

## GI SPECIAL 5H24:



**“I Hope The Full Birds  
And The Stars Were  
Worth Our Blood”**

**“Someone Saw A Chance For  
Glory And Decided To Take It”**

**“In The Future, I Want My Children To  
Grow Up With The Belief That What I Did  
Here Was Wrong, In A Society That  
Doesn't Deem That Idea Unpatriotic”**

[Thanks to Don Bacon, The Smedley Butler Society, who sent this in.]

Lately this blog has been passed around to dudes of every rank, and those who would be punishing me have become readers.

August 18, 2007 By AH, Army of Dude [

## **Stupid Shit Of The Deployment Awards!**

**At the end of our fifteen month deployment, it seemed fitting to resurrect the Stupid Shit series started over a year ago under the gray Washington sky.**

**I envisioned a weekly edition but quickly realized a deployment is a constant parade of ridiculous, asinine, over the top moments that are too numerous to keep track of, and much too difficult to explain in full.**

These entries come to you in a fury of writing during the few precious days we have inside the wire.

**Ever since Baghdad we've left the comfort and safety of our huge bases to venture out into the city for as little as two or as much as eight days at a time.**

**There is a direct correlation between the amount of operation activity and the amount of stupid shit that gets piled onto us.**

**As the workload increases, so does the shit, eloquently described as stupid here on out.**

Most of the candidates for Stupid Shit of The Deployment, then, come from our stay here in Baqubah.

**Our operation tempo went from back breaking in Baghdad to soul crushing in Diyala Province.**

**Gone were the days of adequate rest for the trucks and ourselves.**

**Often we'd spend five days out in an Iraqi's house, sleeping on the roof with lice infested mats and pillows, only to come in for a scant few hours for fuel and a shower (if time permitted).**

**For reasons unknown to anyone, we'd arrive as the chow hall was closing and everyone would make a mad dash for the scraps left over. Stupid, indeed.**

So without further ado, the nominees for Stupid Shit of The Deployment:

### **Working With 1920s**

A Sunni insurgent group we've been battling for months, responsible for the death of my friend and numerous attacks, agreed to fight Al Qaeda alongside us. Since then, they've grown into a much more organized, lethal force. They use this organization to steal cars

and intimidate and torture the local population, or anyone they accuse of being linked to Al Qaeda.

The Gestapo of the 21st century, sanctioned by the United States Army.

### **The Surge**

The beefing up of ground forces in Iraq at the beginning of the year, started by the 82nd Airborne. Unit deployments were moved up several months to maintain a higher level of boots on the ground to quell the Baghdad situation.

What most don't realize is the amount of actual fighting troops in a brigade, something in the area of 2,000 soldiers in a brigade of 5,000 depending on what unit it is.

**So for every 2,000 fighters, there are 3,000 pencil pushers sucking up resources in every brigade that was surged.**

**A logistical nightmare that, surprise, failed miserably.**

The increase of troops in Baghdad pushed the insurgents to rural areas (like Diyala), hence our move here in March.

**The surge was nothing more than a thorn in the side of nomadic fighters having to move thirty five miles while the generals watched Baghdad with stubborn eyes.**

### **Two Companies Clearing Baqubah**

Which brings us to the next nominee.

Since Baghdad was the showcase of the war and Baqubah was brimming with super IEDs taking our Bradleys and Abrams tanks, it was decided that a unit needed to be sent there to assist the cavalry unit who averaged a death per week.

But how many to send?

Someone, somehow, somewhere decided that two companies of Strykers would be adequate to take down what Al Qaeda had deemed their headquarters in Iraq.

What came about this oversight?

Two hours into the first mission, my friend was killed in a massive IED blast that busted the hell out of the squad leader's face, resulting in traumatic brain injury and facial reconstruction surgery.

The vehicle commander tore his ACL from the concussion. Shrapnel being thrown around the inside of the truck caught one dude in the knee as a dude in the back hatch got rattled around, bruising his back as the other in the hatch was thrown completely out the vehicle.

He's been quiet since then, and was sent home soon after.

**Returning fire from us and the Bradleys killed an untold number of kids unlucky enough to be in the school next to our position.**

A wrecker sent out to pick up the destroyed Stryker was the next victim of an IED explosion, killing two men inside.

Two more wreckers were sent out, one for the Stryker, one for the now totaled wrecker.

**As we pulled out that evening, local Iraqis, men, women and children, danced in celebration by the massive crater where the Stryker had been.**

At once we realized reinforcements were needed but we didn't get any for two more months.

Many more men were killed because we were stretched to our operational breaking point. But there was always more to do.

**Whoever made the decision to send less than an infantry battalion should be in jail right now.**

### **The Extension**

This wasn't too much of a surprise to us, as we knew in the back of our minds that an extension was in our future.

What was surprising was the fact that everyone in Iraq was extended to fifteen month deployments.

It was meant to give every unit at least a year in between deployments, as some were coming back to Iraq after only ten months back in the states. Now at the end, it's not hard to assess the achievements of our three extra months. It seems at a quick glance that we pacified the city, street by street.

There was a lull in American deaths because, simply, we absorbed all the bomb blasts or found the IEDs before they could detonate on us. As deadly as they are, deep buried IEDs must take a lot of time to build and emplace. The ones used against us were meant for the cavalry unit, who didn't have the manpower to patrol the streets like we have been. After we arrived, there were few bombs that haven't been sitting in the ground for several months already.

