

GI SPECIAL 5H23:



Photo By Bill Perry, Veterans For Peace
"March to the Arch" St. Louis, Missouri 8.19.07

Puerto Rico's Governor Calls For Withdrawal From Iraq: Gets Standing Ovation From 4,000 National Guardsmen:

August 25, 2007 DAVID McFADDEN, Associated Press Writer

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) - A call by Puerto Rico's governor for a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq earned a standing ovation Saturday from a conference of more than 4,000 National Guardsmen.

Gov. Anibal Acevedo Vila said the U.S. administration has "no new strategy and no signs of success" and that prolonging the war would needlessly put guardsmen in harm's way.

"The war in Iraq has fractured the political will of the United States and the world," he said at the opening of the 129th National Guard Association general conference. "Clearly, a new war strategy is required and urgently."

Acevedo said sending more troops to Iraq would be a costly blunder.

"By increasing the number of National Guard and reserve troops, we put our soldiers in danger for the umpteenth time since the beginning of the global war on terrorism," said the governor, adding U.S. territories and states need Guard reserves in the event of natural disasters and domestic disturbances.

Acevedo, a Democrat, has called on Washington to withdraw troops from Iraq in the past, but has not been a vocal critic of the war.

Col. David Carrion Baralt, the Guard's top official in the U.S. Caribbean territory, said Acevedo received a standing ovation.

"Maybe the (officers) were not expecting those kinds of comments, but having a dialogue is the point of conferences like these," Carrion said by phone.

The nonpartisan National Guard Association represents nearly 45,000 current and former Air and Army National Guard officers and petitions Congress for resources.

About 1,800 Puerto Rican guardsmen are stationed overseas. It was not immediately clear how many were deployed in Iraq.

"The daily death toll of Americans and their allies has caused irreparable anguish here in Puerto Rico, and throughout the country. The same could be said for the people of Iraq," Acevedo said.

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

Ex-Cadet Killed In Iraq

August 14, 2007 By HOLLY HUFFMAN, Eagle Staff Writer

Marykay Edwards clearly remembers the sound of her son's enthusiastic voice as it traveled via telephone wire from the other side of the world.

Deployed to the Arab Jabour region south of Baghdad, Pfc. William Lawrence Edwards didn't have easy access to phones or the Internet. But the 23-year-old Aggie, who was known as Billy to his friends and family, managed to check in with his parents every two or three weeks.

"Mom!" he would enthusiastically say as she answered the call.

Just days after learning that Billy Edwards had been killed by a sniper in Iraq, the Somerville mother said she still expected to pick up the ringing phone and hear his voice.

William Edwards

Pfc. William "Billy" Lawrence Edwards was killed Saturday by an enemy sniper in the Arab Jabour region of Iraq. Edwards had attended Texas A&M and had been a member of the Corps of Cadets.

Funeral services will be held at Strickland Funeral Home in Caldwell, but the date and time are pending.

"I surely did not want to open that door," she said, her voice trailing off as she recalled learning that her son had been killed. "I was hoping maybe he just had been really seriously injured, but. ..."

Billy Edwards was among five soldiers killed Saturday when the group was attacked by small-arms fire from enemy forces, according to U.S. Defense Department reports. Edwards was shot by a sniper, his parents said, while the other four soldiers were killed by a bomb that went off when one of the soldiers stepped on it.

Edwards was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division in Fort Stewart, Ga.

He grew up in Houston, where he graduated from Stratford High School in Spring Branch. His family moved to Somerville after he enrolled at Texas A&M, where he was a member of the Corps of Cadets C2 unit.

He was enrolled at the College Station campus from fall 2002 through fall 2003, a university spokesman said. He spent spring 2004, his last semester in college, at Texas A&M-Galveston. Family members said he left college to join the military.

Marykay Edwards said her son always had been a “military kid.” During Operation Desert Storm, he and friends, pretending to be Iraqis, would go outside armed with sticks and shoot up neighborhood trees, she recalled.

After his first semester at Stratford, Billy Edwards told his parents he wanted to attend the Marine Military Academy in Harlingen, where a friend was enrolled. The teen stayed at the military school through his junior year.

“My son ... had a mind of his own. What can I say?” Marykay Edwards said.

Billy Edwards also was active in the Boy Scouts, obtaining Eagle Scout status at 15, his mother said. He was an avid camper and rose to the post of senior patrol leader, ultimately supervising the 125 boys in his troop.

The Edwardses said they weren’t surprised when their son came to them with a plan to leave school and enlist. Though he had a Navy scholarship, Marykay Edwards said, her son was insistent on joining the infantry. And so, in February 2006, he did. He deployed to Iraq on May 11, 2007.

“He never looked back,” she said. “He was very happy where he was, very happy with his choice of career. It didn’t shake him at all to go to Iraq. He had a job to do, and that’s that.”

The Edwardses last spoke to their son Wednesday - just three days before he was killed. On a three-day leave, Billy Edwards called his parents from the royal gardens in Baghdad, where he and fellow soldiers had gotten to take lengthy showers and lounge poolside for hours.

“It was great. He was just so happy,” she said, recalling their last conversation. “He said, ‘Oh, Mom, you ought to see this place. You wouldn’t believe it.’”

On Saturday, there was a knock on the door of the family’s Somerville home, and the parents immediately recognized the uniform and what it meant. Marykay Edwards said she asked the casualty officer if there was any chance the Army had made a mistake in identification. Deep down, she knew the answer was no. But she desperately wanted to cling to a shred of hope.

“It was a shock to us,” added William Lee Edwards Jr., the soldier’s father. “We just talked to him.”

Marykay Edwards seemed wistful Monday as she thought about her son, whom she described as a great sport with a great sense of humor. He had a beautiful smile, she said, and his eyes were great big pools of blue.

