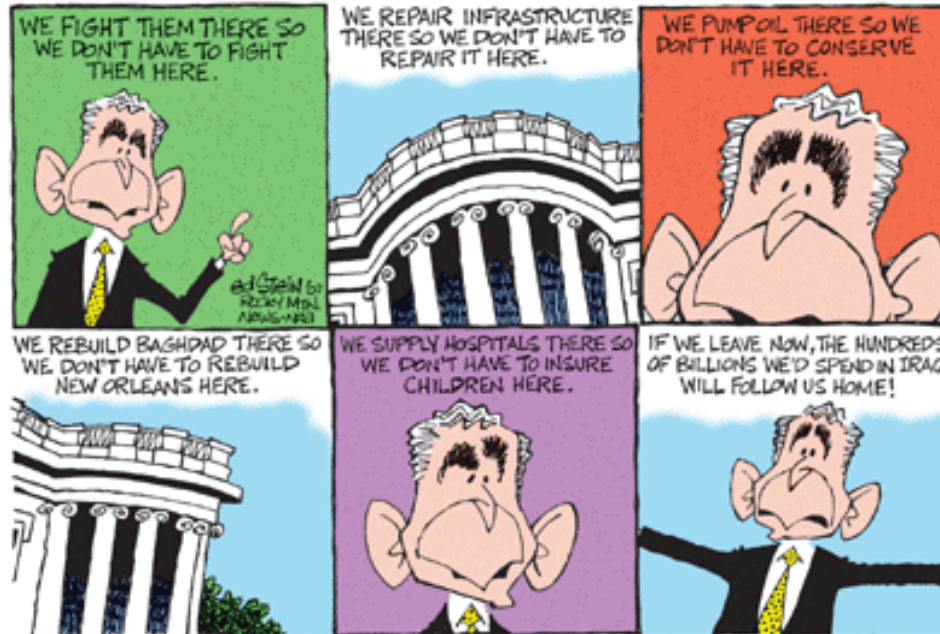


GI SPECIAL 515:



August U.S. KIA Up 25% From Last Year

	KIA	Daily Average	
8-2007	81	2.74	31
8-2006	65	2.13	31

[Iraq Coalition Casualties: icasualties.org/oif/]

“[S]o far, every month of 2007 has seen more U.S. military fatalities than the same month in 2006.” PAUL KRUGMAN, New York Times, September 3, 2007

Gates Considering Extending Tours From 15 To 18 Months

August 29, 2007 By Sarah Olson, In These Times [Excerpt]

Despite the studies clearly linking longer tours with higher rates of combat stress, Defense Secretary Gates is considering even further extending the tours of troops currently serving in Iraq--this time from 15 to 18 months.

Gates says this is a “worst-case scenario,” but few other options exist if troop levels are to be maintained at current levels.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Michigan Soldier Killed In Noor



Sgt. 1st Class Daniel E. Scheibner from Muskegon, Mich., 40, was killed Aug. 30, 2007, when his vehicle struck an explosive in Noor, Iraq. He was a 1986 high school graduate and was assigned to Fort Lewis. (AP Photo/Family Photo)

Poway Soldier Killed In Chopper Crash

August 25, 2007 By: ERIN SCHULTZ - Staff Writer; North County Times

POWAY ---- A Poway man who was scheduled to marry his girlfriend this fall was one of 14 Army soldiers killed in a helicopter crash in Iraq earlier this week.

Staff Sgt. Jason Paton, 25, died Wednesday when a Black Hawk helicopter crashed in northern Iraq.

Paton was born in Chula Vista and grew up in Poway, stepfather Jim Valenzuela said Friday evening.

He attended Meadowbrook Middle School and Poway High, and graduated in 2000, Valenzuela said. After taking a few classes at Palomar College, he came home one day from a morning of surfing and told his family he'd joined the Army.

The airborne ranger died just three months shy of his wedding day, his stepfather said. He proposed to his fiancée, who was a starting catcher for the UCSD softball team, over the stadium's public address system.

"They were planning to go to Georgia," said Valenzuela, who added that his stepson had re-enlisted before he died. "He was going to be a ranger trainer and she was planning to coach softball there."

Paton was scheduled to return around his birthday this July, his stepfather said, but his unit's tour was extended by an order from President Bush.

When he was killed, he was three weeks away from turning in his weapons and getting ready to return to the States, Valenzuela said.

Services are not yet planned for Paton, whose remains will take several days to reach the U.S.

At least 3,722 U.S. service members have died in Iraq, according to the Pentagon.

**“People On The Streets Of Basra
Also Celebrated The Departure Of
The British”**

**“Iraqi People Reject Occupation, We
Reject Colonialism - We Want Our
Freedom”**

**British Occupation Forces Retreat To
Basra Airport**



Iraqi soldier on the fence around the Basra Palace complex in Basra, Sept 3, 2007. British troops gave up their last garrison in the city, a move that will hand control to an Iraqi force composed of anti-occupation soldiers. (AP Photo/Nabil al-Jurani)



Iraqis welcomed the pull out of British troops, saying they did not want 'colonialists' in their country. Daily Mail [UK]

3rd September 2007 Daily Mail [UK]

Members of the Shi'ite Mehdi Army cheered the withdrawal. "They were facing catastrophe and withdrew because of the attacks by the Mehdi Army," Mehdi Army fighter Abu Safaa said.

People on the streets of Basra also celebrated the departure of the British.

"We reject any strangers and they are colonialists," said Rudha Muter.

"We are pleased that the Iraqi army are now taking over the situation - we as an Iraqi people reject occupation, we reject colonialism - we want our freedom."

As of midday, all Britain's troops in Basra were consolidated in the sprawling base at the Basra airport, itself under daily mortar attack.



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

**“People Need To Stand Up For
Their Rights”**

**“If Our Entire Country Doesn’t
Want Us Here, Then Why Are We
Here?”**

**“Why The Fuck Are We Here Wasting
Our Lives If The People We’re
Supposed To Be Defending At Home
Don’t Want Us Over Here?”**

**“The Surge Is But A Mote In A Maelstrom, A
Tiny Island In A Raging River. Arrogance,
Delusion, A Reliance On Best-Case
Scenarios, And A Shocking Degree Of
Wishful Thinking”**

[Long, but interesting up close and personal view of Baghdad and the war. By a combat veteran. T]

“The surge will help for a while, then it will go back to the way it was. Just like every other plan we have. It’s only a matter of time before they figure it out,” said Private First Class Kyle Doolittle, a twenty-year-old tank driver from Ithaca, New York.

And there it was, the fatalism and pessimism that can’t be kept in check for long in Iraq.

8/29/2007 By Brian Mockenhaupt, Esquire [Excerpts]

It’s September. Four and a half years in, the author, a former infantryman, went back to Iraq to profile the president’s surge.

Here’s what he found...

Watching soldiers on a mission can be poignant.

Watching soldiers on a mission spiraling toward failure is devastating.

Outside a house in western Baghdad’s once-upscale Ghazaliya neighborhood, next to a broken Iraqi Humvee, I enjoyed this rare bit of clarity, and in a moment I saw why Iraq is such a mess.