**The enemy ran out of ways to kill us until the ingenious idea of putting bombs in houses took hold. Instead of blowing us up in armored vehicles, they thought about doing it inside an abandoned house.**

What kills you isn't the bomb, but the foundation of the house that comes crashing down after the explosion. Wires and triggers are hidden behind doors or underneath rugs, so when we go out and clear blocks and blocks of houses, there's a pressure plate waiting for you at the foot of the stairs. Only your eyes can save you at this point.

**That tactic has been born from our proclivity to redundantly clear neighborhoods, and the extension is guilty of claiming lives of men who are running on too little sleep, walking into house after house in the desert heat.**

**When you're worried about how much water you have left and the trucks are too far away to get more, you tend to miss the trip wire in the dark stairwell.**

**Twelve month deployments are a burden on your body and mind.**

**Asking men for three more months is not only unfair but deadly.**

### **Seven Men Killed At The Same Time**

Finally, one of the lowest, saddest points of the deployment came in May. One night, a helicopter spotted several men gathered in the road with a large object. Permission was asked to fire a Hellfire missile at them, as they were obvious IED emplacers.

Permission was emphatically denied, but someone decided that a Stryker platoon should head out there anyway to check it out. In tow was a Russian reporter.

On a road called Trash Alley, they hit a massive deep buried IED. Everyone in the truck except the driver, six Americans and one Russian, dead.

And they didn't need to be there at all. A helicopter could have killed the insurgents with breathtaking ease. Instead, those guys and the one with the detonator got away in the night. Justice was never done.

**And now the moment you've been waiting for. The (dubious) winner of Stupid Shit of The Deployment is:**

### **Two Companies Clearing Baqubah!**

While each nominee was unique and shameful in its own way, this outshined them all in how much death and maiming occurred after the fact.

Sure, the surge was the cataclysmic event that brought about everything, but the decision to go into the Al Qaeda mother ship with less than a battalion of men was one of the most reckless, foolhardy missteps of the Long War and should go down in the history books as such.

**In a few weeks we'll be coming back to the states without our brothers because someone saw a chance for glory and decided to take it.**

**I hope the full birds and the stars were worth our blood.**

What has been bothering me this whole deployment is the brevity and formality in which the media handles the death of soldiers. It always goes, "PFC John Smith, Norman,

Oklahoma, killed by enemy small arms fire in Baghdad. Assigned to 1/43 Engineers, Third Infantry Division.”

What a crock to read that in a paper.

It would be wholly appropriate to dedicate a full color photo and a real biography in every paper in America.

The anonymity of dead soldiers would evaporate and the public would be forced to look at the faces of the fallen. Would it set in progress change? Perhaps.

It certainly would go to show that we're out here every day, dying for an ideal long forgotten.

**As for me, I started to sign these entries with my initials long ago to avoid detection by superiors. I could and still can get in trouble for what I've written. Lately this blog has been passed around to dudes of every rank, and those who would be punishing me have become readers.**

So it's no longer necessary to be sneaky and secretive, another anonymous soldier.

My name is Alex Horton, and I'm a 22 year old from Frisco, Texas.

I can recite Pulp Fiction line by line and my favorite color is blue. I want to be a journalist when I grow up, and I want to see every part of the world. For the first time in my life I'm an avid reader. Fifteen months here has been fifteen months away from Lauren, the girl I'm crazy about. This wouldn't be much of a blog without her, as she's the inspiration for anything creative coming out of me, my beautiful muse.

**In the future, I want my children to grow up with the belief that what I did here was wrong, in a society that doesn't deem that idea unpatriotic.**

Herbert Hoover said, "Older men declare war. But it is the youth who must fight and die."

**These are the young men we can't afford to go without. Brian Chevalier and Jesse Williams; George Bush and Secretary Gates, we're all flesh and blood.**

**Every life is sacred. You probably don't know the names of the first two. But you should.**

**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

### **Illinois Soldier Killed In Baghdad**



Army Pfc. Omar E. Torres, of Chicago, 20, died Aug. 22, 2007, in Baghdad when an explosive detonated near his unit. (AP Photo/Illinois Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn's Office)

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### **Illinois Soldier Killed In Baghdad**



Phillip Brodnick, of New Lenox, Ill., 27, died when a Black Hawk helicopter went down in northern Iraq on Wednesday, Aug. 22, 2007, after picking up troops from a mission. (AP Photo/Illinois Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn's Office)

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## **Ft. Bragg Sgt. Killed In Iraq**



Sgt. Joshua L. Morley, 22, 82nd Airborne Division was one of two soldiers who died Aug. 26, 2007, in a firefight in Samarra, Iraq, and were based at Fort Bragg. (AP Photo/U.S. Army 82nd Airborne Division)

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## **Two U.S. Soldiers Killed In Salah Ad Din**

August 27, 2007 Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20070827-02

TIKRIT, Iraq – Two Task Force Lightning Soldiers were killed by enemy gunfire in Salah ad Din Province, Sunday.

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## **Two Marines Killed In Anbar**

August 27, 2007 Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20070827-04

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq – A Marine assigned to Multi National Force-West died Aug. 25 and in a separate incident, another Marine died Aug. 26, while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar Province.

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# **Son's Death Leaves Mom Asking Why: "I Don't See The Purpose For Being There" "When Is It Going To Stop?"**



August 21, 2007 By Anne Krueger, UNION-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

With her son deploying to Iraq, Maria Fisher wasn't about to let an aching back stop her from dancing with him at his going-away party.

"I said, 'I don't care if I hurt myself, I'm going to dance with my son,' " Fisher said yesterday as she gazed at his black-and-white dancing shoes in her El Cajon living room. "He promised to dance with me again when he came home.

