

GI SPECIAL 5117:



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

One More Wounded Soldier Betrayed:

**The Army Withholds His Pay & His
Enlistment Bonus Denied Because
“He Failed To Fulfill His Contract”
Due To His Injury In Iraq”**

The U.S. Army failed to provide all the benefits and support for which the family is entitled. Now the Hinkles are tens of thousands of dollars in debt, and they may

lose their ranch. Ron's wife, Reece, gave up her lucrative income as a corporate accountant to take care of him.

September 12, 2007 by Howard Berkes, All Things Considered

Two years ago, Army Specialist Ronald Hinkle left a good trucking job, a working ranch, a wife and two daughters in Byers, Colo., to serve in Iraq.

Now Hinkle is one of more than 13,000 American service men and women who have suffered serious wounds in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Hinkle survived an IED blast but festering wounds nearly killed him.

He and his family are struggling to rebuild lives completely transformed by that explosion in Iraq.

Hinkle was diagnosed with Traumatic Brain Injury, or TBI, as a result of the IED explosion. He suffers from sudden seizures. He tires quickly. He doesn't think clearly, and he cannot be left alone.

Hinkle was honored for his service in November when Vice President Dick Cheney pinned a Purple Heart to his desert fatigues, but his family feels otherwise deserted by the Army.

The U.S. Army failed to provide all the benefits and support for which the family is entitled.

Now the Hinkles are tens of thousands of dollars in debt, and they may lose their ranch. Ron's wife, Reece, gave up her lucrative income as a corporate accountant to take care of him.

Reece now finds herself as more of a caretaker than wife, and she laments that Ron has lost the ability to be a father, a son and a husband because "he is living his life being injured."

"Just trying to just figure out how to deal with that is enough," Reece said. "What people don't realize is it's not the injury that destroys families. It's the aftermath. It's how you reconstruct your life, how you physically regroup, emotionally, financially. It will never be the same."

Reece's initial reaction to Ron's enlisting in the Army — which he did out of the blue — was fear, followed by what she called an "are you stupid?!" reaction. But those feelings eventually subsided.

"And my heart was filled with pride. And I was determined to be the best military wife I could be and support him even though it totally changed our entire life," she said

But Reece set three conditions. Keep the ranch. Don't move away from the ranch. And keep her doctors in Denver, where complications from diabetes now have her on waiting lists for kidney and pancreas transplants.

The Army assigned Ron to the closest post, Fort Carson, Colo., a two-hour drive away.

After he deployed to Iraq, the Hinkle's eldest daughter Rebecca, 14, was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. This was a military family with more challenges than most, even before the bomb blast in Iraq.

Ron remembers driving down the road in Iraq when it happened: "just headed out on patrol ... just an explosion happened ... just things flying everywhere ... seemed like a lot of chaos ... in our vehicle ... seemed like everything took forever to happen ... everything just happened in slow motion."

Ron lost his hearing. His eardrum was perforated. And he bled from what seemed like minor shrapnel wounds.

He was treated and sent back to work.

Nine days later, there was another crisis at home: Reece had suffered a heart attack. Ron rushed back to Colorado on emergency leave. Reece improved but Ron got sick. The day he was due to head back to Iraq, he was in intensive care in a civilian hospital outside Denver.

"Ron was on a ventilator, fully intubated and in a coma," said Reece. "So in a matter of less than 10 hours, he went from talking to me to being on life support." Within the first 18 hours, he was given last rites because doctors didn't expect him to live to sunrise.

The entire family gathered at the Aurora Medical Center. Daughters Rebecca and Callie, 13, joined their mom and grandparents at Ron's bedside.

"When I had to say goodbye to my dad, I really wasn't mad," Rebecca said. "I really wasn't anything. It basically was I was in shock and I couldn't feel anything. And all I could keep thinking was this is not true. My dad never was sick. He was the strongest person I knew."

Ron Hinkle is matter of fact about the explosion that led to his Purple Heart.

"It's part of the job. I was doing my job and that's something that happened," said Hinkle, who says he'd re-join his unit in a heartbeat.

"I'd be happy to go do it again. I loved everything," he said. But Hinkle can't go much of anywhere. And because of his brain injury, his days of military service are over.

Working on his farm is Hinkle's only job, and it is also his therapy. He cares for eight hogs, nine horses, seven cows and a bull on his 60-acre ranch about 40 miles east of Denver.

Hinkle can't do many of the things he used to before the accident — he can't drive a pickup truck, a tractor or his all-terrain four-wheelers on the ranch. He can't even drive down the driveway to close the front gate when the cows and horses are grazing. He may never get much better.

Rebecca said she wishes everything would go back to normal — no brain injury or other medical problems. But she knows that's unrealistic.

"He's going to have seizures. He's going to start forgetting us. And it's going happen," she said. "So we just got to make the best of what we have now and just keep going and not sit there like other people who just drain on themselves and go, oh well, he's only going to be here eight more years. You just kind of got to pick it up and say no, we're going to make the best out of this."

Ron sits and listens when his family talks about what's happened to him. His expression doesn't seem to be a barometer of what he feels — it rarely changes. It's mellow, sweet, and his eyes seem a bit lost — like a boat in calm waters. He simply shrugs his shoulders when asked about what he hears.

Reece does most of the talking now. Her life has changed dramatically since the blast. She says she's no longer a wife, a lover or a best friend; she's become a caregiver.

Last year alone, Reece drove more than 10,000 miles for more than 300 doctor's appointments, most 120 miles away. There were also meetings with caseworkers, payroll clerks, insurance companies and military officers.

"I'm no longer an individual," Reece said, "I have not had any individuality ... because Ron drastically needs me. My mother, the children, need me."

Ron's doctors say his raw strength helped him beat the odds, even after 16 days in a medically-induced coma.

There are times when Ron seems normal. But review his medical reports and listen to his family and it is clear there's no such thing as normal anymore. No hunting or hiking with the girls. No driving them into town for ice cream. Ron can't help with homework. He gets frustrated and angry easily. He needs a palm pilot, organized and managed by his wife, to remind him to do things.