It's not the obvious choices -- sectarian hatred or Al Qaeda or meddling by Iraq's neighbors -- but something much more pedestrian, exceptionally mundane: flat tires.

Several of the local Iraqi battalion's Humvees had been knocked out by bombs in recent weeks and hauled to a camp near the Baghdad airport a few miles away.

The Iraqis had requested tires and spare parts from their maintenance depot, which still hadn't arrived and may never.

Captains Jeremy Tilley and Eric Wilkinson, U.S. advisors to the Iraqi army at Joint Security Station Thrasher, stood in the midday sun with Major Hatham Faak Selman, helping him work through his tire problem.

They stared down at the busted Humvee. Tilley suggested that Selman take the four good tires off the broken Humvee, drive to the airport, replace a disabled Humvee's flat tires, and drive or tow the trucks back to the combat outpost. Selman, the Iraqi battalion's maintenance officer, seemed doubtful of the plan.

"What other options do you have?" Wilkinson asked.

"I need tires," Selman said.

"There's no tires," Tilley said, exasperated. "You waited so long, and now you don't have any other options."

"I've been asking for tires and haven't gotten any!" Selman said, throwing his hands up. "And now we're losing another truck every day."

One day it's tires, the next it's batteries, the next it's fuel.

Soon the Iraqis quit bothering to fix the trucks.

The vehicle shortage had reduced their ability to patrol this neighborhood, which meant they weren't gaining as much experience, which would make it impossible for them to assume control of security for the area, which would make it impossible for them to assume control of security for the country, which would leave the Americans holding the bag for as long as they could stand it.

"Right now," Tilley said, "I recommend you take these four tires and come back with at least one Humvee."

"Okay," Selman said. "It's my problem. I will solve it." He walked away, seeming bothered.

"We've been hounding them for the past three weeks, and it's been pretty much falling on deaf ears," Tilley said.

He and Wilkinson were pushing the Iraqis to develop a system to track their vehicles, to know which are mission ready and which need maintenance, but had made no progress. "They want us to solve the problem, and you've got to say no," he said. "They have the solution here. You just have to help them make the connection."

The same story is told a thousand times a day across Iraq, from the police to the courts to the customs office.

Nation building, as it turns out, takes a lot of tires.

I was back in Iraq to see the president's surge, to see if pushing more troops into Baghdad had made a difference.

I had last been in Iraq two years before as a sergeant in an infantry company, patrolling its farm fields and city streets.

On a good day, the country looks the same as it did during my deployments. Usually it looks much worse. Being back in Iraq, I hoped, would be a brief sojourn to reality, a break from America's version of the war, where the battle lines had been drawn by fearless sloganeers: "Cut 'n' Run" or "Bring 'Em Home," depending. Where the debate no longer has much to do with Iraq and its people -- other than the shitty smorgasbord of daily violence touted as evidence of either the mission's futility or the dangers of quitting.

Mostly, I wanted to make sense of why this had gone on so long with so little progress and see how the war looked to those tasked with the salvage operation.

I. "Welcome To Cribs: Ghazaliya,"

"Welcome to Cribs: Ghazaliya," Sergeant First Class Bernard Garlick says. "This is my crib. Here's my fridge full of near-beer and Gatorade. I got eighty-seven armed guys 24/7, bitch. I got eight M1 tanks. Count 'em, eight."

Garlick is thirty-three and from a small town in Kansas called Junction City. He advises Iraqis on communications equipment, one of fifteen soldiers on the Military Transition Team, or MiTT.

Right now he is working on breakfast, his new plan for normalcy at the joint security station. He already has the pancake batter. Someone is mailing him syrup. Now he needs a hookup for sausages.

"You're going to get Iraqi sausage?" one of the British advisors asks.

"No. KBR brings it in," Garlick says. "I don't know what would be in Iraqi breakfast sausage. Sunnis put in Shiites. Shiites put in Sunnis."

"Sell it to the Americans!" Sergeant David Hallway says. "Ha! They're eating the evidence."

This joint security station, JSS Thrasher, one of seventy that sprang up around Baghdad with the start of the surge, feels more like a fraternity house than a military outpost.

Kitchen cabinets are stuffed with Pop Tarts and lemonade, energy bars, crackers, and jerky. Hot dinner is brought in each night from Camp Liberty, a sprawling U.S. base a few miles away. The soldiers have showers and e-mail access. They play Xbox in their rooms, sprawl on couches in the living room watching DVDs, and shuffle in and out at all hours, from guard duty and patrols.

Delta Company, from the 1st Cavalry Division, and the MiTT team took over these two huge houses in March. The owners, wealthy Shiites, had fled the country. The Americans surrounded the yard with a ten-foot cement wall and guard towers. Iraqi soldiers live in three houses next door and in five more spread around the neighborhood.

I'd been given a bed in the MiTT team's room, crowded with five bunk beds, a couple wall lockers, and piles of gear.

The fifteen-man team, comprised of captains and senior noncommissioned officers, spends its days with Iraqi counterparts, coaching them through the intricacies of building a capable army. Most of them have been to Iraq or Afghanistan at least once. This is Garlick's first deployment. He'd been pulling wartime duty stateside, as a recruiter in Brooklyn from 2001 to 2005. "September 11, that was a wild day," he says. "And we still didn't get the day off."

Instead he called the potential recruits he'd already been working on, reassuring them. Recruiting was easy for a while after that, buoyed by patriotism and anger, but then the lean months set in, and Garlick fought against the daily death tolls for people's attention. "There's no selfless service in America anymore. There's no duty. People support the war as long as we're victorious," he says.

"The surge can only be maintained for a while. The army, the police, the people, they have to change their fucking attitude and want to make a difference. They're going to kill you anyway, so you may as well stand up for something."

Garlick brings out the Xbox, and for the next two hours, we huddle in the room playing Halo, an Iraq favorite. We charge across pixelated battlefields, slicing one another with energy swords and sending bodies spinning into the air with blasts from rocket launchers.

I played Halo for dozens of hours between patrols on my last deployment. I never got better, but somehow virtual slaughter makes for good stress relief. Once again, I was losing. "I hope you're not finding material for your story in here," Captain Matt Kohler says. "At least say we're good at the game."

Kohler sat on a metal folding chair reading the Book of Mormon. The Mormons, he says, are traditionally patriotic. So long as the government is good and just, they hold a duty to support it, even should that mean killing on its behalf. Kohler scrunched up his eyes for a moment, remembering the right words. "It is better that one man should perish," he said, "than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief."

The Mormons come down on both sides of the war, like everyone else these days. “All of these religions in one way or another create the conditions to justify war,” he says. “Apparently there’s a time for everything.”

Kohler was working through his second or third Pepsi of the day, his small luxury, brought out with hot chow each night. Though his Mormon faith forbids the consumption of coffee and tea, soda is allowed. Hallway, one of five British soldiers on the MITT team, wondered at this.

“You’ve never had coffee?” he asks, stunned.

“No.”

“Never?”

“No.”

“Try it,” Hallway says. “I won’t tell. And you know God’s not watching Baghdad.”

Of the many bad areas of Baghdad, Ghazaliya had been among the worst.