"That was our last dance."

Staff Sgt. Sean P. Fisher, 29, was one of five Army soldiers who died Aug. 14 when their helicopter crashed in Al Taqaddum, Iraq. Fisher and the other crew members were assigned to the 1st Battalion, 52nd Aviation Regiment, Task Force 49 in Fort Wainwright, Alaska.

This week, Fisher's family and girlfriend, Melissa Volentine, are preparing for a funeral Mass on Friday at St. Kieran's Catholic Church in El Cajon.

Votive candles and American flags line the sidewalk to the apartment Maria Fisher shares with her husband, Walter Fisher. Sean Fisher's black-and-white shoes, his favorite Padres hat and several photos of the young soldier form a sort of shrine on the living room table.

Sean Fisher grew up in East County and graduated from Granite Hills High School in El Cajon. He got married and had a daughter, Bailey, now 6 years old.

Fisher worked at a McDonald's restaurant and the Viejas Casino, but he enlisted in the Army five years ago, his mother said, because he saw it as a reliable job that would provide training in mechanics, one of his passions.

Fisher served a year in Iraq in a previous deployment, his mother said. His wife couldn't handle the separation, and the couple recently divorced. Maria Fisher's last call from her son came at 5:30 a.m. Aug. 13. He told her he was re-enlisting. "I told him, 'I can't share your happiness,'" she said.

Sean Fisher told his mother he would receive a \$20,000 bonus and talked of opening up an auto repair shop or working for an airline when he got out of the service.

"He had all these dreams," Maria Fisher said.

The next day, she was notified that her son was dead. That day, a letter from him arrived in the mail for Valentine. Valentine said Fisher signed the letter "Your No. 1 hero."

"He said a prayer that we would get through this together because if we could get through this, we could get through anything," Valentine said.

Maria Fisher is bitter that her son died in what she called "a useless war."

She said she feels that President Bush lied to the country about the reasons for invading Iraq and that going to war was not necessary.

"Serving your country is good, but not for no reason," she said. "I don't see the purpose for being there."

As of yesterday, 3,701 troops had died in the Iraq war. Maria Fisher said she sees reports of the deaths almost every day, and now her son's body will be arriving home in a coffin Thursday.

"When is it going to stop?" she asked.

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## **So Much For General Betrayus' Lying Happy Talk About Anbar: "The Militants Still Control The Supply Routes Of The Province" "Americans Don't Control The Roads"**

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

August 27, 2007 By Hannah Allam, McCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

BAGHDAD -- Iraq's deadly insurgent groups have financed their war against U.S. troops in part with hundreds of thousands of dollars in U.S. rebuilding funds that they've extorted from Iraqi contractors in Anbar province.

The payments, in return for the insurgents' allowing supplies to move and construction work to begin, have taken place since the earliest projects in 2003, said Iraqi contractors, politicians and interpreters involved with reconstruction efforts.

Providing that security is the source of the extortion, Iraqi contractors say.

A U.S. company with a reconstruction contract hires an Iraqi subcontractor to haul supplies along insurgent-ridden roads.

The Iraqi subcontractor sets his price at up to four times the going rate because he'll be forced to give 50 percent or more to gun-toting insurgents who demand cash payments in exchange for the supply convoys' safe passage.

Sometimes, the insurgents take the goods, too.

Despite several U.S. military offensives to rout insurgents, the militants still control the supply routes of the province, making reconstruction all but impossible without their protection.

One Iraqi contractor who is working on an American-funded rebuilding project in Ramadi said he faced two choices when he wanted to bring in a crane, heavy machinery and workers from Baghdad: either hire a private security company to escort the supplies for up to \$6,000 a truck, or pay off locals with insurgent connections.

He chose the latter, after getting \$120,000 for a U.S. contract he estimates to be worth no more than \$20,000. "Insurgents control the roads," he added.

**"Americans don't control the roads -- and everything from Syria and Jordan goes through there."**

<p><b>OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME NOW!</b></p>
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**Just Fucking Brilliant:  
The Next Time You're Surrounded By  
Masses Of Iraqis On A Religious  
Pilgrimage, Be Sure To Wave A Hand  
Gun At Them**



Unarmed Shi'ite pilgrims object to the presence of a U.S. occupation vehicle in the midst of their religious procession in Mahmoudiya, 30 km (19 miles) south of Baghdad August 26, 2007. Picture taken August 26, 2007. REUTERS/Ibrahim Sultan (IRAQ)



A U.S. soldier atop an armoured vehicle in Mahmoudiya, 30 km (19 miles) south of Baghdad August 26, 2007 after hundreds of unarmed Iraqis objected to the presence of a U.S. occupation vehicle in the midst of their religious procession. Picture taken August 26, 2007. REUTERS/Ibrahim Sultan (IRAQ)



The U.S. soldier aims his sidearm from atop an armored vehicle in Mahmoudiya, 30 km (19 miles) south of Baghdad August 26, 2007 after hundreds of unarmed Iraqis objected to the presence of a U.S. occupation vehicle in the midst of their religious procession. Picture taken August 26, 2007. REUTERS/Ibrahim Sultan (IRAQ)

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## **NEW GENERAL ORDER NO. 1: CLEAN UP PACK UP GO HOME**



A US soldier cleans his weapon in the Buhriz Iraq Police station, southeast of Baquba, 30 July. (AFP/File/Olivier Laban-Mattei)

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## **AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS**

# **Four Foreign Occupation Soldiers Killed In E. Afghanistan; Three From U.S.**

August 28, 2007 Xinhua

Three soldiers of the U.S.-led coalition forces and one NATO soldier were killed in eastern Afghanistan on Monday, the military said.

