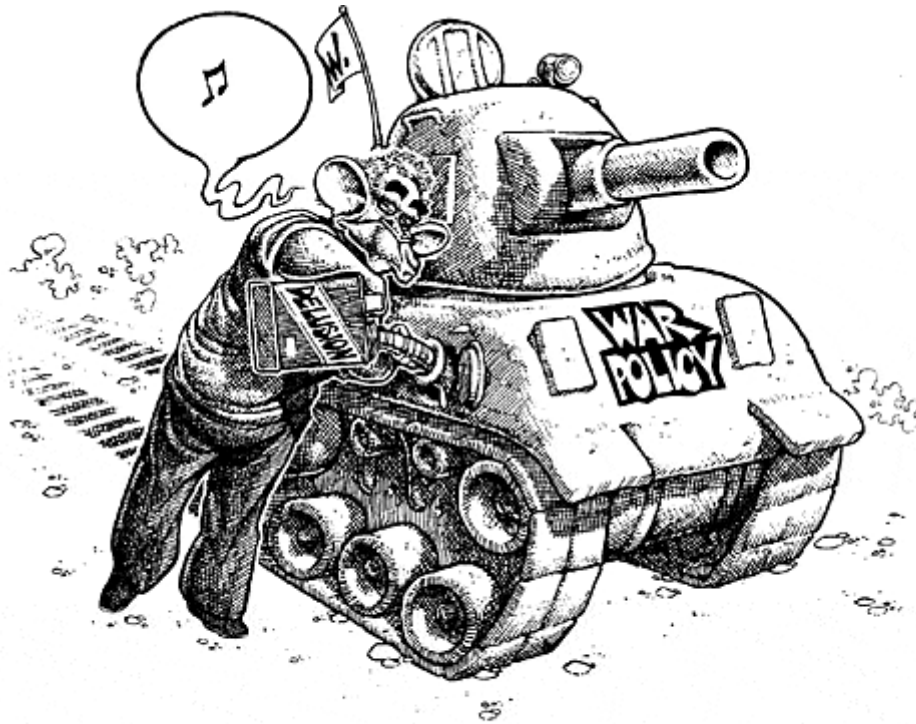


GI SPECIAL 5J2:



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9/17

**“The Uniform Took On
New Meaning”
“It Was No Longer Worn With
The Intention Of Fighting For
The Government, But Fighting
Against It”**

“A Significant Factor In Ending The War In Vietnam Was The Ability Of Protesters And GIs To Strike Fear In The Heart Of The Government”

“This War Will End ... When The Army They Sent To Spread Imperialism Becomes The Army That Marches To Their Offices And Charges Through The Police Barricades”



Michael Prysner arrested at the Capitol on Sept. 15 along with 195 others. Photo: Stanley Rogouski

For me, and for my brothers and sisters in Iraq Veterans Against the War, the uniform that once symbolized fear and destruction would now be worn in the spirit of justice and resistance.

28 Sep 2007 By Michael Prysner, Iraq Veterans Against The War, Via A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition

[The writer is an Iraq war veteran.]

On the morning of Sept. 15, I held in my hands a uniform that was issued to me nearly five years ago.

I remembered the first time I held it, wondering if I would ever wear it home, wondering if it would be stained by blood or shredded by bullets.

It looks much different now than the first time I put it on—it is faded from 12 months of desert sand and sun. The elbows and knees are worn from lying in the street. The boots are tattered from kicking down doors and walking over cities of rubble.

As I put it on for the first time since I returned from Iraq, I finally felt as if I was putting it on for a purpose.

For so many years, that uniform has not stood for justice and freedom.

It is the uniform that the Iraqi people saw stomp through their towns. It is the uniform that drove humvees and manned machine guns.

It is the uniform that dragged people from their homes and interrogated them in prison camps.

But on the streets of Washington, D.C., the uniform took on new meaning.

It was no longer worn with the intention of fighting for the government, but fighting against it.

For me, and for my brothers and sisters in Iraq Veterans Against the War, the uniform that once symbolized fear and destruction would now be worn in the spirit of justice and resistance.

In March of 2003, our government ordered us to put on that uniform, march into a foreign land and take it from those who lived there.

On Sept. 15, we put on that same uniform to march to the Capitol and face those who sent us to war.

A significant factor in ending the war in Vietnam was the ability of protesters and GIs to strike fear in the heart of the government.

Countless citizens and soldiers threw their bodies into the gears of the war machine, and made the ruling class realize that instead of fighting their war, we would fight them.

This war will end when the government begins to fear the masses—when the army they sent to spread imperialism becomes the army that marches to their offices and charges through the police barricades.

The first time I put on that uniform, I hoped I would wear it with honor. On Sept. 15, I finally did. I could finally do something right while wearing it. The nearly 200 people arrested on that day—many of whom were Iraq war veterans—showed the government that we will do more than just march.

We will defy them at every turn; we will not fade away, but only grow in numbers and intensity. The longer this war rages on, the more we will resist and the more we will sacrifice.

