. “I told him: 'Message me on MySpace. Let me know you're O.K.' So I would get messages from him - 'I'm alive, I'm okay.' “

These are the rites of connection for the young.

Rituals for the dead are woven into the church and the military. For the church, a bishop came; for the Army, a general. The bishop, Octavio Cisneros, recalled the suffering of the mother of Jesus, and prayed that she would bring peace to Private Wilson's mother. The general, Bill Phillips, spoke of the fellowship of soldiers, their care for one another and their mission.

He read the citations for the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star and the Combat Action Badge for service in Operation Iraqi Freedom, the name given to the invasion that started more than four years ago as a mission to eradicate weapons of mass destruction that turned out not to exist, and in retribution for the Sept. 11 attacks, which the Iraqis had nothing to do with.

The name of the operation is not heard so often these days.

The medals and a framed flag were presented to his mother. Ms. Francis handed them to relatives. Then the bishop, stood to begin the final prayers in the church.

“Into your hands, father of mercies, we commend our brother Le Ron,” Bishop Cisneros said.

When he was done, Ms. Francis strode behind her son's coffin, composed but struggling.

The young people did not bother. They wept openly, then pooled together in cars, ready to join the procession to Calverton National Cemetery on Long Island, where they would lay their friend down.

“A girlfriend? Not in high school,” said Ms. Araullo. “He went to Hawaii, on recreation; there was a girl named Roxanne he met that he liked. That was before he went to Iraq.”

A few blocks away, as the funeral procession moved east, it was break time at the military recruiting center where Le Ron Wilson declared that he would become a soldier.

Two girls cantered streetward, down a flight of stairs, out into the sunshine. They paused beneath a sign for the center, where they are working through August.

“We go leafleting, we call people up about recruitment,” said one of the girls. “A lot of people say 'no' right away because they think they have to go straight to Iraq, but that's not true, there's other things they could do.”

She was 14. Her companion was 15.

All told, they said, nine teenagers, paid \$7.15 an hour by the city's summer job program, are working at the Jamaica recruiting center.

Military recruiting, of course, is the work of professional soldiers, not teenagers in a summer program to learn how to hold a job.

Still, it is not surprising that they would be drawn into the search for new soldiers.

Just as youth must be served, so, too, must the needs of a country at war.

Iowa Sailor Killed In Iraq



Petty Officer 1st Class Jeffrey L. Chaney, 35, who graduated from Bellevue West high school in Nebraska has been killed July 17, 2007, by a roadway bomb in Iraq . (AP Photo/Family Photo, HO)

Rialto Soldier Sorely Missed

RIALTO - From the time he was starting out in boot camp in Fort Knox, Ky., to when he was later stationed in Fort Lewis, Wash., and deployed to Iraq, Army Spc. Victor Garcia was known as Garcia by his fellow soldiers.

He was also a good friend to his Army buddies, particularly to Sgt. Jonathan Hibbard, and a highly intelligent young man who was selected to attend language school and learn Arabic.

Now those buddies are missing him.

Garcia, 22, of Rialto, died Sunday in Baghdad of wounds suffered from enemy small-arms fire.

As part of a Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Garcia was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division in Fort Lewis, Wash.

Gordon Hibbard of Manhattan, Kan., the father of Jonathan Hibbard, met Garcia at Fort Lewis, where his son and Garcia were stationed.

His initial impression of his son's friend and roommate was that he was a quiet but very intelligent kid who took care of what needed to be taken care of.

Capitol flags were also flown at half-staff to honor Garcia.

***Great Moments In U.S. Military
History:***
**Dishonorable Filth In Command Of
U.S. Military Occupation Make War
On Media Productions &
Publications, And Steal Money
From Orphans
“Suspected” Militants Imprisoned;
More Stupid, Childish Lies About Al-
Qaida Puked Up**

July 21 (Xinhua) & AFP

The Association of Muslim Scholars denounced on Saturday a raid by the U.S. and Iraqi forces on its offices in the Um al-Qura mosque in western Baghdad, while the U.S. military said that 18 suspected militants were detained there.

“U.S. forces backed by aircraft, stormed at dawn today, the offices of the association after they smashed the doors, beat the guards and arrested them all,” the Sunni body said in a statement obtained by Xinhua.

“The brutal forces broke into the headquarters before dawn and destroyed the computers, furniture and the lockers and stole its contents,” the association said.

It said that 14 people were arrested by the troops during the raid that lasted four hours.

The association accused the U.S. forces of “stealing amounts of money allocated for the salaries of its employees and payments of hundreds of orphans.”

The Sunni Muslim body denounced the raid describing it as “a reaction towards its anti-occupation stands.”

On the other hand, a U.S. military statement said that U.S. and Iraqi forces detained 18 suspected militants during a pre-dawn operation on Saturday targeting al-Qaida in Iraq operatives near the Um al-Qura mosque.

“During the operation, Iraqi and Coalition Forces found extremist propaganda and media materials,” the statement said.

The Association is a gathering of Sunni religious leaders formed on the 14th of April 2003, only four days after the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime in Baghdad by a U.S.-led invasion.

The body's leaders remain as opposition to the Iraqi new government due to the fact that they believe joining political process when Iraq is under occupation is unjust.

