

GI SPECIAL 517:



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

Mirror Images

July 12, 2007 By AH, Army of Dude [U.S. Soldier, Iraq]

One more inspection and he is going to lose it.

General Omar was visiting the training camp today, his training camp, and things had to look absolutely perfect.

It was a dog and pony show as always. Oversights that didn't matter day to day had to be corrected or hidden from view. Green banners proclaiming "God's Will" would be strewn up, faded portraits of Saddam would be dusted off and straightened, and the shit trenches would be filled with dirt and fresh ones would be dug. Just in case Omar had the squirts.

The camp was little more than three small one story buildings isolated deep within the palm groves. One was empty save for a chalkboard spanning two of the walls. On doctrine training days they'd huddle around the board as an instructor lazily explained the concept of ambushes and mortar attacks. The X's and arrows the instructor drew

reminded him of the football plays he and his brother sketched in the dirt field next to their house...

"Akmed? Are you paying attention?"

"Huh? Oh, Yes. Fully sir" he replied, his mind coming back reluctantly to the steaming classroom. Even in his own clothes, Akmed seemed to be out place. Wearing light blue sandals two sizes too small and tight black jeans, he didn't fit anywhere. Sitting on the floor next to the other men was always a trial of patience.

Even folded, his legs were long enough to annoy someone sitting next to him. After a few days, he found a spot in the back, alone. The various instructors never failed to remind the class of his bulbous nose and thick unibrow. Nearly a year at the camp, he had forgotten why he was there in the first place.

"The class would love to hear what the basic load is for a three man RPG team, Akmed. Since you're listening so attentively."

"Um. I know this. Three?" A few guys in the front snicker.

"Three? Are you sure?"

"It could be four, I guess."

"That's incorrect. At this rate you'll barely be a mediocre suicide bomber." The snickering turned into a roaring laughter. Akmed's shoulders drop and his nervous smile fades. Defeated.

"I know the answer!" It was Sayid. "The basic load is six RPGS, two for each man." Fucking teacher's pet.

"That's right Sayid. Perhaps you can learn a thing or two from him, Akmed. The whole class can. That's it for today's lesson. Class is out early so everyone can clean up for General Omar's inspection today. So get to work."

The class of ten trickled out into the scorching afternoon sun. The palm trees did little to shade the cluster of buildings. They seemed to hold in the heat, even during the night. Akmed scoops up an empty bottle of Class Cola and walks around to the backside of the classroom to the spigot on wall. With a full bottle of murky water he makes his way to the barracks.

Even though they were the same size as the classroom, the two buildings held ten men each with all their gear and sleeping mats. There was barely enough room for that. During class, the instructor gave a list of what was needed for the layout during the general's inspection. Akmed digs into his pocket for the folded piece of paper.

-Cleaned and oiled Kalashnikov with sharpened bayonet, free of rust

-Washed magazine bandoleer

-Four magazines filled with 30 rounds each, clean and free of rust

- Dusted off and taped grenades in order: two fragmentation, one colored smoke
- Vest filled with ball bearings and nails. Hanging straps folded neatly and taped. Words "God Is -Great" neatly written in black marker
- Mask with holes cut for eyes and mouth, clean and free of dirt
- Tools free of rust and dirt: shovel, pliers (small, large), pry bar, wire cutters
- Iraqi Police uniform and Kevlar vest, clean with patches sewn
- Koran

Each man's equipment layout had to be exactly alike. Nothing was to deviate from the picture hanging by the door.

The mats were to be one Kalashnikov (without bayonet) apart in two rows of five.

On the mat, the Kalashnikov was vertical on the left side, the bayonet five inches from the barrel and flush with the tip, bandoleer folded as to show all three pouches five inches from the bayonet, four magazines with the curve to the left in stacks of two on top of the center pouch, two fragmentation grenades and one smoke grenade lined up horizontally underneath the bandoleer with a two inch separation, martyr vest filled with forty $\frac{3}{4}$ inch ball bearings and twenty-five three inch nails, with straps folded in an underhand fashion and secured with black tape, "God Is Great" written in two inch letters in the center of the belt and placed in the bottom center of the mat, mask with one hole for mouth and two for eyes, cut at a 45° angle (to show aggression) five inches to the right of the vest, shovel with scoop pointing up and out across the mat from the Kalashnikov, pry bar two inches to the left and flush with the shovel, wire cutters three inches underneath the shovel and handles pointing to the left, small pliers one inch to the left with handles down, large pliers one inch to the right with handles down, Iraqi Police Kevlar vest four inches below the mat, centered, Iraqi Police uniform stacked neatly on top with shirt showing identification badges, and last, at the center of the mat with four inches distance all around, The Main Pillar of Islam, The Koran.

Akmed stands to eyeball his layout, stretching his nearly six foot frame toward the ceiling. Blood rushes back to his legs after ten minutes of meticulous arranging on his knees. Standing back, he glances at the finished layouts to his left and right. Good enough.

Akmed, the lanky, unbrowed, awkward seventeen year old from central Iraq, needs a smoke badly. The general was coming in an hour and everyone in the camp still remembers what happened the last time there was an inspection.

Colonel Ali, known for his meticulous and obsessive nature, couldn't find one infraction in the barracks. He ran a white gloved finger over the rounds in the magazines and sniffed the armpits of the uniform sleeves for odor. Everything was perfect. Then he stepped to Akmed's mat. With a horrified look on his face, Colonel Ali froze.

“Captain, what is this meaning of this?” Colonel Ali never looked at his subordinates when addressing them.

“What is the meaning of what, sir?” responded Captain Samman with a nervous look on his face, gleaming with sweat.

“This” replied Colonel Ali, bending down to pick up Akmed’s shovel, pointing a damning finger at a spot of rust the size of a pinhead.

“It appears to be rust, sir.”

“No, Captain. It is a failure of the whole chain of command from you on down to make certain your men’s equipment is serviceable. Do you really expect this private to dig a hole with such poor tools? And while I’m at it...”