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## **Dutch Soldier Killed In Oruzgan, Another Wounded; Truthful Officer Says “Progress Is Regularly Countered By Far-Reaching Setbacks”**

August 27, 2007 (dpa)

A Dutch sergeant was killed and a Dutch corporal wounded during military action in Afghanistan.

The Dutch soldier's death was confirmed by Defence Staff Chief General Dick Berlijn during a press conference Monday morning in The Hague.

The incident took place on Sunday at 11:30 pm, 12 kilometres north of the Dutch military camp of Deh Rawod in the Afghan province of Oruzgan.

The Dutch troops were trying to locate and destroy roadside bombs when, upon leaving their jeep, one of the bombs exploded.

The explosion killed 30-year-old Sergeant Martijn Rosier from Sint Annaparochie, a small village in the northern Dutch province of Friesland. Corporal Bas van Mourik, 23, was wounded.

Corporal van Mourik, who sustained a head injury, was taken to the nearby Deh Rawod camp. He spoke to his family before he was operated on in the military hospital at Camp Holland. His life was not in danger and his medical condition was described as stable.

General Berlijn said Monday that the Dutch are able to neutralize and destroy many roadside bombs, but that it is “impossible to eliminate all danger. Yesterday's incident demonstrates this in a tragic way.”

The death of a colleague is always difficult, he said.

“This is a tough and difficult mission, where progress is regularly countered by far-reaching setbacks,” Berlijn added.

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## TROOP NEWS

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



8.19.07: Wounded soldier arrives at Baghdad's Green zone emergency room.  
REUTERS/Damir Sagolj

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**A Group Of Soldiers In Iraq Very  
Politely Tell The New York Times  
And The Whole World That The  
War Is Fucked**

[As for the concluding sentence, everybody serving in Iraq knows not just the war, but morale also is completely, utterly fucked too.]

**[As this letter so perfectly illustrates.**

**[When groups of soldiers begin writing open letters to the New York Times moderately critical of the war, you can imagine what thousands of less conservative troops are really thinking, and saying, including saying to the media.**

**[Set aside your criticisms of some of the politics below: what matters is that this is a thermometer telling you the temperature in the serving troops in Iraq. And it is very hot, and getting hotter. The act is more important than the content.**

**[Hopefully Staff Sgt. Murphy will fully recover. T]**

[Thanks to Elaine Brower, Chris Lombardi, Alan Stolzer, and Pham Binh, The Military Project & James Starowitz, Veterans For Peace & Max Watts, who sent this in.]

August 19, 2007 By BUDDHIKA JAYAMAHA, WESLEY D. SMITH, JEREMY ROEBUCK, OMAR MORA, EDWARD SANDMEIER, YANCE T. GRAY and JEREMY A. MURPHY, The New York Times

**Buddhika Jayamaha is an Army specialist. Wesley D. Smith is a sergeant. Jeremy Roebuck is a sergeant. Omar Mora is a sergeant. Edward Sandmeier is a sergeant. Yance T. Gray is a staff sergeant. Jeremy A. Murphy is a staff sergeant.**

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**Baghdad**

**VIEWED from Iraq at the tail end of a 15-month deployment, the political debate in Washington is indeed surreal. Counterinsurgency is, by definition, a competition between insurgents and counterinsurgents for the control and support of a population.**

**To believe that Americans, with an occupying force that long ago outlived its reluctant welcome, can win over a recalcitrant local population and win this counterinsurgency is far-fetched.**

**As responsible infantrymen and noncommissioned officers with the 82nd Airborne Division soon heading back home, we are skeptical of recent press coverage portraying the conflict as increasingly manageable and feel it has neglected the mounting civil, political and social unrest we see every day.**

(Obviously, these are our personal views and should not be seen as official within our chain of command.)

**The claim that we are increasingly in control of the battlefields in Iraq is an assessment arrived at through a flawed, American-centered framework.**

**Yes, we are militarily superior, but our successes are offset by failures elsewhere.**

**What soldiers call the “battle space” remains the same, with changes only at the margins.**



It is crowded with actors who do not fit neatly into boxes: Sunni extremists, Al Qaeda terrorists, Shiite militiamen, criminals and armed tribes. This situation is made more complex by the questionable loyalties and Janus-faced role of the Iraqi police and Iraqi Army, which have been trained and armed at United States taxpayers' expense.

**A few nights ago, for example, we witnessed the death of one American soldier and the critical wounding of two others when a lethal armor-piercing explosive was detonated between an Iraqi Army checkpoint and a police one.**

**Local Iraqis readily testified to American investigators that Iraqi police and Army officers escorted the triggermen and helped plant the bomb.**

These civilians highlighted their own predicament: had they informed the Americans of the bomb before the incident, the Iraqi Army, the police or the local Shiite militia would have killed their families.

As many grunts will tell you, this is a near-routine event.

**Reports that a majority of Iraqi Army commanders are now reliable partners can be considered only misleading rhetoric.**

The truth is that battalion commanders, even if well meaning, have little to no influence over the thousands of obstinate men under them, in an incoherent chain of command, who are really loyal only to their militias.

Similarly, Sunnis, who have been underrepresented in the new Iraqi armed forces, now find themselves forming militias, sometimes with our tacit support. Sunnis recognize that the best guarantee they may have against Shiite militias and the Shiite-dominated government is to form their own armed bands. We arm them to aid in our fight against Al Qaeda.