Rebecca says he can't connect in ways he once could. "Before dad got hurt, we just kept thinking we're grateful it didn't happen to us. But then it did ... and I didn't talk to anyone, because my dad was the only person I did talk to," Rebecca said. "And he obviously couldn't talk to me. So just kind of kept it bottled inside."

Callie has another perspective on life with a wounded dad. She used to get angry and ask why this happened to her. But then she'd count her blessings, remembering all those other families with dads or moms who didn't come home.

Although Reece said the "honor" she carries in her heart is that her husband gave up everything, she remains frustrated at how the Army has responded.

"For him to be injured doing his job, that comes with the job. That's a risk. But the way he was taken care of afterwards, it's very disheartening," Reece said. "I feel like they almost make the guys feel like (they) never mattered."

"And I heard that Ron would never be forgotten. And I don't believe that anymore. I believe he's been forgotten."

UPDATE: Since NPR spoke with Hinkle last month, his financial situation has become more precarious.

He is now owed two paychecks from the Army. It's not clear when the checks will resume or whether he'll receive back pay.

The family is missing close to \$2,500 in back salary.

In addition, last week Hinkle was notified by the finance department at Fort Carson that a \$3,000 enlistment bonus will not be honored because "he failed to fulfill his contract" due to his injury in Iraq.

Part 2: At The Brink Of Financial Ruin

September 13, 2007 by Howard Berkes, All Things Considered [Excerpts]

Ron's wife, Reece, quit her high-paying job to care for him. They live on their Byers, Colo., ranch with their two daughters, Rebecca, 14, and Callie, 13, and Reece's mother, Lois White.

The Hinkles' home is filled with memories. Photographs and display cases chronicle a military career cut short by the bomb blast. There's a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star, and a special Army snapshot Reece was only supposed to receive if Ron never made it home. Reece said it took her a long time to even look at the photo. But over time, she has come to see the picture as an achievement: Not many families who receive the photo end up seeing the soldier pull through injuries.

"You know, we conquered a hurdle that very few do," she says.

Ron Hinkle survived his wounds, but he'll probably never work again. Meanwhile, Reece has serious health concerns of her own: She awaits a kidney and pancreas transplant. And their two daughters are just past bouts with cancer.

That means that, along with a plunge in income, the family is dealing with crushing medical bills.

Roger Stradley is a retired Army command sergeant major who now directs a military family support group called USACares. Stradley predicts that the Hinkles will lose their family ranch.

"When we first heard the story, it was just incomprehensible that so many things could happen to a family in such a short period of time," Stradley says. "It was not to be believed."

Some of the things that went wrong are beyond the Army's control, but some are not.

Confusing advice put the Hinkles in the wrong military insurance plan, leaving them with \$18,000 in family medical bills.

Misinformation left them with \$5,000 in unpaid travel expenses for Ron's medical care.

Bureaucratic errors cost Ron half his military pay last month.

And the Army failed to properly document Ron's war injury, costing the family \$70,000 in special payments reserved for wounded soldiers.

The Hinkles may never see most of this money. And that has them at the brink of financial ruin.

Stradley sees military families struggling like this all the time.

A big problem seems to be the Army's reliance on an injured soldier's regular unit for family and logistical support, once the soldier is out of the hospital. It's all left to rear detachment commanders, like Capt. Matt Staton, who commanded Ron Hinkle's home unit until he retired from Fort Carson last month.

Staton himself suffered a traumatic brain injury, complicating his rear detachment work.

Staton says that the Hinkles were somewhat isolated from the military support system because they live 120 miles from Fort Carson, Colo. And Hinkle's wounds in Iraq weren't recognized as serious until he was home on leave and was rushed to a civilian hospital, 70 miles from the base.

"I don't think they fell through the cracks. I think their situation was unique," Staton said.

Deborah Berthold focused on the Hinkles when she worked for the Army's new Wounded Warrior program, an attempt at providing systematic support.

'There was no one agency, organization or caseworker that really had the ability to look at the whole picture and provide them services,' Berthold said. "I don't think any one person understood the scope of what was going on in this family's life."

The Army has an even newer program called the Warrior Transition Unit. It gathers wounded soldiers in special units devoted solely to them and their families. But that won't help Hinkle, who retires from the Army this month.

Although Hinkle generally shrugs his shoulders at his problems, his family is frustrated.

"Basically what the military made us feel like is, 'You're good enough to fight for me, but you're not good enough for me when you lay down on the bed and you're dying,'" said Rebecca, his 14-year-old daughter.

This story was produced for broadcast by Marisa Penaloza and edited by Andrea de Leon.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Cedar Rapids Soldier Dies From Wounds Suffered In Iraq

September 4, 2007 NIGEL DUARA, REGISTER STAFF WRITER

Cedar Rapids native Sgt. Kevin Allan Gilbertson died on Friday in a hospital in Germany.

The soldier, known as an upbeat, rabble-rousing, ball of fire nicknamed Gilmoie, was shot in Ramadi, Iraq, last week and died two days later. He was on his second tour in the country, military officials said.

"He was always go-go-go," said his former stepmother Diane Gilbertson, who married Gilbertson's father when Kevin was 4 years old. "It hit me. It hit me hard."

Kevin Gilbertson, 25, was a newly-minted family man. His son was born 8 months ago to his wife. The couple lived in Scheweinfurt, Germany, where Gilbertson served with the 1st Battalion, 77th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.

"He joined the Army right out of high school to get a college education when he got out," said Don Gilbertson, the soldier's father. "His dream was getting a degree and supporting his family.

"He was the greatest kid in the world."

A 2001 graduate of Cedar Rapids Jefferson High School, his personal page on a Web site told much of his story.

The postings ranged from expletive-laced tough-guy messages left by his buddies to pink-and-purple "Happy Easter" cards that prominently display bunny rabbits.