After the colonel yelled at the captain, and the captain yelled at the sergeant, and the sergeant at the corporal, and the corporal at Akmed, the rest of the men were sure to teach him a lesson. Later that night when Akmed was pulling triple guard duty, three men tackled him, held him down and beat him with a rusty chain. It was his mother’s birthday.

With a sigh, Akmed steps back from his mat with the perfect layout. Or he thought it was perfect. The last one seemed to be immaculate to him. He even ran an oiled rag over his shovel to make sure it was glistening.

His mind seemed to wander off when his attention was needed the most, like when he was on guard duty or wiring a bomb. Ah, the smoke! Akmed feels around in his pocket for a pack of Five Star cigarettes. He pulls it out and flips open the top. Empty. Akmed turns and heads out the door, oblivious to the new piece of paper stapled to the door.

It was a list of things needed to be done around the camp before the general arrived.

It read:

Mohammed – String up barbed wire around perimeter of camp. Discard old wire.

Amir – Sweep out the classroom and take out the garbage in and around the buildings.

Akmed – Dig a fighting position ten meters in front of the main barracks. Emplace an RPK with 1200 rounds.

Sayid – Cement glass into the tops of walls for protective measures.

Get this done before 1300!

-Captain Samman

Stepping outside, Akmed sees a stout, solitary figure staring into the grove. It must be Mahmood.

“Hey Mah, got a smoke for me?”

“Not again Akmed,” Mahmood says with a smile. He reaches into his pocket. “This is the last time.”

“Whatever man, I get you all the time!” If Akmed was the tallest of the group, Mahmood was definitely the shortest. He stood five feet tall with a thick pair of sandals on, but made up for it in muscle. The only thing darker than his skin was his eyes, intense but with a hint of playfulness about them. Mahmood carried the RPK, a heavy machine gun, like it was a toy.

So far he had claimed two downed American helicopters last January. It was safe to say he was the most feared man in the camp. He had taken part in the beating of Akmed after the colonel’s visit, but they had since become friends. Their personalities complemented one another, and he was the only one Akmed completely trusted.

“How’s your layout? I hope it’s better than last time,” Mahmood says with a smirk, holding the pack of Five Stars out to Akmed. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a purple lighter, sparking the tip of the cigarette hanging out of his mouth.

“I don’t think so. Mine looks as good as anybody else’s.”

“Let’s hope so. A pissed off colonel was bad enough. A pissed off general would be the end of us. We’ll be filling ghee cans with dirt all day and night if this goes bad.”

“Fuck! Shit!”

Mahmood and Akmed look at each other and spin around to see Sayid standing on top of a chair next to a wall, blood dripping from his hands. At his feet is a bucket filled with shards of glass and a spade dripping with wet cement.

“God dammit Akmed, stop staring and get me something to wrap my hand with!” With some hesitation and a hidden smile, Akmed runs into the barracks room, grabs a bandana hanging on the wall and runs back to Sayid, still standing on the chair, still bleeding.

“I hope your chore is going better than mine,” says Sayid, wrapping the bandana around his crimson palm.

“What chore? You mean the layout?” Akmed replies, with confusion.

“You mean you didn’t dig the fighting position yet?”

“What are you talking about?”

“I hope you’re joking Akmed. General Omar will be here soon, and you haven’t dug the hole? Go look on the barracks door if you don’t believe me.”

Trailing Mahmood, Akmed walks back to the barracks to look at the letter posted on the door. His skin drains of blood and suddenly the room feels cold in the summer afternoon. “Mahmood, I might need your help.”

With clean and oiled shovels in hand, Mahmood and Akmed quickly measure out ten meters with thirty paces from the barracks door. They begin to dig, and dig, and dig.

Akmed takes a break long enough to glance at his watch. A quarter to one. They had fifteen minutes until the captain's final inspection right before the general arrived. With the sun high above them, masked by the leafy palms, the two men dig with fury, digging to prevent the consequence of not digging at all.

The hole had to be big enough for a man to stand up inside chest high so he could man the machine gun with most of his body concealed. Mahmood throws down the shovel and disappears into the hole, the ground swallowing him completely. It was deep enough.

Akmed extends his bony arm to Mahmood, straining to pull him out. Stepping out of the hole, Mahmood runs to the pile of leaves and brush used for fires. It would be useful in concealing the mound of dirt excavated for the fighting position. Seemingly out of nowhere, Captain Samman is standing by the position, his arms crossed, as Akmed and Mahmood stop in front of him, their arms full of brown foliage.

"You two fuckups better hurry. General Omar is on his way, and I'll be damned if I have another failed inspection on my hands. I already have one bleeding private. I don't want two more."

"Yes sir!"

As Captain Samman walks away, Akmed and Mahmood look at each other and start to chuckle. They throw the brush on the dirt pile and rush back to the barracks to grab Mahmood's RPK and a belt of 1200 rounds. On their way back, they pick up their shovels and briskly walk back inside to clean off their tools.

"Hey, any of you guys got any oil?" pleads Akmed.

"No."

"No."

"Shit no."

"Teeeeeen-hut!" Everyone in the room scrambles to attention. Mahmood leaps across the room and drops his shovel nonchalantly on the right side of the mat, mirroring the sparkling Kalashnikov on the left side. Akmed, frozen with his arms at his side, still clutches the shovel.

"How are you men doing?" booms General Omar, a colonel on his left, Captain Samman on his right. No one answers the short, thick, ugly man with a scar spanning his forehead.

Legend had it that in the Iran-Iraq War, a tank shell grazed his head, leaving an eight inch wound. Others claim he fell asleep while taking a shit in the woods, splitting his head open on a tree stump in front of him.

General Omar is a busy man. He commands all Al Qaeda units in Diyala Province and had many places to be. It was therefore strange he was there, in this small and insignificant training camp, to inspect the living conditions of his soldiers.

He didn't care, frankly.

These men would be led to their deaths, whether it was from a martyr bombing or getting shot while planting a bomb in the road.

He was a general, and the lives these men led was of little importance to him. Still, he felt these visits improved the morale and spirit of the men fighting for an independent Islamic state, free of American will and treasonous dogs in the Iraqi Army and Police.