However, while creating proxies is essential in winning a counterinsurgency, it requires that the proxies are loyal to the center that we claim to support. Armed Sunni tribes have indeed become effective surrogates, but the enduring question is where their loyalties would lie in our absence. The Iraqi government finds itself working at cross purposes with us on this issue because it is justifiably fearful that Sunni militias will turn on it should the Americans leave.

**In short, we operate in a bewildering context of determined enemies and questionable allies, one where the balance of forces on the ground remains entirely unclear.**

**(In the course of writing this article, this fact became all too clear: one of us, Staff Sergeant Murphy, an Army Ranger and reconnaissance team leader, was shot in the head during a "time-sensitive target acquisition mission" on Aug. 12; he is expected to survive and is being flown to a military hospital in the United States.)**

While we have the will and the resources to fight in this context, we are effectively hamstrung because realities on the ground require measures we will always refuse — namely, the widespread use of lethal and brutal force.

Given the situation, it is important not to assess security from an American-centered perspective.

**The ability of, say, American observers to safely walk down the streets of formerly violent towns is not a resounding indicator of security. What matters is the experience of the local citizenry and the future of our counterinsurgency.**

**When we take this view, we see that a vast majority of Iraqis feel increasingly insecure and view us as an occupation force that has failed to produce normalcy after four years and is increasingly unlikely to do so as we continue to arm each warring side.**

Coupling our military strategy to an insistence that the Iraqis meet political benchmarks for reconciliation is also unhelpful. The morass in the government has fueled impatience and confusion while providing no semblance of security to average Iraqis. Leaders are far from arriving at a lasting political settlement. This should not be surprising, since a lasting political solution will not be possible while the military situation remains in constant flux.

The Iraqi government is run by the main coalition partners of the Shiite-dominated United Iraqi Alliance, with Kurds as minority members. The Shiite clerical establishment formed the alliance to make sure its people did not succumb to the same mistake as in 1920: rebelling against the occupying Western force (then the British) and losing what they believed was their inherent right to rule Iraq as the majority.

The qualified and reluctant welcome we received from the Shiites since the invasion has to be seen in that historical context.

They saw in us something useful for the moment.

Now that moment is passing, as the Shiites have achieved what they believe is rightfully theirs.

Their next task is to figure out how best to consolidate the gains, because reconciliation without consolidation risks losing it all. Washington's insistence that the Iraqis correct the three gravest mistakes we made — de-Baathification, the dismantling of the Iraqi Army and the creation of a loose federalist system of government — places us at cross purposes with the government we have committed to support.

Political reconciliation in Iraq will occur, but not at our insistence or in ways that meet our benchmarks. It will happen on Iraqi terms when the reality on the battlefield is congruent with that in the political sphere. There will be no magnanimous solutions that please every party the way we expect, and there will be winners and losers. The choice we have left is to decide which side we will take.

Trying to please every party in the conflict — as we do now — will only ensure we are hated by all in the long run.

**At the same time, the most important front in the counterinsurgency, improving basic social and economic conditions, is the one on which we have failed most miserably.**

Two million Iraqis are in refugee camps in bordering countries. Close to two million more are internally displaced and now fill many urban slums. Cities lack regular electricity, telephone services and sanitation. “Lucky” Iraqis live in gated communities barricaded with concrete blast walls that provide them with a sense of communal claustrophobia rather than any sense of security we would consider normal.

In a lawless environment where men with guns rule the streets, engaging in the banalities of life has become a death-defying act. Four years into our occupation, we have failed on every promise, while we have substituted Baath Party tyranny with a tyranny of Islamist, militia and criminal violence.

**When the primary preoccupation of average Iraqis is when and how they are likely to be killed, we can hardly feel smug as we hand out care packages. As an Iraqi man told us a few days ago with deep resignation, “We need security, not free food.”**

**In the end, we need to recognize that our presence may have released Iraqis from the grip of a tyrant, but that it has also robbed them of their self-respect.**

**They will soon realize that the best way to regain dignity is to call us what we are — an army of occupation — and force our withdrawal.**

Until that happens, it would be prudent for us to increasingly let Iraqis take center stage in all matters, to come up with a nuanced policy in which we assist them from the margins but let them resolve their differences as they see fit.

This suggestion is not meant to be defeatist, but rather to highlight our pursuit of incompatible policies to absurd ends without recognizing the incongruities.

We need not talk about our morale. As committed soldiers, we will see this mission through.

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## **Soldier Who Paid To Get Shot To Avoid Another Iraq Deployment Says “Soldiers In His Unit Told Him They Understand ... They Can’t Blame Me” “I’m Getting A Lot Of Support”**

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

July 31st 2007 Patrice O'Shaughnessy, NY Daily News [Excerpts]

Bronx soldier Jonathan Aponte - reviled as a coward and scorned as a dope for paying a gunman to shoot him so he wouldn't get sent back to Iraq - hadn't told his mother too much about his 10 months in the hell of the war-torn country.

"When he came home he seemed different, and I finally asked him, 'What is the worst thing you ever saw over there?'" Gwen Aponte recalled. "He said, 'Do you really want to know?' And I said, 'Yes, I really want to know.'

"He told me about a roadside bombing ... their translator was in the truck, and half his body got blown away, blown down the street, and the other half was still on the seat, the seat belt held it there."