“Small Kill” Teams Setting Up Traps To Murder Iraqi Civilians



US soldiers from the 1st battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry, Alpha company, install a surveillance camera in the al-Hurriyeh area of western Baghdad, 20 July 2007. (AFP/File/Olivier Laban-Mattei)

“Once in Iraq, he was assigned to a ‘small kill’ team that set traps for insurgents.

“They’d place a fake camera on a pole with a sign labeling it as U.S. property, giving the team the right to shoot anyone who messed with it.” July 16, 2007
MARK LARABEE, The Oregonian.

[“Anyone” of course includes any man, woman or child desperate enough to think they could steal a camera and sell it to buy something silly, like food. So, it’s simply a way to murder Iraqi civilians, while pretending it has something to do with honor and battle.]

UNREMITTING HELL ON EARTH; BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



Thanks to Kevin Ramirez, CCCO. He writes: Pics showing what happens when US bases get mortared/rocketed. Obviously taken by a GI. I found them online, and don’t know who took them.

British Besieged In Basra; “Insurgents Could Reach What, Under Present Plans, Will Soon Be The British Army's Only Base In Southern Iraq”

[Thanks to JM, who sent this in.]

July 21, 2007 Richard Norton-Taylor, The Guardian [Excerpts]

The main British base in southern Iraq, erected around the old airport buildings on the outskirts of Basra, looked pretty safe. Squaddies talked and washed and played music in their blocks, or lines as the army likes to call them, naming them after famous generals. The paths in between were named after well-known London streets and landmarks; Bond Street, or Trafalgar Square.

There were special barriers designed to protect the troops and deflect any incoming rocket or mortar. Everyone was supposed to have a helmet close by.

Soldiers were being shot at down town but, surrounded by flat and empty ground, everything in the base seemed pretty relaxed and secure.

That was last year.

On Thursday three RAF personnel were killed, and a number of troops injured, in a sustained mortar attack on the base.

Two of those killed were from 1 Squadron, RAF Regiment, based at Honington near Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk. The third was from 504 Squadron, Royal Auxiliary Air Force, based at Cottesmore in Rutland. The next of kin have been informed.

The attack seems ominous. It showed that insurgents ... could reach what, under present plans, will soon be the British army's only base in southern Iraq.

British troops are handing over all bases in central Basra to Iraqi forces.

Thirteen British troops have been killed in southern Iraq since the beginning of June, and 162 since the invasion in March 2003.

Military commanders say that they expected insurgents to increase attacks on British forces as the troops prepare to reduce their presence on Basra's streets.

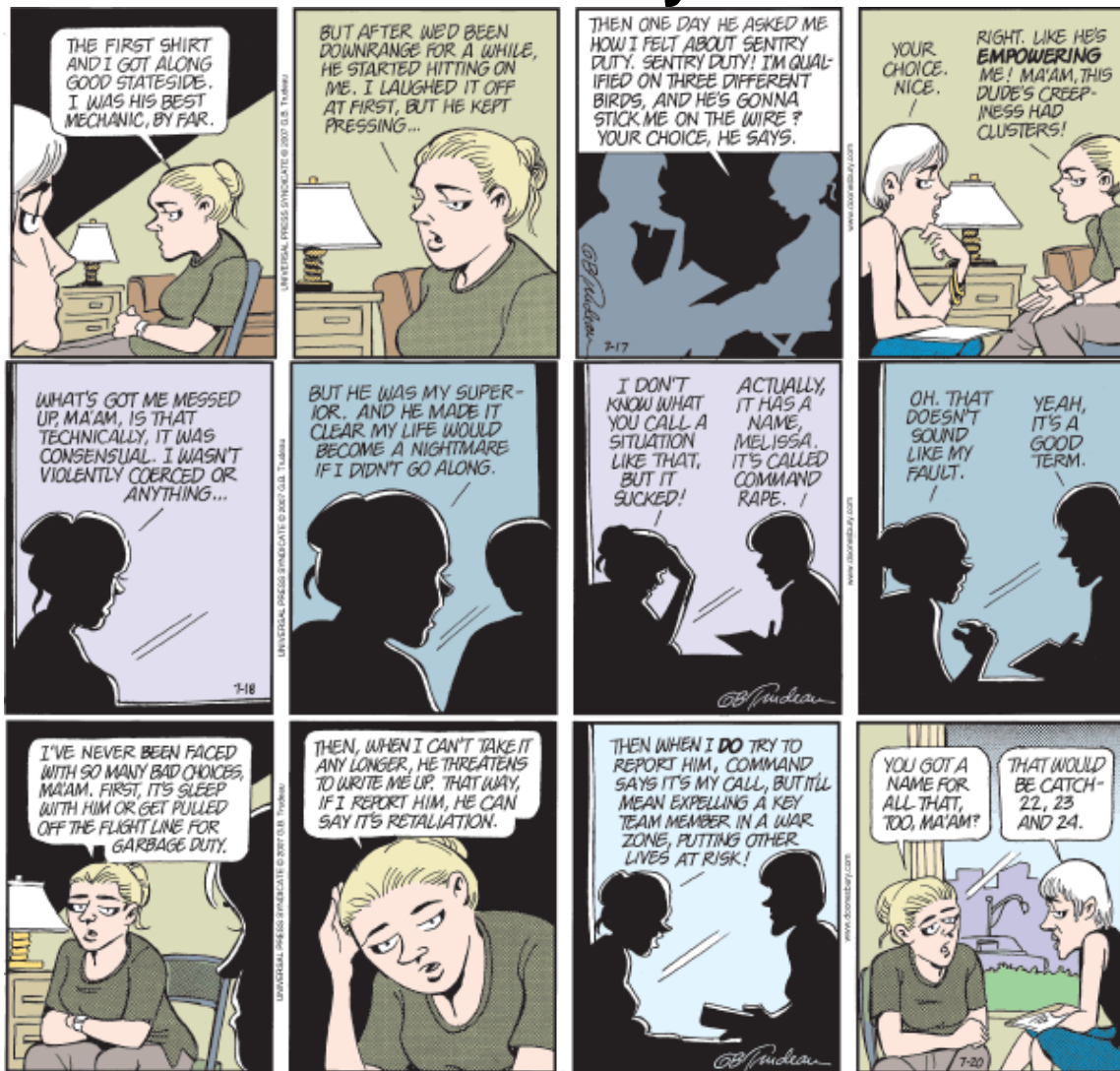
But they are also worried about the effect of the attacks on morale if the troops are forced to remain on the base by Basra's airport, as if besieged. ["As if" besieged? What, it takes catapults and trench lines before the idiot drops the "as if"? T]