They were usually poor and confused young boys, like Akmed, coerced into fighting by friends and brothers. It didn't take much to bend their will or convince them of reasons to die for men like General Omar. He was an orator before a tactician.

"Men, I want you to know what a difference you're making out there. Those American bastards are dying by the hundreds because of brave souls like you.

"A free Iraq is closer today than yesterday because of your will, your sacrifice in places like this. I know the training and fighting is hard, but we have more cost, more loss, ahead of us."

He casually walks down the space between pads, glancing slightly to the identical layouts and to the glassy, disciplined stares of the men in front of them.

"I came down to tell you how proud I am of this company, the best of the battalion. It's not because of your captain or your other superiors, but because of you. You make my job that much easier." He stops at Akmed, eyeing the shovel in his hand.

"Son, why do you have a shovel at the ready? Do you aim to retire me early?" General Omar says with a chuckle. He's the only one laughing.

"Um, no, no, sir" stutters Akmed. "I just finished digging a fighting position in front of the barracks, sir."

"I see. I'm sure it's a fine job, soldier."

General Omar looks around the room one more time. Moving toward the exit, Captain Samman stands fully erect.

"Teeeee-hut!"

"Carry on men!" exclaims General Omar. "Good luck out there!"

The colonel trailing General Omar closes the door behind him, and everyone breathes a sigh of relief.

Akmed looks at his shovel, brushes off the tip with his shirt, and places it, scoop up and out on the right side of his mat, flush with the freshly oiled Kalashnikov.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

IED Kills Three Baghdad Soldiers, Two Wounded

05 September 2007 Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20070905-06

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Three Multi-National Division-Baghdad Soldiers were killed and two others wounded when an explosively-formed penetrator detonated on their patrol during combat operations in an eastern section of the Iraqi capital Sept. 4.

Two U.S. Soldiers Killed, One Wounded In Eastern Baghdad

05 September 2007 Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20070905-15

BAGHDAD — Two Multi-National Division-Baghdad Soldiers were killed and another wounded during combat operations in an eastern section of the Iraqi capital Sept. 5.

Two U.S. Soldiers Killed, Three Wounded In Salah Ad Din

05 September 2007 Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20070905-17

TIKRIT, Iraq – Two Task Force Lightning Soldiers died as a result of injuries sustained from an explosion near their vehicle while conducting operations in Salah ad Din Province, Wednesday.

Three Soldiers were also wounded and transported to a Coalition medical facility for treatment.

U.S. Soldier Killed, Two Wounded In Baghdad

05 September 2007 Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20070905-07

A Multi-National Division-Baghdad Soldier was killed and two others wounded during combat operations in a western section of the Iraqi capital Sept. 4.

Iowa Soldier Dies During Second Stint In Iraq

September 5, 2007 The Associated Press

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa -- A 25-year-old Cedar Rapids native was fatally wounded in Iraq.

According to military officials, Army Sgt. Kevin Gilbertson was attacked last Wednesday in Iraq, and he died two days later in a hospital in Germany.

Gilbertson was a graduate of Cedar Rapids Jefferson High School. He served with the 1st Battalion, 77th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, based in Schweinfurt, Germany. The sergeant was on his second tour in Iraq and lived in Germany with his wife and an 8-month-old son.

The soldier's father, 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.

Josh Flynn's Calling Was Army Aviation



Chief Warrant Officer Paul Josh Flynn, 28, of Gibsonville.

Aug. 25, 2007 By Jim Schlosser and Jaime Kennedy Jones, Staff Writers; News & Record

It happens often. A student loves fun more than books. After he barely graduates, joining the military is among his few options.

And there he blossoms.

That's the story of Chief Warrant Officer Paul Josh Flynn, 28, of Gibsonville. After 10 stellar years in the Army, he was killed Wednesday in a helicopter crash in Iraq. All 14 soldiers aboard the Black Hawk helicopter were killed.

"He just did enough to get by in high school," said his father, R. Deleno Flynn, Gibsonville's town manager. "The Army got him focused."

After Flynn joined as a private, the Army saw potential and motivation and later sent him to warrant officer and flight schools. He became a helicopter pilot. His father says his grades in aviation school ranked among the top in his class.

It's not clear if Flynn was piloting the aircraft when it went down in Multaka, Iraq. Also on board was Capt. Corry Tyler, 29, a West Point graduate who was an Army aviation officer. He and Flynn belonged to the 4th squadron, 6th U.S. Air Cavalry Regiment, Fort Lewis, Wash.

Flynn's father had talked by phone with his son — his only child — Sunday night. The younger Flynn was on his first tour in Iraq, having arrived in June.

"He was excited to be there. He was enjoying it and liked being in the Army," Deleno Flynn said, adding his son planned a career in the Army.

Josh Flynn told his father he had been flying so many missions he expected to soon accumulate 500 hours of flight time. He hoped the flight time would benefit him when it came to promotion.

More than the Army, his father says, Josh Flynn loved his 6-year-old son, Morgan, who lives in Clarksville, Tenn., near Fort Campbell, Ky. Josh Flynn met and married Morgan's mother when he was stationed at Fort Campbell. They later divorced.

Wesley Jarrett, who attended Eastern Guilford High with Flynn and now teaches at Northwest Middle School, said: "He was just a great guy, down to earth, who would do anything for you."

He says Flynn was at a loss about what to do when he graduated from Eastern, "and the Army proved a perfect fit."

Deleno Flynn said a service for his son will be held next week in Clarksville, Tenn.

That will be followed later by a funeral at Gibsonville United Methodist Church, with burial in Gibsonville Cemetery.

Friends And Family Gather To Remember A Fallen Hero

August 30, 2007 Written by 22News Reporter Julie Tremmel.

WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

Hundreds of friends and family members gathered Thursday night to say goodbye to Jeremy Bouffard, a 22-year-old soldier from the Hampshire County hill town of Middlefield.

Bouffard died with 13 others in a Blackhawk Helicopter crash in Iraq last week.

Those who knew him say Jeremy Bouffard loved his family, his country, and every Boston sports team from the Sox to the Celtics.