Bodies showed up everywhere. The favored site was a field near here. Every time patrols came into the area, they found bodies. Men, women, and boys. One, two, a dozen. Some shot, some tortured, some beheaded. Some were killed elsewhere and dropped off here. Others were found in fresh puddles of blood.

The killers knew U.S. and Iraqi forces would retrieve the bodies, so they laced nearby roads with bombs and ambushed the advancing vehicles. Bodies sometimes lay in the open for days. Neighborhood dogs often arrived before the soldiers. Basic human dignity left this neighborhood long ago.

America’s latest quest for redemption in Iraq started here in this nasty little corner of the city, the perfect place to test the hypothesis that if a flood of troops can keep Baghdad’s violence in check, then residents can have some measure of safety, spurring a sliver of belief in the government and a willingness to oppose forces undermining stability. And ultimately, when the Iraqis run a government that provides for and protects its people, the Americans can disengage, somewhere closer to victory than defeat.

That’s the theory, anyway.

The previous strategy had hinged on Iraqi security forces taking the lead while U.S. forces pulled back to large bases, making America seem less like an occupier. It didn’t work.

And last year’s orgy of killing erased any modest gains that had been made.

The surge pushed U.S. troops back into the neighborhoods, to live with the people they were protecting and the security forces they were training.

To control Ghazaliya, the Americans built their Great Wall, 8.5 miles of concrete barriers, drawing on a basic tenet of counterinsurgency: You can't establish security until you control the population, and for that you must control access, which can be problematic.

Wall people off from their neighbors, make them pass through a series of checkpoints to get home, and they will feel like prisoners. But being captive might be better than being dead, for a little while at least. So thousands of cement barriers, the ubiquitous feature of today's Baghdad, now surround southern Ghazaliya.

Residents must pass through checkpoints on the way in and through more checkpoints once inside. "I was on leave when the walls went up," a soldier says. "I came back to Escape from New York."

By late April, the troop buildup and the wall had started to calm the area. The body drops tapered to a couple a week. A few people had even moved back in, though a third of the houses remained empty, with another third occupied by squatters. Insurgents still blew up and shot at patrols, but at nowhere close to the previous levels.

By late spring, they took to blowing up the barriers to regain unfettered access to the neighborhood. Most fighters were either lying low or had left the neighborhood, becoming another unit's problem. The daily firefights had given way to the more tedious work of controlling the ground U. S. forces had gained, with presence patrols and conversations with the locals, the very early stages of building trust.

At night, they often raided houses, scouring the neighborhood for weapon caches and insurgent hideouts.

I hadn't been on a raid in two years, but it might have been yesterday, so quickly does the extraordinary again become the routine. Captain Jon Brooks, who would take command of Delta Company in a few days, finds me a seat in the back of his Humvee, and the patrol crawls out of Thrasher toward an abandoned house rumored to be used by insurgents.

A block away, we pile out and jog down to the house. A breach team tosses a concussion grenade through a window -- which I didn't know about, making me jump in the dark -- then blows open the lock with a shotgun. The team hustles inside and walks out a few minutes later. Dry hole. A soldier stationed on a nearby rooftop sees movement down the street and calls down to Brooks: "If they're on a moped, can I shoot them? What time's curfew?"

"No," Brooks says. "Don't shoot them."

The patrol moves down the street, to a house where buried weapons and piles of homemade explosives were found a month earlier. In the clutter of overturned furniture, strewn clothes, and junk heaped in the house and yard, they find a pile of white powder.

"Is it homemade explosive?" Brooks asks.

"No, sir," a soldier says from the darkness. "It's powdered sugar."

"How do you know? Don't tell me one of you dumbasses tasted it."

“Well, yeah, sir, how else would we know?”

“Unbelievable,” Brooks says. “Did you find any more shit in there?”

“Just a blasting cap.”

“Where is that now? Does someone have it on his tongue?”

“Won’t happen again, sir.”

Driving back to Thrasher, Brooks talks about his plans to fix Ghazaliya, his face aglow in the pale light of the computer screen tracking the patrol’s movements. He read the Iraq Study Group report and agreed with much of it, especially the emphasis on political reconciliation. Maybe he could help move that forward.

“All an insurgency needs to succeed is a complicit population,” he says. His easy drawl might suggest indifference were the subject more benign. “I’m working with two key assumptions: The reason for the complicity is fear, and if I can take away the fear, I’ll reduce the complicity.”

Like many of his soldiers, Brooks has been to Iraq before, serving a year near the beginning of the war, when he was wounded by an IED. That he hasn’t died, that more of the men haven’t died, must be the hand of God. He tells people at home that their prayers are working -- how else to explain so many close calls and so few casualties? But maybe God helps those who help themselves.

“A lot of it is getting across the message that I live here. I sleep here every night. I’m your neighbor. I’ll kill the people who are trying to harm you. Call me if bad people come into your neighborhood,” he says. “But I can tell the people everything in the world, but until they see results, it’s all just noise.”

The next morning, we are back on the same streets as the early sun heats the air. This was a taking-the-pulse-of-the-neighborhood patrol conducted jointly with the Iraqis.

At the first house, Brooks asks the family if anyone has tried to intimidate them. Not lately, the mother says, but four months ago her uncle disappeared. “Are any of the people kidnapped ever released?” she asks. Brooks starts to respond, then pauses, thinks through his answer. He knows they want hope, but then he’ll share in the blame when the uncle doesn’t come home. “Not in this area,” he says. They nod, having heard the expected assessment.

We continue through the neighborhood, with Brooks chatting up residents and his soldiers poking through their houses. A few Iraqi soldiers stand watching. “Hey,” Brooks calls to one of his sergeants, “tell ‘em they can go help search the house, too. Just tell them not to break shit.”

In the next house, the mother is irate. “We have a problem with the sewage,” she says. “It’s everywhere outside the house, and it’s bad for the kids.”

"It will take us some time to fix the problem," Brooks says. "Until then, we have a sucking truck. Right now, we're spending millions of dollars to fix the problem."

The problem, as the woman sees it, doesn't need a million dollars. It needs a boot in the ass. Why is the guy at the pumping station never working? she asks. Why is he being paid?

Brooks says he will investigate, though he already knows the answer: Since the pumping stations still aren't connected to the main sewer line, the man has no real work to do.

In the next house, Brooks starts with his stock questions for the day. "Do you feel safer now? What do you think of the Iraqi army being in the neighborhood?" The man, a former officer in Saddam's army, shrugs and smiles. "They do a duty for their country," he says, "and they've never done anything bad to me."

As Brooks talks in the kitchen, his soldiers lounge in their bulky gear on sofas in another room, helmets off, sweating. The man's wife brings them orange juice and cookies, and they drink the juice, eat the cookies, smoke cigarettes, and bullshit.

This is the commander's hearts-and-minds mission, with everyone else just along for the ride. Some think this is useful; others think it a waste.

"What am I doing that's helping the United States right now? What am I really doing? How am I supporting and defending the Constitution?" Specialist Michael Callahan asks a few hours later, after we return to Thrasher.

"We don't need to go fuck up everyone's backyard, sprinkling American sugar in everyone's Kool-Aid," he says.

"Global war on terrorism? Completely justified. And then we go into Iraq, we roll in with a third the size of the force we rolled in with the first time. Where the fuck was the plan for what happens next?"