Denmark has secretly evacuated 200 civilians, including interpreters and other aides, who had worked for Danish troops in southern Iraq. The Danish government has announced it would withdraw its 480-strong force from Basra in August.

TROOP NEWS

The Shirt Command-Rapes A Soldier:

The Traitor Bush Command-Rapes An Army



IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

**“Wherever You Find The
Occupation, You Will Find Us:
From Mosul, Baghdad And**

Samarra To Basra, Hillah And Kirkuk”

“There Are Two Kinds Of People In Iraq: Not Sunni And Shia, Kurdish And Arab, Muslim And Christian, But Those Who Are With The Occupation And Those Who Are Against It”

“There Are Now More Than 5,000 Attacks A Month Against US Forces Across Iraq”



The resistance training in the Sunni triangle north of Baghdad. This faction is called the 1920s Revolution Brigades

They are not a Sunni sectarian organisation, he insists: “The military leader of the Brigades is a Kurd. Iraq is for all Iraqis and we only distinguish between those who cooperate with the occupation and those who do not. If my brother cooperates with the occupation, I will kill him - but the innocent must not be touched.”

[Thanks to Pham Binh, Traveling Soldier & Phil G, & D who sent this in.]

July 19, 2007 By Seumas Milne, The Guardian. Names have been changed. [Excerpts]

Dr Zubeidy is a hunted man. His picture has been shown on Iraqi TV as a wanted terrorist. Since Shia militia came to his house in Baghdad to kill him last year -

and kidnapped and murdered his brother-in-law when they realised that he wasn't home - he has rarely slept in the same place twice and always carries fake ID.

“Fortunately there are many thousands who are also wanted,” he says.

“But I have had to move 37 times. It has been very difficult for my children in particular - they have often had to change schools and it has had a psychological impact on them.

But they understand what this is all about - they're also fighting with me in their own way.”

A medical doctor in his late 40s, Abd al-Rahman al-Zubeidy was imprisoned under Saddam Hussein for hiding and treating a friend who had got into a fight with an official from Saddam's Ba'athist regime.

He was released in a general amnesty in the run-up to the US-British invasion.

Sitting next to him, Abdallah Suleiman Omary, an engineer with a stubbly beard and reading glasses, draws a map of the al-Ghazaliya area of Baghdad, where he was living until recently, in an attempt to explain the impact of the recent US “surge” in troop numbers on areas where Sunni resistance is strongest.

“They have now built a concrete wall blocking all but one road into the district from the Baghdad expressway,” he says. “To get to my house, you have to pass a bridge with a checkpoint, an American base, a gated entrance and a further four checkpoints in one kilometre.

“Yesterday, they banned all cars in the area because of the fear of car bombs.

“But,” he adds, “we are still able to launch attacks. Weapons are brought in by hand. Fighters watch the soldiers until they leave the checkpoints to buy something - then they follow them and kill them.”

Both men are leaders of the Iraqi resistance - or insurgency, as it is usually known in Britain and the US.

Zubeidy is the political spokesman of Ansar al-Sunna, an Islamist armed group with a ferocious reputation in Iraq, and Omary is head of the political department of the 1920 Revolution Brigades, a more nationalist organisation whose name commemorates an uprising against British rule after the first world war.

For four years, the resistance has stayed in the shadows, without a public face and apparently leaderless, while delivering an ever more violent and devastating campaign that has brought the world's most powerful army to the brink of defeat and changed the balance of global power.

[I]t is that growing war of attrition - there are now more than 5,000 attacks a month against US forces across Iraq and the past three months have been the bloodiest for US forces since the 2003 invasion (331 deaths and 2,029 wounded) - that has pushed the demand for withdrawal from Iraq to the top of the political agenda in Washington.