“Billy and I talked about him going over there,” she said. “My husband and I always had our wills done and gave the kids copies. I knew Billy had a will ... but I just never thought he wouldn’t come home.”

Funeral services will be held at Strickland Funeral Home in Caldwell, but the date and time are pending. Edwards will be buried in the cemetery adjoining Evangelical Church of Christ in Lyons.

**BUSY NOT-LOOKING AT MAP
[BEEN ON THE JOB TOO LONG]
[COME ON HOME, NOW]**



U.S. soldiers from the 2nd battalion, 32nd Field Artillery brigade ignore their commander as they prepare for a mission in Baghdad August 2, 2007. REUTERS/Damir Sagolj

**“Before We Left Baghdad, We
Were Promised One To Two
Months Up Here, And We Would
Be Relieved. What Is It With The
Military And Outright Lying?”**

**“The Most Sophisticated Army In The
History Of The Planet Is Getting Torn Up
By Fifty Cents Worth Of Wire And
Explosives Made In A Bathtub”**

May 15, 2007 By AH, Army of Dude [Excerpts]

In a perfect world, I wouldn't be writing this right now. At this very moment, if we had not been extended, we would be convoying down to Kuwait in preparation for coming home.

Our time would be spent cleaning vehicles and equipment. The unit replacing us would have been here for a few weeks already, and we would have shown them the ropes of this town. In a perfect world.

Instead, this comes to you on the two month mark of our move to Baqubah. Before we left Baghdad, we were promised one to two months up here, and we would be relieved.

So we were extended on our extension.

What is it with the military and outright lying? We're grown ups. We can handle the truth.

For two months now we've been going full force. They have us, two companies of infantry, holding the most overtly violent city in Iraq. I don't have the resources to find out, but there is something in the area of six brigades operating in Baghdad. It's busting at the seams with soldiers.

Whoever that guy is, the guy who sits in a big air conditioned room with a huge map on the table a la Dr. Strangelove, decided to send less than a battalion to a city that hasn't had American forces walking around in almost a year.

The biggest mistake the government, the military and the American people made was deciding these insurgents were stupid farmers with rusty guns.

For months, they have been sitting around a chalkboard doing the math on how big of a bomb it takes to completely destroy an Abrams tank, the biggest vehicle in our arsenal.

Then they took the time to go out in the middle of the night, cut holes in the road with concrete saws, and drop several hundred pound bombs in the road. Next comes the concealment of the wire that can be hundreds of meters long, running up light poles up to rooftops connecting to batteries.

There, a guy sits waiting and waiting until someone comes along. We have found several of these houses. They have chairs and beds on the roof, and a tea set for when they get thirsty.

They're waiting for an Abrams to roll by a bomb in the road that is practically invisible. But a Stryker rolls up instead.

With enough explosives to destroy a fifty ton vehicle, what do you expect to happen when one weighing thirty tons less sits on it?

Our sister company found out the other day.

You might have heard about the six soldiers and one Russian reporter that died when their Stryker hit one such bomb. They were on their way to investigate the actual site before it blew.

They knew it was there. Beforehand, an Apache helicopter identified several men digging a hole in the road, putting something large in the hole, and running away. The pilot asked for clearance to shoot a Hellfire missile at them.

Once again however, our rules and tactics became a bigger enemy than any terrorist could. They were denied permission to fire repeatedly because of the possibility of collateral damage. In the sagacious words of Hurley from the TV show Lost, we looked in the face of the enemy and said 'whatever man!'

So a dude on a rooftop watched through a little peephole in the brick wall, waiting for someone to come. They didn't wait long. Our sister company, the only other one in the city, was sent to investigate the matter.

They were ordered down a road that was barred from being driven on in the first place because it was so dangerous. I don't think I have to go into details about what came next. A whole squad, save the driver, was no more.

They didn't die for Iraqi liberty or American freedom. They died for trial and error.

They died because an officer somewhere didn't want to fill out paperwork because some dude's car might have been damaged in a missile strike.

And if we were in a perfect world, they wouldn't have died at all, because we wouldn't be here in this city without an extension.

Recently, a general finally manned up and said we need reinforcements in Diyala. There simply aren't enough guys to control it.

Until now, it has been under Mussolini scrutiny. In Fascist Italy, it was said the trains always ran on time, even when they didn't. Reports sent up here have said what a great job we're doing and that our manpower was enough to overtake Baqubah.

Those reports cost my friends their lives.

The day Chevy died, there were Bradleys in front of him. They waited patiently for a Stryker to pass over triple stacked anti-tank mines to see what it would do to a Stryker.

The most sophisticated Army in the history of the planet is getting torn up by fifty cents worth of wire and explosives made in a bathtub.

We're expected to intimidate a group of people who are begging to die as martyrs with laser guided bombs and low flying jets.

If you shake a fist at a beehive, they'll sting you regardless.

Yesterday while I watched over the same street where seven men lost their lives, a kid that lived in the house asked me, "Why you come Iraq?"

I told him, because they told me to. I didn't try to explain I was sent by a group of men who didn't know what it was like to be stung.

But we wouldn't go looking for the hive, in a perfect world.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Car Bomb Insures Two Foreigners; Nationality Not Announced

August 26, 2007 (AP)

A car bomber rammed his vehicle into a convoy of two four-wheel drive Land Cruisers on a main road leading out of Kabul, said Ali Shah Paktaiwal, chief of criminal investigations in the city. Interior Ministry spokesman Zemerai Bashary said two foreigners and four Afghans were injured. He said he did not know the nationalities of the foreigners or the extent of their injuries.