Wearing that uniform at the steps of the Capitol, I knew that the most important action that I could do was to advance towards the barricade, and help light the spark that will empower people to stop this government.

For the first time, that uniform was worn fighting a just war.

When I emerged from jail that night, I saw hundreds of cheering supporters outside.

Then, I knew that sooner or later we will win this war against imperialism.

And I have never felt prouder wearing that uniform.



Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward GI Special along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Project, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

U.S. Soldier Killed In Baghdad: 10 More Wounded

October 1, 2007 Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20071002-02

BAGHDAD — A Multi-National Division-Baghdad Soldier was killed and 10 U.S. Soldiers, two Iraqi Army troops, an interpreter and one Iraqi resident were wounded during combat operations in central Baghdad Sept. 30.

U.S. Soldier Killed In Baghdad

October 1, 2007 Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20071001-01

BAGHDAD — A Multi-National Division-Baghdad Soldier was killed during a small-arms fire attack while conducting combat operations in an eastern section of the Iraqi capital Sept. 30.

U.S. Soldier Killed, Another Injured In Qadissiya Accident

October 2, 2007 Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20071002-01

Logistics Support Area ADDER, Iraq – One U.S. Soldier was killed and another wounded in a non-combat related accident yesterday in Qadissiya Province.

The wounded Soldier was transported to a local Coalition Force medical facility for treatment and further evaluation.

Soldier's Wife Celebrates Birth; Grieves Husband's Loss In Iraq



Joshua Reeves

09/26/07 By Tena Lee, Hendersonville Star News and Leon Alligood, The Tennessean

In the span of a day, Leslie Reeves both welcomed a newborn son and learned of the death of her husband Joshua, who was serving in Iraq.

Those who know Reeves - a 2001 graduate of Hendersonville High School who was living with her parents here when she gave birth last Friday - admit little can be said to relieve her grief.

Reeves delivered seven-pound, 14-ounce Joshua Jackson Reeves on Friday at Centennial Medical Center.

Soon afterward she phoned Iraq to deliver the happy news to her soldier-husband of two years, Spc. Joshua H. Reeves. Reeves was stationed with troops from Fort Riley, Kan. and was due to come home in November for two weeks of vacation.

"He got to hear him cry over the phone and said 'Hi' to him," the new mother recalled. A short time after the birth, the specialist, 26, also received photos of his son via the Internet.

"I just wanted him to have seen his son," the mother said. "That was comforting to me."

The young mother's joy, however, turned to sorrow on Saturday as a bomb detonated as Joshua Reeves' Humvee drove down a Baghdad street. Leslie Reeves was still in the hospital with her new baby when she learned she was a widow.

"Everyone is just deeply saddened," said Paula Fortner, owner of Hendersonville's American Academy of Dance.

Leslie, who has danced since the age of six, was a former student of the academy as well as a teacher there as recently as two days before her delivery. Her mother, Marikay Burke, is the office manager at the studio.

Fortner said an account has been set up to help Reeves and her newborn son at any Regions Bank.

Pastor Tim Reynolds of Hendersonville's First Presbyterian Church was all set to visit the new baby in the hospital Saturday when he received a call that Joshua Reeves had been killed.

According to Reynolds, Leslie had been active at his church before leaving to attend the University of Georgia. She had even been on the search committee that hired him.

Reynolds said Reeves will be buried on Saturday in his hometown of Watkinsville, Ga.

"It hurts so terribly," said Joshua's father James. "You just can't know how bad it hurts."

Three years ago when their son told them he was going to join the Army, the Reeveses were not surprised.

"He wanted to fly helicopters, that was his dream," said James, an eighth-grade teacher. "He went to an aviation school after high school but he decided that joining the Army would get him to that point quicker."

"He was always determined, in everything," James added.

“He was such a good-hearted person. Everybody loved him,” added his mother Jean said.

Jean talked to her son last week by phone. Sometimes, she said, he confided to her that he sometimes had trouble sleeping and worried about roadside bombs, the ubiquitous weapons of this war. “But even so, he was real committed. He had just re-enlisted for six years. He supported his country. He supported the Army. He supported his President. He cared about the Iraqi people,” Jean said.

The couple was in Hendersonville Monday, where James nodded to the screen of a laptop computer.

“Let me show you this,” he said. His fingers clicked the keys, opening files until he found the photo he searched for.

Another click magnified the image. Joshua sat cross-legged on the floor of an Iraqi house, a guest for a Ramadan meal. He looked at the camera with a quizzical smile as he held something to eat in his fingers. The specialist appeared to be at ease, among trusted companions.

“Isn't that just absolutely the greatest shot?” James said, chin on his neck, tears flowing unchecked, shoulders bobbing from the sobs. “We got this last Wednesday.”

Now the photo becomes his son's parting image.

In the next room, Leslie Reeves held her sleeping son close.

Iraqis Say Basra Quieter After British Troop Pullout “Their Presence Was Annoying And Provocative Most Of The Time” “The Situation These Days Is Better. We Were Living In Hell”

ct 1, 2007 By Aref Mohammed, (Reuters)

Residents of Iraq's southern city of Basra have begun strolling riverfront streets again after four years of fear, their city much quieter since British troops withdrew from the grand Saddam Hussein-era Basra Palace.