The soldier's aunt, Amy Gilbertson of Austin, Texas, said the Kevin "was kind of like my little brother. He's always been very proud. He loved his country. He really embraced being a soldier."

Diane Gilbertson said Kevin made family a priority. He immediately befriended her twin sons, now 21 years old, and would visit her 12-year-old boy when he was on leave from Iraq.

"He looks up to Kevin," Diane Gilbertson said. "He was a huge influence."

Many posts on the Web site related to his service or to his son. One, left on New Year's Eve 2006, included a prayer for soldiers.

“Please God ... Grant them courage, when times seem bleak. Grant them strength, when they seem weak. Grant them comfort, when they feel all alone, and most of all, God, please bring them all home.”

Don Gilbertson said he will travel to Germany to retrieve his son's body and return it to Iowa.

Funeral arrangements are pending at Cedar Memorial Park Funeral Home in Cedar Rapids.

Gilbertson is the 61st person with Iowa ties to die in Iraq or Afghanistan since March 2003.

Mountain-Born Soldier Dies In Iraq

August 27, 2007 by Andre A. Rodriguez, CITIZEN-TIMES

HENDERSONVILLE – A soldier with family ties to the mountains died Sunday in Iraq leaving behind a wife and a daughter he never got to see.

Sgt. Joshua L. Morley, 22, was a sniper team leader with 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division. He was killed in Samarra, Iraq, Sunday when insurgents using small arms fire and hand grenades attacked his unit, according to a release from the 82nd Airborne Division.

Morley leaves behind his wife, Kendra, and daughter, Alexis, who was born in April, said Irene Brevard, Morely's aunt and a Hendersonville resident.

His father's parents and his wife's grandparents also live in the Hendersonville area.

“He was just an adorable kid growing up,” Brevard said. “Nobody couldn't help but love him.”

Morley was born in Hendersonville, although his family was living in Fayetteville at the time. He would visit the area frequently to spend time with family here.

Morley's father, Joe Morley, of Carthage, spent 23 years in the service and Josh felt a similar call to serve his country, Brevard said. He joined the Army in July 2004.

“During the last 12 months, he risked his life while participating in hundreds of combat operations with his sniper team against insurgent forces within the city of Samarra,” said Capt. Carlos Morales, Morley's company commander. “His moral character, stalwart leadership and aggressive spirit will always be remembered. His sacrifice will never be forgotten.”

Morley is also survived by his mother, Sara Morley, of Apex. His unit will hold a memorial service for him in Iraq.

Insurgents Attack Two British Military Patrols Near Basra

Sept 16 (KUNA)

Armed insurgents have attacked two British military patrols in the southern region of Basra, a spokesman of the British force said on Sunday.

The spokesman said a military patrol was attacked, on Saturday, with mortar shells near Al-Zubair causeway in the south of Basra city. Another patrol was targeted with a bomb blast, late on Saturday, followed with volleys of machine-gun fire in the same region.

No losses were mentioned in the statement.

BEEN ON THE JOB TOO LONG: COME ON HOME, NOW



US soldiers from Bravo 1-12 Cavalry Battalion near the city of Baqouba Sept, 6, 2007.
(AP Photo/Karel Prinsloo)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Soldier From Washington Killed In Afghanistan

August 31, 2007 ALLAN BRETTMAN, The Oregonian Staff

VANCOUVER -- U.S. Army Sgt. Bryce D. Howard, 24, formerly of Battle Ground, was one of three soldiers killed Tuesday in Afghanistan by an improvised explosive device, the Defense Department said.

He is the first Southwest Washington soldier to be killed in Afghanistan and the 111th member of the U.S. military with ties to Oregon or southwest Washington to die in Iraq, Afghanistan or Pakistan since the current conflict began.

The Army "was the best thing to happen to him," Howard's father, Dean Howard, said Thursday evening. "It transformed a young, rebellious teenager into an adult," said Dean Howard, a Vietnam veteran and Yacolt-area resident.

"He was just good-spirited," Dean Howard said. "He developed some really good, close friends (in the Army)."

Also, Bryce's father said, "He had a smile that could get him out of trouble."

Bryce Howard graduated from Battle Ground High School in 2001. Later that year he met his future wife, Amber, in Hazel Dell. They married in December 2001.

The couple, who make their home in Tacoma near Fort Lewis, have two children: Caleb, 7, and Ryan, 3. "We felt very fortunate he met her and got married," Dean Howard said.

Bryce Howard, a snowboard and motorcycle enthusiast, planned to pursue a career as a surveyor when he left the Army, his father said.

Bryce has a brother, James Howard, 23, and a sister, Casey Howard, 21, both of Clark County.

Bryce was serving his second tour in Afghanistan; he also served there from February 2005 to February 2006.

Jaji, the town where the Defense Department said the explosive device detonated, is best known in Afghanistan's recent military history for a 1987 battle in which Osama bin Laden led Afghan rebels against Soviet soldiers. Jaji is on the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Not even a year removed from high school, Bryce Howard entered the Army on Jan. 16, 2002. As a technical engineer, he was assigned to Headquarters Support Company, 864th Engineer Battalion, 555th Engineer Brigade. The unit is based in Fort Lewis, Wash.

He attended initial entry training at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., and then reported to Camp Henry, Korea, in August 2002, where he served a 12-month tour. He reported to Fort

Lewis on Aug. 19, 2003, and was assigned to 864th Engineer Battalion, 555th Engineer Brigade.

Howard's military education included Basic Combat Training in 2002, the Technical Engineer Qualification Course in 2002, Warrior Leaders Course in 2004, and Combat Lifesaver Course in 2003, the Defense Department said.

His awards and decorations include two Army Commendation Medals, Army Achievement Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, NCO Professional Development Ribbon, Army Service Medal, Overseas Service Ribbon, and NATO Medal.

Howard was posthumously promoted to his current rank from his previous rank of corporal.

Resistance Action

9/15/2007 AFP & (AP)

A roadside bomb struck a police vehicle in the southeastern province of Khost of Friday, either killing or wounding all five policemen inside, a provincial police chief said. General Mohammad Ayob could not say how many were dead and how many were hurt.