Great Moments In U.S. Military History: The Massacre Of The Musa Qala Engagement Party; "And When We Bring Our Casualties To The Hospital Then They Say They Are Taliban"

Aug. 26 2007 Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan -- Witnesses said Sunday that clashes between coalition troops and Taliban fighters in southern Afghanistan left at least 18 civilians dead.

Coalition and Afghan troops clashed late Saturday with militants near the Taliban-controlled town of Musa Qala. NATO officials, however, said no noncombatants were killed.

But Haji Abdul Manan Agha, the tribal leader from the area, said two homes were bombed by coalition forces late Saturday. "In one home 18 people attending an engagement party were killed, including women, children and men," he said.

In the second house, eight Taliban were killed, he said. More than 30 people were wounded in both strikes, Agha said.

Mohammad Gul, a taxi driver who brought six wounded to a nearby hospital, also said that 18 civilians were killed in the clash.

Mohammad Nabi, whose relatives were among the wounded, said dozens of people were killed. "If the Taliban shoot at NATO or American convoys, than NATO and Americans come back and bomb all of the area," Nabi said. "And when we bring our casualties to the hospital then they say they are Taliban," he said.

Assorted Resistance Action

August 25, 2007 (AP) & By VOA News & August 26, 2007 (AP) & (AFP)

Dozens of Taleban guerrillas attacked police in the eastern province of Nangarhar, injuring a district chief and one of his guards before they were repelled, police said.

In Kandahar province in the south, insurgents attacked a police patrol with a bomb and then opened fire with automatic weapons and rocket-propelled grenades, police officer Umar Khan said. Eight officers were killed, and one was missing, he said.

A roadside bomb killed two Afghans guarding a convoy carrying supplies for NATO-led forces.

Insurgents attacked the logistics convoy in southern Kandahar province, a former Taliban stronghold, with a remote controlled bomb, said provincial police chief Sayed Aqa Saqib. Two guards were killed instantly, while three others were wounded, he said.

Police say a roadside bomb Saturday in Kandahar province killed three Afghan security guards and wounded at least two others.

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

TROOP NEWS

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



Burial services for Army Spc. Todd Neiberger, 22, of Company C, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, Aug. 16, 2007, at Arlington National Cemetery. Neiberger died Aug. 6 from wounds caused by a roadside bomb in Iraq. (AP Photo/Haraz N. Ghanbari)

As Troops Die, War Profiteers Feasting On MRAP Contracts; They Run The Price Up By Millions Of \$ For Each One

August 20, 2007 By John T. Bennett, Army Times [Excerpts]

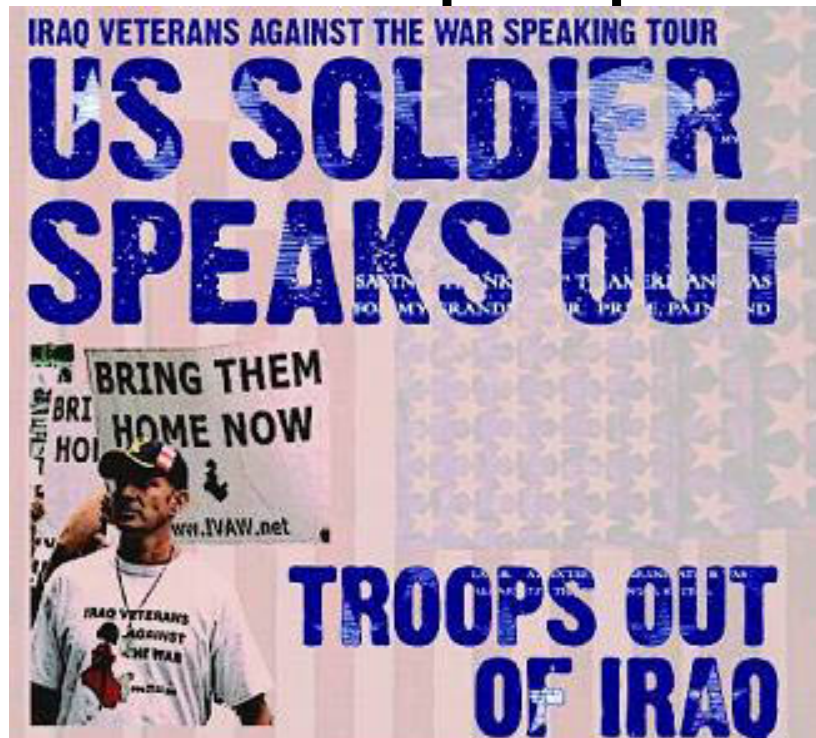
The White House has sent Congress a \$5.3 billion wartime spending request that would buy 1,520 new mine-resistant vehicles and increase industry's ability to build them.

This comes to \$3.4 million per MRAP, which could jolt lawmakers expecting to pay about \$1 million each, said James McAleese, who monitors defense programs for McAleese and Associates, based in McLean, Va.

Moreover, he said, "There could be some congressional surprise that the \$5.3 billion amendment only funds an additional 1,520 vehicles, instead of approximately 4,600 additional vehicles."

Still, one former defense official said: “The price of each has soared to \$4 million apiece for the Marines’ version? It’s going to make some on (Capitol Hill) ask, ‘Just what the hell are you putting on these things these days?’”

‘It Was Instantly Apparent To Myself That This War Had Nothing To Do With Liberation And Everything To Do With Subjugation And Domination Of The Iraqi People’



[Thanks to Jeanie Lucas, Secretary, NoWar South Australia, who sent this in.]

August 26, 2007 Chris Saliba, Webdiary.com.au [Excerpts]

Matt Howard from Iraq Veterans Against The War is in Australia at the moment speaking out about his involvement in the Iraq war. A public meeting was held at Melbourne University on Thursday 23rd August to hear Matt discuss his experiences of the war and the US military, with question time afterwards.