Political assassinations and sectarian violence continue, some city officials say, but on a much smaller scale than at any time since British troops moved into the city after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.

“The situation these days is better. We were living in hell ... the area is calm since their withdrawal,” said housewife Khairiya Salman, who lives near the palace.

Civil servant Wisam Abdul Sada agreed. “We do not hear the sounds of explosions which were shaking our houses and terrifying our women and children,” he told Reuters.

“Their presence was annoying and provocative most of the time,” said Mehdi Obaid, a 39-year-old civil servant.

It had been feared the British withdrawal would trigger an upsurge in violence in Basra.

But for now Basra seems quieter and safer to some families who have started to come out at night to stroll along the banks of the Shatt al-Arab river, something that would have been unthinkable not long ago.

“A year or six months ago, we were afraid to go out to this place,” Bidaa Razaq told Reuters as she walked with her son.

“The occupiers used to come often to this place,” she said referring to the British troops who had been stationed in Basra city since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.

NEW GENERAL ORDER NO. 1: PACK UP COME HOME NOW



U.S. soldiers sit on an armoured vehicle before a mission at the Loyalty U.S. camp southeast of Baghdad September 18, 2007. REUTERS/Carlos Barria

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Quincy National Guard Member Killed In Afghanistan



September 30, 2007 The Associated Press

BOSTON -- A member of the Massachusetts Army National Guard has died in action in Afghanistan.

Specialist Ciara Durkin, 29, of Quincy, was killed Thursday. Durkin was assigned to Task Force Diamond as part of a finance unit that was deployed to the country in November, 2006.

TROOP NEWS

**“I Got Back From Iraq Where We
Were Having Projectiles Shot At Us,
And Now I’m Being Threatened With
Projectiles Here”**

September 28, 2007 Socialist Worker [Excerpt]

In San Francisco, some 100 activists from Bay Area campus antiwar groups rallied September 19 in front of House Majority Leader Nancy Pelosi's San Francisco office to protest her continued support for the war in Iraq.

Students were told that if they crossed the waist-high barrier demarcating the security checkpoint, they would be fired on with rubber bullets, tear gas and pepper spray.

Eddie Falcon, a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) and City College Students Against the War, told the crowd, "I got back from Iraq where we were having projectiles shot at us, and now I'm being threatened with projectiles here."

Active Duty Soldiers Join March Against The War



9/29/09 (WSYR-TV)

SYRACUSE:

Thousands of protesters rallied against the Iraq war in downtown Syracuse Saturday.

From military moms to active duty soldiers, from as far away as Buffalo and New York City, participants started off with a rally near the Everson Museum.

"We live with this war every day," said Eli Wright, a soldier who spent a year serving in Iraq.

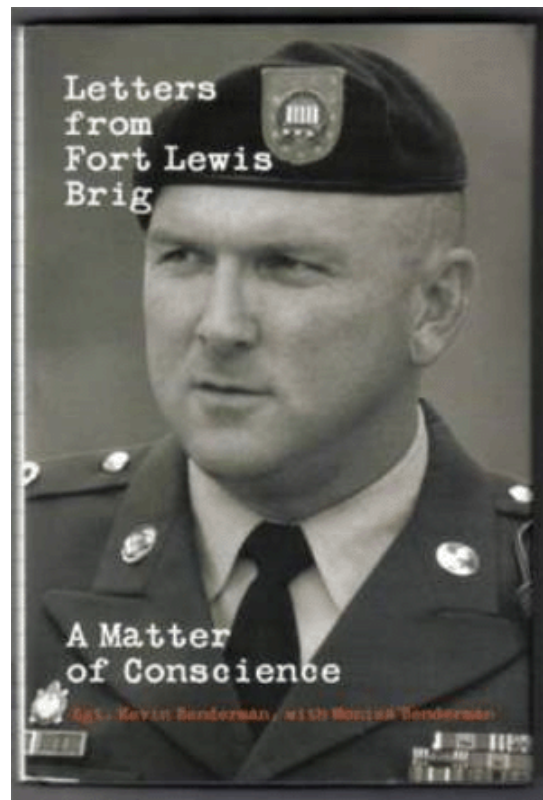
"For most it's a 10 second clip on the news but for the veterans who dealt with war and are suffering from it we live this war every day of our lives."

Protesters marched down Fayette Street and up University Avenue to Syracuse University.

Organizers said they chose Syracuse to host the rally and march because of its central location and because it's the closest large city to Fort Drum.

Saturday's events were organized by a handful of groups but primarily the Syracuse Peace Council.

“Letters From Fort Lewis Brig” “Appalled By What He Saw In Iraq, He Decided He Could Not Return For A Second Tour”



October 1, 2007 Benderman Defense Trust

“Letters from Fort Lewis Brig,” by Kevin Benderman with Monica Benderman, was released on October 1 by Lyons Press, an imprint of Globe Pequot Press.