Her 20-year-old son was down in Fort Hood in Texas, recovering from the gunshot to his knee and awaiting his fate from the Army and from a Bronx grand jury, which is considering a conspiracy charge against him.

**Some soldiers in his unit told him "they understand ... they can't blame me," Aponte told me by telephone. "I'm getting a lot of support."**

He said he didn't get shot to get out of his duty with the Army. "I like the Army; but how can I take combat if I couldn't take the fireworks on the Fourth of July?" he asked. He said he didn't want to endanger the soldiers next to him.

He was supposed to finish his tour in Iraq - two more months - but with the troop surge, he would have been extended another six months, said his lawyer, Marty Goldberg.

**When Aponte went into the grand jury, "There was no question he did it; the question was whether they want to bestow mercy on him," said Goldberg.**

**"The grand jurors were crying, the kid was crying," said Goldberg, a former Bronx assistant district attorney. He said even the prosecutor thanked Aponte for what he did in Iraq.**

As for what happens next, Gwen Aponte is praying. But she said no matter what the future holds, one thing can't be taken away.

"He served 10 months with all he had."

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## **British Commanders Tell Government To Get The Fuck Out Of Iraq Now**

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

19 August 2007 By Raymond Whitaker and Robert Fox, Independent News and Media Limited

Senior military commanders have told the Government that Britain can achieve “nothing more” in south-east Iraq, and that the 5,500 British troops still deployed there should move towards withdrawal without further delay.

Last month Gordon Brown said after meeting George Bush at Camp David that the decision to hand over security in Basra province – the last of the four held by the British – “will be made on the military advice of our commanders on the ground”. He added: “Whatever happens, we will make a full statement to Parliament when it returns (in October).”

Two generals told The Independent on Sunday last week that the military advice given to the Prime Minister was, “We’ve done what we can in the south”.

The Army is drawing up plans to “reposture” the 5,000 that will be left at Basra airport, and aims to bring the bulk of them home in the next few months.

**Immediate American discontent is said to centre on the CIA’s reluctance to leave Basra Palace, an important base for watching Iran, which may explain why Britain has held on to the complex until now.**

***There are fears that the bloody power struggle in Basra will escalate sharply if and when British troops depart, but commanders point out that up to 90 per cent of the violence is directed against their forces.***

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## Australian Troops Using Faulty Weapons

28/08/2007 Radio Australia

Australia’s Federal Labor Opposition has seized on reports that Australian soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan have been using faulty equipment, saying the Government is letting down the country’s troops.

Freedom of Information documents from the Defence Force have revealed malfunctions to rifles, pistols and machine guns. But Labor’s defence spokesman, Joel Fitzgibbon, says there should be an audit of the weapons in the field.

“We accept isolated incidents but this is obviously a systemic failure going all the way from pistols to rifles through to machine guns and even grenade launchers. The Howard Government’s always talking up its national security credentials and its commitment to our troops but it appears they’ve let our boys on the frontline very very badly,” he says.

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## **IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP**

# Assorted Resistance Action

27 Aug 2007 Reuters & August 28, 2007 By STEPHEN FARRELL, The New York Times

At least seven tribal [collaborator] militia members were killed and four wounded when they clashed with militants over night in the town of Jurf al-Sakhr, about 85 km (50 miles) south of Baghdad, police said.

Guerrilla fighters attacked a police station and wounded three policemen in al-Rashdiya district in the northern outskirts of Baghdad on Sunday, police said.

The governor of Iraq's Salahuddin province escaped an assassination attempt on Monday that, if successful, would have made him the third regional governor to be killed this month, police said.

Two roadside bombs exploded near the convoy of Governor Hamad al-Qaisi, but he escaped unscathed. Two of his bodyguards were hurt, police and sources in the governor's office said.

CBS News announced Monday that an Iraqi interpreter working for the network was found dead five days after he was abducted from his Baghdad home.

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

## FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

**At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation's ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. Frederick Douglas, 1852**

**Re: Army Of Dude, GI Special 5H23:  
"Is There Intelligent Life Anywhere By  
The Potomac?"**

From: Felicity Arbuthnot  
To: GI Special  
Subject: An opposing Army of near half a million  
Date: Aug 27, 2007 10:26 AM

Re: Army of Dude, GI Special 5H23.

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

**Indeed, further, who is responsible for the fury at the US army? Their very own national, former Iraq 'Viceroy' Paul Bremer and Washington's policy makers.**

Guess what they get when they disband an army of nearly half a million and fire every one from their jobs? An army with fighting and explosive expertise, of half a million, teaching virtually an entire disaffected, occupied, nation, their army skills.

**Is there intelligent life anywhere by the Potomac?**

Further, one point, in the same report, the writer reported people watching from rooftops even having beds, chairs and tea up there, thus always guilty.

Traditionally, however, Iraqis slept and entertained on their flat roofs in the hot months, as it is cooler. Homes were built with this in mind. As electricity, thus air conditioning, is near non-existent, they reverted to this tradition during them embargo years and more so even, as electricity is worse, during the occupation.

**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](mailto:contact@militaryproject.org):. Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Replies confidential. Same address to unsubscribe.**

## **Same Old Same Old**

August 25, 2007 Via Tom Condit

"When Iraq becomes strong enough in our opinion to stand alone, we shall be in a position to state that our task has been fulfilled, and that Iraq is an independent sovereign state.

But this cannot be said while we are forced year after year to spend very large sums of money on helping the Iraqi government to defend itself and maintain order."