The meeting was held by Unity For Peace, who tried to get Matt Howard’s visit covered by the major newspapers. Unfortunately, the print media showed no interest in this compelling story. Except for ABC radio.

Matt Howard looks very much like your average college student. He's young, doesn't look a day over twenty-five, sports a spiffy pair of glasses and wears a baseball cap. He's the casual young type you always see on a tram or a bike up Swanston Street on the way to a lecture at Melbourne Uni. The only difference is he's seen the horrors of war. I don't know Matt Howard, but after having heard him talk about his experiences, I wish he hadn't seen what he'd seen.

During the talk he looked down a lot, and he spoke in a halted and troubled voice. You wondered if he was going to break down at any minute as he described scenes that belonged in Picasso's Guernica.

It was frustrating, we were told, to have the US media always frame the war in Iraq in a certain light, describing the war as a failure, a mistake, a series of miscalculations, an unfortunate blunder, 'as if this somehow implies that had we done it right then everything would be okay'.

But this type of thinking is wrong, and that even had the US gone in, ousted Saddam Hussein, and left, the war would still be immoral.

Howard's descriptions of the way the US military operates are probably the most chilling. So called rules of engagement are thrown out the window once you are involved in battle in a foreign country, where even innocent children are considered the enemy. The fighting was more or less one sided, heavy handed, and all coming from the US services.

'They changed the rules of engagement, they legalised murder. Usually we operate under strict guidelines.' Yet Howard was advised that he could fire on unarmed people. Or to summarise the ethos that prevailed amongst marines, 'If it moves, you fire on it.'

'It was how we conducted ourselves during that initial push to Baghdad that set the tone, that laid the ground work for four years of brutal occupation.'

'It was instantly apparent to myself that this war had nothing to do with liberation and everything to do with subjugation and domination of the Iraqi people.'

Matt Howard knew he was not there to help the people of Iraq because one of the first missions he was assigned once Baghdad had been won was to secure the oil fields. This operation was called Operation Crown Jewel.

The idea behind this operation was the overriding ethos of his whole time in Iraq, the former marine maintains.

Describing the aftermath of a battle, Howard painted a gruesome picture of men, women and children dead. 'It was the most grotesque scene I had seen, up to that point in my life.'

We were also given a chilling description of US firepower:

'I don't think anybody in the public has any idea of the true fire power these weapons present. You know, a fifty caliber machine gun round doesn't even need to hit you to kill

you, it can pass a metre away and your stomach will be ripped up by the velocity of that round and you will be dead.'

Many marines showed their boredom by trashing everything in sight, and wanting to shoot for thrills. 'The mentality was to destroy anything and everything.' 'We just wanna get some,' was a common refrain amongst those serving in Iraq.

Amazingly, the army didn't even have any translators. When Howard asked about translators he was told, 'What the hell do you need a translator for when you have an M16?'

'That weapon proved to be the communication tool of choice for the US Marine Corps'

When providing food and water, humanitarian rations, to Iraqi children, his first sergeant told him not to distribute any more food. Eventually all of those supplies would have to be buried in the ground. When he took the issue up with his high commander he was told: 'The top brass did not want to give the Iraqis the wrong impression about why we were there'

After the war, Howard moved to Canada to try and forget the war, but he found the more he tried to forget the more he couldn't stop thinking about it. He headed back to the US and found the Iraq Veterans Against the War. This group, he claimed, saved his life.

Airborne Vet Says "Rumsfeld Can Resign, Can Those Fighting In Iraq Also Resign?"

"The War On Terrorism Is Terrorism"

Spring 2007, By Amy Meyers, *The Veteran*, Vietnam Veterans Against the War [Excerpts] Amy Meyers is a member of the Chicago chapter of VVAW, the Chicago Coalition Against War and Racism and the Chicago Coalition Opposed to Militarization of Youth.

It was a crisp November day in Chicago when VVAW held their annual Veteran's Day observance at the Vietnam memorial. Folk singer Anna Stange opened and closed the event with folk songs. This year's speakers included veterans of the past 50 years, each giving their own personal rendition of war and the continuing impact. VVAW's GI Counselor Ray Parrish was this year's emcee; between speaker introductions he offered some of his own insights.

Adam Navarro served 3 years as a MP with the 101st airborne including a 6 month tour in Kosovo. Adam discussed the sacrifices veterans make and why he thought it was important to allow his voice to represent those active duty soldiers who can't speak today.

Adam went on to say that the people do not support the war or the administration's policies, stating "the war on terrorism is terrorism, war solves no fundamental problems, the death toll is rising, and while Rumsfeld can resign, can those fighting in Iraq also resign?"

**British Soldiers Say:
"Iraq Is A Lost Cause"
"And More Soldiers Wouldn't Help.
It's Just More Target"
"I Have Never Known Such A State Of
Apathy And Low Morale Within The
Armed Forces As There Is Today"**

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

2007/08/23 By Paul Wood, Defence correspondent, BBC News

A belief that Iraq is unwinnable, fears that Afghanistan could go the same way and an overwhelming feeling that the government has not looked after the Armed Forces properly in return for the sacrifices they make.

That is what emerges from the answers given by hundreds of servicemen and women in response to the online questionnaire we posted here a few weeks ago. We received nearly 2,000 replies to a set of questions about life in the forces.

Those who contacted us did so in defiance of Queen's Regulations. It is forbidden for members of the Armed Forces to talk to the media unsupervised.

"We don't have the resources to do the tasks we're asked to do," said one RAF man who spoke to us.

"It's getting hotter and hotter. And more soldiers wouldn't help. It's just more target," said one veteran of Basra.