Kevin Benderman served his country honorably, both in the United States and Iraq, service for which he was commended. But appalled by what he saw in Iraq, he decided he could not return for a second tour.

For that, he was court-martialed and sent to prison.

He would do the same thing again.

Forty-year-old Sergeant Kevin Benderman was court-martialed by the U.S. Army for desertion.

Haunted by his year of combat duty in Iraq, remembering his encounters with maimed children, dead civilians being ravaged by dogs, and young soldiers turned into soulless killing machines, the nine-year veteran declared himself a conscientious objector and declined to return to Iraq for a second tour.

When his unit was deployed again to Iraq, he stayed home in Georgia.

Imprisoned for 13 months after being convicted of “missing movement” in 2005, Benderman is still appealing, and requesting an honorable discharge.

“I’m being singled out and punished for speaking the truth about the army,” he said.

He and his wife Monica continued to speak publicly in spite of his imprisonment.

Their ongoing story is told in between fragments of the battles Kevin fought in Iraq, his growing awareness that the war in Iraq is wrong and their struggle to see that justice is served.

The book is available from the publisher, Lyons Press, and from retailers such as Amazon.com.

From a statement by Kevin Benderman to the U.S. House of Representatives

“I have prepared this statement to address the injustice I have been dealt by the U.S. Army after I made the decision to apply for a conscientious objector status.

“I made this decision after my return from Iraq, where I witnessed and experienced for myself the insanity of war. What I learned from my experience is that war is a waste of humanity.

“We kill many people in the name of keeping the peace – an oxymoron if there ever was one. After many months of contemplation, I reached the conclusion that I no longer wanted to contribute to the ultimate violence toward other human beings that war is.”

A DREAM’S DEFERMENT

A Play About A New Form Of Military Recruitment

PLAY READING:

Friday, October 5, 2007, 7-9 pm

**Manhattan Plaza
400 W. 43rd St. New York City
The Ellington Room (2nd Floor)**

**Written by
Alan Stolzer***

**Directed by
Martin Treat***

**Cast
(in order of appearance)**

**SALLY DAVIDSON
AARON TREAT
MARTIN TREAT
KEVIN KELLY
DAVID CARGILL*
NANETTE DEARY**

* Manhattan Plaza Residents and U.S. Armed Forces
Veterans

Refreshments will be served

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Resistance Action:

Sep 29 (KUNA) & By Alexandra Zavis, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer & 30 Sep Reuters
& Laith Hammoudi, McClatchy Newspapers

Yesterday around 11:00 P.M, 3 gunmen in a sedan car attacked a Lt. Col. named Norri
in AlMuaalemen district as source of police (refused to reveal his name) has reported
today. They shot twice but they missed him and run away rapidly.

A roadside bomb exploded near a police patrol and wounded two policemen in the town of Hawija, 70 km (40 miles) southwest of Kirkuk, police said.

Two policemen were wounded when a roadside bomb exploded near their patrol in Mosul, police said.

Guerrillas killed two policemen in eastern Mosul.

The death toll of the car bomb that targeted an Iraqi police patrol in Al-Hamdaniya, 30 km in northeast Mosul, north of Iraq on Saturday rose to 6. The blast took place at 3.30 in the afternoon (local time) killing five policemen

A car bomb targeted a police patrol near the northern city of Mosul, killing four of its members.

A member of the Nineveh provincial council and his three guards were killed when insurgents sprayed their car with bullets in southeast Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

Police said they found the body of an Iraqi soldier shot in Diwaniya, 180 km (110 miles) south of Baghdad. The soldier was captured on Saturday.

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

A Bird Knows No Barbed Wire



[Thanks to Katherine Gorell, The Military Project]

By Aaron Hughes

Aaron Hughes served in Kuwait and Iraq for over a year and a half.

The first poem was written in Baghdad in the spring of 2004 waiting for convey clearance to head south.

The second piece was written in New York City in the summer of 2006. He joined IVAW in 2006 and currently lives in Chicago.

From:

Warrior Writers: Move, Shoot And Communicate; A Collection Of Creative Writing By Members Of Iraq Veterans Against The War. Copyright 2007 by Warrior Writers, IVAW's first chapbook. Second Edition. April 2007

A Bird Knows No Barbed Wire

**Tired
Dust covered
Waiting
Convoy clearance
Three weeks gone
Lost dusk in western Iraq
IED on MSR Tampa
A bird flying in and out of barbed wire**

Ahmed

**The children lining the roads of Iraq begging for food fill me with guilt, cynicism and anger.
Yet Ahmed who has been raped by this war, raped of his youth, raped of his body, raped of his sight, raped of his home, raped of his freedom, has no cynicism in his thoughts.
He gives love and trust without fear.
He grabs my hand and yells, "Run. Run please? Please, run."
He is a nine-year-old boy who wants to run.
He is a nine-year-old boy who can't run without someone to lead him. To stop him before the curb, before the tree, before the car that he cannot see.
He is a nine-year-old boy who wants to stomp his feet and twist to pop music.
He is a nine-year-old boy that teaches himself to play piano.
He is a nine-year-old boy that is a bird who knows no barbed wire.
He is a nine-year-old boy that is my guardian angel constantly reminding me that life is for love and trust, not cynicism and anger.
Ahmed Jabar Shareef is my friend**