Taleban militants killed a man in Qarabagh district charged with spying for the Americans.

An estimated 40 insurgents armed with mortars and rocket-propelled grenades attacked an Afghan police and coalition patrol Saturday afternoon in the Musa Qalat.

In Ghazni province, a remote-controlled bomb hidden in a bag on a bicycle exploded as Andar district chief Abdul Rahim Desewal left his home on Saturday, wounding him, two bodyguards and 12 civilians, said area police official Hayatullah Khan.

<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**



Army Cpl. Javier Paredes' casket Sept. 14, 2007, St. Patrick's Catholic Church in San Antonio. Paredes, 24, died of wounds suffered from a rocket-propelled grenade attack Sept. 5 in Iraq. (AP Photo/San Antonio Express-News, William Luther)

“The Army Combat Uniform Is A Flop”

“It Doesn't Remotely Conceal The Soldier In The Desert Or The Woods”

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
September 17, 2007

The Army Combat Uniform is a flop. The negative climate around this uniform is so high it almost outweighs the outrage encountered when we went to the beret.

It doesn't remotely conceal the soldier in the desert or the woods.

The tiny pockets on the lower legs and upper sleeves are better suited for cell phones and cigarettes than magazines. And who uses the chest pockets? Slanted or not, they are useless when wearing armor.

Velcro is great for kids and keeping the elderly's shoes on, but has no place on a military uniform. It wears out fast and gets shredded in the woods, and it fills with sand and other debris in the desert. When the uniform gets dirty, it stays dirty no matter how much you wash it.

The biggest problem: pin-on badges. We got rid of those 25 years ago. Didn't someone get the memo?

I think the Army is just trying to make the badge wearers go away to make the have-nots feel good about themselves. Sew it on and it stays on — sterilized uniforms are for ice cream men.

All we needed was a battle dress uniform in a new pattern, minus the bottom pockets on the shirt.

All the Army did was over-think and over-engineer something that wasn't broke.

The dress blues, however, are great. Our greens needed to be changed out long ago. My constructive criticism: we need unit and combat patches added to the uniform, as well as wartime-service hash marks.

Without consideration, Army history and traditions are disappearing. We are what soldiers before us have made us. There is always time to correct mistakes or oversights. This is one of those times.

Sgt. 1st Class Bill Madlonado
Fort Devens, Mass.

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.

Kentucky Turns Against The War

**“I Had Twenty-Eight Years Of
Military Service. I Think This War
Is Absolutely Stupid”**

**“87 Percent Of The People Who
Answered Their Doors Took An End
The War Yard Sign”**

**Rat Cop Cowards Can't Take It:
“The Deputy And A Metro Police Officer
Dragged Her Off Forcefully In Handcuffs”**

October 1, 2007 by BOB MOSER, The Nation [Excerpts]

Louisville

Carol Trainer could hardly process what was happening. To her, a 60-year-old grandmother and Vietnam veteran, of all people.

On Memorial Day, of all times. Arrested for protesting the war at, of all places, Abbey Road on the River, an annual five-day Beatles tribute that had adopted a fortieth-anniversary Summer of Love theme for 2007.

Forty years ago, when the Louisville native married Air Force officer Harold Trainer, Carol wouldn't have gone near anything associated with the Summer of Love. “I wasn't an activist; just the opposite, in fact.”

But since 2002, when the Trainers--he retired from twenty-three years in the Force, she from eleven years as a Northwest Airlines flight attendant--found that they couldn't keep quiet about the catastrophe that was poised to unfold in Iraq, they've been unlikely stalwarts in one of the country's feistiest grassroots antiwar movements.

At Abbey Road, Carol had joined cohorts from the Louisville Peace Action Community (LPAC), passing out end-the-war pamphlets to incoming patrons--many of them young folks duded up for the occasion in flowers, beads and peace signs. Early that afternoon, she'd decided to join the fun inside, have a couple of beers and dance along to the music she'd missed in the '60s.

After spotting a couple of youngsters holding up peace-symbol signs, she figured it would be OK to walk around with her bright blue End the War! sign.

The festival's producer gave her explicit permission to do so.

After all, it was perfectly in tune with the spirit of a festival whose grand finale would be a musical production called “Hell No, We Won’t Go.”

Trainer didn’t make it that far.

As she was dancing and singing along to the strains of psychedelic nostalgia, holding her sign off to the side of the main festival stage, an oversized sheriff’s deputy came stalking toward her. “He comes up to me and says, ‘Drop your sign,’” Trainer recalls. “I said, ‘Why?’

He said, ‘I told you to drop your sign.’ He grabbed it out of my hand when I didn’t drop it.

“That kind of started me. I thought, What’s going on here? I kept asking why and he wouldn’t tell me.”

The only explanation Trainer received, after her arrest, was that offended patrons had complained that she was harassing them and ruining their fun.

She says that while dozens of people thanked her for the message, she had been confronted by four patrons, including one veteran “who said, ‘This is Memorial Day--we’re here to enjoy ourselves.’ I said, ‘When do the people in Iraq get to enjoy themselves?’”

Crying and struggling with the deputy, she tried appealing to Mayor Jerry Abramson, who was watching the show nearby, but he “just stared and glared at me and didn’t say a word.”

The deputy and a Metro Police officer dragged her off forcefully in handcuffs.

“I did not go quietly,” Trainer acknowledges, and she ended up charged not only with disorderly conduct at the festival but also with resisting arrest and assaulting an officer.

(Two of the charges were ultimately dropped; on the advice of LPAC’s attorney, she agreed to do forty hours of community service for the resisting-arrest charge without admitting guilt.)

“You don’t think that this could happen in the United States, you know,” says Trainer.

“One thing that irritates me is when some military people come up and say, ‘I’m over there so you can do this. So you have the right.’

“And I’ll say, now, after this, ‘No, I don’t have the right.’”