Winston Churchill, 1922

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# **“I Saw Soldiers Smoking, Talking On Cell Phones, Talking Back To Drill Sergeants”**

## **“The Proper Response Is, ‘Yes, Sergeant, On My Way’”**

August 20, 2007  
Letters To The Editor  
Army Times

I read the article about the possibility of longer basic training because the soldiers who are graduating are not mature enough, lack discipline and motivation, and pretty much do what a teenage adolescent does.

It's not that we need a longer basic; we took the power away from the drill sergeants to break down new soldiers and build them up properly.

I just went through a reclassification to another job in the Army and had to do my schooling in an Advanced Individual Training unit, which included all new recruits just out of basic.

I saw soldiers smoking, talking on cell phones, talking back to drill sergeants and being disrespectful to their peers. This type of behavior is not what the Army is about, and should be dealt with accordingly. Even now, the unit I was assigned to has many problematic soldiers because they weren't properly trained in how to become a soldier.

Drill sergeants should have the power to do what is necessary to train these soldiers to become the best the Army has. They are the Army's new generation of soldiers, and they look and act like a bunch of high school kids.

Example: When an NCO asks a soldier to do something, the proper response is, “yes, sergeant, on my way.” Nine times out of 10, the actual response is “Why?” or “why can't he or she do it?” or “I don't want to.”

That type of nonsoldiering is what makes an NCO's job harder. Now he has to discipline the soldier, or write up a 4856 (counseling form) about why he was disrespectful to an NCO.

Some of these soldiers are graduating and being sent to Iraq. They have a front-row seat on becoming soldiers because they are fighting for their lives and their buddies' lives in a war zone. Do we really want to send undisciplined soldiers to a war knowing they could wind up acting and doing as they did in basic?



We need to go back to the old ways of training soldiers — we need to be tough on them. It's unfair to drill sergeants that limitations are placed on how they can do their jobs. And it's unfair to the soldiers who are being trained poorly.

Spc. Andrew Douglas  
Fort Lewis, Wash.

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

## OCCUPATION REPORT

# 60% Of Iraqis Want U.S. Troops Dead: Big Surprise



Foreign occupation soldiers from the U.S. 2nd battalion, 32nd Field Artillery brigade walk past an Iraqi citizen holding her baby after a night home invasion to search her house in Baghdad August 13, 2007. REUTERS/Damir Sagolj (IRAQ)

**[61% of Iraqis say they approve of attacks on U.S.-led forces in their country, up from 47 percent in January. A solid majority of Shiite and Sunni Arabs approved**

**of the attacks, according to the poll.** 9/27/2006 By BARRY SCHWEID, AP & Program on International Policy Attitudes

**Iraqis feel about U.S. troops trampling them in the dirt the same way Americans felt about British troops trampling them in the dirt in 1776. They are right to resist.**  
T]

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## **Collaborator Cops Butcher Unarmed Pilgrims In Karbala**

Aug 27, 2007 (Reuters)

Police killed three people on Monday night in clashes with pilgrims in Iraq's city of Kerbala, where tens of thousands of Shi'ites have gathered for one of the holiest days on the Shi'ite calendar.

A Reuters photographer said he saw one pilgrim shot dead outside his hotel. Several wounded people were carried away by fellow pilgrims.

Police said they opened fire on a large crowd of pilgrims infuriated by the strict security measures in force in the city for the celebrations, killing three and wounding 13. The shots were fired after the pilgrims began brawling with the policemen.

A pilgrim in Kerbala said tensions were running high in the city. He said that scores of policemen were on the main roads leading to the two shrines and others on rooftops. Some carried heavy machineguns and rocket-propelled grenade launchers.

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## **DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK**

### **Gonzales Resigns To Spend More Time Eavesdropping On His Family**

August 27, 2007 The Borowitz Report

Attorney General Alberto Gonzales resigned today, effective immediately, telling reporters that he wanted to spend more time eavesdropping on his family.

Mr. Gonzales, a champion of domestic surveillance and warrantless wiretaps while in office, said he was "totally stoked" about turning his prying eyes on his own family.

“Domestic surveillance begins at home,” Mr. Gonzales said at a White House press conference. “That means nobody in my family is above suspicion, not even the little ones,” an apparent reference to Mr. Gonzales’ children.

Standing by Mr. Gonzales’ side, President George W. Bush praised his former Attorney General, singling out his “courage” for ramping up his domestic spying program on his own family.

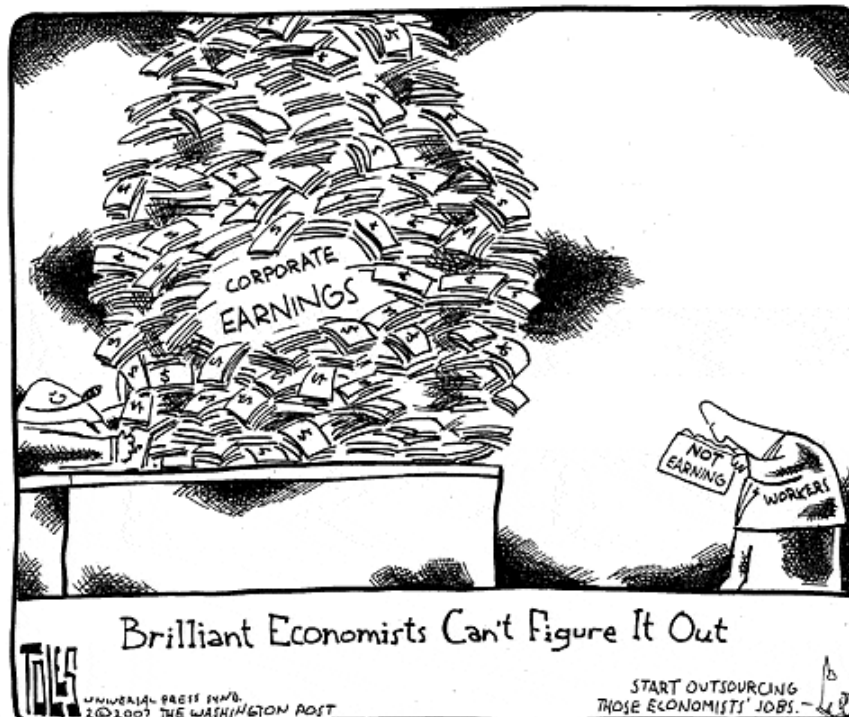
“If every head of every household was as willing to eavesdrop on his own family as my man Alberto is, we wouldn’t need a Homeland Security Department,” Mr. Bush chuckled.