II. The Surge Has Been Costly For The Americans,

The surge has been costly for the Americans, with deaths averaging more than three a day since January. In Ghazaliya, the Delta Company soldiers fought nearly daily battles with insurgents through the first few months of the year.

As a fire team stacked against a wall in February ready to clear a building, a sniper fired two shots, hitting two soldiers in the chest. One lived, but Sergeant Robert Thrasher died in the street as the medic worked on him. The unit named the JSS in his honor.

A month later, a huge bomb buried in the road blew up under a Humvee, killing four of five soldiers, and a few days before I arrived, a rocket fired down an alley slammed into a Humvee and killed another. The Iraqi battalion fared just as badly, suffering three killed and eighteen wounded in their first days in Ghazaliya. The unit had never been in combat.

Their commander, Colonel Jabar Al Thabit, who served for twenty years in Saddam's army, is realistic about their capabilities. The soldiers aren't paid enough and lack the training and weapons to outmatch insurgents in urban areas.

"But the Iraqi army soldier is brave and patient, and maybe he will get more power. Maybe he will learn quickly. Maybe, with support, he will be loyal and believe in the mission," he says. "I'm always talking to my soldiers. We are fighting for our country. If we don't protect our country, who will protect it for us? I believe someday the Americans will leave, because of course they will get tired of the Iraqis."

When the U.S. does get tired enough to pull out combat troops, American advisors will still be here, training Iraqi troops.

Today we're touring safe houses and checkpoints to make sure the Iraqis know what they're doing. The MiTT team has been working on this for weeks.

"This one's going to be a quiet one," Captain Jonny McDonald, one of the British advisors, says as the Humvee pulls out of Thrasher.

"I love you optimists," Hallway says. "This is my third patrol in four days, and on the other two, they blew my shit up."

Hallway drives down narrow streets, following the lead Humvee and calling out blind spots and suspicious people to Garlick, the gunner. We roll past a six-foot-wide crater from a recent IED and pull up in front of our target house.

McDonald moves inside quickly to avoid sniper fire and climbs to the roof to inspect defensive positions. A soldier at the front corner of the house mans a sandbagged machine-gun position, but the rear of the house is totally unguarded.

McDonald asks about the defense plan. "We have six people in the house," the Iraqi company first sergeant says. "We'll all run up here."

"But the first time you're going to know something is wrong is when you're being attacked," McDonald says.

The first sergeant offers McDonald a weak smile.

McDonald climbs into the Humvee, and Hallway is pulling away when a single gunshot cracks behind us. "Shot fired!" Garlick shouts. The truck stops. But it isn't a sniper. An Iraqi soldier has accidentally fired his weapon. "Fuck that," Garlick says. "They do that all the time. Captain McDonald, can you slap that fucker for me?"

Back in the house, McDonald pulls aside the soldier, who tells him he was only clearing his weapon. "Are you telling me you don't know how to clear your weapon without firing a round?" McDonald shouts. "That is one of the most unprofessional things I've ever seen."

McDonald turns to the first sergeant: "What are you going to do to punish this man?" He shrugs and says he'll take care of it.

Enforcing the most basic rules and standards is the most nettlesome job for the MiTT team. A few years ago, hundreds of Iraqi soldiers brought to fight in Fallujah either fled or switched sides.

Mass desertion is not the problem at the moment. Here the problem is a paucity of basic soldiering skills.

In Ghazaliya, two Iraqi soldiers were recently killed picking up or kicking IEDs, and the battalion's sergeant major, the highest-ranking noncommissioned officer, shot himself in the foot.

Battlefields are unforgiving classrooms where almost right can still be completely wrong. Two weeks earlier, an Iraqi patrol arrested two men who were driving a car that they had earlier denied owning. The soldiers cuffed the men, searched the car, and drove it to Thrasher. Hallway was pleased. The Iraqis had been alert to a suspicious situation and seemed to have done everything right.

Did you search under the hood? he asked them.

Yes.

And the trunk?

Yes.

Did you search under the seats?

No.

One of the Iraqis lifted the backseat and found several artillery shells wired for detonation.

Around the same time, two Iraqi soldiers shot at a nearby checkpoint were carried into the kitchen. "We couldn't evacuate them because they'd parked a fucking bomb out front," Hallway said. A couple weeks later, an Iraqi patrol found a tanker truck suspected of carrying chlorine for bombs. The Iraqis drove that back to Thrasher as well, without searching it.

Why didn't you search it? Hallway asked.

It was awfully dark.

III. Petraeus's Rose-Colored Judgment

Sitting in a Porta-John on an Air Force base in Kuwait, waiting to fly to Baghdad, I had read this on the wall: TWO IN THE HEART, ONE IN THE MIND. KINETIC PSY-OPS, a cynical twist on the "hearts and minds" credo.

I heard that notion echoed by a few soldiers who felt they were being limited by politicians, by people's sensibilities, by those who didn't understand the dangers of the

war. "They're not letting us fight the way we need to," an infantry squad leader working in Baghdad told me. "What we need to do," another said, "is tell everyone they have twenty-four hours to get out of town, then kill anyone who stays behind."

Four years into the war, some still want to turn cities into parking lots, which says something about the problems U.S. forces have faced in adapting to the insurgency.

Not surprisingly, General David Petraeus has a sunnier disposition on the subject. "We've come light-years from where we were in 2003," he tells me. "Having said that, there will still be folks that will say we're going to kill our way out of this."

He works in a small, plain office with fluorescent lights on the second floor of the U. S. embassy at a desk crowded not with the trinkets and mementos of past commands but with three computer monitors and seven phones.

The room has no windows, but that's just as well. In June, a mortar exploded outside Crocker's office next door.

But the office is big enough for a sitting area with several chairs, which is a necessity, because everyone in Iraq wants something from Petraeus. Protection. Answers. Assurances. Miracles. See the people queuing outside his office as if they're waiting for the Godfather, seeking just a moment of his day, a day that starts at 0500 and ends when the knocks, the phone calls, and the e-mails stop, which is never, really. His time is in such demand that his driver has learned the quickest travel routes around Baghdad, shaving precious minutes off trips around the Green Zone and Camp Victory near the airport, where Petraeus has his sleeping quarters, another office, and his personal chef. No time for waiting in chow lines. He works through dinner, unless he's entertaining visiting bigwigs, and he works through those dinners, too.

Such is the life of the man tasked with saving a failing effort.

He says he has 150,000 counterinsurgents working with him, but he alone sits atop the shit pile.

And like Colin Powell in the run-up to war, Petraeus serves as the frontman for his commander in chief's expedition, his military credibility cashed in by the White House as political currency.

In days of briefings, he told Americans that results would be slow in coming and urged them not to equate the occasional giant car bombings and other "sensational attacks" with failed policy. To prepare, Petraeus sat with his staff answering practice questions, like a politician prepping for a debate. He met with President Bush and spoke with Congress in sessions that drew so many people, they were sitting on the floor.

Back in Iraq, he has taken to looking for signs of hope as he helicopters over Baghdad.

A few nights ago, he says he saw people at three amusement parks. "There's an awful lot of Baghdad," he says, "that is very normal."