While protesting the war has alienated the Trainers from many of their old military buddies--“They tend to think we’ve left the reservation,” says Harold--they’ve become fast friends with “peace people” they once despised.

“They’ve really accepted us very well as partners in the peace effort,” Harold says, “even though we’re military.”

While LPAC, a spinoff of Louisville’s large and active Fellowship of Reconciliation, includes its fair share of hard-core pacifists, the group--like so many other peace efforts around the country--has flung its tent wide open. “When Harold and Carol joined us,” says longtime activist Judy Munro-Leighton, “it elevated our credibility about 1 million percent.

When people came up to us at the state fair, or wherever we were demonstrating, and said, ‘Yeah, what the hell do you know about it? You’ve never fought in a war,’ we could point to Carol and Harold and say, ‘They have.’“

Carol Trainer’s twelve hours in jail kicked off the most raucous summer yet for Kentucky’s antiwar movement--a vibrant microcosm of the coalition of peace activists, military veterans and families, blue-collar hard hats and college professors, old and young and (mostly) middle-aged, who’ve been spurred to action by the disaster in Iraq.

LPAC has been a force since the buildup to the war, bringing out hundreds to loudly protest George W. Bush’s six speeches in Louisville in the past six years, holding regular street-corner demonstrations, marking every Iraq anniversary and landmark death count with in-your-face panache.

They’ve chartered a plane to fly over the Kentucky Derby flashing an End the War banner. They’ve commemorated Iraq milestones with displays of empty shoes, empty shirts and--in 2007--4,000 white flags along the Ohio River. They’ve read the names of Iraqi and American dead from the county courthouse steps.

And they’ve been particularly creative when it comes to getting under the skin of Kentucky’s pro-war politicians.

When Louisville’s Republican Congresswoman, stubborn Bush supporter Anne Northup, refused to meet with her antiwar constituents, LPAC posted “Missing” posters around the city with smiling images of Northup, labeling her a “lapdog” who “answers to Bush.”

They staked out her home for seventy-three straight Sundays with “a variety of signs you can’t even imagine,” says Munro-Leighton, until Northup finally agreed to a meeting.

“We had a cardboard Bush with a bubble to show he was speaking, and we changed the message weekly to ‘I Love Ann,’ or ‘My War’s Going Great!’ or ‘I Sold the Country.’ On the first anniversary of the war, we made her a cake out of black cardboard and put it on her car. ‘Happy Anniversary!’“

Tarred by her unflagging support for Bush and the war, Northup lost her 2006 bid for a sixth term to Louisville’s John Yarmuth, an unabashed liberal Democrat calling for withdrawal.

With Northup dispatched, Kentucky's peace brigade laid plans to fry a far bigger fish in 2008: Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell, Bush's powerful Iraq War ally, who will be running for a record fifth Senate term.

As summer--and McConnell's recess vacation--approached, two new sets of nontraditional allies materialized to help LPAC bird-dog the senator, who makes his home in Louisville with his wife, Labor Secretary Elaine Chao. Matt Gunterman, a 30-year-old rural Kentucky native and Yale University graduate student, launched the DitchMitch blog earlier in the year, bringing together a varied band of bloggers from around the state on a composite site with a common goal. And in June, two young native Kentuckians and a Navy veteran opened an Iraq Summer headquarters in Louisville, part of a national campaign by Americans Against Escalation in Iraq (AAEI) to target key members of Congress with a homegrown antiwar message before they returned to Washington to resume the war debate.

By mid-August McConnell was sending out fundraising letters complaining about being harassed by "the '60s antiwar movement on steroids." But as the Republican kingmaker well knew, the reality was something altogether different from that old stereotype--and considerably more formidable.

Jim Pence is a 68-year-old, Salem-smoking, pickup-driving, self-proclaimed hillbilly from economically devastated Hardin County, retired after thirty-five years in the factory at the American Synthetic Rubber Corporation. Politically inactive until 2004, when Bush's re-election and the war in Iraq spurred him to "vow to fight with every ounce of my strength from then on," Pence now makes some of the freshest, funniest antiwar and political videos anywhere--and as a result, he's become the unlikely heart and soul of Kentucky's DitchMitch campaign.

Linking from his own Hillbilly Report website to DitchMitch and YouTube, Pence puts up snappy vignettes on subjects ranging from Kentucky's annual bipartisan political hoedown at Fancy Farm--where McConnell made a hasty exit this year after being jeered by protesters carrying signs showing him as Bush's hand puppet--to a fanciful take on Bush and Condoleezza Rice's relationship, set to the tune of Frank Sinatra's "The Way You Look Tonight," to a hard-hitting series of exposés of liquor-industry fundraising by Ron Lewis, the holy-rolling Congressman from Pence's district.

"People are stepping out more than they would a few years ago," Pence says. "Now I can't get them to stop talking when they see that camera. People know me now, and for the most part they trust me--whether or not they should!"

The Friday before the "Take a Stand" town-hall meeting that would culminate Louisville's Iraq Summer, Desert Storm veteran Brian Smith spent the first day of his most unusual summer vacation yet, volunteering round-the-clock for the antiwar effort. Smith has been working with Iraq Summer since June, when its three paid staffers hit the ground in Louisville. "I've been in charge of making coffee, making smart-ass remarks and doing guerrilla ops," Smith says. The previous night, that meant joining Louisville natives and Iraq Summer organizers Aniello Alioto and Sara Choate in planting fifty bright red Support the Troops/End the War signs outside a fundraiser where McConnell was speaking on behalf of scandal-plagued Republican Governor Ernie Fletcher.

“We want to be where he is,” Smith says. For two long, hot, parched months, that’s where Iraq Summer, combining forces with LPAC and other peace groups around the state, has been. They’ve bird-dogged McConnell’s fundraisers. They’ve organized a stream of rallies and vigils outside McConnell’s home. And they’ve drawn in a new batch of blue-collar and military folks like Smith, who still pinches himself when he looks in the mirror and sees an antiwar protester looking back.