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



The burial service for Army Sgt. John W. Mele, 25, of Bunnell, Fla., Sept. 27, 2007, at Arlington National Cemetery. Mele died Sept. 14 in Arab Jabour, Iraq, of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near his unit during combat operations. Mele was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division in Fort Stewart, Ga. (AP Photo/Haraz N. Ghanbari)

***The Jerry Rescue:* Most Honorable Anniversary: October 1, 1851**

**“A Group Of Men Forcibly Overpowered
The Guards With Clubs And Axes And
Freed Jerry A Second Time”**

Carl Bunin Peace History October 1-7

In the “Jerry Rescue,” citizens of Syracuse, New York, broke into the city’s police station and freed William Henry (called Jerry), a runaway slave working as a barrel-maker.

The federal Fugitive Slave Law required “good citizens” to assist in the return of those who had fled “ownership” by another.

A group of black and white men created a chaotic diversion and managed to free Jerry but he was later re-arrested.

At his second hearing, a group of men, their skin color disguised with burnt cork, forcibly overpowered the guards with clubs and axes and freed Jerry a second time; he was then secretly taken over the border to Canada.

NYHistory.com

Among the more interesting events in Syracuse history is the story of the Jerry Rescue.

The event occurred on October 1, 1851, while the anti-slavery Liberty Party was holding its New York State Convention.

Leaders of the local Abolition movement, including Underground Railroad Stationmaster Jermain Loguen and others, had organized a local committee to thwart enforcement of the recently adopted Fugitive Slave Law.

The previous May, then Secretary of State Daniel Webster repeated his previous criticism of the Abolitionists and their promise to thwart the law. Webster proclaimed from a balcony facing Syracuse City Hall that the law "will be executed in all the great cities - here in Syracuse - in the midst of the next Anti-Slavery Convention, if the occasion shall arise."

And so it did.

Around noon on October 1, federal marshals from Rochester, Auburn, Syracuse, and Canandaigua, accompanied by the local police, arrested a man who called himself Jerry. also known as William Henry.

Jerry was working as a barrel maker, and was arrested at his workplace. He was originally told the charge was theft until after he was in manacles. On being informed that he was being arrested under the Fugitive Slave Law, he put up substantial resistance, but was subdued.

Word of the arrest quickly reached the Convention, then in session at a nearby church.

There are reports that the wife of Commissioner Sabine, who would hear the case, had already leaked plans of the arrest.

By pre-arranged signal, church bells began ringing, and a crowd gathered at Sabine's office, where Jerry had been taken for arraignment.

An immediate effort to free the prisoner was unsuccessful, and though he escaped to the street in irons, he was rapidly recaptured.

The arraignment was put off until evening and relocated to a larger room. A large crowd gathered in the street, this time equipped for a more serious rescue attempt.

With a battering ram the door was broken in and despite pistol shots out the window by one of the deputy marshals, it became clear that the crowd was too large and determined to be resisted.

The prisoner was surrendered, and one deputy marshal broke his arm jumping from a window to escape the crowd.

The injured prisoner was hidden in the city for several days in the home of a local butcher know for his anti-abolitionist sentiments, and later taken in a wagon to Oswego, where he crossed Lake Ontario into Canada.

The following day, Gerrit Smith introduced the following resolution, adopted at the Liberty Party convention:

“WHEREAS, Daniel Webster, That base and infamous enemy of the human race, did in a speech of which he delivered himself, in Syracuse last Spring, exultingly and insultingly predict that fugitive slaves would yet be taken away from Syracuse and even from anti-slavery conventions in Syracuse, and whereas the attempt to fulfill this prediction was delayed until the first day of October, 1851, when the Liberty party of the State of New York were holding their annual convention in Syracuse; and whereas the attempt was defeated by the mighty uprising of 2,500 brave men, before whom the half-dozen kidnapers were 'as tow', therefore,

“Resolved, That we rejoice that the City of Syracuse- the anti-slavery city of Syracuse- the city of anti-slavery conventions, our beloved and glorious city of Syracuse- still remains undisgraced by the fulfillment of the satanic prediction of the satanic Daniel Webster.”

**“The Black Goldrush That
International Oil Companies Are
Banking On Is Not A Done Deal”
“With A Growing Opposition
Challenging Sectarian, Corporate
And Foreign Agendas, The Future Of
Iraq's Black Gold Is Far From
Certain”**

30 September 2007 By Ewa Jasiewicz, Independent News and Media Limited. Ewa Jasiewicz is a freelance journalist and part-time researcher for Platform, an independent oil industry analyst. [Excerpts]

Iraq is open for business,” promised oil ministry officials. “Investment can reduce Iraq’s poverty and help bring peace,” came back the chorus from oil company chiefs.

As the executives toasted one another with cocktails sponsored by Lukoil at the Iraq Petroleum 2007 conference in Dubai earlier this month, ordinary Iraqis were living in a state of emergency.