Tears flowed freely for a young life taken too soon at a funeral home in Westfield tonight. His brother-in-law Thomas Burgess is still in shock about the loss, saying, "He made a difference in my life and I know for a fact that he made a difference in many a people's lives, because there's a lot of people here that came to pay their respect."

The Firston-Adams Funeral Home in Westfield was overwhelmed with people --and with grief on Thursday night, as mourners gathered to say goodbye to army specialist Jeremy Bouffard. The 22-year-old Middlefield native died with 13 others in a Blackhawk Helicopter crash in Iraq last week. The military believes it was caused by mechanical failure, not hostile fire.

Burgess says, "I was just thinking of Jeremy coming back, because he's a die hard Boston fan, he's my idol, my person that I always looked-up to."

Lifelong friend Daniel Anderson says he's still in disbelief, "I know it happened, but you know like somewhere I'm expecting him to pop out from somewhere, just grief."

Bouffard's brother-in-law says his sister, (Jeremy's wife Amanda), is holding up surprisingly well under the circumstances, especially since the couple has a young son. "She's taking it better than any of us because she knows she has to be strong because Jeremy wanted her to be like this, wanted her to know, that she could do it without him."

A full military funeral service, complete with a 21 gun salute and honor guards from all over New England, will be held for Bouffard on Friday. Arrangements begin at 1pm at the Bethany Assembly of God Church in Agawam. Burial will follow at the Veteran's Memorial Cemetery in Agawam.

Green Beret's Death Leaves A 'Big Hole'

August 28, 2007 DAVID AUSTIN, The Oregonian Staff

Family members of Sgt. 1st Class Adrian Elizalde will tell you the North Bend soldier became tough enough to be a Green Beret on wrestling mats in southern Oregon.

Elizalde and a soldier from Pennsylvania died Thursday when an improvised explosive device struck their vehicle near Al Aziziyah, southeast of Baghdad. Elizalde was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), out of Fort Lewis, Wash.

He is the 110th 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 30-year-old Elizalde was a Special Forces engineer sergeant and had been deployed to Iraq as part of the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force -- Arabian Peninsula, according to Department of Defense officials.

Elizalde was born in San Diego, where his family lived for several years before moving to North Bend. He joined the Army in 1996, one year after graduating from North Bend High School.

"He just wanted to support and defend his country," said Jorge Elizalde, Adrian's father, in a telephone interview from Renton, Wash. "It was a way for him to go to college and get an education. That's also how he saw it."

Adrian Elizalde started wrestling at age 8, his father said, and became a standout. In high school, he eventually won a district championship in the 126-pound weight class, qualifying for the state tournament. The 5-foot-6 Elizalde reached the second round.

"He was a very disciplined person," Jorge Elizalde said. "Whatever he set his sights on, he went after it. He wanted to be the best at whatever he attempted."

According to military officials, Adrian Elizalde started his career as an infantryman with 3rd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment at Fort Bragg, N.C. He later served as a Long Range Surveillance Detachment team leader with Company D, 519th Military Intelligence Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division.

In 2004, he was selected to attend the Special Forces Qualification Course at Fort Bragg to become a Special Forces engineer. There, he became a Green Beret in 2005 and was assigned to Fort Lewis in March 2006.

Adrian Elizalde's mother, Teresa, said Monday that her son -- the youngest of two children -- had a "sparkle" about him.

She said that he was serious about his military career and that he had talked about becoming a teacher after his stint in the Army. "He talked about being a science teacher and possibly a wrestling coach," she said.

Initially, the Defense Department's announcement of Adrian Elizalde's death created confusion among friends and family members. The original announcement said the dead soldier was from North Bend, Indiana.

Jorge Elizalde said the mistake created a whirlwind of calls from people wondering whether his son had perished.

"We've been dealing with a lot here," he said. "My son was special to us and we know he touched a lot of people. Everybody's coming forward."

That included Sally Prouty, a retired North Bend principal who taught Adrian Elizalde in second grade. She remembers a "sweet, smiling" student who was "the cutest little boy."

"He was extremely bright and he liked to break dance and do the moonwalk all the time," Prouty recalled.

"What a waste because he really was a wonderful boy. As an adult, he would've added a lot to this or any other community where he landed. He was there for everybody whenever they were in need."

North Bend Mayor Rick Wetherell, who used to coach Elizalde in football and baseball, said the death leaves a "big hole" in the Coos County town.

"Everybody has a position on this war and at times like this it doesn't really matter where you stand," Wetherell said. "You don't realize the cost until it comes home like it has now."

Wetherell said Elizalde -- though relatively small in stature -- had a big heart.

"He was so much bigger than his size," he said. "He worked hard and he hit hard. He did everything he ever did real hard."

In addition to his parents, Elizalde is survived by his daughter, Sydney Grace, 6, who lives with her mother in Klamath Falls; and sister, Rachel of Renton, Wash.

A funeral service is tentatively scheduled for 3 p.m. Saturday at North Bend Chapel. His family said he will be buried with full military honors.

How It Is

September 4, 2007 By Tina Susman, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer [Excerpt]

Pouring troops into the capital is no doubt going to make some areas safer, said one Marine officer, who asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the upcoming assessment.

"I don't know anyone who said, 'Let's have an argument on whether 20,000 troops can have an impact on some neighborhoods,' " the officer said.

"I heard a debate about whether a 20,000-man surge would appreciably enhance the security of the Iraqi people and end the sectarian violence so political reconciliation could occur across the country, not just in Baghdad neighborhoods.

"The surge now is isolating areas from each other . . . and putting up permanent checkpoints. That is what I call a failure," said Yousif Kinany, an engineer in Hurriya, a northwestern area that has become primarily Shiite.

**REALLY BAD IDEA:
NO MISSION;
HOPELESS WAR:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW**



US soldiers conduct a foot patrol during Operation Gecko, south of Baghdad, 24 August 2007. "(AFP/File/David Furst)"

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

**2 British Soldiers Killed In Helmand;
Brain-Dead Major Says IEDs “Have No
Impact” On Mission**

9.5.07 By CHRIS BRUMMITT, Associated Press Writer & AFP

KABUL, Afghanistan - Taliban attacks killed two British soldiers and two Afghan police officers Wednesday in restive southern Afghanistan.