“Initially I supported the war,” he says, “more because I felt it was a duty to support the troops because I knew what they were going to be going through. When I saw antiwar protesters here at first, they gave me a little bit of a rise, because I felt that they didn’t really understand the issues and would be proven wrong.” He laughs. “Now I’m spending all my spare time working with them.”

Abu Ghraib was a breaking point for Smith. “My only defense of the war to that point had been, ‘Well, at least we’re the good guys.’ After that, I had nothing left.

“But what really activated me was the surge. I thought after the 2006 elections things would change, but they just steamrolled right over us. So I went from there to the peace rally in Washington in January.” A group he met there, Veterans for Peace, later connected him with Iraq Summer. “I would never have believed, a year ago, that I’d be doing anything like this,” Smith says.

Nor, for different reasons, did Alioto, who’d been teaching diplomacy and national security classes to youth leaders in Washington, DC, when AEI’s national field director, Kate Snyder, called to ask if he’d return to Kentucky to dog McConnell. “I said no. I didn’t want to go work for some peacenik, ‘Let’s end the war and sing songs’ kind of campaign. But she said, ‘This is a pro-military, pro-veteran campaign. It’s not antiwar; it’s anti-reckless war.’ Then my ears pricked up.”

Alioto found even more grassroots anger back home than he’d imagined. When Iraq Summer canvassed McConnell’s neighborhood, “87 percent of the people who answered their doors took an End the War yard sign. I like numbers,” he says, chuckling.

But Alioto has also found that “there’s still a lot of organizations, and a lot of individuals, that are scared to get involved. We get a lot of backdoor help. The hardest part is letting people know that we’re not the traditional antiwar movement.”

The nontraditional nature of the movement is on vivid display August 28 at the Take a Stand rally. A crowd of nearly 800 packs a Bellarmine University auditorium to hear not only from the expected cast of politicians, including Congressman Yarmuth, but also grassroots warriors like Smith, who leads the Pledge of Allegiance wearing several days’ worth of stubble along with his old Army infantry jacket.

There’s 85-year-old Jean Edwards, a legendary local peace-and-justice activist, and her 15-year-old granddaughter, who asks the question, What would Gandhi do?

There’s a liberal white Presbyterian minister who went to Mississippi in 1964, during Freedom Summer, followed by an African-American minister who surveys the room and declares, “We are the people that can end this war. It has always

been and will always be us--the good people, the common people, the regular people. It will always be incumbent upon us, when we have had enough."

There's Bill Londrigan, the state's AFL-CIO chief, echoing that theme: "This is a war of elites fought by the working people of this Commonwealth and this country."

And there's Lieut. Col. Andrew Horne, who's pondering an antiwar challenge to McConnell in '08, pacing the stage talking about why he chose to lead his National Guard unit into Iraq--and why he subsequently turned into a national VoteVets spokesman against the war.

Horne leads a refrain that will be echoed during the evening's culminating event, a candlelight march to the senator's home: "Hey Mitch, can you hear us? We are the people!"

The marchers are mostly solemn and orderly, sticking to the sidewalks under pink-streaked evening skies as they wind up busy Bardstown Road to the accompaniment of honking horns, then down through McConnell's leafy old neighborhood.

Informed that "We're going to McConnell's," one neighbor, standing on his lawn to view the procession, urges the folks: "Blow him up!"

A few doors down, a white-haired senior citizen in a blue scooped-neck T-shirt hangs over his side porch bellowing a different opinion: "Damned idiots--you're helping kill 'em!" His plump face is scarlet with fury.

On the sidewalk in front of McConnell's nondescript two-story brick condo waits a thin line of counterprotesters, most of them portly, scruffy, tattooed bikers who've parked their hogs in formation across the way. Some hold signs reading Peace Through Strength and Stand Strong Mitch, while others aim cameras at the protesters in a vain attempt at intimidation.

It's impossible not to notice the irony: how much more "mainstream" the war protesters, a mostly middle-class khakis-and-polo-shirt crowd, look than the ragtag defenders of Corporate America's favorite member of Congress. Across the street, the only sign of possible life in the condo is a yellow light glowing through the upstairs windowshades. (McConnell's spokesperson will later say that the senator was in Lexington that night, helming another fundraiser for Fletcher.)

When McConnell's defenders finally rumble off, Smith shakes his unruly head of black curls and grins. "They got no staying power," he snorts. "All huff, no tough."

Worst of all, though, is this nagging band of peace protesters. Will they be a temporary phenomenon, drifting apart after the war finally sputters to a halt? Or could this strange confluence of urban liberals, independent-minded hillbillies and populist bloggers turn into the Republicans' worst nightmare: a left-leaning version of the silent majority that's propelled the likes of McConnell into office for the past few decades?

Clearly feeling the pressure, McConnell has tried to dip a toe in the new reality while clinging to the tried-and-true. While he wildly claimed on CNN in July that Kentuckians

“overwhelmingly” support his backing of Bush and the war, the senator has nuanced his rhetoric, making vague promises of “changes” in September after the much-ballyhooed Petraeus Report. Despite that halfhearted concession, he hasn’t been allowed a moment’s peace.

And sure enough, even on the blazing hot morning after Take a Stand (which also attracted hundreds to Lexington and Newport rallies), some sixty protesters and fans carrying I □ Mitch signs are waiting for McConnell’s gunmetal SUV to pull up at Boone Tavern, a colonial inn that graces the tiny eastern Kentucky college town of Berea.

“I think the war is wrong,” says Lisa Myers of Lexington. “We’re spending all this money that we could be using for healthcare, for education--for positive things. This war is costing us \$9 billion a month, and we have poor people, lots of them.”

Meanwhile, Jim Pence is busy coaxing local protesters to speak their minds into his camera. “I’m Laura Mangus, from Berea, Kentucky,” says a somber-faced woman holding a long rectangular sign reading, How Much More Misery and Death Per Gallon?