A statement like that locks up the brakes. Normal? Really?

Life in Baghdad is anything but.

That people might go to the market or an amusement park, despite the danger, in defiance of danger, is a testament to their longing for normalcy but hardly an example of it.

To the contrary, wishing for a day when mundane activities no longer require a careful risk assessment shows how far from normal Baghdad remains.

I met a young woman who lives in Baghdad and works for the Americans in the Green Zone. She lies to her neighbors, as many do today, and tells them she works for the city government. A taxi drops her on a random street corner and she walks the rest of the way.

I asked about life in Baghdad, if she is able to have any fun, to enjoy herself. She looks at me with a mix of disbelief and pity, that I understand so little of the situation.

“Of course not,” she says. “Life here is terrible.” For fun she used to shop, until the markets started blowing up often enough that the fear outweighed the pleasure. “Now I go shopping twice a year,” she says. “Once for summer clothes. Once for winter clothes.”

Petraeus’s rose-colored judgment is understandable, because he had to start somewhere, because a populace willing to brave death for a trip to an amusement park may be a populace that will somehow say no to the chaos, and because he is under tectonic pressures to produce results, to salvage the cause, to show Americans that the credibility, the money, the blood, and the lives they have pumped into Iraq over the past four years have not been flushed away.

“You’re working on an election cycle,” I say.

Petraeus laughs, grimacing slightly. “There’s no shortage of challenges, wherever you look,” he says.

The day before I met Petraeus, I sat at the Iraqi high tribunal watching the closing arguments in the case against Lieutenant General Sultan Hashim Ahmed, the former minister of defense accused of helping kill tens of thousands of Kurds during the Anfal campaign in the late 1980s.

“Any military man given an order in war should obey it and not question whether it’s fair or not,” he told the court. “If I didn’t carry out the order, I’d be executed.” Ahmed, his lawyer said, had nothing to hide, which is why he had surrendered to U. S. forces in Mosul in September 2003, with the assurance that he would be taken off the deck of cards, a list of the fifty-five most wanted men in Iraq.

Ahmed had been number twenty-seven, the eight of hearts. His lawyer then pulled out a letter, testimony to his client’s honor, and read to the court: “We are on two different sides of the war, but both of us are military men. We understand that we have to obey

the orders of our commander. . . . You will be treated with respect, better than if you were a fugitive. I want you to surrender.”

Petraeus wrote that letter to Ahmed when he led the 101st Airborne and controlled the area around Mosul, when the unrest was still the doing of dead-enders. When just over three hundred Americans had died.

When those who pushed the war had yet to feel the sting of rebuke for ignoring the absolute need to rebuild the country and its institutions. When the war was merely messy, nothing yet like the monster it has become.

His letter, invoking the honor of soldiers, calling on a shared understanding of duty and decency, seems quaint today, sweet, and impossibly simple.

Now Petraeus’s one enemy has been swallowed by a hydra: the militias. The insurgents. The jihadis.

And for every bit of progress made, for every head lopped off the beast, another piece of the war turns bad. Now bodies is the buzzword. And while the number dumped around Baghdad dropped earlier in the year, it climbed into the summer. June’s body count was 50 percent higher than January’s.

Petraeus looks at me and says he has tried to be candid, not selling the war but reporting its ups and downs. “I don’t think we should be in the business of putting lipstick on pigs, trying to create perceptions that are not well-founded. When that is done, that inevitably undermines the effort. If there’s some good stuff, we’re going to offer it up,” he says. “If there’s some bad stuff, we’re going to say it was a bad day. Yesterday here was a bad day. There’s no two ways about it.” (Eleven U. S. troops were killed, including six in a single explosion.) “But you’re going to have bad days. This is war. It’s unlike any other endeavor. And that’s a tough part of it. That part never gets any easier. And I’m not so sure it doesn’t get harder.”

Here Petraeus pauses, and when he starts speaking again, his words are stretched out, stark.

“I’ve occasionally wondered if there’s sort of a bad-news limit,” he says. “How much tragic news can you take in one lifetime?”

IV. An Explosion Rumbled Outside, A Few Hundred Meters Away.

There must have been fifty guns at Ghazaliya’s Sunday-morning town-council meeting.

For five months, this has been one of Captain Darren Fowler’s nation-building projects, urging local leaders to take ownership of the fate of their neighborhoods. These sorts of tasks usually fall on the military and junior officers like Fowler. A lanky southerner who went to college on a shooting scholarship, Fowler was trained to maneuver tanks on battlefields.

But he had the most manpower, the most regular interaction with local leaders, and the most to gain: If local government thrives, the area will be less dangerous for his soldiers. Besides, no one else offered to do the job.

Violence aside, southern Ghazaliya has endless problems. Sewage floods the streets, trash piles up in vacant lots, electricity and clean water are sporadic, and too few people have jobs. Yet when Fowler's unit arrived, the locals asked for a soccer field. As a show of good faith, the Americans gave them \$40,000 to build two soccer fields on trash-strewn lots. They pushed the garbage to the side rather than carting it away, built some welded goalposts, and put up some bleachers.

Driving out to assess progress, Fowler passed the trash pile and an IED exploded on his truck, one of nearly a dozen bomb blasts he has survived in Ghazaliya. He would have liked a warning. "We'll clean the trash up, and the next day they start throwing it out again," he said. "You keep doing these projects over and over. The people lack will."

After the Samarra mosque bombing in early 2006, Ghazaliya fell apart, and so did the Neighborhood Advisory Council, which had been formed by the Coalition Provisional Authority. Fowler's boss, Lieutenant Colonel James Nickolas, started the rebuilding process last December, bringing the NAC together to meet the new local Iraqi army commander, Lieutenant Colonel Sabah Kadam Fadily, a Shiite from a neighborhood just north of Ghazaliya.

The situation went from tense to terrible. "If you kill one of my soldiers," Fadily told the NAC members, "I'll kill a hundred of you." The room exploded in shouting, and for months Nickolas fielded complaints about Fadily's harsh tactics. "He can be difficult," Nickolas says, "in getting along with people he's supposed to be protecting."

Colonel Al Thabit, who later took over southern Ghazaliya, was a calming influence on the neighborhood. He walked the streets and shook hands. He listened. He removed detainee's hoods and offered them cigarettes. "The people of the neighborhood were shocked by our treatment of them. They thought we would come in force and kill innocent people," he told me. Before moving into Ghazaliya, Al Thabit had frequent talks with his soldiers, telling them to respect the people and their homes. If you can open a door by knocking, he said, don't kick it down. "I follow the law," he said. "And if I do that, the people will respect me."

Al Thabit's demeanor helped, but the council was hardly effective, or even whole. Northern Ghazaliya had a NAC representative for each of its neighborhoods. Southern Ghazaliya, Fowler's area, was supposed to have four, but one had been kidnapped, and another was threatened and quit, and another seat had been vacant for months. So he had just one.

Fowler scanned the council room as it filled up with American and Iraqi soldiers, police, and neighborhood leaders. Riyadh Finjan, the Iraqi NAC chairman, called the meeting to order, and Fowler sighed. "My only rep didn't come," he said.