Another wrote: "I am about to do my second tour of Basra. I don't think the public are aware how bad it actually is out there, getting rocket attacks every day and no let up."

"Iraq is a lost cause," he said. "I don't think we can't achieve much. It is a difficult moral dilemma though. We owe it to the Iraqi people to stabilise their country and secure it for them. But at the same time it is unwinnable."

One soldier wrote: "We are underfunded by a tight-fisted government who wants to fight wars on the cheap. Young soldiers are dying on a regular basis for less than £50 a day, and yet we are supposed to be grateful for the £2,300 'bonus' we receive at the end of a tour.

"Compare that against an MP's expenses and you'll see why good soldiers are leaving in droves."

Another said: "Life in the armed forces? All you currently read on this matter is true.

"Shocking morale, little done to reduce constant overseas deployments, whilst cutting back our numbers in the middle of two major conflicts, (military) hospitals closed, inquests taking four years, shocking quality of accommodation, poor pay, and 30-minute phone calls a week from theatre.

"Prisoners get the same and we pay tax."

One sailor, just back from Iraq after a six-month tour, wrote: "The armed forces have been cut back year on year.

"Although the workload has increased enormously, I have never known such a state of apathy and low morale within the armed forces as there is today.

"I, like many, am just counting the days until I qualify for my pension and can leave the demoralised and destitute armed forces."

There were other concerns, in particular the number of casualties and how they are treated back in the UK.

One serviceman wrote: "For every fatality, there are many 'broken' soldiers who have suffered hideous injuries. If the sheer scale of those injuries was made common knowledge, the public would be shocked and disgusted."

He went on: "The government prefers to evade that issue. The armed forces are being asked to provide more and more with less and less. The system is extremely close to failing."

Much of what was said to us, in response to our questionnaire is also being said by senior officers, occasionally in public.

Members of the armed forces are not saying they will not go to Iraq and Afghanistan, that they will not do their duty.

The overwhelming view is that the armed forces cannot go on like this indefinitely.

Longshore Union Condemns The War: “A Single Strike Would Be More Effective Than All The Peace Marches”

We need to use labor’s muscle to stop the war by mobilizing union power in the streets, at the plant gates and on the docks to force the immediate and total withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Afghanistan and Iraq.

August 25, 2007 Via Veterans For Peace

The International Warehouse and Longshore Union Local 10, 400 North Point Street, San Francisco, California @ Fisherman’s Wharf [Excerpt]

As the war in Iraq and Afghanistan enters its seventh year, opposition to the war among working people in the United States and the world is massive and growing.

The “surge” strategy of sending in more and more troops has become a fiasco for the Pentagon generals, while thousands of Iraqis are killed every month.

Before the March 2003 invasion of Iraq, millions marched against the war in Britain, Italy and Spain as hundreds of thousands took to the streets in the U.S. to oppose it. But that didn’t stop the invasion.

In the U.S., this “war on terror” has meant wholesale assault on civil liberties and workers’ rights, like the impending imposition of the hated TWIC card for port workers.

And the war keeps going on and on, as Democrats and Republicans in Congress keep on voting for it.

As historian Isaac Deutscher said during the Vietnam War, a single strike would be more effective than all the peace marches.

French dockworkers did strike in the port of Marseilles and helped bring an end to the war in Vietnam. To put a stop to this bloody colonial occupation, labor must use its power.

The International Warehouse and Longshore Union has opposed the war on Iraq since the beginning.

In the Bay Area, ILWU Local 10 has repeatedly warned that the so-called “war on terror” is really a war on working people and democratic rights.

Around the country, hundreds of unions and labor councils have passed motions condemning the war, but that has not stopped the war.

We need to use labor's muscle to stop the war by mobilizing union power in the streets, at the plant gates and on the docks to force the immediate and total withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Afghanistan and Iraq.

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.**

**"The mighty are only mighty because we are on our knees. Let us rise!"
--Camille Desmoulins**

Lethal Dose Of Justice



By Mike Hastie

Vietnam Veteran
August 21, 2007

I had a dream last night that
Dick Cheney was finally arrested
For global war crimes against humanity.

He was found guilty by a jury of his peers,
And executed by a lethal dose of justice.

My Post-Traumatic Stress vanished
And I lived happily ever after.

Photo and caption from the I-R-A-Q (I Remember Another Quagmire) portfolio of Mike Hastie, US Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71. (For more of his outstanding work, contact at: hastiemike@earthlink.net) T

One day while I was in a bunker in Vietnam, a sniper round went over my head. The person who fired that weapon was not a terrorist, a rebel, an extremist, or a so-called insurgent. The Vietnamese individual who tried to kill me was a citizen of Vietnam, who did not want me in his country. This truth escapes millions.

Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
December 13, 2004





“In Unconventional Wars, Body Counts Don’t Really Count”

“The Real Question Is Not How Many Bad Guys We Are Killing, But How Many Our Continued Presence In Iraq Is Creating”

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

August 25, 2007 By Andrew J. Bacevich, L.A. Times [Excerpts]

Finding in the debacle of the Vietnam War a rationale for sustaining the U.S. military presence in Iraq requires considerable imagination. If nothing else, President Bush's speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars earlier this week revealed a hitherto unsuspected capacity for creativity. Yet as an exercise in historical analysis, his remarks proved to be self-serving and selective.

As the balance of the president's VFW address makes clear, Bush remains oblivious to the history that actually matters.

Here are a few of the lessons that he overlooks.

In unconventional wars, body counts don't really count.

In the Vietnam War, superior American firepower enabled U.S. forces to prevail in most tactical engagements. We killed plenty of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong. But killing didn't produce victory -- the exertions of U.S. troops all too frequently proved to be counterproductive.

So too in Iraq -- although Bush insists on pretending otherwise.