“I’m here today on behalf of my son, who came back from Iraq very, very wounded. When you have a son that calls you at 2:30 in the morning wanting to blow his brains out because of what he saw and experienced in Iraq, you darn well better know I’m going to be here to let my senator know what I think about this.”

“I had twenty-eight years of military service,” an elderly fellow in a lawn chair, antiwar sign propped up in his lap, tells the Hillbilly. “I think this war is absolutely stupid.”

“Hi there,” says a wise old face, peering into Pence’s camera. “My name is Sister Nan and I oppose war in general, and this war in particular.”

Around noon, the protesters cluster around the front of Boone Tavern, chanting, “Enjoy Your Lunch, End the War!” in the direction of the room where McConnell is holding forth. With an air of determined calm, McConnell’s senior Kentucky staffer, Larry Cox, materializes. “Mitch knows your position,” he says. “There’s no way he can ignore the sentiment here. Things are changing now. There is very likely to be a change in direction.”

Why won’t McConnell come out? various voices grumble. “Would the senator come out to address just one question?” “No,” says Cox. “Would the senator come out if we promise not to ask any questions?” another protester suggests. “No.”

After Cox escapes back into the fundraiser, accompanied by a stirring chant of “End the War!” the protesters trickle around to the back entrance, where McConnell’s SUV sits idling.

Martha Wilkie of Lexington, holding a sign with Thou Shall Not Kill on one side and Blessed Be the Peacemakers on the other, waits by the door alongside a gaggle of McConnell’s admirers. She carries the scriptural sign, she says, because “people who support the war are all so into the Bible. But they disregard what’s actually in the Bible.” And speaking of disregarding, she says, “What in the world is McConnell scared of? Why won’t he just come out and talk to people?”

The question lingers in the still, hot air for another half-hour. And then, in a flash, McConnell's ride goes ripping down the driveway and swerves around to a side door.

Head down, the most powerful man in Kentucky skitters down a flight of steps and ducks inside the vehicle while his constituents come rushing around the corner, watching the back of their senator's SUV as it speeds him away, snug in the air-conditioned comfort of his increasingly fragile cocoon.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

What Part Of Get The Fuck Out Don't You Understand?



September 16: Iraqis burn a makeshift US flag during an anti-US Occupation protest against a raid by U.S. forces on a Shi'ite mosque on Friday in Baghdad (AFP/Wissam Al-Okaili)

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

“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.

David Cline: In Memoriam

**“For Many Years He Was Our
Commander In Chief. One Who Led
From The Front”**

**“The Guidon Will Be Picked Up And
Carried Proudly”**

**“Iraq Veterans Against The War Carries It
Now. There Will Be No Gap In Our
Lines”**



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

September 16, 2007 By Billy Kelly [Vietnam Veterans Against The War]

Dear Friends of Peace & Justice For All,

“Old soldiers never die; they just fade away.”
-- General Douglas MacArthur

The old General had it wrong. Soldiers do die.

But the ‘Winter Soldier’ does not fade away and go easily into the night.

David was/is the epitome of that soldier. He always was and will be a true soldier.
Always leading the fight.

For many years he was our Commander in Chief. One who led from the front. I was extremely proud to have known him and will rededicate myself to continue the fight.

Many of us ‘old’ and ‘not-so-old’ soldiers will wage the real war. The one to bring decency and humanity to our people and to show our brothers and sisters in the world that we are one with them.

The guidon will be picked up and carried proudly.

Iraq Veterans Against The War carries it now.

There will be no gap in our lines.

“I’m still a soldier. I’m just not their soldier anymore.” Stan Goff

We’ll all be telling stories about David for years to come and in that way we will ensure he remains with us and an integral part of our army.

Recently, David accompanied several Viet victims of Agent Orange on a trip to meet some congressmen in DC.

On the bus trip home, David, in his inimitable way, began to compare wounds with a seriously ill former opponent. The next day at a gathering of supporters, David presented this ex-Viet Cong soldier his Purple Heart with two Oak Leaf clusters.

Nguyen Van Quy was delighted and so proud to have it pinned onto his suit.

It was a gesture that could only come from David.

Sadly, Quy and another Viet on the trip, Hong, died from Agent Orange complications soon after returning to Viet Nam.

And now David.

Hoa Binh,
Billy Kelly

David Cline:

The Profile Of A Great Man.



From: Mike Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: September 16, 2007
Subject: David Cline--The profile of a great man.

**If it were not for the David Clines' of the world,
I would not get out of bed in the morning.**

**When you take your last breath,
your eyes open to a new world.**

**Mike Hastie
Vietnam Veteran
VFP Chapter 72
Portland, Oregon**

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)

“Helluva Review I’d Say”

From: Alan Stolzer [Military Project]
To: GI Special
Sent: September 16, 2007
Subject: Penn Station Recognition

Another visit to Penn Station handing out GI Specials to patrolling National Guardsmen/women found a sergeant closely scanning the publication.

“Hey, I know this. We got this up at the armory on [XXXXXX]. There were a bunch of people handing them out.

“It’s on the money.”

Helluva review I’d say.

THE GODFATHER AND INSURGENCY

From: Alan Stolzer [Military Project]
To: GI Special
Sent: September 16, 2007

In the all too uncompromising and Machiavellian film series, “The Godfather” an interesting scene takes place in “Godfather II.”

Michael Corleone, kingpin of the criminal empire initiated by his father, is in pre-revolutionary Havana, on his way to a meeting of top American criminal elements preparing to increase their empire-influence in Cuba.