Finjan directed the first order of business to Al Thabit. "I heard a complaint from a cabdriver who said he drove around a small piece of concertina wire in the road and the person at the checkpoint fired on the vehicle and dragged him out," he said.

“It wasn’t like that,” Al Thabit shot back, waving a meaty hand at Finjan. “There was a line of vehicles waiting to be searched. The car drove around it.”

“The man told me, ‘I used to love the Iraqi army. Now I’m ready to blow myself up at a checkpoint!’ “ Finjan said.

Fowler raised eyebrows, puffed his cheeks, and exhaled.

“If people didn’t drive around with guns and bombs in their cars,” Al Thabit said, “I wouldn’t need to search them all.”

The conversation turned to recent explosions and shootings, and Sheik Mohammed Al Qasi, one of the neighborhood’s most influential men, raised himself from his plastic chair. “To speak frankly, we’ve all been threatened. By who? God knows,” he said. “They tell us you can’t cross this line or we’ll cut your head off. We’ve been shot at and blown up. More than once I’ve asked about security. And I’m not even allowed to carry a screwdriver.”

Fowler listened. He thumbed through a black rosary, using it like a set of worry beads. His impatience grew. He wanted them to figure out how to get rid of the shit puddles and trash piles all over town. “They need to get back on track,” he said.

The room degenerated into a half dozen side conversations.

Major Jim Orr, the MiTT team chief, turned and looked at me with a crazy smile. “The birth of democracy at its lowest level,” he said, and spit a glob of tobacco juice into a soda can.

Finjan pounded his hand, rapping his ring on the table. He announced that the council now had candidates to fill the empty slots. They weren’t from Fowler’s neighborhood, but finding anyone willing to serve was a good step.

“If they do find representatives from southern Ghazaliya,” a council member said, “they won’t want to come north, so maybe meetings can be held in both the south and the north.”

Fowler’s head snapped up. “No. No. No,” he said, jumping into the discussion for the first time. “To have a unified government you must have a meeting with the Sunnis and the Shiites in one place. We’re not having separate meetings. We’re doing it here, together.”

Fowler blew out another long breath. His fingers sped along the rosary beads. He popped a Jolly Rancher into his mouth. “We trained in this before we came over,” he said. “I just didn’t expect it to be completely broken when I got here.”

An explosion rumbled outside, a few hundred meters away.

V. Even Moving Inside The Green Zone Can Be Deadly.

The answer to Ghazaliya's lakes of sewage and mountains of stinking trash can be found somewhere in a massive concrete building in downtown Baghdad, not far from the Green Zone.

The Amanat controls the city's water, sewage, and trash collection, the everyday services all Baghdadis want and not enough have. Kent Larson and Alan Zangana have drawn the messy mission of determining what America might do to help the Amanat run better. They work on the Baghdad Provincial Reconstruction Team, a State Department group created just last summer to solve some of the more crippling nation-building issues -- no rule of law, no public diplomacy, no infrastructure, no economic development, little governance.

We climbed eight flights of marble stairs, the air warm and stale. Larson wiped his brow with a handkerchief and slid off his body armor. He reached into his backpack and pulled out a blue blazer, slightly wrinkled. Everyone in the Amanat wears business attire; so must he. Zangana had worn his suit under his body armor.

For the next hour, Larson and Zangana were taken through budgeting and auditing, procurement processes and compliance reporting. They wanted to know why the Amanat uses four different budgets, whether all the offices had automated accounting software, and who decides the budget allocations. They toured the accounting and auditing departments, where employees worked hunched over both paper ledger books and computers, of which there were surprisingly few given the nature of the work.

As we headed back into the Green Zone, I marveled at what I had just seen. The lack of basic services had been a steady complaint for years, fueling displeasure with both the Iraqi government and America. This was tedious but important work. Why hadn't it been done years earlier?

The PRT program was launched in November of 2005 but didn't really get going until the middle of last year, three years into an insurgency that feeds off inertia.

Indeed, the State Department's Iraq operation still has only about fifteen employees -- including the ambassador -- with a working knowledge of Arabic.

In January, Bush doubled the number of PRT personnel to six hundred and added ten smaller PRT teams, which would be embedded with brigade combat teams in Anbar and Baghdad. But that staff is still being added, giving it little influence on the surge.

Turnover on the PRTs can be high, needs dwarf resources, and progress falls well short of Washington expectations. And there's the war.

In a month, the Baghdad PRT might conduct eighty missions like the trip to the Amanat, visiting markets, courthouses, and police stations, but the trips are kept short and movement is severely limited by security concerns.

Of course, even moving inside the Green Zone can be deadly.

While I was in Iraq, the rockets and mortars had been coming down regularly and with a new accuracy, wounding several, killing a few -- including a woman who died behind the U.S. embassy under a tree not far from the pool, where a sign

cautions, NO DRINKING WHILE ARMED -- giving the Green Zone's inhabitants the unsettling feeling that they are participants once again in the war, the real war and not just the idea of the war.

The State Department's Regional Security Office, in charge of safety around the embassy, adjusted the dress code, and a hardy few lounged poolside in shorts and body armor.

The PRT staff has an immediate view of the war from offices that overlook Ibn Sina hospital, which receives soldiers wounded around Baghdad. I heard the dull beating of a helicopter and walked over to a window. I leaned my forehead against the glass and stared down at the knot of hospital workers moving out to the flight pad huddled around a six-wheeled John Deere Gator, a grim reenactment of the M.A.S.H. opening credits.

They crouched against the blasting rotor wash, slid out a stretcher, and laid it across the Gator's bed. Tan combat boots poked out from under a blanket. They hurried the patient inside, and a few minutes later, the flight medic walked out with his stretcher, hosed off the blood, climbed back into his helicopter, and flew away. That show plays several times a day.

The mangled bodies flying in on those helicopters have played the biggest role in influencing America's thinking on the war. But any graceful exit from Iraq -- no longer possible, of course -- depends not just on reducing violence but on the very slow work of rebuilding Iraq's institutions and introducing new notions of prioritizing and problem solving. Without that, everything stays jacked up. People aren't paid on time. Gas-station lines stretch for a mile. Schools aren't built.

Instead, here's how it has worked: Neighborhood leaders said, We need a school right here. The local U. S. military commander said, Great, I have money for that. The people will be grateful. And the school was built. But no teachers or supplies were sent because the Ministry of Education wasn't consulted, and the land was in dispute because no one talked to the Ministry of Planning. Soon the school sat empty, used only as an insurgent hideout. What sounded so simple, a quick hit with good returns, was anything but.

In February, the PRT organized a meeting between Baghdad's governor and mayor, the Provincial Advisory Council chief, and the ministries of education, planning, and finance to coordinate the process of building schools. That was the first time many of them had even met.

"Think of it as building a bridge as you walk across it," Colonel Timothy Clapp said. "That's how we do everything in Iraq."

Clapp, a reservist from Williamsburg, Virginia, heads the Joint Reconstruction Operations Center, an effort started last fall to coordinate building projects around Baghdad.

Even with centralized efforts, the work is a pain in the ass. Ten percent of the projects are on hold, and Iraqi construction, mediocre in the best of times, drops off the charts when workers are under fire.