At the same time, a parallel conference was taking place in Basra under the banner, “Oil wealth belongs to the Iraqi people”.

Organised by the Iraqi Federation of Oil Unions (Ifou) and attended by civil society leaders, activists and academics from all over the country, this was Ifou’s third conference aimed at stopping the likes of Shell and BP from gaining a controlling stake in Iraq’s oil wealth.

With a growing movement to keep the oil in the public sector, disputes between the Kurdish regional government (KRG) and Baghdad, and no legal framework for investment, the black goldrush that international oil companies are banking on is not a done deal.

Iraq, with proven reserves of 115 billion barrels represents the biggest untapped oil and gas market on the planet. Iraqi oil production stands at just 2.5 per cent of the world’s total even though the country possesses 10 per cent (or potentially double that, according to some estimates) of global reserves.

With just 4 per cent of the world’s oil in the hands of multinationals and a growing trend for nationalisation in countries from Venezuela to Kazakhstan, Iraq is seen by many international groups as their best chance to turn the tables.

Central to their hopes is a new oil law friendly to foreign investment.

Controversy has raged over the provisions of the new law, with political parties, religious authorities, oil experts and trade unions calling for a referendum and a moratorium on any long-term contracts with foreign groups.

Planning minister Ali Baban has pledged to resign if the law is passed; the Association of Muslim Scholars has issued a fatwa against it; more than 100 senior technocrats and experts have written to the government boycotting it; and Iraqi oil unions have not ruled out strike action.

Asked about the possibility of a consultation involving Iraqi civil society and unions over the law – a senior source at the Iraqi ministry of planning, who did not wish to be named, said: “Well Iraqi workers, they come from a low class – they are not well informed about these things. They are always demanding something: whether it’s higher wages or conditions, they are always wanting something.” He denied they should be included in consultations.

A recent research poll commissioned by US and UK human rights groups found that just 4 per cent of Iraqis felt they had received enough information about the oil law.

Some 63 per cent said they believed their oil industry should be developed by state companies, with 32 per cent of those indicating a strong preference.

The type of contracts on offer has also been a source of controversy. Production-sharing agreements (PSAs) were the first to be touted by the law – exclusive long-term deals that Iraq's unions liken to earlier, colonial-era concession agreements. These gave companies virtually unlimited profits, and control over the production, depletion and sale of Iraq's oil.

PSAs are usually used by countries with reserves to which it is hard to gain access and, as a result, high extraction costs.

None of the top six OPEC countries use the agreements, opting instead for service contracts. These allow the state to retain full authority over all production decisions and consign the investing company to the role of contractor.

Some in the oil ministry disagree.

Natiq al Bayati, director of reservoir and oil fields development, has called PSAs “a red line”.

Speaking at Iraq Petroleum, he stated: “International oil companies would prefer the PSC (production-sharing contract) but the political and economic culture and atmosphere in Iraq is not conducive to this contract. We will operate on a 'horses for courses' basis – there will be no one model contract.”

Many of Iraq's top professionals have joined the exodus from the country, and the brain drain is taking its toll on the oil sector.

An Iraqi consultant working with organisations in Baghdad, who did not wish to be named, said: “Iraq can, on its own capability and manpower, double production, but the organisations operating here are incredibly weak. Execution of work has been delayed, and contracts with suppliers and manufacturers are taking three to four times as long as they used to because experts in the field of contracting have left. “About 90 per cent of Iraq's top experts have left. Nobody wants to die.”

A world away from the bright lights of Dubai in the power-cut streets of Basra, the Iraqi Federation of Oil Unions was pressing ahead with its campaign for a unified industry in public hands.

Hassan Jumaa Awad, Ifou president, believes Iraqi manpower and international technology and expertise make a good match for developing the oil sector, but only on terms advantageous to Iraq.

Speaking from Basra, he said: "It is possible to co-operate with oil companies through a service contract, for the development of the oil industry in the service of the Iraqi economy." He said that the Southern Oil Company could increase output by one million barrels per day by the end of 2008 if given a \$500m (£250m) investment.

Despite their reconstruction efforts and a membership of 26,000, Mr Shahrstani has ruled the union illegal and wants to see it shut down.

The oil minister has refused to recognise or meet with it, instead reapplying Baathist laws that ban unions in the public sector.

Speaking on the sidelines of Iraq Petroleum, he stated: "Trade unions anywhere else are supposed to be concerned with the welfare of workers and adequate wages, not set policies for the government."

He said that industrial action effecting exports would be treated as "violent" and dealt with by force.

The strength of the union, however, has forced the prime minister to meet with leaders over demands covering pay, health and safety and permanent contracts, as well as a re-instatement of fuel subsidies and consultation on the oil law.

IFOU, from its origins as the Southern Oil Company union in 2003, has held regular elections and grown to a nationwide federation including unions from 10 state oil and gas companies.

Responding to the oil minister's comments, Mr Awad said: "Our legitimacy has come through the ballot box and the Iraqi constitution, which enshrines the right to form unions. The minister's actions are similar to those undertaken by Saddam's regime against those who demanded better conditions for the people."