His speech had him sounding like President Lyndon Johnson, bragging that, in each month since January, U.S. troops in Iraq have "killed or captured an average of more than 1,500 Al Qaeda terrorists and other extremists."

If Bush thinks that by racking up big body counts the so-called surge will reverse the course of the war, he is deceiving himself.

The real question is not how many bad guys we are killing, but how many our continued presence in Iraq is creating.

In his remarks to the VFW, the president described Iraq as an "ideological struggle." Our adversary there aims to crush "freedom, tolerance and dissent," he said, thereby "imposing this ideology across a vital region of the world." If we don't fight them "there," we will surely have to fight them "here."

Radical Islamists like Osama bin Laden do subscribe to a hateful ideology.

But to imagine that Bin Laden and others of his ilk have the capability to control the Middle East, restoring the so-called Caliphate, is absurd, as silly as the vaunted domino theory of the 1950s and 1960s.

Bush did not even allude to the condition of Vietnam today.

Yet the question poses itself: Is it not possible that the people of the Middle East might be better qualified to determine their future than a cadre of American soldiers, spooks and do-gooders?

The answer to that question just might be yes.

OCCUPATION REPORT

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



Iraqi citizens amid the rubble of home and shops after an overnight raid in the Azamiyah neighborhood by foreign occupation soldiers from the USA Thursday, July 12, 2007, in Baghdad. Neighbors in the Sunni enclave say U.S. soldiers used explosives to gain entry. (AP Photo/Khalid Mohammed)

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

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

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

***The Great Iraq Swindle;*
How Bush Allowed An Army Of
For-Profit Contractors To Invade
The U.S. Treasury:
"The Administration's Acquiescence
In Their Thievery Suggests That It,
Too, Saw Making A Buck As The True
Mission Of The War"
"There Isn't A Brazen, Two-Bit, Purse-
Snatching Money Caper You Can Think
Of That Didn't Happen At Least 10,000
Times With Your Tax Dollars In Iraq"**

In the history of balls, the world has never seen anything like the private contractors George W. Bush summoned to serve in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Collectively, they are the final, polished result of 231 years of natural selection in the crucible of American capitalism: a bureaucrat class capable of stealing the

same dollar twice -- once from the taxpayer and once from a veteran in a wheelchair.

When things went wrong, KBR simply scrapped expensive gear: The company dumped 50,000 pounds of nails in the desert because they were too short, and left the Army no choice but to set fire to a supply truck that had a flat tire. "They did not have the proper wrench to change the tire," an Iraq vet named Richard Murphy told investigators, "so the decision was made to torch the truck."

Aug 23, 2007 Rolling Stone [Excerpts]

How is it done? How do you screw the taxpayer for millions, get away with it and then ride off into the sunset with one middle finger extended, the other wrapped around a chilled martini? Ask Earnest O. Robbins -- he knows all about being a successful contractor in Iraq.

You start off as a well-connected bureaucrat: in this case, as an Air Force civil engineer, a post from which Robbins was responsible for overseeing 70,000 servicemen and contractors, with an annual budget of \$8 billion. You serve with distinction for thirty-four years, becoming such a military all-star that the Air Force frequently sends you to the Hill to testify before Congress -- until one day in the summer of 2003, when you retire to take a job as an executive for Parsons, a private construction company looking to do work in Iraq.

Now you can finally move out of your dull government housing on Bolling Air Force Base and get your wife that dream home you've been promising her all these years. The place on Park Street in Dunn Loring, Virginia, looks pretty good -- four bedrooms, fireplace, garage, 2,900 square feet, a nice starter home in a high-end neighborhood full of spooks, think-tankers and ex-apparatchiks moved on to the nest-egg phase of their faceless careers. On October 20th, 2003, you close the deal for \$775,000 and start living that private-sector good life.

A few months later, in March 2004, your company magically wins a contract from the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq to design and build the Baghdad Police College, a facility that's supposed to house and train at least 4,000 police recruits.

But two years and \$72 million later, you deliver not a functioning police academy but one of the great engineering clusterfucks of all time, a practically useless pile of rubble so badly constructed that its walls and ceilings are literally caked in shit and piss, a result of subpar plumbing in the upper floors.

You've done such a terrible job, in fact, that when auditors from the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction visit the college in the summer of 2006, their report sounds like something out of one of the Saw movies: "We witnessed a light fixture so full of diluted urine and feces that it would not operate," they write, adding that "the urine was so pervasive that it had permanently stained the ceiling tiles" and that "during our visit, a substance dripped from the ceiling onto an assessment team member's shirt." The final report helpfully includes a photo of a sloppy brown splotch on the outstretched arm of the unlucky auditor.

When Congress gets wind of the fiasco, a few members on the House Oversight Committee demand a hearing.

To placate them, your company decides to send you to the Hill -- after all, you're a former Air Force major general who used to oversee this kind of contracting operation for the government.

So you take your twenty-minute ride in from the suburbs, sit down before the learned gentlemen of the committee and promptly get asked by an irritatingly eager Maryland congressman named Chris Van Hollen how you managed to spend \$72 million on a pile of shit.

You blink. Fuck if you know. "I have some conjecture, but that's all it would be" is your deadpan answer.

The room twitters in amazement. It's hard not to applaud the balls of a man who walks into Congress short \$72 million in taxpayer money and offers to guess where it all might have gone.

Next thing you know, the congressman is asking you about your company's compensation.

Touchy subject -- you've got a "cost-plus" contract, which means you're guaranteed a base-line profit of three percent of your total costs on the deal. The more you spend, the more you make -- and you certainly spent a hell of a lot. But before this milk-faced congressman can even think about suggesting that you give these millions back, you've got to cut him off. "So you won't voluntarily look at this," Van Hollen is mumbling, "and say, given what has happened in this project . . ."