This, Clapp told me, is the problem in Ghazaliya. The first contractor did terrible work tying in to the main sewer line. A busted water pipe flooded the ditch, which couldn't be drained because the workers didn't have generators to run the pumps. And now the work site is being attacked. But Clapp, like nearly everyone I'd met doing this sort of institutional rebuilding, carried an ardent devotion to making this work. He had been in Iraq for fourteen months and had volunteered to stay another eighteen. "It's like the old saying about the sausage and the egg. The chicken is involved with breakfast; the pig is committed," he said. "I'm the pig."

Clapp's new project is the Energy Fusion Cell, a clearinghouse similar to the JROC focusing on Iraq's electricity and oil problems. "You've got fifteen different groups going in different directions and no one to pull them together," he said. "I specialize in building dysfunctional families."

The Fusion Cell will pull in reps from Iraq's defense, oil, electricity, finance, and planning ministries, along with several U. S. agencies and military units. Clapp showed me the floor of desks and cubicles that would become the Fusion Cell. A poster sporting the group's logo hung on the wall of the largely empty office.

My breath drew in the sweet stink of fresh paint, which just pissed me off. People in Iraq have long since given up on the modern idea of reliable electrical power. Solving the country's power problem is crucial to restoring faith in the government and undermining the insurgency. So why would such an elemental job take four years for someone to think of?

That Iraqis are being pulled into these processes stands as progress. But the time needed and the complexity of coordinating these efforts, even without the war, would overwhelm their capabilities.

Consider the effort of just moving reconstruction materials around the country, something of a ballet and one the Iraqis are still far from choreographing on their own. Jack Holly built the network that supplies Iraq's security forces and ministries with everything from boots to bulldozers. The retired Marine colonel, who now wears madras shirts and sneakers and has a graying beard, has spent the last four years shoving Iraq into the modern world. "We come into a society that's hungry, that's now had the chains thrown off, but they're not ready to do things logistically," he said. "They're sitting like Rip Van Winkle, back in the early 1970s, trying to grasp and suck from a fire hose in a world that's been transformed."

In Holly's logistics nerve center, located on the grounds of a former prison, civilian contractors monitor a couple dozen convoys moving across Iraq. Ambulances for the Directorate of Border Enforcement. A sewage-sucking truck for the Ministry of Justice. Earthmovers to Ramadi. GPS units update positions every couple minutes, and panic buttons alert the center's staff moments after an attack.

The staff know when the convoys depart, arrive, and whether they veer off the preplanned route. They track months' worth of attacks, discerning which roads are the most dangerous and at what time of day.

On average, one in ten convoys gets hit.

Since the logistics center opened in late 2004, it has coordinated 13,000 convoys, with 1,304 attacks, 140 killed, 454 wounded, and 5 still missing. On a stretch of road between Taji and Samarra this winter, every other convoy was attacked. That's the price to supply Iraq's police and army with vehicles, helmets, and boots, to put beds in hospitals and computers in offices.

Holly had run logistics operations in Somalia and Saudi Arabia for the Marines. He came to Iraq in late 2003 with no budget and instructions to create a logistics network for rebuilding Iraq. "I try to be pragmatic. In my previous life, I went for 100 percent solutions. Now 60 percent solutions are grand," he said. And often enough, it's not the Iraqis' lack of ability that retards the effort but poor oversight and simple ignorance of the critical steps between paper goals and implementation.

"This company had a whole customs contract, millions of dollars," Holly said. "They took all their equipment out to the customs house and just dropped it there because guess what? No fucking electricity. And they said, That's not our responsibility. We delivered the equipment. I said, You're supposed to set it up. Well, we can't set it up because there's no electricity. And what ended up happening? All the equipment that was out there disappeared and is probably being used to look at the fuck porn on the Internet that fills up everything here. I can imagine that some guy who's only seen women in burqas all his life who all the sudden sees tits and ass hanging out is going to be on the Internet, taking it all in. The twenty-first century, let me join," Holly said and paused to catch his breath. "You don't give things to the people without the proper supervision."

Over in the command center, a buzzer screamed and a red light flashed. One of Holly's convoys had been attacked.

VI. "If Our Entire Country Doesn't Want Us Here, Then Why Are We Here?"

In April, bombs destroyed two key Baghdad bridges. Then the pace quickened, and by midsummer another half dozen bridges had been blown up.

A few months earlier, Iraq saw a spate of chlorine bombings. Before that, helicopters were being shot down.

Before that, the markets were blowing up.

All of which reminded me of a conversation I'd had at Thrasher with First Lieutenant Sean Henley.

"It really ends up being a game of cat and mouse," he told me after Iraqi army soldiers had found explosives hidden in three trucks carrying medical supplies.

"They change, we have to change. We change, they have to change. It's a constant back-and-forth battle for who's winning this fight."

"Given the objectives that we have, this is the way to go about achieving them," General Petraeus had told me as we discussed the surge strategy. "We've got about everything that our nation can muster in terms of military forces."

That is certainly true. And it has left America hamstrung both at home and in Iraq. Soldiers and marines are now on fourth and fifth deployments, one-year Army tours have been stretched to fifteen months, and there still aren't enough fingers to plug the dike in Iraq.

In early May, insurgents ambushed a two-vehicle American patrol south of Baghdad, killing five soldiers and an interpreter, abducting three more soldiers, and torching their Humvees.

When I was here as a soldier, we'd be on patrol and we'd talk about how easily insurgents could wipe out a whole patrol if they had their shit together.

We plotted perfect ambushes, how gunmen could seal off narrow streets, maybe distract us with a car bomb, then rain down RPGs from rooftops.

Those conversations always ended with the same sentiment: Good thing they don't have their shit together. But many of them now do.

Within hours of the ambush, a massive search party assembled. Four thousand Americans and two thousand Iraqi soldiers, aided by helicopters and unmanned aerial drones, searched every house for miles around. Just as violence in the Diyala province had drawn troops from Baghdad, soldiers were again pulled from the capital to aid in the search.

Few things carry higher priority for U. S. forces than missing soldiers, a truth the insurgents understand.

The captured soldiers were from the brigade I served with during my two Iraq deployments. Many of my friends are in Iraq now, and on May 17 some of them were out walking through fields and villages, searching for the missing.

They had done nothing else for the past week.

The patrol stopped and Sergeant Steven Packer squatted down on one knee, triggering a pressure-activated bomb. In a shower of dirt and debris, my company's long run of luck ended. Packer's was the first death in three Iraq deployments.

I slept next to him during our four months of basic training and served in his platoon during eighteen months in Iraq.

Through the spring of 2006, he waited for paperwork to be signed allowing him to finish his enlistment three months early and start college.

But the signature never came, and he received stop-loss orders, preventing him from leaving the Army, and he went back to Iraq last summer.

I had been stop-lossed, too, earning me an extra year in Iraq.

I had been pissed then, briefly, but Packer's death enrages me.

Not because he shouldn't have been there, which is true, but for the fact that the greater effort in Iraq has been managed so poorly.

Packer died doing something good, something noble, searching for a missing comrade. But step back and the picture blurs. Is there any worthiness in his death?

Soldiers die in war, and most that I know are ready to make that sacrifice. I was. And I still would today.