He went on to say: "We will continue our efforts to serve our members and defend our oil wealth, no matter what the cost."

And the cost may be high.

In June arrest warrants were issued against union leaders and Iraqi troops occupied the oil fields over strike threats.

The TUC and the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions have both condemned the Iraqi government's strong-armed tactics and called for negotiations and recognition of Ifou as a bona fide organisation.

For Iraqis, an economic occupation, imposed by military force, threatens a future of genuine sovereignty and freedom.

Yet with a growing opposition challenging sectarian, corporate and foreign agendas, the future of Iraq's black gold is far from certain.

OCCUPATION REPORT



**Rabid Dogs Loose In Baghdad:
Blackwater Says Iraqi Soldier
And Baby Were "Armed"**

Enemies” Who Deserved To Be Killed: One Iraqi Citizen Understands What Needs To Be Done With Rabid Dogs: “I Was Boiling With Anger, And I Wished That I Had A Weapon In My Hands In Those Minutes,” He Said

Iraqi officials said the guards were unprovoked when they opened fire on a white car carrying three people, including a baby. All died. The security guards then fired at other nearby vehicles, including a minibus loaded with passengers, killing a mother of eight. An Iraqi soldier also died.

In Blackwater's only statement regarding the Sept. 16 incident, Anne Tyrell, the company's spokeswoman, denied that the dead were civilians. “The 'civilians' reportedly fired upon by Blackwater professionals were in fact armed enemies,” she said in an e-mail, “and Blackwater personnel returned defensive fire.”

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

September 27, 2007 By Leila Fadel, McClatchy Newspapers

BAGHDAD — On Sept. 9, the day before Army Gen. David Petraeus, the U.S. military commander in Iraq, and U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker told Congress that things were getting better, Batoul Mohammed Ali Hussein came to Baghdad for the day.

A clerk in the Iraqi customs office in Diyala province, she was in the capital to drop off and pick up paperwork at the central office near busy al Khilani Square, not far from the fortified Green Zone, where top U.S. and Iraqi officials live and work. U.S. officials often pass through the square in heavily guarded convoys on their way to other parts of Baghdad.

As Hussein walked out of the customs building, an embassy convoy of sport-utility vehicles drove through the intersection.

Blackwater security guards, charged with protecting the diplomats, yelled at construction workers at an unfinished building to move back.

Instead, the workers threw rocks. The guards, witnesses said, responded with gunfire, spraying the intersection with bullets.

Hussein, who was on the opposite side of the street from the construction site, fell to the ground, shot in the leg.

As she struggled to her feet and took a step, eyewitnesses said, a Blackwater security guard trained his weapon on her and shot her multiple times. She died on the spot, and the customs documents she'd held in her arms fluttered down the street.

Before the shooting stopped, four other people were killed in what would be the beginning of eight days of violence that Iraqi officials say bolster their argument that Blackwater should be banned from working in Iraq.

During the ensuing week, as Crocker and Petraeus told Congress that the surge of more U.S. troops to Iraq was beginning to work and President Bush gave a televised address in which he said “ordinary life was beginning to return” to Baghdad, Blackwater security guards shot at least 43 people on crowded Baghdad streets.

At least 16 of those people died.

Two Blackwater guards died in one of the incidents, which was triggered when a roadside bomb struck a Blackwater vehicle.

Still, it was an astounding amount of violence attributed to Blackwater.

In the same eight-day period, according to statistics compiled by McClatchy Newspapers, other acts of violence across the embattled capital claimed the lives of 32 people and left 87 injured, not including unidentified bodies found dumped on Baghdad's streets.

The best known of that week's incidents took place the following Sunday, Sept. 16, when Blackwater guards killed 11 and wounded 12 at the busy al Nisour traffic circle in central Baghdad.

Iraqi officials said the guards were unprovoked when they opened fire on a white car carrying three people, including a baby. All died. The security guards then fired at other nearby vehicles, including a minibus loaded with passengers, killing a mother of eight. An Iraqi soldier also died.

In Blackwater's only statement regarding the Sept. 16 incident, Anne Tyrell, the company's spokeswoman, denied that the dead were civilians. “The 'civilians' reportedly fired upon by Blackwater professionals were in fact armed enemies,” she said in an e-mail, “and Blackwater personnel returned defensive fire.”

A joint commission of five U.S. State Department officials, three U.S. military officials and eight Iraqis has been formed to investigate the incident, though almost two weeks later, the commission has yet to meet.

But interviews with eyewitnesses and survivors of each incident describe similar circumstances in which Blackwater guards took aggressive action against civilians who seemed to pose no threat.

“They killed her in cold blood,” Hussein Jumaa Hassan, 30, a parking lot attendant, said of Hussein.

Hassan pointed to the bullet-pocked concrete column behind him. He'd hidden behind it.

“I was boiling with anger, and I wished that I had a weapon in my hands in those minutes,” he said. “They wanted to kill us all.”

Anyone who moved was shot until the convoy left the square, witnesses said. Also among the dead was Kadhim Gayes, a city hall guard.