Until now, the resistance groups have operated entirely underground and their leaders have communicated with the outside world mainly through internet postings, if at all. (Omary's group specialises in hi-tech communication and produces photos and videos, some of them reproduced here, which are strongly reminiscent of IRA propaganda of the 1980s.)

Now they have decided to speak to the western press for the first time as they prepare to launch a public face and a common political programme in anticipation of eventual American and British withdrawal from Iraq.

Seven of the most important Sunni-led armed organisations - excluding al-Qaida and the Ba'athists - have agreed to form a united front and have drawn up a series of demands to form the basis of future negotiations with the occupation forces.

Our meeting takes place in Damascus, arranged through a series of intermediaries.

As well as Zubeidy and Omary, one of the political leaders of Iraqi Hamas - a trader from Fallujah who uses the nom de guerre Abu Ahmad - also takes part in a conversation that lasts for nine hours.

All three have come recently from Iraq and are wary and uncertain of how open to be in this interview as they edge towards a public profile for the Iraqi resistance.

These are the kinds of insurgent leaders who - according to Dan Goure, vice-president of the Virginia-based Lexington Institute and a Pentagon consultant - the US military intelligence is increasingly targeting in the hope of taking out the leadership of what the resistance leaders themselves estimate as a 50,000-strong movement.

Zubeidy insists that they have no direct contact with the Syrian regime - and they certainly don't advertise their presence in Damascus.

“Our organisations depend on stores of weapons left by Saddam Hussein, or we buy them from the Iraqi army through merchants,” says Zubeidy.

“We try to avoid links with the Syrians. Either they can sell us out at any time if there is heavy pressure on them, or we risk being completely controlled by them.”

Indeed, all the groups say they have no support from any regime, although they do claim that there has been indirect contact with France about creating the conditions for a public office.

And, a couple of years back, Zubeidy says, Iran offered the Islamic resistance groups weapons, money and also help with stopping attacks from the Shia militia, but while he believes al-Qaida accepted, the others did not.

“We do not trust Iran.

“We need help from Arab and other governments. But although Turkey and Saudi Arabia have encouraged the resistance to unite, they are afraid of us”.

The 1920 Revolution Brigades spokesman is an articulate and sophisticated operator, who - if he survives the counterinsurgency and sectarian onslaught - clearly has the potential to become an influential voice in a future Iraq.

“Our position is that there are two kinds of people in Iraq: not Sunni and Shia, Kurdish and Arab, Muslim and Christian, but those who are with the occupation and those who are against it.”

Anyone who takes part in the institutions set up by the occupation, such as the government and parliament, army or police, are regarded as collaborators.

“Our organisation began its operations in the first days after the invasion and wherever you find the occupation, you will find us: from Mosul, Baghdad and Samarra to Basra, Hillah and Kirkuk,” continues Omary.

“Our group has also carried out attacks on British forces in Basra.”

They are not a Sunni sectarian organisation, he insists: “The military leader of the Brigades is a Kurd. Iraq is for all Iraqis and we only distinguish between those who cooperate with the occupation and those who do not. If my brother cooperates with the occupation, I will kill him - but the innocent must not be touched.”

What makes Iraqis join the resistance?

“Many people come to the resistance because of their Islamic background, some because of what has happened to their relatives at the hands of the occupation armies,” says Zubeidy.

“American forces have committed very big crimes against the Iraqi people.

“All Iraqis hate the foreign forces and won't forget what they have done.

“Generally, British forces have acted as a helper to the US and the British government shares the blame for everything that happened to Iraq. But their actions are seen as having been less cruel than the Americans.”

At the heart of the new insurgent alliance is a rejection of the murderous sectarianism that has come to grip Iraq - and the role of al-Qaida in particular.

Most striking is the case of Zubeidy, whose hardline salafist (purist Islamic) group Ansar al-Sunna recently split in half over the issue (his faction is now called the Legitimate Committee of Ansar al-Sunna - Goure says such splits are endemic in the resistance movement).

“We wanted to unite with other resistance forces, but the other group is moving closer to al-Qaida and refused. Al-Qaida has brought benefits and problems,” Zubeidy says. “They attack the US occupiers. But every day the problems they bring become greater than the benefits.

“Resistance isn't just about killing Americans without any aims or goals,” he continues.

But they say that it is necessary for the Sunni-based groups to ally with the Shia.

“Even though that is not easy,” says Zubeidy. “A great gap has opened up between Sunni and Shia under the occupation and al-Qaida has contributed to that - as have the US and Iran.

“Most of al-Qaida's members are Iraqis but its leaders are mostly foreigners. The Americans magnify their role, even though they are responsible for a minority of resistance operations - remember that the Americans brought al-Qaida to Iraq.”

Sectarian division has been inflamed, Omary adds, as part of the “old British imperial tactic of divide and rule”.

Who benefits, asks Abu Ahmad, when there are bombs in markets? “It is only the occupying forces and Iran.”