"No, sir, I will not," you snap.

". . . 'We will return the profits.' . . ."

"No, sir, I will not," you repeat.

Your testimony over, you wait out the rest of the hearing, go home, take a bath in one of your four bathrooms, jump into bed with the little woman. . . . A year later, Iraq is still in flames, and your president's administration is safely focused on reclaiming \$485 million in aid money from a bunch of toothless black survivors of Hurricane Katrina. But the house you bought for \$775K is now assessed at \$929,974, and you're sure as hell not giving it back to anyone.

"Yeah, I don't know what I expected him to say," Van Hollen says now about the way Robbins responded to being asked to give the money back. "It just shows the contempt they have for us, for the taxpayer, for everything."

In Iraq the lines between essential government services and for-profit enterprises have been blurred to the point of absurdity -- to the point where wounded soldiers have to pay retail prices for fresh underwear, where modern-day chattel are imported from the Third World at slave wages to peel the potatoes we once

assigned to grunts in KP, where private companies are guaranteed huge profits no matter how badly they fuck things up.

To travel to Iraq, would-be contractors needed permission from the Bush administration, which was far from blind in its appraisal of applicants. In a much-ballyhooed example of favoritism, the White House originally installed a clown named Jim O'Beirne at the relevant evaluation desk in the Department of Defense.

O'Beirne proved to be a classic Bush villain, a moron's moron who judged applicants not on their Arabic skills or their relevant expertise but on their Republican bona fides; he sent a twenty-four-year-old who had never worked in finance to manage the reopening of the Iraqi stock exchange, and appointed a recent graduate of an evangelical university for home-schooled kids who had no accounting experience to manage Iraq's \$13 billion budget.

James K. Haveman, who had served as Michigan's community-health director under a GOP governor, was put in charge of rehabilitating Iraq's health-care system and decided that what this war-ravaged, malnourished, sanitation-deficient country most urgently needed was . . . an anti-smoking campaign.

Is it really possible to bilk American taxpayers for repainted forklifts stolen from Iraqi Airways and claim that you were just following orders? It is, when your commander in chief is George W. Bush.

There isn't a brazen, two-bit, purse-snatching money caper you can think of that didn't happen at least 10,000 times with your tax dollars in Iraq.

At the very outset of the occupation, when L. Paul Bremer was installed as head of the CPA, one of his first brilliant ideas for managing the country was to have \$12 billion in cash flown into Baghdad on huge wooden pallets and stored in palaces and government buildings. To pay contractors, he'd have agents go to the various stashes -- a pile of \$200 million in one of Saddam's former palaces was watched by a single soldier, who left the key to the vault in a backpack on his desk when he went out to lunch -- withdraw the money, then crisscross the country to pay the bills.

When desperate auditors later tried to trace the paths of the money, one agent could account for only \$6,306,836 of some \$23 million he'd withdrawn. Bremer's office "acknowledged not having any supporting documentation" for \$25 million given to a different agent. A ministry that claimed to have paid 8,206 guards was able to document payouts to only 602. An agent who was told by auditors that he still owed \$1,878,870 magically produced exactly that amount, which, as the auditors dryly noted, "suggests that the agent had a reserve of cash."

In short, some \$8.8 billion of the \$12 billion proved impossible to find.

Because contractors were paid on cost-plus arrangements, they had a powerful incentive to spend to the hilt. The undisputed master of milking the system is KBR, the former Halliburton subsidiary so ubiquitous in Iraq that soldiers even encounter its customer-survey sheets in outhouses.

When things went wrong, KBR simply scrapped expensive gear: The company dumped 50,000 pounds of nails in the desert because they were too short, and left the Army no choice but to set fire to a supply truck that had a flat tire. “They did not have the proper wrench to change the tire,” an Iraq vet named Richard Murphy told investigators, “so the decision was made to torch the truck.”

In perhaps the ultimate example of military capitalism, KBR reportedly ran convoys of empty trucks back and forth across the insurgent-laden desert, pointlessly risking the lives of soldiers and drivers so the company could charge the taxpayer for its phantom deliveries. Truckers for KBR, knowing full well that the trips were bullshit, derisively referred to their cargo as “sailboat fuel.”

In Fallujah, where the company was paid based on how many soldiers used the base rec center, KBR supervisors ordered employees to juke the head count by taking an hourly tally of every soldier in the facility. “They were counting the same soldier five, six, seven times,” says Linda Warren, a former postal worker who was employed by KBR in Fallujah. “I was even directed to count every empty bottle of water left behind in the facility as though they were troops who had been there.”

Yet for all the money KBR charged taxpayers for the rec center, it didn’t provide much in the way of services to the soldiers engaged in the heaviest fighting of the war. When Warren ordered a karaoke machine, the company gave her a cardboard box stuffed with jumbled-up electronic components. “We had to borrow laptops from the troops to set up a music night,” says Warren, who had a son serving in Fallujah at the time. “These boys needed R&R more than anything, but the company wouldn’t spend a dime.”

One of the most dependable methods for burning taxpayer funds was simply to do nothing. After securing a contract in Iraq, companies would mobilize their teams, rush them into the war zone and then wait, citing the security situation or delayed paperwork - all the while charging the government for housing, meals and other expenses. Last year, a government audit of twelve major contracts awarded to KBR, Parsons and other companies found that idle time often accounted for more than half of a contract’s total costs. In one deal awarded to KBR, the company’s “indirect” administrative costs were \$52.7 million, and its direct costs -- the costs associated with the -actual job -- were only \$13.4 million.