The deaths were the latest in a surge of violence that underlines the weakness of the central government six years after U.S.-led forces invaded the country and toppled its Taliban rulers.

"These improvised explosive devices will have no impact on our ability to carry out our missions ... but are having a devastating affect on the Afghans," said Maj. Charles Anthony, a spokesman for NATO's International Security Assistance Force.

The two British soldiers were killed in an explosion as they patrolled in southern Helmand province, the UK's defense ministry said.

A third British soldier and an Afghan interpreter were wounded, the ministry said, giving no more details.

Most of the 158 foreign soldiers to die in Afghanistan this year have been killed in action, with the steadily mounting toll causing alarm in countries sending troops to Afghanistan as part of the US-led "war on terror."

<p style="text-align: center;">IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATION</p>

Aussie Troops Run Over Own Bomb Dog

September 05, 2007 By Max Blenkin, Queensland Newspapers

AN Australian army explosive detection dog has been killed on active service in Afghanistan, run over by an Australian light armoured vehicle.

The Australian Defence Force said today the dog, named Merlin, died when run over by an the Australian Light Armoured Vehicle (ASLAV) at the Australian Reconstruction Task Force (RTF) base at Tarin Kowt earlier this month.

Merlin had been lying in the shade of the ASLAV when the vehicle drove off, running the dog over.

TROOP NEWS

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



A military doctor places a blanket over seriously injured U.S. soldiers as they are brought to the 28th Combat Support hospital in the Green Zone in Baghdad August 18, 2007. The soldiers were brought to hospital by a military helicopter after an IED exploded under their vehicle. REUTERS/Damir Sagolj



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

Odius Odierno Says Keep The Surge Going Another Year: Not Enough Troops? Nonsense! Send The National Guard And Extend Marine Deployments

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

09/10/2007 By Thomas Donnelly and Gary Schmitt, The Weekly Standard [Excerpts]

As Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno, deputy commander in Iraq, pointed out in a news conference earlier this month, the current surge can be pushed until next August. And there are a number of ways to sustain a larger force even longer.

To begin with, Marine rotations for combat forces, now seven months long, could be extended.

Additional forces are also available from the Army National Guard. Six full Army National Guard brigades have been on alert since July in anticipation of deployment in 2008; their deployment could be accelerated.

To be sure, there would be questions about the wisdom of such decisions, but it is simply not the case that the capacity to extend the surge doesn't exist.

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.

“Former U.S. Marine And Veteran Of The Iraq War Says He Has Come To Sydney To Deliver An Anti-War

Message To U.S. President George W Bush”



[Thanks to Max Watts, who sent this in.]

September 03, 2007 Roslan Rahman, AFP

A former US marine and veteran of the Iraq war says he has come to Sydney [Australia] to deliver an anti-war message to US President George W Bush and Prime Minister John Howard during the APEC summit.

Twenty-six-year-old Matt Howard [a member of Iraq Veterans Against The War] has served two tours of duty in Iraq and says he sees Mr Bush’s visit to Sydney as a chance to directly voice his dissent over the war.

He says he will be protesting on Saturday against Australia’s ongoing involvement in the US-led invasion of Iraq.

"Four-and-a-half years later we as soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines are done," he said.

"We are done being told under the threat of court martial to run over children that get in the way of our speeding convoys.

"We are done raiding and destroying the homes of innocent Iraqis on a nightly basis.

"We are done abusing and torturing prisoners."

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



"March to the Arch" St. Louis, Missouri 8.19.07: Photo By Bill Perry, Veterans For Peace [Thanks to Elaine Brower, The Military Project & Traveling Soldier, who sent this in.]

At Least 7 Hood NCOs Suspended In Death Of Supply Sgt.

September 03, 2007 By Gina Cavallaro, Army Times [Excerpt]

At least seven noncommissioned officers at Fort Hood, Texas, were suspended and given letters of reprimand in the case of a supply sergeant who died during a land-navigation exercise.

The resulting investigations have rocked the NCO Academy. Following the death, the post's senior mission commander canceled the academy's 15-day Warrior Leader Course, which remains shut down while the actions against the school's leadership are completed and procedures revised.

Fort Hood officials would not identify the disciplined soldiers, all of whom worked at the post's NCO Academy, and said prosecution under the Uniform Code of Military Justice is also possible.

Sgt. Lawrence Sprader Jr., 24, died in June after becoming lost and suffering dehydration and hyperthermia during the Warrior Leader Course test, a mandatory leadership course for soldiers who become NCOs..

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

***Military Resistance To Imperial War:
“Search-And-Destroy Missions Were
Turned Into Search-And-Avoid
Missions”***

**“We Did A Very Good Job Of
Avoiding The Bad Guys”**

**“We Were Doing Nothing I Could See
That Was Worth Anybody Getting Shot
For. It’s As Simple As That”**

Perhaps more poignantly, a soldier who had joined after the death of his brother at Khe San said, “I came partly for revenge, but now I have lost all faith. The demonstrators are right to speak up because this war is wrong and it must be stopped.”

THE NEW WINTER SOLDIERS: GI AND VETERAN DISSENT DURING THE VIETNAM ERA; Richard R. Moser; 1996; RUTGERS UNIVERSITY PRESS; New Brunswick, New Jersey [Excerpts]

The most effective and creative antiwar actions reversed battle tactics and stood the military’s mission on its head. Search and destroy missions were turned into search-and-avoid missions.

In early 1969 Pete Zastrow was a captain in the 1st Air Cavalry Division, 2d Brigade, 1st of the 5th Battalion. Zastrow led his troops into search and avoid.

“My feeling was that most of the Vietnamese we were fighting against . . . didn’t want to shoot us anymore than we wanted to shoot them. They had their job, which was to carry supplies, and we had our job, which was to stop them.

“But if we stayed out of their way, they sure wouldn’t come looking for us. So we stayed out of their way.