All the Sunni-led resistance groups are acutely aware of the threat posed by sectarian division to the future of Iraq and emphasise their strong links to those Shia with fewer links to Iran (what they call Arab “national” Shia), but reject any suggestion of making common cause with the Shia militia and political parties - including the anti-American Mahdi Army, which is thought to be behind many of the current armed attacks on British forces in Basra - because of their participation in the occupation's political institutions and their role in ethnic cleansing and sectarian killings. The man who came to Zubeidy's house last year and killed his brother-in-law after demanding a million-dollar ransom claimed to be from the Mahdi Army.

To emphasise their own distance from the kind of atrocities that have become associated in the western imagination with the Iraqi insurgency, Omary mentions the case of Wassef Hassoun, a Muslim Lebanese-American US marine captured by the 1920 Revolution Brigades and released after he swore an oath on the Koran that he would not continue to fight with US forces.

“Our people took him from the marine base outside Falluja - they got into the base in a rubbish lorry and took him out with them. They let him go after he pledged not to go back to his unit. We did something similar with an Egyptian lorry driver working for a transport company under contract to the Americans.”

Hassoun was later charged with desertion after he failed to return from leave after his release. He is still missing.

During breaks in the conversation, Zubeidy stops to pray, Abu Ahmad fingers his worry beads and Omary shows me a video clip on his mobile phone of the body of a neighbour's 12-year-old child, Mustafa, with a huge wound in his chest, laid out for mourning in the family home.

“He was shot last month by an Iraqi soldier 200 metres from an American base, apparently for fun.

The same night, resistance fighters went to the Iraqi soldiers' billet and killed all of them in the house, half a dozen of them, by cutting their throats.”

While all seven of the armed groups joining the new front reject attacks on civilians, they have no qualms about brutal violence against Iraqi police and soldiers, or US and British troops.

“Peaceful resistance will not end the occupation,” states Abu Ahmad. “The US has made clear that it intends to stay in Iraq for many decades. Now it is a common view in the resistance that they will start to withdraw within a year.”

Right or wrong, that is one of the factors that has led to the decision to form the new front, which is planned to be called the Political Office for the Iraqi Resistance. As well as Iraqi Hamas, the 1920 Revolution Brigades and the new Ansar al-Sunna, it is to include the powerful Jaish (army) al-Islami, Jaish al-Mujahideen, Jama' and Jaish al-Rashideen.

The plan is to hold a congress of the seven groups to announce the front's formation and then move towards the establishment of some form of public presence outside Iraq, though it is hard to see any state being prepared to risk the wrath of the US by hosting such an outfit. “It would need UN protection,” Zubeidy suggests.

They have already agreed that at the heart of the programme will be a commitment to liberate Iraq from all foreign troops; recognise only those who reject the occupation and its institutions as able to represent Iraq; demand compensation from foreign forces for the devastation they have inflicted on the country; declare all decisions taken by the occupying states and its client government null and void; and reject any change in population distribution.

The aim is for the front to join other independent anti-occupation forces from across the country to negotiate with the Americans for their withdrawal. A temporary technocratic government would then manage the country during a transition period until free elections could be held for a new independent government. Even Saddam's revamped Ba'ath party - which now plays what is regarded as a reduced role in the resistance - is an enthusiast for fully competitive elections.

But what if the US doesn't start to withdraw from Iraq next year, as the resistance groups expect, or merely withdraws to the huge military bases it has built around Iraq to intervene as and when it sees fit?

“As long as foreign forces remain in Iraq,” Omary replies, “the Iraqi government will not be independent. And armed resistance will continue.”

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

Armed Demonstration Condemns Collaborator Government



Thousands of Baghdad residents hold up their weapons during a protest in Firdous Square in central Baghdad July 18, 2007, demonstrating against the collaborator government. The demonstrators urged authorities to 'stop mocking us' and to make its only goal 'the protection of Iraqis.' (AP Photo/Khalid Mohammed)

Assorted Resistance Action

20 Jul 2007 Reuters & 21 Jul 2007 Reuters & (KUNA)

One Iraqi policeman wounded by a roadside bomb in the Mansour district of west Baghdad, police said.

Guerrillas killed a policeman in the northern city of Mosul watching the Iraqi soccer team beat Vietnam in the Asian Cup quarter-final on television, police said.

The body of a policeman was found after he was captured in Diwaniya on Friday, police said.

A police captain was killed in southern Baghdad on Friday, police said.

Meanwhile in Kirkuk, Iraqi police Director of Al-aqdayia Brigadier Sarhad Qader said today that a dead body was used as a booby trap to kill two police officers west of Kirkuk.

Qader said police received information of a dead body stretched out in one of Kirkuk's roads close to Koba village, adding that police immediately rushed to the

scene and while they were carrying the dead body it exploded killing instantly two patrol officers and injuring two others.

An improvised bomb exploded targeting a police patrol vehicle in Kirkuk injuring two policemen and causing damage to their vehicle, Qader added.

Six police officers were killed and two were injured when an improvised bomb exploded near a police patrol vehicle. The source said the improvised bomb exploded targeting a police patrol in Hajar valley in Mosul.