Mr. Gonzales was noncommittal when a reporter asked him a question about the role that waterboarding and other forms of torture might play in his interrogation of family members. “Nothing is off the table,” he said.

Asked about his tenure as Attorney General, Mr. Gonzales was candid about his stormy time in office: “Frankly, I can’t believe it took this long for them to shitcan me.”

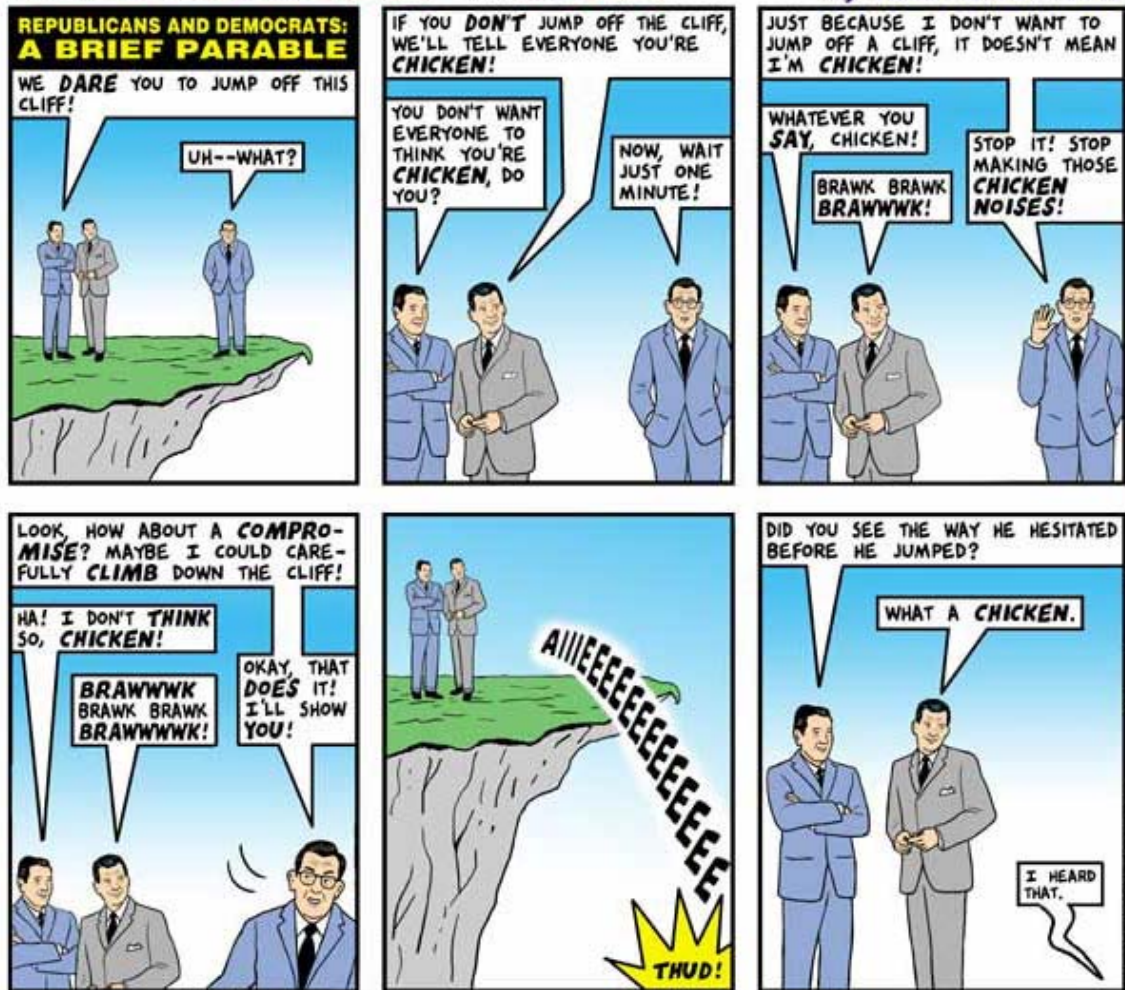
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## **DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK**



# THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



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

## NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces. Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces. If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers.

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/> And join with Iraq War vets in the call to end the occupation and bring our troops home now! ([www.ivaw.org/](http://www.ivaw.org/))

## GI Special Looks Even Better Printed Out

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

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

<http://www.uruknet.info/?p=-6&l=e>; [http://www.traprockpeace.org/qi\\_special/](http://www.traprockpeace.org/qi_special/);  
<http://www.albasrah.net/maqalat/english/qi-special.htm>

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