“We did a very good job of avoiding the bad guys. As a matter of fact, we religiously avoided the bad guys. We worked hard on what we called search and avoid.”

Search and avoid was well suited to the mission of the antiwar soldiers.

“The military teaches you mission first, men second. But because I felt the mission was stupid . . . the men were much more important to me than the mission. We were doing nothing I could see that was worth anybody getting shot for. It’s as simple as that.”

It was this more covert resistance that characterized the most pervasive kind of antiwar activity in the military. In the spring of 1968 Greg Payton and others came upon the enemy.

Occasionally, combat avoidance was mutual.

“They didn’t come after me. . . . We were walking in this high grass and we saw the grass moving so you knew somebody else was in the grass. We got to a clearing, it was Vietcong, they had weapons. . . . They looked at us, we looked at them; they went that way, we went this way. That was the end of that. There was identification, man. Oppression is a universal kind of thing.”

In addition to combat avoidance some soldiers tried to make friends with the local people. GIs often had access to food and supplies the Vietnamese peasants were grateful to have. Nicknamed “Hippie” by his fellows, John Lindquist worked in the lead truck of a supply convoy.

“They said we couldn’t throw C-rations, but I’d do it anyway—nice and gently. I was usually pace vehicle, . . . Everybody’s eating dust so they couldn’t see me.” One such humanitarian mission in Cam Lo village ended in a kind of public celebration. Some American soldiers won the support of the Vietnamese people.

“We’d listen to Cream and talk about how the war was messed up. . . . So as we went in the village. . . . Me and Buzz we gave the radio headset to the driver . . . we crawled out the back canvas window and stood there with a case of C-rations—very gently just throwing them. Well the word must of gotten out. By the time we’re at the end of the ville they’re throwing flowers and we’re throwing C-rats. And we just had a great time looking out on the mountains of Laos. We’d throw C-rations, they’d throw flowers.”

Shamming

Noncooperation with the military was part of a much larger style of nonviolent resistance that included shamming.

Shamming, the use of deception, stealth, ruse, and petty sabotage, is a traditional form of working-class resistance particularly effective under the condition of involuntary labor, slavery, or the military.

Shamming was at times consciously promoted by the underground press. The GI paper *All Hands Abandon Ship* borrowed the title of the Simon & Garfunkle song "Slow Down, You Move Too Fast" to encourage sailors to re military operations quietly.

Work slowdowns were a widespread and effective weapon.

During 1969 Jack Klein served with Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 26th Marines, 1st Marine Division.

"If the officers pushed too hard there was generally a slowdown. People didn't directly disobey a lawful order, but they wouldn't comply as easily or as well as the officers wanted to.

"You could really piss them off and see the result right there in front of you.

"But people did the job well enough to survive. I was there in '69 as the common ground-pounder, the grunt, started becoming aware of the fact that the American public wasn't too pleased with what we're doing."

Although shamming is traditional in the military, antiwar attitudes lent a political edge to everyday opposition to military life. Personnel clerks had considerable power in the giant military bureaucracy and sometimes resorted to a kind of paper sabotage or nonviolent fragging.

Marc Leepson served with the 527th Personnel Service Company at Qui-Nhon during 1968.

"I loved my country when I went over there. Six weeks later I hated life, the war, Vietnam, America. .

"There were various things you could do. . . . One was the one-a-day method for dealing with lifers. Lifers in the army twenty years, they've got a file this thick. . . . Take one out — burn it — a day. They never notice until you do two hundred pages.

"Before I got there . . . when they were building a new mess hall . one night while the cement was setting, the sergeant's records of twenty years were — poof — mixed in there. He didn't get paid. He can't go home on leave."

By the end of the war disobedient behavior and passive resistance had become commonplace.

In January 1973 Tom Bradley of the Battalion Landing Team 2/9, 3d Marine Division was assigned to guard a prisoner on his flight home from Okinawa.

"As I'm boarding the plane they give me a record jacket for another marine who was facing court-martial. . . . I was supposed to make sure that he and his paperwork got to . . . Camp Pendleton, but I was being processed out. When we

landed in California, I just gave him his paperwork and told him to do whatever he felt was right—shook his hand and I went my way and he went his.”

Bureaucratic sabotage, slowdowns, and shamming reined in the military machine.

Public Demonstrations

On Christmas Eve of 1968, approximately thirty stalwart dissenters in uniform, a number of civilians, and some Vietnamese students met at JFK Square in Saigon to demonstrate against the war.

The rally site was placed off limits, and most GIs were confined to barracks. The local army commander showed up in person to threaten those in attendance.

In July of 1969 one hundred African American soldiers held an antiwar protest at Qui-Nhon. The soldiers marched through the port base and fought with police when the demonstrators approached a local airport.

Small-scale protests were common in many units. In February 1970 Lamont Steptoe organized the African Americans in his unit. “We wanted to dramatize the anniversary of the assassination of Malcolm X. I organized the blacks of my unit so that on that particular day we would all wear black arm bands.”

As domestic opposition to the war grew, dissident soldiers showed their support for antiwar demonstrations.

On November 9, 1969, a full-page ad in the New York Times signed by 1,365 active-duty servicemen, 189 of them serving in Vietnam, called for Americans to support the November 15 antiwar moratorium.

News of the moratorium and mobilization demonstrations were received warmly by antiwar soldiers.

The December 1969 issue of Attitude Check carried a photograph of over a dozen marines flashing peace signs and holding two banners.

One banner was a peace sign; the other banner read Vietnam Moratorium, October 15, Danang Vietnam, U.S.M.C., End the Madness Now!

Soldier support for the moratorium even found its way into the pages of Life magazine.

Correspondent Hal Wingo interviewed approximately one hundred men, many of whom were combat soldiers. Wingo asserted, “Many soldiers regard the organized antiwar campaign in the U.S. with open and outspoken sympathy.”

Wingo also believed that “the protests in the U.S. are not demoralizing troops in the field.”

Wingo's article quoted Private Raul Torres, 4th Division medic, as saying, "I never could see the sense in this war, but I enlisted partly because I wanted to get the true picture on what is happening. I'll go back now and carry my sign on the campus. Maybe I can influence somebody."