GET THE MESSAGE? They Aren't Going Home: They Are Home



Nationalist soldiers take up position as they fight British occupation troops in central Basra July 16, 2007. The clash began before sunset when the Provincial Joint Coordination Center was subjected to small arms fire and rocket-propelled grenades. (AP Photo/ Nabil al-Jurani)

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

**“What country can preserve its liberties if its rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms.”
Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, 1787.**

**July 22, 1877:
American Workers Exploded With
Rage — And The Rulers Of The
Nation Feared The Fury Of The
“Terror” From Within:
“Pittsburgh Was ‘In The Hands Of Men
Dominated By The Devilish Spirit Of
Communism’”**

THE GREAT STRIKE OF 1877



REMEMBERING A WORKER REBELLION

Carl Bunin Peace History July 16-22

United Electrical Workers News - 06/02 [Excerpts]

One hundred and twenty-five years ago, American workers exploded with rage — and the rulers of the nation feared the fury of the “terror” from within.

A headline in the Chicago Times in 1877 expressed the capitalists’ anxious outrage: “Terrors Reign, The Streets of Chicago Given Over to Howling Mobs of Thieves and Cutthroats.”

After three years, the nation still suffered through a major economic depression.

A strike by railroad workers sparked a coast-to-coast conflagration, as workers driven by despair and desperation battled troops in the streets of major U.S. cities.

The foreign born were widely blamed for the unprecedented, collective expression of rage against economic hardship and injustice.

The ruling elite, badly shaken by the widespread protests, thought a revolution was underway.

The New York Sun prescribed “a diet of lead for the hungry strikers.”

When the fires turned to cold ash and working-class families buried their dead, no one — neither labor nor capital — would be the same again.

If there ever was such a thing, this was no ordinary strike.

It was an explosion of “firsts.”

The Great Railroad Strike of 1877 was the first major strike in an industry that propelled America’s industrial revolution.

It was the first national strike, stretching from Atlantic to Pacific.

In some cities, especially St. Louis, the struggle became one of the nation’s first general strikes.

This was the first major strike broken by the U.S. military.

Probably in no other strike had so many working people met a violent death at the hands of the authorities.

BORN OF DEPRESSION

The Great Strike was a creature of one of the periodic economic downturns that have caused misery for working people throughout U.S. history.

A bank panic on Sept. 18, 1873 disintegrated into depression. “Weekly the layoffs, wage cuts, strikes, evictions, breadlines and hunger increased,” wrote Richard Boyer and Herbert Morais in *Labor’s Untold Story*. The winter of 1873-74, especially in large cities, was one of great suffering for the tens of thousands of unemployed workers and their families who were starving or on the brink of starvation.

As the depression stretched into 1874, the unemployed demanded work and unions fought wage cuts. But the depression itself became a powerful weapon in smashing unions.

Millions suffered through months upon months of mounting misery. “By 1877 there were as many as three million unemployed (roughly 27 percent of the working population),”

according to Boyer and Morais. “Two-fifths of those employed were working no more than six to seven months a year and less than one-fifth was regularly working.

“And the wages of those employed had been cut by as much as 45 percent, often to little more than a dollar a day.” Newspapers reported cases of starvation and suicide.

FIXED ELECTION

Political crisis seemed to mirror the economic mess.

Many Americans in 1877 believed their new president had reached the White House through fraud.

Certainly Rutherford B. Hayes, a Republican, was not the man for whom a majority of voters had cast their ballots the previous year. Democrat Samuel Tilden overcame the Ohio governor in the popular vote but 20 disputed electoral votes from Florida and other states threw the election into House of Representatives.

Thomas Scott of the Pennsylvania Railroad reached a deal with Hayes: in exchange for a federal bailout of his troubled investment in the Texas and Pacific Railroad, the millionaire industrialist would deliver Congressional votes to Hayes.

As a further inducement, the Republicans promised to end Reconstruction, a blatant betrayal of African Americans. Southern Congressmen deserted Tilden, handing the election to Hayes.

President Hayes withdrew federal troops from the South, ending Reconstruction and its promise of political equality for former slaves. The troops would soon have other uses.

PAY CUTS

The Pennsylvania Railroad had already slashed wages by 10 percent when it cut wages by another 10 percent in June 1877. The following month that railroad company, the nation's largest, announced that the size of all eastbound trains from Pittsburgh would be doubled, without any increase in the size of crews.

Angry railroad workers took control of switches and blocked the movement of trains.

Meanwhile, on July 13, the Baltimore & Ohio cut the wages of all workers making more than a dollar a day, also by 10 percent. The company also reduced the workweek to only two or three days, a further pay cut.

On July 16 firemen and brakemen refused to work.

The company tried to bring on replacements — many experienced men were unemployed because of the depression — but the strikers assembled at Camden Junction, three miles from Baltimore, would not let trains run in any direction.

The word quickly spread to Martinsburg, W. Va., where workers abandoned their trains and prevented others from operating them.

The railroad company appealed to the governor, who called out the militia.

Militiamen and workers exchanged gunfire. The scabs ran off, the militia withdrew — and the strikers were left in control of their idled trains.

The strike swiftly followed the rails to Wheeling and Parkersburg.

As Harper's Weekly reported the following month, "Governor Matthews evoked the aid of the national government. President Hayes responded promptly."

Federal troops armed with Springfield rifles and Gatling guns arrived in Martinsburg on July 19. The show of force got the trains running, releasing the 13 locomotives and 1,500 freight cars bottled up in Martinsburg.