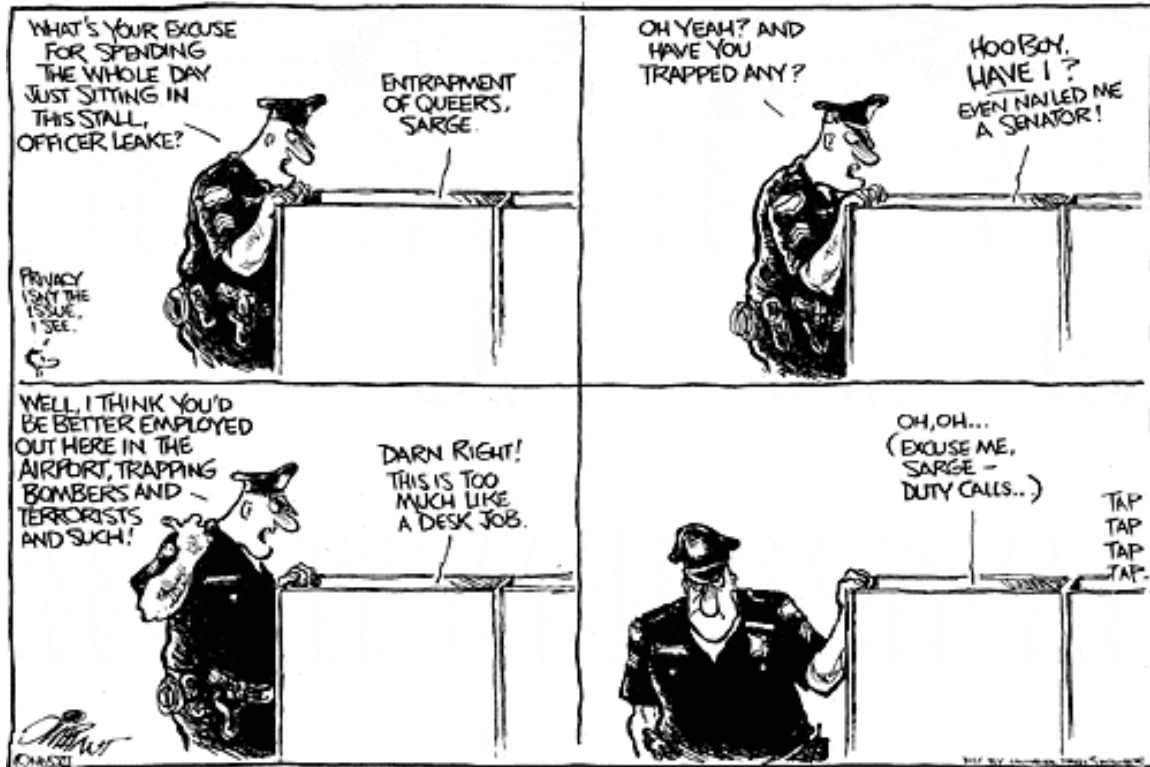
The car is momentarily stopped as Cuban soldiers are arresting a group of suspected rebels. One of the suspects breaks free from being searched, grabs the officer in charge of the detail and explodes a grenade he had hidden, killing himself and the officer.

Later, at the meeting, Michael relates the story to the gathered group of Mafia personnel. His arch nemesis, Hyman Roth, is disturbed by the story since he senses that such stories may interfere with his plans and tells Michael that he, Roth, has been coming to Cuba for decades and that there’s “always been rebels.”

Michael then says the police-army is being paid while the rebels aren’t. Roth asks, “What does that tell you?” Michaels says “they can win.”

Reality is, after all, reality, as both Godfather I and II memorably depict.

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



Evidence? No Evidence? “OF COURSE NOT, BECAUSE THEY’RE NOT FROM IRAN YOU FOOL”

[Thanks to Pham Binh, Military Project & Traveling Soldier, who sent this in, with the headline.]

Sep 13 By ROBERT H. REID, Associated Press Writer [Excerpt]

A U.S. general, meanwhile, said a fatal attack on the headquarters garrison of the American military in Iraq this week was carried out with 240 mm rocket — a type of weapon that he said Iran provides to Shiite extremists.

Displaying a twisted piece of shrapnel from the attack, [Maj. Gen. Kevin] Bergner said military experts had so far determined only that its markings and manufacture were “consistent with” Iranian-produced munitions.

“Can I hold up a piece of fragment today that has a specific marking on it that traces this back to Iranian making?” he said. “At this moment I can’t do that, but explosive experts — as I said — are still analyzing all the different fragments that they have gathered.”

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/)

OCCUPATION REPORT

Good News For The Iraqi Resistance!!

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



Foreign occupation soldiers from the US break into Iraqi citizen's house during a home invasion in southern Baghdad, 11 September 2007. (AFP/File/David Furst)



U.S. soldiers of Charlie company, 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment search inside a private home during a night operation in southeast Baghdad September 12, 2007.
REUTERS/Carlos Barria

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

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

"In the States, if police burst into your house, kicking down doors and swearing at you, you would call your lawyer and file a lawsuit," said Wood, 42, from Iowa, who did not accompany Halladay's Charlie Company, from his battalion, on Thursday's raid. "Here, there are no lawyers. Their resources are limited, so they plant IEDs (improvised explosive devices) instead."

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

Got That Right

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

9.16.07 Dominic Evans and Waleed Ibrahim, Reuters

"The Americans always try to pretend the responsibility for cleaning up this mess isn't theirs and tend to shift blame onto Iraq, Iran and Syria for everything that goes wrong," said veteran Kurdish lawmaker Mahmoud Othman.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Amazing News! Bush Says He's Trying For Endless War In Iraq

September 14, 2007 By Dan Froomkin, Washington Post [Excerpt]

What exactly was President Bush up to yesterday, making a "surprise visit" to a huge American air base in Iraq, praising the ostensible progress there and hinting at a troop reduction if things keep going so well?

One answer lies in the remarkably forthright interviews Bush gave author Robert Draper for a new book coming out today. As Jim Rutenberg wrote in Sunday's New York Times, Bush earlier this year explained his Iraq strategy to Draper this way: "I'm playing for October-November."

Writes Rutenberg: "That is when he hopes the Iraq troop increase will finally show enough results to help him achieve the central goal of his remaining time in office: 'To get us in a position where the presidential candidates will be comfortable about sustaining a presence,' and, he said later, 'stay longer.'

GI Special Looks Even Better Printed Out

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

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

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

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

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

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

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