Perhaps more poignantly, a soldier who had joined after the death of his brother at Khe San said, "I came partly for revenge, but now I have lost all faith. The demonstrators are right to speak up because this war is wrong and it must be stopped."

The article carried a photo of soldiers on patrol wearing black arm bands in solidarity with the moratorium.

GIs organized powerful demonstrations in Vietnam as part of the moratorium.

Dave Blalock was a communications specialist stationed at Camp Long Thanh North.

"One night we were sitting around the barracks in Vietnam . . . and passing around this full-page ad in the New York Times that a guy who had just come back from R&R in Hawaii had clipped out. Everybody's . . . saying . . . 'Why don't we do something on this date, November 15th' . . .

"We came to a decision that we're going to wear black arm bands and we're going to refuse to go out on patrol.

"The next day we went around . . . and put out the word. . . . It seemed like everybody was going to do it. . . . The morning of the 15th we wake up at about five in the morning, and instead of playing the military shit, they put Jimi Hendrix's "Star-spangled Banner" on.

"So we went to formation with our new commanding officer. The former CO was blown away . . . he was killed, fragged. . .

"So we went out in morning formation and we're all wearing black arm hands. It was like 100 percent of the enlisted men . . . including some of the war doctors and the helicopter pilots. The CO comes out and he says . . . "I think we're going to give you guys a day off." He was real slick with it."

The moratorium demonstrations accelerated public displays of dissent.

That Thanksgiving, over one hundred members of the 71st Evacuation Hospital and the 44th Medical Detachment at Pleiku organized a protest fast called the "John Turkey movement." In Home before Morning, nurse Lynda Van Devanter recalls her change in attitudes.

"Earlier in my tour, when I had heard about the war protesters, I had felt angry at them for not supporting us. Now I wished I could march with them. . .

"Most others in Pleiku felt the same way.

“We even held our own Thanksgiving Day fast —t he John Turkey movement — as a show of support for those who were trying to end the war through protests and moratoriums. We heard that the fast had spread to units all over Vietnam.”

The fast received considerable media coverage when Denise Murry, a nurse a Pleiku and daughter of a distinguished admiral, made antiwar statements to the press.

In the port city of Vinh Lam twenty-five GIs demonstrated publicly against the war.

African American soldiers in the Americal Division protested high casualty rates among African Americans. A demonstration of forty African Americans occurred on January 15, 1971, at the U.S. Army headquarters and stockade at Long Binh. The marchers demanded an end to racial discrimination in the army and the freedom of Angela Davis.

The soldier demonstrators held aloft a black, red, and green flag and a banner in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King.

Also in 1971 two hundred soldiers from airborne and medical units assembled at the headquarters of the 101st Airborne to protest the use of the powerfully armed Cobra gunships because they resulted in large civilian casualties.

A massive GI-sponsored rally and picnic on July 4, 1971, turned beaches near Chu Lai into what David Cortright called “the largest pot party in the history of the Army.”

Secretly circulated and short-lived, petitions were a common form of expression in Vietnam. The most successful petition was sponsored by the VVAW [Vietnam Veterans Against The War] and collected approximately 2,000 names calling for an end to hostilities. A petition with 136 names was collected by a Captain Alan Goldstein in support of the moratorium demonstrations.

Hundreds of thousands of men wrote complaints to the president and Congress, or voiced similar sentiments to the news media.

This wave of GI protest produced dissident organizations and began to reorganize the military itself.

Violent Uprisings

In October 1967 the first large-scale rioting of American soldiers took place at Fort Hood.

Scheduled to leave for Vietnam the following day, the 198th Light Infantry Brigade rioted, attacking the officers’ club and destroying \$150,000 in property.

This type of uprising was a typical expression of GI resistance. In a military environment where organized dissent was easily disrupted by harassment, transfer, or troop movements, spontaneous, seemingly leaderless outbursts were difficult to predict or prevent.

In May 1971 the most violent uprising of American soldiers in the United States occurred at Travis Air Force Base. A riot by over five hundred soldiers resulted in 135 arrests and national press coverage.

After a minor incident two African American soldiers were arrested and placed in the Travis stockade. Chanting "Free Our Brothers," approximately one hundred black airmen with some white GI solidarity marched on the stockade.

Air force police armed with automatic weapons met them with tear gas, made mass arrests, and beat a number of demonstrators.

As the fighting erupted scores of soldiers joined the fray.

That night, the bachelor officer quarters were burned to the ground, and a colonel was dragged from his car and beaten.

The next day a bomb scare was called in at the terminal where troops were being loaded for Vietnam.

While military officials attempted to characterize the events as a "race riot," the GI press lent another interpretation to the rebellion.

"Both the officers and the national press claim that it was a 'race riot' . simply 'mirroring' overall racial patterns in America.

"The airmen, especially those directly involved in the fighting and the arrests, have a different point of view.

"They see the incidents of the weekend not as a "race riot" but as a GI expression of frustration and anger with the officers at Travis, the oppressive system of the military, and the war.

"The fighting started around incidents . . . which may have been racial in character.

"But as the fighting grew and security police were called in, there appears to have developed black—white unity against the police.

"Fighting also developed against the officers. .

"It is significant that the only major property damage was done to an officer's quarters, and the heaviest fighting took place around the stockade.

"While it may seem surprising that such an eruption could occur in the Air Force, it is important to recognize that Travis has a very high percentage of black and white working-class airmen because it is primarily a support base."

During June 1971 an army attempt to pacify GIs with a rock concert backfired into a riot.

Canned Heat performed at Fort Ord for an assembly of soldiers heavily guarded by MPs, army intelligence, and Criminal Investigation Division agents.

It seems that after a series of small incidents were met with excessive force by the police, a shower of rocks and bottles hailed down on the MPs. As the concert let out, buildings were broken into, trashed, and burned. A bus was stoned and overturned. Fighting between soldiers and police spread throughout the base. Over a hundred were treated at the base hospital for injuries.