STRIKE SPREADS

But the strike was far from over. "Indeed, it was barely begun," reported Harper's Weekly.

"As fast as the strike was broken in one place it appeared in another," wrote Boyer and Morais. The revolt against the powerful railroad companies spread into western Pennsylvania, Kentucky and Ohio.

Believing that strikers in Cumberland were stopping the eastbound trains from Martinsburg, Maryland's governor ordered out the state militia.

Thousands of the jobless and underpaid in Baltimore clearly saw whose interests the governor's proclamation served.

Within a half hour of the call, "a crowd numbering at least 2,000 men, women, and children surrounded the (Maryland Sixth Regiment) armory and loudly expressed their feelings against the military and in favor of the strikers," according to Harper's Weekly. The crowd added bricks and stones to the curses hurled against the armory. The police were powerless.

Once the troops emerged for their march to Camden Station, shots were fired — and shots were exchanged.

The militia killed at least 10 and wounded many others, among them curious onlookers. The Fifth Regiment was also attacked, although no shots were fired.

BATTLE IN PITTSBURGH

Sympathy for the strikers was even stronger in Pittsburgh.

Here, said Boyer and Morais, the strike against Tom Scott's Pennsylvania Railroad "had the support even of businessmen, angry at the company because of extortionate freight rates." The police and local militia sided with the strikers, so the authorities had to appeal for troops from Philadelphia.

When the militiamen arrived and marched out of the station, they were met with the cries of an angry crowd — and, according to Harper's, "a shower of stones."

They emptied their rifles into the crowd, killing 20 men, women and children and wounding 29.

"The sight presented after the soldiers ceased firing was sickening," reported the New York Herald; the area "was actually dotted with the dead and dying."

A newspaper headline read: "Shot in Cold Blood by the Roughts of Philadelphia. The Lexington of the Labor Conflict at Hand. The Slaughter of Innocents."

As the news reached nearby rolling mills and manufacturing shops, workers came rushing to the scene.

Workers broke into a gun factory and seized rifles and small arms. Wrote Boyer and Morais, "Miners and steel workers came pouring in from the outskirts of the city and as night fell the immense crowd proved so menacing to the soldiers that they retreated into the roundhouse."

By midnight, Harper's said, some 20,000 surrounded the roundhouse, 5,000 of them armed.

Workers and soldiers exchanged gunfire throughout the night. The workers nearly succeeded in burning out the troops by sending a blazing oil car hurtling against a nearby building.

'A NIGHT OF TERROR'

A Civil War veteran among the besieged troops told a New York Herald reporter that he had seen some "wild fighting" in that conflict, but "a night of terror such as last night I never experienced before and hope to God I never will again."

The next morning the troops evacuated the roundhouse and fought their way out of town.

Pittsburgh policemen were among those reportedly taking aim at the strikebreakers.

The angry crowd then torched the railroad station, roundhouse, company offices and scores of railroad cars.

The New York World told its readers that Pittsburgh was "in the hands of men dominated by the devilish spirit of Communism."

Meanwhile, on July 21, President Hayes had issued a proclamation warning strikers and their sympathizers to disperse within 24 hours. The next day, Pennsylvania's governor had ordered every regiment in the state to report for duty. Clashes between troops and strikers in Reading added to the death toll among workers.

CHICAGO AND ST. LOUIS

The strike continued to spread. Reported Harper's, "On the morning of the 25th the strike had reached its height, when hardly a road was running, from the Hudson to the Mississippi, and from Canada to Virginia."

The strike reached Chicago, as workers on the Michigan Central followed the example of the men on the other lines. General Sheridan's cavalry, newly recalled from the South, attacked a group of workers there, killing many and wounding many more.

The workers of the Missouri-Pacific Railroad joined the strike in St. Louis, where the Workingmen's Party coordinated a general strike.

The Workingmen's Party had several thousand members.

At one of its huge meetings, writes Marieke van Ophem, "a black man was the voice for those who worked on the steamboats and levees. He asked: 'Will you stand to us, regardless of color?' The crowd shouted in response: 'We will!'"

Not only did the trains cease running, but breweries, flour mills, foundries and other shops stopped operating as well.

As a result of this working-class solidarity, bosses agreed to pay raises and shorter working hours without a reduction in wages.

Then the military arrived — the U.S. Army and state militia, as well as armed vigilantes in the service of the bosses.

Although there had been no violence, St. Louis came under martial law. Strike leaders were thrown in jail. Bosses canceled the wage increases and the eight-hour day.

'SHOT BACK TO WORK'

Business leaders became better organized, rallying their political allies, who mobilized the might of the military. Tom Scott of the Pennsylvania Railroad had recommended giving strikers "a rifle diet for a few days and see how they like that kind of bread;" in the end, the government's ability to inflict violence on strikers and supporters got the trains rolling again.

As one worker put it, "We were shot back to work." By early August the strike had collapsed everywhere.

It had been an unforgettable event, and many railroad workers seemed to have been justifiably proud.

“Without any organization they had fought with bravery and skill and the country had been behind them,” wrote Boyer and Morais. “The strike had been as solid as it was spontaneous. There had been few desertions and few scabs.”