But not when my chances of success are so seriously diminished by arrogance, delusion, a reliance on best-case scenarios, and a shocking degree of wishful thinking.

After I'd come back from Captain Brooks's foot patrol at Thrasher, I sat with a couple soldiers in the smoking area, a small open courtyard in the middle of the house.

"America's not the perfect place to live. We have our flaws. But it's still a better place than this," Specialist Callahan was saying. "I think everyone in the world has a right to say, 'Here are my goals, what I want, and if I fail along the way, that's okay, but I have a chance.'"

Callahan believes in this, or believed in it. He's twenty-six, from Matawan, New Jersey, had played lacrosse at Seton Hall for a few years before enlisting. He'd been to Iraq once before, when he'd helped flatten Fallujah. That made more sense than this, he said.

Now he sees his role the way many soldiers do today: hunting gunmen who move like ghosts, breaking up street fights, and trying to hold the whole rickety arrangement together.

He was halfway into his cigarette and warmed up.

If last year's elections were a referendum on Iraq, like so many had been saying, why was he still sitting in a house in Ghazaliya, no end in sight?

"I can name you sixteen guys who I know that died over here, and I don't want them to end up like the guys from Vietnam, with people saying they died in vain. Why did they die for a mistake, since everyone's calling it a mistake now?" he said.

"People need to stand up for their rights.

"If our entire country doesn't want us here, then why are we here?"

"Why the fuck are we here wasting our lives if the people we're supposed to be defending at home don't want us over here?"

His eyes moved around the porch.

“We’re always behind the power curve for what they’re throwing at us,” he said. “Let’s say you can put in a joint security station every four blocks. What’s that doing for this country?”

And there it was, the fatalism and pessimism that can’t be kept in check for long in Iraq.

Even in Ghazaliya, where the surge was working, where the soldiers no longer found dogs eating dead bodies every day.

“The surge will help for a while, then it will go back to the way it was. Just like every other plan we have. It’s only a matter of time before they figure it out,” said Private First Class Kyle Doolittle, a twenty-year-old tank driver from Ithaca, New York.

“The fewer projects we finish, the worse the situation is, the better they look. You can do all the good in the world, giving them all the good things we have, and they’ll do something to fuck it up. Then the Iraqi people say, What the fuck? Why don’t you finish what you started? And we aren’t fulfilling our end of the bargain.” Doolittle stopped and considered.

“All you can do,” he said, “is go day by day. And every day you make it through, that’s one day closer you are to going home. That’s all you can think about.”

A couple weeks earlier, an IED buried deep in the road blew up under the tank he was driving. The blast lifted the sixty-five-ton tank off the ground and knocked out Doolittle, but everyone lived.

A few days later, someone put a bomb in the same spot and blew a Humvee into pieces and killed four of the five soldiers inside. They found the triggerman. He admitted to both blasts. He bragged. He was twelve years old.

“We’re just delaying the inevitable,” Doolittle said.

“There’s going to be a civil war here when we leave. We’re just prolonging the hardship. It’ll be really bad for two or three years, one side will win, and it will be over and Iraq can go back to being Iraq.”

If you’re outside its concrete fortifications, then you understand that the surge is but a mote in a maelstrom, a tiny island in a raging river.

Around the country, there is vital work being done by impossibly dedicated people, projects that make sense, that seem like the best way forward -- if only there weren’t a war on, if only it weren’t too late, if only there weren’t the intervening years of neglect and failure and death.

**GUESS WHO’S WORRIED
GUESS WHO ISN’T**

GUESS WHY BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



A U.S. soldier from Bravo 112 Cav. Battalion during foot patrol in the city of Baqouba, 60 kilometers (35 miles) northeast of Baghdad Sept, 2, 2007. (AP Photo/Karel Prinsloo)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Guardsman Killed In Action: BB Riverboat Captain Had Been Married Less Than A Year, To Another Captain

August 28, 2007 BY RYAN CLARK, The Enquirer

DAYTON - Two American flags fly from the Carnes home on Fourth Avenue. In the windows, signs and yellow ribbons ask to Pray for Our Troops and Bring Them Home.

Monday, about a dozen grieving family members and friends sat on the front porch, mourning one of their own - 25-year-old Staff Sgt. Nicholas Carnes of the Kentucky National Guard.

Wray Jean Carnes talked about her son, who was killed in Afghanistan over the weekend when his unit engaged the enemy in a firefight.

"They were on maneuvers, looking for (improvised explosive devices)," she said. "Then the enemy fired on his squad."

Sunday, she received a late-night phone call telling her Nicholas had been killed.

Carnes was part of the Guard's 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery, based in Carrolton.

He graduated from Dayton High School in 2000, where he played football.

He entered the Army National Guard at 17 and went to work at BB Riverboats, where he became a captain before leaving on his guard deployment in October 2006.

His wife, Terri Bernstein-Carnes, is herself a captain and a member of the Bernstein family, owners of BB Riverboats. Sept. 19 would have been their first wedding anniversary.

This was Carnes' first deployment, his mother said.

"He was the most kind, gentle, loving young man," his mother said. "There wasn't anyone he ever met who didn't love him. He never grumbled. He was always there to lend a helping hand. He was a giving young man."

But his mission had more importance. "He wanted to protect his family," she said of his desire to serve. "He wanted us all to be free."

"We're not only going through a personal loss, we're also going through a professional loss," said his father-in-law, Alan Bernstein said. "(Nicholas) really thought he was doing the right thing, serving his country. He thought that if he lost his life, it was in the name of freedom. He knew the danger, and still he was overly-enthusiastic about going. We lost a great kid."

Bernstein said Carnes was destined for great things.

"But he was short-cuttled," he said. "He was a natural leader, never in a bad mood.

"I don't know what there is to say to my daughter. She's a strong girl, like he was a strong man. We're getting a lot of support from the community already, even people we don't know."

TROOP NEWS

As Happy Troops Show Their Delight To See Him, The Traitor Bush Pretends To Study A Map Of Something Or Other



The traitor Bush at Al-Asad Airbase in Anbar province Sept. 3, 2007. (AP Photo/Charles Dharapak)

MORE:

Bush Proclaims Success In Anbar; But “Not Scheduled To Leave The Security Of The Base To See Those Changes First Hand”

September 3, 2007 By Michael Fletcher and Ann Scott Tyson, Washington Post Staff Writers

AL ASAD AIR BASE, Iraq, Sept. 3 -- President Bush, in a surprise visit to this isolated and well fortified air field in Anbar province Monday, said continued gains in security could allow for a reduction in U.S. troops in Iraq and called on the Iraqi government to follow that success with progress toward rebuilding and political reconciliation.

Although Bush has touted the substantial political and security progress made in Anbar province, he was not scheduled to leave the security of the base to see those changes first hand.

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.

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

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 U.S. Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division search a house in the Amariyah neighborhood of west Baghdad, Aug. 13, 2007. (AP Photo/Petr David Josek)



An Iraqi citizen with the wreckage of his belongings after an armed home invasion by U.S. military in Sadr City in Baghdad Sept. 1, 2007. (AP Photo/ Karim Kadim)

[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."

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

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.