One of the largest base uprisings happened at Fort McClelland, Alabama, in November 1971. A series of racial incidents escalated when an off-duty MP drove his jeep through a crowd of African American soldiers, injuring several.

Following the incident, a number of African American servicemen and servicewomen rioted.

The next morning a number of African American Women's Army Corps (WACs) refused to work. A demonstration the following Monday resulted in the arrest of seventy-one GIs and sixty-eight WACs when the protesters refused to disperse.

War Within The War

At its worst, fragging led to a war within the war.

During October 1971 military police air-assaulted the Praline Mountain signal site to protect an officer who had been the target of repeated fragging attempts. The military police occupied the American base for a week until command was restored.

The following anonymous story taken from *Spoils of War*, by Charles J. Levy, captures the war within the war.

"A marine recalls a series of attacks on his commanding officer. We started having war calls, which is like at midnight everybody in the outfit starts opening fire screaming, "Gooks in the wire." . . . And then you try to kill any of the lifers that you didn't like.

"So we tried to get the CO a couple of times with a machine gun. One time his rack took nine holes. His cot, nine bullet holes.

"So one night this guy named H. booby-trapped his tent. And in the morning when he woke up it wasn't the CO that got it. It was the executive officer Captain J. . . . Captain K. was the one we wanted to get. But J., it was just as good to get j. 'cause he sucked too. They threatened to press charges against the whole outfit for mutiny. They were trying to figure out a way they could keep it hush-hush. Nobody wants to know the Marine Corps mutinied."

Fraggings were sometimes attributed to drug dealers or "short-timers," men with few days remaining in Vietnam. The one-year tour of duty for soldiers and the six-month tour for officers also inhibited the development of good relations.

Although the motivations behind fraggings were varied, tangled, and complicated, at bottom lay issues of power and control.

The realities of the war in Vietnam prohibited many soldiers from experiencing honorable combat and embracing the war's official justification. In lieu of fighting for democracy or following exemplary leadership, anti-authoritarian, antimilitary, and antiwar sentiment shaped soldiers' survival instincts.

An officer who threatened a soldier's life with a mission unworthy of sacrifice was then seen as the enemy.

Desperate, effective, and often collective, fragging was the most extreme mutinous activity through which orders and authority were contested.

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

Time For The U.S. Army To Demolish The Green Zone?

From: Felicity Arbuthnot
To: GI Special
Sent: September 04, 2007
Subject: Demolishing failed projects

Re: GI Special 513:
'Al-Khadhra police station, in west Baghdad, was dismantled on August 29 due to failure of its staffers to prevent insurgent activities in the area, according to the statement.'

If the criteria of the U.S. army for dismantling security stations is the 'failure of its staffers to prevent insurgent activities', can I suggest that they apply the same to the Green Zone (rocketed up to a dozen times daily) and all other U.S. bases, posts, attacked equally on an ongoing basis.

Further, another humiliation for more Iraqis, who if they were not in the resistance, surely will be now.

OCCUPATION REPORT

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

[BEFORE]



A U.S. soldier from the Delta 112 Cav. Battalion walks past a sick bedfast Iraqi as they do home invasions near the city of Baqouba, 60 kilometers (35 miles) northeast of Baghdad Aug. 31, 2007. (AP Photo/Karel Prinsloo)

[AFTER]



The same man, and another from the same location, who is missing an arm and is can't walk, are arrested as "terrorists" by the US occupation troops. They were loaded on the back of an Iraqi Police truck and taken to prison. (AP Photo/Karel Prinsloo)

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

**THIS IS NOT A SATIRE:
[But It Is A Classic]
"We Can Fire The Police Chief, We Can
Get The Mayor Removed If We Want.
Iraq Is A Sovereign Country, Don't Get
Me Wrong"**

September 5, 2007 By Sudarsan Raghavan, Washington Post Foreign Service
[Excerpts]

"We can fire the police chief, we can get the mayor removed if we want. Iraq is a sovereign country, don't get me wrong, but I wonder how much they would get their act together if our presence was reduced," said Maj. Craig Whiteside of the 1st Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment.

We are the government for them," said Tatem, of Reston, Va. [Lewis Tatem, leader of the Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team].

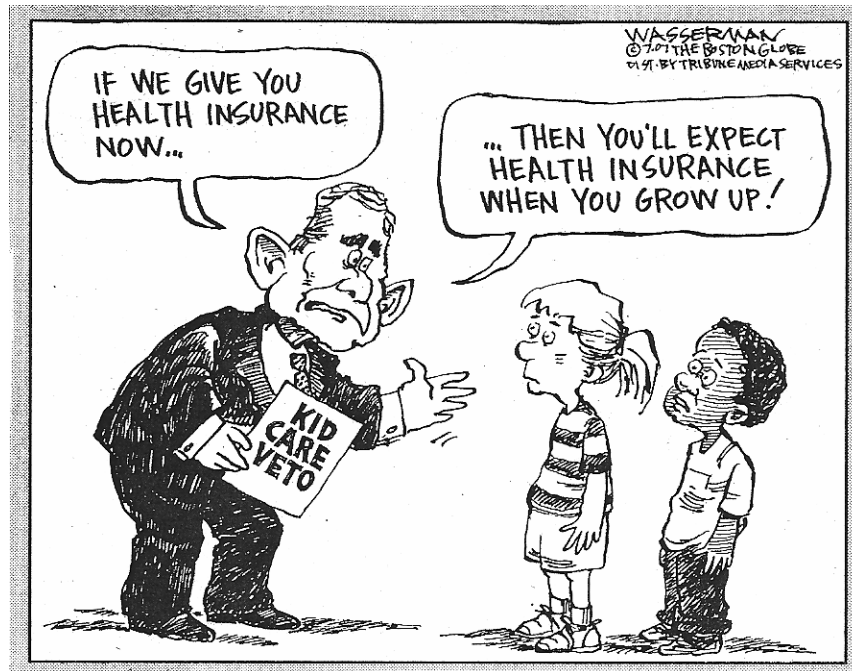
"It's impossible to put the American military somewhere and not have everybody, when they have to make a decision, ask, 'Is this okay, boss?'"

**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/)

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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