Some 100,000 workers had gone on strike, and countless unemployed workers in numerous cities had joined the strikers in protests against intolerable conditions. Farmers, who hated the railroad companies and their extortionate practices, fed the strikers.

More than half the freight on the nation’s 75,000 miles of track stopped moving.

More than 100 had died and 1,000 had been jailed, although those imprisoned were not the ones directly responsible for the deaths.

The results of the Great Strike were mixed.

GUNS AND PROMISES

Even as they agreed to some worker demands, bosses were determined to never again allow workers the upper hand.

“The railroads made some concessions, rescinded some wage cuts, but also strengthened their ‘Coal and Iron Police,’” writes van Ophem. “In several large cities, National Guard armories were constructed, with loopholes for guns.”

Working people learned that without strong unions and nationwide organization they could not defeat the alliance of capital and government.

America’s Industrial Revolution was underway, and with it, born in the blood of men and women who yearned for a better life, a modern labor movement.

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.

***Against Imperial War:
1915 Version;***

“Whoever Wishes A Durable And Democratic Peace Must Be For Civil War Against The Governments And The Bourgeoisie”

August 1915, V.I. Ulyanov, Socialism And War [Excerpts] & Proletarskaya Revolutsiya [The writer used the pen name “Lenin” to keep the government from terrorizing his family. Excerpts]

The war has undoubtedly created the acutest crisis and has incredibly intensified the sufferings of the masses.

The reactionary character of this war, the shameless lie of the bourgeoisie of all countries which covers its predatory aims with “national” ideology, all this inevitably creates, on the basis of an objective revolutionary situation, revolutionary sentiments in the masses.

Our duty is to help make these sentiments conscious, to deepen them and give them form.

The only correct expression of this task is the slogan “Turn the imperialist war into civil war.” All consistent class struggle in time of war, all “mass actions” earnestly conducted must inevitably lead to this.

We cannot know whether in the first or in the second imperialist war between the great nations, whether during or after it, a strong revolutionary movement will flare up.

Whatever the case may be, it is our absolute duty systematically and unflinchingly to work in that particular direction.

FRATERNISATION IN THE TRENCHES

The bourgeois papers of all the belligerent countries have quoted examples of fraternisation between the soldiers of the belligerent nations, even in the trenches.

The fact that the military authorities of Germany and England have issued severe orders against such fraternisation proves that the government and the bourgeoisie consider it of serious importance.

If, at a time when opportunism among the leaders of the Social-Democratic parties of Western Europe is supreme and social-chauvinism is supported by the entire Social-Democratic press as well as by all influential figures of the Second International, such cases of fraternisation are possible, how much nearer could we bring the end of this criminal, reactionary and slave-driving war and the organisation of a revolutionary international movement if systematic work were conducted in this direction, at least by the Left Socialists of all the belligerent countries!

A revolutionary class in a reactionary war cannot help wishing the defeat of its government, it cannot fail to see the connection between the government's military reverses and the increased opportunity for overthrowing it.

A mass sentiment for peace often expresses the beginning of a protest, an indignation and a consciousness of the reactionary nature of the war.

It is the duty of all Social-Democrats to take advantage of this sentiment.

They will take the most ardent part in every movement and in every demonstration made on this basis, but they will not deceive the people by assuming that in the absence of a revolutionary movement it is possible to have peace without annexations, without the oppression of nations, without robbery, without planting the seed of new wars among the present governments and the ruling classes.

Such deception would only play into the hands of the secret diplomacy of the belligerent countries and their counter-revolutionary plans.

Whoever wishes a durable and democratic peace must be for civil war against the governments and the bourgeoisie.

The Socialists cannot reach their great aim without fighting against every form of national oppression.

They must therefore unequivocally demand that the Social-Democrats of the oppressing countries of the so-called "great" nations in particular) should recognise and defend the right of the oppressed nations to self-determination in the political sense of the word, i. e., the right to political separation.

A Socialist of a great nation or a nation possessing colonies who does not defend this right is a chauvinist.

Imperialism is the period of an increasing oppression of the nations of the whole world by a handful of "great" nations; the struggle for a Socialist international revolution against imperialism is therefore impossible without the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination.

"No people oppressing other peoples can be free" (Marx and Engels).

No proletariat reconciling itself to the least violation by "its" nation of the rights of other nations can be Socialist.

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The peace slogan can be advanced either in connection with definite peace conditions, or without any conditions at all, as a desire, not for a definite peace, but for peace in general.

It is obvious that in the latter case we have a slogan that is not only not Socialist, but that is entirely devoid of meaning and sense.

Absolutely everybody is in favour of peace in general, including Kitchener, Joffre, Hindenburg, and Nicholas the Bloody [Imperial politicians], for everyone of them wishes to end the war.

The trouble is that everyone of them advances imperialist (i. e., predatory in relation to other peoples), oppressive peace conditions for the benefit of "his" nation.

OCCUPATION REPORT

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



Foreign occupation troops from the USA humiliate an Iraqi citizen in his own house during an armed home invasion in the middle of the night in Baquba June 30, 2007. REUTERS/Goran Tomasevic

[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?]

"You go up the stairs. You grab the man of the house. You rip him out of bed in front of his wife. You put him up against the wall. Sgt. John Bruhns

"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 instead."

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

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