Companies jacked up the costs even higher by hiring out layers of subcontractors to do their work for them. In some cases, each subcontractor had its own cost-plus arrangement. “We called those ‘cascading contracts,’ “ says Rep. Van Hollen. “Each subcontractor piles on a lot of costs, and eventually they would snowball into a huge payout. It was a green light for waste.”

For all the creative ways that contractors came up with to waste, mismanage and steal public money in Iraq, the standard remained good old-fashioned fucking up. Take the case of the Basra Children’s Hospital, a much-ballyhooed “do-gooder” project championed by Laura Bush and Condi Rice. This was exactly the sort of grandstanding, self-serving, indulgent and ultimately useless project that tended to get the go-ahead under reconstruction.

Bechtel was given \$50 million to build the hospital -- but a year later, with the price tag soaring to \$169 million, the company was pulled off the project without a single bed being ready for use. The government was unfazed: Bechtel, explained USAID spokesman David Snider, was "under a 'term contract,' which means their job is over when their money ends."

Asked to cast a vote for the war effort, contractors responded by swiping everything they could get their hands on -- and the administration's acquiescence in their thievery suggests that it, too, saw making a buck as the true mission of the war.

Two witnesses scheduled to testify before Congress against Custer Battles ultimately declined not only because they had received death threats but because they, too, were contractors and feared that they would be shut out of future government deals. To repeat: Witnesses were afraid to testify in an effort to -recover government funds because they feared reprisal from the government.

The Bush administration's lack of interest in recovering stolen funds is one of the great scandals of the war. The White House has failed to litigate a single case against a contractor under the False Claims Act and has not sued anybody for breach of contract. It even declined to join in a lawsuit filed by whistle-blowers who are accusing KBR of improper invoicing in Fallujah.

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is the story of the Iraq War in a nutshell.

In the history of balls, the world has never seen anything like the private contractors George W. Bush summoned to serve in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Collectively, they are the final, polished result of 231 years of natural selection in the crucible of American capitalism: a bureaucrat class capable of stealing the same dollar twice -- once from the taxpayer and once from a veteran in a wheelchair.

Going back over the various congressional hearings and trying to decipher the corporate responses to the mountains of thefts and fuck-ups is a thrilling intellectual journey, not unlike tackling the Pharaonic hieroglyphs or the mating chatter of colobus monkeys.

Standing before Congress, contractors and the officials who are supposed to monitor them say things like "As long as we have the undefinitized contract issue that we have . . . we will continue to see the same kinds of sustension rates" (translation: We can't get back any of the fucking money) and "The need for to-fitnessization was viewed as voluntary, and that was inaccurate as the general counsel to the Army observed in a June opinion" (translation: The contractor wasn't aware that he was required to keep costs down) and "If we don't know where we're trying to go and don't have measures, then we won't know how much longer it's going to take us to get there" (translation: There never was a plan in place, other than to let contractors rip off every dollar they could).

According to the most reliable -estimates, we have doled out more than \$500 billion for the war, as well as \$44 billion for the Iraqi reconstruction effort.

And what did America's contractors give us for that money? They built big steaming shit piles, set brand-new trucks on fire, drove back and forth across the desert for no reason at all and dumped bags of nails in ditches.

For the most part, nobody at home cared, because war on some level is always a waste.

But what happened in Iraq went beyond inefficiency, beyond fraud even.

If catastrophic failure is worth billions, where's the incentive to deliver success? There's no profit in patriotism, no cost-plus angle on common decency.

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.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

***New Orleans Abandoned:*
“Volunteers Come To Understand
What I've Concluded Is The Heartless
Reality”**

**“The Bush Administration Actually
Wants These Neighborhoods Below Sea
Level To Die On The Vine”**

26 August 2007 By Douglas Brinkley, Washington Post [Excerpts]

Over the past two years since Hurricane Katrina, I've seen waves of hardworking volunteers from nonprofits, faith-based groups and college campuses descend on New Orleans, full of compassion and hope.

They arrive in the city's Ninth Ward to painstakingly gut houses one by one. Their jaws drop as they wander around afflicted zones, gazing at the towering mounds of debris and uprooted infrastructure.

After weeks of grueling labor, they realize that they are running in place, toiling in a surreal vacuum.

Two full years after the hurricane, the Big Easy is barely limping along, unable to make truly meaningful reconstruction progress. The most important issues concerning the city's long-term survival are still up in the air. Why is no Herculean clean-up effort underway?

And why are volunteers practically the only ones working to reconstruct homes in communities that may never again have sewage service, garbage collection or electricity?

Eventually, the volunteers' altruism turns to bewilderment and finally to outrage. They've been hoodwinked. The stalled recovery can't be blamed on bureaucratic inertia or red tape alone.

Many volunteers come to understand what I've concluded is the heartless reality:

The Bush administration actually wants these neighborhoods below sea level to die on the vine.

Shortly after Katrina hit, former House speaker J. Dennis Hastert declared that a lot of New Orleans could be "bulldozed." He was shot down by an outraged public and media, which deemed such remarks insensitive and callous.

Two years have shown that Hastert may have articulated what appears to have become the White House's de facto policy. He may have retreated, but the inaction remains.

The medical infrastructure has largely collapsed. Mercy and Charity hospitals remain closed. A severe crisis in mental health care has erupted and gang violence is on the rise.

The Environmental Protection Agency refuses to clearly state that it's safe to live in the metro area. Young professionals, recognizing that there are greener pastures all over the nation, are fleeing in droves.

Flood Hits Crawford, Texas

Crawford, Texas -- Recent flooding destroyed the personal library of President George W. Bush at his Crawford, Texas home.

The flood began in the presidential bathroom where the books were kept. Both books were lost. A spokesman said the president was devastated, as he had almost finished coloring the first one. The White House tried to call FEMA, but there was no response.

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