It took two days for Hussein's family to retrieve her body from the morgue. Before they could, her sister signed a sheet acknowledging the contents of her purse, which had been collected by security guards at the Baghdad city hall — a Samsung cell phone, a change purse with six keys and 37,000 Iraqi dinars (\$30), gold bracelets, a notebook, pens, and photos of her and her children.

Three days later, Blackwater guards were back in al Khilani Square, Iraqi government officials said. This time, there was no shooting, witnesses said. Instead, the Blackwater guards hurled frozen bottles of water into store windows and windshields, breaking the glass.

Ibrahim Rubaie, the deputy security director at a nearby Baghdad city government office building, said it's common for Blackwater guards to shoot as they drive through the square.

He said Blackwater guards also shot and wounded people in the square on June 21, though there are no official reports of such an incident.

Blackwater guards opened fire as the State Department convoy they were escorting crossed in front of stopped traffic at the al Nisour traffic circle.

While U.S. officials have offered no explanation of what occurred that day, witnesses and Iraqi investigators agree that the guards' first target was a white car that either hadn't quite stopped or was trying to nudge its way to the front of traffic.

In the car were a man whose name is uncertain; Mahasin Muhsin, a mother and doctor; and Muhsin's young son.

The guards first shot the man, who was driving. As Muhsin screamed, a Blackwater guard shot her. The car exploded, and Muhsin and the child burned, witnesses said.

Afrah Sattar, 27, was on a bus approaching the square when she saw the guards fire on the white car.

She and her mother, Ghania Hussein, were headed to the Certificate of Identification Office in Baghdad to pick up proof of Sattar's Iraqi citizenship for an upcoming trip to a religious shrine in Iran.

When she saw the gunmen turn toward the bus, Sattar looked at her mother in fear. "They're going to shoot at us, Mama," she said. Her mother hugged her close. Moments later, a bullet pierced her mother's skull and another struck her shoulder, Sattar recalled.

As her mother's body went limp, blood dripped onto Sattar's head, still cradled in her mother's arms.

"Mother, mother," she called out. No answer. She hugged her mother's body and kissed her lips and began to pray, "We belong to God and we return to God." The bus emptied, and Sattar sat alone at the back, with her mother's bleeding body.

"I'm lost now, I'm lost," she said days later in her simple two-bedroom home. Ten people lived there; now there are nine.

"They are killers," she said of the Blackwater guards. "I swear to God, not one bullet was shot at them. Why did they shoot us? My mother didn't carry a weapon."

Downstairs, her father, Sattar Ghafil Slom al Kaabi, 67, sat beneath a smiling picture of his wife and recalled their 40-year love story and how they raised eight children together.

On the way to the holy city of Najaf to bury her, he'd stopped his car, with her coffin strapped to the top. He got out and stood beside the coffin. He wanted to be with her a little longer.

"I loved her more than anything," he said, his voice wavering. "Now that she is dead, I love her more."

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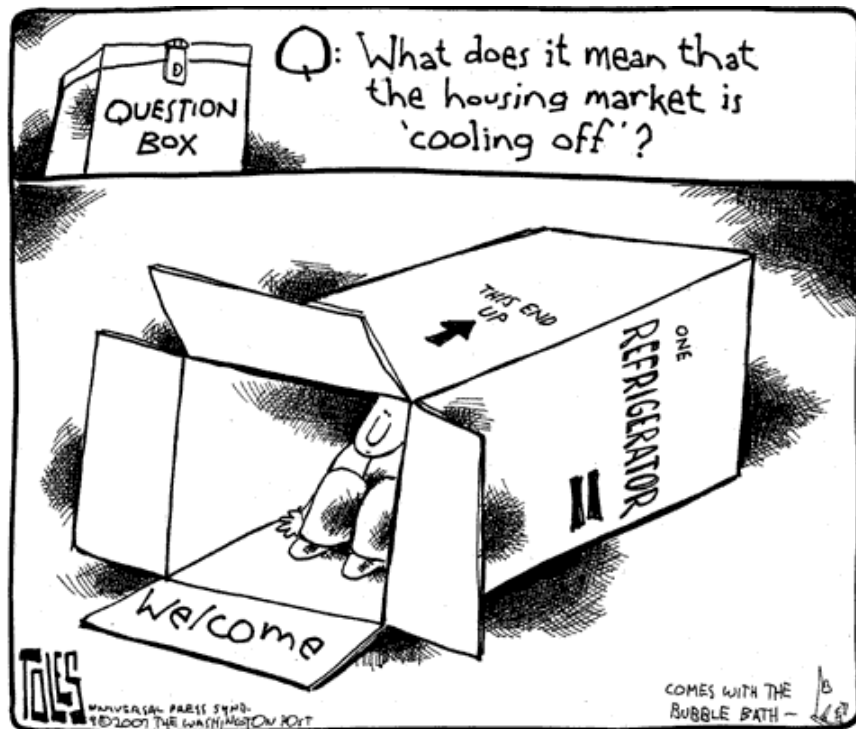
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